

SACRAMENTO

A bi-monthly publication of the Sacramento Blues Society



BLUE NOTES!

Blues Society

JULY - AUG
2025
ISSUE 46
VOL. 4



President's Column

By Marcel Smith

Greetings SBS Family,

It's summertime—and as the song goes, "the living is easy" (sometimes!). I hope this message finds all of you in great spirits and good health.

Another vibrant season is upon us, and we're ready to let the good times roll!

First, I want to give a heartfelt shout-out to Shirley McCoy for her outstanding work in coordinating the recent International Blues Challenge (IBC) during our Annual SBS competition at the Torch Club. Kudos to all the talented artists who participated and showcased their gifts—your dedication truly inspires us all.

A huge congratulations to our two winners heading to Memphis in January 2026: Mike Hammar and the Nails in the band category, and Dirty Laundry in the solo category. This is a fantastic achievement, and we're all behind you! Please see the ads in this issue for the two events we've scheduled for August and September, as we come together to raise funds for their trip to Memphis. Let's back our artists and show them our full support!

A special thank you to Mindy Giles for organizing an excellent show at Harlow's featuring Blues Music Award Winner Mike Zito. It was a thrill to see our IBC winners in the house—Dirty Laundry opening the show and Mike Hammar in attendance. This is what community is all about—supporting those who pour their hearts into their craft.

Thanks to the leadership and dedication of Sally Katen, for coordinating the 6th Annual Johnny "Guitar" Knox Memorial Jam at the Torch Club, which was well attended and a beautiful tribute to our friend.

Indeed, June was a busy month, and there's more excitement on the horizon! Our "Blue Sunday" shows are a great opportunity to



introduce new members and bands to our vibrant community. Let's continue to support our volunteers—without whom none of this would be possible.

Finally, I encourage each of you to spread the word—invite friends and family to join the Sacramento Blues Society and remind them that, yes, "the blues is alright!" Together, we keep the blues alive, thriving, and full of joy.

Thank you for your ongoing support. Let's keep the blues rolling!

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Blue Notes Newsletter - Cari Chenkin & Jan Kelley

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

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

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

All SBS Members in good standing are invited to attend.

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

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

Layout - **Cari Chenkin**

Cover Design: **Bob Cosman**

Cover Photos - **Indigo Rian Photography, Bob Cosman**

Printing & Mailing by: **Premier Print & Mail**

Blues Notes Ad Rates:

www.sacblues.org/advertising-rates

Jan's Jams Weekly e-newsletter: - **Jan Kelley**

Website: www.sacblues.org

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Blues In The Schools Update

By Rick Snyder (aka Rico)
Blues in the Schools Committee Chair



As the summer sun warms Sacramento, the Blues in the Schools (BITS) program enters its restful phase following an exceptionally vibrant season. Our annual BITS Showcase, held successfully on May 4 (coinciding intentionally with the Big Day of Giving [BDOG]) marked a fantastic culmination of months of enthusiastic musical mentorship and growth.

Throughout our busy season, dedicated artists-in-residence provided inspiring mentorship at multiple local schools. At Cal Middle School, talented blues artist Kyle Rowland, a proud Cal Middle alum, collaborated with music teacher Talyn Wong, igniting students' passion for blues music. West Campus High School's students flourished under Lew Fratis' guidance, alongside Brianna Fonseca, a music teacher and proud BITS graduate herself. River City High School benefited from Jonnie Domino's vibrant instruction, greatly supported by music teacher Felicia Weatherly.

Meanwhile, Steve Boettner energetically led Rosemont High School students, assisted by music teacher Erik Beckett. Collectively, these four schools showcased the burgeoning talents of approximately 30-40 students performing in diverse band configurations, displaying confidence and musicality beyond their years.

Additionally, our beginning guitar class at Alexander Twilight Secondary Academy, skillfully facilitated by myself, Rick Snyder, was enthusiastically embraced. The eight-session program saw students eagerly commit to returning next year, underscoring the impactful reach and popularity of blues education.

As we look ahead, excitement builds around planning our upcoming BITS 20th Anniversary Celebration. We envision hosting this milestone event at a premier Sacramento venue, featuring engaging panel discussions, an enriching harmonica workshop, vibrant musical performances, and more memorable moments.

The next BITS season is set to commence in February 2026. If you have a student attending a K-12 school in the greater Sacramento area who may be interested, please contact me, Rick Snyder, at sacbits@gmail.com to explore possibilities for participation. Stay tuned for exciting updates and announcements. Together, let's continue keeping the blues alive and thriving in Sacramento!

Big Day of Giving 2025

By Rick Snyder, BDOG lead

The Big Day of Giving (BDOG) 2025 has wrapped up, and our collective efforts were indeed commendable. This year, we successfully raised a total of \$1,330 through our online donation platforms.

Of these contributions, \$615 was generously directed toward the Sacramento Blues Society, while an additional \$715 specifically supported our Blues in the Schools (BITS) program.

Our in-person fundraising at the BITS Showcase was also successful, generating an additional \$705 in donations on the day of BDOG itself. This combined effort brought our total BDOG 2025 earnings to a respectable \$2,035.

While these results are encouraging, we continuously strive for growth and improvement. We are committed to enhancing our ef-

forts and making BDOG 2026 even more impactful and successful.

A heartfelt thank you to everyone who contributed to making this year's event a success. Your generosity helps sustain and enrich our vibrant blues community.

Spring Blues Fling

Swabbie's on the River, May 3, 2025

By Cari Chenkin and Jan Kelley

Photos by Cari Chenkin

It was another fine day at Swabbie's on the River with ideal weather and a great line-up of blues artists. Brought to us by TcKing Productions, this event



featured Matt Rainey & the Dip-pin' Sauce. Matt's band members included his musical partner Bert Thomas on keys, Mike Marsh on drums, SBS Hall of Famers Jimmy Pailer on guitar and Chris



Fraire on bass, and of course, Matt on guitar and vocals.



