

SACRAMENTO

A bi-monthly publication of the Sacramento Blues Society



# BLUE NOTES!

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# PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

BY MARCEL SMITH



Happy Fall Y'all. As we enter a season of change, we pause to celebrate and reflect as we continue our mission of preserving the blues.

I am honored to extend hearty congratulations to our 2025 Hall of Fame inductees. Welcome to the Hall of Fame – well deserved. I would also like to acknowledge Sally Katen and the Hall of Fame Committee for a job exceptionally well done. The ceremony at Harlow's stood out as second to none, beginning with "Gone But Not Forgotten", a reverent remembrance of beloved community members who have passed away. The performance by Daniel Castro was nothing short of fantastic, and the night continued at the Torch Club. I want to thank Marina Teixeira and the Torch Club Team for hosting, as we witnessed the inductees' photos mounted on the SBS Wall of Fame, followed by an outstanding jam session led by this year's Hall of Fame inductee, Dave Segal. It was a fantastic evening of celebration and remembrance.

On a personal note, the powerful but silent tribute to our beloved Mick Martin moved me to my core. The tasteful display touched me deeply. My heartfelt thanks to those who organized and contributed to this tribute.

Recently, I have been in conversations with members and supporters inside and outside SBS who have expressed interest in supporting our mission. Many donors have specific areas of interest, and some have asked where SBS needs support,

and while donations to our auxiliaries are always welcome, the greatest impact comes from contributions to our General Fund.

This fund enables SBS to bring local, national, and international artists to Sacramento, sustaining the quality of our productions and programming. The General Fund also keeps the lights on (so to speak), allows us to put out a bi-monthly Newsletter, pays postage, printing, supplies, and all other "unglamorous" expenses (nonprofit status & other government filings, insurance, etc.) incurred by SBS that are not related to other auxiliary funds. The General Fund is what keeps the SBS alive and well.

Speaking of productions, we're very excited about the upcoming SBS Holiday Gala on December 14. Featuring the band HowellDevine, this promises to be an exceptional night of music, fun, dancing and holiday merriment. AND, please remember, this is also our bylaws-mandated Annual Membership Meeting, where we vote for SBS Board of Directors candidates.

I invite all who enjoy our newsletter and love SBS shows to consider donating to the General Fund. To ensure our message reaches every member, we will be launching a campaign to raise awareness and support. I thank you in advance for your continued commitment to the blues and to our community.

With appreciation and solidarity, Marcel Smith, President, Sacramento Blues Society.

*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 persevere 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, 7PM

All SBS members in good standing are invited to attend.

Meetings are held via Zoom; to request an invitation, email:  
sacramentoblues1979@gmail.com

## SACRAMENTO BLUES SOCIETY PUBLICATIONS

Blues Notes, Bi-Monthly Newsletter -  
Cari Chenkin & Jan Kelley, Co-Editors

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Facebook: [facebook.com/sacblues/](https://facebook.com/sacblues/)

Instagram: [instagram.com/sacbluessociety/](https://instagram.com/sacbluessociety/)

## 2025 COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Hall of Fame: Sally Katen

Events: Mindy Giles

Membership: Linda McShane

Sponsorship/Fundraising: Open

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 Sunday: Cari Chenkin

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!

## 2025 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Marcel Smith, President

Barbara Katen, Vice President

Shirley McCoy, Secretary

Laurel Coppess, Treasurer

Rick Snyder, Parliamentarian

Cari Chenkin

Lynette Shumway

Sally Katen

Julio Covington

# New in 2026: Good Eats & Good Beats!

BY BARBARA KATEN

Beginning with our January/February 2026 issue, we're excited to launch a brand-new column for the Sacramento Blues Society: Good Eats & Good Beats.

Each issue, we'll serve up a favorite dish, a recipe you can try at home, and the perfect blues record to spin alongside it. Because nothing feeds the soul like good food and good music together.

Expect a mixture of downhome comfort food, lighter modern fare (including vegetarian-friendly dishes), and the perfect drink to raise a glass with. Every recipe comes paired with a blues classic – so you'll always know what to cook, sip, and spin.

And this isn't just one-way! We want to hear from YOU – our members. Got a favorite recipe and a blues album that goes with it? Send it in, and your "good eats & good beats" might be featured in a future issue.

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## SUPPORT OF MEMBERS' BUSINESSES!

BY BARBARA KATEN

To add even more value to your Sacramento Blues Society (SBS) membership, the Board of Directors is launching an additional page to our website that spotlights legitimate businesses owned or operated by our members. From tax and bookkeeping services to hairstylists, attorneys, landscapers, day care providers, handy people, and more—the list is limitless.

Let's celebrate and patronize our members' businesses as a true member benefit.

Members: Get Listed  
Send your business card, a brief description of your services, and contact information to:

**Sacramento Blues Society,  
P.O. Box 60580,  
Sacramento, CA 95860-0580  
Attn: B. Katen**

or email: [bkaten@gmail.com](mailto:bkaten@gmail.com) (please put "SBS" in the subject line).

# HOWLIN' FOR THE HOLIDAYS!

## DECEMBER 14TH ANNUAL GALA

### HYPNOTIC HILL COUNTRY BLUES W/ HOWELLDEVINE!



BY MINDY GILES

*"What a pleasure to find a young band that really gets the blues...Deep and true to the roots."*

- Bonnie Raitt

Faunt your fabulous faux fur at the annual December membership gala because this year we will all be howlin' for the holidays! The Bay Area's beloved shack-shakin' trio, HowellDevine, are on board to bring their hypnotic Hill Country and Delta blues to Harlow's stage.

Triple threat talent, Joshua Howell (guitar, harmonica, vocals) and percussion savant, Pete Devine (drums, washboard), plus veteran upright bassist, Joe Kyle Jr. deftly mix rural blues with wildly syncopated rhythms to create a rollicking sound that stands in stark contrast to the typical blues heard these days. The band was the first blues act signed by Chris Strachwitz to his legendary Arhoolie Records label in over 25 years, a testament to HowellDevine's ability breathe life back into the early blues with their stamp of propulsive, hypnotic rhythms.

*"...just when it seems like all the [blues] permutations have been heard and it might be time to hang it up, a trio like HowellDevine shows that in reality the road is endless..."*

- Bill Bentley, Warner Brothers Records

*"HowellDevine plays The Music with the original feel, intent and spirit, and you can tell they love the music while delivering some real blues in their own way. The singing and playing is never strained and they play*

*with easy confidence...they don't have to prove anything. There's tasty slide, harp and rhythm with relaxed vocals that all blend together for a wonderfully satisfying experience...it knocks me out to hear a group playing such good quality blues."*

- Charlie Musselwhite

The Sacramento Blues Society is ending another year in high fashion. (Remember your faux fur!) This annual celebration also rounds out the SBS' celebration of its 46th year in existence. The SBS, established in 1979, is one of the three oldest blues societies in the United States.

