

# bluesnotes

**Preserving and Promoting the Blues in the Pacific NW**

A bi-monthly publication of the Cascade Blues Association | [cascadebluesassociation.org](http://cascadebluesassociation.org)



**Jul /Aug 2025**  
Volume 40 | Issue 7 (FREE)

## WBF

## Waterfront Blues Festival

Portland OR • July 4-5, 2025

### Music Review

Kim Field Band (Page 10)



Photo by  
Debra Penk

## A Tribute to Our Blues Societies

By Timmer Blakely

### Promoting and Preserving the Blues

Did you know there are around 180 blues societies around the world affiliated with the Blues Foundation, an organization based in Memphis, Tennessee? That's more than 180 communities connected by a shared love of roots music, each run by passionate volunteers keeping the blues alive on the ground, in the clubs, and in our hearts.

Here in the Pacific Northwest, we're lucky to be part of a rich, resilient network. In Washington, three Blues Foundation affiliates hold it down: The Washington Blues



Society in Seattle, Inland Empire Blues Society in Spokane and South Sound Blues Association in Spanaway.

In Oregon, we've got the Cascade Blues Association (that's us!) and our fellow Blues Foundation affiliate, the Rogue Blues Society in Medford. We also proudly share our region with two non-affiliated groups: Eugene's Rainy Day Blues Society and Portland's West Side Blues Association.

All of these organizations — whether official affiliates or independent — are nonprofit and entirely volunteer-run. That's no small thing. These folks give their time,



talent, and heart to build communities around the music they love, often with little recognition and even less sleep.

### And let's be honest: it hasn't been easy.

The COVID era hit hard, shuttering venues, scattering audiences, and threatening the very existence of grassroots music organizations. Somehow, through sheer will and leadership, many of our societies pulled through. Some didn't. Some still haven't.

The CBA itself faced another challenge in that same timeframe with the passing of our long time president Greg Slim Lively Johnson. While



Greg Johnson

there are many who contributed to the survival of their respective organizations, I want to call out two specific people; Rae Gordon, former president of the CBA and current CBA VP, and Tony Fredrickson, former president of the Washington's Blues Society. Both held their societies together



## Blues Notes is a publication of the Cascade Blues Association

Help us promote and preserve the lyrical emotion and sultry sounds of blues music in Portland, become a member! Visit <http://cascadebluesassociation.org> today!

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**Managing Editor:** Michael Wong

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### Contact:

PO Box 6566, Portland OR 97228  
[bluesnotes@cascadeblues.org](mailto:bluesnotes@cascadeblues.org)

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through the toughest circumstances any blues society had ever seen, while many other societies failed and/or still have not recovered. These two kept the lights on. While other societies were folding, Rae and Tony were holding their communities together with duct tape, hustle, and heart. Their leadership didn't just preserve their own organizations; it helped sustain the scene itself.

And looking ahead, there's a new wave of leadership showing us what the future can look like. Casey Sutton, the newly elected President of the Washington Blues Society, is already making waves with a smart, forward-thinking approach. His work in social media, content, marketing, and community-building is exactly what blues societies need to thrive in 2025 and beyond.

I stepped into my own first year as CBA President in 2025 and am incredibly grateful to our brilliant and dedicated board. But I'm also grateful to leaders like Casey, who are generous with ideas, perspective, and support.

**What We're Doing Here at Home:** Right here at the Cascade Blues Association, we're building on that legacy with programs designed to expand access, celebrate artistry, and create lasting opportunities:

We're breathing new life into Blues in the Schools, connecting students with music education that's hands-on, inclusive, and rooted in history and self-expression.

Our annual Summer Picnic has officially become the Member Appreciation Picnic, a warm-weather celebration of the folks who make our community what it is.

The Journey to Memphis Finals are getting a new twist this year! With the Waterfront Blues Festival scaling back to two stages (goodbye, Front Porch Stage), we partnered with the festival to keep the tradition alive. The finals will now take place aboard the Cruisin' to Memphis Blues Cruise — same grit, same glory, just with a river view and a cool breeze.

