



Stacey Earle and Mark Stuart play Café Paradiso on Tuesday

music BY VANESSA SALVIA

Musical Marriage

Stacey Earle and Mark Stuart's downhome folk.

Stacey Earle and Mark Stuart have performed together on stage since 1992. They've also been married since 1993, yet they waited until 2001 to announce an official *musical* partnership. Those who have seen them perform together before are probably not surprised that they finally made this decision, as it seems the pair has one of those blessed partnerships that produce musical magic.

Before the musical merger, they each produced their own CDs, all released on their own Gearle Records/Buoy Publishing label.

Earle debuted with the delicate, plain-spoken *Simple Gearle* in 1998. Stuart released *Songs From A Corner Stage* the following year, and Earle followed up with *Dancin' With Them That Brung Me* in 2000.

If the name Earle sounds familiar to you, it could be because Stacey is kid-sister to one of back-porch folk and rock's most loved musicians, Steve Earle. In fact, her husband formerly performed with Steve Earle as one of his Dukes. While Earle came to know the powerful potential of the music in her blood at a later age than her brother, she is gaining fame and popularity on her own terms and with her own style.

Stuart and Earle creatively mesh in every aspect of their musicianship. Even though a typical songwriting credit might list only one name, chances are that both have given their constructive input. No matter who writes the song, it gets filtered through the other, and it's that input from both talented parties that gives an Earle/Stuart song its depth and uniqueness.

They have recently released a live CD celebrating their new partnership entitled *Must Be Live*. This two-disc set spotlights shining examples of the duo's most pleasing performances together

over the last few years. One thing many fans love about Earle's shows is that she gets intimate with the audience, chatting while on stage and telling stories as if leaning over a back fence. This CD captures much of that charm and her gift for reeling in the crowd with her endearing personality and twangy, down-home vocal style. The couple will appear Tuesday at Cafe Paradiso.

If "raucous, piano-based Dixie R&B [full of] classic Southern songcraft and passion" sounds like your thing, then you definitely don't want to miss **Marcia Ball's** upcoming performance.

Ball is celebrating the release of her newest CD, *So Many Rivers*. She was recently honored by two nominations for 2003 W.C. Handy Blues Awards, one for Contemporary Blues Female Artist of the Year and the other for Blues Instrumentalist on Keyboards. The 2002 award for Blues Album of the Year was hers and hers alone for her first Alligator Records release, *Presumed Innocent*.

Ball comes from a family in which every female played piano. She's been playing, initially at her grandmother's side, since she was 5 years old. Her three decades of experience show in the quality of her music.

So Many Rivers still features Ball's trademark boogie-woogie vibe, but she also includes influences from a wider variety of genres and song structures. Six of the songs are her own compositions, and all highlight her powerful piano skills.

Ball drives all over the musical map on this CD, from New Orleans-style R&B to Delta Blues to heart-wrenching ballads. The stripped-down and soulful ballad "Give Me A Chance" is right at home with the roadhouse rhythms of "Foreclose On The House Of Love," while the brisk "If It Ain't One Thing" closes the CD on an energetic note.

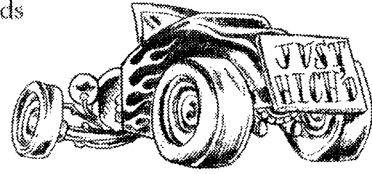
Ball performs Thursday, June 5 at the Wild Duck. **ew**

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