

**PLUS:** 

The St. Louis Blues Society's First Atomic Blues Festival Blues Workshops at the School of Rock St. Louis Pre-War Piano Blues: The Sparks Brothers South Broadway Call to Action The 2015 Road to Memphis

Highway 61 Tuesday Blues Jams CD Review: Ivas John



# SUPPORTING BLUES MUSIC IN ST LOUIS FOR MORE THAN 30 YEARS

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Fall is shaping up to be our busiest season this year. Over the last few months I have become more and more excited about the work the STLBS is doing. We are really coming alive. The board is involved in a wide range of planning and executing, new volunteers are stepping up, and the local community seems to only get stronger. On that note, I'd like to highlight some some of our current projects to keep on your radar.

The Atomic Blues Festival is our first large, all-day show, benefiting the new Education Fund. Many musicians are volunteering their time, volunteers are planning, the Atomic Cowboy venue is perfect for a two-stage event and the time of year should make for good weather. Also, the new Executive

Director of the National Blues Museum will be there to answer questions and get to know the community. This will be a great day and I hope you can join us.

Speaking of the Education Fund, we are excited to partner with the School of Rock in Ballwin on four blues workshops coming up in September and October. Eric McSpadden, Kirk Grice, Eugene Johnson and Rich McDonough will all be presenting on their instruments to a very engaged group of young folks. We look forward to organizing and funding more educational programs very soon.

The International Blues Challenge is here again. It looks like another great group of musicians are excited to represent St. Louis in Memphis early next year. I really hope you can join us on October 18 for the regional challenge at Kirkwood Station Brewery. The event has only gotten better over the last few years and we hope to continue to support acts who want to perform on a National level.

Finally, we are hard at work on the new STLBS Compilation CD. Many of you have conveyed how much you enjoyed last year's CD and we're hoping not to disappoint you. Assuming there are no disasters, the new CD will feature 15 local blues artists (none of which were on the last album) performing original material. Look for it to come out late 2015 or early 2016. Remember, if you're a member we will be sending you one in the mail. We still have plenty of the last album, so if you haven't gotten yours go to the website or see us at one of our booths to pick one up!

### Thanks to everyone who helps make St. Louis a better musical city!

Jeremy Segel-Moss

Chairperson of the St. Louis Blues Society

**E-mail**Jeremy I'd love to hear from you!

Please write me at jsegelmoss@stlouisbluessociety.org and tell me what you think of our current projects.

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Mary Kaye Tönnies Jeremy Segel-Moss Co-Editor

Mary Kaye Tönnies

Mike Aguirre "Hound Dog" Brown Bernie Hayes

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.





# CALLING ALL MUSIC LOVERS

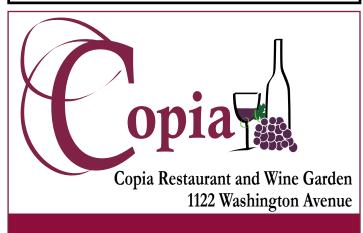
Play It Forward of St. Louis donates new and gently used instruments to local schools music classes.

Founded with grass roots efforts, we aim to provide your pre-owned instruments back into the schools' music programs.

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### MUSIC EVERY FRIDAY & SATURDAY Happy Hour All Day, Every Day

September Music Schedule 4 Thunder Biscuit Trio 5 Eugene Johnson & Co. 11 Bottoms Up Blues Gang 12 Erika Johnson 18 Ethan Leinwand 19 Joe Metzka



# The St. Louis Blues Society YouTube Channel

hosted by Ethan Leinwand www.youtube.com/channel/ UCUcxqQx7B6nVx7MKapFIeBg





Volunteer with the Blues Society!

## **Rebecca Ryan**

St. Louis Blues Society Volunteer Coordinator volunteer4@stlouisbluessociety.org

# **VISIT OUR WEBSITE**

www.stlouisbluessociety.org







# **Blues**Workshops at the

## **STLBS & The School of Rock**

by Jordan Heimburger, Regional Music Director, SOR

School of Rock has been active in the St. Louis music community since we opened in Ballwin in 2013, and one of the first organizations we connected with was the St. Louis Blues Society. Blues is a vital form of expression across the globe, essential to the course of music over the past century and a musical language that all modern musicians need to understand. We are thrilled to be able to work with the St. Louis Blues Society to connect our students with some of the musicians at the center of the St. Louis Blues community through a special series of workshops that will complement our students' lessons and rehearsals.