**We're placing a strong focus on youth participation, too.** Led by the unstoppable Dave

Fleschner, bandleader and music teacher who has worked with countless Grammy winning jazz artists, rock stars, blues icons and soul legends as well as the Portland Symphony Orchestra and the Portland Gay Men's Chorus, we're planning a dedicated Youth Journey to Memphis challenge later this year — a space for young artists to showcase their chops and find their voice.

And looking ahead, we're laying the foundation for a CD Fund, designed to help established Pacific Northwest blues performers record and release their first commercial album. Artists retain all rights to their work — because we believe in building careers, not just moments.

In an increasingly digital world, these blues societies are our real-world anchor — the brick-and-mortar spirit of a music that was born in backyards, front porches, juke joints, and church halls. They are where fans become friends, and players become legends.

**They connect us. They represent us. They serve us.**

So support your local blues society. And the

not-so-local ones too. Because this isn't just about music — it's about community.

- [WABlues.org](http://WABlues.org)
- [InlandEmpireBlues.com](http://InlandEmpireBlues.com)
- [SouthSoundBlues.org](http://SouthSoundBlues.org)
- [Facebook.com/rainydayblues](https://Facebook.com/rainydayblues)
- [DaveFleschner.com](http://DaveFleschner.com)
- [Blues.org](http://Blues.org)
- [TimmerBlakely.com](http://TimmerBlakely.com)
- Information on Journey to Memphis competition can be found at [CascadeBlues.org/category/journey-to-memphis](http://CascadeBlues.org/category/journey-to-memphis)
- Cruisin' to Memphis Cruise with Journey to Memphis competition tickets can be found at [WaterFrontBluesFest.com/tickets](http://WaterFrontBluesFest.com/tickets)
- Member Appreciation Picnic is on September 7th, 11am-3pm at North Clackamas Park, 5440 SE Kellogg Creek Dr, Milwaukie, Oregon. Free to members and \$10 suggested donation to non-members. ■

## Timmer

(CBA President)

By Timmer Blakely (President) with a little help from Evelyn Silverman, Membership Chair

## Blues Review: Kim Field & The Perfect Gentlemen

Review by Michael Penk

### Don't Need But One

*Don't Need But One*, Kim Field & The Perfect Gentlemen's new album, was recorded at Falcon Studios with Dennis Carter as the engineer and at Roseleaf Recording with Jimi Bott as engineer. The record was produced and mixed by recording industry veteran Dave Darling for an April 2025 release. Like the batting order in baseball, where the leadoff hitter is the player most likely to score, the opening track, "Don't Need But One," is a catchy R&B style hit that sets the tone for the entire album. Kim Field's vocals, paired with Joe McCarthy's top-notch horn arrangements, create a sound reminiscent of the Dap-Kings.

The album continues to impress with "Please Don't Ask Me," a Chicago-style blues track where the rhythm section comes out swinging and truly shines. It's easy to imagine blues legend Charlie Musselwhite covering this song on his next album. "Black Diamonds," a slow blues number that asks what do you do when your best is not enough, stands out with its poignant



lyrics and Whit Draper's stinging guitar work that perfectly captures the heartbreak and pain.

On "What Kind of Fool," the band channels the dance energy of Roomful of Blues, with Vyasa Dodson on lead vocals and a dynamic middle section featuring harmonica and guitar solos augmented by the Soul Survivor Horns. "I Give In" transports listeners back in time with Vyasa's nostalgic vocals and guitar, evoking a sense of 1960s Americana. It's like you're nineteen,

wearing jeans and a white T-shirt with a pack of Lucky Strikes rolled up in the sleeve, hair piled high with more than a dab of Brylcreem, driving a '57 Chevy over to Mary Sue's house for a date.

The instrumental track "Emergency" showcases the talents of bassist Denny Bixby and drummer Jimi Bott. They get way down in the groove while Kim blows some tasty harmonica and Whit Draper and Vyasa Dodson trade off groovy guitar solos that add depth to

the groove. "So Dark" features some of Kim's best lyrics, exploring very relatable themes of loneliness and longing. He asks, "Everyone has someone, why can't I be cherished too". This track is elevated by Chris Mercer's emotional sax solo.

