



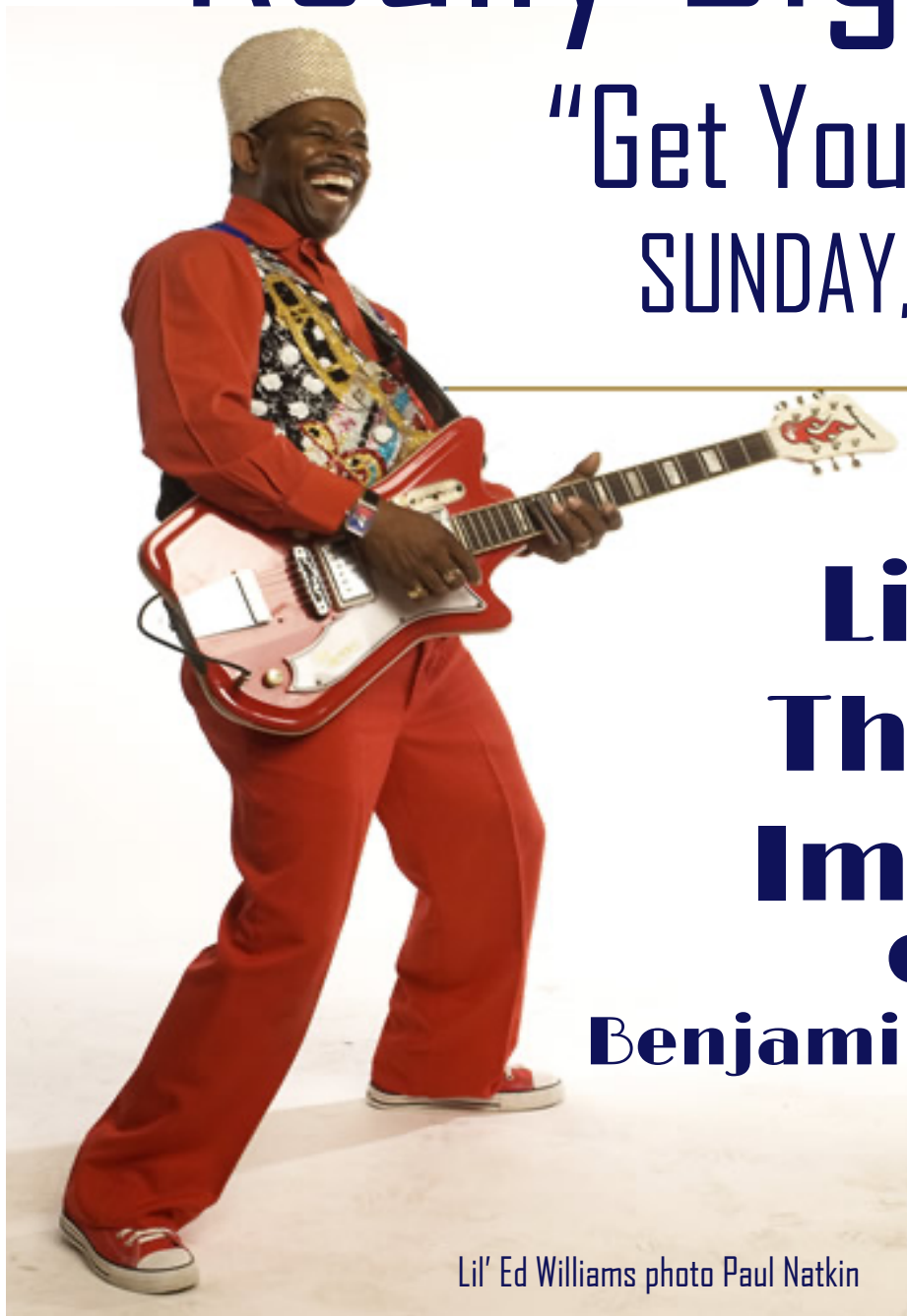
Blues Society of Central Pennsylvania
www.bscpblues.com

BLUES NEWS

April.- June. 2022

Really Big Show

"Get Your Ed-Head On"
SUNDAY, APRIL 24, 2022



**Lil' Ed &
The Blues
Imperials**

**Opener:
Benjamin Vo Blues Band**

Lil' Ed Williams photo Paul Natkin

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

From your President	2
In Memoriam	3
Spring Show	4
Blues Bands Beat	5
In the Spotlight	6
Book Corner	7
A Peek at the Past	8
Mom I Picnic Poster	9
Meet Board Members	10
Save the Dates	10
In the Spotlight	11
Guitar Slim	12
Jam Gear	13
In Case You Missed It	14
CD Reviews	15
Blues Festivals 2022	16

**BSCP BOARD OF DIRECTORS****President:** Kathy Gregoire**Vice President:** Mike Knott**Secretary:** To be filled**Treasurer:** Gary "Rocky" Rothrock**Committee Chairpersons:**

To be filled – Archives

JD Drudul – IT Coordinator

Kathryn Gregoire – Membership, Newsletter

Mike Knott – Events

Dan Mowery – Webmaster; Website

Gary "Rocky" Rothrock – Jam, Finance

Rebecca Young – Public Relations

Members-at-Large:

Ben Brandt

Hannah Sherman

Sherman Smith

Board Member Emeritus: Virginia Ivanoff

BLUES NEWS STAFF

Managing Editor Kathryn Gregoire

Review Editors Jackson Fogel, Mike Knott

Contributing Writers Jackson Fogel, Bill Halaszynski, David Moyer, Jack Roberts, Hannah Sherman, Betty Knott

Photographers Greg Hogg, Ken Rimondi

Printed by Get It Now Print

4790 Derry St, Harrisburg, PA

Designer Ashley Rozema, Graphic Artist

Send email and address changes to
bluesmunga@gmail.com

From your President...

As I am writing to you on March 13, I cannot help but note that it is exactly two years since the PA Covid shutdown was announced. As I reflected on the day, I retrieved my 2020 wall calendar and looked at March, noting the many cancelled events. Now with guarded optimism, we are returning to more in-person events and activities.

Our next event is remarkable in that we have the same Spring Show that we had to cancel two years ago. Thanks once again to Mike Knott, Events Chairperson, the Benjamin Vo Blues Band is scheduled for 2 pm, followed by Lil' Ed and the Blues Imperials. Doors will open at 1 pm on Sunday, April 24, at Champions (p.4). It feels good to have come full circle.

I thought about how BSCP continues to meet the challenges of ongoing changes by keeping the focus on its mission to preserve, promote, support, and enjoy America's truly original art form, the blues. BSCP can do this because of all the members and volunteers who give of their time and energy as they are able, helping at events, serving on the board and committees, hosting and playing at the jam, and supporting musicians and their blues society in essential ways, big and small. It takes the whole village to keep the blues alive!

The village will be coming together for its annual Mom I picnic on Sunday, May 29, 2022. After our two-year hiatus, it will be especially sweet to hear live blues music from our local bands who once again are generously donating their talents to us all for the annual BSCP fundraiser. Volunteers, too numerous to mention, are already working hard to prepare a fun picnic (p.9).

I want to take this opportunity to thank the five members who have recently stepped down from the BSCP board. Dot Grubb has been with the board since its inception serving as the Treasurer and most recently

as a Member-At-Large and Kitchen Coordinator at Mom I picnics and Christmas Parties. Buster Grubb has been around nearly as long as Dot, serving as President, Vice-President, Membership Chairperson and Archives Chairperson. Greg Hogg served for years as a Member At Large and IBC Committee Chairperson. Decades of his BSCP event photographs are in the newsletter and the archives on the website, as well as the virtual jam videos he prepared for posting. During the past year, Betty Knott served on the board as Secretary and Rosemary Witzel served as a Member-At-Large. Both served as volunteers in the kitchen at events. I am so grateful to each of these individuals for their commitment and hard work both in the past and the present as they continue to contribute in numerous ways.

