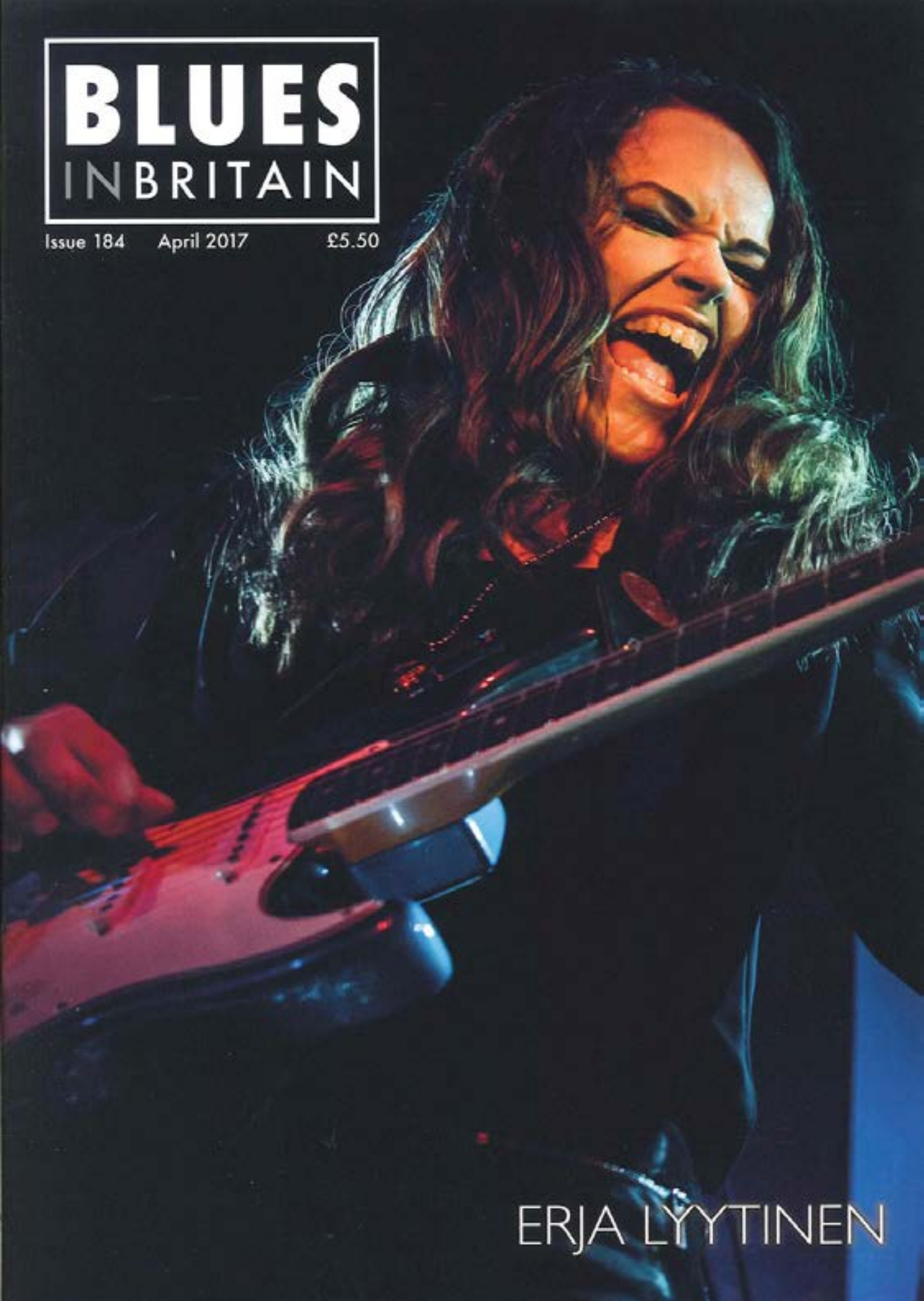


# BLUES IN BRITAIN

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ERJA LYYTINEN

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## Top 40 Played Artists and Albums

