

# bluesnotes

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

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



**Jan / Feb 2026**  
Volume 41 | Issue 1 (FREE)



Photo by  
Kathy Rose

## Happy New Year!

### Here's to a Year of Making Music & Memories



Photo by  
Debra Penk



Photo by  
Debra Penk



# The Blues Are Alive & Thriving in the Pacific Northwest

Join us for an amazing 2026!

Imagine a party where the music moves everyone—from ages 10 to 90—three incredible bands keep the energy high, laughter and applause fill the room, and the dance floor is alive with joy. That was our Holiday Party in December 2025—more than 150 people attended, it was truly memory making, filled with laughter and fabulous desserts.

The Fenix Rising Band kicked off the party, followed by the new to the scene teen blues band, Sleeper Wave, and Johnny Wheels and the Swamp Donkeys kept everyone kicking up their heels. Raffles, grab bags, silent and live auctions kept the donations flowing. The Holiday Party is always free to members.

For more than 30 years, the Cascade Blues Association (CBA) has been the heartbeat of the Northwest blues scene, bringing together musicians, venues, music professionals, volunteers, and fans who share one thing: a deep love for the blues. From electrifying live performances to programs that inspire the next



generation, the CBA is more than an organization—it's a community.

## 2025 was on Fire!

Memberships increased, events multiplied, the new website keeps getting better and volunteer involvement is on the rise.

Year in review, from Classics to New Releases!

## The Heartbeat of the Blues

Every first Wednesday of the month, the Member Showcase offers local solo artists, duos, and bands a stage to share their talent. These evenings are intimate, welcoming, and full of surprises—perfect for longtime blues lovers and newcomers alike. Free to

members or \$5 for non-members and open to all ages.

## Celebrating Northwest Blues Excellence

The 2025 Muddy Awards took place at the Alberta Abbey, honoring the artists, venues, and recordings that make the local blues scene extraordinary. The night was electric—filled with applause, laughter, and incredible performances.

## Food, Friends, and Fun

Our Membership Appreciation Picnic was a festive celebration of community, featuring special musical guests, great food, and a mix of new and old friends. Laughter, music, and camaraderie filled the day, reminding everyone that the CBA is about more than just music—it's about connection and joy.

## Our Local Stars Take the Stage

The Journey to Memphis Competition makes stops at local venues, the Waterfront Blues Festival, and completes the trip at the International Blues Challenge held every January in Memphis, Tennessee with musicians from around the world. In 2025, we sent Dave Fleschner as our solo competitor, the Beacon Street Titans for the band competition, and the Oregon Bluesberries participated in the youth showcase. In 2026, the Nikki Jones Band and solo act Lilla will represent the Pacific Northwest competing with some of the best blues talent in the world. The teen blues band Sleeper Wave will participate in the Youth Showcase. It's an amazing opportunity for the younger performers to learn, grow, and celebrate the blues on an international stage.

## Blues in the Schools: Inspiring the Next Generation

Our Blues in the Schools program will be back strong next year, bringing music, history, and creativity into classrooms across Portland. Students explore math, language arts, and history through the lens

## 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!

**Publisher:** Cory Burden

**Editor:** Michael Wong

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

bluesnotes

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**Contact:**

PO Box 6566, Portland OR 97228  
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Beaverton, OR 97005  
503.641.3320  
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of the blues, gaining a deeper appreciation for culture and diversity. We hope to receive Metro grant support, and we're excited to expand this program in 2026 and reach even more young people.

## The Anthony Roberts Memorial CD Fund - Launching New Careers

2025 marked the launch of the Anthony Roberts Memorial CD Fund, a tribute to CBA member Anthony Roberts' legacy and a way to support emerging Pacific Northwest artists in

producing their first commercially released CDs. After a competitive selection process, the inaugural award went to Kivett Bednar, with a special smaller award to Josh Makowsky. Their music will now reach new audiences, helping launch careers and keep the blues thriving in our region.

