

was Chicago blues, Motown, Memphis. It was called West Side and South Side blues, and I never saw that. I was playing the West Side as much as the South Side. To get a job in one of these blues clubs where they didn't know who you were, you had to do an audition, and they would ask you if you could play these top ten songs on their jukeboxes. You had to play a Fats Domino, Jimmy Reed, Guitar Slim, B.B. King, whoever had a hit record. If you didn't play them, you wouldn't get that gig for \$2 a night. So I had to play Jackie Wilson, Eugene Church's 'Kansas City,' Big Joe Turner. You had to do all that. [You] couldn't be branded as a blues player back then.

A lot of people danced when we played back then," Guy continued. "In the '60s they started branding us as this or that. I still like to do everything. Marvin Gaye did some great songs, James Brown did some great songs. How could you go to a blues club when James Brown was coming out with 'Papa's Got A Brand New Bag'? You had to do that. And then they started taking that from us. I can go out and play my gig right now and do a Marvin Gaye song and they'd accept me. But then they'd say, 'OK, now I want to hear blues.'"

Meanwhile, Guy surrounds himself with colleagues who know that his art is multi-dimensional. His primary collaborator on *Skin Deep*, drummer/producer Tom Hambridge, worked with him in crafting the all-original material on the album. Considering how the title track in particular called for looking beyond such perceptions as race, the music itself had to show more than one face, like adding in veteran r&b bassist Willie Weeks. Hambridge said he always recognized Guy's inclinations.

"Buddy Guy is a legend because he can play anything," Hambridge said. "You're not limited. He's not even thinking in that zone. That's why he can jump onstage with Jeff Beck, they're playing fusion and he just plays what he plays and it fits. He plays Buddy Guy and it works."

Guitarist Derek Trucks, who also worked on *Skin Deep*, adds that a big part of what makes it all work is that in Guy's earlier years collaborating with Junior Wells on such albums as *Hoodoo Man Blues* (Delmark), he experienced how crucial a secondary guitar role should be. It's as important as the sparse staccato attack on Guy's own '60s records for Chess that inspired Hendrix and initially drove Leonard Chess bonkers.

"Back in the day, Buddy knew what part was needed where, and it was so funky, so rhythmic," Trucks said. "Not flashy, not over the top, you really have to listen to it. I don't know anybody else who could, or would, put those notes there. The Chess records had a grime, a sophistication, but also this total gangster street element that's so profound and such a wild combination."

But it's not too wild to lack generosity,

according to Trucks' wife, singer Susan Tedeschi, who also appears on *Skin Deep* and first performed onstage with Guy about a dozen years ago (on a version of his friend Bill Withers' "Use Me"). After she mentions the singer-guitarist charisma that he gleaned from Muddy Waters and B.B. King, Tedeschi adds that Guy can use all that to highlight her own leads.

"He's very dynamic, gets real quiet, and his voice is so rich—it's an extension of his guitar playing," Tedeschi said. "I love singing with

him, because I can sing real pretty and do these little nuances where we'll get real quiet, and then build it up and get real crazy."

This spring, Guy will return to the recording studio with Hambridge. He intends to focus on another avenue of the blues tradition, particularly the lesser-known songs of Jimmy Reed.

"Some of the songs Jimmy played were some of the first rhythm-type stuff I learned," Guy said. "There weren't a lot of lead guitar on his records. I had a horn player who called

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