

THE BLUES FOUNDATION PRESENTS
THE 44TH ANNUAL

BLUES MUSIC AWARDS



MAY 11, 2023



MEMPHIS

THE BLUES
FOUNDATION

NOTODDEN
BLUES
FESTIVAL

3.- 6. AUGUST 2023

NORWAY



DESIGN: ESPEN LILAND

Europe's Finest Blues Experience!

BETH HART BOBBY RUSH SUPERSONIC BLUES
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THE WATERBOYS VANESSA COLLIER BERNHOFT
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TERRIE ODABI ROY ROGERS, AMUND MAARUD
& KAUT HEM MIKE FARRIS

JACE EVERETT & AMUND MAARUD BAND WOMEN IN BLUES
NOTODDEN BLUES BAND JT LAURITSEN & THE BUCKSHOT HUNTERS
LEDFOOT SPOONFUL OF STONES KNOCKOUT GREG & THE
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NOTODDEN
IS A UNESCO
WORLD HERITAGE
DESTINATION



BLUES MUSIC AWARDS

RENASANT CONVENTION CENTER
MAY 11, 2023 • MEMPHIS, TN

CONTENTS

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>9 Welcome
From the President and CEO,
Kimberly Horton</p> <p>11 Greetings
From the Board Chair, Scott Fitzke</p> <p>13 Program Highlights
Updates on the HART Fund and
Generation Blues Affiliate Grant</p> <p>15 BMA Week Events</p> <p>17 Board of Directors</p> <p>18 Charter Members, VIPs,
Patrons, and Supporters</p> | <p>20 44th Annual Blues Music
Award Nominees</p> <p>22 Joel Libby <i>Painterly Pop Art</i>
by Art Tipaldi</p> <p>27 Affiliated Blues Societies</p> <p>30 Keeping the Blues Alive
Award Recipients</p> <p>34 John Primer <i>Old School</i>
by Art Tipaldi</p> <p>40 Blues Hall of Fame
2023 Inductees</p> <p>60 In Memoriam
Rest in Peace</p> |
|--|---|

The Blues Foundation | 421 South Main Street | Memphis, TN 38103 | 901-527-2583 | blues.org

The Blues Foundation is Memphis-based, but world-renowned as THE organization whose mission is to preserve blues heritage, celebrate blues recording and performance, expand worldwide awareness of the blues, and ensure the future of this uniquely American art form. Founded in 1980, The Blues Foundation has over 4,000 individual and business members and 175 affiliated local blues societies representing another 50,000 fans and professionals around the world. It boasts close to 500,000 social media followers with reach in the millions. Its signature honors and events - the Blues Music Awards, Blues Hall of Fame, International Blues Challenge and Keeping the Blues Alive Awards - make it the international center of blues music. Its HART Fund provides the blues community with medical assistance for musicians in need, while Blues in the Schools programs and Generation Blues scholarships expose

new generations to blues music. The newly created COVID-19 Blues Musician Emergency Relief Fund has already come to the rescue for close to 100 blues musicians in need of financial assistance for basic necessities such as housing and utilities. The 2015 opening of the Blues Hall of Fame Museum in Memphis, TN now adds the opportunity for music lovers of all ages to interact with the music and the history. Throughout the year, the Foundation staff serves the worldwide blues community with answers, information, and news.

Support The Blues Foundation by becoming an affiliated blues society, blues business associate or individual member, or by making a charitable donation. The Blues Foundation is a 501c3 not-for-profit organization, and your donations are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

RELEASES



**Congratulations to the
BratGirlmedia Family Blues
Music Award Nominees!**

Dylan Triplett
Who Is He?

BEST EMERGING ARTIST ALBUM
(VizzTone Label Group)

Bernard Allison
Highs & Lows

BLUES ROCK ALBUM
(Ruf Records)

Albert Castiglia
I Got Love

BLUES ROCK ALBUM
(Gulf Coast Records)

Bob Corritore & Friends
You Shocked Me

TRADITIONAL BLUES ALBUM
(VizzTone Label Group)

Kenny Neal
Straight From The Heart
TRADITIONAL BLUES ALBUM
(Ruf Records)

Annika Chambers
SOUL BLUES FEMALE ARTIST

Ben Levin
PINETOP PERKINS PIANO PLAYER

Albert Castiglia
BLUES ROCK ARTIST

Larry Fulcher
INSTRUMENTALIST - BASS

Laura Chavez
INSTRUMENTALIST - GUITAR

Bob Corritore
INSTRUMENTALIST - HARMONICA

Tony Braunagel
INSTRUMENTALIST - DRUMS

ALSO REPRESENTING:

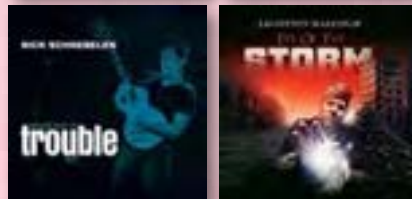
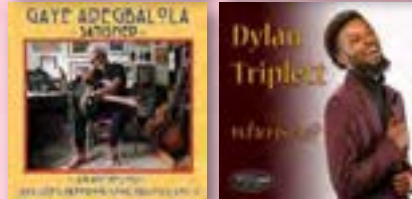
John Mayall, Tab Benoit, Devon Allman, Big Al & the Heavyweights
Ruf Records, VizzTone, and Whiskey Bayou Records

BOB MARGOLIN hosts the **VIZZTONE BLUES PARTY**
Friday May 12, 10 PM at the Rum Boogie on Beale Street

bratgirlmedia.com



RELEASES



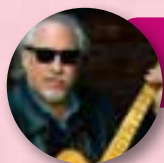
Proudly representing BMA nominees...

John Nemeth * The Love Light Orchestra * Joanna Connor * Mr. Sipp
Sugaray Rayford * Albert Castiglia * Selwyn Birchwood * Kenny Neal
Curtis Salgado * Annika Chambers * Kat Riggins * Jeff Schroedl * Jim Pugh
Willie J Campbell * Tony Braunagel * Larry Fulcher * Laura Chavez

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A BRAND NEW 16-SONG BATCH OF POWERFUL SOUL-DRENCHED BLUES NUGGETS BY HARMONICA BOSS BOB CORRITORE AND HIS ALL-STAR A-LIST OF SPECIAL GUESTS!

"CORRITORE UNDERLINES THE MUSIC OF ALL THESE FINE ARTISTS WITH HIS CONSIDERABLE HARP TALENTS, BLENDING MAGICALLY INTO EVERY SONG AND STYLE." -JIM WHITE/BLUES ROADHOUSE

"CORRITORE IS A SPECIALIST IN THESE PROJECTS. BLOWING IN THE REINS OF HIS HARMONICA HE MANAGES, WITHOUT CONCEDED, TO GET INTO FULL TUNE WITH THE SINGER ON DUTY. A TAILOR WHO SEWS CUSTOM-MADE CLOTHES. AND THEN THE BAND. THE VARIOUS ELEMENTS ALTERNATE WITH DISARMING VERSATILITY. GENUINE TALENTS THAT HAVE MADE A POINT THIS TIME TOO. A UNIQUE SHOW OF THE CLASSIC BLUES. THANK YOU BOB." - GIANFRANCO PIRIA/ME & BLUES BLOG

RELEASED ON SEPTEMBER 22ND 2023



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SWMAF.org

VizzTone.com

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HOHNER



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Blues Festival Guide
Blues Matters Magazine
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Folk Alliance International
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Halloran Centre for Performing Arts & Education
Lugar Foundry
Pati deVries / Devious Planet
Renasant Convention Center
Sheraton Memphis Downtown Hotel

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Writing Contributions
Kimberly Horton, Scott Fitzke, Jim O'Neal & Art Tipaldi

Program Designer
Celene Clark

Editors
Kimberly Horton, Candace Dickerson

Program Cover & Poster Art
Candace Dickerson

Printing
directFX Solutions

SHOW PRODUCTION

Producer
Joe Whitmer

Live Motion Graphics Producer
Willy Bearden

Production Coordinator
Tom Harris

Musical Directors
Kimberly Horton & Joe Whitmer

Stage Manager
Trey Kuhn

Backstage Announcer
Brett Fleming

Music Playback
Ron Buck

Script Writer/Technical Producer
Willy Bearden

Audio Stage Engineer
Lawrence Haynes

Audio Monitor Engineer
Bryan Walker

FOH Audio Engineer
Brad Anderson

Audio Engineer
Tom Roach

Lighting Technician
Merrick Bland

Video Director
Tim McCall

Video Engineer
Jason Sylvester

Video Playback/Record
John Langston

Lighting Designer
Jarrett Goldman

Scenic Technician
Drew Samuelson

Scenic Tech/Truck Driver
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JIB Operator
Joe Bremer

Truck Driver
Franklin Warfe

Nominee & Winner Slides Designer
Candace Dickerson

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Andrew Ross

Membership Coordinator
LaTasha Nathaniel

Communications Coordinator
Candace Dickerson

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Levi Frazier

BLUES HALL OF FAME DOCENTS

Bruce Bland
Peter Reese

VOLUNTEERS

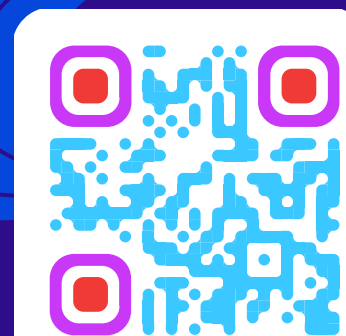
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Charolette Arrick
Clayton Andrus
David Hughes
Gina Parks
Joe Powell
Joy Terral
Kyle Deibler
Linda Forbess
Maria Brown
Marty Hawkins
Mick Wilson
Sara Negri-Whitmer
Stephen Whitney
Steve Vasquez
Teri Stoerger
Tom Claypool
Veronica Layne



I Love Memphis BLOG

CONGRATULATIONS
TO ALL WINNERS
AND NOMINEES

ILOVEMEMPHISBLOG.COM



PRESIDENT'S WELCOME

Hello Blues Friends & Family,

Welcome to the 44th Blues Music Awards. I would like to first congratulate all of our nominees this year! This is indeed a special night for The Blues Foundation to celebrate and honor blues music with the very best. This evening you will experience many styles of blues from traditional blues to blues rock. The awesome part of it is we all get to enjoy it together as one big blues family!

I would like to thank The Blues Foundation Staff and Board of Directors for all of the hard work they have done to make this night a success. I am so honored to be a part of such a great organization such as The Blues Foundation. I love what we stand for and where we are striving to go. We must continue to work together as a blues community to help engage the future of the blues with our young people. Blues music is a staple, it brings us together to celebrate the history and heritage of those who have walked before us and left the everlasting stamp of great music that feeds the soul. If this is your first Blues Music Awards, we welcome you with open arms. If you've been here for all 44, welcome home! I hope that this night is memorable for you filled with lots of enjoyment. If you aren't yet a member of The Blues Foundation, I encourage you to join us by visiting blues.org and help us to continue to grow the future of the blues.

Thank you to all who have made donations to the HART Fund, we have been able to assist many artists with a variety of needs. We are looking forward to awarding grants for Generation Blues and continuing to help those in need through the Blues Musician Emergency Fund. Information on all of these wonderful programs can be found on our website blues.org. The Blues Foundation Staff and myself are looking forward to many successful years as a team pushing us forward and upward to the next level. Also, please save the dates for the 2024 International Blues Challenge, January 16th-20th.

Thank you once again for joining us tonight and let's get ready to celebrate the blues!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kimberly Horton".

