

**LARRY VANN** ~ Vocalist, Drummer ~ "Groove Merchant" is the title appointed to this San Francisco Bay Area legend. Authentic "root music", music the soul can reach out and touch, the essential substance of his artistic source, is the foundation of this superbly seasoned artist's own music branding, which fuses the essence of soul-stirring blues, sweet, mellow jazz and genuine soul, R&B and funk. Mr. Vann has performed with many great artists such as THE WHISPERS, ELVIN BISHOP, CHARLES BROWN, MARTHA REEVES, THE MARVALETTES, CURTIS MAYFIELD AND THE IMPRESSIONS, CHARLIE MUSSELWHITE, BRIAN AUGER and many others and also with his own band for over 30 years. His work with the popular San Francisco Bay Area blues group, RON THOMPSON & THE RESISTORS contributed to the band earning two Bay Area Music Awards (BAMMY). He has also been honored with the Blues Society's West Coast Hall of Fame, "BLUES DRUMMER OF THE YEAR" award and The Jazz Institute's "MAN OF THE YEAR" award. He has also been honored to serve as a Governor on the governing board of the San Francisco chapter of The Recording Academy® (GRAMMY). From Duo to big band, he can customize his band to your event requirements - "A challenge and an adventure".

## **PAUL BRANIN**

formerly with Levon Helm

PAUL BRANIN ~ VOCALIST, GUITAR ~ He has worked and toured with Levon Helm and backed up Bob Dylan, Bruce Springsteen, and others while working with Levon, as well as playing with Rick Danko and Garth Hudson. He's also worked with jazz legends like Jimmy McGriff, Hank Crawford, and Jack DeJonette. Other bands include Orleans, Robbie DuPree as well as numerous local and regional acts on both the East and West Coasts. - "Playing in Band Of Gypsies Revisited is such a treat for me, as well as a most worthy challenge!"

## **MICHAEL WARREN**

formerly with Merl Saunders

MICHAEL WARREN ~ VOCALIST, BASS ~

Although Warren considered himself one of the black hippies of the 60s and 70s, his roots run deep into Jazz, Funk and Motown groove. He has performed and toured with a great spectrum of dynamic artists including MERL SAUNDERS, BB KING, RANDY CRAWFORD, MARIA MULDAUR, BUDDY MILES, THE CRUSADERS, THE DAVE MATTHEWS BAND and many others. The performance venues where he has displayed his talent range from The Grand Ole Opry in Nashville, The House of Blues in Chicago, The Fillmore in San Francisco to Carnegie Hall in New York City. - "An absolute honor for me. Very challenging music!"

# LARRY VANN

*"To sum up how I am, I'm a groove merchant, always searching for a groove. That's my mission – to find the grooves, me grabbing it and locking it in. Every time I play, I want to be able to capture it."*

Larry Vann has made an impressive mark on the Bay Area music scene over the years with his authentic, piercing, all-encompassing musical technique. Authentic "root music", the essential substance of his artistic source, is the foundation of this superbly seasoned artist's own music branding, which fuses the essence of soul-stirring blues, sweet, mellow jazz and genuine soul, R&B and funk. One listen to his compelling, penetrating and intoxicating grooves clearly demonstrates why he has been in such huge demand for sessions & tours with the likes of ELVIN BISHOP and MERL SAUNDERS. His top-notch drumming and percussion has garnered him popular and critical success throughout the United States and Europe, and Vann has also wowed critics and crowds alike with his sultry singing voice, buoyed by his melodic, inventive songwriting.



A professional performer since age 15, Vann draws from a deep well of musical influence, including gospel, blues, funk, jazz and soul. These various genres have collectively shared his unique sound, his groove "brand", which is in full display in his performances and music recordings.

Vann's resume' reads like a "Who's Who" list, having toured and recorded with those musicians listed above, as well as THE WHISPERS, MARTHA REEVES, THE MARVALETTES, CHARLES BROWN, BUFFY SAINT-MARIE, RANDY CRAWFORD and many more. His work with the popular San Francisco Bay Area blues group, RON THOMPSON & THE RESISTORS contributed to the band earning two Bay Area Music Awards (BAMMY).

