



1995

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- ***First KBS Blues Cruise winds up at the 26th Street Tavern***
- ***Inaugural "Blues to the Point" festival in Carrollton***
- ***KBS meetings held at the Velvet Rose***
- ***Paul Schneider takes over as editor of the "Blues News"***
- ***Sylvester Weaver Award goes to Fred Murphy***

Friday, January 20, 1995

The Courier-Journal Section F



Fans and musicians revel in city's changing nightclub scene

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Fans and musicians revel in city's changing nightclub scene

By MARK CLARK, Special Writer

NOT THAT LONG AGO, if you wanted to hear a blues band in Louisville, your options were few. In the mid-1980s, you had only one destination: west Louisville, home of the 26th Street Tavern, Joe's Palm Room and the now-defunct Pleasure Inn. If you were a blues musician, your job prospects in town were grim.

"The hard-core guys who really love the blues made places to play," said Lamont Gillispie, a veteran harp player who toughed out lean years in Louisville any way he could. For instance, Gillispie said, he and some friends persuaded the elderly owner of the Blue Cottage (now the Bristol Bar & Grille on Bardstown Road) to let them play there on Monday nights.

"I never thought I would see the day in Louisville when a blues band could make a living full time," said Scott Mullins, host of the "Saturday Night Blues Party" on WFPK-FM.

But today, fans and musicians alike can revel in a mushrooming blues scene. Louisville is now home to three full-time blues bars (despite the demise of one popular spot, The Bluebird Cafe) and at least eight more nightclubs that offer blues on a regular basis.

"It's easier to get work now than it has been for 20 years," Gillispie said.

Mike Pollard was the latest entrepreneur to jump into the blues arena, opening Stevie Ray's Blues Bar, 230 E. Main St., in October. Some wondered if Louisville's blues community could support another blues club. But Stevie Ray's has been packed virtually every night.

"It's just amazing," said Mullins, a co-founder of

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Upbeat blues

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the Kentuckiana Blues Society and owner of Rollin' and Tumblin' Records, which records Louisville-area blues bands. "Every time I think, 'This is as good as it's going to get,' another club opens, a couple more bands come along. It just continues to grow."

Part of the credit for Louisville's blues renaissance must go to local blues bands.

"They're excellent," Pollard said. "Their sound is good, and they're very easy to work with."

"There's definitely a lot of talent in this town," said David Cook, who opened the Cherokee Pub (now the Cherokee Blues Club) and the Bluebird. "We've definitely got more talent than a lot of cities do."

"The talent base is incredible, but the fan base is what concerns me," Mullins said. "It seems like we've reached the saturation point, but I thought that before they built Stevie Ray's."

For now, it appears that more Louisvillians than ever are going for the atmosphere that blues clubs offer.

In a blues club, Gillispie said, "it's easier to walk up and ask somebody if they want to dance. A

good blues band, if the bottom end's cooking, makes you want to stomp your feet. It works on your mind, then gets into your feet. . . . People have been known to drink a little more in blues clubs. Crowds are a little looser, more relaxed."

If patrons like what they get at blues clubs, owners like the kind of clientele blues clubs usually draw.

"The blues crowd seems to be 30-and-up, middle-class," Cook said. "They can afford to spend some money. They're laid-back, down-to-earth. They're not going to tear up your business like kids will."

So what's the best place to catch live blues? Opinions vary. Mullins, for instance, likes Zena's Cafe, 303 W. Market St.

"It's the best place in town to drop in, listen to some blues, drink a beer and have some fun," he said. "It's the most unpretentious place in town."

Gillispie, who has played legendary clubs like the Checkerboard Lounge on Muddy Waters Boulevard in Chicago during his long career, likes Stevie Ray's and 26th Street.

"Out of all these bars, maybe one or two are capturing the real blues feeling," he said. "Stevie Ray's has done it, and it's a brand new place. It feels like a blues joint already."