They delivered a sizzling set that contained both blues classics such as "Goin' Down the Road Feelin'



Bad" and James Cotton's "Here I Am", and Matt's original tunes, including "Farmer John". They got the crowd up on their feet on the dance floor early on, and the action didn't stop there.



Next up was headliner Daniel Castro. Daniel Castro continuously

amazes me, no matter how many times I've seen him perform! His wizardry on the fret dazzles me at times and his voice is pretty great too! He favored us with many



of his songs from his CDs: like "Johnny Nitro," and "Maureena," from his album *Desperate Rain*.

One of my favorites from his album *Live at the Saloon* included his long





rendition of "Cross Cut Saw" and then everybody's favorite cover of Albert King's "I'll Play the Blues For You". Daniel invited his wife Julie to come up and sing a couple of tunes, to crowd approval.

The surprise of the day was Daniel's sister (coincidentally also named Julie), who sang some pretty hot blues on her own. She has a band in the LA area, so she's no stranger to the stage.



All in all, it was a wonderful kickoff to the summer concert season, and Swabbie's was a great venue for it.

What's On Your Playlist?

By Barbara Katen

I'll be honest, it's been getting harder to get folks to respond to my requests for playlist songs. But not this issue! Everybody I asked came through (well, almost) and it all came together at the last minute when our SBS 2025 IBC Competition Winners agreed to participate. For those of you who attended the Competition this year, you know the competition was tough. So, this says a lot for the Band and Solo/Duo our judges selected to send to Memphis in January. Yes, they blew the roof off the place! If you would like this column to continue, please send your top five playlist songs to me at bkaten2@gmail.com and put "Playlist" in the subject line. I'll keep going as long as the tunes keep coming my way!



Mike Hammar (SBS IBC 2025 Competition Winner – Band/Mike Hammar & the Nails)

- "Hootchie Coochie Man" - Muddy Waters
- "Damn Right I Got the Blues" - Buddy Guy
- "Texas Flood" - Stevie Ray Vaughan
- "I'll Play the Blues for You" - Albert King
- "Everyday I Have the Blues" - B.B. King

Marcus Valez (SBS IBC 2025 Competition Winner – Single or Duo/Dirty Laundry)

- "Lina Blues" - Jabbo Smith
- "Reckless Disposition" - Forty Drop Few
- "Black Bottom Strut" - The Three Striped Gears
- "True Blue Lou" - Ethel Waters
- "Uncle Sam Said" - John White

Pat "Ratatat Pat" Balcom

- "Me and the Devil Blues" - Robert Johnson
- "Boogie Chillin'" - John Lee Hooker
- "Matchbox Blues" - Blind Lemon Jefferson
- "Baby, Please Don't Go" - Big Joe Williams
- "Smoke Stack Lightning" - Howlin' Wolf

Ben Daw

- "This Land" - Gary Clark, Jr.
- "Sultan's Curse" - Mastodon
- "Smiley Faces" - Gnarles Barkley
- "Tap Out" - The Strokes
- "Villagers" - The Lillingtons

Jeff Parkin (@frontrowblues)

- "I Can't Wait" - Diunna Greenleaf (Rhythm Room 9/2022)
- "Chicken Fat" - Mick Martin Big Blues Band (PHP 12/2023)
- "Goodbye Tamika" - Alabama Mike w/Rick Estrin (Harlows 2/2024)
- "Woodstock Boogie" - Canned Heat (Maui Sugar Mill 10/21)
- "Mannish Boy" - John Primer w/Kyle Rowland (Topanga Blues Festival 5/22)
- "I'm Coming Home to You" - Marcel Smith w/Mick Martin Big Blues Band (Sutter Creek Theater 9/24)

* Note: All songs on Jeff's playlist were taken from recordings he made at the live shows referenced and dated.

SBS Hall of Fame Inductees

Class of 2025 Announced

By Sally Katen, HOF Chair

After months of a long nomination period, during which SBS members were encouraged to nominate prospective members for the Hall of Fame, the SBS Hall of Fame Committee has announced the "Class of 2025" Inductees. Let's give a big round of applause and appreciation to this year's Inductees:



Dave Segal, David Garrity, Paul Vieira, Stanley Alves and Wayne Smith!

Please be sure and congratulate them if you see them out and about! The 2025 SBS Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony and Afterparty will occur on Sunday, September 28, 2025 at Harlow's from 1pm to 4 pm, then we'll move to the Torch Club for the Showcase and Wall Hanging of the photos. The New Hall of Fame Members will be sharing their talents on the Torch Club Stage from 5 pm – 7 pm, and there is no cover charge.

Tickets are currently on sale at Harlow's Box office, or online.

THE SACRAMENTO BLUES SOCIETY PRESENTS

THE 2025 HALL OF FAME AWARDS

SUN. SEPTEMBER 28
 CEREMONY: HARLOW'S 1-4PM / SHOWCASE: TORCH CLUB 5-7PM

CONGRATULATIONS TO THIS YEAR'S INDUCTEES:
DAVE SEGAL • DAVID GARRITY
PAUL VIEIRA • STANLEY ALVES • WAYNE SMITH

ENTERTAINMENT TBA

TICKETS: SBS \$15 / GAS20 @ HARLows.COM
 MORE INFO: SACBLUES.ORG



Johnny "Guitar" Knox 6th Annual Pro Jam

By Sally Katen

Photos by Steve Martarano and Sally Katen

It was a fun day at the Torch Club Sunday on June 1, celebrating the Johnny "Guitar" Knox 6th Annual Pro Jam by the Sacramento Blues Society Hall of Fame. Johnny was so proud to be a Hall of Fame member that he would bring his trophy to the Torch Club when he had his open jams. Sunday was the day to honor him with musicians who came to jam and helped raise funds for the HOF. The SBS membership and fans came in droves - in other words, the place was packed!!