Pos	Artist	Album	Pos	Artist	Album
1	Jo Harman	People We Become	26	Manitoba Hal	Live In Ghent
2	Thorbjorn Risager & Black Tornado	Change My Game	27	Teresa Watson Band	Teresa Watson Band
3	Troy Redfern	Dirt Blues Ritual	28	Jack J Hutchinson	See Your Heart For The Sun
4	Catfish	Broken Man	29	Jimmy Bowskill & Carlos Del Junco	Blues Etc
5	Erja Lyytinen	Soled Hearts	30	Krissy Matthews	Live At Freak Valley
6	Gerry Jablonski Electric Band	Live Trouble	31	Thornetta Davis	Honest Woman
7	Paul Lamb And The Kingsnakes	Live At The Albert Hall	32	Eric Bibb	Migration Blues
8	Mike Ross	Jenny's Place	33	Fran McGillivray Band	Midnight Call
9	Toriah Fontaine	Block Water	34	Gaetano Letizia & Underworld Blues Band	Resurrection
10	Dave Fields	Unleashed	35	James O'Hara	James O'Hara
11	Sean Taylor	Flood & Burn	36	Elvin Bishop	Elvin Bishop's Big Fun Trio
12	John Ginty Feat. Aster Phoenix	Rockers	37	Papa Chubby	The Catfish
13	John Mayall	Talk About That	38	Rebecca Downes	Be Live
14	Rainbreakers	Rise Up	39	Wily Bo Walker & E.D. Brayshaw	Stone Cold Beautiful Vol II
15	Zoe Schwarz Blue Commotion	This Is The Life I Choose	40	Rolling Stones	Blue & Lonesome
16	Lachy Doley Group	Lovelight	<b>IBBA Presenters' Picks of the Month</b> During April members will be playing tracks in their shows each week from these albums: 1. Sean Webster Band - Leave Your Heart At The Door 2. Toriah Fontaine - Block Water 3. Zoe Schwarz - This Is The Life I Choose 4. LaVendore Rogue - A Night in the North		
17	Marcus Malone	A Better Man			
18	Remembering January	Choir Above It All			
19	Ash Wilson	Broken Machine			
20	Big Bill Morganfield	Bloodstains On The Wall			
21	John Cee Stannard	To The River			
22	Ronnie Baker Brooks	Times Have Changed			
23	Matt Andersen	Honest Man			
24	Wille And The Bandits	Steel			
25	Eliza Neals	10,000 Feet Below			

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April 2017

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*"I play through a 1968 100 watt super reverb; I use a lot of pedals."*

Erja Lyytinen



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# UNCOVERED

## Erja Lyytinen: On Stolen Hearts

Released this month *Stolen Hearts* is Finnish slide-queen Erja Lyytinen's tenth album; *Blues in Britain* spoke to her about this career landmark, pushing boundaries and the healing power of music.

"I've never listened to any of my albums as much as this one. One of the reasons was I had much more responsibility with this album. I was there through every step from writing to mastering: well, I wasn't there at the pressing company! but everything else, from scratch until the very end. I'm really happy with the overall result" Erja wanted to make something extraordinary and different, a natural consequence of her continually developing sound. "It has changed enormously, on my first album in 2002, I was playing a softer, jazzier style, playing Gibson Country Gentleman guitars through a Fender Blues Junior amp which is 15 watts. I was into Wes Montgomery, all that kind of stuff, but I was searching for what is 'me': it has taken me fifteen years to find my inner self, the sound that I want to put out. Nowadays I play through a 1968 100 watt super reverb; I use a lot of pedals (my pedalboard weighs 28 kilos!) and I have five different guitars on stage now. I really hope that twenty years from now I can look back and say, 'Wow, in 2017 I only had those things going on; but now I have this and this and this...' It's important for me that I should continually develop and I think with this new album I have taken a step toward something different that I haven't done before."

Some of that was driven by the material, "there were these songs coming out of me over the years, which I'd never had a chance to use. Many songs on the album are much older: for instance I wrote 'City Of Angels' when I was studying in California in 2004. Going there I saw things I hadn't seen before: a lot of poor people and also a lot of rich people. I wondered how people handle that in their lives, are they happy with all these things they have accumulated, and I saw people who were not so fortunate but who seemed happy and open. So I wrote this journey with me as a young girl traveling on the bus seeing all this and I finally finished it for this album. There are lots of songs I wrote when I was on tour in Germany: 'Silver Stones' talks about how fine the line is between losing it or not, as I witnessed from a close personal point when someone I knew was losing it. I do get bored easily, that's one reason why I push myself! For this album I was really thinking a lot about the guitar parts: one of the songs 'Black Ocean' is seven minutes long and the solo is probably about five minutes! I really wanted to make a "big" song

out of it, I was thinking of the great progressive bands like Led Zeppelin, Pink Floyd and Yes who had these long songs. They weren't thinking of radio play, those songs are like a story from the beginning to the end so the listener has the time to grow into the story: it's not gone in the blink of an eye there's time to walk the path together, I think nowadays we are so

**"I was there through every step from writing to mastering."**

used to changing our minds, changing everything quickly, we are so busy with everything but with music and art it's good to sit down and watch the painting with time and enjoy it. I think I had that moment in this album. It's going back to a time when there were no time limits to a song; in the 60s and 70s people made these great long songs and I think you should do that now and then!

