

BLUESLETTER

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN
HERE IS THE MAN
I MEAN THE MAN
THE SENSATIONAL! THE INCOMPARABLE!
THE KING OF THE BLUES THE DYNAMIC



Images ©2010 Gabriel

Design: Kevin Belford

St. Louis Blues Society

Gabriel

Playing the blues and the oldies for you and yours!

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



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Congratulations to the winning 2018 *Road to Memphis* groups: Hy-C & The Fresh Start Show Band and the Bottlesnakes. The *Road to Memphis* event was hugely successful this year and we have all of you to thank! The participating bands, judges, volunteers and attendees made for a tremendous afternoon of music and community. Please join us on December 9th at BB's Jazz, Blues & Soups to raise some extra dollars for the groups headed to Memphis next year to represent St. Louis at the International Blues Challenge.

The big topic for the next few months will be the STLBS Elections coming up in January. Each STLBS Member will receive a ballot in late December which will offer the opportunity to vote for the eight board positions. Elections are very important to a transparent and evolving organization. The ballot will include board members looking to be re-elected as well as a handful of new people interested in serving on the board. PLEASE make sure your membership is up-to-date, so you have the ability to vote for the leaders of the St. Louis Blues Society. As the process moves forward, please feel free to reach out if you have any questions, comments or concerns!

This issue of the BluesLetter features Gabriel. As another giant in our community passes on it is so important to spend some time reflecting on the job we are doing to support the history and promote the present of St. Louis Blues music. If you have ideas for ways to create a better St. Louis Blues Society or a better St. Louis, please reach out to us and let your voice be heard. This organization is for you! It is for the musicians, the venue owners, the fans, the studios, the radio stations and we count on you to help us be as successful as possible.

Thank you for supporting St. Louis Blues music in all its forms!

Jeremy Segel-Moss, STLBS Board Chairperson

E-mail Jeremy I'd love to hear from you!

Please write me at jsegelmoss@stlouisbluessociety.org and tell me your thoughts on the board elections.

BluesLetter is published six times a year by 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.

2019 St. Louis Blues Society General Membership Meeting and Election of Board Members

by Kelly Wells, Election Committee Chair

The St Louis Blues Society will hold its annual board elections in January, 2019

Each member of the St Louis Blues Society will receive a ballot in the mail in late December. The individuals listed on the ballot will include a slate of candidates nominated by the board of directors for the St Louis Blues Society Board of Directors election. The terms of office will be for two years or until the 2021 Annual Meeting of the Members of the St Louis Blues Society.

Ballots will include information about the candidates, mail-in instructions and deadlines, as well as information about the Annual Meeting of the Members of the St Louis Blues Society to be held on January 22, 2019.

All current members of the St Louis Blues Society are eligible to vote in the January board elections. If you are not currently a member or if your membership has lapsed, visit www.stlouisbluessociety.org by December 15, 2018 to become a member so that you may participate in the upcoming board elections.

Look for your ballot in late December and plan to participate so that the St. Louis Blues Society can continue to effectively serve the St. Louis community with its mission of preserving and perpetuating blues music in and from St. Louis, while fostering its growth and appreciation.



JOIN The Saint Louis Blues Society

The St. Louis Blues Society is a Missouri 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation dedicated to preserving blues music, to fostering the growth and appreciation of blues music, and to providing blues artists with an opportunity for public performance and individual improvement in their field, all for the educational and artistic benefit of the general public.

Memberships to the Blues Society are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law

Membership Contribution Levels:

- ___ Blue Plate Special \$30/annual
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St. Louis

story and photos by
Bob Baugh

Soul Revival

Hearing “Would You Rather” by the Georgettes in the recent Forest Whitaker movie *Roxanne* or Bernie Hayes’ 1969 “Cool Strut” in a new Heineken beer commercial serves as a reminder of the soul scene that once flourished in St. Louis. The city never had a Motown, Stax or Chess with its massive marketing and distribution system. But, if there was one musician that put a stamp on our local soul, it was Oliver Sain, a band leader/musician/producer that Solomon Burke once called, “the Quincy Jones of St. Louis.”

