

## The CBS Blues Jam Returns



# AUGUST 4 2019



Admission  
5 Cans of food  
or \$5 at the Door  
to benefit Loaves & Fishes

Doors 7pm  
Band: 8pm

Jam 9:00pm

with

# THE INSTIGATORS

The Rabbit Hole 1801 Commonwealth Ave. Charlotte NC

Blues Jam Guideline on [www.CharlotteBluesSociety.org](http://www.CharlotteBluesSociety.org)

### IBC BLUES CHALLENGE

Solo/Duo Challenge Sept 1  
Deadline: represent  
Charlotte Blues Society  
in Memphis in 2020?

### SUBMIT YOUR SELF PRODUCED BLUES CD

Think your CD is the next  
big blues breakout? One  
CD from here will be  
submitted to the IBC in  
January

### YOUTH BLUES GROUP

We are excited about the  
possibility of having a blues  
youth group in 2020.  
Come see the talented young  
artists!

CHARLOTTE BLUES SOCIETY  
AUGUST 2019  
BLUESLETTER

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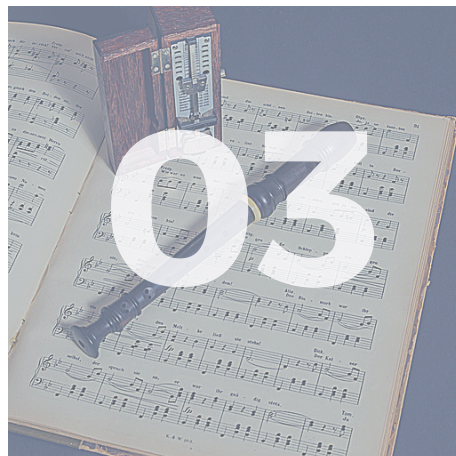
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**ON THE COVER**

Chris O'Leary Band is guest artist June 2 at the Rabbit Hole

**ABOUT US**

THE CHARLOTTE BLUES SOCIETY (CBS) IS DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION AND PRESERVATION OF THE AMERICAN BLUES TRADITION THROUGH THE PRESENTATION OF CONCERTS, FORUMS, EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS AND SUPPORT OF LOCAL MUSICIANS IN CHARLOTTE AND THE SURROUNDING AREAS. CBS IS A 501(C)(3) NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION GOVERNED BY A BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND OPERATED BY AN ALL-VOLUNTEER STAFF. CBS IS AN AFFILIATED MEMBER OF THE BLUES FOUNDATION, THE UMBRELLA ORGANIZATION FOR A WORLDWIDE NETWORK OF 165 AFFILIATED BLUES SOCIETIES AND HAS INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIPS AROUND THE GLOBE.



**Blues Musing**

News & Updates from  
Charlotte Blues Society  
President

**A Brick for Robin**

A Brick for Robin  
Help us raise funds to  
honor our most beloved  
blues songbird:  
Robin Rogers.

**Red Hot & Blues  
Reviews**

Marty Gunther's reviews of 9  
albums just released. Many  
which have been nominated  
for Blues Blast Awards.

plus an interview with Billy  
Branch on Page 15

**Meeting Dr. John**

Michael Ingmire recalls two  
remarkable contrasting days  
when he was one on one with  
Dr. John.

# A HOT summer of Blues : a plea to Blues for Food

Blues musing from The President ~ Mary London Szpara

Whew! With the warmer temperatures comes some great outdoor, as well as indoor shows. From house concerts to backyard BBQ's to major venues, the city is singing, stompin' and celebrating music

We had the month of July off for our Blues Sundays, but the music never stopped.

One thing that did come to a halt: school lunches.

Because school is out for the summer, the lunches and meals that were supplied to at risk kids just doesn't happen, and the need to feed the children in our community is more critical than ever.

CBS has teamed up with Loaves & Fishes for the second year, and we are asking you to help. We NEED YOU!

Our August Blues Sunday is normally a free show for members, but **we are asking EVERYONE to either bring in 5 cans of food, or \$5 to donate to the Loaves & Fishes Food Bank.** Let's make this our best collection ever: as we say : Hunger doesn't take a vacation.

1 Can? I Can! This month, 5 cans Man! We can do this!

Once again we are nearing the deadline for solo/duo and band participation in the Blues Challenge this year.

Solo/Duo event is scheduled for September 1, and Band October 6. We encourage serious musicians to enter. Last year, Solo/duo entry from Triangle Blues Society Jon Splain won, and he has been invited to participate in the Big Blues Bender in Las Vegas and will be on the Legendary Blues Cruise in 2020, among other benefits. This year, it could be you! But you can't win it all if you don't enter.

More information elsewhere in the newsletter.

We will have a youth group representing us this year. It's been a while since we were able to do that, and we are really excited about the enthusiasm of the young people. You will be meeting them at our jams and upcoming events!

Lastly, we have some outstanding writers contributing to our newsletters, and we hope you will take the time to read their articles. From Michael Ingmire this month, his story on meeting Dr. John, whom the music world lost in June this year.

From Marty Gunther, we have an amazing interview with Billy Branch , plus don't miss Marty's review of Billy's new album, along with 8 others in "Red, Hot & Blues".

If you would like to contribute to our newsletter, we would love to hear from you! Simply send us an email at [CLTBluesSociety@gmail.com](mailto:CLTBluesSociety@gmail.com).

Lastly, please welcome our lasted board member Kelly Foster. A terrific singer, you may have seen and heard her play with Delta Fire. (Yup, THAT Kelly) She will be officially inducted in August. We've already put her to work on several projects.





# Blues for Food

Don't forget to bring non-perishable food items for Loaves & Fishes to our next Blues Sunday August 4th

