

# GOLDEN GATE GROOVES

## SPOTLIGHT ON THE MULTITALENTED JOE LOUIS WALKER

*by Mark Hedin, Photos Courtesy of Joe Louis Walker (unless noted otherwise)*



Joe at Biscuits & Blues, September 2011, by Deb Lubin

Guitar slinger Joe Louis Walker's logged many, many miles on the road to success, and these days he gets his mail at an address in upstate New York, but when it comes to the city of his birth, San Francisco, he says, "I'll always be a resident, I still am."

Walker was born in San Francisco on Christmas Day, 1949, the "youngest of the litter" of five kids born to parents who brought their love of music with them from the South. From them, he was exposed early on to the great boogie-woogie piano players his Dad loved – Pete Johnson, Mead Lux Lewis, and Albert Ammons – and T-Bone Walker. His mom, meanwhile, he says, "played nothing but BB."

When he was about 10, he recalls, he began making music of his own, borrowing violins, accordions, a clarinet – "everything you could check out" from school – Ben Franklin Junior High in the Fillmore, where his family had moved after his early childhood was spent in the Ingleside district.

"It was heaven for me," he says. In the early '60s, living in the projects of the Fillmore District, he could look up to the Brougham Brothers, a band comprised of five cousins. *(continued on page 3)*

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## FROM THE EDITOR

*Deb Lubin*



I'm having a difficult time concentrating as I put this jam-packed issue of the newsletter together, as I'm sailing on my first West Coast Legendary Rhythm and Blues Cruise (LRBC) this weekend! I've been on about a dozen LRBC cruises in the Caribbean, but this is the first one where I can drive to the ship! So great not to have to deal with flying! More to come on the cruise in the next issue! If you're a Blues fan, and you haven't sailed on one of these cruises, you owe it to yourself to check them out! It's the vacation of a lifetime! 🎵

We cover a lot of ground in *Golden Gate Grooves* this quarter! As you can tell from page 1, we're shining a spotlight on the multitalented **Joe Louis Walker**, a native San Franciscan. Walker has long been one of my favorite musicians and we are very lucky to have our native son come back home and play for us frequently. He has a unique approach to the Blues, and his guitar, slide, and harmonica playing is sure to grab you! Check out the photos following **Mark Hedin**'s article for a deeper understanding of Walker's Blues—and life—cred! 🎵

The Golden Gate Blues Society (TGGBS) has completed our preliminary International Blues Challenge (IBC) rounds for 2012, with events at **Bluz By-you**, **Club Fox**, and **Biscuits & Blues**. The winners of the preliminary rounds—added to the winner of the first round, **Pinkie Rideau and Blind Resistance**—are **The David Landon Band**, **Paula Harris and Blu Gruv**, and **The Delta Wires**, who will all participate in the finals **November 13** at **Biscuits & Blues** (see flyer later in this issue), for the opportunity to compete with more than 100 other bands in Memphis in February 2012. We also held our first-ever solo/duo IBC event at **The Grand Dell Saloon**. The winners—**Wendy DeWitt and Kirk Harwood**—will also represent TGGBS in Memphis! Congratulations to all the musicians who participated; check out the photos, which were mainly taken by **Bruce Fram**. Thanks to all who participated and, of course, to our IBC Coordinators **Susan and Marty Preece**! We hope to see YOU at the finals November 13! 🎵

I'm sure you know many Blues artists who deserve greater recognition. They exist in all areas of the country. In the San Francisco Bay Area, one such artist is **Lisa Kindred**. We're happy to do our part to rectify the situation in Lisa's case. Our own **Johnny Ace** interviewed Lisa, and we're proud to present that interview herein so you can get to know a little of what we've known here for many years. **Lisa Kindred** is a local treasure! 🎵

**Joseph Jordan** continues his "On the Air" series with an interview of local Blues DJ **Jay Johnston**. Radio play is so important to the future of the Blues, and this series focuses on the DJs who bring it to us in the SF Bay Area—and on the Internet! 🎵

We also present "music business" articles by two local musicians. **Carlos Velasco**, educator and drummer for **Tip of the Top**, our 2011 IBC winner, returns to *Golden Gate Grooves* with an article on how he spent his summer vacation: booking the band! And **Burton Winn**, bass player for many bands and a new contributor to *Golden Gate Grooves*, shares his opinions on the future of the Blues. Hope you enjoy these articles from an inside perspective! 🎵

We have three CD reviews. **Joseph Jordan** reviews our own **Fillmore Slim**'s latest, *The Blues Playa's Ball*, and former Bay Area resident and harp master **R.J. Mischo**'s 2010 CD, *Knowledge You Can't Get in College*. We're expanding our CD reviews to include bands that don't have a local connection to better inform our members and other readers to a wider variety of quality music! (Our main focus continues to be local, so don't despair!) Reviewer **Joel Fritz** took on Los Angelino guitarist and vocalist **Bernie Pearl**'s latest CD, *Sittin' on the Right Side of the Blues*. Check out these reviews and please support the artists! 🎵

Back in July, two Blues festivals in the area caught our attention, as they do every year! TGGBS President **Dorothy L. Hill** recaps the 6th annual **Redwood City PAL Blues Festival** and **Henry Provost** shares some photos from the 12th annual **Hayward/Russell City Blues Festival**. Hope to see more of you at these festivals next year! 🎵

New contributor, guitar player (and Yankee fan) **Alan Oehler** attended a live show as part of the Stanford University Jazz Series, **Ruth Davies' Blues Night**, with special guest **Robben Ford**. Alan shares his experience with us. 🎵

Lastly, we lost two more Blues giants recently: **David "Honeyboy" Edwards** and **Willie "Big Eyes" Smith**. We remember them both with love and respect. 🎵

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

### Joe Louis Walker (continued from page 1)

His mom sent him to music classes when he was 14 and Walker got his first taste of the life of an itinerant musician, traveling with a drum line (like a drum corps) that became the mascot for the Rattlers, a black motorcycle club. They traveled up and down the state, playing at clubs, games, Elks lodges, doing TV and radio commercials and backing “a lot of people,” and playing at battles of the bands at the Fillmore Auditorium, then being managed by Charles Sullivan, who was eventually slain on a street south of Market.

Other places Walker played as a youngster included Shelton’s Blue Mirror, Minnie’s Can-Do, and the Off-Plaza in the Fillmore; The Player’s Choice, Club Long Island, and



Little Bo Peeps in the Mission and Hunter’s Point; and, in Oakland, the old Eli’s Mile High Club, Esther’s Orbit Room, and Your Place II, and Larry Blake’s in Berkeley.

One cousin, bassist Ted Wysinger, had a gig backing Freddie Stewart in a band called Freddie and the Stone Souls. Eventually, Freddie gave way to his older brother Sylvester as bandleader, and Wysinger to Larry Graham on bass, and the band made a name for itself as Sly and the Family Stone. Walker says he’s still friendly with that band’s Jerry Martini and Greg Errico, and that Freddie can still be found in Vallejo, running a church. As for Sly, Walker says he’s unchanged in some ways – “a riddle wrapped in an enigma.”

During this time, Walker began lifelong friendships with a number of other musicians who also went on to become world famous – Bob Weir (Grateful Dead), Steve Miller, Jorma Kaukonen and Jack Casady (Jefferson Airplane, Hot Tuna), Jerry Miller (Moby Grape), Carlos Santana, and Mike Bloomfield, who moved to California after soaking up the blues in the Windy City of Chicago. Bloomfield, who Walker says became a major influence on him, was the first of many young white musicians to follow that route, along with Nick Gravenites and Elvin Bishop.

Although Walker’s musical career got off to an early start, that didn’t preclude him from serving his time working in restaurants, as a forklift operator, and many other jobs as well. Then things got really interesting. Walker joined the musicians’ union and was living under the wing of pimp, songwriter, and guitarist Fillmore Slim, who he says practically raised him. “Everything was happening,” Walker says. “It was a convergence of everything. The Haight-Ashbury, the Fillmore, the Avalon. That’s what I grew up in.”

He was busy making a name for himself in those days, he recalls. He shared stages with such now-familiar name players as J.J. Malone, L.C. Robinson, and Charlie Musselwhite and practically became the house guitar player at the Matrix.

After getting to know Johnny Cramer, another Chicago transplant, he moved into the Carmelita Avenue house in Mill Valley that would become Grand Central to many young musicians, most famously Bloomfield, who named a tune “Carmelita Skiffle” after it, but also Ira Kamin, Rick Estrin, Bob Jones of We Five, keyboardists Cramer and Barry Goldberg, Walker says. After about 6 months, he and Cramer moved above Tamalpais High on Miller Street in Mill Valley.

It was a heady time of discovery, study, and aspiration. “I used to follow Muddy, **Buddy Guy**...I wanted to aspire to



be them. Butterfield, and Taj and (Danny) Kalb. I could aspire to be them. ...Steve Miller, John Cipollina (Quicksilver Messenger Service), Pigpen (Ron McKernan of the Grateful Dead),

Jerry Garcia...those guys were pretty much my age, they were aspiring to be like those guys too.”

And then there was Bloomfield. “The most anti-rock star guitar player I ever met in my life,” he says. What made him and the Butterfield Blues Band he played in so special, Walker says, was the time they’d spent in Chicago playing with blues forebears – Muddy Waters, Sunnyland Slim, Buddy Guy, and others.

