

# BLUES LETTER



Matt and  
Nikki Hill

# The St. Louis Blues Society

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# BluesLetter

## The Monthly Magazine of the St. Louis Blues Society

### Number 58

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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## On the Cover..

***Matt and Nikki Hill perform at the Blues City Deli in January. They will be back there again on Thursday, April 11. cover photo by Reed Radcliffe***

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# Hello Blues Lovers,

Well, we thought it was spring but then we got winter's last effort at keeping us down with some unexpected snow. We are quite grumpy over having to cancel the March 24 blueSunday with the Bottoms Up Blues Gang. Hopefully by April 28, we will be having real spring weather when Paul Niehaus IV and friends are up. Be sure to come down to the Grizzly Bear from 1 to 4 pm for Paul's awesome guitar and bass work.

We are getting ready for Bluesweek and the Memorial Day festival at Soldiers Memorial on May 24-26, 2013. Check out [www.bluesweek.com](http://www.bluesweek.com) for the music schedule and information on workshops. Bluesweek means the Blues Society has alot work to be done and we need your help.

We are hoping to grow our volunteer list. You will find our new membership renewal and volunteer forms on pages 8 and 9 of this BluesLetter. Please take the time to fill out the forms and send them back with your membership renewal donation and volunteer preferences. We look forward to working with you.

The Blues Society is currently seeking outreach volunteers for this year's Bluesweek Festival. If you're interested in working at our booth, helping with the street team or working in the beer booth please contact [volunteer@stlouisbluessociety.org](mailto:volunteer@stlouisbluessociety.org) or come to the next blueSunday to sign-up.

Thanks to everyone for supporting St. Louis Blues.

All the best, Jeremy and Mary Kaye

## Blues Society Half-price Discounted Events for Members

### *BB's Jazz Blues and Soups*

Apr 19	Victor Wainwright and The Wildroots
Apr 20	Victor Wainwright [7 pm]
Apr 21	Biscuit Miller
Apr 24	Brad Vickers & His Vestapolitans
Apr 25	Joe and Vicki Price
Apr 26	John Németh

BB's Jazz, Blues and Soups  
700 South Broadway  
St. Louis, Missouri 63102  
(314) 436-5222  
[www.bbsjazzbluessoups.com](http://www.bbsjazzbluessoups.com)



## Blues Society Discounted Events for Members

### *Broadway Oyster Bar*

**MONDAYS**

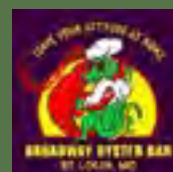
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Show your St. Louis Blues Society Card and  
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Broadway Oyster Bar  
736 South Broadway  
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# Matt and Nikki Hill:

## THEY LOVE THIS TOWN

By Bruce Olson

Matt and Nikki Hill got married on March 3, 2011 and two days later moved to St. Louis hoping to take their music careers to a new level. Two years later they have a new band, are one of the hottest acts in town and their tour calendar is filling fast. You'd have to say the St. Louis plan was a success.

Before that crucial move, Matt had put out three records and was a successful singer/songwriter in the Durham, North Carolina area. Nikki had been doing DJ gigs, dance-hall, reggae, parties, having fun. But both wanted more.

"My record had just come out but the scene in North Carolina was really drying up," Matt recalled during a BluesLetter interview at Blueberry Hill earlier this year. "The blues scene there was non-existent. There's no clubs there." Nikki added, "Even the Durham Blues Festival crashed. It went from having Bo Diddley to really nothing."

"The only thing you could find were like 17 blues jams a week," Matt said. "There was no money in any of them. Nobody was hiring any bands. No real gigs. The same 10 jammers came out and played the same four songs they've been playing for 10 years."

"We found St. Louis attractive," Nikki said. "When we started dating I came out here with him. It's right in the middle of the country. It's cheap. There's tons of clubs. People are great. For us, our lease was about up, we were getting married. Do we do it? Do we don't? That was the question."

Matt played at Beale on Broadway and met drummer Joe Meyer and bass player Preston Hubbard. Matt had a full blown act by then, a bag full of originals and great stage presence that showed off a wild blues style. Meyer and Hubbard both urged him to make the move to St. Louis.

"We came to St. Louis together one weekend," Nikki said. "They were on him already, and when we drove back and got home, we had decided. Why don't we just move? We made a decision. A month later he proposed. Five months later we got married, then we moved," Nikki said.

