

Teen guitarist Ryan Woodard got a boost from Buddy Guy

Now 16 years old and a junior at Montgomery High School, Ryan Woodard leads the the Ryan Woodard Trio. | 2

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If you go

What: Ryan Woodard Trio

Where: Belly Left Coast Kitchen & Taproom, 523 Fourth St., Santa Rosa

When: 6:30-8:30 p.m. Saturday, March 18

Admission: free

Information: bellyleftcoastkitchenandtaproom.com, 707-526-5787

It's been five years now since young guitarist Ryan Woodard got invited onstage to jam with blues legend Buddy Guy at Santa Rosa's Luther Burbank Center. It was a spontaneous moment that got some local public attention, but it was only a glimpse into Ryan's story.

Now 16 years old and a junior at Montgomery High School, he's leader of his own band, the [Ryan Woodard Trio](#), and maintains a busy performance schedule both with his trio and playing solo.

He'll perform with his trio Saturday at the Belly Left Coast Kitchen & Taproom in downtown Santa Rosa, playing blues and classic rock. He also has played at the Victory House in Santa Rosa's Epicenter and at HopMonk Tavern, among other local venues.

"I did more than 60 shows last year," he said, including solo shows and performances with the School of Rock house band.

"My hope and dream is touring and collaborating with famous people. I want to attend the Berklee College of Music in Boston," he said.

Ryan was diagnosed with autism at age 3 and started playing guitar at age 9, said his father, Travis Woodard, general manager of Urban Tree Farm Nursery.

"He wants to be an advocate for people with autism and show that people with autism can make a difference," Travis said.

When the School of Rock opened in Santa Rosa in 2019, Ryan was one of the first students there and soon became leader of the private music school's house band, a position he's held for the past four years.

"School of Rock has been one of the most positive influences on Ryan's life. It's given him something he can feel confident about. It taught him about leadership, and it has given him a great community with similar interests," Ryan's father said.

Ryan plays not only guitar and sings, but also plays piano, harmonica, drums, bass, ukulele and mandolin. He has started writing his own songs, too.

His trio includes Conor Manning on drums and Chris Bradley on bass. "We've been working together for about a year," Ryan said.

Ryan's memory of his moment with Buddy Guy is still vivid. He was in sixth grade and attended the concert with his grandfather. He got the chance to talk about his guitar playing with Guy's crew and then drew the attention of Guy himself.

"He was coming downstage and around the crowd, and he gave me a serious look," Ryan said. "Then his guitar technician came and got me."

For more information on Ryan Woodard and his trio, visit RyanWoodardTrio.com.

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