

BLUES LETTER



ERIC SLAUGHTER

Roosevelt Sykes +
Killer Blues Headstone Benefit

National Blues Museum: Meet Rob Endicot

Tribute to Dutch Schultz

CD Review: Johnny Fox

STLBS YouTube Channel

St. Louis Musicians Listing



BLUES LETTER

The Bi-Monthly Magazine of the St. Louis Blues Society

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.

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Editors

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Contributing Photographers

Huy Mach

Kelly Cox Villinger

Contributing Writers

Suzie Gilb

Ethan Leinwand

Joe Pastor

Jeremy Segel-Moss

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On the Cover: Eric Slaughter playing in "Guitar Masters" at the 2014 Bluesweek Festival. photo by Huy Mach of the St. Louis Post Dispatch

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.

St. Louis Blues Society

P. O. Box 78894

St. Louis MO 63178



stlouisbluessociety.org

mktonnies@stlouisbluessociety.org

jsegelmoss@stlouisbluessociety.org

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The BluesLetter readers would like to hear from you. If you have a local story idea you want to share with blues fans in St. Louis and beyond, contact Jeremy Segel-Moss or Mary Kaye Tönnies. Submissions are accepted until the 15th day of the month preceding each issue.

DISCOUNTED EVENTS FOR BLUES SOCIETY MEMBERS

show your Blues Society Membership card to receive half-price discounts at these venues:

BB's Jazz Blues and Soups		April	
700 South Broadway			
March	5 Shadowhawk Ellis & Broken Arrow Blues Band	2 Iron Mike Norton	9 pm
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	10 Randy McAllister Band	3 Harper and The Midwest Kind	10 pm
	13 R J Mischo Band	4 Boo Boo Davis	10 pm
	25 Eric Sardinias & Big Moter	8 R J Mischo Band	7 pm
	26 Gene Jr. & The Family	9 Reverend Raven & Chain Smoking Altar Boys	10 pm
	27 Josh Hoyer & the Shadowboxers	10 Wayne Sharp & The Sharpshooters	10 pm
	28 James Armstrong Blues Band	24 Kilborn Alley	10 pm
	31 Joshua Powell and Nicole Rae	26 Laura Rain & the Caesars	10 pm

BANDS AND VENUE OWNERS:
If you would like to make your events available for STLS member discounts, contact Jeremy Segel-Moss jsegelmoss@stlouisbluessociety.org

dear blues lovers,

This year has already been very eventful. The Blues Society released its first compilation CD, the National Blues Museum is coming in the fall and I have the honor of becoming the new Chairman of the Board. I am very thankful for all of the support I have received in the last month. I have also fielded many, many questions about how things may or may not be different.

Let me just say that our mission is still the same. The STLBS is here to support and facilitate historical and living St. Louis blues and blues musicians. In the last few years, we have consistently produced the BluesLetter, sent representatives to Memphis for the IBC, produced a CD, and have been visible at many local events. Ultimately, my goal is to bring all of this to a higher level and add new programs and layers to support the community.

An organization such as the STLBS, however, only grows when people participate. The more folks who take leadership roles, bring good ideas to the table, volunteer and attend STLBS supported events...the more successful we will be.

I'd also like to point out that John May is not going anywhere. He is still on the board and will be a wealth of information and support as we move forward. For many decades John guided the organization and none of us would be enjoying the incredible St. Louis blues scene the way we are now without him. If you see him at BB's, make sure to take time to thank him for his service and support of the music we all love so much.

Looking forward to the future,

Jeremy Segel-Moss
Chairman of the St. Louis Blues Society

Volunteer with the **St. Louis Blues Society** *THE SLBS NEEDS YOUR HELP*

BLUESLETTER - volunteer for creation of content and advertising representation.

MEMBERSHIP OUTREACH - help sign up new members and arrange for new membership benefits.

EVENT COORDINATOR - help coordinate all SLBS events and work on promotion.

EDUCATION - help create curriculum for Blues in Schools and fill SLBS website with content.