Kimberly Horton
President and CEO

ALLIGATOR RECORDS

congratulates its 2023 Blues Music Award nominees



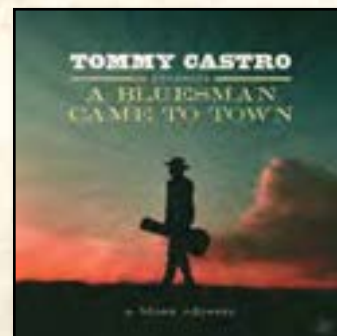
SHEMEKIA COPELAND
Done Come Too Far
•Album of the Year
•Contemporary Blues Album Of The Year
•Song Of The Year – “Too Far To Be Gone”
•Instrumentalist – Vocals



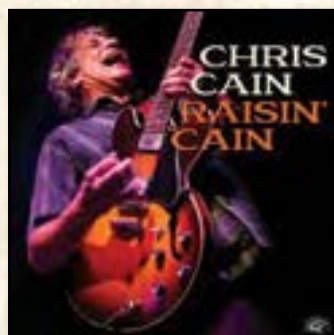
RICK ESTRIN & THE NIGHTCATS
Contemporary
•Band Of The Year
•Instrumentalist – Drums (D’mar Martin)
•Instrumentalist – Guitar (Kid Andersen)



TINSLEY ELLIS
Devil May Care
•Blues Rock Album Of The Year
•Blues Rock Artist Of The Year



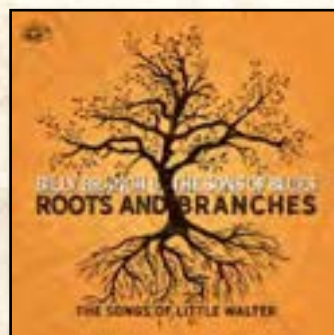
TOMMY CASTRO
Presents A Bluesman Came To Town
•BB King Entertainer Of The Year
•Blues Rock Artist Of The Year



CHRIS CAIN
Raisin' Cain
•Contemporary Blues Male Artist Of The Year
•Instrumentalist – Guitar



CURTIS SALGADO
Damage Control
•Soul Blues Male Artist Of The Year
•Instrumentalist – Vocals



BILLY BRANCH & THE SONS OF BLUES
Roots And Branches
•Traditional Blues Male Artist Of The Year
•Instrumentalist – Harmonica



CHRISTONE
“KINGFISH” INGRAM 662
•Contemporary Blues Male Artist Of The Year



CHARLIE MUSSELWHITE
Mississippi Son
•Acoustic Album Of The Year



SELWYN BIRCHWOOD
Exorcist
COMING IN JUNE!
•Contemporary Blues Male Artist Of The Year



THE CASH BOX KINGS
Oscar's Motel
•Instrumentalist – Drums (Kenny “Beedy Eyes” Smith)



THE NICK MOSS BAND
featuring Dennis Gruenling
Get Your Back Into It!
COMING THIS SUMMER!
•Instrumentalist – Harmonica (Dennis Gruenling)



BOARD CHAIR GREETINGS

On behalf of The Blues Foundation, its Board of Directors, and its employees, I welcome you to the 44th Annual Blues Music Awards. We are so excited to see you all back in Memphis to honor the 2023 Blues Music Awards nominees, and to recognize the best in blues recordings and performances from 2023.

Congratulations to all the nominees for the awards this year. The competition is tough, and the nominees clearly represent the best of the best. Thanks to each of you for your hard work, creativity, passion, and dedication. You are all winners! I offer a special thanks to those of you who perform this evening, as well as to our presenters.

I especially want to thank The Blues Foundation’s staff for all the blood, sweat and tears that go into putting a successful event together. Kimberly Horton, our interim President and CEO, and her staff have devoted many hours and much thought and consideration to making the Blues Music Awards a successful and special evening. In addition to the staff, we also have a large and dedicated group of volunteers who assist with both the production of the event and in the nomination and award process. We could not do it without our dedicated volunteers, who we appreciate greatly.

Finally, I want to thank our members, our affiliated Blues Societies, our sponsors, advertisers, and our donors. We could not do this without you, and your support and contributions are greatly appreciated.

It is an honor and a privilege to serve as the Chair of the Board of Directors of The Blues Foundation. I personally thank you for the opportunity to do serve, and for the support that you have given me in this role.

I hope you all enjoy the evening’s festivities as the blues community comes together to honor our Blues Music Award nominees and winners.

Respectfully,

R. Scott Fitzke

Scott Fitzke
Chair, Board of Directors



BEST OF LUCK TO ALL
BMA NOMINEES!

Big Blues BENDER

WESTGATE LAS VEGAS RESORT & CASINO • SEPT 7-10, 2023

A special thank you to all the artists past and present who have performed in our annual charity event, HART PARTY.

HART PARTY!

Together we have raised over **\$300,000** to provide support and assistance to artists just like you!

The Blues Foundation established the HART Fund (Handy Artists Relief Trust) for Blues musicians and their families in financial need due to a broad range of health concerns. The Fund provides for acute, chronic and preventive medical and dental care as well as funeral and burial expenses.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS



HART FUND

HANDY ARTIST RELIEF TRUST (HART) FUND

The Blues Foundation established the HART Fund (Handy Artists Relief Trust) in 2013 for Blues musicians and their families in financial need due to a broad range of health concerns. The Fund provides for acute, chronic, and preventative medical and dental care, as well as funeral and burial expenses.

Throughout the year at various events, the HART Fund provides free health screenings for diabetes, prostate cancer, Hep C, anemia, thyroid, kidney, and liver testing via blood work.

Over **\$86,000** was awarded in 2022, helping over **39** applicants with various medical, dental, vision, and funeral expenses.

Applications for HART Fund support are reviewed by a committee and administered by The Blues Foundation staff.



I can't even begin to express how much this means to me. Receiving this help brought me to tears, and the amount of relief it provided was monumental. I wouldn't have been able to pay rent if it wasn't for this fund.

Thank you to The Blues Foundation for everything you guys do!

- Leilani Kilgore

If you're interested in applying, donating, or for more information:

blues.org/hart-fund

or email LaTasha Nathaniel at bluesmembership@blues.org

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS



GENERATION
BLUES

GENERATION BLUES

The Generation Blues scholarship program allows qualified musicians under the age of 21 to study their instrument of choice at reputable camps, seminars, and workshop programs, usually during the summer months. The applications are available at blues.org. Please consider helping a young blues performer by making a donation to Generation Blues.



Photo: Pinetop Perkins Foundation



Photo: Laura Carbone



Photo: Laura Carbone



Photo: Pinetop Perkins Foundation

If you're interested in applying, donating, or for more information:

blues.org/generation-blues/



BLUES MUSIC
AWARDS

BMA WEEK EVENTS

TUESDAY, MAY 9

6:30pm-8:30pm

**Jeff Fasano Book Signing
Americana Portrait Sessions**
Blues Hall Of Fame Museum
421 S. Main Street

5:30pm-8pm

(Doors Open At 5pm)

**Blues Hall Of Fame Reception
And Induction Ceremony**
Halleran Centre For Performing Arts
& Education
225 S. Main Street

10am-Late

Will Call And Merchandise Sales
Sheraton Downtown Memphis Lobby
250 N. Main Street

11am-1pm

**Hart Fund Musician Health
Screenings**
Sheraton Downtown Memphis
250 N. Main Street

WEDNESDAY, MAY 10

Noon-4pm

Will Call And Merchandise Sales
Sheraton Lobby
250 N. Main Street

8pm-Late

**Biglou's 9th Annual
Hall Of Fame Tribute Jam**
Fundraiser For Generation Blues
Hard Rock Café
126 Beale Street

6:00pm-Midnight

44th Blues Music Awards
Renasant Convention Center
255 N. Main Street

Noon-2pm

James Cotton Documentary
Blues City Café
138 Beale Street

THURSDAY, MAY 11

9:00am-10:30am

**Blues Foundation Board
Of Directors Meeting**
Sheraton Memphis Downtown
250 N. Main Street

1pm-4pm

**Nominee Photo Session With
Jeff Fasano**
Sheraton Hotel
250 N. Main Street

9:30am-4pm

**Nominee Photo Sessions With
Jeff Fasano**
Sheraton Hotel
250 N. Main Street

FRIDAY, MAY 12

9:00am-10:30am

Charter Member Breakfast
Sheraton Hotel
250 N. Main Street

Congratulations to all this years nominees from
STONY PLAIN RECORDS



Colin James



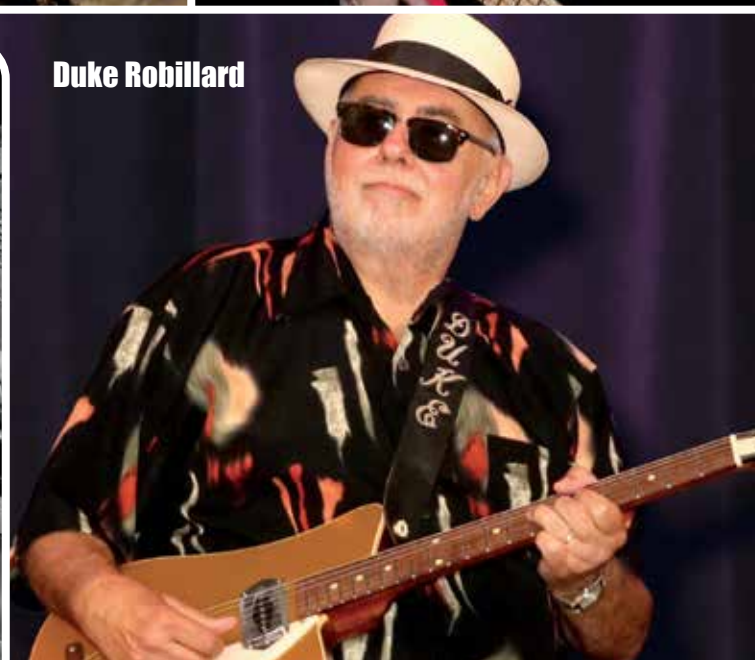
Rory Block



Sue Foley



Kenny "Blues Boss" Wayne



Duke Robillard

stonyplainrecords.com



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Board Chair
 LITTLETON, CO



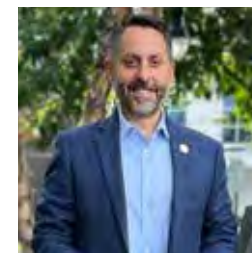
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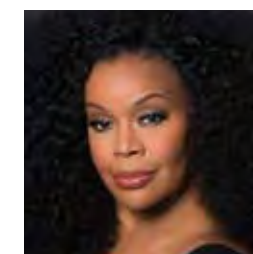
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Terri Robbins
Jim Robertson
Pat Robertson
Jay & Priscilla
Dawn and LA Smith
Andy T' Talamantez
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Kerby Eugene Confer
Bob Corritore
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Roger and Joey Finck

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Leigh Shockey
Eric Simonsen
Douglas Tilden
Graziano Uliani
Shonda Warner
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Joel and Patyy Weiss
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Nancy W Putnam
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Frank Robinson
Scott Haas
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Reuben Farris
Kathyjoy DeSoto
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Portia White
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*Congratulations
Duwayne Burnside!*
**2023 BLUES MUSIC AWARD NOMINEE
Best Acoustic Blues Album**



*Representing Award-Winning
Artists from Around the World!*

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Bridget Kelly Band (GAINESVILLE, FL)	Eddie Turner (DENVER, CO)	Dottie Kelly (W PALM BEACH, FL)
GeminiDRAGON (LOUISIANA)	Kara Grainger (AUSTRALIA/NASHVILLE)	Levee Town (KANSAS CITY, MO)
Ben Rice (PORTLAND, OR)	Andy T Band fea. Alabama Mike (NASHVILLE, TN)	Mark Telesca (BOYNTON BEACH, FL)
Tyron Benoit (HOUMA, LA)	Duffy Bishop (ST AUGUSTINE, FL)	Mark Dufresne (SEATTLE, WA)
Billy the Kid & the Regulators (PITTSBURG, PA)	Murray Kinsley & Wicked Grin (OTTAWA, ON)	Bill Magee Blues Band (SAN DIEGO, CA)
Kelli Baker (LONG ISLAND, NY)	Rev. Raven & the Chain Smokin' Altar Boys (MILWAUKEE, WI)	Joey Gilmore (FT LAUDERDALE, FL)
Chris Beard (ROCHESTER, NY)	Lionel Young (BOULDER, CO)	Dirty Red & the Soul Shakers (OKLAHOMA CITY, OK)
Duwayne Burnside (HOLLY SPRINGS, MS)	Mark May (HOUSTON, TX)	Mathias Lattin (HOUSTON - '23 IBC WINNER)
	Anni Piper (AUSTRALIA/PORTLAND, OR)	Hughes Taylor (ATLANTA, GA)

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44TH BLUES MUSIC AWARDS NOMINEES

B.B. King Entertainer of the Year

Bobby Rush
Eric Gales
Mr. Sipp (Castro Coleman)
Sugaray Rayford
Tommy Castro

Album of the Year

The Blues Don't Lie, Buddy Guy
Hard Times, John Primer
Done Come Too Far, Shemekia Copeland
May Be the Last Time, John Németh
Leave the Light On, The Love Light Orchestra

