

January 2026

Bluesletter

Washington D.C. Society



**MEET OUR
IBC CONTESTANTS**

**REMEMBERING
DICK POWELL**

**JAZZ ALLEY
RECEIVES KBA**

Letter from the Editor



It happens to every musician sooner or later. You advertise your shows, you work your email list, you do your social media posts, and then hardly anyone shows up. John Kuhlmann, who contributes a lot to the Blues Society, played on such a night recently, and sent me his reflections on the event:

I recently joined a band on stage at a jam session where there was only one person in the audience. This has happened to me many times before: decades ago I was in a country/rock band that played in the Carnation Duvall area, and there were times at the Duvall tavern where the band members outnumbered the audience. In both circumstances, we - the band - played so well that we all had smiles on our faces, almost laughing. I'll venture that it was for these three main reasons: we weren't afraid of making mistakes; we weren't focusing on our own image; and we weren't soloing to get attention nor laying out to let another soloist get theirs. We took more opportunity to listen to the other players, not merely giving the other player space, but giving them support; playing the notes and chords that they no longer had to. All with the result that there was a fullness that playing to, and for, an audience doesn't always engender. So think of how you might bring an empty room to your performances.

I loved what John wrote, because in 40 years of performing, I've played enough dead rooms to have put together some expertise on the subject. Twice in that career I was in bands that played at bars where there was literally no one there, not even a bartender. Once was in Granite Falls back in the 1990s. The four people who were in the bar all got in a fight and got kicked out, so they kept fighting in the alley. The bartender went out to watch, leaving us to play to the beer bottles and the barstools. The other was with my current trio, playing at Emmett's in Houston a couple years ago. That is a late audience, so it wasn't all that surprising to open the set to an empty room, but dang it, the bartender kept going outside to smoke.

I've noticed the same thing John noticed, and it was the first time I heard anyone else say it. After you get over the initial awkwardness and disappointment, you'll do some of the best shows of your life playing to rooms with hardly anyone in them. Usually a slow night will still have a handful of people hanging about, and I always joke on the mic that as long as they continue to outnumber us, we're fine, but thank God we're a trio. It gets a laugh and people relax after that, and then so do I.

Then I'll not only start taking musical risks that sometimes pay off with really cool variations I've never played before, but I start

taking risks as a performer. My jokes get a little more edgy, and I'll start clowning with the band until we can barely sing for laughing. I've ended evenings like that several times by telling the people who were there that they just caught one of the best shows of the tour.

John finished his thoughts by recommending that musicians learn how to bring an empty room with them to their shows. That is brilliant. I wish I knew how to do it. Because sometimes, when the shows are screamingly successful and every seat is full, I get in my head, trying to game out every second of the show, to try harder and harder and harder to deliver until I'm half crazy. Bringing an empty room to a full house like that would turn out the same performance or better, simply by taking the pressure off.

Thanks, John, for reminding me that, if a person's head is in the right place, a disappointment can be a really good time.

Cheers,

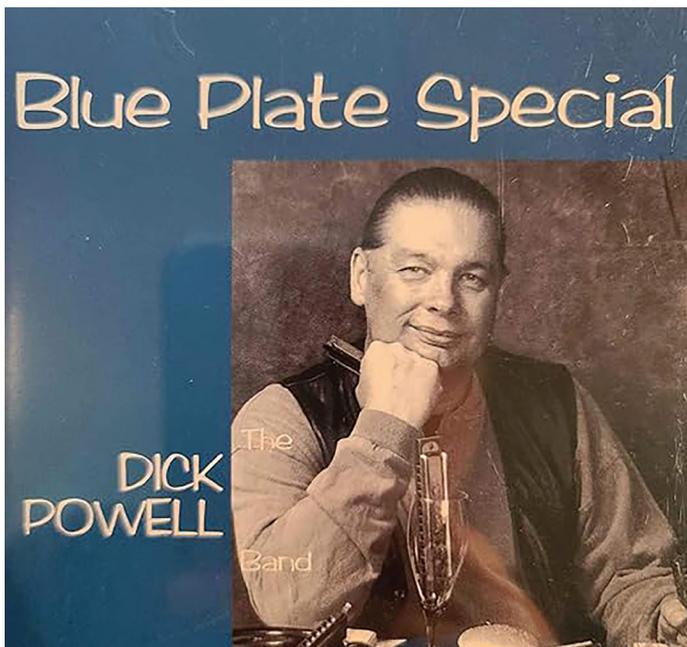
A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Polly O'Keary".

Polly O'Keary, Editor



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In This Issue

This month we present our annual International Blues Challenge issue, and this issue celebrates the three acts the Washington Blues Society is sending to Memphis for this year's event, Jan. 13-17. Also, this issue contains the news that Dimitriou's Jazz Alley, one of the top jazz and blues clubs in the nation, is one of nine people and organizations worldwide to be honored with a prestigious Keeping the Blues Alive Award this year. The club will be recognized at the annual awards luncheon at the IBC. Finally, for those traveling to Memphis, long time attendee Eric Steiner has included a budget-conscious guide to the IBC.

Also in this issue we honor the memory of Dick Powell, one of the most respected blues musicians in Washington history.

We also look back at a memorable Taj Mahal run at Jazz Alley, and look ahead to some fabulous shows coming to the Evergreen State, including Pat Travers, Ana Popovic, WAR, Jason Isbell, and The Dirty Dozen Brass Band. We at the Washington Bluesletter wish you and yours a year filled with great music and good times!



Above: Dick Powell was one of Washington's most highly regarded blues musicians.

Cover: IBC contestants, left to right: Don Montana, Tracy Wilkinson, Joel Astley, Jonathan Pitman, Joseph Barton, and Kevin Sutton. Photo by Randy Hiatt. In the circle is Nickhail Bagga, youth showcase artist. Photo courtesy of the artist.

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Washington Blues Society December Board Meeting

CANCELED

As many of the Washington Blues Society boardmembers will be in Memphis, the next board meeting will be held the second Thursday of February.

Location: APEX Everett

El Sid Cocktail Lounge

Address:

1611 Everett Avenue

Everett, Washington 98201

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Please Note: If we receive enough editorial copy before the 30th, or camera-ready ads before the 5th, space may be filled, and material may be saved for a future issue. Please send ALL contributions early!

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Please send articles and photos as attachments only to editor@wablues.org. Please do not embed images or stories in emails and please do not send links.

Please only send attachments with each file titled with a unique file name instead of phone or camera-supplied identifiers. All contributions not meeting these requirements will be returned to the contributor.

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business card horizontal	\$36	\$46	56 x 91.3
business card vertical	\$36	\$46	91.3 x 56

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MISSION STATEMENT

The Washington Blues Society is a nonprofit organization whose purpose is to promote, preserve, and advance the culture and tradition of blues music as an art form. Annual membership is \$25 for individuals, and \$35 for couples. The Washington Blues Society is a tax-exempt nonprofit organization and donations are tax-deductible. The Washington Blues Society is affiliated with The Blues Foundation in Memphis, Tennessee.. Our website is www.wablues.org.. The Washington Blues Society received the Keeping the Blues Alive Award from The Blues Foundation in 2009.



**KEEPING THE
BLUES
· ALIVE ·**

WASHINGTON BLUES SOCIETY
P.O. BOX 70604
SEATTLE, WA 98127

Carrie's Corner: Sheri Roberts Greimes Celebration of Life a Beautiful Gathering

By Carrie Parduhn

On Sunday, November 23, Everett keyboardist, singer and songwriter Sheri Roberts Greimes's Celebration of Life was attended by many of her friends and fans.

The poem at right was written on Sheri's Memorial card given as a keepsake for the attendees. It was beautifully written by her son John Harley Roberts Greimes.

The celebration was the second remembrance held for Sheri. Monday, November 10, Madison Avenue Pub had a night of remembrance called "For the Love of Sheri." Sharing in this night of music was Marc Lagen, bringing with him members of Sheri's longtime band, Jo'Momma. Stacy Jones and Donna Ray were among the many friends bringing love and songs for Sheri.

I will always enjoy her two records, "Family Tree" and "Lightning Strikes Twice." She generously autographed and gave them to me at one of her performances. She was a delight to me and to many. She always

The Music Still Plays

Her hands once danced on ivory keys

Her voice a whisper on the breeze.

With Blues and Soul, she found her way,

and poured her heart in every play.

The stage is quiet, the lights now low,

but melodies she made still glow.

In every heart her rhythm stays -

the music fades..

Yet still it plays.

-John Harley Roberts Greimes

Forever remembered for her warmth,
her strength, and the beautiful music
she gave the world.

made me feel welcome and included me in the Blues Ladies Luncheons. She had a wicked sense of humor that we all recalled with stories at her Celebration of Life.



WBS president Casey Sutton, left, with John Harley Roberts Greimes, center, and IBC contestant Keven Sutton, right. Photo by Carrie Parduhn.

Madison Ave Pub

Madison Ave Pub 905 Madison St. Everett 425-348-7402

Mondays 7 till 9-ish

Mad Bojo

Wednesday Unbound Blues Jam

7 till 10-ish

1/7 Erik Scott
1/14 Jill Newman
1/21 Billy Shew
1/28 Marc Lagen & Mitch Pumpian

Rockin' Fridays 8-12

1/2 High Voltage
1/9 Cloud Cover
1/16 Can't Get Enough & Full Spectrum
1/23 One Island Drop
1/30 Short Cutz

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Tuesday Night Dinner Show 7-9

1/6 Delta Promenade
1/13 Tom Jones and Friends
1/20 Unbound 1/27 Mr. Canoe

Thursday's Music

1/1 WA Blues Society's Blues Ambassadors

First Thursday every month!

