



The Bluesletter

Oliver Sain's Soul Reunion Returns

By Kathy Wentzel

On Friday, May 12th, St. Louis' Oldies Station AM-1380 KGLD welcomes show that will be absolutely impossible to ignore. Oliver Sain, one of St. Louis' finest blues and rhythm & blues musicians for almost 40 years, is celebrating his "26th Year Soul Reunion" down on Laclede's Landing at Mississippi Nights, and if the list of performers is any indication, this show is going to rock the rafters with some of the greatest music St. Louis has ever heard. This year's reunion brings back almost two dozen of the best rhythm & blues and soul artists around.

Over the years, Oliver Sain has been associated with many local and national blues and rhythm & blues artists, among them Howlin' Wolf, Little Milton, Fontella Bass and Bobby McClure. In the early 1970s, Oliver hit the R&B charts with his songs "Bus Stop" and "Soul Serenade." In addition to his talents as a songwriter and musician, Oliver has produced a multitude of other artists out of his St. Louis-based Archway Studios. Oliver has been turning international audiences on to his St. Louis style of rhythm & blues as well, touring over 45 European cities in the past three years.

Hometowneer Fontella Bass and West Coaster Bobby McClure, two of the headliners of last year's sell-out reunion show, will be back again to belt out their classic duets "Don't Mess Up a Good Thing" and "Don't Jump" recorded during their tenure with Chess Records, which brought them both to the charts. Fontella and Bobby also charted as solo artists on that label, Fontella most notably with "Rescue Me" and the unforgettable "Soul of the Man" written by Oliver Sain, and Bobby with "Peak Of Love" and later in association with Willie Mitchell at Hi Records "High Heel Shoes. Fontella's and Bobby's association with Oliver goes back to the early 60s, when shortly after quitting as band director for Little Milton, Oliver formed his own revue featuring Fontella and Bobby as a vocal duet, with Fontella doubling on piano. Their friendship has lasted all these years, making this reunion a very special one.

Fontella won't be the only lady on that crowded stage Reunion Night. Female vocalists have always held a prominent place in rhythm & blues music, and this show will be no exception. Together with Fontella will be Ruby Andrews, until recently a Chicago-based talent who hit it big in 1967 with "It's All Over Casanova," a tune written by former Ikette Jossie Armstead. The Ikettes, of Ike & Tina Turner fame, will be back again featuring St. Louisan Robble Montgomery, Jossie Armstead and Frances Hodges. Also performing will be Barbara Carr of St. Louis, with her hit song "Made a Good Woman Go Bad." And finally The Olivettes, another female trio formerly with Oliver's music revue, featuring Frances Hodges, Ann Hill and Sondra Harold.

Balancing out this musical entourage is an equally exciting lineup of male performers. Along with Bobby McClure will be Alvin Cash, who made it big in 1965 with the popular



The Michelob Jazz & Blues Festival

By Ned Mitchell

Director of Development and Marketing for the Forum

Where will you have the opportunity of previewing an exhibit about St. Louis Modernist architects of the 1930's and a photographic essay of St. Louis' pre-1920's Tall Buildings while attending a Jazz & Blues festival?

The Forum.

The Forum, downtown St. Louis' only visual and performing arts center, and The Friends of the Forum, with support from The St. Louis Blues Club, will host The Michelob Jazz and Blues Festival Saturday, May 6th from 7:00 pm to 1:00 am.

The Friends of the Forum, under the artistic direction of Patti Thomas, have put together a sampling of St. Louis' finest musical heritage which will be presented in a performance art setting. This event will feature: St. Louis' oldest living Blues Legend and Missouri Arts Council Award winner, Henry Townsend; well traveled and seasoned tenor and soprano saxophonist, Willie Akins; the all-male gospel group, The Fantastic Mighty Angels; tenor saxophonist with strong support systems, Roland Clark and The Sound Exchange; and recorded Blues aficionado, Doc Terry and The Pirates.

