

# BLUES NEWS

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE KENTUCKIANA BLUES SOCIETY  
 "...PRESERVING, PROMOTING AND PERPETUATING THE BLUES."

Louisville, Kentucky

December 04/January 05

Incorporated 1989



Photo by Debbie Wilson

President Brenda Major presents the 2004 Sylvester Weaver award to Keith Clements, an original member and past president of the Kentuckiana Blues Society, at the 16th Annual General Membership Meeting and Birthday Party. Keith is a dedicated blues historian and works tirelessly to preserve, promote and perpetuate the blues.

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December 04/January 05  
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**Blues News**

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Kentuckiana Blues Society

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As usual, please check your mailing label to see if your membership will expire soon. Our Single membership is a bargain at only \$15.00 US per year. Double membership (two members at the same address, two membership cards, one newsletter) is only \$20.00 US per year. If you see a notice on your mailing label, that means that it's time to renew!

**KBS LEADERSHIP FOR THE YEAR 2005:**

**Brenda Major – president/treasurer**  
**Debbie Wilson – vice-president/treasurer**  
**Martha McNeal – secretary**

**KBS MONTHLY MEETING**

If you are interested in reviewing new blues releases, come on out to the KBS monthly meeting (held the first Wednesday of each month at **7:00 PM** in **The Germantown Café at 1053 Goss Ave.**) and take your pick! We receive promo releases from the major blues labels as well as regional and local bands. If you review a CD, it's yours to keep!

# A LETTER FROM THE PREZ

I can't believe it's almost Christmas! Where has this year gone? But I am pleased that the KBS sent it out with a bang at our Sweet Sixteen Birthday Party November 20<sup>th</sup>. I was really glad to see several members there. For those of you that didn't make it, we were at Lisa's Oak Street Lounge. We decided to do something different this year to see if we could improve on attendance. We had the party on Saturday instead of Sunday and we provided pizza and veggies as well as having two, yes two, great bands. We had our Unsigned Band Contest winners, the Stella Vees, and one of our local favorites, Lamont Gillispie and 100 Proof Blues. I thought it was a great time. I really enjoyed hearing the Stella Vees again before they head to Memphis to represent us at the International Blues Challenge, February 3<sup>rd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup>. (From the reaction of the crowd I wasn't the only one who enjoyed them!) As always during our annual party we had our election of officers and the confirmation of the board and as has been the case for the past several years, the slate of officers and the board remained the same. Although we don't mind serving again, I encourage you guys to get involved with your society. New ideas are always welcome to make the KBS better. If you feel like you can come to a meeting or two please do so. We actually do have a pretty good time. We welcome you comments and suggestions and need your input to help us. We also presented the 2004 Sylvester Weaver Award at the party. This year the award went to Keith Clements, one of our original members and one of the more knowledgeable blues historians that I know. Keith does a monthly blues column in Louisville Music News, is a past president of the KBS, and has spent a lot of years studying and promoting the blues. I want to congratulate him on a well-deserved award.

I want to also let you know that the Stella Vees will be hosting a blues jam at Handy Hall on Beale Street the afternoons of February 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> during the International Blues Competition in Memphis. The jam will be held in the afternoon while the contest is during the evening. The guys have hosted this jam before and say it's a lot of fun. If any of you are in Memphis be sure and stop by to see them. We wish them the best of luck at the competition. They are a great band and I'd love to see them do well.

On a sadder note, Louisville lost another part-time blues bar to the wrecking ball. Churchill's Blues Bar had its last night on December 3<sup>rd</sup>. It's being torn down to make way for more parking for Churchill Downs. Although Dana didn't have blues all the time it was still one more venue to hear our music occasionally. We did have some good times there since it was a stop for the blues bus.

But on a happier note, one of my all time favorite performers is coming back to Stevie Ray's on December 20<sup>th</sup>. Jimmy Hall is bringing his brand of blues back for a Christmas show. If you've never heard Jimmy sing live I strongly suggest you make of point of catching this show. It's one you won't soon forget.

Although I'm hosting the board at my house for the January meeting, as Keith did in October, I still want to encourage you guys to join us at the Germantown Café on Goss Avenue for our monthly board meetings starting in February. We meet the first Wednesday of every month at 7:00 and we'd love to see you there. If anyone has any articles they would like to write for the newsletter we would love to hear from you. Hope to see you soon.

