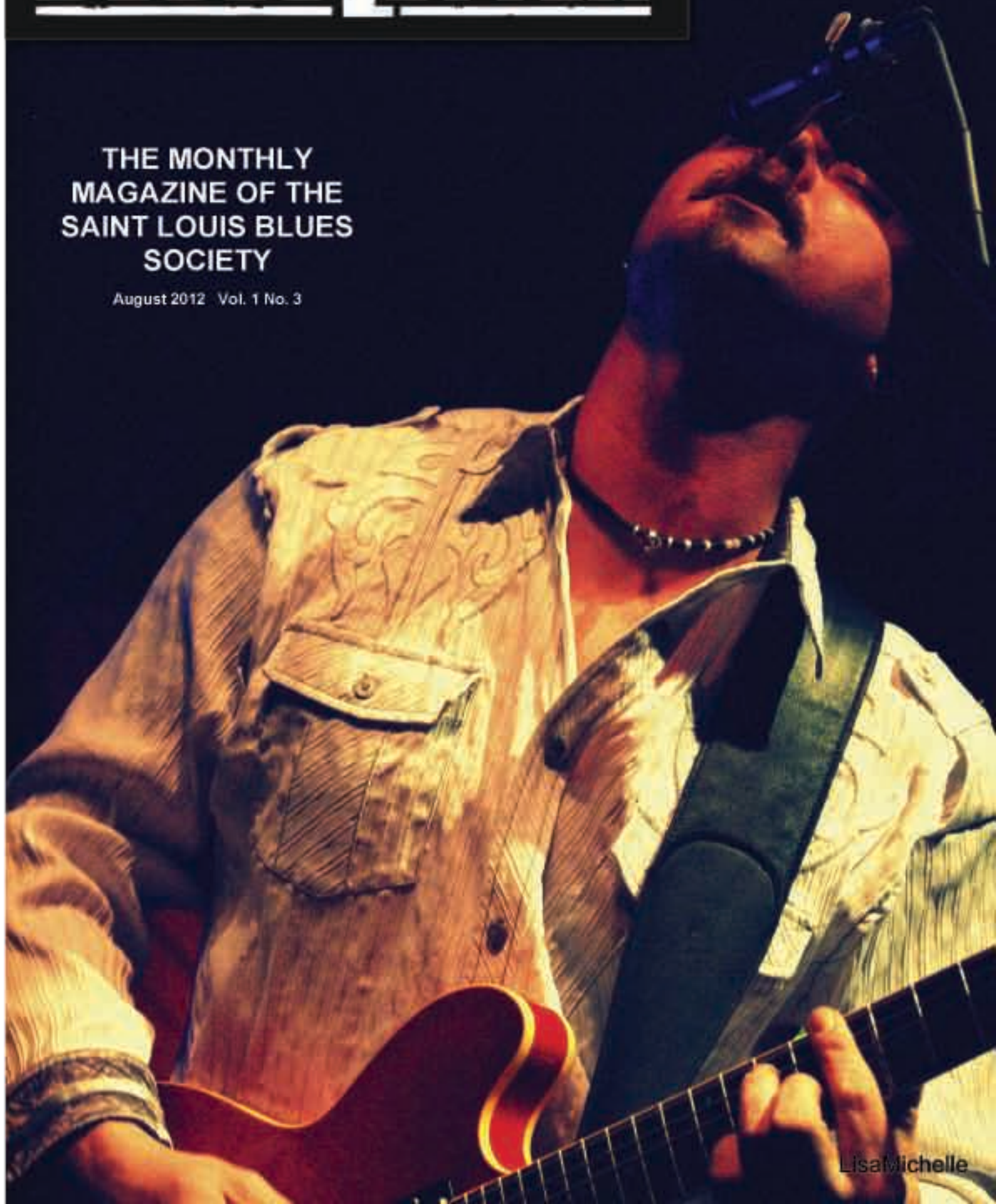


BLUES LETTER

THE MONTHLY
MAGAZINE OF THE
SAINT LOUIS BLUES
SOCIETY

August 2012 Vol. 1 No. 3



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The St. Louis Blues Society

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BluesLetter

The Monthly Magazine of the St. Louis Blues Society

Volume 1 Number 3

The St. Louis Blues Society is dedicated to preserving and perpetuating blues music in and from St. Louis, while fostering its growth and appreciation. The St. Louis Blues Society provides blues artists the opportunity for public performance and individual improvement in their field, all for the educational and artistic benefit of the general public.