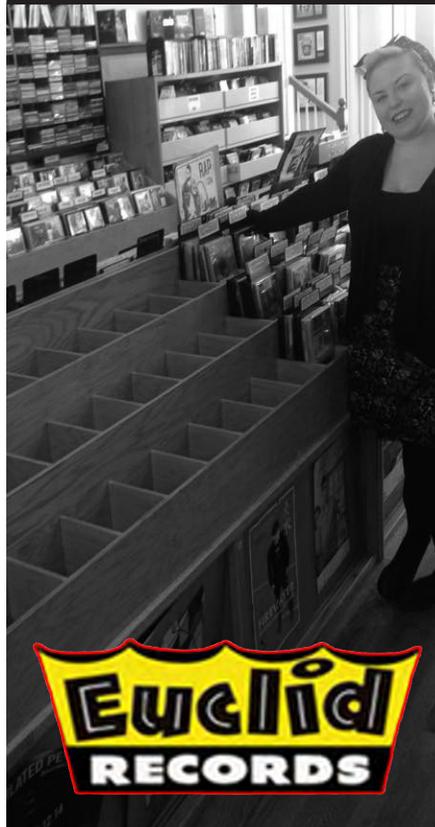
BUSINESS OUTREACH - help get more local businesses involved with the SLBS.

STREET TEAM - help with getting the word out about the SLBS by hanging posters, passing fliers and distributing BluesLetters.

Contact Jeremy Segel-Moss
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By Ethan Leinwand

ROOSEVELT SYKES + KILLER BLUES BENEFIT

St. Louis' Roosevelt Sykes is a name every blues fan should know. "The Honeydripper" is one of the most important, influential, versatile, and virtuosic blues pianist of all time. He was by far the most widely recorded pianist of the pre-war era, accompanying himself and countless other singers on hundreds of sides. In fact, to record with as many labels as possible, Sykes used pseudonyms like Dobby Bragg, Willie Kelly, and Easy Papa Johnson.

Sykes is considered by many to be the father of modern blues piano. Before Sykes, the best recorded blues players had a strided/jazzier sound, while the low-down bluesmen tended to play in a cruder and less skilled style. Sykes brought a level of virtuosity to low-down piano that doesn't seem to have an antecedent. His quick right hand featured novel splashes and flurries of notes up and down the piano, barely—if at all—in time. These moves have become a signature aspect of blues piano, and can be heard in the music of Otis Spann, Memphis Slim, Sunnyland Slim, and right on down the line.

Sykes was born in Arkansas in 1906. At the age of three, his family moved to St. Louis. Growing up, he split his time between Helena, AK and St. Louis. In Helena, and in traveling up and down the Mississippi, he would have been exposed to the many barrelhouse styles of southern itinerant bluesmen.

Despite spending time in the South, though, Sykes truly learned piano in St. Louis. As Kevin Belford wrote in *Devil at the Confluence*, "Helena sits just across the Mississippi River from fabled Memphis, Tennessee, but Sykes and blues legend Lee Green came to St. Louis for their careers in music. Both men learned to play piano from unrecorded bluesmen Redeye Jesse Bell, Baby Sneed, and Joe Crump."

Roosevelt is considered an active, almost frantic player, but he would at times play the simple low-down blues. He could also play the up-tempo, 8-to-the-bar, boogie-woogie bass-lines with ease. His ability to combine all these styles is one element that separates him from other pianists of the time, and made him such a sought after accompanist.

In addition to recording, he acted as a pseudo talent scout St. Louis, and is responsible for bringing countless bluesmen, such as Walter Davis and Henry Townsend, into the studio. "Roosevelt Sykes was very instrumental in getting me started with the piano," Townsend said (*A Blues Life*). "I can say he's totally the reason I went into it as much as I did."

A wonderful boisterous singer, Sykes first recorded in 1929. His earliest tunes, "The 44 Blues" and "All My Money Gone Blues" are quintessential to the piano blues repertoire and are still covered to this day. Sykes had a long and impressive career, playing until the end of his life in 1983.

Killer Blues Headstone Project in conjunction with The St. Louis Blues Society, will be hosting a benefit show at BB's Jazz, Blues and Soups on March 22 to raise money for Sykes' headstone. This event is only more special because Sykes played opening night at BB's in 1981. There will be a raffle, auction and performances by Brian Curran, Ethan Leinwand, Animal Children and Curt Landes.

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Do you take photos, want to write articles or have some new ideas?



