



A bi-monthly publication of the Sacramento Blues Society

BLUE NOTES!

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VOL. 2



Marcel Smith



President's Column

Inspired to Run, Here to Serve

By Marcel Smith



Ladies and gentlemen, fellow blues lovers, and cherished members of the Sacramento Blues Society, I am filled with immense gratitude and pride. It is an honor to accept the role of president of an organization that has dedicated 45 years to preserving and promoting the rich legacy of the blues in our beloved Sacramento region. Together, we have woven a tapestry of sound, culture, and community that resonates far beyond our city limits.

For nearly five decades, the Sacramento Blues Society has been a beacon of hope and creativity, fostering talent, celebrating our heritage, and bringing people together through the soulful sounds of the blues. Our programs—Blues In The Schools, the Blues Hall of Fame, the Gene Chambers Musicians Crisis Fund, the Mick Martin Student Fund, and the SBS Little Charlie Baty Memorial Music Scholarship—have touched countless lives. These initiatives not only honor our past but also invest in the future of our music and our artists.

As we look back on our history, we must take a moment to pay homage to the icons who have paved the way for us. Legends like Johnny Heartsman, Little Charlie Baty, Rick Estrin, Guitar Mac, Mick Martin, Arbess Williams, Gene Chambers, Big John Evans, Lena Moseley, Johnny Knox, Marshal Wilkerson, Al Arnett, Marshall Jones, and so many others, have shaped the Sacramento blues scene. Their contributions have not only enriched our sound but have also inspired generations of musicians and fans alike. We are their legacy, and it is our duty to ensure their stories and music continue to resonate within our community and beyond.

As your president, my hope is that we continue to cherish our rich history while also looking forward. We must strive to create growth,

outreach, and opportunities within our region. Let us attract new and emerging artists, expand our membership, and build a robust roster of dedicated volunteers. Together, we can cultivate an environment where the blues can thrive and evolve, honoring both our roots and our future.

I was inspired to run for this position because I believe in the power of music to unite us, to heal us, and to elevate our spirits. I am here to serve you, to listen to your ideas, and to work collaboratively as we embark on this journey together.

Again, let us honor our legacy, celebrate our icons, and work tirelessly to ensure that the Sacramento Blues Society remains a vital force in our community. Together, we can continue to make history

2025 Committee Chairs

Hall of Fame - Sally Katen

Events - Mindy Giles

Membership - Linda McShane

Sponsorships/Fundraising - Renee Erickson Sullivan

Finance Committee - Marcel Smith

Public Relations & Social Media - Mindy Giles

Volunteer Coordinator - Lynette Shumway

Blues in the Schools, Big Day of Giving - Rick Snyder

Merchandise - Lynette Shumway

Blue Notes Newsletter - Cari Chenkin & Jan Kelley

IBC Competition - Shirley McCoy

Webmaster - Mindy Giles

Board of Directors Development - Open

Help keep the blues alive - Contact a Chair or Board Member to volunteer for the Board or a Committee!

The Sacramento Blues Society (SBS) is one of the oldest blues societies in California, founded in 1979. SBS is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization formed to preserve and promote blues music as an art form. SBS has kept the blues tradition alive in the Sacramento area by promoting the local blues music scene, bringing internationally renowned artists to the region, educating students with "Blues in the Schools", acknowledging our local blues artists, providing a Musicians' Crisis Fund and publishing the **Blue Notes** six times a year. SBS is an affiliate member of The Blues Foundation (which honored us with a 2015 Keeping the Blues Alive Award) which provides educational opportunities for young people with The Blues Foundation's "Blues in The Schools" Program.

Board of Directors Meetings - 2nd Tuesday of each Month, 7:00 p.m.

All SBS Members in good standing are invited to attend.

Meetings are held via Zoom; to request an invitation, email: president@sacblues.org

2025 Board of Directors

Officers to be elected 1/14/2025

Marcel Smith, President
Barbara Katen, Vice President
Shirley McCoy, Secretary
Laurel Coppess, Treasurer
Rick Snyder, Parliamentarian
Cari Chenkin
Lynette Shumway
Sally Katen
Julio Covington
Renee Erickson Sullivan

Sacramento Blues Society Publications

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"X", formerly **Twitter**: [@SacBluesSociety](https://twitter.com/SacBluesSociety)

in the blues.

Thank you, and let's keep the blues alive!

Blues In The Schools Update

By Rick Snyder (aka Rico)

Blues in the Schools Committee Chair



The Blues in the Schools (BITS) program has been in full swing this past month, making incredible strides in expanding our reach and solidifying our programs for the year ahead. Here's a look at what we've accomplished and what's on the horizon:

Exciting Funding News

We are thrilled to announce that the Porteus Family Foundation has generously donated to BITS for the third consecutive year! This year's contribution of \$5,000 provides a significant boost to our ability to bring music education to more students in the greater Sacramento area. We deeply appreciate their continued support and commitment to keeping the blues alive in schools.

Artist in Residence Programs Expanding

We have been in contact with numerous high schools in the Greater Sacramento area and are excited to report that we will be launching Artist in Residence programs in four high schools and one middle school. Here are the confirmed programs:

- West Campus High School – Led by music teacher and former BITS student Briana Fonseca, this program will feature Lew Fratis as the Artist in Residence. Budget: \$800
- California Middle School – Music instructor Talyn Wong will oversee this program, with Kyle Rowland as the Artist in Residence. Budget: \$700
- River City High School – Thanks to Artist in Residence Jonnie Domino, who personally reached out to the school, we are excited to welcome music instructor Felicia Weatherly and her students to the program. Budget: \$800
- Rosemont High School – Music instructor Erik Beckett will lead this program, with Steve Boettner as the Artist in Residence. Budget: \$800
- Alexander Twilight Secondary Academy – The school has expressed strong interest in a weekly beginning guitar class for students. If approved by the SBS Board, we will create such a program for them.