## Blues for Food

**Admission: 5 Cans of Food or \$5 at the door**



The home of Charlotte Blues Society

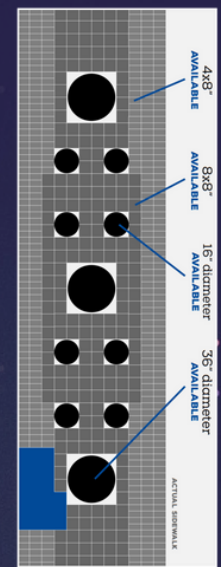
*join us at  
The  
Rabbit  
Hole*

1801 Commonwealth Ave. Charlotte  
Next door to Jackalope Jacks and The Peculiar Rabbit





# A BRICK FOR ROBIN ROGERS



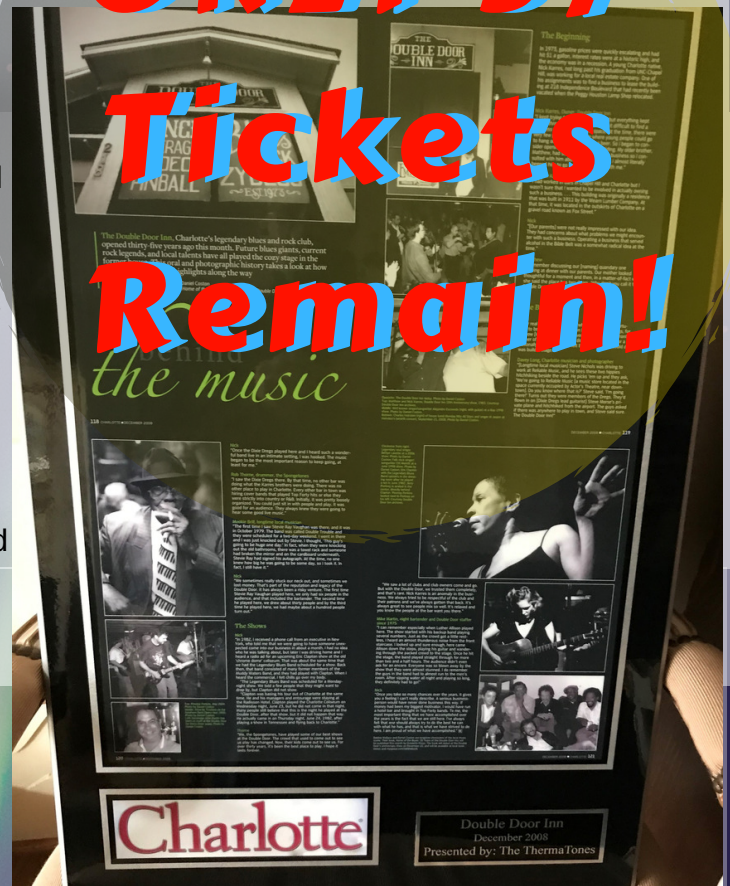
She was a one in a million talent. The whiskey soaked voice, the sorrowful soulful harp, songs that tore the heart in two. A dynamic performer. A professional. Loyal to the core and a joy to work with A talent as big as her heart. No gig was too small, no audience too large: they all felt the magic that was Robin Rogers every time she hit the stage..She was signed by a label that loved her and appreciated her amazing abilities. Her second release on Blind Pig Records "Back in The Fire" debuted at #3 on Billboard's Blues Albums Chart. She was set to be a superstar in the blues world until cancer, the hated big C, reared its ugly head. She fought it like a warrior but within months our beloved Robin was gone. She was honored with a BMA Award for Best Contemporary Female Blues Artist in Memphis a few months later Robin Rogers was loved by all. To honor her in the City of Blues, Memphis TN, we are raising money through a raffle to buy an 8x8 brick that will be intalled in front of the Blues Hall of Fame.

You could win this limited edition plaque commemorating The Double Door Inn. Only two exist. This collectible has been donated to Charlotte Blues Society to raise funds to purchase a permanent brick which will be installed in front of the Blues Foundation building in Memphis. This brick will commemorate CBS member, Award winning blues artist Robin Rogers and CBS. We are going to raffle this plaque strictly for the purchase of the brick. We are selling 100 raffle tickets at \$5 a piece. Once all tickets are sold, the winner will be drawn. The Double Door plaque could be yours.

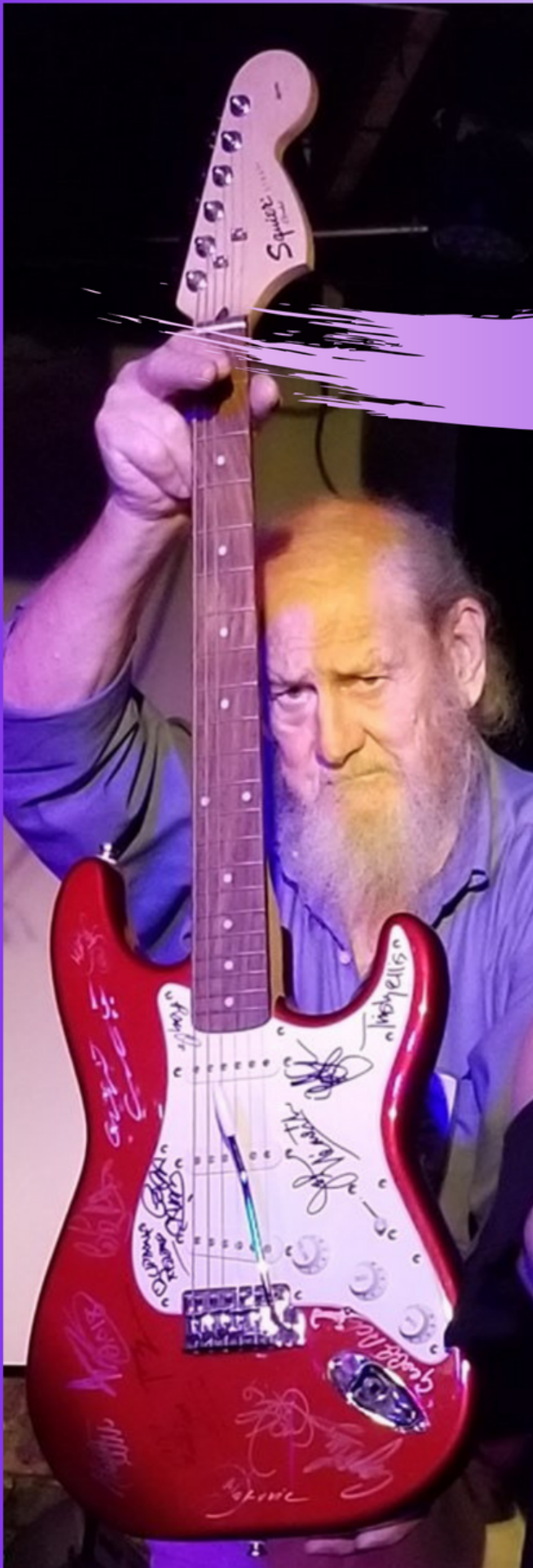
Remember, only 100 tickets so get yours soon. Robin was a huge advocate of Charlotte Blues Society and The Blues Foundation. She was also winner of the 2009 "Best Female Artist" Blues Blast Award.

## SOMETHING COLLECTIBLE FOR YOU

# ONLY 57 Tickets Remain!







2019

CHARLOTTE BLUES SOCIETY

# RAFFLE GUITAR

CANDY APPLE RED FENDER SQUIER STRAT

RAY  
DONATED BY  
OTSTOTT

ALBERT CASTIGLIA DEC. 2, 2018  
RAY OTSTOTT DEC. 2, 2018  
JONATHON LONG DEC. 4, 2018  
SAMANTHA FISH DEC. 4, 2018  
ERIC GALES DEC. 6, 2018  
JOHN NEMETH JAN. 9, 2019  
POPA CHUBBY JAN. 25, 2019  
LIPBONE REDDING FEB. 10, 2019  
TINSLEY ELLIS MAR. 21, 2019  
COCO MONTOYA MAR. 21, 2019  
DAVY KNOWLES MAR. 29, 2019  
GERRY MCAVOY (*BAND OF FRIENDS* BASSIST) MAR. 29, 2019  
TOMMY Z APRIL 7, 2019  
HEATHER GILLIS APRIL 13, 2019  
ANA POPOVIC APRIL 13, 2019  
DANIELLE NICOLE APRIL 14, 2019  
GEOFF ACHISON MAY 5, 2019  
JAMIE MCLEAN MAY 18, 2019  
ANTHONY GOMES MAY 31, 2019  
CHRIS O'LEARY JUNE 2, 2019  
NICK SCHNEBELEN JUNE 14, 2109  
ROBERT CRAY JUNE 21, 2019

ALL PROCEEDS BENEFIT CBS  
WINNER DRAWING DECEMBER 1, 2019 AT CBS BLUE  
CHRISTMAS BASH EXTRAVAGANZA

RAFFLE TICKETS AVAILABLE ONLINE  
[WWW.CHARLOTTEBLUCESSOCIETY.ORG](http://WWW.CHARLOTTEBLUCESSOCIETY.ORG)



# THE ROAD TO MEMPHIS BEGINS IN CHARLOTTE

Solo/Duo Challenge September 1, 2019 noon-4pm  
Band Challenge Sunday October 6, 2019 6-10pm

**The International Blues Challenge** represents the worldwide search for those Blues Bands and Solo/Duo Blues Acts ready to perform on the international stage, yet just needing that extra big break. Charlotte Blues Society, an affiliate of The Blues Foundation has the right to send a band and a solo/duo act to represent its organization at the IBC.