School of Rock offers programs for kids aged five through adult, focusing on learning music through playing music. Our programs are built around the idea that if our students are enjoying what they're playing and want to pick up their instruments, they'll learn and progress that much more quickly.

Students in our Performance Program, designed for kids age about 10 to 18, attend weekly one-on-one lessons and weekly rehearsals that culminate in a seasonal performance at one of St. Louis' live music venues. Having a concrete goal to work toward and a group of fellow musicians to rehearse and perform with helps to motivate our students to learn and improve. School of Rock also works to establish a sense of community among our students and a feeling of being connected with the St. Louis music community as a whole.

Blues will be one of the areas of music our students study this fall, along with the music of Queen, Radiohead, Van Halen, modern bands featured at Lollapalooza and Warp Tour and more, and the blues workshop series will be available to all of our students. We invite you to get in touch and arrange a time to visit the school and try a free first lesson to find out more about how to join Performance or one of our other programs!

# Blues Workshops at the School of Rock

Oct. 6 Eric McSpadden - Harmonica Oct. 20 Eugene Johnson - Bass Nov. 3 Kirk Grice - Drums Nov. 17 Rich McDonough - Guitar

for more information contact: jheimburger@schoolofrock.com

# St. Louis Blues Society Calendar of Events Sponsored and coordinated events Sept/Oct 2015

Come visit, or volunteer in, the St. Louis Blues Society's booth at these events

\*Sat., Sept. 5 & Sun. September 6, 3pm-12am Big Muddy Blues Festival on Laclede's Landing

\*Saturday, September 12, 6-9p Lafayette Square Concerts in the Park Lafayette Park Gazebo Miss Jubilee and the Humdingers

\*Friday, Saturday and Sunday, September 18-20 Budweiser Taste of St. Louis Chesterfield Amphitheater, Central Park Chesterfield MO

Visit the St Louis Blues Society Beer Booth Bartenders across from the Marketplace and next to the School of Cooking Friday – 4pm to 10pm; Saturday – 11am to 10pm; Sunday – 11am to 7pm

> \*Saturday, September 19, 6-9p Soulard Business Association Soulard Market Concert Series Soulard Blues Band

\*Saturday, September 19, 12-10pm Old Webster Jazz & Blues Festival **Webster Groves MO** 

\*Sunday, September 20, 12-7pm Trailnet's Urban Cultural Festival The Old Post Office Plaza

Ethan Leinwand, Miss Jubilee, Skeet Rogers and The Inner City Blues Band, Charles Hunt, Eric Slaughter, Rich McDonough, Funky Butt Brass Band, Marsha Evans and the Coalition

> \*Sunday, October 18, 2-8pm St. Louis Blues Challenge Final Judging Kirkwood Station Brewing Company Kirkwood MO

### JOIN THE SAINT LOUIS BLUES SOCIETY

Address:		
City:	3)	
State:	Zip:	
Country:		
Phone:		
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### Membership Contribution Levels:

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

Please check the desired category and return this form with your annual membership donation to our return address



Or visit our website w.stlouisbluessociety.org to join and pay through Paypal or credit card

# St. Louis Blues History: Pre-war Piano Blues by Ethan Leinwand

The Spark Brothers
Aaron 'Pinetop' and Milton 'Lindberg'

### What do you picture when you imagine a blues musician?

Take a minute...

I would wager that the majority of you pictured an old black man. Ask Google what a blues musician is and they'll regale you with just such images—old black men, usually holding a guitar, and often on a porch. It's an image deeply engrained in our subconscious, but it can be problematic at times. It can sometimes taint our ability to understand the music, where it came from and who was making it.

### Now picture this...

Twenty one-year-old twin brothers. Kids. They moved to St. Louis in 1920, when they were ten years old, and spent their teenage years running around the streets until they were just old enough to attend the speakeasies, or the all night house-rent parties on Deep Morgan, or the dangerous sporting houses down on the levee.

Aaron 'Pinetop' Sparks was the piano player. He was an easy-going guy, friendly with the ladies, and who, according to Henry Townsend, "didn't use the word no too often. He would be with one crowd all night, a fresh crowd would come and get him in the morning, and another crowd in the evening. He was good for losing twenty-four hours sleep on weekends, and this was what they claimed he died of." (A Blues Life by Bill Greensmith) Pinetop died sometime in the mid-to-late 30s. He wouldn't have been 30 years old.