**Brenda**

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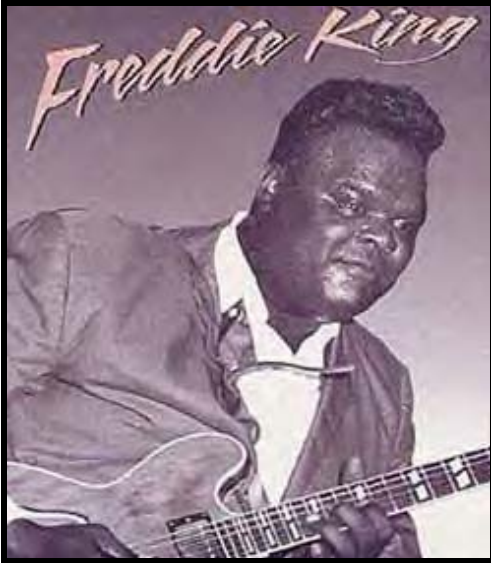
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# Texas Cannonball: The Freddie King Story

Each month Bad Dog Blues takes a look at essential blues, those artists whose music stands the test of time. Each month we'll pick an artist or two or discuss a slice of blues history that we feel is important. We'll make sure to list all essential records. This month we take a look at blues giant Freddie King.

Jeff Harris – Bad Dog Blues Radio



Guitarist Freddie King rose to fame in the 60's with a string of brilliant instrumentals that were widely influential in both blues and rock circles. Despite his premature death in 1976 his impact can still be heard in the music of countless blues and rock artists.

Freddie King (originally billed as "Freddy" at the beginning of his career) was born September 3, 1934, in Gilmer, Texas. He learned to play guitar as a child from his mother and an uncle named Leon King. He initially played in a rural acoustic style similar to Lightnin' Hopkins. In 1950, when he was sixteen, he moved with his mother to Chicago. He began hitting the clubs, listening to bluesmen like Muddy Waters, Jimmy Rogers, Robert Lockwood Jr., Little Walter and Eddie Taylor. He soon formed his own band, the Every Hour Blues Boys. As King said, "working in Chicago, that's where I first started playing in a band, but I been playing guitar since I was six. But I picked up the style between Lightnin' Hopkins and Muddy Waters, and B.B. King and T-Bone Walker. That's in-between style, that's the way I play, see. So I play country and city."

In the mid-50's King began playing on sessions for Parrot and Chess Records as well as playing with Earlee Payton's Blues Cats and the Little Sonny Cooper Band. He supposedly first appeared on record on unissued sides for the Parrot label. King cut his first single in 1957 for the small EI-Bee label ("Country Boy"/"That's What You Think") but it failed to gain much attention. He began gigging frequently and in 1958 quit his day job at a mill, making ends meet with the money he was making playing the clubs on Chicago's South and West sides.

In 1960 he signed with the Federal label a subsidiary of King Records. This came about when Syl Johnson introduced King to King-Federal A&R man Sonny Thompson. As Freddie said, "now Sonny Thompson was the one who put me on King Records I was playing at Mel's Hideaway Lounge, on Roosevelt and Loomis (it's torn down now), in 1960 and Sonny came to hear me and asked me to record, We called my first instrumental tune "Hideaway." In August 1960 he cut his first single for the label, "You've Got To Love Her With A Feeling" which became a minor hit, hitting the bottom of the pop charts in 1961. Following this song King cut "Hide Away" which would become his signature song and his most influential. The song was adapted from a Hound Dog Taylor instrumental named after the aforementioned Mel's Hideaway Lounge. The single was released as the B-side of "I Love That Woman" (his singles featured a vocal A-side and an instrumental B-side) in the fall of 1961 and became a major hit, reaching number five on the R&B charts and number 29 on the pop charts. "Hide Away" proved so popular that every up and coming bluesman was expected to have it in his repertoire.

King cranked out some of his best and most influential 45's during this period including sizzling instrumentals like "San-Ho-Zay" (#4 R&B/#47 Pop), "The Stumble" plus vocal performances like "I'm Tore Down" (#5 R&B), "Lonesome Whistle Blues" (#4 R&B/#88 Pop), "Christmas Tears" (#26 R&B), "She Put The Whammy Me", "When The Welfare Turns It's Back On You" and many others. Many of these have become blues classics covered by Magic Sam, Eric Clapton, Stevie Ray Vaughn, Dave Edmunds, Peter Green and many others. King also cut full length albums starting in 1961 with *Freddie King Sings* followed by the instrumental albums *Let's Hide Away and Dance Away with Freddie King* and *Freddie King Gives You a Bonanza of Instrumentals*. King toured extensively during the early 60's and in 1963 moved to Dallas. He stayed with the King-Federal label until 1966.

In late 1968 King signed with Atlantic and cut two albums for their Cotillion subsidiary. He released *Freddie King Is A Blues Master* in 1969 followed by *My Feeling For The Blues* in 1970 both of which were produced by King Curtis. King was less than happy with these records and soon parted ways with the label.