Band of the Year

Anthony Geraci & The Boston Blues Allstars
John Németh and the Blue Dreamers
Rick Estrin and the Nightcats
Southern Avenue
Tedeschi Trucks Band

Song of the Year

"Great Minds Drink Alike"
Written by Jeff Schroedl
"I Want My Crown" Written by Eric Gales, Joe Bonamassa, & James House
"The Blues Don't Lie"
Written by Tom Hambridge
"The Last Time"
Written by John Németh
"Too Far To Be Gone" Written by John Hahn & Will Kimbrough

Best Emerging Artist Album

Buchanan Lane, Yates McKendree
Drums, Roots & Steel, DaShawn Hickman
Major League Blues, Jose Ramirez
Scream, Holler & Howl, Blue Moon Marquee
Who Is He?, Dylan Triplett

Acoustic Blues Album

Acoustic Burnside, Duwayne Burnside
Ain't Nobody Worried, Rory Block
Mississippi Son, Charlie Musselwhite
Thanks For Tomorrow, Harrison Kennedy
The Insurrection Blues, Corey Harris

Blues Rock Album

Crown, Eric Gales
Devil May Care, Tinsley Ellis
Highs & Lows, Bernard Allison
I Got Love, Albert Castiglia
Open Road, Colin James

Contemporary Blues Album

Blues Without You, Larry McCray
Done Come Too Far, Shemekia Copeland
Hard to Kill, Janiva Magness
I Ain't Playin', Diunna Greenleaf
The Blues Don't Lie, Buddy Guy

Soul Blues Album

Golden Girl, Trudy Lynn
Heartache by the Pound, Kirk Fletcher
In Too Deep, Sugaray Rayford
Leave the Light On, The Love Light Orchestra
Progeny, Kat Riggins

Traditional Blues Album

Bob Corritore & Friends: You Shocked Me, Bob Corritore
Hard Times, John Primer
May Be the Last Time, John Németh
Straight From the Heart, Kenny Neal
They Called It Rhythm & Blues, Duke Robillard

Acoustic Blues Artist

Doug MacLeod
Guy Davis
Harrison Kennedy
Rhiannon Giddens
Rory Block

Blues Rock Artist

Albert Castiglia
Joanne Shaw Taylor
Tinsley Ellis
Tommy Castro
Walter Trout

Contemporary Blues Female Artist

Beth Hart
Janiva Magness
Ruthie Foster
Teresa James
Vanessa Collier

Contemporary Blues Male Artist

Chris Cain
Christone "Kingfish" Ingram
Mr. Sipp (Castro Coleman)
Ronnie Baker Brooks
Selwyn Birchwood

Soul Blues Female Artist

Annika Chambers
Kat Riggins

Thornetta Davis
Trudy Lynn
Vaneese Thomas

Soul Blues Male Artist

Billy Price
Curtis Salgado
Don Bryant
John Németh
Johnny Rawls

Traditional Blues Female Artist (Koko Taylor Award)

Deitra Farr
Diunna Greenleaf
Rhiannon Giddens
Rory Block
Sue Foley

Traditional Blues Male Artist

Billy Branch
Duke Robillard
John Primer
Johnny Burgin
Sugar Ray Norcia

Instrumentalist Bass

Bob Stroger
Danielle Nicole
Larry Fulcher
Michael "Mudcat" Ward
Willie J. Campbell

Instrumentalist Drums

Chris Layton
Cody Dickinson
Derrick D'Mar Martin
Kenny "Beedy Eyes" Smith
Tony Braunagel

Instrumentalist Guitar

Chris Cain
Christoffer "Kid" Andersen
Joanna Connor
Kirk Fletcher
Laura Chavez

Instrumentalist Harmonica

Billy Branch
Bob Corritore
Dennis Gruenling
Jason Ricci
John Németh

Instrumentalist Horn

Deanna Bogart
Greg Piccolo
Jimmy Carpenter
Mark Kaz Kazanoff
Sax Gordon Beadle

Instrumentalist Piano (Pinetop Perkins Piano Player)

Anthony Geraci
Ben Levin
Dave Keyes
Jim Pugh
Kenny "Blues Boss" Wayne

Instrumentalist Vocals

Curtis Salgado
Danielle Nicole
Diunna Greenleaf
John Németh
Shemekia Copeland

JOEL LIBBY

PAINTERLY POP ART

BY ART TIPALDI



Joel Libby

More often than not, images today are snapped digitally and shared immediately on various social media platforms. Cell phone cameras and its more expensive digital SLR cameras and editing programs like Adobe Photoshop and Lightroom, PicsArt, and the portrait editing app, Facetune 2 make editing photos quick and easy to design and manipulate details for instantaneous results.

That's not the art medium Joel Libby inhabits. Instead, Joel utilizes a process that trades the contemporary culture's immediacy for a more time-honored approach that includes brush, pigments, and canvas. In this method, Joel physically creates the images of his subjects as meticulously as any artist schooled in the techniques of art's Masters. Step into the work and you can trace Joel's brushstrokes that form a musician's signature hairstyle or smile or intense emotional delivery.

"When I paint, I am working in the moment," Joel told me. "I am trying to balance my impulses with my knowledge of color interactions and of course the character of my subject. Each painting differs because of the identity of the subject and because of the headspace I'm in while making that particular work."

"For this project, I did try to connect with the work of each of my subjects for this collection. iTunes has an excellent collection of available albums from many of these artists. I now have several albums that I didn't before starting this project. YouTube also has some choice videos of recordings. The one that stands out in my mind is of Big Mama Thornton singing 'Hound Dog.'"

Left: Mavis Staples

The portraits in Joel's exhibit were made over a five-year period between 2017 and 2021. During that time, Joel worked on many paintings at once as he searched for the unique magic in each artist.

"Every new project is like a puzzle. There is always a solution, and I love figuring it out. One of the most significant pieces of this puzzle was getting to research all the various musicians that have been inducted into the Blues Hall of Fame and then carefully curate a collection of images for the show."

The 18 Hall of Fame images on exhibit are for sale include Mavis Staples, Alberta Hunter, Aretha Franklin, Billie Holiday, Big Mama Thornton, Bonnie Raitt, Lead Belly, John Lee Hooker (sold), Sonny Boy Williamson II, B.B. King, Muddy Waters, Little Richard, Son House, R. L. Burnside, Robert Johnson, Howlin' Wolf, Buddy Guy, and Lightnin' Hopkins.

"My hope with these paintings is, not only to celebrate the bright lights of blues history but also to illuminate some of seemingly less appreciated members of the blues pantheon. I hope that when people see my paintings, they will take a moment to listen to Alberta sing 'I'm Tired Blues' or Lightnin' sing 'Trouble in Mind' or R. L. sing 'Skinny Woman.'

"I want my paintings to celebrate the best in humanity, and I found those qualities in these subjects. It just spoke to me, even at a young age. As I learned more about the lives and careers of these musicians, I was so impressed with their perseverance, strength, and expression."

In the finest blues performances, the musician begins with an idea, a topic, a musical arrangement, a line, and as the performance moves ahead, the musician begins to experiment with his musical muse following an inner spontaneity. Joel's art follows a similar creative process.

"I spend quite a bit of time working on a monochromatic drawing in paint to get the likeness and then the color dance begins. I apply paint hurriedly and with abandon, allowing drips and splatter to wander as they please. Occasionally I will need to exercise more control so I can reconnect with the drawing. The goal is to shepherd all that energy into a final painting that is both wild and controlled."



Joel Libby's work is on display in the Legendary Rhythm and Blues Cruise Gallery in the lobby of the Blues Hall of Fame.

That sounds exactly like the most memorable live blues performances I've ever seen. Look at Joel's portraits and his bright splashes of vibrant colors paint each musician's idiosyncratic appeal. Joel's striking use of explosive COLOR in his portraits of these legendary blues performers is his way of capturing the essence of his subject.

As I looked at Joel's style, I saw it as something between the pop art of the sixties and something more Impressionistic, like how the 21st century offspring of a Warhol, Renior, or Monet might paint. "My style reflects all the experiences, emotions, and thoughts that I've had thus far in my life. Every new painting is both affected by that history and affects its future.

"It's true that Warhol's pop art portraits were a significant influence. The idea of making a relatively large and eye-catchingly bright image of someone as a means of celebrating him or her is something that I have borrowed from Andy.



Lead Belly



Aretha Franklin



“However, I am far more interested in painterly techniques than the Pop artists. I want brush work to be expressive and visible, for texture to play a roll, and for the subtle interaction of color to be key in my work. With that in mind, my work may have connections to Impressionism, but I often simply refer to it as Painterly Pop Art.”



Howlin' Wolf

Within Joel's 17-framed images on display, there are one-of-a-kind stories that live within each image. From Mavis Staples' revolutionary "Respect Yourself" look to John Lee Hooker's sly, endless boogie smile to Billie Holiday voicing her most important song to Little Richard's hip cat pompadour to Son House and Robert Johnson gazing over their cigarettes into a future beyond the Delta to B.B.'s regal dignity, Joel has unlocked the intimate soul of his subjects.

As to some intimate personal moments in this process, Joel recalled, "The two that stand out would be Robert Johnson and Howlin' Wolf. The Johnson painting, like the man, has a complex history. There are actually a few unsuccessful attempts at finishing that painting that are buried under the final version. Someday art curators will have fun with an x-ray scan of that canvas. "The Howlin' Wolf painting is the first painting I've made while the canvas was largely turned on its side. I wanted the drips to follow the immense power of his vocals."

To me and others, baseball and blues have deep, historical connections. Joel also understands that connection as he also has portraits exhibited in Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown.

"Most of my baseball portraits are of players from the Dead-ball era and so for me,

developing a series of blues portraits seemed somehow fitting. Both groups often led hard lives and had to be tough to survive. Maybe it was simply the ethos of the era, but the

contributions of both groups to our modern pop culture is undeniable."

And like everyone who explores the world through one's art, there is a certain education that occurs within one's in-depth study. It is no different for Joel through his immersion in the blues.

"I'm reminded that they were and are all people, flawed and beautiful, complex and often misunderstood. As artists they connected with their world through music. They gave us a gift in their heartfelt songs. Not only entertainment but a mechanism to process our own challenges and pain."

"In a social context that is so eager to dismiss individuals because of their flaws, I hope we can openly embrace their gift which was shaped and forged in the midst of their pain."

By hosting a revolving gallery of portraits in the Legendary Rhythm and Blues Cruise Gallery in the lobby of the Blues Hall of Fame, the Blues Foundation continues to celebrate the efforts of the men and women who have dedicated their lives to chronicling the history of the genre through the display of their art. The stunning collection of Joel Libby's portraits on display in the museum are for sale in the Hall of Fame with a portion of the proceeds being donated back to The Blues Foundation.