Singer-Songwriter Showcase

Stacy Jones with special guest
1/8, 1/15, 1/22 and 1/29

Red Hot Saturdays 7:30-11:30

1/3 Red House
1/10 Tumbling Dice
1/17 the Billy Appleton Band
1/24 Seattle Houserockers & Powerhouse
1/31 Ezekiel's Bones






Blues Foundation Unanimously Awards Jazz Alley with KBA

Washington Blues Society sets record of 10 KBAs supported by the society, dating back to Marlee Walker in 2007

By Eric Steiner

I am pleased to begin the new blues year by appreciating Seattle's Jazz Alley and its 2026 Keeping the Blues Alive award during International Blues Challenge week in Memphis. I wanted to thank John, Carla and Ari Dimitriou in these pages for some and memorable live blues moments at their venue dating back to my early years in the Pacific Northwest after relocating from Chicagoland.

In the early 1980s, I caught many shows in the University District, just across Interstate 5 from my former home in the Wallingford neighborhood. Several years later, Jazz Alley moved to Seattle's Belltown neighborhood, not far from my former office at the Xerox Corporation.

I'm admittedly biased because I've had the privilege over the years of representing the Washington Blues Society to introduce several acts at Jazz Alley, including Pinetop Perkins, Janiva Magness, Shemekia Copeland, Paul de Lay, and Ottmar Liebert and Luna Negra. I get butterflies in my stomach when manager and MC Rob Perry gives me the clipboard of the night's announcements, and I try to get those butterflies to fly in formation as I hold up a Bluesletter and welcome each act to the stage.

Ever since the venue reopened after the COVID-19 pandemic, I had wanted to nominate Jazz Alley for a prestigious Keeping the Blues Alive Award from The Blues Foundation. However, life, retirement and two grandchildren got in the way.

Until last year's Keeping the Blues Alive Award committee annual conference call.

A Little Background...

I've volunteered for nearly 20 years on this committee and enjoyed last year's Zoom meeting with fellow committee members Deb Lubin of the Golden Gate Blues Society, Paul Benjamin of the North Atlantic Blues Festival and the Maine Arts Commission (and past president of The Blues Foundation board), Michael Cloeren of the Poconos Blues Festival, and publicist and songwriter Karen Leipziger.

While any Blues Foundation member may nominate for this important recognition, the foundation encourages affiliates to consider potential recipients as well.



During the meeting, I lamented that I didn't complete the annual nomination form in time for this year's meeting. I described the things that I thought made Jazz Alley special: Opportunities for blues artists to have residencies that include access to a venue-owned apartment, a tradition of featuring contemporary and traditional blues musicians, and a world-class kitchen.

Fortunately, many of my fellow committee members were well aware of the venue. I continued to describe Jazz Alley's contributions to the community during the pandemic as well the upcoming 30th residency of Taj Mahal, who was en route to play 12 shows in nine days. I then sat back and watched (on Zoom) and listened to the committee discuss Jazz Alley.

I recused myself when I listened to the committee's deliberation and vote as I could not vote for a nomination I had made. It was unanimous. Jazz Alley was a recognized with a Keeping the Blues Alive award by The Blues Foundation.

I felt those same goose bumps that I felt on stage at Jazz Alley.

The following is the award summary that The Blues Foundation published after our annual conference call.

Blues Venue: Jazz Alley

Carla and John Dimitriou opened Dimitriou's Jazz Alley in 1979 in the heart of Seattle's University

District. Six years later, the venue relocated to a larger, four-hundred-seat location in downtown Seattle, and in October of 2025, Jazz Alley celebrated its forty-third anniversary featuring Jon Cleary & The Absolute Monster Gentleman.

For over four decades, Jazz Alley has been an essential destination for blues artists, including John Mayall, Mark Hummel's Harmonica Showcases, Janiva Magness, Trombone Shorty, James Cotton, Ronnie Baker Brooks, Lisa Mann, Bob Corritore and the Highway 99 All-Stars, and Coco Montoya. The venue's roster has featured not only a wide range of contemporary and traditional blues musicians, but also talented student performers from the Quincy Jones Performing Arts Center at Garfield High School, as well as bands from Edmonds-Woodway and Mountlake Terrace high schools.

Jazz Alley also welcomed Pinetop Perkins and the Willie "Big Eyes" Smith Band several times throughout the 2000s as part of the venue's unique residency program, which allows performers to play multiple nights while staying nearby in an apartment provided by the club. In 2025, Taj Mahal played 12 shows over nine nights during his thirtieth Jazz Alley residency, a relationship that began when John Dimitriou first collaborated with Paul Goldman at the Monterey Artists agency in 1980.

The venue faced a major challenge during the COVID-19 pandemic, closing from March 2020 through June 2021. During this time, the Jazz Alley kitchen prepared over one hundred thousand

(Continued next page)

Jazz Alley owner reflects on winning the KBA

The international awards is given by the Blues Foundation and goes to blues supporters worldwide

By Polly O'Keary, Editor

When John Dimitriou, owner of Seattle's Jazz Alley, learned that his club had won a Keeping the Blues Alive Award, he didn't even know he'd been nominated. But thanks to the efforts of Bluesletter editor emeritus Eric Steiner, who has gone through the lengthy process of nominating several people for the prestigious international award, Jazz Alley can now put the coveted Keeping the Blues Alive Winner logo alongside their many other accolades.

Dimitriou last month described himself as "surprised and honored" to win the award, which this year the Memphis-based Blues Foundation granted to just nine individuals and organizations worldwide.

Although Jazz Alley has brought world-touring jazz artists to Seattle for decades, the venue also regularly presents the crème de la crème of the blues world. That is because blues and jazz are inextricably intertwined, he said.

"It is my belief that the blues play an important part in the development of our country's musical history," he said. "They are an essential part of jazz and have been considered the backbone of the music."

His recognition of the importance of blues to jazz was once validated by one of jazz music's most highly respected artists.

"I remember the great jazz pianist Kenny Barron telling me his negative opinion of a jazz sax player when I asked what he thought of this artist," Dimitriou said. "His

response was, 'How can any jazz player consider accomplished if they can't play the blues?' That statement resonated with me as to the importance of the blues in jazz and why we are dedicated to presenting it at Jazz Alley."

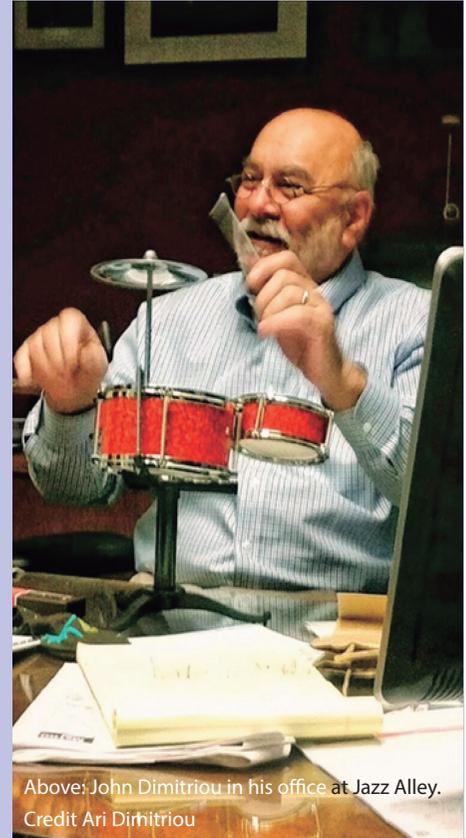
Dimitriou credits a lot of people as having helped make Jazz Alley an important venue for blues artists, including "all the people that help educate my staff and I about the importance of blues music and keeping the blues alive."

Among those people have been many artists, including "Pine Top Perkins, Hubert Sumlin, Eddie Clean Head Vinson, Mavis Staples, Joe Louis Walker, Koko Taylor, to name a few who played the club in years past, he said. And of course, artists like Taj Mahal, Shemekia Copeland, Keb Mo, and The Fabulous Thunderbirds are but a few that have helped blues remain a staple at Jazz Alley. "

The Keeping the Blues Alive Awards are presented at the International Blues Challenge in Memphis every January at a swank \$80 luncheon. Unfortunately, Dimitriou will not be able to accept it himself because of the family farm.

"We are still trying to see if someone from the club can attend because it is an important event for us, and we would like to have a representative attend," he said.

As for the future of the music the Blues Foundation has recognized him for supporting, Dimitriou said he believes the blues is destined for longevity.



Above: John Dimitriou in his office at Jazz Alley. Credit Ari Dimitriou

"There are so many new blues artist coming out these days, it seems the blues are in good hands," he said. "I also sense a lot of country artists are increasingly including the blues into their catalog and performances. We believe the blues are in a great place and destined to do nothing but grow and prosper."

Jazz Alley KBA, cont'd

meals for Seattle's first responders and social service organizations. The venue also invested over one hundred fifty thousand dollars in upgraded ventilation, sanitation and protective Plexiglas barriers. Jazz Alley was one of the first live music venues in the Pacific Northwest to reopen after restrictions were lifted, and most of the sixty-five staff members who were laid off during the closure returned for a grand reopening with singer Lisa Fischer in June of 2021.

Since reopening, Jazz Alley has presented Elvin Bishop & His Big Fun Trio, Mindi Abair & The Boneshakers, the Taj Mahal Quintet and Trio, the Highway 99 All-Stars featuring Bob Corritore and Lisa Mann, Tower of Power, and Ottmar Liebert &

Luna Negra.

Jazz Alley's longstanding commitment to live blues music, its innovative residency program, exceptional dining, and on-site lodging for musicians, continue to distinguish this family-owned and operated venue apart from others across North America.

A Word of Encouragement...

I encourage all members of the Washington Blues Society who are also members of The Blues Foundation to consider nominees for future Keeping the Blues Alive Awards. Generally, this award is reserved for individuals, organizations, and institutions

that have made significant contributions to preserving and advancing blues culture.

Over the past several years, I've also wanted to nominate blues DJ Leo Schumaker of Bluesland at KMRE-FM radio in Bellingham, the South Sound Blues Association in Tacoma, the Gorge Blues and Brews Festival in Skamania, and the Salmon Bay Eagles in Seattle based on each of these entities' decades of work promoting live blues in the greater Pacific Northwest.