This festival would not be complete without the accent of food and drink. Offerings from The Broadway Oyster Bar, The House of Jamaica, The Original Restaurant and The Jet Set Soul Food Restaurant will be available for purchase with beverages compliments of Anheuser-Busch, Inc.

The purpose of this festival is twofold: The Forum, recognizing the art of performing blues and jazz, will showcase St. Louis musicians in a unique and focused setting. And secondly, as a membership development event, The Friends of the Forum will be drawing attention to the Forum's facilities, purpose and function, as the city's only inter-disciplinary arts center.

Tickets for this event are \$12.00 for current Forum members and \$15.00 for non-members, which includes one year membership to the Forum. For more information concerning this event and ticket outlets, call the Forum at 421-3791.

Upcoming Events

- APRIL 30 LITTLE MILTON CAMPBELL at the Coliseum. 7 PM.
 MAY 5 Blues Club welcomes PINETOP PERKINS at Cicero's. Two shows.
 MAY 3 The BLUES CRUISE on the President resumes, sponsored by the RFT and KSD. The May 3 cruise features Tommy Bankhead & The Blues Eldorados and The Soulard Blues Band. Tickets at Ticketmaster.
 MAY 6 The BLUES & JAZZ FESTIVAL at the Forum. See cover.
 MAY 9 JOHN LEE HOOKER at Mississippi Nights.
 MAY 12 The OLIVER SAIN SOUL REUNION at Mississippi Nights. See cover.
 MAY 12, 13 The BEL AIRS at Off Broadway.
 MAY 13 MAYFAIR at Washington University next to Graham Chapel. Noon til dusk. QUEEN IDA & BON TON ZYDECO BAND, JOHN CEPHAS & PHIL WIGGINS, and BEAUSOLEIL.
 MAY 13 MILLIE JACKSON at Caesar's. 9973 Lewis & Clark. Two shows 7 and 11 PM.
 MAY 19 A.C. REED & THE SPARKPLUGS at Off Broadway.
 MAY 24 The MANNISH BOYS at Off Broadway.
 MAY 25 St. Louis Blues Club presents BIG GEORGE & THE HOUSEROCKERS at Blueberry Hill.
 MAY 30 LITTLE CHARLIE & THE NIGHTCATS at Off Broadway.
 JUNE 2 TYRONE DAVIS at Club 54. Two shows 7 and 11 PM.
 JUNE 4 ALBERT COLLINS at The Coliseum. Call to confirm 385-6910
 JUNE 29 The Blues Club presents ROSS & HUNT at Blueberry Hill. A record release party.

Reviews

- MARCH 9 SCREAMIN' JOE NEAL at Blueberry Hill presented by the Blues Club. Screamin' Joe is back on the scene and in fine form. Look for more good things from this St. Louis artist.
 MARCH 11 ETTA JAMES at the Coliseum with Oliver Sain. Sain's otherwise solid set was plagued by technical problems. Etta James rocked the full house of 2000 with a superb soul-blues performance.
 MARCH 22 LITTLE ED & THE BLUES IMPERIALS gave a superior performance at Off Broadway with an inspired opening set from the Rockin' Luckys. Ed's slide playing was even better than last year. A real high-energy show.
 MARCH 23 ANSON FUNDERBURG & THE ROCKETS with SAM MYERS at Cicero's, also with a crowd pleasing opener by the Rockin' Luckys. Anson, Sam and the Rockets turned in a great performance abetted by the intimate setting. A guest appearance of Johnnie Johnson on piano was a highlight.
 APRIL 7 KOKO TAYLOR and JOHNNY TAYLOR at Club 54. An excellent show. Koko in royal form earned her Queen of the Blues title and Johnny served up a dose of his deep soul blues. (see National News.)

Local News

Expect a new album from Barbara Carr in June. The album, titled "Good Woman Go Bad" is on the Bar-Car label and includes new 1989 recordings as well as previously unreleased material.