“It’s a big difference, learning first-hand,” he says. “I can tell when somebody’s played with those guys, there’s a direct connection.” That’s what distinguished the Butterfield band from the English players, such as Eric Clapton, who had to study and learn at first from recordings, although Walker says that over time, of course, Clapton’s overcome that early obstacle.

“It’s no mistake,” he says, that the late Al Wilson of Canned Heat, who nonetheless “gets missed,” was so good, Walker says. “Believe me. He was one of the few guys who played with Son House.” It’s also what made Jimmie and Stevie Ray Vaughan stand out, that “they played with Albert King,” Walker says. Similarly, Bob Margolin’s long association with Muddy Waters, and Mississippian Levon Helm’s with Sonny Boy Williamson, made all the difference.

Walker's pursuit of his own career led him to leave Mill Valley for Vancouver in '69 and Toronto the next year, and in the mid-'70s, he began playing "nothing but gospel" for a decade, with the Spiritual Corinthians. "It was a good experience," he says, but he went "back to the blues" in '85.

He recorded five albums on Oakland's Hightone label before signing with Polygram in the early '90s and recording six more albums for them, and then almost a dozen more for a variety of labels, including Telarc, Evidence, JSP, and, most recently, Stony Plain.

By now, he's made that name for himself that he set out from San Francisco to do so long ago and attained status



as one of the elder statesmen of the art form. He's won Grammy Awards, played for presidents (George H.W. Bush and **Bill Clinton**), and tours the world.

His most recent Stony Plain album, "Blues

Conspiracy, Live on the Legendary Rhythm & Blues Cruise," features Walker playing with Johnny Winter, Curtis Salgado, Tommy Castro, Nick Moss, Watermelon Slim, Franck Goldwasser (Paris Slim), Todd Sharpville, Kenny Neal, Tab Benoit, Mitch Woods, Henry Oden, Paul Nelson, and original Roomful of Blues leader Duke Robillard.

He plays Cara brand guitars – they have five Joe Louis Walker models. They look like Les Pauls, and some feature three mini-humbucker pickups that get a "tighter, brighter sound," he says. He generally stays in

standard tuning, even for his slide work, for which he credits Earl Hooker's influence, but will also mix things up with drop D, Vastepool, and open E tunings.

Coming up, he says, besides by-now established players such as Susan Tedeschi, Kenny Neal, Shemekia Copeland, Derek Trucks, Chris Thomas King, Doyle Bramhall, Jr., and Serbian guitarist Ana Popovic, Walker also endorsed



Neal's nephew, Tyree Neal; Marquise Knox; Arsene St. Mary the 3rd (known as **California Red**), with whom Walker often shares the limelight when he's in California; the English

nobleman Sharpville; and Austin's Gary Clark, Jr. as players to watch. "You got a lot of guys," he says, "doing it their own way." Reflecting now on his long career and worldwide acclaim, Walker can't help but wonder. Back when the Beatles were still a new fad, he says, "nobody knew that this business was going to transpire to be such a moneymaker." Given the way Walker's been shaking his all these years, though, maybe he shouldn't be so surprised.

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*Photo above, Joe with California Red, Henry Oden on bass, and Jeff Minnieweather on drums at Biscuits & Blues, June 2011, by Deb Lubin*

*Mark Hedin is an acoustic bass and guitar player who's made his home in the Bay Area ever since fleeing New York City as a teenager, where he began his career writing concert reviews for the newspaper *Our Town*. Nowadays, he writes for and distributes the *Central City Extra* newspaper in San Francisco's Tenderloin district. He'll be happy to hear from you at: [markhedin@aol.com](mailto:markhedin@aol.com).*



Joe Louis Walker with Candye Kane, Bob Stroger, Paul Oscher, Eddie Shaw, Willie "Big Eyes" Smith, Mitch Woods, and Bobby "Blue" Bland in the center

May 2011 Blues Music Awards  
Memphis, Tennessee

## PHOTOS FROM THE JOE LOUIS WALKER ARCHIVES

*Courtesy of Joe Louis Walker (except as noted)*



Ike Turner & Joe, 1997



Hubert Sumlin & Joe, 1997



Joe receiving a Proclamation at Biscuits & Blues from the Office of the Mayor of San Francisco, who proclaimed September 4, 2011, Joe Louis Walker Day in the City by Deb Lubin



Joe & Mr. Super Harp, James Cotton



Joe & Stevie Ray Vaughan



Joe and Kevin Eubanks, 2009



Joe & Albert King, mid-1980s



Joe & Willie Dixon



Bobby Rush, Buddy Guy, Mickey Thomas, and Joe at the May 2011 Blues Music Awards in Memphis, Tennessee



Joe & BB King

Check out Joe's website at [www.joelouiswalker.com](http://www.joelouiswalker.com).

## CD REVIEWS

### Fillmore Slim, *The Blues Playa's Ball*

by Joseph Jordan



If the documentary "American Pimp," the artist's four previous CDs, and his longevity as a San Francisco Fillmore district icon didn't already make Fillmore Slim's reputation, this CD should go some ways in further cementing his long

legacy.

At a recent show, vocalist Slim said proudly that *The Blues Playa's Ball* was the "bestest record he could make," and after several listenings, even if you're unfamiliar with his previous works, you will probably hear why.

The two-disc set—coming in at a combined 19 tracks (with one "extended track" repeat) and a generous 2 hours and 6 minutes of hard-driving, truth-telling, street-wise cuts—will give you plenty of indication why, after nearly half a decade making music, Slim has still got it in him, and it's got to come out. The discs just rock. (To get a good idea of the potency of the songs, and Slim's delivery, you can listen to several tracks on his website (provided at the end of this review.)

Joe Louis Walker is all over this recording, along with several members of his band, The Boss Talkers. Also participating in the proceedings are well-known players (at least to many of us) Rick Estrin (harp and vocals), Gary Smith (harp), Bobbie Webb (saxophones), Henry Oden (bass), Franck Goldwasser (guitar), and several other fine musicians.

Some of the tracks aren't terribly politically correct in their sensitivities ("Playa's Ball" and "She's Nasty" to name a couple), but if you can get past that, and I'm sure you'll do so easily, then the songs will carry you where Fillmore Slim wants to take you.

The recording was produced by Goldwasser (aka Paris Slim) with executive production by Charles and Xander Putris.

Mountain Top, the little label that could (and does) has released the last three of Slim's CDs, and with its usual

impeccable taste in artists and production detail, has provided Slim and the players with a rich framework of musical excellence.

Mountain Top Productions - 2011

Check out: <http://fillmoreslimmusic.com/>

### R.J. Mischo, *Knowledge You Can't Get in College* by Joseph Jordan



A native of Minnesota, the now Arkansas-based harmonica player and singer R. J. Mischo has put out a good one.

Clocking in at 53 minutes, it just kicks!

Recorded last year, and being the tenth release under his own

name, with this CD, Mischo (pronounced MISH-oh) has fashioned, along with super-producer/engineer/mixer/player Chris "Kid" Andersen, a thoroughly satisfying collection of songs. The recording was coproduced by Andersen and Mischo.

Featuring an elite crop of Bay Area players (Andersen, Rusty Zinn, Sid Morris, June Core, Kedar Roy, and others), Mischo gives his fellow musicians plenty of space to shine, while maintaining his own position of leadership throughout the project.

Of the 14 tracks, 9 are originals, written in the constantly touring Mischo's sly, often humorous, but always wise, lyrics. The music is first rate, and R.J.'s harmonica prowess is front and dominant. In the liner notes, he lists no less than five types of harps he plays, from chromatic to Hohner Marine Bands.

"Little Joe" is a standout track, with a truly unique beat and including lovely background vocals by Lisa Leuschner Andersen. "Two Hours from Tulsa" is a road song with a something-new-to-say slant. Morris's keyboards and Andersen's guitar (along with, 'natch, Mischo's harp playing) make "Ruthie Lee" a wonderful 12-bar jaunt. And "Down to the Bottom" has "vinyl LP simulation" (remember those, folks?) that provides the listener with a retro-kick.

You can hear four of the cuts in full on R.J.'s website, which will give you a good idea of what I've been talking about.

The all-in-all on this one is that, along with Mischo's fine, heartfelt vocals and superior harp playing accompanied by superb backing musicians, this one's worth the addition to your CD collection.

**Greaseland Records - 2010**

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

## **Bernie Pearl, *Sittin' on the Right Side of the Blues* by Joel Fritz**



In the early '60s, Bernie Pearl was able to do something that almost any folkie, especially those of the blues persuasion, would have done unspeakable things to be able to do. He got to meet, play with, and learn from Lightnin' Hopkins, Mance

Lipscomb, and Mississippi Fred McDowell. He appears to have learned a thing or two.

*Sittin' on the Right Side of the Blues* was recorded at a live performance in February 2011. According to the liner notes, the audio is unprocessed. The track order has been rearranged, but overdubs and autotune were not used in making this CD. Pearl sings and plays acoustic guitar accompanied by bassist Michael Barry, who collaborated with Pearl on the production.

At age 70, Pearl's light-timbred baritone shows the signs of age. His guitar skills are excellent for someone of any age. In particular, his slide playing in open tuning is marvelous. He has a crisp attack, expressive vibrato, and impeccable time. He owes a large debt to Fred McDowell and, to my ear, Booker White, but has developed his own voice.

