# BLUESIETTER



Congratulations to the our 2017 International Blues Challenge Representatives Good Luck in Memphis!

Eugene Johnson and Company

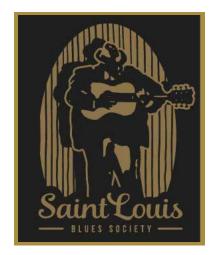
Play One More

Best Produced CD Representative

PLUS

Episode Two of A Loving Tribute to Mark O'Shaughnessy by Michael Kuelker - Bob Baugh's review of the Big Muddy Tribute to Albert King and Tommy Bankhead - Alonzo Townsend talks to Dion Brown about the National Blues Museum's radio show - Reed Radcliffe's photos from the Big Muddy - and much more!

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



The 16th Annual Baby Blues Showcase poster by Craig Downs

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As fall kicks into full gear in St. Louis I always like to take a moment to look back at the year and all that the St. Louis Blues Society has accomplished. In 2017, The St. Louis Blues Society has continued to push new education initiatives thanks to Mike Battle, participated in several community events thanks to Rich Hughes and Lynn Barlar, released our third compilation CD and are preparing the fourth thanks to Paul Niehaus, published BluesLetters thanks to Mary Kaye Tönnies and all of the writers and photographers, had another outstanding Road to Memphis thanks to Jerry Minchey, Glenn Howard, Greg Hunt and all of the volunteers, and had a great showing at the Big Muddy Blues Festival thanks to all the fans, musicians and volunteers. All in all, 2017 was a rock-solid year for the St. Louis Blues community.

2018 looks to be even better. The STLBS will continue to work on the programs we've been progressing on with the addition of a couple new Board Members who will definitely be making a difference. Alonzo Townsend came on board earlier this summer and is working hard to help with education and get the Mission Fund fully functional. We are also proud to announce that Kelly Wells has joined the board as well. You may know Kelly best as the Executive Director of

KDHX and an outstanding St. Louis musician! We all look forward to the great programs and ideas that will come from working with such a great advocate for St. Louis as Kelly Wells!

There are still a couple months left in the year and lots of blues to be had. Congratulations to this year's STLBS representatives to the International Blues Challenge: Torrey Casey and the Southside Hustle and the Kingdom Brothers Duo, as well as, the representative for Best Self-Produced CD: Eugene Johnson's Play One More. We will be raising additional funds for the acts at the December 10th Road to Memphis Benefit at BB's Jazz, Blues & Soups. This is a guaranteed good time!

Also, coming up Thanksgiving Weekend is the 16th Annual Baby Blues Showcase. This is always a special show that features young St. Louis Blues Artists. Some of the performers include Marquise Knox, Aaron Griffin, Matt Lesch, Beulah Flakes, the St. Louis School of Rock, and for the first time the St. Louis Blues Society Youth Band. This is a great opportunity to see the future of the Blues in St. Louis and we hope you can join us!

# E-mailJeremy I'd love to hear from you!

Please write me at jsegelmoss@stlouisbluessociety.org and tell me your ideas for new projects

As this is the final BluesLetter for the year, I'd like to truly thank all the people that make St. Louis one of the greatest music scenes in the world. Whether you are a musician, music lover, club owner, festival promotor, photographer, tourist, history buff or radio personality... THANK YOU! It takes a village to create and maintain such a special musical city!

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

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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.

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.





# Honoring the Greats: A Big Muddy Tribute to Albert King and Tommy Bankhead Show Review by Bob Baugh

The tribute shows honoring St. Louis legends Albert King and Tommy Bankhead at the National Blues Museum were perfect opening acts for the days of the 22<sup>nd</sup> annual Big Muddy Blues Festival at Laclede's Landing. The Legends Room was full of blues fans for the early afternoon shows. Organized by BB's owner John May for the St. Louis Blues Society, the shows offered array musicians who knew and played with King and Bankhead.

The Saturday show for Albert King featured a band comprised of musicians were alumni of his bands over the years. The group, led by drummer Kenny Rice (61-65), featured Vince Martin (68) on guitar, Oliver Johnson (75-81) on trumpet and trombone, Vince Sala (79-80) on sax, Frank Dunbar (79-83) on bass and Eric Marshall on the keyboards. Vocalist Barbara Carr also put in a surprise appearance for a powerful finish to the show.

The Sunday tribute for Tommy Bankhead was another all-star cast of local musicians many of whom came up in the 70s and 80s and helped revitalize the St. Louis blues scene. The opening band included: John May - bass, Eric McSpadden - harmonica/vocals, Billy Barnett - guitar/fiddle/vocals, Rich McDonough - guitar, and Aaron Griffin - drums/guitar/vocals. Other musicians joining in during the show included Kyle Yardley - harmonica/vocals/drums, JJ Johnson - vocals/drums, Chris Taylor - harmonica, Kay Lobster - vocals, and Bob Case – vocals.

## **Albert King: A New Generation of Blues**

Albert King had the Delta in his blood but his music took the blues in a new direction. He was a part of 1950's generation St. Louis musicians that included Johnnie Johnson, Chuck Berry and Ike Turner that changed the world music. His original style of playing is cited as a major influence on Jimi Hendrix, Eric Clapton, Mike Clapton and Stevie Ray Vaughn.