National News

ROBERT "Pops" TAYLOR, husband and longtime road manager of Koko Taylor died in Chicago's Mercy Hospital on Wednesday, March 22 after a long illness. Taylor, 72, operated blues clubs in Memphis in the early 50's where B.B. King and Bobby Bland got their starts, before moving to Chicago in 1953. His loss is mourned by blues lovers everywhere.

The estate of JIMMY REED has filed an 18 million dollar lawsuit against nearly every record company he ever worked for. His songs have been covered by almost everyone.

New Members

St. Louis Blues Club would like to take this opportunity to thank and welcome our new members.

Brown Abrams	Chris Cuquet	Les Jankovich	David Oscarson
Gary K. Bolen	Sanjay A. Desai	Calvin Marsala	Tom Ronollo
Bruce Bramoweth	Charles L. Freeman	Adam Miles	Paul J. Taxman
N. Barrett Braun	Gary Gordon	D.W. Miller	Kathleen Wentzel
Joe Cardillo	Ken Groutage	Joe Moreno	Susan Wilson
Victoria Cardillo	Bill Harrison	Steve Morgan	Robin L. Winfield
Dennis Cronin-Doyle	Edward Holtz	Willie Obermoeller	Dave Wright

Club Job Openings

We need assistance with Bluesletter distribution North, East and West. We also need contributions to Local and National News. Call 647-2447.

Soapbox

Bluesmen have always taken the sounds that came before them, reinterpreting, personalizing, carrying it forward by adding new bricks to an already laid foundation. Blind duplication of music promotes stagnation and eventually death. Evolution in music is critical!

Great music, like all forms of art, is perceived emotionally. It must be felt. Its impact is strongest when experienced live.

Live blues and rhythm & blues in St. Louis has survived in nightclubs that present the best blues artists available. The St. Louis blues scene is enhanced by artists of regional, national, and international notoriety. Blues music provides more entertainment for your dollar than any other form of music, this allows the audience to witness the various styles of blues, thereby broadening their perspective, and serves as a form of inspiration for our St. Louis musicians.

The broadcast of blues on radio provides an alternative to those of us that require something other than "commercially safe" music. This presents an opportunity to listen to St. Louis artists, country and urban blues, soul, jazz, R&B and gospel. Eclectic, informative and stimulating.

Blues artists are committed to their music, club owners and promoters risk financial existence on shows, some radio stations and record stores provide options, this newsletter provides information. Chances should be taken with live music to develop and retain focus on what is perceived as good blues music!

You must be critical and decide for yourself, seeking it out through comparison and contrast. Your responsibility is to support it and spread the good word!

John M. & John Z.



DIRECTORS:	Gene Norman
Ron Edwards	Lindsay Pickens
Frank Babcock	Oliver Sain
George Edick	Joel Slotnikoff
Bill Greensmith	Lou "Fatha" Thimes
Carl Kuelker	Henry Townsend
John May	Sam Valenti

The St. Louis Blues Club is a Missouri non-profit corporation dedicated to preserving Blues music, to fostering growth and appreciation of Blues music, and to providing Blues artists the opportunity for public performance and individual improvement in their field, all for the educational and artistic benefit of the general public.

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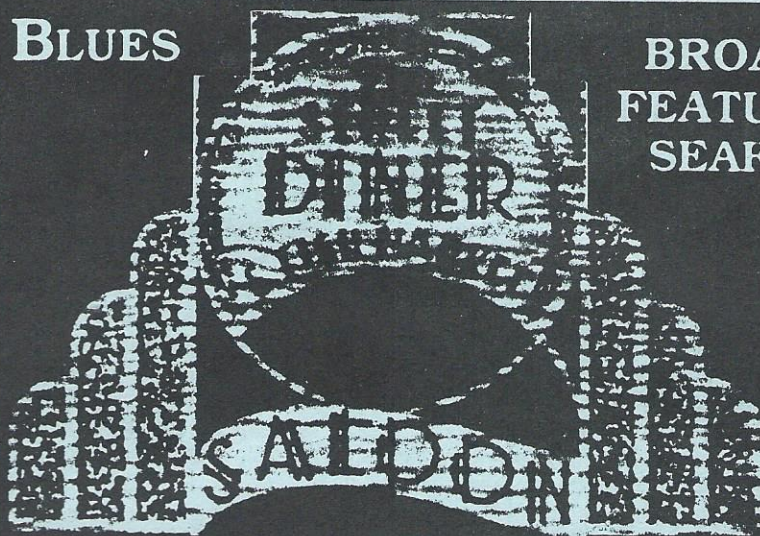
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MISSISSIPPI NIGHTS