The only cover on the album, "The Man That Got Away," is a beautiful rendition of the Harold Arlen/Ira Gershwin classic that was written for a 1954 movie. The harmonica soars like a bird, catching the updraft from the lush horn and organ arrangements. Kim and the band really stretch out on this one with a style that is more like Toots Thielemans than the blues.

In conclusion, "Don't Need But One" is a remarkable album that masterfully blends energetic and soulful tracks, showcasing the band's impressive versatility. Much like a road trip on Route 66, this album takes listeners on a captivating journey from Chicago to Hollywood, filled with memorable sights and sounds to enjoy along the way. ■

Learn more about Kim Field and The Perfect Gentleman at [KimField.com/the-perfect-gentlemen](http://KimField.com/the-perfect-gentlemen)



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**Summer 2025**

Sun	June	29	Good In The Hood
Fri	July	4	Waterfront Blues Festival
Sat	July	12	Mississippi Street Fair
Sat	Aug	16	Peninsula R & B Festival
Fri	Aug	22	Vancouver Wine & Jazz

... and many more, see website calendar

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## Treat yourself to a local gig in July & August

### CBA Blues Calendar

#### Weekly Shows

#### Mondays

- Lloyd Jones at Muddy Rudder, Portland
- Tevis Hodge Jr with Bayou Boyz Band at Mekong Bistro, Portland

#### Wednesdays

- Grace London at Trails End Saloon, Oregon City

#### Thursdays

- Ed Newman & Friends at CI Bar, Tualatin
- Fenix Rising Band at Blue Diamond, Portland

#### Sundays

- Bayou Boyz at Spirits Pub, Portland

#### July Events

- 2 - CBA Monthly Showcase & Meeting at Mekong Bistro, Portland



- 4 - First Friday with Lloyd Jones at Artichoke Music, Portland
- 4-5 - Waterfront Blues Festival at Tom McCall Waterfront Park, Portland
- 4 - Sail on Sister Cruise on Portland Spirit at Waterfront Blues Festival
- 4 - Ms Vee and a Bad Ass Band at Clyde's, Portland
- 5 - Cruisin' to Memphis on Portland Spirit

at Waterfront Blues Festival

- 5 - Kivett Bednar at Northwood Public House, Battleground, WA
- 6 - 1st Sunday Gospel Fest w/Rae Gordon, LaRhonda Steele, Melody Guy, Jonn Del Toro Richardson at Trails End Saloon, Oregon City
- 6 - First Sundays w/Myrtle Brown's Groove at Canary, PDX
- 6 - First Sundays w/Suburban Slim, Portland
- 9 - JT Wise Band at McMenamins Kalama Harbor Amphitheatre, Kalama
- 9 - Vintage Soul at Blue Diamond, Portland
- 10 Kivett Bednar at Laurelthirst Public House
- 11 - Kevin Selfe & the Tornadoes at Arriverdici Wine & Jazz, Milwaukie
- 11 - Ben Rice & the PDX Hustle at Ilani, Ridgefield, WA
- 12 - Saturday in the Park w/Kevin Selfe & the Tornadoes at Sternwheeler Park, La Center
- 12 - Bottleneck Blues Trio at Northwood Brewing, Battleground, WA
- 13 - Louis Pain & Renato Caranto at Ilani Casino Line & Lure, Ridgefield, WA
- 18 - Carolyn Wonderland at Alberta Rose Theatre, Portland
- 18 - Blues Night at 45th Annual Cathedrall Jazz Festival
- 18-20 - Winthrop Rhythm & Blues Festival, Winthrop, WA
- 19 - Sparrow Wren at Ilani Casino Line & Lure, Ridgefield, WA
- 20 - Sarah Lodge Band at Trails End Saloon, Oregon City
- 23 - Shinnyribs at Aladdin Theater, Pdx



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- 24 - Tab Benoit at Aladdin Theater, Portland
- 24 - Ruthie Foster w/ special guest Stephanie Anne Johnson at Alberta Rose Theatre, Portland
- 25 - PDX Preachers Band at Awakening Coffee, Oak Grove
- 25 - Kivett Bednar at Happy Valley Concert Series, Happy Valley
- 26 - Kris Deelane & the Hurt at Ilani Casino Rock & Brews
- 30 - Soul Cookin' at Blue Diamond, Portland