Our gathering is also when all the SBS ballots for the 2026 Board of Directors are tallied, and the new Board members are welcomed in. And, we also acknowledge our "Volunteer of the Year" Award winner. We're planning a (Howell)Devine party night! Hope we see you there!

**Sunday, December 14, Harlow's  
2708 J Street, Sacramento, CA 95816  
Doors: 6pm, Event: 7pm-10pm.  
Ticket price: FREE for current Sacramento Blues Society Members (please bring your card). \$30 general admission (includes one year Sacramento Blues Society membership) online at Harlow's website. First come, first served seating. Dance floor. (Photo by Brian Castagne)**



Photo by Brian Castagne

# SACRAMENTO BLUES SOCIETY ANNUAL MEETING & BOARD ELECTION ANNOUNCEMENT

## JOIN US FOR THE HOLIDAY GALA AND PARTICIPATE IN THE SBS LEADERSHIP!

### Annual Meeting and Holiday Gala

In accordance with our bylaws, the Sacramento Blues Society (SBS) will hold its Annual Meeting on December 14, 2025, in conjunction with our festive Holiday Gala. This important event is the time for conducting any business requiring a vote from our membership, including the election of new Board of Directors members.

### Board of Directors Election Process

The SBS Election Committee will mail out ballots to all current SBS members in November. To ensure your vote is counted, please return your completed ballot by mail to the SBS address provided on the ballot envelope. Ballots must be received no later than December 14, 2025.

Alternatively, if you plan to attend the Holiday Gala (and we hope you do!), you may bring your ballot with you to the event and deposit it in the ballot box that will be available on site.

All votes, whether mailed in or dropped off at the Gala, will be tallied during the party. The newly elected Board Members will be introduced to the SBS membership later that evening.

### Meet the Candidates

Each candidate for the Board of Directors has submitted a brief statement for your consideration. Please take a moment to review these statements to make an informed decision when you receive your ballot.

### How to Vote

1. Watch for your ballot in the mail in November.
2. Review the candidate statements included with your ballot.
3. Return your completed ballot by mail (must be received by December 14, 2025), or bring it to the Holiday Gala and deposit it in the ballot box.

### Your Participation Matters!

Your vote helps shape the future of the Sacramento Blues Society. We strongly encourage every member to participate in this important process. Please take a moment to vote when you receive your ballot!

We look forward to celebrating with you at the Holiday Gala and welcoming our new Board Members for the upcoming year!

## BOBBIE ARMSTRONG



My name is Bobbie Felt Armstrong. I have been an active member with the Sacramento Blues Society since approximately 1990. I support the mission of the SBS organization. I have also been working with Sally Katen on the Hall of Fame since she became the head of that committee and have organized and worked the Raffle for the Hall of Fame and other raffles. I have also been a recipient of the Valerie Jean Anderson Volunteer Award in 2021. I would love to be a part of continuing the mission of the

Sacramento Blues Society and would appreciate your support with your vote.

## RICK SNYDER

Rick Snyder walks the crossroads where history, music, and mystery collide. As a Sacramento Blues Society Board Member and Chair of the Blues in the Schools Committee, he sneaks real live blues bands into classrooms, hands out egg shakers like candy, and convinces kids that history is way cooler when it comes with a backbeat. When he's not doing that, he moonlights as the Curator for the Museum of the Strange and Unusual – part treasure hunter, part storyteller, part guardian of guitars that might just whisper if you listen closely. Strange and unusual? Absolutely. But that's exactly how the blues likes to roll.



## SHIRLEY MCCOY



The past two years serving as Secretary of this great blues society has gone by fast. I have been honored to serve on this Board and have learned a lot and feel thoroughly blessed to be involved with such a great group of people. I have taken over chairing the International Blues Challenge Committee in my time, and to me, it only makes sense for me to continue to be involved on this Board for as long as I can, as much as possible.

I have enjoyed contributing content to the Blue Notes and plan to continue to add to this top-notch publication as often as I can, as well.

I would appreciate your votes to continue to serve as Secretary for another term. The Board has been through some challenging times in my time served, but I have seen how resourceful and resilient the leadership here is and I look forward to continuing to be a part of guiding us forward into the future and doing what I can to help keep the blues alive.

There's something **YELLOWY ORANGE** living on the SBS website!!!

Hey there SBS members: we need your help as public servants. We have a short survey we'd like you to participate in! It is on the homepage of our website -

[www.sacblues.org](http://www.sacblues.org)

# DIRTY LAUNDRY FUNDRAISER AT THE GASLIGHT COMPANY

BY SHIRLEY MCCOY

Photos by Shirley McCoy, Mindy Giles & Jeff Parkin



On August 24, the Gaslight Company in Folsom was packed tight for Marcus Velez - better known as Dirty Laundry - as he held his International Blues Challenge fundraiser. The venue was a meaningful choice: Marcus grew up playing there, honing his craft on

the very stage where he now drew such a loyal following. Given his talent and trajectory, it may not be long before crowds will need to catch him on much larger stages. Those in attendance could consider themselves lucky to have shared this intimate night of music.

With just his resonator guitar and harmonica, Marcus held the room spellbound. His busker-esque style, complete with foot-tapping Piedmont picking and warm, soulful vocals, showcased the artistry that won him the SBS IBC Competition in the "Single/Duo" category. What we saw at the Gaslight went far beyond that short contest set. Marcus played long into the night - well after many Blues Society members had headed home - revealing both stamina and a deep catalog of original songs. While he mixed in a few covers, it was his own songwriting that stood out, a strong foundation for his upcoming journey to Memphis.



The night also included a special collaboration: Kyle Rowland joined Marcus on stage for several songs, taking over vocals while Marcus leaned into intricate guitar work. Kyle added percussion on cajón, giving the performance a raw, stripped-down feel that harkened back to the earliest days of acoustic blues. The chemistry between them suggested that a Dirty Laundry/Kyle Rowland project would be a natural and exciting fit for the future.

The benefit itself was a resounding success. Both tip jars made the rounds, Marcus's guitar case filled with donations, and support poured in from fellow musicians - including Mike Hammar, who came out to cheer on his IBC peer. Seeing Kyle and Mike flanking Marcus was more than a photo opportunity - it felt like a glimpse at the future of blues.

Dirty Laundry plays without pretense, with grit and authenticity, straight from the heart. As Marcus heads to Memphis, we're proud to know his journey began here—and prouder still that we can say, "I remember when we saw him in little old Folsom."