The St. Louis Blues Society is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit Missouri corporation.

Memberships to the Blues Society are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

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Cover Photo used with permission ©Lisa Michelle Parker 2012	
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WELCOME TO THE NEW BLUESLETTER

Our Third Issue is Here!

This summer is going by fast and bringing St. Louis some very hot temperatures with some very hot blues music too. We hope everyone had as much fun as we did at the Third Annual Bluesweek Festival over Memorial Weekend. The music-filled celebration brought out the crowds to enjoy incomparable St. Louis blues music and raised awareness of what our community of wonderfully talented musicians has to offer our city.

Last month our first St. Louis Blues Society Blues Brunch brought out a nice crowd to hear Larry Griffin and Eric McSpadden perform together. On Sunday July 29, we host our second monthly Blues Brunch at the Great Grizzly Bear. Sharon and Doug Foehner, The Fabulous Foehners, will entertain while you enjoy some great food and drink. What a treat for a lazy summer Sunday! Come on out to support the Blues Society and local blues music and don't forget there's no cover for Blues Society members.

The Blues Society is experiencing revitalization. We are excited to show our members what is happening and we are looking for new members to get involved to help support our local musicians and to foster the growth and appreciation of St. Louis blues music.

Come out to the Brunch and bring some friends or hit one of the clubs on the weekend. Most of all, treasure our blues and the generations of local musicians who make St. Louis part of the rich living history of American music.

Mary Kaye and Jeremy

Want to help with the St. Louis Blues Society **BLUESLETTER?**



We are looking for help with the BluesLetter.

Do you take photos, want to write articles,
review a CD or have some ideas?

Come to the BluesLetter Staff Open Meeting

Every first Monday of the month

MoKaBe's Coffee House

3606 Arsenal (corner of Grand and Arsenal)

7:30 pm.

STL BLUES SOCIETY BLUES MISSION FUNDRAISER

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 2012

3:00pm to 7:00pm

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The Mature Mind of Stacy Johnson

Recently, St. Louis bassist Sharon Foehner, was honored to speak one-on-one with vocalist Stacy Johnson. They talked of his past and his future, and what he has learned along the way to becoming one of the current elders in the St. Louis blues and r&b music community.

"I used to tell people all the time, 'this is my vehicle, if I wreck it, that's on me, it ain't on you.' That was me trying to be a big shot, thinking that being the leader of a band is, you know, the shit. Now, I think a band is delving into everyone and making them a part of a team. I had to learn that the hard way," Stacy said.

Stacy started in music, he says, "singing doo-wop straight out of reform school." When he met Ike Turner, he was singing with Benny Sharp and the New Breeds. (Benny, Stacy, Vernon Guy, Horise O'Toole.) "Ike came to Big George's place, Club Caravan when Albert King was playing," he said. Stacy got the opportunity to sing and Ike liked what he heard that night—so much that he decided to take Vernon and Stacy on the road for two weeks.

It was exciting to travel with Ike Turner. "You know, I never really thought that each night that passed I was going to get to go on stage," Stacy said. "But I messed around with some marijuana and made it impossible for them to hire me. At that time, Ike Turner didn't put up with nothing. You know, I was 17 years old and that just broke my heart." It was not until Ike's band was back in St. Louis playing at Club Manhattan that Stacy says he redeemed himself with Ike and was asked to go back on the road.

In a few years, Stacy returned to St. Louis. He started a band called One Step Ahead and got his first booking at Souldard Preservation Hall. "My very first gig on my own. They had posters all over.

"I still have a lot of music that I want to get done."

I got a poster on Facebook" he says. Later Stacy changed the line-up and named the band Broadway

Rhythm. He has been based in St. Louis ever since, singing with Oliver Sain for a while, recording with Johnnie Johnson and continuing, off-and-on, to lead his own band.