As for 26th Street, "that's about as close as you can get to the real South Side of Chicago."

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To cruise for blues ...

Here's a look at Louisville clubs that regularly offer live blues, with comments from local blues guru Scott Mullins:

Air Devils Inn, 2802 Taylorsville Road: Besides a Thursday night blues jam, the club offers blues by local, regional and sometimes national artists on Friday and Saturday. "It's not the greatest room for live music," Mullins says, "but what it lacks in acoustics, it makes up for in atmosphere." The music starts about 9:30 p.m. and continues until 4 a.m. The cover is \$3, except for special attractions. (502) 454-4443 or 454-9911.

Backstage Blues Cafe, 133 W. Liberty St. (in O'Malley's Corner): Live blues by local and regional bands like Blonde Johnson and the Mudcat Blues Band Thursday through Saturday. Shows run from 9 p.m. to 4 a.m. Cover is \$2 after 8 p.m. on Thursday and from 7 to 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday. \$3 after 8 p.m. on Friday and from 8 to 9 p.m. on Saturday, and \$4 after 9 p.m. on Saturday. The covers include admission to the other three O'Malley's clubs: The Rock It Club, Humcats O'Malley's and Coyote's. (502) 589-3996.

Butchertown Pub, 1335 Story Ave.: Blues by local and regional artists such as Blonde Johnson and the Mudcat Blues Band Friday and Saturday on the Old Pub Stage. "It's a nice room, the acoustics are fine," Mullins says. "Friday nights are absolutely crazy. They get in some good regional bands." Shows run from 7 to 11:30 p.m. Friday and from 8 p.m. to midnight Saturdays. The cover is \$3. (502) 583-2242.

Cherokee Blues Club, 1047 Bardstown Road: Live blues by local and regional and sometimes national bands Wednesday, Friday and Saturday night and a blues jam Sunday night. Shows usually run from 10 p.m. to 2:30 a.m. Cover is \$3 or \$4



PHOTO BY CHRISTINA FREITAS

Louisville singer Tanita Gaines performs regularly at Zona's Cafe.

Friday and Saturday night, unless the club is having a national act. Since moving into the former Twiglans, the club had been booking alternative rock acts as well as blues bands, but "by the end of February, we'll be nothing but blues again," said manager Terry Payne. (502) 456-2560.

Jim Porter's Good Time Emporium, 2345 Lexington Road: Live blues by local artists like Lamont Gillispie and the Home-wreckers and Forte Wells and the Walnut Street Blues Band on Wednesday, Friday and Saturday in the Melody Bar. "It's good exposure for the bands," says Mullins. "They get seen by people who don't ordinarily go to see blues bands." Shows run from 8 p.m. to 1 a.m. Wednesdays and from 9:30 p.m. to 2:30 a.m. weekends. Cover is \$2 Wednesday, \$3 Friday and Saturday. (502) 452-9531.

Joe's Palm Room, 1821 W. Jefferson St.: A legendary club that books more jazz than blues nowadays. Live music Wednesday from 8 p.m. to 2 a.m., Friday and Saturday from 8 p.m. to 4 a.m. Cover is \$2 on weekends. No cover on weekdays. (502) 581-1291.

Red Hot & Blue Memphis Pit Bar-B-Cue, 2051 S. Hurstbourne Parkway: This rib joint, decorated with blues posters and instruments, will offer live blues from groups such as the Rusty Spoon Blues Band and the Shannon Lawson Band Friday and Saturday in February from 8:30 p.m. to 12:30 a.m. If audience response is favorable, the restaurant will continue booking bands, general manager Kerry Nook said.

Stevie Ray's Blues Bar, 230 E. Main St.: Live blues from local and regional acts Wednesday through Saturday. Shows run from 8:30 p.m. to 12:30 a.m. Wednesday, from 9:30 p.m. to 1:30 a.m. Thursday and from 7 p.m. to 3 a.m. Friday and Saturday. Cover is \$2 Wednesday and Thursday, \$3 weekends. No cover for patrons who arrive before 8 p.m. (502) 582-9945.