In late 1971 King signed with Leon Russell's Shelter label which yielded three albums: *Getting Ready*, *Texas Cannonball* and *Woman Across the River*. All of the records sold well and his concerts became increasingly popular among rock audiences. He was among the first performers to work the Fillmore, playing there first in 1971 on a bill that included Albert King and Mott the Hoople. In 1974 he signed on with RSO Records (also Eric Clapton's label) releasing *Burglar* in 1974, which was produced and recorded with Clapton, and *Larger Than Life* in 1976. During this period King toured America, Europe and Australia. Throughout 1976, King toured America even though his health was starting to decline. As Tim Schuller wrote in his obituary: "Nobody expected to be writing obituaries for Freddie King yet. He looked too big and too strong to be anywhere near death, but on December 28, 1976, heart failure, a blood clot, and internal bleeding caused his death at Presbyterian Hospital in Dallas." He was 42 years old.

### Essential Listening/Viewing

**The Federal Recordings:** There's no shortage of collections of Freddie King's prime Federal recordings. The most comprehensive is Collectible's "The Very Best Of Freddy King Vol. 1-3" which collects everything King cut for Federal between 1960-1966. Ace's "Guitar Hero Vol. 1-2" is another fine set. The Modern blues label issued the 24 track "Just Pickin'" which collects both of King's all-instrumental albums for the King label ("Let's Hide Away and Dance Away with Freddy King" and "Freddy King Gives You a Bonanza of Instrumentals") on one tremendous disc.

**Hide Away: The Best Of Freddy King (Rhino):** Indispensable one disc, 20-cut anthology spanning his entire career. Includes his very first single "Country Boy", Federal classics like "Have You Ever Loved a Woman", "I'm Tore Down", "The Stumble" plus 70's gems like "Going Down" and "Palace Of The King."

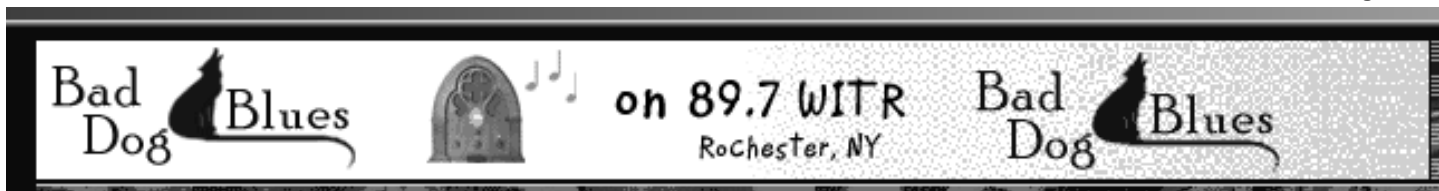
**The Best Of The Shelter Years (The Right Stuff):** King's Shelter years were covered completely on EMI's 2-CD "King of the Blues", which had everything from all three of his Shelter albums and then some. Although all of the 18 songs on this single-disc anthology were on "King of the Blues", this is a more manageable survey of the same era which wasn't King's best period. There's some fine material here including "Going Down," "Lowdown in Lodi," "Palace Of The King", "Woman Across the River" and several other gems.

**Burglar (RSO):** One of King's best but often overlooked records of the 70's. Produced in part by Mike Vernon this is an strong set of ten songs performed by King and a slew of guests including Eric Clapton and a fine horn section. Notable numbers include "Texas Flyer", the sizzling instrumental "Pulpwood" and "Come On (Let the Good Times Roll)."

**Live Recordings:** There's numerous live Freddie King recordings floating around with a few very good ones. Among the better ones are "Live In Germany", "Texas and Oklahoma Club Dates 75", "Live At The Electric Ballroom 74" and "Live At The Texas Opry House" which was apparently King's last recording and shows him still in great form.

**Video:** There's a number of Freddie King videos that are worth while with the best being "The!!!! Beat." In 1966 a Black music variety show called The!!!! Beat ran for 26 segments and was shown in about a dozen major cities in the U.S. where there was a large blues and soul market. Freddie became a regular guest, making several appearances. The 14 great tunes including "Funny Bone", "Sitting On A Boat Dock", "She Put The Whammy On Me", "San-Ho-Zay" plus 3 tunes recorded in 1973 at a concert in Sweden. Other good video of King includes "Live In Europe" shot during three European concerts in 1973 and 1974, "Freddie King: Live at the Sugarbowl" shot at the Sugarbowl in South Carolina in 1972 and "Live In Dallas" performed at a TV studio in Dallas in 1973.

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**EDITOR'S NOTE:** For a wealth of history, blues news and reviews, plus more than 70 hours of archived blues radio broadcasts, check out the Bad Dog Blues website at [www.baddogblues.com](http://www.baddogblues.com). You can catch the weekly show live online from 10:00 AM – 3:00 PM EST.



## New Music Reviews



### Otis Taylor Double V Telarc CD 83601

Otis Taylor won the W.C. Handy Best New Artist of the Year in 2002 for his CD *White African*. His originality garnered him praise but he has been characterized as “too blue for the blues” and a “purveyor of pessimism”.