## What's New for 2026? A New Look and Feel for the Muddy Awards

A big change is on the horizon. After several years in theater-style seating, the 2026 Muddy Awards will debut in a new venue with a round-table setup—a shift designed to change the entire flow of the night. Join us Sunday, March 22, 2026 at the Milwaukie Elks Lodge for an exciting evening of celebration. Blues isn't a "sit quietly and clap politely" kind of art form. It's social. It's communal. It thrives when people talk, mingle, laugh, reconnect, and build new friendships.

## The Power of Community:

### You Make It Happen

All of these events, programs, and opportunities happen because of you—our members, volunteers, donors, and sponsors. Every ticket purchased, every volunteer hour, every donation directly supports local musicians, programs like Blues in the Schools, the Journey to Memphis, the Muddy Awards, and the Anthony Roberts Memorial CD Fund.

## Join the Celebration: Be Part of the CBA

Membership isn't just about supporting the organization—it's about joining a vibrant, welcoming community that loves the blues as much as you do. For \$25 a year, members receive:

- Updates and e-newsletters on local and national blues happenings
- Discounts on tickets and access to exclusive giveaways

By Evelyn Silverman

- Free entry to our monthly Member Showcase, the Member Appreciation Picnic and the Holiday Party
- A chance to support local musicians through the Journey to Memphis competition
- A voice in the annual Muddy Awards
- Voting rights in board elections
- The satisfaction of helping preserve the blues for future generations

The blues is alive in the Pacific Northwest—and the Cascade Blues Association is where it all comes together. From incredible performances to community celebrations and supporting the next generation of artists, 2025 was a year to remember. And now, with Nikki Jones Band, Lilla, Sleeper Wave, Kivett Bednar, and Josh Makowsky stepping into the spotlight, the excitement is only just beginning.

- FenixRisingBand.com
- SleeperWaveBand.com
- JohnnyWheelsBand.com
- DaveFleschner.com
- BeaconStreetTitans.com
- NikkiJonesBand.com
- LillaMusic.com
- KivettBednar.com
- Facebook.com/Josh.Makosky ■



Chance Hayden and Ms. Vee

Photo by Debra Penk

Visit the Cascade Blues Association website  
CascadeBlues.org!



## Blues Review: Nikki Jones Band

### Live at Wave-length Studio

The blues has always lived at the intersection of tradition and transformation. From the back porches of the Mississippi Delta to the electric streets of Chicago, each new generation reshapes its contours while keeping the genre's heart intact. With their latest live album, the Nikki Jones Band again proves that the blues still has new stories to tell — and entirely new grooves to explore.

Nikki and Brandon are an amazing musical power couple as they fell for each

other between verses, their love humming soft and low beneath every melody. Onstage, each glance and guitar slide felt like a secret vow set to rhythm and smoke.

Led by powerhouse vocalist Nikki Jones, whose commanding presence recalls legends like Etta James and Koko Taylor while sounding unmistakably modern, the band has crafted a record that's both grounded and groundbreaking. Featuring the band's guitarist and Nikki's partner on and off stage Brandon Logan's legendary guitar work, Loren Christian's explosive drumming, and Kevin

Kelley's fluid bass lines, the album delivers musicianship of the highest order. What sets it apart, outside of it being recorded live, is the group's fearless ambition: intricate time signatures, daring arrangements, and a joyous sense of discovery that redefines what contemporary blues can be.

Nikki Jones possesses the kind of voice that arrests a crowd before the first chorus lands. Her range isn't just technical — it's emotional. She can stretch a single syllable into a story, then pivot from a sultry whisper to a triumphant wail with effortless control. Every phrase feels

Review by Shawn Sullivan

deliberate, every inflection earned. Jones doesn't imitate the masters — she converses with them, channeling a century of blues lineage into a sound as vital as it is timeless.

She approaches each lyric like a seasoned storyteller, embedding the songs with lived experience. Whether she's delving into heart-break or resilience, there's an emotional precision that makes her performances impossible to ignore.

Brandon Logan's guitar work and vocals could easily anchor a record on its own. His playing is musical yet lyrical, drawing ▶

## I'm excited to see what 2026 holds for PDX Blues

### Right Here, Right Now

Happy, Happy New Year to my blues loving family everywhere!