We are always looking for help with the **BluesLetter!**

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Saturday	18	Brian Curran
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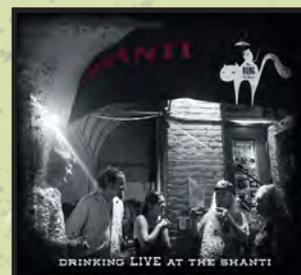
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MEET THE CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD OF THE NATIONAL BLUES MUSEUM

by Jeremy Segel-Moss

As the opening of the National Blues Museum nears, we are bringing you the opportunity to meet the people who are involved in its creation. Last issue we featured radio host, Christian Cudnik. This month we would like to introduce you to the Chairman of the Board, Rob Endicott.

Please talk about the National Blues Museum, your role and how you got involved.

RE: The National Blues Museum is a non-profit corporation that is building the museum on Washington Avenue between 6th and 7th, in first floor of the old Stix, Baer & Fuller department store (later Dillard's), as part of the Mercantile Exchange (MX) district that includes several restaurants, a movie theater, an Embassy Suites, apartments, and other retail. I am currently a partner at the Bryan Cave law firm downtown, but come from a musical background. I studied music formally, first at the University of Illinois, then with a Master's from the Juilliard School in New York. After playing professionally for a few years, I went back to law school. While working at Bryan Cave, I started playing locally with the Voodoo Blues Band in Soulard, and through that involvement in the St. Louis blues scene came to the project initially through Dave Beardsley. We have been working steadily on fundraising, design and content development for the last several years. We recently (November 2014) closed on a major tax credit financing, with the help of many, many major and generous partners at the city, state and private level, which allowed us to begin construction. Our content advisors ranged from folks with national and international expertise, St. Louis based scholars and those with knowledge of the history of the Blues. We are working on getting our exact opening date scheduled (meshing with construction schedules and so forth) and are continuing fundraising efforts to make sure the exhibits are as good as they can be.

As someone who has direct insight into the plans, what are you most excited for?

RE: I am thrilled we are telling the whole story of the Blues, nationally and internationally, with appropriate shout-outs to St. Louis (as well as of course other great blues centers, such as the Delta, Memphis and Chicago to name a few). Another thing I am excited about is being a part of St. Louis putting a stake in the ground around this

particular music, which we have a deep heritage in, but sometimes seem to not fully grasp and embrace. There is such a vibrant blues scene, and I think the museum will help put that into focus for both people locally and those who make a visit from out of town to come to the museum. I think it will also help to spread the word about the other incredible music venues and "scenes" happening here (including Jazz at the Bistro, the Sheldon, the Fox, Powell Symphony Hall all in Grand Center, and the various clubs in Soulard and elsewhere that have amazing blues music, and many more places too numerous to mention—I know I'm leaving out many!).

How do you envision St. Louis being incorporated into the Museum?

RE: We are centrally located, both geographically and in the more spiritual sense, of the blues story—many parts of the national story will have elements of "did you know this piece of the story happened right here, in St. Louis (sometimes literally down the street)." People should have a good idea of the whole story, and also the role of St. Louis in that story. We will highlight artists and other events that are illustrative of styles, or developments, in the whole story. For example, how Chuck Berry took the blues, modified it a bit, and gave us rock and roll. How jazz artists like Miles Davis and Clark Terry (both hailing from the St. Louis area) took the blues and kept up the traditional intertwining with jazz.

As you move towards the opening of the NBM, what do you need help with from the community?

RE: We need you to plan to come see us, follow us on social media, go to the blues clubs and support the musicians! Listen to the National Blues Museum radio on the Radio Arts Foundation. We are so grateful to the incredible civic support we have enjoyed to date, as mentioned, from government (city, region, state) and civic minded private individuals and companies. Please continue to help us!!! 🎷

ERIC SLAUGHTER

by Joe Pastor

Eric Slaughter has one of those resumes that is the envy of other musicians. His range is wide. From jazz—both traditional and progressive—to straight blues, with R&B, funk, soul, and gospel in between. Locally he has played with most of the important artists in those genres. Nationally he has performed with an equally diverse list of acts, including Ike Turner, Snooks Eaglin, The Next Generation which featured Harold Batiste, and Maurice Brown in a band which featured the legendary bassist George Porter Jr.. He has appeared with nationally recognized St. Louis talent like Jeremy Davenport, David Sanborn, Russell Gunn, and Montez Coleman.