Congratulations to Jazz Alley and I look forward to this year's Keeping the Blues Alive Award luncheon during International Blues Week in Memphis!

Salmon Bay Eagles Celebrates 45 Years of the Blues

January is a very special month for Seattle's oldest blues club

By Rick J. Bowen

The Salmon Bay Chapter of the Fraternal Order of Eagles was founded in 1931 and is a very special place for the region's blues community. This month, Seattle's longest-running live blues music venue celebrates 45 years of live blues in the historic Ballard neighborhood.

The Eagles is an international nonprofit organization whose mission is to unite fraternally in the spirit of liberty, truth, justice and equality, to make human life more desirable by lessening its ills, and by promoting peace, prosperity, gladness and hope. Nationally, the Fraternal Order of Eagles was instrumental in founding Mother's Day, advocated for the development of Social Security, created a \$25 million Eagles Diabetes Research Center at the University of Iowa, and initiated the Jobs After 40 program to fight age discrimination. In addition, the organization has done significant charity work for heart, cancer, and children's causes, and supported military families..

The Salmon Bay Eagles is a 501c(8) which, among other things, means it is tax exempt and seek to collect donations for other non-profit organizations. Over the years, the Aerie has supported hundreds



of charitable groups, most recently the Ballard Food Bank, the Medic One Foundation, and Friends of the Children Seattle. The club hosts events for members only and offers community-friendly get-togethers like the Annual Easter Egg Hunt (an annual tradition for over 70 years!), a Kids' Christmas Party, and a Seafoodfest temporary tattoo booth. In recent years, the Salmon Bay Eagles has dabbled with open-to-the-public events like burlesque bingo, Oktoberfest, and the Ballard Jazz Walk.

of each Eagles chapter). When the beloved Jimi Jean passed away 17 years later, other members stepped in and continued the tradition.

January 2026 marks 45 years of hosting live music three nights a week for free and often open to all ages. For nearly five decades, Salmon Bay Eagles blues events featured a "who's who" of the finest musicians from Pacific Northwest, running the gamut of genres from roots and rock to soul and swing while reserving each Thursday night for live blues music.



Salmon Bay Eagles' members are dedicated to charity, community, and the betterment of humankind while weaving in a little bit of fun. Back in 1990, when the rest of Seattle was emerging from the punk rock hangover and getting deep into a grunge phase, a clever Salmon Bay Eagles member named Kevin Wallace and an enterprising bartender named Jimi Jean Tuttle started a jam session with a few local blues musicians.

Within a few months, this monthly jam session became a huge draw for the little Aerie #2141 (that's the name

This month kicks off with Annie Eastwood and Friends ringing in the New Year, followed by a cavalcade of performers who have won Best of the Blues awards from the Washington Blues Society, including the Joe Cook Band, the John Stephan Band, Stevie and the Blue Flames, Rod Cook and Toast, culminating with an official anniversary party and open house featuring the Stacy Jones Band on January 22.

Above: A piece of blues history from the 2006 UnTapped Brews & Blues Festival signed by Norton Buffalo, Kenny "Blues Boss" Wayne, Phil Wagner ("Suburban Slim"), Chris Carlson, Andy Strange, Duffy Bishop, Lissa Ramaglia, Honey, Tim "Too Slim" Langford, Guitar Jackie, The Strange Tones.

Left: A great band playing the Salmon Bay Eagles: Dan Abernathy, Bob Davis, Dave Tendi, Steve Pearse, JP Falcon & Keith Scott. Photos by Eric Steiner



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Jazz Alley is a fixture of the Seattle live music and dining scene, family owned and operated since 1980

January 2026 SHOW

- 2-4 Nearly Dan
- 6-7 Dirty Dozen Brass Band
- 8-11 Peter White
- 13 Gretta Matassa
- 14-18 Chris Botti
- 20-21 Marc Seales Quartet
- 22 -25 Judy Collins
- 27-28 Stella Cole
- 29 WAR

2033 6th Avenue
Seattle WA 98121
Phone (206) 441-9729
jazzalley@jazzalley.com
JAZZALLEY.COM









Saturday
The LARGE Show
Sugaray Rayford
Re-Wired
Coyote Kings w/Tiph

Friday
Opening Concert
Hamilton Loomis

Saturday
The Guitar Crawl

Saturday
Acoustic Showcase

Sunday
Jazz At The Fest

Friday
Kick-off Party

Sunday
Gospel Brunch
Real Deal

Saturday
Tarwater Allstar Jam



Featuring...

Sugaray Rayford
Hamilton Loomis
Kevin Sutton & Re-Wired
Coyote Kings w/Tiph
Billy Stoops & The Dirt Angels
Diego Romero - The Stacy Jones Band
Taylor Newville & The Ride
Alison Joy Williams - Mark Hurwitz & Gin Creek
The Wasteland Kings - Gary Winston & The Real Deal
Mike Agidius - Vaughn Jensen - Mike Mendoza
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venues
Marcus Whitman Ballroom - VFW Post 992 - WW Eagles
AK's Mercado - House of Smith - Grandma's Kitchen
Henry Earl Estates - T-Post Tavern - Plumb Cellars



Thanksgiving at Jazz Alley: Taj Mahal's Family Tradition

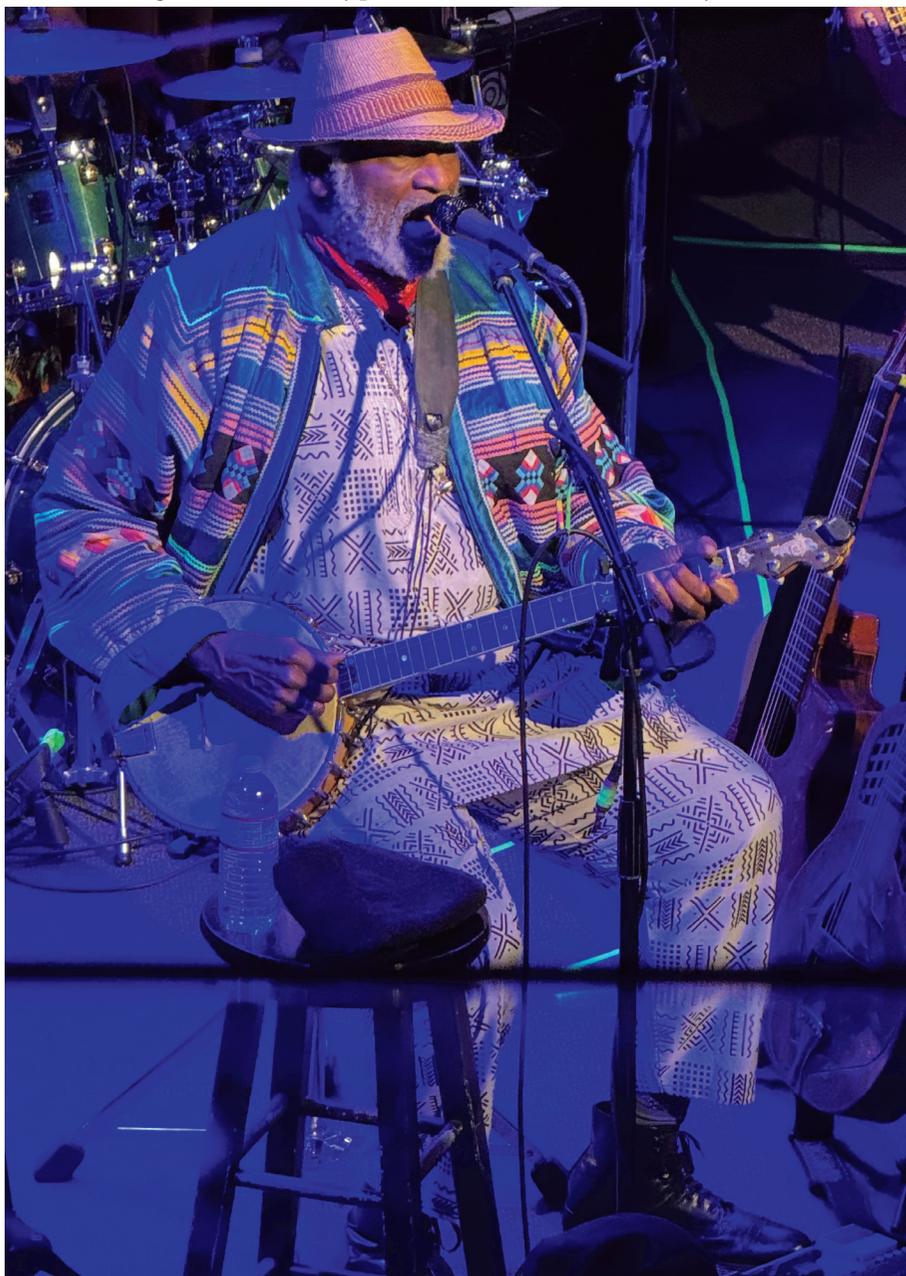
I went to eight of the legendary artist's 30th Anniversary shows at Jazz Alley. My heart is full.

By Kirk Anderson

Thanksgiving 2025 marked a milestone. Something special began nearly thirty years ago—not just musically, but through the building of both a business relationship and a deeply personal one. Not only between a legendary musician and a storied venue, but between their extended families, the region, and the many personal

families who return year after year.

For Taj Mahal, Thanksgiving has become synonymous with his annual residency at Dimitriou's Jazz Alley. For many Seattle-area families, it's a tradition wrapped in music, connection, and gratitude—a feeling that fills the room night after night. What follows are my reflections on Taj's most recent residency.



Of the twelve shows this year, I managed to attend eight. Eight! I had expected to catch three or four at most, but a perfect mix of circumstances and holiday magic made the rest possible.

For background on the thirty-year odyssey shared by Taj Mahal and Jazz Alley—along with the stories of their families (both related and acquired) and the city of Seattle—I recommend my feature preview cover story in the November 2025 Bluesletter.