I want to start the new year with a personal thank you to all of the Cascade Blues Association's board members, volunteers, and event staffers. 2025 was, by all measurements, a success for the CBA and the Portland Blues community. Progress does not happen without effort, and this crew continuously gives



more than 100%. I am excited to see what new opportunities and adventures await us in 2026.

I'd also like to personally thank the CBA

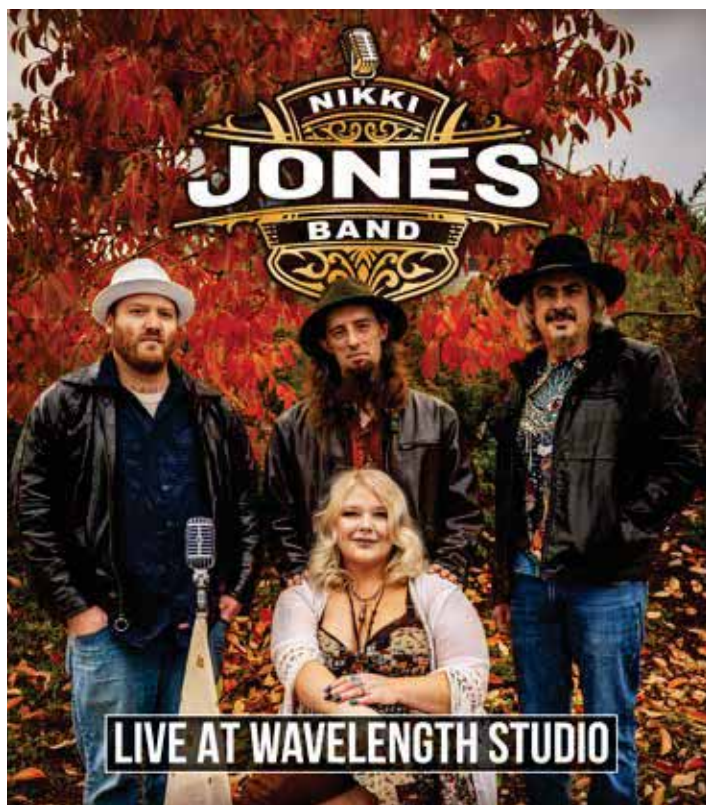
membership. Your collective interaction and support, both financial and others, along with our shared passion for the blues, is what empowers

us and keeps us moving forward. I'm excited for another year of growth and advancement for the CBA.

And finally, thank you for entrusting me with my position. I look forward to another year of service to my blues community. ■

**Timmer**  
(CBA President)





► from the classic blues lexicon while pushing it into uncharted terrain. The tone — rich, vocal, and soulful — evokes the spirit of vintage tube amps and smoky bars, yet his phrasing feels thoroughly modern.

On several tracks, Logan delivers solos that unfold like narratives in miniature: clean, deliberate openings that build into cascades of bends and slides before resolving with surgical precision. His intertwining lines with Jones's vocals create moments of electricity — their musical dialogue feels almost telepathic, a push-and-pull that animates the entire record.

The secret engine behind the band's innovation lies in the rhythm section.

Drummer Loren and bassist Kevin approach the blues not as a fixed form, but as a constantly shifting landscape. Loren plays with orchestral imagination, moving between traditional shuffles and dizzying meters that inject the music with tension and surprise. His touch — crisp cymbals, resonant toms, a sense of swing that seems to breathe — keeps the music alive and unpredictable.

Kevin, meanwhile, anchors the group with a melodic sensibility rare for blues bassists. His lines dance around the beat, adding motion and dimension without disrupting the pocket.

One of the album's most daring creative choices lies in its re-imagining

of classic blues standard Slipback by Marcus King. Instead of paying static tribute, the Nikki Jones Band turns the songs inside out — slowing tempos here, shifting keys there, adding rhythmic accents that reveal emotional layers buried in the originals. The band never drifts into pastiche; instead, they honor the emotional gravity of the old songs while re-contextualizing them for a generation raised on eclectic playlists and genre-blending. The result is music that feels at once steeped in history and startlingly current.