AFFILIATED BLUES SOCIETIES

ALABAMA

Magic City Blues Society
BIRMINGHAM, AL

The Music Preservation Society
FLORENCE, AL

ARIZONA

Northern Arizona Blues Alliance
SEDONA, AZ

Phoenix Blues Society
PHOENIX, AZ

Southern Arizona Blues Heritage Foundation
TUCSON, AZ

ARKANSAS

Fort Smith Riverfront Blues Society
FORT SMITH, AR

Ozark Blues Society of NW Arkansas
BENTONVILLE, AR

Port City Blues Society
PINE BLUFF, AR

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Sacramento Blues Society
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Santa Clarita Valley Blues Society
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PORT SAINT LUCIE, FL

GEORGIA

Atlanta Blues Society
LAWRENCEVILLE, GA

IDAHO

Boise Blues Society
BOISE, ID

ILLINOIS

Crossroads Blues Society of Illinois
BYRON, IL

Decatur Blues Society
DECATUR, IL

Illinois Blues Coalition
PEORIA, IL

Illinois Central Blues Club
SPRINGFIELD, IL

Prairie Crossroads Blues Society
CHAMPAIGN, IL

River City Blues Society (IL)
PEORIA, IL

Windy City Blues Society
CHICAGO, IL

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UNION MILLS, IN

Naptown Blues Society
INDIANAPOLIS, IN

River Basin Blues Society
EVANSVILLE, IN

IOWA

Central Iowa Blues Society
DES MOINES, IA

Linn County Blues Society
CEDAR RAPIDS, IA

Mississippi Valley Blues Society
DAVENPORT, IA

South Skunk Blues Society
NEWTON, IA

Southeast Iowa Blues Society
FAIRFIELD, IA

KENTUCKY

Central Kentucky Blues Society
LEXINGTON, KY

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MO Blues Association
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St. Louis Blues Society
ST. LOUIS, MO

Washmo Blues Society
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OMAHA, NE

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RENO, NV

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Hudson Valley Blues Society
PATTERSON, NY

Long Island Blues Society
CENTEREACH, NY

Mohawk Valley Blues Society
NEW HARTFORD, NY

NORTH CAROLINA

Charlotte Blues Society
CHARLOTTE, NC

Piedmont Blues Preservation Society
GREENSBORO, NC

Triangle Blues Society
DURHAM, NC

OHIO

Cincy Blues Society
CINCINNATI, OH

Columbus Blues Alliance
COLUMBUS, OH

Northeast Ohio Blues Association
(NEOBA)
UNIONTOWN, OH

The Blues, Jazz and Folk Music Society
CAMBRIDGE, OH

OKLAHOMA

Blues Society of Tulsa
TULSA, OK

Friends of Rentiesville
CHECOTAH, OK

OREGON

Cascade Blues Association
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Trinity River Blues Society
DALLAS, TX

UTAH

Utah Blues Society
SALT LAKE CITY, UT

VERMONT

Vermont Blues Society
HINESBURG, VT

VIRGINIA

New River Blues Society
NEWPORT, VA

River City Blues Society (VA)
NORTH CHESTERFIELD, VA

WASHINGTON

Washington Blues Society
SEATTLE, WA

WEST VIRGINIA

Huntington Blues Society
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Paramount Music Association
GRAFTON, WI

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Wyoming Blues Society
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BELGIUM

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BRUSSELS

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KINCARDINE, ON

Calgary Blues Music Association
CALGARY, AB

Canada South Blues Society
WIDSOR, ON

East Coast Blues Society
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Edmonton Blues Society
EDMONTON, AB

Grand River Blues Society
WATERLOO, ON

Montreal Blues Society
MONTREAL, QC

Ottawa Blues Society
OTTAWA, ON

Thunder Bay Blues Society
THUNDER BAY, ON

Toronto Blues Society
TORONTO, ON

Victoria Blues Society
VICTORIA, BC

COLOMBIA

Colombian Blues Society
CALI

CROATIA

Croatian Blues Forces
ZAGREB

FINLAND

Finnish Blues Society
HELSINKI

FRANCE

France Blues
MANTES LA JOLIE
Toulouse Blues Society
AUCAMVILLE

GERMANY

BluesBaltica
EUTIN, SCHLESWIG- HOSTEIN
German Blues Network
EUTIN, SCHLESWIG-
HOLSTEIN

ISRAEL

Israel Blues Society
TEL AVIV

ITALY

DeltaBlues
ROVIGO

Mojo Station
ROMA

KOREA (THE REPUBLIC OF)

Korea Blues Society
SEOUL

LUXEMBOURG

Blues Club Luxembourg
HEISDORF

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UK Blues Federation
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KBA 2023 AWARD RECIPIENTS

THE LITTLE VILLAGE FOUNDATION



The Little Village Foundation, formed as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit in 2015 by Grammy-award-winning keyboardist Jim Pugh, focuses on seeking out, recording, and promoting artists whose music has not yet been discovered outside of their communities. Little Village artists all share a common goal of exposing their music to audiences they would not have otherwise reached without LVF support. All LVF artists are provided with the tools to launch a successful album at no cost. Notably, the LVF artists also own all their intellectual property, unlike artists signed to a traditional record label. Little Village arranges to record the artists, coordinates with the artist on album artwork, manufactures one

thousand CDs for the artists to sell or give away as they please, hires a publicist to promote the project, and secures online distribution for the recording – all at no cost or indebtedness for the artists. Donations to Little Village cover all expenses; the artists retain one hundred percent of the proceeds from CD sales and do not need to reimburse Little Village for any costs or share of CD sales. Once an artist sells the initial thousand CDs provided by Little Village, they can continue to press as many additional copies as they like, paying only the actual cost of the CDs directly to the manufacturer. Among the fifty-one recordings released by Little Village to date, the majority are blues related, including BMA nominee Wee Willie Walker's comeback album and later live recording, posthumous releases from Paul DeLay and Ron Thompson, and fresh recordings by Junior Watson, Diunna Greenleaf, Chris Cain, and Kevin Burt. CDs nominated for recent Blues Music Awards include albums by Tia Carroll, Memphis Sounds, and Sonny Green; and a special release from United By Music, an organization that supported rising blues star Christone "Kingfish" Ingram well before his international breakout success. The Little Village Foundation offers previously unheard-of opportunities for artists and is very deserving of this Keeping the Blues Alive award.



JOHN GUREGIAN

For more than forty years John Guregian has been spinning the blues on his radio show, Blues Deluxe, hosted on WUML-FM in Lowell, Massachusetts. Starting in 1979, when Guregian was still a student, the show aired for four hours on Saturdays. This led to a stint as blues director for station, along with subsequent work emceeding many blues festivals and club shows. John has invited dozens of blues artists to be interviewed on Blues Deluxe, including John Hammond Jr, Luther Allison, Chris Thomas King, Johnny Winter, Kim Simmonds, Ronnie Earl, Walter Trout, Selwyn Birchwood, Kat Riggins, Coco Montoya, Rick Estrin, Joe Louis Walker, JJ Grey, Chris Cain, Curtis Salgado, Jimmy Johnson, James Harmon, and many others. Blues Deluxe is now on the air every Saturday from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. at www.wuml.org. In 2020, when Covid hit, Guregian expanded his

interview schedule and now has live online interviews every week with artists around the world. Just a small sample of those recently interviewed includes Fiona Boyes from Australia, JT Lauretson from Norway, and Ian Parker from the U.K. With over four decades on the radio, and a deep commitment to helping advance the visibility and careers of artists from around the country and throughout the world, Guregian is a most worthy recipient of a Keeping the Blues Alive award.

MARILYN STRINGER



Marilyn Stringer is among the most prolific photographers currently documenting the blues. An avid music fan all her life, she began covering the blues in earnest in 2006 and has since become the head photographer for some of the most prominent blues festivals in America. Her work promotes the genre worldwide through various magazines, promoters, record labels, venues, and big-name performers. Stringer estimates that she has covered more than five thousand performances over the years through her extensive travels to festivals, events, and live music clubs. Meanwhile, she has also published three books in her Blues In The 21st Century series. The proceeds from these works have been donated to various charities and organizations supporting the Blues and Blues artists.

Blues In The 21st Century Volume I explored the careers of more than one hundred performers with interviews and photos. At the same time, Volume II covered ten years of images from the Portland Waterfront Blues Festival. Volume III, specifically put together during the COVID shutdown to raise money for The Blues Foundation's COVID Relief Fund, covered the Blues Music Awards performances and related events in Memphis. She recently started her fourth book, Blues Souls, which will feature black & white photos of renowned blues performers. Notably – and in keeping with the generous spirit that she has demonstrated for years – the future proceeds of Blues Souls have been earmarked for The Blues Foundation's HART Fund. Along with her books, Stringer has worked closely for many years with The Blues Festival Guide. Her photos appeared on six of the last seven covers of that publication. Working with Back To The Roots magazine, she has earned seven covers over the last six years. Other leading blues publications that rely on Stringer's talent include Blues Music Magazine, Blues Blast Magazine, and Living Blues. When asked about her attitude toward her work, Stringer says, "If I am going to take these photos, I am going to share them with the world. I want the blues to stay alive and keep the excitement for these performers going. And I don't just photograph the main person in the band; I make sure I get

photos of all the performers. They are all important to me!" Such sentiments and her incredible body of work make it clear that Stringer deserves a 2023 Keeping the Blues Alive Award.

THE SIERRE BLUES FESTIVAL

In 1995, capitalizing on his deep passion for the blues, Swiss native Silvio Caldelari established the Blues Bar music club in Sierre, Switzerland, a small mountain town known as "the city of the sun." Fourteen years later, in 2009, Caldelari and a group of dedicated volunteers further strengthened the blues scene in Switzerland by founding the Swiss Blues Society. After affiliating their new organization with The Blues Foundation, Caldelari's group boldly decided to launch the first-ever Sierre Blues Festival. Since that inaugural event, the three-day festival has steadily grown in popularity, and today hosts internationally renowned artists such as the Mannish Boys, Ana Popovic, Playing for Change, Shemekia Copeland, Marco Pandolfi, Janiva Magness, Eric Gales, and Shakura S'Aida. In 2022, the 13th version of the Sierre Blues Festival attracted an estimated 11,000 fans by featuring popular Italian headliner Zucchero, along with regional and international talent such as Sara Zacarelli's Nu Band, Guts, One Rusty Band, Nigeria's Justina Lee Brown, and Emir Kosturicas & The No Smoking



Orchestra. North America was well represented with a lineup that included Larkin Poe, Mike Zito & Kat Riggins, and Sugaray Rayford. Every year, the Sierre Blues Kids share the stage with blues luminaries, building on the festival's Blues in the Schools program launched by Michael "Hawkeye" Herman and other notable blues educators. Through the years, Caldelari has continued to work with European blues leaders to nurture the European Blues Union and its partnership with The Blues Foundation. As a result of these successes and Caldelari's energy, passion, and collaborative spirit, the Sierre Blues Festival has attracted a wide range of partners and sponsors, including Canton of Valais, the City of Sierre, Loterie Romande, the La Nouvelliste newspaper, Rhone FM radio, and a constellation of more than sixty national and local businesses, ranging from hotels and nightclubs to major Swiss and European companies. In 2020, the European Blues Union honored Caldelari with a "Blues Behind the Scenes Award," recognizing his decades of work promoting and celebrating blues music in Switzerland. Given the longevity and ongoing success of the Sierre Blues Festival and the event's importance to the larger European blues scene, the festival is most certainly worthy of a 2023 Keeping the Blues Alive Award.

FRANKY BRUNEEL

In 1982, at age 15, Franky Bruneel started his blues radio show, Back to the Roots. His show ran on several local and national radio stations throughout Belgium, his native country, and it grew in popularity. In 1991, Franky began organizing Blues concerts and created a link that brought American artists to Europe for short tours. For over 30 years, Franky has been a tour organizer and made European bookings for many blues artists, including Carey Bell, Rod Piazza & The Mighty Flyers, Bob Corritore & The Rhythm Room All-Stars, Kim Wilson's Blues Revue, Mud Morganfield, and many more. In 1995, Franky created a modest fanzine named after his old radio show, Back To The Roots. It contained Blues news and tips for new CDs. There was no Blues magazine in Belgium, and people started subscribing, and other Blues writers joined the team. What began as a radio show and a small fanzine



grew into a full-fledged, glossy, 64-page, full-color Blues magazine. The magazine currently produces five issues yearly, featuring Blues News, interviews, and reviews of books, CDs, and DVDs. It has the most extensive Blues concert calendar in the Benelux, the geographic area encompassing three neighboring countries: Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg. 'Back To The Roots' is now the only printed Blues magazine in the Dutch language and is read in Belgium and the Netherlands. It is also one of the most important Blues magazines in Europe. Franky Bruneel has acted as a consultant for festivals, helped negotiate recording agreements,



and has released three compilation albums on the Back To The Roots label. His 40 years of work in the blues as a DJ, writer, photographer, editor, and publisher of his own blues magazine, website, and record label, as well as his direct work with blues artists, make him a valued resource in the worldwide blues community.