Taylor is a storyteller who weaves darkness into his music. His stories are the tragedies of the oppressed and his maudlin presentation will do nothing to boost your spirits. For example, “Plastic Spoon” is about an elderly couple who can’t afford prescription medicines unless they resort to eating dog food. “505 Train” is about a girl that sees her father strike her mother and she knows they will leave and never come back home. “Mama’s Selling Heroin” is about his mother that sold heroin and went to prison for it. “Reindeer Meat” is the story of a homeless girl who at Christmas time is told by her mother that there is no food and she vows that she will not eat reindeer meat. You get the idea.

There are 12 songs on the CD for a total playing time of 44:28. Taylor plays guitar, banjo, electric banjo, electric mandolin, harmonica, and sings. His daughter also adds eerie background vocals and main vocal on one song, as well as plays bass. There is no percussion on any of the songs. Four other artists play cello and one song includes a trumpet.

Taylor’s playing in some songs seems to be a droning noise that is more background sound for his storytelling. His forced laughter reminds me of something I heard in a horror movie.

Taylor has always been unusual. His *White African* CD includes a song in which the storyteller is first person deceased. If you are an Otis Taylor fan, this is yet another iconoclastic recording. If you are not familiar with Taylor, beware- this CD is not for everybody. *It is different.*

### Bob Brown

### In Your Arms Again John Hammond Backporch Records

For over 40 years, John Hammond has been playing the blues and he just keeps on getting better and better. John is usually a solo artist but sometimes joins others or puts together a band for his CD’s. The band that accompanies him on some of his CD’s are Marty Ballou, Augie Meyers, Frank Carillo and Steven Hodger.

He plays traditional acoustic guitar and accompanies himself with harmonica when he is not belting out the

lyrics of some great blues covers. This CD has 10 covers and 2 originals for some 45 minutes of soul searching, heart breaking songs that reflect the hurt and pain of losing a love that was special to you or getting dumped, mistreated, and abused by a woman.

John has won a Grammy and three W.C. Handy Awards as well as been nominated for many, many more awards. Each time he releases a new CD, he gets nominated for the W.C. Handy Acoustic Blues Artist of the Year. He is currently touring but most of his dates are in the North East and he will go to Canada in April, Europe (England and Germany) in May. On this CD, he includes two songs written by Ray Charles- I Gotta Woman and A Fool For You. Some of my favorites on this CD are I’m Leaving and You’ve Got Me Crying. He starts the CD with a swing number Jitterbug Swing (which I did not like) and ends up with a super rendition of I’ll Be Your Baby Tonight.

Traditional blues lovers will love the CD. He puts his soul into his music and you can tell he is not swayed by the modern blues but stays true to what the blues really means to most of us.

### Martha McNeal

**MIKE BADER**  
**"CLEARCUT CASE OF THE BLUES"**  
**BY PETER "BLEWZZMAN" LAURO**  
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OK readers, here's a question for you. Quick, tell me your favorite Montana Bluesman. Hmmmm, let me see now....my favorite Montana blues man....errrrr...ummmmm.... errrrr.... Just as I thought - you can't. But soon, that may very well change. Once word gets out about MIKE BADER'S new CD - "*CLEARCUT CASE OF THE BLUES*" - this bluesman from Montana will become common knowledge within the blues community.

The band consists of MIKE BADER on vocals and guitar, DAVE BADER on bass, TOM "T-BONE" GIBLIN on keyboards and MIKE "BUTCHIE" O'CONNELL on drums. The CD, which features all original music, is a nice mix of different styles of blues while featuring straight forward blues as the mainstay.

The opening track sounds like a song written out of a real life experience, If not MIKE's surely, someone else's. It's titled "*POWER SHAFT BLUES*". On it, Mike sings that "she got the power, he got the shaft.....she got the house, he got the garage.....she got the yacht, he got the raft.....he thought he had love, but it was just a mirage". Lyrically and vocally this is an outstanding track that features great blues guitar organ playing. "*AUF WIEDERSEHEN BABY*", is another straight up blues track that feature a real good unnamed harmonica player and once again some very good vocals. On this one, MIKE's saying good bye to his lady in German as well as many other languages. His writing seems to mix in a little humor with a lot of reality. The title track "*CLEARCUTCASE OF THE BLUES*" is a song about all of life's problems. Although Mike may never solve any of them, he sure does a hell of a job singing about them. This is another track that features some excellent blues guitar and one of the highlights on this CD - the excellent keyboard playing of "T-BONE" "*SHUFFLIN' IN A*" is a quick, catchy, Cajun number that's all about the organ, while "*NEVER TOO LATE*" and "*FUNKY ED*" throw some reggae and funk into the mix. "*ANY KINDA DAY*" ends the CD with the sort of blues that makes up most of "*CLEARCUT CASE OF THE BLUES*", good old straight up blues and lots of great guitar work.