Matt soon formed Matt Hill and the Deep Fried 2 with Meyer on drums and Paul Niehaus IV on bass.

I caught Matt's show at Joe's Cafe in January of 2012. The place was just half-full; people still hadn't heard about the band. I remember Matt told the crowd he had moved here because "people can make a living playing the blues in St. Louis." He did several originals and generated an immediate impact. He did AC/

DC ala Jerry Lee Lewis. He did a medley of Howlin' Wolf. His excitement was contagious and before the end of the first set he hollered, "This is one of the coolest gigs on the planet."

Nikki, meanwhile, was sitting in a booth near the stage, wearing her trademark headscarf, waiting for the second set to make an appearance. She hadn't been gigging with the band and still had a day job to help pay the bills while Matt got established.

Matt got further and further into the set, doing a great old Link Ray tune, "Rumble," some more originals. By now he was down on the floor, he was playing the guitar behind his head, he was telling Ernest Tubbs stories. People in the crowd were asking, "Who is this guy?"

Then they started asking "Who is this woman?" It was Nikki, doing "Rip It Up" and "Send Me Some Lovin." Like Matt, her impact was immediate and by the end of the set, the Joe's crowd, that sometimes can be a little on the staid side, had managed to find room to dance.

Matt and the new band soon landed a regular slot at BBs, Nikki started sitting in regularly and the newlyweds were off and running. "I've never seen anybody grow so fast or learn so quick," Matt said about his wife. "And that's what everybody says who's around her. She learned in 10 weeks what it took me 10 years to learn. Everybody's like 'how'd you do that?'"

So, I asked, "how'd you do it?" She replied, "A lot of it is just listening and collecting music. Just from being a big music fan all these years. That's where it comes from. We have a pretty hefty collection. And the record collecting around here is just incredible." Matt said, "we like wiped Vintage Vinyl out of soul 45s when we first got here, We sat on the floor there for like five hours grabbing this one, that one. Every Stax record there was."



Photo by Reed Radcliffe

"It's a very musical city," Nikki adds. "We are absorbing what's going on. It's cool seeing what everyone is doing. It kind of rotates for us. We'll listen to nothing but the Stones for a week, then that changes the gig that Friday. I think that's really cool."

In addition to joining Matt's band, Nikki played separately, landing gigs on the West Coast and in Chicago after an appearance last April in the Viva Las Vegas showcase. That led to an EP and was something of "a star is born" moment for Nikki.

As she tells it: "Viva Las Vegas is a huge roots thing. Tons of bands, 20,000 people. They have this pre-party thing at a guy's house who runs Rolling Rock Records. He's kind of a revival rockabilly guy. He's helped a lot of guys who got screwed by their labels kind of revive and record. [He's] A really cool guy and they have a party and he has this jam and one of my girlfriends signed me up for the jam without telling me. Suddenly, I got grabbed and she says, 'What song are you going to do?' And I say I'm not doing this. But I got railroaded into it and I sang three songs and people recorded them on their phones."

By the time she got home, she had emails, calls and text messages. "I sang generic, Little Richard, a shuffle and a swing. Well, that was all Matt needed. He goes let's write something and record it." She said.

In November 2012, while Matt was out on the road and Nikki plays a show at Joe's, joined by Meyer on drums, Tom Maloney on guitar and Sal Ruelas on bass. No longer sitting in, Nikki appeared as the mature front to a tight band. Her voice has the R&B tone she needs to put her songs across and with Maloney providing the cool hand, the show rolled along without a hitch.

No one would know that this woman was not singing on her own a year earlier. By "Ooh, Ooh, Wee" and Barbara Lynn's "I'm a Good Woman"—halfway through the first set—she's in charge. "Rip It Up" ends the first set and the second is just as good.


The next step for the couple was to form a band together, which they did around the end of 2012. Calling it the Nikki Hill Band they hoped the result would be 300 gigs a year. "We can approach it in different ways," Nikki said. "We can do it like a co-bill. It's entertaining for the audience to have two different fronts up there for different sets. We can play with that. Whatever we do its going to be the two of us."