I am also very pleased to announce two new board members: Ben Brandt (Member-At-Large & Public Relations Committee) and Joe Kambic (By-Laws Chairperson and Education Committee Chairperson). Each has unique talents and long-time passion for the blues. Please join me in welcoming them to the board.

Celebrating the blues,



Kathryn Gregoire

bluesmunga@gmail.com

Mission Statement

The Blues Society of Central Pennsylvania is a non-profit corporation dedicated to the preservation, promotion, support and enjoyment of the truly original American art form, the blues.

In Memoriam

by Jackson Fogel



Harpdog Brown

January 28, 1962 - January 7, 2022

Harpdog Brown was an award-winning Canadian vocalist and harmonica player who played venues big and small from here to Germany. He and his guitarist, J. Arthur Edmonds, lit up the mid-50s Chicago blues scene with several albums, including 1995's *Home Is Where the Harp Is*.



Kristopher Schnebelen

May 2, 1980 - January 10, 2022

The drums and vocals of the soul blues trio Trampled Under Foot from 2000 to 2014, Schnebelen helped the band win the International Blues Challenge in 2008 and hit number one on the U.S. Billboard Top Blues Albums Chart before a prolific solo career.



Tony TNT Jones

June 24, 1956 - January 21, 2022

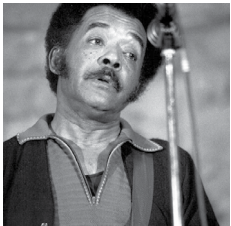
An incredible bassist, composer, producer, vocalist, and arranger, TNT Jones's list of collaborators is as long as his talents. The former musical director for Sister Sledge, Jones was a major influence in the Philadelphia music scene and was dedicated to community arts projects to help kids get access to instruments and learn how to play.



Samuel Lay

March 20, 1935 - January 29, 2022

Rock n' Roll, Blues, and Jazz Hall of Famer Sam Lay got his start playing drums for the Original Thunderbirds in 1957 before becoming Muddy Waters' regular drummer and collaborating with everyone from Howlin' Wolf to Bob Dylan.



Jimmy Johnson

November 25, 1928 - January 31, 2022

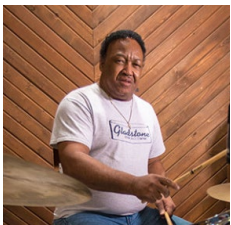
The Holly Springs, Mississippi-born guitarist found his first professional gig with Slim Willis in 1959. By the '60s he had his own band, and by the mid-70s, he was touring Japan with Otis Rush. He played with BB King, Magic Sam, Albert King and more. He won the first annual Blues Music Award in 1980, was inducted into the Blues Hall of Fame in 2016, honored as "Best Blues Guitar Player" in 2020 by Living Blues and named "Blues Artist of the Year" in 1921.



Sylvester "Syl" Johnson

July 1, 1936 - February 6, 2022

Brother to Jimmy Johnson, Syl Johnson began his music career in Chicago after moving there from Holly Springs, Mississippi, in 1950. Syl had a storied career with massive hits, including "Different Strokes," which has been sampled over 300 times. The singer and owner of Solomon's Fishery was added to the Blues Hall of Fame in 2020.



Howard Grimes

August 22, 1941 - February 12, 2022

A lifelong musician, Grimes had his first performance at 12 and was recording regularly as a drummer by his late teens. As the main drummer in Willie Mitchell's house band at Hi Records, Grimes was involved with many of the major soul blues hits in the 1970s.

Spring Show 2022

The cancellation of the BSCP April 19th Show due to Covid 19 restrictions was the front-page story for the Spring 2020 edition of the Blues News. We are thrilled to be back with Lil' Ed & The Blue Imperials and the opener, Benjamin Vo Blues Band, almost exactly two years later – Sunday, April 24th, 2022. Both bands are doing great. Lil' Ed & The Blues Imperials are nominated for the BMA Band of the Year (to be announced May 5, 2022). Benjamin Vo Blues Band is planning a third album.

Prepare to get your “Ed-Head” on

Chicago's Lil' Ed & The Blues Imperials brings identity-changing, high-energy show to Champions

by Andrew Kehe

Reprint, *Blues News*,
April 2020

Memo to all Meatheads, Deadheads and Blockheads everywhere. April 19 at Champions Sports Bar & Grill in Highspire offers an opportunity to upgrade and simplify those unsavory monikers to a more gritty, bluesy one.

Then and there, health regulations permitting, heads of every size, shape and identity will experience Chicago blues legend Lil' Ed & The Blues Imperials, and will leave having declared themselves proud members of “Ed Head” Nation.

That's what Ed Williams' identity-changing, raucous, playful Chicago blues music can do to you. People align themselves with Lil' Ed, and keep coming back for more.

It's all good. Worry only if you can't resist donning a fez.

The two-time Blues Music Award winning Lil' Ed & The Blues Imperials, a Chicago-based band *Guitar Player Magazine* describes as a “snarling, boogie-blues machine” takes the stage at Champions following the 2 p.m. opening set performed by Lititz's The Benjamin Vo Blues Band, itself a band receiving high acclaim as of late.

It seems everywhere Lil' Ed and his band play, glowing accolades follow.

The Philadelphia Daily News described Lil' Ed Williams as “the liveliest blues showman alive, with an explosive, good-rocking guitar sound and the stage moves to match. Raw, gutbucket blues sure to get you up and dancing.”

Chicago Tribune: “Although they've been steadily releasing albums and playing clubs and roadhouses since their first gig on the West Side in 1975, the Blues Imperials grow more fiery and energetic every year. Behind his colorful fezzes and jackets and party-time shows is a hard work ethic.”

Naples Daily News: “Williams, with what critics call his “slashing” slide guitar, flinty

voice and band of music veterans, has become an institution in the band's blues-centric hometown of Chicago.”

BMA has taken notice, nominating his band eight times for Blues Band of the Year, and presenting them with that honor twice. Lil' Ed is a three-time winner of Living Blues' Performer of the Year award.

Humble beginnings in the 1950s and 60s on the rough West Side of Chicago preceded Lil' Ed's rapid rise to success. Buffing at the local car wash enabled his early musical development. Inspired by the slide guitar playing of his uncle J.B. Hutto, a Blues Foundation Hall of Famer, Lil' Ed developed his own style that caught the attention of Alligator records in the early 1980s. It may not have happened were it not for the insistence by his uncle that his nephew follow his own path, develop his own style.

“No you're not,” Hutto told Lil' Ed when the youngster said he wanted to play just like him, Williams told the Naples paper. “You can play my music and you can sing my music, but you've got to make it your own.”

Lil' Ed had never recorded in a studio before auditioning before Alligator President Bruce Iglauer, so the band didn't know better than to tear into its music in a way they might on stage. Iglauer dug it, signed them to a contract right there and in 1986 the band debuted its first of eight records on Alligator “Roughhousin.” Twelve of the songs used for “Roughhousin” were recorded during a three-hour session during which the band cut 30 songs.

That's the helter-skelter pace at which this band can function, still.

Lil' Ed & The Blues Imperials did dissolve for a time in the 1990s, with Williams filling the gap recording a few solo records. But the band re-formed in 1999 and has been going strong since.



And so has the wardrobe and the come-party-with-me message it emits. The fezzes in particular provide a unique touch, and they are not, he says, to extend his physical stature.

Lil' Ed ain't big, but he ain't little either, at least not with a fez on.

“It's an African thing,” Williams told the Naples Daily News. “My uncle used to wear one. It's like a crown. My auntie decided to make one for my uncle because it stands for king.”

That appealed to Lil' Ed and now, obviously, to all Ed-Heads who follow.

Benjamin Vo Blues Band

This charging Lititz band has been coming on like gangbusters since drawing attention from the Reading Blues Festival a few years ago and then winning the Billtown Blues Festival Challenge a year ago. Backed by the Billtown Blues Association, the Benjamin Vo Blues Band joined Lancaster band Blues On The Loose as a competitor at last month's International Blues Challenge in Memphis.