After a rehearsal we had together (with the dance company MADCO, that is including live musicians in its works for modern dance) Eric and I sat down for some barbecue and talked about the music business. Slaughter recalled for me how he got into the blues. He had already been playing jazz gigs after returning from Boston and the Berklee College of Music, but he was hoping to work with the local blues acts.

However, before he really got into the scene he got the opportunity to play with Chicago bluesman Willie Clayton. “I had to learn to play blues on the gig. We were on the Chitlin’ Circuit with Bobby Blue Bland, Bobby Rush, Shirley Brown, those kind of acts. And most of the gigs were 45 minute sets with four or five different acts billed. Around that time, my mom had a brain aneurysm and I ended up staying on that gig for longer than I might have so I could help support the household. I think I did that gig for about two-and-a-half years.”

When the band wasn’t on the road, Willie was able to pay them for sessions he produced at Ace Records in Jackson, Mississippi. “Since Willie had a production deal with Ace, we stayed there and did sessions with a lot of artists, but I don’t know who they were because I didn’t know blues names then, I’m ashamed to say.” It was a good gig, and it paid very well, especially to a guitarist in his twenties.

Although it sounds cliché, the road is a tough life, especially in the Chitlin’ Circuit. He described a friend of his who got himself a similar gig with a particularly rough-cut group of guys. “He couldn’t hang with them because they were too hardcore. He got a little freaked out and called us. ‘Help me! I’m in Mississippi,’ or, ‘I’m in Alabama, and I can’t do this gig anymore!’ Then he had to give them money to get out of the gig,” Eric remembered laughing.

When he returned to St. Louis, Eric started playing with local blues legend, Oliver Sain. “I played with him for three years until he died. He had a regular night at BB’s, and a bunch of private gigs in those days. At the time, I didn’t realize that his legacy was documenting all those artists from here in his studio—stuff that Ike did. Oliver did a show at Mississippi Nights and he had Ike there, and Little Milton. Oliver did many shows like that. Once he brought Rufus Thomas. My uncle Jimmy Hinds, the great guitar player, said that people really know Oliver Sain abroad, but here he’s sorta got a St. Louis reputation. People should come to realize Oliver Sain is responsible for a lot of important music being documented.”

At this point I contributed to his sentiment by saying that when somebody becomes, or is a nationally known musician, the effect is often lost on their local crowd. I am not putting blame on anybody. It’s just that to the locals, the artist is still just a musician they know. “Exactly, and I think that is how people around here think of Oliver” Eric said.

Slaughter has been very busy since returning to St. Louis. Over the past few years he has proven that he crosses between jazz and blues with ease. His many varied projects demonstrate his versatility. His regular gigs include playing with Ronnie Burrage in both an original music band and a tribute to jazz greats band.

He also plays with a unique "French and Gypsy Jazz" group called Franglais. He plays regularly with the well known St. Louis jazz look-alikes, the Bosman Twins and with The Brian Owens Band.

Doing new stuff but always with reverence to the great musicians who have come before may be why Eric's repertoire is so vast. The Ronnie Burrage tribute band covers such greats as George Duke and Jaco Pastorius, while Franglais' hot jazz pays homage to Django Reinhardt. But of course, Eric loves to come home and play the blues too.

Slaughter has definite goals for the future. "I want to be more consistent and better." He strives toward creating "a personal style grounded in the musical tradition of jazz and blues," he said. He believes it is the "truth of the music that touches people," and he keeps growing and developing in the truth and the ability to touch people with his work. 🎵



Eric Slaughter at Jazz at the Bistro
photo by Kelly Cox Villinger

Eric is one of those world-class musicians we take for granted in St. Louis. Get out and see him. He plays many local and national dates:

*March 6 – Ronnie Burrage Tribute Band
Side Door
Old Lyhne CT*

*March 11 – SWIC
East St. Louis Blues Seminar
SIUE campus
East St. Louis IL*

*March 26 – Franglais
Evangelines
St. Louis MO*

*March 28 – Ronnie Burrage Tribute Band
State College (HUB)
University Park PA*

*March 29 – Ronnie Burrage Tribute Band
Shape Shifter Labs
Brooklyn NY*

*April 8 – Franglais
Nathalies
St. Louis MO*

*April 10, 11 – Bosman Twins CD Release
Party
Jazz at the Bistro
St. Louis MO*

*May 17 – Franglais
Evangelines Brunch
St. Louis MO*

*July 9, 10 – Ronnie Burrage Tribute Band
Sculler's Jazz Club
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Building B, Room 2083 and Cafeteria

