

# BLUES NEWS

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE KENTUCKIANA BLUES SOCIETY  
"...PRESERVING, PROMOTING AND PERPETUATING THE BLUES."

Louisville, Kentucky

August/September 2005

Incorporated 1989



Photo by Keith S. Clements

Mark Bright, Greg Martin and Dave Witherspoon were among the artists, friends and fans who turned out for the Sam Myers benefit show June 26th at Stevie Ray's Blues bar. Martha McNeal reviews the event inside on page 7.

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## A LETTER FROM THE PREZ

Henderson was a blast as usual. It may have been the best one yet (but I think I always say that). The weather was great and the line up was exceptional. So good, in fact, that I had a "blues moment". I was so looking forward to the Holmes Brothers, as well as Kenny Neal and Billy Branch that I thought I'd died and gone to heaven when Kenny joined the Holmes Brothers about 15 minutes into their set and Billy joined them for the last few songs. It was blues nirvana. One of those combos you can't hope to see again. It certainly made my day if not my festival.

A few weeks after Henderson I was fortunate enough to go on a roots music pilgrimage. Bob and I took a week off and drove through Cajun country. We started out with the intention of attending the Catfish Festival in Luling, Louisiana but that ended up being cancelled due to Hurricane Dennis. We didn't know it was cancelled until we got there so what were we to do put carry on. We went to Houma and visited Tab Benoit's restaurant, Lagniappe; we went to Breaux Bridge and ate at Mulate's and listened to some great Cajun music; we stayed in a floating cabin at a fish camp on the Atchafalaya Swamp (complete with some of the loudest frogs I've ever heard!) and listened to some more great Cajun music; we spent the night at antebellum mansions in Natchez and Vicksburg; and in essence had a wonderful time. Driving across the swamp with Tab's new CD, *Fever for the Bayou*, playing loudly was a good as it gets. That part of the country contains some wonderfully friendly people and I highly recommend it as a vacation destination.

Since we've been back we seen some great blues shows at Stevie Ray's. Unfortunately, Rod Piazza was there while we were down south but we did get to see Michael Burks and Jimmy Thackery on consecutive Mondays. Both were really good shows. We also missed Lil' Ed at the Water Tower, which I hear was a great success this year. I've really enjoyed that festival the past couple of years and hated to miss it, but I look forward to what they have to offer next year. I also had a treat and caught Sue O'Neil and her band at the Hard Rock Café for Actor's Theatre's promotion of their upcoming play, *Love Janis*, about the life of Janis Joplin. Even though Sue said she wasn't sure how Janis could do Janis all night (massive amounts of Southern Comfort!), she did a great job on Janis' songs.

There's good news and bad news on the remaining local festival front. The good news is that the Ribberfest at Madison, Indiana has a really strong line up this year. It will be August 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> and if you don't already have your wristbands I strongly suggest you get them. The cost is \$20 per person for both days, but if you get them in advance you get \$10 worth

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of food coupons when you first enter the gates. You can't beat that deal, especially when you're getting ready to see Tommy Castro, Mark Selby, the Chicago Rhythm & Blues Kings, Studebaker John & The Hawks, Guy Davis, Omar & The Howlers, and James Harmon & Junior Watson. Now that sounds like there may be some potential blues moments in the offing. The bad news is that after 10 years the Carrollton Blues to the Point Three Rivers Blues Festival has been cancelled. I really hate to see that one go. I have so many fond memories of camping, kite flying, my friends from Toledo, great fried fish from the Larrys, as well as some wonderful music in an idyllic surrounding. I know good things can't last forever but that doesn't keep you from hoping they will and grieving when they don't. I guess we just have to be grateful for the ones we still do have.

I just got the word that Buddy Guy will be appearing at the Brown Theatre on October 29<sup>th</sup>. That will be one not to miss. Tickets are \$46.75, \$37.25, \$33.25 and \$28.25, and can be purchased starting Saturday, August 6 at 10 a.m. by contacting The Kentucky Center Box Office at (502) 584-7777 or toll free at (800) 775-7777, (502) 562-0730 TTY or by visiting [www.kentuckycenter.org](http://www.kentuckycenter.org). I'll be there, hope you are.

It looks like there are still some great blues to come before the summer is over so remember to get out there and support and enjoy live music. Hope to see you at our meetings sometime. As always they are held at 7:00 the first Wednesday of the month at Germantown Cafe on Goss Avenue.