Vo earned the sponsorship by edging Blues On The Loose at Billtown's preliminary challenge.

Vo, 32, started out playing nylon string classical guitar, but then caught on to the blues in college after listening to his friend's collection of Delta blues legends. With his sights set on performing and touring, he began writing his own tunes in 2014.

The UK-based Blues Matters Magazine described the band's performance at the Lancaster Roots & Blues Festival in 2016 as “purely magnetic and held the attention of everyone in the room.”

The magazine has been following their progress ever since, publishing glowing reviews of their releases “Rain On My Windows” and “Blueberry & Country Sugar.”

Blues Bands Beat

by Jack Roberts



OK, it's time for some more blues news you can use. So, let's get right to it. Johnny Never and John Colgan Davis, better known as **The Two Johns**, are back out on the circuit again and they couldn't be happier about it. The duo is now gearing up for a show at a new performance theater in Glenside - The Royal - on April 30. According to Never. "It's a very cool space with an excellent sound system. Tickets are available at <https://www.theroyalglenside.com>.

In the meantime, Never is hard at work in the studio. "I'm excited about being all enveloped in writing songs and working on initial recordings for my next album," he said. They're hoping to do a little better financially on the next album. "The last CD had radio play all over the frickin' world," he said, "but as any hard-working musician will tell you, it is difficult to sell recorded music when folks can just get it free through streaming sites that don't actually pay the artists anything."

Did someone say recordings? Oh, yeah, we did. Local bluesman **Benjamin Vo** is headed up to New York City on April 6 to do a direct-to-vinyl recording session at Leesta Vall Records.

"There will be 7-inch 45 RPM vinyl records, each performance done one at a time," Benjamin said in a recent email. "Anybody is welcome to place an order if interested and they can choose the song." To preorder, go to <https://leestavall.com/products/benjaminvo>.

To hear Benjamin Vo and his band live, head up to Champions at Highspire - you've heard of that place, right? - on April 24. They'll be opening for Lil' Ed and

The Imperials. Sounds like a great way to spend a Sunday afternoon, no?

Joe Kambic is currently in the Sound Design Music Studio in Lancaster - or was when he emailed us in March - recording his first CD of other people's blues tunes and some of his originals. Want to check it out? Then head out to the Launch Music Conference & Festival in Lancaster, where Kambic will be playing on The Acoustic Stage in the Conference Center at 25 South Queen Street - and releasing his new CD - on Thursday, April 14. And for the record - or cassette tape - Joe's stage name is Shaky Joe Kambic.

And even more new news: the word is just in - **The Ann Kerstetter Band** will be opening for Joe Lewis Walker and Dana Fuchs at the newly opened Susquehanna Event Center in Selinsgrove on June 18th. Starting time is 4:30 p.m. For more on the event center, go to www.sveventcenter.com.

Can't wait that long? Then catch the Ann Kerstetter Band at the 32nd Annual Billtown Blues Music Festival at the Lycoming County Fairgrounds in Hughesville on June 10th. Not familiar with The Ann Kerstetter Band? Not surprising. They're fairly new to the Central PA blues scene - they've only been playing around the area since 1969.

Jamey's House of Music, 32 S. Lansdowne Ave, Lansdowne, PA, showcases lots of our favorite regional blues musicians. You might remember that their house band played for our virtual show during Covid lockdown. Some of the upcoming acts include Moonshine Society (Fri, April 15); The Billy Price Band (Sat, April 23); Mike Guldin and Rollin' & Tumblin' w/special guests Roger Girke and Mikey Jr. (Fri, April 29); Laura Cheadle Band (Fri, May 27); and Gabe Stillman Band (Fri, June 3). All shows are 8 - 10 pm.

Possibly the biggest news we have belongs to **Blues on the Loose**, the Lancaster-based band which now has as many new band members as old ones. "On guitar, we have added Anthony 'Tony' Wayne Pieruccini and on percussion, Connor Spoehr." Lewis Bechtold, BOTL leader, vocalist and harmonica player, told us in a recent email.

"Additionally, we have welcomed

Ralph Leon Miller aboard," Bechtold said. "Ralph performs on piano, organ, horns, and electric fiddle, though not all at the same time." Miller, a longtime Lancaster musician, appeared with the band, as did Pieruccini in the group's recent show at 551 West in Lancaster.

That said, BOTL's sound is still based on the work of what Lewis calls "the Holy Trinity of Lewy, Doug and Jay" - a clear reference to Lewis; Doug Porter, longtime bassist with the band; and Jay McElroy, aka JMac, their longtime guitarist and vocalist. They've also got a start on their next recording project with a new original tune, "I Can't Dance," which, Bechtold says has a calypso tempo for those "twinkling toes of our dancing fans."

Quite the streak, no? And they might be appearing there as winner of a Central Pennsylvania Music Award for Best Blues Band. The CPMA's will be announced at Hershey Theater on March 24. Other area performers in the competition include **Nate Myers and the Aces, The Skyla Burrell Band, Gabe Stillman Band, and Switch Fu**.

Finally, we've got some great news for those who love the blues - and that's all of you, right? The **East Pete Blues Fest** is coming back and we've got Randy Bucksner's word on it. Date and time: September 3, from 1-7 p.m. On the lineup so far are **Clarence Spady** and **Acoustic Stew**. And we'll let you know more as soon as we find out more.

But the good news doesn't end there. **The Blues Night at Tellus360** will start up again on June 24, in addition to which Randy is working on starting a Blues Evening at Phantom Power in Millersville. And, of course, we'll keep you posted on that.

OK, that's it for now. Hopefully we'll catch you at some, if not all, of the above shows.

**BSCP Congratulates
The Gabe Stillman Band
CPMA 2022 Award
Best Blues Band**



In the Spotlight...

Ben Brandt



By Hannah Sherman



When your dad is a pro and your mom plays violin, music becomes second nature and your parents become your first influences. Born in Livingston, New Jersey, Ben started with the violin at age 3 and started guitar on his dad's full-size red SG when he was about 4. He thinks the reason he has such large hands now as compared to the rest of his physique is because his hands adapted to playing that guitar at such a young age. Moving to Madison, New Jersey, when he was 6, Ben lived to play. His dad was doing session work and playing in bars but was also a hypno-therapist and did radio interviews in New York City. Ben fantasized about being a radio disc jockey and set up his dad's tape recorder in his room and played DJ with CDs. Then he made his dad listen to his taped "shows!" His parents always encouraged his music and supported him completely. His dad started having writing sessions with him when he was 9 or 10, but he was still obsessed with the guitar.

When he was 10, his dad invited him to go with him to WDHA 105.5 to do an interview for their sister station. While his dad was being interviewed, he started wandering around the studio and ended up in the office of the head program director, Lenny Block. Block was on the phone and he had a guitar in the corner so, of course, Ben picked it up and started playing. After discovering how good Ben was and how and why Ben ended up in his office, the studio got him session players, did a whole album called "Lay it on the Line," and get this: Still 10 years old, Ben and his band opened for Billy Hector and Savoy Brown at Meadowlands! For Ben, opening at Meadowlands at age 10 meant he was going to be able to get a new Game Boy to play Pokémon on!

During high school, he was in bands, playing guitar and writing progressive music, and then becoming interested in drums. They entered band competitions and won in Stroudsburg with his band, Sugars. His family also formed the band Genetic Blends, with his dad on guitar, his brother, Mike, on bass and Ben on drums. Three months after graduation, his dad died suddenly, right when Ben was going to start college in the music field, and instead he got a job with the New Cumberland Army Depot. His dad liked cigar shops and Ben found a cigar shop/pool hall in New Cumberland so he could get to know the area better, having just moved from the Poconos. He met his friend, Steve (cow bell!) who suggested they go to the BSCP blues jam at the 40&8. He was 20 years old and has been with us ever since.