There were many Hall of Fame members and musicians who volunteered their time and talents: the backup band was Dave Segal (Emcee and HOF 2025), Rat-a-tat Pat Balcom (HOF 2013) and Dean Chance. Now that is a backup band to have!



One of the special guest musicians was Aaron King, keeper of Johnny's 1980's Tokai Gold Top Les Paul along

with emcee Dave Segal, who has the 1962 Guild X-500 guitar of former Torch Club Jam Host, the late Jeff Felcher, which they proudly displayed and used to open the event! Wow what an opening!



Other HOF and local musicians who played were Angel Reyes (HOF 2023), Liz Peel Van Houten (HOF 2015), Ray Copeland



(HOF 2012), Marilyn Woods, Dave Croall, Lew Fratis (HOF 2013), Marty De-radorian (HOF 2019), Zot (HOF 2022),



and a few more I am probably forgetting, (so sorry).



Thank you to the Sacramento Blues community who came once again to honor Johnny Knox. We hope to see you there again next year!



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Blues In the Schools Showcase Wows!

By Liz Walker

Photos by Cari Chenkin

We weren't quite dancing around a Maypole on May Day but there was definitely dancing, toe tapping, finger snapping and booty shaking when the students from the four after school programs showed off their talent. It was a beautiful evening at Brookside Restaurant in Rancho Cordova with fans, friends and family in attendance.



Lew Fratis returns as the Artist in Residence at West Campus. Music teacher, Brianna Fonseca, was a participant herself in the program when she attended West Campus and is a strong supporter



of the BITS program. The West Campus crew consisted of Dominic O'Toole-guitar, Ethan Chagan-keys, Daniel Gonzalez-Sanders-vocals, Jane Ertl-guitar, and Frances Urbano-vocals.



This was the first year the program was held at a middle school. The students of Cal Middle School were so excited they showed up before school at 7:00 a.m. to work with Kyle Rowland. He had his hands full with a large group: Emma Garcia-clarinet, Eliza Merson-flute, Angela Ma-flute, Rio Roth-tuba, Randy Martinez-tenor sax, A. J. Jenkins-drums, Tedy Vincent-bass, Isaih Vasquez-keys, Elias Spann-guitar,



Jaesyn Juarez-guitar.

Though BITS has had a long-standing relationship with River City High School in West Sacramento I believe this is



the first time there was an after-school program. Artist in Residence Johnny Domino welcomed Levi Garica-bass, Enzo Perfetto-drums, Owen Quarter-guitar, Genieve Zamora-vocals & tenor sax, Jayden Sambrano-guitar & drums, Leo



Reyes-piano, Gariel DeLuna-bass, Ethan Smalley-clarinet, Yaho Saini-tenor sax & clarinet.

Retired teacher Steve Boettner returned to Rosemont High School as the Artist in Residence. His large group included: Alyssa Roberts-vocals & tambourine, Margarita



Muklin-keys, Lexy Barnum-vocals, Dublin-bass, Damian Hirschinger-drums, Sean Krauss-guitar, Aaron Reeves-drums, Kari Autio-piano, Justice Martinez-guitar, Zildjian-Beckett-bass, Jazzmine Stillson-vocals.





Torch Club
JULY

Sat., 5th - Bill Mylar & Friends, 6 pm
 Fri., 11th - Too Many Squirrels, 6 pm
 Sat., 12th - Elvis Cantu, 9 pm
 Sat., 19th - The Gold Souls, 9 pm
 Thurs., 24th - My Son the Hurricane, 9 pm
 Fri., 25th - Leaping Blennies, 6 pm
 Sat. 26th - The Crescent Cats, 6 pm; Peter Petty, 9 pm
 Sun., 27th - SBS Blue Sunday - Dave Croall & The Soothers, 4 pm
 Weds., 30th - Daryl Rowland Band, 9 pm
 Thu., 31st - Danny Sandoval & His Amigos, 9 pm

AUGUST

Fri., 1st - Bill Mylar & Friends, 6 pm; Joy & Madness, 9 pm
 Fri., 8th - Ten Foot Tiger, 9 pm
 Sat., 9th - Hamilton Loomis, 9 pm
 Sat., 16th - Mercy Me!, 9 pm
 Thu., 28th - Danny Sandoval & His Amigos, 9 pm
 31st - SBS Blue Sunday - Jeremy Norris & The Blues Cartel, 4 pm

www.torchclub.net

Produced a CD This Year? Want It to Be Recognized World-wide?

Enter the Sacramento Blues Society IBC "Best Self-Produced CD" for the Blue Foundation.

SBS is participating in the upcoming 2026 "Best Self-Produced CD" this year. We are excited to offer this opportunity to our members and musical friends.

In 2005, the Blues Foundation established an award for the "Best Self-Produced CD", given out at the International Blues Challenge. As part of our mission to celebrate blues recordings and to ensure the future of this uniquely American art form, this award was created to recognize excellence in independent blues recordings.

There are a few rules to follow, so read the information below and if you are interested, reach out to Sally Katen at bluesforthecure@hotmail.com

BEST SELF-PRODUCED OFFICIAL RULES

- # Entries for the Best Self-Produced CD can only be submitted by the Blues Foundation Affiliated Organizations.
- # Each Affiliate is permitted one entry.
- # The CD entered may be recorded and performed by an act other than is entered in the current year's International Blues Challenge.
- # Compilations are not eligible.
- # Only CDs released between November 1st, 2024 and October 31st 2025 are eligible for consideration as the 2026 Best Self Produced CD. Deadline for submitting is November 1, 2025.
- # While we encourage a competition at the Affiliate level to determine the CD it will sponsor for the Best Self-Produced CD, we do not require one. If an Affiliate does not conduct a competition to

determine who it will sponsor but instead appoints a CD, that CD may not include a board member or officer of the sponsoring Affiliated organization.