Sain grew up in a musical Mississippi family playing trumpet and drums in his teens and taking up the sax following his service in the Korean War. He played Greenville, MS juke joints in the early 50s with his stepfather Willie Love, Sonny Boy Williamson, and Charlie Booker, as well as with Little Milton who got signed by a Sun Records talent scout named Ike Turner. Sain met the Chess brothers after moving to Chicago in 1955 and began playing everything from blues to jazz on drums or sax with Howlin’ Wolf, Elmore James and others. He would tell people that it was a gig that got him to St. Louis, “I came to East St. Louis in 1959 to play

a weekend with Little Milton and I’ve been stranded here ever since.”

It was a music scene being turned upside down by Ike Turner’s Kings of Rhythm and Little Milton’s Band. He would become Milton’s musical direc-

when telling people about Bass, “I recruited a piano player and later found out she could sing her ass off.” A few years later he would form his own band, “The Oliver Sain Soul Revue,” featuring Bass and McClure. Their 1965 hit “Don’t Mess a Good Thing Up,” for Chess provided the royalties that enabled Sain to open Archway Studios (1965-2003).

The studio attracted top talent. In addition to Bass and McClure there was Ike and later Tina Turner, Little Milton, Albert King, Shirley Brown, Barbara Carr, David Dee, Larry Davis, Julius Hemphill, Johnnie Johnson, The Montclairs, The Georgettes, The Sharpies, The Smith Brothers/The Smith Connection, The Caesars, The 13th Floor, The Laniers, Bernie Hayes and Uvee Hayes, and many more. And, Sain was a talent in his own right with multiple albums featuring his searing sax. One listen to his “Soul Serenade” tells you all you need to know.

Jimmy Hinds, a renowned bass player, was his coproducer at Archway. Sain managed the relationships with the stars and kept the studio filled with state of the art recording equipment. In the studio Hinds was the musical director with both act-



Flyer courtesy of Marsha Evans and Jimmy Hinds

tor, begin writing and producing records on his friend’s Bobbin label and finding new talent like Fontella Bass and Bobby McClure. He would laugh

ing as engineers and musicians, playing their instruments with guitarist Phil Westmoreland and drawing from a circle of Sain band members for recordings. Hinds found their differing styles to be complimentary, “Oliver had a country boy ear but was a stone bluesman. I had my blues, but I was a Motown baby with clarity in hearing everything. We had two different ears so our mixes sound different but there was no conflict because we came from the same place. We were bluesmen.”

They drew from the deep St. Louis talent pool and tapped a unique East St. Louis model cities program. The Young Disciples (1967-72), developed by Allen Merry a woodwind player who had worked with Curtis Amy, Ray Charles, Hank Williams Jr., and Little Richard, became a mini Motown for training young musicians. Hinds said Archway opened the door of opportunity for the black community, “Oliver Sain brought his record industry experience from Chess to St. Louis. A lot of us would never have seen the technology or how to use it. White studios were very uncomfortable to work in. They didn’t want us [black musicians] learning the business. Oliver opened the doors for the black community to learn about music and music production.”

Sain’s death in 2003 marked the end of an era memorialized today by the Stax, Chess and Motown museums. Rap and Hip Hop had become the youth pipeline. In St. Louis, Sain influenced artists like Marsha Evans, Renee Smith, Kim Massie, Marty Abdullah, Gene Jackson, Roland Johnson, Marcel Strong and the Apostles and the Ground Floor Band kept the music alive performing

covers. One exception was Uvee Hayes whose consistent album releases sell and get radio play. Her latest works includes two recent CDs, *Nobody But You* (2017), and *From a Woman’s Point of View* (2018); and a new video “Basement Party.”



Marsha Evans and the Coalition with special guests at the NBM for the 2018 Big Muddy Blues Festival's Tribute to Oliver Sain

The exciting news is the emergence of a new and old soul scene thanks to the efforts of the St. Louis Blues Society. Jeremy Segel-Moss, the STLBS chairperson, likes to tell how “for years my band (The Bottoms Up Blues Gang) would be traveling and telling people in the places we played about the amazing music in St. Louis but we didn’t have anything to back it up.” That changed when he was elected chair in 2013 and set out to produce an annual CD. The first one released in January 2015 was titled *14 In 14*.