Elementary School Assemblies

- Earl Warren Elementary School will host two assemblies on February 21st, featuring instruction and performance by Red's Blues. This will be a fantastic opportunity for young students to experience the power of blues firsthand. We will be paid \$900 for this program.
- We are continuing outreach to several other elementary schools that have expressed interest in hosting BITS assemblies. However, the Any Given Child-funded grants have not yet begun to book programs. We expect more schools to confirm once that process is underway.

20th Anniversary Blues in the Schools Event

We have exciting updates regarding our headline artist for the 20th Anniversary Blues in the Schools Celebration. Our team, led by Events Committee Chairwoman Mindy Giles, has been in direct contact with the artist's management, and negotiations are ongoing. Once the details are finalized, we will shift into full gear to organize what promises to be a landmark event for BITS.

Looking Ahead

As we move deeper into the first quarter of the year, our priorities remain focused on:

- Finalizing additional elementary school programs once Any Given Child bookings are confirmed.
- Expanding our Artist in Residence outreach to include more schools.
- Finalizing details for the 20th Anniversary celebration and ensuring all moving parts come together seamlessly.

The momentum is strong, and with the continued support of our community, volunteers, and sponsors, 2025 is shaping up to be a milestone year for Blues in the Schools!

Thank you for your dedication to this program and for helping us bring the magic of music to students across Sacramento.

SBS Board of Directors Elects 2025 Slate of Officers

At our January meeting, your SBS Board of Directors held its election of 2025's slate of Officers. Welcome to your 2025 SBS Board of Directors' Officers:

President: Marcel Smith

Vice President: Barbara Katen

Secretary: Shirley McCoy

Treasurer: Laurel Coppess

Parliamentarian: Rick Snyder

Congratulations to all, and let's get cracking on having a great 2025!

In Memoriam

Anthony (Tony) Montanino

September 1, 1946 – December 18, 2024

The Sacramento arts scene lost a valuable member on December 18, 2024. Anthony (Tony) Montanino passed away after a long illness. He was a prolific artist, painting beautiful landscapes and blues artists from Sacramento and beyond that were bold and colorful, including autographed paintings of Fats Domino and Charlie Musselwhite.

He was also active in the local music scene, playing drums with a number of blues bands including Sunland Blues Band with Steve Samuels, Nate Shiner and Dave Frasier, backing up such artists as Luther Tucker, Charlie Musselwhite, and John Lee Hooker, among others. Tony started a blues band called Quickshake after that, which consisted of Ray Copeland, Jim Monroe, and Liz Peel. After a year the band hired Charles Baty, which evolved into Little Charlie and the Nightcats, and a few months later Rick Estrin was added.

Tony went on to play with Nate Shiner and the Nighthawks for several years, which later became The Nate Shiner Band. With Nate Shiner, they backed up Big Mama Thornton at the Sacramento Blues Festival along with many other blues artists.

Tony also designed the first logo for the Sacramento Blues Society, which was used on the first membership cards & T-shirts. He also did the designs for most of The Sacramento Blues Festival & Heritage Festival posters for Tower Records, in addition to blues T-shirts.

He was inducted into the Sacramento Blues Society Hall of Fame in 2016.



What's On Your Playlist?

By *Barbara Katen*

There's so much good music for us to give a listen to on the following playlists. And yes, I will continue to reach out to SBS members near and far to find out what songs are always on their playlist. Any song, any genre. Maybe it's a special tune that reminds you of a special time, a song that makes you remember a lost love or a song that can't keep you off the dance floor. Whatever songs float your boat or soothe your soul. We ask for five songs, but as you can see, it can be difficult. (I'm talking to YOU, Mr. Thatcher! LOL). We print what we get so send your five top songs to me at bkaten2@gmail.com and put "What's on my Playlist" in the subject line. We really do want to hear from you...or you'll be hearing from me!

Geoff Drake

"Spider in my Stew" - Lurrie Bell
"Not Here for a Long Time" - D.K. Harrell
"You're Somebody Else's Baby Too" - Anthony Paule Soul Orchestra
"For the Love of You" - David K. Mathews (The Fantasy vocal sessions)

Linda Ham

"Cookin' with Grease" - Sista Monica Parker
"Resentment File" - Rick Estrin & The Nightcats
"The Longer That I Live" - Curtis Salgado
"Paradise" - Ruthie Foster
"Loosen up Naturally" (the entire album) - Sons of Champlin

Chris Lord

"Statesboro Blues" - Allman Brothers Band
"Christo Redemptor" - Charlie Musselwhite
"Rocket 88" - James Cotton
"Stormy Monday" - T-Bone Walker
"How Blue Can You Get?" - B.B. King



Janet Hongola

"One Good Man" - Janis Joplin
"A Pirate Looks at 40" - Jimmy Buffet
"Black Coffee" - Humble Pie
"What Is and What Should Never Be" - Led Zeppelin
"Angry Eyes" - Loggins & Messina

Michael Thatcher

"Bring Your Fine Self Home" - Albert Collins, John Copeland & Robert Cray
"Sugar-Coated Love" - Lazy Lester
"It All Went Down the Drain" - Earl King & Roomful of Blues
"That's Big" - Little Charlie & the Nightcats
"Monkey Around" - Anson Funderburgh & Sam Myers
"My Baby Done Changed the Lock on the Door" - Ry Cooder & Taj Mahal
"Can I Change My Mind" - Tyrone Davis
"Too Close Together" - Sonny Boy Williamson

Attention: Sacramento Blues Society Member Bands!

By *Shirley McCoy, Your New 2025 IBC Chairwoman*

Have you ever dreamt of performing on Beale Street in Memphis, home of the blues? Here's your chance to make that dream a reality- soon we will be announcing our annual local blues challenge!

You will have the opportunity to compete for the spot to represent our awesome Sacramento Blues Society in Memphis at the International Blues Challenge in January 2026.

Last year, we sent both a band - Rowland and Tumblin' - as well as a duo - Matt Rainey and Bert Thomas, and they both made it to the semi-finals.

This is a chance of a lifetime! Stay tuned for future developments!

