



# GOLDEN GATE GROOVES

## FROM THE EDITOR

*Deb Lubin*

Happy New Year all! 🎵 It's been a successful first full year for The Golden Gate Blues Society, thanks to our officers and members, and we look forward to more great musical events in 2011. We're getting ready to send our first band to the International Blues Challenge (IBC) in Memphis at the beginning of February. Hearty congratulations to Tip of the Top, the winner of The Golden Gate Blues Society IBC events! **Susan Preece**, the TGGBS IBC Coordinator, reviews the events from her perspective, accompanied by several photos from the finals, which were held in November. TGGBS wants to thank Susan and **Marty Preece**, who took care of the sound, for their hard & very professional work putting the IBC events together! Please come to our **fund raiser this Sunday at Club Fox!**



It seems to be a sign of the times, as again in this issue, we focus on life and death. The name **John Leslie Nuzzo** may not be familiar to a lot of our readers, but he was a fabulous Bay Area harmonica player I had the pleasure of hearing just a couple of times. As you'll read in the article by **Johnny Ace**, a good friend of John's, there were many sides to John Leslie, as he was known on stage. Johnny also elicited comments from other musicians who knew John well and loved him. I hope you'll be moved to seek out John's CD, which would be a huge help to his widow, Kathleen. 🎵

🎵 And we celebrate **Steve Gannon**, one of the nicest guys on the Bay Area Blues scene and a wonderful guitarist with Craig Horton, Lady Bianca, Sugar Pie DeSanto, and many others, as he struggles to recover from serious illness. A benefit to help with medical expenses was held for Steve at George's Nightclub in San Rafael this past November. The house was packed, the music was amazing, and Steve was looking good—it was a very successful event! 🎵 New contributor to *Golden Gate Grooves*, **Steve Cagle**, wrote about the day and several photographers contributed photos. Thanks to all involved for your support! Please also see **Bobbi Goodman's** video links from this show and others.

Also in this issue, four different reviewers review CDs by four local musicians: **Macy Blackman, Stan Erhart, Kenny Neal, and Lara Price!** Check out the reviews and go out and support these hard-working musicians at their live shows and by buying their CDs! Thanks to **Joel Fritz, Joseph Jordan, Ira Kart, and Ron Purser** for your reviews! 🎵

🎵 Please see the contents list below for the remainder of topics covered and information provided in this, the eighth edition, of *Golden Gate Grooves*. We are always looking for, and welcome, contributors to the newsletter. If you're interested in participating, and/or you have a topic of interest, please contact me at [deblubin@sbcglobal.net](mailto:deblubin@sbcglobal.net). 🎵

I encourage all of you who haven't yet joined The Golden Gate Blues Society to please do so by going to [www.tggbs.org](http://www.tggbs.org) and clicking on the appropriate link. We can only be as strong as our membership! Hope to see you at one or more of the many events discussed in this issue of the newsletter! 🎵

🎵 **Go out and support live Blues! See you on the Blues trail.** 🎵

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## IN THIS ISSUE

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## The Golden Gate Blues Society Finals International Blues Challenge 2010

*Article by Susan Preece, IBC Coordinator, photo by Deb Lubin*

As the TGGBS International Blues Challenge Coordinator in 2010, I'd like to express thanks and appreciation to all who participated in the five events.



Starting last June, I began contacting Bay Area blues clubs to coordinate dates,

and was pleased to have cooperation from a variety of club owners. Angelica's, JJ's Blues, The Mojo Lounge, The Standby Club, and Club Illusions had no guarantee of a full house, and received no cover charge for the day, yet were willing to help a young blues society begin a project to promote blues in the Bay Area. Without them, these events could not have happened.

Word spread, and more and more people began to volunteer by publicizing, emailing flyers, and just getting the word out. With the inspirational leadership of TGGBS President Dorothy L. Hill, and her "right-hand man" Brad Robertson, Bay Area blues lovers prepared to organize raffles, handle ticket sales, set up information tables, and lend a hand where needed. My husband volunteered his expertise by setting up and running the sound system at all five of the shows. I can't say enough how grateful I am to see an organization like TGGBS become a driving force in the promotion of blues in the San Francisco Bay Area, and continue to encourage all willing and able blues fans to become a part of it. These are the blues fans that came out and supported the bands they loved. These are the folks that will refuse to let the light and love of the blues go out in their city.

For MCs, we involved blues personalities, such as esteemed blues writer/reviewer Joseph Jordan, blues

harmonica player and MC Mark Fenichel, Dave "the Blues Dude" from KSCU, and veteran KPOO Blues DJ Noel Hayes. We had the privilege of having the expertise of prestigious blues aficionados Kathleen Lawton, Barbara Hammerman, and Lee Hildebrand as our esteemed panel of judges at the finals on November 7.

But I'd especially like to thank the musicians. Without the promise of pay or acclaim, they took a chance to be chosen as the first representative of TGGBS in Memphis. I deeply admire these performers who put themselves on the line, and agreed to endure the pressure of being critiqued and judged in a competition with some of the best bands in northern California.

A winning band was selected on November 7. Tip of the Top, a unique and tightly professional group of seasoned veterans, will represent The Golden Gate Blues Society at the International Blues Challenge in Memphis this February. I give my heartfelt congratulations to them. They deserve this. But there were no losers in this competition. I received thanks and appreciation from many musicians for allowing them the opportunity to participate. I saw the exhilaration as bands won, and when they didn't, I watched them congratulate those who did. They continually insisted that it was "all good for blues." They moved on, proud of their performances and ready for the next gig. I am struck with the integrity and class of these Bay Area blues musicians, and look forward to working with many of them again in the future.

I am grateful for having had the chance to be part of this event, and I'm proud to be a part of the San Francisco Bay Area blues community.

*[Ed. note: Please see photos from the final round on the following page.]*

**Look out Memphis –  
The Golden Gate Blues Society is on its way!**



## Photos from the TGGBS IBC Finals at Club Illusions

Participating Bands in Order of Appearance



©COSMAN 2011

A Packed House, by Bob Cosman



©COSMAN 2011

Wendy DeWitt and Kirk Harwood by Bob Cosman



Photo ©2010 by Rachel Kumar

Tip of the Top by Rachel Kumar



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Twice as Good by Bob Cosman



©2010 Peggy DeRose

Tip of the Top by Peggy DeRose

[Ed. Note: Please see video links from this event on a later page of the newsletter.]



J.C. Smith Band by Bobbi Goodman



## CD Reviews

### Lara Price, *Everything*

by Joseph Jordan



Vietnamese-born Lara Price, a 12-year music arts veteran (singer/songwriter/performer) of the Northern California scene, has put out what must surely be her definitive CD. Price's fifth recording, *Everything*, accomplishes what she undoubtedly set out to do,

bringing opportunity to sing her heart (and lungs) out in several musical genres, including blues, jazz, country-flavored, and, for good measure, a torch song or two.

*Everything* includes several of the musical genres Price relishes, which may come as a surprise to those who think of her as strictly a blues artist... (get it?... everything?) The CD is self-produced with a little help from her "additional production" friends, and the sound quality of the album just sparkles. Kudos to the several engineers and producers for making it all mesh so well.

In "real life," Price maintains three bands that are individually able to capture the various sounds she encompasses while on stages, and many members of these bands are featured on the CD. Yesterday's Band scorches through the more-than-oft-recorded "Fever" to great effect, and Lara's vocals are in appropriate anguish for this tale of burning love.