The electric guitar, which he played left handed and held upside down, was the lead instrument with a tone and intensity that set the bar for those that followed. He became one of the early blues artists to break the color barrier while crossing over into soul and rock. When Bill Graham first heard Albert in 1967 at Ike Turner's Manhattan Club in East St. Louis he booked him for the first of many appearances at his Fillmore West and East.

King was also noted for being rough on his musicians. He went through a lot of them through the years. But, Kenny Rice, who started with King when he was 16, says as tough as he was, "He was like a father to me and the band looked out for me like I was their son." He said King had the reputation because, "He was always seeking perfection in his music and was never satisfied but he also had a kind heart."

**Ridin the Bus** 

King worked hard and played hard. He loved to gamble. That was how Vince Martin joined the band in 1968 at the age of 15. His older brother, Colbert, was one of Albert's gambling buddies. As Vince tells it, King lost a big bet with his brother who told King, "I don't want your money just put my brother in your band." Martin, Frank Dunbar, Oliver Johnson and Gus Thornton are part of a long list of talented St. Louis musicians who toured the U.S. in King's beloved bus.

Oliver Johnson like Gus Thornton had two stints with King. He tells how "Albert got me back on the bus by saving me from a terrible situation." After playing with King a move to Motown ended up in personal troubles and a job in a Bay area donut shop. One day a big bus pulls up outside the shop and in walks Albert with a laughing Frank Dunbar. Johnson says, "It was a scene from the Blues Brothers. I'm in my apron and Albert walks up and says, 'so makin donuts...if you thinkin you'd like to come back..." A plane ticket to Texas came the next day and when Johnson got on the bus Albert said, "No Oliver I don't need more donuts."

Gus Thornton hooked up with Albert in 1977 via his friendship with Oliver Johnson and his work with the The Young Disciples, a legendary East St. Louis youth music project that spawned many a career. Riding the bus led to jam sessions and a friendship with Stevie Ray Vaughn and multiple albums with King and Vaughn in the 80s. Outside the music, Gus credits King with teaching him about the business side when he made him his road manager.

Sitting in the Tribute audience was a pleasure. From "Watermelon Man" and "I'll Play the Blues for You" to "The Sky is Cryin" and "Hold It" you would swear this group had just gotten off the bus from the last gig. While the Albert King Band may have had a big revolving cast the quality and innovation in his music and the talent of his musicians stand in tribute to his legacy.

### Tommy Bankhead: Making Music and Breaking Barriers

Tommy Bankhead was 17 when he came to St. Louis in 1949 after having had a chance to work with his uncle Elmore James, Howlin' Wolf, Sonny Boy II and Bobby Bland in Arkansas, Mississippi, and Memphis. After hearing about the music scene here from a member of Ike Turner's band he got an invitation to play at Ned Love's on the East side club. Over the next fifty years he would become and anchor of the local blues scene.

The early years were spent playing in the many clubs on the East side and North side clubs that also characterized the racial divide in the city. By the late 70s, the blues scene had the blues. Gaslight Square was long gone and the club scenes on the North side and East side were struggling. At the same time, there were stirrings to the south of the Delmar dividing line along south Broadway and in Soulard. As new clubs opened careers were revived and a new generation began to play.

A young generation of white musicians like Keith Doder had crossed the color barriers to learn and play with black bluesmen like Tommy Bankhead. Both were always open and encouraging of other young musicians often inviting them onstage to jam. Bankhead became the first black musician to take his electric blues style south of Market to the Broadway Oyster Bar and Mike & Mins in Soulard. It turned into a 17-year gig.

His band at the time was the Blues Eldorado's with Ben Wells on drums, Thurman McCain on bass and Doder on harp. As Ben Wells tells it he recruited Bankhead to his band after watching him freelance around town. "I told him he was good. People love you. You need a regular band of your own – let's go." Ben was moved to tears when a frail looking 82-year-old Kay Lobster took the stage. It only took a few moments before Lobster was off his stool, a mic in one hand and his cane in the air belting out the blues.

Thurman McCain said his more than 20 years with Bankhead "was all good...Tommy was so friendly and we got to play all the clubs and colleges." Other talented musicians would join in along the way like Larry Griffin who gave up teaching in Texas in the mid-80s to pursue the blues in St. Louis. He ended up playing with Bankhead four nights a week from 1985-87. He said, "Tommy was the nicest guy in the world, a real mentor, always pushing up what he was playing and he was the sharpest dresser in town."

### St. Louis Style

Bankhead's style, as characterized by *That St. Louis Thing* author Bruce Olson, was "easy blues with a sweet voice and a

gentle, old school guitar." Eric McSpadden, who opened the show with "Wait Do Time," "Stop Breakin Down," and "Blow Wind," played with Tommy his last four years. He said his approach to the blues "was really laid back. Playing and singing seemed so easy for him." JJ Johnson followed Eric at the mic for "Same Thing," "Play the Blues," "Killin Floor," and "Mojo Workin" before taking over on drums.