Renee Smith with the Blue Lotus Soul Review at the 2017 Big Muddy Blues Festival

The idea wasn’t just about visibility; it was an organizing tactic for Segel-Moss, “We wanted honest participation with our town’s musicians. With the CD they get one song recorded for free and encouragement to make nine more for their own CD.” The first one was a learning curve. The compilation

of recorded songs submitted by musicians “was a tough sell,” according to Segel-Moss, “we encountered lots of ‘Nos’ and apprehension from older artists who had been screwed by record companies. We also found many well-known local artists didn’t have any original music.” That needed to be remedied.

15 In 15 took that step by collaborating with Paul Niehaus, one of the most desired sidemen in town (bass, guitar, keyboards, drums and more), who was opening Blue Lotus Studios. Niehaus works in many genres, but he is quick to tell you that, “my core all-time favorite music is Royal Studios High Records, the Memphis sound from early 70s.” It’s a template for him to “make music that has an organic quality and songwriting where all the songs on a record are a cohesive statement with threads harmonically woven throughout.”

Their plan worked and the hoped-for spin-offs became a reality. Niehaus worked with soul master, Roland Johnson, after *15 In 15* to produce his first original CD, *Imagine This*. Soul artists Renee Smith and Gene Jackson cut original songs on *16 In 16* with Jackson then writing his first original album, *1963*. Johnson’s and Jackson’s albums received good reviews and *Blues Blast* nominations. They are working with Niehaus to produce follow-up albums.

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17 In 17's soulful thrust included Kim Massie, Marcel Strong and the Apostles, Marty Abdullah, Brian Owens & the Deacons of Soul and Charisse "Swan" Sauls. Massie and Abdullah are now working on original cd's with Niehaus. He has also been help-



Paul Niehaus IV at his Blue Lotus Studio

ing promote the music by organizing and ongoing series of Blue Lotus Soul Revues that include Chess, Stax and Motown tributes. And, the word is spreading. Ms. Zeno, the Mojo Queen, a Memphis soul legend, traveled to St. Louis to make her newly released CD, *Back In Love*, at Blue Lotus.

Niehaus thinks Brian Owens, a Ferguson native, with his Marvin Gaye inspired soul has the potential "to be the Al Green of St. Louis." He has already achieved national attention with *The Soul of Ferguson* and the critically acclaimed *The Soul of Cash* (yes, Johnny Cash) and a single, *For You*, with five-time Grammy award winner Michael McDonald. He is currently doing pre-production work and writing his next album at Blue Lotus.

There is a younger wave of soul/R&B artists emerging as well. The upcoming Blues Society Presents *18 In 18* will feature an 18-year-old Little Dylan Triplett who has taken to town by storm with his bluesy soul and R&B. He recently signed with Marquise Knox, LLC and is writing songs for a CD.

One of his early R&B performances came early in 2017 when he sat in with another reemerging local soul artist with Motown roots, Carolyn Mason, at the National Blues Museum.

Two other young Stax-influenced bands are making waves in town with original music and an energy infused stage presence inspired by horns, harmony, key boards, and a sound that makes you move.

Al Holliday and the East Side Rhythm Band is a 10-piece outfit that just released a self-produced critically acclaimed third CD, *4963*. A European tour is in the works for November. Holliday is also producing the first original CD for the seven-piece, three-horn band, Big Mike Aguirre and the Blue City All Stars. Both bands were featured closing acts along with Marquise Knox at last month's Big Muddy Blues Festival.

This is a feel-good city story about soul lost and found again. A village of musicians, fans, new studios, producers with soulful ears and a Blues Society with a passion for original music connects our past with the present. They have St. Louis doin' the "Cool Strut" once again.

