

PLUS

Mike Aguirre remembers Preston Hubbard Reed Radcliffe's Big Muddy photo spread CD review: Al Holliday Natural Remedies Lilly's Corner: Spotlight on Frank Bauer



# PRESERVING AND PERPETUATING BLUES MUSIC IN AND FROM ST. LOUIS SINCE 1984

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I'd like to start out this issue of the *BluesLetter* with a huge **THANK YOU** to St. Louis. The 21<sup>st</sup> Annual *Big Muddy Blues Festival*, which celebrated St. Louis Blues Music with over 40 St. Louis acts Labor Day Weekend, was one of the best festivals in recent memory. For that reason, we've got a huge spread of pictures of the festival with notes from the emcee, Alonzo Townsend, on pages 7-9.

I witnessed several magical moments throughout the weekend. Some of them included the truly heartfelt tribute shows for Henry Townsend and Johnnie Johnson at the National Blues Museum. The stories told, Kathy Corely's film, *That's the Way I Do It: The Life and Times of Henry Townsend*, and all of the music performed in honor of two of our legends made for very powerful presentations.

There was an infectiously positive vibe from the crowd who filled Laclede's Landing to celebrate St. Louis music on six stages. I was overwhelmed by the musicians who showed up with their 'A game'—and they all did! Alonzo Townsend killed it as the emcee and his attitude was definitely reflected in the energy of both the musicians and the crowd. I also enjoyed seeing all of the St. Louis Blues Society volunteers who put in long hours meeting interested music fans, selling merchandise, and signing up even more members and volunteers!

I'd like to especially thank all of the people who came down to enjoy the *Big Muddy Blues Festival*. A lot of talented people put a lot of work into making the weekend happen and the attendance reinforced the idea that St. Louis can get behind an all-St. Louis Blues festival. So, thank you for showing up at the festival and for your continued support of the musicians and all of the venues throughout St. Louis.

The Fall is shaping up nicely for blues as well. We hope you can join us at this year's *Road to Memphis* International Blues Challenge on October 16 at the Kirkwood Brewing Station. The St. Louis Blues Society will be sending representatives down to Memphis in January to show the world what St. Louis is all about. The afternoon is always fun and full of good music.

Another item to keep an eye on is the upcoming release of the new STLBS Compilation CD, 16 in '16. Paul Niehaus has been working overtime to record original music by sixteen St. Louis groups.

Note: make sure your membership is up-to-date so you will receive our newest CD compilation in January's issue of the *BluesLetter*!

As always, thank you for supporting St. Louis Blues Music! Jeremy Segel-Moss, Chairperson

E-mailJeremy
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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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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# Johnnie Johnson Receives an Old Webster Jazz and Blues Festival Founders Award words and photos by Dave Beardsley





On behalf of the Old Webster Jazz and Blues Festival, Dion Brown, Executive Director of the National Blues Museum presented Frances Johnson with an "Old Webster Jazz and Blues Festival Founders Award" in honor of the late Johnnie Johnson on Saturday evening, September 17 on the Webster University stage at the festival.

Representatives of the festival organizers, Joe Rath and Dan Warner, said it was Johnnie Johnson's performances that really helped their festival grow, and they were honored to give this award—the very first given to a musician! 🎜







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#### **SEPTEMBER**

SEP 15	7 PM	Brad Ellerecht (St. Louis, MO)
SEP 16	7 PM	Fletcher Moley Group (St. Louis, MO)
	11:30 PM	Steely James (Nashville, TN)
SEP 17	7 PM	Wack-A-Doo (St. Louis, MO)
SEP 18	11 AM	Boogie Woogie Brunch with
		Sweetie & the Toothaches
SEP 19	7:30 PM	Sissy Brown (Lawton, OK)
SEP 20	7 PM	Box of Nerves (St. Louis, MO)
SEP 21	7 PM	Feyza Eren featuring
		Canvas Artist Vesna
SEP 22	7 PM	Tommy Halloran (St. Louis, MO)
SEP 23	7 PM	Boogiefoot (St. Louis, M0)
SEP 24	7 PM	Joe Bozzi (St. Louis, MO)
SEP 25	11 AM	Vintage Swing Brunch
		with Wack-A-Doo
SEP 26	7 PM	BaqBeet Presents:
		Singer-Songwriter Night
SEP 27	7 PM	The Green McDonough Band
		(St. Louis, MO)
SEP 28	7 PM	Sarah Simmons (Birmingham, AL)
SEP 29	7 PM	Lliam Christy (Los Angeles, CA)
SEP 30	7 PM	Danbury Street (St. Louis, MO)