Award nominated "Peggy Sue Got Married" and being featured on the ABC Television San Francisco local affiliate, KGO for his work with "GRAMMY In The Schools" as a mentor and instructor. World tours with jazz pianist, BRIAN AUGER and blues harp legend CHARLIE MUSSELWHITE round out a phenomenal career in music making.

The true power of the "Groove Merchant" is exhibited in his latest musical creation, the "Oakland Scratch Groove". This groove is a true reflection of Mr. Vann's talent as he offers his brand of penetrating, soulful, authentic "root music" grooves.



Vann's honors and awards include:

- The Blues Society's West Coast Hall of Fame, "Blues Drummer of the Year" award
- The Jazz Institute's "Man of the Year" award

He is also Governor Emeritus, San Francisco chapter of The Recording Academy® (GRAMMY).

*"When a band locks down on a groove, it's powerful. It can become hypnotic. It gets people dancing, excited. Once you've experienced that, you're always in search of it."*

*His groove will grab a hold on you ...you're groovin' all day long...*



## Larry Vann shares some highlights of his music career...

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My earliest performances started with the NAACP Talent Shows in the Oakland/San Francisco Bay Area where I lived. Through these shows, I was able to get my "chops" together by playing behind so many acts – there was a lot of time to prove ourselves, a lot of recognition and exposure to the up and coming Bay Area young talent.

Next, we played the Oakland clubs. We were able to get our feet wet with great R&B acts such as The Whispers, The Ballards, Marvin Holmes and the Uptights. We gained a lot of ground. It was a great time to learn and be on the scene – getting our feet wet with great R&B acts, the great talent in the area.

We played the big rooms in the area. One was the Continental Club in Oakland - they brought James Brown, Bobby Bland, Charles Brown; another was The Sportsman Club – one of the premier Black clubs in Oakland. Some of the artists they brought were Jerry Butler, The Impressions, and Major Lance. And history tells us that Billy Holiday also played there, but that was before my time, but still very interesting information. Another premier club in Oakland was the Showcase. Some of the artists they brought were Johnny Talbot and Johnny Hartsman. These were all premier "cats" in the area we had to gauge ourselves from and learn from. It was an important time in my musical growth.

In 1966 or '67 I went on my first tour – it was with The Whispers. We were part of a "review". I didn't know it at the time, but I was able to be on the "Chitlin' Circuit" right before it ended. Many of the clubs in the circuit unfortunately closed. At that time it was an incredible circuit – you could see some of the biggest names. While out on that tour, I met: Buddy Miles in Omaha, Nebraska at the Paul B. Allen Showcase; Sam and Dave – we opened for them in Buffalo, New York at the Dellwood Dance Hall. We almost starved a week before they came because something went wrong with the booking and we were there one week before they arrived, in the dead of winter. I also met Dike of Dike and the Blazers who did "Funky Broadway" down in Phoenix where he lived. He used to always come see us all the time when I was with The Whispers. This was an incredible tour for me – a big, big journey for me in my career. I learned and grew a lot – I learned a lot about life.

My work with Motown started in the late 60's, working in the backup band for The Marvalettes. We got picked up to play in their backup band while they were in our area.

Also in the late 60's, I was a part of the Temptations Review. We didn't back them up, just in the same review. That was really a treat - they were really hot at that time.

I had the pleasure of working with Curtis Mayfield and The Impressions – their drummer spent a lot of time with me. He saw I was just a young brother, new to the scene. He was the first one to show me about rudiments, taking me aside to give me some training. I learned a lot just hanging out with him and watching

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him play – he was a master drummer. He came to an unfortunate end. While touring down south, driving over an icy bridge, they lost control of the car. They were also pulling a trailer. The car fell over into an icy river and everyone perished. It was a really sad, sad note for me to find out about that. I always looked forward to them coming to the Oakland/San Francisco Bay Area. We would usually get together and kick it, so this was really a big loss for the music community and me.

