

Bio

Hill Country and Delta Blues with Hypnotic Grooves

"There is no blues band performing today as different as HowellDevine—nor as delightful." ~ Lee Hildebrand, Living Blues Magazine/SF Chronicle

Triple threat talent, Joshua Howell (guitar, harmonica, vocals), veteran upright bassist, Joe Kyle Jr., and the dynamic J. Hansen on drums mix rural blues with wildly syncopated rhythms to create a rollicking sound that stands in stark contrast to the typical blues heard these days. Originally formed by Joshua Howell and drummer Pete Devine, the band's signature sound grew from their deeply shared rhythmic sensibility. The band was the first blues act signed by Chris Strachwitz to his legendary Arhoolie Records label in over 25 years, a testament to HowellDevine's ability breathe life back into the early blues with their stamp of propulsive, hypnotic rhythms.

Joshua Howell (Vocals, Guitar, Harmonica)

Within three years of picking up the harmonica at the age of 14, Joshua was sitting in with many of the San Francisco Bay Area's blues bands. He quickly became the go-to house harmonica player at clubs like Eli's Mile High and Your Place Too, though his under-age status limited his exposure to only those clubs that could circumvent the age restrictions. During this time, he took up guitar, intently focused on learning the techniques of the Mississippi greats such as Fred McDowell, Bukka White, Robert Johnson, and RL Burnside. While living in Santa Cruz, Joshua built a successful career in guitar making, co-founding the Howell & Forsyth Guitar Company. Though he continued performing locally, music as a profession took a back seat to lutherie until a move to Thailand where he committed fully to musicianship, playing over 15 gigs a week as a solo artist. After two years playing professionally in Thailand's mountainous north, he returned to the Bay Area and resumed performing. When he crossed paths with drummer and percussionist Pete Devine, they recognized a shared musical language. Their common approach effortlessly generated a powerhouse, deeply rhythmic take on blues that became the foundation of HowellDevine's sound.

Joe Kyle Jr. (Upright Bass)

It was during the Great Swing Wars of early-1990s San Francisco, when gigs were plentiful, public cigar smoking was legal, and vintage clothes were still cheap, that Joe was fortunate enough to have been drafted into musical service. Since that time he has become an in-demand player known for his superb feel, musical agility, and adaptability. Joe has been touring and recording with the Waybacks since mid-2001, and in such capacity has shared the stage with a host of notable roots music heroes including Bob Weir, Sam Bush, John Cowan, Joan Osborne, Jerry Douglas, Emmylou Harris, Elvis Costello, Danny Barnes, Gillian Welch and David Rawlings, Grace Potter, Mike Marshall, Darol Anger, Jim Lauderdale and Bela Fleck. He might be the only bassist to have played with Martin Denny, Al Kooper AND Pinetop Perkins, although not at the same time, sadly.

Following Devine's passing, drummer Jason "J" Hansen joined HowellDevine, bringing his own dynamic voice to a tradition rooted in groove and interplay.

Jason "J" Hansen (Drums)

J Hansen's dynamic drumming has been featured on stages around the world. Hailing from Joliet, IL by way of the SF Bay Area, J has played all across the US as well as over 40 countries internationally, and on 5 continents. As a member of Little Charlie (now Rick Estrin) and the Nightcats for 15 years, J played most of the major music festivals across the US and Europe. J. Hansen has backed many great

jazz and blues artists, including: Elvin Bishop, Rick Estrin, Charlie Musselwhite, Kim Wilson, LaVay Smith, Tommy Castro, Clint Baker, Wee Willie Walker, Barbara Dane, Little Charlie Baty, the Welsh/Ledbetter Connection, and many others.

In Memoriam

Pete Devine (Drums & Washboard)

Originally from Maine, Pete Devine began playing drums at age six, long before he owned a proper kit—improvising on pots, pans, and Quaker Oats boxes while playing along to Louis Armstrong and Spike Jones records spun by his grandmother. A drummer was born. After moving to San Francisco in 1989, Devine became a mainstay of the Bay Area roots scene, performing with a wide range of bands including Bo Grampus, Gaucho, Devine’s Jug Band, and as a founding member of Lavay Smith & Her Red Hot Skillet Lickers. For nearly 30 years, he was also a core member of Mal Sharpe’s *Big Money in Jazz*. Over his career, Devine recorded on more than 40 albums spanning traditional jazz, blues, jug band music, ragtime, gypsy jazz, and rock and roll. His distinctive old-time drumming and jug playing led to collaborations with artists such as Dan Hicks, Maya Angelou, Howard Armstrong (Louie Bluié), Bob Weir, and Maria Muldaur. Of his many projects, Pete once said, “*though I’ve played in many great bands over the years, Howell Devine takes the cake.*”