That preview introduced the Taj Mahal Quintet, and over the course of the residency it became clear just how collaborative the ensemble truly is. Each musician supported Taj while also stepping forward for featured solos, with the rest of the band instinctively providing space and support. Caribbean rhythms and sounds from the southern hemisphere permeated the music, consistent with the deep global roots that have always shaped Taj's work.

On opening night, seated at Jazz Alley before the first of two shows, the stage told its own story. Robert Greenidge's steel drums were set front left, alongside Taj's chair and an array of instruments: a National resonator, McPherson acoustic guitar, Gibson Keb' Mo Bluesmaster semi-hollow electric, banjo, and ukulele. Jim Pugh's keyboards anchored stage right, with bassist Bill Rich behind Greenidge and drummer Tony Durham centered at the back, locking in the rhythm that carried each performance.

Sitting at different tables throughout the run reinforced why I attend multiple shows during residencies like this. Each vantage point offers a new way of hearing and seeing how musicians interact. From a table just off the right side of the stage, with a partially obstructed view of Taj and Pugh, my ears locked into Durham and Rich as they laid down the groove. From there, I could also see Greenidge's mallets strike the steel drums, sharpening my focus on his sound. When Taj switched between

resonator and banjo, the complementary tones made clear why each instrument was chosen and how naturally it fit within each song.

As expected, sitting near the soundboard delivered a pristine mix and a full view of the band. That said, Jazz Alley's current layout provides excellent sound and sightlines throughout the room—from the mezzanine to the downstairs tables near the stage. No matter where I sat, the sound was stellar, and the wait staff remained consistently attentive and personable, creating a relaxed atmosphere that kept the focus on the music and the people sharing the evening together.

The night before Thanksgiving brought something especially meaningful. Taj's daughters, Deva and Zoe, had flown in from New Zealand for the holiday and joined him on stage for the final three

songs of both shows. The mood in the room shifted instantly. Their voices added beautiful harmonies, but more importantly, their presence brought a tangible sense of family that elevated Taj's performance and embodied the spirit of the season.

On closing night, another surprise guest appeared before Deva and Zoe joined the stage: Lee Oskar. The warmth in Taj's voice as he introduced him spoke volumes about their friendship. Oskar's distinctive harmonica blended with the quintet, and his solos fit effortlessly into the familiar song structures while adding fresh energy.

Before I knew it, the final notes of the residency rang out with Lee, Deva, and Zoe joining the quintet for the last three songs.

That night, I had two extra copies of the November *Bluesletter*. In the green room,

I introduced myself to Deva and Zoe and handed them each a copy featuring the striking photo of their father donated by Linda Wolf. "Everyone else has their copies," I told them, "But if anyone should have one, it's his daughters."

After nights spent talking with Taj and the band, getting to know the Jazz Alley staff, and sharing music with fellow fans through the Washington Blues Society, one phrase kept coming to mind:

Leave with a full heart.



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Memphis Bound! Meet the WBS 2026 IBC Contestants

Washington Blues Society Sends Exciting lineup to annual international competition

The three acts that the Washington Blues Society is sending to the International Blues Challenge, Jan. 13-17, contain some seasoned blues performers, one of whom already has one IBC first place under his belt, as well as a rising young star some call the “future of the blues..”

The Joel Astley Band

They say that behind every overnight sensation is 10 years of hard work. Joel Astley erupted onto the national scene with his 2023 debut album *Seattle to Greaseland*, which impressed industry people coast to coast by emerging on the *Billboard Blues* chart at #7, a feat many a legend would be glad to boast of. However, Washington blues fans have watched Astley painstakingly develop his craft over many years of hard work and dedication, while racking up 26 WBS Best of the Blues awards. The band also includes three highly respected local musicians, including Tracy Wilkinson on bass, Don Montana on drums, and Joseph Barton on guitar.

Sutton and Pitman

Multi-instrumentalist singer and songwriter Kevin Sutton is partnering with harmonica whiz Jonathan Pitman to compete in the solo/duo category. Kevin Sutton already has one IBC trophy to his name; his trio *The WIRED!* Band won the competition in 2016. No act can win more than one IBC trophy, but people who have won in the band category are still eligible to compete in the solo/duo category, and vice versa. Jonathan Pitman, a native of Spokane, also has 15 years of experience playing and teaching harmonica professionally, and is noted for his eye-catching suits and his dynamic stage antics.

Youth Showcase: Nikhil Bagga

Every year at the IBCs, the Blues Foundation hosts a Youth Showcase at which some of the world’s best young blues artists perform. They do not compete, but they demonstrate their skills to a crowd of music journalists and talent scouts. This



year, the WBS is sending Nikhil Bagga, a guitarist and songwriter who has won wide acclaim for his performances of the *Star Spangled Banner* at Seattle Mariners baseball games and Seattle Kraken hockey games.

Above left: The Joel Astley Band, featuring (left to right) Tracy Wilkinson, bass; Don Montana, drums; Joel Astley, vocals and harp; and Joseph Barton, guitar. Above right, Jonathan Pitman, left, and Kevin Sutton, right, will represent the WBS in the solo/duo category. Photos by Randy Hiatt. Bottom: Nikhil Bagga will represent the IBC at the annual Youth Showcaswe. Photo courtesy of the artist.

So You are Going to the IBCs...

Tips and things to know from a frequent visitor to Memphis and Blues Foundation events...

By Eric Steiner

During the production of this issue, I discovered I had the privilege to return to Memphis for the International Blues Challenge this month. I hadn't been back since the IBC was added to the Blues Music Awards post-pandemic a few years ago, and I was delighted to plan another trip back to the Bluff City.

First, a word about getting to Memphis. I've always encouraged blues fans to go to Blues Foundation events, such as the International Blues Challenge. Over 90% of blues fans told me: "I'll never go. I can't afford it. It's just way too much money."

I get it. Most blues fans, and most blues musicians, have more month than money at the end of each month. I hope that this brief article provides a few budget-friendly options based on my 25 years' visiting Memphis and the Mississippi Delta. I've made some great musical memories at the International Blues Challenge and encourage readers to add it to their "blues bucket list."

Eric's Memphis Checklist

The Blues Hall of Fame Museum: One of my first stops is to the Blues Hall of Fame Museum at The Blues Foundation at 421 S. Main St. It's a blues destination like no other, and it's one of the first museums in the world to have a hologram! I can't wait to see the virtual Taj Mahal. The interactive exhibits, book signings, rotating art displays and downstairs reading nook (in front of Pinetop Perkins' piano) are a lot of fun. Selfishly, I look up at the donors' wall and find the Washington Blues Society's name engraved as our blues society was one of the early donors to this exceptional place. *Budget Tip:* It's free for Blues Foundation members (but I just like to think it's pre-paid).

IBC Week Events: Maximize each opportunity, whether that's workshops for musicians or blues society leaders, healthcare access for musicians, nightly competitions along Beale Street, or the Keeping the Blues Alive Awards luncheon.

Budget Tip: Skip coffee at the coffee shop, splurge on the awards lunch and hydrate as much as possible.

Local History & Public Art: Visit Dr. Martin Luther King Reflection Park MLK Blvd at 2nd Street and learn about King's work in Memphis with the sanitation workers' strike in his final days. Find three of the official Mississippi Blues Trail Markers within the Memphis city limits, experience the award-winning Beale Street Flippers on fabled Beale Street, say hello to W.C. Handy and Roscoe Gordon in Handy Park for me, and trace the history of Memphis through 67 brass plaques placed in front of sites of interest that include the South Main Arts District, or see the Mighty Lights of the De Soto Bridge across the Mississippi River at sundown. *Budget Tip:* These are all free, and more importantly, they are informative and educational as well.

Key Memphis Destinations: Since my first pilgrimage to Memphis 25 years ago, I've treasured visits to Sun Studios, the National Civil Rights Museum, the Center for the Study of Southern Folklore, the Peabody Hotel (the daily, free procession of the ducks is fun!), the Stax Museum, and the Smithsonian's Rock and Soul Museum (home to the Memphis Music Hall of Fame). *Budget Tip:* The Peabody Hotel is free, and several museums offer discounts for blues fans "of a certain age."

Eric's Memphis' Menu: I try to maximize complimentary hotel breakfasts and appreciate the many less expensive, local dining options downtown. *Budget Tip:* Main Street has many inexpensive food options, including Maciel's Tortas & Tacos, Sam's Main Street Eatery, Huey's, Aldo's, Alcenia's, Willie Moore's Family Soul Food. On Beale, I enjoy The Pig, B.B. King's Blues Club, and the Blues City Café ("Put some south in your mouth").

I've run out of space, but barring any complications with my wife's surgery in early January, I plan to be back at the Keeping the Blues Alive Award luncheon. It was a thrill to nominate Seattle's Jazz

Alley for this award as a member of the Keeping the Blues Alive Award review committee, and it's always a treat for me to return to Memphis.

Until next month, if you haven't, please consider joining The Blues Foundation!



Top-: Statue of W.C. Handy.

Center: The Lorraine Motel, site where Martin Luther King, Jr. was killed and current home of the National Civil Rights Museum

Bottom. Entrance to the Blues Hall of Fame

Photos by Eric Steiner

Album Reviews



Erin Harpe (feat. Jim Countryman)

Let the Mermaids Flirt with Me: A Tribute to Mississippi John Hurt

(Eric Harpe Music/The Vizztone Label Group)

By Eric Stiener

“Let the Mermaids Flirt with Me: A Tribute to Mississippi John Hurt” is Erin Harpe’s fifth CD through the Vizztone Label Group and it marks a first for this award-winning artist. “Mermaids” is the first CD released on her own Erin Harpe Music label.

The CD is a family affair: Husband Jim Countryman accompanies Erin on ukulele and acoustic bass, and father Neil Harpe’s painting of Mississippi John Hurt is in the CD art. Stella Guitars recognizes Neal as a “Guitarologist” for authoring *The Stella Guitar Book* and Neil’s portraits of Mississippi John Hurt’s contemporaries also illustrate Ted Gioa’s landmark book, *Delta Blues*.