Brenda

## **Everybody Wanna Know Why I Sing the Blues: The Social Status of Blues Musicians**

*While the blues may have originated from poor, impoverished blacks, most Bluesmen these days are white. But can they really sing the blues? Of course . . . but it doesn't come easy. Though the racial demographics may have changed, the blues maintains its working-class attitudes*

**Part Two of Two Parts  
by Alex Plamp**



**Stevie Ray Vaughan**

In looking at all the information I gathered through my interviews, one glaring fact sticks out: blues is a music that was created by blacks, yet every blues musician that I talked to was white. This does not indicate by any means that there are no more black people playing the blues. However, the fact that the random sample that I was able to contact consisted entirely of white middle-aged men does reflect a significant trend in the music. The fact is that the black working-class bluesmen who defined the blues for the first half of the twentieth century have given way to a generation of mostly white players. Everyone I spoke to agreed that there has been a dramatic shift from black to white in the audiences as well as the practitioners of the blues. In fact, Lamont Gillispie says, "I don't know if the blues would have made it over the last fifteen or twenty years without us white guys." The white musicians, he says, have been the strugglers, the ones who have fought to keep the blues alive in a music market where it is not always appreciated.

Jeff Cane suggested that one reason for the shift might be simply a generational issue – that is, new generations tend to connect with forms of entertainment and lifestyles that are unfamiliar (and perhaps subversive) to the previous generation. That is almost certainly a major impetus for the initial popularity of blues-based rock music among white teenagers in the sixties, thanks to

white, mostly British musicians such as The Rolling Stones, John Mayall, Cream, Paul Butterfield, Led Zeppelin, Joe Cocker, the Animals, Peter Green's original version of Fleetwood Mac (pre-Stevie Nicks), and even Bob Dylan. Such music was the first exposure that many white listeners had to many great blues songs, rather than the original black recordings (and let's not forget Elvis Presley, who had a hit with Arthur "Big Boy" Crudup's "That's All Right" in 1954).

Another theory that was suggested by several people is that, because of its roots in social injustice, oppression and hardship, the blues for many black people is an uncomfortable reminder of a difficult time in their history. Keith Clements of the Kentuckiana Blues Society said, "As African Americans began to rise in society, they felt the blues heritage was disrespectful." Lamont Gillispie recalls some black people disparaging the blues as "Uncle Tom music" or, even more bluntly, "slave music." Cosmo told me about a black friend of his who said, "I ain't gonna pick cotton out of a medicine bottle."

I know what George Carlin has to say about the prevalence of white bluesmen today: "White people got no business playing the blues ever. At all! Under any circumstances! What the fuck do white people have to be blue about? Banana Republic ran out of khakis? The Espresso machine is jammed? Hootie and the Blowfish are breaking up? White people ought to understand . . . their job is to give people the blues, not get them. And certainly not to sing or play them!"

This is funny, of course, because he is making fun of his own race, but it is most certainly not true. Every blues player I talked to said that the emotional connection to the blues is what compels them to play it. Everyone experiences heartache, love, despair, joy . . . all facets of emotion that are expressed in the blues. And of course, Carlin knows this, and he passes on a remarkably astute piece of wisdom: "I'll tell you a little secret about the blues: It's not enough to know what notes to play - you have to know why they need to be played."

*Everybody wanna know why I'm singing the blues  
Yes, I've been around a long time,  
People I've paid my dues*

So why sing the blues? In the music's early history, when poor blacks were the primary practitioners of the blues, performing on the street, in clubs, and anywhere people were willing to listen and pay a few cents was often a way for the poverty-stricken to get by. In a two-part feature in the Kentuckiana Blues Society's September and October 1994 newsletters, Tommy Fletcher recounts growing up as a young black man in Louisville in the 1920's and 30's. When he came to Louisville from Nashville in 1923 at the age of sixteen, he shined shoes, cleaned hats, and dug sewers to get by, and eventually started playing the trumpet in the prohibition-era "joints" – after-hours clubs that sold bootleg liquor:

"They would have a piano and drums and somebody'd be playin' an old horn they brought in. That's all was at those joints was the blues. Most of those guys were playin' by ear. It was something they picked up. It was their way of survival. I worked around in them for a long time. 'Course they was payin' but 50 cents a night . . . when I first started out, it'd be just me by myself. I took my pants leg, sewed it up in one end where the hem would come through, put a shoestring in it and I'd carry that old horn with me. I'd hear an old piano goin' and I'd go in . . . They'd say, 'hey, man, wanna work?' I'd say, 'Yeah!' They'd say, 'Blow what you know!'"