This article was published in the Oct/Nov 2018 issue of Big City Rhythm and Blues magazine. It was Bob's story about Chuck Berry in 2017 for KDHX and the St. Louis Blues Society that attracted the attention of the magazine. They ran that piece and invited him to become a regular contributor to the bi-monthly publication with a focus on St. Louis stories. 🎵



Paul Niehaus IV at his Blue Lotus Studio

17th ANNUAL BABY BLUES SHOWCASE

THANKSGIVING WEEKEND - SUN NOV 25



PERFORMANCES BY:

Marquise Knox - Little Dylan - Aaron Griffin - Matt Lesch
Alex Sinclair - School of Rock - EMCEE: Alonzo Townsend

\$15 OR \$10 WITH 5 CANS OF FOOD

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The Story Of Gabriel

by Robert W. Delaney

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www.stlmediahistory.org

St. Louis Blues Society Gabriel Postcards

photos courtesy of Gabriel
artwork by Kevin Belford

After the song fades out there is the sound of a door slamming and a grandmotherly female voice says "Gabriel! Stop making that noise!". This signaled the end of Gabriel's *Tin Pan Alley* weekly radio program heard from Midnight Sunday until 3 am Monday mornings on community radio station KDHX-FM, 88.1 in St. Louis, Missouri.

There is a momentary feeling of emptiness and longing for more repartee and music. It is really an empty, puzzling emotion. It brings to mind a visit with a good friend or close relative and the feeling you get when the person leaves. It was such a good time you just had listening to Gabriel that you don't want it to end so soon. In a few hours, you may be back at work dealing with the mundane things of life in the everyday business world. Listening to Gabriel exposed you to a deeper understanding of the little things in life that we overlook or ignore.

I suspect this scene and sudden emotion was repeated in many places and many minds where people listened to Gabriel. I'm sure a large group of the population with a musical taste for blues and traditional gospel music have heard his broadcasts at one time or another during his 66-year career in radio broadcasting in the St. Louis and other parts of North America.

His listeners were a diverse group. His appeal was diverse in the community, perhaps wider than any other media personality currently on St. Louis radio. In the era of strict playlist conformity, Gabriel was (and KDHX is) a blessed oasis in the desert of '20 songs in a row' and classic rock stations.

At KDHX, the management and other blues DJs besides Gabriel come from a wide background. Some of them are currently blues performers, some are just DJs as a hobby. Blues

music is still important enough to KDHX that most of the drive-time Monday through Friday shows are still blues shows. The Sunday evening blues block is still there. And, blues is sprinkled throughout the rest of the schedule. Gabriel is the granddaddy of the KDHX blues DJs. You got the feeling in listening to him that none of the other blues DJs would be on the air if Gabriel hadn't led the way. All of them acknowledge Gabriel's programs over the years as one of their influences. Many of the other DJs have an encyclopedic knowledge of the blues and present excellent material, often in thematic programs. Gabriel acknowledged their scholarship and consulted them for details when needed. It is through this radio station, the St. Louis Blues Society, and the support of the people in St. Louis that the St. Louis blues music has survived all this time.

So...How did I ever stumble across Gabriel and his program? In the summer of 1971 commercial radio station KDNA-FM, 102.5, was in its 3rd or 4th year on the air in St. Louis. It was classified as a listener-supported station. It existed on the donations of its listeners and the initial capital provided by investors. Its on-the-air staff was diverse and ever-changing. It included well-known local personalities like Leonard Slatkin, then a St. Louis Symphony conductor. It might include whomever walked in off the street to start broadcasting their agenda, if the mood was right. There were only a few scheduled programs at scheduled times, although certain DJ's were usually on the same days. There was a lot of listener-DJ phone conversation which was not yet as popular of a radio format as it is today in the format called "talk-radio". All types of mu-

sic was played. There were no limits on what could be played. This type of format was pioneered by a San Francisco station, KSAN-FM. Most of the people working at KDNA were under the age of 30 at that time.

In the summer of 1971, I was listening to KDNA one Saturday morning about 3 am through headphones when I heard the following: "And Now! For Your Dancing, Listening, and Reminiscing Pleasure! Ladies And Gentlemen! Here Is The Man! I Mean The Man! The Sensational! The Incomparable! The King Of The Blues! The Dynamic!" Then a friendly voice announced he was "Gabriel...playing the 3 B's for you." The voice continued, "I do not mean Bach, Brahms, and Beethoven..... but Boogie, Barrel-



house, and Blues!". As he spoke, a piano boogie tune started to play and continued while he talked over it.