Another highlight in my career was in the '70s, while working with Marvin Holmes and Justice. We worked with Rufus Thomas – Mr. "Do the Dog", the father of the great Carla Thomas. Rufus Thomas taught me how to end songs. I used to just do "a feel", then do a lot of rolls/movements, playing off the cymbals. He stopped me at a rehearsal – he said, "drummer, don't ever end like that. End like this...". He then showed me how to do a flam and then roll on the cymbals, making a big swell with the ending chord. I never forgot that – he showed me how to end a song. That was an incredible highlight to perform behind Rufus Thomas.

Also in the 70's, I was back with The Whispers. I went to Europe for the first time, Geneva, Switzerland. We performed there for about a month. After that, I became a staff musician for the Soul Train Records, developed by Don Cornelius and the great Black promoter, Dick Griffey. We recorded the first Soul Train Gang LP, down on Sunset Boulevard at the RCA studio. During that time, we also did the "Midnight Special" television show. Working as a staff musician for Soul Train Records was a big moment for me. It was also great working with Don Cornelius and Dick Griffey.

Really, I started out playing blues in blues and R&R clubs. I actually always looked to jazz. If it wasn't for the area I grew up in and the guys I was around, I probably would have been a hard-core jazz musician. Jazz was really pulling me, but I'm glad I came up the way I did and was able to start out the way I did. It gave me the foundation I needed for where I've been headed. There's nothing like having a strong backbeat. Don't never go outside without a strong backbeat, drummers. I thank God for the backbeat – being able to understand it and develop it and have it as part of my arsenal.

To sum up how I am, I'm a groove merchant, always searching for a groove. That's my mission – to find the grooves, me grabbing it and locking it in. Every time I play, I want to be able to capture it. When a band locks down on a groove, it's powerful. It can become hypnotic. It gets people dancing, excited. Once you've experienced that, you're always in search of it. There's power in it – it's joyous. You're giving it and the crowd is giving it back to you. It makes you want to play all night long – you just don't want to stop.