Price covers several prominent songwriters on this 10-tune set, including Leonard Cohen, Lennon-McCartney, Koko Taylor, and John Prine. But luckily for the listener, Price also includes songwriting contributions from well-known California artists, such as Mighty Mike Schermer, Earl Thomas, Laura Chavez, Terry Hiatt, herself, and others.

Price and her very fast vibrato can ratchet it up or down as the songs demand. Schermer and Thomas's brilliant song "One More Day" is given a worthy cover by the artist, evoking the longing desire the song demands. Schermer's playing on this track, and on three others, is, as usual, perfect. The Beatles' classic "Yesterday" is given a worthy arrangement and vocal. Studio guitarist Ken Harrill must be singled out for his absolutely brilliant contributions to four songs, especially on "Voodoo Woman" and "Dance Me Till the End of Love." Who is this monster player? And on the cuts he plays on, Paul

Revelli's drumming is proof again of his being one of the West Coast's finest percussionists.

After listening to this CD, no one in their right mind will deny Ms. Price has a formidable set of pipes, and the musical ingenuity to use them correctly. Her breath control and phrasing are impeccable and her individual song approaches are mostly spot on. She is far from being a limited vocalist, but still seems to be in the process of finding her true voice, not a bad thing for any evolving artist.

*Everything* is a fine effort put together by an artist who matters.

Price Productions, 2010.

Check out: [www.laraprice.com](http://www.laraprice.com)

### Stan Erhart, *Missing You*

by Ron Purser



The Bay Area Blues community is blessed to have the talent and creativity of Stan Erhart in their midst. He is a steadily gigging musician, who is also loved for the popular blues jam he's been hosting for the last 10 years at Old Princeton Landing near

Half Moon Bay. His new CD, *Missing You*, has something for everyone. The music is eclectically blues, smooth in quality, comparable to high grade tequila. In fact, I absorbed his CD while poolside in Cabo San Lucas. I was pleasantly surprised because 6 of the 13 tracks are originals. Having followed Stan and his live band in its various configurations (usually with Michael Warren on bass), it was a real treat to hear a superbly mastered studio recording (coproduced with Garth Webber).

*Missing You* leads with one of Stan's original tunes, "Hey Baby" (I Need You Tonite). I've heard this song live many times, but it was a real joy to hear it again with Nancy Wright's never failing growling solos on tenor sax. The next track is a blues standard favorite, "All Your Love" by Otis Rush. The listener will enjoy and appreciate the warm, rich tone of Stan's guitar playing on this one, along with tasteful keyboard accompaniment by Mike Emerson. The next tune is an original called "Close Down." Stan's lyrical talents come through on this one—



the flavor is easy, laid-back, and smooth. The next track is a tune by Junior Parker, "Mystery Train," and Stan shows his stuff on slide guitar. Track 5 is a beautifully arranged original and slow instrumental called "Missing You." Stan and Nancy Wright are really together on this one. Next, is a more pick-you-up blues, "One of These Mornings." One of the things I really like about Stan's work is that he is true to the idea that the blues is all about the story—and Stan balances his talent as a vocalist with his well honed guitar playing. The next track, "Let Me Down Easy," is a country-blues-rock song—not twangy, but just enough to make you want to put your leather boots on. The next tune, is an original that has been getting a lot of play—it's called "Please."

Track 9, "Who's Been Talkin'," is a nice rhumba piece that many blues lovers will recognize. Randy Hayes is a sought after drummer in the SF Blues community—and his execution is outstanding. And let's not, of course, forget the great Michael Warren on bass—who is considered a "musician's musician" in blues and rock circles. The stellar rhythm section on this CD will please blues aficionados. Track 10 is a unique collaboratively written instrumental, where both Garth Webber and Michael Warren keep it funky, while Stan demonstrates his woodwind talents on solo flute (with a dose of reverb of course). It feels sort of Jeff Beck-ish. If you want just good old pain and suffering, then the next tune, "Serves Me Right To Suffer" by John Lee Hooker, will do the trick. The next track will bring smiles—a Willie Dixon original—raunched out and slow, "I Just Want To Make Love To You." The bonus track, "Hot Cha," is a Junior Wells instrumental piece that most blues lovers will be familiar with and will enjoy.

*Missing You* is a warm, down to earth, and soulful inspired album. If you've heard Stan Erhart play with these wonderful musicians, you will definitely want to add this CD to your collection. If you haven't, go out and catch Stan playing around the San Francisco Bay Area, or, if you are not a local, then pick up this CD. You won't regret it.

**Hack Bondo Records, 2010**

**Check out: [www.stanerhart.com](http://www.stanerhart.com)**

## **Kenny Neal, *Hooked on Your Love* by Joel Fritz**



This album is evidence that doing something right, no matter how familiar it might seem, is a guarantee of a good listening experience. *Hooked on Your Love* is a collection of 12 soul blues tunes by Kenny Neal. It's not a creative explosion that

takes the genre into uncharted territory. Instead, it demonstrates that the existing form has plenty of life left in it. Neal sings and plays guitar and harmonica, assisted by bassist brother Darnell Neal on all tracks. Vasti Jackson plays rhythm guitar on most tracks.

Neal has a raspy baritone that's completely at home with this music. His guitar and harmonica playing are understated, but always exactly right for the context. The arrangements are deceptively simple, following the first rule of soul music: the song should be a seamless construct in which instruments and vocals collaborate.

*Hooked on Your Love*, the title track, is a love song with a loping beat that features a melodic guitar solo by Neal and backup vocals. *Bitter with the Sweet* is a gospel-influenced advice song anchored by the refrain that begins "Life ain't always a bed of roses, diamonds and pearls, champagne and toasting." It includes background vocals by Alfreda McCrary Lee, Ann McCrary, and Regina McCrary, organ by brother Fredrick Neal, piano by Lucky Peterson, and drums by Bryan Morris. Neal plays a short lyrical guitar solo.

*Down in the Swamp* is one of the pair of tunes that celebrate Neal's Louisiana origins. It's a one chord tune about bayou life with the refrain "It sure is funky down on the bayou." Neal plays harmonica on this one. His approach to the harp is more like the pre-WWII players, such as John Lee Williamson and Noah Lewis than the dirty Chicago style most players favor today. Neal's playing doesn't rely on amplifier and microphone distortion. It gets its tone coloration from hand technique and embouchure [ed. note: the mouthpiece of a wind instrument]. The song features background vocals by Alfreda McCrary Lee, Ann McCrary, and Regina McCrary; Lucky Peterson and brother Fredrick Neal on clavinet, Bryan Morris on drums, and Kenny Neal, Jr. on miscellaneous percussion.



*Blind, Crippled, or Crazy* is a breakup song with the refrain "I'd rather be blind, crippled, or crazy, somewhere pushing up daisies, than to have you breaking my heart all over again." The song has dual keyboards with Fredrick Neal on organ and Lucky Peterson on piano. Bryan Morris and Kenny Neal, Jr. handle the percussion.

*If Walls Could Talk*, by Robert Miller, is one of four songs on the album not written by Neal. It's a novelty tune about bad behavior and the stories inanimate objects could tell about it. It has an unidentified horn section and background vocals by Theresa Davis and Dianne Madison. Tony Coleman plays drums, with Kenny Neal, Jr. on miscellaneous percussion.

*Things Have Got to Change* is a socially conscious tune reminiscent of Curtis Mayfield. Lucky Peterson plays keyboards and takes a tasty jazz-influenced solo. The horn section includes Corey Distefano and arranger Joe Campbell on trumpet, Carl Vickers on tenor sax, and Chriss Dunn on trombone.