The IBC is judged by blues professionals from across the world who have years of experience in listening to, producing, and creating blues music. The Blues Foundation has established a set of criteria by which all acts are evaluated throughout the five days of the IBC

Charlotte Blues Society is required to stage a regional preliminary IBC competition, with the winner of that event representing us in the International Blues Challenge held annually in Memphis, TN along historic Beale Street. Charlotte Blues Society uses The Blues Foundation's structure and rules during our local challenges, with a true challenge between multiple acts to determine which single band and/or solo/duo act will advance to Memphis.

In addition CBS awards the artists to offset the cost to represent our organization in Memphis.

Last year, Jake Haldenvang advanced to the semi finals in solo/duo.

Delta Moon won first place in the band competition at the IBC in 2002.

To qualify, your band location must be within a 250 mile radius of Charlotte, and meet eligibility requirements. Rules and information are available on our website.

### **Best Self-Produced CD Competition.**

The Blues Foundation established an award for the Best Self-Produced CD, given out at the International Blues Challenge, as part of their mission to celebrate blues recording and to ensure the future of this uniquely American art form and to recognize excellence in independent Blues recordings.

Robin Rogers won this award in 2003 with "Crazy Cryin' Blues"

Charlotte Blues Society can submit one CD to represent us in this competition. If you wish to submit an entry to be considered by CBS, the rules and information are available on our website.

Challenge forms and more information on our website under IBC 2020





**hot,  
smooth,  
tasty  
& sometimes  
nasty**  
**WE SPEAK BLUES HERE**



**special  
band  
membership  
pricing  
& benefits**  
**WE SUPPORT MUSICIANS HERE**

**LIST YOUR BLUES GIGS ON OUR MUSIC CALENDAR**

- \*SEND US **ONE** EMAIL PER MONTH WITH YOUR GIG INFO.
- \*INCLUDE: DAY/DATE/TIME/LOCATION/ ADDRESS/ FOR EACH PERFORMANCE
- \*EACH ACT IS LIMITED TO **ONE** EMAIL PER MONTH TO PREVENT CLOGGING OUR SYSTEM
- \*DEADLINE: 20TH OF EACH MONTH.

**HELP US HELP PROMOTE YOU! DO NOT SEND US LINKS TO YOUR WEBSITE'S DATES. OUR STAFF IS ALL VOLUNTEER AND WILL ONLY ENTER WHAT WE RECEIVE BY DEADLINE**

**EMAIL: CLTBUESOCIETY@GMAIL.COM**

**WE SUPPORT ALL BLUES GENRE AND MUSICIANS CHARLOTTE BLUES SOCIETY OFFERS ALL BANDS A SPECIAL MEMBERSHIP.  
\$40 PER YEAR FOR 4 MEMBERS / \$10 EACH ADDITIONAL MEMBER**

**RENEW OR JOIN TODAY CHARLOTTEBLUESOCIETY.ORG**

**MUSICIANS/BANDS WITH CBS MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS:**

- \*FREE ADMISSION TO MINIMUM 9 CBS BLUES SUNDAYS
- \*FREE ADMISSION TO BLUES SUNDAY JAMS
- \*FREE GIG LISTING ON CBS ONLINE MUSIC CALENDAR
- \*DISCOUNTS TO MEMBERS FROM PARTICIPATING PARTNERS
- \*SPECIAL PROMOTIONAL EVENTS FOR MEMBERS

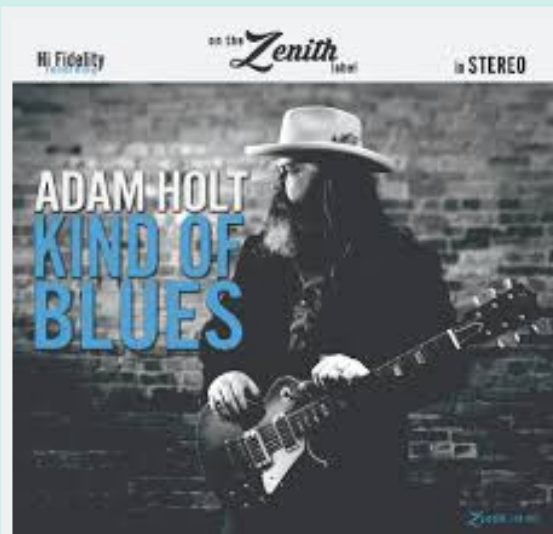
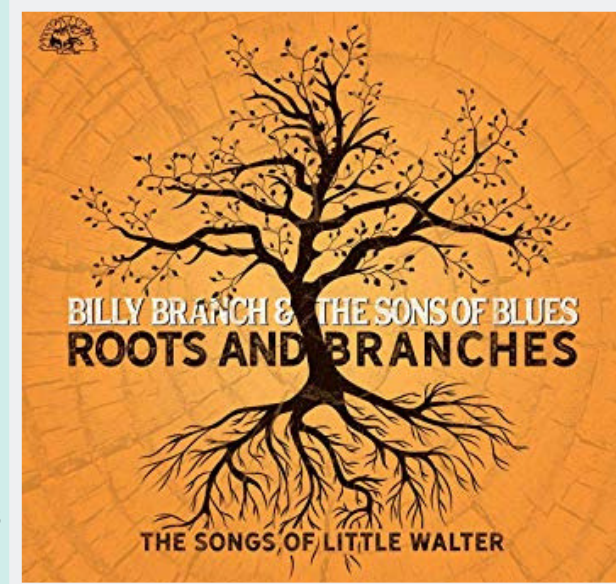


**10% Discount on Food orders at  
The Rabbit Hole on CBS Blues Sundays  
with valid CBS Membership**

**Billy Branch & The Sons of Blues –  
Roots And Branches: The Songs of Little Walter**  
(Alligator Records ALCD 4992)  
[www.billybranch.com](http://www.billybranch.com)

Billy Branch, the dean of Chicago harmonica players, hits new heights aided by his longtime band, The Sons of Blues, on this album, delivering covers of 14 tunes made famous by Little Walter Jacobs, the man credited with creating the modern blues harp sound. And he does it in a manner that's rarely, if ever, been accomplished previously by putting a fresh spin on songs that have varied very little since they first appeared.

The idea for this release came at the suggestion of Walter's daughter, Marion Diaz, who contributes a heart-touching spoken tribute to her father at album's end. Never content to copy anyone, Branch brings all of the material here into the 21st century by incorporating elements of R&B, soul and rock. But despite the new arrangements, Walter's themes bubble to the surface throughout. A must for anyone who loves modern blues harp, it's hard to pick out the high points here because there are so many to choose from. Don't miss "Mellow Down Easy," "Blue And Lonesome," "Juke," "My Babe" and "Blues With A Feeling," just to name a few!