Feature Artist: Little Milton Campbell

By Jeff Collier

Arguably the most commercially successful soul-blues artist with St. Louis roots, Little Milton Campbell has had a continual stream of original and distinctive recorded material. Over the course of a career spanning 35 years, he has maintained a nationwide following of loyal fans. Unlike some artists, Little Milton's music has stood the test of time—the songs from the earliest period of his career are not "dated." He is a talented and important figure in contemporary soul-blues.

Between Leland and Greenville, Mississippi, lies the town of Iverness, the birthplace of Little Milton Campbell. The nickname "Little" distinguished Campbell from his father, whose name was also Milton.

At a very young age, music became an intrinsic part of Campbell's life. Raised on a farm in Greenville, Mississippi, he sang in the church choir and in gospel groups. Local musicians provided the entertainment for "suppers" and house parties held by his family. He displayed a growing interest in music by drumming on lard cans and playing a diddley-bow. He acquired the first guitar at the age of 12 from a mail-order catalog. His self-taught guitar skills soon earned him jobs at hometown parties and Greenville honky-tonks, like the Blue Note Club and Henry's T's Pool Room. When he was 15 years old, he left home to play with the Eddie Cusic band, with whom he spent two years. The next few years, Campbell played in Willie Love's band and with Sonny Boy Williamson (Rice Miller). (Both Willie Love and Rice Miller were King Biscuit /Enter-tainers for KFFA Radio, Helena, Arkansas.)

In 1951, Little Milton formed his own band. It was also at about this time that he met Ike Turner. Milton first recorded as a member of Willie Love's band for the Trumpet label in 1952. (Of note: St. Louis' Oliver Sain was a member of the Willie Love band at the time.)

The following year, Ike Turner, working as a talent agent, introduced Milton to Sam Phillips, owner of the newly formed, Memphis-based Sun record label. The first recordings featuring Campbell as the headliner were made in 1953. These were mostly straight blues tunes. He was backed by Ike Turner and the Playmates of Rhythm. He continued recording in front of and playing with Ike Turner throughout 1953 and 1954.

In 1955, Milton moved to East St. Louis, Illinois. As the commercial success of his rockabilly records created a shift in Sam Phillips' interest away from blues artists, Milton started shopping for another label. One

session on Les Bihari's Memphis-based Meteor label in 1957 resulted in two records issued by "Little Milton and his Playmates of Rhythm." (Incidentally, the saxophone player for this session was Oliver Sain.)

Milton left Meteor because of lack of support by Bihari. At about this same time, Bob Lyons was managing KATZ Radio. Milton, still living in East St. Louis, was appearing regularly at George Edick's Club Imperial. He also frequented the Havana Club and the Birdcage in St. Louis and the Club Manhattan on the East Side. Many performances were broadcast live over KATZ. In 1958, the release of Milton's "I'm A Lonely Man" launched the Bobbin record label, founded by Bob Lyons. Featuring Oliver Sain playing sax, and Fontella Bass at the piano, the recording was made at the KATZ studio. The same artists recorded for sessions in 1959 and 1960, playing mostly jump blues.