From the interviews I conducted, I did not get the sense that anyone I talked to played the blues out of sheer necessity; at least, no one I talked to started playing the blues purely because that was the only way to make any money. Most people simply started doing it for the love of the music, and the blues often came along with many other musical interests. In fact, when Jeff Cane first started performing as a teenager, playing mostly country songs in Louisville bars, he wasn't even paid money, and that was fine by him: "At 17, being paid in beer to play music was better than being paid thousands of dollars now (as an adult)."

When I asked how they developed an interest in the blues, most people answered that they discovered it through records and the radio. Several people mentioned the Nashville station WLAC, which played straight-ahead blues records and could be heard from far away. Lamont Gillispie recalls listening to Howlin' Wolf and Muddy Waters tunes with his brother, hiding the radio under their pillows late at night when they were supposed to be sleeping or doing homework. "I could feel the truth in it back then," he recalls. Feeling an emotional connection to the music was the common response, the reason most people decided to learn an instrument.

Watermelon Slim grew up in Asheville, North Carolina "during the last days of Jim Crow in the South," in a family of "well-enough-off middle class folks." He first heard the blues at the age of five, when his family's black maid (a woman who, he says, "would just be a friend now, someone who would come see me at my shows") would sing blues tunes such as John Lee Hooker's "One Bourbon, One Scotch, One Beer" as she worked. At the time, he said, "I didn't know what it was," but his emotional connection with the blues stuck with him, and he began playing the harmonica at age 10.

*But I had 'em a long time, I've really paid my dues  
Ya know I ain't ashamed of it, people  
I just love to sing my blues*

The blues, as music of tradition, is full of clichés and rhetoric. Regardless of who is playing it, there is just no escaping the working-class tone behind it. But something I realized in my research was that occupation, education, and race are not necessarily the most important factors when it comes to being a bluesman.

Discussing the state of blues today, Watermelon Slim mentioned the "up-and-coming white guitar slingers" of today, such as Johnny Lang. He suggested that while the new, younger players may be fantastic musicians, they "don't know what being a bluesman is." This highlights a very important distinction that I came across throughout my study. At least in the eyes of some of the older, more experienced players, there is a difference between *playing* the blues (that is, playing the right notes in the right form) and *being* a bluesman. When I asked Slim, "What does it mean to be a bluesman?" he responded, "It means experience. It means frustrated expectations. It means you haven't gotten everything you wanted the first time around. You have to have your dick knocked around in the dirt for a significant period." He went on to say, "When you're a kid, or a very young adult, you don't think, 'is anything I'm doing going to be worth a damn three weeks after I'm gone?'" Only time and experience, he says, give one the perspective on life that is necessary to really get at the emotional core of the blues – "Youth hasn't coalesced around anything." Slim then got right to the very heart of the matter: "I'm not sure I wouldn't be singing the blues if I was a solid middle-class Burgher. But I know I wouldn't be singing the blues if I were part of the high-class elite. I might have the blues as a hobby, but I wouldn't be singing it. You can't sing it if you haven't lived it."

Class distinctions among blues musicians may have once centered around race, back when the blues was still a dominantly black music form. But it seems that the more crucial distinction is street credibility – that is, whether one has gone through enough hardships and made enough sacrifices for his blues to really mean something. After I asked my neighbor, Cosmo, how much education he had, he told me he was a high

**"I remember back when I had to play two or three shows a night to get by." — BB King**

school graduate, but he was careful to add, "I have a Master's degree in street." His credibility as a musician comes from the work he has put into his art – playing countless clubs, bars, dances, proms, and any other place where he could get work.