Bankhead did not record a lot during his life. Wells says he had to push him to do the 45, "Makin Love for You," and "Gamblin' Blues" and his first album in 1983, *Please Mr. Foreman*. He said the reluctance came from a fear of being ripped off. Bankhead himself in an interview tells how he got sued over an early recording. He would only record two more albums late in life, *Message to St. Louis*, released in 2000 and *Please Accept My Love*, recorded three months before his death on December 16, 2000.

John May, who played with Tommy, opened the show promising music that would show off the St. Louis style Bankhead helped to create. He told how important Bankhead was to the revival of the blues with his music and his personality. "There are two things that characterized Tommy Bankhead," May said, "One was he would always rather talk with you than to you and the other was his favorite saying, 'Makin love is good for you."

John returned to this theme at the close of the show reminding people that, "In this time of Ferguson, anger and bullshit we need this music to bring us together." So, it was fitting to have Bob Case, another one of musicians who helped revitalize the scene close the show with his song "St. Louis is My Home." You know Tommy was smiling. He wouldn't have had it any other way.



The Saint Louis Blues Society's annual compilation CD is in production now. Look for tracks by: Melissa Neels, Devil's Elbow, Kyle Yardley, Marcell Strong Kim Massie and twelve more!

■ 17 Saint Louis Bands playing 17 original songs recorded especially for this release!

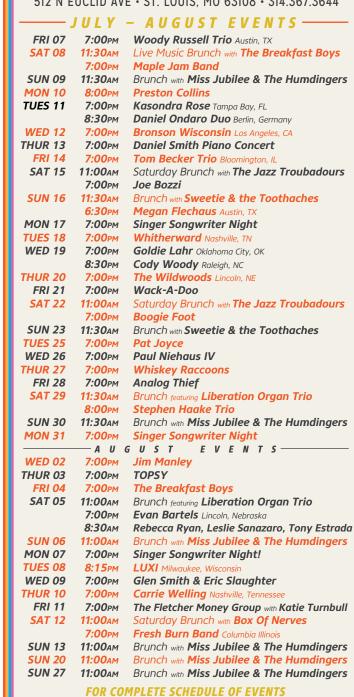
Members will receive their CD by mail in January with their issue of the BluesLetter.

Become a member today to be sure you get your free copy!

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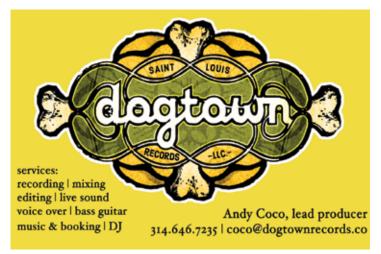


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The St. Louis Blues Society BluesLetter 7 6 The St. Louis Blues Society BluesLetter

# BB's Jazz Blues & Soups: The Second Era



In loving memory of Mark O'Shaughnessy, 1952-2017

n 1977, after little more than a year, doors. Cofounder and prime mover Mark O'Shaughnessy had put in a valiant effort to pursue his vision of music and community, but business solvency eluded him.

by Michael Kuelker

We shall dub 1976-77 the First Era of BB's because on the strength of his passion and commitment, Mark's vision would manifest anew. BB's reopened in 1980 showcasing jazz, blues and soups. Poetry, too. This was the old scrappy BB's, one floor with a low ceiling above the stage, operated by the young scrappy Mark O'Shaughnessy, a studly southside Irishman with a beatnik/ fuck-it attitude.

We can look back at the music he staged at the club in this time and know with surety that the early 80s was one of St. Louis' golden ages. Jazz artists at BB's in the Second Era included Earl Hines, Betty Carter, Eddie Harris, James Moody, Ptah Williams, JD Parran, the Kennedy Brothers, and the Expression Jazz Quintet. On the blues side were Henry Townsend, Oliver Sain, Roosevelt Sykes, Charlie Musselwhite, Yank Rachell & Sunnyland Slim, Larry Davis and Rod Piazza. A regular jazz poetry night was also staged with Lee Roth, Arthur Brown and poets the Last Exit across the street (presently who would tribalize in a few years as the Beale on Broadway). The first floor at 700 Soulard Culture Squad.

But nightclub economics being always a mix of feast, famine and precariousness, and the club owner's business decisions not always orienting toward savvy capitalism, BB's shuttered after a year and a half. The story, though, was far from over. The Second Era comprises not only the brief second life of BB's as a nightclub but the music. Bruin visited St. Louis in 1981 and aftermath in which Mark O'Shaughnessy conducted recordings at BB's by Henry gained experience and business acumen in Townsend and Piano Slim. The 'blues cop' the world of blues and jazz. And he was Charlie O'Brien was also involved. truly out in the world.

Mark was a quintessential St. Louisan, BB's Jazz Blues & Soups closed its deeply embedded and invested here, hoisting the city's music-and-culture banner for most of his adult life. He lived in an apartment on BB's third floor for 41 years, right up to his dying hour on May 27. But this period post-1981 in which Mark worked outside of St. Louis was seminal for him and helped shape the artistic and business plan that would result in the third and most stable era of BB's, 1996 to present.