I guarantee you that after just one listen to "*CLEARCUT CASE OF THE BLUES*", the next time you're asked "who's your favorite Montana bluesman", your answer will be a "*CLEARCUT*" - MIKE BADER.

**THE CHRIS FITZ BAND**  
**"THIS IS MY CHURCH"**  
**BY PETER "BLEWZZMAN" LAURO**  
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It seems that there is a lot of blues coming out of Boston lately - some of it good and some of it bad. The Yankees losing to the dreaded Red Sox is just a little more blues than this writer cares to have. However, Listening to the CHRIS FITZ BAND has certainly helped to ease the pain. As I always say....."The Blues Is My Passion And Therapy"

In 2002, THE CHRIS FITZ BAND won the *BOSTON MUSIC AWARD*, in 2003 they were finalists in the *INTERNATIONAL SONG WRITING COMPETITION*, and after listening to their CD "*THIS IS MY CHURCH*", I can certainly see them in the running for the 2004 *BLEWZZY AWARD*.

THE CHRIS FITZ BAND consists of CHRIS FITZ on vocals and absolutely amazing lead guitar, JOEY SULLIVAN on drums and JUSTIN MEYER on bass. On this particular CD they were joined by a hand full of special guests: TOM WEST on the Hammond B3 organ and Baby Grand Piano, PAUL AHLSTRAND on tenor saxophone, WALTER PLATT on trumpet, KEVIN WATSON on baritone saxophone, JOHN LAMOIA, on percussion and J. PACE on harmonica.

"*THIS IS MY CHURCH*" starts right off with a very hot swinging tune called "*LOVE HAS FADED*". This track features great horns and lots of excellent piano work by TOM WEST. From here on in the CD just keeps getting better and better.

"*YOUR HOME IS A PRISON*" is all CHRIS FITZ. It features lots of scorching blues guitar, at it's very best, from beginning to end along with a strong vocal performance. Undoubtedly one of the highlights on this CD. The track is a little over 7 minutes long and had it been seventeen that would have suited me just fine. "*BLUES FOR RONNIE*" is another track that once again finds CHRIS right on target on guitar. His style of play on this track, along with some great percussion work by JOHN LAMOIA, makes this one sound like it's right off of a Carlos Santana recording. Another of the many highlights on the excellent CD.

"*MEDICINE FOR THE BLUES*" is all about the horns. This very fast, very hard swinging track features an excellent horn arrangement by tenor sax player PAUL AHLSTRAND. He and the rest of the horn section, KEVIN WATSON and WALTER PLATT really light it up on this track. "*LONELY*", is one of those soft, slow, sexy songs that makes you want to grab the one you love and just squeeze and sway with. On this track I can't help but compare Chris to one of my all time favorite guitar players - Ronnie Earl. The guitar work here is flawless. This one had me hitting replay, sitting back with my eyes closed and wishing the song would never end.

This CD completely satisfied me and I highly recommend it to any blues connoisseur. With any kind of luck, the CHRIS FITZ BAND could become a force to be reckoned with in the blues world. I certainly feel that they have the qualifications.

**These reviews have been complimentary written for your newsletter by Peter "Blewzzman" Lauro, A contributing writer for BLUESWAX and BIG CITY BLUES MAGAZINE, and the Blues Editor at WWW.MARY4MUSIC.COM -- where you can read many more CD and live show reviews, view lots of blues photographs and find an abundance of blues material. I can be reached at Blewzzman@aol.com**

# Women in Blues History



## Alberta Hunter

An early blues vocalist in the 1920s, a sophisticated supper club singer in the 1930s and a survivor in the '80s, Alberta Hunter had quite a career. Hunter actually debuted in clubs as a singer as early as 1912, starting out in Chicago. She made her first recording in 1921, wrote "Down Hearted Blues" (which became Bessie Smith's first hit) and used such sidemen on her recordings in the 1920s as Fletcher Henderson, Eubie Blake, Fats Waller, Louis Armstrong and Sidney Bechet. She starred in Showboat with Paul Robeson at the London Palladium (1928-29), worked in Paris and recorded straight ballads with John Jackson's Orchestra. After returning to the U.S., Hunter worked for the USO during World War II and Korea, singing overseas. She retired in 1956 to become a nurse (she was 61 at the time) and continued in that field (other than a 1961 recording) until she was forced to retire in 1977 when it was believed she was 65; actually Hunter was 82! She then made a startling comeback in jazz, singing regularly at the Cookery in New York until she was 89, writing the music for the 1978 film Remember My Name and recording for Columbia. After the 1920s, Alberta Hunter recorded on an infrequent basis but her dates from 1935, 1939, 1940 and 1950 have been mostly reissued by Stash, her Bluesville album (1961) is out in the OJC series and her Columbia sets are still available. — Scott Yanow, All Music Guide