Photo by Reed Radcliffe

Matt is 27, Nikki 28, and both say they want to see the world, with St. Louis as their home base. They have signed with Intrepid Music Group of New York City and booked European shows that this spring took them to Italy. Future dates include Norway, Holland, Spain and Sweden. They also signed for the Waterfront Blues Festival in Portland, Oregon and the Winthrop R&B Festival in Winthrop, Washington this summer. 🎵

*Mark your calendars for Matt and Nikki's only upcoming St. Louis gig for a while. They are at the Blues City Deli on Thursday, April 11.*



**88.1 KDHX**

INDEPENDENT MUSIC PLAYS HERE

## Weekdays at 4 pm

**MONDAY**  
Soul Selector with Papa Ray

**TUESDAY**  
Howzit Bayou with Sonny Boy Mason

**WEDNESDAY**  
The Big Bang with Dr. Jeff

**THURSDAY**  
Blursday with John and Denny

**FRIDAY**  
Blues in the Night with Art Dwyer

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2008 'Keeping the Blues Alive' recipient



# John Long

## BBs Jazz Blues and Soups

March 9, 2013

By Hound Dog Brown



What was it that was in the air in St. Louis in the 1950s and 1960s? Whatever it was, it caused young white kids to be bitten hard by the blues, such that they sought out master bluesmen to learn the craft directly from them.

Leroy Pierson sought out Fred McDowell, Son House and Mance Lipscomb. Ron Edwards connected with Bukka White, Furry Lewis, Houston Stackhouse and J.B. Hutto. Johnny Long, and his older brother Claude, became professional musicians in Doc Terry's band, and Johnny later became a student of Homesick James in Chicago in the 1970s.

Though I'm personally well-acquainted with both Leroy and Ron, I had not met Johnny Long until Friday March 9, 2013, when he made a rare appearance in his hometown at BB's Jazz, Blues and Soups.

Johnny and his wife Carrie, and brother Claude make their homes in Springfield, Missouri. For decades, Johnny has plied his craft as a solo resonator guitarist and rack harmonica player, singing and playing his own material. He's spent much time in Colorado, playing small venues, where he and Ron Edwards have tagged up from time to time.

John has not spent much time in recording studios over the decades. He self-produced a CD of his own material, which he sold at shows, a copy of which found its way to Al Blake and Randy Chortkoff at Delta Groove Productions. A deal was struck to re-record Johnny's originals, and the disc is titled *Lost & Found*, released in 2006. Simply put, this is old school pre-war and early post-war resonator slide guitar, rack harmonica and lyrics of the highest order. This CD, released on an established label, has been bringing Johnny greater and much-deserved recognition among fans of old school blues.

Since this was the first time I've seen and heard Johnny apart from his recordings, I was not sure what to expect. Would he play only his own material, or add in covers? He did both, with more emphasis on covers. His first set included covers of songs by Rice Miller, Jazz Gillum, Big Bill Broonzy, Doc Terry, Roosevelt Sykes, John Lee

Williamson, Homesick James, Elmore James, Lonnie Johnson and Sister Rosetta Tharpe, with just one song written by brother Claude, "Greyhound Driver", which appears on John's CD.

His vocal style can be fairly described as booming, occasionally with the intensity of a cannonball. It's not difficult to see how in small venues, John could get by quite well without a microphone.

The second set started with two covers that are a natural fit for Johnny, namely, songs by that master guitar and rack harmonica bluesman, Jimmy Reed. For the remainder of the set, Johnny was joined on stage by Ron Edwards on bottleneck slide and John May on bass. They led off with one of Johnny's originals, "You Don't Know St. Louis Like I Do", but done Tampa Red style. More covers followed of songs by Tampa Red, Lonnie Johnson, W.C. Handy, and Rice Miller, along with Johnny's eight bar blues original, "Healin' Touch". Between songs, John spoke praises to the musicians he covered and to other local musicians, including Big George Brock.

Johnny furnished an answer to the question of what it was that was "in the air" in St. Louis in the 1960s that led to these young white guys being bitten hard by the blues. Just as Leroy Pierson and Ron Edwards have also said, Johnny cited Gabriel's radio shows on KATZ as a huge magnet that drew him to the blues. Johnny paid tribute on stage to Gabriel, and also to radio DJs Lou Thimes and Rockin' Mr. G. Off stage, Johnny told me that of these, the greatest influence was Gabriel, and that Gabriel "raised us up on blues, gospel, jazz, and on comedy and country."