> During the decade and a half between BB's second and third eras, Mark was involved in music festival production and album production in Chicago, New Orleans and Europe as well as in St. Louis. He had an ongoing relationship the Netherlands-based Swingmaster label and was a catalyst for recording and performing opportunities for St. Louis blues artists. He was integral at the to play *Blues Estafette* in Utrecht." inception of Blues and Jazz Inc and the St. Louis Blues Club, the forerunners of the St. Louis Blues Society. He promoted and road managed St. Louis blues artists on tours in Europe including James Crutchfield, Henry Townsend, Oliver Sain and members of Ike Turner's old Kings of Rhythm.

Upon the second closure of BB's, Mark leased the space to Rich Andrews, who ran South Broadway became Heartbreak Hotel, which ran from 1981-84 and featured punk, new wave and reggae. Mark worked at JB Hutto's, the blues club in Woods Mill Center in west county (Highway 40 and 141).

By this time Mark had made a link with Leo Bruin of Swingmaster Records, a heritage label keenly interested in St. Louis

Thirty-six years later speaking from his home in the Netherlands, Bruin has fond recollections. "In 1981, I made a tour to the United States to make recordings and I had a contact in St. Louis, name was Charlie O'Brien. He worked with the police force. He was a detective and he made a lot of discoveries of famous blues artists in the 50s and he was still active in the 80s. He brought me in contact with Henry Townsend and later on with James Crutchfield, and through Charlie O'Brien, I met Mark.

"I came back two years later and stayed at Mark's place for a week, and then we found James Crutchfield, the piano player. He was a little out of practice, so for a couple of months Mark brought him over to let him play on the piano. [Crutchfield] came in November of that same year, 1983,



Mark O'Shaughnessy with Oliver Sain photo courtesy of stiblues.net

Mark assisted on several Swingmaster releases which were made at BB's, at Oliver Sain's Archway Studio and in the Netherlands.

John May, who knew Mark from the mid-70s, says, "He was bringing artists to Swingmaster, right, and he was also preparing the ground to take those artists over to tour them through Europe. At that point in time in Europe every country was separate. There was no Euro. The Iron Curtain still existed."

Many of the artists performing at BB's in the early 80s were booked at JB Hutto's, which was founded by Frank Babcock and ran from 1978 to 1983. John May, who worked at Hutto's at this time (and later at Blues Band, Blue City Band, Clayton Love, BB's), says, "When it was BB's and Hutto's, we were double booking the acts knowing that, hey, we can get a better deal on the national artists by booking 'em the whole weekend. You take this night, I'll take that night; you've got an urban crowd, I've got a county crowd. And we'll work together."

More synergy was in the works. On March 22, 1986, the St. Louis Blues Club (soon to become the St. Louis Blues Society) produced a day-long festival at Mississippi Nights. With 16 sets across 14 hours, it was a lineup for the ages of St. Louis blues artists in full bloom including David Dee, Oliver Sain with James DeShay and Barbara Carr, Clayton Love (piano, vocals), Billy Gayles Rondo's Blues Deluxe, Tommy Bankhead, Henry & Vernell Townsend with Ron Edwards, Billy Peek, Silvercloud, Soulard



Mark O'Shaughnessy with Bud Mosely, East St. Louis 1983 photo courtesy of Leo Bruin

Leroy Pierson, Piano Slim, Big George & the Houserockers, George & Ethel McCov. Tom Hall and James Crutchfield. The event was coordinated by Mark O'Shaughnessy, John May and Ron Edwards.

In 1987 Mark organized a tour for the St. Louis Kings of Rhythm featuring members of Ike Turner's backing band. During the tour they cut an eponymous double album for the Timeless Records in the Netherlands, and it is a supremely tasteful and swingin' set of soul and R&B. Core members of the St. Louis Kings of Rhythm were Oliver Sain (saxophone), Erskine Oglesby (saxophone), (drums, vocals), Herb Sadler (guitar), Stacy Johnson (vocals), Robbie Montgomery the BluesLetter J. (vocals) and Jimmy Hinds (bass).

As John May observed, "When the blues society wanted to do the Kings of Rhythm tour, Mark was the perfect person because he was already fluent in the other languages. And you're gonna have to take a road manager. He was the guy and we did it. They were the St. Louis music ambassadors.

"He'd be taking blues guys out on the trains to where everybody had sub-machine guns and German shepherds. There were no CDs so you were transporting records, boxes of records. They had to pay for 'em, pay the tariff in every country, do all kinds of stuff."

The tales of this tour—and much more—will be uncovered in future issues of

# Mark O'Shaughnessy's 80s Discography

Mark O'Shaughnessy worked on a number of St. Louis blues recordings during the 1980s. Although Mark played guitar, he was not a contributing musician. He was a facilitator and I am still reconstructing as best I can what his roles were. What we know is that Mark was associated with and received special thanks or citations on the following albums, which I list chronologically according to recording dates. - MK

Piano Slim – Mean Woman Blues [Swingmaster LP 2103]

Texas-born Robert T. Smith aka Piano Slim moved to St. Louis in 1959 and cut a popular side titled "Workin" for the local Bobbin label. Mean Woman Blues is a solo piano recording save for the final cut (w/ Amos Sanford on guitar) recorded at BB's Jazz Blues & Soups on August 12 & 13, 1981. Released in 1981.

