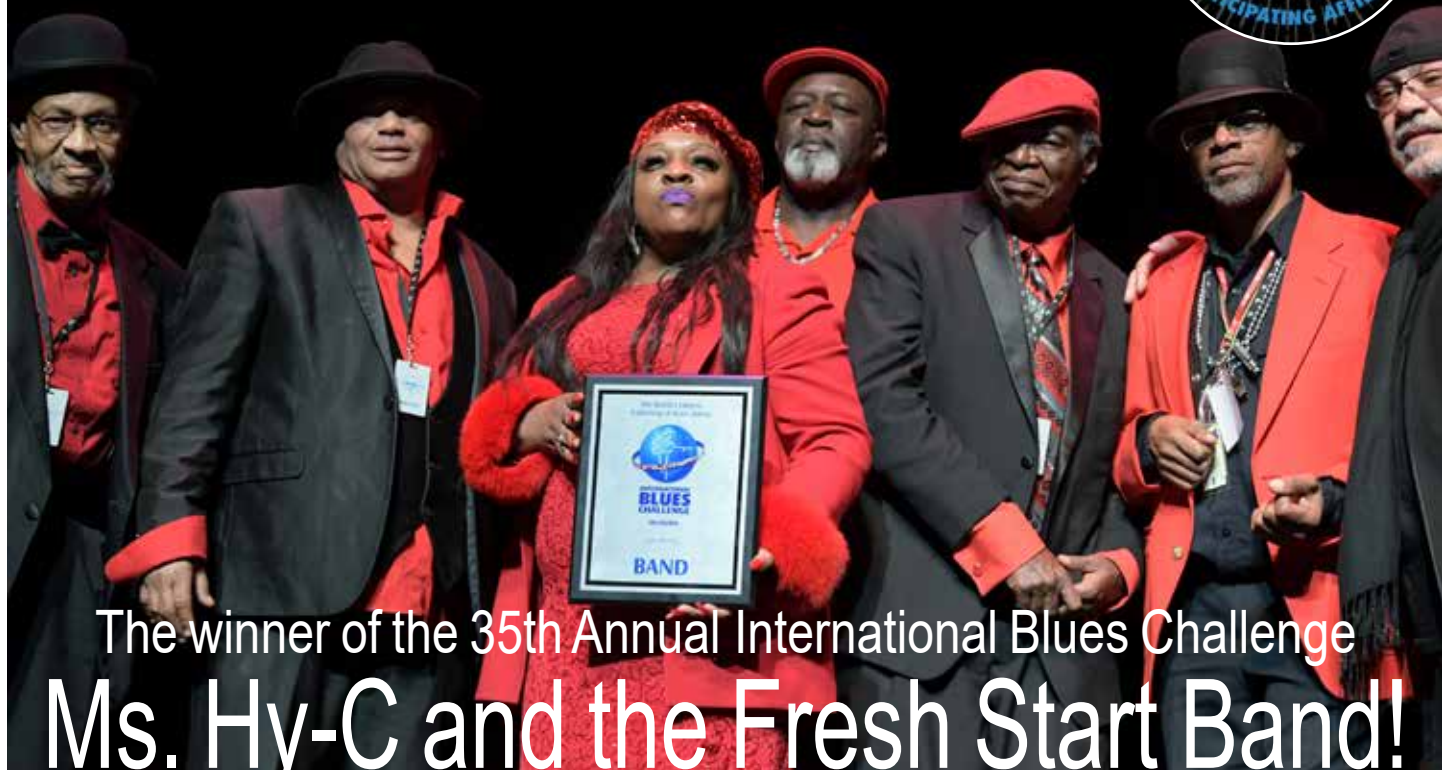


BLUES LETTER

THE BI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE OF THE SAINT LOUIS BLUES SOCIETY Jan/Feb 2019 Number 94

An incredible musical win for St. Louis!



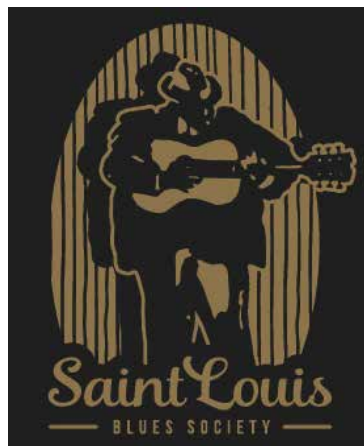
The winner of the 35th Annual International Blues Challenge
Ms. Hy-C and the Fresh Start Band!