Here is another perfect example of the importance of working-class credibility in the world of blues. When B.B. King played a concert in Louisville one night in the late seventies, Lamont Gillispie's band was called up at the last minute to replace the scheduled opening act, soul singer Bobby "Blue" Bland. According to Gillispie, the crowd was shocked to see five white boys up on stage warming up for the universally hailed "King of the Blues," but once he started blowing his harp, the tension was broken and the show went very well. After their set, B.B. King himself congratulated the band on a job well done, and offered to take pictures with them after he had finished his show. Gillispie then apologized to King, saying they could not wait around because they had another, previously scheduled gig to play that night at a bar elsewhere in town. B.B. King, whose adoring fans were waiting for him to take the stage, took the time to take pictures with the band right then and there, saying, "I remember back when I had to play two or three shows a night to get by." Gillispie also told me the story of one blues guitarist, Alex Schultz, whom he described as "one of the best players I have ever seen." Schultz, who played guitar with Rod Piazza and the Mighty Flyers for many years, is the son of fashion designer Liz Claiborne. He grew up in Greenwich Village and studied at the Berklee School of Music. Once again, this is the type of musician I expected to find many more of, and Gillispie told me that he was not surprised that most of the bluesmen I found were from



**Muddy Waters (left) and Little Walter**

much humbler backgrounds than Schultz. In any case, Gillispie does not in any way disparage Schultz's credibility as a bluesman simply because of his class background. "I've always known it's not about having to get down and dirty and slaving . . . it doesn't have anything to do with how much money you have in your pocket or what color you are. It's about how truthful you are to the music. Your W2 forms don't come across when you're playing music." Thus, since blues is such a traditional music, credibility as a bluesman also depends on respect towards the traditions of the form and the amount of heart and feeling put into the music.

Still, the apparent contradiction of white people singing the songs of black people from poor class backgrounds has not escaped many of the white blues artists who learned about the blues second-hand. Pen Bogert, a member of the KBS who works as a researcher at the Filson club in Louisville, got his first taste of the blues watching old acoustic country-blues masters like Lightnin' Hopkins play at coffee houses in Philadelphia in the 50's and 60's. Thus, when he started playing music himself, he played the same kind of acoustic folk-blues he grew up hearing. He told me that at some point, he began to think that what he was playing was "detached from its roots and its culture." The old folk-blues songs, he said, were set in a certain period with a certain world-view, and it felt "phony" to be singing them, having not experienced what the original authors experienced. "I still listen to it, and it really can reach me when I'm listening to it," he says, but playing it himself felt "not quite real."

Very early in my research, I emailed Matthew O'Bannon, a student of music, class, and race issues from Louisville. I told him about my thesis, and he wrote back, "The bourgeois appropriates the artifacts/residue of dead cultures (including the working class) once said artifacts are safe (dead, defunct, by-gone), because they have no culture of their own, except possibly an economic one . . . Listen to NPR – half-baked nostalgia for some-



*Muddy Waters (left) and his band*

body else's past, coupled with what used to be called 'exotica' (i.e. world music) – very lame. 'Credibility' and 'Authenticity' are bogus criteria."

Based on my talks with bluesmen, this doesn't appear to be a fair generalization. As I've discussed, the

issue of credibility among blues players came up frequently, and the social backgrounds varied among the bluesmen I found. The working-class blues culture is not dead. The social makeup may have changed, but there are still very humble people without advanced education or elite occupations playing the blues out there, for no other reason except their love of the music. Of course there is not much money to be made in it, but there never really was, unless one was willing to put in the extraordinary amount of work required to make it, and there, I found, is where the true authenticity of the blues lies.

Trumpeter Vince DiMartino, a music professor at Centre College who is an expert on jazz (a very close musical cousin of the blues), had much to say about the emotional connections that people make with music. He does admit that more widespread mass media has done a lot to educate people about music from different cultures and class



backgrounds: think back to all the bluesmen I talked to who heard their first taste of Muddy Waters on WLAC radio. "Education brings people out of their small groups and puts them in larger groups that cut across socioeconomic backgrounds," he

says, but "a group is not unified in thought; the way we feel about music doesn't follow a pattern. When homogenization takes place, there are still different reasons why people listen to this music." These reasons are "tempered by the true meaning of the music, and we can't even predict that".

So, who plays the blues these days? Yes, it does seem to be mostly white people, but other than that, it is hard to make any generalizations. I talked to businessmen of various levels, manual laborers, and college professors – a full spectrum of middle class working people. I spoke to no one who could be called high-class or elite, but I spoke to no one who was in abject poverty, either. Looking back, I had an unfair generalization in my head of the college-educated white businessman who learned the blues out of a book and plays it as a hobby. No, the modern bluesman is not the same as those from the first half of the twentieth century; as Keith Clements says, "not too many people still pick cotton and take Highway 61 up to the cities." It should be noted that not all working class people play (or even listen to) the blues, either. It's just not that widely popular. Still, because of its tradition and origins, the mere act of playing the blues implies a strong association between the performer and the common working man, and that is still holding true.