# MIKE HAMMAR & THE NAILS TO MEMPHIS AND BEYOND

BY SHIRLEY MCCOY

Photos by Shirley McCoy & Cari Chenkin



On Sunday, September 7, the Hammarheads packed the Torch Club to support Mike Hammar & the Nails at their fundraiser for the upcoming International Blues Challenge in Memphis this January. The turnout said it all - this band has become one of the Sacramento Blues Society's brightest standouts: super-talented, endlessly fun, and genuinely kind musicians both on and off stage.

Mike Hammar knows how to command a room, but it's the chemistry of the whole band that creates their infectious, feel-good energy. Their stage presence is undeniable - that magical connection where the band feeds the crowd, the crowd feeds the band right back and the dance floor never stops moving.

Behind the fun is a band that takes their craft seriously. Their two

Torch Club NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 2025		
NOV 1ST	CAMPBELL'S FOLLY	6-8 PM
NOV 7TH	BILL MYLAR & FRIENDS	6-8 PM
NOV 8TH	ROOSTER	6-8 PM
NOV 13TH	DAVE KELLER	9PM-12AM
NOV 15TH	AKI KUMAR BLUES BAND	9PM-12AM
NOV 21ST	RAIN DOG	6-8 PM
NOV 22ND	NTH POWER	9PM - 12AM
NOV 26TH	OSCAR LADELL	6-8PM
NOV 26TH	DARYL ROWLAND & THE BLEEDING HEARTS	8:30 - 11 PM
NOV 28TH	THE LEAPING BLENNIES	6-8PM
NOV 29TH	TOO MANY SQUIRRELS	6-8 PM
NOV 29TH	MERCY ME!	9PM - 12AM
NOV 30TH	SBS BLUES W/ HIP NOSIS	4-7 PM
DEC 5TH	BILL MYLAR & FRIENDS	6-8 PM
DEC 6TH	DEKE & THE STREAKS	9PM - 12AM
DEC 18TH	AC MYLES	9PM - 12AM
DEC 19TH	TROPICALI FLAMES	9PM - 12AM
DEC 20TH	DANNY SANDOVAL & HIS AMIGOS	9PM - 12AM
DEC 28TH	SBS BLUES W/ TONY & THE TUFF TIMES	4-7 PM
DEC 31ST	NYE WITH MERCY ME!	9PM - 1AM

flawless sets reflected countless hours of rehearsal and 25 years of playing together. Allan "B3 Blues" Carroll traveled in from Texas to add his signature organ sound, while Michael "The Professor" Boykin lit up the stage with harmonica fireworks - and even took the mic for a show-stopping version of "Red Rooster". Greg Merino kept the beat driving steady on drums, and Mark "Sparky" Gehres held down the groove on bass. And Mike himself delivered searing guitar solos and heartfelt vocals that captured both the struggles and triumphs of the blues.

We couldn't be prouder that Mike Hammar & the Nails are the Sacramento Blues Society's official selection to represent us in the "Group Category" at the International Blues Challenge. They are an electrifying, road-tested band full of heart, soul, and enthusiasm—deserving veterans of the blues who are poised for even greater success. To Memphis and beyond!



**QR Codes for Our IBC Entrants' GoFundMe Accounts**



**Dirty Laundry  
QR code**



**Mike Hammar &  
the Nails QR code**

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# What's On Your Playlist?

BY BARBARA KATEN



Get ready, blues fans - Memphis is calling! This January, the Sacramento Blues Society is proudly sending Mike Hammar & the Nails to the prestigious International Blues Challenge (IBC), where they'll represent us in the Band Category. Mark your calendars for January 13-17, 2026, and keep an eye on the SBS Facebook page for updates as the excitement builds. Whether you're making the trip to cheer them on in person or following along from home, the pride we feel in this band is unmistakable.

Back in our July/August edition of Blue Notes, we shared Mike's playlist. But why stop there? In the spirit of the upcoming IBC, we thought it was the perfect time to showcase the entire band's playlists. Think of this as your all-access pass to what Mike and the boys may be blasting on their way to Memphis!

## MICHAEL "THE PROFESSOR" BOYKIN

- "Smokestack Lightnin'" - Howlin' Wolf
- "Invitation to the Blues" - Tom Waits
- "Steady" - Jerry McCain
- "Down So Low" - Linda Ronstadt
- "1982-A" - Sons of Champlin

.....

## ALAN "B3 BLUES" CARROLL

- Anything by Tower of Power • Anything by Mingo Fishtrap
- Anything by Robben Ford • Anything by Bonnie Raitt
- Anything by Cold Blood

.....

## MARK "SPARKY" GEHRES

- "Carmelita Shuffle" - Mike Bloomfield • "Weepin' and Moanin'" - Mike Henderson
- "I Don't Want You to Cut Your Hair" - Anson Funderburgh w/ Sam Myers
- "Rock the House" - Hollywood Fats • "Going Down" - Freddie King

.....

## GREG MERINO

- "Gone Too Long" - Walter Trout • "Right as Rain" - Tommy Castro
- "Nasty Habits" - Tommy Castro
- "Since We've Ended as Lovers" - Jeff Beck
- "Wired" - Jeff Beck

.....

## MIKE HAMMAR

- "Hoochie Coochie Man" - Muddy Waters • "Damn Right, I've Got the Blues" - Buddy Guy
- "Texas Flood" - Stevie Ray Vaughan • "I'll Play the Blues for You" - Albert King
- "Every Day I Have the Blues" - B.B. King

Let's not forget - we'll also be cheering on the fabulously talented Dirty Laundry, who will represent SBS in the "Single/Duo" category at the IBC. (If you missed it, you can check out his playlist in the July/August Blue Notes.) Together, these two acts embody the passion, grit, and soul that keep the blues alive.

We couldn't be prouder of both, and we know they'll do SBS - and Sacramento - proud on the world stage!

# THE LITTLE CHARLIE BATY MEMORIAL MUSIC SCHOLARSHIP AT SAC STATE IS NOW AVAILABLE TO PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS!

BY MINDY GILES

For high school teachers who have taught/brought "Blues in the Schools" Programs to your campus—this is especially important for you to read and share with your students. Thank you deeply to all who have donated across the past four years to make this scholarship a reality.

"The application period for the 2026/2027 School of Music Scholarships runs from October 1, 2025, to February 15, 2026. The University will allow the School of Music to consider only those who submit a Sac State Scholarship application during this time. This notification appears in the CSUS Audition Application. Anyone who would like to be considered for a SOM Scholarship must also complete the Audition Application.

The message for the scholarship announcement in the University scholarship application is provided below. The University system will identify any prospective music applicants who list the "Blues in the Schools" program in their high school musical experience. Alternatively, our Scholarship Committee will look for a jazz guitarist with a talent for Blues. The School of Music is very grateful to the Sacramento Blues Society and "Little Charlie" for their support of our students.