George & Ethel McCoy – At Home with the Blues [Swingmaster LP 2106] Recorded in East St. Louis, Illinois on August 14-15, 1981. Released in 1982 George & Ethel McCoy were a brother-sister blues duo who lived in St. Louis and had recorded a wonderful album for Adelphi in 1969. In 2017, Leo Bruin told the BluesLetter: "In '83 we went to visit George & Ethel McCov who we recorded in '81. We brought them a box of LPs with the recordings of '81. George took us for a tour to visit his old music buddies, one of which was Bud Mosely. We picked up his daughter and I remember George introducing me while slapping me on my shoulder as, 'This is Leo, a big man from Poland!' She got in the car with us and showed us the way to Bud's house. He was not in, so Mark and I went back the next day with more luck. Mr. Mosely was a good slide-guitar player and I made some recordings there that are still unissued."

Henry Townsend – Hard Luck Stories [Swingmaster LP 2107] Recorded at BB's on Aug 11, 12 & 15, 1981. Released in 1985.

Henry Townsend - St. Louis Blues Ace [Swingmaster CD 2202] Recorded in St. Louis in 1981 and 1983 and in the Netherlands in 1987; released in 2000. A solo guitar and piano outing which compiled six songs from Hard Luck Stories and ten new recordings, some recorded at Sain's Archway Studio.

RL Burnside – Hill Country Blues [Swingmaster LP 2111]

Thirteen mostly solo vocal and guitar by the Mississippi bluesman, three of which were recorded in October 1982 and November 1984 in Groningen, Netherlands. The relationship took root. Burnside performed at BB's a decade later with a twonight stand on June 19 and 20, 1998.

## Piano 'Robert T. Smith' Slim & the St. Louis Bluesmachine

- Gateway to the Blues [Swingmaster LP 2110]

Piano Slim's second album for Swingmaster in which he fronted a full band. The album was cut on March 18 and 21, 1983 at Oliver Sain's Archway Studio. The Swingmaster-Piano Slim-St. Louis connection produced a final effort, Sneaky People (CD 2206), also recorded at Archway.

James Crutchfield - St. Louis Blues Piano [Swingmaster CD 2205] A solo piano blues outing by Crutchfield, recorded in Groningen, The Netherlands in Nov 1983 and released in 2001.

St. Louis Kings of Rhythm - St. Louis Kings of Rhythm [Timeless SJP 231/232] Recorded in 1987 and released on both LP and CD in 1989.

**Johnnie Johnson** – Blue Hand Johnnie [Pulsar LP PUL 1002]

His debut solo album in 1988 with an all-star roster of St. Louis artists and Columbia, Missouri's Bel Airs.



# by Bob Baugh Hustling to Memphis: This year's St. Louis Blues Society's The St. Louis IBC Winners inning combination for some veterans who

winning combination for some veterans who had previously won in another category and a Now Chris and Ron are better prepared: "We Zeppelin), Soul and Memphis/Stax." He also Southside band who wowed the crowd at the 2017 Big Muddy Blues Fest.

Eugene Johnson won in the IBC best self-produced cd category. His band, Eugene Johnson and Company, previously went to Memphis as the winners of the regional IBC. The CD, Play One More, is brand new. "I scrambled to get it done just before Big Muddy," Johnson said, "my sales there covered most of the cost." He hopes his songs messages of "hope, life and love" will find a wider audience as a result of making it to the Memphis IBC.

Shepard and Ron Roskowske, won in the solo/ duo category. Both said, "It was a total surprise because the competition, Big Mike Aguirre and Johnny Fox, were so good." Urged on was a cracked cassette of B.B. Kings Why I by STLBS president, Jeremy Segal Moss, the duo only began playing Morgan Street Brewery gigs in the past year. Chris says, "having won the 2014 Band Challenge we know getting to Memphis is a big deal because it means increased exposure and credibility."

know what to expect which means we will be more relaxed." Ron says, "it means we gotta practice." Both agree they will advantage of the worldwide networking opportunities that Memphis provides.

Torrey Casev and the South Side Hustle have had a real breakout experience over the past few months. They played a lot in the Festus, Crystal City and Jefferson County area over the past few years but were less well known in St. Louis. All of that has changed following a dazzling high energy performance at the 2017 Big Muddy that left blues fans The Kingdom Brothers Duo, Chris saying, "Wow, who are these guys?" Torrey said "his FB page went crazy ... I had no idea how strong the St Louis Blues Society is."

> Casey started playing guitar at 15 but it Sing the Blues, he found in 1996 that led to the IBC. Torrey grew up with his father's drums and rock bands but playing the tape was a revelation. He learned every song and the blues became a lifelong pursuit. His style he says a "mix of electric blues (Hendrix/Led

says, "I have always been able to write lyrics" and credits his experience in hip hop for that.