*New Lease on Life*, by William Bell and Keith Jones, is about how love can turn your life around. The song has three keyboards—Tyree Neal on synthesizer, Fredrick Neal on piano, and Lucky Peterson on clavinet. *Ain't Nothing You Can Do*, credited to Don Robey and Wade Scott, is a version of the age old list song. It contrasts a list of illnesses and unpleasant states and their remedies with heartache, the incurable malady. Tony Coleman plays drums. The horn section consists of Melvin Jackson on alto sax, Carl Vickers on soprano sax, and James Bolden and Stanley Abernathy on trumpet.

*Old Friends*, listed as "copyright controlled," is a country-flavored song that could easily have been done by George Jones or Webb Pierce, with Floyd Cramer-ish piano by Lucky Peterson, who also plays organ. Neal plays delightfully appropriate harmonica on this tune. Tyree Neal plays synthesizer and Bryan Morris is on drums. *Tell Me Why* is a suspicions of adultery song—"Something strange is going on in my home..." Lucky Peterson plays piano and synthesizer.

*Voodoo Mama* is the other Louisiana song on the album. It's a sprightly NOLA style rhumba with a raucous sounding horn section consisting of Kenny Anderson, who co-authored the horn chart with Neal, on trumpet and Big James Montgomery on trombone. Neal plays a surprisingly effective slide guitar, not what you'd expect on this kind of tune. Lucky Peterson plays piano. Bryan Morris and Kenny Neal, Jr. handle percussion.

*You Don't Love Me* is a shuffle reminiscent of Bobby Bland's work from the late '50s and early '60s. Neal takes a simple and effective harmonica solo. The Duke/Peacock horn section consists of Corey Distefano on trumpet, Carl Vickers on tenor sax, and Chris Dunn on trombone. Lucky Peterson plays piano and organ and Kenny Neal, Jr. plays drums.

I enjoyed this CD thoroughly. I'll admit to a bias toward this kind of music. For me, soul music is what big band music was for my parents' generation. It's easy to get soul wrong. When it's done right, it sounds deceptively simple. The trick to doing it properly is for all the component parts to work together and the rhythm to be precise. That's exactly what happens here. Neal's vocals illuminate the lyrics without overshadowing them with the gymnastics that decorate a lot of pop music. His guitar and harmonica playing are similar. He knows what to play and when to play.

**Blind Pig Records, 2010**

Check out: [www.kennyneal.net](http://www.kennyneal.net)

## **Macy Blackman and the Mighty Fines, *Don't You Just Know It* by Ira Kart**



*Don't You Just Know It*, Macy Blackman and the Mighty Fines' mighty fine new release will transport you to the French Quarter and beyond. A variety of New Orleans artists are represented as songwriters, stylists, and influences,

including Fats Domino, Dr. John, Professor Longhair, Allen Toussaint, Huey Smith, early Meters and Neville Brothers, King Oliver, and even Lester Young and Sidney Bechet. The tracks were recorded over 2 days, in one or two takes with minimal overdubs, creating a very "live" feel—a bit rough around the edges, hence its charm.

When he isn't playing the cornet, Macy's piano style and vocals are reminiscent of Professor Longhair, a fine pianist with just enough vocal ability to bring the song home. Props to the band for keepin' it in the pocket — Jack Dorsey (drums), Bing Nathan (a very solid bass, and he switches to piano on Papa's Cool Blues), New Orleans transplant Ken "Snakebite" Jacobs (bari sax and some great clarinet), Kit Roberson (bass on Papa's Cool Blues), and the very talented Nancy Wright (tenor sax and vocals).



Macy, getting his inspiration from the songs as originally recorded, wrote the arrangements shortly before the sessions – they are interesting and just tight enough. The song list includes jump blues to get you dancin’, some gumbo grooves to make you stroll, slow blues to put you in the mood, and the surprising “Papa’s Cool Blues,” an instrumental that conjures up a smoky Bourbon Street club.

The diverse menu of obscure songs was a delight. You might not enjoy all 16 tunes, but you will probably find some to add to your playlist.

**Mamaru Records, 2010**  
Check out: [www.macyblackman.com](http://www.macyblackman.com)

## Bay Area's Best Come Together for Steve Gannon

*Article by Steve Cagle, photos as credited*

On the sunny afternoon of November 14, 2010, an awe-inspiring contingent of top-shelf Bay Area musicians gathered at George’s Nightclub in San Rafael, rallying to support their longtime colleague and friend Steve Gannon, beloved guitarist who has graced both stage and studio with a copious and distinguished list of artists, including many of those present. The music burned well into the night, teeming with memorable performances and an overflow of good will for Gannon, who faces mounting financial woes due to ongoing serious health issues.

Performers and fans began filing into the spacious 4<sup>th</sup> Street music room and restaurant while Berkeley’s purveyor of traditional acoustic blues, Reverend Rabia, got the program rolling. Accompanied by harmonica



player/vocalist Spencer Jarrett, Rabia opened with Memphis Minnie’s “Black Cat Blues,” displaying her distinctly deep and rich vocal style enhanced by Jarrett’s fluid

harmonica interplay. Spencer took the lead vocal on “That’s Alright,” and Rabia showcased a new “band” song she’ll be performing with her as-yet-unnamed band. With a generously full roster of artists on the bill, sets were kept short, but no less sweet, by stage manager Vince Caminiti, and the duo closed as the audience joined in for a rousing rendition of the gospel anthem, “Down by the Riverside.”

The show “plugged in” as San Francisco icon Johnny Nitro took the stage, proudly sporting a San Francisco Giants jersey, and tore into the trademark rockin’ blues that made him the toast of North Beach. He was flanked by



vocalist/sax wonder woman and longtime sidekick Silvia Cicardini, bassist Burt Winn, drummer/producer/manager Scott Silveira, vivacious singer/keyboard player Kathy Tejcka (who

tore it up with a rowdy version of Marcia Ball’s “Red Beans”), and two of the Bay areas premier horn players, Frankie Bailey (trumpet) and Michael Peloquin (sax). The volatile collective barreled through their set like a runaway train, including an energetic reworking of Tom Petty’s “I Won’t Back Down,” as well as Elmore James’s “Talking on the Telephone,” showcasing the talents of the dynamic Ms. Cicardini.

After the set, we stepped outside for a smoke break and had just finished talking at length to soul/blues vocalist McKinley Moore, whose latest project is a musical tribute to the late Otis Redding, when Johnny walked out and joined us. He enlivened the conversation with a hilariously un-P.C. joke involving a man on a tightrope between two buildings at the 95<sup>th</sup> floor and another man



on the sidewalk below who was simultaneously receiving oral gratification from a 95-year old woman. Both men were having the exact same thought at the exact same moment. What was that thought? Go see Johnny at the Saloon or any other venue where he’s performing and ask him during a break!

Meanwhile, the music carried on with dapper soul man John “Broadway” Tucker and veteran guitarist Dave Workman at the helm, joined by Chris Burns on keys, Bili



Turner on drums, Henry Oden on bass, and horn duo Bailey and Peloquin. Their soulful set included the Tyrone Davis quintessential R&B gem “Can I Change My Mind” and Latimore’s timeless classic “Let’s Straighten It Out,” with Tucker commenting “That’s usually what the men say, cuz they the ones who made it crooked in the first place!”