A performer who has previously been nominated for a Blues Music Award (formerly the W.C. Handy Blues Awards) shall not be eligible for this competition. A CD issued in the name of an otherwise eligible performer which also includes the contributions of a Blues Music Award nominee may be ineligible, depending on the extent of the contribution. Please contact the The Blues Foundation directly to confirm eligibility.

A CD on a record label that has been previously nominated for a Blues Music Award (formerly the W.C. Handy Blues Award) shall not be eligible for this competition.

Judging will take place in three rounds. Judges will remain anonymous in order to protect them from outside influences and represent a cross-section of professionals from the blues radio and print industry. The final results will be announced at the finals of the 41st International Blues Challenge. (to be announced).

Local IBC Competition Top Notch!

By Shirley McCoy, IBC Chairperson

Photos by Barbara Katen, Mindy Giles & Jeff Parkin

The Sacramento Blues Society's 2025 Local International Blues Challenge Competition was one of our best and most exciting in recent years. The energy from the audience and all of our competing acts was incredible! Six contestants, three bands, and three solo acts gave us all a day full of blues showcasing some very diverse talent.



It was another extremely close competition- in fact, so close that the Committee decided that it would be a missed opportunity if we did not include a winner in

both the band category and in the solo category. We are proud to announce that both Mike Hammar and the Nails and Dirty Laundry will be representing Sacramento in Memphis in 2026!



Mike Hammar and the Nails recently played a "Blue Sunday" gig - we were all very excited to see that he had signed up for the competition and felt that

they would be strong competitors. Mike and the band had infectious energy that just grabbed people right from their seats and onto the dance floor. You could tell he and the band were just having a blast.

Their set was all original music. Maybe it's because they've been together for such a long time, but the band was also very tight... Everyone got a little chance to shine. They were very well-polished and brought the dyn-o-mite!



Dirty Laundry, aka Marcus, was the wild card of the competition that no one was expecting. I'm glad to know that our beloved Kyle Rowland urged him to sign up to compete. I think I can speak for all of us in attendance, we were glad that he did. His voice cried out the blues in an authentic, soulful way where he

made us all feel what he was playing. Emotional. Resonator guitar, harmonica, Piedmont-style picking... seemingly quiet and reserved hanging out in the crowd, not someone to draw any kind of attention, but up on that stage we all saw a promising young talent emerge! Dirty Laundry just had it! The kind of it to take it all the way to Memphis. We can't wait to see what happens with him in the future.



Our other competitors each also had their own unique something that captured the audience and our judges in their own ways. I was glad to see the Teri Wilson Blues Band in our line-up. They were the only woman-fronted blues band in our competition. I would've liked to have seen the full



band but even the three-piece held a steady spot in the highlights of the day. Teri got people out on the dance floor as well and added a little funk and soul to the blues. Her stage-presence style reminded me a bit of a Debbie



Davies type. I'd say she represented female power in the blues quite well and recommend checking out her band when you can.

Rooster brought out a rockier, rawer side to their blues. They had some youthful energy to them that rippled out through the audience. Much like Mike Hammar, they had their own crowd that showed up to cheer





them on. They are a good party band that commands an audience and knows how to get people moving to their grooves. They also have appeared at a "Blue Sunday" show back in 2023 gaining SBS fans.

Christian DeWild (who was a previous SBS IBC winner who represented us in Memphis several years

ago) set himself apart by being the only one to sing acapella and really grabbed the attention of the crowd from when he first sat down. His strong suit was his songwriting abilities and singing. As one of our judges noted, he "talked like a white



guy and sang like an old Black man". You could tell he put the

soul and emotions into his set, too.

Rusty Sterling was our returning competitor from last year. You could tell he had taken some more time to hone his songwriting and playing skills. He also brought along his own little posse. His set was probably one of the broader-reaching as far as different types of the blues- as much as can be with a solo artist. Definitely has a hold on that old-school style and it was a treat to see him on stage being vulnerable and sharing his stories and personality with us all.



The day proved that the blues is still alive and has hope to thrive on into the future. Sacramento will be very well represented in Memphis next year.

In the meantime, we've planned two fundraising events (so far!) for both Mike Hammar and the Nails and Dirty Laundry in the next couple of months. Look for the ads in this issue. Support live music when you can and your local member bands who gave us such a great day of music!



"Blue Sunday" Update

By Cari Chenkin

Photos by Dale Roberts, Barbara Katen & Mindy Giles

Now in 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 all the way to the end of 2025, and I'll soon start booking our 2026 dates!

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.

In this issue, we're reviewing shows from April and May. June's show, which featured the Papa Day Blues Band, will have occurred too late for publication in this issue. But we'll catch up with them next issue. We'll feature Dave Croall & The Soothers for the July 27 date, and Jeramy Norris & The Blues Cartel are on deck for August 31. And more great Sunday music yet to come!

April 27, 2025

Red's Blues

April's Blue Sunday show featured our ONLY ALL-HOF-MEMBER BAND, Red's Blues.

They last performed at a Blue Sunday back in December of 2021, so we were excited to welcome them back almost three and a



half years later. And they did not disappoint!



With Beth Reid-Grigsby (the "Red" in Red's Blues) out front on vocals, Doug Crumpacker on guitar, harmonica and vocals, RW Grigsby on bass



and Tim Wilbur on drums, the band also included a "guest star", Joe Ybarra, on pedal steel guitar.



