

---

---

**STEPHEN COLBERT**  
WITH  
**THE BLACK BELLES**

---

---

## **TMR-105**

Satirical late-night television host Stephen Colbert filmed a three-episode arc chronicling his time spent recording this single with lyrics composed by him and his writing staff and music by Olivia Jean of the Belles. When the single was announced and performed on "The Colbert Report" on June 23rd, 2011 the resultant "Colbert bump" caused the Third Man Records website to crash, the only time in memory this has occurred. To date this is the only single in the Blue Series where the tri-color is not in the white-black-yellow vinyl configuration. As a nod to the patriotic manner of Colbert, this tri-color was done in American flag red-white-blue and was sold from the Third Man Rolling Record Store at the Lot at the High Line in New York City, immediately following Colbert and White performing an acapella version of "The Star-Spangled Banner." Colbert would go on to perform a karaoke version of "Charlene II" with Olivia Jean from the Black Belles accompanying on live guitar while the rest of the Belles stood motionless in the background. With this single, The Black Belles are the only band featured on more than one Blue Series release.

**A SIDE: CHARLENE II (I'M OVER YOU)**  
**B SIDE: CHARLENE (I'M RIGHT BEHIND YOU)**

RELEASED: JUNE 23, 2011



# STEPHEN COLBERT

WITH

# THE BLACK BELLES



**SIDE A: CHARLENE II (I'M OVER YOU)**  
STEPHEN COLBERT WITH THE BLACK BELLES

**SIDE B: CHARLENE (I'M RIGHT BEHIND YOU)**  
PERFORMED BY THE BLACK BELLES

• "CHARLENE II (I'M OVER YOU)" • LYRICS BY STEPHEN COLBERT, PETER GWINN, PAUL DINELLO, AARON COHEN [CHUCKLE CHANNEL MUSIC INC./ASCAP], ERIC DRYSDALE [HILARITY MUSIC, INC./BMI], MUSIC BY OLIVIA JEAN [OLIVIA JEAN MUSIC/BMI], - STEPHEN COLBERT - VOCALS, OLIVIA JEAN - GUITAR, TICK-TACK BASS, LIL' BOO - MOOG, RUBY ROGERS - BASS, SHELBY LYNNE - DRUMS. • "CHARLENE (I'M RIGHT BEHIND YOU)" • LYRICS BY STEPHEN COLBERT, PETER GWINN [CHUCKLE CHANNEL MUSIC INC./ASCAP], ERIC DRYSDALE [HILARITY MUSIC, INC./BMI], MUSIC BY OLIVIA JEAN [OLIVIA JEAN MUSIC/BMI], - OLIVIA JEAN - GUITAR, SYNTH, VOCALS, RUBY ROGERS - BASS, SHELBY LYNNE - DRUMS, RECORDED BY VANCE POWELL AND JOSHUA V. SMITH, ASSISTED BY BUCK HALTIWANGER AT THIRD MAN STUDIO, MIXED BY JACK WHITE III & VANCE POWELL, ASSISTED BY JOSHUA V. SMITH, PRODUCED BY JACK WHITE III, PHOTOS BY JO MCCAUGHEY, DESIGN BY JULIAN BAKER. ©2011 THIRD MAN RECORDS, LLC, 623 7TH AVENUE SOUTH, NASHVILLE, TN 37203. UNAUTHORIZED DUPLICATION OF THIS RECORDING IS PROHIBITED. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. WWW.THIRDMANRECORDS.COM - WWW.COLBERTNATION.COM



**“Oh S-t-e-p-h-e-n. Oh yeah, like the saint. There it is. Yeah. There you go. That’s the only way up. Saint Stephen OF Antioch.”**

**BEN BLACKWELL:** This is Ben Blackwell from Third Man Records.

**STEPHEN COLBERT:** Hey! How are ya?

**BLACKWELL:** I’m good, how are you doing?

**COLBERT:** Doing just dandy.

**BLACKWELL:** That’s just great. Are you a big fan of Black Oak Arkansas and Jim Dandy the lead singer?

**COLBERT:** Of course I am. Of course I am.

**BLACKWELL:** So yeah, I’m calling to talk about the wonderful recording experience you had a couple years back when you came down here to Nashville.