Erin’s awards shelf is justifiably crowded. She’s won the Boston Blues Challenge five times since 2010, was the Blues Act of the Year at the 2012 Boston Music Awards and was the 2016 winner of the Granite State Blues Challenge in New Hampshire. In the New England Music Awards, she won Blues Act of the Year in 2019, and Album of the Year in 2021 for “Meet Me in the Middle.” Nationally, Erin is a five-time Blues Music Award nominee and she’s reached the International Blues Challenge finals in Memphis.

The CD opens with the suggestive “Candy Man,” highlighting Erin’s bright fingerpicking style, and continues with Hurt’s most memorable songs, including “Make Me a Pallet on Your Floor,” and “Got the Blues (Can’t Be Satisfied).” The sounds of the acoustic bass first captivated me when I heard Piedmont bluesman Mike Baytop play at an Archie Edwards Barbershop fundraiser at Potter’s House in Washington, D.C. in 2005, and Jim’s solid bottom beneath Erin’s nimble fingerpicking brought me back to that show. Edwards co-founded the D.C. Blues Society, was a

close friend of John Hurt’s, and last year, the Archie Edwards Blues Heritage Foundation celebrated its Silver Anniversary of live blues jams honoring Archie’s legacy.

On “Mermaids,” I particularly like “Stagolee,” Hurt’s version of the “Stack O Lee” legend, and the jaunty “You Are My Sunshine,” which calmed my four-year-old granddaughter after open heart surgery two years ago. When I first played it for her last year, she smiled and said “Papa, that’s our song!”

Last year, Hurt’s childhood home, a three-room shack transformed into the Mississippi John Hurt Museum, burned to the ground in Avalon less than a day after it was added to the National Register of Historic Places. Over the past year, the Mississippi John Hurt’s Legacy Will Rise GoFundMe campaign has attracted support from the Suncoast Blues Society, Derek Trucks, Stevie Van Zandt, and many individual donors. I want Hurt’s granddaughter and Mississippi John Hurt Foundation Founder, Mary Frances Hurt, to know that I’ve added my donation to this campaign.

“Let the Mermaids Flirt with Me: A Tribute to Mississippi John Hurt” is one of my favorite blues releases of 2025, and I hope readers will consider supporting not only this CD, but also the Mississippi John Hurt’s Legacy Will Rise campaign this year.



Mercedes Nicole

Too High A Price To Pay

(Self Released)

By Eric Stiener

Mercedes Nicole is no stranger to the Washington Blues Society or to Pacific Northwest venues like Jazz Alley, Egan’s Jam House, the Kirkland Performance Center or Seattle’s Bumbershoot arts festival. My Bluesletter cover story on this talented vocalist in August of 2020 highlighted her 2018 Female Composers Award from the Seattle Allied Arts Foundation and showed how she persevered through the pandemic.

Last year, she released “Too High a Price to Pay” with a “dream team” of award-winning musicians that included guitarist Rod Cook, vocalist and harmonica player Stacy Jones, bassist Scotty Harris and drummer Andrew Cloutier. Musical Director Jake Sele’s keyboards and Alexey Nikolalaev’s sax add to the CD with background vocalists Tommy Warren, Patrice O’Neal and producer Ben Lange (who produced the disc at the David Lange Studio in Pierce County’s Edgewood, Washington).

“Too High a Price to Pay” features seven solid originals and six exceptional covers, including pretty soulful takes on John Hiatt’s “Feels Like Rain,” Albert King’s “I’ll Play the Blues for You,” and George Jackson’s “Last Two Dollars.” Mercedes’ original, “Blue Fire (Searching for Robert Gasper),” captures her songwriting and singing at the top of their game, while the contemplative “Breathe Again” is bathed in Stacy Jones’ harmonica, Jake Sele’s piano and Alexey Nikolaev’s sax.

In addition to including Robert Gasper in that song title, Mercedes’ liner notes include dreams to “... sign with a label, tour all over the World, win a Grammy, record with Robert Gasper, Kirk Whalum, Eric Bibb, & Christone ‘Kingfish’ Ingram.” Elmore James’ “The Sky is Crying” and Howlin’ Wolf’s “Smokestack Lightning” are reimagined thoughtfully through Mercedes’ understated style, and I appreciated these new interpretations of two of my favorite blues standards. Throughout, Rod Cook weaves his wizardry on the guitar, and together, each of the artists on this CD have helped Mercedes Nicole produce a CD that I hope will catch the attention of Grammy-winning artist Robert Gasper (“Black Radio”), who is up for his 12th Grammy this year for “Keys to the City, Vol. 1” in the Best Alternative Jazz Album category.

I hope that “Too High a Price to Pay” gets Mercedes Nicole closer to her dreams listed in her liner notes (as well an opportunity to sing at Seattle’s Jazz Alley, honored by a prestigious 2026 Keeping the Blues Alive Award by The Blues Foundation).

Remembering Seattle keyboard and harp legend Dick Powell

"Dick Powell was the real deal. My thoughts go out to his wife Patty and his family."

By Eric Steiner

"A Psychedelic Connection"

Dick Powell was a blues legend, but his earliest work was psychedelic. His first studio work was captured on Crome Syrcus' "Love Cycle" LP and six other 45s. In keeping with psychedelic records at the time, the seven-song record's title song topped 18 minutes of spacy rock music that included flute, strings and a lot of guitar noodling.

From 1968 to 1973, Crome Syrcus was right in the middle of the counterculture, opening for The Doors, Moby Grape, Jefferson Airplane and The Grateful Dead. James Cotton befriended Powell after a Berkeley Folk Festival gig, and the two musicians stayed in touch on and off the road.

Crome Syrcus was a featured act at Boyd Grafmyre's legendary Seattle Pop Festival in Woodinville in 1969, which included The Doors, Chicago Transit Authority, The Flying Burrito Brothers, Ike and Tina Turner, Led Zeppelin, Santana, and Ten Years After. Later that year, the band played the second Sky River Rock Festival in Tenino, which had several blues and Americana artists on the bill, including James Cotton, Country Joe and the Fish, Flying Burrito Brothers, Guitar Shorty, Buddy Guy, Dan Hicks and His Hot Licks, Mississippi Fred McDowell, Steve Miller, and Alice Stuart.

A 38-year old enfant terrible of dance, Robert Joffrey, hired Crome Syrcus to score and perform during his groundbreaking ballet, *Astarte*, at City Center in New York. In addition to collaborating on the first-ever ballet to feature multi-media, a rock band and Peter Max's art, Powell and Joffrey shared another Pacific Northwest connection: Robert was born Anver Bey Abdullah Jaffa Khan in Seattle to Afghani and Italian immigrant parents. While *Astarte* made the cover of *Time Magazine*, *The New York Times* considered "the music is conventional rock, composed and played by a group called the Crome Syrcus; it is the background music to a loud cocktail. It has none of the psychedelic beauty of the Beatles and their Sergeant Pepper."

After New York, Crome Syrcus played a number of gigs in San Francisco, including venues like the Fillmore West and Avalon Ballroom with shows with The Doors, Iron

Butterfly, the Velvet Underground, Junior Wells and Canned Heat.

Dick returned to Seattle and landed with the rock band Zacharia. After a short stint with that band, he returned to his blues roots and played with the Isaac Scott Band, Stevie & the Blue Flames, and in his longest-running gig, was a member of Little Bill and the Blue Notes for over 25 years. Powell was a mainstay of Pioneer Square's blues heyday, and he often played the Central Tavern, the New Orleans Creole Restaurant, the Mint, the Fenix or Larry's Greenfront Café, and in later years leading the Dick Powell Band at the Rockfish Grill in Anacortes as well as local festivals and Fraternal Order of Eagles clubs.

On Record...

Dick Powell played on Isaac's Scott's "Big Time Blues Man" (arguably Isaac Scott's most popular albums), but I absolutely keep coming back to "Blue Plate Special," an exceptional blues CD from the Dick Powell Band from 1996. This powerful disc contains many songs from the traditional song book, including "Sweet Home Chicago," "The Sky is Falling" and arguably his most popular live song, "Walkin' Blues."

Later, Dick landed on two of producer Michael Cobbs' "Best of Seattle Blues" compilations on Raw Records 25 years ago with Little Bill and the Blue Notes' "Cherry Red" (Vol.1) and the Dick Powell Band's "Lose the Blues" (Vol. 2). In the late 80s, Dick played on Stevie & The Blue Flames' "Ain't Gonna Cry" cassette tape produced by Seattle's Crow Recordings.

I'll close with a memory of one of my favorite tracks on the South Sound Blues Association's "Big Blues for Little Bill" a 15-song CD that celebrated Little Bill's 75th birthday co-produced by Randy Oxford and former blues



society president Tony Frederickson. Dick Powell, along with Billy Stapleton, Terry Morgan and Chris Leighton play a rousing version of Little Bill's "Wine & Whiskey," and since its release in 2009, it's been one of my favorites.

With Dick Powell, every show was special. Few could play the keyboards and harmonica simultaneously like Dick Powell, and in between, he could sing the blues like no one else.

Last summer at Little Bill's celebration of life in his native Tacoma, I wished that I could have heard Little Bill just one more time.

Starting in 2026, I just wish I could have heard Dick Powell one more time, too.

Dick Powell, R.I.P.

Above: Dick Powell, a veteran of many top Seattle blues bands including Isaac Scott, Little Bill, and Stevie and the Blues Flames. Photo courtesy of Billy Stapleton.

Blues on the Road: Happy Blues Year!

We're starting off the New Year right with some great live blues shows!

By Eric Steiner

This year, I'm beginning my first Blues on the Road preview column a little differently than in months' and years' past. I used to focus on nationally touring acts visiting the Pacific Northwest and British Columbia's Lower Mainland, but this month, I'm starting out in my old "stomping grounds" of Seattle's historic Ballard neighborhood with the Salmon Bay Eagles. This month, this venerable live music venue celebrates the thirty-sixth "Blues-Aversary" of offering live blues music with the Stacy Jones Band.