What elevates their second album beyond technical brilliance is its emotional scope. The Nikki Jones Band explores the full spectrum of the human condition — heartbreak, joy, defiance, and grace — without getting trapped by genre conventions. One track might pulse with the kinetic energy of funk; another might simmer with gospel reverence. Yet each song remains unmistakably blues at its core.

Nikki's lyrical phrasing often subverts expectation. She doesn't dwell on sorrow — she transforms it. Even when confronting pain, there's an assertion of agency in her delivery. It's the blues as catharsis, not tragedy.

Taken as a whole, the album feels like a live

statement of purpose. It declares that the blues isn't a museum piece — it's a living language, rich enough to absorb the complexities of the present. In the hands of these players, it becomes a vessel for both virtuosity and vulnerability. All recorded live as a band in a studio setting.

Brandon redefines the possibilities of guitar tone and phrasing. Loren and Kevin forge one of the tightest rhythm sections in recent memory. And Nikki Jones, standing center stage, carries the emotional truth of the blues forward with conviction and grace.

It's no exaggeration to say this album marks a turning point. For purists, it honors the old forms with technical mastery. For modern listeners, it opens doors to rhythmic and harmonic worlds rarely explored in the genre. Most importantly, it pulses with life — the unmistakable sound of musicians not preserving tradition but expanding it.

The Nikki Jones Band has not only made one of the year's finest albums — they've redefined what the blues can sound like in this century. ■

For more information, visit [NikkiJonesBand.com](http://NikkiJonesBand.com)

By Shawn Sullivan, Host of Sullivan's Unheard Voices Podcast



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MIKE SKILL GROUP  
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RICH LAYTON & TOUGH TONES  
MS VEE & CHANCE HAYDEN  
JODY CARROLL  
TEVIS HODGE JR

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MIKE SKILL GROUP  
THE STRANGE TONES  
RICH LAYTON & TOUGH TONES  
MS VEE & CHANCE HAYDEN  
JODY CARROLL  
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**bluesnotes**

**WBF** Waterfront Blues Festival  
Portland OR • July 4-5, 2025

Music Review  
Fun Portland (Page 10)

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PORTLAND, OREGON

**JOURNEY TO MEMPHIS**  
MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE

INTERNATIONAL BLUES CHALLENGE





Photos courtesy of the CBA  
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## Blues Review: Hard Road

Review by Mike Penk | Photos by Debra Penk.

By Christone  
"Kingfish" Ingram



In the summer of 2015, blues fans at the Waterfront Blues Festival in Portland were in for a treat- the introduction to a fifteen-year-old wunderkind named Christone "Kingfish" Ingram. His already emerging talents wowed the crowd, with voice and guitar playing skills that belied his young age.

Over the past decade Kingfish has toured almost constantly and released one live album and three studio albums. His fans were thrilled when his 2021 release, "662", was awarded a Grammy Award for Best Contemporary Blues Album. He also founded his own record company,

Red Zero Records, in partnership with Acceleration Music.

His most recent release, "Hard Road", is the result of the maturation of his musical fluency combined with his life experiences. He is reunited with his Grammy-winning producer and co-songwriter, Tom Hambridge. The opening song, "Truth", connects his storytelling with confident vocals and a searing guitar. In the important second verse, he states his truth. "Some call it blues, some say it's rock n roll; I don't know what it is, it all comes from the soul; People love to talk and throw around the bull; I

don't care what you call it, long as it feels good". Kingfish has learned the lessons of his roots and now he declares his independence and freedom to create his art in his own way. He has matured into an artist who uses his growing life experience as his canvas to paint his own pictures.

On the outstanding track, "Bad Like Me", Kingfish injects modern soul vocals with rap-inspired lyrics and gritty blues guitar. As he is exposed to temptations and bad influences, he chooses to walk right past these vices, and he becomes "bad" in reverse. Another favorite, "Nothing But Love", a modern soul ballad with

smooth vocals, shows a gentler side where he sings from his heart. He was happy and content with the single life, until love came crashing in and changed everything. On the Hendrix-inspired song, "Voodoo Charm", Kingfish unleashes some of the best blazing guitar on the album. Many of his guitar fans are going to put this song on repeat. The album ends with "Memphis", a song that is based on his Delta roots. It represents where he came from, which will always be a part of him in his evolution as a person and a musician.