Powerhouse Pub Presents Chrissie O'Dell and the Real Deal

Sunday, January 19, 2025

By Michelle Blaisure

Photo by Michelle Blaisure

It was cold outside that Sunday, but Chrissie O'Dell and the Real Deal quickly heated things up inside the Powerhouse Pub! Many SBS members were there to support the band, as Chrissie is one of the favorites around town.

The band started with "Let the Good Times Roll" leading into the introduction of Chrissie, who quickly started rocking the house!

As they used to say on *American Bandstand* (for those of you who are old enough to remember), when they rated the records, the refrain was "it has a great beat and you can dance to it", which are two of my favorite criteria to having a great time, as I love to get up and shake my booty! Chrissie definitely fit the bill with songs like "High Heel Sneakers" and "Mojo Boogie".

If not dancing, the band had heads bobbing and toes tapping throughout their sets.

The playlist was a mix of some originals such as her well-known "If I Had a Dime" that spent 12 weeks on major national blues charts along with other familiar tunes, such as "Big Ovaries" from the now-defunct group Saffire the Uppity Blues Women. Chrissie's not only a powerhouse blues singer but has a sexy, sultry, soulful side when she slows it down. Her newly formed West Coast band includes harp man Dave Croall, drummer Rat-A-Tat Pat Balcom, sax player Marty Deradoorian, bassist Chris Fraire and Dave Segal on guitar. Such a fun time! Hope to see her again soon.



The band featured Joey Williams (who was the musical director of the Blind Boys of Alabama) on the bass and Rayfield "Ray Ray" Holloman (of Robert Randolph and the Family Band fame) on the guitar. As Luther said on the stage, "When these four get together it's an A-team of all-star talent". I really appreciated the lack of ego between the members and how they each got to take their turns to showcase their talents. They seemed to have a hell of a fun time doing it!



One of the highlights for me was when Joey took the lead on Bob Dylan's "You Gotta Serve Somebody". He sang it soulfully as he worked the crowd and had us all singing along and back to him. Cody pulled out a washboard while Luther took over drumming and they

played a fast-paced, fun little psychedelic, funky jam. I always enjoy seeing a washboard come out on the stage. Ray Ray's guitar playing perfectly serenaded and crescendoed with the washboard to create a fiery, funky rhythm.



Other highlights of the night for me were Joey taking us all back to church again with "Glory, Glory" and then leading right up into "Don't Let the Devil Ride." They closed out the show with "Po Boy."

It was a longer show than the Big Room typically has, but this band held the crowd for the whole time. Everyone was off their seats and on the dance floor for most of the night. I got the best seat in the house right back near the sound board. I just love this "perk" of working for a community radio station!

If you get a chance to see the North Mississippi Allstars, don't pass it up! You can see their talent and dedication shining through everything they do. It was a great concert to start off 2025, and I know it'll only get better from here!

"Blue Sunday" Update

By Cari Chenkin

Photos by Cari Chenkin

"Blue Sunday" remains one of our members' favorite recurring SBS events.

Our December band was Julie & the Jukes, followed in January by The Anthony Arya Band, featuring guest star AC Myles. February's Blue Sunday band is Mike Hammar & The Nails, which will have occurred too late to review in this issue, and will be included in the May-June issue.

Coming attractions for 2025 include:

March – Yahmo; April – Red's Blues; May – Rube & The Rhythm Rockers; June - The Papa Day Blues Band.

July through December "Blue Sunday" dates have yet to be booked, so I'm calling on all member bands, especially those that have not yet played a "Blue Sunday", to get in touch with me at: cariedawaycc@gmail.com if you want to participate.



North Mississippi Allstars at Sierra Nevada Brewery

By Shirley McCoy

Photos by Ken Pordes



The North Mississippi Allstars played a show at the Sierra Nevada Brewery's Big Room at the end of January. This was a special show for me for two reasons: first, embarrassingly, I hadn't heard about this band before, and secondly, it was the first time I got to do the live broadcast of the show for my radio station KZFR. We have

been doing more live broadcasts from this iconic Chico venue lately, but I had never gotten to do one myself.

While I hadn't known about this band before, I foresee myself listening to more of their music after this show. If you're not familiar with them, the band is made up of brothers Cody and Luther Dickinson - their dad was producer and musician Jim Dickinson. They formed the band in 1996 and Duwayne Burnside, R.L.'s son, was with them for a short stint. This was fun to learn after having just seen Samantha Fish with Cedric Burnside, R.L.'s grandson.



Sunday, December 29, 2024

December's "Blue Sunday" show featured a return performance by member band Julie and the Jukes. They first performed for us back in October of 2021 – the second Blue Sunday ever. We welcomed them back with a good-sized and lively crowd that stayed on the dance floor throughout the entire show.

The four-piece band included Julia Simon (the "Julie" in the band's name) on bass & vocals, Charles Oriol on guitar and vocals, Bill Mulvihill on guitar and vocals, and Dave Gill on drums. They covered plenty of great blues classics, opening the



show with "Walkin' By Myself" and continuing with songs such as "Big Boss Man", "19 Years Old", the somewhat obscure Tarheel Slim composition



"Number Nine Train", and Sonny Terry & Brownie McGhee's "You Bring Out the Boogie in Me", along with a few original tunes.



Their second set kicked off with a great rendition of Otis Rush's "All My Love" and continued in a like vein. The latter part of the last set paid homage to the Allman Brothers band with covers of "Statesboro Blues" and "One Way Out" (originally done by Sonny Boy Williamson).



Among the happy crowd of dancers and listeners were a couple

celebrating their 20th anniversary, and our bartender Loxy celebrating her birthday, so there was a lot of joy in the room. The energy vibed back and forth between the band and the audience, making for a fun time for both performers and attendees.



Sunday, January 26, 2025

January's "Blue Sunday" showcase featured the Anthony Arya Band, with AC Myles. This young Bay Area member band brought a high-energy vibe, especially with AC sitting in on guitar and vocals. Despite the competition posed by the NFL playoffs that day, the band drew an appreciative and enthusiastic audience.