10 a.m. – The History of Blues in the St. Louis Region
10:30 a.m. – The Impact of St. Louis Blues on Music After
a panel discussion moderated by award-winning critics
11:30 a.m. – Roundup
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MARCH 11	7pm	Ayesirowl
MARCH 12	7pm	Erika May
MARCH 13	8pm	Troubadours of Divine Bliss (Louisville, KY)
MARCH 14	8pm 9pm	Pik'n Lik'n Tony Ramey (Greenville, TX)
MARCH 17	7pm	The Harmaleighs (Nashville, TN)
MARCH 19	7pm	Bob "Bumblebee" Kamoske Duo
MARCH 20	7pm	Sarah Jane & the Blue Notes
MARCH 21	7pm	Wack-A-Doo
MARCH 26	7pm	Franglais
MARCH 27	6pm 8pm	Erisa Rei (Lincoln, IL) John Statz (Denver, CO)
MARCH 28	6pm 7pm 8pm 10:30pm	Tree Read (Nashville, TN) Skyler Clark-Hamel (Boston, MA) Sofia Talvik (Sweden) Raw Earth Band
APRIL 2	10:30pm	Some Kind of Nightmare
APRIL 3	8pm	The Wise Brothers
APRIL 4	7pm 8:15pm	Cygne (Greenville, TX) Leslie Sanazaro
APRIL 9	7pm	Tom Byrne and Erika Johnson
APRIL 10	7pm	The Freeway Revival Band (Asheville, NC)
APRIL 11	7pm	Danbury Street
APRIL 15	7pm	Ben Hunter & Joe Seamons (Seattle, WA)
APRIL 17	7pm	Boogiefoot
APRIL 18	7pm	Wack-A-Doo
APRIL 21	7pm 9:30pm	Leslie Sanazaro The Please Please Me (Austin, TX)
APRIL 24	7pm	Bob "Bumblebee" Kamoske Duo
APRIL 30	5pm 7pm	Leslie Sanazaro Dana Cooper (Nashville, TN)

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Upcoming Musical Highlights

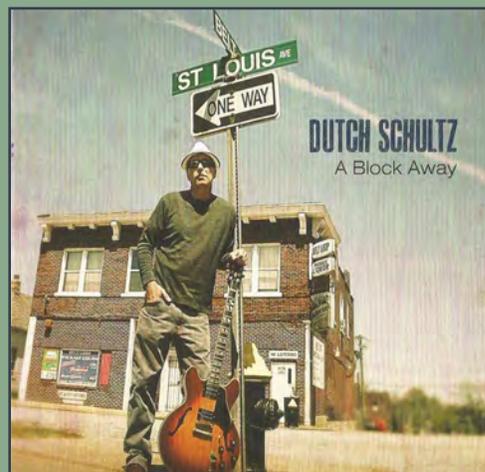
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Every Monday at 9PM Soulard Blues Band Open Jam*

- Sat Mar 7. Funky Butt Brass Band 10PM
- Sat Mar 14. Red Elvises' St. Pat's Party 10PM
- Fri Mar 20. The Broadcast with Wood and Wire 10PM
- Sat Mar 21. Al Holliday's East Side Rhythm Revue with Collegiate Shag Brass Band [Columbia MO] and Sophisticated Babies 10PM
- Sat Apr 4. Clusterpluck with Mountain King celebrate Leah's Birthday 10PM
- Thurs Apr 9. New Kingston with Arise Roots [NYC] 9PM
- Fri Apr 10. Fortunate Youth [LA] with Hirie and Sensamotion 10PM
- Fri Apr 17. Acoustics Anonymous 10PM
- Sat Apr 18. Jake's Leg 10PM

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REMEMBERING DUTCH SCHULTZ

1952-2015



Dutch was a great singer and loved the music of St. Louis including the Imperial dancers. But foremost, he was a used car salesman. He was blessed with the gift of gab. He could charm the pants off of you. I loved the way he worked the crowd and sang. But as a drummer himself, he was very hard on drummers and we went through quite a few, one of note was a fantastic drummer named Lavon Love. He was also drummer for the Barbara Carr band. Sometimes he didn't have a full kit and one night, did not have a stand for his snare (which was broken on one side) but he put it on a folding chair and it turned out to be one of the best nights we had!