**COLBERT:** Yeah!

**BLACKWELL:** So I guess where does your memory bring you in terms of how all this came about? Where did the idea spring from?

**COLBERT:** Well we were fans of Jack, and one of my producers, a guy named Aaron Cohen, came to me — he was also one of my writer/producers who also was always making music recommendations to me, so he always came in with his music ideas — and he goes, “would you wanna go, would you wanna record something with Jack White at Third Man Records?” And I said “Yeah, sounds great!” And he goes, “We’d have to go to Nashville,” and I went, “I don’t know about that,” because traveling was difficult — we had to do a show every day. And he goes, “No it will be fun, please, let’s go. It’s supposed to be like a musical playground down there.” And I said, “Alright, sure, I’ll give it a shot. What are we doing?” “Oh we’ll do a sequel to ‘Charlene,’” and I said “That will be fun.” And I don’t think

... I can’t remember if we had Jack on the show yet, I can’t remember if we had him on yet because I know evidently we had a show where we did something a little different, he didn’t want to be interviewed.

**BLACKWELL:** I don’t think you did from my recollection.

**COLBERT:** Ok. He’s pleasantly difficult, is how I would describe Jack. A difficult that leads to creativity because you have to find a new way to talk to him or play with him and it’s always fun, because he’s particular about the way he likes to do things, which I respect. And so, I said “sure,” that was it. Just one of my producers was a fan of Jack’s and he knew that I liked Jack and The White Stripes and I said “sure let’s give it a shot.” But I didn’t know what to expect at all.

**BLACKWELL:** Do you have any recollection — I remember back in, whenever it was, 2005 or so, at some point in the lead up to your show —

**COLBERT:** — oh shit, yeah! Ok so here’s the deal: Jack agreed to do our theme song, the original song, and listen, I didn’t have the original conversation with Jack. It was Ben Carlin, one of my old execs, and he goes, “Hey, Jack White said he’s up for doing our theme song.” And I’m like, “Oh that sounds fantastic! That’s great!” And the closer we got, the less it seemed like it was gonna happen so Jack finally said like, “I just don’t have time. I know you guys are coming up, I wanna do it, I just don’t have time.” And I had always thought that — I was very excited that Jack wanted to do it — but I hadn’t actually reached out to Jack because I didn’t know him. And I was always like, I kinda felt like we were gonna go with Cheap Trick and my exec was like, “Would Jack White be fine too?” And I’m like, “Yeah sure.” It was just another thing I didn’t want on my plate. And I was thrilled it was gonna be Jack, and then I found out he couldn’t do it and I was like, “Man, fuck Jack White!” And then I was like, well let’s go with what I wanted. Then we went with Cheap Trick and had a great time. But yeah, Jack was originally gonna do the theme song.

**BLACKWELL:** And Rick Nielsen has since made millions off of your theme song.

**COLBERT:** God I hope so.

**BLACKWELL:** I remember being with Jack at the time and him saying, “Yeah I’m gonna do the theme song for this new Stephen Colbert show.” Oh wow, that sounds pretty cool. And not hearing anything from him between when he said that and I was watching the first episode going like, “can’t wait to see what Jack did! Ehhh this doesn’t really sound like Jack.”

**COLBERT:** [laughs] Does not sound like him, no. And that was my original thought. Because I had totally forgotten about that. So

when they said do you wanna do something with Jack White. I was like “I’d like to plan to do something with Jack White” —

**BLACKWELL:** So you had to travel down here, you guys — you and a bunch of your writers — kind of started sketching out the idea of the song. Was there a little bit of back and forth? You guys came up with lyrics and —

**COLBERT:** Yeah, what would the next version of the song be ...

**BLACKWELL:** Right. You guys didn’t do any of the music part at all, right? You guys just only focused on lyrics?

**COLBERT:** Yeah, I think so we just did the lyrics and Jack came through with the music, I think that’s how it worked.

**BLACKWELL:** Right. And how did you feel about that, did that feel all in concert with the interview and the actual filming or did you view it as two separate, but connected, parts?