At the IBC the band was nervous: "The talent in the room was amazing and we were worried about the blues balance in our set. But, we decided to do what we do best and focus on the energy and entertainment." He is quick to praise his bandmates. He says his vocalist Teec'a Easby is "absolutely awesome, a force" and that his keyboardist, Alex Sinclair, who also plays with Al Holliday, "is the most expressive player in town." Bassist Brad Waller and drummer Donnel Robinson rounds this group of talented energetic musicians.

It was after they finished their set that they realized they actually had a shot at winning. They saw it in the crowd and the judges' response. "And," as Casey says, "when you wear your gold blazer you don't want to lose." The band is already preparing for Memphis. Torrey is talking to previous winners to learn from their experience. The band is practicing, and Torrey is picking out his wardrobe for the trip south. They will do St. Louis proud. 🎜











10 The St. Louis Blues Society BluesLetter The St. Louis Blues Society BluesLetter 11

# Thanksgiving Treats: The Baby Blues Showcase by Bob Baugh When you feel the air chillin and see Flakes signaled her emergence with

the leaves a fallin' then you know the

The November 26 show will once proud. again feature some of St. Louis' best young blues talent. Its line up will mix Matt Lesch, Beulah Flakes and with players.

# The Second Time Around

Matt Lesch and Beulah Flakes both had This year Baby Blues attendees will that he recently recorded for the STL has caught everyone's attention. Blues Society upcoming 17 in 17 CD. He It led to opportunities to sit in with will be joined onstage by Doug Foehner/ The Carol Mason Band, Roland Johnson guitar, Tecora Morgan/bass and Rilev and Skeet Rodgers and in recent months, Coatie Jr./drums.

and Doug Foehner, says "I have been that experience, "has helped him learn singing with my parents as long as I can different styles and how to work a stage.' remember." She also points out that "I It caught the attention of Marquise Knox was mentored by Bennie Smith and Henry and Michael Battle who invited him to sit Townsend (piano lessons) and went to in with the band. They will be backing up many blues clubs along the way." A five- Dylan for the Showcase where he "hopes year stint in the Army after high school to leave a legacy with an experience and three kids took her life away from people will remember." the music. Her 2013 appearance in the The Blues Society has its own new Showcase singing her own song "Injured entrant into the Showcase. The St. Louis Hearts" showed her potential but other Blues Society Youth Band is a creation of priorities held sway.

Baby Blues Showcase is about to come her recording on the STLBS 16 in 16 CD Marquise Knox Band. The current band callin'. The 16th annual showcase has its where she sang Sharon's song, "Homeless usual reservation in place at BB's Jazz, Child." Her real coming-out party was 12-16: Nathan Marks/bass, Marcus Lane/ Blues and Soups for the Sunday after a stellar performance as the vocalist for drums, Keller Anderson/guitar/vocals and Thanksgiving. Our chef, Jeremy Segel- her Mom's band, Sharon Bear and the Sam Castro/guitar. Moss, has put together another delectable Golden Licks at this year's Big Muddy. menu for the end of the holiday weekend. She wowed the crowd and made her folks

am more dynamic than I thought," and see the fruits of their labor."

# Young Blood

their first and only Showcase experiences meet Little Dylan Triplett a 17-year-old in 2013. Matt has been active ever since vocalist and honors senior at Edwardsville working as Big George Brock's lead High School. His father, Art Pollard, is a guitarist and with his own band while local saxophonist who encourages his attending Webster University. Matt says son's education and musical development. he "was really excited to get the call from Dylan has been singing gospel in church Jeremy asking him to headline this year" choirs since he was five, classical with and that he "ordered a new red blazer for the Edwardsville Chamber Choir as well the show." One of the songs he plans to as playing organ and keyboards. It is his play is an original composition "Rattlin" command of R&B, Soul and Blues that

a regular set on Sunday nights at the Beulah Flakes, the daughter of Sharon Red Door in East St. Louis. Dylan says

> Michael Battle, STLBS board member/ education director and drummer for the

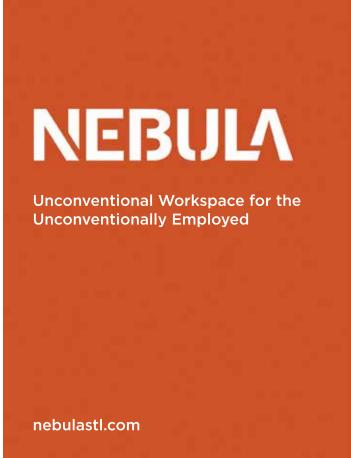
consists of four vouth between the ages

The Youth Band is part of a bigger vision for Battle and the STLBS to engage kids in creative activity. Additional Beulah says she has learned that, "I components include Blues in the Schools and working with Paul Niehaus and his some well-known Baby Blues graduates that she felt "Big Muddy was a rite of Lotus Studios to give kids an inside look like, Marquise Knox, Aaron Griffin, passage for me in the STL blues scene, a at song writing and production. KDHX confidence builder." She promises to bring and the National Blues Museum are also an interesting group of new faces. The her "emotional/sultry style" to the stage partners in these efforts. The Youth Band School of Rock will lead off at 5 PM where, backed by her mom and dad, she uses the museum's Legends Room stage with its ever-evolving group of talented hopes to honor them, "by having everyone for practice. They have played at the NBM, Blues in the Schools, and the St. Louis Art Fair.