*-Alex Plamp, 2004*

## Sam Myers Benefit Fund Raiser – June 26, 2005

On Sunday, June 26th, a benefit was held to help with the medical expenses of a great bluesman, Sam Myers, who has been diagnosed with throat cancer. Hosted by Lamont Gillispie, the benefit was held at Stevie Ray's Blues Bar and 8 bands volunteered their time and great talent towards providing us with a wonderful evening of blues music and fellowship. A silent auction was held to help with the fund raising. A picture of Sam Myers was created by Jim Masterson and donated by Mark Cook. This picture once hung in the old Cherokee Blues Bar. The picture sold for \$500 and will hang in Stevie Ray's as a lasting tribute to Sam. Another auctioned item was a cake baked and decorated in the shape of a harmonica. It also sold for \$500 and the purchaser shared the cake with everyone there. A raffle was held and tee shirts, games, toys, CDs, a cruise on the Star, and pictures by the Kentuckiana Blues Society's own Keith Clements were the prizes. Lamont had arranged for food so there were hamburgers, hotdogs, brats and plenty of liquid refreshment as always.



Photo by Keith S. Clements

Lamont Gillispie, Bill Dean and Byron Davies

### NOTICE TO MEMBERS

DON'T FORGET TO CHECK YOUR MAILING LABEL AND RE-NEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP WHEN YOU SEE IT COMING DUE. THE GRACE PERIOD FOR RENEWAL IS THREE MONTHS PAST THE DATE OF EXPIRATION. THE GENEROUS GRACE PERIOD IS DUE TO THE FACT THAT YOUR MEMBERSHIP APPLICATIONS AND RENEWALS ARE SENT TO A POST OFFICE BOX AND MAY NOT BE PROCESSED FOR UP TO SEVERAL WEEKS. SO IF YOU ARE NEW OR ARE RENEWING IN THE GRACE PERIOD, AND YOU NEED YOUR NEW CARD ASAP FOR ADMISSION OR OTHER KBS MEMBER DISCOUNTS, JUST LEAVE A MESSAGE AT 502-893-8031 AND WE'LL GET YOUR CARD OUT RIGHT AWAY. BETTER YET, COME TO A MEETING AND RENEW IN PERSON. WE'D LOVE TO SEE YOU! PLEASE KEEP YOUR MEMBERSHIP CURRENT AND HELP US KEEP ON KEEPIN' THE BLUES ALIVE.



Photo by Keith S. Clements

Tim Krekel

River City Blues Band was first up and they played a good mix of swing and slow blues. *My Girl*, *Sure Hate To See You Go*, and *Why Not* were some of their selections. Da Mudcats were up next and they played great blues with *Just Give Me What Your Got* and *Misfit* as their highlights. El Roostars hit the stage with their special style of rock. The crowd was on its feet and the dancing began. Straight Cats Blues Band is Kentucky Headhunters Rufus Huff and Greg Martin. They played low and slow blues such as *Going Down Slow*, *Keep on Moving*, and *It's Alright*. Tim Krekel and his band plays a type of country rock and Lamont joined them on the harp. They played *Silver For My Baby*, *Everythings Gonna Be Alright* and *Shake, Rattle and Roll*. Sue O'Neil and The Blue Seville came out wailing and performed *Find Yourself an Old Man*, *Stay With Me*, and *Rock Me Right*. The Saints played *Love Ya Baby* and *Can't Do My Homework Anymore*. Lamont sat in with them on some of their numbers. Lamont and The 100 Proof Blues Band topped us off with a jamming great time and many of the other performers jammed to make this an evening to remember forever.

Over \$2000 was raised to help pay Sam's medical expenses and Lamont went down to Texas to personally present the money to Sam.

Martha McNeal



# Laser Licks

Beats and Treats...  
What's Getting Lazed at My  
House!

by Nelson Grube

LIVE! Marcia Ball  
Down the Road  
ALCD 4903  
Released 2005

Get out your dancing shoes cause Marcia doesn't do  
concerts. Great live album from one of the best doing it.