*Stolen Hearts* was part recorded and mastered here in Britain. "we cut the band parts in Finland, I've done most of my previous albums here but I decided I needed to try something different. I'd told my friend Alan Darby the guitarist I wanted to finish my album in England, I wanted someone who could help me with vocals and Alan said, 'Let's ask my friend Chris Kimsey if he's available.' I was a bit scared as I wasn't sure he'd even like my songs but it didn't take him much time to say 'Yes', he loved the material. It turned out State Of The Ark studio was available, Terry Britten's boutique studio with all that great history: you guys have too much history; you should share it with us a little! So suddenly I found myself in South London making great music with Chris in front of that great old EMI console. It was kind of a trip for him too, as he used that console on the Rolling Stones album he did, so there was a lot of great vibes going on. Immediately I liked Chris, I felt so relaxed with him; he is one of those producers that let you enjoy the music. Some producers just want to punch in lines but he wants you to enjoy the music and tell the story. The song is a story you are telling, and it's hard to tell the story if someone is interrupting you all the time. This is probably the best vocal I have done so far; as State Of The Ark is an old studio it has lots of vintage gear so we were trying out different tube mics and ribbon mics

from as far back as the 40s before we started to see which mic would best suit my vocal for each individual track. I really enjoyed how we made everything there."

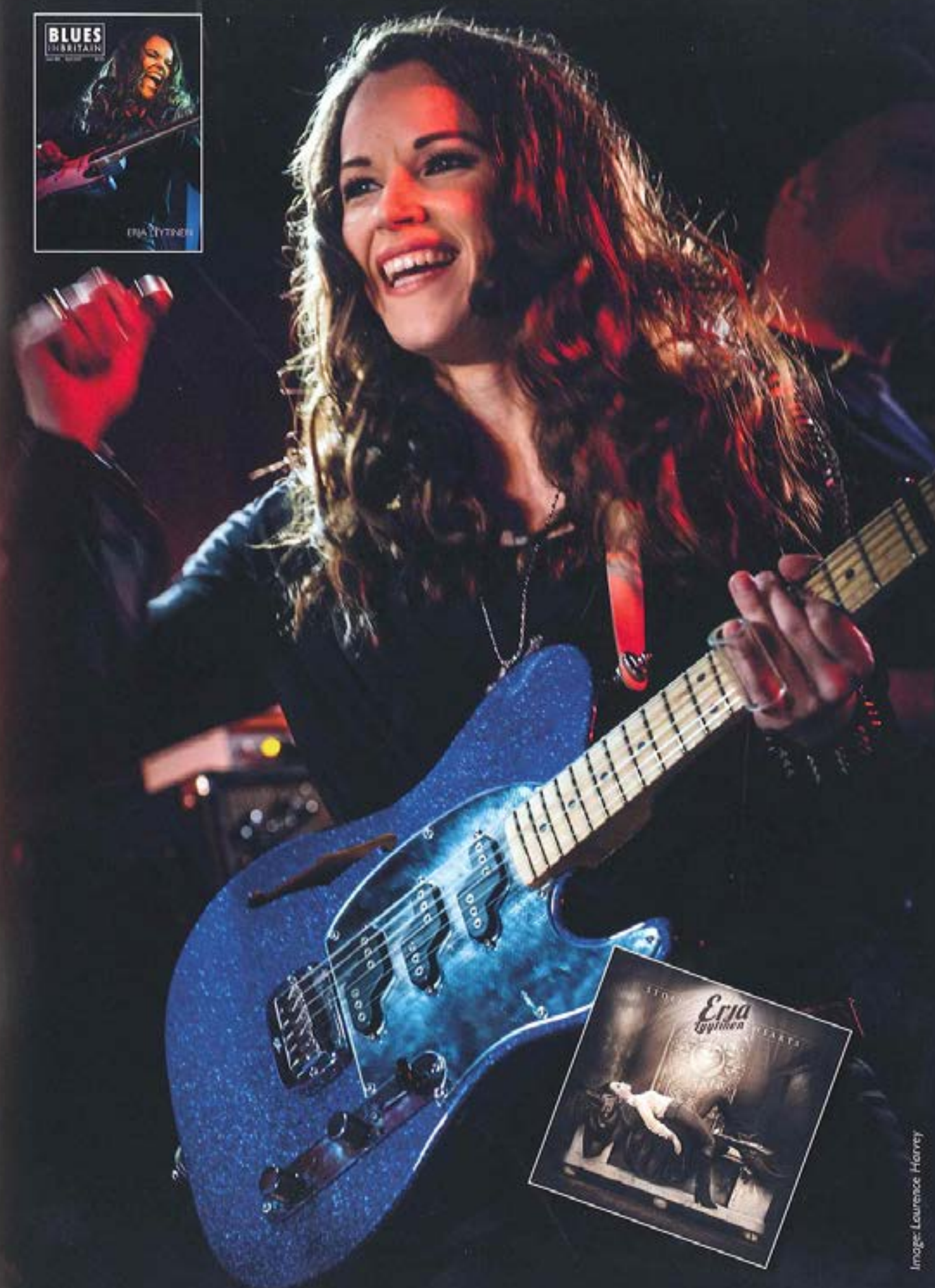
The 'extraordinary and different' abounds on *Stolen Hearts*, right from the opening title track with its blend of modern R&B and Jimi Hendrix. "There's a bit of Macy Gray in that

