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Album a 'flash forward'

STAFF AND WIRE REPORTS

-- Andrew S. Hughes, arts and entertainment writer

Siegel-Schwall returns

The Siegel-Schwall Band releases "Flash Forward," its first album of new studio recordings in 31 years, on Tuesday.

Despite the title, the band serves notice from the top that its Chicago blues sound and sense of humor both remain intact with the kickoff shout from Corky Siegel's harmonica and the line "If I don't tell you I love you, you should kick me in the shin."

Highlights include Siegel's "Twisted," a first cousin to his 1970 classic "I Don't Want You to Be My Girl," and drummer Sam Lay's "Going Back to Alabama," which injects country blues changes on the guitar into a full band setting.

Guitarist Jim Schwall grabs his mandolin and hops in his Geo Metro for the Old-Timey romp "On the Road." A not-so-subtle dig at George W. Bush, Schwall's down-and-dirty "The Underachiever Blues" recalls the band's "I Won't Hold My Breath" and "Out-a-Gas?" from the '70s and features perhaps the grungiest solo he's ever recorded.

The album's real gem, however, is bass player Rollo Radford's surprising jazz song, "Pauline," which features perhaps the sweetest, most melodic playing Schwall has ever recorded.

Fans of 1973's "953 West," in particular, should feel a warm vibe listening to "Flash Forward," but, really, any fan of Siegel-Schwall should rejoice at hearing this smart, fresh set of new songs.

-- Andrew S. Hughes