#### **OCTOBER**

OOIODER		
OCT 1	7 PM	Franglais (St. Louis, MO)
OCT 2	11 AM	Vintage Swing Brunch
		with Wack-a-Doo
OCT 3	7 PM	BaqBeet Presents:
		Singer-Songwriter Night
OCT 4	7 PM	The Sidemen (St. Louis, MO)
OCT 5	8:30 PM	Lorin Walker Madsen (Salt Lake City, UT)
OCT 6	7 PM	Bob "Bumblebee" Kamoske (St. Louis, MO)
OCT 7	8PM	Robbie & the Rockin' Fools (St. Louis, MO)
OCT 8	7 PM	The Midwest Jazz-tette (St. Louis, MO)
OCT 9	11 AM	Jumpin' Hot Jazz Brunch
OCT 10	7 PM	BaqBeet Presents:
		Singer-Songwriter Night
OCT 14	7 PM	Fletcher Moley Group (St. Louis, MO)
OCT 15	7 PM	Wack-A-Doo (St. Louis, MO)
OCT 21	7 PM	St. Louis Gypsy Jazz Festival

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# Sunday, October 16, 2016











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#### **Preston Hubbard** (March 15, 1953 - August 17, 2016)

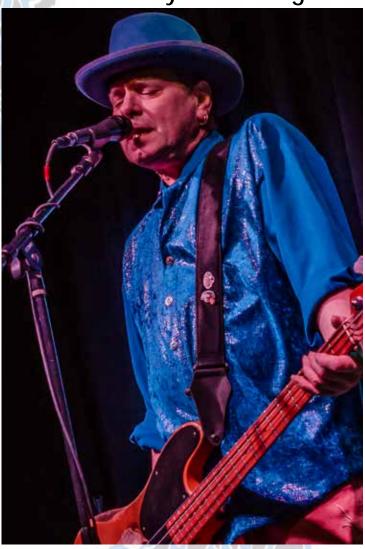
by Michael Aguirre

met Preston around 2006 or 2007, when he first arrived in St. Louis from Austin and began playing with Paul Bonn and Shakey Ground. As a young musician just starting to put my own projects together, he made quite the impression on stage, his face a mask underneath a tight bandana, tricked out like some kind of tattooed-up jailbird Willie Dixon. I was flat out intimidated by his platinum credentials, the musical connections he had all over the world, and the way his bass playing brought a visceral swagger to the band's sound.

I wanted so badly to be in that band, but I think he wrote me off as a "blues-rock" guitarist. Prez, to put it lightly, wasn't all that into blues-rock. I nursed my pride and wounded my licks as a succession of outlaw guitar slingers steeped in real-deal playing breezed into town to play with Shakey Ground and its evil offspring, Los Carnales, but I also paid attention. Those guys didn't play "shuffles in the key of \_\_\_\_," and they didn't play standards. They played SONGS! Deep, choice brazen cuts. Arrangements chock full of dynamics and nuances played by musicians who specialize in making every note count and giving no quarter. Preston, for his part, despite his many accolades and achievements in the music world, never tried to attract attention to himself through his playing. No gimmicks, no solos, just rocksolid, effortless groove, with a touch of menace. When you're lucky enough to have that mentality on stage with you, gigs become a whole lot more fun, and you can fall into the habit of witnessing musicians playing outside of themselves on a routine basis.