### August Events

- 1 - First Fridays w/Lloyd Jones at

## Blues Jams in and Around Portland

### Mondays

- Dave's Lowdown Youth Blues Jam w/ Backbeat Music Academy and Clackamas Community College Rhythm Section at Artichoke Music (First Monday).
- Chad Rupp Jam at McMenamins White Eagle, Portland (Every Monday)

### Tuesdays

- Vic Sorisio at Billy Blues, Vancouver, WA

### Wednesdays

- Toby Worthington & The Fabulous Bad Cats Jam at Dublin Pub, Beaverton



### Thursdays

- 1-4-5 Chad Rupp Jam at Lair Bar, Milwaukie

### Sundays

- Kevin Selfe Jam at Blue Diamond, PDX
- HiTS (Jason Thomas, Marty Henninger, Jim Solberg) Blues Jam at Trails End Saloon, Oregon City

- Scott Steele Jam, Montavilla Station, PDX
- Jerry Jacques Jam at 99 Saloon, Vancouver
- Eric Savage, Bobby Ferrante, Eric Rabe, Ben Jones at M&M Lounge, Gresham
- Kathryn Grimm Jam at Mekong Bistro, Portland (9/28, 12/28)

Artichoke Music, Portland

- 1 / 2 - Stevenson Waterfront Music Festival
- 2 - Wilsonville Festival of Music at

Charbonneau, Wilsonville

- 2 - Homer Davenport Days w/Kevin Selfe, Noah Bell, AC Porter, Silverton

- 3 - First Sunday Gospel w/Rae Gordon & Special Guest at Trails End Saloon, Oregon City
- 3 - First Sundays w/Myrtle Brown's

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by Rae Gordon

at Ilani Casino Line & Lure, Ridgefield, WA

• 17 - Sarah Lodge Band at Trails End Saloon, Oregon City

• 20 - Keb Mo & Shawn Colvin at McMenamins Grand Lodge, Forest Grove

• 21 - Blues Traveler, Gin Blossoms, Spin Doctors at Ilani Casino Cowlitz Ballroom, Ridgefield, WA

• 23 - Ms Vee and a Badass Band at Beaverton Music Festival, Beaverton

• 27 - Soul Cookin' at Blue Diamond, PDX

• 29 - Kitsap Blues Music Festival, Bremerton, WA

• 30 - Willamette Falls Music Festival, Oregon City

• 30 - John Primer, Kivett Bednar, Ben Rice at Headliners Club, Lake Oswego



This may not be a complete list of blues shows and jams in the area. Please refer directly to music venues and acts for more information or [CascadeBluesAssociation.org/calendar](http://CascadeBluesAssociation.org/calendar)

To get your show included in the next printing of BluesNotes, email your information to us at [BluesNotes@cascadeblues.org](mailto:BluesNotes@cascadeblues.org)

◀ Executive Groove at Canary, Portland

• 3 - First Sundays w/ Suburban Slim Band at Slim's, Portland

• 6 - CBA Monthly Showcase & Member Meeting at Mekong Bistro, Portland

• 8 - PDX Preachers Band at Oregon City

Porchfest, Oregon City

• 8 - Kevin Selfe & the Tornadoes at Tigardville, Tigard

• 9 - PDX Preachers Band at Mulino Blues Fest, Mulino

• 15 / 16 - Peninsula Blues Festival

• 16 - Kevin Selfe Trio



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**July 2nd**

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Showcase

Ms Vee



**August 6th**

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## ***Upcoming festivals***



### **Waterfront Blues Festival**

- July 4-5, Portland, Oregon

[WaterfrontBluesFest.com](http://WaterfrontBluesFest.com)

### **Winthrop Rhythm and Blues Festival**

- July 18-20, Winthrop, Washington

[WinthropBluesFestival.com](http://WinthropBluesFestival.com)



### **Peninsula Blues Festival**

- August 15-16, Long Beach, Washington

[PeninsulaBluesFest.org](http://PeninsulaBluesFest.org)

### **Sunbanks Blues Festival**

- September 4-7, Electric City, Washington

[SunbanksFestival.com](http://SunbanksFestival.com)