The Sacramento Blues Society Little Charlie Baty Memorial Music Scholarship has been created in honor of Charles "Little Charlie" Baty, master guitarist and fearless blues musician. 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."

**Qualifications:**

- 2.0 GPA in good academic standing
- Major: Music major, preference given to SBS Blues in School participant
- Undergraduate • Enrollment Part time

Award: Varies • Scopes: Music • Deadline: 3/2/2026

You will be automatically considered based on your completed General Application.

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Any questions after looking at the Sac State Scholarship application?

Please contact:

Mark E. Allen, MM '97  
 SSP III, Undergraduate Admissions  
 Counselor & Program Advisor  
 School of Music  
 Capistrano Hall, Room 111, 6000 J St.  
 Sacramento, CA 95819-6015

(916) 278-6543 • mallen@csus.edu  
<http://www.csus.edu/music>

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**HOW TO PARTICIPATE IN THE OPEN MIC JAM**

To participate in the Open Mic Jam with Bob Jones and the Chosen Few band. Simply show up at the Capital Elks Lodge at 3706 Stockton Blvd Sacramento CA. The jam is FREE for guest performers, and starts at 5pm.

Since it is a OPEN MIC JAM you will be expected to sign-up at the door on the performers list. If you bring a guest with you they will be asked to pay \$10.

Ellen Marshall Rosell of ELM PRODUCTIONS & ENTERTAINMENT PROMOTIONS will manage the performances of guest musicians and singers.

Be prepared to showcase your talent, whether it is singing, playing an instrument or other forms of musical expression!

Depending on the amount of guest performers you will be able to showcase two songs. There will be two guest sets. Come early and be guaranteed two songs.

# A CASUAL CONVERSATION WITH SOUTHERN AVENUE

BY SHIRLEY MCCOY

Southern Avenue has been taking the blues world by storm and on a steady touring schedule, out promoting their Alligator debut album, *Family*, that was released this past April. I wanted to make this interview happen for a while so was delighted when I got the chance to talk to the entire band.

**Blue Notes (BN):** Your Alligator debut came out in April. Tell us a little bit more about how this album came about and what it feels like to be on Alligator Records. You were the first Memphis band to be signed to the newly reformed Stax label when you had your debut album in 2017.

**Tierinii Jackson (TJ):** It was an honor to take on that legacy and be responsible for holding up such great music history. And now being on Alligator, they're really treating us well and we've all worked together so well with this album release. It feels like the best time of our lives. With this album, we really wanted to be very intentional this time around about taking time to focus on writing the project. When we did that, we came up with a concept and then we wanted to tell our story. So, we started to write the songs in order of the way we were telling our story. John Burk, who produced this album, who also signed us to Stax in the beginning, we sent him a few of the songs just because we trust him and his thoughts and we wanted his opinion. We didn't know that he was working with Alligator, but when we sent him these songs he was just taken back by it and impressed and he wanted to produce the songs and wanted to sign us to Alligator. Things just opened up for us and it was all meant to be.

**BN:** The three of you- TK and Ava and Tierinii are sisters. And Tierinni and Ori, you guys are married to each other. That's an interesting dynamic there.

**TJ:** Yes, yeah. It didn't start out that way.

**BN:** How did it start out?

**TJ:** That's actually the story that we tell in the album. We were each on our own individual journeys. Ori came to Memphis with his solo band and he competed in IBC and booked all these gigs for this tour and then, as we say in the album, he went through some catastrophic changes in his personal life and had to find a whole new set up. He went looking for a new singer and he found me, and I, of course, wanted to get my sister on the gig, TK, and Ava was still in high school so she wasn't a part

of the "band" band, but she was recording backgrounds on the albums that we were doing. And so, it was a slow type of development for us. But eventually, the unit that we were building grew into a family after we got married and we had Nava, and then Ava graduated college and she joined us on the road permanently. It grew to us having this vision, this mission and just being driven by bringing people together and making music as a family.

**BN:** Have the three of you sisters always been close? How does this play into your writing? Do you find it any easier or harder? Do you all usually get along musically speaking?



**TJ:** We've always been close. I'm six years older than TK, and Ava's the youngest. We get along.

**Ori Naftaly (ON):** Yeah, and I can also say that the album name, *Family*, is not really just about us being a family. It's also about our fans and this being the first album we tell our story unfiltered and even chronologically. So, in many ways, it's a different kind of way of looking at it. It's our fans, and the family we made being on tour and traveling the world. It's really an all around family for us. It's a little bit of both. I think that us being related, in a way, was more secondary to the feeling we have when we go on tour and meet our fans.

**BN:** Ori, you're from Israel and you came

over here to Memphis and got to compete in the IBC. What was that experience like for you?

**ON:** Yeah, no, I was definitely in shock but I felt very much at home. It was one of the most amazing weeks of my life. Very intense. The International Blues Challenge is really just like a big showcase. Memphis to me, was, since the age of 6, I've been listening to Memphis music and playing Memphis music, so it's really in my DNA in many ways. Musically, I feel at home. For all of us, really, we're in it for the music. Not the good times. The good times only come when the music is great. We're really doing all of this for the music and for all our fans, for our new fans that don't know us yet and just spreading our message. I didn't come to Memphis to play the blues, I came to Memphis to spread my songs and my message and the good you want to see in the world. Each of us individually in our own perspective. It wasn't about just playing my guitar, it was more about finding my true destiny.

**BN:** Ava, TK, and Tierinii - you weren't allowed to listen to any secular music until your late teens. Can you remember what you first listened to and what you thought about it?

**Tikyra Jackson (TKJ):** I would say, my first impression of secular music- it was more so like we understood it was out there. We had TV, we had cable, we saw Michael Jackson on the TV, Beyonce. We've always had exposure to culture. It's just when you start singing it, that's where my parents draw the line. I would say, my first impression, I didn't necessarily recognize the separation to be a necessity or a real thing. For me, it was always just music- music we weren't allowed to listen to vs music that we were. Honestly, I'm just glad to be out. I'm just glad to be able to freely express- even our music, to a certain extent, would be considered secular in a lot of ways. Honestly, it has so much meaning and value that it's almost unquantifiable, what music is. Therefore, when it comes to this whole idea of secular vs. non secular it's almost like it dissipated away as we grew up. Once you grow and you learn, then things change. Our parents, they see us now and they're super supportive and they're very proud of how far we've come. My mom is still to this day, asking when are we gonna write a gospel tune.