### Essential Listening

*Young Alberta Hunter: The Twenties Vintage Jazz*  
*Alberta Hunter with Lovie Austin and Her Blues* Se Riverside  
*Glory of Alberta Hunter* Columbia  
*My Castles Rockin' [Collector's Edition]* Collector's



## Willie Mae "Big Mama" Thornton

Born Willie Mae Thornton, December 11, 1926, Montgomery, Alabama; died April 25, 1984, Los Angeles, California) Outside the Blues community, Willie Mae "Big Mama Thornton" is best remembered as the first artist to record "Hound Dog," the song Elvis Presley made into a million-selling Rock & Roll hit in 1956. Yet Thornton's contribution to Blues and Rhythm and Blues extends well beyond her trademark tune. A rugged Blues belter, Thornton was a direct descendant of such classic Blues singers as Ma Rainey, Bessie Smith, and especially Memphis Minnie, the '30s Blues woman whose style Thornton's most strongly resembled. Thornton is also the link between these artists and the '60s Blues Rock queen Janis Joplin. Joplin recorded Thornton's classic "Ball N Chain" and turned it into one of her most memorable songs. Willie Mae Thornton was raised in a religious setting in Montgomery, Alabama; her father was a minister, and her mother was a church singer. Thornton's musical aspirations led her to leave home in 1941 when she was just fourteen and join the Georgia-based Hot Harlem Revue. Her seven-year tenure with the Revue gave her valuable singing and stage experience and enabled her to tour the South. In 1948 she settled in Houston, Texas, where she hoped to further her career as a singer. Thornton was also a self-taught drummer and harmonica player and frequently played both instruments onstage. Thornton began her recording career in Houston, singing a contract with Don Robey and his Peacock label in 1951. While working with another Peacock artist, West Coast Rhythm and Blues bandleader Johnny Otis, she recorded "Hound Dog," a song composers Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller had given her in Los Angeles. "Hound Dog" was released by Peacock in 1953 and soared to the number 1 slot on the R&B charts. Although Thornton became a star, she saw little of "Hound Dog's" profits. She continued to record for Peacock until 1957 and performed with R&B package tours that included Junior Parker and Little Ester Phillips. Despite her recording and touring success, Thornton's career began to fade in the '50s and early '60s. To resuscitate it, she left Houston and relocated in the San Francisco Bay area, where she mostly played local Blues clubs. In



1965 she performed with American Folk Blues Festival package in Europe. While in England that year she recorded Big Mama Thornton in Europe and followed it up the next year in San Francisco with Big Mama Thornton with the Chicago Blues Band. Both albums came out on the Arhoolie label. Thornton continued to record for Vanguard, Mercury and other small labels in the '70s and work the Blues circuit until her death in 1984, the same year she was inducted into The Blues Foundations' Blues Hall of Fame.

#### Essential Listening

*Ball n Chain (Arhoolie 1039)*

*Big Mama Thornton with Chicago Blues Band (Arhoolie 1032)*

*The Original Hound Dog (Ace 940)*

*Hound Dog: The Duke-Peacock Recordings (MCA-Duke-Peacock MCAD 10668)*

*The Big Book of Blues, Robert Santelli, Penguin Books*



## Bessie Smith

(Born April 15, 1894 in Chatanooga, TN; Died September 26, 1937 in Clarksdale, MS). The first major blues and jazz singer on record and one of the most powerful of all time, Bessie Smith rightly earned the title of "The Empress of the Blues." Even on her first records in 1923, her passionate voice overcame the primitive recording quality of the day and still communicates easily to today's listeners (which is not true of any other singer from that early period). At a time when the blues were in and most vocalists (particularly vaudevillians) were being dubbed "blues singers," Bessie Smith simply had no competition. Back in 1912, Bessie Smith sang in the same show as Ma Rainey who took her under her wing and coached her. Although