**COLBERT:** Well the funny thing was, the interview that I did with Jack, felt so different from almost any other interview I’ve ever done because it was all just about music and Catholicism. Those two subjects that we talked about. And he’s got an irascible nature, and it was such wonderful friction to go up against. Because you really want somebody to resist you in an interview situation. So you have some place for sparks to happen. And he’s all either flint or steel. I’m not sure which one it is. So there are so many sparks, even if — think I was like, “What’s your favorite Bob Seger song?” And he’s like, “excuse me?” I’m like “C’mon, Seeg?” And it’s time for the comeback. “What’s your favorite Seger song? Don’t tell me you don’t have one. Don’t tell me you don’t have a favorite.” And in some ways I’m fucking with him but it was kind of sincere. I ran my interview with him, but the song is totally in character. The song’s totally in character. But I was doing the interview with one of the early examples of like, this is what I would be like if I could just interview people not in character. Because yeah, I was fucking with him but just like a comedian, but it was entirely enjoyable just to spend time with someone as opinionated and as, oddly, both opinionated and reticent at the same time. Having to pry answers out of him at times and almost entirely be combative, but seeing that he would enjoy it, it was such a joy to do. So the interview was totally not the song. The process of the song was, let’s complete this character game that we created in the first months of the show when the character was very tightly wound. And the interview was the loosest one I’ve ever done up until that point. Even though I was, I had a game of just messing with him. So, yeah, they were very different.

**BLACKWELL:** You had said, at some point you said to someone, that Stephen Colbert, the character, and Stephen Colbert, the person, are both huge fans of Bob Seger.

**COLBERT:** Yeah that’s true.

**BLACKWELL:** And do you recall at the time that Bob Seger was actually in Nashville?

**COLBERT:** He was?

**BLACKWELL:** He was in Nashville and it seemed like we almost got him down to appear on-screen to play one of those nights you were filming here.

**COLBERT:** [laughs] I remember something like that. I actually ran into Seger about a month ago.

**BLACKWELL:** Oh nice!

**COLBERT:** I had never met him before, but I was at the Kennedy Center Honors and he was there to sing “Heartache Tonight” for the Eagles, which I guess he co-wrote with Don Henley. I think it was Henley he wrote it with. With Glen Frey, he co-wrote it with Glen Frey. And we were seated next to each other at the actual award ceremony at the White House. He leans forward around his wife and goes, “Heyyyy,” and I said, “Oh man! So nice to finally meet you.” And he goes, “I saw your thing with Jack. Really liked it, man. We were playing it around the office a lot.” And so that was a real joy. I’m still waiting for the re-Seegerence. I know he’s never going anywhere and he’s still been around but somebody needs to do a movie with an entire soundtrack of just Seger. But let’s get back to Jack.

**BLACKWELL:** Well, we’ve been working on it since, at least since then to try to reissue some of that stuff. But that’s another story. So the whole Catholic throwdown thing, you talk about the interview being nothing but talking about music and Catholicism — my side question becomes, you have a — I remember preceeding this Jack said it’s really hard to be interviewed by you because first of all, it’s not a traditional interview. Second of all, you actually need to come in with an approach as maybe you dealt with a lot of people who were trying to be funny in response to you? And maybe a lot of people weren’t coming in thinking no you actually need to dial it back and Stephen’s the funny one and you need to be the straight guy. Did that feel at play with that conversation at all?