The band consisted of Anthony Arya on guitar and vocals, Michael Hayes on drums, Noah Mogor on bass and special guest, guitar-slinger AC Myles on guitar and vocals. (Accord-



ing to Anthony's manager, Kamela, they also use other guitar players on some gigs.)

You may recall that Anthony Arya appeared on TV's "The Voice" several years ago, at the age of 16s a teenager. He's done nothing but mature and expand since those days, and now fronts his own band.



The first set had the band playing a good mix of cover tunes including Taj Mahal's "Queen Bee", Clapton's "Lay Down Sally", "Messin' with the Kid" (done in the style of the late Rory Gallagher), and "Crossroads", along with some of Anthony's original tunes such as "Til I See You Again", "Ballad of

Eugene" and "Crooked Crown".

Both Anthony and AC shared vocal duties, with AC featuring his own composition "I Wouldn't Treat A Dog". The two guitarists played some fiery solos, trading fours and playing in harmony on some songs. If you're a guitar-driven band fan, you were in hog heaven!



The second set saw more of the same, a mix of great covers ("I'd Rather Go Blind", and "Dust My Broom" for example) and original tunes: "The Wheel", "Judge Taylor" and AC's "Other Side". They even covered a Lucinda Williams tune, "Joy". And





while the hard core football fans really missed out on a great afternoon of music, those that were there had a blast! IYKYK.

21st Century Women In Music

An inside look at today's influential women in music behind the scenes

By Jan Kelley

Excerpts from various online sources

Photos Courtesy of the Women Profiled



If you know the blues, you know of many women from the early days who were influential in making the blues popular: Ma Rainey, Bessie Smith, Ida Cox, Ethel Waters, Memphis Minnie, Sippie Wallace, etc.

Several women of the 21st century are making their mark not necessarily as performers like those of the past, but who are quietly influential in keeping the music alive in other ways. Many of these women exemplify a dedication that goes beyond the music, incorporating a social consciousness in their actions. Here are just a few:

Kimberly Horton

Kimberly Horton, current president of the Blues Foundation, was chosen as president after diligently serving on the Board of Directors. Horton has been a passionate advocate of the blues genre since she was young.

Kimberly has dedicated over 16 years of her career to higher education. Her love for the blues, however, led her in a different direction: becoming President of a successful blues booking and management agency, Heathrow Muzik Box. Through her agency, she has managed several well-known artists in the blues genre. Her expertise in the industry helped earn Horton a position as a Board Member with The Blues Foundation.



Michele Seidman

Michele Seidman is the founder and current president of Women in Blues, which began in 2006 when she became frustrated in not finding any blues women as mentors. She was an actress before that (*Dawson's Creek*, *Little Mouth to Feed*, etc) and created the position of Director of Film Studies for an accredited North Carolina Community College, Cape Fear Community College.

She also was a singer and had a blues band named Michele and the Midnight Blues before reaching out to the Blues Foundation to



highlight female blues singers. She has been successfully running the *Women in Blues Showcase* in Memphis, TN each year since 2006, where it is considered an honor among blues music artists to be asked to perform.

Lea Gilmore

Lea Gilmore, former WIB Board member and recently named as

Essence Magazine's "25 Women Shaping the World", made her mark as one of the world's most respected Blues, Gospel, Jazz and inspirational vocalists as well as writer, social justice advocate and lecturer on women's rights. She is also a recipient of many awards for her advocacy in social justice and equality.



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Sylvia Rhone



Sylvia Rhone has had a remarkable career running some of the biggest, most influential record labels in music. Currently, Rhone serves as the Chairwoman and CEO of Epic Records. Previously, she was the President of Motown Records from 2004-2011. Before that, Rhone was the Chairwoman and CEO of Elektra Entertainment Group. Addition-

ally, she's a member of the board of directors of the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame. In 2023, she was named Executive of the Year at the Billboard Women in Music Awards.

Michelle Jubelirer



Michelle Jubelirer became the first woman to be Chair/CEO of Capitol Records in December 2021. While she stepped down from the position in February 2024, Jubelirer has made a remarkable impact on the label. One of her many accomplishments leading Capitol Records was winning the bidding war to sign Ice Spice. Jubelirer was also part of working with Universal Music with the release of 2025 Grammy award winner "Now and Then," the final single from The Beatles that was completed thanks to AI technology.

And in our own community:

Mindy Giles



Mindy has over 45 years in the music business in artist management, record labels, publicity, marketing/advertising and being a music/event promoter. Was with The Polygram Group (Midwest Marketing Director); Alligator Records (Vice President); Rounder Records (Marketing Director); Black Top Records (Marketing/Publicity Director) and Tower Records (Marketing Director for Bayside Entertainment Distribution.)

She has managed/project managed the careers and recordings of some great artists, such as Lonnie Mack, Stevie Ray Vaughan, Maria Muldaur and Koko Taylor, and has written many artist bios, liner notes, and provided photographs.

In late 2017, she created and produced a popular weekly live concert series "Blues & Bourbon Wednesdays" in midtown Sacramento featuring national, regional and local blues and roots music artists. This continued until late 2024.

Val Starr



Val has experienced a lifetime of music as a performer, song writer and music industry executive. Her music business career began in the late 70s working for record labels, ABC, Chrysalis and Polygram as an executive assistant. In the early 80s her focus shifted to radio promotion and from then on into the late 90s, Val had a successful career as an independent radio promoter. In becoming frustrated with limited air play on traditional radio, Val started an online radio network called choiceradio.com, later becoming gotradio.com, a 24-hour blues streaming service. In the meantime, she and her band "Val Starr and the Blues Rocket,"

have racked up seven albums and numerous awards in creating all-original blues songs.