### **Wilsonville Festival of Music -**

### **Blues for Schools**

- August 2-3, Charbonneau, Oregon

[Charbonneuarts.org](http://Charbonneuarts.org)

### **Sunbanks Blues & Roots Festival**

- September 4-7, Sunbanks Lake Resort, Electric City, WA

[www.sunbanksfestival.com](http://www.sunbanksfestival.com)

# First Round of Annual Journey to Memphis

By Evelyn Silverman

Packs the House  
at Mekong  
Bistro



Portland's Mekong Bistro turned into blues central on Sunday, June 1st as seven stand-out acts competed in the first round of the Cascade Blues Association's Journey to Memphis Competition—each with the dream of competing on Beale Street in January 2026 during the International Blues Challenge. The IBC brings blues acts from around the world every year to Memphis, Tennessee.

On a gorgeous sunny Sunday, five solo performers and two bands shared their bluesy energy from the stage. More than 50 die-hard blues fans soaked up the rich musical variety, when they could've been soaking up the sun - proving blues is very much alive—and evolving—in the Pacific Northwest.

The talent ran deep and wide from



rootsy fingerstyle to genre-blending soul — and people showed up loud to support them.

## Finalist for Solo

- Lilla
- Juliet Sings

## Finalist for Band

- Kit's Bag o' Cats
- The Nikki Jones Band

These artists will battle it out aboard the Portland Spirit during the Cruisin' to Memphis Blues Cruise, for a chance to represent Portland at the International Blues Challenge in Memphis, January 2026!

## Big Thanks and a round of applause to:

- Our fierce and fabulous judges: Merry Larson, Vicki Herlemen, and Michael Osborn
- The competitors: Mick Schafer, Tim Connor, Al Polito, Lilla, Juliet Sings, Kits Bag 'o Cats and The Nikki Jones Band
- The photographers and videographers who catch the magic in motion and give us all something to remember it by, Kelly Ralph, Debra Penk,

Kathy Rose, and Bill Cleghorn

- The crowd who cheered, clapped, and kept the vibe alive
- And special thanks to Saron Khut & the Mekong Bistro crew for hosting us in their wonderful event space. We love your heart and your food!

This round of the Journey to Memphis proved, once again, that the Pacific Northwest isn't just playing the blues—we're living it, celebrating it, and sending our best to represent it on the world stage.

We'll see you at the Finals, on the water July 5th — come cruise, cheer, and be part of the Journey to Memphis! Tickets available through [WaterfrontBluesFest.com/tickets](http://WaterfrontBluesFest.com/tickets). ■

Mekong Bistro is located at 8200 NE Siskiyou. Please follow the Journey to Memphis all the way from Oregon to Tennessee! [CascadeBlues.org/category/journey-to-memphis/](http://CascadeBlues.org/category/journey-to-memphis/)





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**Journey To Memphis Youth Showcase September 21**

## **Info sessions:**

**Monday, July 7**

6:30-8:30 pm

Youth Jam

at Artichoke Music

**Monday, August 4**

6:30 pm - 8:30

Youth Jam

at Artichoke Music

**Monday, September 1**

6:30 pm - 8:30

Youth Jam

at Artichoke Music

**The Cascade Blues Association  
is gearing up for the 2025  
Journey to Memphis (J2M)  
Competition.**

**This is your shot to represent  
the Pacific Northwest at the  
International Blues Challenge  
(IBC) Youth Blues Showcase in  
Memphis, Tennessee, hosted  
every January by  
The Blues Foundation.**

To Learn More

[cascadeblues.org](http://cascadeblues.org)



## Local venues that promote the Blues

And help to  
preserve the  
music we love

### Southeast Portland

- Aladdin Theater
- Arrivederci Wine and Jazz Bar,
- Artichoke
- Best Western River-shore Hotel,
- Corkscrew Wine Bar
- Corner 14
- Falls View Tavern
- Lair Bar & Grill
- Montavilla Station
- Muddy Rudder
- Nebbiolo Restaurant
- Revolution Hall
- Rose City Coffee
- The Showdown
- Trails End Saloon