In the past 10 years, he has done an album with the Ben Brandt Trio, lived in Nashville for 2 years, done an album in Los Angeles, was invited to his now good friend Joe Bonamassa's house, and opened for Coco Montoya, Jimmy Thackery, Los Lonely Boys and Shemekia Copeland, among others. Ben's influences are Robin Ford, Chris Cain, Bonnie Raitt and Sonny Landreth. His early blues influences were the Allman Brothers, Mike Bloomfield and Howlin' Wolf, who all started him on his blues journey.

Ben considers himself a man on a mission trying to accomplish a lot of things. Ben says, "I've always been attracted to deep, emotional feelings. The path less traveled never truly ends because if you rest on your accomplishments then you stop searching for the next stone to turn over." He quit working in 2018 to focus on his music but is now in search of a hobby, maybe golf, and is looking for a teacher!

Ben moved to Harrisburg right after his dad died and he found the BSCP, and we are the reason he has stayed in this area. He has met some good friends and we've been like family. Not only do we enjoy his playing at

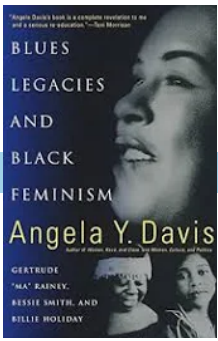
the jam and his shows, but he is also now the newest member of the BSCP Board as a Member-At-Large and we look forward to a long, new relationship with him.

"Ben's a really talented kid. Started playing at the jam young, played well, and only gotten better. Glad he's hooked up with Gabe Stillman and they're playing for our fall show. Gabe's a great match for Ben – who's a rising star. And a great talent. Always friendly and fun changing leads with him. Also glad to hear he has a good agent. Great to have him as part of our blues family." – Rocky Rothrock

"The first time I met Ben, I was running the jam at the 40&8 and I put him on the jam board. He had his dad's Sunburst Telecaster. He started hanging out with Tyler Bondero and they became good friends, playing together, and both really improved. They tore the frets off a guitar so they could learn to play fretless! I love the kid! He's going places!" – George Bressler

"Ben is blues personified – all about intense feelings. He is centered and dedicated to growth. When he opened for Shemekia Copeland, the crowd went wild over his music. I am so delighted that he is now serving on the BSCP Board as a Member-At-Large." - Kathryn Gregoire





BLUES BOOK CORNER

By KATHRYN GREGOIRE

Blues Legacies and Black Feminism

by Angela Davis

Angela Davis examines the lives and music of Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, Bessie Smith and Billie Holiday in her book **Blues Legacies and Black Feminism** (2006) which she describes as "an inquiry into the ways their recorded performances divulge unacknowledged traditions of feminist consciousness in working-class Black communities...through the prism of the present."

Davis first explores the work of Ma Rainey and Bessie Smith, two blues singers identified with the early or "Classic" blues of the 1920's. Her transcription of their songs is provided in the second half of the book. Ma Rainey, born in 1886, began performing at age 14 in southern tent shows. She made 92 records, mostly in Chicago between 1923 and 1928.

Bessie Smith modeled herself after Ma Rainey. Her first record "Down Hearted Blues," in 1923 was Columbia's first popular hit and first race record, selling 750,000 copies. She sold millions of records in her life and was financially successful. Women dominated the blues scene in the 1920's, giving way to country bluesmen in the 1930's. Unfortunately by this time blues musicians were heavily exploited by white men who realized there was money to be made.

Bessie Smith portrayed women as independent and assertive. When blues songs presented women as subservient and tolerant of violence for the sake of being loved, this was done with the indirect methods of sarcasm and irony. The women in Ma Rainey's blues were likely to be the ones to do the abandoning and even abusing. Song themes do not include children, domestic life, husbands and marriage, all of which were irrelevant to blues women who were financially independent and free to travel without family responsibilities.

Only four of the 252 songs recorded by Bessie Smith and Ma Rainey referred to marriage. Those four were recorded (but not written) by Bessie Smith at the end of her career and appear to be an attempt by John Hammond to appeal to a White audience.

Blues Legacies and Black Feminism does a thorough job of analyzing Ma Rainey and Bessie Smith's songs, revealing a wealth of socially significant themes ranging from discrimination in the work place to the vulnerability of marginalized populations in disasters such as flooding. The book provides a comprehensive cultural and historical overview of the era of Classic blues women.

Book club members took turns leading the discussion based on a song theme they selected from the book. Members also

discussed the movie "Black Bottom" about Ma Rainey and the 3-piece documentary "St. Louis Blues" about Bessie Smith.

Moving into the next era, the author looks at Billie Holiday, who made her first record shortly after Bessie Smith's last recording. Davis views Billie Holiday's repertoire as being "deeply rooted in the blues tradition" by its "intimate connection between love, sexuality, individuality and freedom". She states that Holiday's approach to the lyrics "both borrowed from and transformed ways of representing black female sexuality associated with Classic blues women."

Government officials considered her music to be subversive and connected to communism; they kept a close watch on her performances. The FBI forbid her from including certain songs in her stage shows, most notably "Strange Fruit," written by Abel Meeropol in protest of lynching. Holiday recorded this haunting song in 1939 which was inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame in 1978. In 1999, Time magazine named "Strange Fruit" as the "Best Song of the Century." "Strange Fruit" eventually sold over a million records, but, unfortunately, Billie Holiday lived a life of limited means and never had a best-selling recording during her lifetime.

In addition to reading and discussing **Blues Legacies and Black Feminism**, the book club members also watched the award-winning 2021 American biographical drama film **The United States vs. Billie Holiday** based on the book **Chasing the Scream: The First and Last Days of the War on Drugs** by Johann Hari. This moving account of the personal and political struggles of Billie Holiday, available on Hulu and DVD, brought her songs to life for the book club members.

Once again, we enjoyed and learned from the renditions and research of our talented book club members. Hannah Sherman sang one of her all-time favorites "Black-Eyed Blues" by Ma Rainey. Hank Imhof sang and played several songs on his guitar from the Classic Blues era as he talked about the music.

Hank Imhof writes:

"I performed all songs on a 1917 Washburn style 1915 /1922 parlor style guitar which had become popular in that era through the 1920's and 1930's expressly to market to women because of a smaller size, very similar to the popularity of ukuleles in that same time period. Throughout our book club investigation of anything associated with the history of the "Blues" we have come repeatedly upon a term "the Classic Blues". So with a bit of reading and research I tried to show the differences between the

different kinds of blues, if there were any. After all wouldn't the Blues be the Blues no matter if it was designated "Delta Blues", Piedmont, Chicago etc.

Our conclusion, although open for discussion, was that the Classic Blues exemplified by Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, Bessie Smith and Ida Cox and many others used a more complex chord and harmony structure than, for example, the Delta Blues. Usually this involved more players supporting the singer and this allowed for more complex harmonies. Many of these compositions came from WC Handy and other writers and composers of the time and were more polished and structured to appeal to a wider range of listeners, white and black.

As today, nothing is out of bounds if it sounds good and connects. I played "Spoonful" as a single chord song, as it was played by Howlin' Wolf and showed how other players added other chords, electric guitars, a bass, drums, piano, horns and background singers, all good if it sounds good and works. All the above stylings of one-chord songs will appeal to different tastes at different times.

Back to the Classic Blues, in the 1920's and 1930's a vaudeville style approach to entertainment and music became very popular. Bessie Smith would anchor the show with her band but there may be comedians, magicians and other show people involved. So the music that Bessie was singing would be termed the Classic Blues. It was mainly applied to the black female singers and their music in that era. In the mid 30's it went out of style until male band leaders incorporated it into what we call Jazz and Blues which is another wonderful discussion.

There are, of course, exemptions and examples to all written above but I feel this is a generalization that works.