**Adam Holt – My Kind of Blues**  
(Zenith Records ZAH 1905)  
[www.adamholtmusic.com/](http://www.adamholtmusic.com/)

Based out of Mobile, Ala., Adam Holt is a powerful tenor with a voice that rings like a bell. He tips his hat to jazz legend Miles Davis by co-opting the title of the jazz master's most famous album. But don't be confused. The music he delivers is a searing combination of blues and Southern rock. A multi-instrumentalist who sticks to guitars here, Holt penned nine of the 10 tunes, opening with "My Morning Drive," a beautiful tribute to his father-in-law who enjoyed a 50-year career as a deejay before retiring at age 90. Like all of the songs, it's delivered with a straightforward approach.

Among the highlights here are "Bobby," which deals with a friend who's in the depths of drug addiction, "The Bourgeoisie," a powerful statement against corporate greed, and the country-flavored "I'm Still Holdin' On," about someone living in the past and hoping a lover will return after a rocky break-up.

**Manx Marriner Mainline – Hell Bound for Heaven**  
(Stony Plain Records SPCD1404)  
[www.stonyplainrecords.com](http://www.stonyplainrecords.com)

Here's an album that might fly under the radar, but deserves attention. It's a sensational pairing of two of the most heralded musicians North of the Border: multi-instrumentalist Harry Manx and Steve Marriner, the harp player/guitarist best known for his work with MonkeyJunk. Their chemistry – created during decades of friendship during which they've shared the stage often – is spectacular as they front a full band and deliver a set of modern blues with traditional feel.

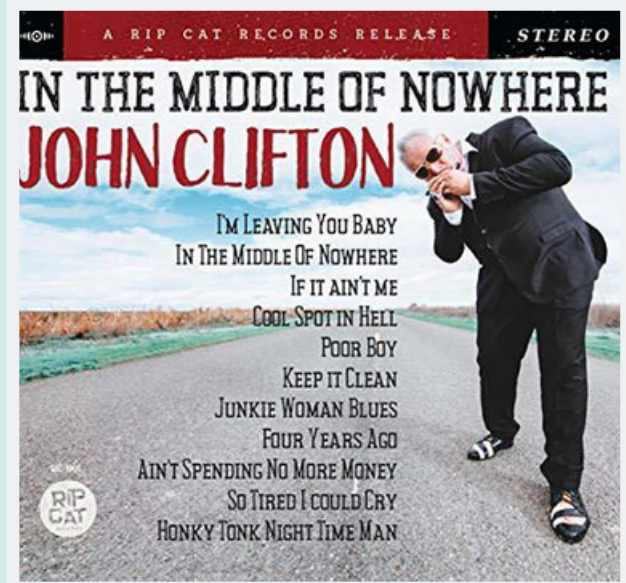
Manx and Marriner penned seven of the ten cuts, flushed out with covers from Charley Patton, Pops Staples and Reverend Gary Davis, creating a mix that will appeal to both acoustic and modern blues fans. Highlights include "Nothing," "Everybody Knows," "Wish I Had Answered" and a thoroughly modern electrified take of Patton's 1929 classic, "Rattlesnake Blues."





**John Clifton – In The Middle Of Nowhere**  
 (Rip Cat Records RIC 1901)  
[www.johncliftonmusic.com](http://www.johncliftonmusic.com)

Harp player/vocalist John Clifton has been a fixture in Central California since the late '80s, and shows why with this collection of straight-ahead Chicago- and West Coast-style blues and R&B that's both powerful and cliché-free. Clifton's toured in support of Big Bill Morganfield and was a contributor to Morganfield's highly reviewed Blood Stains on the Wall CD. He's also a producer whose work with former International Blues Challenge finalists The Boogie Boys won album of the year honors in the Polish Blues Awards. Boogie Boys keyboard player Bartek Szopinski accompanies him here in full-band format. "I'm Leaving You Baby" opens the action atop a hard, uptempo shuffle, before "In The Middle of Nowhere," swings from the jump. Other highlights are a run of three consecutive originals: "Junkie Woman Blues," which is delivered with a '30s acoustic feel, "Four Years Ago," a fiery Chicago blues, and "Ain't Spending No More Money," which feels as if it could have been part of Sonny Boy Williamson II's catalog.



**The Cash Box Kings – Hail to the Kings**  
 (Alligator Records ALCD 4991)  
[www.cashboxkings.com](http://www.cashboxkings.com)



Based out of Madison, Wis., but with a revolving lineup that's included top players from Chicago, The Cash Box Kings led by harp player Joe Nosek and Oscar Wilson, who share vocals. True originals in their own right, they bring the Windy City blues tradition into the 21st century with this stunner, which includes major contributions from guitarist Billy Flynn and percussionist Kenny "Beedy Eyes" Smith, two of the most important fixtures in Chicago, and Queen Lee Kanehira, a young lady from Japan who's a rising star on the keyboards. Adding to the mix is Shemekia Copeland, who provides vocals on one cut. This powerful, all-original set is a pleaser from the first notes. Wilson powers out of the gate with "Ain't No Fun (When the Rabbit Got the Gun)" before Copeland joins him on "The Wine Talkin'." Other don't miss cuts include "Poison In My Whiskey," "Joe, You Ain't From Chicago," "Bluesman Next Door" and "The Wrong Number."

**Johnny Shines – The Blues Came Falling Down**  
 (Nighthawk/Omnivore Recordings OVCD-328)  
[www.omnivorerecordings.com](http://www.omnivorerecordings.com)

Born near Memphis in 1915 and one of the most important yet under-recorded artists who bridged the gap from country to urban blues, Johnny Shines lives again with this never-before-released two-hour, 20-song live concert set that was captured in 1973 when his skills were as sharp as a razor. Shines spent part of his youth touring with Robert Johnson, was "rediscovered" at a concert headlined by Howlin' Wolf and performed and recorded with Big Walter Horton, James Cotton, Willie Dixon and Sugar Blue. His final album, the 1991 Blind Pig release, Back to the Country, captured a W.C. Handy Award and featured contributions from Johnny Nicholas and Snooky Pryor. Recorded at Washington University by St. Louis-based Nighthawk Records, this set was unearthed after Omnivore Entertainment Group acquired the Nighthawk catalog in 2017. This is an exceptionally well-remastered time capsule of one of the most talented finger-picking guitarists and strongest vocalists who ever lived. It's chockful of familiar tunes, many of which were penned by Johnny himself. If you have a love for acoustic blues, this one's a must!"







**Atomic Road Kings – Clean Up the Blood**  
(Bigtone Records)

[www.bigtonerecords.com](http://www.bigtonerecords.com)

Born in Florida but based out of Bristol, Tenn., guitarist/vocalist Big Jon Atkinson is a relatively young artist with musical sensibilities from bygone eras. This disc is the debut of his all-star band, The Atomic Road Kings, who turn back the clock in a stylish, pleasant way.

The lineup includes harp player Eric "Jailhouse" Von Herzen of pop/rock powerhouse Social Distortion, a guest appearance by West Coast superstar Bob Welch (Elvin Bishop) on keys, bassist Bill Stuve (Rod Piazza's Mighty Flyers), percussionist Malachi Johnson (Kim Wilson) and a trio of talented guitarists who trade off leads with Atkinson.

This CD was recorded the old-fashioned way: in mono, live to tape and on analog equipment dating to the '50s. Be sure to catch the slow-blues, stop-time mood setter, "I've Got Time," a wry view of someone who's received a lengthy prison sentence, "Rumors," the realization that a relationship is teetering on the edge because the singer's lady believes the truth in the lies being told about him, and "Back Down South," a vow to leave troubles behind and return home.

