



A View from the Crow's Nest

By Michele Lundeen

Randy Oxford (trombone)
hosting Jamarama.
Photo by Kathy Rankin Photography

You never know who just might pop into a jam. This is especially true at the Crow's Nest Pro-Am Jamarama on the [Legendary Rhythm and Blues Cruise](#) (LRBC). Many passengers are also musicians that sail each year to enjoy all the varied shows featuring their favorite artists, as well as for the opportunity to jam in the Crow's Nest with a variety of other like-minded players. There's a chance to make magic, have fun, network and just plain strut your stuff. There's also room to dance, hang out and enjoy libations at the Crow's Nest bar.

I was honored to be a host for the October 2018 LRBC Crow's Nest Jamarama where I met many wonderful and talented folks – both players, some who were in the bands on board (even the cool B.B. King house band that was off-duty that week), and cruisers, who came to enjoy the unpredictable interactions that can materialize. For an audience member, I imagine it's like having a backstage pass. Not only are there talented cruisers ready to jam, but pros also show up, which adds to the excitement and ups the ante.

I reached out to a few Jamarama hosts and players to get their take on the view from the Crow's Nest.

"My first experience on the LRBC was the 2006 inaugural West Coast Blues Cruise. I was on board as a passenger and brought my trombone with me. I proceeded to jam with everyone and anyone throughout the ship for the entire cruise and it changed my life. Soon after this first experience of bluesin' on the high seas, LRBC CEO Roger Naber offered

me a Pro-Am Jam host position on the 2007 October cruise. Since then, I have stayed-the-course for the past 12 years and continue to host Jams and perform on LRBCs.

All passengers are welcome to get on stage in the Crow's Nest and take part in the Jams, regardless of their level of musicianship. Many of the hired pros on the LRBC also participate, which creates a unique opportunity for both amateurs and pros alike.

The talent of the passengers on board never ceases to amaze. I love hosting these Jams because I am always surprised and blown away by moments that no one saw coming. It's a kind of magic that you can never predict or plan for. The Crow's Nest also has an amazing panoramic view of the ocean from the 12th deck that makes it even more of a unique stage experience. Magic is in the air out at sea.

Bring your instruments with you when you sail on the LRBC, and get ready to jam, or just sit back and enjoy the amazing shows and a life changing experience." — Randy Oxford, LRBC Jam Host/Performer www.oxfordentertainment.com

"I'm a professional drummer and I own a graphics business. I connected with Roger Naber before his first West Coast Blues Cruise and did some graphics and banners for the stages and backdrops. Roger has alternated cruisers and professional artists on the LRBCs to host Jamarama. After that first year, Roger asked me to be a Jam host.



Dan Gorrell (lt), David "T" Tschirhart (ctr) and Harmonica Mike Handler (rt) jamming on "Pajama Night." Photo by Hollie Alcocer

I always bring up a nationally known artist to start the first set. I've had the opportunity to perform with some of the best blues artists in the world. The cool thing is that there are national artists as well as regional artists on board, and the Jamarama is a chance for everybody to get together and make music as well as memories.

The Jamarama usually runs three to four hours. I recall a few years ago when we had a 10-hour jam as pro artists kept coming in and out. One night, Susan Tedeschi, Derek Trucks and most of their band played intermittently all the way to daybreak. I will never forget that.

Due to some of my LRBC connections at the Jamarama, I've had the opportunity to connect with many artists and produce the music and staging of the Baja Blues Fest."

— Tom Stewart, [Backwater Blues Band](#)/San Diego, CA

"First, it's an honor to be able to host a Jamarama. Most of the jammers have been in bands or are in one now. It's great to play with people from all over the world and see the different influences they bring to the Jam. It's also wonderful to turn around and see one of the pros sitting in and being able to play with them. Of course, there is always one person who thinks they should be booked as the talent, and has to show off. Seeing the young ones jamming is always fun to watch, too. So much talent and so much fun!"