### **RECOMMENDED LISTENING:**

Get the album! THE SPARKS BROTHERS **COMPLETE RECORDINGS** 1932-1935

1996 Document Newton Stewart, UK



His brother Milton 'Lindberg' Sparks was the singer. He was also the hot head, prone to cause trouble. He even killed a man in 1936 and served time for the murder, though it was apparently in self-defense. Pinetop and Lindberg both were no strangers to the law. They were arrested or cited dozens of times.

The Sparks brothers were youthful African-Americans who were part of a youthful "scene." The music they were hearing—and came to play—was a youthful music; a lowdown piano blues being played by peers just slightly older.

When they entered the studio in 1932, this is the blues these 21 year-olds played. A direct reflection of the lives they lived, partying it up as young, poor, working-class African-Americans in St. Louis. When they went back to the studio the following year, Pinetop brought the ladies with him. Three girls, none of whom recorded before or after, would sing on the session. All three girls are seeped in the distinct sounds of the St. Louis blues style, and they clearly lived it as much Pinetop and Lindberg.

The Sparks Brothers would go into the studio just four times, recording about an album's worth of music. One glorious album! Though nearly every piano player in St. Louis has, for a time, been my "favorite," Aaron 'Pinetop' Sparks was my first love. My introduction to St. Louis piano blues came from an album called Down on the Levee: The Piano blues of St. Louis Vol. 2. The Sparks Brothers music is what first drew me into the greatness of this city's blues. Of all the St. Louis players, I believe Pinetop to be the most lyrical and melodically inventive. Unlike many other bluesmen, every song offers a new melodic idea and one-of-a-kind solo. He found his own, often beautiful, voice, all the while being completely rooted in the St. Louis

If you do some digging, you can find the whole album on YouTube. Or I recommend buying it on iTunes. It's worth it. When you listen though, I urge you to remember that these are not old men on the record. And they're certainly not playing old men music. These are brash, hip, cocky, know-it-all kids playing the music their grandparents could only scoff at.  $\Pi$ 



# **SOUTH BROADWAY: CALL TO ACTION**

by Big Mike Aguirre

The 700 Block of South Broadway, long known as the Bluesiana Triangle" for the three premier music venues located on the block, has gone from being a music lover's dream to a pedestrian's nightmare. Seven nights a week, despite the heavy foot traffic moving from club to club, cars and motorcycles scream through the area at highway speeds. The lack of effective traffic control represents a critical public safety issue. Property has been damaged, people have been injured, and two members of the St. Louis musical family, Amber Wood and "Bapi" Gupta, have lost their lives.

The recklessness of drivers who demonstrate no regard for the human lives they place in danger is deplorable. Law enforcement, already stretched thin, is either unavailable or unwilling to consistently and effectively enforce the speed limit. In short, with everything going on in St. Louis these days, it isn't a priority. City Hall has other priorities as well. The elected officials who have the authority to use government resources to address a serious public safety issue have utterly failed to take appropriate steps to improve traffic conditions and the safety of pedestrians. Meanwhile, they are falling over themselves to build a \$980 million dollar football stadium (including taxpayer money) for a billionaire who has publicly indicated his wish to move his team to another city.

Owners of BB's Jazz, Blues & Soups, The Beale on Broadway and The Broadway Oyster Bar sat down with the newly-elected Ward 7 Alderman, Jack Coatar, on June 4, 2015, to warn him that it was only a matter of time before someone was seriously hurt or killed. Mr. Coatar was prepared, attentive and supportive, and assured us that he would do his best to work with City Hall to address the situation. I don't doubt that Mr. Coatar meant everything he said or that he did his best. Unfortunately, his best effort wasn't good enough. The city failed to act immediately. On June 28, 2105, "Bapi" Gupta paid for the city's inaction with his life.

It is clear that City Hall does not take the matter seriously, and we need to do something about it. It will take focused and sustained pressure to realize results. To that end, Please call your alderman/woman to demand that immediate and comprehensive action be taken to make South Broadway safer for pedestrians.