Torch Club

MARCH

- SAT 1ST: THE HUCKLEBUCKS @ 6PM
- SUN 2ND: LA FIRE BENEFIT @ 2PM
- TUE 4TH: FAT TUES CELEBRATION @ 6PM
- FRI 7TH: BILL MYLAR @ 6PM
- THU 13TH: EVAN DAILY BLUES BAND @ 9PM
- FRI 21ST: PAILER & BLOCK BAND @ 6PM
- THU 27TH: DANNY SANDOVAL & HIS AMIGOS @ 9PM
- FRI 28TH: LEAPING BLENIES @ 6PM
- SAT 29TH: DARYL ROWLAND BLUES BAND @ 6PM
- SUN 30TH: SBS BLUES W/ YAHMO @ 4PM

APRIL

- TUE 1ST: DENIM & BLUES BENEFIT FOR WEAVE @ 5PM
- FRI 4TH: BILL MYLAR @ 6PM
- FRI 11TH- SUN 13TH: TORCH CLUB 25TH ANNIVERSARY WEEKEND CELEBRATION
- THU 17TH: ADAM BLOCK BAND @ 9PM
- FRI 18TH: PAILER & BLOCK @ 6PM
- FRI 25TH: WILLY SELTZER BDAY BASH W/ SNB @ 9PM
- SAT 26TH: CHACEN THE BEAT @ 6PM, GOLD SOULS @ 9PM
- SUN 27TH: SBS BLUES W/ RED'S BLUES @ 4PM

www.torchclub.net

Hall of Fame & Johnny Knox Jam Updates

By Sally Katen



The Johnny "Guitar" Knox Sixth Annual Pro Jam will be Sunday, June 1, 2025, and the Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony and After-Party will be Sunday September, 28, 2025.

Johnny's Pro Jam lets HOF Members and local musicians play together at the Torch Club to show off their skills and honor Johnny, while raising monies for the Hall of Fame!

Each year the Sacramento Blues Society requests nominations of people in the greater Sacramento area who have been either a performer (musician/vocalist) or non-performer (supporter of the blues) for 20 or more years, who are deserving of recognition. There is a place on our website, sacblues.org, where you can print out a form and mail it to SBS/ Sally.

Go to sacblues.org – click on What We Do – click on Hall of Fame. That will take you to the Hall of Fame. Scroll down to Nominations and Guidelines. Right below that you will see the form you can copy and paste to a blank page and fill it out. Mail it to me, Sally Katen, Hall of Fame c/o Sacramento Blues Society, PO Box 60580, Sacramento, CA. 95860-0580 OR just email me at bluesforthecure@hotmail.com with the name of the person you are nominating and why.

The Hall of Fame again will select five of these Musicians / Supporters who are deserving of recognition to join the SBS Hall of Fame Class of 2025 on September 28 at Harlow's.

Just a little tidbit, for my birthday this year I am raising monies for the Hall of Fame. My post is on Facebook through March 10, and any and all donations will help! I am going through GoFundMe and the link is <https://www.gofundme.com/f/support-the-sacramento-blues-society-hall-of-fame>.

Mick Martin's Big Blues Band Ignites the Powerhouse of Blues

By Rick Snyder

December 22, 2024

Photos by Rick Snyder

The Powerhouse Pub transformed into a blues lover's paradise as Mick Martin's Big Blues Band tore through an unforgettable night of high-energy, horn-driven



blues. From the first note to the last roaring encore, the band delivered a performance that was both soul-stirring and electrifying, proving once again why they are one of the most exciting acts on



the scene today.

A Band That Brings the Fire

Mick Martin, a harmonica virtuoso and legendary front man, led the charge with his signature grit and soul, wailing on his harmonica with passion and precision. His deep, emotive vocals and undeniable stage presence kept the crowd engaged, making every song feel personal and powerful.

But this wasn't just about Mick—his Big Blues Band was a powerhouse in its own right, creating a wall of sound that was both dynamic and deeply rooted in the blues. Each musician brought their own flair, weaving together a night of musical brilliance:



Danny Sandoval – Saxophone, delivering blazing

solos and deep, soulful runs.

Andres "The Kid" Sandoval – Saxophone, bringing high-energy riffs and smooth harmonies.

Dave Johnson – Trumpet, adding a bold, brassy punch to the horn section.

Andrew Little – Guitar, shredding with fiery licks and smooth, soulful melodies.

Steve Utstein – Organ, Piano, setting the mood with rich, deep textures.

Jim Caselli – Drums, keeping the groove tight with rock-solid rhythms.

AJ Joyce – Bass, locking it all down with deep, driving lines that made the room move.

An Unforgettable Night of Blues

From sweaty, up-tempo shuffles to soulful slow burns, the band covered every shade of the blues, with Mick Martin leading the charge like a true blues preacher. The horn section was on fire, delivering razor-sharp blasts that filled every corner of the Powerhouse Pub. The guitar solos cut deep, the organ swirled with gospel-like intensity, and the rhythm section held everything together with unstoppable energy. Standout moments included:



A barn-burning rendition of a Chicago blues classic that had the crowd stomping and clapping.

A slow, smoky blues number where Mick's harmonica work sent shivers through the audience.

An all-out horn section jam that felt like a New Orleans street party had landed in Folsom.

By the time the band wrapped up their encore, the crowd was on their feet, cheering for more, reluctant to let go of a night so rich in soul, energy, and pure musical magic.

Final Verdict: Five Stars and Then Some!

If you weren't there, you missed a legendary night. Mick Martin's Big Blues Band doesn't just play music, they bring the blues to life, making every show a celebration of the raw, real, and electrifying power of the blues.

#MickMartin #BigBluesBand #PowerhouseOfBlues #LiveBlues #HornPoweredBlues #FolsomMusicScene



A Casual Conversation with Ronnie Baker Brooks

By Shirley McCoy

Photo from RBB Website, copyright Aigars Lapsa

I was honored to chat with Mr. Ronnie Baker Brooks ahead of his March 4th show at Harlow's. Ronnie's debut Alligator Records album, very appropriately titled *Blues in My DNA*, came out last October. Ronnie shared with us how it feels to finally be on the same storied record label that his Dad, the legendary Lonnie Brooks was, and his view of the blues today.

Blue Notes (BN): Tell us a little about this album and how it feels to finally be on the same label that your Dad was.