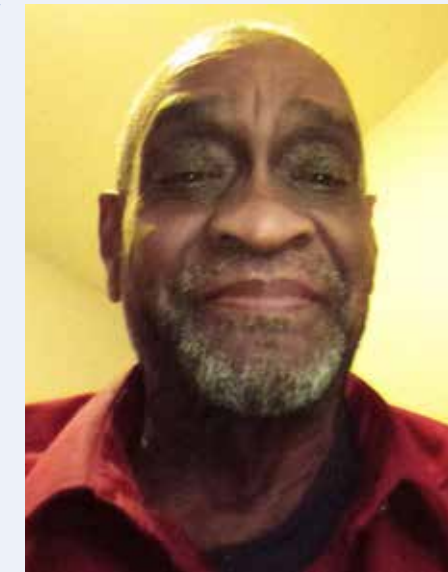
BLUE FRONT CAFE

Located on Highway 49 in Bentonia, Mississippi, the Blue Front Café has been the home of the great "Bentonia School" blues tradition since 1948, when Jimmy "Duck" Holmes' family first opened the Café. During the Blue Front Café's earliest years, it regularly featured performances from the likes of Henry Stuckey and Skip James, both of whom became musical mentors to Holmes. Today, the café is still open daily and presents live blues performances every weekend, making it the oldest continually operating juke joint in the United States. The Blue Front Café is in an incredibly colorful and historic locale—well maintained and welcoming, but essentially unchanged for more than seventy years in its location across from the town's railroad tracks. As the headquarters of the free Bentonia Blues Festival, which Holmes started

in 1972 and has run ever since, the Café has become a beacon for blues fans from around the world. The beloved juke joint is also the home of its own annual anniversary celebration—a smaller festival held every September. Holmes, now 74, is regarded as a living blues legend and the leading practitioner of the distinct Bentonia style. A Mississippi Blues Trail Marker and series of videos shot at the Café for the Black Key's Mississippi hill country-inspired album, Delta Kream, have put even more focus on the Blue Front as a musical mecca, and a perfect citadel of authentic, enduring blues.

RON WYNN

The Grammy-nominated blues journalist Ron Wynn has been writing about music for more than forty years. A brilliant writer and intellectual, as well as a living encyclopedia of the blues, Wynn began his career in the 1980s as the chief music critic for the Memphis Commercial-Appeal, where he profiled both national and regional blues greats, ranging from B.B. King and Buddy Guy to Jim Dickinson and Bobby Rush. Wynn went on to chronicle the careers of important blues artists for Boston's Bay State Banner, Connecticut's Bridgeport Post-Telegram, the Memphis Star, and Nashville's City Paper. He currently writes for the Nashville Scene, the Tennessee Tribune, the Tennessee Jazz and Blues Society, and Jazz Times, among other publications and websites. Wynn took part in fellow Memphis journalism legend Robert Gordon's documentary, Muddy Waters: Can't Be Satisfied, and was interviewed for the 1994 film, Rhythm, Country & Blues. His liner notes for From Where I Stand—The Black Experience in Country Music received a Grammy nomination in 1998, and, in 2005, he contributed writing for the Grammy-winning compilation album, Night Train to Nashville, Vol 1. Wynn has made countless appearances on panels, at conferences, and in concert programs, and has contributed to three books, including Ain't But a Few of Us: Black Music Writers Tell Their Story, slated for publication in December 2022. Since 1994, he has also worked as a beloved DJ, leading a variety of blues, soul, and gospel radio shows. Along with writing about famous blues artists, Wynn



has championed up-and-coming musicians, and has also told the tales of the songwriters, producers, promoters, and others whose work tends to stay behind the scenes. Overall, he has had a remarkable career and penned many thousands of compelling pieces.

TEDDY'S JUKE JOINT

Lloyd "Teddy" Johnston, proprietor of Teddy's Juke Joint, will tell you he's only ever had one address. It's here, at the end of a dirt road off Highway 61—one of the last remaining juke joints on the Chitlin'

Circuit. Teddy was born in this shotgun shack in the thick woods north of Baton Rouge. After touring the country in the 50s and the 60s as a DJ, he returned to Zachary, Louisiana in the early 70s to expand his childhood home into a bar. He allowed gospel groups to practice in the building, but when they began to form blues bands of their own and needed a place to perform, Teddy's Bar & Lounge became Teddy's Juke Joint. By the late 1970s, blues musicians from around the Delta and the World lined up to perform at Teddy's. A visit to Teddy's Juke Joint is like stepping into the past. It's like walking back into 1979. Once a little shotgun house, Teddy's has evolved into an "Authentic Louisiana Juke Joint." On the walls, you'll find old photographs, bar signs, license plates, and relics from the past. Teddy is a "Slim Harpo Ambassador" recipient of the Baton Rouge Blues Foundation and other notable recognitions by local and worldwide publications. Teddy sits behind his music throne, spinning the best of rhythm and blues, and "Nancy's Kitchen" is always open for some of the best food you'll ever put in your mouth. The club books world-famous and home Blues acts 2-4 nights per week, and classic spins the rest of the time. With just one visit, you will feel the warmth and hospitality of Teddy's and will be sure to return.



JOHN PRIMER

OLD SCHOOL

By Art Tipaldi



Photo: Eric Kriesant



Name the Chicago blues guitarist who has played in the bands of Muddy Waters and Willie Dixon, enjoyed seven years in the house band of Theresa's backing Junior Wells and many others, stood on Chicago's Maxwell Street when it was central to the Windy City's blues scene, traveled and recorded with Magic Slim for 13 years, been nominated for two Grammys, and stood on-stage leading Muddy's band in an after hours, Checkerboard Lounge jam with Mick, Keith, and Ronnie?

Only John Primer can embrace all that and more. Since he arrived in Chicago in 1963, every stage Primer has played on has readied him for today. "I feel that now this should be my time. I've been out here a long time scufflin' really tryin' to make this my time. I'm not trying to rush myself, but I figure this should be my time," says the patient Primer.

"I've been at this for a long, long, long time. I never tried to make it my time when it wasn't. I knew that my day would come someday and that when I get it, I will be very happy. I waited, kept on playing and doin' what I'm doin', and I didn't try to rush myself, and it'll come.

Primer is also the poster child for you never know what the future might hold. Born into a sharecropping family in Jim Crow Mississippi, there was likely little future beyond the horizon of cotton fields. "As a kid in Mississippi in the 1950s, it was a hard life. I knew times you'd wake up in the morning and didn't have food.

"When I was small, I was doin' things in the fields. When I got to 12 years old, I went to the fields and did a little sharecropping until I was 18. My mom was out workin', so I was raised mostly by my grandmother. When I was 12, my mom left and went to Chicago. It was hard, and we were always behind. You never break even."

Yet Primer recalls the hypnotic lure of the music he heard in his childhood. "When I was a kid, my uncles would be singin' out in the fields or plowin' with a mule or pickin' cotton, you could always hear singin'. I used to hear blues all the time when I was a kid growing up, my mom, my grandmother, aunts, and uncles played the blues. So I always wanted to be a musician and play guitar.



Photo: Eric Kriesant

"Ever since I was big enough to know what a guitar string was, I wanted to be a musician. It was born into me. I started on a one-string outside my grandmother's house. When I was three years old, I got this catalog magazine from Chicago, and I wanted to find that page with the guitars. I'd get on the floor and look at them.

"I'd see my uncle and cousin playin' this thing with one string with a glass thing going up and down. So when they'd leave to go to work, I wanted to try it myself. I'd sneak around and play that thing, singing and playing it like a slide."



“He taught me how to be a leader, to be a man of your word, and keep your promises. If you tell somebody you’re gonna do something, you do it and if you can’t, you let them know. That’s the way I am. I don’t get mad, I think that it’s a gift from Junior.”

When he landed in Chicago in 1963, 18-year-old Primer found himself in the epicenter of the city’s blues explosion. “The music scene was Muddy Waters, John Lee Hooker, Howlin’ Wolf, Jimmy Reed, B.B. King, and Bobby Bland. But I thought Muddy Waters and all those other guys had passed away. Then somebody told me, ‘Muddy Waters playin’ live at Mr. Kelly’s in Chicago.’ I was happy cuz I thought they all was gone.”

Primer’s earliest memories of Chicago’s music are centered on the famous Maxwell Street open Sunday markets. Maxwell Street to Chicago blues was what the Mississippi juke joints were to Delta blues, the place to play and learn.

“My earliest memories of the music [in Chicago] were of Maxwell Street. I played on Maxwell a lot. Man, on Sunday’s you could have one of the best days of your life. Most musicians like Hound Dog Taylor, Muddy Waters, Howlin’ Wolf, Honeyboy Edwards were hanging out down there. I was able to walk down the street and see the people I had only heard. In the clubs you could make \$20, but on Maxwell, you could make \$40 or \$50 easy. If anybody’d got to see that street, they’d never forget it.”

His first band gig came in his band the Maintainers with Pat Rushing. “To me, he was the king of Maxwell Street blues. He was the first guy to walk me down there to play music.” Then, in 1974, Primer was hired for the next seven years to join the house band in Theresa’s Lounge playing Chicago blues for seven nights a week, backing every major blues talent, most notably, Junior Wells.

“He taught me how to be a leader, to be a man of your word, and keep your promises. If you tell somebody you’re gonna do something, you do it and if you can’t, you let them know. That’s the way I am. I don’t get mad, I think that it’s a gift from Junior.”

But Primer’s most important gift was passed along by his days with Muddy Waters, days that were not exactly planned for. “Muddy’d heard me playing in Mexico City with Willie Dixon in 1979. He asked Willie, ‘Who’s the young man playing the guitar with you. That young man



knows my music.’ So when his old band quit, Muddy called Willie and asked for me.

“I already knew all his music, all his tricks, all his songs because that’s what I studied all my life, Muddy Waters’ music. So for me, it was easy to play when I got in his band.”

Primer played in Waters’ last band from 1980 to 1983. It was from Muddy that Primer received acknowledgment from all his years of woodshedding in bands throughout Chicago. And his most lasting lesson about the blues. “I learned from Muddy Waters to take my time, lay the foundation down, and make every word mean something. And with a feeling. He taught me what the blues is about. I learned the real meaning of the blues and to play it, to relax, and not force it.”

Following Waters’ death, Primer hooked up with Magic Slim and the Teardrops from 1983 to 1996. The musical influences of both are evident in the approach Primer brings to his shows. Though he is referred to as a traditionalist, Primer’s style straddles the boundaries. At times, he evokes Muddy on stage; at other times, he cuts a sharp edge that is born from the varied influences a modern musician must stir into his technique.



His Mississippi roots grafted onto Chicago clubs like Theresa's and watered by mentors like Sam Lawhorn have given strength to Primer's distinctive techniques.

Vocally, Primer delivers the same real deal barroom soul any blues pilgrim to Chicago's West Side would hear.

"Sam Lawhorn, who played with Muddy Waters for over 15 years, was also an influence. I came to Theresa's club and John Watkins introduced us. He taught me to set the tone on my amp. I learned slide from Sammy. I had a Cry Baby and a phaser and Sammy told me to throw those things away because when you go out to jam and don't have those pedals, then you can't get your sound. He said, 'It's just best to play it from your heart and get your own sound.'"

"Today, some people are playing the original [Chicago style] blues. But a lot of these guys playing think they gotta have foot pedals and all those machines and boxes on the floor. That's OK because they're keeping the blues alive. That's their blues. but to me, you don't need none of that stuff if you're gonna play blues."

That's the most important lesson Primer shares with young blues guitarists. "To me, blues and jazz is just straight and natural from the heart. When people see me play, I'm keeping it real and traditional, like it was played when I learned it."

"I want them to know that you don't give up on it and it'll come to you. Learn it and learn it well. Be traditional and play it like the people played it when I was growing up. Play all music, but make sure you connect the blues to it. When I go up there, I play it and I teach it. When I play a show, I'm teachin' the generations what the music is all about. I mix contemporary blues with soul music because the younger generation doesn't know that blues is the root. Look, listen, and learn."

And at his point in his life, his most important student is his teenage



daughter, Alyia. So what does a Grammy winning father say to his daughter about the music business? "She says she wants to sing the blues, so I teach her how to sing those deep notes in the blues."

"On my new CD, she sings on a song called 'Tough Times.' I had something different for her in that style, One night, I came home, and she and her mama had written the song with better lyrics, so it's her song, and it turned out great. When we recorded it, I helped her in the studio, telling her when to come in and when to go out."

"She's learning it very well. We've just came from Mississippi and the Hopson Plantation celebration of the Pinetop Homecoming and she surprised me and came up singing 'I'd Rather Go Blind,' and the crowd went crazy. She knows what the blues is and she loves it."

And about the night with Mick, Keith, and Ronnie in the Checkerboard Lounge in 1981? "I had some fun that night! I didn't take a break all night. From that day on, I never any contact with the Stones. [The DVD of this once in a lifetime event is well-worth adding to your collection.] But I do play two songs, 'Angie' and 'Let It Bleed,' on the *Chicago Plays The Stones* record."