**Beth Hart – Live at the Royal Albert Hall**  
(Provogue/Mascot Music Group PRD 75672)  
[www.bethhart.com](http://www.bethhart.com)

Are you a fan of live concert albums? If you are, this two-CD, 121-minute extravaganza, which is also available with an accompanying DVD, is right for you.

Los Angeles-based singer/songwriter Beth Hart has become the queen of live sets, and this one might be her best yet. A keyboard player and guitarist in her own right, she's backed here in a tight four-piece band setup as she delivers a collection of four covers and 19 originals to an extremely enthusiastic crowd at the crown jewel of all auditoriums in England, Royal Albert Hall.

Beth opens with Bill Withers' "Lifts You Up," enlisting the audience into a little call-and-response, before changing the mood with the unhurried ballad "Close to My Fire." her voice shines like a diamond on "Good as It Gets," takes you to church with "Spirit of God" and then quiets to a whisper for the ballad "Baddest Blues."

Disc two opens with a rapid-fire take on "Saved," a hit for LaVern Baker in 1960. Other highlights include tune the fan favorite, "The Ugliest House on the Block," "Spiders in My Bed," "Leave the Light On," "My California" and "Caught Out in the Rain," which brings the set to a close.



**Ben Levin – Before Me (VizzTone Label Group VTBL 002)**  
[www.benlevinpiano.com](http://www.benlevinpiano.com)



A 2018 International Blues Challenge semi-finalist and Blues Blast Music Awards nominee for rising star and debut album of the year, pianist/vocalist Ben Levin has made quite a splash in the past year, and he continues his ascent into the blues heavens with this beautifully conceived disc.

Still only 19 and a student at the University of Cincinnati, Levin works frequently with former Muddy Waters guitarist Bob Margolin, Arizona-based harmonica wizard Bob Corritore and 93-year-old percussionist Philip Paul, who was the studio drummer at King Records and whose beat graces such hits as Little Willie John's "Fever," Wynonie Harris' "Good Rockin' Tonight" and Freddie King's "Hideaway." All three are present on this collection of six originals and six covers.

Highlights here include the rapid-fire "Pappy" delivered barrelhouse with a delightfully delicate touch, a pair of New Orleans style originals – "Before Me" and "Creole Kitchen" – that give new life to Fats Domino and Allen Toussaint and a driving cover of the James Cotton/Otis Spann 1965 pleaser "Lightning."

Levin is a young man who's keeping folks like Leroy Carr, Sunnyland Slim, Pinetop Perkins, David Maxwell and Barrelhouse Chuck alive through his keyboard prowess. If you like traditional blues piano, give this a listen. You'll be beaming throughout.

**MARTY GUNTHER HAS LIVED A BLESSED LIFE WHERE THE BLUES IS CONCERNED. A NATIVE RHODE ISLANDER NOW BASED IN CHARLOTTE AND APP STATE ALUM, HIS FIRST EXPERIENCES WITH LIVE MUSIC CAME AT THE FEET OF FIRST-GENERATION BLUES LEGENDS AT THE NEWPORT FOLK FESTIVALS IN THE 1960S. A PROFESSIONAL JOURNALIST AND HARMONICA PLAYER WHOSE WORK APPEARS IN BLUES BLAST MAGAZINE AND OTHER OUTLETS, HE WAS A LONGTIME MEMBER OF THE CHICAGO BLUES COMMUNITY BEFORE FOUNDING THE NUCKLEBUSTERS, A BAND THAT'S BEEN ENTERTAINING SOUTH FLORIDA SINCE 1987. MARTY IS ALSO A MEMBER OF CHARLOTTE BLUES SOCIETY AND ON THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF CBS.**

## **AUGUST BIRTHDAYS**

- 1- ROBERT CRAY (1953)
- 2-BIG WALTER PRICE (1917)
- 3-MERCY DEE WALTON (1915)
- 4-LOUIS ARMSTRONG (1901)
- 6-WILLIE BROWN (1900), LEM JOHNSON (1906), WILLIE NIX (1922), JESSE WILKINS, JR. (1933) ALLAN HOLDSWORTH (1946)
- 7-MAGIC SLIM (1937), RAHSAAN ROLAND KIRK (1936)
- 8-JOE TEX (1933), JIMMY WITHERSPOON (1923)
- 9-ROBERT SHAW (1908)
- 10-RONNIE SPECTOR (1945), GREGO ANDERSON (1968)
- 11-SAM COLLINS (1887)
- 12-PERCY MAYFIELD (1920), ROY GAINES (1934) ,MARK KNOPFLER (1949)
- 13-JIMMY McCRACKLIN (1921), SON SEALS (1942)
- 14-LARRY GRAHAM (1946) ,
- 15-BUSTER BROWN (1911), OSCAR PETERSON (1925), JACKIE BRENSTON (1930), BOBBY BYRD (1934)
- 16-EDDIE KIRKLAND (1928), MELVIN "LIL' SON" JACKSON (1915), ERIC BIBB (1961)
- 17-LUTHER ALLISON (1939), ALBERT WASHINGTON (1935) , ERIC JOHNSON: 8/17/1
- 18-JIMMY WITHERSPOON (1923), CURTIS JONES (1906)
- 19-EARL GAINES (1935) GINGER BAKER (1939)
- 20-ISSAC HAYES (1942), JACK TEAGARDEN (1905), ROBERT PLANT (1948)
- 21-COUNT BASIE (1904) MATT SCHOFIELD (1977)
- 22-JOHN LEE HOOKER (1920), DEBBIE DAVIES (1952), HENRY "SON" SIMS (1890)
- 24-ARTHUR "BIG BOY" CRUDUP (1905), WYNONIE HARRIS (1915) MR. SIPP (1976), OTEIL BURBRIDGE (1964)
- 25-DANI WILDE: (1985)
- 26-JIMMY RUSHING (1902)
- 27-LESTER YOUNG (1909)
- 28-JIMMIE BELL (1910)
- 29-CHARLIE PARKER (1920), DINAH WASHINGTON (1924)
- 30-LUTHER "SNAKE BOY" JOHNSON (1934)
- 31-TODD RHODES (1900), JOANNA CONNOR (1962), VAN MORRISON (1945)



The influence of Dr John on the soundtrack of America is vast. As I wrote in my June 20, 2019 Politichicks article, Dr John: Beyond the Hoodoo Moon, Dr John encompassed and innovated upon many musical styles in his 60 plus years musical career. From Blues to Jazz to Ballads to Funk to R&B to Big Band to pieces with a symphonic Gottschalk flavor and beyond. Dr John was one of America's most broad ranging artists. As I wrote, in the aforementioned article, the only artist that rivaled the Doctor in genre jumping was Miles Davis.

I thought it would be interesting to tell about the two times I met Dr John. Two meetings that were vastly different in 1994 and 1997.

In April 1994, I was visiting my nephew George in New Orleans. I was there with a friend to attend the 25th New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival. I really wanted to see Dr John, a perennial favorite of mine. I also found out that he would be signing his biography at the festival book tent.

After Dr John's set on Sunday, April 24th, I headed over to the Fest book tent with my nephew and purchased the Dr John biography, as told to writer Jack Rummel, titled "Under a Hoodoo Moon," (St. Martin's Press, 1994).

Dr John approached the tent from the main path, he looked overheated and over weight and it seemed like he really didn't want to be there. I stood in line with the Doctor's book and a gift for him. I brought him a cassette studio quality recording of a version of a song of his titled, "I've Been Hoodooed." I had recorded this with a Norfolk, VA. band by the name of Gumbo Motion. The Doctor signed my book, took my cassette and, when I started to tum away, dropped the tape in the trash can next to him.