# **DISCOGRAPHY**

## **Larry E. Vann**

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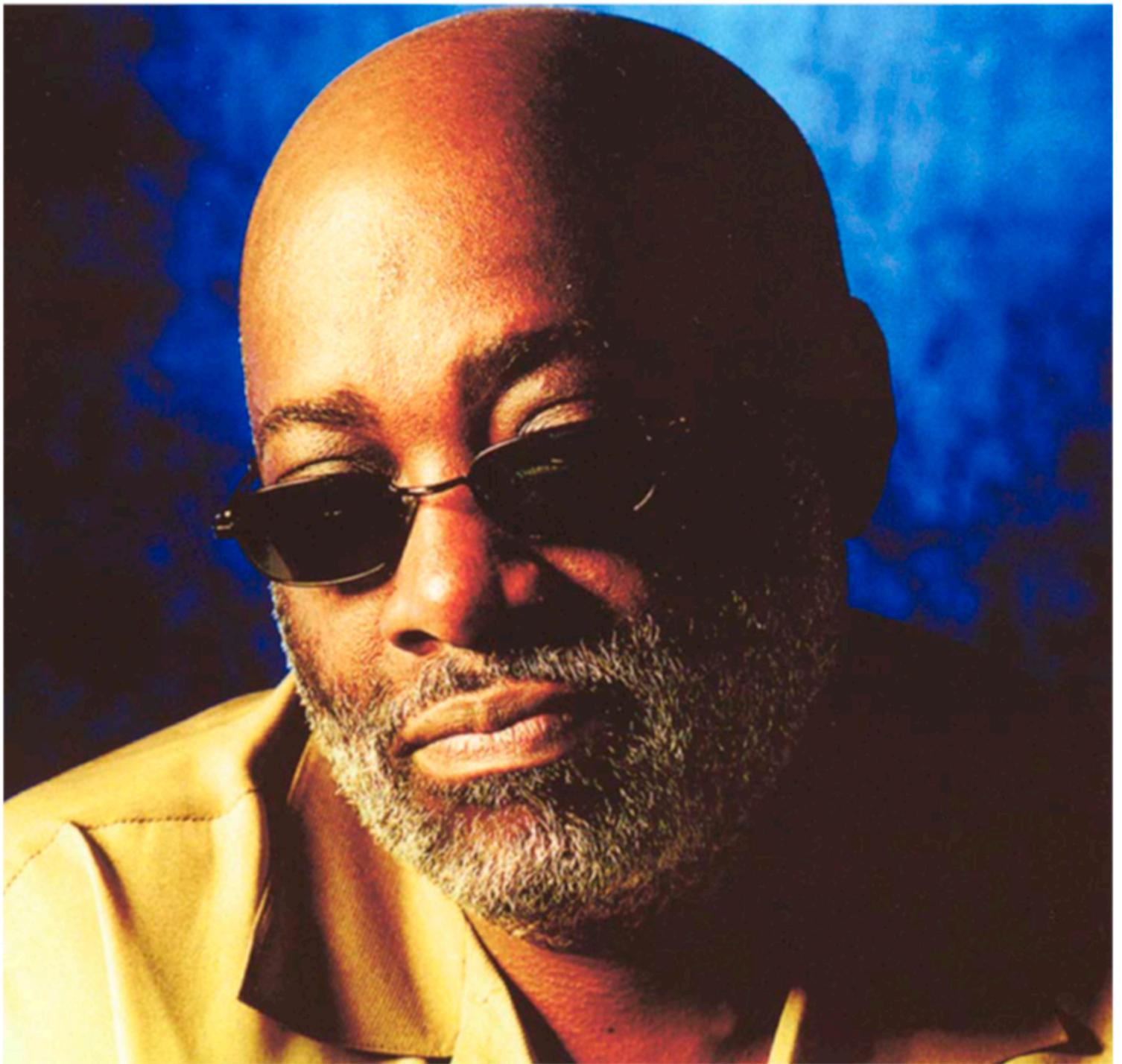
- ◆ **JULES BROUSSARD...WITH STRINGS ATTACHED**  
(Jules Broussard)
- ◆ **STILL GROOVIN'**  
(Merl Saunders)
- ◆ **THE RHYTHM AND ROOTS OF LARRY VANN**  
(Rusty Key Records)
- ◆ **CYRIL MAGNIN STREET FAIR – June 26, 2003**  
(Various Artists - Live Feed CD)
- ◆ **SOUL TRAIN '75 – THE BEST OF THE SOUL TRAIN GANG**  
(Compilation - Sanctuary Records)
- ◆ **SUMMERTIME IN THE BIG CITY**  
(Rusty Key Records)
- ◆ **LOOK OVER YONDER -- (On "SWEET JIMMIE SINGS THE BLUES")**
- ◆ **THE SKIN I'M IN**  
(Elvin Bishop – Alligator Records)
- ◆ **MAGIC TOUCH**  
(Ron Thompson and the Resistors)
- ◆ **FEELINGS**  
(Merl Saunders -- Fantasy Records)
- ◆ **KEY TO THE HEART**  
(Brian Auger -- One Way Records)
- ◆ **ACE IN THE HOLE**  
(Elvin Bishop -- Alligator Records)
- ◆ **TRIBUTE TO HOUND DOG TAYLOR**  
(Alligator Records)
- ◆ **ALLIGATOR CHRISTMAS ALBUM**  
(Alligator Records)
- ◆ **YOU CAN LEAVE YOUR HAT ON**  
(Merl Saunders -- Fantasy Records)
- ◆ **DO I MOVE YOU**  
(Merl Saunders -- Crystal Clear Records)
- ◆ **TREAT HER LIKE GOLD**  
(Ron Thompson and the Resistors -- Tacoma Records)
- ◆ **JUST LIKE THE DEVIL**  
(Ron Thompson and the Resistors -- Blind Pig Records)
- ◆ **IN LOVE FOREVER**  
(The Whispers -- Soul Train Records)
- ◆ **DON CORNELIUS PRESENTS THE SOUL TRAIN GANG**  
(Soul Train Records)
- ◆ **SUMMER OF '73**  
(Marvin Holmes & Justice -- Brown Door Records)
- ◆ **DAVID SOUL**  
(David Soul -- Private Stock Records)
- ◆ **VARIOUS RECORDING SESSIONS**  
(Paul Butterfield)
- ◆ **VARIOUS RECORDING SESSIONS**  
(Paul Butterfield)
- ◆ **TRADE WINDS**  
(Verlin Sandles -- Deep Roots Records)
- ◆ **JUJU ALCHEMY OF THE BLUES POEMS**  
(Sara Webster Fabio -- F19714 Folk Ways Records)

### **MOVIE SOUNDTRACKS**

- ◆ **PEGGY SUE GOT MARRIED**

### **EUROPEAN RECORDINGS**

- ◆ **CITY WALLS**
  - ◆ **CHANGES**
  - ◆ **PHIL CARMEN LIVE AT MONTREUX**  
(Phil Carmen)
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# *Larry Vann*

*Rusty Key Records*

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# PAUL BRANIN

Paul is a full time musician who has achieved an equal level of proficiency on both guitar and sax.