Tommie Johnson, Tyrone McCain, Jacinta Branch-Griffin, John Smith,
Andre Petty, Frank Dunbar, Stanley Coleman

photo by Laura Carbone

PLUS: Thoughts on the closing of Beale on Broadway from Bruce Olson and Mike Aguirre
Baby Blues Showcase photos by Reed Radliffe

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



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First and foremost, **CONGRATULATIONS** to Hy-C and Fresh Start for their huge win at the International Blues Challenge in Memphis. The St. Louis Blues Society has never had a band in the finals of the IBC let alone win. The band did an outstanding job. The IBC committee, specifically Glenn Howard, Jerry Minchey and Greg Hunt did an outstanding job. The St. Louis music fans who supported the band did an outstanding job. All in all, I am so proud to be a part of a music community that continually stands for the music and people who create it!

Last month The STLBS hosted elections for the Board of Directors. We have three new board members: Gene Dobbs Bradford, Terry Hardin and Lee Howland. I look forward to working with these very qualified board members on new projects with new energy. I would like to especially thank Greg Hunt, Richard Hughes and Glenn Howard for their years of service to our blues community. If you happen to see them around, make sure to thank them. Their years of work are priceless to the promotion and preservation of St. Louis Blues.

I know you are waiting for new STLBS Compilation CD - *18 in 18* - that is usually released in January. We promise it is on the way! Paul Niehaus at Blue Lotus Studios has done a great job bringing the project together, but it took a little longer than usual with so many bands creating original material. To keep the stories timely, we are releasing this issue now. Look for the new CD in early March with the next *BluesLetter*.

We guarantee it will be worth the wait.

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



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

Please write me at jsegelmoss@stlouisbluessociety.org
and tell me your thoughts on our incredible IBC winners.

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.

ALL THE WAY ON THE ROAD TO MEMPHIS

Congratulations to the winner
of the 35th Annual International Blues Challenge

Ms. Hy-C and the Fresh Start Band!

Tommie Johnson, Tyrone McCain, Jacinta Branch-Griffin, John Smith,
Andre Petty, Frank Dunbar, Stanley Coleman

photos by Laura Carbone

The Blues Foundation's International Blues Challenge (IBC), a worldwide search for blues bands and solo/duo blues acts ready to perform on the international stage, is held in Memphis, Tennessee over four days each year in late January or early February. This year, 2019, marked the 35th anniversary of the event. Each local affiliate of The Blues Foundation has the right to send a representing band and a solo/duo act to compete, however IBC entry is limited to artists who have participated in, and won, a local challenge held by that affiliate. The St. Louis Blues Society holds its local preliminary IBC competition, *The Road to Memphis*, each year in October.

For the St. Louis Blues Society, the *Road to Memphis* actually begins in July when band and solo/duo applications, along with the application for another IBC category, the Best Self-Produced CD award, are available for download on the STLBS website. Artists who meet the criteria set in the

Blues Foundation's official rules and guidelines including meeting all deadlines are selected to compete in the local challenge. For the past several years, the St. Louis challenge has been held at the Kirkwood Station Brewing Company.

The 2018 *Road to Memphis* show at Kirkwood on October 14 included four bands and two solo-duo acts that met the criteria for entry. The panel of judges were prominent members of other area blues societies and local music personalities. After all the acts performed, the judges met to discuss their tallies and the winner was announced. This year's band winner was Ms. Hy-C and Fresh Start.

The STLBS always covers the travel costs to Memphis for each of the winners. To raise funds for the trip a winners' showcase is held each December at BB's Jazz, Blues and Soups. This year, on December 9, Ms. Hy-C and Fresh Start played with the St. Louis solo/duo winner, The Bottlesnakes, to a great crowd. The National Blues Museum added another fundraising date to help with any additional costs. That show was held on January 20.

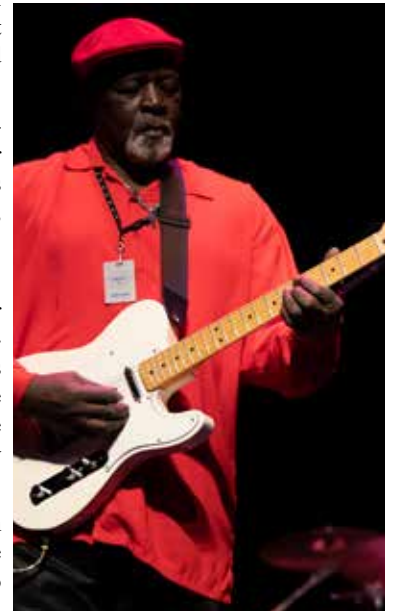
Finally, IBC week arrived, and Hy-C and Fresh Start competed in Memphis in the preliminary rounds on January 23 and 24. They made it to the semi-finals on Friday night, January 25. The bands chosen to proceed to the finals round were announced after midnight.