I think of Gabriel as a musical Johnny Appleseed, whose orchards planted decades ago continue to bear fruit, as 'The Man' continues to plant new orchards every Sunday night at midnight on 88.1 KDHX. 🎵

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John Long Photo Courtesy Carrie Long





The St. Louis Blues Society

# bluesunday

**Last Sunday of the Month**  
**1 pm to 4 pm**

*\$5.00 cover  
free for Blues Society Members*

**April 28**

**at The Great Grizzly Bear**  
**1027 Geyer Ave. in Soulard**



*Paul Niehaus IV and friends*



Glazer's



*Renew your membership*

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Annual membership benefits include:

- \* Notification of blues concerts
- \* Membership card
- \* Subscription to the BLUESLETTER  
(full-color emailed monthly;  
black & white printed and mailed quarterly)
- \* Admission discounts for selected events
- \* Blues Society bumper sticker



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Renew your Membership to The Saint Louis Blues Society today

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

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I would love to volunteer at shows and events \_\_\_\_\_

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

## Membership Contribution Levels:

- \_\_\_ Blue to the Bone \$500/lifetime
- \_\_\_ Boogie Down/Family \$50
- \_\_\_ Blue Plate Special \$25
- \_\_\_ Blue Business \$100
- \_\_\_ Foreign Subscription add \$10 (U.S. funds)  
to membership level

Please check the desired renewing membership level and return this form with your annual membership donation to:

**St. Louis Blues Society**  
**P.O. Box 78894**  
**St. Louis MO 63178**

Or visit our website  
[www.stlouisbluessociety.org](http://www.stlouisbluessociety.org)  
to renew and pay through  
Paypal or credit card





# Volunteer with the

# THE SAINT LOUIS BLUES SOCIETY



We are seeking dedicated and talented people who can help us grow STLBS. This is your chance to become an active participant in the STLBS's effort to help the St. Louis Blues Community.



The St. Louis Blues Society is a Missouri 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation dedicated to preserving blues music, to fostering the growth and appreciation of blues music, and to providing blues artists with an opportunity for public performance and individual improvement in their field, all for the educational and artistic benefit of the general public.

## Committees needing your help:

- ☐ **Blues Education Committee** – Responsible for planning/execution of Blues in the Schools program.
- ☐ **Business Relations Committee** – Responsible for recruiting business sponsors, securing discounts for our membership, selling advertisement in our BluesLetter, website or other publications.
- ☐ **Marketing & Merchandise** – Responsible for ordering T-shirts, mugs, pins, bumper stickers, business cards, etc. Keeping merchandise inventory and supplied at STLBS events.
- ☐ **Membership Committee** – Responsible for the handling membership related tasks including new member processing, membership cards, membership publications/brochures/forms, etc.
- ☐ **Musicians Liaison Committee** – Responsible for musicians outreach and communication with the STLBS.
- ☐ **Newsletter Committee** – Responsible for assisting the Editor in creation and publication of the BluesLetter.
- ☐ **STLBS/IBC Challenge Committee** – Responsible for planning/execution of the "Road to Memphis" Challenge.
- ☐ **Website/Technology Committee** – Responsible for website maintenance and other technical expertise.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Email: \_\_\_\_\_

If you have an interest in any of these committee areas, check the appropriate box and return this form to:

**St. Louis Blues Society**  
**P.O. Box 78894**  
**St. Louis MO 63178**

Or visit our website  
[www.stlouisbluessociety.org](http://www.stlouisbluessociety.org)  
to volunteer



# St. Louis Blues Musicians' Information Page

## ATTENTION BLUES MUSICIANS

**The St. Louis Blues Society  
Musicians Committee  
Coordinator & Musicians' Liaison  
Paul Niehaus IV  
invites you to join the  
Blues Society's musician  
contact group.**

Send your email address and/or other contact  
information to him at

[musicians@stlouisbluessociety.org](mailto:musicians@stlouisbluessociety.org).

## THE ROAD TO MEMPHIS

The Blues Society is happy to announce the local competition to find one band and one solo/duo act to send to Memphis as representatives of St. Louis for the Blues Foundation International Blues Challenge (IBC) will begin with a workshop for interested musicians at the Bluesweek Festival.

At the workshop, musicians will learn IBC eligibility guidelines, competition rules, criteria for judging, application requirements and deadlines and local competition rules and guidelines.