The band was in top form, playing a mix of their original tunes, as well as some well-chosen blues classics. Originals "Broke Down in the Fast Lane", "Sherry Ann", "Sally Lou" and "What's a Poor Girl Gonna Do" were featured in the first set. That set also included RW's



cover of Jimmy Reed's "Bright Lights, Big City", the Zydeco classic "Hello Josephine" and the first song Beth ever sang onstage "Trouble in Mind".

The second set contained a similar mix of the familiar and original songs, with originals "All Dressed Up Got No Place to Go", "Road Scholar" and Beth's musical tribute to Memphis Minnie. They covered Wanda Jackson's "Mean, Mean Man" and Carl Perkins' "Boppin' the Blues". Harmonica player & vocalist Frankie Munz came up to sit in for a song or two, and the band also played "Rock with Me Tonight" and covered "Why Don't You Do Right" and "Mother Earth".



Doug's tasty guitar work, along with Beth's fiery and passionate vocals, the solid rhythm section of RW and Tim, and the tuneful addition of the pedal steel made for a very fine afternoon of musical delight!



May 25, 2025

Rube & the Rhythm Rockers

May's Blue Sunday show featured the first appearance of member band Rube & The Rhythm Rockers. Band members included Steve "Rube" Rubenstein on vocals and harmonica, Jeff Horsley on guitar, Brad Evans on keyboards, Rick Hill on bass, Scotty Stewart on drums and Will Fowler and Don Bowman on saxophone. The band has recently re-formed, after a hiatus fueled in part by Steve's tragic loss of his home in one of the recent wildfires.

The band was tight and versatile,



featuring lots of jump and swing blues and sax-laced grooves. Selections included both original and cover tunes, and there was a nice variety of beats and tempos throughout their sets. Jeff Horsley's guitar work was excellent, featuring a great clean tone, some



jazzy vibes and solos played with a lot of heart. Steve's harmonica playing likewise was top-notch.

The first set began with an instrumental tune and then jumped into the classic "Who's Been Talking". They swung it with "I Just Love the Blues", then gave us a taste of the NOLA sound with "Hello Josephine". Other tunes included Louis Jordan's "Choo Choo Ch'Boogie", "Messin' with the Kid" and "Natural Born Lover". They ended the first set with a Steve original, which was inspired by his wedding anniversary, "She's My Baby".



The second set started off with Big Joe Turner's "Ain't Gonna Be Your Dog No More, then another original tune "Highway 99". Other tunes included "Flip Flop & Fly" and "Blues with a Feeling". Rick Hill took over the vocals for "Caledonia" and they also played Wynonie Harris' "Big Fat Mama".



The third set started off with "Do the Hip Shake Baby" and

"I'm Ready" and kept the audience on their feet and on the dance floor. The band closed the show with the classic "Shake, Rattle & Roll". And



everyone there had a ball!



Help Send Mike Hammar & the Nails to Memphis!

SBS IBC Fundraiser!



Sunday, Sept. 7 - The Torch Club
904 15th St., Sacramento

4pm-7pm
\$15

Presented by The Sacramento Blues Society/Torch Club

Mick Martin's Big Birthday Bash!

By Frank Farmer

Photos by Bob Hakins and Mindy Giles

Mick Martin recently had a birthday, his 76th, but we who were in the audience got all the presents. Mick and his band mates brought their A++ game to Mick's Birthday Bash at Sacramento's Sofia

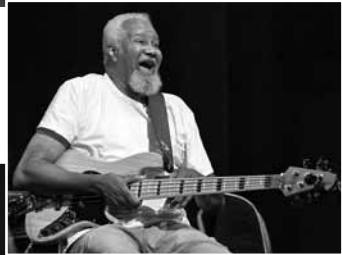


Center for the Arts on May 24. His Big Blues Band mates were on fire, with their usual sterling instrumental work and fine vocalists.

Andrew Little performed several



numbers on vocals, in addition to his masterful guitar work. David Johnson did the same for a couple of songs, setting aside his trumpet. Danny Sandoval (saxophone), Andres Sandoval (saxophone), Steve Utstein (keyboards),



AJ Joyce (bass), and Jim Caselli (drums) were all outstanding. This was a very fresh show, making it clear that the band is not resting on their laurels.

But then ... the guest stars! Marcel Smith brought his gospel-tinged soul.



Katie Knipp shared some provocative new songs that cut deep. Annie Sampson brought her brilliant take on Dylan's "It's All Over Now, Baby Blue." And then, Tim Barnes ... he brought it all. Joining with Annie Sampson, Tim and Annie shared some songs from their old band Stoneground as well as a blast of some old Blues Rockers., closing with a powerful rendition of Don Nix's classic "Goin' Down".



Mick Martin, the guest of honor, head provocateur, treating us to soulful vocals and harmonica. Taking it all in, sitting in the eye of the hurricane, all in his honor!



Selwyn Birchwood Show Review

Thursday, May 15, 2025, The Press Club, Sacramento

By Cari Chenkin

The SBS presented a special show on May 15, featuring Florida bluesman Selwyn Birchwood. This was our first show at a brand-new-to-us venue, the Press Club, in midtown Sacramento. Both the show and the venue got hearty "thumbs-ups" from those who attended.

Since I hadn't planned on writing the review, I took no notes. So, this will be short and sweet!



I've seen Selwyn twice before – once a few years back when Mindy Giles brought him to the Starlet Room for one of her "Blues & Bourbon" series shows, and then last year at the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival. While he impressed me with his playing, singing and songwriting initially, he's gotten even better with the pass-



ing years. His show was nothing short of phenomenal. His band consisted of Selwyn on guitar and vocals, plus Henley Connor III

- Drums, John Hetherington - Keyboards, Reggie Oliver - Saxophone and Donald Wright - Bass. His vocals were on point, his playing was at times ferocious and at times restrained, with incredible tone and nuance. And yes, he still likes to play onstage barefoot!