**COLBERT:** No, I didn’t feel that at all. Not with Jack at all. He was very — I mean, I don’t know what he’s like to people who have known him for a long time, but he’s got a combative nature — at least when I talked to him — and he’s also got a little bit of “oh you’re not so great. You’re not so great. Why are you such a big fucking deal?” And so it’s like, “Oh you’re not the biggest Catholic, I’m the biggest Catholic.” You know? [laughs] He wouldn’t give me an inch. And my character is usually very high status. And just like having a TV show is very high status. And he wouldn’t give



me the status. Which was always fun. It ended up being the status game. The status game evolved very quickly into specifically the Catholic status game. Who could stump the other person. I don't even remember how we got to the first question about it.

**BLACKWELL:** He asked you how to spell your name.

**COLBERT:** Oh S-t-e-p-h-e-n. Oh yeah, like the saint. There it is. Yeah. There you go. That's the only way up. Saint Stephen *OF* Antioch. First Martyr. That's how he got into it, yeah. I guess he felt the game right away.

**BLACKWELL:** I have to say, as someone who's spent a lot of time with him and has often seen him, the humorous and funny and playful side, I think it comes through in all of his different projects and artwork and endeavors, I think that is probably one of the best comedic performances by him in terms of the end result. Because it's hard to come across in the music world, as a record label, or performer or artist, to have a sense of humor without seeming goofy or without seeming campy, there's a way to be funny while still kind of maintaining some kind of respectability out of it and I think with you was the most perfect way.

**COLBERT:** It's one of my favorite interviews we ever did. I was completely taken aback by how much I liked it. You never know, when you go on the road and make a big choice like this, whether it's gonna be fun. And maybe the most fun day I ever had on the show was being at Third Man that day. And not just the interview but like the atmosphere of the place. It's like a playground. It's a clubhouse.

**BLACKWELL:** And do you recall the three-part thing on the rapport piece, seemed like people were saying to even do a two-part piece was actually really, really involved.

**COLBERT:** Super rare. It's super rare to do a two-part piece. We once did a four-part piece, we did very few three-part pieces, maybe one or two.

**BLACKWELL:** And so on our end too that seemed like, just excitement and kind of really, really anticipatory of how big and fun this was. In terms of the actual recording, of you laying down your vocals what is your recollection? Was it easy, was it in-and-out?

**COLBERT:** It was hard. It's hard, I'm not a professional rock 'n' roll singer and so it was hard. Jack is firm but fair in the studio, in my opinion. The style that he wrote it was maybe, the style and the music, the way he would want me to sing it might be a little more aggressive than I was, that was my want. But I wanted to please my producer, so, yeah it wasn't right across the play for me. How about that. It was good. It was a challenge.

**BLACKWELL:** That's a really great analogy. And this also led to you guys performing, you guys had the band The Black Belles with you perform on the show. Which, before or since, have you performed as part of a musical guest ever?

**COLBERT:** Yeah, I'm sure I did. But I think that was the first time. No, actually that's not true. I sang with Barry Manilow. So no, it wasn't the first, but I was never my own musical guest, if you know what I mean. The Black Belles were there but I was the lead singer. I've assisted other people, that was the first time I ever went out there and was my own musical guest you know, with the Belles.



HAVE YOU SEEN THIS CAT?

**BLACKWELL:** So that night was really interesting too. When you and Jack are doing the interview at your desk, you pull out the record and you talk about it and he says it's available online at Third Man Records dot com and that flashes across the screen. I'm not sure if word ever got to you but that was the week that we first had a tech website IT guy, that was his first week, before that we just had designers who took a two-hour class how to run a website. And so the instant that flashed across the television screen the website crashed. First week for the web guy and so he's freaking out not knowing what to expect anyhow and then that happens. We still have the same web guy, Todd Valentine, as I would say, as a cautionary tale, our website has not crashed since then. And we've had some pretty big news days and events but releasing the single with you left us very — the opposite of gun shy — left us to be very prepared for any future big news events.

**COLBERT:** Well good I'm glad we could provide that. Our job is to detect aerospace tolerance. The way a skunkworks for peoples' websites.