Queued up was Ron Hacker, who arrived at George’s wearing a suit and tie, looking more like a corporate executive bound for a board meeting than the author of the autobiography *White Trash Bluesman*. Shortly into



the set, the tie was history and the spiffy white shirt was soaked in sweat as Ron got down to his real business of hammering out the gritty, lowdown blues that is his claim to fame. With bassist Don Bassey (lately

of Volker Strifler’s band) and drummer Paul Revelli, the blues power trio burned through their set while Ron’s ripping slide guitar work on “It Hurts Me Too,” “Prison Mind,” and “Dusk to Dawn” left any semblance of a board meeting in smoldering rubble.

After the smoke cleared, Man of the Hour Steve Gannon strapped on his six-string and made his way to center stage as the next all-star musical configuration took their respective places on all sides. By this time, the collective



resume of the musicians who had already performed would have stretched to the other side of Fourth Street, but the party

was nowhere near the end. This lineup boasted the talents of “artist’s guitarist” Anthony Paule, “go-to” keyboard player/vocalist Steve Willis, bassist Mike McCurdy, and returning drummer Scott Silveira. Highlights included Michael Peloquin’s smokin’ sax solo during a slow bluesy version of “C.C. Rider” with Willis belting out the vocals.

Bobbie Webb slowly made his way onto the stage and, while catching his breath, declared, “And I thought I was in good shape!” Recalling his days performing with Gannon at Eli’s decades earlier, Webb played sax and

sang fronting a horn-heavy assemblage that included Ray DiFazio and Frankie Bailey in addition to Peloquin.

The George’s stage continued to be a proverbial revolving door of music mastery throughout the evening. Wendy DeWitt at the keyboards and Kirk Harwood on drums tore through a rousing rendition of “Kansas City,” and coaxed Michael Peloquin to trade his saxophone for harmonica during the set. Mitch Woods, sporting a



Hawaiian-style shirt illustrated with piano keys, gave the real ivories a workout while Lisa Kindred belted out the vocals, joined by guitarists Marvin Greene and Charles Wheel, with Tim

Eschliman on bass and Mike Rinta adding trombone to the horn section in progress.

Tip of the Top, who will represent The Golden Gate Blues Society at the International Blues Challenge in Memphis



next month, displayed a collective musical acumen that will surely have the IBC judges’ jaws dropping. Suited in stylish uptown Saturday night attire,

guitarist/vocalist Jon Lawton, harmonica player Aki Kumar, bassist Frank DeRose and drummer Carlos Velasco created an aura of sophistication and style for eyes and ears.

Kickin’ the Mule kept the dynamic in high gear while providing the rollicking soundtrack for two of Oakland’s enduring legends,



harp-blower Birdlegg, back in town from Austin just to pay tribute to Steve Gannon, and celebrated soul singer Freddie Hughes. Wearing a crisp blue shirt

and tie, Birdlegg put on an animated performance as he boogied across the stage and blasted the notes from his harmonica, powered by Patty Hammond on bass, William



Beatty on keys, Kelvin Dixon on drums and vocals, and John Graham on guitar.



Freddie Hughes took the spotlight next. While Kickin' the Mule played the tune to Michael Jackson's hit "Billie Jean," Freddie added the lyrics to "Big Boss Man," the unusual combination meshing seamlessly. Dedicating his 1968 record "Send My Baby Back" to Steve Gannon, Freddie demonstrated his extraordinary vocal range as he hit the high notes down to the bass. The band lived up to its name, kicking up a punchy groove for "I Don't Want Nobody Telling Me How To Do My Thing," while drummer Dixon supplied vocal support, including a call and response with Hughes.



Famed Bay Area guitarist/vocalist Craig Horton was joined by fellow guitarists Steve Gannon and Anthony Paule, harmonica player Scot Brenton, drummer Scott Silveira, keyboard player Sid Morris, and bassist Mike McCurdy. Highlights included an extended guitar solo during a slow rendition of "It's My Own Fault," with Horton meticulously enunciating each guitar note as Morris simultaneously gave a succinct punch to each keyboard note.



Craig announced "I'm gonna bring my daughter up to get down for ya" as Sumac stepped out and wasted no time as the band tore into the pulsing up tempo rhythms of her self-penned "I Got Blues in My Feet."

Alabama Mike immediately followed with stage lineup intact. Recently transforming his public image from earthy blues singer to suave soul man, Mike was coiffed, incognito behind designer shades, and smartly attired, wearing a shiny silver coat, slacks, and matching tie that hovered somewhere between a GQ cover model outfit



and rock star David Byrne's famous "Big Suit." The crowd-pleasing set concluded with an audience participation tribute to the finer attributes of Mississippi, most notably whisky-drinking and big-legged women.

After 6 hours of nonstop, highly entertaining music, harmonica giant Mark Hummel and Chicago guitar legend Steve Freund closed the show with the help of bassist Randy Bermudes, drummer Paul Revelli, vocalist Jan Fanucchi, and the great Steve Gannon. And while the event came together as a benefit for Gannon, it was without question a benefit to all who attended. Thanks to everyone involved for a unique and unforgettable experience!



## Photo Information and Credits

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Reverend Rabia and Spencer Jarrett, *by Deb Lubin*  
 Silvia Cicardini and Michael Peloquin, *by Diane McGee*  
 Johnny Nitro, *by Diane McGee*

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Dave Workman and Bili Turner *by Deb Lubin*  
 Ron Hacker *by Deb Lubin*  
 Scott Silveira, Mike McCurdy, and Steve Gannon *by Diane McGee*  
 Mitch Woods, Marvin Greene, and Lisa Kindred *by Diane McGee*  
 Tip of the Top *by Diane McGee*  
 Birdlegg, Patty Hammond, John Graham, Mike Rinta, and Michael Peloquin *by Deb Lubin*

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Freddie Hughes *by Deb Lubin*  
 Kelvin Dixon *by Deb Lubin*  
 Scott Silveira, Sumac, Craig Horton, and Mike Rinta *by Deb Lubin*  
 Sid Morris, Anthony Paule, Scot Brenton, Alabama Mike, Mike McCurdy, and Steve Gannon *by Deb Lubin*  
 Mark Hummel and Steve Freund *by Rachel Kumar*

## More Photos from the Steve Gannon Benefit



**John "Broadway" Tucker, Henry Oden, McKinley Moore  
by Deb Lubin**



**Charles Wheel, Mike McCurdy (background), Randy Bermudes, Aki Kumar, Steve Freund, Alabama Mike, Jon Lawton, and Peggy DeRose by Rachel Kumar**



Photo © 2010 by Rachel Kumar

**Patty Hammond by Rachel Kumar**



**Wendy DeWitt and Steve Gannon by Diane McGee**



**Freddie Hughes, Craig Horton, Sumac, and Bo Ely by Steve Cagle**

### International Blues Challenge Judges



**Kathleen Lawton, KCSM Blues and Jazz DJ**



**Henry Oden by Deb Lubin**



**Lee Hildebrand, Distinguished Journalist, *Living Blues***



**Barbara Hammerman, veteran IBC Judge and 2009 Keeping the Blues Alive award winner**



## Links to YouTube Videos of IBC Finals and Steve Gannon Benefit

*by Bobbi Goodman*

### IBC FINALS AT CLUB ILLUSIONS

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XHL3J3bbr7M> – Tip of the Top

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vgAaEilHmFc> – Twice as Good

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cQyBBupxU3Y> – Wendy Dewitt and Kirk Harwood

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7IW47QaOYq0> – JC Smith Band

**As a result of winning the IBC, Tip of the Top  
won the gig to open for Robert Cray at the Fox Theatre!**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U5YdtPFc2Rc> – Tip of the Top

### STEVE GANNON BENEFIT AT GEORGE'S NIGHTCLUB

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eBGK9OU7hAQ>  
Alabama Mike with Anthony Paule and Steve Gannon on guitar

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FDbpqbiFQpM&feature=related>  
Mark Hummel, Steve Freund, Sid Morris

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bJYhqTjoN2w&feature=related>  
Johnny Nitro with Silvia Cicardini

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tQoegnr5QN4&feature=related>  
Dave Workman with John "Broadway" Tucker

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hR2UnKAZQik&feature=related>  
Bobbie Webb with Steve Gannon on guitar

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h7kUPJxrcAU>  
Wendy DeWitt

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CeX9Of05KP0&feature=related>  
Lisa Kindred



## For My Dear Friend John Leslie Nuzzo

January 25, 1945 - December 5, 2010

*Article and Photos by Johnny Ace*

On December 5, 2010, between 11:00 a.m. and 1:20 p.m. PST, one of my best friends, John Nuzzo, also known as John Leslie, left the planet without saying goodbye. It was and still is and will remain a tremendous shock, not just for me, but to his many other friends, his wife and family, and his many fans all over the world.