I also played Jimmy Cox's version of "Nobody Knows You When You're Down and Out" written by Bessie Smith, a song which was played by many different artists throughout all the history of the blues. I showed how the words and chords were changed by artists from Scrapper Blackwell to Eric Clapton - same song but with differences in each version.

I also picked a Bessie Smith song which was written with a standard blues A,A,B lyric style. The first line is repeated which is the A,A statement and the answer or B response is in the last line of each verse. This song didn't fit the Classic Blues format but could be adapted to that styling.

If any of this is of interest please look into joining Kathryn and the rest of the book club. It's been a wonderful trip through the Blues and the history of our country"

A PEEK AT THE PAST

Carrie Baker: I was thinking about the picnic coming up and how far we have come and thought that maybe some of you who don't know how the picnic started and evolved might be interested.

When we started the BSCP, we didn't have any money. We had just started collecting dues.

We certainly didn't have any money to put on a huge event, like the Little Buffalo Festival. Our Treasurer at the time, Kathy Robinson, wanted to have a members' picnic, a picnic put on by and for our members, so we could have fun and raise a little money in the process. The board said we don't have any money, but Kathy said she would put up the money and if we made any money she would donate the proceeds. We had nothing to lose, so we said sure. I'm glad we took that chance!

As a member, if you were attending, we asked if you could bring a side dish or desert dish, sign up for a chore or donate towards the main entrees. The member picnic meetings were some of our most well attended and sometimes the most raucous. Members would start signing up for food items right after the menu was set. "Put me down for two pans of potato salad."

We would volunteer to help with one of the chores. I always volunteer to be the Beer Truck Girl. We were proud of what we accomplished, and every year we would toast Mom I because she coordinated the unbelievable food and guided the whole event. So, after 20 years the Treasurer's Picnic became the Mom I Picnic. We love our Mom I and we honor her. She throws a hell of a party!

Well, after a two-year hiatus, we are back! Woo Hoo! I can't wait to see y'all!

Virginia (Mom I) Ivanoff - "Mitch had a co-worker named Dino and his wife Ginny loaded up his truck and brought tubs for soda and water,

made deviled eggs, etc., and brought jello shots. Then Carrie Baker, Jason Suter and Mari Bressler started bringing jello shots. They kept me going - they help all of us going. Mitch asked me to come out to see the band and I met Dot Grubb and Beverly McCormick, they started talking about the picnic and I asked if I could help. I loved it. I must have or I wouldn't have stayed so long! Nina Valante and I would start at 6:30 or 7:00 putting together side dishes and we would have donuts for the volunteers cooking the chicken, etc. Ray Santana would bring equipment in. We've met wonderful people - love my Baltimore crew. When we had shows, sometimes there were more of them than us! We were so happy when we hit 100 members - George Bressler couldn't stop laughing! Cooking for the picnic gave birth to our BSCP cookbook. Elaine DeStephano helped write it up, The back room at the 40&8 had a chest freezer that we had to use for a counter top. We put crock pots on it and heated up food we had made at home. We did most things ahead: pasta, pickled eggs, turkeys, etc. Each year we had to grow as the picnic grew. We would buy chicken on sale and keep it in as many freezers as we could find. One year, Dot's freezer went out and we had chicken corn soup that year! It was really fun - I needed it. It was good."

Hannah Sherman: "My first memories of kitchen duty are from the 40&8. The pavilion kitchen had one refrigerator and there was barely room to turn around. We did Christmas parties in the back room of the main building where there was no kitchen. Everything was pre-made and brought in. I'm not sure how we made it work but we did.

As we have evolved, the kitchens have improved. We now use Hummelstown Fire Hall

and the Mechanicsburg Picnic Grounds, both of which have full kitchens. As far as the labor is concerned, it's always been hard work, but we are always seeking to improve/change the menu to keep things interesting and make it as easy as possible for the volunteers.

Volunteers have come and gone through the years but the most enjoyable part is getting to know others, forming lifelong friendships, and having fun. As always, we welcome anyone and everyone (men and women) who wishes to contribute in any way (a food contribution or a few minutes in the kitchen) as we break bread and have fun."

"Dancin" Dot Grubb: "This takes me back to when Mom and I went on shopping expeditions. Starting at the 40&8 propping the oven door shut with a board, marinating chicken on the picnic tables and doing other prep the day before, moving on to Grantville with an improved kitchen and always great, great music every time. I'll still be handing out buckets and foil pans and begging for people to contribute like they have in the past. Please continue to contribute again this year with your generosity. BSCP doesn't provide desserts, fruit, and snacks so they are always welcome and much appreciated. See you at the picnic!"

If you would like to volunteer (grounds clean up, parking directors, 50/50 tickets, stage set-up, beverages, kitchen), please email Hannah Sherman, Member-At-Large and picnic coordinator, at hannahww@yahoo.com or call her at (443) 617-6693. And when you see Dot Grubb kept handing out aluminum pans that need filling, feel free to take one. Lots of hands make for lots of fun for everyone!



Sell tickets



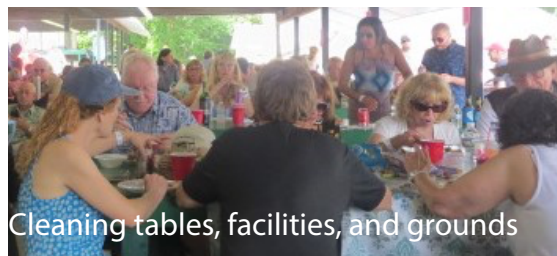
Prepare and serve food & drinks



Set up, tear down, and play blues



Donate desserts, fruit and snacks



Cleaning tables, facilities, and grounds



Play more blues



Proudly wear your cookin' apron

THE BLUES SOCIETY OF CENTRAL PA IS PROUD TO PRESENT

MOM I'S PICNIC

MECHANICSBURG CLUB PICNIC GROUNDS

199 GLENDALE DRIVE, MECHANICSBURG, PA 17050

ADMISSION IN ADVANCE \$20 * ADMISSION AT THE DOOR \$25



NATE MYERS TRIO
1PM

THE HUMBLERS
2PM

**BEN BRANDT & THE SOUL
MINERS UNION** **3PM**

**DON JOHNSON
PROJECT**
4PM

ELECTRIC STEW
5PM

THE MIGHTY KLUCKS
6PM

SUNDAY, MAY 29TH 2022, 12PM – 7 PM

FOOD & DRINKS INCLUDED * DESERT, FRUIT AND SNACKS WELCOMED

PURCHASE ADVANCE TICKETS AT THE THURSDAY JAM OR ON BSCPBLUES.COM

MEET YOUR BSCP BOARD MEMBERS!

By Hannah Sherman

Virginia Ivanoff



Photo by Ann Kerstetter

There aren't many of us who can say we were born in the 20's but Virginia proudly proclaims she was born in 1929 in Spencer, North Carolina. Her family moved to the southern tip of the Eastern Shore when she was 4 or 5 years old and she was there until she graduated from high school. Before the 17.6 miles long Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel was built they had to take a ferry or a steamer 27 miles to get from Cape Charles to Norfolk or Little Creek near Virginia Beach.

Known as Virginia, Ginny, Mom I, and Lucy, she is worthy of having many more names: Super Woman, Kitchen Magician, Wonderful Friend and thankfully for us, Board Member Emeritus, an honorary status recognizing her lifetime of contributions to the Blues Society of Central PA. As a Board of Directors member at large for more years than I can remember, she has been an absolute angel with her gifts to our blues society. She has helped shop for food, prepare it and serve it up – all with that winning smile. Her input on the board has helped shape our society to be what it is today.

Virginia always liked music, although she couldn't play anything, and during her teens in the war years she noted that, "Cowboys were king" when County and

Western ruled the airwaves in her area. Her tastes expanded when her children were growing up and she started to hear rock'n roll, folk and blues. Their next-door neighbor gave the family 78s, especially blues. She herself had 33s but her rowdy bunch used them as frisbees. When her remorseful kids grew up they always replaced the broken "frisbees" and gave her CDs for Christmas, such as Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey and Harry James.