When the Bobbin label was leased to Checker, a subsidiary of Chess records, Milton moved to Chicago, where in 1961, he signed with Leonard Chess for the Checker label. He spent nine years with Checker and released his best-known recordings. The material during this period is characterized as predominantly smooth soul ballads and rhythm and blues. Milton's first national chart appearance was with So Mean To Me, and during the Chess period he placed a total of 16 tunes on the R & B charts. Among them are the #1 hit, "We're Gonna Make It" and "Who's Cheating Who," which reached the top five. Other chart entries included "Blind Man," "Grits Ain't Groceries" and "Just A Little Bit." He toured constantly, all the while placing hits on the charts. As his tenure progressed with Chess, Milton's material became increasingly soul-oriented.

Leonard Chess died near the end of Milton's contract with Chess records. New management offered Milton a contract, but he declined their offer, and in 1971, he signed with the Stax label. His hits on Stax include "That's What Love Will Make You Do" and "Walking The Back Streets Crying." In this material, Milton's guitar work is more prominent. It was at about this time that he appeared in the motion picture "Wattstax." When Stax liquidated, Little Milton moved to TK and then MCA before signing with Malaco, his current label.

Little Milton will be appearing April 30 at the Coliseum, 3601 Goodfellow, 7 PM. For information call 385-6910.

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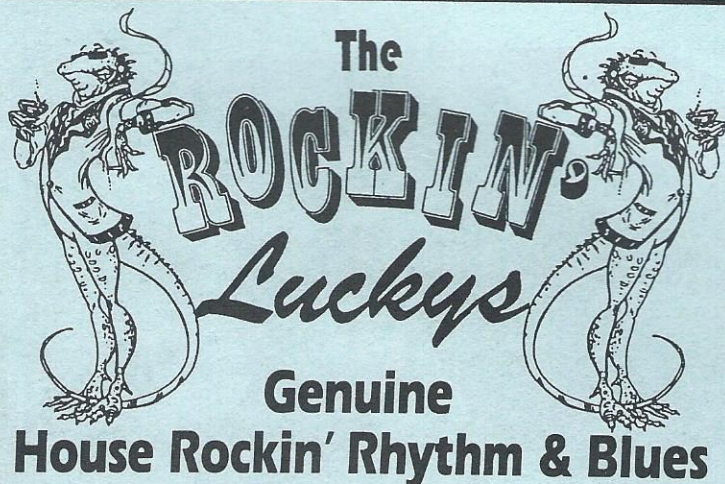
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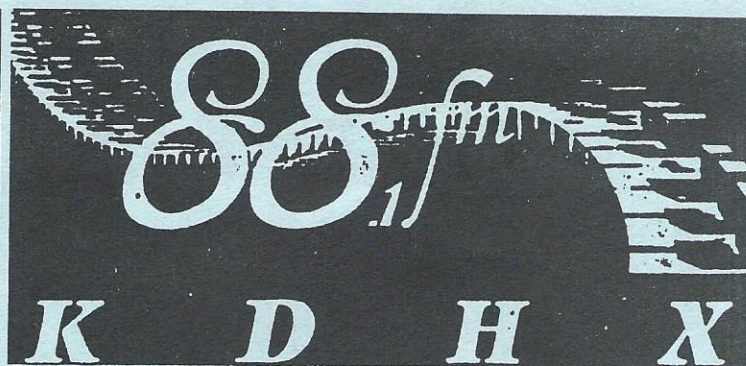
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Local Record Scene

by Victoria Cardillo

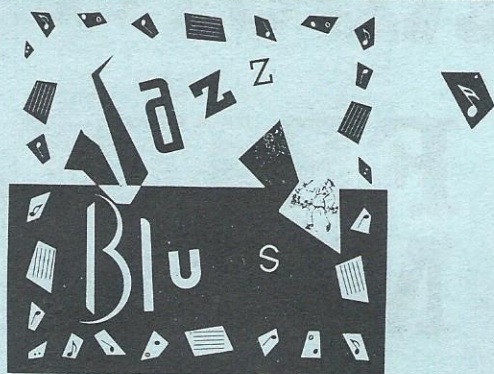
The Blues come "smokin" right out of St. Louis, as Pulsar Records brings to light the talent that's been here for years!

