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SOULFUL SONGWRITERS
The Reminders Share Their Faith and Music

Musical Storytellers Sing of Grace and Human Frailty

The Reminders will perform June 26 at the Freeman Stage near Fenwick Island.

Patricia V. Rivera
Editor

Call it divine intervention. None of them expected it. But the moment that the three men who comprise The Reminders united their wide-ranging voices in harmonic perfection, they knew there was a reason for their meeting.

"This was an instance in which the sum was greater than its parts," recalled Ed Shockley, of Lewes. "We couldn't have planned it so perfectly."

Much like other impromptu jam sessions that spring up among musicians, this one inspired greatness. Shockley, a well-known drummer and rhythm-and-

blues singer, was playing informally one day with John Thompson, of Rehoboth Beach. The latter is a career songwriter who produced more than 30 major albums in the country, pop and gospel fields for artists such as Earl Scruggs, the Bill Gaither Trio, Doug Oldham, the Oak Ridge Boys and Roseanne Cash.

Shockley and Thompson asked Kevin Short — a singer, bass player and producer from Georgetown — to join them. Thompson's higher pitches contrasted

perfectly with Short's hearty baritone. Shockley's earthy and raspy mid-tones completed the trio's musical fullness. They felt a spirit move them.

Months later, they would call their first album "Tender. Loud. Gravel," to describe each of their voices.

It's hard to define and categorize music built on rustic ideals and infused with roots music — blues, folk-rock, bluegrass — and old-fashioned gospel.

What's certain is that since 2009, The Reminders have moved fans across the state and the nation with their heartfelt voices and arrangements, which include the guitar, mandolin, bass and percussion drums.

More recently they performed at The Grand in Wilmington with the Blind Boys of Alabama and at Le Poisson Rouge in New York City.

On June 26, The Reminders will headline at The Freeman Stage near

Fenwick Island. Johnny Neel will make a guest appearance with them.

Soulful by any other name

*Everything we believed in has come — tumblin' down
Won't you teach me to the river
And just teach me how to sing*
In the words of one of their friends and fellow musician Bill Rawlins, The Reminders share stories through voices that say "we're all creatures of history, wristers with demons, searchers for something sacred and moments of grace."

They aspire to be authentic, and they take a simple approach to songwriting and performing that feels like bygone days, as their name reflects. In their first album, they define themselves as musical storytellers with a deeply spiritual inclination.

Their repertoire features a song called

"Broken Alleluia." Thompson wrote it for a group of convicts who met for Christmas breakfast one year. Today, he sees it as the story of the musical journey experienced by The Reminders. This is how the song begins:

*I don't feel much like singing,
And if the truth be known
I'd rather go off somewhere
And just lick my wounds alone
So here I am, here I am*

Their second album, "What Was That Thing Called Sorrow," contemplates universal emotions that bind people of all walks of life and offer hope in dark moments.

The Reminders found themselves performing to the grieving, and composed lyrics for them. Among those songs was "Don't Have to Say Goodbye to Love." The lyrics insist that love is never really gone: "It just moves to another world"

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John Thompson, Kevin Short and Ed Shockley make up The Reminders. They embrace Americana, gospel roots, praise and bygone days, as their name reflects.
Photo courtesy of Ed Roberts.

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The number of song samples available at The Reminders' website, thereminders.net.

SUMMER SHOWS

- **June 8.** Mountaire Family Night at the Delmarva Shorebirds Stadium in Salisbury, Md.
- **June 26, 7 p.m.** Freeman Stage at Bayside with Johnny Neel.
- **July 20, 6:30 p.m.** Trap Pond State Park Summer Concert.
- **August 8, 7:30 p.m.** Carey's Camp in Millsboro.
- **August 15, 8 p.m.** The Grange Hall at Martha's Vineyard, West Tisbury, Mass.
- **August 16.** Studio 35 Benefit in Fall River, Mass.
- **August 17.** First Parish Church Coffeehouse in Taunton, Mass.
- **August 18.** Wrightsville Presbyterian Church, Penn.



The Reminders unite their wide-ranging voices in perfect harmony.
Photo courtesy of Ebert Roberts.



