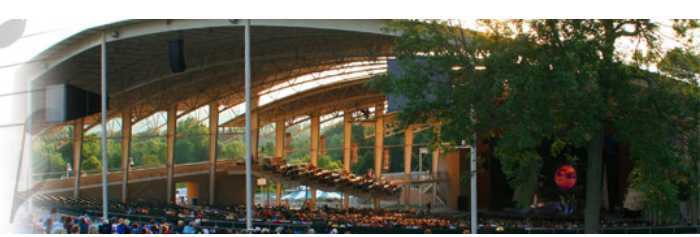




CONSTELLATION BRANDS
MARVIN SANDS
PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

Located on the campus of Finger Lakes Community College
3355 Marvin Sands Drive, Canandaigua, NY 14424



George Thorogood and the Destroyers

The Robert Cray Band

With The Fabulous Thunderbirds

GEORGE THOROGOOD has a theory. "In any field, especially the arts, there are always two things— 'genius' and 'very clever.' There's no in-between. You're either a genius or very clever. I'm going to throw out two names at you. John Lennon--genius, right? And Mick Jagger? Very clever. See what I'm saying? I'll give you another example. Einstein--genius. And George Thorogood--very clever."

Yet what about the people who think Thorogood is a genius in his own way? "OK, I'm a genius at being very clever," he says with a hearty laugh. Thorogood loves quips almost as much as he loves the blues, so here's another: "Let's put it this way. Dylan has a Rolls-Royce dealership. I have a used Chevy dealership. But I'm in the business. You got it? That's all I wanted from this thing. A gig, man. And I got a gig."

Thorogood and his band the Destroyers have held that gig for more than 30 years. And he's not about to let go now. "It's like a championship fight," he says. "You've got two guys in the ring--one guy who's the contender and wants to get the title and you've got the guy who's got the title and it took him 15 years to get the title and he's held onto it for five years. Who's going to be the tougher opponent? It's going to be the guy with the title who worked hard to get it. You're going to have to kill him to get it away from him. And that's all that I'm doing up there. I'm trying to hold my gig. I just want to make sure that at the end of the night the promoter comes up and says, 'I want to hire you again.'"

The Destroyers fought their way to the top. They came out of Delaware in the '70s as a jarringly high-energy bunch (also featuring drummer Jeff Simon and bassist Billy Blough) whose raucous, slide guitar-stoked, blues-rock takes on tunes by Chuck Berry, Elmore James, John Lee Hooker, Bo Diddley and others helped land them a contract with Cambridge's Rounder Records.

They had moved to Boston and cut their teeth in the city's blues circuit before their second album for Rounder, *Move It On Over*, struck big with the title track, an amped-up cover of a Hank Williams tune. They added a saxophonist (Hank Carter) and further fame came in the '80s through a signing to EMI Records, which released a series of gold records by the band.

These included 1982's *Bad to the Bone* (the title track is Thorogood's best-known composition and its video became a staple on MTV) and 1988's *Born to Be Bad*, with the swaggering hit, "You Talk Too Much." The '90s saw more hit-making with 1993's "Get a Haircut," from the album *Haircut*. And albums followed into the new millennium with 2003's *Ride 'Til I Die*--and 2006's *Hard Stuff*--on Eagle Records, and a 2004 Capitol compilation, *Greatest Hits: 30 Years of Rock*, which went gold and was #1 on Billboard's blues chart for a noteworthy 60 weeks, while winning the magazine's award for blues record

of the year.

And still, Thorogood good-naturedly downplays his accomplishments. "In 1970 I said, 'You ain't no genius, George.' You've got to figure out a way to do this with barely a high school education and no voice to speak of and some interesting chops on the guitar. But you've got to bullshit your way in there, man. I say this to the world: The Beatles did what they did, the rest of us played the blues."

The Destroyers have expanded through the years--they now include not only Simon and Blough, but guitarist Jim Suhler (a Texan who was brought aboard in 1999) and saxophonist Buddy Leach, who joined in 2003.

The band recently re-joined forces with Capitol/EMI for the July 28 release of *The Dirty Dozen*, a scorching new blues-rock album pairing six new studio recordings with six classic fan favorites, including three popular tracks that were previously out-of-print in the U.S. The album will be widely available on CD and digitally, and it will also be exclusively available for purchase on vinyl LP from www.georgethorogood.com and at the band's concerts on tour. *The Dirty Dozen* features Thorogood's signature blues-rock vocals and guitar playing on 12 songs, many of which were written by a who's-who of American blues legends, including Muddy Waters, Bo Diddley, "Sleepy" John Estes, Chuck Berry, Howlin' Wolf, and Willie Dixon. The album's new recordings and fan favorites are grouped as LP-inspired "sides."

Through it all, Thorogood maintains his cleverness. "How far can you stretch three chords? Or in my case, one chord?" he says, laughing again. "How many different paint jobs can I put on 'Johnny B. Goode'? You got it? My biggest thrill is when somebody says to a friend, 'I've got George's new CD and it's just like the last one.' You know what I mean? "Not all of us are John Lennon and Paul McCartney. They started off playing Chuck Berry, then they developed it into 'Strawberry Fields.' I am not like that, nor do I ever proclaim to be like that."

Thorogood prefers to think of himself as a role-player, but that role has been pleasing a couple of generations of rock fans by this point. He retains his innocence and also his self-deprecating humor.

