**RUTHIE FOSTER BIO**

In the tightknit musical community of Austin, Texas, it’s tough to get away with posturing. You either bring it, or you don’t.

If you do, word gets around. Praises are sung. And one day, you find yourself duetting with Bonnie Raitt, or standing onstage with the Allman Brothers at New York’s Beacon Theater and trading verses with Susan Tedeschi. You might even wind up getting nominated for a Best Blues Album Grammy — three times in a row. And those nominations would be in addition to your seven Blues Music Awards, three Austin Music Awards, the Grand Prix du Disque award from the Académie Charles-Cros in France, and a Living Blues Critics’ Award for Female Blues Artist of the Year.

There’s only one Austinite with that résumé: Ruthie Foster.

The small rural town of Gause, TX had no chance of keeping the vocal powerhouse known as Ruthie Foster to itself. Described by Rolling Stone as “pure magic to watch and hear,” her vocal talent was elevated in worship services at her community church. Drawing influence from legendary acts like Mavis Staples and Aretha Franklin, Ruthie developed a unique sound unable to be contained within a single genre. That uniqueness echoes a common theme in Foster’s life and career - marching to the beat of her own drum.

Joining the Navy was one way for Ruthie to stake out her own path. It was during her time singing for the Navy band Pride that her love for performing became apparent. After leaving the service, Ruthie signed a development deal with Atlantic Records and moved to New York City to pursue a career as a professional musician.

A deal with a major label would seem to be a dream come true for a budding artist. But the label wanted Ruthie to hand over her authenticity in exchange for being molded into a pop star. In another bold move, she walked away from the deal and returned to her roots, moving back to the Lone Star State.

Returning to Texas, Ruthie solidified her place as an up-and-coming singer/songwriter and began a musical partnership with Blue Corn Music. Her studio albums for the label began with *Runaway Soul* in 2002, followed by *The Phenomenal Ruthie Foster* in 2007, *The Truth According to Ruthie Foster* in 2009, *Let It Burn* in 2012 and *Promise of a Brand New Day* in 2014. Her live shows, which she has referred to as a “hallelujah time,” have been documented on the album *Stages* in 2004 and the CD/DVD release *Live at Antone’s* in 2011.

Then came Ruthie’s latest - *Joy Comes Back* - again on Blue Corn Music*.* When she recorded this album, Foster wasn’t merely singing about love and loss; she was splitting a household and custody of her 5-year-old daughter. Music was her therapy.

In the warm confines of Austin producer and former neighbor Daniel Barrett’s studio, she found a comfort level she’d never before experienced while recording. It gave her the strength to pour the heartache of her family’s fracture and the cautious hope of a new love into 10 tracks, nine of which are by a diverse array of writers ranging from Mississippi John Hurt to Chris Stapleton to Black Sabbath. Yes, Black Sabbath: Foster reimagines “War Pigs” as a jam session with Son House. She also covers the Four Tops’ “Loving You Is Sweeter Than Ever,” written by Ivy Jo Hunter and Stevie Wonder.

And she makes each one hers, aided by some special guests. Derek Trucks drops slide guitar into the title tune; bassist Willie Weeks (Bowie, Clapton, George Harrison) plays on the Foster-penned “Open Sky”; and drumming legend Joe Vitale (Crosby, Stills & Nash; Eagles) appears on several tracks. Local hero Warren Hood (“Champ Hood’s boy,” as Foster calls him) lays fiddle and mandolin on Hurt’s bluegrass-tinted “Richland Woman Blues.”

At one point, Barrett described the album to Hood as “some blues, some folk, some soul, some rock, some gospel.” Hood replied, “Sounds like Ruthie Foster music.”