I first met her when we were out to hear Krypton City Blues Revue, fronted by her son, Mitch. She rarely missed a show. She also enjoyed his final project, Tin Can Buddha, with Lee Carroll, and traveled to Kentucky for those shows. She loves blues festivals, especially The Heritage Music Blues Festival Wheeling, WV, with its great views of the river traffic. She also thoroughly enjoyed traveling the Caribbean on the Legendary Rhythm and Blues Cruise. Her cabin mate was a friend of Taj Mahal, who she enjoyed talking to as he autographed his first album that she brought with her, Lonnie Brooks and family, who Mitch played with in Philly, and Koko Taylor. "They took me off that boat kickin' and screamin'!"

Virginia got a big surprise about 15 years ago when she learned she had a half-sister, Ruth, who was born in 1923. She was able to meet Ruth and her son, who lives in Lynchburg, VA. Her other half-sister, Annie, died young, but she met her daughter, Elizabeth, who lives in Charlotte, NC.

Her favorite thing about the BSCP, as I'm finding most people feel, is the feeling of family and fun. What more is there to

say except we thank you from the bottom of our hearts for being you and choosing us as your "fun family"!

"She's just awesome. She's everybody's "Mom" and we all love her!" – Rocky Rockrock

"Any time spent with Mom is a treasure. She's my adopted mom and best friend. I met Mom when Mitch brought her to a gig and said, "Take care of her", and we've been friends ever since. We took Mom on our belated honeymoon on "The Melody" for the Legendary Rhythm and Blues Cruise in 2003, we've shared motel rooms at festivals – she's a great traveling companion. Mike and Betty Knott and I visited her recently, took lunch around noon and before we knew it was five o'clock! So interesting and so enjoyable to spend time with her. She has helped so many of her friends. She stepped up any time anyone needed help." – Dancin' Dot Grubb

"Mom epitomizes the soul of blues folk." – Buster Grubb

"When I think of Mom (Lucy Ivanoff) the words that come to mind are awesome, special, kind, compassionate, humble, generous, joyful and a friend to all. We in BSCP are so fortunate to have her in our midst. She is our hero and our inspiration. Thank you for being you." – Mary Mammola

"Mom I is such a good-hearted lady. She is so kind and beautiful and gracious to all who come in contact with her. Always has love for her Blues family. She is so welcoming to all who met her through her son, Mitch." – Beverly McCormick

SAVE THE DATES

Sunday April 24

Lil' Ed & the Blues Imperials
w/ Benjamin Vo Blues Band

Saturday May 29

Mom I Picnic

Sunday July 17

Mississippi Railroad

Sunday Sept. 18

Gabe Stillman Band w/ Ben
Brandt & the Soul Miners Union

Sunday December 4

BSCP Christmas Party

Please visit our website @ bscpblues.com for further information

How's Our Gear?

By Gary "Rocky" Rothrock, BSCP Jam Coordinator

They tell me it started with a snare drum, high hat and a cardboard box for a kick drum, some borrowed amps and PA stuff. It was at the Lochiel Hotel where a few stalwart blues fans started the Blues Society of Central PA and after the meetings, some would stay and jam together. It became a thing and folks began to show up to listen and participate.

I first learned about the jam from an article in the WITF Central PA magazine which featured a cover photo of Kenzie Johnson smiling and playing a big red guitar. A friend and I went out one Thursday to search for the Lochiel and after about an hour found the place - on the wrong side of the tracks, through a dark underpass by the river. By that time, they had added a Hammond organ (donated by Eric Wewer) and Leslie Cabinet (donated by Gary Harrington) and were still working with a mix of borrowed and donated equipment.

The Lochiel got flooded in 2001, which started a series of moves to the

40 and 8 Club, Liquid 891 and finally to Champions Sports Bar in Highspire, PA. Along the way, our gear expanded and changed to what we use now at our jam. Through those changes, we tried to buy quality gear that was suited for the venue and the players and have assembled a solid backline that gets a good workout every Thursday night.

BSCP has sponsored many shows at Champions and we offer the artists the option of utilizing our backline gear instead of hauling their own. On many occasions, they will arrive with their gear but when they see the quality of what we have, they opt to use our stuff instead. This has been very gratifying to those of us who have worked to assemble this gear, as are the many compliments we get from jammers on how great our stuff plays and sounds. It is nice for them to know they can show up with a guitar or bass or drumsticks and have quality, great sounding gear to work with and we are proud to share it with all who come to play.

For all you gear heads, here is the list of our backline gear:

Guitar/harp amps - 2 Fender Deluxe Reverb 65 reissue, Peavey Delta Blues, Fender Blues Junior

Bass Amp - Ampeg Portaflex 500-watt w/ 15" speaker

Drums - Tama Star Classic drum set: brass snare, mounted tom, floor tom, kick drum, ride cymbal, 2 crash cymbals, splash cymbal

Casio electric piano w/ QSC K-10 speaker

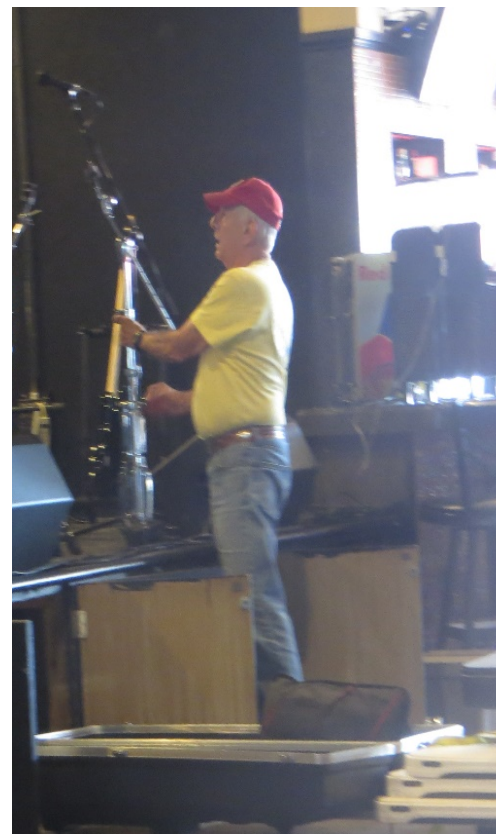
Hammond organ - 50's vintage RT-3 w/ Leslie cabinet

Your donations to our jam tip jar enable us to maintain and improve our musical gear for the enjoyment of all! Thank you!!

**Electric Blues Jam
at Champions
Every Thursday night
7 pm – 10 pm**



Gary "Rocky" Rothrock, Don Intrieri, and George Carver setting up gear.



Eddie "Guitar Slim" Jones

By Dr. Mo



ll, he returned to Mississippi taking up residence at the Harlem Club in Hollandale dancing and playing piano backing Robert Nighthawk. It was Nighthawk that first interested him in the guitar. In 1948 he left Mississippi, moving to Arkansas to join Willie D. Warren's band initially as a dancer, eventually learning guitar from Warren.

Eddie often told a story that he got his first guitar from a fellow worker when he worked at a cotton press in Hollandale. It seems this man would often sit outside the boarding house where they lived and play guitar in the evenings. One night a group of white men gathered and an altercation of some kind developed. Eddie's friend knew he had to leave town and was afraid if he were to be seen with a guitar he would be more easily identified. He gave Eddie his guitar and left, telling Eddie to keep the guitar until he returned for it. He never did.

As Eddie's talent grew, so did his desire to leave the confines of the juke joints of the delta. In 1950 he told Willie D. that he was calling himself Guitar Slim and moving to New Orleans to pursue a recording career. At first Eddie gained little notoriety in The Big Easy, playing alone in various French Quarter bars or on the street. Singer Geri Hall remembers frequently chasing Eddie off his front steps at 6:00 AM, where he played his guitar at top volume.