Rainey would achieve a measure of fame throughout her career, she was soon surpassed by her protégé. In 1920 Bessie had her own show in Atlantic City and in 1923 she moved to New York. She was soon signed by Columbia and her first recording (Alberta Hunter's "Downhearted Blues") made her famous. Bessie worked and recorded steadily throughout the decade, using many top musicians as sidemen on sessions including Louis Armstrong, Joe Smith (her favorite cornetist), James P. Johnson and Charlie Green. Her summer tent show Harlem Frolics was a big success during 1925-27 and Mississippi Days in 1928 kept the momentum going. However by 1929 the blues were out-of-fashion and Bessie Smith's career was declining despite being at the peak of her powers (and still only 35!). She appeared in St. Louis Blues that year (a low-budget movie short that contains the only footage of her) but her hit recording of "Nobody Knows You When You're Down and Out" predicted her leaner Depression years. Although she was dropped by Columbia in 1931 and made her final recordings on a four-song session in 1933, Bessie Smith kept on working. She played the Apollo in 1935 and substituted for Billie Holiday in the show Stars over Broadway. The chances are very good that she would have made a comeback, starting with a Carnegie Hall appearance at John Hammond's upcoming "From Spirituals to Swing" concert, but she was killed in a car crash in Mississippi. Columbia has reissued all of her recordings, first in five two-LP sets and more recently on five two-CD boxes that also contain her five alternate takes, the soundtrack of St. Louis Blues and an interview with her niece Ruby Smith. "The Empress of the Blues," based on her recordings, will never have to abdicate her throne! -- Scott Yanow, All Music Guide.

#### Essential Listening

*The Collection Columbia*

*The Complete Recordings, Vol. 1 Columbia/Legacy*

*The Essential Bessie Smith Columbia/Legacy*

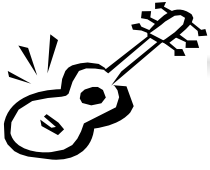
*The Complete Recordings, Vol. 2 (1924-1925) Columbia/Legacy*

*Complete Recordings, Vol. 5: The Final... Sony/Legacy*

*The Complete Recordings, Vol. 3 Columbia/Legacy*

*The Complete Recordings, Vol. 4 Columbia/Legacy*

*Bessie Smith: Empress of the Blues 1990 Penguin Feinstein, Elaine*



**KENTUCKIANA BLUES CALENDAR**  
**All Shows Subject to Change**  
**Best to Call Before Hitting the Road**



DEC	Date	Artist	Time	Location	Notes
	4-Mar	Stevie Ray's	7:30	Sue O'Neil & Blues Seville	10:30 Gene Deer
		Jim Porter's Melody Bar		The Funky Bluesters	
	4	Air Devils Inn		Junkyard Jane	
	5	Air Devils Inn		Blues jam w/ John Burgard, Mike Lynch, & Denny Thornberry	
	6	Stevie Ray's	9:30PM	Lazy Eleven	no cover
	7	Stevie Ray's	9-11:30 PM	Blues jam	no cover
	8	Stevie Ray's	9 PM	Tom Truly and the Tom Kats	\$5
		Lisa's Oak St Lounge		Blues jam with Sue O'Neil & the Blueshounds	(1004 Oak St)
	9	Stevie Ray's	9:30PM	Hot Rod and the Devilles	\$5
	10	Tink's Pub	10:30 PM - 1:30 AM	Robbie Bartlett & Company	
	10-11	Stevie Ray's	7:30	Junk Yard Jane	10:30 Studebaker John
		Jim Porter's Melody Bar		The Walnut Street Blues Band	
	11	Molly Malone's	11 PM - 2 AM	Robbie Bartlett & Company	
		Air Devils Inn		Junkyard Jane	
	12	Air Devils Inn		Blues jam w/ John Burgard, Mike Lynch, & Denny Thornberry	
	13	Stevie Ray's	8 PM	Amazing Rhythm Aces	\$15
	14	Stevie Ray's	9-11:30 PM	Blues jam	no cover
	15	Stevie Ray's	9 PM	Rusty Spoon	\$5
		Lisa's Oak St Lounge		Blues jam with Sue O'Neil & the Blueshounds	(1004 Oak St)
	16	Stevie Ray's	9:30 PM	Hellfish	\$5
	17-18	Stevie Ray's	7:30	Da Mudcats	10:30 V-Groove
		Jim Porter's Melody Bar		George Brackens Blues Band	
	18	Headliner's Music Hall		Bodeco and The Legendary Shack Shakers	
	19	Air Devils Inn		Blues jam w/ John Burgard, Mike Lynch, & Denny Thornberry	
	20	Stevie Ray's	8 PM	Jimmy Hall & the Prisoners of Love	\$15
	21	Stevie Ray's	9-11:30 PM	Blues jam	no cover
	22	Stevie Ray's	9 PM	Blue Swing Shooz	\$5
		Lisa's Oak St Lounge		Blues jam with Sue O'Neil & the Blueshounds	(1004 Oak St)
	23	Stevie Ray's	9:30 PM	Phat Beat Revival	\$5
	24-25	Stevie Ray's	24th CLOSED	25th Lamont Gillispie & 100 Proof Blues	9 PM
	26	Air Devils Inn		Blues jam w/ John Burgard, Mike Lynch, & Denny Thornberry	
	27	Stevie Ray's	9:30	Black Cat Bone	no cover
	28	Stevie Ray's	9-11:30 PM	Blues jam	no cover
	29	Stevie Ray's	9 PM	One Shot Johnny	\$5
		Lisa's Oak St Lounge		Blues jam with Sue O'Neil & the Blueshounds	(1004 Oak St)
	30	Stevie Ray's	9:30 PM	George Bracken Blues Band	\$5
	31	Jim Porter's Melody Bar		Dr Don & the Love Dogs and The Boogie Men	
<b>DEC/JAN</b>	31-1	Stevie Ray's	31st 10 PM	The Predators	
			1st 9 PM	The Predators	
	6	Stevie Ray's		Kelly Richey Band	
	10	Stevie Ray's		Michael Burks	
	17	Stevie Ray's		Lil' Ed and the Blues Imperials	