He said, "I don't think everybody understood [the transition from] Stacy, the bull-shit artist, to Stacy, the bandleader." For much of this time, admits Stacy, he was known for his self-destructive behaviors. "It all has one heading, my homelessness and drug abuse. I was addicted to cocaine and it interfered with every facet of my life. I was so enthralled with what I was doing that everything else became secondary and at some point it became nothing."

He credits two people for inspiring change in his life—his wife Anadelene, and St. Louis radio personality and music producer, Bernie Hayes. "Bernie was very supportive and still is to this day." Stacy says he got clean and, "started being able to see beyond myself."

However, his life took an unexpected turn. "I was performing at BB's when the stroke starting coming on me. I went into the hospital the next day. I stopped going places because I felt inadequate and would get a complex about my left side being stiff. I did not have the ability to bring forth wind from my stomach. One song and I felt like I had done a four-hour gig."

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St. Louis Blues Society Blues Brunch at The Great Grizzly Bear



JUNE 24

Larry Griffin and Eric McSpadden came together to perform Sunday, June 24, 2012 at the St. Louis Blues Society Blues Brunch. Playing together for many years in a variety of bands, Larry and Eric incorporate electric and acoustic flavor in a tight duo act. Photo ©Mary Kaye Tonnies 2012.

JULY 29

The Fabulous Foehners, the musical and married duo of Sharon and Doug Foehner, perform acoustic roots blues and gospel for you on Sunday, July 29, 2012, 11a-3p at The Great Grizzly Bear in Soulard.

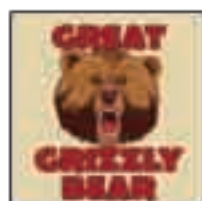
Photo ©Madison Thorn 2011



AUGUST 26

Rich McDonough Acoustic is lead by well-known St. Louis guitarist Rich McDonough. Winding it back to an acoustic notch for brunch with blueberry mimosas, Rich and his group will bring you the blues at the St. Louis Blues Society Blues Brunch at The Great Grizzly Bear, 1027 Geyer Ave., on Sunday, August 26, 11a-3p.

Photo ©Madison Thorn 2012



St. Louis Bluesweek Festival 2012 Review

By Bruce Olson

Thousands of music fans ignored warnings of "dangerous heat levels" Memorial Day weekend to dance on the downtown streets, showing just how serious St. Louis is about its music. Event director Mike Kociela said The Third Annual *St. Louis Bluesweek Festival* was, "Beyond successful—it was hot but they didn't stay away."

It was indeed hot with record 90° temperatures, but nobody was complaining down at the crossroads of 13th and Chestnut. The crowds, constant each day, hid out in the shade, popping out for a dance or another cold beer. In the cooler evenings, they filled the streets and much of the two acres of downtown green space within the festival grounds.

The celebration was at first saddened with the news that the great blues guitarist, Michael Burks, had died of a heart attack just a few days earlier at age 54. Friday night Chicago bluesman Nick Moss took up his guitar to fill-in for the scheduled Burks. Moss told the crowd, "We lost a great bluesman this week, a member of the family." Moss eased into a powerful gospel tinged blues reminiscent of the energy and vitality that marked Michael Burks.

Burks' roots came from Albert King and his skills have passed to Marquis Knox, the St. Louis prodigy who then moved out on the stage. Knox recorded his 2009 album "Man Child" with the Burks band. "Check him out," Moss yelled, waving a hand toward Knox, who looked just like he stepped out of a Vee-Jay recording session. Knox roared through the core blues catalog, leaning into the crowd on "How Blue Can You Get?" saying, "I was raised up on Jimmy Reed." A player with a big

future, Knox is one of the new generation of St. Louis blues musicians.

The festival highlighted the rich history of several generations of great St. Louis blues musical talent. "We wanted a festival that gave due recognition to the musicians that have made St. Louis what it is," Kociela said. "And this was a celebration for our musicians in a town where they are sometimes overlooked."

Another next generation player, Matt Hill, took the 13th Street stage Saturday afternoon and was found leaning into a 40s style microphone harmonizing with Paul Niehaus IV while Nikki Hill belted out, "A Girl Can't Help It." Nikki sang a true blue tone that rolled along until Matt fired up a guitar solo right out of the next decade.