Fathers And Sons  
M\*C\*A Chess  
Released 2001  
Muddy Waters, Otis Spann,  
Michael Bloomfield, Paul Butterfield,  
Donald "Duck" Dunn, Sam Lay  
and Buddy Miles.

Sometimes reunion albums work better than the original  
stuff did. This is one of those albums. Treat yourself.

Big Joe Duskin  
Big Joe Jumps Again!  
Cincinnati Blues Session  
Yellow Dog Records  
YDR 1133  
Recorded January 18, 2004.  
The son of a preacher who kept  
his promise to his dad to not play  
that "Devil Music" until he died.  
Daddy lived to be 105. This CD  
shows what the world might have completely  
missed out on.

Lonnie Johnson  
The Original Guitar Wizard  
Properbox 81  
A four disc set that spans a recording career from 1925  
to 1952.  
This compilation was released in 2004.  
Amazing guitar work.  
With Bessie Smith, Victoria Spivey, Louis Armstrong,  
Duke Ellington, Eddie Lang and others.

Ronnie Earl/Duke Robillard  
"The Duke Meets the Earl"  
Stony Plain Records  
SPCD 1303  
Released 2005  
Two present day guitarists  
join forces to show just how it ought  
to be done. And manage to do that job quite well.  
Duke formed Roomfull of Blues and  
was their guitarist for some years; Ronnie  
took over when Duke left.  
They're still making history.



## New Music Reviews



### The Bruce Katz Band A Deeper Blue



Bruce Katz's latest blues album is called "A Deeper Blue" and is produced by Severn Records. Katz has performed blues and jazz music for over 20 years and decided to call his album "A Deeper Blue" because it "connects with that primal feeling blues music is all about. Katz demonstrates his commit-

ment to this primal feeling by playing a Hammond B-3 organ on the album. There is something about a Hammond organ that evokes the feel of a divey, hole-in-the-wall blues or juke joint.

Katz teaches Hammond organ classes at the Berklee College of Music in Boston, and he has developed a Blues History and Analysis class for the college. He has also played as a sideman with some of the best blues musicians, including Jimmy Witherspoon, Big Mama Thornton, and Mighty Sam McClain. During the 1990s, he joined and toured with Ronnie Earl and the Broadcasters. After several years with the band, he left to start his solo career.

The latest album is all instrumental, and Katz is at his best when he sticks to the straight blues selections. My favorites are "Blues in D Natural" and "The Dark Room." Both selections feature Katz's excellent keyboard talents. Katz wrote "The Dark Room" and penned most of the songs on the album. Katz is backed up by an incredible lead guitarist named Michael Williams. In my opinion, the album is worth buying just to hear Williams' impassioned guitar licks. His playing is not to be missed. I especially like the way he rips through "Blues in D Natural," one of the best cuts on this album. Williams also makes the selection "Yeah, Maybe" with his great playing. The rest of the album is very jazz-oriented. Many of the songs feature scat playing common in many jazz albums, and I will admit that I am not a big fan of either jazz or scat. One selection on the album even has a short drum solo. I think that Katz would have been better served if he had stayed with a more traditional blues album.

However, if you are a fan of both blues and jazz instrumental music, this album is for you. You can find more information about Bruce Katz and Severn Records at the website located at [www.severnrecords.com](http://www.severnrecords.com).

**Gary Sampson**

**Johnnie Johnson**  
**New Release. Last Release.**  
**"Johnnie Be Eighty. And Still Bad!"**

To All Blues Societies,

I like to think that blues lovers are a little more knowledgeable about music than the average person. I like to think blues lovers know and care more about real music, and the history of American Music, especially American Music in fairly contemporary times. So I tend to think that most members of blues societies know a lot about Johnnie Johnson. So I am going to skip the history lesson, skip all the things I could say about the role Johnnie played in the development of Rock and Roll, and his career in the blues. And I will skip all the things I could say about Johnnie being one of the greatest and most original musicians of our time. I will say that Johnnie Johnson was as great a man as he was a musician. And will tell you that I was privileged to get to know Johnnie well in a small portion of time that seemed to encapsulate a wide slice of life, and that I can say knowing Johnnie Johnson has made me a better person.

Last winter, Johnnie and his wife granted me the opportunity to produce a Johnnie Johnson recording. When I proposed it, and my concept, they said let's go, let's go now.