"I once talked to Randy Newman and I was freaked out because he told me what a big fan of mine he was," says Thorogood. "I said, 'Hey, you're Randy Newman. You're a genius. And after a while, he got a little miffed. He said, 'George, can't I like 'Bad to the Bone'? What's the matter with you?' He was singing the National Anthem at a ballgame and I couldn't even concentrate on the game because I was so freaked out that Randy Newman not only knew who I was, but that he dug what I do. When I was going home, my father-in-law said, 'Look at it this way, I heard that Laurence Olivier was a big Three Stooges fan.' You got it? That's all Jeff and Billy and I were: Larry, Moe and Curley. But Larry, Moe and Curley are still on TV, OK? "I'm still on the scoreboard."

Robert Cray

Robert Cray's *This Time* – the first studio album on singer-songwriter-guitarist Cray's own imprint Nozzle

Records, distributed by Vanguard Records – arrives at a vital juncture in the musician's career, marked by creative renewal and a key reunion with an old performing partner.

The five-time Grammy Award winner summarized 35 years of mastery on the debut Nozzle release *Live From Across the Pond* (2006), an electrifying two-CD concert set drawn from a series of shows (opening for Eric Clapton) at London's Royal Albert Hall. When the time came to follow up that widely praised collection with a studio recording, Cray viewed it as an opportunity to move his sound in other directions.

He found exactly what he was looking for by turning to one of his oldest friends and colleagues: bassist Richard Cousins, whose tenure with the Robert Cray Band began with its barnstorming regional origins in Eugene, Oregon, in 1974 and extended through 1991, encompassing such early high-water marks as *Strong Persuader* (1986) and *Don't Be Afraid of the Dark* (1988), both winners of the best contemporary blues performance Grammy.

"I've known Richard for 40 years," Cray says. "We go back to 1969, and we grew up in the same area together. We've always had a really good rapport together stage-wise. Richard and I have remained the best of friends ever since he departed way back in '91. I'd still see Richard, whether it was in the States or in Europe – where he still lives. He'd always come to see us at the gigs. We always remained close. We talked on the telephone all the time.

"It just so happened that last year, I wanted to make personnel changes in the band. So I asked Richard to come back."

Cousins' return to the Cray fold bonds him once again with keyboardist Jim Pugh, a cornerstone of the guitarist's group since 1989.

In the hunt for a new drummer, Cray – with encouragement from Cousins -- struck on a musician whose style and experience perfectly complemented his own: the road-tested Tony Braunagel, whose résumé includes work with Bonnie Raitt (including her Grammy-winning *Nick of Time* and *Luck of the Draw*), Taj Mahal, Keb' Mo', and B.B. King.

Cray recalls, "I'd seen Tony work in a lot of different situations before. My first real opportunity to play with him was three years ago, when we did a benefit up in Portland, Oregon, for our friend Curtis Salgado. Tony was playing drums there, and Richard was there, too – they were the rhythm section. Richard was working really well with Tony, and they were kind of fronting the whole jam. It was great. I was talking to Richard after he'd rejoined the group, and I said, 'We need to find a drummer.' He just went, 'Tony!'"

The refreshed lineup of Cray, Cousins, Pugh, and Braunagel came together at Santa Barbara Sound Design in Santa Barbara, California, to record what became *This Time*. Cray produced (though he notes, "Every time I produce, it's like a communal effort"), with Don Smith engineering.

Cray says of the sessions, "I really looked forward to it -- to how Richard and I were going to gel together after having not played together for a long time, and to bringing Richard back to work with Jim, because we did all get a chance to work together for two years, before Richard left -- and then having Tony come in.

"Richard and Jim and myself have all known each other for a while, but when we added Tony to the mix, it was like, 'Hey, where you been?' We all get along really, really well. It was fun, and everybody brought something to the table. Tony's interpretation of what we were doing was just spot-on, and of course, with his background, all the music that he'd listened to and played coincided with the music we've listened to and played over the years. It was like the perfect hand in the glove."

All of the band members contributed fresh material to *This Time*. Cray brought in the title track, "Chicken in the Kitchen," "I Can't Fail," and "Trouble and Pain," and co-wrote "Forever Goodbye" with his wife Sue Turner-Cray. Pugh authored "Love 2009" and "To Be True." Cousins and the Swiss soul/blues musician Hendrix Ackle collaborated on "Truce." And Braunagel and guitarist Johnnie Lee Schell co-authored "That's What Keeps Me Rockin'."

As ever with Robert Cray's undefinable sound, the music on *This Time* remains stubbornly beyond category. He has been internationally admired as a stylist whose innovations have brought new life to the blues, and such punchy outings as "Chicken in the Kitchen" and "That's What Keeps Me Rockin'" should satisfy the most demanding blues fans. But the new album's barrier-busting material – whether it's the soulful "Love 2009" or the profound balladry of "This Time" and "Forever Goodbye" – demonstrate once again that attempting to slot Cray in a single genre is an exercise in futility.

"Blues is one of the foundations of our music, but it's not all that we play," Cray says. "When I first started playing guitar, I wanted to be George Harrison – that is, until I heard Jimi Hendrix. After that, I wanted to be Albert Collins and Buddy Guy and B.B. King. And then there are singers like O.V. Wright and Bobby Blue Bland. It's all mixed up in there."

He continues, "Every time somebody asks me about where my music comes from, I give them five or six different directions – a little rock, soul, jazz, blues, a little gospel feel. Then there are some other things that maybe fall in there every once in a while, like a little Caribbean flavor or something. You just never know. I always attribute it to the music we grew up listening to, and the radio back in the '60s. It's pretty wide open. It's hard to put a tag on it."

Cray, who began 2009 with concert appearances in Brazil and Japan, will support *This Time* with shows around the country with his reconfigured band.