groove we have there! She was really big here in the 90s, I listened to her a lot so I think there is a little from her there. For the Hendrix vibe and the ending solo I had this psychedelic image in my head, and psychedelic and Jimi just go together! We put this long delay on my solo, and I played all the effects live, they're not added on the mix after, and that affects how you play and phrase it."

Equally unexpected is the unusual 7/8 time signature to 'Rocking Chair'. "I came up with that riff and thought, 'I am definitely going to make a song out of this!' It is such a cool riff: it is very rare to have songs in 7/8! Playing the riff and singing during the pauses gives it that feel of Zeppelin's 'Black Dog' even though it's a totally different song. It took us a little while to get that going on stage: at first we were all counting in our heads! 'When do I start to sing?' 'When do I start the next phrase?' It was a real pain to begin with, but it's fun to do something different!"

'Love Laboratory' shows a flair for a dancey vibe bordering on 70s disco. "It's not a typical song is it! I wrote it years ago, we even cut a demo with my former band with Roger Inniss on bass, but never recorded it properly. Last year when I was touring Finland I started playing it again and I thought, 'Yeah, I need to get this song on the next album.' I'm happy that we got it down; it's funkier than the other tracks. The overall feeling on the album is of dark, deep emotions and stories so it's nice to have something a bit pinky, happier!"

The most obviously 'bluesy' track is the classic slow blues 'Slowly Burning'. "I haven't really done a slow minor blues before; this song came about after I'd had a pretty rough time and I started to write the song in the early hours, sitting in my house coming up with this very





oppressive story, when things really go wrong in a relationship. Everybody has been in that situation, and there is that feeling that you will lose it all. I think it delivers pretty well on the album, it's not easy to make a slow blues on an album; it's very hard actually so I tried to keep it simple. Somebody said to me that it is a very eerie song and I think it is, and it came out beautifully which is nice."

The closing track 'Broken Eyes' is a piano-based, love song that Erja feels draws on the spirit of the likes of Gershwin. "It is so different from the other songs: there was a moment when I was going to drop it from the album, give it to someone else and let them sing it. But again the song was very personal for me and is so different that I thought I should keep it. It fits with all the other stories, it is a heartbreaking story. I composed it on piano so I have played it myself but I got Harri Taittonen, my piano player from the band, to do it on the album because I wasn't confident enough to put my piano playing out there! I could have done it but I wanted Harri to play it. It has a jazzy vibe in there with the chords I've used, and again it's about stories: it's a love song which is why I thought of Gershwin, those songwriters who made great songs with heartbreaking stories."

As you'll have gathered, there is a thread of darker subjects on *Stolen Hearts*: '24 Angels' with its themes of morality and forgiveness; the dark emotions behind 'Slowly Burning'; the mental illness angle of 'Silver Stones'. "Well, I do have these dark moments in my life and for those particular songs I was pondering things

in my head and my life... they aren't necessarily true stories, but I experienced some darker feelings in the last two years that have made me look differently at life so I thought I'd put all this in the music on the album because music heals. There have been a lot of tears poured into these songs and now it's like I can talk about these things happily; it's all there, and in life it's better to put things out there than keep them inside you!"

