



The Bluesletter

Blues Club Co-Produces Biggest Blues Fest Ever

By Joel Slotnikoff

The week of October 10-16 saw the biggest blues celebration ever in St. Louis, Benson & Hedges Blues, co-produced by The St. Louis Blues Club. A week of blues started off with a pub crawl on Monday night featuring St. Louis artists: Tommy Bankhead and The Blues Eldorados at the Missouri Bar & Grill, Doc Terry and The Pirates at the Great Grizzly Bear, James DeShay at Cicero's, Rondo's Blues Deluxe at Blueberry Hill, Souldard Blues Band at the Broadway Oyster Bar, Blue City Band at Mike & Min's, Billy Peek at the M/V City of St. Louis, Herb Sadler Trio at the 1860's Saloon, and the Daryl Darden Quartet at the French Quarter.

Wednesday's concert of acoustic blues at Mississippi Nights lead off with St. Louisans Ron Edwards and Leroy Pierson, followed by Texas guitarist John Campbell, Mississippi guitarist James Son Thomas accompanied by Walter Liniger, St. Louis legend Henry Townsend, and the renowned Robert Jr. Lockwood. The evening was climaxed by a series of duets by Townsend and Lockwood and a final jam by everyone.

Thursday's show at Mississippi Nights featured a strong line-up of St. Louis artists beginning with Tommy Bankhead and the Blues Eldorados. They were followed by Barbara Carr and Fontella Bass singing with the Oliver Sain Band featuring Johnny Johnson on piano. Headlining the Thursday show was the great Albert Collins who gave a standout performance, landing on stage like he'd been shot out of a cannon and culminating in a walk through the audience, out the door and back again.

Friday's gala concert at the Fox Theater opened with a short set by Dr. John with St. Louis' Robbie Montgomery singing



Photo by Bruce Bramoweth

Benson & Hedges Blues Legends: Bob Stroger on bass, Pinetop Perkins on Piano, Sam Lay on drums and Jimmy Rogers on guitar.

backup, followed by the man from Lovejoy, the great Albert King, and a scorching set by Johnny Winter. The grand finale of the night was a performance by Ray Charles, his orchestra, and the Raelets.

Saturday's Mississippi Nights extravaganza began with local bluesmen Billy Peek and David Dee. Next came Ronnie Earl and the Broadcasters, featuring Jerry Portnoy. They gave a fine performance on their own and then tastefully backed the great Otis Rush. James Cotton and his band turned in a rousing set. To cap it all off, St. Louis was treated to a performance by the Benson & Hedges Legends: Snooky Pryor on harmonica, Pinetop Perkins on piano, Jimmy Rogers and Hubert Sumlin on guitar, Sam Lay on drums, and Bob Stroger on bass. These blues giants lived up to their Legends billing in every way, playing a blazing set that ran until 2:30 in the morning.

The week wound down with a series of events on Sunday, Oct. 16th, at the Mis-

souri Historical Society beginning with a screening of magnificent film footage from the Chertok Collection. There was a fine lecture on the development of the blues by Dr. Harriet Ottenheimer. Also featured was a series of performances and workshops by Ron Edwards, Doc Terry, Henry Townsend, John Campbell, all the members of the Benson & Hedges Legends, and closing with a fine set from St. Louis' James DeShay and his band.

The St. Louis Blues Club extends its thanks to the musicians, promoters, and venue operators who made this fabulous event possible. Of hundreds of impressions received through the week, the one that stands out is producer/guitarist John Campbell's statement that St. Louis is the greatest blues town he's ever seen, with more blues lovers and more blues expertise. We are especially proud of the many fine local artists who contributed to the success of Benson & Hedges Blues.

Upcoming Events

**BIG BAD SMITTY & THE UPSETTERS
with special guest Q.T. MACON**

THURSDAY, JANUARY 26, 9 PM

Blueberry Hill, 6504 Delmar, Univ. City

Big Smitty is the hardest working man in blues. Q.T. MACON was the opener for the second set at the Davis Brothers event. He's terrific! Both artists have new records out that are hard to get but will be available at this event.