A Casual Conversation with Selwyn Birchwood

By Shirley McCoy

I jumped at the chance to interview Selwyn Birchwood (my other blues crush) ahead of his May appearance at the Press Club. It was a rare treat for him to be in California, and he played a killer show for us!

Blue Notes (BN): For people who haven't seen you play before, what do you think you could tell them to expect from one of your shows?

Selwyn Birchwood (SB): I always say you're gonna see a band that's just as happy to see you as you are to see them. We don't do an "everybody keeps to themselves and sits on their hands" kind of a show. We get up to perform for you and entertain you. You're gonna hear 100% original music. That's what we do. I play all the songs that I've written that are on my records. We're gonna be out playing stuff off of our newest album as well as some unreleased stuff that should be out a little later on this year. I'm excited for everyone to hear the new songs.

BN: The last album on Alligator was *Exorcist* and then you did an-



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other one with Bobby Rush, *Old School*. You self-produced this one. Tell us a little bit more about what it was like working with Bobby Rush.

SB: It was awesome, man. It's a trip for me because I've been listening to Bobby Rush since I was in high school. It's a really cool thing. I wrote the song specifically for him. He sang and played harmonica on the title track of that album. I couldn't be happier with the way it turned out. It got a ton of airplay and people have been really excited about it.

BN: One of my favorite songs off of the *Exorcist* album is the "Florida Man" song - that's a fun song. What was it like for you to grow up there in Florida? Do you have any favorite "Florida Man" stories yourself?

SB: Yeah, there are too many to count. I just thought it would be a cool thing to try to make a song of all completely true stories that just illustrate the craziness of some of the stuff going on. It feels like a crazy carnival ride sometimes, but I think that song did a good job of capturing the insanity of it all.

BN: You started playing guitar at 13 and toured with Sonny Rhodes at 19. Are there any favorite memories of that time? What was the best advice he ended up giving you?

SB: I'm just very happy and feel very privileged to have ridden the coattails of one of those old school blues men at such a young age. I was fortunate that I knew what I wanted to do at a very young age - playing the blues was the be-all, end-all for me, so to be able to actually get out and do it was great. He took me under his wing when I was 19 and took me all over the US, all over Canada, showed me what it was to be a traveling blues musician and band leader. I learned everything I know from him, and I wouldn't be traveling and

touring and doing what I'm doing today if it wasn't for studying under him so early in my career.

BN: You got your MBA from the University of Tampa. Did you always have it in mind to do music as your full-time career?

SB: Yeah, I mean everybody wants to play music as a full-time career that picks up an instrument but it's like wanting to be in the NBA when you're a kid and the odds normally aren't stacked in your favor. So, I'm very blessed that a mixture of hard work and some lucky breaks along with, hopefully some talent, has allowed me to be able to do this for a full-time career now for the past 12 years and I haven't looked back.

BN: You went to the International Blues Challenge in Memphis. What is it like out there? The competition? Do you have any advice for anybody that's looking to make it to the IBC next year?

SB: I mean, it's really kind of an intimidating thing. It's a battle of the blues bands they have in Memphis each year. So, you get 200 to 300 bands from all over the world going over there to compete every year. It's another thing that I went into, and I know it's sort of a lottery and we ended up with a good result in 2013. I got first place out of over 200 bands. I won Guitarist of the Year. Then I signed with Alligator in 2014, releasing my first album with them. Won a Blues Music Award the year after that in 2015. Released another 3 albums through them. Won another Blues Music Award in 2022. Feel like I've won the lottery multiple times, and I couldn't be happier about it- any day I can get on the stage and perform my music, I'm stoked.

BN: What's coming up in the future? With such an awesome live show that you put on, have you ever thought about putting out a live album?

SB: No, I haven't done a live album yet. We're just finishing up mixing this latest studio album that we're gonna be playing all of the songs on it live when we get over here to California. We've got a ton of touring set up for this year. We've got a new album coming out. We've got some extensive European tours- heading to the Czech Republic, Belgium, France and several other countries. We pound the pavement, and we take this music out on the road and take it to the people.

BN: Are there any thoughts you'd like to leave us with?

SB: Nah, just looking forward to getting over to see you and if you wanna know anything more about the band or keep up with us please follow us on Facebook and Instagram. My website's selwynbirchwood.com. We're looking forward to seeing you out there.

Gino Matteo Memorial Benefit

June 8, 2025 at Club Fox, Redwood City

By Jan Kelley

Photos by Bob Cosman & Jan Kelley

The music world lost a true legend on March 24, 2025, with the passing of Gino Matteo, renowned for his extraordinary contributions to the blues genre. News of his death spread quickly through social media, as fans and fellow musicians alike shared their grief and memories. Gino Matteo's legacy is one that will be cherished and remembered, as he leaves behind a profound impact on music and the lives he touched. The Bay Area came together to honor Gino and give support to his wife Jade Bennett-Matteo on Sunday, June 8, 2025 at the Club



Fox Redwood City, organized by Tina Abbaszadeh and Daryl Hawkins. It was a day full of incredible music and love.

The rotation of performers, all backed by Kid Andersen's Greaseland All Stars & Friends, was the



Bay Area's best. Kid Andersen & Lisa Leuschner Andersen played all four hours, along with Steve Ehrmann on bass, either Jim Pugh or Lorenzo Farrell on keys, and Paul Revelli on drums. The horn section included Mike Rinta on trombone, and the saxes included Doug Rowan, Jack Sanford,

and Scott Franklin from Portland, OR .