Ronnie Baker Brooks (RBB): Yeah, finally. It feels good- it really does. Alligator does a great job of getting the record out to the masses and to the right places that service our type of music. It feels good to have had the opportunity to work with the late, great Mr. Jim Gaines who produced this record- unfortunately, he passed away last November, and I was told that this was one of the last full projects that he had done, so it was an honor to have worked with him.

I wrote a lot of those songs during the pandemic, and it just feels good to get them out now that people get to hear them. The writing

process is just as much fun for me as the stage - you see an idea become a song, and then a song starts to make people react to it and it's a great feeling.

BN: Did you ever imagine doing anything else besides playing music or was that always the path?

RBB: When I was younger, I had the dream of being an NBA basketball player and that faded away as I got older.

Music has always been in my life since I was a baby. As far as I can remember, we had music going on in the house. My Dad would have us all join in with him playing music. I'd play the bass line with a guitar; my brother Wayne would play some spoons on some boxes or some pots - Dad would always include us. There was always stuff like that going on in the house.

I never thought I could be a professional musician and make it as a living, because I had Lonnie Brooks as a father and I saw one of the best do it every night and I was like "No, I can't do that." He would always instill in me "yes you can, you can do it, you can even do it better". So, I had a great mentor, a great father, and a best friend to help me get to this point. Now I've just dedicated my life to it, making sure that I can do my part to keep the music alive and add to my family's legacy.

BN: What was some of the best advice you've ever received from anyone?

RBB: The main thing that Dad taught us was to treat people the way you want to be treated. He taught me how to be a man- a man first, and then a musician. Sometimes when you have a passion for what you love to do, you get lost in that. You live for the music - but you have to remember to treat people the way you want to be treated.

And then put your work in- whatever you're trying to achieve, you've got to put the work in and dedicate yourself to it. Dad gave us those work ethics. Even when I decided to play- I started playing when I was six years old, first time on stage at age nine with my Dad.

I quit to play basketball and broke my Dad's heart. When I got back into playing again, he made sure that's what I wanted to do before he allowed me to get on stage with him and play - I would go out as his roadie carrying his gear and as his valet and doing everything he needed offstage.

He wanted to make sure this is what I wanted, because he knows that in this business you have to really love it- there's going to be some ups and downs. You've got to be able to sleep with yourself at night when it's going down and keep yourself together when it's going good. And the great B.B. King taught me "Always do one for the ladies".

BN: What do you think your Dad would say about the blues today?

RBB: My Dad was way ahead of his time- he was always thinking ahead. Even his music, if you look at the time he put the music out it was way ahead of everything - a lot of things. He was always different - he always did something different.

I think he would be happy, first of all, that I'm at Alligator, finally. You have to go through it to get to it. I started my own label, Watchdog Records, back in 1998 and I put out my own records. I wrote every song on every record, and it just gave me a platform to develop as an artist and have the leeway to do what I wanted to do, musically.

Now that I've got a team behind me with Alligator, a lot of that stuff

that I had learned prior to Watchdog came from the relationship of my Dad and Alligator Records. I grew up on that platform.

One of the first songs I wrote that got published was on Alligator, the first song that I ever sang was on Alligator, the first song that I ever played on record was on Alligator- so there were a lot of firsts there. I learned a lot there that enabled me to start on my own solo career and start my own label and now I've got the team of Alligator with me, and it's been fun- I'm enjoying the ride.

BN: What advice do you have for the next generation of players and is there anyone on your radar coming on up?

RBB: The first thing that I would tell them is what Junior Wells and Buddy Guy told me as a youngster: Junior told me "If you can't feel it, you can't make the people feel it. Play something that you feel. And if you can feel it, the people gravitate to that".

The great Buddy Guy and my Mom were friends. When my Mom passed, I called Buddy to let him know, and after that he said "Ronnie, I kinda know what you're going through - but don't ever give up, don't ever stop". And I needed to hear that from him, or from someone of his stature that's been through it.

That's what I would tell the young generation that's coming behind me. And yes, we got some great stars coming - Christone "Kingfish" Ingram - I think he's 25 or 26, sounding like he's 76. I'm really happy to see that. You've got Samantha Fish - she's doing very well. One of the first times she was on stage was with me when she was 16 years old in Kansas City and to see her do what she's doing today is awesome and bringing in a younger audience to keep this growing- that's what we need.

Check out Ronnie's website at: <https://ronniebakerbrooks.com/>.

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The 4th Annual Little Charlie Celebration Concert

Thursday, March 27 @ Harlow's in Sacramento

By Mindy Giles

"In 32 years and listening to Little Charlie on literally thousands of gigs, I never lost that feeling of anticipation, wonderment and fascination.

His skills and knowledge never stopped growing - His work ethic never wavered - but it was his instinct for constructing the most daring, thrilling, and wildly logical solos that was his absolutely unique gift.

Night after night, I would introduce Little Charlie as "One of a kind" - it's an overused phrase, but in Charles' case, it was the gospel truth. At his best, he was the best." - from Rick Estrin's eulogy for Charles Baty, 2020.

It's nearly five years since we lost one of the world's greatest guitarists. This annual gathering of the Nightcats' "circle of trust" is a sweet reminder of the essence of Charles Baty, the joyous celebration of music and the strength of brotherly bonds.

Thursday, March 27 at Harlow's is the Fourth Annual concert fundraiser for the Sacramento Blues Society Little Charlie Baty Memorial Music Scholarship.* Rick Estrin and the Nightcats, along with the great Texas guitar player Anson Funderburgh, once again honor their friend. Special guests are two California-based singing stars, Marcel Smith, our new SBS President, and the wonderfully provocative R&B songwriter, Alabama Mike.

Marcel reflected on this event, *"We are excited to honor and celebrate the legacy of Little Charlie Baty, a true icon and pillar of the Sacramento blues and music scene. I find myself reflecting on the years I had the privilege of performing alongside Little Charlie and the Nightcats as a member of the Soul Prophets. His performances were always captivating, leaving both me and the audience wanting more.*

This event is more than just a celebration; it is a deeply heartfelt tribute to a man who has profoundly influenced the Sacramento music community. His legacy resonates within us, reminding us of the power of music to connect, inspire, and uplift".