Of course, John Leslie will always be known for his huge contribution to the adult film industry. He was an award-winning adult film actor and director who appeared in more than 300 movies during porn's so-called Golden Age in the 1970s and '80s. He was one of the first actors to transition successfully into directing, and he won an impressive list of awards throughout his career, which spanned over 35 years.



These are the things about John Leslie that everyone knows.

But most people don't know about John's many other talents—he was a very complex human being. Other than being everything that a great friend should be, he was a very fine blues musician. He blew harmonica and sang with all his heart and soul, and he never overplayed with a million notes that meant nothing. He was also a fine painter who studied at The Art Students League of New York, a fine photographer, and a mind-blowing chef. WOW could he cook! He was also an athlete. As a kid, he played all sports; as an adult, he loved to play golf. And his sense of humor was the best! He loved Jackie Gleason and The Honeymooners, The Three Stooges, Abbott and Costello, and Jonathan Winters. Plus, he was a fan of early TV shows: "The Twilight Zone," "Andy's Gang," and "Rama of the Jungle." When it came to music, John loved the DJ Porky Chedwick and his '50s and early '60s radio show out of Pittsburgh.

John loved so many things. He had a tremendous gift for enjoying life. And he had a tremendous heart.

Our lives intersected around blues as early as 1969. We met at The Sportsman Bar on East 96<sup>th</sup> Street in New York City—a real friendly place—JUST KIDDING! It was a bucket of blood! The late harp player, Bill Dicey, was

playing that night and somehow John and I ended up talking.

We met again in 1970 when I was with the Thompson Ferry Blues Band. We were playing a 3-day gig opening for Muddy Waters at Ungano's on West 70<sup>th</sup> Street. It was the middle of June. John and I hung out, but we didn't really talk about anything deep. Then, about 3 months later, I was riding a bicycle working as a messenger to make ends meet. I was on East 34<sup>th</sup> Street and ran into John. I asked him what he was doing. He said that he was studying at The Art Students League right there on 34<sup>th</sup> Street. He looked at me in a very big-brotherly way and asked me what I was doing on a bike. I told him and he immediately got very upset. He told me that I was too good to be doing that. He said, "There's a blues band playing in Brooklyn and they're looking for a bassist. They just backed up John Lee Hooker. They run a jam every Monday night! You should go there and get the gig!"

Well, I went over there and got the gig. I had to quit the Thompson Ferry band, which upset my dear friend Bobby Dupree, who was the band leader. I wanted to play blues, not drive a bike, and we just weren't working enough. Years later, in 1980, Bobby had a huge Top 10 hit with his song "Steal Away," so I never had to worry about Bobby.

The next time John and I connected was when he joined a band I was in called The Brooklyn Blues Busters. The band was started by Paul Oscher, who was blowing harp for Muddy Waters. Muddy was hospitalized as the result of a big car accident in the autumn of 1969, an accident that killed three people. Paul needed a gig to survive until Muddy got better. So Paul left Chicago where he had been working with Muddy and living since 1967, and moved to Brooklyn where, through an ad in *The Village Voice*, he found blues drummer Danny Spurduto. When Muddy got better in the spring of 1970, Paul went back to play with him and left The Blues Busters to Danny. Danny then got his Brooklyn pal, guitarist Howard T. Levine, and harpist Fred Palmer (who later became Flower City Red), plus a bassist (no one can remember his name) to form the new Brooklyn Blues Busters.

Well, while I was gigging with The Blues Busters at The Night Cap, John Nuzzo would come down and sit in—this went on for 5 months.



I remember it was the first of a 3-night gig at The Night Cap and Fred's Fender Twin Reverb disappeared. It was stolen from the club. We were all very mad. Al, the club owner and fine gentlemen that he was (JUST KIDDING!), wouldn't buy Fred a replacement amp. He could afford to, plus it was his club. We all felt Al was

responsible. We couldn't afford to buy Fred another amp, so Fred quit. We got John.

We all just hit it off so great with him. John was so kind and warm-hearted. He had a sweet, naive side that he wouldn't let a lot of people see. He was also extremely smart. We'd rehearse at Howard's pad in Brooklyn or at John's on East 32<sup>nd</sup> Street in the City. I'd spend many fun-filled hours hanging with John just listening to his old 45s or his stories about all the great r&b and rock 'n rollers from the '50s and '60s that he'd seen growing up in Pennsylvania. He saw everyone in their PRIME—EVERYONE, including James Brown in 1958 with The Famous Flames! John loved James Brown the most out of everyone. And he LOVED to dance! You had to be there to see John do "The Slop" and "The James Brown." Words really can't describe that!

John was totally into the music! I would say he was obsessed, but in a good way. And he had an overabundance of self confidence! He was real good on the stage and with an audience. He loved Little Walter, James Cotton, Big Walter, Muddy, and so many others. And we'd all go see the greats live in the clubs in NYC. We'd also blast "the grease"—that's what we used to call the old doo wops—before the term "doo wop" was invented a year later. John loved The Turbans, The Channels, The Cadillac, The Flamingos, and The Diablos, to name a few. He'd always ask me to sing that stuff and smile in approval when I would. John was also very much a team player. He was very supportive and proud to see someone in the band do real good. We used to hang out a lot just me and him and do things like play James Brown's "Live at The Apollo" LP over and over again. We'd go wild each time! He also loved Jimmy Smith, the organist. He'd constantly blast "The Sermon," Jimmy Smith's famous Bluenote LP. John had great ears. The music was in his heart, body, and soul.

Then the Blues Busters all moved out to Ann Arbor, Michigan, in January 1972. And we found "SHANGRI-LA!" Before, we were used to playing in these old, funky black bars in Brooklyn that not too many people would

want to go to—especially any good looking women. Basically, we played for the love of the music.

When we got to Ann Arbor, a college town that loved blues and had great looking women all over the place, we went hog wild! The whole town embraced us—well, except the blues purists. We were a blues-based band, but we'd throw in some old r&b and r&r. We always were into putting on a show. And I guess we were a bit different. John was extremely handsome and the women loved him. A lot of guys were jealous of him.



From day one, walking the streets with John was the most fun. He just loved women so much! He was able to charm them so naturally. It was poetry in motion to watch him do his thing. I learned a lot. Ha Ha!