I had been writing songs for Johnnie and with Johnnie in mind. Rich McDonough, Johnnie and myself collaborated on 'em, and we cut the music live in the studio. Recording took place in November and December of last year. My intent was to capture the essence of Johnnie's sound. And to me, Johnnie Johnson is all about real music, live music, spontaneity and communication of emotion. His blues is the real old deal blues, and his rock and roll is the rockinest, roll- ingest there is, built on a solid foundation of gospel, blues, etc., Then there is that unique Johnnie Johnson sound, with that same base, but with jazz, stride piano, and swing mixed in. A sound unequaled in originality and breadth. Each style is represented, every song indelibly pure Johnnie Johnson. And it is all blues. Even the rock and roll songs are pure blues, but you blues people will know that.

At the present time, "Johnnie Be Eighty. And Still Bad!" is on my label, Cousin Moe Music. Johnnie loved the project. He was eager to have it. Getting a label deal is a lengthy process, even for a Johnnie Johnson project. I love Johnnie, always will, and it was important to me to complete this project for him. So much of the meaning in this project to me is that Johnnie wanted to do it with me, enjoyed it, loved listening to it, and was proud of it. I was not about to make Johnnie wait, so went ahead and completed it on my own label, as quickly as I could and still make a project that represents the class and elegance of Johnnie Johnson.

The manufactured CD actually arrived from the factory on April 12<sup>th</sup>.. I was in NY at the time, but called Johnnie and told him I had the first shipment, was overnighting him some CDs, and that I would be back home in St Louis real quickly. We planned to hit the local radio stations the next week. Johnnie sounded great and happy. As usual, he was considerate of me. Told me to slow down, rest up, and be careful getting back.. As you know, the next morning, April 13<sup>th</sup>, Johnnie passed peacefully and beautifully.

"Johnnie Be Eighty. And Still Bad!" is Johnnie's Johnson last musical statement. It is a personal project for Johnnie, I wrote "Beach Weather" about his life, and "Lucky Four" about the great love between he and Frances, his fourth wife. This project is just one of the many gifts Johnnie gave to this world. Johnnie was giving right up till his last breath. "Johnnie Be Eighty. And Still Bad!" is available at [www.cousinmoemusic.com](http://www.cousinmoemusic.com) . Photos and info about the project are there as well. It is also available at <http://cdbaby.com/cd/johnniejohnson>,

or at <http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/search-handle-form/104-7382080-6606368>. Johnnie played his heart on this project. It is there to be heard. Blues lovers would want to know about this project now. If the responsible parties at each blues society would please pass this letter on to its e mailing membership, both I, Johnnie's family, and I do not doubt your members, would be pleased. Thank you.