During an interview with Pulsar Records owner, Sam Valenti, I learned the new St. Louis based blues label has produced three albums and four 45's in their first year of business...true to their slogan: "Comin' on Strong with those Low Down Blues!" The first album, "I Ain't Beggin' Nobody" by Larry Davis, is doing very well. Larry penned the Stevie Ray Vaughn hit, "Texas Flood." Next, Eddie Kirkland's fine Pulsar album, "Have Mercy," is a testament to the rich blues history of this colorful performer, who accompanied John Lee Hooker on his early recordings and played in the back-up band for Otis Redding. Finally, the debut album of our beloved Johnnie Johnson is generating worldwide excitement with the newly released "Blue Hand Johnnie." All three are required listening for the serious blues lover.

Pulsar Records' 45 releases include the Handy Award Winner of the Best Blues Single of the Year, "Woman Look What You're Doin' To Me" by Luther "Guitar Jr." Johnson with "9 Below Zero" on the flip side. Also from Luther an uptempo contemporary blues shuffle called "Love Your Sexy Ways." An upcoming release by Ronnie Guyton, "Honey Take Me," with Freddie King's classic "Hideaway." And from East St. Louis, Q.T. Macon's "Blow Wind" is getting lots of exposure on your favorite blues stations. The flip side is entitled "Black Neck And The Soul Band."

You might say that Sam Valenti has his hand on the very pulse of St. Louis Blues music! Future projects from Pulsar Records include those involving veteran blues players Clayton Love, Oliver Sain and Stacy Johnson, as well as a St. Louis anthology, featuring some of the prime artists in the city and the more contemporary local groups.

The St. Louis Blues Club is proud to have the owner of Pulsar Records on its Board of Directors. Sam Valenti's enthusiasm, interest and involvement is an example of the kind of spirit we're looking for in all our members. Let's all jump on the "Band wagon" to support and preserve blues music. Buy blues records, attend events and concerts, support your favorite performers and join the St. Louis Blues Club!



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Thursday: 12-4 PM, Big Bucket of Blues with Tony Cabanellas
11-2 AM, The Night Crawler with Michael Finney
Friday: 2-5:30 PM, Blues in the Night with Art Dwyer
9-Midnight, Rhythm & Blues Etc. with Orlando Peraza
Sunday: 7-8 PM, Nothin' But the Blues with Ron Edwards
8-10 PM, Night Train with Papa Ray

KCLC 89.1 FM

Sunday: 8-Midnight, Blues in the Night—Blues from the
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Friday: 9-10 PM, Blues from The Red Rooster

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Oliver Sain Reunion—Cont.

"Twine Time," as well as several other chart-topping records including "The Barracuda" and "The All Shuffle." In the 1970s, Alvin went on to build a reputation as a dancemaster, recording several dance tunes, including the big hit "Keep on Dancin'." St. Louis favorite Johnnie Johnson, longtime piano player for Chuck Berry and talented bandleader in his own right, will also be joining Oliver for this great night of music, featuring songs from his new album "Blue Hand Johnnie," recently released on Pulsar Records. Filling out the male vocals part of the show will be Stacy Johnson, who charted with the tune "Consider Yourself" during his stay with Ike Turner's Kings of Rhythm, and has recently been touring internationally with Oliver's St. Louis Rhythm & Blues All-Star Band. Stacy, together with Vernon Guy and Bobby Williams, will rejoin as The Sharpees of Bennie Sharp fame, and do their hits "Do the '45" and "The Sock." Charles Drain, another local rhythm & blues singer currently featured with Herb Sadler's Kings of Rhythm, rounds out the male vocals portion of the show.