Eddie eventually met and befriended a 15-year-old piano player named Huey Smith. The two of them joined forces, getting a spot at The Dew Drop Inn. Their first gig there, splitting the bill with a female impersonator and a "shake dancer". Eventually they rounded out the duo by adding Little Willie Nutters on drums. Slim's passionate singing, stinging guitar work and exuberant stage antics soon gained notoriety.

Slim became known as one of the most flamboyant stage acts in New Orleans. He would wear brightly colored suits of red, blue, yellow, orange or any other bright color, dye his hair to match and shoes either the same color or white. He would often have his valet, a very large man, carry him into the clubs on his shoulders while Slim played guitar, utilizing a 300 ft. guitar cable, (a stunt later used by Albert

Collins).

Buddy Guy described the first time he saw Slim. "My father had a phonograph and I had heard B.B. King, and T Bone Walker, but when I heard "The Things That I Used To Do" I said wait a minute, I ain't never heard the guitar played like that. So I went up to Baton Rouge to hear Slim, and they introduced him, and the band was on stage. I could hear this guitar but I didn't see nobody playin' it. Then in come Slim, bein' carried in on this big guy's shoulders, dressed all in this red suit, his hair dyed red, playin' all crazy. I said, that's it. I wanna sound like B.B. King, but I wanna play and act like Guitar Slim!"

Stories abound of Slim's stage antics. Slim's bassist, Bill Sinegal related one story that involved him climbing up into the exposed rafters of one club and making his way through the rafters to the front of the hall, continuing to play guitar all the while. Slim, still plugged in and playing, went out the front door into a rainstorm, slipped in the mud and got stuck under a car. The crowd pulled him out from under the car, Slim climbed back into the rafters, went back the same way to the stage, never once stopped playing.

1951 found Slim finally in the recording studio. His first 2 sessions produced 4 songs, two records, "Bad Luck Is On Me"/"New Arrival" and "Standin' At The Station"/"Cryin' In The Mornin'" with the trio of Slim, Huey "Piano" Smith, and Willie Nutter. Neither record sold well, despite Slim's popularity as a live act. Both records were crudely recorded, and Slim's extremely overdriven and distorted guitar was off-putting to many listeners.

Huey Smith left to pursue his own career, so Slim hired an unknown teenager named Ray Charles to play piano. This trio recorded while on tour in Nashville resulting in the release of "Feelin' Sad"/"Certainly All", the former later recorded by Ray Charles. Both recordings mark an early attempt at fusing Blues and Gospel, accenting Slim's vocal prowess over his guitar playing.

Jerry Wexler, co-founder of Atlantic Records, described Slim's voice this way: "He was like a holy figure, a holy icon to them. His voice carried all of the suffering, the oppression, the discrimination, the piney woods, the isolation of a black man at the wrong time in the wrong part of the south. At the same time, his

In February 1959, a young man, aged 32, was unceremoniously buried in Thibodaux, Louisiana. He died February 7th of that year, alone on a table in a doctor's office in Harlem of complications from pneumonia. His grave would remain unmarked for over 2 decades. Virtually unknown in his hometown for the 8 years prior to his death, he was hailed as one of the most innovative guitarists and dynamic stage performers of his time.

Guitarists as divergent as Buddy Guy, Frank Zappa, Billy Gibbons, Jimi Hendrix, Prince, Doug Sahm, and Stevie Ray Vaughn cite him as a major influence on their playing. Just who was this towering influence so often overlooked by the general listening public? Many intriguing and contradictory stories abound concerning the life of Eddie Jones, popularly known as Guitar Slim.

Born in Greenwood, Mississippi, in 1926 and orphaned 5 years later, Eddie Jones worked in cotton fields until his teens when he realized he could make more money as a dancer and entertainer. Known as "Limber Legs Eddie" for his acrobatic spins, splits, jumps and twirls, he would be hired by band leaders and club owners to dance. He was also known to be an adept Boogie Woogie piano player.

After serving in the Pacific during WW

music and delivery expressed the hope of redemption."

By 1953, Slim's popularity had risen to the point where he was able to augment his band with a horn section. He continued to write songs and was eager to record again. He had a song he was convinced would be a hit. He said the song came to him in a dream. In this dream, an angel and Satan stood before him, each with a song in a hand. "Of course I chose The Devil's song, because that's what the people want to hear!" he recalled.

Trumpeter Frank Mitchell, who was on the session, described Slim's pre-recording preparations: "I went to pick Slim up to go to the session, before we left he went upstairs and smoked 3 sticks of weed, by himself! Then he came down with a half pint of gin. He asked me if I wanted a taste, and I took a little taste, but he finished it before we left. On the way there, he stopped the car and bought a pint of gin and finished it by himself before we hit the studio. When we get there, the engineer asked what we wanted to drink, Slim yells we're drinkin' gin, so the man goes out and gets a fifth of gin."

"Ray Charles took over as band leader. By all accounts there were over 40 takes of the first song." Mitchell says, "rather than stop each take when a mistake was made, Ray would let the band finish and then go over each mistake. When a complete take was finally committed to tape, an excited and relieved Ray Charles can be heard shouting 'Yeah!' as the song concludes." The song, given to Slim by Satan, was the biggest seller in the history of Specialty Records, and continues to be considered a classic of New Orleans Blues. "The Things That I Used To Do" continues to be one of the most covered blues songs of all time.

From the same session came Slim's next release, "The Story Of My Life/Letter To My Girlfriend". Although this never quite achieved the popularity of "The Things That I Used To Do", "The Story Of My Life" probably more than just about any other recording by Slim, showcased the combination of his singing and guitar playing. Just the moaned intro can send chills up your spine if you're hearing it in Death Valley in the middle of July.

Riding high on the success of these records, Slim prepared to embark upon a major tour of the U.S. when he drove his new Oldsmobile sedan into a bulldozer, landing in the hospital. Slim recuperated and hit the road, continuously touring and making recording dates while on the road. Although his records sold well, none reached the success of "The Things that I Used To Do."

In 1956, Specialty released him from

his contract, but he was immediately snatched up by Atlantic Records who put a full court press into promoting him. Specialty continued to release recordings that Slim had made which had never been released while Atlantic tried to promote new recordings. Between the two competing companies, his combined sales were strong, but no singles were chart toppers. Between the competition with himself, and his increasingly extravagant lifestyle, including his alcohol consumption, things began to go south.

Despite these issues, Slim managed to record some sides that have gone on to become Blues classics. "You Give Me Nothin' But The Blues"/"Somethin' To Remember You By" in 1956 and "If I Should Lose You"/"It Hurts to Love Someone That Don't Love You" are classic New Orleans blues. Slim's final recording session was for Atlantic in 1958, in New York and produced two songs that were almost prophetic, "There's No Way Out"/"If I Had My Life To Live Over".

After recording these songs, he embarked on a tour of the Northeast. His doctor told him he was in no condition to finish the tour and to go home to

Thibodaux to convalesce. By February of 1959, his breathing was labored, and he was having trouble singing. February 5th in Rochester, he couldn't finish the show. The next night in Newark, he collapsed after leaving the stage. A local Dr. diagnosed him with double pneumonia and told his people to take him to New York City. They found a doctor in Harlem who would see him, left him at the doctor's office and went around the corner to check into a hotel. Upon their return, Eddie "Guitar Slim" Jones was gone.

Slim returned to Thibodaux Louisiana, penniless. His last manager, Hosea Hill, paid for a plot next to his own and paid for Slim's funeral. He was buried with his favorite guitar, a 1954 Gold Top Les Paul. Slim rested in an unmarked grave in the Moses Cemetery at East Twelfth St. and St. Charles St. for almost 30 years until an association of his fans (myself included) bought a simple grave marker in the shape of a cross to honor one of the greatest and most dynamic guitarists, singers, and performers to ever grace a stage anywhere.