He has worked and toured with Levon Helm and backed up Bob Dylan, Bruce Springsteen, and others while working with Levon, as well as playing with Rick Danko and Garth Hudson.

He's also worked with jazz legends like Jimmy McGriff, Hank Crawford, and Jack DeJonette. Other bands include Orleans, Robbie DuPree as well as numerous local and regional acts on both the East and West Coasts.

He is well versed in many styles from blues to rock to modern jazz and others. He consistently wows audiences with his prowess on both instruments and is told he plays each as if it was his only one.





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# MICHAEL WARREN

Although Warren considered himself one of the black hippies of the 60s and 70s, his roots run deep into Jazz, Funk and Motown groove. He has performed and toured with a great spectrum of dynamic artists including MERL SAUNDERS, BB KING, RANDY CRAWFORD, MARIA MULDAUR, BUDDY MILES, THE CRUSADERS, THE DAVE MATTHEWS BAND and many others. The performance venues where he has displayed his talent range from The Grand Ole Opry in Nashville, The House of Blues in Chicago, The Fillmore in San Francisco to Carnegie Hall in New York City.

His musical beginnings started in Seattle, Washington. Born to a music, contracting and real estate family, Warren took the path of music, leaving real estate for a later time. Warren's father Eugene Warren, Sr. moonlighted as jazz pianist, organist and music contractor all over the Washington State and Canada while his mother and sisters sang in church. Warren recalls, "I now realize that some



of those people hanging out in are basement rehearsal room were Jimi Hendricks and Ray Charles", among others.

Warren was to be a pianist as was his older brother Eugene, Jr. and younger brother Walter. That changed when his father recruited his older brother Eugene, Jr. to play bass when his bassist couldn't make the gig. He was hooked when he watched them rehearse with the rest of the band in his dad's basement rehearsal room. By age 5 he was sitting on his brother's lap picking Motown tunes on a scaled down Dan

Electro bass. He was also sneaking down to the rehearsal room to try out every instrument left behind for the next rehearsal. By age 7, Warren was dabbling on guitar, piano, organ, and vibes, occasionally trying out saxophone and trombone. While he never really took formal lessons on any of them, by 9 years old, he gained enough knowledge and facility to show his friends how to get around the instruments and eventually started his first band at age 10. He taught his younger brother the bass so he could play piano. He recalls, "that was the first time I ever got paid to do what I truly loved. We made 10 bucks and came to 2 dollars each!" By 12 years old, he had formed his first 3-piece horn band with trumpet, sax and trombone. Needing to teach the trombone player how to play various riffs and phrases, he learned to play trombone by ear. Realizing how much he enjoyed the instrument Warren continued to play the trombone for the next 20 years.

Warren decided to leave Seattle for a short Navy career in San Diego, which did not include music study. He eventually moved to the Oakland bay area to pursue a music career. Landing at Laney College, Warren recalls, "Jazz Pianist professor Ed Kelly was the jazz band director. I remember walking into the music department and asking him if I could play bass. Looking over his glasses, he pointed over to the bass chair where there were at least 8 guys and one girl standing, handed me a bass trombone and said 'go home and practice this and you can play'. I played in the trombone section for the next 2 years. That was 1975. I eventually bought myself an electric bass and borrowed an upright and started playing mostly trombone gigs around the bay area with groups such as the Caribbean All Stars, the Ballads and Son & Daughters of Lite. For about 2 years, no one at Laney knew I was a bassist. They would always refer to me as the "that bad trombone player." Eventually, due to cracks in my front teeth, I retired the trombone and went back to playing bass".



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