The CD contains 15 tracks, with 6 originals. On the cover tunes, Pearl has applied the folk process. While Pearl's performance captures the flavor of the originals, it's different enough to qualify as original interpretation.

The first track on the CD is "Jailhouse Blues," described in the notes as "based on Lightnin' Hopkins' version of a Bessie Smith song." Pearl's standard tuning guitar work on this song combines elements of Hopkins, jazz, and rock. The accompaniment to the vocals is solidly in the Hopkins zone, while the three-chorus guitar solo is eclectic.

Next is Pearl's version of Fred McDowell's "New Hollow Log Blues." Pearl has added a few verses to this member of the "Rollin' and Tumblin'" family of songs. Pearl's slide guitar builds a strong syncopated groove in the Delta tradition. He fell victim to a temptation common to guitar players who also sing, and chose a key that's best for the guitar. It's a bit too low for his vocal range, causing him to struggle with the low notes. To be fair, open tunings don't allow as much freedom of key choice as standard tuning. The length of the guitar neck limits the player to a key range of two whole tones or less without using a different tuning. Pearl's guitar is delightful.

"Outside Boogie" is an original, described in the notes as "inspired by a Magic Sam riff and taken somewhere else." Pearl takes a minimalist approach here. He states a simple motif and develops it in a very deliberate fashion. The rhythmic underpinning of the tune has a strong resemblance to the refrain to "Shortnin' Bread."

"Sittin' on the Right Side of the Blues," the title track, is a musical memoir in which Pearl catalogues his influences.

"I Believe I'll Carry My Hook" is Pearl's version of another McDowell song. The first line, "I'm going down south and I believe I'll carry my hook," is a blues floating verse that goes back at least as far as Blind Lemon Jefferson and probably further. Jefferson had an encyclopedic collection of floating verses. At 5:45, this is the longest track on the CD. Pearl's slide guitar again evokes McDowell without copying him. The song is built on a powerful syncopated groove.

"Shinin' Moon" is a Lightnin' Hopkins standard. The lyrics are a prime example of how good a songwriter Hopkins was.

"Shetland Pony Blues" is Pearl's take on a Son House song. Pearl says in the notes, "I must be crazy to try a Son House tune. Certifiable for sure." This song is one of House's versions of the classic pony theme done by many, including Charley Patton and Howlin' Wolf. House recorded a different version as "Pony Blues." Pearl's guitar accompaniment deviates from House's and alludes to the groove that Patton used. House's lyrics are a wonderful combination of floating verses and incisive personal observations.

"I Just Keeps on Wanting You" is my favorite song on the CD. It's by Louisiana singer Herman E. Johnson, whom Pearl describes as "a most obscure and brilliant artist." I hadn't heard of Johnson before. This song made me want to know a lot more about him. The song is a powerful take on unrequited love. Pearl's slide guitar



takes a more melodic approach on this tune. It reminds me of Blind Willie Johnson's melodic work. Pearl's vibrato is especially good on this one.

"I'm up a Tree" is an original about suffering the consequences of bad choices.

"Flat-Footed" is another original. In it, Pearl examines the current economic and political situation from the 99 percent point of view.

"Can't Be Satisfied" is Pearl's version of the song Muddy Waters recorded for the Library of Congress in 1941. The guitar work is closest to the original of any of the songs on the CD. It's hard to play this song differently from the way Waters did. The original guitar part imbeds itself in the subconscious of anyone who listens to it and becomes one with the lyrics. Even so, Pearl deviates from the canonical version enough to make his interpretation interesting.

"Night Time Is the Right Time" is Pearl's version of Mance Lipscomb's approach to a blues trope. Roosevelt Sykes, in the late 1930s, was probably first to record a song with the refrain "The night time is the right time to be with the one you love," with the tune people remember from the Ray Charles song. Like Charles, Lipscomb kept the refrain intact and made it into a different song.

"I Ain't Hurt" is an original instrumental. At the beginning of the track, Pearl explains the title. He says that it's impossible for anyone to do a finger-picking

instrumental in the key of G in standard tuning without sounding like Mississippi John Hurt. While the song has some similarities to Hurt's work, it often deviates from Hurt's customary alternating bass and signature pattern.

"You Can Break My Heart" is an original about unrequited love with a strong jazzy flavor.

Pearl closes with "Shake 'em Down," credited to Fred McDowell. It's based on McDowell's reworking of a song that was recorded many times in the 1930s by artists such as Booker White, Tommy McClennan, and Bo Carter. McDowell used his own melody for the song and dropped the traditional refrain, which is a variation on "Must I keep dealin' or can I shake 'em on down." Again Pearl's slide guitar shines. The syncopated groove has a powerful appeal that goes directly to the motor nervous system.

This CD has some excellent guitar playing. Pearl's work in standard tuning swings and maintains a firm footing in the country blues tradition. In his slide playing, Pearl has developed a personal style that extends the work of pre-WWII players, but respects it. He has the big three elements of blues slide playing: syncopation, melody, and vibrato. I preferred the cover tunes to the originals, but your mileage may vary. Pearl has the ability to approach an existing song from his own point of view and make the listener think about it in a different way.

**Major Label Recordings, 2011**  
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# TGGBS INTERNATIONAL BLUES CHALLENGE PHOTOS

from Bluz By-you, Club Fox, Biscuits & Blues, and The Grand Dell Saloon  
by Bruce Fram (unless noted otherwise)

## PRELIMINARY ROUND 2 at BLUZ BY-YOU



The Smokin' Kingsnakes



Goodlife Rhythm and Blues Revue



The winning band of the day:  
The David Landon Band

## PRELIMINARY ROUND 3 at CLUB FOX



The Kathy Tejcka Band



The GG Amos Band



The winning band of the day:  
Paula Harris and Blu Gruv by  
Bobbi Goodman

## PRELIMINARY ROUND 4 at BISCUITS & BLUES



Eddie Neon Band by Deb Lubin



Mari Mack & Livin' Like Kings



The winning band of the day:  
The Delta Wires by Deb Lubin

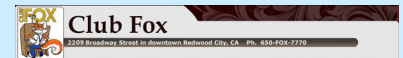
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## SOLO/DUO ROUND at THE GRAND DELL SALOON



**The Fritz Brothers by Deb Lubin**



**Cleome Bova**



**Scott Thomas Miller**



**The winning solo/duo act:  
Wendy DeWitt and Kirk Harwood  
by Deb Lubin**

**Congratulations to Wendy and  
Kirk, who will represent The  
Golden Gate Blues Society at the  
February 2012 IBC in Memphis!**

## VIDEO LINKS FOR THE IBC PARTICIPANTS by *Bobbi Goodman*

**The Poor House Bistro, Round 1** (covered in the July issue of *Golden Gate Grooves*)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8r3cuiZqF8U> – Pinkie Rideau and Blind Resistance - winner

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zsss3x0Gs48> – Kickin' the Mule

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cy3CZmOBInY> – Blues Kitchen

## Bluz By-you, Round 2

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xM3lsbyWMhs> – David Landon Band – winner

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IEUyn0z41Mc> – Smokin' Kingsnakes

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eUyaID7IjQo> – Goodlife Rhythm and Blues Revue

## Club Fox, Round 3

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fJ0Y6e3nZH8> – Paula Harris and Blu Gruv - winner

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v6B1MEDEb8w> – GG Amos

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xM3lsbyWMhs> – Kathy Tejcka Band

## Biscuits & Blues, Round 4

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AZI8jVWlkk> – Delta Wires - winner

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gHN49\\_URo08](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gHN49_URo08) – Eddie Neon Band

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hrqstWroEk0> – Mari Mack and Livin' Like Kings

*[Editor's Note: Bobbi did not attend the solo/duo event.]*

The winning San Francisco Bay Area band at this event will represent The Golden Gate Blues Society at The Blues Foundation's International Blues Challenge in Memphis February 1-4, 2012

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

**The Golden Gate Blues Society**  
Presents the **FINALS** of our

**International Blues Challenge**

**Pinkie Rideau**  
& *Blind Resistance*

**David Landon Band**

**Delta Wires**

**Paula Harris**  
& *Blu Gruv*

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## RUTH DAVIES' BLUES NIGHT with SPECIAL GUEST ROBBEN FORD

by Alan Oehler

On Sunday evening, July 24, bassist Ruth Davies put on her tenth annual Blues Night at the Stanford Jazz Festival. This year, the featured guest was guitarist Robben Ford.



The show, in the intimate and comfortable Dunkelspiel Auditorium, started at about 7:45pm. With a Stanford Jazz Camp student (alas, his name escaped me) sitting in on organ, bassist Davies, along with guitarist Danny Caron, saxophonist Charles McNeal, keyboardist

John R. Burr, and drummer Ndugu Chancler, opened with a rousing instrumental, with everyone taking strong solos. The student was then replaced by the other keyboardist in the band, Bennett Paster, and the group played another instrumental with a bit of a '50s rock and roll feel. Davies then welcomed Robben Ford to the stage.