If you are interested in volunteering your time, I have another request: hang out outside of Beale, BB's or the Oyster Bar on any night you choose. Find a safe spot, keep your eyes open and your phone ready. When a car or motorcycle comes through the area at a dangerous speed, record it on your cell phone and send it to: stlma618@gmail.com. I am spoiling for a fight with the city, and I would like to include reliable data and a visual reference in a presentation. J

# Achieving Charon Soehner Excellence

# by Joe Pastor

Nobody who knows Sharon Foehner well can deny that she continuously strives to be the best musician she can be. Don't think for a minute that all of her experience as a professional bassist has made her feel less inclined to practice. Her thousands of professional engagements all around the U.S. and Europe have not made her the least bit complacent. You won't find in her a sense of entitlement, or jealousy, or competition with other musicians. But, you will find an endless pursuit of excellence that drives her to take lessons from the likes of John King and Tom Maloney. You'll find a musician not content to just play the bass, but who studies and performs guitar in greater and greater capacities year by year. You will find a woman who is truly thankful to be among the elite few who can make their livings in music.

The truth is, when Sharon and her husband ■ Doug first moved to St. Louis from their native Rochester NY in 1987, she didn't expect she would become a professional musician. She remembers first playing the bass in school band. "I never dreamed I would still be playing today. In a few more years now it will be 50 years since then." She played string bass in the school orchestra and was more than pretty good at it. She twice made All-County Orchestra and went to All-State one year. She learned music theory from her classroom teacher and by way of a few free lessons.

"My parents were share-croppers, we didn't have no money. John Turner taught me for free on Tuesdays and Thursdays in the 9th and 10th grades. Other than that we couldn't afford lessons. My mom was able to rent a bass for me to practice in the summer. She encouraged me to believe in myself, and now I've been all around the world. I started playing around the time my dad left. I don't think that's coincidental. It helped me get through," said Foehner.

It was not always easy for a black kid in a suburban school to be involved in something like classical music. Sharon recalls the time she raised her hand to express her interest in joining the school orchestra, "I want to give a shout out to Karen King, she's the redneck that told me 'you people don't know how to do that kind of thing.' Like you have to be white to play Mozart or something. Well I'm going to Brazil now, Ha Ha!"

Later in high school she was punished for doing exactly what she has since made a life of. "Music is why I got kicked out of school, how's that for irony? I used to skip English class every day to practice for Youth Orchestra. This is what I lived for. Well I made the Youth Orchestra, but then they kicked me out of



school, and if you weren't in school you couldn't be in Youth Orchestra. I was pretty bitter about that and I'm sure the color of my skin didn't help me. All that time they knew where I was, how could you not? You could hear me all the way down the hallway sawin' away on that thing! Then when I make the Youth Orchestra they decide to throw me out."

Fast forward a decade and a half, and she arrived in St. Louis to raise her family. Her three children, Beulah, Barbara and James are now grown. In raising them, Sharon's contribution to the family income was entirely made as a working musician. It started in 1989 when she met a St. Louis blues legend. "The first thing I did was play with James Crutchfield, and the first thing he did was throw out all the rules. The best ear-

training I ever got! He had this button on his piano that transposed the keyboard to an entirely different key. He would hit that thing at random times! Well, now all of a sudden we're in B-flat, oops, now we're in G! This is while we are on stage!"

Crutchfield was most recently well known in St. Louis for playing every Wednesday night at the Venice Cafe with Bennie Smith

throughout the 1990s and up until James' death in 2001. It was Sharon who introduced Crutchfield to Bennie Smith.

"Bennie and I started the Urban Blues express in 1995, James was playing at Venice every Wednesday night. Tommy Johnson had been the rhythm guitarist, a wonderful rhythm guitarist. When Tommy couldn't play the gig anymore I invited Bennie to take his place," Foehner said.

As Crutchfield's health deteriorated Sharon became Bennie Smith's regular bassist and manager for the band in a tenure that lasted more a decade. "Do you know why I booked Bennie's gigs? Because he told me that if I booked gigs for him he would teach me the guitar." She sharpened her bass skills playing with Bennie too. "When I first started playing with these

guys, I didn't know any songs. I studied classical music in school, I didn't know about pop music or blues except the stuff I listened to as a teenager. So that's how Bennie first helped me. Bennie was a great musician because he practiced with discipline. At every rehearsal we had the drum machine on this Casio he had, which taught us good time."

It was with Bennie Smith that Foehner first went to Europe in a band that included Big Bad Smitty and Arthur Williams. "I met Big Bad Smitty at the airport for the first time, because although they scheduled rehearsals they always would be canceled before we could all get together. So we never did rehearse. Bennie was shouting the keys to me on stage. It's a good thing I learned my theory!"