Preston's mere presence in town raised the bar for working blues bands in St. Louis, but even more importantly, he had a keen eye for the potential of our music scene itself. St. Louis, he would often claim, was the last real-deal music city in America, and in his inimitable understated way, on stage and off, he lifted it to a higher level. Preston's friends all over the world, musicians and fans alike, were introduced to that little corner of heaven we know as the Blues City Deli. In addition to the awe-inducing nature of Deli shows, many out of town musicians booked dates at other local venues around those gigs, and have become part of the musical family here.

Preston had a huge influence on musicians of this town, especially this one. Back in 2010, the stars aligned and we began playing together on a regular basis as charter members of the Blu City All Stars, along with Rich McDonough, Frank Bauer and Joe Meyer. Right around that time I kept getting compliments on how much my singing had improved. Put simply, when your rhythm section consists of Joe Meyer and Sir Preston Hubbard, the band is going to sound amazing, period. Watching those two lift talented players to higher levels was a blast, and as the singer, I had the best seat in the house. More than anything, the



Preston Hubbard playing with Big Mike Aguirre and the Blu City All Stars at the Casino Queen in 2013 photo by Reed Radcliffe

cumulative effect of savoring so many "too good to be true" moments imbued me with a passion and desperation that is the basis for every show I've played since.

We played together regularly for nearly five years. I cannot begin to count the effortlessly sublime musical moments we created and shared together. I can tell you that each and every time, I recognized how special and how fleeting they all are. I learned, through habit, by virtue of Preston's talent and openhearted enthusiasm and encouragement, to seek out and savor those moments like the treasures they are. Powerful stuff. RIP, my friend. c/s

Alonzo Townsend, son of legendary bluesman Henry Townsend, is 'on a roll' in St. Louis. During the last few years, Townsend has grown into one of the most positive voices in support of St. Louis' long history of blues music and St. Louis as a whole. He is a manager at the Broadway Oyster Bar, has hosted discussions at the National Blues Museum, been awarded Deluxe Magazine's "Emerging 30 under 30" award, and most recently was the emcee on the Main Stage at the "Big Muddy Blues Festival." In his own words, Alonzo talks about the Big Muddy, St. Louis and the future.

# ALONZO TOWNSEL

It was my dream to be involved and emcee the Big Muddy Blues Festival. I grew up watching the legacy musicians performing at the festival. As a kid, I watched my dad be on that stage. I watched people like Johnnie Johnson, Fontella Bass or Bennie Smith on the main stage. I was honored to be able to carry that torch and support the festival where I watched my dad for so many years. I was able to tell the story of what the blues in St. Louis means to the locals and to people around the world. It meant everything for me to be on that stage and it was so humbling. I also want to help be a voice for the future of St. Louis and

the next generation of musicians. Opportunities like this help me move my dreams forward.

Throughout the festival I was able to talk to many of the musicians who performed, or were just there to enjoy the festival. Every single musician I talked to didn't have a single negative thing to say. This year turned out to be one of the greatest festivals ever. Many of the newer musicians don't remember the early crowds or some haven't played the festival in years so they don't know how good it can be. This year was great. Every single act felt they were front and center. The idea that this is 'our' festival came through in the musicians and the fans who came out in support. Not to knock out of town acts, but a lot of the local musicians felt that this is the direction the festival should continue to go in. It made everyone feel like they were a part of something.

It was kind of a risk to make the festival all local. Would the crowds show up? But the attendance proved that wasn't the case. Last year, with national acts, didn't exactly work. This year was a feel good story for real. People came from all over the world to see the Big Muddy. They could go anywhere, but they came to St. Louis to hear St. Louis music. Even after the festival, when so many of the out of towners came to the Broadway Oyster Bar. It was so cool to see people experience St. Louis blues. To see

them believe it the way we do. That was one of the sweetest feelings in the world. And to see the festival be so successful was monumental.

One of my favorite moments was at the end of the second day when Jeremiah Johnson was about to perform. Laura Tobey (the Executive Director of Laclede's Landing) and I got to talk on stage about what a world-class city St. Louis is and how the festival is all about coming together. There were hundreds of fists in the air in support, joining together for the music, for St. Louis, for Love....in unity. I was able to persuade Laura to take down the barriers and everyone came all the way down to the front of the stage.