The first record I heard him play was a blues tune with nice guitar work and harmonica, but the singer had such a weird way of singing the syllables: "You're the one who rayeeecellly gave me a buzzzzz." Years later, Gabriel would identify the song for me as "You're The One" by Jimmie Rogers, who was Muddy Waters' Lead Guitar Player. Gabriel played mostly blues tunes that night until about 5 am. This was the music that influenced the top rock musicians of the 1960s. Groups such as the Beatles, the Jimi Hendrix Experience, Cream, Canned Heat, The Animals, The Rolling Stones, John Mayall, and numerous others all pointed to the blues as the major influence in their music.

The blues Gabriel was playing was an encyclopedia of new tunes to me. Hearing this music for the first time was very intriguing. I had vaguely heard the name Gabriel mentioned as a DJ on a St. Louis radio station, KATZ, but I had never really listened to that station much. Gabriel was also running a retail record store at the time, The House of The Blues, not too far from the location of KDNA.

It was stirring, metaphysical stuff to listen to. Little did I realize that the blues was the basis of most black gospel music. Gabriel referred to it as the "Holy Blues." Most black blues performers had grown up going to church or singing in church at one time or another. I didn't really listen to the gospel with sincerity, more with curiosity. I had heard John Lennon of the Beatles say that he liked gospel music and I had seen a film of the "Around the Beatles" TV special the Beatles made in England in 1964 which included their rare performance of "Shout," an Isley Brothers tune with strong gospel influences.

So here we are more than 40 years later, and blues music is still holding in popularity and record sales, concert revenues, etc. Why is this so? The blues is a music that has been passed from generation to generation in the black community and this still continues in the Delta in Mississippi and other locations in the USA today. It is my opinion that the recent popularity of the blues has occurred because it is now the "New Rock and Roll" of white listeners who grew up in the 1960s and 1970s absorbing the music of their rock idols that was firmly based in the blues traditions of earlier decades. The persons in this age group (50 - 65) are now a powerful economic demographic group. In their youth, the blues was admired by rock musicians for its simplicity and authenticity. The blues has always been a music that tells the story of a person's fate, good or bad. "The blues is the story of a good man with a problem" is an often-heard phrase.

The black person performing the blues usually represented a person alienated from the establishment for its poor treatment of blacks and racist attitude. In the 1960s and 1970s many young whites felt this same alienation and vowed to eliminate racism or reduce its effect. Some people feel that black music is ultimately what won over large groups of whites when segregation was an issue. This is a complex question that can't be answered with snap answers and unsupported theories. The average middle-class white person in this age group feels alienated today in this era of job lay-offs, downsizings, temporary jobs, and the lack of loyalty between the employer and the employees. These white people are feeling some of the misery and pressure that always existed in the black person's world due to racism.

Most white blues enthusiasts, myself included, have a genuine interest in the music's history and wish to keep it alive and developing. Gabriel often bemoaned the fact that most younger black people don't show much interest or liking for the blues. Even the young black gospel groups of recent years do not rely much on the blues, another fact that Gabriel often mentioned. Gabriel was quick to acknowledge that without the heavy support and interest of white blues enthusiasts, the music would be dead commercially.

Gabriel felt that he played the best of the blues. His show was not a one-hour weekly rap session about the Blues Brothers. On Gabriel's show he played the guitar work of Matt "Guitar" Murphy and described Murphy's virtuosity. He may have mentioned that Murphy was part of the band in the Blues Brothers movie. He explained that Murphy did some playing with Memphis Slim in the 1950s on an outstanding album. Gabriel would then discuss the way Memphis Slim encouraged him when he was a young musician, how he got him into clubs to hear the music. He may have mentioned that when Memphis Slim was playing in a St. Louis tavern late in his career, Gabriel was spinning records there between sets.

Gabriel didn't always mention the history behind the song, but he may have given us an anecdote about the performer, or even a personal memory. He found Muddy Waters to be "friendly", but Howlin' Wolf was "hard to know, to get close to". He told stories about



the Coliseum Ballroom in the small town of Benld, Illinois, about 75 miles from St. Louis. All the big-name performers, black and white, performed there.