— [Mike "Hurricane" Hoover](#)/Baja, MX

"As one of the musicians who attends the Pro-Am Jams on the Blues Cruises, I'm always amazed by the diversity and depth of the players on stage. Musicians, mostly seasoned band members or leaders in their own right, come out and join in the fun – usually with total strangers – and it always (well, almost always) works. Plus, we get the benefit of having hosts like Randy Oxford, LA Smith, Billy Price and Michele Lundeen sit in and make it real for all of us. I, myself, have written songs and played them at the Jams and made real friends amongst the players. There's a great listening vibe in the room and positive feeling between the players and the audience – many cruisers say the Jams are their favorite part of their musical day. So, play on, jammers!"

— [Harmonica Mike Handler](#), [Blues Revue Band](#)/Santa Fe, NM

"On my very first cruise, I was playing my bass in the Crow's Nest, when it was time to switch drummers. The new drummer was Harold Brown of The Lowrider Band, whose playing I've admired since the early '70s. We shook hands, both admitting we were not really blues players, and proceeded to put a funk groove to everything we played. Afterwards, Harold invited my wife Sue and I to share a dinner table with him. There have been many musical encounters like this on two subsequent cruises. The late-night Jams are particularly magical... Bring your instrument! You will play!" — [David "T" Tschirhart](#)/Sterling Heights, MI www.davidmusicandstuff.com



First-time Jamarama vocalist Julie Pelton. Photo courtesy of Julie Pelton

"As a virgin cruiser, I was curious to see how the Jams were run. All the jammers and the hosts I met were very friendly and helpful, and it appeared the hosts of each of the four Jams I sang at were able to get everyone who signed up on stage. A new experience for me was jamming at 4:30a.m. What fun! I can hardly wait for October to get here, maybe I'll sing and play keys this time." — Julie Pelton/DesMoines, WA



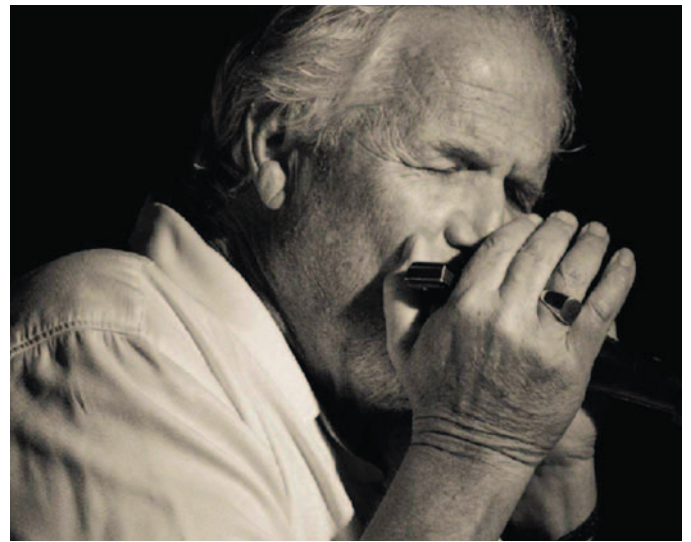
Tom Stewart (drums) and a member of the B.B. King house band. Photo by Lydia Stewart



The "Queen of Steam" Michele Lundeen, singer and feature author. Photo by Victor Rodriguez Ratliff

So, you see, there's something for everyone from this view. Include the Jamarama in your LRBC experience. Magic can surely happen in the Crow's Nest! I'll see you onboard in October 2019. Come jam with the "Queen of Steam." www.michelelundeen.com 🎵

Nicknamed the "Queen of Steam" for her powerhouse vocals and sassy, hi-energy shows, Michele Lundeen is an award-winning singer-songwriter, 12x San Diego Blues Music Award Nominee, Blues In The Schools presenter, vocal instructor and owner of a 1-woman graphics/print broker business. www.michelelundeen.com



Mike "Hurricane" Hoover. Photo courtesy of Mike "Hurricane" Hoover