**Ava Jackson (AJ):** Good music was always in entertainment. Even if we were watching TV, or games, like video games, or just different forms of media, we were always exposed to good music and a high level of musicianship because a lot of those songs were in some of our favorite movies. It wasn't necessarily like we hadn't heard anything at all. I think as we get older, the conviction of it all does disappear because



On Sunday, September 28, the Sacramento Blues Society gathered to honor the legends at our Annual Hall of Fame Awards. The afternoon began at Harlow's with Sacramento Blues 1988-1990: A Time Travel Retrospective of Our Blues Scene, a rare video compilation of classic live SBS performances of HOF members (Produced by Craig McKeown, the full 90 minute program is now on the SBS YouTube Channel.)

Emcee Liz Walker welcomed the audience, followed by Blues in the Schools (BITS) Chairperson Rick Snyder, then Hall of Fame Chair Sally Katen, who highlighted SBS programs including the Gene Chambers Musicians Crisis Relief Fund, the Mick Martin Student Fund, the Charlie Baty Memorial Scholarship Fund, and of course, the Hall of Fame itself.

A powerful moment came with the viewing of the "Gone But Not Forgotten" tribute video, created by Bob Cosman. This year, the loss of founding SBS member and beloved musician Mick Martin was deeply felt. His favorite table was lovingly reserved with his hat, photo, and a bouquet of yellow tulips in his memory.

The music portion of the program lifted spirits as Daniel Castro and his band delivered two roof-raising sets that had the audience dancing and cheering.

The heart of the event - the induction of the 2025 Hall of Fame honorees was filled with emotion and respect:

- **Dave Segal**, presented by Paris Clayton
- **David Garrity**, presented by Lew Fratis
- **Paul Vierra** (unable to attend), presented and accepted on his behalf by Marcel Smith
- **Stan Alves** (posthumously honored), accepted by his sister and presented by Rattat Pat Balcom
- **Wayne Smith**, presented by Ray "Caffish" Copeland

Afterward, the new inductees joined returning Hall of Fame members on Harlow's back patio for the annual class photo - an inspiring sight of blues legacy gathered together. The celebration continued at the Torch Club, where the new inductees' portraits were added to the famed Hall of Fame Wall, ensuring their contributions are remembered for generations.

This event could not have happened without the dedication of our incredible volunteers. Special thanks to: Mindy Giles, Liz Walker, Lynette Shumway, Earl Withycombe, Barbara Katen, Esther & Ernie Vasquez, Bobbie Felt-Armstrong, Donald Jacobson, and Robert Katen. Your hard work keeps this tradition thriving.

The Sacramento Blues Society is proud to celebrate the 2025 Hall of Fame class—honoring those who have shaped our music, our community, and our hearts.

# SACRAMENTO BLUES SOCIETY 2025 HALL OF FAME INDUCTION CEREMONY

BY SALLY KATEN

Photos by Bob Hakins, Jeff Parkin, Mindy Giles, Bobbie Felt Armstrong & Barbara Katen





# "BLUE SUNDAY" REVIEW

BY CARI CHENKIN

Photos by Dale Roberts & Cari Chenkin



Now, almost done with its fourth full year, our "Blue Sunday" program has become a beloved feature of the Sacramento Blues Society experience. We started the series in August of 2021

as a way to benefit our member bands and it's grown in popularity with both bands and audiences. I'm proud to say we're booked from now through May, 2026!

Member bands, especially those new to the SBS or who haven't played a "Blue Sunday" yet, or who played one back in 2021, 2022 or 2023, please contact me if you want to book our 2026 dates. Reach me at: [cariedawaycc@gmail.com](mailto:cariedawaycc@gmail.com).

In this issue, we're reviewing August's show, which featured Jeremy Norris & The Blues Cartel. On October 26, we welcomed back Todd Morgan & The Emblems, who last appeared at the November 2021 "Blue Sunday". Because that show occurred too late to get into this issue of **Blue Notes**, we'll cover it in the Jan.-Feb. 2026 issue. November's "Blue Sunday" features a new member band, HipNosis, a big band that's sure to rock the Torch! And more great Sunday music yet to come!

August 31, 2025 -

## Jeremy Norris & the Blues Cartel

Back for their second Blue Sunday appearance, having last played for us in February of 2022, Jeremy Norris and the Blues Cartel brought their signature high-energy rocking blues to the Torch Club and what a great show it was!

Featuring Jeremy Norris on guitar and vocals, Chip Yeager on bass and Ryan Blodgett on drums, the band opened their show with "She's My Baby", then played a Bo Diddley/New Orleans beat style song called "Way Down in the Swamp". This tune featured a fun bass solo, then a rhythm section solo with the bass and drums trading fours.

Jeremy just gets more amazing on guitar every time I see him. From ballads to blasters, he displays his prowess, speed and tasty style. Their sets contained a good mixture of classic covers and original tunes including covers of Stevie Ray Vaughan's "The House Is Rockin'", and Albert King's "Born Under a Bad Sign". He then featured



his original tune "Lovin' On 11" and the "Wingnut" Adams-penned "You're Responsible". Other tunes included the funky "Wicked Ways", a reggae-influenced version of Dylan's classic "All Along the Watchtower", then "Johnny B Good", "Pride & Joy" and "Voodoo Child". Each band member got to shine with brief solos throughout the set, which pleased the large crowd of enthusiastic dancers and listeners.

They opened the second set with

"Fire", in which the drummer really showed off his excellent rock chops. Jeremy then invited SBS former president and HOF member Derek Washington onstage to join them in "Got My Mojo Workin'" and "Let Me Love You Baby".

Those who weren't able to make it to the gig missed a terrific show; hopefully they got to see Jeremy the following month when he played at the Blues & Bones Festival.

## BLUES & BONES FESTIVAL SERVES UP SMOKIN' RIFFS AND SAVORY VIBES IN ANGELS CAMP

ANGELS CAMP, CA – SEPTEMBER 27, 2025

BY RICO

The hills of Calaveras County came alive with the sweet sound of the blues and the unmistakable aroma of barbecue smoke as the **14th Annual Blues & Bones Festival** took over the **Calaveras County Fairgrounds** in Angels Camp on Saturday, September 27. With a stellar lineup, mouth-watering food, and a laid-back, family-friendly crowd, this year's Festival once again proved why it's one of the region's most anticipated music events.

### The Music: Grit, Groove, and Guitar Fire

The Festival's main stage roared to life shortly after noon with **Jules Leyhe**, whose dazzling slide guitar and funky tone set the



tone for a day of pure blues delight. Jules, along with guitar slinger/vocalist Jimmy Leslie, gave us an energetic set that warmed up the crowd nicely. **The Blues Cartel** featuring **Jeremy Norris** followed, tightening the groove and firing up the crowd with profound Delta influences and spirited vocals that had people dancing in the aisles. The Blues Cartel is Ryan Blodgett on drums and Chip Yeager on bass, and, of course, Jeremy Norris on all aspects of guitar.