Photo: Eric Kriesant

BLUES HALL OF FAME

2023 INDUCTEES

CLASSIC OF BLUES LITERATURE

The Original Blues: The Emergence of the Blues in African American Vaudeville 1899-1926,
by Lynn Abbott & Doug Seroff

The Vaudeville Theater was the major public venue for blues in its earliest years, before the advent of radio, blues records, and jukeboxes. Lynn Abbott and Doug Seroff, whose previous books chronicled the minstrel and ragtime traditions that preceded the blues, compiled *The Original Blues* by scouring thousands of African-American newspaper accounts to produce a volume that is indispensable to understanding blues history. Such histories most often trace the music from its rural origins as country blues, but *Original Blues* makes the case that key developments in the blues came from the vaudeville stage and that the vaudeville repertoire in fact strongly impacted the country blues.

(University Press of Mississippi, 2017)



CLASSIC OF BLUES RECORDING: ALBUM

Little Walter: The Complete Chess Masters (1950-1967)

Little Walter Jacobs was the best blues harmonica player ever, in the opinion of many fans and musicians, and certainly the most influential, so Hip-O's 5-CD, 126-track compilation of his work was a true blues bonanza. The set includes

all the material issued on Chess Records' Checker subsidiary including such classics as "Juke," "My Babe," and "Blues With a Feeling," along with unissued tracks. The variety in sounds, styles and accompaniments enhances the collection, which features stellar sidemen like Muddy Waters, Robert Jr. Lockwood, Buddy Guy, Fred Below, Willie Dixon and many more. Scott Dirks, Tony Glover and Ward Gaines, co-authors of Walter's biography, contributed the liner notes. According to a recent communique from Dirks, "The Hip-O box includes every completed take of every title in Little Walter's Chess discography except for one minor leftover," an instrumental version of "One of These Mornings" that is shorter than the take chosen for the box by compiler Andy Mckaie.

(Hip-O Select, 2009)



CLASSIC OF BLUES RECORDING: SINGLES

Black Nights — Lowell Fulson

Lowell Fulson (or Fulsom, as Kent Records spelled it) excelled as a songwriter, singer and guitarist, and "Black Nights" is one of his finest works and biggest hits, charting for 12 weeks in 1965-66 in Billboard magazine.

Fulson's poignant lament of faded love and lonely black nights was recorded during one of his most productive periods in 1965 on the Bihari brothers' Kent label with stalwart arranger Maxwell Davis on piano. (Kent, 1965)



While the record is nominally about a black woman who'll "make a mule kick his stable down," House floated in a variety of verses including several from "Death Letter Blues." House's bold vocal delivery and concise guitar accompaniment make this a prime example of his deep Delta blues in his prime, recorded at Paramount's studio in Grafton, Wisconsin, in 1930. (Paramount, 1930)

Mojo Hand — Lightnin' Hopkins

Lightnin' Hopkins, who never had a problem with coming up with songs for cash on the spot, recorded more than 40 songs in the month of November 1960 for three different companies in New York and New Jersey. As usual, there were gems in the cache, and "Mojo Hand," a rolling boogie waxed for Harlem record man Bobby Robinson, became Hopkins' most recognizable standard. Hopkins' goal in the song was to buy a "mojo hand"—a small cloth bag filled with secret spell-casting ingredients—to "fix my woman so she can't have no other man." (Fire, 1960)



I'm Tore Down — Freddy King

"I'm Tore Down," a tale of despondency set to a shuffle rhythm, was written by producer-pianist Sonny Thompson and sung with appropriate verve by Freddy (aka Freddie) King, who also contributed some of his signature piercing guitar licks. Recorded January 18, 1961, with Thompson and a studio band in Cincinnati, it became the fifth of King's six entries on Billboard's R&B charts that year and is the second of them (after the instrumental "Hide Away") to enter the Blues Hall of Fame. (Federal, 1961)



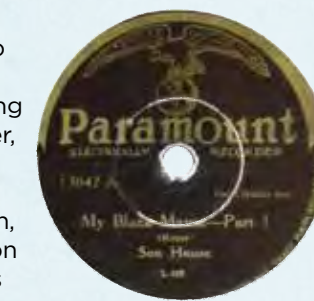
The Red Rooster (Little Red Rooster) — Howlin' Wolf

"The Red Rooster," better known as "Little Red Rooster," is widely acknowledged as one of Howlin' Wolf's classics, but oddly enough it was not a major hit when Chess Records released it as a 45 rpm single in 1961. It didn't chart for Chess, but it did much better for Sam Cooke in 1963 in the U.S. and for the Rolling Stones, whose version hit No. 1 in the U.K. in 1964. Wolf's original featured not only his incomparable vocals but also his rarely featured slide guitar. Willie Dixon drew on an old theme recorded by Memphis Minnie as "If You See My Rooster" to compose his own version of the song. (Chess, 1961)



My Black Mama — Son House

"My Black Mama" may not be a title familiar to the many admirers of Son House's work during his revived 1960s career, but while the title was never used for any the songs he recorded then, the original 1930 version is loaded with couplets recognizable in many other songs by House and by blues singers before and after him, from Ida Cox to Robert Johnson.





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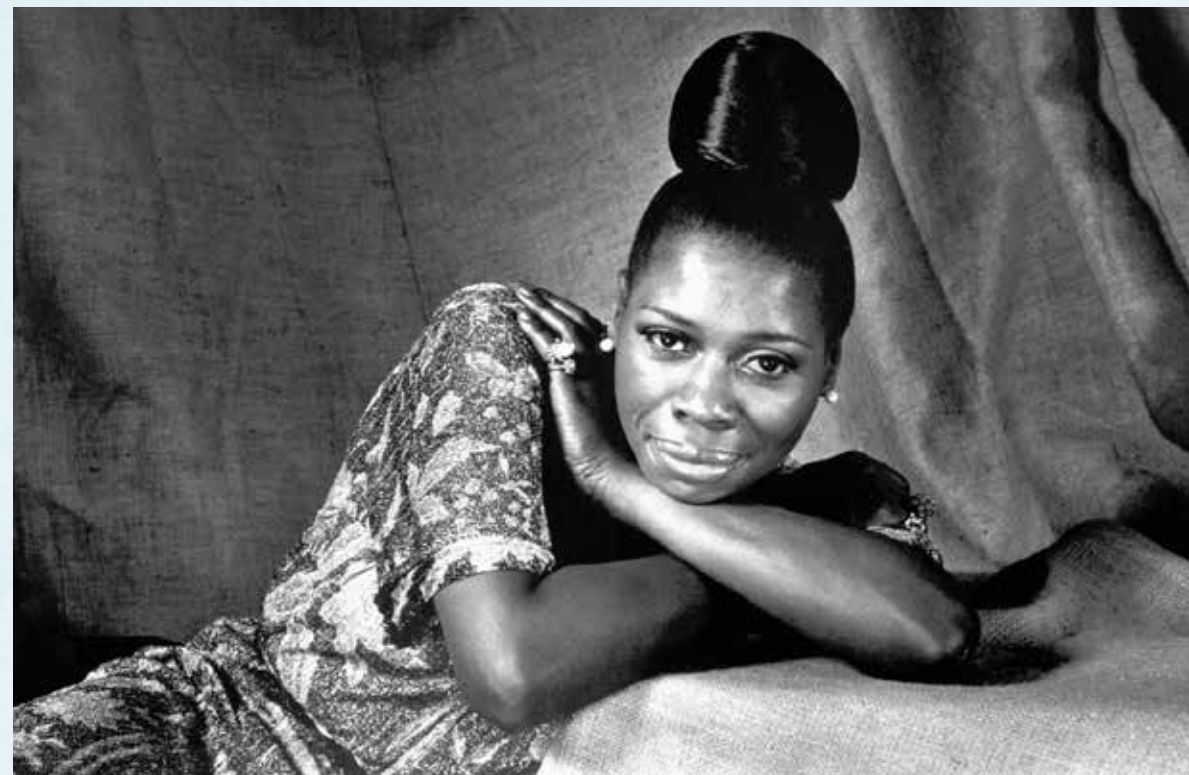
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PERFORMER

ESTHER PHILLIPS



Esther Phillips began her career as an astounding 13-year-old prodigy, singing very adult, saucy blues with the legendary Johnny Otis revue in Los Angeles. Hers was a life filled with both triumphs and tragedy, cut short by the effects of heroin addiction, but less than a year before her death famed critic Leonard Feather hailed her as "the indisputable queen of the blues" in a nightclub review. A superlative singer who could deliver blues, R&B, soul, jazz, pop, and even country songs with candor and conviction, Phillips was a devotee of an earlier blues queen, Dinah Washington and often sang in the same vein while developing her own personal approach. He could play many instruments and might take a turn at the piano onstage but on recordings she focused only on her vocals.

Esther Mae Jones was her legal name when she started singing, but her birth surname was Washington, as registered in Galveston, Texas, on December 23, 1935. In a restart in later years she chose Phillips, inspired by a Phillips

66 sign. But to the blues/R&B world she was simply Little Esther in her teenage era. Raised in Houston and Los Angeles, she sang in church but wrapped herself in the blues early on. Accounts vary as to how she and Johnny Otis met, but the key event was a talent contest at the Barrelhouse Club which Otis co-owned in Watts. Under his auspices she made her first record for the Modern label on August 31, 1949, and soon she was recording hits with Otis on the Savoy imprint, including three consecutive No 1 R&B hits in 1950: "Double Crossing Blues," "Mistrustin' Blues," and "Cupid's Boogie." Subsequent sessions for Federal and other labels produced some top-notch singles but sales fell off. Little Esther traveled with Otis and band (and initially with her mother, sister and a tutor) and showed impressive poise at the start, according to Otis' producer Ralph Bass. While life on the road was exciting, it also deprived her of a normal adolescence. She turned to drugs and would go through periods of recuperation, relapse, and rehabilitation for the rest of her life.

In 1962 Ray Charles' monumental success with Modern Sounds in Country & Western Music motivated Lenox Records to employ Esther's vocal expertise in a country setting. The result was one of her biggest hits, "Release Me." The Lenox connection resulted in a contract with Atlantic Records and a few more hits including a Beatles cover, "And I Love Him," which led to a BBC-TV appearance co-starring with the Fab Four. Jazz-inflected blues fueled the fine Atlantic albums *Burnin'* and *Confessin' the Blues*.

Extensive studio crews of top musicians in jazz, funk and soul backed Phillips during the '70s on albums for the Kudu label (seven of which made the soul charts in Billboard), followed by releases on Mercury. Her Kudu update of Dinah Washington's *What a Diff'rence a Day Makes* was her last big hit, but more striking was her emotionally charged rendition of Gil Scott-Heron's heroin addiction masterpiece "Home is Where the Hatred Is." The Kudu LP *From a Whisper to a Scream* earned her a Grammy nomination for Best

R&B Vocal Performance of 1972. She lost, but the winner, Aretha Franklin, felt that Phillips deserved it and delivered the Grammy to her. Franklin said, "I gave her my Grammy because Esther was fighting personal demons, and I felt she could use encouragement. As a blues singer, she had her own thing; I wanted Esther to know that I - and the industry - supported her."

Phillips' final album for Muse Records was posthumously titled *A Way to Say Goodbye*. The toll of drug and alcohol use on her body led to her demise at a hospital in Torrance, California, on August 7, 1984. She was married to agent-producer Clyde B. Atkins, former husband of another of Phillips' idols, Sarah Vaughan, in 1979 but had filed for divorce. Johnny Otis, with whom she had periodically reunited for guest appearances, preached her funeral and helped raise funds for a headstone. The Los Angeles music community has held several celebrations in her memory.