**\$4 Admission / \$3 with Membership Card.
A ST. LOUIS BLUES CLUB PRESENTATION**

The RECORD COLLECTORS CONVENTION will be happening on Jan. 15, 9:30 AM at the American Czech Center, 4690 Landsdown.

The WILLIAM CLARK BLUES Band will venture to St. Louis from sunny Hollywood, Calif., Friday, February 3, at Off Broadway Nightclub at the corner of Lemp & Broadway. Opening for William Clark will be St. Louis' own Rockin' Luckys. For information call 773-3363.

News Bits

The St. Louis Blues Club annual meeting and party at Blueberry Hill featured the Davis Brothers Band with guest appearances by Doc Terry, Q.T. Macon and Dan Lee Taylor. The Board of Directors were elected by acclamation, the band and guests were super, and a good time was had by all. (December 1)

The Harp Attack '88 at The Off Broadway Nightclub featuring nine of the area's best harp blowers. The place was packed to the rafters and a great time was had by all. (December 6) For those that missed the show, it will be broadcast in late January by KDHX-FM on Ron Edwards' "Nothin' but the Blues." (see Blues on the Air)

Legendary blues disc jockey Gabriel, for years on the air with KATZ and KDNA, was in fine form at a record spin hosted by the St. Louis Blues Club, Dec. 10 at Gino's Lounge, 6161 Natural Bridge in Pine Lawn.

George Brock, better known as Big George & The Houserockers, played host to the Oil Man, Big Jack Johnson from Clarksdale, Miss., at Georges' club, the New Club Caravan at Taylor & Delmar. Johnson's soulful vocals and solid guitar playing would have satisfied all. But additional treats included an awesome stint by Jack on the bass, and an unannounced appearance by blues legend Frank Frost, Johnson's bandmate of thirty years. Frost recalled his first professional appearance in 1957 at a club at 18th & Franklin, and dazzled the crowd with his harp playing and vocals. Many thanks to George for this stellar event, including the fine performances by George and his band. (November 25, 26)

Silvercloud, with Ingrid Berry guesting on vocals, and Henry Townsend played at Preservation Hall. There was an opening set by Benny Smith and the Sportsmen. Traveling Pop Music Workshop produced the show. (November 26)

Soapbox

As the new president of the Blues Club, I would like to welcome the many new members who have joined the club. It is my hope we can build this club into the organization a great blues city like St. Louis deserves. I am thankful for the help and support I have received so far from veterans of the club and newcomers alike. I hope more of you who wish to participate will do so.

The Benson & Hedges Blues has been a terrific boost for St. Louis Blues. There are more blues shows on the radio than at any time. I believe we can ride this wave of enthusiasm to a new level of success for the artists, the fans, and the music of St. Louis. We also can gain the respect and recognition nationally and internationally that a city with our important blues heritage deserves.

Positions on the following committees need to be filled: Research, Promotion, Logistics, Community Education, Development, Membership and Art & Graphics. Your input is needed. This is crucial, as the club is a vehicle for our enjoyment. To those of you who have friends not yet in the club, I hope you will enlist their support. Word of mouth is our strongest tool for growth.

Joel Slotnikoff

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Ron Edwards, Chairman
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Joel Slotnikoff
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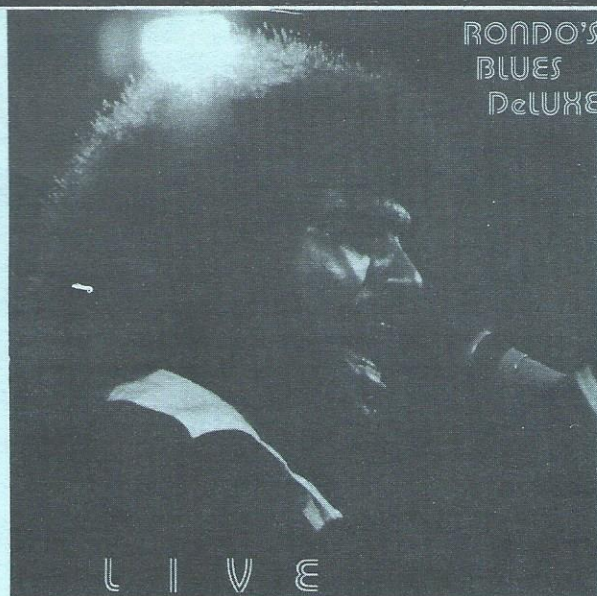
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National Scene