On a lighter note, Erja was invited to play in India last year. "The promoter just contacted me and said, 'Hey, we'd like you to come out and play here!' I've visited Asia (as a tourist) in Thailand and other places but never India, I



thought it sounded so exciting and exotic, that I must go. We only had a few gigs there, but it opened up a lot of things for me. It was such a different atmosphere: the cultural change is so great: we have around 5.5 million people in Finland and they have twenty million just in Mumbai! During the first day I was afraid we were going to die in the traffic: the traffic is crazy but you get used to it. The promoter was really kind, arranging some cool stuff; he got me to meet the local sitar manufacturer. This guy was a seventh generation sitar maker and I got to try out some of the sitars. I would never had had the chance to experience these things without music, without the blues; blues connects people, people from the other side of the world."

Even people from the slightly less exotic UK! "We do a short UK tour in April, with an album launch at the good old 100 Club, somewhere else full of history! It feels very homey there, and we'll bring a few friends over to enjoy the show, and the British company!"

**Moray Stuart**  
erjalyytinen.com

#### Gigs

- 9 Apr: Square & Compass, Ilminster
- 11 Apr: 100 Club, Oxford Street, W1D
- 12 Apr: Southern Pavilion, Worthing Pier
- 13 Apr: Gala Theatre, Durham
- 15 Apr: O2 Academy, Sheffield

#### Erja Lyytinen: *Stolen Hearts*

For those familiar with Erja's recent *Live In London* and *The Sky Is Crying* albums and know her as Queen of blues slide guitar this 10th studio album is going to be a little different.

'Stolen Hearts', both the album title and opening track is a lovely soulful, jazz edged song, the sort Paloma Faith is so good at, BUT this Erja and that guitar is going to kick in with a vengeance, and so it does, a superb title track. Put simply this has got national chart hit written all over it.

Sit back in the 'Rocking Chair' and strap yourself in, just the spot for Ozzie to rest easy, as Sabbath retire. This is one hard rocker from Erja, heavy, sculptured from drum and bass on the rocks, then laced with searing hot guitar liquor! It's almost a relief to these ancient ears, as we slip into an ethereal, 'Love Laboratory', finding a funk groove that soars up to a spicy finish.

'24 Angels' is a deep, moral tale with a slow soulful opening that breaks into a honey doped slide and a rock strewn path leading home. A thumping Blues riff, 'Black Ocean', finds us on waves of drum and bass, with subtle guitar and keyboard breakers, dancing over the surface, the crying guitar soars clear like gulls over the crashing percussion. This is an ocean of pleasure that reveals Erja sailing across on a superb guitar solo. Beautiful, soulful and dark 'Slowly Burning' brings out the quality of Erja's voice matched to lovely guitar leads, it makes for a superb sizzler of a track, distinct and memorable.

Signature slide notes, opens the book on, 'Lovers Novels', it reads like

funked up retro soul, with flashes of nice rich, tube tortured, strings. There are elements of pop rock, soul and country, as we work our way through this album. You would expect nothing less than scintillating guitar and you'll not be disappointed, but significantly it also brings out the versatility of Erja's voice. 'Awakening', switches from funk to rock, as Erja examines a long relationship, before driving energetically into the, 'City Of Angels', a song that searches across the street life of LA, riding to a country edged rhythm.

*Stolen Hearts* expresses Erja Lyytinen's view of the world around her, she has produced songs that explore both her writing and the instrument that is her voice, the final song, 'Broken Hearts', strips everything away, she puts aside the guitar, leaving just the piano and a very soulful Erja, which leaves a warm glow.

The vocal track of this album was recorded at State Of The Ark Studios under engineer Chris Kimsey. The album covers a huge range of styles, roots blues, soul, funk, folk, r&b, jazz and yes, let's call it what it is, pop. Erja had taken this project to Chris to really explore her vocal qualities, there being no doubt about her guitar credentials. The result may not be to everyone's taste, particularly the die-hard blues fans, but that would not be doing it justice.

There are flashes of the slide and attack you would expect, but in 'Stolen Hearts', you will discover Erja Lyytinen, chanteuse, has added extra strings to her guitar.

**Graham Munn**