Aki Kumar on harmonica also sang some duets with Lisa. Mark Hummel, on harmonica and vocals & Volker Strifler on guitar, were next up with Gary Silva taking over on drums. Lisa & Kid sang a beautiful duet accompanied by the horns and Gary.

Rae Gordon, from Portland OR was up next and wowed the crowd! Then Lisa did a duet with her that was just fabulous!

Next up was Sugaray Rayford with his drummer Sky Garcia and trumpet player "JuJu"



(Julian Davis) who joined the horns. Joining him was Angelo J Rossi and Kid Andersen on guitars, and Jim Pugh on keys. Kid and Lisa did a duet with Paul Revelli on drums.

Next up was a plethora of performers consisting of Daniel Castro, Johnny Tsunami, Terry Hiatt, and Jules Leyhe on guitars. Kid Andersen took over on bass and



Lisa treated us with some more songs with Jim Pugh on keys. Tommy Castro on guitar and vocals was joined by Daniel Castro on guitar, with Randy McDonald on bass. What a treat having the two Castros rocking out together!!

Joey Delgado came on stage and sang a beautiful song dedicated to his dear friend, Gino. After that, Joey played for the rest of the day with everyone who came on stage.

Next up was Kyle Rowland and it was also his birthday! He played



Gino Matteo Benefit, Con't. from P. 14

with Kid Andersen, Joey Delgado, Steve Ehrmann, and Paul Revelli. They all stayed on stage and backed up Fillmore Slim, who was eventually joined by Rick Estrin. Those two share a long history from the Bay Area and provided loads of entertainment performing together!!



Alabama Mike had the room dancing and singing and just celebrating the life of Gino and the great community we all have. On stage



with Mike was Kyle Rowland, Kid Andersen, Rick Estrin, Lisa Leuschner Andersen, Joey Delgado, Steve Ehrmann, Jim Pugh, and Paul Revelli on drums. Fantastic show!

Thanks again to Tina Abbaszadeh & Daryl Hawkins who extended them-

selves in providing this wonderful event that exhibited so much love and respect. Kudos to Kid Andersen's Greaseland Allstars, including Lorenzo Farrell who was "Stage Manager" keeping everyone organized.



Jade Bennett Matteo was not present but expressed her appreciation of the honor given to Gino.

Meeting Carolyn Wonderland

By Shirley McCoy

Recently, I had the chance to talk to Carolyn Wonderland just ahead of the release date of her latest recording *Truth Is* on Alligator Records. her time with John Mayall, and working with Dave Alvin. And, she'll be playing a date at the Sutter Creek Theater on July 25!

Blue Notes (BN): How many releases have you had on Alligator now?

Carolyn Wonderland (CW): This is my second one on Alligator and my second one I got to do with Dave Alvin, so both of those things make me incredibly happy.

BN: What was that like to work with him on this album?

CW: Man, he is any band's dream. First off, he's one of my favorite guitar players and songwriters to begin with. It's really cool when your hero turns out to be a really nice guy. I love getting to work with him; He's great.

BN: He plays on some of the album with you too.

CW: Yeah, in particular there were a couple of songs that he rearranged so much it's like "Nah, man these are songs we wrote together at this point." And I got him to play on "Blues For Gene", which is a song I wrote for our mutual friend, the amazing Gene Taylor. He was this great piano player- he played with Dave forever



and in the Blasters and Canned Heat and the Fabulous Thunderbirds. He died in the Texas freeze along with hundreds of other Texans, so we had to write a song for him.

BN: This album is dedicated to Gene and to John Mayall? You were the first female lead guitarist John had.

CW: Yeah, John Mayall was the best boss I ever had. I know I'm never going to have another boss that cool and that amazing. I was the luckiest guitar bum I know- I toured for five years with him. It was really sweet- I couldn't believe he called and took a chance on me.

BN: What was the overall theme or inspiration for this particular album for you?

CW: I always write about things I'm trying to understand and basically don't understand. I find that it's a lot of interpersonal relationships - trying to understand why it is that we disagree and have to get so mean about it. I try to walk in other people's shoes and find stuff that's personal but also relatable on a larger scale.

BN: There have been many artists that you've gotten a chance to play with - over your career, who's your favorite person that you've ever played with? Is there anyone that you wish you could've played with?

CW: I will say people that surprised me and that changed me, for sure, would be working with John Mayall. He had so much in common with Levon Helm that they both were so joyful when they played. When I was kid growing up in Houston, if there was an Austin guitar player in town, someone like Danny Gatton, I would always go. Oh man, I would've never had the nerve but sure would've loved to have played with him at some point. But I feel really lucky. I've got to see a whole bunch of folks and even though I'm pretty much a chicken I've kind of fallen backwards into getting to play with some really, really sweet folks.

BN: You've been playing for a long time. You were traveling in your van for a while- the real grit of being on the road. What would you say was the toughest part of your journey to get where you are today?

CW: I suppose the most eye-opening would be there was a period of almost two years when I ended up living in the van. Long story short, I came home and it's like "Oh, I have nowhere to be" and so I had to stay on the road and just keep working. That was the only thing I could think to do, and I realized really quickly how expensive it is to be poor. That was probably the most difficult. Ever since, I've been super glad to have a home, to have somewhere to be. It led me to working with a group of ladies in Austin - Marcia Ball and Shelly King. About a dozen years ago we started a charity here called HomeAustin.org. We raise money to ensure that musicians 55 and older in and around Austin get to stay in their homes and live with dignity instead of getting in the system or being homeless.

BN: Do you have any advice for up-and-coming blues players and how do you keep the hope alive?