-Danny Mills, keys, the Untouchables

Schultz was the man in charge of the Untouchables. I am not sure how long they had been playing together before I got there, but they were pretty tight at that point. Schultz was the guy I had to please to get in. He set up most of the gigs, dealt with the owners and paid us at the end of the night. He called rehearsals and found someone to fill in when one of us couldn't make a gig.

He was hard on drummers; I suspect partly because his dad was a drummer and had taught him some of how it worked. Lavon Love, JJ, Marty Spikener, Rayburn Hayes, each were with us a while.

Dutch set the song lists and called the songs while we played. He was partial to car songs (Need Me a Car) and 60s' soul (Unchain My Heart). His version of "She Caught the Katy" was the best I've ever heard to date. He even let me or Danny sing now and then.

He was the voice, face and business of that band. He gave and expected a certain level of professionalism in performance, appearance and attitude. After all was said and done, the crowd knew we were bluesmen.

We played three or four times a month, maybe more. 9th and Russell, Mike and Minn's, a string of clubs in the county, some place off Chambers, and a million other places, Jackie Smith sat in singing Big Boss Man with us at Turvey's on the Green. Twice, John Songbird McCue, a former King of the Hobos, invited us to Bangor, Wisconsin, just outside Lacrosse, to play for a Hobo Hootenanny. We were kings in a foreign land!

-Chuck Loeb, harmonica, the Untouchables

Dutch sat in with Kingdom Brothers a few times. When singer Tom Wilson's health took him out, I asked Dutch to sub. Dutch was a tireless champion of all things St. Louis and told some great stories thru his songs.

He studied guitar under Tom Maloney and jammed some with Tom Papa Ray as well. He would turn up at BB's every time we played there hawking his CD. He would tell people if you like Kingdom Brothers, they are on my CD. I last saw him at our gig at The Deli right before we went to Memphis. His sudden passing was a shock to me and everyone that knew him. He was full of life and was working on material with Stan Gill for his next album. Most of that is lost as he kept everything in his head.

-Bob Walther
of the Kingdom Brothers

At the time I was playing some gigs with Dutch and The Untouchables, he told me he had an out-of-town gig lined up for the next week. That sounded cool—then he told me where it was; in Bangor. I thought we were going overseas. Then he said a hobo convention in Wisconsin; so I thought we would be playing in a boxcar of a train!

He said we would play in two places, a club and outdoors in a park and not too much money to be made but I wanted to get out of town so bad I did not question it too much. As long as I didn't have to drive and they had some drums there I didn't care.

So we loaded up a van and headed out. On the way up, I made the mistake of asking Chuck [Loeb] what it was like there since I think he told me he had been there before. He said I would be the only black person in town and people would come up and touch me because they had never seen a black person before. Well it was too late to turn around and jumping out and hitchhiking back was out of the question. I expected to see Rod Sterling of The Twilight Zone to pop up somewhere in the van.

Dutch was always making sure things went down ok and taking care of his band. It must have been the rainy season in Wisconsin because it rained all the time we were there. We stayed at a friend of Dutch's and Dutch was sure we had beer and eats so that was cool. The folks there were cool and Dutch made sure I was cool too. The band jammed both days and the folks enjoyed us and we had great time.

-Marty Spikener, drums, the Untouchables

In the Winter of 2013, I was asked to do a session for a bluesman named Dutch Schultz STL by my friends in Kingdom Brothers, who I'd played with a few years earlier while on the road with Rockin' Jake. I'd never met Dutch, but knowing the K.Bros., I knew it would be a fun time.

After meeting him, we just immediately hit it off, and started going over the tunes. He was so excited to be doing this album, he was like a kid who'd eaten too much candy! He would sometimes call me to go over certain parts of the songs, and we would always just end up talking about everything else in the world but that. He cracked me up! The more we spoke, and the more I listened to the songs, I realized what great songs they really are. The man could really "paint a picture," if you will. This was a man who had been there, done it, seen it, and was so in love with the city he grew up in! He loved and LIVED St. Louis.

The things he saw, the places he went, and the people he loved are ALL there! They're in his songs! He really just threw himself at it. I mean, hell, he'd been singing the blues in St. Louis for 40 years! And he finally had the chance to get it on tape. I was all too honored to be a part of it.