Living Blues

The World's Leading Blues Magazine

www.livingblues.com

PERFORMER

JOHN PRIMER



Photo: Eric Kriesant

John Primer earned his pedigree in blues playing with Blues Hall of Famers Muddy Waters, Willie Dixon and Magic Slim. Still dedicated to the fundamentals he picked up as a sideman and apprentice, Primer now delivers consistently top-notch, no-nonsense blues on his steady slate of shows and recordings. He has been a perennial nominee and frequent victor in the Traditional Blues categories of the Blues Music Awards, Living Blues Awards and other honors

programs. Primer's life story reads like those of many blues greats who preceded him - born in Mississippi, raised in poverty, working the fields as a youngster, moving to Chicago for a factory job, cutting his teeth playing blues for tips at the Maxwell Steet outdoor market, making his way up through the club circuit, learning from the veterans, and maturing into an internationally heralded artist. The saga began in Camden, Mississippi, where Primer was born into a

sharecropping family on March 5, 1945. Music provided a relief from daily hardships as he sang in church, played a homemade one-string guitar, and listened to his grandmother's blues records. In 1963 he came to Chicago and was soon playing with local groups, eventually landing gigs in the house band at the fabled Theresa's Lounge where he was mentored by guitar wizard Sammy Lawhorn while backing an all-star parade of guests, and at the Checkerboard, Buddy Guy's home base. In 1979 Willie Dixon invited Primer to join his Chicago Blues All Stars, which gave Prime his first opportunities to tour outside the U.S. When Muddy Waters needed a new band in 1980, Primer found himself playing with one of his lifelong idols until Muddy's death in 1983. Then began a 13-year stint with Magic Slim & the Teardrops, marked by constant touring and frequent recording, live and in the studio, with Primer regularly featured

on a few vocals. Primer left to focus on his own career and began compiling an impressive resume of tours and albums, beginning with the first of several CDs for an Austrian label, Wolf Records, and continuing with Earwig, Code Blue (Atlantic), Telarc and others, including the label he and his wife Lisa own, Blues House Productions. He has been even more prolific in the studio as a first-call sideman in Chicago, recording with James Cotton, Jimmy Rogers, John Brim, Eddie Shaw and many more, along with live recordings with Muddy, Big Mama Thornton and others. His latest CD project, released in February 2023, is a tribute to Magic Slim. His aptly named Real Deal band features Steve Bell, son of Carey Bell, on harmonica. John Primer remains committed to honoring past heroes while creating his own music and passing the blues torch on to younger generations.

PERFORMER

CAREY BELL



Carey Bell Harrington took his place in the lineage of Chicago blues harp masters in the 1970s, exuberantly following in the footsteps of his mentors Big Walter Horton and Little Walter Jacobs. In addition to recording noteworthy albums of his own, he became Chicago's go-to harmonica player for blues sessions, valued for his creative solo flights and the ease with which he adapted to any song put before him. Bell made his first studio recordings backing guitar virtuoso Earl Hooker in November 1968 and over the next three decades he played on more than 100 different sessions, either as the featured artist or backing Willie Dixon, Muddy Waters, Louisiana Red, Jimmy Rogers, Eddy

Clearwater and many others. He duetted on some with Big Walter Horton and other harp masters and joined James Cotton, Junior Wells and Billy Branch for a historic *Harp Attack!* album on Alligator. His good-natured, often playful live performances could generate even more excitement when he had the chance to extend his melodic explorations on both on the 10-hole diatonic harmonica and the larger chromatic instrument.

Born Cary (sic) Harrington in Macon, Mississippi, on November 14, 1936, he began playing harmonica as a child and by the time he was in his teens he had come under the wing of

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veteran pianist Lovie Lee in the nearby city of Meridian. Lee took a young band including his “adopted stepson” Bell to Chicago in the mid-1950s and over the years they wove their talents into the Windy City blues fabric while holding down other jobs to make a living. Guitarist Honeyboy Edwards also guided the young Bell, playing with him and introducing him to both Little Walter and Big Walter. Edwards also showed Bell some runs on the bass, an instrument Bell learned to play with expertise. Bell also worked with Johnny Young, Eddie Taylor, and others and was recorded in a street performance with Robert Nighthawk at the Maxwell Street market in 1964. Earl Hooker hired Bell for a tour to play bass, and then harmonica when he learned how well Bell could play. After his recording session with Hooker for Arhoolie, Bell played on a Sleepy John Estes session for Delmark and waxed his own Delmark debut LP, *Carey Bell's Blues Harp*, in 1969.

His career immediately shifted into high gear with regular club gigs, festivals and tours, including several junkets to Europe. Muddy Waters brought

Bell into his band, as did Howlin' Wolf briefly, followed by a stint with Willie Dixon's Chicago Blues All Stars, in between his own gigs and sessions. Albums of his work, some co-billed with his son Lurrie Bell, a phenom himself, appeared on ABC BluesWay, Alligator, Blind Pig, Wolf, Rooster Blues, L+R, Blues South West, JSP and other labels in the U.S. and several other countries. His Alligator CD *Good Luck Man* won a W.C. Handy Award in 1998, the same year he was elected Traditional Male Blues Artist of the Year, following several previous nominations.

Among his other accomplishments he sired a brood of blues-playing sons including Lurrie, Steve (now playing harp in classic Carey Bell style in John Primer's band), Tyson and James. He had moved to North Carolina and lived with Willie Dixon's daughter Patricia before entering a Chicago hospital where he died of pneumonia and renal failure on May 6, 2007. A diabetic, Bell had suffered a stroke in 2006 but the joy of making music never left him and he recorded tracks for his final CD onstage in a wheelchair.

PERFORMER

JUNIOR KIMBROUGH



Junior Kimbrough, after years of holding forth in the juke joints and house parties of the Mississippi hills, Junior Kimbrough became a nationally renowned blues icon known both for his unique idiosyncratic style and for his role as potentate at his own juke, Junior's Place, where visitors from far and wide mingled with the party crowd of Marshall County. Kimbrough called his music cotton patch blues or cotton patch soul blues, a custom maintained by his family of musicians, and like other Hill Country blues variants, its foundation lay in a raw, insistent groove. The Kimbrough style—not

as hotly energized as the rocking rhythms of his friend R.L. Burnside or an early influence, Mississippi Fred McDowell — employed a droning, hypnotic roll that won him followings among both blues fans and devotees of trance and alternative rock.

David Kimbrough Jr. was born in Hudsonville, Mississippi, on July 28, 1930, he grew up in a musical family which included his father (his most formative influence) and several siblings and sang in a gospel group before assembling his own blues band.

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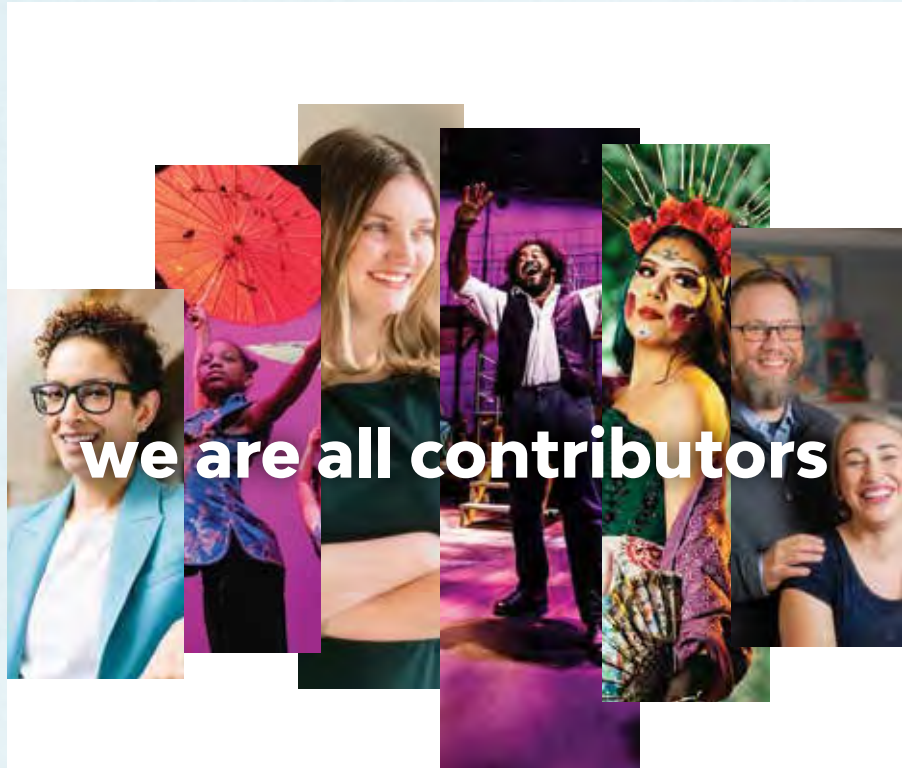
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Rockabilly legend Charlie Feathers, a longtime friend from Hudsonville, helped Kimbrough secure his first record release, a single on the Philwood label in Memphis in 1966. Another Memphis session for Goldwax was shelved until the sides appeared on a First Recordings collection in 2009. Likewise, a 1969 recording with Feathers and 1980s album for the University of Memphis' High Water imprint remained

unissued until Kimbrough's later fame prompted their release. High Water did issue a 1982 Kimbrough single which revealed the sound he had developed with his group, the Soul Blues Boys. It was not until his performance of his signature tune "All Night Long" in the documentary Deep Blues and several albums for the Fat Possum label in the 1990s that his fame truly spread. He played festivals in America and Europe but did not tour frequently. Instead, his audience (including some famous rock stars) came to him, especially at his juke joint in Chulahoma where he also recorded some of his CDs. His bands typically included some of his sons and younger members of the Burnside family (who once lived next door). His music was perpetuated by his sons David Malone (1965-2019), Kinney Malone and Robert Kimbrough and grandson Cameron Kimbrough, and his songs have been covered by the Black Keys, Iggy Pop & the Stooges, Daft Punk, the North Mississippi Allstars and others. Kimbrough died of a heart attack in Holly Springs Memorial Hospital on January 17, 1998. His legacy is celebrated annually in the area at the Kimbrough Cotton Patch Soul Blues Festival. His headstone bears the memorable quote from Charlie Feathers, "Junior Kimbrough is the beginning and end of all music."



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PERFORMER

SNOOKY PRYOR



Snooky Pryor was one of the pioneers of the classic Chicago blues of the post-World War II era, a byproduct of the migratory wave of musicians from Mississippi and the Deep South who changed the sound of the city with their electrified update of Delta blues. After playing a bugle (and harmonica) through a P.A. system while serving in the war, Pryor bought a P.A. system with speakers in Chicago and became one of the first harp players to amplify his sound with electricity. Pryor made some historic recordings for several Chicago labels, including

Boogie (Snooky and Moody's Boogie), a predecessor to Little Walter's massive hit Juke, and Judgment Day (later revived by British rockers the Pretty Things and Eric Clapton), but none sold well enough to make the charts. He had some success in the city's nightclubs but finally dropped off the scene in the 1960s, disillusioned with the music business. Rumors and questions about his whereabouts puzzled blues fans and researchers for years. Some thought he had turned to preaching or to Islam. Neither

was true, although he was the son a preacher who forbade “devil music” (the blues) in the home, and he could quote the Bible at length. But on a phone call one night in 1971, guitarist Homesick James told Living Blues magazine that he had an old friend with him: “You know Snooky Pryor?” Pryor and his family had moved to Ullin in southern Illinois, where he was working as a carpenter. An article in the magazine led to a musical revival for Pryor, who resumed his recording career and went on to play concerts, clubs and festivals to an enthusiastic new generation of international blues aficionados. He picked up where he had left off, singing and playing the same spirited kind of blues he had perfected in the 1950s, eschewing the influences of subsequent soul, funk and rock music trends that changed the approach of many others in Chicago. Born in rural Quitman County, Mississippi, near Lambert and Denton, on September 15, 1919 (not 1921 as he usually said), James Edward Pryor took up harmonica and the blues in spite of his father’s rules. A childhood friend was future Chicago legend Jimmy Rogers,

who was then nicknamed Snooky. Bluesman Floyd Jones later dubbed Pryor as Snooky (pronounced to rhyme with “nuke” rather than “nook”) in Chicago. Pryor left home as a teenager and traveled through Mississippi, Arkansas, Missouri, and Illinois, finally settling in Chicago, where his musical partners included Floyd and Moody Jones, Homesick James, Johnny Young and Eddie Taylor. His first Chicago recordings for Planet, J.O.B., Parrot and Vee-Jay have all been reissued on CD and LP. After his 1960s hiatus he cut his first album on the Today label, followed by a slew of others in the U.S., Europe and Canada for Big Bear, Blind Pig, Antone’s, Wolf, Electro-Fi and other companies. Though he made occasional Chicago appearances and worked for a while with Willie Dixon’s Chicago Blues All Stars, he continued to reside in Ullin, where he trained his sons Earl and Richard (“Rip Lee”) to play. Rip Lee has continued to perform in the venerated style of his father, who died in a Cape Girardeau, Missouri, hospital, on October 18, 2006.