Fellow musician Bill Rawlins said The Reminders share stories that say "we're all creatures of history, wrestlers with demons, searchers for something sacred and moments of grace."
Photo courtesy of Marc Clery.

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The music comforted the crowds at somber memorial services. Shockley said this was an example of how the needs of others lead their songwriting.

"We're shaped by what's happening around us, where we sense the opportunity to serve," he explained.

Now they are preparing their third album in which they plan to continue telling authentic stories, including one called "Ocean Lady."

*If you've seen the sun come up over the ocean
Setting life to the morning sea
And the dolphin running south out of Henslopen
Then you've seen
what that woman can do to me*

An inward examination

*The call to soul search
"Lord, I confess,
I am anxious in my spirit.
Could you help me, please,
show me what to do?
"Cause I want my life, for you,
to be, well, pleasing."*

Religion notwithstanding, who doesn't struggle with inner conflict — with the concept of worthiness?

After forming The Reminders, Shockley wondered about his new role of galvanizing audiences in churches. All his life, he'd evoked emotion

among those who accompanied his musical creations with clapping, stomping, singing and swaying. His rock song "Dodge City," written years ago when he was in the band Jack of Diamonds, is still an anthem to many music fans in the mid-Atlantic region.

Using gospel, was unfamiliar for him. He felt lost at times. He remembered thinking, "Wouldn't it be nice to feel like God was with you?"

Perhaps the response was natural given that The Reminders' lyrics came from the spirit of God. With that privilege, an examination of conscience soon followed.

Short also remembers feeling uneasy at first, about singing in worship halls near pulpits where the teachings of God transcend earthly cares.

Their spirits, however, reassured their minds. They were encouraged by Thompson, an internationally accomplished gospel songwriter who built his career on imparting inspirational messages.

Then one Sunday morning during worship, Shockley felt his worries lifted. He and gospel singer Deah Harriott had performed a song appropriately called "Sanctify Me." Their recording was played during the service. The lyrics and voices moved many worshipers who, during an altar call, rose to their feet and advanced to the front of the church as a symbolic commitment to Jesus Christ.

Shockley witnessed how his voice was an instrument for something greater than entertainment. He realized that God was with him.

The Reminders live their faith quietly. They don't pretend to convert souls (Thompson said that job belongs to God). They don't cast stones as they're too aware of their shortfalls as humans.

They do share stories of human strength and frailty in a world they believe was created by a loving God, a God whose most important creation felt at one moment in his life "broken, alone and afraid," as The Reminders wrote in their song "Outrageous Grace — Violent Mercy." That feeling is shared by many. A line explains:

*"If I took a snapshot
on Main Street
in any town, anywhere,
future or past,
you'd see on those faces
a longing for something
an emptiness under the mask."*

A heart of creativity

*"If God wrote a love song
the first ones he would let hear it
would be shepherds, just like him.
He knew they would understand (...)
And all the world would see it,
what was written in his ancient heart."*

During worship in a Georgetown church, Thompson related a telling interpretation of God.

Songwriters, he noted, love to share their songs: "We get excited when we go into a writer's session with nothing and come out with something." Likewise, he sees God share similar enthusiasm about each and every one of his creations.

"God has such a heart for creativity that if he was to show you his songs, he would show you people. He would say, 'look what I made, look what I did with this one,'" Thompson said.

Indeed, each of the songs that The Reminders compose is filled with words



Most recently, The Reminders have performed at The Grand in Wilmington with the Blind Boys of Alabama and at Le Polisson Rouge in New York City.
Photo courtesy of Buck Shockley.



Their second album, "What Was That Thing Called Sorrow," contemplates universal emotions that bind people of all walks of life and offer hope in dark moments.
Photo courtesy of Marc Clery.

that form poignant stories that they love to discuss in greater detail.

In recent years, The Reminders have performed at pubs and restaurants. Short recalled the first time someone requested "Outrageous Grace" in that setting.

"We all kind of looked at each other and asked, 'Can we do that here?'" he recalled. "We did it, and it was extremely

well received."

*I don't know much about heaven
But they say it's filled with praise
So would you mind this straggler
Trying to show a little faith*

To learn more about The Reminders, or to listen to their music, visit thereminders.net.