**BLACKWELL:** And then you guys did, the next day you guys did the performance outside the High Line in New York. Could you talk about that?

**COLBERT:** Oh shit! I forgot, yeah we did at the beer garden. Yeah, I forgot about that, we did the signing. That was awesome!

**BLACKWELL:** Yeah, it was cool. I wasn't there but seeing it and hearing the reports back and having the limited editions of the records. We usually do those records, the tri-colors, black, yellow and white, and we did yours as red, white and blue for America. And I think those were instantly selling for 500 bucks online amongst the collectors, that was definitely amongst the most desirable records that we've put out in the limited edition form.

**COLBERT:** Yeah I've got one around here someplace.

**BLACKWELL:** Yeah. Honestly, man, anything else, you have any impressions, thoughts of the process or working with Third Man —

**COLBERT:** I loved, I love — I think everything helped me find my look.

**BLACKWELL:** Going from Jack's White Stripes duds to all different kind of goth look and that stuff.

**COLBERT:** Sure, sure. I'd say it was all in one. I loved playing with the theremin. I liked that they do their own blue screen studio in there, I loved the deep blue theme color everywhere. I loved the little record shop. It was so great going there and playing around. It really did feel like being invited to a clubhouse that I in no way belonged in, but it was one of the most surprising and fun days I've ever had. And then the other night y'all got us into Patterson House. Which was one of my favorite nights of drinking I've ever had.

**BLACKWELL:** Nice! That's great.

**COLBERT:** That and some butter-fried donuts.

**BLACKWELL:** That's the way to go. I have an unrelated question to this. But I'm just curious in your "Comedians in Cars" interview with Jerry Seinfeld, you very beautifully quote Neutral Milk Hotel and I'm curious what your history or what your exposure or you know, being a fan of that stuff, where did you become aware of that stuff or how long has that been on your radar?

**COLBERT:** I was in, it was the last shoot I did for the Daily ... I was, there was a movie of *Dukes of Hazzard* coming out, and I was down in Tennessee interviewing the guy who played Cooter, in the original series, he was mad about the movie. I don't know why, can't remember why. He was pretty mad. Still had the General Lee. And midday during the day we went to — is there a University in Knoxville?

**BLACKWELL:** Yeah, UT is in Knoxville.

**COLBERT:** Ok, so we went to UT that's where it was in Knoxville and we were gonna talk to some frat boys about something, I don't know what, it's been a long time. But I'm in this very hip little coffee shop right off campus and I'm sitting there getting my coffee collecting myself halfway through the day and "King of Carrot Flowers" comes on from *Aeroplane Over the Sea* and I couldn't believe how it just grabbed me by the aorta and kind of like, rattled me listening to it. It really, it sounded different than anything I had heard before and yet oddly familiar. I couldn't, I had to know. So I went up to the baristo and I said, "What is this? What am I listening to?" And he said, "This is Neutral Milk Hotel." And I said, "Seriously, what is this? I'd really like to know." Because it sounds like a band name you would make up. And he goes, "No, it's Neutral Milk Hotel, it's from *In the Aeroplane Over the Sea* which is the greatest single album ever made."

**BLACKWELL:** [laughs] That's how it was presented to you as?

**COLBERT:** That's how he presented it to me. And I said, "Really?" And then he goes, "Yeah, Jeff Mangum, the guy who wrote —" then he gave me the whole rundown on like, the Elephant 6 Collective and Athens and The Apples in Stereo, Jeff Mangum, and that now he's off making puppets — he gave me the whole legendarium of the end of the Neutral Milk Hotel and the guy was very into it. Or he's just telling me not concerning other customers in the coffee shop. So as soon as I got back to New York, that was my last piece, I moved over to the new show and I started listening to Neutral Milk Hotel. And I was tapping into it that August because we started in October, so late August through September I was listening to it, that and the song "Aeroplane Over the Sea" and of course "Holland, 1945" and every, almost, I think you could say within aerospace tolerances I could say and be accurate that