Backing up this incredible stable of stars will be Oliver Sain's St. Louis Rhythm & Blues All-Stars Band, featuring the four-piece brass horn ensemble from the group The Benders.

This reunion is an opportunity to hear some of the best music to come out of St. Louis' 60s era of soul and rhythm & blues. All these great stars, and all on one stage. So head down to Mississippi Nights Friday, May 12, and join Oliver and his friends for this rare night of musical memories.

Artist Profile: Big George Brock

By Jeff Collier

St. Louis blues artist George Brock, who performs as 'Big George', has been a fixture on the St. Louis blues scene for over twenty years. George is a large, good looking man with long curly hair that hangs down to his shoulders. He has a propensity for striking outfits, often topped with a cowboy hat. The thrust of his performance is vocals and harmonica. He has a large repertoire including many Muddy Waters and Howling Wolf tunes.

George Brock was born on May 10, 1932, in Granada, Mississippi, one of seventeen children. His father was a cotton laborer. His earliest musical memories focus upon when, at the age of ten, his father gave him and his two brothers each a harmonica for Christmas. His brothers soon lost interest in theirs, but George kept his with him all the time and worked with it until he could play it. He would even practice with it at night, softly, under the blankets. As he became more proficient, he would be rewarded with applause from family members. At school one day, his teacher had him blow a tune for the other school children, which paid off with popularity and elevated status among his peers. He also played the diddley bow and used spoons on a rub board to make percussion when not playing his harmonica.

In 1949 his family moved to Mattson, Mississippi, which is near Clarkdale. Soon he formed a trio of friends which included Lee Klsard, which played in Mattson every Saturday night at parties and get-togethers. Here he began refining his sound, and to gain confidence in his vocal and harp delivery. During this time he saw Sonny Boy Williamson (Rice Miller) and B.B. King at local clubs. He played rub board behind Robert Nighthawk for a couple of months around the Clarkdale area, and worked as the set-up man for Howlin Wolf between 1951 and 1953.

In 1953 he moved to St. Louis while working as a boxer. About three years later, he happened to be visiting the Early Bird Lounge at Garrison



and Franklin where a band called Foster was playing. He asked to sit in with them. After a few numbers, the owner, Mr. Johnson, was so impressed he asked what his name was. Big George and the Houserockers was the reply. He was hired on the spot to play every Friday and Saturday night. George quickly assembled a band consisting of drums, bass and guitar to back him and they became the house band at the Early Bird for the next three years.