In this month's Blues on the Road, I also recommend shows from the Dirty Dozen Brass Band, Ana Popovic, the Pat Travers Band, Jason Isbell & The 400 Unit, JD Simo and Luther Dickinson, and WAR. Again, each Blues on the Road preview is admittedly a rather personal list of shows I'd enjoy, and while some acts may not be considered "true blues acts," I heartily recommend each one.

Happy "Blues-Aversary" to the Salmon Bay Eagles with the Stacy Jones Band



On January 22, the Stacy Jones Band will play the Salmon Bay Eagles, Aerie #2141, and I strongly encourage Washington Blues Society members and friends to join Worthy Secretary Judy Abernathy and jam host Dan Abernathy to ring in another year of live blues at one of my favorite, old-school dive bars in Seattle. Regular readers know

that I mean that as a compliment as I consider venues like the Salmon Bay Eagles as true incubators of live blues music. Last year, Duffy Bishop celebrated the Slammin' Bay's thirty-fifth anniversary, and last month in these pages, I am pleased that Editor Polly O'Keary included my review of Keith Scott and the JP Falcon Band on one of my most exciting blues weekends that also included Robert Cray's stop at the historic Mount Vernon theatre on his 2025-2026 "Out Driving Around" tour. Earlier in January in the New Year, the Stacy Jones Band opens for Ana Popovic at the Historic Everett Theatre on January 17, and next month, this award-winning band plays Darrell's Tavern in Shoreline on January 14.

The Dirty Dozen Brass Band at Seattle's Jazz Alley

Dimitriou's Jazz Alley welcomes New-Orleans based, 45-year running, the legendary Dirty Dozen Brass Band for two nights and two shows on January 6 & 7 at 7:30 PM. The Dirty Dozen Brass Band features Roger Lewis on baritone sax and vocals, Gregory Davis on trumpet and vocals, Kirk Joseph on sousaphone, Trevarri Huff-Boone on tenor sax and vocals, Stephen Walker on trombone and vocals, Julian Addison on drums, and Takeshi Shimmura on guitar. Doors open each night at 6:00pm. This show is supported by long-time Washington Blues Society partner KNKX, and I highly recommend this legendary cultural experience to Washington Blues Society members and fans alike.

Ana Popovic at the Rickshaw Theatre & the Historic Everett Theater

This year marks Ana Popovic's twenty-sixth year as a touring musician, and she brings her "Dance to the Rhythm" tour to the Rickshaw Theatre in Vancouver, British Columbia on the 16th and the Historic Everett Theatre in Everett on the 17th. On the Everett date, the award-winning Stacy Jones Band opens, and the Vancouver show will feature

some special guests (but they weren't posted as of this issue's deadline). Ana's surmounted some tough challenges over the past few years. Thankfully, breast cancer treatment is in her rear view mirror, and I hope she'll continue to stretch the boundaries of the blues like she did last year with her "Fantastafunk" big band project. Prior to the pandemic, Ana was the only female guitar player in the all-star Experience Hendrix lineup for five consecutive years from 2014 – 2018, a nationwide tour celebrating the music and legacy of Jimi Hendrix that included Buddy Guy, Eric Johnson, Jonny Lang, and Kenny Wayne Shepherd.

The Pat Travers Band in Bellingham, Tacoma & Salem

Former Washington Blues Society Secretary Rocky Nelson used to frequently remind me that he was "an unrepentant rocker from way back," and when I read that the latest Pat Travers power trio was on tour, I resembled that remark. On January 15, the Pat Travers band plays the historic Grand Theatre in Salem, Oregon, then Tacoma's Airport Tavern Music Hall the next night, followed by a show the next night at Bellingham's Bar Two Eleven on January 17. This is the first time I've mentioned Bar Two Eleven in these pages (and screens), and I hope that it keeps on keepin' on, and I've always said, felt and typed that we need more venues that book live music.

Luther Dickinson in Seattle, Portland & Bend

On January 20, Luther Dickinson plays Seattle's Tractor Tavern with JD Simo, followed by solo shows at Portland's Alberta Rose Theatre and Salem's Tower Theatre. In late 2024, Washington Blues Society volunteer Kirk Anderson introduced me to the Allman Betts Family Reunion that included Luther, and I'm glad he's back with his own deep

catalogue of blues steeped in the Mississippi Hill Country.

Jason Isbell & The 400 Unit at the Paramount Theatre

Don't miss a rare opportunity to see Grammy-award winning Jason Isbell & The 400 Unit as they return to Seattle to play the Seattle Theatre Group's Paramount Theatre on January 23 & 24. It's pretty early in the band's 75+ date international tour that includes other legendary venues like Chicago's Salt Shed, Memphis' Orpheum Theatre, and New York's Radio City Music Hall. I first learned about this exceptional Americana act from Shemekia Copeland at Jazz Alley (she opened for Jason Isbell & The 400 Unit during their Ryman Residency in Nashville

and the Salt Shed in Chicago). As a young man, I passed the historic Morton Salt factory on "Da Nort' Side," and it has since been re-imagined into a live music destination by the 16"OC restaurant and arts community innovators in the "City of the Big Shoulders." The company name, an acronym for "16" on Center" will be familiar to readers with an interest in construction. It's a builder's term for a center mark that creates the strongest build (according to the 16"OC website).

WAR at Seattle's Jazz Alley

The first month of the New Year ends with four nights of very special shows at Dimitriou's Jazz Alley with the legendary funk band from January 29 through February 1. Current band members are Lonnie Jordan

on keys and lead vocals, James Zota Baker on guitar, Rene Camacho on bass, Salvador Rodriguez on drums, Scott Martin on saxophone, Marcos Reyes on percussion, and Mitch Kashmar on harmonica. The list of hits includes "The World Is A Ghetto," "Why Can't We Be Friends," "The Cisco Kid," and many more.

Last summer, the Hollywood Chamber of Commerce honored WAR with a star in the Recording Category on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. During the ceremony at, original member Lee Oskar played the iconic, opening notes of "Low Rider" before he left the podium.

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Tom Jones & Friends



Featuring
Stacy Jones * Marc Lagen
Doug Cooper * John Cuttite
Tuesday, January 13th - 7:00pm

January 2026 Live Blues Music Calendar

Submit calendar information to wablues.org/events/washington-blues-societys-events

JANUARY 1

Jazz Alley, Seattle: Nearly Dan 7:30 p.m.
Snapdragon, Vashon: Steve Itterly and Friends 8 p.m.
Owl and Thistle, Seattle: Danny Godinez Presents 9 p.m.

JANUARY 2

Jazz Alley, Seattle: Nearly Dan 7:30 p.m.
Triple Door, Seattle: Andy Stokes 7:30 p.m.
Madison Ave Pub, Everett: High Voltage 8 p.m.
Owl N Thistle, Seattle: Freddy Fuego 9 p.m.
Salmon Bay Eagles, Seattle: Vadavenus 8 p.m.
Sea Monster Lounge, Seattle: Fire Marshall Ventura 8 p.m. Funky2 Death 10 p.m.
Bishop Block Bottle Shop, Port Townsend: Jazz w Jonathan Doyle & Friends 5 p.m.
The Royal Room, Seattle: David Nicoella Ensemble Holiday Jazz 7:30 p.m.
Madison Ave Pub, Everett: Nick Vigarino 7 p.m.
Jazz Alley, Seattle: Smokey Robinson 7:30 p.m.
McCaw Hall, Seattle: KEXP Yule Benefit With Jeff Tweedy and Mavis Staples 7:30 p.m.
Billy Blues Bar and Grill, Vancouver: Ben Rice and the Hustle 8 p.m.
Sea Monster Lounge, Seattle: The 350's 7 p.m. Joe Doria Presents 10 p.m.

JANUARY 3

Port Gardener Bay Winery, Everett: Mr. Roxy 7 p.m.
Madison Ave Pub, Everett: Red House 7 p.m.
Triple Door, Seattle: Johnny A Trio 7 p.m.
Jazz Alley, Seattle: Nearly Dan 7:30 p.m.
Aurora Borealis, Shoreline: Robbie Dee's Tribute to Elvis 8 p.m.
Salmon Bay Eagles, Seattle: Joe Cook Band 8 p.m.

JANUARY 4

Peabo's, Mill Creek: Sunday Music Revue 7 p.m.
The Spar, Tacoma: Sunday Blues 7 p.m.
Jazz Alley, Seattle: Nearly Dan 7:30 p.m.
Sea Monster Lounge, Seattle: Ron Weinstein Trio 9 p.m.

JANUARY 5

El Sid, Everett: Blues Ambassadors 7 p.m.
Madison Ave Pub, Everett: Mad Bojo 7 p.m.
Blue Moon, Seattle: Andy Coe Band 9 p.m.
Owl 'N Thistle, Seattle: Aquilizer 9 p.m.
Sea Monster Lounge, Seattle: La Luz 10 p.m.

JANUARY 6

Sea Tac Airport North Marketplace, Sea Tac: Eric Madis 11:30 a.m.
Bishop Block Bottle Shop, Port Townsend: Jazz w

Jonathan Doyle & Friends 5 p.m.
Madison Ave Pub, Everett: Delta Promenade 7 p.m.
Jazz Alley, Seattle: Dirty Dozen Brass Band 7:30 p.m.
Billy Blues Bar and Grill, Vancouver: Ben Rice and the Hustle 8 p.m.
Sea Monster Lounge, Seattle: Joe Doria Presents 10 p.m.

JANUARY 7

North City Bistro, Shoreline: Shape Shifter 4:30 p.m.
CCR, Snohomish: Usual Suspects 6 p.m.
The Spar, Tacoma: Jazzy Wednesdays 7 p.m.
Jazz Alley, Seattle: Dirty Dozen Brass Band 7:30 p.m.
Triple Door, Seattle: Roy Hargrove 7:30 p.m.
Seamonster, Seattle: Weinstein Wednesday 10 p.m.