He told stories about Ned Love's club in East St. Louis, where Ike Turner and the Kings of Rhythm played when they first came to St. Louis from Clarksdale, Mississippi.

He described several St. Louis clubs in the 1950s where mixed race couples were not frowned upon. He told a story about riding around in a limo with Chuck Berry when "Maybellene" had become a hit. He told us of the day that he was the first person on radio in St. Louis to report that President Kennedy had been shot in Dallas. He acknowledged the support of the people he worked with over the years, especially Dave Dixon, Spyder Burks, and Leo Cheers, among others.

One Sunday, Gabriel told a story of his association with Ike and Tina Turner. He met Ike Turner in the 1950s when Ike and his band were playing the clubs in East St. Louis. Gabriel was involved in the recording of Tina Turner's first records. Gabriel talked specifically about his relationship with Tina Turner, "Ike would ask me to pick her up and take her to the gig or the studio or whatever. I was the only one he trusted to pick her up. He knew I wouldn't try to hit on her. She lived in what was basically a garage near the Cochran Veterans Hospital. She already had children, not necessarily by Ike. I wouldn't say we were bosom buddies, but we might go get some White Castle hamburgers, and sit in the car and eat them."

As you might imagine, Gabriel had quite a few of Ike and Tina's recordings. Gabriel decided he would play some of Tina's recordings that she probably wouldn't want her current "pop" music audience to hear such as her versions of "Amazing Grace", "Dust My Broom", and "Little Red Rooster". The records sizzle with down-home blues

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excitement and that “Baptist Moan” in Tina’s voice. Gabriel regards the “Baptist Moan” in a person’s voice as being essential to success in the R & B and Gospel music field.

Gabriel was born in Louisiana. His aunt came to East St. Louis and later Gabriel, his mother, and grandmother joined her. Gabriel will only say he is, “...not a day over 131” when asked about the year of his birth. He liked to play the song “Happy Birthday To Me” by Hank Locklin in the weeks before his birthday came up. He liked to tell stories of his childhood and his grandmother. It is easy to see why the love and respect for others that his relatives fostered on him was a central part of his character.

He talked about a terrible ice storm when he was in the first grade. He had to help the younger children get across the street to go to school. Occasionally he will recall a teacher he had in school. His childhood friends still call him on his show to let him know they are alive and well. At an age when many persons have lost track of all their old friends and associates, it must be a comforting feeling to reminisce with the old friends. In this way, Gabriel was a rich man. The economic reality was that Gabriel lived on only his Social Security check and he just barely got by on that amount. He had the gas turned off in the winter and the electricity turned off in the summer. He said when you see a utility truck in the neighborhood you always wonder if they’re coming to shut you off. He wondered why the government doesn’t help the poor with energy stamps the same way they attempt to with food stamps.

Gabriel talked of going to Lincoln High School in East Saint Louis, Illinois at the same time Miles Davis attended. He said he knew Vernon Davis, Miles’ brother, but that he never met Miles. He knew Vernon through the high school band, where Gabriel learned to play the trumpet. According to Miles Davis, there was an excellent teacher, Edgar Buchanan, at Lincoln, who had quite a few students who developed into excellent professional trumpet players.

In addition to his role as a disk jockey, Gabriel also pursued many other activities at various times in his life: record engineering, producer and distributor of his own and other artists’ records on his own record label, proprietor of a retail record store, concert promoter, and television and electronic equipment repairman.

Gabriel formed a band that would include several superb St. Louis blues musicians over the years (Bennie Smith, Ace Wallace). Gabriel was out-front on trumpet. Gabriel was an excellent trumpet player with heavy Louis Armstrong influences. Louis Armstrong was his

idol. Gabriel played other instruments such as pedal steel guitar, but he never developed his talent on these instruments as he did with the trumpet. Unfortunately, the trumpet was not the up and coming instrument in R & B at the time he was recording. In the 1950s, the guitar was making inroads as a dominant instrument in all types of American music. Gabriel always said he wishes he had learned to play guitar as well as some of his band mates.