Sharon poses with Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown (1924-2005), Bennie Smith (1933-2006) and Johnnie Johnson (1924-2005) at Off Broadway in 1997, photo by Lori Jeffress

In 2004 Foehner left Bennie's band to take the place as bassist in the Rich McDonough band, which was later renamed Rough Grooves, and who she still plays with today. It was not easy for her to leave Bennie, but she knew it was time to move on. "I liked the way that Rich thinks outside the box. I took it as a personal challenge to let a cat like Rich feel like he could do whatever the fuck he wants for as long as he wants to solo." She can be heard on three CDs with McDonough. Also through her association with McDonough, Sharon has been able to perform with Kenny "Blues Boss" Wayne, a Juno Award winning pianist from Vancouver. In August Foehner traveled to Brazil with Kenny along with Rich and drummer Keith Robinson to play a series of festivals.

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# continued from page 9

Sharon is also devoting hours and hours a week to improving as a guitarist. She can be heard playing professional engagements on six strings with Genevieve. She can also be heard on guitar with her long-time duet with Jeremy Segel-Moss called Bootigrabbers Delight. You can expect to hear her sing any time you see her perform on any number of strings, and if you are lucky, you just might hear some of her original songs or poetry. "I've really been working on my vocals. People have given me a lot of nice compliments lately." She writes with social awareness and pride in her heritage. "I hope to be writing more in the future, and exploring new genres. It enriches the audience's experience when a musician learns more about what they do."

Since those early days with James Crutchfield, Sharon's career has taken her a long way. Over the years, she has performed with Oliver Sain, Johnnie Johnson, Rufus Thomas, Etta Baker, Henry Townsend (who she toured with), Billy Gayles, Kenny Rice, Erskine Oglesby, Rayburn Hayes, Big Clara and the Magnatones, Kenny "Blues Boss" Wayne, Big Bad Smitty, Frank Frost and Sam Carr. She is a regular at clubs like BB's Jazz, Blues & Soups, Venice Cafe, Broadway Oyster Bar and other venues that are known for hiring only quality musicians. But you won't find Sharon celebrating those past accolades too much. She's too busy working on the next achievements.

# What does Bennie have in his hands? It appears to be a BluesLetter!

Bennie Smith appeared on the cover of the Winter issue of the BluesLetter in 1996.





# BLUES CITY DEI

## Sept/Oct Live Music

		Tom Woote
Saturday		Hudson and the Hoodoo Cats
Thursday	10	Dawn Weber's Naked Rock Fight
Saturday	12	Rhythm Section Road Show
Thursday	17	CB and the Cadillac Daddies
Saturday	19	Paul Bonn and the Bluesmen
Thursday	24	Bailey Dee and her Late Night Bait
Saturday	26	Paul Niehaus IV and His Band
Thursday		Big George Brock and the New Houserockers
Saturday		Marquise Knox
Thursday	8	Doug Deming and the Jewel Tones with Dennis Gruendling
Saturday	10	Doug Deming and the Jewel Tones with Dennis Gruendling
Thursday	15	Big Mike Aguirre and the Blu-City All Stars
Saturday	17	The Bottoms Up Blues Gang
Thursday	22	Roland Johnson and Soul Endevor
Saturday	24	Ethan Leinwand
Thursday	29	Miss Jubilee and the Humdingers
Saturday	31	Mat Wilson
		iust about every Thursday and Saturday. Lookin' for
		eck out our website for upcoming shows and events!
		w.bluescitydeli.com
2438 McNa	air, S	t. Louis MO 63104 (314) 773-8225

# The Road to Memphis



St. Louis local 2012 winners, The Jeremiah Johnson, Band onstage at the IBC in Memphis, January 2013. photo by Lisa Michelle Parker





Band winner Big Mike Aguirre and the Blu-City All Stars and solo/duo winner Bob "Bumble Bee" Kasmoske compete at the November 2013 Road to Memphis photos by Reed Radcliffe

Join the St. Louis Blues Society on Sunday, October 18 from 2 to 8pm for the fourth annual Road to Memphis Blues Challenge.

One band and one soloduo act will be chosen to represent St. Louis at the 32nd Annual International Blues Challenge presented by the Blues Foundation in Memphis in January 2016.