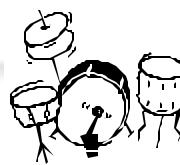
Sincerely,

Jeff Alexander  
Cousin Moe Music  
Cousinmoe58@aol.com  
www.cousinmoemusic.com





**KENTUCKIANA BLUES CALENDAR**  
**All Shows Subject to Change**  
**Best to Call Before Hitting the Road**



AUG 1	Stevie Ray's	The Marks 9 PM no cover
2	Stevie Ray's	Blues jam 9-midnight no cover
	Zena's Cafe	Tanita Gaines
3	Stevie Ray's	Malcolm Gibson & the Mighty Jukes 9 PM \$5
	Zena's Cafe	Black Cat Bone
	Lisa's Oak Street Lounge	Blues jam with Lamont Gillispie & 100 Proof Blues 9 PM
4	Stevie Ray's	Mojo-Mo Soul Ladies Nite w/ The Predators 9 PM \$5
6-May	Stevie Ray's	7:30 Lamont Gillispie & 100 Proof Blues 10:30 Jason Ricci
	Jim Porter's Melody Bar	Bootleg Radio
	Zena's Cafe	5th BB Taylor 6th Billy Roy Danger and the Rectifiers
7	Air Devils Inn	Blues jam w/ John Burgard, Mike Lynch, & Denny Thornberry
8	Stevie Ray's	Tab Benoit 8 PM \$15
9	Stevie Ray's	Blues jam 9-midnight no cover
	Zena's Cafe	Tanita Gaines
10	Stevie Ray's	Rockin Kake 9 PM \$5
	Zena's Cafe	Black Cat Bone
	Lisa's Oak Street Lounge	Blues jam with Lamont Gillispie & 100 Proof Blues 9 PM
11	Stevie Ray's	Mojo-Mo Soul Ladies Nite w/ B.F. Burt & the Instigators \$5
12	Molly Malone's	L A Groove
12-13	Stevie Ray's	7:30 Da Mudcats 10:30 The Predators
	Jim Porter's Melody Bar	Susan O'Neil & Blue Seville
	Air Devils Inn	12th Hellfish 13th El Roostars
13	Gerstles	Bodeco
14	Air Devils Inn	Blues jam w/ John Burgard, Mike Lynch, & Denny Thornberry
	Willow Park	Lamont Gillispie & 100 Proof Blues 7 PM (Cherokee Triangle)
15	Stevie Ray's	John Burgard & Reed Davis 9 PM no cover
16	Stevie Ray's	Blues jam 9-midnight no cover
	Zena's Cafe	Tanita Gaines
17	Stevie Ray's	The Stela-Vees Blues Band 9 PM \$5
	Zena's Cafe	Black Cat Bone
	Lisa's Oak Street Lounge	Blues jam with Lamont Gillispie & 100 Proof Blues 9 PM
18	Stevie Ray's	Mojo-Mo Soul Ladies Nite w/ Greg Foresman 9 PM \$5
19-20	Stevie Ray's	7:30 Sue O'Neil 10:30 Steve Ferguson
20	Zena's Cafe	The Marks
21	Air Devils Inn	Blues jam w/ John Burgard, Mike Lynch, & Denny Thornberry
22	Stevie Ray's	Blue Meridian 9 PM no cover
23	Stevie Ray's	Blues jam 9-midnight no cover
	Zena's Cafe	Tanita Gaines
24	Stevie Ray's	Rusty Spoon 9 PM \$5
	Zena's Cafe	Black Cat Bone
	Lisa's Oak Street Lounge	Blues jam with Lamont Gillispie & 100 Proof Blues 9 PM
25	Stevie Ray's	Mojo-Mo Soul Ladies Nite w/ Jason Ricci 9 PM \$5
26	R Place Pub	Robbie Bartlett & Company 10 PM - 2 AM
26	Air Devils Inn	Billy Roy Danger and the Rectifiers
26-27	Stevie Ray's	7:30 Travelin Mo-Jos 10:30 Tim & the True Tones
	Zena's Cafe	The Louisville Blues
28	Air Devils Inn	Blues jam w/ John Burgard, Mike Lynch, & Denny Thornberry
29	Stevie Ray's	Lazy Eleven 9 PM no cover
	The Kentucky Theater	Johnny Lang
30	Stevie Ray's	Blues jam 9-midnight no cover
	Zena's Cafe	Tanita Gaines
31	Stevie Ray's	Midnight Blue 9 PM \$5
	Zena's Cafe	Black Cat Bone
	Lisa's Oak Street Lounge	Blues jam with Lamont Gillispie & 100 Proof Blues 9 PM
SEP 2-3	Jim Porter's	Funk Junkies
8	Stevie Ray's	Johnny Rawls
10-11	Stevie Ray's	7:30 Lamont Gillispie & 100 Proof Blues 10:30 Scott Ellison
	Jim Porter's	Susan O'Neil & Blue Seville
12	Stevie Ray's	James Armstrong



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**31st Midnight Blue**

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**All Dates Subject To Change**

### **NOTICE TO MUSICIANS AND BANDS!!**

Get the word out to your fans and the rest of the blues world about where you're playing. The new sletter and website calendar pages are free services to blues musicians. Call Natalie Carter at (502) 893-8031 or e-mail our webmaster at [kbsblues@aye.net](mailto:kbsblues@aye.net) with your schedule. Send us photos of your band and we'll put them in the *Blues News*.

Air Devils Inn	2802 Taylorsville Rd.	454-4443	Phoenix Hill Tavern	644 Baxter Ave.	589-4957
Billy's Place	26th & Broadway	776-1327	Stevie Ray's Blues Bar	230 E. Main St.	582-9945
Jim Porter's	2345 Lexington Rd.	452-9531	Zena's Cafe	122 W. Main St.	584-3074

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Blues program hosted by Rich Reese Monday nights on 96.7.

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Photo by Brenda Major

The Holmes Brothers and Kenny Neal at the 2005 W. C. Handy Festival in Henderson, KY.



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