As the afternoon heat mellowed, **Chickenbone Slim and the Biscuits** delivered a standout performance, his first at Blues and Bones – sharp, soulful, and



brimming with West Coast swagger. The members of the Biscuits were Justice Guevera on guitar, Kurt Rosenbaum on bass, and Kurt Kallker on drums. But it was headliner **Chris Cain** who stole the night, his smooth vocals and effortless guitar phrasing reminding everyone why he's considered one of the great modern torchbearers of the blues. The band consisted of Greg Rahn on keys (omg, this cat was exceptional), Endre Tarzy (from the Anthony Paule Orchestra), and Ronnie Smith on the skins. His set was a masterclass in tone and taste, capped by a raucous encore that drew a standing ovation.

The evening concluded with a spontaneous **artist jam session**, a joyful collaboration that embodied the Festival's communal spirit — musicians trading solos, smiles, and stories as the crowd swayed beneath the golden Sierra twilight.

#### The Food: Bones to Match the Blues

Of course, it wouldn't be *Blues & Bones* without the "bones." Barbecue pitmasters lined the fairgrounds, offering smoky ribs, pulled pork, brisket, and all the fixings. The quality was high across the board, with most festivalgoers agreeing that the food was as much a draw as the music itself. Cold beers,



local wines, and classic festival snacks rounded out the offerings, though some attendees noted that more vendors accepting card payments would've made life easier.

#### Atmosphere: Homegrown and Heartfelt

The fairgrounds provided a perfect rustic backdrop — wide open, friendly, and filled with that small-town hospitality that makes Calaveras County special. Blankets and low-back chairs dotted the lawn, families picnicked, and kids danced barefoot to the beat. The crowd, largely local but sprinkled with visitors from across Northern California, exuded a positive vibe from start to finish.

#### Final Take

The 2025 Blues & Bones Festival captured everything fans love about the genre — grit, groove, and genuine connection. Between the world-class musicianship, savory barbecue, and warm community spirit, this was a day to remember in Angels Camp. As the last notes of the final jam echoed across the foothills, one thing was clear: the blues are alive and well in Calaveras County, and they taste even better with a side of ribs.



## URGENT! WE NEED YOU!

The Sacramento Blues Society is looking for a

### Sponsorship Chairperson



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**FUNDRAISING = MORE MUSIC,  
MORE EVENTS, MORE BLUES!**

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Contact any SBS Board Member today.

#SacramentoBlues #KeepTheBluesAlive  
#SBSNeedsYou

# KEEPING THE BLUES ALIVE- TOGETHER

## We Need YOUR Help to Continue!

BY BARBARA KATEN

The Sacramento Blues Society has always been rooted in passion, tradition, and community. For more than four decades, our members have kept the music alive in Sacramento, sharing the blues with heart and soul. But as we look ahead, we face both opportunities and challenges.

#### Youth and the blues:

Many of our loyal members have been with us for years, and their dedication is the reason we stand strong today. But sadly, we lose members by attrition each year. Now, it's time to also reach out to the next generation—to invite young people into the blues family so they, too, can discover the power of this music and carry it forward. The blues is more than music—it's history, storytelling, and soul. With your help, and some new, younger members coming in, we'll make sure the blues doesn't just survive, but thrives—today and for generations

#### Support blues shows:

We also know times are tough. Ticket sales are down, but bringing world-class musicians to our stages depends on all of us. Supporting a show, renewing your membership, inviting a friend, or simply

spreading the word makes a bigger difference than you may realize.

#### Volunteer!

The Sacramento Blues Society is powered by volunteers—people just like YOU who share a love of the blues and want to keep it thriving in our community. From setting up shows to working the membership and merchandise tables, to simply spreading the word about our mission, every pair of helping hands makes a difference.

We know life is busy, but even a little of your time goes a long way toward making our events run smoothly and showing Sacramento what the blues is all about. Volunteering is also a fun way to meet fellow music lovers, support the artists, and keep our traditions strong.

If you'd like to get involved, please reach out to our Volunteer Coordinator: Lynette Shumway, shumwaylynette@yahoo.com, or text (760) 525-4288.

Or stop by the SBS table at any of our events and let us know you're ready to pitch in. Together, we can keep the blues alive and well in Sacramento!

Thank you for standing with us and for keeping the blues alive.

# THE BIG BLUES BENDER 2025

BY DOUG PRINGLE • Photos by Doug & Sheri Pringle

It was a musical vacation of a lifetime! Six stages, four days & nights of world class blues music, all in a four-star Las Vegas resort! The Big Blues Bender returned to the Westgate Las Vegas Resort & Casino September 4-7. The Big Blues Bender is a four-day music festival that occurs in the resort. The event runs from a Thursday to a Sunday, with the first official set beginning late afternoon on Thursday, and the final note of music in the wee hours of Monday morning. We drove down to Vegas on Wednesday.

It featured some of the world's finest blues musicians performing on multiple stages, indoor and outdoor. On average this year, the Big Blues Bender featured 45 billed artists, 22 sets a day, and 17+ hours of programming a day. They call it a "Bender" for a reason!



We had been looking at the event for many years. We always decided to pass. But this year we finally went. Living on the outskirts of Reno, it was a seven-hour drive to Vegas. Since I'm pushing 82 it was a bit too much. I told my wife, Sheri, that I would opt for flying if we go next year. That is the only bad news. Well, that, and the fact that we were overwhelmed by the food choices at the resort. Expensive and not that good in our opinion.

The good news is that we said goodbye to port-a-potties and roasting in an open field all day. At the Bender, your private oasis awaits! Dip back to your room for a power nap or a bathroom break. Enjoy a fine dinner in the steakhouse or play a few hands of blackjack, all within paces of the entertainment! Comfort, convenience, and world class entertainment is the hallmark of the Big Blues Bender. If you go in the future, you'll see why their motto is "Everything, An Elevator Ride Away!". Plus, parking is free. You can even validate your



valet ticket. The two main venues are huge and have big screens in case that really tall guy decides to sit in front of you.

The Bender keeps getting Bigger! They announced the addition of some excellent artists to the 2025 Big Blues Bender lineup. They included Samantha Fish, Rory Block, Josh Hoyer & Soul Colossal (IBC Band Winner) and Joce Reyome (IBC Solo Winner). Their latest addition to the Big Blues Bender lineup was none other than Bill Murray & His Blood Brothers! They were great! Murray can sing and the band was amazing! Bill Murray is currently touring with the band "Blood Brothers" featuring blues musicians Mike Zito and Albert Castiglia. Zito played two sets on his own and Castiglia is part of The Three Kings band. Murray's band showcased a blend of rock classics and blues.