Well, the Blues Busters in Ann Arbor lasted until April 1973. Then we split up. Looking back, I think our big mistake was that we never made a record. We did play out of town, but we should have had a record to promote all over the country. We were just too busy having fun and thought it would never end. We did many great gigs, The Ann Arbor Jazz and Blues Festival



being the highlight, where we backed up our old friend from Brooklyn, blues diva Victoria Spivey, and also the great John Lee Hooker. Our show with Victoria was put out in

the '90s on CD by John Sinclair, the famous poet, on The Poor Boy label. I don't know if it's still in print. But the best thing about that time was the friendships that were made, which are still very strong today, 40 years later! We all remained friends with Danny Sperduto until he passed on in 2002, and Howard T. Levine, Blues Buster drummer Martin "Tino" Gross (later of The Howling Diablos), the wailing Hammond B3 player, Bill Heid—also known as "Baseball Bill" because he earned the Guinness world record for "Longest Total Distance Hitched" (to get to baseball games)—and of course, John Nuzzo. In Ann Arbor, we also became friends with two other great individuals: Walter Shufflesworth, the drummer who later formed the Dynatones, and all-round personality and street legend Chinner Mitchell. Chinner would often be our MC at gigs. No money in the world could buy friendships like these.



We played our last Blues Busters gig at Floods, a great bar in Ann Arbor that's now way gone. I can see it all in my brain like it was last month. It was early spring. At that time, streaking was sweeping the nation. Young kids out of nowhere would just take ALL their clothes off and run in public! MERCY! We were playing our last song of the night, "Funky Broadway," and our MC, Chinner Mitchell, was on stage singing it with John. On the instrumental break, Chinner and John started a dance battle. They were trying to outdo each other with their moves. Chinner went first, doing a lot of hip kung-fu-like standing moves to the groove of the band, arms and legs flying! Now Chinner weighed about 250 pounds, mostly muscle, and he could WORK IT!—very light on his feet! I remember the stage would just shake when he danced! But then John got up and did his thing. He killed it! He went wild, waving this white hanky around while doin' "The New York Slop." Then he did "The James Brown" with splits and all of it! After about a minute of John working out, Chinner yelled at him over the mic, "THAT AIN'T SHIT! YOU GOT TO GET NAKED! YOU GOT TO STREAK!!"

In a New York minute, John stripped off ALL his clothes and then started to wail on his harp! Chinner was screaming over the mic, "HE'S DOIN THE STREAK! HE'S DOIN THE STREAK!!" The audience went wild! Then out of the crowd, a young, very pretty lady attacked the stage and jumped on John while he was still wailing away on his harp. She straddled her long legs around John's naked body, but John didn't miss a beat! Now the crowd was in a frenzy! Chinner ran over to the mic and started SCREAMING at the top of his lungs, "HE'S DOIN' THE STREAK! HE'S DOIN' THE STREAK! OH MERCY! AH! AGGGGGHHH!" I had to stop playing my bass I was laughing SO hard! The girl then kissed John and left the stage. John just kept wailing away—totally into his harp and the show. You had to be there! MERCY!

On our last gig, we weren't all that sad about breaking up. I remember that we were all standing outside the club hangin' out: Martin, Bill, John, me, and Junior (Junior is a WHOLE other story—wow!) Anyway, John asked me what I was gonna do, and I told him I was gonna go back to NYC to look for a gig. John wasn't too sure of where he was going. I suggested trying San Francisco. We ended up giving John the band van, "The Rat Mobile" (John's nickname was "Rat"—a term Baseball Bill came up with) because John customized the van for his own pleasures. So John went to San Francisco. He found a place to live, but he couldn't get a gig playing harp. He said no one in San Francisco would let him sit in. I knew what it was. John was just so confident and good looking that he'd intimidate a lot of insecure musicians. This

forced him to get a job on Union Street making sandwiches. John got fired for talking to the help in the kitchen. Then he got involved in the adult entertainment business and the rest is history. John getting famous in that industry didn't surprise me or anyone else who really knew him. John was a natural. That was in 1975.

We never lost contact over the years. When I came back to San Francisco in '76 and then '79 to live, we hung out and grooved. John gave me my first snort of cocaine in



1976 and he was really worried about it. He said, "Ace, you like it too much!" I don't want to go into that, but John saw a vision and he stopped using it himself. Not me—not

at least for a decade or more. Years later, when I got really heavy into it, John actually sat me down and talked to me about it. He told me in a very gentle, caring way that I had lost that glow, that sparkle in my eyes that I always used to have, and that I was getting very bitter. I didn't even realize it at the time. That talk gave me a real good wake-up call. I will always really appreciate it. John helped me get straight.

Well, time marched on and by the early 1980s, I had two kids and had moved back to NYC. Then John followed in '82. I had quit playing music for almost 2 years to support my family—and to stay out of trouble. John saw how I was and told me he was worried about me. He said I didn't look happy. He could see right through me—always. He encouraged me to play music again. Then in October 1986, I moved back to San Francisco, now with four kids and my wife. John was right there as a friend.

In 1980, John met the love of his life, Kathleen—that was a meeting set up by the Gods. John stopped performing in adult movies when AIDS came out in the '80s and because he met Kathleen and started to write/direct adult films. He was constantly painting and cooking these mind-blowing meals. He had no kids. He told me



that he didn't want to bring any more children into this world. But he loved dogs. He had plenty of money, but I knew he missed playing music. He'd occasionally come

to a club that I'd be working at and sit in, but it wasn't the same. He still had too much music in him, though, and it had to come out.



In 1994, we finally put a band together with my man Brian Bisesi on guitar, Kevin Coggins on drums, and Justin McCarthy on second guitar. That lasted about a year. Brian had to go back east for family stuff, and Kevin was let go because he told me and John that Ray Charles had no time.

After Brian left, I hooked John up with Rusty Zinn. A band was formed with Rusty on lead guitar, Justin McCarthy on second guitar, Bob Welsh on piano, and Robi Bean on drums. We even got John's wife Kathleen to play maracas to make it a family affair. After about

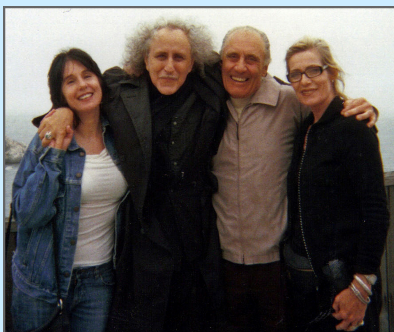


9 months of playing, we made a CD in 1998 entitled "In the Kitchen." John wrote the title song and a couple of others. It was a real good CD. At that time we worked at Biscuits

& Blues in San Francisco and other clubs, like The Ivy Room in Albany, CA, and always to sold out crowds. Then I left because I wanted to do my own thing and blast out the music loud. John was looking for a more organic, almost acoustic, blues sound. I was replaced by Randy Bermudes who played electric and stand up bass. This brought the volume down.

Throughout the years, John was like a great uncle to my kids. He became my son Paul's Godfather when he was born. He loved all of my kids and they loved him—Kathleen too. Always at Christmas time, we'd go to John and Kathleen's house in Mill Valley to celebrate—there'd be John's great cooking, presents, great music blasting, and that glowing love—always! We'd always end the evening watching "The Honeymooners Christmas Episode" for that yuletide New York buzz!

Time is a strange thing. It was just a few months ago that John and Kathleen invited me and my partner Cathy Lemons to see an exhibition of French impressionists at



the DeYoung Museum here in San Francisco. It was crowded that day and so we split up into pairs. It was so uncomfortable that John and I couldn't enjoy the paintings, so we

just sat down and rapped for 40 minutes until the ladies came out. Then John took us out to The Cliff House restaurant at Ocean Beach. We had the most wonderful time. We watched the sun go down over the ocean, and we were laughing away—not a care in the world. Time stood still.