A cool breeze drew people to the Showcase Stage, an oasis of semi-calm all weekend—an acoustic picnic on the electric blues prairie. Dave Black made it even cooler with his easy guitar vibe. One couple snuck a kiss serenely balanced on a pair of folding chairs. Well-known in St. Louis, Black is a music professor at Webster University and a music player in the very coolest of jazz traditions.

Back on the big stage at 14th Street, the Jim Stevens Group evoked the great Oliver Sain by playing "Back to the Chicken Shack." Sain's sax was a major part of the richness of sound heard in St. Louis in the late part of the 20th century while Sain himself provided support and leadership for other St. Louis musicians. In the heat, Stevens' sax rolled from the stage while dancers swayed, little kids sprayed water, and vendors fanned themselves.

Stevens leaned into "Georgia on My Mind," accompanied by keyboard player, Pete Ruthenberg.

As the sun lowered and the night cooled, Marsha Evans, brought her Coalition to the stage. Coming up in the '50s, Evans and her sister were the first black kids to perform on stage at the Kiel Opera House. Now The Peabody, the old Kiel sits just a block from the stage where Marsha was bellowing out her soul. Evans worked for years as the main vocalist in Oliver Sain's Review. That evening her voice rang clear and true even as she spoke of her twin brother's death just two weeks before. As she headed into "Midnight Train to Georgia," the collective neck hairs of the crowd stood at attention.

The night also brought out the St. Louis Social Club—a dream group made-up of players from some the city's best bands. The stage was filled with a who's who of mid-generation St. Louis players—musicians who were the youngsters when Bennie Smith, Tommy Bankhead, Oliver Sain and Henry Townsend were the elders. The list was impressive: Brian Casserly on trumpet, trombone and vocals; Rich McDonough, guitar; Tom Maloney, bass; Matt Murdick, keys; Jim McClaren, harmonica; and Benet Schaeffer, drums.

The Bottoms Up Blues Gang kicked off Sunday afternoon. New generation members, the Gang praised and remembered past St. Louis blues greats. In "South Broadway Blues," Kari Liston, sang she wanted to hear some, "Tommy Bankhead, Oliver Sain, Bennie Smith on South Broadway... drinking my blues away." Two little girls held hands with a woman wearing a Blues Brothers hat. The three swung around into the sun and out onto the pavement down front. Kari called down, "Thank you dancers," and everybody bowed.



Bobby Rush on the 14th & Chestnut Stage Saturday night at the 2012 Bluesweek Festival.

Photo and Graphic ©Mike Kociela 2012

Next up came The Rough Grooves Band. Winners of several local awards and mainstays at BB's Jazz Blues and Soups, the band was led by a pair of mighty players: St. Louis Blues Artist of the Year 2012, Rich McDonough, on fire with his electric guitar, and Eric McSpadden on harp with clear and deep vocals. The fabulous Sharon Foehner was strong on bass and vocals, and a new generation player, young Derek Bonn, son of St. Louis vocalist Paul Bonn, was hot on the drums.

A few stops with the elders of St. Louis blues rounded-out the three days of music, food and drink. Beginning in the shade of 13th Street trees, the ultimate '50s white cat, Billy Peek, blasted off with his low-slung flying V electric guitar. He spoke of Ike and Tina Turner, Little Milton Campbell, Chuck Berry, Johnnie Johnson, and of the days when East St. Louis was the center of the blues. Harry Simon, the sax master who played in the Gaslight Square days, doing several smooth solos, joined Peek on Sunday afternoon.

Big George Brock, who just celebrated his 80th birthday, kicked-off Sunday evening from the Pine Street stage with his down-home electric blues. Brock and his band, The New House Rockers, had the crowd dancing under the trees to his original, "Keep Your Bedroom Door Locked" and the Howlin' Wolf classic, "Killing Floor Blues." Brock, the self-promoted "King of the Blues," was a true showman. He ascended the stage decked-out in his signature gold-trimmed cape and reigned over the crowd the whole show.

Boo Boo Davis and Arthur Williams, two more revered elders of the St. Louis scene, are players with deep connections to the city's north side and East St. Louis. They finished-off Sunday night with another huge cheering crowd overflowing the slab in front of Soldiers Memorial.