There is so much negative crap going on in St. Louis and around the country. I really believe we need to break down the barriers all across St. Louis. Whether its race, sexual orientation, young, old...whatever barriers we have. We need to break them down. This festival not only

represents the local music scene but also celebrates St. Louis and helps bring people together. When the crowd filled the space from the front of the stage all the way to the back, when we broke down the barriers and filled the whole hill...elbow to elbow, face to face, hand in hand in celebration of St. Louis music...that was the greatest moment of the festival for me. I'll never forget that moment, those words.

I was also was able to spend the weekend with my daughter, Kalia, who just turned nine years old. The legacy of St. Louis blues has to live on and the only way is to immerse the kids in the music. It was a

god given gift for my dad to keep me down at the festivals. I wish I had been home riding my bike, but I feel so lucky to have been exposed to the legacy. It is those memories that made me passionate about the music and our city. That job is now mine and I want to enrich my daughter so I can pass the torch on to her someday.

St. Louis is so alive and thriving right now. It sometimes blows my mind. A few years ago they were saying there were only a few young people continuing the tradition. Marquise Knox was the only one. Now there is Aaron Griffin, Matt Lesch and so many more. We got so many people carrying on the tradition of what guys like my dad or Bennie Smith or Johnnie Johnson built. People were saying it was dying because the elders were passing, but now we have a large group of young musicians carrying on the traditions of our elders. Not only are they playing around town, but they are traveling around the world to represent St. Louis. No city has a music scene like St. Louis and I'm so proud to be a part of it!

In the future, I'd love to see the festival continue to put St. Louis first. We showed we can do it this year. It was so awesome to see the kids perform from School of Rock. We just need to keep exposing more young musicians to the blues and to St. Louis. I hope to continue to be a voice for the Big Muddy. If we continue

to believe in ourselves it will only get bigger and bigger. Like Field of Dreams, "if you build it they will come." This year's festival proved that.

I also want to continue to be a beacon for the future of the blues and for St. Louis. I'm proud to be a torch-bearer for my dad. Whether it is Big Muddy, or the city of St. Louis or the blues....I want to continue to be a voice and symbol for the city and for the music for years to come. All of my memories of the festival...watching my dad perform with the local guys or with people like Honeyboy Edwards, Robert Lockwood or Homesick James...was to witness what my dad loved to do most. He had a huge passion for music and no one controlled that for him. He didn't have to clock in or out. It was his own. He taught me to find something that no one can take away from you. Having something like music as your passion is what kept him alive for 96 years. J



Alonzo Townsend on stage at the Big **Muddy Blues Festival** 

photo by Reed Radcliffe





The St. Louis Blues Society BluesLetter  $\,9\,$ 











Blues City Deli Street Fest 11am to 6pm Saturday 1

Thursday 6 Joel Patterson and The Modern Sound -wsg. Sonny Leyland

Saturday 8 Bottoms Up Blues Gang

Thursday 13 Miss Jubilee and the Humdingers

Saturday 15 Stacy Mitchhart Band

Thursday 20 John McVey Blues Band

Soulard Blues Band Saturday 22

Thursday 27 Roland Johnson and Soul Endeavor

Saturday 29 Big Jon Atkinson (LA CA)

Thursday 3 Big George Brock

Saturday 5

Thursday 10 Matt Wilson and Felix Reyes

Brian Curran and Friends Saturday 12

Thursday 17 Trip Daddys

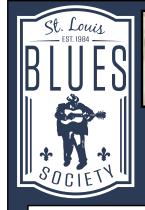
Saturday 19 Sidney Street Shakers

Rum Drum Ramblers Saturday 26

John McVey Band Thursday 1

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Al Holliday's remedy is natural. Brewed with soulful conviction, his latest mix not only goes down smooth, it lifts the spirit with a tasty dose of East-side blues, soul and R&B.