The lady that seemed to be handling his affairs, fished the tape out the trash and scolded him, "Shame on you Mac, at least give it a listen." Dr John grudgingly put the tape in a bag he had with him.

Please remember that Dr John was only a few years off a 34 year plus heroin habit and was suffering then from misdiagnosed psychiatric problems for which was being prescribed lithium. That explained the weight.

Flash forward to June 1997, this time I was part a three act bill with the band I was with, Anders Osborne and Dr John at the Ninth Annual Bayou Boogaloo and Cajun Food Festival in Norfolk, VA. Standing in the backstage area with me was a slimmed down and a seemingly happy, Dr John. He was wearing a badass suit with hat, tailored perfectly.

My band had just finished playing and Anders was getting ready to hit the stage. I decided to take a chance and said, "Dr John, you look fabulous!" Behind some very cool shades the Doctor replied, "Thanks man, my old lady don't let me eat after Midnight anymore!" He slipped his glasses down and said, "Youse was just up there, wasn't you?" Nice guitar playing man! You studied that stuff, didn't ya? Your drummer needs to study too!" He was right. I was dressed in a beret, a Night Tripper like vest, shades and rattlesnake shoes. The shoes gamered an immediate response from the Dr, "Nice kicks man! You look like your ready for the 50's. Cool threads."

He than spoke softly, shyly, "I'm Mac Rebennack, better known as Dr John, the Night Tripper. Who's you?" I introduced myself and recalled our meeting from 1994. He said " I remember you now man. I finally threw your tape in the machine about a year ago, good arrangement, real good piano player, but you changed some of the words. Done that myself."

He was right, I did make up a verse up because I could not understand all his words. This was an improved Dr John who was experiencing a consistent amount of joy in his life. He regaled me for over ninety minutes with stories of playing for the Marcello crime family as a teenager to his still standing hatred of former New Orleans District Attorney, Jim Garrison. Chillingly, he also mentioned that the levees in New Orleans were put together with "swamp grass and chewing gum," and one day a storm would "wipe New Orleans out." This was over eight years before Katrina.

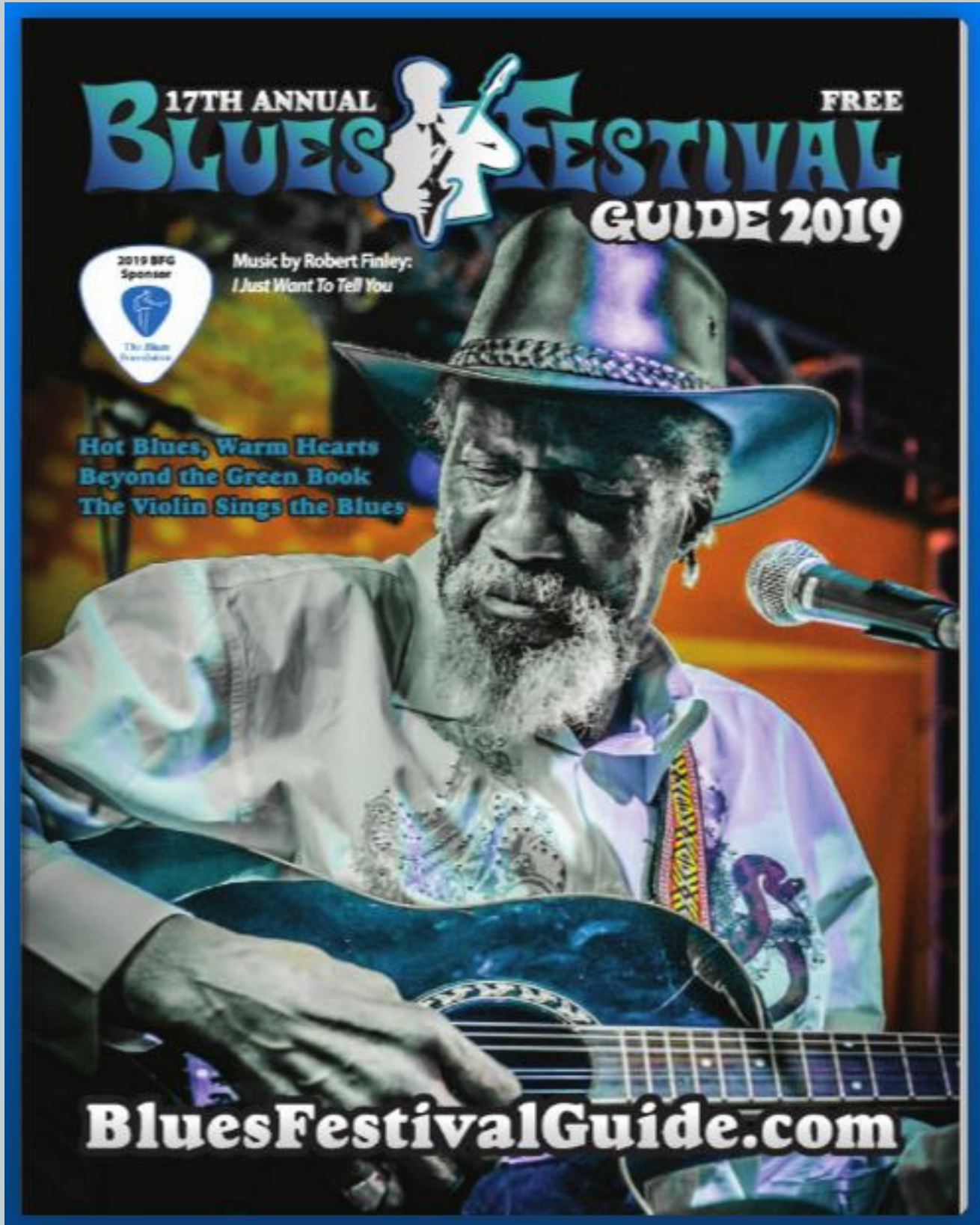
Ultimately, this was a Dr John who treated me, and himself, as one of the cats. No matter what life was for Dr



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## Billy Branch & Little Walter: Reimagining a master!

Blues harmonica master Billy Branch took on a seemingly impossible task when he decided to go into the studio to honor a true giant of the instrument, a project that came to fruition last month with the release of *Roots and Branches: The Songs of Little Walter*, on the Alligator label.

Of all the musicians in the golden era of Chicago blues, Little Walter is among the most enigmatic. Like Jimi Hendrix on guitar, his immense talent on harp literally revolutionized the instrument. He left such an indelible imprint that, in the five decades since his untimely death at age 37, virtually none of the world-class musicians who've followed have been able to do little more than copy his charts note-for-note rather than using them as a benchmark and taking them to another level.

"To be honest, at first, I was hesitant to do the project," Billy said recently in an exclusive Charlotte Blues Society interview. "What happened was that, over the last few years, my wife Rosa and I developed a pretty close relationship with Walter's daughter, Marion.

"Marion wanted to see this project. She wanted me to do a tribute to her dad. We discussed it with my wife, and we kinda went back and forth. At first, I thought: There have been so many tributes to Little Walter albums.

"And I've never wanted to be the guy who's doin' the same thing that everybody else is."

Anyone who's familiar with Branch's work knows that it's true.