No St. Louis band had ever made it past the semi-finals, but what was once thought maybe unattainable, was now becoming reality. Over 100 bands from around the world began the competition just two days before and Ms. Hy-C and Fresh Start was among the eight selected to compete in the final round on Saturday, January 26. They went on stage at 5:00 pm at the grandest of venues in Memphis, The Orpheum Theatre at Beale and Main Sts.

After a week of music, workshops and speaker panels, the main event—the announcement of the final winners—took place at around 7:45 pm on the Orpheum stage. Ms. Hy-C and Fresh Start were announced as the winners! An incredible musical win for St. Louis.

**Congratulations to the band members who brought home the
biggest trophy in blues music.**

The prizes awarded to the winners of the International Blues Competition are appealing too! Included in the package are: \$3000 cash, recording and mixing or mastering time at Showplace Studios, advertising in Blues Festival Guide, and nine blues festival gigs including the Legendary Rhythm and Blues Caribbean Cruise in January of 2020. 🎵



Common Ground: The Beale on Broadway

Here was “common ground.” That’s what the southwest corner of Cerre and Broadway was called not long after Pierre Laclede founded St. Louis in 1764. Cows wandered near the river, orchards bloomed, and businesses were built, tenements grew, and horse traffic clogged the street. In January 2019, it was the spot where Kim Massie closed out The Beale on Broadway.

In the twenty-first century, as in the eighteenth, the people there found common ground. The venerated Ms. Massie closed out Beale and her remarkable 18-year run there sending the ultra-packed crowd into fits. Deep into that night, the upstart Marquise Knox bid a heartfelt goodbye to Bud Jostes, the Beale’s impresario. Knox was the club’s biggest discovery, starting in his teens and eventually commanding the Saturday night stage. Like Massie, Roland Johnson, and the Ground Floor Band, he filled the club to capacity regularly.



Bud Jostes adjusting stage equipment
photo by Reed Radcliffe

Jostes, first and foremost, cared about the way things sounded. His little place was never too noisy, the tones balanced. You heard the same in the back as you did in the front. The wood in this joint is deep, there are lots of twists and turns in the building, giving the sound a chance to mellow.

Built in 1890, the old building survived the tornado of 1896 that rolled past a half mile away. It survived the Depression, and it survived the emptying of the city in the sixties and seventies. The neighborhood in 1890 was filled with a bubbling immigrant population of a prosperous river city. Ragtime was in the air in Deep Morgan, blues was just around the corner. The building housed a succession of guest houses, restaurants, bars and various sleeping arrangements.

Just west is an area that became known as Chouteau’s Landing, a neighborhood dense with German immigrants who had begun arriving in the 1840s. A Catholic Church built in 1844 still stands. An iron railroad trestle, built by the city in 1909, crosses close above as it stretches across the river on what was once called the Free Bridge.

From the late 1950s into the 1970s, the whole downtown area was torn-up with highway construction, baseball stadium construction, and vast demolition. I-55 replaced the Third Street Express in 1967. The Poplar Street Bridge opened in 1971 completing a dizzying complex of roads and bridges that sweep past Beale.

Until now, situated isolation protected the venue from developers. But the success of Ballpark Village made it inevitable that downtown development would creep south towards Beale. Other nearby bars have already felt the impact. The owner of the building,



Beale on Broadway’s entrance portrait of Bennie Smith by Rob Hagan in 2003
photo by Reed Radcliffe

Al Cherrnick, of Chicago, said that he was, “exploring all options.” He wanted Jostes to either become a partner, buy out the building at above market price or sign a more expensive lease. Things rattled around for a few months but weren’t resolved.

Stunned fans remembered the bands and good times at Beale. One musician posted his list on Facebook: Marcel Strong and the Apostles to Marquise Knox, Eric “Guitar” Davis, Tom Jones, Eric Sardinas, Jeremy Spencer, Junior Brown, Bobby Rush, Johnny Winter, Billy Gibbons, Shawn Kellerman, Willie Big Eyes Smith, Hubert Sumlin, Nick Curran, Sean Costello and many more.

Naturally, it was a sad blues playing in a chilly Beale on auction day, bar stuff tossed aside and boxed-up. Wet snow sagging the tarp above the empty outdoor dance floor. But, all is not lost. A common ground had been found at Beale through the persistence and the quality of the music, *a lesson for anybody presenting live music*. The blues community will survive. 🎵

Bruce Olson is author of *That St. Louis Thing: Vol. 1 and 2: An American Story of Roots, Rhythm and Race*

600 words on 701 South Broadway

The gumbo at the Beale on Broadway was my favorite in the city. Not all can recall the days when the kitchen at 701 South Broadway churned out a full menu of fare to pair with live music. As delicious as owner Bud Jostes' gumbo recipe was though, eventually the energy consumed by the kitchen took away from the energy demanded by the music, and you know which one had to go.