Then John went to Los Angeles to work for 8 days on his new movie. He stayed with his pal Joey, who was also in the business. John called me when he got back. He told me that he was gonna get a massage and that he hadn't had one in 20 years. He said he felt tired. Well, one week later, on Monday, December 6, about 12:00 p.m., I woke up to hear a phone message from Paul Oscher on my machine stating that he heard a rumor that John Nuzzo had died. I didn't believe it. Then another message came in from Rusty Zinn saying something I couldn't really understand—or didn't want to. And then a message came in from John's wife—she said "Johnny, Nuzzo's not so good." in a strained voice. Then I knew. I'm still numb and don't or can't believe it. I know that John always loved doing magic tricks and in my innocent childlike brain, I am still hoping that John did a big ol' disappearing trick—to just mess with us. But that's NOT what is happening. So who now can I call up on the phone late at night to say "Turn on Channel 9 RIGHT NOW—Bela Lugosi's on in "The Devil Bat!" or "Turn on KPOO! They're playing all Bo Diddley!"

I just don't understand...

I know for John money was a requirement—he loved to have it and spend it. Being in the adult movie business enabled him to live the way he wanted. But I also know that he was tired of the whole thing. He told me. He just had too many debts. I'd always ask him to quit the adult movie business and go into directing straight movies. He could have done anything he wanted to do and would have excelled. I would always ask him to play music again because that's what he really loved, along with golf, painting, cooking, his friends, and Kathleen. But he just didn't want to. John was brilliant, and driven. I guess he just didn't want to start all over again. Of course, he did have a great, amazing life. He was a friend to so many people, and he touched many of us so deeply.

I have to end with this: when John met Kathleen, he changed. Walking the streets with him was different. He loved Kathleen so much, he wouldn't even look at another woman. This took a while for me to get used to. Kathleen told me that before they went to sleep on his last night, John looked her in her eyes and told her that he loved her. Kathleen then took her ponytail and lovingly rubbed it in John's face. They kissed goodnight. The next morning, Kathleen left the house briefly and





when she got home, John was dead. He had a massive brain aneurism. He was out in a split second! Jakes, their dog, was by his side.

John is survived by his wife Kathleen, his brother Andrew, his sister Florence, his dog Jakes, and friends and fans from all over the planet. He was cremated on December 11 in Mill Valley, California, and a big memorial service was held in Los Angeles for all his adult movie friends. Another memorial service in Mill Valley is being planned for his musician friends and will soon be announced along with a final memorial service to be held for his family and friends in Pennsylvania.

There will NEVER BE ANOTHER JOHN NUZZO!. Have a GREAT journey my dear friend. We all love you so much. RIDE!! OH RIDE!!!!

***Some comments follow from musicians who played with and loved John (in the order of how long they knew him).***

#### **Rod Piazza**

I stayed with John in New York in 1968 while on tour with George "Harmonica" Smith and Big Mama Thornton. He was a great host and aspiring harp player, so we hit it off well. He took me to see all the sites in New York and let me use his portable amplifier to play in Washington Square. We kept in touch throughout the years, always a gentleman and friend. I will miss him.

#### **Paul Oscher**

After Muddy's car accident in the fall of 1969, I returned to New York, and while Muddy was laid up in the hospital, I started a "Blue Monday Party Blues Jam" at a club in Brooklyn called The Night Cap Lounge. My drummer was Danny Sperduto and these jams became an overnight success...we played to packed houses. When I returned to Muddy's band in the spring of 1970, Danny kept the New York gig going and called the band The Brooklyn Blues Busters. They went through some personnel changes until the group had John Nuzzo as the front man and my pal Johnny Ace on the bass. They got real good fast.

I'll never forget when they were playing this gig somewhere in lower Manhattan on Broadway Street in this huge joint. The place was packed. That's when I first heard John Nuzzo play. He had it; the whole band had it! They were kickin' it!

I was a friend with John for many years and was sad to hear of his passing. Every now and then, he'd call me on the phone and have a long conversation about

equipment and blues styles. He had a great passion for the blues, and he knew what the real deal was and respected it. He had a lot of cool equipment and was always offering to let me use it when I played in San Francisco. One time I was playing at Biscuits & Blues, and my chromatic harp messed up and I told him about it. The next day he came down and gave me a brand new harp. He was very generous and was always cool like that. Last week, I attended his memorial in Los Angeles with his lovely wife, Kathleen. They had assembled a beautiful show with videos of him playing the blues, a slide show of his paintings, and some clips from his movies. In one of the clips, he played a gangster; I was truly surprised about how good an actor, director, painter, and writer he was *in addition* to being a very good blues player. Hate to see you go, brother.

#### **Howard T. Levine**

The first time I saw John was in 1969 or 1970 in NYC; he was photographing a show by harp players George Smith and Rod Piazza. All of a sudden, he dropped the camera and danced across the stage a la James Brown. That was the love of music and the spontaneous nature of John. The next time I met John was in 1971 or '72. He was sitting in with my band, The Brooklyn Blues Busters. Soon, he would be our singer/harp player, along with bassist Johnny Ace and drummer Danny Sperduto. We moved from New York to Ann Arbor, Michigan and played at the blues festival with John Lee Hooker and Victoria Spivey. John always played, sang, and danced his heart out. Soon I was to depart as the band's guitarist, yet the band members remained my friends for life. John was a real artist, painter, and filmmaker, and my dear friend till the day he died. We spoke for an hour or more the day before he passed on; he was as passionate and as animated as ever. There's no replacing what cannot be replaced. Adios my great friend.

#### **Jerry Portnoy**

I met John back in the '70s. Paul Oscher and I sat in with him at a small club in Brooklyn—nice guy and a good harmonica player who really loved the music. He was talented in a number of fields and had many friends who will sorely miss him.

#### **Steve Freund**

They don't make guys like John anymore. He was real, real, old-school East Coast, streetwise, but educated. Girls loved him. He turned every man's fantasy into a career. Plus, he could really blow that harp.

I remember when I first started going to the Night Cap jam, they wouldn't let me sit in the first few times I



went. But I kept going anyway. Finally, Nuzzo, Johnny Ace, and Howard Levine, the guitar player, took me into the kitchen for an "audition." There I was, up against the refrigerator, guitar strapped on, and these three guys saying "come on kid, let's see what you got. Come on, come on." Well, all I knew were a few BB-type licks, and I played those. The two Johns said "no, that's not what we want. You need to play some chords." Howard, however, said that I was playing some nice stuff, and they should give me a chance. So, on the next set, they called me up to play. Needless to say, I got kicked off right away. But, I was pointed in the right direction musically.

### **Martin "Tino" Gross**

I'm sitting home in my bedroom at my Mom's house back in Detroit, it was about 1973 and I was probably 18 years old. The phone rings and it's a guy named John Nuzzo, from New York, who I had never met in my life. John got my number from a kid in Ann Arbor, where he was now staying, and needed a drummer for his band, the Brooklyn Blues Busters. I'm not kidding, but this phone call changed my life. In the course of our conversation, John explained to me how it was our destiny to play together, and he could feel my spirit through the phone, and always knew I would be his drummer. He calmly informed me that I needed to get out to Ann Arbor and play with his band at a dive bar named Flick's. The voice on the other end of the wise-cracker line was so persuasive, that I figured this was my calling...and it was.

I joined the Brooklyn Blues Busters and hooked up with the best crew ever—deep cats who became life-long friends—even though the band broke up after 2 years. These guys became my older teachers and I got schooled on the inside, secret, mystical history of cool blues, doo wop, and r&b. One of our very first shows together was backing up John Lee Hooker during the prime of his career.