Syl's Lounge, 2403 W. Broadway: Blues by Boogie Martin and Friends Thursday from 9 p.m. to 1 a.m. and by Billy McClain and Friends Monday from 8 p.m. to midnight. No cover. (502) 776-9105.

26th Street Tavern, corner of 26th Street and Garland Avenue: Blues by Joe Wells and Fred Murphy on Friday, Saturday and Sunday. "These guys are the real deal," says Mullins. "This is a real, authentic neighborhood blues club." Music runs from 11 p.m. to 3:30 a.m. Friday and Saturday and from 8 p.m. to 12:30 a.m. Sunday. (502) 776-7828.

Willie's 537 Lounge, 537 E. Oak St.: Blues and jazz Sunday from 8 p.m. to midnight by local bands such as Area Code 502. "It's a nice club," says Mullins. "one of the old show bars from the '50s." Cover is \$4. (502) 637-9031.

Zona's Cafe, 303 W. Market St.: Blues by the Rusty Spoon Blues Band Tuesday night, by Kush Griffith and the Sunstroke Blues Band Friday and Saturday night. Shows run from about 9 p.m. until 4 a.m. (502) 584-3074.



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Pal Joey

2/11/95

When benefits have been held for various musicians, Joey Lamont Gillis-

pie has always been among the first to volunteer to play his harmonica. Now he's on the other side of the stage. Gillispie is facing surgery for an intestinal blockage that has caused him to lose 40 pounds. It's a serious, and seriously expensive, situation.

On Tuesday — Valentine's Day — a stellar lineup will gather at Stevie Ray's Blues Bar, 230 E. Main St., to raise rent money for Gillispie. Admission is \$5, and showtime is 7 p.m. Take your honey.

Harmonica king Sam Myers is flying in from Dallas to take Gillispie's place in the Homewreckers, and Big Fred Murphy is making a rare appearance outside of his West End stomping grounds, playing with the B. B. Taylor Blues Band. Also appearing are The Predators, Ricky Feather, Mudcat Blues Band, Mark Stein and the Rib Tip Kings (with Mark Hoekstra), and Susan O'Neil and the Blues Hounds.

That, folks, is a stellar lineup. So pack the house.

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Journal*

*February 11,
1995*

BENEFIT CONCERT FOR LAMONT GILLISPIE

TUESDAY -- FEBRUARY 14
@ STEVIE RAY'S BLUES BAR
230 E. MAIN ST.
IN DOWNTOWN LOUISVILLE

FEATURING:

LEGENDARY BLUES HARMONICA KING, SAM MYERS
WITH LAMONT GILLISPIE & THE HOMEWRECKERS

PLUS

THE B. B. TAYLOR BLUES BAND
FEATURING BIG FRED MURPHY

THE PREDATORS

THE MUDCAT BLUES BAND

MARK STEIN & THE RIB TIP KINGS
WITH MARK HOEKSTRA

RICKY FEATHERS OF BODECO

MIKE PERRY AND JOE PINKERTON OF MR2 BLUE
SUSAN O'NEIL & THE BLUESHOUNDS

THE MUSIC STARTS AT 7:00 P.M.

THE COVER IS A \$5.00 DONATION TO HELP DEFRAY
LAMONT'S RECENT MEDICAL EXPENSES.