Now recognized as the undisputed king of harmonica in the Chicago blues community, Billy was born in the Windy City, grew up in Los Angeles, where he started playing harp at age 10 and grew up listening to R&B, classic rock and folk music. He returned to the Midwest in 1969 to enroll in the University of Illinois-Chicago.

His introduction to the blues came that summer when he attended a festival in Grant Park organized by Willie Dixon and featuring him in performance with an all-star lineup that included Muddy Waters, Bo Diddley, Buddy Guy, John Lee Hooker and others, including a young Koko Taylor, whose version of Dixon's Wang Dang Doodle was in constant rotation on all of the city's radio stations at the time.

That afternoon proved to be a life-changer for Branch. Soon, he was spending his days in class and his nights getting schooling himself in the blues at many of the clubs that dotted the South Side at the time, including Teresa's and the Checkerboard Lounge.

The blues has always been an artform handed down from one generation to another, and that was true for Billy, too. It didn't take long before two elder statesmen, piano player Jimmy Walker and guitarist Homesick James – as well as a host of others, took him under their wings.

Always a hard mistress to master, the blues is best learned on the street, not out of a book, and Branch began establishing himself at what are commonly known as "headcutting" competitions. Probably a tradition as old as the music itself, it's akin to a winner-take-all duet in which two musicians face off head-to-head, trading licks until one walks away the winner.

The battles were as much fun as they were challenging and brutal, especially when you consider that the city's roster of harmonica players at the time included Big Walter Horton, Junior Wells, James Cotton, Carey Bell and dozens of others.

"I got lessons from 'em all," Billy recalls. "But they weren't like sittin' down. It was from gettin' my head cut in them damn clubs! That's how I got my lessons, includin' from Big Walter. Those were the trial-by-fire lessons.

"'C'mon up here on stage with me...'

"'Okay...'



“I didn’t have enough sense then to say no! They cut my head so much, I should have hired ‘em to be my barbers!”

Branch’s big break came in 1975 at the Green Bunny Club, a long-forgotten tavern on the South Side, where he butted heads with Little Mack Simmons, a harp player, bar and record label owner whose work appeared on Chess, Wolf, Electro-Fi and his own Simmons and PM imprints.

Billy cut Little Mack at this own game that night, and soon began sitting in at clubs whenever he could – drawing the attention of other musicians with his rock-solid old-school chops in the process. His first venture into a recording studio came the same year, when he laid down two tracks on *Bring Me Another Half a Pint*, an album released on George Paulus’ Barrelhouse Records with a cover illustrated by Robert Crumb.

Around the same time, Dixon enlisted Branch to replace the departing Carey Bell as harp player in his Chicago Blues All-Stars, a relationship that endured until Billy yielded the spot to Sugar Blue in 1981 to concentrate on his own group, Sons of Blues, which debuted on Alligator’s *Living Chicago Blues Vol. 3* in 1978.

The early SOBs roster included both Willie’s son, Freddie, and Carey’s son, Lurie, and several other top talents – including J.W. Williams, Carl Weathersby – emerged from the band’s ranks. Four decades later, they remain major proponents of the Chicago sound.

Together, Branch and the SOBs have released more than a dozen albums. But the Little Walter project was the biggest challenge yet.

Both a Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Blues Hall of Fame inductee and a Grammy Hall of Fame Award winner for the song *Juke* as well as other honors, Marion Walter Jacobs was born in Marksville, La., on May 1, 1930 and left home at age 12, gradually moving from New Orleans to Memphis, Helena, Ark., and St. Louis, where he busked on the street and developed skills on harp and guitar under the tutelage of Sonny Boy Williamson II, David “Honeyboy” Edwards and Sunnyland Slim.

He settled in Chicago at age 15 and split his time on both instruments before revolutionizing the work of harmonica in ways best compared to the breakthroughs Louis Armstrong made as a soloist on trumpet before him or Hendrix did on guitar after Little Walter’s death.

In fact, many music historians credit Walter with inventing and perfecting the use of electronic distortion. Both Sonny Boy II and Snooky Pryor are credited with urbanizing the sound of the harp because they held it up to the microphone when they played. But Walter took it a major step farther.

Walter played in a traditional, unamplified manner when he made his first recordings in the Windy City – both as a leader for Ora-Nelle and then as a member of the Muddy Waters Band in the late ‘40s and early ‘50s, appearing on most of Muddy’s major work in that era.

But frustrated by being drowned out by guitar players, he began cupping the mic in his hands and plugging it directly into either the sound system or his amp to get more oomph a little later.

Before long, he realized that not only was he able to compete with them on an even scale, but he was also able to push the amp beyond its perceived limitations as he explored distortion as he created sounds not previously produced by any instrument.

He set the entire music world on its ear in 1952, however, with the release of the instrumental, *Juke*. Recorded in one take for Chess’ Checker imprint with backing from Muddy, Jimmy Rogers and drummer Elga Edmunds, it’s a standard 12-bar blues in 4/4 time that changes intermittently to 3/4 and 2/4 with Walter creating revolutionary tones as he played in second position.



## Billy Branch & Little Walter: Reimagining a master! (continued 3)

“The tune was such a novelty that it soared to the No. 1 position on Billboard’s R&B charts, where it remained for eight weeks. It’s both the only harmonica instrumental ever to achieve the honor and a song that ranked higher than any tune Waters would ever record. At the time, it was Chess’ most successful record ever.

As Branch says today: “He effectively used feedback and distortion to achieve that sound that was so novel at the time that, purportedly, when Juke hit the airwaves, the jazz musicians were gatherin’ around the jukebox and debatin’ what instrument was bein’ played because it was completely unrecognizable as a harmonica.

“It sounded nothing like a harmonica. It doesn’t quite sound like a saxophone. But it sounds like a horn – but what kinda horn?

“I’ve heard debate over the years whether or not Walter was the very first cat to utilize the standard method of takin’ a microphone and overdrivin’ it through an amp. But I’ll tell you what: If he wasn’t the first one, he certainly was the guy that perfected that technique.

“And he’s certainly the guy who pioneered that technique.”

Juke solidified Walter’s spot in the Chess roster for the next decade, during which 14 of his tunes hit the Top 10. His My Babe hit the top spot while Sad Hours, another instrumental, climbed to No. 2. After leaving Muddy, he worked with a succession of top bandmates, beginning with The Aces – brothers Louis and Dave Myers and drummer Fred Below, the father of what came to be known as the Chicago beat.

His backing musicians included Robert Jr. Lockwood, Luther Tucker and Odie Payne Jr. after the Aces’ departure, and a young Ray Charles even backed him on one tour.

Despite his success, however, like many of his contemporaries, Little Walter enjoyed his liquor, and he had a fiery temper. Still only in his late 20s, his career began to decline dramatically in the late ‘50s. As a sideman, he recorded with Memphis Minnie, John Brim, Johnny Shines, Bo Diddley, Otis Rush, Robert Nighthawk and even poet Shel Silverstein, and worked less and less under his own name, frequently putting bands together from musicians available at the spur of the moment.

Despite the success of other bluesmen in Europe during the 1960s, Walter only crossed The Pond twice. He died at the home of his girlfriend on Feb. 15, 1968, apparently from injuries suffered during a brawl between sets at a club in Chicago the night before.

Sadly, unlike the great majority of his peers, there’s very little legacy of his performance captured on film.

“In comparison, there’s a lot of footage of Sonny Boy,” Branch says, “but very little of Walter. Just recently, in the past decade, these little snippets of Little Walter from the American Folk Blues Festival have been poppin’ up.