Bill Murray, renowned for his comedic roles in films, has embraced a new artistic venture by performing live music with the Blood Brothers. This collaboration began after Murray joined the band during the Murray Brothers Caddyshack Golf Tournament, where he performed several songs, leading to the idea of a full tour together. Bill Murray's collaboration with



the Blood Brothers marks an exciting chapter in his career, allowing him to explore music while entertaining fans in a new way.

One of the bands we really love is the Mavericks. But we were deeply saddened to learn that Raul Malo, their lead singer, is experiencing post-surgery complications and, as a result, they were unable to join us. We were incredibly fortunate and grateful that Walter Trout agreed to step in as a headliner. Walter understands what it means to face life's toughest challenges, having survived a nearly life-ending illness just a few years ago. When he learned that a fellow musician was in need, he did not hesitate to lend a hand and step up for the Bender family. Trout did a set on two different days.

We really enjoyed The Cash Box Kings from Chicago. They specialize in Chicago-style blues from the 1940s and 1950s, as well as Delta blues style music from the 1920s and 1930s. The Cash Box Kings were created by singer, songwriter, and harmonica player Joe Nosek, who now heads the band. The band is named with respect to Cashbox, a defunct publication that kept a music chart from the 1940s



through the mid-1990s that rivaled Billboard. **Holler and Stomp**, the CBK's Blind Pig label debut, was nominated for Blues Blast Music Awards for "Band of the Year," "Song of the Year" and "Best Traditional Blues" CD. The band released **Black Toppin'** in 2013 to favorable reviews, and the album won the Blues Blast Music Award for Traditional Blues Album of the Year. Personally, I prefer their older style blues to the more modern sound of the, in my opinion, loud electric guitar.

Another group we enjoyed were The Three Kings. The Three Kings is a dynamic tribute act honoring blues legends B.B. King, Albert King, and Freddie King, brought to life by three contemporary blues guitarists: D.K. Harrell, Chris Cain, and Albert Castiglia.

D.K. Harrell was deeply inspired by B.B. King from a young age. After a moving encounter with B.B. in 2013, where he received personal advice and a guitar pick

from the legend, Harrell dedicated himself to carrying on King's legacy. His stage presence and playing style strongly mirror B.B.'s. Chris Cain reveres both B.B. and Albert King. A pivotal moment in his career came when Albert King invited him on stage, leading to a friendship that left a lasting impact on Cain. Albert would attend Cain's shows in Memphis, fostering a bond built on mutual respect. Albert Castiglia discovered Freddie King through his admiration for Eric Clapton. After diving deep into Freddie's discography, he



came to idolize Freddie's raw power and soulful voice. Castiglia now collaborates with Freddie King's former keyboardist, Lewis Stephens, in the Blood Brothers band.

The trio, each deeply connected to one of the original Kings, unites to celebrate their legacies with electrifying performances. Their shows blend technical prowess, heartfelt blues, and joyful chemistry, backed by a full band including brass and keys. With no egos and plenty of passion, The Three Kings promise a powerful, dance-inducing blues experience poised to captivate festival audiences worldwide.

GA-20 is an American blues band from Boston. The band is named after the guitar amplifier manufactured by Gibson from 1950 to 1961. They primarily play Chicago blues. In 2018, GA-20 were nominated for a Boston Music Award for Blues Artist of the Year. They have been nominated for the award seven years in a row. They won Blues Artist of the Year in 2019, 2021, 2022, 2023, and 2024. They were nominated for their first Blues Music Award in 2022 for Best Emerging Artist. Like many others, they played two sets on different days in different venues. They told the crowd that Hound Dog Taylor was one of their favorites. Mine too!

Tab Benoit was featured in two sets. His playing combines a number of blues styles, primarily Delta blues. He plays a stock 1972 Fender Telecaster Thinline electric guitar and writes his own musical compositions. In 2007, Benoit won his first B.B. King Entertainer of the Year Award

presented by the Blues Music Awards, described variously as "the highest accolade afforded musicians and songwriters in blues music" and "the premier blues music event in the world". He was inducted into The Louisiana Music Hall of Fame on May 16, 2010. "King" Solomon Hicks is an American guitarist, blues, jazz singer, and composer. His style of music ranges from jazz, blues, classical, gospel, R&B, funk, Afro-Cuban, and classic rock. Hicks has been a blues guitarist since he was 13. He plays a Benedetto GA35 guitar. Benedetto jazz guitars are hand crafted by Robert Benedetto an American luthier of archtop jazz guitars. His first recording was when he was 14 with the Cotton Club All-Star Band. The CD is called *Embryonic*. We had not seen him before. He is good. Very enjoyable!

Caron Nimoy "Sugaray" Rayford is a soul blues singer and songwriter. He has released five albums to date and been granted three Blues Music Awards. Rayford's 2019 album, *Somebody Save Me* was nominated for a Grammy Award in the Best Contemporary Blues Album category.

In 2010, Living Blues magazine noted that "Sugaray is a first-rate blues artist with a deep-running, church honed soulfulness." His latest album, *Human Decency*, was released in 2024. If you were lucky, you saw him at one of our Sacramento events a few years back.

Eddie 9V (9-volt) has made a name for



himself in the blues scene in the American South, wowing all types of audiences with his searing Freddie King-style approach to guitar and his original retro/soul songs. An "old soul" at the tender age of 27, Eddie makes his home in the swamps of Georgia and has played clubs and festivals throughout the region. His debut album, *Left My Soul in Memphis*, was recorded in a shotgun shack studio and was released in the fall of 2019. In Summer 2020, Eddie released *Way Down the Alley (Live at Blind Willie's)*. Capturing a raw performance with a rowdy and energetic three-hour live show, you can smell the booze and feel the atmosphere from the audience on a cool Atlanta night. We enjoyed him and his band.

We had not even heard of Toronzo



Cannon who is an American electric blues guitarist, vocalist and songwriter. He grew up on the South Side of Chicago near Theresa's Lounge where he heard blues artists including Buddy Guy and Junior Wells. Cannon first bought a guitar at age 22. He played reggae music before playing blues. Among the influences he has named are Albert Collins, B.B. King, Freddie King, Buddy Guy and Jimi Hendrix.

Cannon drives a Chicago Transit Authority bus during the day and performs at night, on weekends and during vacation breaks. He has performed at the Chicago Blues Festival nine times. He headlined in 2015. He has also performed in many United States and European cities. You know what; he is fun!

It was getting late but we stayed awake to hear The Teskey Brothers for the first time. The Teskey Brothers are an Australian blues rock band from Melbourne, named after the two brothers who formed the group in 2008. They started by playing in the streets and at parties, then playing larger venues. They were soon attracting attention from record labels. The band began to experience success in 2017. In January 2017, The Teskey Brothers released their debut album, *Half Mile Harvest*, which was produced in their home studio.