Larger-than-life blues star Rick Estrin has piloted the wildly fun and musically fearless Rick Estrin & The Nightcats for the last 16 years, touring the world and proving night after night why they have a shelf full of awards. The limitless combined talents of blues harmonica virtuoso and sly, soulful singer Estrin, guitar mastermind Kid Andersen, keyboard wizard Lorenzo Farrell and endlessly creative drummer Derrick "D'Mar" Martin take Estrin's inventive, original songs to new and unexpected places. On stage, the band's ability to deliver an unpredictable, no-holds-barred show is unmatched.

In 2024, they released *The Hits Keep Comin'* and received the coveted *Blues Blast* Band of the Year Award, along with the award for Contemporary Blues Album of The Year. The band also has multiple nominations in the 2025 Blues Music Awards set for this May.

*A portion of the net proceeds will be donated to SBS' Little Charlie Baty Memorial Music Scholarship.

This scholarship honors Charlie Baty's commitment to the Blues in Schools program, and supports the Sacramento Blues Society's commitment to continuing the education and preservation of Blues music.

It will support students in the School of Music within the College of Arts and Letters, California State University, Sacramento, California.

Report from Memphis

IBC Moments

We asked some of our members who attended the International Blues Challenge held by the Blues Foundation in Memphis in early January to share their experiences for the *Blue Notes*.

Performance Fun - Val Starr

Much to my delight, I was one of the lucky lottery winners that were selected out of hundreds of blues women to participate in the "2025 Women in Blues Showcase" at Alfred's on Beale.



I was also invited to perform at one of two esteemed Galaxie Agency Showcases at B.B. Kings Club. It was a big 'bucket list' moment as a blues musician. My band



played their hearts out to appreciative fans that came to enjoy blues from all over the world. I was very pleased that Sacramento was well represented at this year's IBCs with both our participating band and solo acts making it into the semi-finals. I also had another 'first' when I was recognized and approached in the airport by blues fans headed home. It sure did feel good! Sacramento blues lovers should feel proud about the blues that is coming out of their own Sactown.

Winter Wonderland - Liz Walker

Friday morning brought about three inches of freshly fallen snow to Beale Street. The city doesn't really know what to do with a little bit of snow, businesses and schools close, drivers start going crazy. Some of us made the trek to the Stax museum, only to find it "closed due to inclement weather". But three inches is nothing to a bunch of northern Californians (and one New York transplant), so we headed back to Beale to get the party started.



Friday is the day of the semi-finals for the International Blues Challenge (IBC) and both of SBS's sponsored acts had made it through. Later, when we stepped outside to catch some fresh COLD air and await the results of the semis, we were met with sounds of laughter and yelling and general brouhaha. Earlier in the evening I had talked with a group of very clean-cut young men who were in town

for a fraternity conference. I had suggested Beale Street was the happening spot that night for some fun. Well, they were having fun all right...a giant snowball fight on Beale! It was so much fun to hear them all yelling and talking smack, snowballs flying from one side of the street to the other. Frankie Munz, Kenny Marchese and Bo Ely all got in on the fun but unfortunately



no decent photos exist (only video!) Just know the hilarity and laughter was contagious and a wonderful reminder of simple good times.



IBC Talent – Frankie Munz

So, when you attend The International Blues Challenge, get to Beale Street for the festivities, during the next four days you're going to be treated to over 200 bands, playing a wide variety of blues, in a variety of clubs, stretching over about two blocks. You can't go wrong; every act (single, duo, and full band) are all so darn good because every act is a champion from the area they came from. It is pretty cool to see and hear these virtually unknown acts perform before the potential fame hits them. And I'm sure that some are well on their way.



On a personal note, hanging with, and watching local friends, perform in front of a very appreciative audience (that have never seen, or heard

of them before) at the IBC is a pretty cool thing to watch. Rowland & Tumblin' and the duor of Matt and Bert did Sacramento real proud.

Matt & Bert, as well as Kyle and the boys, gave stellar performances during each of their three 20-minute sets. But.....



you can never really tell exactly what the judges are looking for when making their decisions. Congratulations to Matt, Bert, Kyle and company for getting the opportunity to perform their magic at the IBC.

Also, Val Starr arranged for The

Blues Rocket to perform two sets at both BB King's, and Alfred's on Beale. What a treat for us to be playing these legendary clubs for a very responsive, full house audience!



And yes, there was snow. About six inches of it. An added bonus was when Kenny Marchese and I took part in a massive snowball fight along with about two dozen of the local college kids. I Haven't done that since I left New




York. I believe I'm going to make this an annual thing.




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Christine Vitale Interview

By Jan Kelley

**Editor's Note: This article had to be shortened due to space constraints; look for the full version in Jan's Jams, sent to your email or online at the SBS website.*



I recently caught up with Christine Vitale for an interview, which was quite an accomplishment in itself, as she is a very busy lady. If you are not familiar with the name, she is part of a team of successful songwriters, including her husband Anthony Paule, internationally known guitarist, vocalist and band leader, along with musician Larry Batiste.

Blue Notes (BN) - I understand you were a performer early in your music career. Please tell us about that.

Christine Vitale (CV) - I was the piano player in an all-girl band, back in Madison, WI. Our name was Paraphernalia, and we played a little bit of everything, top-40, blues, and light rock. I stayed with them five years.

My next venture was as a vocalist with Big City Bob and the Ballroom Gliders. We played blues, soul and swing. I fronted the band with Bob, and it was pretty good. This is when I met Bruce Iglauer, it was 1975. Bruce engineered/co-produced our first demo. In 1977 came The River City Shuffle Band. This is when I met Anthony Paule. This was the first time Anthony and I worked together. In 1980 I put together Tina & The Tigers, with Anthony, and we had a great time playing blues and soul. Last but not least, The Hula Sisters. We were a soul and blues group fronted by three women singers, and we wrote most of our own material.

BN: You've also been promoting and writing about blues music in the press for many years. How did you get your start?