Gabriel told stories of several trips to Chicago to try to interest record companies in the demo records he and Ike Turner had made, some with original



material, and some with cover versions of currently popular blues material, such as “Baby, What You Want Me to Do”. He summed up the conversations between the record company managers, himself, and Ike. “Ike would always say, “Gabriel, you can go ahead and play your record first.” I would then play my record and the record company manager would pause for a long time and then say, “Well, I can’t use that right now, but check back with me in six months.” Then Ike would play his record and the record company manager would get very excited and start talking to Ike about how many thousands of dollars he would get for the record.

Gabriel made a trip to VeeJay records to try to interest them in releasing his records. He said he didn’t see Vivian (Vee) and Jimmy (Jay) who were the owners of the record label. He sat outside of their chief AR man, Ewart Abner’s, office overnight since he had nowhere to stay and no money to buy food. Finally, the AR man gave him enough money to buy chili mac and fries. He left Vee Jay and went

to Chess Records. They were not interested in his records either, but blues great Willie Dixon gave him enough money to take a train back to East St. Louis.

These hard luck stories underline the determination of a talented young man who would have a lifetime in music. This is a man for whom music was his life and broadcasting, a true calling. This is a man who remained true to what he felt was good music and brought it to the attention of the public.

The structure of Gabriel’s radio program was somewhat flexible. Each week he determined which tunes he would play based on listeners’ requests, personal preferences, and topical or calendar-related references such as Martin Luther King’s Birthday, Mother’s Day, or Father’s Day. In June of each year he liked to do a Christmas show. The unusual timing of this program was based on his observation that “we may not be here at Christmas time.”

Gabriel’s show included a heavy dose of the blues from the 1920s through 1990s with a few current performers occasionally included (such as Robert Cray, Taj Mahal, Mississippi Heat, Dave McKenzie). He liked to play any record he felt was good. He played things like the *Baywatch* theme because he enjoyed the piano solo in the song.

He had a special place in his heart for those who are imprisoned. He felt that there is a large number of persons who are arrested and incarcerated by mistake. Prisoners sent him letters describing the brutal treatment they have received and the prison’s censorship of Gabriel’s show. He read the letters on the air, acknowledging the prisoner had gotten through to the outside world. He was careful not to read portions of the letter that may get the prisoner in trouble. He would usually read the prisoners’ letters during the Traditional Gospel portion of the show. During this portion of the show, he played a slow version of “Amazing Grace”, played on a pipe organ by Maceo Woods. He led a moment of prayer calling it “Meditation Time.”

Gabriel reminded us to “...pray for your enemies, those who have done you wrong.” He told the story of a time when a cab driver could not make change for his grandmother when she had a \$5 bill. The driver took the money but never returned to give his grandmother the change. Gabriel said he saw the cab driver many years later. The cab driver had been in a severe accident and was crippled for life. He talked about times when a family had no heat or electricity. When there was little food on the table in his home his relatives ate less so he could have more as a child. He spoke of going to the relief office with his grandmother to sign up for relief. He refers to the current DHS Food Stamp office as “The temple of doom.”

Gabriel's story was as the B. B. King song goes, "I'm a Poor Man, But I'm A Good Man, Understand."

Gabriel would often read a listener's letter or portions of it on the air. He delighted in hearing from listeners he personally knew, went to school with, worked with, or grew up with. He had respect for all of his listeners. He announced the deaths of local musicians and benefits for ill musicians. He once announced that a local musician he played with was dead. The local musician was listening to Gabriel's program that night and he called to assure Gabriel that he was alive! Gabriel also announces information concerning blues festivals.

For many individuals in nursing homes, senior citizens apartments, and government institutions, Gabriel's program was the only show on the radio they could listen to that connected them to their past friends, families, and everyday life. He did this through the music he played of course, but his uncanny memory for details and his easy way of setting the scene of a memory was unique. He liked to bring in old St. Louis newspapers and read articles and the prices of items back then.

Each week he arrived at the station about an hour before his program started and

"assembled" the program by selecting cassettes, records, and CD's from his large suitcases according to the plan he had devised for the show. He looked at the list of tunes he had made during the week and pulled out the tunes he wanted to play that night. For this reason, he did not take on-the-air requests from listeners. Radio station KDHX has a large music library which he rarely used. Many of the recordings he had are the original 78 records of a tune. For this reason, they were often scratchy. Gabriel's comment on this was: "If you don't like the scratchy records, meet me at the record store with your credit card and we'll get a CD."