> The STLBS efforts go hand in hand with Battle's creation of a non-profit, The Center for Artistic Expression. With music at its heart the idea behind the Center is to help kids identify and develop their artistic interests. It isn't only about playing music; it's about all forms of creative expression from writing, photography and performing to radio and stage production and more. "The point is to help kids find their interests and help them pursue it." Battle says, "this gives kids something to do, it teaches them discipline and commitment and helps build the life skills kids need."

> Jeremy Segel-Moss looks back with pride at 16 years of Baby Blues Showcases: 'I believe in building institutions that outlast my own performance. Each year continues to reaffirm our belief that we are doing the right thing by cultivating young musicians who will help build the St. Louis music scene." The Baby Blues Showcase is all about the Blues Society's mission to support and advance the blues. And, as you can see there's quite a sampler platter to enjoy. 🎜

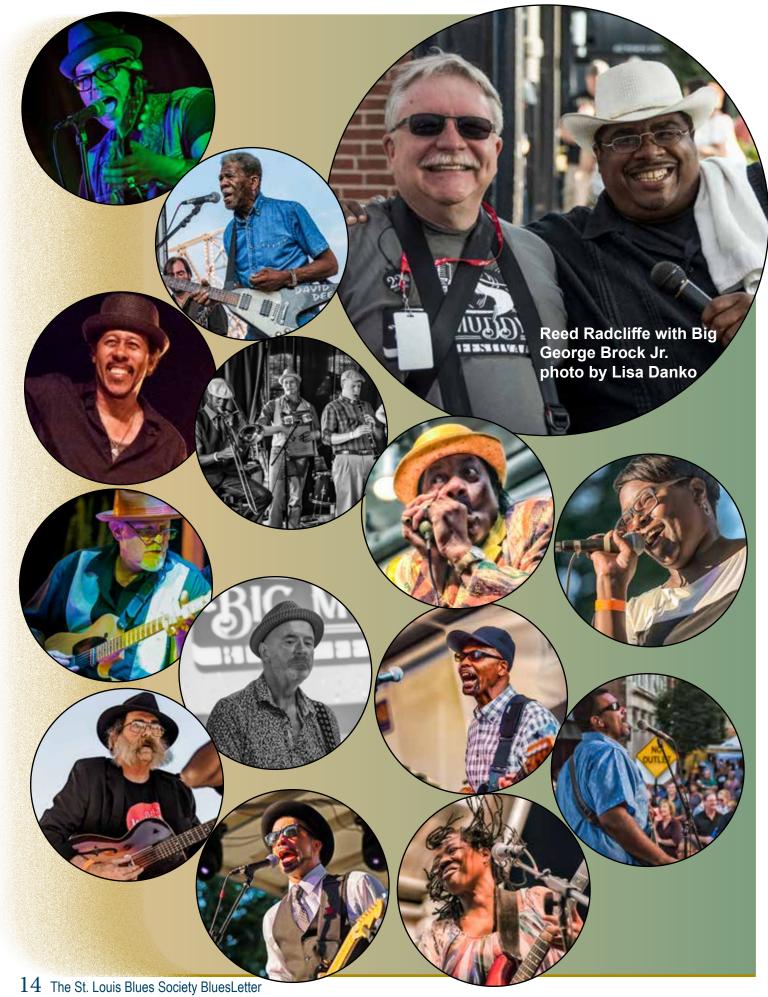
Come on down and keep the tradition alive at BB's Jazz, Blues and Soup Sunday November 26 from 5-11 PM.















# **Alonzo Townsend asks Dion Brown** about the National Blues Museum's **Radio Show on WSIE**

Join the National Blues Museum every Thursday at 6pm on WSIE 88.7 The Sound for The Blues Highway



## What is the primary focus for the National Blues Museum Radio?

The Blues Highway is an extension of the ever-growing programming offered by the National Blues Museum. We have the opportunity to speak of the educational programs offered, the great traveling exhibitions, and sensitive topics during our panel discussions just to name a few.

Throughout its existence, the essence of the blues has remained constant, reinforcing basic elements that connect artists from different eras, geographies, and stylistic approaches. That's because, above all, the blues is a feeling as much as a form, and as is simply amazing. Recently Marquise [Knox] had his CD release universal as life itself.

The National Blues Museum is the only museum dedicated exclusively to preserving and honoring the national and international story of the blues and its impact on American culture in the United States.

We need to share that story and make that impact in every way possible to reach as make people as possible and radio is another way to do it.

We are visited by people from all over the world. The German National Public Radio Director made an appointment to visit recently. It was great having radio programming in common with an international visitor.

## How did the WSIE-NBM Radio relationship develop initially and what is the vision you saw with NBM/WSIE?

When I arrived in St. Louis back in Jun 2015, I was scanning the channels on FM and ran across what I thought was a blues channel. They were playing an Albert King song and I said perfect, the area has a station dedicated to the blues. I continued listening but all I heard was jazz with a blues song mixed in. Fast forward six months and the general manager reached out to the NBM about possibly doing a show. The museum hadn't opened yet, so the time just wasn't right. We continue to talk over the months and finally came up with the plan for the show and we launched the "Blues Highway" in August 2017.