CV: I write press releases, and promo materials like bios, etc. I just don't want anyone to think I'm a reviewer or journalist.

Once I stopped performing, I was at a loss as to what to do next. I had always done promo and publicity for the bands I was in, so that's how I got started. As far as making a career of it goes, that didn't happen until I ran into Pamela Rose who had just recorded a jazz album, but didn't have a clue as to what to do next. So, I told her I knew exactly what should be done, and offered to help. There you have it, my first official publicity gig.

My next artist was Tommy Castro. He dumped a pile of stuff onto my dining room table and said, "I hear you know how to take care of this." That was the beginning of the beginning.

BN: What inspires you to write about the music world?

CV: I'm not sure if you consider writing press releases and bios "writing about the music world," but that is what I do.

In the early 90s I was moved by the number of talented musicians and bands who had spent their time, love and money to record their music, but had no idea what to do next. Unless an artist was signed to a label, one was pretty invisible to media. I was sensitive to that need and wanted to fill it.

In 1992 I started Christine Vitale Publicity and began providing publicity and radio promotion for independent blues and soul artists. I was the first woman in the U.S., not employed by a record label, to provide this type of service.

BN: How has your background or heritage influenced your writing?

CV: I am blessed to have grown up in a time when you could turn

on the radio and dial in the best of the best. What an era, Motown, The Beach Boys, The Beatles, Janis Joplin and Stax all on the same station. My parents played a lot of good music too, and I loved it. I was raised with all of it.

BN: Have you ever experienced a significant block or obstacle in your career, and how did you overcome it?

CV: No doubt the pandemic made for some challenging times. Musicians had to get creative about how to be creative. We had to do our songwriting via Zoom, and any recording was done remotely. We were doing some writing with SBS President Marcel Smith. He had started a wonderful song, "If You Miss Me." It needed to be finished. I had been hanging on to a line for years, trying to find the right song for it. I was honored to drop "Sentimental As A Valentine," into "If You Miss Me."

BN: What's the best piece of advice you ever received about being in the music business?

CV: It was drummer Clyde Stubblefield's first gig with us. He was James Brown's drummer, now he's playing with us. We got to the gig and the club was empty. Maybe 30 people showed up, I was so embarrassed. I told Clyde how sorry I was that no one was there. He said "Tina, you play for the people who show up, not for the ones who don't." Wisdom that can be applied to many of life's events. Also, Clyde was the first person who encouraged me to write my own songs. The first song I wrote as an adult was not only inspired by Clyde, but it was also about him! I'm glad I listened to him.

BN: What's the best piece of advice you could give about it?

CV: Always follow your heart. Be authentic, be honest. Never pretend to know something you don't. Don't be afraid to ask, to learn. Don't follow trends.

BN: What song by another artist do you wish you had written and why?

CV: "There's Always One More Time" by Doc Pomus; "Love Letters" by Ketty Lester; "How Long Has This Been Going On?" by George and Ira Gershwin, and "Imagine" by John Lennon.

BN: You've collaborated on a number of blues songs with Anthony & Larry Batiste. You must have good communication with one another. Are there any disagreements when writing together? How do you resolve them?

CV: We have outstanding communication and chemistry. We have very few disagreements. We each have a lane where we are strongest. Mine is lyrics, I have final say in lyrics. Anthony and Larry handle the music. Larry is unreal when it comes to arranging, he can't be touched. Now having said that, we do get into each other's lane sometimes. We make suggestions and no one takes offense or gets all possessive. We don't take anything personally. In fact, when Larry and I first got together, I had an idea, and Larry said "That's a cheap rhyme, Christine." I knew right then we were a perfect match, no kid gloves, no eggshells. Everybody is a very strong songwriter.

Recently Willy Jordan has joined us and he's great! Cool lyrics and outstanding melodies. Willy is a co-writer on four of the tracks off our new album *What Are You Waiting For?*

BN: Can you share the story behind the song "After A While," the 2018 Blues Music Award (BMA) nominee for Album of the Year and Soul Blues Album?

CV: "After A While" was used for the memorial in 2020 at the Blues Music Awards. It played while the photos were shown. I love the song.

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Christine Vitale Interview, Con't. from P. 13

KPFA DJ Opal Nations called me and asked if I could write a soulful ballad for him. I said sure, and wrote "I Just Can't Go On," thinking he wanted something Otis Redding-like. After much discussion we finally figured out that he wanted something he could sing in a doo-wop style, so I wrote "After A While." It was one of those songs that was ready to be written. Without going into a lot of detail, the song was inspired by devastating heartbreak I had experienced in my much younger days. Opal turned it down, so we then offered the song to Frank Bey and he turned it down, then gave it to Wee Willie Walker, and he flipped out. It was a perfect fit!

BN: What was the most memorable moment in your music career?

CV: Having the *After a While* album nominated for Soul Blues Album of the Year was a huge moment. I've been blessed to have had a few thrilling moments. It was very cool when The Hula Sisters were asked to sing back up with The Dynatonnes, for the VIP party at the 1989 Super Bowl in Miami. Also, when Marshall Chess (son of Leonard Chess of Chess Records) asked me to work for him, when he released Murali Coryell, on his brand new CZYZ Records.

BN: Following the success of *After a While*, you & your team also wrote the song "Real Good Lie," which became the 2022 BMA nominee for Song of the Year. What thoughts do you have about these achievements?

CV: I honestly cherish the moments. Being nominated is very special to me because it's the music industry people who select the nominees. I don't take any of it for granted. It's an honor.

BN: What do you feel has been the biggest change in the music industry during your career?

CV: So much has changed. Technology. Anyone with a computer and Garage Band can record an album. Graphic programs can do

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Christine Vitale Interview, Con't. from P. 14

your artwork. I support DIY to a great extent, but really, anyone can record an album, and not everyone should. Streaming has killed our royalties. It's humiliating. The streaming services use our art paying

only a pittance. The general public seems to be unaware of this inequitable situation. And don't let me get started on AI! Thank you for this interview Jan, it was a lot of fun.

BN: It was my pleasure, thank you.



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