“It’s kinda mysterious that there is so little. Little Walter’s the acknowledged king of blues harmonica. You’d think that everybody would have been tryin’ to film him.”

In the five decades that have passed since his death, Walter’s fairly short catalog has been covered by most of the harmonica players who’ve followed in his path. Anyone with a trained ear can recognize one of his tunes within the first notes.

Unlike the contributions of other reed players, however – either because of reverence to the master or the simple belief that his work was so perfect that it’s beyond improvement, few, if any, advancements have been made from what Walter recorded in the ‘50s and ‘60s. Check out the many albums recorded as a tribute and you’ll quickly discover that the great majority of the players – the top musicians on the planet – still place Little Walter tunes note-for-note.

“Most of the guys today are still using Little Walter’s technique today,” Branch says. “In my estimation, he’s the most emulated and copied harmonica player of any genre.

“In my travels recently...to China, to South America...in the Andes Mountain range, I’m doin’ Blues in the Schools and these youngsters are tryin’ to play like Little Walter. And then, in China, they got a harmonica club – and they’re tryin’ to play like...Little Walter.

## Billy Branch & Little Walter: Reimagining a master! (continued 4)

“In the span of my career, I’ve seen it all over the world. You’ve got people who play like others, but I’ve never seen so many people wantin’ to play like Little Walter.”

When Walter’s daughter, Marion Diaz, approached Billy and his wife, Rosa, with the idea of a tribute CD, however, Branch was initially reluctant to jump on the idea – and for good reason.

“I’ve never wanted to be the guy who’s doin’ the same thing that everybody else is,” he says. “I don’t aspire to havin a Little Walter sound on every song durin’ the night. But we talked it over, and Rosa said: ‘Look, it’s comin’ up at the 50th anniversary of his passing, and Marion wants YOU to do it.

“And also, she’s willing – and wants – to tell some stories about her father on there.’

“So we started on it. And as we rehearsed with our band, some of these time-worn classics of Walter’s started taking on new life – the arrangements started changin’. Then it became even more interesting. As we got engaged in the process, it started taking on an identity of its own. That’s when it became fun.”

The album features the current lineup of Sons of Blues: Sumito “Ariyo” Ariyoshi on piano, Giles Corey on guitar, Marvin Little on bass and Andrew “Blaze” Thomas on drums with a guest appearance on guitar by Shoji Naito, a longtime member of the Eddy Clearwater Band.

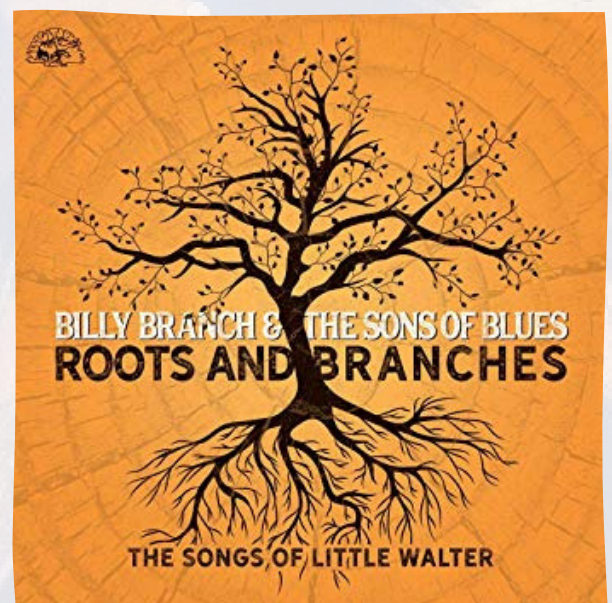
“I felt that my band more than rose to the occasion and did a superb job when it came to echoing the traditional feeling and styles on certain numbers and then being able to adapt them in a more contemporary vein,” Billy insists. From the opening cuts of Nobody but You to the closing bars of Blues with a Feeling, the essence of Little Walter comes through loud and clear, but Branch does something rarely, if ever, achieved with the material: By incorporating soul, rock and funk elements, he releases the 14 classic numbers on the disc from the time capsule in which they’ve been held captive, breathes new life into them in a manner that will both surprise and delight even the most steadfast blues purist.

Making the album an even greater delight is the final cut, a 2:43 monolog from Marion chockful of delightful, warm and intimate memories of her long-lost father that’s guaranteed to put Little Walter in a light he’s never been in before.

Billy chuckles at the thought.

“Yeah,” he says. “He was a nice guy after all!”

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**AUGUST 4 2019**



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 Band: 8pm  
 Jam **9:00pm**

with  
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 Blues Jam Guideline on [www.CharlotteBluesSociety.org](http://www.CharlotteBluesSociety.org)

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# BLUES JAM GUIDELINES

Blues Jam Guidelines and Courtesies     Charlotte Blues Society Blues Jam.

You are participating in a tradition that is over 25 years in the making. The Charlotte Blues Society has consistently promoted a Blues Jam as part of its Blues Sunday. The Charlotte Blues Society's Blues Sunday occurs on the first Sunday of each month. The Blues Jams do not happen at every Blues Sunday. Always refer to [charlottebluessociety.org](http://charlottebluessociety.org) for details and schedules. We hope your experience will be inspiring and that your own musical abilities will be informed by these jams.

We offer the following guidelines to consider when signing on as a participating jammer:

**\*A practical suggestion, sign up early. On the sign-up sheet please list your instrument and/or ability that you wish to contribute to the Jam. While the Blues has a lot of variations, please be advised this is a Blues Jam. Please keep it real ladies and gentlemen.**

**\*Be respectful of any equipment that you use, backline and PA, treat it as your own or possibly better than your own. If you have a special amp, pedal or set-up that you need to use, remember guideline #1; Come early**

**"Bring your own gear including amp. Do not rely on there being enough amps on stage. If you happen to blow up an amp during a righteous jam, then make sure it is your own"**

**\*Keep track of your place on the sign-up sheet. It is not up to the Jam Master to track you down when your time to shine arrives.**

**\*Please be advised that you need to be tuned and ready BEFORE you get on stage. Additionally, if you are a guitarist that tunes down a half step, please note the House band will be tuned to standard 440. Two choices remain, either tune to 440 or make allowances in your choice of a chord voicing.**

**\*If you only hear yourself on stage, perhaps you are too loud. Likewise, if you hear everyone else, but not yourself; turn up.**

**\*Be respectful of your fellow musicians, no matter what their ability may be. Everyone usually starts at the same place.**

**\*In regards to soloing, again please be respectful of other musicians in the jam. For example, rhythm guitar is not just something to waste your time on while you wait for your next solo. One of the lessons of a Blues Jam is to learn how to be as apt an accompanist as you hope to be as a soloist. The Jam Master will be generous with solos, but be mindful of other musicians that may be waiting to jam.**

**\*Lastly, have fun. Also respect the traditions as well as the innovations of the Blues. Likewise, respect the Charlotte Blues Society and The Rabbit Hole for providing the space and equipment for you to jam.**

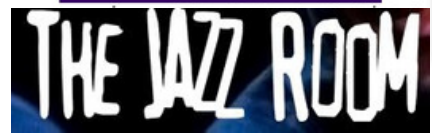
**We are fortunate to have an experienced blues man and great "Jam Master" in Michael Ingmire. Help him make it a great jam by following our guidelines. No matter what degree of experience you have, Michael will help make your first, and every jam, one that is fun and make you want to come back for more!**



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