Luther Johnson's single, **WOMAN LOOK WHAT YOU'VE DONE TO ME / NINE BELOW ZERO**, won the 1988 Blues Single of the Year Award from The Blues Foundation, based in Memphis, Tenn. It was recorded on St. Louis' Pulsar label.

KOKO TAYLOR won the Foundation's award for Contemporary Female Blues Artist of the Year. Male Contemporary Blues Artist went to **JOE LOUIS WALKER**.

The Foundation named **LITTLE MILTON (CAMPBELL)** Blues Entertainer of the Year. Milton was based in St. Louis for many years.

The Kansas City Blues Society last month directed its focus to women blues artists. Its Eighth Annual Blues & Heritage Festival, entitled "Women in the Blues," was dedicated to the late Priscilla Bowman. St. Louis-based singers Barbara Carr and Fontella Bass appeared.

On another note, the Kansas City Blues Society formed an education Committee, chaired by Brad Grooms, to heighten blues awareness among public school students 14 to 18 years old. The program, first presented to high school music students, includes a mini-blues seminar and a jam session. The Society plans to present local and possibly national artists to young people.

Legendary blues drummer Fred Below passed away Aug. 14. He developed the Chicago backbeat in blues. His broad contributions to blues will always be remembered.



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Artist Profile: Henry Townsend

By Jeff Collier

Henry Townsend is widely recognized as the patriarch of St. Louis Blues. His imaginative country blues display unusual rhythmic variations and picking dexterity. Henry is equally adept at guitar and piano, and his performances are intelligently and thoughtfully presented improvisations on familiar themes.

Henry was born in Shelby, Mississippi, on October 27, 1909, and at a young age moved with his family to Cairo, Illinois. He moved to St. Louis at the age of nine, and when he was about fifteen, began to teach himself to play the guitar. He listened to all the blues greats; Lonnie Johnson, for example, in East St. Louis, IL taverns. His first recording consisted of four sides for the Columbia label, and was made November 15, 1929. Henry worked with his friend, Henry Spaulding, for a number of years in and around the St. Louis area. His guitar-playing enabled him to be versatile and to mesh with the varied approaches of some of the blues greats including Roosevelt Sykes, Walter Davis, Robert Johnson, Robert Nighthawk and Sonny Boy Williamson. During this period he recorded for the Bluebird and Bullet labels. After a stint in the Army, he spent time in Chicago playing again with Sonny Boy Williamson and Robert Nighthawk. In the 60's he recorded for Decca, Prestige-Bluesville, and Adelphi.

In the 70's, Henry's predominant emphasis shifted from guitar to piano playing. In 1980, he and his wife, Vernell, toured Europe. His most recent LP is titled "MULE" and is on St. Louis' Nighthawk label. The record is a fine one, and is an accurate reflection of Henry's current performance style. It is the work of a legend.

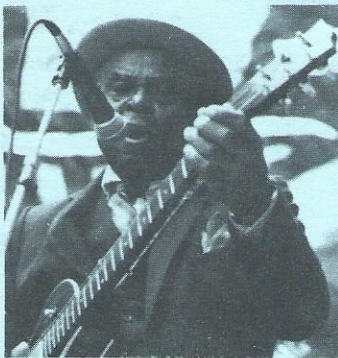


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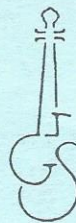
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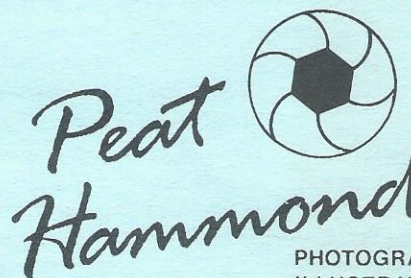
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