Left out of this account are many, many more players than can be mentioned—check local listings for The Bel Airs, The Jeremiah Johnson Band, The Ground Floor Band, Skeet Rodgers, Boss Hall with Margaret Bianchetta, Roland Johnson & The Voodoo Blues Band, and the long-standing and always vibrant Souldard Blues Band. In all, nearly 40 bands entertained record crowds during the festival's new annual time-slot Memorial Weekend. The *St. Louis Bluesweek Festival* found a home in May this year and is surely on to something big!

Jeremiah Johnson Reflects on the IBC

By Bruce Olson

As a three-time veteran of the International Blues Challenge in Memphis, Jeremiah Johnson believed he didn't need to worry when he found his band was given the difficult time slot of opening the first day of the contest. "The judges can't very well give a '10' to the first band out of the gate. The club was nearly empty and the judges had no one to compare us to. It's tough to make a good impression," he said.

But Johnson, the leader of the St. Louis Blues Society's entry in the annual contest, knew the drill. As long as the songs were original and the band nailed the music, they stood a chance to shine.



The Jeremiah Johnson Band with the Sliders on stage at the IBC. Photo ©Lisa Michelle Parker 2012

"Frankly, we kicked ass," he said. "And on the second night, we got a later time slot and it was wild. We had so many people up and dancing the judges couldn't even see us. It was surreal," he added. That second night garnered the St. Louis band a score good enough to run them up the ladder past over 100 other groups into the semi-finals.

In its 28th year, the IBC is an international search by The Blues Foundation and its affiliated organizations for a band that's ready to take their act national. Each of the 226 entrants in the prestigious event perform a 20-minute set on each of the first two days to show their stuff to the judges, something Johnson was well aware of due to his past experiences in the contest as a solo performer sponsored by the Houston Blues Society.

This year he and his band—the Jeremiah Johnson Band and the Sliders—won the St. Louis preliminary competition and the opportunity to go to the international challenge as a representative of the St. Louis Blues Society.

"The attitude you have to have is that you can't go into it thinking you're going to win. You have to see it as a way to network and get your name out there," he said. "You want to get bookings out of it." He offers advice to musicians thinking of entering the challenge in the future, "I would tell anybody who wants to try it that it's great to win but you need to network as hard as you can."

The competition is also great for hundreds of fans who can walk Beale Street and see blues music in all its forms from all over the world. Fifteen countries were represented including Croatia and Australia. Over 700 musicians took part.

While Johnson's band did not win the contest, the ghost of another St. Louis musical Johnson was present when the winner, the band WIRED! from Everett WA, was announced. WIRED! is fronted by Kevin Sutton, a cat who just happens to have spent the 1980s in none other than good old St. Louis. In an interview with the Washington Blues Society, Sutton said he got his musical education here by listening to and playing with the legendary Johnnie Johnson and others including Big Bad Smitty, Tommy Bankhead and James Crutchfield.

Jeremiah Johnson, 39, grew up in St. Louis, and Pacific, MO, during that same era. Later he moved to Houston TX where he qualified to represent the nation's fourth largest city at the IBC in 2004, 2005, 2006. He moved back to the banks of the Mississippi four years ago and started gigging in Soulard where he is a fixture on Saturday nights at Hammerstone's.

This past winter, he won the St. Louis Blues Society Challenge and in February 2012 was back on Beale Street. His band includes Brad Martin on drums and Jeff Girardier on bass plus a horn section of the veterans Stuart Williams on sax and Jim Rosse on trumpet.

continued on page 9

ST. LOUIS BLUES SOCIETY

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the BLUES Brunch

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1027 Geyer Avenue, St. Louis MO 63104
11a - 3p

LIVE MUSIC - DRINK SPECIALS

\$5 cover for the bands
\$7 brunch

NO COVER FOR BLUES SOCIETY MEMBERS

Schedule: June 24 Larry Griffin & Eric McSpadden
July 29 The Fab Freshers
August 26 Rich McDonough Acoustic

JUNE 2012 KDHX • BLUES CITY DELI

continued from page 8

"It would be cool to win," he said, "But it's like a beauty contest, everybody there looks pretty good. It really comes down to what style the judges like, r&b, traditional, rocking out—what do they care for. It was a great time and we printed 2,000 cards to advertise us and passed them out all over the city. We are getting more airplay on KDHX and more exposure around the country," he added.