The Beale on Broadway, from its inception to its jam-packed farewell performance by Kim Massie, always put the music first. From making dozens of vintage amplifiers, guitars, and other instruments available as house equipment to meticulously mic'ing and mixing the sound soaring through the speakers to fit the acoustic signature of the room, the barometric pressure of the evening, and the ethereal essence of "that" moment, Bud Jostes put music, and the musicians who made it, first and foremost.

For most of its existence, the Beale on Broadway hired local, regional and national working bands to perform "roots" music (often performed by the roots, trunks, leaves and seedlings of the St. Louis blues, R&B, and soul family tree) seven nights a week. Let me tell you, folks. A lot of places around the city, the country and the world that are savvy enough to hire musicians to entertain their customers

would quail at the thought of featuring live music seven nights a week, let alone maintaining and providing a top-quality stage, sound system and backline equipment capable of accommodating eleven-piece bands. I believe I hold the record for making use of the tuned guitars hanging on the walls, measured in broken strings...

Let's not forget the necessity of training and retaining the staff to not only handle the day-to-day demands

by Mike Aguirre

The collective all-for-one-and-one-for-all mentality that endured at the Beale, hand-in-hand and side-by-side with the spirit of the music performed there on a nightly basis, created a special atmosphere within that old building.

That special atmosphere drew musicians and music lovers from all over the world like moths to a flame. Let's face facts: St. Louis, like all too much

of our country in these divisive days, is far from a fully-integrated community. More than anything, what drew me to blues, soul and R&B music in the first place was the unexpected and overwhelming spirit of welcoming, acceptance and kindness shown by strangers I met in my early days learning how to perform in East St. Louis,



Big Mike and the Blu City All-Stars play at Beale in July 2013
photo by Reed Radcliffe

of running a bar, anticipate and manage any challenge that may arise when crowds of people and alcohol come together, and most importantly anticipate and correct any technical issues that might arise before they become noticeable, all while stocking the bar, clearing tables, manning the door, and opening and closing the place. The members of the Beale staff I had the privilege and pleasure of working with as a musician over the course of the last 15 years, by and large, are some of the hardest working, dedicated and enjoyable personalities I've known.

Jennings, etc. The Beale on Broadway audiences that packed, played and partied together in tight quarters made it one of the most diverse and inclusive music venues in St. Louis, thanks in large part to Bud Jostes' commitment to featuring the beating heart and soul of St. Louis' musical culture on stage. In addition to the gumbo, the friends, the house PA, the backline equipment, the guitars hanging on the walls, what I will miss most is the magic of different people coming together, enjoying each other's company, enjoying the band, and embracing the universal spirit of music. 🎵

THE 17TH ANNUAL BABY BLUES SHOWCASE PHOTOS BY REED RADCLIFFE



art by Craig Downs

Sunday,
November 25, 2018

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and Soups



The 17th Annual Baby Blues Showcase

took place November 25 at BB's Jazz, Blues and Soups with performances by Marquise Knox (center), Little Dylan, Alex Sinclair, Matt Lesch, and the School of Rock (surrounding photos), with a special debut performance by Ms. Kalia Townsend (above).



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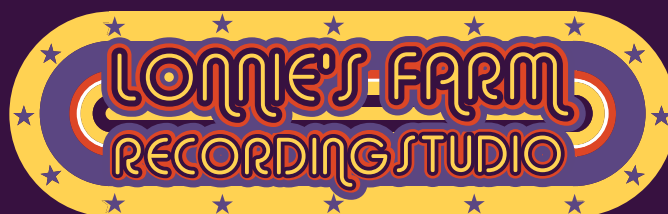
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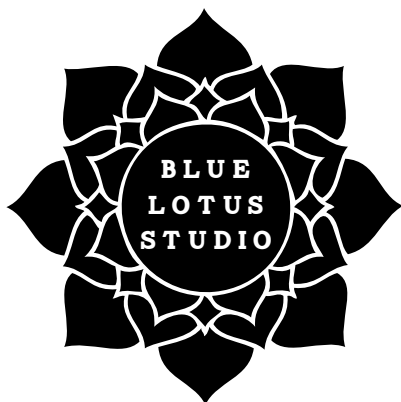
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MARCH 8TH
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7:00 - 10:00 PM

MARCH 10TH
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4:00 - 7:00 PM

MARCH 13TH
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