The East St. Louis sound—especially piano and horns—has always been a local badge of valor. In fact, for a city notorious for crooked politics and racial tensions, the East-side has unleashed a creative stew of music beyond compare. Miles Davis started there. Peetie Wheatstraw lived and died at a crossroads there. Professor Longhair actually staked the town before returning to New Orleans. Ike Turner moved there playing with his Kings of Rhythm. Not only would he discover Tina, but his southern connections brought Little Milton and Oliver Sain. Albert King held shop on the Illinois banks. And of course, Chuck Berry wandered across the Eads Bridge against family advice. Finding Sir John's Trio at the gritty Cosmopolitan Club, Chuck and Sir John (Johnnie Johnson) would—as Berry put it—"have them black folks kicking off their shoes to hillbilly music!"

Welcome to the club Al Holliday. Or more accurately, thanks for inviting us in.

Natural Remedies, Holliday's second release, shows no sign of a sophomore jinx. In fact, the mojo grooves stronger and better than ever. All eleven songs are homemade originals. Starting with the song 'Full Grown,' the template is set. Holliday's gruff voice, pounding piano and the East Side Rhythm Band's powerful horns set the pace. Add Josian Joyce's guitar with the sanctified vocals of Emily Wallace and Miss Molly Simms, and it's quickly apparent how good the CD will be.

It doesn't disappoint either. In fact, it's hard to pick standouts because the CD has such a natural flow. One minute you're intrigued by the sassy sweet "Oliver Sain's 3 A.M. Soul Serenade." The next thing you know, the title track starts off with, "I eat more cornbread than you'll ever see." In either case though, the

message comes across clear with the final line, "There'll be no more darkness over me."

And that's exactly what propels Natural Remedies. The CD's hopeful and redeeming vibe is real. For example, the lovely ballad "Right Thru Me" parallels how the Mississippi runs right between us and our neighbors, yet it's essential essence is binding, life affirming and good.

Most of the soulful rockers like "Bring Your Troubles to the City" and "Just Like That" are on the first half of the disc. But even the slower gems like "The Times" with beautiful guitar and sax solos, and "There Ain't But The One Way," that segues over seven minutes into a wonderful up-tempo ending are stunning.

My personal tendency is to compare new music with the sounds of previous artists. I did that with Al Holliday. You can hear Professor Longhair's stride, the positive vibe of Little Milton, the vocal prowess of Rondo and the tight horn charts that both Oliver Sain and Albert King would approve of. However, in the end, this is all Al Holliday and his band.

As of print time, Al Holliday will have already released a vinyl version of Natural Remedies at a kick-off show at Off Broadway. The 45 minutes of sweet, affirming sounds are well worth it. So is the positive energy. The band continues to grow a national audience, and don't be surprised if it quickly becomes international. To think that almost 100 years after the nasty East St. Louis riots Al Holliday would be pumping out such great music, is truly a cause for good spirits. Perhaps the recently departed Prince would have put it best, It really is a "sign of the times".....Enjoy!!

Al Holliday and the East Side Rhythm Band spent their September playing all points west and have just returned to town. To see videos of the band or check out their tour schedule, visit their website: www.alhollidaymusic.com

# with Lilley Halloran

Lilley Halloran, 6th grader and daughter of local musician Tommy Halloran, has been writing for several years already. She is interested in journalism and publishes the Wyoming Street News that you can find around South Grand. Lilley's newest column is about local saxophone player Frank Bauer.

#### LH: What brought you to the saxophone? Describe your musical training.

FB: I started playing in the grade school band, but I quit after junior high school going into my freshman year of high school. In my early twenties, after discovering the blues scene in St. Louis by following Rondo's Blues Deluxe and listening to programming on KDHX, I began to regret that decision. During a fateful trip to the 1991 Chicago Blues Festival, I struck up a conversation with a street musician playing solo tenor sax. He convinced me that I needed to buy a horn. As soon as I got back to St. Louis, I went out and bought a horn. Early on, I took some lessons with two local saxophonists, first with Corky Blake for a year or so and then I spent a year or so with Dennis "Chicago Slim" Lansing, who I had admired from afar when he was playing with Rondo. I didn't really have any formal training. I spent many hours running scales and playing along with records.

#### LH: You are a staple in the St. Louis Blues community. How did vou come to the scene, and how has this changed in the years you've been working?