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*Fred Murphy
receives the
Weaver Award
from Keith
Clements at
Garvin Gate
1995*



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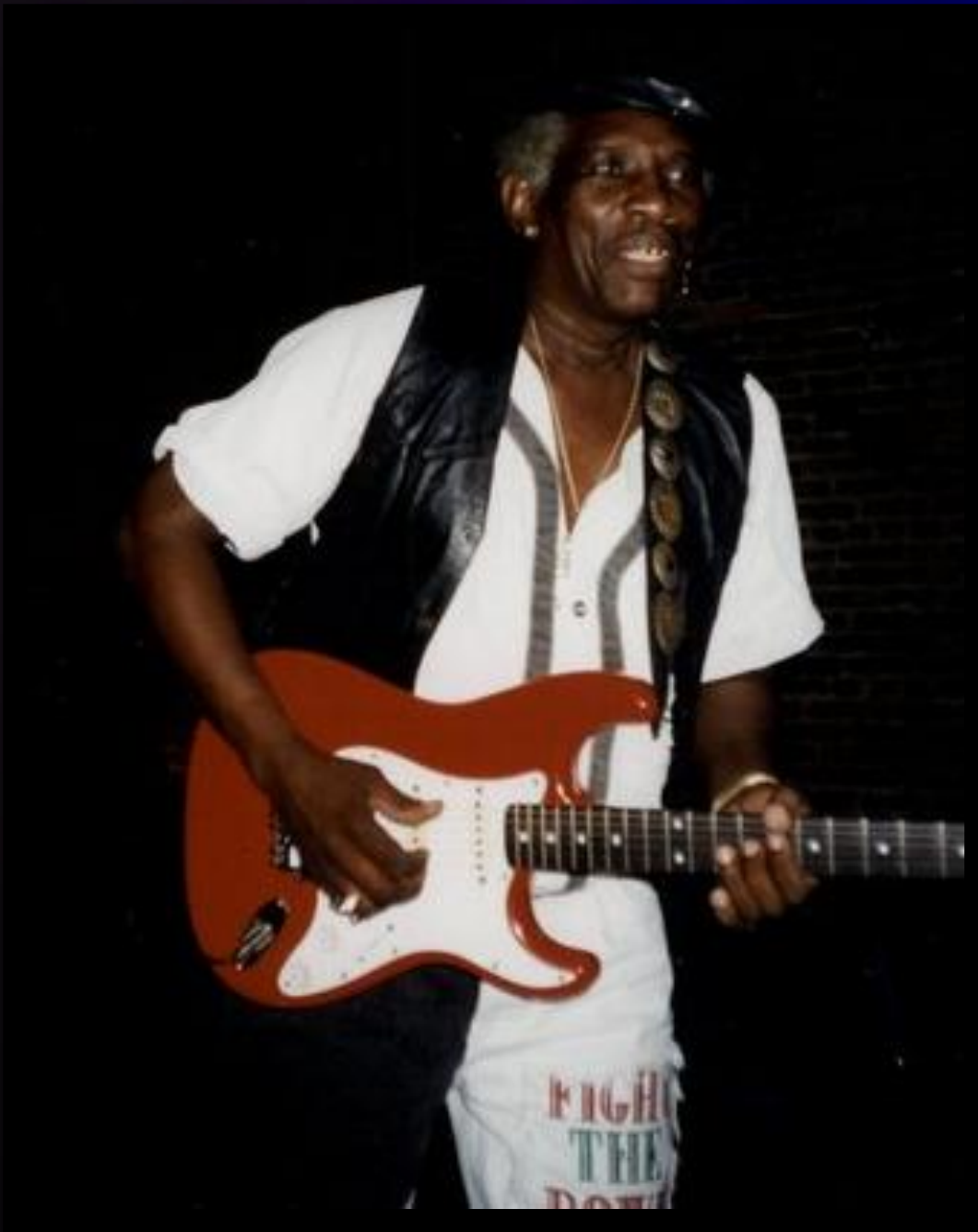
1995



*26th Street Blues Band - Joe Wells,
Fred Towns, Joe Junior, Eddie Mack
April 1995 KBS Blues Cruise*

James Peterson

*Stevie Ray's
1995*



1995



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Redd Snapper Blues Band 1995 KBS IBC Contest Winners