Ford was in fine form, obviously very comfortable and enjoying himself very much. His voice seemed slightly strained at moments, but his guitar playing was first rate, though

perhaps a bit too loud for Dunkelspiel and a festival audience used to quieter jazz ensembles. The group played a set of material from Ford's catalog, including his own "Good Thing," "Lateral Climb," and his instrumental tribute to B.B. King, "Indianola," followed by a strong version of Maceo Merriweather's "The Way You Treated

Me (You're Gonna Be Sorry)." The band backed him beautifully. In recent years, Ford has most often performed in a trio context, just bass and drums, so it was a special pleasure to hear him play with a larger ensemble. The solos by everyone were uniformly exceptional. Ford himself demonstrated all the traits that have made his reputation as one of the best—great rhythmic feel, a rich and beautiful electric tone, and phrasing that is deeply rooted in the blues tradition, but uncoils from there with a much broader melodic palette than most blues players ever get near.

After a short intermission, the band returned sans Ford and played a rousing version of the Pee Wee Ellis instrumental classic, "The Chicken." Then Ford came back onstage and sang Ed and Lonnie Young's "Chevrolet," which was followed by "Cannonball Shuffle" (another Ford instrumental tribute, this time to Freddie King), and then one of his collaborations with Michael McDonald, "Nothin' to Nobody," finishing the set with his take on Paul Butterfield's "Lovin' Cup." The latter featured an extended ending in which Ford quoted the guitar hook from the Beatle's "I Feel Fine" and a false ending followed by a taste of the melody of "Tequila." Audience members were on their feet applauding and cheering, and in short order everyone came back out for an encore, Charlie Singleton's "Help the Poor."

Check out the following:

<http://stanfordjazz.org/jazz-festival/events/ruth-davies-blues-night-with-special-guest-robben-ford/>

<http://www.ruthdavies.com>

<http://www.robbenford.com>

*Photos of Ruth Davies and Robben Ford from the Stanford Jazz Festival website.*



## HOW I SPENT MY SUMMER VACATION *or* HOW TIP OF THE TOP FINDS GIGS

by Carlos Velasco, Educator and Drummer, Tip of the Top



You would think having almost 3 months off from teaching third grade would be considered one of life's simple pleasures, but let me tell you, it can be stressful! A typical day goes something like this. I wake up at no specific time. It can be early morning or late afternoon! Then I get something to

eat. Foraging for brunch can be pretty stressful, come on! Unless you've walked in my shoes and all, making a steak and egg breakfast can be full of unseen, high stress events. After I've had my fill of food and drink, it's time to take a nap. But I can't go back to my bedroom. I like to nap in my backyard, on a sunny day, under a big shady tree, with a cool breeze blowing over me. Think that's relaxing? I never know what could nuzzle up to me trying to steal some space on my chaise lounge. It could be my dog or cat or some other furry animal running wild in my yard. ARGH, the stress! After my nap, I have to (again) feed, so I'll have energy for my daily bike ride. After my hour-long ride, I take a shower and then, time for a nap! When I wake up, it's time for dinner! After dinner, I practice drumming and maybe go out to see a band playing in the area. I always check to make sure I have my ear protection. See, more stress! I'll get home by midnight and then it's time for bed. If all goes well, I've made it through another hectic summer day and I'll do it all over again tomorrow. I know what you're thinking, how does he do it? I amaze myself as well.

Okay, okay, the first paragraph was just a joke except I really am a third grade teacher and I do get almost 3 months off in the summer. Okay, *maybe* some of the events in the paragraph above happen every now and then, but what do I *really* do with my summer? I look for gigs! The four of us—Frank DeRose, Jon Lawton, Aki Kumar, and myself—are constantly looking for gigs year round, but in the summer, I have more time to put into this process. It's fun, kinda like buying a new car. I've called many festivals and talked to some rude people. I don't let it bother me. In fact, I find it a challenge to see if I can change their mind. I really have nothing to lose and everything to gain. Once I was told to never call back or they would kick my ass. YIKES! So I sent an email!

Looking up clubs, festivals and other venues is time consuming and feels just like a full-time job, but rewarding when the gigs start to line up. Looking up ALL the festivals in California and other nearby states takes forever, but I never spend more than 4 hours a day on it. Remember, I have to nap! I begin the process of finding as many festivals as I can and all the contact information. I write down the date and time of year the festivals occur and make a list. I usually make the call right then. If I'm lucky, I'll talk to the booker. I talk fast and try to get my point across in as few words as possible. Before I forget, I always put on a smile when I make the call. Okay, if I get lucky, I introduce myself and ask what I can do to have our band considered for next year's festival. They always say, "Send a packet." Most of the time, they want the electronic email packet. If your band doesn't have a website, get one! Tip of The Top is fortunate to have Aki Kumar, who is not only a brilliant harp guy, but he's just a brilliant guy. Aki does our website and, if you check it out, you'll see a first-class website that he's put together and manages every day! Thanks Aki, you da man!

PS: Aki is one of the nicest guys you'll ever meet; if you want tips on a website, ask him, but wait until you see him at a blues gig, and not when Tip of The Top is playing. Hopefully, one of your band mates will be able to run your website. To be honest, once I send the link to our website to the booker, it's fairly easy from that point on because our website is first rate. I'd say about one fourth of our gigs have been scheduled based on our website alone! When promoters see our website, they call back, and we get the gig because they were impressed. I can't say enough about having an Aki. Oops, I mean having a website! Anyone can get an Aki. In fact, take ours!

If I don't talk to anyone when I call, I'll leave a voice message and then send an email. I make a note in my planner to call back. Many times when I follow up, they say, "Oh yeah, I got your voice message." Now the booker and I are on more familiar terms. I continue to call as many festivals as possible, leaving messages, making notes about the call, and who I need to follow up with; it's a long process. Once I get through the list, I decide which festivals fit our calendar. Some festivals no longer exist, others are too far away. I write one generic letter that will fit all the festivals; I just change the name of the person to whom the letter is addressed. From that



point on, it's follow up, follow up, follow up! Following up can take the rest of the year, but it must be done or the time spent looking everything up is wasted. Remember, Frank, Jon, and Aki are looking too. I just have a bit more time in the summer. In fact, Aki and I once sent emails out to the same place a day apart, so we have to be in constant contact, letting the other band members know who we've called, as well as making sure we have matching shoes and ties for a gig! Many times Frank will find a venue and have me follow up and vice versa. Jon has hooked us up at many local venues, as well as with some gigs in Los Angeles. The four of us are constantly working together, learning from each other on how to approach a venue or festival. I can't tell you how many times I've called Frank right after I've spoken to a booker and asked his advice about what to say and what to ask for ( I said BOOKER!). So far, he's been dead on!

The hunt for gigs is a constant hustle. Rarely a day goes by when one of us is not calling, emailing, or driving out to meet someone for a potential gig, but it's paid off! We've been heavily booked week in and week out and we've been able to help some of our friends get gigs! The hard work we put in has been a fun and exciting process. We've met many interesting people and made many great contacts. Like Deb Lubin and all the people at The Golden Gate Blues Society! (Is my nose getting browner? Was that too obvious?) It's rewarding if we can help other bands get gigs. The most important thing we've realized is that we all have to work together to keep our band and the blues alive. It's up to us to find new places to play, and when we do, we do everything we can to represent our band and this music in the most dignified way possible so the venue will say, "It was great

having Tip of The Top. Lets have them back and hire more blues bands!" Quite a few times when we come off stage, a booker will come up to us and offer us a gig ( I said BOOKER!). This happens because of the efforts the four of us make to get our name out there. The process is slow, but little by little, it seems to pay off. We don't get every festival we shoot for and there have been countless days we don't make any contacts, but we don't give up. As a result, we've consistently added to our resume. Sharing the load makes us a better band in so many ways. We all have a say in the band. We're all invested in the band; nothing happens unless the four of us agree. The incredible relationship that's evolving among us has been built on the understanding that the goal of this band is to play gigs. The more gigs we play, the more confidence we have. The more confidence we have, the better we become as a band. We've been asked if we ever get tired of gigging so much. The answer to that is No! The gig is the reward for the hard work we've put into the band. We're finding out that the more we play, the more creative we are. In fact, our third CD that we recorded with the genius Kid Andersen has just been released! Since we've been gigging so much, we already have new material for our fourth CD! The whole process just seems to feed on itself. Each of us has to contribute in a big way to make our band work. We work it together. We're in sync. We're having a great time. So that's how I spent my summer vacation. I hope you had a great summer too! I'm back to school now; I miss my naps!

*Photo of Carlos taken at The Union Room, above Biscuits & Blues, September 2011, by Deb Lubin*

## REDWOOD CITY PAL BLUES FESTIVAL RECAP

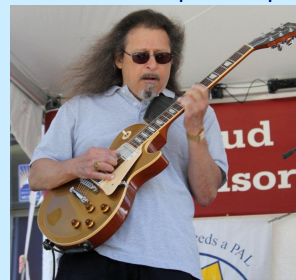
*Article and Photos by Dorothy L. Hill, Blues Journalist and TGGBS President*

The 6th Annual Redwood City Police Activities League (PAL) Blues Festival kicked off with a top-notch lineup of blues and soul on July 22 and 23 at Courthouse Square and adjoining streets in downtown Redwood City, California. This free event featured a family-friendly atmosphere that not only focused on music, but included a BBQ cook-off competition, an arcade for children, and an array of vendor booths. This festival benefits the PAL youth programs through sponsorships and donations.

Although I was unable to attend the Friday evening show with Earl Thomas and The Blues Ambassadors, this popular band always delights and Earl Thomas is an extraordinary vocalist who entralls his audience.