PERFORMER

FENTON ROBINSON



Fenton Robinson practiced an erudite brand of blues hailed by musicians, critics and discerning audiences around the world, but rarely enjoyed the kind of wide public acclaim enjoyed by many high energy, hard-rocking blues performers. As Alligator Records’ Bruce Iglauer wrote, “In a world of barroom entertainers Fenton Robinson was a serious musician who is best appreciated with greater concentration than his audience usually gave him.”

Robinson relocated to different cities several times trying to find his niche and had his moments of success and satisfaction, as a performer, songwriter and teacher. His 1967 masterwork “Somebody Loan Me a Dime” failed to hit the national charts but scored in Chicago, enough so that Robinson was recruited to compete with B.B. and Albert King, Bobby Bland and other heavyweights in a “Battle for King of the Blues” show at the Regal Theater in 1968. A 1969 rendition by

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Boz Scaggs with Duane Allman on guitar was the first of many cover versions. Robinson did the first waxing of the often-recorded standard "As the Years Go Passing By," which he said was written by Peppermint Harris. "You Don't Know What Love Is," an Alligator album track, also inspired covers. Born in Leflore County in the Mississippi Delta on September 23, 1935 (or a little before, according to various documents), Robinson began performing as a teenager in Memphis, where he teamed with guitarist Charles McGowan. He and McGowan moved to Little Rock and briefly to St. Louis. Robinson made his first records for the Meteor label in Memphis and Duke Records in Houston, playing with a harder electric attack than on his later Chicago records when he had developed a nimble, fleet-fingered technique influenced by T-Bone Walker's style and by formal music studies. In addition to "As the Years Go (Passing) By," his 1950s records (all credited to Fention Robinson) included "Tennessee Woman," "The Freeze (made famous by Albert Collins) and, on a session backing Little Rock cohort Larry Davis, "Texas Flood" (later popularized by Stevie Ray Vaughan). Robinson moved to Chicago in 1961 and established himself on the club scene, backing Junior Wells, Sonny Boy Williamson No. 2, Otis Rush and others and working his own gigs on the strength of singles he recorded for USA, Giant and Palos that showcased both

his progressive guitar work and sensitive, soulful vocals. His debut LP on Nashville's Sound Stage 7 label captured his talent as a vocalist but allotted little room for his guitar. His upward trajectory was blunted after a 1969 auto accident which eventually landed him in prison, but a letter-writing campaign from blues fans helped him earn an early release. He was based in Chicago in the 1970s, aside from a stay in Santa Cruz, California, where he landed after partnering on tour with Charlie Musselwhite. He recorded two critically acclaimed albums for Alligator, including the Blues Hall of Fame LP "I Hear Some Blues Downstairs." But his career in Chicago stagnated and he decided to move back to Little Rock, where he had been well received on return visits. Springfield, Illinois, where he had earlier taught blues in the schools, was his next residence, followed by Rockford, Illinois. Although he toured across the country and overseas, made further high-quality recordings, and was widely admired, high-echelon blues stardom eluded him. A philosophical thinker, serious reader and progressive musician, Robinson embraced the Islamic faith in the 1970s and once went under the name Fenton Lee Shabazz. A Japanese reissue LP honored him with the title The Mellow Blues Genius, and a British album designated him Mellow Fellow. He passed away from cancer in Rockford on November 25, 1997.

PERFORMER

JOSH WHITE



Josh White transitioned from a career as a traditional Piedmont blues artist to emerge as a unique and integral voice in the burgeoning folk music world of the 1940s, and in so doing played a seminal role in introducing new audiences to the blues. White was outspoken in his songs of protest against racism and injustice, a revolutionary tactic among blues singers of his era who had to couch such sentiments in code or hidden meanings in their lyrics. His induction into the Blues Hall of Fame and concurrent honors as Folk Alliance

International's 2023 Lifetime Achievement memorial award recipient are finally shining the spotlight on an icon whose many contributions have too often been forgotten or overlooked in the years since his death in 1969.

Born in Greenville, South Carolina, on February 11, 1914, White sang in church as a youngster and got an extended taste of the road by traveling as a guide (or "lead boy") for blind street singers. John Henry "Big Man" Arnold, his main local employer, also hired him out to

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other blind men and White claimed to have led Blind Lemon Jefferson and dozens of others. He also told of suffering beatings and witnessing a lynching. In 1928 he was in Chicago playing guitar behind Blind Joe Taggart on a session for Paramount Records. After returning to Greenville, he headed to New York City and launched his own recording career in 1932, chosen as one of a select crew of blues artists who were able to record prolifically in the Depression years. His blues and gospel records for the A.R.C. label group, many of them solo, some with accompanists including Leroy Carr and Walter Roland, were variously credited to Joshua White, Pinewood Tom, and Joshua White (The Singing Christian).

An invitation to appear in a 1940 Broadway play, *John Henry*, in 1940, served as an entrée into a whole new realm of musical, theatrical, social, intellectual and political circles. White adroitly adapted his act to project folk authenticity with a sophisticated touch. His records, previously marketed to African Americans, changed accordingly to appeal to a predominantly white following. While he always drew on his blues and gospel repertoire, he also incorporated Tin Pan Alley hits, pop tunes, work songs, and folk ballads from various sources. His most popular number, "One Meat Ball," recorded for Asch Records in 1944, was a bigger hit when covered by the Andrews Sisters, and many listeners heard "House of the Rising Sun" for the first time through White. More momentously, he began addressing segregation, workers' rights, lynching and other controversial issues in songs such as "Defense Factory Blues," "Uncle Sam Says," and "Jim Crow Train" (written in collaboration with Harlem poet Waring Cuney), and "Strange Fruit," the haunting vision of lynching first made famous by Billie Holiday, on Keynote and other labels. The resultant commotion drew the attention of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who met with White and became the first of three chief executives (prior to Kennedy and Johnson) to invite White to appear at presidential functions. Eleanor Roosevelt also became one of White's closest confidantes. His other compatriots included Lead Belly, Pete Seeger, Woody Guthrie, Alan Lomax, Burl Ives, Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee. Celebrated for his suave stage presence, supple guitar work, engaging showmanship, proper diction and sexual magnetism (plus offstage escapades), he appeared at cabarets, folk gatherings, and political events, on radio and TV shows, and in plays and feature films. In 1950 he broke new ground taking the blues to England,

France and Scandinavia, traveling on a goodwill tour with Eleanor Roosevelt.

However, his protest songs and leftist associations led to a blacklisting during the McCarthy anti-Communist era and he was called to testify before the House Un-American Activities Committee in 1950. For a while work became harder to find in the U.S. but receptive audiences in England and other countries enabled him to keep performing and he toured and recorded prolifically.

In 1949 his *Ballads and Blues* on Decca was, according to some researchers, the first blues record to be released in a newly introduced format – the 33 rpm LP. His *Strange Fruit* LP on Mercury followed in 1950. He also recorded for Columbia, ABC-Paramount, Blue Note, Elektra, Vanguard and labels in France, the U.K., Italy and Denmark. While in England, he came out with a book, *The Josh White Guitar Method*, followed in the U.S. by *The Josh White Song Book*. White remained a popular figure on the folk scene although his finances began to decline along with his health. Testimonies to his impact upon upcoming musicians, including the first wave off British blues rockers, are legion. He died during heart surgery in Manhasset, New York, on September 5, 1969.

Salutes to White's legacy have included a children's book, *The Glory Road: The Story of Josh White* in 1982, a U.S. postage stamp with his image in 1998, an incisive biography by Elijah Wald, *Josh White: Society Blues*, in 2000, a "Cultural Heroes" bust sculpted from clay shown in several museums, a three-panel statue in his hometown of Greenville unveiled in 2021, and this year's Folk Alliance and Blues Hall of Fame honors. His music has lived on through his children, especially Josh White Jr., who has been a folk musician virtually all of his life ever since appearing onstage with White at Café Society as a four-year-old.

The belated recognition from the blues community has been attributed to the view that the polished act that served White so well in folk concerts and cabarets has not fit well with recent generations' preferences in the blues. As Elijah Wald wrote in *Living Blues* back in 2001: "He did more than any artist until B.B. King to make the blues singer a recognized cultural icon, and his rediscovery as a seminal musical giant and a unique American voice is long overdue."

INDIVIDUALS (BUSINESS, MEDIA & ACADEMIC)

DAVID EVANS

David Evans' induction in a Blues Hall of Fame category covering "Business, Academic, Media & Production" achievements could not be more fitting, for he has covered multiple bases as an educator, field researcher, and producer with hundreds of media credits in print and in audio and video formats. While not a businessman in an occupational sense, Evans has had to handle plenty of business with blues artists, record companies, and at events around the world, including his own extensive travels as a performing musician. Evans is the author of four books on the blues, including *Big Road Blues: Tradition and Creativity in the Folk Blues*, which is in Blues Hall of Fame. He taught from 1978 to 2016 at the University of Memphis, where he was in charge of the university's High Water record label as well as its ethnomusicology curriculum and other classes. He produced records by R.L. Burnside, Jessie Mae Hemphill and many other artists for High Water and for a variety of other labels and did groundbreaking research on blues legends Tommy Johnson and Charley Patton, as well as on the blues and fife and drum traditions of the Mississippi Hill Country and the community of Benton, home of Skip James and Jack Owens.

Born in Boston on January 22, 1944, Evans graduated from Harvard before earning degrees in folklore and mythology at UCLA and



teaching at California State-Fullerton. His scholarly research and his fieldwork in Mississippi, Louisiana and other states formed the basis for a plethora of publications, recordings, liner notes and lectures. His writing has been informed by a multidisciplinary approach utilizing musicology, biography, history, discography, folklore studies and his experience as a musician. He has been the recipient of multiple research grants, academic honors and awards, including two

Grammys for liner notes. Beyond the blues, he has also done research in Africa and Venezuela, and in America with gospel singers, the Hopi Indian nation and others.

At the University of Memphis his students included blues authors Kip Lornell and Steve Franz and many other writers, educators and producers. Evans' film and video work includes a Mississippi fife and drum documentary and an instructional video on the guitar style of Tommy Johnson, while his radio resume is highlighted by two long-running shows he hosted in Memphis on WEVL. Evans has served as a series editor at the University Press of Mississippi since 1996. The series numbers over 100 books, including *The Original Blues*, this year's Blues Hall of Fame honoree in the Classics of Blues Literature category, and his latest book, *Going Up the Country: Adventures in Blues Fieldwork in the 1960s*.

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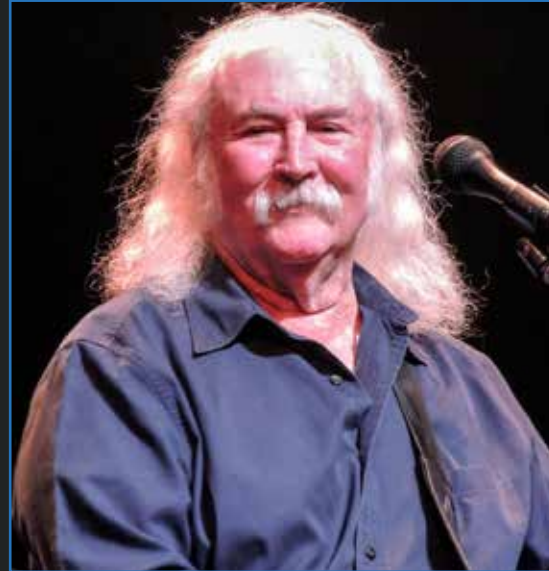
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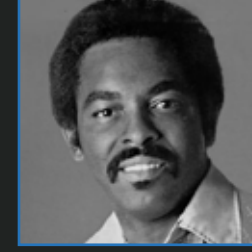
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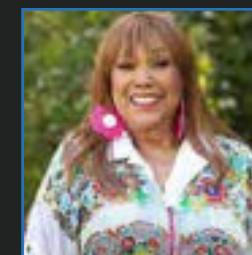
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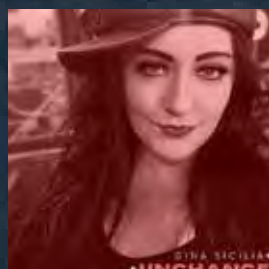


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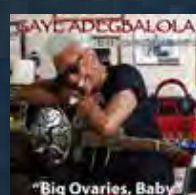
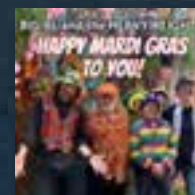
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