

Kentuckiana Blues Society

Louisville, Kentucky

1988-2012

25 Year History of the Kentuckiana Blues Society

The Kentuckiana Blues Society will be celebrating its silver anniversary this year (2013). The organization has grown from a handful of believers with a dream of a mission "To Promote, Preserve and Perpetuate the Blues" in our region to an active membership of over five hundred people. There have been no stones in our pathway for we are on a roll. The following are some of the milestones during the 25 years.

The KBS was first involved in the creation of the Garvin Gate Blues Festival in 1988. This annual neighborhood event has brought the community together featuring local and national acts. In 1989 the KBS was granted articles of incorporation and became a nonprofit organization. At the second Garvin Gate Blues Festival the first Sylvester Weaver Award was presented to a local musician who exemplified the Three 'Ps' of our mission. This award has been given each year to someone the KBS Board designates as worthy.

In 1990 the KBS collaborated with Kentucky Homefront, another organization that presents music, for a blues concert at Bellarmine University to celebrate our first anniversary. Kentucky Homefront produces a monthly live performance featuring Kentucky's finest acoustical folk, traditional, bluegrass and country and blues. These shows are recorded for broadcast on Public Radio WFPK. That same year the KBS became an affiliate member of the Blues Foundation. The Louisville Blues Compilation album was released on Rollin' & Tumblin' Records, featuring ten local bands with the KBS providing financial assistance.

The following year the monthly KBS newsletter, *Blues News*, got a new format and masthead. In addition to the newsletter's reviews, articles and monthly calendar of blues events, a weekly e-mail update was initiated in 2007 to keep the members informed of current events. At the 1991 General Membership Meeting, Foree Wells and The Walnut Street Blues Band performed with Pinetop Perkins.

In 1992 the KBS received a grant from the Kentucky Oral History Commission to do over thirty interviews with people associated with blues music. That endeavor was called the Louisville Blues Legacy Project. The research was completed four years later with most of the historical information published in *Blues News* and the tapes and transcripts archived at the University of Louisville Ekstrom Library. Money was raised for a headstone for pioneering blues guitarist Sylvester Weaver and there was a dedication ceremony at the Louisville Cemetery. Weaver was a Louisville native who was the first blues guitarist to record in 1923 as an accompanist to Sara Martin and as a solo artist with the instrumental "Guitar Blues." A grant from the Fund for the Arts to the KBS enabled the Society to present blues legend, Henry Townsend, who played piano and guitar at the Kentucky Center for the Arts.

Monthly articles about the blues titled "I Got A Mind To Ramble" started to be published in the magazine, *Louisville Music News*, in 1993. These articles were written by members of the KBS and they continue today. The first Annual Amateur Blues Contest was held at the Bluebird that year. The KBS adopted the logo that incorporated the profile of Clarence Gatemouth Brown. A series of fifteen 30-minute shows titled, "Back To The Blues" was produced by the KBS and shown on TKR cable access that highlighted local and regional blues talent and history.

The KBS raised money for a base for Bill Gaither's headstone in New Crown Cemetery in Indianapolis during 1994. In 1995 the KBS started their Blues Cruises, where a school bus transported a group to various venues in the city for food, drink and live blues. The KBS website was up and running in 1997 (www.kbsblues.org), providing pertinent information about the Society. A headstone was dedicated for founding KBS members Foree and Lorene Wells in Louisville's Calvary Cemetery in 1999. The year ended on a happy note with the KBS celebrating ten years with a party at Stevie Ray's Blues Bar where singer E.C. Scott performed.

KBS members volunteered to help Louisville Public Media during their membership drive in 2001, which has continued each year. Louisville's 'Songbird of the South', Mary Ann Fisher, released a CD in 2003 and Foree Wells' CD, *It's A New Day Brother*, released on Jim O'Neil's Stackhouse Records label, came out in 2007. Both recordings were sponsored by the KBS with CD release parties. Founding KBS member, Scott Mullins, retired from hosting "Saturday Night Blues Party" on Public Radio after twenty years and Kevin Yazell became the new host.

The KBS has partnered with a variety of organizations in recent years to initiate several local blues festivals, including the Louisville Blues-n-Barbecue Festival, Smokin' On The River Festival, Jeffersontown-Crusade Blues Festival, 10th Street Blues Festival, Pitt Academy Bar-B-Q Festival, Booty Shakin' Blues Festival, Germantown-Schnitzelburg Blues Festival and the Big Rock Jazz and Blues Festival. 2008 marked the twentieth year for the KBS with a big bash at the Vernon Club that included the Beat Daddy's and Miss Lissa & Co. See the attached Special Commemorative 20th Anniversary Issue of our newsletter with photos depicting our past.

A power point show called "Blues You Can Use" that combines images and music was prepared by the KBS to portray the history of the blues. The informational presentation has been presented on several occasions. The KBS has been a constant supporter of MERF (Musician's Emergency Resource Foundation) to cosponsor and promote benefit concerts to financially assist musicians in need. Our current president, Gary Sampson, started hosting a weekly radio program of local and regional blues on Crescent Hill Radio in 2010.

For the last two years, in 2011 and 2012, the KBS Solo/Duo competition winners (Jimi V & Screamin' John and Jimmy Davis) have competed in the semi-finals in the International Blues Challenge in Memphis. We have high hopes that our 2012 band winner, Lamont Gillispie and 100 Proof and solo/duo winner Joe DeBow and Danny Henderson will do well in the 2013 IBC.

This year will be a milestone with several major events planned culminating with a 25th anniversary celebration that will showcase several national acts.

The KBS Board of Directors has met regularly on the first Wednesday of every month with the meetings open to all its members and guests. The benefits of a KBS membership are the best bargain in Louisville. For a \$20 single membership or \$25 double membership you get admission discounts of blues events at several venues, discounts on purchases at designated music stores, free admission to the Louisville Blues-n-Barbecue Festival and selected blues events at Jim Porter's Good Time Emporium. Most important of all you share in the camaraderie of a bunch of dedicated blues loving nuts.

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