JANUARY 8

Bad Albert's, Seattle: Annie Eastwood and Friends 6 p.m.
Madison Ave Pub, Everett: Songwriter Showcase 7 p.m.
Jazz Alley, Seattle: Peter White 7:30 p.m.
Salmon Bay Eagles, Seattle: John Stephan Band 8 p.m.
Seamonster, Seattle: Paige Sandusky Band 8 p.m.
Snapdragon, Vashon: Steve Itterly and Friends 8 p.m.
Owl and Thistle, Seattle: Danny Godinez Presents 9 p.m.

JANUARY 9

Third Place Commons, Lake Forest Park: Harmatones 7 p.m.
Kimball Coffeehouse, Gig Harbor: HD Fusion 7 p.m.
Port Gardener Bay Winery, Everett: The Guise 7 p.m.
Jazz Alley, Seattle: Peter White 7:30 p.m.
Aurora Borealis, Shoreline: Rock Shop 8 p.m.
Madison Ave Pub, Everett: Cloud Cover 8 p.m.
Salmon Bay Eagles, Seattle: X-Statics 8 p.m.
Sea Monster Lounge, Seattle: Funky2 Death 10 p.m.

JANUARY 10

Triple Door, Seattle: Django's Birthday Seattle – with Ranger and the "Re-Arrangers" and Combo du Jour 7 p.m.
Port Gardener Bay Winery, Everett: Willets Flying A 7 p.m.
Madison Ave Pub, Everett: Tumbling Dice 7 p.m.
West Seattle Eagles, Seattle: John Stephan Band 7 p.m.
Jazz Alley, Seattle: Peter White 7:30 p.m.
Aurora Borealis, Shoreline: Flock of 80's 8 p.m.
Rock The Dock, Tacoma: Heather Jones 8 p.m.
Salmon Bay Eagles, Seattle: Youforic 8 p.m.

JANUARY 11

Peabo's, Mill Creek: Sunday Music Revue 7 p.m.
The Spar, Tacoma: Sunday Blues 7 p.m.
Jazz Alley, Seattle: Peter White 7:30 p.m.
Sea Monster Lounge, Seattle: Red Dress 5 p.m., Ron Weinstein Trio 9 p.m.

JANUARY 12

El Sid, Everett: Blues Ambassadors 7 p.m.
Madison Ave Pub, Everett: Mad Bojo 7 p.m.
Blue Moon, Seattle: Andy Coe Band 9 p.m.
Owl 'N Thistle, Seattle: Aquilizer 9 p.m.
Sea Monster Lounge, Seattle: La Luz 10 p.m.

JANUARY 13

Bishop Block Bottle Shop, Port Townsend: Jazz w Jonathan Doyle & Friends 5 p.m.
Madison Ave Pub, Everett: Tom Jones & Friends 7 p.m.
Jazz Alley, Seattle: Gretta Matassa 7:30 p.m.
Billy Blues Bar and Grill, Vancouver: Ben Rice and the Hustle 8 p.m.
Sea Monster Lounge, Seattle: Joe Doria Presents 10 p.m.

JANUARY 14

Moore Theater, Seattle: One Seattle Soul Holiday
North City Bistro, Shoreline: Shape Shifter 4:30 p.m.
CCR, Snohomish: Usual Suspects 6 p.m.
The Spar, Tacoma: Jazzy Wednesdays 7 p.m.
Jazz Alley, Seattle: Chris Botti 7:30 p.m.
Seamonster, Seattle: Weinstein Wednesday 10 p.m.

JANUARY 15

Madison Ave Pub, Everett: Songwriter Showcase 7 p.m.
Jazz Alley, Seattle: Chris Botti 7:30 p.m.
Salmon Bay Eagles, Seattle: Stevie and the Blue Flames 8 p.m.
Seamonster, Seattle: How Now Brown Cow 7:30 p.m.
Snapdragon, Vashon: Steve Itterly and Friends 8 p.m.
Owl and Thistle, Seattle: Danny Godinez Presents 9 p.m.

JANUARY 16

Third Place Commons, Lake Forest Park: Trish Schimel 7 p.m.
Kimball Coffee, Gig Harbor: Taylor Hardin Blues Band 7 p.m.
Rickshaw Theater, Vancouver B.C.: Ana Popovic 7 p.m.
Jazz Alley, Seattle: Chris Botti 7:30 p.m.
Airport Tavern, Tacoma: Pat Travers Band 8 p.m.

Madison Ave Pub, Everett: Can't Get Enough and Full Spectrum 8 p.m.
Salmon Bay Eagles, Seattle: Trouble At Home 8 p.m.
Sea Monster Lounge, Seattle: Funky2 Death 10 p.m.

JANUARY 17

Pearl & Stone Wine Co, North Bend: Eric Madis 5 p.m.
Port Gardener Bay Winery, Everett: Tim Koss Quartet 7 p.m.
Third Place Commons, Lake Forest Park: Stickhft Annie with Kimball and the Fugitives 7 p.m.
The Historic Downtown Everett Theatre, Everett: Ana Popovic w Stacy Jones Band 7 p.m.
Madison Ave Pub, Everett: Billy Appleton Band 7 p.m.
Admiral Theater, Bremerton: Backstreet Jellyroll 7:30 p.m.
Jazz Alley, Seattle: Chris Botti 7:30 p.m.
Salmon Bay Eagles, Seattle: Tumbling Dice 8 p.m.

JANUARY 18

Peabo's, Mill Creek: Sunday Music Revue 7 p.m.
The Spar, Tacoma: Sunday Blues 7 p.m.
Jazz Alley, Seattle: Chris Botti 7:30 p.m.
Sea Monster Lounge, Seattle: Randy Weeks 6 p.m., Ron Weinstein Trio 9 p.m.

JANUARY 19

El Sid, Everett: Blues Ambassadors 7 p.m.
Madison Ave Pub, Everett: Mad Bojo 7 p.m.
Blue Moon, Seattle: Andy Coe Band 9 p.m.
Owl 'N Thistle, Seattle: Aquilizer 9 p.m.
Sea Monster Lounge, Seattle: La Luz 10 p.m.

JANUARY 20

Bishop Block Bottle Shop, Port Townsend: Jazz w Jonathan Doyle & Friends 5 p.m.
Madison Ave Pub, Everett: Unbound 7 p.m.
Jazz Alley, Seattle: Marc Seales Quartet 7:30 p.m.
Billy Blues Bar and Grill, Vancouver: Ben Rice and the Hustle 8 p.m.
Sea Monster Lounge, Seattle: Foleada 7 p.m. Joe Doria Presents 10 p.m.

JANUARY 21

North City Bistro, Shoreline: Shape Shifter 4:30 p.m.
CCR, Snohomish: Usual Suspects 6 p.m.
The Spar, Tacoma: Jazzy Wednesdays 7 p.m.
Jazz Alley, Seattle: Marc Seales Quartet 7:30 p.m.
Seamonster, Seattle: Weinstein Wednesday 10 p.m.

JANUARY 22

Bad Albert's, Seattle: Annie Eastwood and Friends 6 p.m.
Honey Moon, Bellingham: Bellingham Folk festival 6 p.m.

Black & Tan, Seattle: Hilman City Sway 8 p.m.
Madison Ave Pub, Everett: Songwriter Showcase 7 p.m.
Jazz Alley, Seattle: Judy Collins 7:30 p.m.
Salmon Bay Eagles, Seattle: Stacy Jones Band 8 p.m.
Snapdragon, Vashon: Steve Itterly and Friends 8 p.m.
Owl and Thistle, Seattle: Danny Godinez Presents 9 p.m.

JANUARY 23

Welcome Road, Bellingham: Bellingham Folk Festival 12 p.m.
Historic Everett Theaer, Everett: Curtis Salgado 7 p.m.
Port Gardener Bay Winery, Everett: Ray Baron and the Love Grubs 7 p.m.
Kimball Coffee, Gig Harbor: EMC 7 p.m.
Admiral Theater, Bremerton: Lovin' Spoonful 7:30 p.m.
Jazz Alley, Seattle: Judy Collins 7:30 p.m.
Madison Ave Pub, Everett: One Island Drop 8 p.m.
Paramount, Seattle: Jason Isbell and the 400unit 8 p.m.
Salmon Bay Eagles, Seattle: Alki Heathens 8 p.m.
Bellevue, Bake's Place: Joel Astley 8:30 p.m.
Sea Monster Lounge, Seattle: Funky2 Death 10 p.m.

JANUARY 24

Dusty Strings, Seattle: Blues Fingerpicking Guitar class 11 a.m.
Blue Room, Bellingham: Bellingham Folk festival 12 p.m.
Port Gardener Bay Winery, Everett: Mark & John's Music Shop 7 p.m.
Third Place Commons, Lake Forest Park: Maggie Laird 7 p.m.
Madison Ave Pub, Everett: Seattle House Rockers & Powerhouse 7 p.m.
Jazz Alley, Seattle: Judy Collins 7:30 p.m.
Paramount, Seattle: Jason Isbell and the 400unit 8 p.m.
Salmon Bay Eagles, Seattle: Ron Bailey and the Tangents 8 p.m.
Oxford Saloon, Snohomish: Trailer Park Kings 8:30 p.m.
Hidden Door, Lynnwood: Swindler 9 p.m.

JANUARY 25

Blue Room, Bellingham: Bellingham Folk festival 12 p.m.
Peabo's, Mill Creek: Sunday Music Revue 7 p.m.
The Spar, Tacoma: Sunday Blues 7 p.m.
Jazz Alley, Seattle: Judy Collins 7:30 p.m.
Sea Monster Lounge, Seattle: Ron Weinstein Trio 9 p.m.