FB: At my first lesson with Chicago Slim, he invited me to sit in with his band that following weekend which was basically Rondo's backing band, the Blues Deluxe, but at that time, 1993 or so, Erma Whiteside was fronting the band. They were holding down every Friday night inside at the Broadway Oyster Bar before there was an outdoor patio. Rich McDonough was playing guitar in the band at the time. I was there almost every Friday night soaking in the blues, and they let me sit in whenever I would

show up. I thought that was the greatest thing in the world that these seasoned musicians would allow me to sit in with them. I learned a lot from that experience. After that I worked with a band called Blues Attitude that worked on the fringes of the • blues scene at the time. It wasn't until I started playing with Alvin Jett that I kind of locked in with • the scene. Over the years, things have changed quite a bit based on the fact that we have lost a lot • I'm at home or in the car and to and admired as I was learning • a performance. the craft. Folks like Oliver Sain, Tommy Bankhead, Bennie Smith and even my longtime partner, Alvin Jett, just to name a few. That being said, currently, • the blues scene in St. Louis appears to be very much alive and vibrant. There are a lot of young cats that are out there just tearing it up, such as Marquise Knox and Tyler Stokes with Delta Sol Revival. There are musicians from other cities, like John McVey and drummer Rob Lee, that are taking up residency here in St. Louis. Even the Big Muddy Blues Festival this year was all home grown with 45 local bands and musicians. It's very exciting to be involved with music in this town.

#### LH: You play a number of different kinds of music in your various bands: All Roostered Up, Lucky Old Sons and the Jeremiah Johnson Band. From a saxophone perspective, how do you approach these different styles of music?

FB: Chicago Slim always encouraged me to learn to play in all twelve keys, that way no matter what key the song is in, you have something to work with. My main approach is to listen to the melody of the song so when I'm soloing, I try to incorporate a variation of the

melody into the solo. But at the same time, I'm listening to what the other members of the band are doing. I may copy a lick from the bassist or guitarist and embellish it or I'll try to pick up on a rhythmic pattern from the drummer and use that in the solo. That line of thinking has helped me bridge the gap between the different musical styles. Of course, I'm always listening to different styles of music when of the musicians that I looked up • sometimes that comes out during

#### LH: What non-saxophone musicians inspire or influence you? Are you influenced by other non-musical artists? Painters, writers, sculptors? If so, who and why?

FB: Everyone that I've worked with over the years, be they guitarists, bassists, drummers, keyboardists, vocalists, etc., has had an effect on who I am as a musician today. I've been blessed to be able to work with some of the best in St. Louis. Given that, there are several St. Louis guitarists that have had very direct impact on me; Rich McDonough, Alvin Jett, Rob Garland, Jeremiah Johnson, Steve Bauer and Matt Von Behren, who recently joined All Roostered Up as lead guitarist.

#### LH: What do you think about when you are playing?

FB: I try not to think too much when I'm playing. Lately, I seem to enjoy myself more when the volume of my inner voice is kept to a minimum while I'm performing.

#### LH: What does your practice routine look like?

FB: I haven't varied my practice routine too much over the years other than I don't do it as much

 as I used to. I spend my practice time playing long tones through the full range of the horn, running scale patterns and playing along with recorded songs of various styles.

#### LH: If a complete novice approached you and asked how to play the blues, what would you say?

FB: First off, learn to play your instrument of choice, spend time with it and get to know it. Practice. Listen to the Masters. Practice. Really listen to develop an ear for the music. Practice. Then, get yourself in situations where you surround yourself with musicians that are better than you. Practice some more. If it is something that you really want to do, it will envelope you and become a way of life. Most importantly though is to remember to have fun and enjoy the journey.

#### LH: What is next for you?

FB: I'm very much in the mode of living my life one day at a time. Over the past few years, I've gotten to the point where it is not uncommon that I'm playing up to five shows a week while trying to hold down my day gig as a civil engineer. All Roostered Up just hit the five-year mark for playing from noon to 3 every Saturday at the Broadway Oyster Bar. The Lucky Old Sons have a regular gig at Hammerstone's on the second Friday of the month. I've been performing with the Jeremiah Johnson Band at various venues for just over a vear now and was pleased to be asked to record on several tracks on the newly released CD, Blues Heart Attack. I had a great time performing with them at the 2016 Big Muddy Blues Festival and I'm excited to see what the future holds for this band. 