Johnson and his band just released a new album, *Brand Spank'n Blue*; Johnson's fourth record to date. In addition to Hammerstone's, the band can be found playing at such venues as the Venice Cafe, Three Kings Public House, Shady Jack's Saloon as well as several clubs in Illinois. The Jeremiah Johnson Band with the Sliders is scheduled to play a benefit concert for the St. Louis Blues Society's Blues Mission Fund at Kirkwood Station Brewing Company on Sept. 9, 2012. ♪



The St. Louis Blues Society

announces
the 2012 band competition to select
a blues band to represent
St. Louis at the
29th International Blues Challenge (IBC)
presented by the Blues Foundation
and held in Memphis TN

**St. Louis Preliminary Challenge
Final Live Competition Judging
Sunday, October 14, 2012
3pm to 10pm**

Kirkwood Station Brewing Company
105 East Jefferson
Kirkwood MO 63122

Any band which performs 85% of their time in the
St. Louis area is eligible to compete.
*Bands must follow rules and IBC guidelines
for competition submission application.*

For details visit our website:

**[http://www.stlouisbluessociety.org
/blues-challenge](http://www.stlouisbluessociety.org/blues-challenge)**

Or, contact Jerry Minchey at
jminchey@stlouisbluessociety.org

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BLUES CITY DELI

Stacy Johnson continued from page 4

Sharon told Stacy, "Your fans are asking about you. They want to know if you plan on getting back to performing." He replied, "I still have a lot of music that I want to get done. Somebody once told me that I had to reinvent myself. Now I count my blessings, and God has shown me different ways to do my voice when I thought it was all over. I think that if I have enough time on this earth, my fans will see me again performing the way I was or even better."

Thoughtfully, Stacy continued, "It has been interesting to watch changes in my life over the past four years. I have discovered things that I thought I would not be able to do again. I think I am more mature. It's okay for me not to have any teeth; I'm an old man! I mean I cannot do the pronunciations in singing like I want to do and I can't do real, real fast songs like I used to do. But I have picked out a whole range of stuff that I *can* do."

As a musician herself, Sharon says, "I believe a person is always evolving, always maturing, always growing as an artist, and always getting new ideas. I look forward to hearing what the mature mind of Stacy Johnson has in store for us in the future." ♪

HELP SUPPORT THE ST LOUIS BLUES SOCIETY BY ADVERTISING IN THE BLUESLETTER!

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Half Page	\$80.00
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WEDNESDAY

The Big Bang with Dr. Jeff

THURSDAY

Blursday with John and Denny

FRIDAY

Blues in the Night with Art Dwyer

If you'd like to see your "From the Crowd" photo in the next edition, please email the photo with a brief description to Madison at mthornphotos@stlouisbluessociety.org

From the Crowd

with Madison Thorn



Dave Welsch lays it down with Victor Wooten as part of The Victor Wooten Band at The Old Rock House on July 5th. Their two newest albums hit in September. Photo by MT



St. Louis' own Devon Allman and Mike Zito trade licks as members of The Royal Southern Brotherhood at The Gramophone on July 5th. Their debut album dropped in May to rave reviews. Photo by Rick Priest



Friends Terry Jones Rogers and Dick Baker enjoy the music at Terry's Benefit Concert on June 3rd. Friends and fans came together to raise money for Terry's recent, and brief, hospital stay. Photo by MT

If you'd like to see your photos "From the Crowd" in the next edition, please email them to Madison at mthornphotos@yahoo.com



The MondinBand takes a break from performing at The Loading Dock on May 28th to pose with fans and friends RJ and Betsy Harman. Photo by Barb Lee

Join the St. Louis Blues Society today!

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Membership benefits include:

- * Notification of blues concerts
- * Membership card
- * Subscription to the BLUESLETTER (full-color emailed monthly; b&w printed and mailed quarterly)
- * Admission discounts for selected Society events

Please check the desired renewal category and return this form with your annual membership donation to:

St. Louis Blues Society

P.O. Box 78894

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Membership Contribution Levels:

- ☐ Blue to the Bone \$500/lifetime
- ☐ Boogie Down/Family \$50
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