On Saturday morning, beautiful weather greeted fans as they scrambled to snag one of the tables or set up chairs for prime viewing of the stage.

Blues Cadillac opened up with a high-octane start to the day. The band consisted of Steve Welch on guitar and vocals, Alan "Eye Bone" Eglington on harmonica and vocals, Timm Richard on drums, Doug Mancini on bass, and **Sammy Varela** on rhythm guitar. Eglington's rendering of "Messin' with



the Kid” was splendid. This was a satisfying set of blues, especially good when Varela stepped forward to play an extended lead guitar solo.



The aggregation performing under the moniker John Le Conqueroo, led by singer **Mark Jacobs**, hit the blues and rocked a little heavier with a nifty horn section of tenor and baritone saxophonists and trumpet in

a lively set that included a nice version of “That’s How Strong My Love Is.”

**Tip of the Top**, “Vintage Blues Played with Style,”



consists of Frank DeRose on bass, Aki Kumar on harmonica and vocals, Jon Lawton on guitar

and vocals, and Carlos Velasco on snare drum. TOTT made a splash in Memphis representing The Golden Gate Blues Society in The Blues Foundation’s International Blues Challenge in February 2011, making it into the semifinals. This foursome cut quite a figure seated semicircled on the large stage. On this day, they got the audience involved on the refrain “I Ain’t Worried” a tune from their new CD. Their rockin’ repertoire mixed it up in one of the highlights of the day.

**Ron Hacker** on guitar and vocals was on fire, squeezing out searing solos, in a great mix with Artis “A.J.” Joyce on bass and Ronnie Smith on drums. Hacker showed his master skill favoring the slide guitar with robust expression. A highlight of the set was Hacker’s heartfelt



emotion with gritty vocals on “Death Letter Blues.” This set was funky, bluesy and just plain fun!



The festival recognized DJ **Byrd Hale** with an award for his contribution to the blues community fittingly presented to him by DJ **Noel Hayes**.

Back to the music, **Rusty Zinn’s** Roots Reggae Band represented a radical departure from the blues.



Zinn’s reinvention from blues to reggae puts this very talented performer into another realm—his extraordinary guitar skill combined with a unique vocal capability served him

well in the blues and were evident in his performance this day. As much as I would like to delve into the genre, I can’t say it moves me. But “different strokes,” as they say!

Mark Hummel with **Nathan James** were accompanied by R.W. Grigsby on standup bass, Marty Dodson on drums,



and Chris Burns on keyboards in a vivid portrayal of Chicago blues. Hummel’s expert breath control on harmonica was perfectly matched by James’ prodigious styling on a unique washboard guitar. Hummel and James were especially breathtaking in an acoustic duo with James featured on vocals. Zinn

added some spicy guitar to the proceedings when he joined his longtime cohort Hummel.

For authentic down-home blues, vocalist **Alabama Mike** is the real deal and he was in tip-top form this day.



Accompanied by Anthony Paule on guitar, Paul Revelli on drums, Scot Brenton on guitar and harmonica, and Paul Olguin on bass, they hit it off with “Naggin’,” a tune from Mike’s hit debut CD “Day by Day.” His earthy delivery smoked with stretched phrasing—emphasizing the lyrics with total command of the stage. On “Lay My Money Down,” the boogie

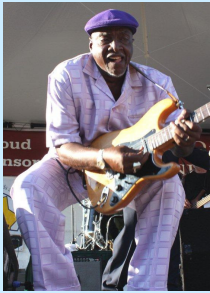
rhythm had the audience fully engaged as they boogied in front of the stage.



*George Schoenstein, Festival Producer*



Southern soul star **Johnny Rawls** closed out the festivities with a large band that featured **Ronnie Stewart** on lead guitar. Rawls played to the audience with honeyed vocals in a set that roared with energy and charisma. Rawls appealed to the females with a flirty delivery of "Can I Get It." His hit tune "Red Cadillac" was delightfully laced with Southern soul. The band was energetic with upbeat groove-inducing support and Rawls nailed it with an exuberant set of no-holds-barred vocals and a sampling of his tasty guitar styling.



The finale jam rocked the crowd with **Kenny Neal** and **Frank Bey** joining in and the hot duo of Johnny Rawls and Alabama Mike going head to head on some down-home blues.



This was a blues feast with an impressive list of musicians who did what they do best, just playin' and singin' the blues to an appreciative audience. Good job, Producer George Schoenstein.

*[Editor's Note: The names in bold indicate the musicians shown in the nearby photographs.]*

## "ON THE AIR" WITH JAY JOHNSTON

*Interview by Joseph Jordan, Photo by Deb Lubin*

Continuing our ongoing series of further introducing you to the blues DJs around the Bay Area, in this issue we



have a conversation with long-time KPOO-FM (San Francisco) disc jockey and "Star Dancer," Mr. Jay Johnston. Jay's a well-known figure around blues clubs and festivals throughout the Bay Area, and as you might have been lucky enough to see, he often "showcases" his dancing prowess and impeccable rhythm during live band performances. He's also a terrific DJ and personality. Here's Jay now!

**TGGBS:** *What are the particulars of your show?*

**JJ:** The name of the show is the "Blues House Party" and I started it in 1980. I broadcast for 3 hours on Monday afternoons from 3 pm to 6 pm on KPOO Community Radio in San Francisco, 89.5 FM and streaming at KPOO.com.

**TGGBS:** *How long have you had your current position at KPOO?*

**JJ:** Actually, I did the overnight, 5-hour blues show for the first 5 years as I held the overnight slot, and played nothing but the blues.

**TGGBS:** *Did you have DJ experience elsewhere before now?*

**JJ:** I really did. I was a DJ in the true sense of the word starting in the mid-'70s, I was the head DJ in nightclubs in San Francisco and Marin County. I was the head DJ for 13 years in a row in nightclubs. Also, I was doing the blues at the same time, so starting in the 1980s, I was doing discos during the week and 5 hours of blues on the weekend. Before that, I had my own mobile disco outfit and I was doing house parties. I've literally DJ'd most of my life.

**TGGBS:** *How would you describe yourself?*

**JJ:** I am the quintessential funky white boy from Oakland. I was born in Oakland and raised in Northern California. I went to Sacramento State (University) and as soon as I graduated Sac State, I moved to Haight-Ashbury and was in the Bay Area, and I've been feasting on this great music ever since.





**TGGBS: Where did you grow up?**

**JJ:** I grew up in Yuba City/Marysville in the Sacramento Valley.

**TGGBS: What brought you to the blues?**

**JJ:** I just started, even in elementary school, when I first heard the music. I've lived long enough to have heard early rock and roll and actually my parents were musicians. My dad was a banjo player and my mother played ukulele and they had a live band as I was growing up. I saw James Brown in concert when I was 18, and I saw Junior Wells and B.B. King and Jimmy Reed and T-Bone Walker, all in a few years from '68 to '72. I saw Howlin' Wolf in Greenwich Village in '72, so I heard all this wonderful music.

**TGGBS: I know the late Junior Wells has been a major influence in your life. Can you tell us what brought you to that late Chicago-blues master?**

**JJ:** I do have a story about the night I met the blues with Junior Wells. I was going to Sac State at the time and Junior Wells and his Chicago blues band were at this beautiful ballroom in South Sacramento. The black community showed up and there were about a hundred black folk and me. I swear I was the only white person in the whole place. The crowd was out in the ballroom, and Junior Wells and the band were doing their thing, and nobody was clapping or snapping their fingers. Not one person was dancing, and Junior Wells noted this. I've never seen anybody in my life do this, but he stopped a song, right in the middle of the song. He goes up to the microphone and says, "What's the matter folks? Aren't I playing anything you like?" Keep in mind this is 1968. The black audience started yelling Motown artists at him: Temptations, Mary Wells, Stevie Wonder, etc. and Junior Wells got mad and he said, "I'm Junior Wells and I play the blues, and I don't care if you like it or not." At that point, total silence. The entire audience turned around and walked out the door and got their money back. And he and the band continued playing the entire set for little old me, sitting in a folding chair right in front of the stage. After that, I went backstage and met the band and Junior Wells and we became friends for his entire career.

I heard the blues that night. He was a thousand miles away from home and the audience had just walked out on him, and I was overtaken by the blues, as Charlie Musselwhite might say. I have also (late Bay Area promoter) Bill Graham to thank for my blues education and I'd like to note that. Being a typical hippie, I was going to the Grateful Dead, Quicksilver Messenger Service, and Jefferson Airplane, but Bill Graham would put in (the show) Jimmy Reed, James Cotton, John Lee Hooker, so I heard all this great music, along with the psychedelic. It was like the Doors and Lightnin' Hopkins and Jimmy Reed, and I just feasted on that music and that helped develop me. So I had two record collections. I had the party disco music, and then I had my blues records and I'm still one of the old time, real disc jockeys who mixes two songs on two turntables and brings in 25 pounds of 45s.

**TGGBS: You've danced at live performance gigs all over the Bay Area. What brings you to that joy?**

**JJ:** Well I've been dancing since I was very young. It's hard for me to sit still at a concert. When I hear the music, I can't sit down. Simply, I've got ants in my pants and I gotta dance. I'm not sure how to express it, I've just got this obsession with dancing. I was the best dancer in the 7th grade.