### Southwest Portland

- Beach Hut Deli
- Catfish Lou's
- CI Bar and Grill
- Dublin Pub
- Hops on Tap
- Keller Auditorium
- Jack London Review
- McMenamins Al's Den
- Tigardville Station

### North Portland

- Atlantis Lounge
- Slim's
- White Eagle Saloon
- Ponderosa Lounge

### Northeast Portland

- Alberta Abbey
- Alberta Rose Theater
- Blue Diamond
- Clyde's Prime Rib
- Laurelthirst
- Mekong Bistro

- The Spare Room
- Spirits Pub
- Wonder Ballroom

### Northwest Portland

- Wilfs Restaurant & Jazz Bar

### Forest Grove

- McMenamins Grand Lodge

### Fairview

- Celebrities Parkway Grill

### Damascus

- Ruzzo's Retreat

### Troutdale

- McMenamins Edgefield

### Clackamas

- Conway's House of Jazz

### Other

- Mac's Place
- McMenamins (all)



Lance Kinnaird

### Vancouver

- Billy Blues Bar and Grill
- Cascade Tavern
- Georgies Garage & Grill
- Ilani Casino

### Battleground

- Northwood Public House & Brewery

This list is subject to change and may not be a complete listing of all venues that highlight blues. If you know of a venue in the area that is hiring and showcasing blues based bands, please let us know at [secretary@cascadeblues.org](mailto:secretary@cascadeblues.org).

## Looking for a copy of the Blues Notes?

Try one of these  
local places

*Pick up a copy at the venues below. Want to distribute Blues Notes in your business? Email:*

[bluesnotes@cascadeblues.org](mailto:bluesnotes@cascadeblues.org)

### Vancouver:

- Briz Guitar & Loan
- Compass Coffee
- Niche Wine Bar

### SW Portland

- Goose Hollow Inn
- Jack's Tap Room

### South Suburbs

- Arrivederci
- McQueens
- Portland Music Co
- The Lair Bar & Grill
- Trail's End Saloon

### SE Portland

- Artichoke Music
- Bagdad Theater
- Barley Mill Pub

- Crossroads Music
- Horse Brass Pub
- Montavilla Station
- Portland Music Co
- Rose City Coffee Co
- The Record Pub

### Westside Suburbs

- Beaverton City Library
- Murray Scholls Library
- Bounty Hunter Saloon
- Catfish Lou's
- CI Bar & Grill
- Cooper Mt. Ale Works
- Portland Music Co

- The Garages
- Tigardville Station

### N/NE Portland

- Alberta Rose Theatre
- Blue Diamond
- Cafe Destino
- Gateway Breakfast House
- Mekong Bistro
- Music Millenium
- Slims
- Spare Room Restaurant
- 3 Tracks Music
- Alberta Abbey



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SPECIAL GUEST CHAD RUPP  
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**AUG 15-16  
2025**

**SATURDAY**

**REVIVAL BROS BAND  
NORMAN SYLVESTER BAND  
MARK HURWITZ & GIN CREEK  
RICH LAYTON & TOUGH TOWN  
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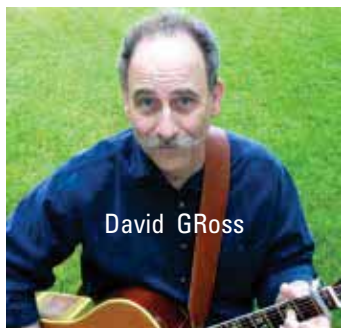
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## Artichoke Bandstand: Building Community Through Music

### Blues & Roots



David Gross

More shows are being scheduled, so please sign up for our weekly newsletter (at [ArtichokeMusic.org](http://ArtichokeMusic.org)) so you don't miss a thing!

#### July

- Jul 10 (1pm): Artichoke Afternoons: David Gross
- Jul 12 (2pm): River City Folk - The Final Show feat. Dave Ross & Michael Henschman
- Jul 12: Kip Richardson

### caféartichoke

Building community through music, one heart at a time, since 1973.