**Kirkwood Station Brewing Company** 105 East Jefferson Kirkwood MO





2014 Road to Memphis band category winners The Kingdom Brothers pose with STLBS Treasurer, Jerry Minchey and solo/duo winners Tom Hall and Alice Spencer perform at the Road to Memphis. photos by Reed Radcliffe

The Highway 61 Roadhouse and Kitchen is located at 34 S. Old Orchard in Webster Groves. When you walk into this establishment, you soon notice the mural on the walls of blues and R&B musicians, with Robert Johnson at the crossroads, centered over the stage. Good music and food is served here and on Tuesday evenings the musicians gather at the bar or at tables in the restaurant waiting to play in the open mic and jam session that runs from 7:30 to 11:30 pm.

The owner, Bill Kunz, stated he opened 61 Roadhouse in October of 2006 and the Tuesday night jam sessions started right away. The sessions initially alternated between jazz and blues nights but shifted to being a blues jam in a few months. The sessions started with the late Alvin Jett (guitar, vocals) and Matt Davis (bass guitar, keyboard, vocals) hosting the jam and this continued until Alvin Jett left for California around three years ago. At that time, Darrow Washington (guitar) stepped in to help Matt Davis with the hosting duties. Weekly attendance is good and Matt Davis commented on how he is amazed by the amount of musicians and patrons showing up regularly. Matt also said that the musicians don't have to play blues to perform, but it is the preferred music at the session. Amplified music also seems to fare better due to the size of the crowds, but acoustic players are accommodated.

With the family-friendly location and restaurant atmosphere, this jam session has a history of supporting young musicians, one of its unique features. Parents feel comfortable bringing their young sons and daughters to perform and they have always been welcomed. "I have received a lot of comments by patrons about how young and how good these musicians are. The patrons also say it is our best music night of the

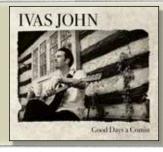
Some of these "youngsters," who began attending the jam session, around the age of thirteen or fourteen, have honed their chops and now play regularly in performing blues bands in the St. Louis area. Aaron Griffin (guitar, drums, vocals), Matthew Lesch (guitar, harmonica, vocals), and Stephen Cole (drums) are but three of the young players that can be seen carrying on the blues tradition, not only at the jam sessions but throughout St. Louis playing with bands such as "Soulard Blues Band," "Mojo Rising," Big George Brock and others. When these young musicians take the stage together and start playing, you know the blues will remain alive.

The jam session is also known for being "harmonica friendly." There is an amplifier with a bullet microphone set up every week for harmonica players. This attracts several harmonica players from the St. Louis area on a regular basis and players from out of town make it a regular stop when in St. Louis. The dedicated amplifier and microphone mean they don't have to be challenged by playing through a stage mic set up for vocals that may not be ideal for the harmonica.

As with many jam sessions, the 61 Roadhouse sessions provide a great place to socialize and network with other musicians. Several bands have formed from musicians meeting and playing together at the session. Bands will also come to the sessions to try out new material or to audition for a gig at the Roadhouse. Stop on by on Tuesday night if you are looking to play or listen to blues music at a well-run jam session in a great atmosphere with great food.  $\square$ The St. Louis Blues Society BluesLetter 11

# **IVAS JOHN** Good Days a Comin 2015 self-released

by Michael Higgins



Ivas John is going back to Arkansas. Packing swan-song fiddle, sweet mandolin and straight-American, finger-picking, not only does he get us there safely, but like a soulful, storytelling escort, Ivas delivers us straight thru Americana to boot.

Ivas is beyond familiar to St. Louis. For almost a decade, his band has swung our confluence to a tasteful blend of blues, jazz and roots. Anchored by Charlie Morrell's drums and Brad Bell's buoyant piano, the Ivas John Band has endeared St. Louis so much, they've recorded two of their five CD's here.

Their second CD, Live from St. Louis, was recorded at the 2009 Big Muddy Festival. The following year brought Look Who's Crying Now, a CD/DVD laid down at our blues landmark, BB's Jazz, Blues and Soups. Those sounds, plus two other studio CDs, Street Music (2008) and 2012's acclaimed Doin What's Natural, not only planted Ivas as a monthly staple at BB's, but have grown a national following, listening and watching from Sirius Radio to PBS-TV. Now, the musical gears have shifted. Not in quality, mind you, but in quantity and ambiance.