**TGGBS: What is your blues DJ. philosophy, if any?**

**JJ:** I believe my show is both entertainment and educational. I don't want my audience to forget the roots, like Lightnin' Hopkins and those old blues cats who never got any recognition. But they're on these compilations of old blues I have, obscure blues guys that never made money or anything, but I put it all in the mix. I, of course, appreciate all these wonderful new artists who are bringing out music. I don't like to label things, but it's rock-blues. I definitely (in my show) put in 75% of the blues when blues was all black. I love playing the roots and put that in the mix along with brand new artists I love to support also. It is my pleasure to preserve and present this wonderful music. I always think that playing the blues is a joy, never a job.



## HAYWARD/RUSSELL CITY BLUES FESTIVAL PHOTOS

*by Henry Provost*



**Guitar Mac**



**Honey Piazza**



**Sean McGroarty**



**Alabama Mike**



**Lenny Williams**



**Taildragger**



**Rod Piazza**



**Lester Chambers**



**Wingnut Adams**

## LISA KINDRED: GEM OF THE BLUES

*An Interview with Johnny Ace; Editorial Assistance by Cathy Lemons*

Hello to all you members, readers, and lovers of blues in the Bay Area. I hope that you all had a great blues-filled summer.

Do you people who live in the Bay Area know how lucky you are to be able to go out just about any night of the week and hear some really fine blues? Now, that of course depends on where you go. You can still hear some really HORRIBLE blues. But what I'm getting at is NOT the famous blues artists you can go see at a festival. That's a given. I'm talkin' about the gems that so far never really got up there in the fame bracket, but are just as talented and loved by those who are in the know. I'm



talkin' about those gems that the fickle hand of fate hasn't yet graced with fame.

Right now I'm very proud and happy to have my dear old friend and veteran blues and folk singer Lisa Kindred speak. I hope you enjoy it.

**ACE:** *Lisa, I know that you grew up in Buffalo, New York.*

**LISA:** Yes.

**ACE:** *Well, what year did you know you wanted to be a singer and who influenced you to be a singer?*

**LISA:** I didn't really know that I wanted to be a singer. I started to sing in the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade because I liked it and it made me feel good. And then I didn't do anything till I was 17—until 1957.

**ACE:** *Did you start in Buffalo, then?*

**LISA:** Yeah, someone gave me a guitar and I sang the usual folk songs. But meanwhile, I went to the library and got hold of a lot of Folkways Records. So I started to listen to the really, really old stuff, and I started getting fussy about what I sang. And most of it was one-shot deals that people did by going down to Memphis or New Orleans, or anywhere around, and getting one song from it that I've never heard since.

**ACE:** *You mean those old Folkways field recordings?*

**LISA:** Field recordings! Yeah! There was a guy named Rabbit Brown who I just loved. And I went to the library and just played him over and over again. People looked at me like I was nuts, but it was okay.

**ACE:** *So you worked the folk clubs in Buffalo?*

**LISA:** There was only one. Then my best friend and I went to New York. She chickened out and went home, but I stayed and just started to pick on guitars and get little jobs in places that were as big as your closet—"basket houses." And if you made \$5, you were rich. So it was cool. It was pretty fun and free and easy. This was in 1961.

**ACE:** *When you were in New York did you immediately meet Dylan, Joan Baez, and all of them?*



**LISA:** No. I met some really good players: Fred Neil. He was a really good player. He wrote "Everybody's Talkin," which was the big hit from the movie *Midnight Cowboy*, and "Candy Man," and a bunch of great songs. He encouraged me to play more. He was my mentor. And under his encouragement, I started to get other jobs at like

Gerdy's Folk City and The Gaslight. Then I met Dave Van Ronk and Dylan. I didn't meet Baez 'til later. There weren't too many female singers around at that point—mostly there were these little college girls who would come in and sing for the weekend and then go home. But there were two or three that were something—like Buffy St. Marie and Mary Travers. Peter, Paul and Mary were around by then. It was a very small community.

**ACE:** *Was there a lot of competition? Did they treat you nice as a musician—and as a woman? How was it?*

**LISA:** They were nice. We were a small family. We kind of encouraged each other to play and sing. We were all interested in hearing new songs that people wrote, and we'd stay up till 7 a.m. and play guitar in some of these all night coffee shops. It was great—simple—wonderful!



**ACE: So when did you get recorded?**

**LISA:** The first one was on Vanguard<sup>1</sup> and had four different artists—a “sampler” they used to call them—1964. Then, in 1965, a record of mine came out on



Vanguard titled *I Like it This Way*.<sup>2</sup> I moved to Boston in the meantime and got into the more ethnic folk music thing—less commercial stuff. And there were some great players there. Great players! And they did things like hire Lightnin’ Hopkins.

The older bluesmen were around at that point and they were getting hired! Lightnin’ was the first one I heard.

**ACE: But didn’t you hear them all in New York City?**

**LISA:** Yeah, I heard ‘em kind of. Josh White was always in New York. But they started to bring these people up from Mississippi to play—Bukka White—all these great players. And Boston was more of a homey place to hear these people play. The clubs were nicer. The people were kinder and opened their homes to these musicians. There wasn’t as much competition—no rules as to who could do what with who. It was just very homey and very nice.

**ACE: Did you sing at Club 47?**

**LISA:** Yeah. And Café le Anna and a place called The Unicorn. The people who ran these clubs did it for the love of the music; they weren’t making a lot of money. Club 47 is actually the first nonprofit club that I ever played. And you had to be a member. It cost you a dollar to join the club. Boston had some very strange laws back then—especially blue laws. It was a private club and so it got a lot of police activity. They could be open on Sundays but they never could serve liquor. It was just a nice place to play. They had Mississippi John Hurt and Reverend Gary Davis, who I saw in New York and again in Boston. The amount of respect that was given these pioneers was 10 times more in Boston than what you got in New York!

**ACE: Lisa did the Vanguard LP in 1966 get you a lot of work?**

**LISA:** Yeah, it did. I got a good manager and I traveled a lot. I was traveling 3 out of every 4 weeks—there was a

lot of folk music activity back on the East Coast at that point. The furthest west I’d go was Chicago and St. Louis. All the rest was up and down the East Coast from Florida to Boston. This was from ‘66 to ‘68.

**ACE: Solo?**

**LISA:** Yeah, me and my guitar, and late night flights. It was interesting. When you’re young like that, in your 20s, it’s really fun. It’s okay when you get a little older; but it can get really monotonous: too much alcohol, too much drugs, too much of this and too much of that! We all know that.

**ACE: Well we all grew up and lived through it! The gods were with us! MERCY!**

**LISA:** You get NONE! HA HA! But, seriously, for about 3 years, touring was just lovely!

**ACE: Then what?**

**LISA:** Then I came to California and opened up for Josh White at The Troubadour in LA and I fell in love with California.

**ACE: And you stayed in LA or did you move here to San Francisco?**

**LISA:** No, actually I moved back to New York and got together with a few electric musicians, and then I moved to LA after that for a year or two before coming to San Francisco.

**ACE: Anyone we know from the LA period?**

**LISA:** No. It was blues band. They all got married and settled down. It was a fad for them.

**ACE: Were you still doin’ folk music?**

**LISA:** Kind of. We were starting to do a little more R&B and a little basic blues. I stayed in LA, and then I moved up here to northern California. I liked the lifestyle and I got more involved in the blues. I knew some people from Chicago: Mike Bloomfield, Nick Gravenites, and Paul Butterfield. They were always encouraging me to listen to more blues and to get a little more involved in it. And it took. It happened.

**ACE: When did you meet Janis Joplin?**

**LISA:** I knew Janis from the late 1960s in North Beach. She was an immense talent—no question about that—a tremendous talent. I wouldn’t call her a great blues singer—but she was a great singer. But she burned too bright—and was burned alive from it—too much of everything—and it destroyed her. You don’t want to destroy yourself from your music.

<sup>1</sup> New Folks Vol. 2, Vanguard / King CD KICP 2230 (JP); Artists: Eric Andersen, Lisa Kindred, Phil Ochs, Bob Jones; Lisa Kindred: 4 tracks: Wild Child (World of Trouble), Times So Hard, Mole In The Ground, The Bulgine Run.

<sup>2</sup> Lisa Kindred: I Like It This Way: 12 tracks; with instrumental ensemble directed by Erik Darling: Russ Savakus, Ted Summer, Bill Svano, Don McLean, four bonus tracks (from New Folks Vol. 2).

**ACE:** *Yeah! Just like what we were talking about earlier—too much of everything will eventually catch up. Well, back to you, Lisa. When did you put your first blues band together?*

**LISA:** In 1970. It was nobody special. It was just with people who liked to play blues. The band was named “Ripple,” after the wine. A friend of mine who is still around, named Nick Ellsworth, played guitar. I was still playing guitar and a lady named Nancy Brown was on bass. And there were a thousand marching drummers. And we played 6 nights a week from Santa Cruz to Sausalito for about a year and a half. Then Nancy wanted to stop to write music and the band broke up

**ACE:** *What year are we in now?*

**LISA:** 1972.

**ACE:** *The year we met! Can you tell the folks a bit about North Beach back then?*

**LISA:** It was GREAT! There was Freddie Harrah’s club and The Keystone on Vallejo Street! Michael (Bloomfield), Nick Gravenites, and Boz Scaggs played there. I floated pretty much ‘til I got a steady band together with Gino (the late Gino Skaggs, a great blues bassist from Chicago who had worked with John Lee Hooker, Jimmy Reed, and others). This was about 1978. We also had King Perkoff on tenor sax—a 5 piece band. We worked solidly at The Saloon on Monday nights for 4 or 5 years. It was wonderful! Gino and Perkoff were the only steady members. Players came and went.