In Case you missed it!

Bobby Gentilo Release Party 03-20-22 @ Zoetropolis, Lancaster PA
GENTILO CD available on BOBBYGENTILO.com
Bryan Thomas Photographer



Dave Groninger and Alex Degnan
© Bryan Thomas Photography



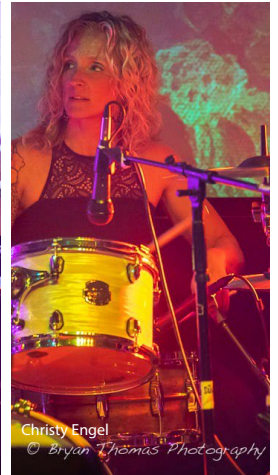
Logan Kurtek
© Bryan Thomas Photography



Nate Young
© Bryan Thomas Photography



Ed Toth (Doobie Brothers) Guest drummer
© Bryan Thomas Photography



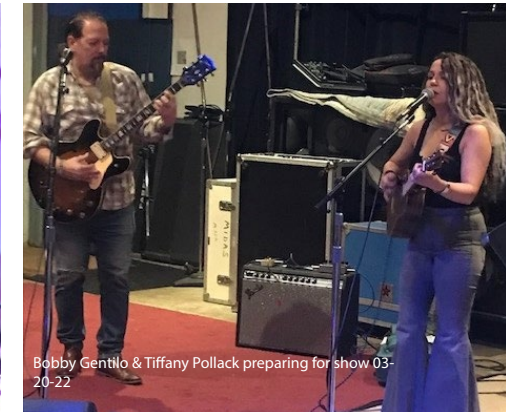
Christy Engel
© Bryan Thomas Photography



Bobby Gentilo
© Bryan Thomas Photography

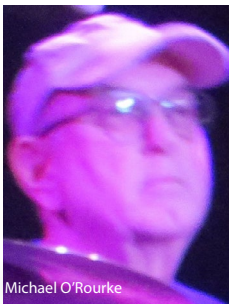


Tiffany Ann Pollack, Special Guest
© Bryan Thomas Photography

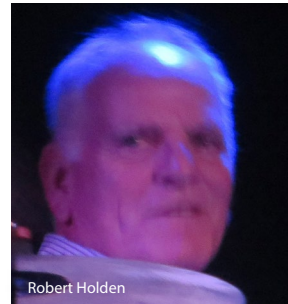


Bobby Gentilo & Tiffany Pollack preparing for show 03-20-22

TRI-STATE BLUES SHOWCASE 03-06-22 @ CHAMPIONS Photographs by Greg Hogg



Michael O'Rourke



Robert Holden



Tom Donovan, Shaky Lyman and Mark Fuhrman



Michael Reinig and Bill Hyatt



Don Evans



Chuck Whiteman



Mike Williams



Sister Blue

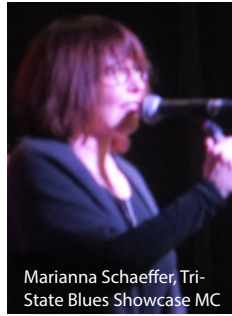


Billy Pierce & Suzanne Dayton

In Case you missed it! cont.



Sister Blue, Billy Price, Don Evans, John Stover



Marianna Schaeffer, Tri-State Blues Showcase MC



Kim Miller, Jeff Miller, Judy Cunningham



Nina Vacante and Greg Hogg, Tri-State Blues Showcase Co-ordinator

hawk Roosts CD Reviews

by Bill "Nighthawk" Halaszynski

Peter Veteska & Blues Train So Far So Good (Blue Heart Records)

I first hopped onboard with Peter Veteska & Blues Train a coupla years back with *Grass Ain't Greener on the Other Side*. It quickly went from being a disc for review to a go to. I felt the primal influence of folks like Duane Allman and Eric Clapton which caught my attention right off. He had a hot rhythm section including strong B-3 and keys. My appetite was whet for what would follow.

So Far So Good shows Veteska and company taking major strides forward. They pack a cohesive punch that includes some notable guest harmonica work throughout that fits into the sound well. Mikey Jr. adds his muscular harp and vocals to six songs while Gary Neuwirth and Derek "Slim" Matterson contribute to a track each.

Other notable guest contributors include Jenny Barnes. She serves as a strong feminine foil on "I Miss You So" and "You Give Me Nothing but The Blues," which also includes the stalwart horn section of Tommy LaBella & Doug DeHays on saxes alongside trumpeter Steve Jankowski. Paul Boddy's incendiary slide guitar helps propel "East Coast Blues" down the highway. Roger Girke steps up to duet on guitar and vocals with Veteska to great effect on "So Far So Good."

While the guest players bring a lot to the table, contributing to this record's success, it's the core quintet that pushes it over the top. The rhythm section of drummer Alex D'Agnese and bassist Coo Moe Jhee consistently drive the sound through varied motifs while leaving the front line plenty of room to do their thing. Although this is Jeff Levine's second straight record with the band he's still listed as a special guest. Make no mistake, however, his Hammond B3 and piano are every bit as responsible for the quality of this outing as the band leader.

Peter Veteska has traveled the Blues Highway



long enough to know what he wants and that he has the chops to get it done. There's nothing fancy here, but every bit is right. Opener "Done with Bad Luck," jumps up and grabs the listener by their lapels. It's an urgent show of resilience in the face of life's ongoing sucker punches. "I've Got the Blues This Morning," is the perfect change of pace follow-up. Plaintive piano and acoustic guitar frame this oft-told tale of having the blues for life. Mikey Jr. wistful harmonica adds to the mournful vibe. His vocals help end things on a hopeful note.

Mikey Jr. returns to help ignite, "Young Bold Women." Sharing sharp vocals and blowing some wailing harp. "Lovin' Oven" serves as a B3

spotlight for Levine while Veteska lets loose with some blistering fretwork that touches base with both Texas guitar and a righteous touch of edgy jazz. "Low Down Dirty Blues," has the feel of classic slow blues. Again, nuthin' new, but damn good.

"Can't We All Get Along" ends things on a soulful note filled with heartfelt pleas for folks to somehow lean on that which unites and not the B.S. that has permeated too much of our shared discourse. D'Agnese and Cool Moe add their voices to the chorus while the keys and guitar soar over the hurt. It's a strong finish to a very fine record. Rock on gentlemen.



P.O Box 7453
Steelton, PA 17113

BLUES FESTIVALS 2022 WEBSITES

Compiled and shared by Mike Knott. Thanks, Mike!

Tampa Bay Blues Festival, St. Petersburg, Fl. Apr. 8 - 10 www.tampabaybluesfest.com

Chesapeake Bay Blues Festival, Annapolis, Md. May 21, 22 www.bayblues.org

Saint Georges Blues Festival, Delaware City, Del. June 4, 5 www.diamondstateblues.com

Billtown Blues Festival, Hughesville, Pa. June 10 - 12 www.billtownblues.org

New York State Blues Festival, Syracuse, N.Y. June 16-18 www.nysbluesfest.com

Briggs Farm Blues Festival, Nescopeck, Pa. July 7 - 9 www.briggsfarm.com

Lancaster Roots and Blues Festival, July 9, 10 www.lancasterrootsandblues.com

Blues, Brews, and BBQ, Allentown, Pa. July 23 www.discoverlehighvalley.com

Heritage Music Blues Festival, Wheeling, W.V. Aug. 12 – 14 www.heritagemusicfest.com

Chenango Blues Festival, Norwich, N.Y. Aug. 19, 20 www.chenangobluesfest.org

Alonzo's Picnic, (Baltimore Blues Society), Rosedale, Md. Sun. Sept. 4 www.mojoworkin.com

King Biscuit Blues Festival, Helena, Ar. Oct. 5 – 8 www.kingbiscuitfestival.com

Reading Blues Festival, Reading, Pa. TBA www.readingbluesfest.com