JANUARY 26

El Sid, Everett: Blues Ambassadors 7 p.m.
Madison Ave Pub, Everett: Mad Bojo 7 p.m.
Blue Moon, Seattle: Andy Coe Band 9 p.m.
Owl 'N Thistle, Seattle: Aquilizer 9 p.m.
Sea Monster Lounge, Seattle: La Luz 10 p.m.

JANUARY 27 -

Bishop Block Bottle Shop, Port Townsend: Jazz w Jonathan Doyle & Friends 5 p.m.
Madison Ave Pub, Everett: Mr. Canoe 7 p.m.
Jazz Alley, Seattle: Stella Cole 7:30 p.m.
Billy Blues Bar and Grill, Vancouver: Ben Rice and the Hustle 8 p.m.
Sea Monster Lounge, Seattle: The 350's 7 p.m. Joe Doria Presents 10 p.m.

JANUARY 28 -

North City Bistro, Shoreline: Shape Shifter 4:30 p.m.
CCR, Snohomish: Usual Suspects 6 p.m.
Headworks Brewing, Enumclaw: Walker Sherman 6 p.m.
The Spar, Tacoma: Jazzy Wednesdays 7 p.m.
Jazz Alley, Seattle: Stella Cole 7:30 p.m.
Seamonster, Seattle: Weinstein Wednesday 10 p.m.

JANUARY 29-

Madison Ave Pub, Everett: Songwriter Showcase 7 p.m.
Jazz Alley, Seattle: WAR 7:30 p.m.
Salmon Bay Eagles, Seattle: Salmon Dan 8 p.m.
Snapdragon, Vashon: Steve Itterly and Friends 8 p.m.
Owl and Thistle, Seattle: Danny Godinez Presents 9 p.m.

JANUARY 30 -

Admiral Theater, Bremerton: Pink Martini 7:30 p.m.
Jazz Alley, Seattle: WAR 7:30 p.m.
Madison Ave Pub, Everett: Shortcutz 8 p.m.
Salmon Bay Eagles, Seattle: Rod Cook and Toast 8 p.m.
Sea Monster Lounge, Seattle: 8 p.m. Funky2 Death 10 p.m.

JANUARY 31 -

Port Gardener Bay Winery, Everett: Deano's Motel 7 p.m.
Third Place Commons, Lake Forest Park: Centerplay 7 p.m.
Madison Ave Pub, Everett: Ezekiel's Bones 7 p.m.
Jazz Alley, Seattle: WAR 7:30 p.m.
Rockfish, Anacortes: John Stephan Band 7:30 p.m.
Salmon Bay Eagles, Seattle: Groove Masters 8 p.m.

Best of the Blues Award Nomination Guidelines

Please review before filling out the Best of the Blues Award nomination form on pg. 23

This year, the board of the Washington Blues Society clarified the guidelines for the Washington Blues Society Best of the Blues Awards. Below are the eligibility rules for the award categories.

The awards categories have been changed slightly. The Best Blues Band and Little Bill Best Traditional Blues Band have been combined, and a category has been added for blues rock.

Rules are not given here for all award categories. Rather, these guidelines were written to add clarity where it was lacking, based on feedback from musicians, members, and board members past and present.

Guidelines

As usual, categories 1-11 are open to all blues performers who live in Washington.

11. Blues Instrumentalist: This category is for artists playing instruments that do not have their own award category. Please include both the artist's name and the instrument they play.

Band awards

To be eligible for a band award, bands must have played at least five shows in the year prior to the awards ceremony, and although it is not necessary that all members live in the state, the act's front person or front people must.

12. Best Blues Rock Band: For bands that play a mix of blues and rock.

13. Little Bill Best Traditional Blues Band This category is for bands that play at least 75% blues music, approximately.

15. Best New Blues Act: To be eligible, the band must have been established within the prior year and play approximately 75% blues.

17. Best Songwriter: To be eligible, the winner must have written at least one documented song in the calendar year prior to the nomination.

18. Washington Blues Recording: Must be a recording of at least four songs, released in the year prior to the nomination.

21. Best Blues Writer: Board members are ineligible, (meaning that Bluesletter editor Polly O'Keary can't be nominated). Former board members are eligible.

22. Best Blues Image: Please name both the artist and the image, collection of images from a single event, or video. If you don't know the name of the artist, the name of the image will suffice. The image must have been created in the year prior to the nomination.

23. Best Blues Graphic: This award is for a graphic image created during year prior to the nomination. The name of the graphic must be included, and the name of the artist if known.

24. Best Blues DJ: Nominees can be the DJ of a radio show or podcast.

28. Best Regional Blues Festival: To be eligible, approximately half the acts should be from outside the region.

29. Best Community Blues Festival: To be eligible, about 75% of the artists should be from Washington or Oregon.

31. Best Non-Festival Event: No WBS events can be nominated, such as the Blues Bash or the Christmas Party. Can include concert series.

Lifetime awards

People can only win the Keeping the Blues Alive, Hall of Fame, and Lifetimes Achievement awards once. A list of previous winners appears at right.

25. Keeping the Blues Alive: No current WBS Board member can be nominated but prior WBS Board members can be nominated. A list of board members appears on the wablues.org website.

26. Blues Hall of Fame- Individual: To be eligible, an artist must have been playing in the area for at least 25 years, with the exception of nominations made posthumously.

27. Blues Hall of Fame-Band: To be eligible, a named act must have been playing in the area for at least 25 years, with the exception of nominations made posthumously.

Previous lifetime award winners:

Keeping the Blues Alive: Patrick Lynch, Cholo Willsin, Rod Downing, Rikki & Kevin Cates, Raven & Sheri Humphres, Robert & Carol Sawyer, Marlee Walker, Ken Page & Frankie Lee, Randy Oxford, Leslie Fleury, Rev. Dave Brown, Randy Oxford, Jeff Hayes & Lloyd Peterson, Jimmie Jean Tuttle, Rhea Rolfe, Dennis "Blues Boss" Dudley, Hwy 99 Blues Club, Tim & Michelle Burge, Tony Frederickson, Steve Sarkowsky, Paul Quilty & Willow Stone, Tom Hunnewell, Eric Steiner, Dennis "Zab" Zyvoloski, Rick J Bowen, Ed Maloney, Amy Sassenberg, Winthrop Music Assoc., Jeannie Baker, Mark Hurwitz, Billy Stoops

Blues Hall of Fame-Band: Little Bill & the Bluenotes; Alice Stuart & the Formerlys; Steve Bailey & the Blue Flames; Junkyard Jane; Isaac Scott Band; Charles White Band; Fat James Band; Jeff Herzog & The Jet City Fliers

Blues Hall of Fame-Individual: Isaac Scott, Dick Powell, Little Bill Engelhart, Buck England, Leslie Milton, Patti Allen, Duffy Bishop, Rich Dangel, Charles White, Kathi McDonald, Nick Vigarino, Mark Dufresne, Randy Oxford, Mark Whitman, Alice Stuart, Dave Conant, Jack Cook, David Brewer, Paul Green, Kirk "KT" Tuttle, Chris Leighton, L.J. Porter, Tim "Too Slim" Langford, James "Curley" Cooke, Mark Riley, Kevin Sutton, Jim McLaughlin, Lee Oskar, Billy Stapleton, Lissa Ramaglia, Tracy Arrington, Jimmy Holden, CD Woodbury, Scotty Harris, Scott E Lind, Steve Bailey

Lifetime Achievement: Isaac Scott, Patti Allen, Dave Conant, Rich Dangel, Patti Allen, Randy Oxford, Mark Whitman, Tommy Morgan, Fat James Grosvenor, Alice Stuart, Kirk "KT" Tuttle, Lee Oskar, Charles White, Tim "Too Slim" Langford, Nick Vigarino, Mark Riley, Raven Humphres, Jim McLaughlin, Paul Green, Scott E Lind, Mark DuFresne, "Stick Shift" Anne Eastwood, Jimmy Holden, Lissa Ramaglia, Billy Stapleton, Sean Denton, Steve Bailey

BB Award Nomination Form

Please review guidelines, opposite page. Due date: January 31

1. Male Vocalist _____
2. Kathi McDonald Female Vocalist _____
3. Electric Blues Guitar _____
4. Slide Blues Guitar _____
5. Acoustic Blues Guitar _____
6. Blues Bass _____
7. Blues Drummer _____
8. Blues Harmonica _____
9. Blues Piano/Keyboard _____
10. Blues Horn _____
11. Blues Instrumentalist - Other _____
12. Blues Rock Band _____
13. Little Bill & The Blue Notes Traditional Blues Band _____
14. Best Solo/Duo _____
15. New Blues Act _____
16. Patti Allen Blues Performer _____
17. Blues Songwriter _____
18. Blues Recording _____
19. Blues Club _____
20. Blues Jam _____
21. Blues Writer _____
22. Blues Image _____
23. Blues Graphic _____
24. Blues DJ _____
25. Keeping the Blues Alive _____
26. Blues Hall of Fame (Individual) _____
27. Blues Hall of Fame (Band) _____
28. Regional Blues Festival _____
29. Community Blues Festival/Event _____
30. Lifetime Achievement _____
31. Non-Festival Blues Event _____



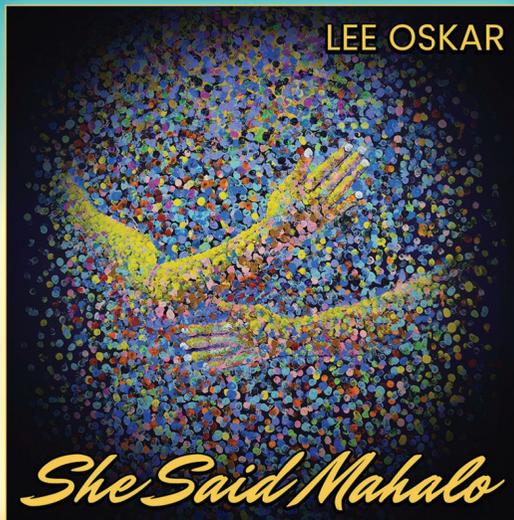
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