Good Days A Comin is a stripped-down gem of American folk blues. From the jaunty fiddle leading into "Going Back To Arkansas," to the suave, Django-styled instrumental "Sunday Morning Blues," the sounds are lean and mean. No more piano or sax fills. The five piece is now three: acoustic guitar, drums, and fiddle or mandolin. Though all 12 songs are superb, certain standouts ring exceptionally true. "Here I Am," with its outsidelooking-in feel, perfectly matches mandolin and slide. You can feel the puppy-dog charm, though our storyteller has drunk himself down again. Hopeful his love on the other side of the window will let him in, it's not a guarantee. And, the song, "Roll Mississippi", is exactly that. From the "top of the map" and with "rambling on his mind," Ivas (much like his touring schedule) heads south towards the Gulf. A country boy on a spree, he "taps his toes to the St. Louis Blues," meets friends in Cape Girardeau, rolls thru "French-town" Ste. Genevieve, and digs into the red beans and rice of "gritty New Orleans."

The four covers on this production are equally top-notch. His handling of Merle Travis' coal miner's lament, "Dark As A Dungeon," and James Jett's "Greenville Trestle High", not only exemplify his unique genius of making another's song his own, but also add to the "down-to-the-dirt" middle-America feel of the entire CD.

Billboard Magazine has raved about Good Days A Comin, calling it, "Nothing short of a slam-dunk." Here in Cardinal country, that means, "GRAND SLAM." It's apparent as Ivas John evolves and matures, "good days really are coming." The songs and sounds themselves say they're already here...  $\Pi$ 

A must buy on the CD list—and highly recommended!



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# St. Louis Blues, Brews & BBQ



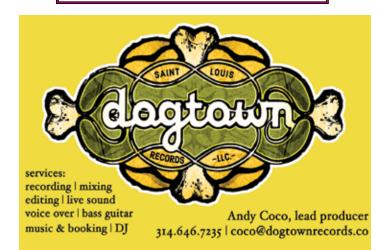
LOCATED DOWNTOWN ONE BLOCK SOUTH OF BUSCH STADIUM OPEN MON THRU FRI 6 PM - 3 AM . SAT & SUN



Every Monday Night 7 - 10 PM

Tim Uncle Albert Dan Stove Handle Jackson Randy Blind Lime Roberts

Hammerstone's @ 9th and Russell In historic Soulard 314-773-5565









### **Aaron Griffin**

aggriffdog11@gmail.com 314.378.0022

### **The Alley Tones**

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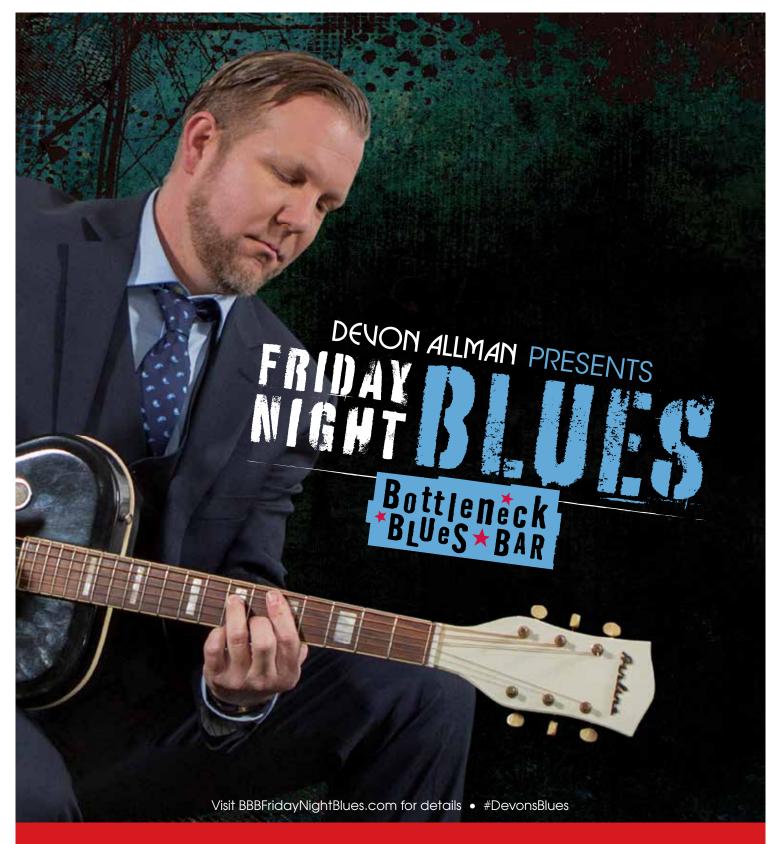
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