In 2019, they signed with Glassnote Records and Ivy League Records. They have released three albums: *Half Mile Harvest* (2017), *Run Home Slow* (2019) and *The Winding Way* (2023). At the 2019 ARIA Music Awards, The Teskey Brothers were nominated for seven awards. They won three categories for the album *Run Home Slow*, Best Group, Best Blues and Roots Album and Engineer of the Year (Sam Teskey).

We had a blast! Or should I say a bender. It is a great event, well worth the time and expense.



# Mark Hummel at Powerhouse Pub

BY MINDY GILES

Two of the greatest modern blues guitar stylists together on one stage were brought together by another blues great-harp player/songwriter/band leader/entrepreneur, Mark Hummel.

They dazzled the crowd on Sunday, Sept. 21 at the Powerhouse Pub in Folsom, CA. We are talking Texas legend, Anson Funderburgh and West Coast legend Junior Watson. With the deep rhythm section of Wes Starr and Kedar Roy, we were all in a powerful Golden State-Lone Star State of mind.

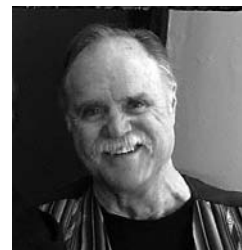


1st row: Dirty Laundry IBC fundraiser; 2nd row: Mike Hammar & The Nails IBC fundraiser; 3rd row: "Blue Sunday" with Jeramy Norris & the Blues Cartel; 4th row: 14th Annual Blues & Bones Festival

# THE HEART BEHIND THE BLUES

## Volunteer Spotlight: EARL WITHYCOMBE

### CELEBRATING THE PEOPLE WHO KEEP OUR SOCIETY STRONG



BY BARBARA KATEN

There's a quiet force of kindness and commitment that runs through the Sacramento Blues Society, and his name is Earl Withycombe. If you've attended a holiday party, browsed the Society's merchandise table, or witnessed the tireless setup and breakdown before and after an SBS event, chances are you've seen Earl in action—often with a grin, always with a can-do spirit. Earl's journey with SBS began in 1999, at one of those legendary holiday parties where music, community, and good cheer come together. It was there that he found not just a welcoming organization but also a new way to channel his lifelong passion for service. Nearly two decades later, at the 2018 holiday party, he responded to a call for volunteers to help with grant writing. Drawing on his extensive experience with other nonprofits, Earl stepped up to help secure funding for the BITS (Blues in the Schools) program, a role he embraced for several years.

Yet, Earl's volunteer résumé extends far beyond fundraising. As he humbly describes, he often serves as "sherpa" for his wife, Lynette, the SBS Director of Merchandise, pitching in at every event where tabling occurs. He's a backup vendor, a setup/breakdown specialist, and a general gofer—ready to help wherever an extra hand is needed.

Volunteering isn't just an activity for Earl—it's a way of life. From leading a local health council and helping secure a National Health Service Corp doctor for the remote western Sierra County, to serving as a clean air litigator and even a volunteer bicycle valet, Earl's commitment to community is unwavering. "A small group of individuals can make a big difference," he says, reflecting on the heartfelt accolades he's received through volunteer work—accolades, he notes, that far outshine those from his professional career.

For Earl, the Blues is a living, breathing art form—a soundtrack for both joy and resilience. "I'm a dancer," he shares. "I love the Blues because it's got a slower tempo, generally, than Rock music, and easier for me to keep up with as I continue aging." But his passion runs deeper than rhythm; supporting the Blues is also a stand for social justice, lifting up segments of society that have faced discrimination.

Ask Earl about his favorite artist, and he's quick to name Tommy Castro, with "99½" topping his list of songs. He recalls a memorable dinner with Charles Baty (as Charles preferred to be called) on a Legendary Rhythm and Blues cruise, listening to tales from the origins of the Night Cats—some stories, he admits, "I cannot repeat."

Every volunteer has their stories, and Earl's are as colorful as they are heartfelt. One recent example: dashing out before a show to the nearest green pharmacy to acquire a pre-roll for a band member who'd forgotten their stash. It's the kind of gofer task that, while simple, underscores the camaraderie and good vibes running through SBS events.

So, what keeps Earl coming back? "The accolades. I'm a sucker for making people happy." It's a sentiment that resonates with anyone who's ever found joy in service.

Earl has advice for anyone thinking of volunteering with SBS: "Let the Society know of any special skills or experience you have that might be of benefit to our operations. Do not stress when faced with adversity—we're all here to have fun. Show up on time." Sage words from someone who truly embodies the spirit of giving.

Who inspires Earl? The courage of those who take the stage, embracing the vulnerability and thrill of entertaining an audience, reminds him of his own days in melodramas. "I admire anyone who has the courage to get up on stage and attempt to entertain an audience," he says.

SBS is grateful for volunteers like Earl Withycombe, whose generosity, dedication, and infectious enthusiasm keep our Society thriving. Whether he's raising funds, merchandising, dancing, or simply spreading happiness, Earl proves that one person really can make a difference—and that the Blues is, at its heart, a celebration of community.

## BLUES IN THE SCHOOLS



- RICK SNYDER, CHAIR BITS COMMITTEE

The Blues in the Schools (BITS) program has had a strong start to the new school year. Over the past month, we have sent numerous emails to elementary schools throughout the greater Sacramento area to introduce and promote our assemblies. We are also actively working with the Sacramento County Office of Education (SCOE), now led by Charles DeAngelus, to secure a position in the Any Given Child grant catalog. This partnership would allow schools within the program to easily book BITS assemblies, broadening our impact significantly.

In addition, we have expanded our outreach to parochial schools across Sacramento, and we are already receiving responses from educators who are eager to bring BITS to their students. We expect to begin booking assemblies in the near future.

Last year, BITS successfully piloted a beginning guitar class at one school, and we are hopeful that this opportunity will continue into the current year. Looking ahead, our next major initiative is outreach to middle and high schools for our Artist-in-Residence program. Traditionally, this program begins about two months prior to the Big Day of Giving (the first Thursday in May). Last year, four schools participated; this year, we aim to increase that number.

It's important to note that the Blues in the Schools program absorbs the full cost of the Artist-in-Residence program, including artist honorariums and the expenses of providing a sound system. To sustain and grow this vital work, we invite you to support BITS with a contribution. Every gift helps us continue bringing live music, cultural history, and creative inspiration to students across our community.

Please make a contribution here: <https://bit.ly/SacBits>

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Our donors and members are the life blood of our organization. Without you we would be unable to accomplish our mission. Please join these major donors by making a tax deductible contribution by sending a check made out to "The Sacramento Blues Society" to SBS, PO Box 60580, Sacramento, CA 95860-0580. We need your continued support. When you renew your membership, why not add an additional contribution? Every little bit helps!

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