One person gave Gabriel the ability to take so many calls while on the air and respond to them in a rapid fashion. That person was Dennis Brannaker. He was the "unsung hero" of Gabriel's listeners. While Gabriel was doing the show, Dennis answered the phones and passed messages to Gabriel. Gabriel read these messages on the air and responded to them. Dennis had been a listener to Gabriel's radio programs on St. Louis radio since the 1950s. He recalled hearing Howlin' Wolf for the first time on Gabriel's program. He said, "...it sent cold chills up my spine..". Dennis was always polite and he made sure he got the messages correct. He always brought Gabriel a snack.

Sadly, Dennis passed suddenly in March of 2015. Since that time, the job of answering the phones for Gabriel has been taken-up by Lynn Barlar and Matthew Heiple. Both have become well-known with Gabriel's listeners. These two had already been involved with Gabriel's show for several years as they took turns each week picking him up and returning him home (after a stop at White Castle) each Sunday. Lynn said Gabriel's favorite show snack was her mozzarella meatballs, but he always referred to it as "Swedish Meatballs."

Gabriel and I exchanged email messages regularly. We discussed many topics: life, love, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. There were times when we are both experienced the blues. There were times when we were happy or sent a humorous message. Gabriel was always able to laugh at himself and his situations in life.

Gabriel was a wise, outspoken man. He stayed above all the blues politics. He was mostly interested in the music and primarily expressed his opinions about the music. Gabriel was the true article. He knew the blues! He is one of the treasures of St. Louis! Gabriel took a sad song and made it better. ♪



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- upcoming shows -

Saturday, Oct. 27 - CJ Muggs
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Saturday, Nov. 3 - Third Base Sports Bar
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Monday, Nov. 5 - The Alamo
Springfield, IL - 8pm

Saturday, Nov. 17 - CJ Muggs
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Friday, Dec. 14 - CJ Muggs
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Saturday, Dec. 15 - BB's Jazz, Blues, &
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	8:15PM	THE WILHELMS St. Louis, MO
FRI 02	7:00PM	TOMMY HALLORAN St. Louis, MO
	8:45PM	SKINNY SHAKES Louisville, KY
	10:00PM	THE BURLYQ & BUBBLY REVIEW Presented by Glimmer Cabaret & Variety Entertainment
SUN 04	11:30AM	HOT SWING JAZZ Brunch with Miss Jubilee
WED 07	7:00PM	THE WRIGHTS PROJECT St. Louis, MO
THUR 08	7:00PM	CARY COLMAN JAZZ TRIO St. Louis, MO
FRI 09	7:00PM	SONY RECORDS PRESENTS OCEANA Cedar Rapids, IA
SAT 10	7:00PM	VEDNORS OF SUBSTANCE CD RELEASE PARTY
SUN 11	11:30AM	HOT SWING JAZZ Brunch with Miss Jubilee
WED 14	7:00PM	ELLISA SUN San Francisco, CA
THUR 15	8:00PM	ELLISA SUN San Francisco, CA
FRI 16	8:15PM	KAREN CHOI St. Louis, MO
SAT 17	7:00PM	ANNA P.S. Mt. Pleasant, MI
	8:00PM	KENNA Nashville, TN
	9:00PM	ROUGH SHOP St. Louis, MO
SUN 18	11:30AM	HOT SWING JAZZ Brunch with Miss Jubilee
TUES 20	7:00PM	COCOMOFO New York City, NY
FRI 23	7:00PM	CHRISTY SIMMONS TRIO St. Louis, MO
SUN 25	11:30AM	HOT SWING JAZZ Brunch with Miss Jubilee
TUES 27	7:00PM	LESLIE & MIKE St. Louis, MO
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Saturday 12/1 Brian Curran
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Marty D. Spikener's On Call Band
spikemoves@hotmail.com
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Melissa Neels Band
melissaneels.net
 314.306.8407

One for the Road (solo act)
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a1manband@yahoo.com
 618.791.7106

Paul Bonn & The Bluesmen
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