The workshop is the best bet for a successful application. Plus, entrants who attend the workshop will get their \$20 application fee waived by the Blues Society.

If you have any questions, please contact Glenn Howard at [glenn953@gmail.com](mailto:glenn953@gmail.com) or Jerry Minchey at [jminchey@stlouisbluessociety.org](mailto:jminchey@stlouisbluessociety.org) or Jeremy Segel-Moss at [jsegel-moss@stlouisbluessociety.org](mailto:jsegel-moss@stlouisbluessociety.org)

BLUES CITY DELI

## LIVE BLUES

THURSDAYS FROM 6 PM - 8 PM  
SATURDAYS FROM 1 PM - 3:30 PM

### APRIL

TR APR 4TH	Big George Brock and The New House Rockers
SA APR 6TH	Bottoms Up Blues Gang
TR APR 11TH	Nikki Hill
SA APR 13TH	Dawn Weber
TR APR 18TH	Samatha Fish [Kansas City MO]
SA APR 20TH	Victor Wainwright [Memphis TN]
TH APR 25TH	Brad Vickers and His Vestopolitans [Long Island NY]
SA APR 27TH	Joe and Vicki Price [Decorah IA]

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# THE SAINT LOUIS BLUES SOCIETY



## THE ROAD TO MEMPHIS

The St. Louis Blues Society announces the 2013 band competition to select one blues band and one solo/duo act to represent St. Louis at the 30<sup>th</sup> International Blues Challenge (IBC) presented by the Blues Foundation and held in Memphis Tennessee January 21 to 25, 2014.

Any act that performs 50% of the time in the St. Louis area is eligible to compete. Entrants must follow rules and guidelines for qualifying application submission.

### St. Louis Musicians' Blues Challenge Workshop

**Sunday, May 26, 2013**

**2:15 pm to 3 pm**

St. Louis Bluesweek Festival Workshop Tent  
Soldiers Memorial Festival Grounds  
1315 Chestnut Street  
St. Louis MO 63103

#### **BEST BET FOR A SUCCESSFUL APPLICATION!**

*The St. Louis blues musicians' workshop will be conducted by Glenn Howard and Jerry Minchey along with fellow St. Louis blues musicians who have attended the Memphis challenge in the past. Participants will receive competition information including eligibility guidelines, St. Louis and International Challenge rules and timelines, and an application packet. The St. Louis Blues Society will waive the \$20 application fee for entrants who participate in the workshop.*

### Application Availability/Submission Deadline

**July 1 through August 31, 2013\***

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

#### **DON'T DELAY - APPLICATION IS ONLY AVAILABLE FOR A LIMITED TIME!**

*The St. Louis/IBC Application will be available for a limited time beginning July 1, 2013 on the St. Louis Blues Society website. Musicians who intend to enter the challenge will download the application and submit it timely to ensure a place in the final competition.*

*\*The St. Louis Blues Society will accept only the FIRST TEN band applications received that meet requirement qualifications and the FIRST FIVE solo/duo applications received that meet requirement qualifications. When sufficient numbers of qualified applications are received by the St. Louis Blues Society, the application availability period will close for that category. The official submission deadline date for both categories is August 31, 2013. No applications will be accepted after the official deadline.*

### St. Louis Blues Challenge Final Judging

**Sunday, October 13, 2013**

**3 pm to 10 pm**

Kirkwood Station Brewing Company  
105 East Jefferson  
Kirkwood MO 63122

### St. Louis Blues Challenge Winners' Showcase and Fundraiser

**Sunday, December 8, 2013**

**8 pm to 12 pm**

BB's Jazz, Blues and Soups  
700 South Broadway  
St. Louis MO 63102

*The two St. Louis winners will agree to perform together at a St. Louis Blues Society fundraiser prior to the IBC in January 2014. Proceeds from the fundraiser will go towards expenses incurred by the Blues Society to send the two fabulous acts to Memphis for the time of their lives!*





*Join the St. Louis Blues Society today!*

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- \* Admission discounts for selected Society events

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

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**St. Louis MO 63178**

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- ☐ Boogie Down/Family \$50
- ☐ Blue Plate Special \$25
- ☐ Blue Business \$100
- ☐ Foreign Subscription add \$10 (U.S. funds) to membership

Or visit our website  
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to follow the links to join and pay through  
Paypal or credit card



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I would love to volunteer at shows and events\_\_\_\_\_

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