& The Prose

- Jul 13: Carpathian-Pacific Express
- Jul 17 (1pm): Artichoke Afternoons: Tom May & Donny Wright
- Jul 18: Swan Songs at The Artichoke
- Jul 18: Golden Bough



Nathan Earle

- Jul 19: Flyover States w/ Nathan Earle
- Jul 24: Soldier Songs & Voices - Portland Metro Chapter (ACM Benefit)
- Jul 25: Avery Hill & Jasper Lepak
- Jul 26: Dean Mueller & Lilli Worona
- Jul 27: Mary Flower w/ special guest Carla Sciaky
- Jul 30: Aslin's Songwriter Showcase

#### August

- Aug 1: Lane Norberg w/ Shiloh Mae
- Aug 3: Matt Axton & Badmoon w/ Kyle J. Glenn



Richard Tillinghast Mtn Duo

- Aug 9: Jonathan Shue - Workshop & Concert
- Aug 10: Ron Roseland w/ Richard Tillinghast & Kyle Glenn (ACM Benefit)
- Aug 23: The Righteous Mothers

Did you know that Artichoke has classes and workshops? Intermediate Blues Guitar, Songwriting and more! Get tickets at [artichokemusic.org](http://artichokemusic.org). Remember they are all-ages all the time, and do not add any fees when you buy show tickets online.

**Jazz Journey to Bluesville**  
\* Sunday Nights \*  
10 pm Pacific

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## Join us in supporting Blues in Portland



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# The 12-Bar Blues Emerges

By J.F. Walsh Jr.

## The Origin of the Blues (part 7)

I noted last month that in the 1880s a family of “bad man” songs, such as “Stagger Lee” and “Bully of the Town,” evolved into the 12-bar “Frankie and Johnny/Boll Weevil” family of songs, accompanied by some variation on a I-IV-I-V chord progression (ex., C-F-C-G) in a pattern such as this:

I Frankie and Johnny  
were lovers,[X] O, Lordy,  
how they could love;[X]  
They IV I Swore to be  
true to each other,[X] As  
true as the stars up above;  
He was her V IIV I V  
Man,[X][X] but he done  
her wrong ([X] [X] [X]  
[turnaround])

(Where [X] represents a strong beat without words.)

Then, in the 1890s, the Central American steel-stringed guitar began to be mass produced in the United States. Gut- and silk-stringed guitars had been available in the US since about 1800, but these were relatively soft-voiced instruments, unsuitable for strongly percussive, rhythmic playing. The new guitars were also an improvement over the banjo

### 12-Bar Blues Chord Progression

Chord progression diagram showing two lines of 6 measures each, totaling 12 bars. The chords are labeled above and below the staff.

Line 1: F (I<sup>6</sup>), F (I<sup>6</sup>), F (I<sup>6</sup>), F7 (I<sup>7</sup>), B $\flat$ 7 (IV), B $\flat$ 7 (IV<sup>7</sup>)

Line 2: F (I<sup>6</sup>), F (I<sup>6</sup>), C7 (V<sup>7</sup>), B $\flat$ 7 (IV<sup>7</sup>), F (I<sup>6</sup>), F (I<sup>6</sup>)

A bracket under the last four measures (C7, B $\flat$ 7, F, F) is labeled **Cadence**.



because greater sustain allowed them to better imitate the human voice. Now, a singer could engage in credible call-and-response with the guitar, with voice and guitar producing both percussive and moaning effects derived from field hollers. This call-and-response was fitted to the 12-bar harmonic structure above:

I Sun gonna shine in my

back door some day ([X]  
[X] [X] [guitar response])  
IV I Sun gonna shine  
in my back door some  
day ([X] [X] [X] [guitar  
response]) V I IV I V  
Wind gonna rise, gonna  
blow my blues away ([X]  
[X] [X] [guitar response])

Again, there were variations in the chords used (a return to the IV in the third line, the addition of seventh chords at the

ends of lines 1 and 2, for example), but this was the basic pattern. To make room for the call and response, the new format shortened the lyric lines of the “Frankie” family to give the guitar more space for a credible response. Presto! Suddenly one person with a guitar could both call and respond in two different voices. ■

**Next time (part 8):  
Why repeated lines?**



J.F. Walsh, Jr. is a music historian and ex-New York streetfighter. Questions? Email him at Vito-JW51@gmail.com

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