The vision for the show is to play great blues...some you've heard, some you haven't, and some forgotten. I also wanted to feature the local artists in the area and promote them as well. The NBM has our own three CD compilation set called From the Beginning, Volume 1 that we play each week and give the history

of the artists that we are playing. Also, what better platform to tell the world about the National Blues Museum being located than on our own radio show. The show is also streamed to an even larger audience live also so this gives us a chance to talk about what's going on at the museum, coming exhibits, special performances,

# How proud are you of the strides the show has made in its first few months since its birth and what do you hope to build going

Man, to have this format to get the word out about the museum party and we were able to highlight him for an entire hour on our show. I'm proud to say that the National Blues Museum played a role in highlighting him. Going forward the plan is to air the show from the museum itself. This will allow us to engage those guests who are visiting the museum with them having input into possible picking out the playlist. This is just one of many ideas we are working on.

# How important is the future of radio, black radio, and the future of shows highlighting the blues?

Radio is essential! There are several pay services that you can pay for, but the authenticity of live radio shows will never go away. From a blues standpoint, there just isn't that many out there dedicated to the blues. Providing our show on the airwaves gives us an opportunity to put a local face to the blues scene. Take for instance, The Blues Highway, we showcase emerging artists and prolific legends. We broadcast history, current events and universal truths by way of the blues. It reminds me of call and response in the African tradition. We send the blues out into the world and our listeners respond in ways that let us know we are on the right track. The hope is that the word will spread that if you want to hear some great blues, learn some history, and speak with some great people you will tune in every week.

# How much fun are you really having with this show and the

I'm blessed to play Host and DJ every week. It's a truly education experience, not only for myself, but for my staff also. For instance, my Director of Internal Affairs, Jacqueline Dace joins me on air most days. She wasn't really a blues listener but now she has had a change of heart. She is responsible for researching, creating



and broadcasting our artist spotlights. Several members of my staff provide support with additional programming that gives different musical perspectives.

The most fun I am having is when I interview the artists, introducing them to our listeners. Some are local, some are national and international touring artists. All of them are on their way to perform at the National Blues Museum in the Lumiere Place Legends Room. The radio program serves as the appetizer to live performances at the museum, our permanent and traveling exhibits and our monthly honors events, where we acknowledge St. Louis' best and brightest musicians. We want to give them their roses while they are still with us.

Overall this experience is just a blast! Spreading the blues baby, one listener, one staff member at a time. The feedback we get from our listeners lets me know we are on the right track. For instance, I asked one listener "How do you like the show?" They answered, "Its great, just to short!" I also enjoying working with WSIE's broadcasting legend Steve Jankowski.

We are having so much fun now that we've extended *The* Blues Highway to a 2-hour format beginning in December. You can hear us on WSIE 88.7 FM, The Sound.

The Blues Highway is a party with a purpose.

# Finally, you've done so much for this museum, this city, and this heritage that is blues as a whole. What is left to accomplish and when will you be satisfied.

Wow. Man, that's a huge compliment but none of this could be possible without this community, staff, and volunteers. Although the museum is in St. Louis, we are the National Blues Museum and the city is on display to the world. One of my stories is how we partnered up with Jeremy Segel-Moss to create the St. Louis room. It's the last gallery all guests see prior to exiting the museum. With St. Louis' rich history, this room provides a small sampling of what the city has offered up to the world in the blues genre.

Locally, I love the fact that we share with our guests the other venues that have live music. If there was an area I'd like to see us explore is some kind of "multi-pass" that would let guests be able to enjoy a show here and then if they wanted to continue the experience, head to one of the other local venues. In this area, I need to work harder with the other venues. There have been several occasions when people ask where can they continue or pay for our show but leave after the first break because they want to see someone else at another venue. It would be nice to offer and potentially grow all areas.

We haven't even begun to scratch the surface on what we can accomplish here when it comes to making an impact in the city. It has always been my dream and will continue to be my dream for us to have a teen mentoring program, a National Blues Museum teen band, supporting local artists as a place to showcase their work in our traveling exhibition hall. These are but a few of the hundreds of ideas I want to flush out and see come to fruition. It's that sort of hunger, curiosity and discovery that keeps the National Blues Museum exciting, interesting and relevant.

We are in our infancy. The museum opened in April 2016 and we have so much more to accomplish. There are so many stories to be told, so much history to be discovered and shared so it will be a long time before I am satisfied with what your National Blues Museum will accomplish. ..



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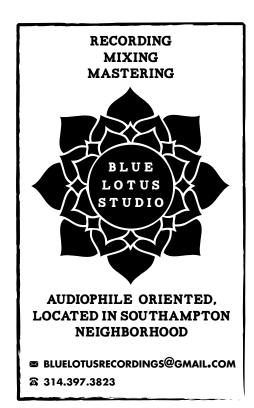
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