CW: I think the best thing to do is when you start touring, follow the birds. They have a couple things that are smart: start with small circles, find friends in different cities, trade gigs with them and follow the birds again- they know what they're doing. Live cheap- anytime you think you got money, something's gonna break- save up for that, and know that that's going to happen. Know that the reward is getting to play the music. The journey that you have is with the people that you choose and you're gonna love each other or not, but you're gonna be family in that band.

BN: How have you seen the blues change and where do you see it heading today?

CW: I see it ebb and flow. I see people take it into different directions and I love that- to me, blues shouldn't be a museum piece. It should be strong enough that it can be shaken and it can be taken to different places- it can be more for the people, it can be more folk, it can be more punk, it can be more big city. Because it's real, I think, it can be dressed up in any number of ways. But the thing I like about it most and the reason that I still have faith in it is no matter how technologically advanced things go with music, honestly I think that people are driven to the realness of it- to the raw music, to the chance of playing live, making a mistake and being honest with yourself and being honest with the music you listen to. I think no matter how technologically driven something may go, I think people still long for real music. And what makes me happy is, when we're on tour, I see lots of younger cats playing real music and it makes me tickled several shades of pink.

BN: Do you have any favorite people on the scene that have stood out?

CW: Of the younger cats, I love D.K. Harrel. I think he's really got a good handle on himself, and his voice is beautiful. I like Mathias Lattin as well. Jackie Venson is here from Austin; she is something else. She's on fire. There's a lot of great players and not just in blues, there's a lot of great players in general coming up. Shoot, I would just suggest folks go out and take a chance on a live band and see what you dig.

BN: What is coming next for you? Do you have any tour dates coming up in Northern California? Maybe we will be seeing you possibly in Sacramento sometime?

CW: I'm looking at it. The record drops on the 16th, and we start touring that week again, in earnest. I know that we're heading out that way. We're booked into the Sutter Creek Theater on July 25, and I wanna say hi to y'all again.

BN: Well, thank you, Carolyn.

CW: Absolutely, and please say hello. I'm good for at least a beer.

Carolyn's website: <https://carolynwonderland.com/>

Mike Zito Played for the SBS BMA Award Winner performed at Harlow's, June 18

By Cari Chenkin

Photos by Bob Hakins, Janet Hongola & Mindy Giles

With the 2025 BMA award for "Best Blues Rock Album" for his *Life Is Hard* recording under his belt, Mike Zito brought his blazing, hard-rocking blues to Sacramento.

The SBS put on this show, and as a special treat, we had our IBC Solo/Duo contestant Dirty Laundry open the show for Mike. If you were at our IBC competition, you know that Dirty Laundry impressed everyone with his blues styling, playing and singing.

The quintessential "power trio" of Mike (guitars & vocals), Matt Johnson (drums) and Scot Sutherland (bass) roared into Harlow's, and from everything I hear (I was unable to attend the show, due to recovery from knee replacement surgery) it was nothing less than a tour de



force. We hope to see him again soon!



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Earlier in this issue, we reviewed the Sacramento Blues Society's competition for the International Blues Challenge coming up in January 2026 in Memphis. We're happy and proud to be sending TWO great acts to compete, and we need YOUR help to get them there.

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Mike Hammar: <https://www.gofundme.com/f/help-send-mike-hammar-and-the-nails-to-memphis>

Dirty Laundry: <https://www.gofundme.com/f/support-dirty-laundrys-journey-to-memphis>

his own particularly tasty take on a Willie Dixon classic made famous by the likes of Lydia Pense and Cold Blood and Etta James "I Just Want to Make Love to You". It's groove-laden with June Core's steady beat on the tambourine-topped drums and cymbals. Aki's harmonica adds a subtle but euphoric melody. It is one of my favorite cover songs on the album.

"Jarvos Woman" is one that I believe he wrote while touring overseas with Johnny Burgin. This is a faster-paced song with a catchy beat and powerful hook that deals with the anguish of trying desperately to get affection from a not-so-loving or faithful partner- "Jarvos woman, I know you got another man". Bob Welsh's beautiful boogie-woogie piano tickling decorates the background of this tune.

"Time Will Tell" showcases Aki and the band's ability to be extremely versatile. They aren't just a blues band. This song combines a softer, early 50's style poppy doo-wop love song with some of Aki's spoken Hindi vocals. The band nails the background vocals on this one. It sounded so authentic to that era that I thought it had to be a cover, but it is, in fact, one of Aki's originals.

The title track "God Bless the USA" is a little political commentary that highlights the unfortunate pitfalls of our country- "The rich shall inherit the Earth, that's what our scriptures say. You're measured by your money's worth, God Bless the USA". "If you're still tryin' to survive, we just might keep you alive. But you'll have to slave and toil, so we can keep all of the spoils". It's all true statements in this one. Rome adds a little Hendrix-esque "Star Spangled" instrumental to close out. I wonder if Aki will be playing this one live. Some people might like it, and some may not, but I think it's a pretty clever one.

Overall, *God Bless the USA* is a must-have for Aki's fans. I didn't go over all of the tracks, but all of them are sure to get you movin', groovin', and maybe even thinking a little bit. It'll make you feel something. Pick up your copies!



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Album Review

Aki Kumar - *God Bless the USA*

By Shirley McCoy

Having followed Aki for several years, I've picked up and thoroughly enjoyed all of his albums. So, I knew I had to get a copy of his latest release, *God Bless the USA*, as soon as it came out. To me, it harkens back to his debut release *Don't Hold Back*. This time around, Aki produced, mastered, and mixed the album all by himself in his San Jose garage.



The album is a fun mix of some familiar fun covers that Aki has worked into his live repertoire he hasn't recorded before. He shares



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Blue Notes is the official
bi-monthly newsletter of
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Society.

Editor: Cari Chenkin

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