John was always so sweet to be around and a world-class blues harp player. He was also very skilled at hooking up with the females at our shows. I would hear that persuasive rap and watch him walk out the door with the hottest lady, while I was crouched down, all sweaty and greasy, tearing apart my drum kit—and I'd just think, "that's a bad-ass bluesman, sho nuff!"

### **Rick Estrin**

Aside from the fact that I loved the guy, one reason John's death hit me so hard is that he seemed so much more alive than other people. He was full of so much passion and enthusiasm, a true artist, gifted musician, painter, film maker, gourmet chef, and golfer (I'm not

sure if golf is technically considered an art, but I'm sure John approached it like one).

We shared one more gift that maybe most people never even think of as a gift: he had the capacity to just dig the SHIT out of anything that really moved him! We could stay on the phone for ridiculous amounts of time raving about the genius of some musician. (Sooner or later, it generally got back to Little Walter.)

John lived a full life. It was a life of his own design. It was the kind of life a lot of people would maybe be envious of, and...it was too damn short for me. He was one-of-a-kind and he leaves a one-of-a-kind void. I sure hope we meet up when I get there.

### **Bill Heid**

John Leslie Nuzzo, a dear friend of 37 years—and a great appreciator of blues and jazz music—passed on recently.



I first met John in Ann Arbor, Michigan, in 1973. I was hired as keyboardist in his band, the Brooklyn Blues Busters. He was dedicated to playing harmonica in the styles of Little Walter, Sonny Boy Williamson II, and Jimmy Reed.

John was one of those rare, lifetime friends that, within minutes after meeting, you felt like you knew him all your life. I will miss everything about him, his great warmth, sense of humor, and love and devotion to hip music. I would venture to say anyone who knew this unique individual would echo those sentiments.

### **Brian Bisesi**

When John decided to play music again in the mid '90s, he asked me to play guitar in the band he was forming. I knew John was a great harmonica player (from his days with the Brooklyn Blues Busters), but I had never worked with him before. I would soon learn how detail-oriented he was. John wanted everything to be just right. There would be rehearsals and phone calls after the rehearsals to discuss parts, ideas, songs. He was very focused—a real pro. On stage, he was a great front-man, a lot of fun, and really knew how to work a crowd.

### **Rusty Zinn**

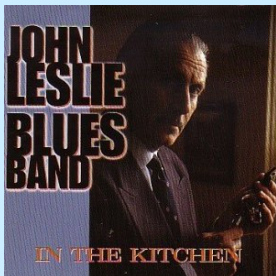
I met John through our dear mutual friend Johnny Ace. Even though it was music that brought me and John together, and it was one of our shared passions, most of



my cherished memories of John are not really from our performances together. John was my best man when I got married the first time. He and his lovely wife Kathleen were like my mom and dad! They spoiled me rotten on a regular basis and when I wasn't on the road, I would eat dinner at their house at least once a week and would often stay over! My mouth was always watering before we ate because John was an amazing cook—so much flavor in his cooking. He put a lot of love and passion into his cooking, just like his music, paintings, and movies. I'll never forget one time John, myself, and our wives went to an outdoor classical music performance, and John and I just kept laughing like little kids in school. Our wives were not really pleased, but the more they would scold us, the more we'd be laughing! So many good memories and laughs, it's just endless. I'll never forget how every time I'd show up at his crib, he'd say "My man!" and give me a kiss on the cheek! He was one-of-a-kind and touched so many people's hearts, it's amazing! Those of us who knew John and became friends with him were truly blessed! So long John! You may be gone in the flesh but your memory and spirit will live on forever!

Visit Johnny Ace on Facebook or email him at [aceonbass@earthlink.com](mailto:aceonbass@earthlink.com)

Note: John's CD *In the Kitchen* can be purchased for \$20.



Please send check/  
money order to:

Kathleen Nuzzo  
PMB 103  
38 Miller Avenue  
Mill Valley CA 94941

**Photo information:**

**Page 12**, John Leslie, taken from a CBS article on the Internet, no credit given.

**Page 13**, Flyer from *The Night Cap*, 1972, from the Ace Archives (in flyer photo, Howard Levine, Johnny Ace, Danny Sperduto, and John Nuzzo). John Nuzzo and Johnny Ace, *The Stables*, East Lansing, Michigan, 1973, from the Ace Archives. Chinner Mitchell, Johnny Ace, and John Nuzzo, Ann Arbor Jazz and Blues Festival, 1973.

**Page 14**, John Nuzzo and Johnny Ace, Mill Valley, 1978, from the Ace Archives. Johnny Ace, Howard T. Levine, Kathleen and John Nuzzo, Spring 1992 at The Saloon in San Francisco, from the Ace Archives.

**Page 15**, Robi Bean, Bob Welsh, Johnny Ace, Justin McCarthy, Kathleen and John Nuzzo at The Ivy Room, Albany, California, 1997, from the Ace Archives. Last gathering at Ocean Beach: Cathy Lemons, Johnny Ace, John and Kathleen Nuzzo, September 2010, from the Ace Archives.

**Page 17**, Johnny Ace, Jamie Gillis, John Leslie, and Bill Heid, Ace's 40th Birthday Party, 1990, from the Ace Archives.

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## Join The Blues Foundation and VOTE for Your Favorite Musicians to Win a Blues Music Award

Voting for the Blues Music Awards, to be held in Memphis on May 5, 2011, is now open! Only members of the Blues Foundation can vote; you can become a member for as little as \$25! Visit [www.blues.org](http://www.blues.org) to sign up and vote today! Many local favorites and members of The Golden Gate Blues Society are up for awards. Here are some nominations that should encourage you to join the Blues Foundation and vote!

BB King Entertainer of the Year: Kenny Neal, Joe Louis Walker  
Band of the Year: Rick Estrin and the Nightcats  
Contemporary Blues Album: John Nemeth, *Name the Day*  
Contemporary Blues Male Artist: John Nemeth, Kenny Neal, Joe Louis Walker

Instrumentalist-Guitar: Joe Louis Walker  
Instrumentalist-Horn: **Terry Hanck**  
Instrumentalist-Other: Sonny Rhodes  
Pinetop Perkins Piano Player of the Year: Mitch Woods  
Traditional Blues Male Artist of the Year: **Alabama Mike**



**UPCOMING BLUES SHOWS THAT CAUGHT THE EDITOR'S EYE AT CLUB FOX, REDWOOD CITY:**

**Chris Cain CD Release Party, with Lara Price opening, Saturday, January 22**  
**Roy Rogers and the Delta Rhythm Kings, Saturday, January 29**

**UPCOMING BLUES SHOWS THAT CAUGHT THE EDITOR'S EYE AT BISCUITS & BLUES, SAN FRANCISCO:**

**Claudette King (BB's daughter!), Friday, February 4**

**SUPPORT THE CLUBS THAT SUPPORT THE BLUES**

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**The Golden Gate Blues Society**

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

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Joseph Jordan, Education Committee  
Jenifer Santer, Events  
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The Golden Gate Blues Society is a nonprofit affiliate of The Blues Foundation, based in Memphis, Tennessee. The purpose of The Golden Gate Blues Society is to enhance the appreciation and understanding of the Blues in the Greater San Francisco Bay Area through:

- Sponsorship and promotion of Blues performances;
- Education programs and publications on the performance, interpretation, preservation and growth of the Blues as an American art form; and
- The financial as well as moral support of the San Francisco Bay Area Blues community