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**29th One Shot Johnny**

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**All Dates Subject To Change**

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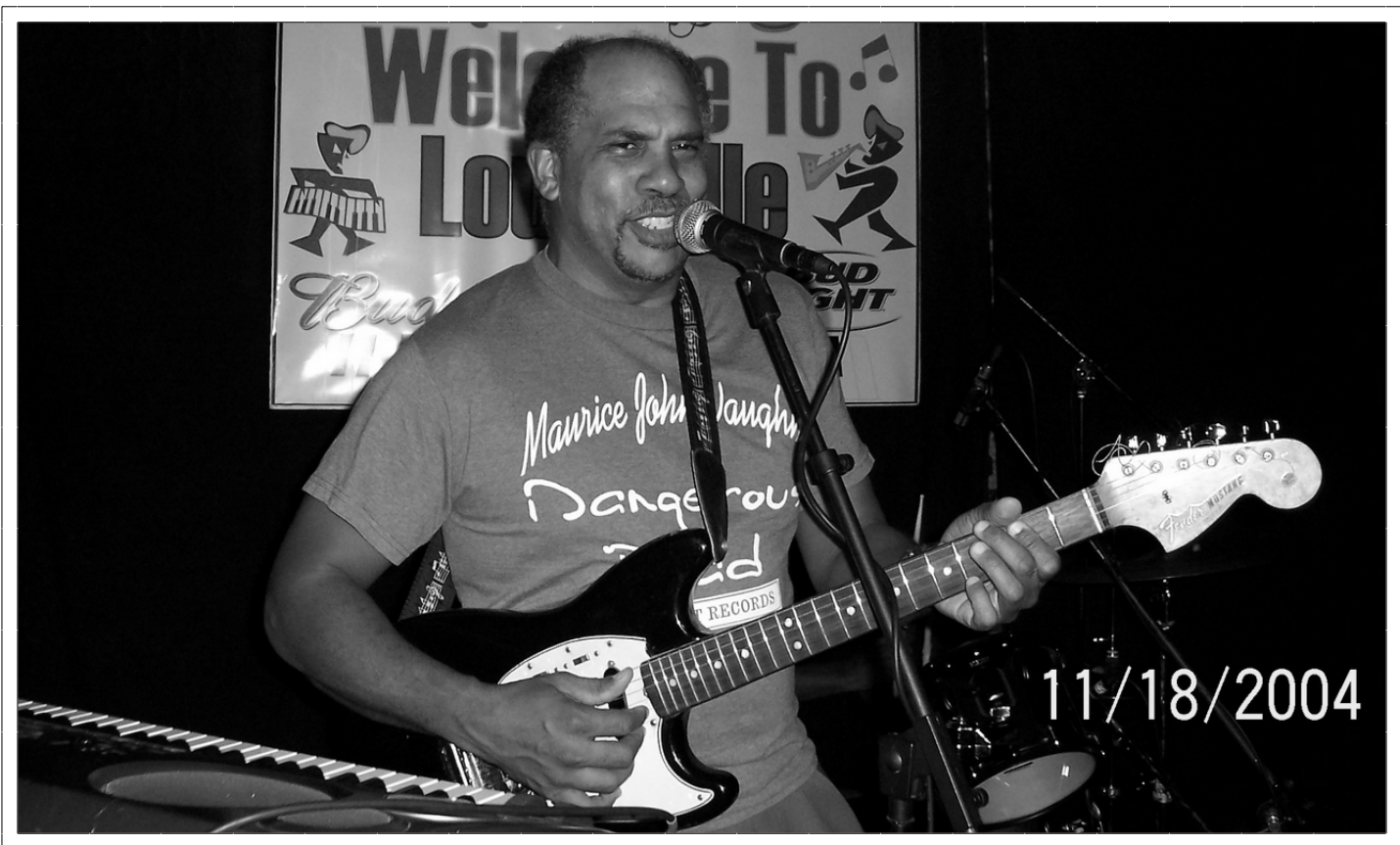
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Maurice John Vaughn at Stevie Ray's Blues Bar

Photo by Paul Schneider



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