**ACE:** *Lisa, when did your first CD come out on The Saloon label?*

**LISA:** That was 6 years ago. It was a matter of moving from one band to another ‘til I found this current band that I’ve been with for 14 years, which includes Dennis Geyer on guitar, Willie Riser on bass, Dick McDonough on drums, and Austin de Lone on keyboards. We also had Eugene Huggins play harmonica on one cut and Ron Hacker play slide guitar on another. I feel real bad, but I don’t remember the horn players’ names. The CD is called “Steppin’ Up in Class;” It’s kind of diverse, but it’s fun!

**ACE:** *And there is brand new CD? What would you like to say about that? What’s the name of it?*

**LISA:** Yes. We’re not sure yet about the name, but I think were gonna call it “Hello Stranger,” not to be confused with the great Barbara Lewis song of that same

title from 1963 with the cool “shoo-bop, shoo-bop, my baby” background vocals.



This song was recorded by The Carter Family and we mixed it up to a Jimmy Reed tempo. Basically, I’ve met many people over the past 25 or 30 years who are great songwriters and who, for one reason or another, have stopped playing, and

you’re NEVER gonna hear their songs. So for this CD, I grabbed about six of those songs from people that I love and respect. Otherwise, the songs would be lost in the ozone! And we also did some blues covers and some New Orleans things.

**ACE:** *Lisa, it interests me that you never wrote.*

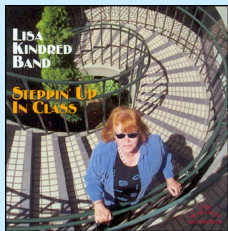
**LISA:** There’s one song on the new CD that I wrote with Austin. It’s about the people on Mission and 6<sup>th</sup> streets begging for money. It’s an interesting tune; it’s very harsh. I think other people write better than I do. I don’t think I have anything different to say that I can say better than anybody else. And if I did write, and I heard one of my songs, I probably would not record it. I’m very picky with my material.

**ACE:** *Well you’re an interpreter of songs, and you have your own style and voice. And you’ve always picked real good material, like that Johnny Adams song “One Foot in the Blues.” You sing that so fine. Were there any singers when you were starting out who you really loved and wanted to sing like?*

**LISA:** It’s really strange. When I was about 11 years old in Buffalo there was a DJ who had a radio show and he was named “The Hound Dog” (George Lorenz/ WKBW). He played Lavern Baker, Ruth Brown, Dinah Washington, Charles Brown, and the first Johnny Ace—the real stuff, not like the other Top 40 AM stations who’d play Pat Boone. Every Saturday, “The Hound Dog” would come on from 9 p.m. ‘til 11 p.m., and I’d lock myself up in my room and not go anywhere ‘til it was over. So I can’t say who I was influenced by, but I heard a lot of Lavern Baker—and Ruth Brown. And then I started listening to Nina Simone, Dinah Washington, and June Christy. I listened to a lot of the jazz vocalists.

**ACE:** *Plus you saw ‘em all!*

**LISA:** Yeah, I saw June Christy. I saw all the Stan Kenton singers: Chris Connors, Anita O’Day, and Carmen McRae. Anytime there was a concert in Buffalo, the choice was to either go to the concert or a hockey game! So I’d always





go to the concerts. The first concert I went to I was 12. I saw Dave Brubeck. I don't know how the contagion started, but it did, and when I sing, it makes me feel better than anything else!

**ACE:** *Well everyone loves you, Lisa. What do you think is the big difference in blues now compared to the '60's and '70s?*

**LISA:** That's a hard question. I see a lot of people studying it, like it's removed from them. The people singing the blues these days are few and far between. That particular genre of music is not as easy to identify with these days. In the '60s, all these kids started to electrify it to a point where it didn't sound like blues to me, except for maybe Eric Clapton and a few others who had a respect for the music. The kids who come over here from Europe and go to The Saloon, it's like they're studying something else that has nothing to do with them. There's less genuine feeling now with the younger kids. They haven't lived the lifestyle. I'm not saying it's out of style; it's totally *IN* style. I don't know why, but it just is. Right down at the core, the younger generation, the bunch that come around that are genuine, are fewer and further apart compared to the '60s and '70s. They don't have the tradition. And they don't learn what the tradition is these days, like going to the library and studying the old music etc., and learning it from the roots up. They just sort of pick it up from Stevie Ray Vaughan and figure that's where it started.

**ACE:** *Don't you think as we speak, there are some young kids out there who learn blues from the greats by seeing them on YouTube or listening to CDs?*

**LISA:** Oh yeah! Oh yeah! But I'm talking about 90 out of every 95 that don't got a clue about what they're doing in singing a song. There is that 5% who are interested, and who get bitten by this bug, and who pursue it, and make a lifestyle out of it.

**ACE:** *I sure hope some heavyweights come up out of this.*

**LISA:** Me too. There are some out there. I'd like to hear just more than guitar players; I'd like to hear some piano players. I just heard a young piano player starting out. And he seemed to have the feeling for it. He knows what a groove is. I remember Francis Clay, Muddy's old drummer, used to say, "If you can't shuffle, you can't play jazz!" The earthiness seems to be one step away from us.

**ACE:** *OK then, what do you say to young kids who come up to you on a gig and ask you for advice? And this could also be for the young kids reading this. What do you tell 'em?*

**LISA:** If they're interested, if they're gonna sing or play guitar, then they have to study a little bit like they do in school, not just do it off the top of their heads. If there's one song that grabs you somewhere, I don't care if it's "Stormy Monday" or "Howl," I don't care what it is, learn it and *sing it like you mean it or play it like you mean it.* And play it *like yourself.* My roommate is a guitar teacher. And he's got one kid who comes over, and the kid asks my roommate, "Can we do a slow minor blues?" And the teacher says, "Oh yeah, just sit down here and we'll do it." And *this* kid has the spacing, the feeling. *He's 18 years old!* About five more like him, and it would be just great!

**ACE:** *I'd like to meet him.*

**LISA:** He's in Boston and he just got a scholarship to the Berklee College of Music.

**ACE:** *We're headin' towards closing time, Lisa. Is there anything else that you'd really like to talk about—anything to add to this?*

**LISA:** You know sometimes people get into blues and they seem to lose the joy. To me, blues is a very joyous music; it talks about everyday life; it comes from a space inside of you. It brings me a lot pleasure and joy. When I'm singing, it's like nothing I've ever experienced before—the act of singing blues. And if you're gonna do something, if you're gonna dig a ditch, if you're gonna play Rachmaninoff, or if you're gonna sing blues, do it from a joyous place. Do it from your heart!



And just let it go from there. I've been very fortunate in being able to do that. And the people I know that really excel at blues all have a really joyful attitude about it. They're not dragging tin cans in the street. They're coming from a joyous place inside, and it brings understanding for the people that you sing blues for. That's about it.



**ACE: Lisa that's beautiful! Myself, and everyone that loves you, wish you the best. And we hope that people will come to see you every first and third Tuesday, 9:30 p.m. - 1:30 a.m., at The Saloon in North Beach, and at The No Name Bar in Sausalito, and that they'll buy your new CD, and hire you for a bunch of festivals!**

**OK! PACK UP!**

Check out:

- Website: <http://www.lisakindred.com>
- Wikipedia Bio: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lisa\\_Kindred](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lisa_Kindred)
- Discography: <http://www.wirz.de/music/kindfrm.htm>

Photo Credits:

Page 19: *In the Saloon Alley, 2010*, by Ken Freeman.

Page 19: *Performing at the Village Gate, New York City, 1966*; by Jim Marshall.

Page 20: *I Like It This Way, Vanguard LP cover; 1965*; by Larry Shustak.

Page 21: *Steppin' Up in Class, Saloon CD cover, 1996*; by Myron Mu.

Page 21: *Lisa and Willie Riser at The Saloon, 2010*, from Kindred Archives.

Page 22: *Lisa Kindred Band from back of "Steppin' Up in Class" CD*; Left to right: Austin de Lone, Denny Geyer, Lisa Kindred, Willie Riser, Dick McDonough; 1996, by Myron Mu.

## WHERE ARE THE YOUNG PEOPLE AND CAN THE BLUES SURVIVE WITHOUT THEM?

*An Opinion by Burton Winn*



I'm setting my bass rig up for another night at The Saloon, or at any of the local blues bars these days. I look out at the crowd and find waves of gray hair on the heads of the audience members waiting for the music to start. Or I see hats: fedoras or Panamas, or motorcycle, or stingy brim types covering balding heads or gray ponytails.

Has the blues audience always been this way? Am I just getting old and noticing this for the first time? Seems to me, the average age of this bunch is nearly 50 years or more. Question: Where are the young people?