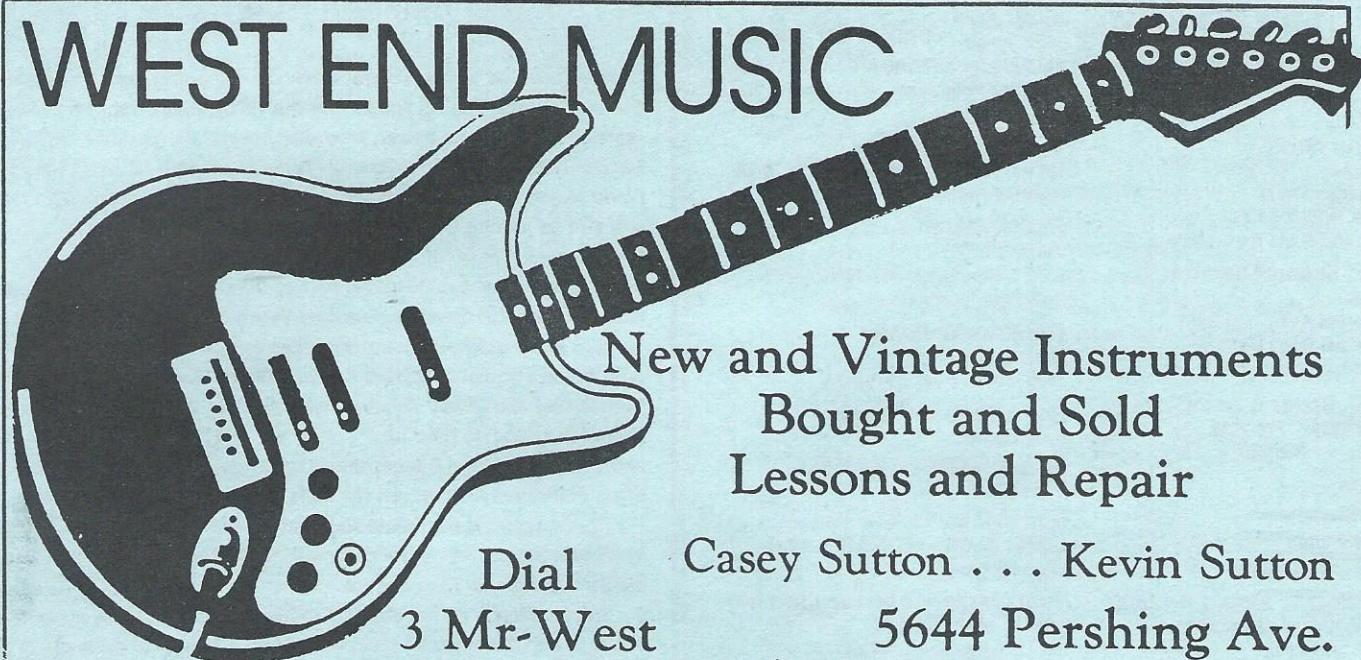
George moved to Sikeston, Missouri in 1963, and operated the Riviera Club, where he and newly assembled group of Houserockers were featured. In 1965 he moved back to St. Louis and played several different spots including the Hideaway and the Moonlight Lounge in St. Louis and the Red Room in East St. Louis, until 1968 when he took over managing the Early Bird Lounge where he had first played back in '56. He changed the name to the Club Caravan, and he and the Houserockers, which at the time included Big Bad Smitty, were the featured band most weekends. Albert King was hired to play there regularly on Thursday nights. Jimmy Reed and Ike Turner did gigs there, and Muddy Waters was brought in for an entire week.

In 1970 George got put out of the club business. He began giving free performances at Fairgrounds Park and played the Moonlight and Jaslo's on Delmar weekends. During this time he also operated a food-vending truck. In 1979 he played a Blueberry Hill show. Thereafter, for a time he was inactive in music. In 1981 he began playing Fairgrounds Park again, and in 1985 he entered a battle of the blues contest against Rondo's Blues Deluxe at Charles Shaw Hall, which he won. Subsequently, he was challenged for ownership of the blues belt by Larry Davis, Albert King, Artie White, and Danny Blue from Detroit, and most recently he butted heads with Big Jack Johnson from Clarksdale. Each time he has retained the belt. In 1986 he was featured at the 1st Annual St. Louis Blues Festival at Mississippi Nights, where he turned in a superb set. His first vinyl was recorded about a month ago and will soon be available on his own Big G label. There are two 45's. The current Houserockers comprise Riley on guitar, Riley's daughter Tili on bass, and his son Little Riley on drums.

Big George fronts the band and can be seen rocking the house at his New Club Caravan, opened at Taylor and Delmar in 1986, every Friday and Saturday night.

The St. Louis Blues Club will be presenting Big George and the Houserockers Thursday, May 25, at Blueberry Hill, and we urge you to come out and see this fine artist.

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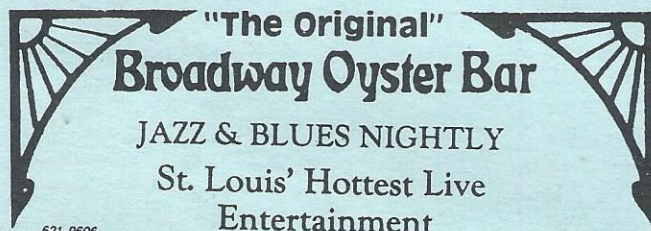
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