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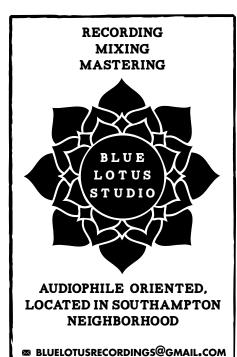
Frank Bauer performing with the Jeremial Johnson Band at the 2016 Big Muddy Blues Festival.

photo by Reed Radcliffe



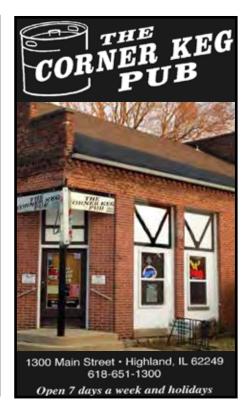
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## **Upcoming Musical Highlights**

- Oct 1 Big Mike Aguirre and the Blu City All Stars 10 PM
- Oct 4 Steve Bauer 9PM
- Oct 5 Sean Canan's Voodoo Players: Acoustic Jerry Garcia 9:30PM
- Oct 7 Big George Brock and the House Rockers 10PM
- Oct 12 Sean Canan's Voodoo Players: Music of Wilco 9:30PM
- Oct 13 Aaron Kamm and the One Drops 10PM
- Oct 15 Funky Butt Brass Band 10PM
- Oct 16 Johnny Fox 2PM
- Oct 19 Sean Canan's Voodoo Players: Allman Brothers 9:30PM
- Oct 22 Jake's Leg 10PM
- Oct 27 New Orleans Suspects 10PM

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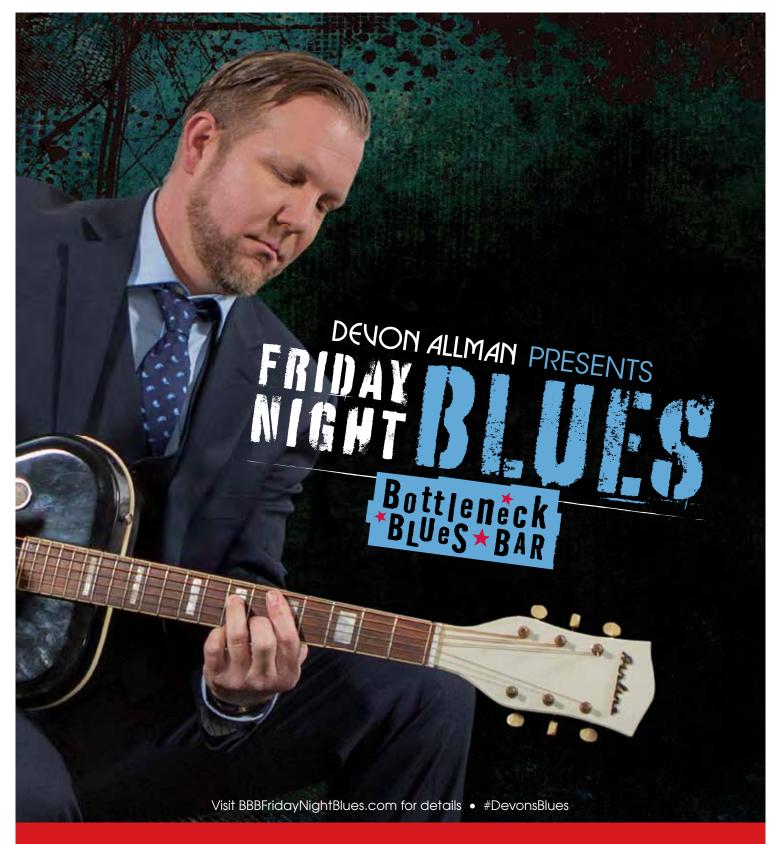
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