I've been playing bass since the early 1970s and listening to blues music since the mid-1960s. The first time I had blues music explained as an expression and a form was in a classroom setting in early 1967, when I was an 18-year-old psychology undergrad, during a college class called Afro-American Music at Cal-State University, East Bay. That class (the first time it had ever been offered) explored the history of African-American music: from its

origins in West Africa, through the Mississippi Delta from New Orleans to Chicago, up to the then-current time of mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century America. *Blues People*, by Amari Baraka (Leroi Jones), was the text book used for the class. I particularly remember the day when the teacher, Dr. Rudolph Saltzer, who was the head of the music department, presented a chart that had 12 boxes (bars), each containing letter names (the chords), and had us count four beats to each bar as he played Wynonie Harris's "Good Rockin' Tonight" on the record player at the podium. Hey, I got it—12 bars, chord changes, a *form* of music and a *style* with deeply expressive, historical, and cultural roots.

My second rock concert, after seeing The Beatles at Candlestick Park in August of '66, was at the Fillmore Auditorium in December of that year. While I was waiting to see the headliner, Jefferson Airplane, the band's lead guitarist, Jorma Kaukonen, announced that he wanted to introduce to the young San Francisco audience two blues bands from Chicago that the Airplane had heard while on tour. First up was Otis Rush, and then Junior Wells came after. These bands played to the young hippie crowd and left a strong impression before the Airplane took the stage. It was the first live blues I



had ever heard, and it happened when I was a young person in a youthful crowd.

During this time period, blues music was mixed in with the pop and rock of its time. The British Invasion of the mid-1960s was based on American blues; Mick Jagger, Keith Richards, Eric Burdon, Paul McCartney, Eric Clapton, Jimi Hendrix, Jeff Beck, Jimmy Page, Rod Stewart, and others started their careers doing covers of blues tunes. “Underground” FM radio (the Internet of its time) also mixed blues originals with the English covers and the other pop and rock songs from the period. I first heard Albert King’s “Born under a Bad Sign” on the local FM rock station KSAN; BB King’s “The Thrill Is Gone” was a hit song on the FM dial (at least here in the SF Bay Area). Genres were mixed together, like an iPod playlist, appealing to a younger, record-buying audience.

So what happened? Blues music continued through the 1970s, but had nearly gone out of business by decade’s end. Soul, disco, hard rock, then the punk/new wave movement competed successfully for the audience’s attention. Even Johnny “Guitar” Watson put out a disco record. If this music truly has a cycle, then this period was a low point. But that soon changed.

In 1983, English rocker David Bowie released a song called “Let’s Dance,” featuring then little-known guitarist Stevie Ray Vaughan. Stevie Ray put together the blues riffs of Albert King, BB King, and other influences, redirecting the spotlight back on blues guitar. As he became more popular, he drew attention to his home scene in Austin, specifically Antone’s Blues Club. The owner, Clifford Antone, was a blues lover and an entrepreneurial club owner who featured a mix of music. Texas-style blues and blues rock predominated at his concerts in this University of Texas town. But he also booked touring blues bands from Chicago and around the country, mixing in the older, established artists with the new, upcoming ones—and he had that big University of Texas college crowd in his audience.

I started getting calls to play blues bass in the mid 1980s. Compared with today, things were booming. I learned what I needed to know while on the job, or I listened to the tape or CD of the song and then went to the gig. One could play blues 7 nights a week in those days in local Bay Area clubs. There were steady Blue Monday gigs and Sunday open jam sessions. And there were many touring bands luring players away from the local gigs, creating a farm system of sorts—before the Internet and Facebook, word-of-mouth networking led to getting the gigs.

Musicians came to the Bay Area from around the country during this period. Quite often, there would be a young

guitarist or harmonica player wanting to sit in at the gigs, and equally as often that person would later be hiring players for his own gig. This activity peaked in the early to mid ‘90s. One signpost for this time was the untimely death of Stevie Ray in 1990. But again, things changed.

The Blues Boom period started to fade by the late 1990s. Locally, clubs consolidated (e.g., JJ’s closed two of its three locations) or changed formats (like Berkeley’s Larry Blake’s, Santa Cruz’s Moe’s Alley, and San Francisco’s Slims) or just closed (like San Mateo’s Blues on B). The touring musicians came less often; blues festivals showed less attendance or stopped completely (the San Francisco Blues Festival, for example, after a 36-year run). A musical chairs-type of environment was created, as there were more musicians and bands than could be accommodated at the gigs. The boom turned to bust.

Today, you can find blues music at just a handful of venues; many “gigs” are jam sessions sponsored by charitable club owners or labor-of-love blues societies. The most crowded gigs I do now are for the international tourist trade in San Francisco. Check out The Saloon or Lou’s Pier 47 sometime and you will find a lot of young tourists in the audiences. The steady blues “faithful” have aged with the scene, but aren’t being replaced by new fans or younger musicians.

So, where do we go from here? I see the following possible scenarios: One, continue on and see what happens. Under this scenario, the audience ages and dwindles; the musicians age too, but are not replaced. The music seeks shelter in blues societies and schools, and becomes historical. To preserve “authenticity,” a system of rules and historical precedents replaces improvisational change, and blues becomes a type of American classical music. I think of New Orleans’s Preservation Hall as an example.

Or, the music evolves and enters the 21<sup>st</sup> century—most American music has gone through historical changes in styles. Jazz, rock, country (and even classical) have all changed over time, reflecting current influences and changing audiences. Possibly another young guitar slinger or vocalist will rise above the crowd and “cross over” into the mainstream, bringing his (or her) own influences into play. Or blues, due to exposure on the Internet or other world forum, might fuse with another type of music, creating a modern hybrid. Blues combined with rock or soul is a successful early prototype of this. Blues might go “off shore” and become a world “folk” type of music that’s played and sung by people in various languages (rock, rap, hip-hop, and jazz are there now). Blues could become a featured





part of an eclectic music scene; my years with Johnny Nitro showed me how blues can be mixed with other styles, like rock and country, in the same show, to appeal to both the blues lovers and the general audience. Or something unknown could happen, charting the future in unpredictable ways.

The future is not yet written. The past is where we were, but the present is what we deal with—we are at a place

in time where we can influence the future by integrating the past and dealing with the present. Can we do this? Can the blues survive?

*Photo of Burton Winn at George's Nightclub by Deb Lubin*

## REMEMBERING DAVID "HONEYBOY" EDWARDS AND WILLIE "BIG EYES" SMITH

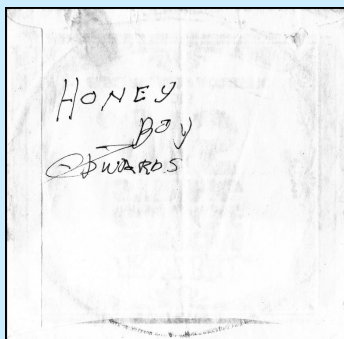
Within a span of 18 days, we lost two giants in the blues world. David "Honeyboy" Edwards died at the age of 96 on August 29, 2011, and Willie "Big Eyes" Smith passed at the age of 75 on September 16, 2011, shocking the blues world to its core. Here we share some of our own memories of our time with them both.

### Johnny Ace on Honeyboy

As many of you know, this past August, Honeyboy Edwards, the last of the first generation of Mississippi Delta bluesmen, passed on. He was 96 years old. I think ol' Honeyboy had a VERY fine run to say the LEAST! Way back in October 1977, New York City blues scholar and photographer Anton Macosky who then was writing for *Living Blues*, brought Honeyboy to New York from Chicago. Anton was also representing Honeyboy back then. I had the honor of playing on a show with him in The Village with my man, the multitalented Brooklyn Slim, aka Paul Oscher. Also on the show was Tarheel Slim, aka Allen Bunn, who recorded delicious rare little morsels of plastic with the infamous Larks of Apollo Records fame in the early 1950s. A host of other New York City blues bands performed on the show (see picture of ad). At the gig, I spoke with Tarheel Slim a bit about The Larks. He didn't seem to want to dwell in the past, so I let him and it be.

It was Honeyboy's first time ever gigging in New York (according to the ad). I went over to him and said "hello," and welcomed him to New York. I asked him for his autograph, which he graciously signed. I still treasure it with my other memorabilia. Years later, in the 1990s, I

again met him at a blues festival in San Jose, California. I went backstage to meet him and was amazed that he was acting as young as a teenager, drinking whiskey and flirting with anything in a skirt. I had a photo taken of us together, but I never received a copy of the photo. That was the last time I saw Honeyboy. I was SO happy that he was rediscovered in the '90s. I loved the book he put out of his tall tales, published in 1997 by Chicago Review Press called *The World Don't Owe Me Nothing: The Life and Times of a Delta Bluesman*. I highly recommend it. Now Honeyboy is up in blues heaven with his pals Robert Johnson, Charlie Patton, Big Joe Williams, and more. I know he's on a beautiful journey. RIP David "Honeyboy" Edwards. RIDE! And he sure DID!!



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Photo to the left of Willie "Big Eyes" Smith at the filming for *The Perfect Age of Rock and Roll* at Great American Music Hall in San Francisco, March 31, 2010. The Golden Gate Blues Society was a partner in the event. *Photo by Dorothy L. Hill*



From the same night at Great American Music Hall, an on-stage shot of Willie. *Photo by Deb Lubin.*



Me (Deb Lubin) with Honeyboy Edwards at Biscuits & Blues in San Francisco in January 2006. I'm using this as my current profile photo on Facebook.



Bob Stroger, Willie Smith, and Hubert Sumlin at an after-party following the Pocono Blues Festival in 2010, *by Deb Lubin.*



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