The session took place at Shock Studios downtown. We had such a blast! He was SO funny in the studio! This was his first time in a big "real" studio, and was coming out of his skin that he was finally going to have a real album. This was a 60-year old man that was catching his second wind! You couldn't help but be inspired by him.

We knocked out his ten songs and he was thrilled with it! He'd done it!!! He finally got his album! I was so overjoyed to be a part of it. To help him get it done. To just play a role in his dream. He called the album *A Block Away*. Most every track has a tie to St. Louis in one way or another. It was his first, and sadly his last, album he'd ever make.

Dutch passed away from complications due to bacterial meningitis and I'm still at such a loss. I mean, I just saw the guy at a gig! We talked about doing another album, and he was just as excited as he always was. Our music community has taken some very heavy hits as of late and my thoughts and prayers go out to all of you and yours.

Thanks for the opportunity Dutch! You will be sorely missed my friend. I KNOW you're home, and I know you'll still be writing your tunes, so our session will have to wait for a bit. I'll keep playing, and when it's our time to meet again, as long as they let me in, I'll be ready...

-Tobin Hall, drums on *A Block Away*



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Room To Move And Time To Think

Johnny Fox
2014 Self-Release

by Suzie Gilb

Johnny Fox



Room To Move
And
Time To Think

Johnny Fox's newest studio album, *Room to Move and Time to Think*, was released in late 2014. It opens with a few acoustic tunes with a roots-y feel, like the toe-tapping opening track "Good Intentions," followed by a driving, straight-forward, acoustic blues number, "Bad For Me." These opening songs retain the honesty of a guy buskin' on a sidewalk, but are more polished and intentional than a random street encounter.

Fox later gives us the ballad "These Old Boots." Not your typical tear-jerking kind of ballad, but rather it's a more pensive variety that you can ponder life's mysteries over without feeling completely heartbroken in the end. If you're looking for a more sentimental ballad though, Fox has got you covered with the song, "All I Really Want Is You."

While building into some fuller arrangements later in the album, Fox gives us the more pared-down tunes first, though they're anything but plain or boring. The entire album was written and recorded by Johnny Fox himself, but don't be misled by the DIY moniker—it's a well-produced album, giving you everything you need to really feel the music while never feeling over-produced. The percussion is scarce but spot-on—just enough to keep your head bobbing, but not so much that it muddies down the mix or distracts from Fox's expansive guitar melodies.

Speaking of expansive guitar melodies, Fox knows how to play some slide guitar, which he amply proves throughout the record, not the least of which on the track, "Fine Young Thang Boogie," which is quite the booty-shaker, despite its simplistic arrangement of just one guitar and vocals (a testament to some mad rhythm guitar skills, slide or not). The 'closing' tune (save the hidden track, that is) "Horseheads" is a down-tempo instrumental number that is nothing short of beautiful—a perfect choice as a finale, and aside from its driving bass notes, possibly the least bluesy song on the record.

Having performed all the instruments himself—including guitars, percussion, slide guitar, harmonica, vocal harmonies—as well having done all the production on the record, Fox is obviously a songwriter with a vision, and is proving to be an artist who knows how to execute that vision. ♪

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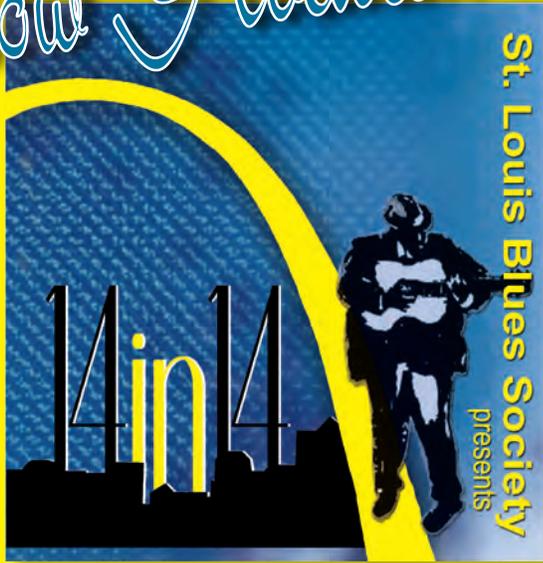
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