"Hard Road" is an important milestone in the development of Kingfish's musical career. It shows his mastery of combining different musical influences into his own unique style that will surely leave his fans excited to see what's next. ■



For more information visit  
[ChristoneKingfishIngram.com](http://ChristoneKingfishIngram.com)  
Photos by Debra Penk.



**SUNDAY,  
JANUARY 4,  
2026  
DOORS: 4:30  
START: 5:00**

*JOURNEY TO MEMPHIS  
SEDOFF CONCERT &  
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# SLEEPER WAVE

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## Treat Yourself to a Local Gig

### CBA Blues Calendar

#### January

- 2 - First Fridays with Lloyd Jones & Mark Steele at Artichoke Music, Portland
- 3 - Santiago & the Signifiers at Spare Room, Portland
- 4 - Journey to Memphis Youth Send-off for Sleeper Wave at Old Market Pub, Portland
- 4 - First Sundays with Myrtle Brown's Executive Groove at Canary, Portland
- 4 - First Sundays with Suburban Slim Band at Slims, Portland
- 6 - Morgan Freeman Symphonic Blues Experience at Schnitzer Concert Hall, Portland
- 7 - CBA Monthly Showcase with Dave Fleshner & Rae Gordon at Mekong Bistro, Portland
- 10 - Lloyd Jones & Friends at Spirits Pub, Portland
- 10 - One Way Out with Kivett Bednar Band at the Get Down, Portland
- 11 - Journey to Memphis Send-Off with Lilla & Nikki Jones Band at Blue Diamond, PDX

### Blues Jams

#### Mondays

- Dave's Lowdown Youth Blues Jam w/Backbeat Music Academy and Clackamas Community College Rhythm Section (1st Mondays)
- Chad Rupp Jam at McMenamins White Eagle, Portland

#### Tuesdays

- Vic Sorisio Jam at Billy Blues, Vancouver, WA

#### Wednesdays

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

#### Thursdays

- Josh Makosky Jam at Lair Bar, Milwaukie
- Dan Hess & Friends at Beach Hut Deli, Tigard

#### Sundays

- Kevin Selfe Jam at Blue Diamond, Portland
- Scott Steele/Kirk Bryant Jam at Montavilla Station, Portland
- Jerry Jacques Jam at 99 Saloon, Vancouver, WA
- Eric Savage, Bobby Ferrante, Eric Rabe, Ben Jones at M&M Lounge, Gresham

- 13 - Mark Shark & Michael Osborn at DeNicola's, Portland

- 19 - Ben Rice & the PDX Hustle at Alberta Street Pub, Portland
- 21 - Vintage Soul at Blue Diamond, Portland
- 25 - Come to Mama! Etta James Birthday Celebration at Alberta Rose, Portland
- 28 - Soul Cookin' at Blue Diamond, Portland
- 31 - Dan Newton at Rose City Book Pub, Portland

#### February

- 1 - First Sundays with Myrtle Brown's Executive Groove at Canary, Portland
- 1 - First Sundays with Suburban Slim Band at Slims, Portland
- 4 - CBA Monthly Showcase with Lilla & Nikki Jones Band at Mekong Bistro, PDX
- 6 - First Fridays with Lloyd Jones & Mark Steele at Artichoke Music, Portland
- 14 - Lloyd Jones & Friends at Spirits Pub, Portland
- 16 - Ben Rice & the PDX Hustle at Alberta Street Pub, Portland
- 18 - Vintage Soul at Blue Diamond, PDX

### Weekly Shows

#### Mondays

- Lloyd Jones at Muddy Rudder, Portland
- Tevis Hodge Jr with Bayou Boyz Band at Mekong Bistro, Portland
- Dave's Lowdown Student Blues Jam at Artichoke Music, Portland

#### Tuesdays

- Ed Neumann & Friends at Conway's House of Jazz, Clackamas
- Tuesday Blues at Hoku Events at Madison, Portland

#### Thursdays

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

#### Sundays

- Bayou Boyz with Ben Rice at Spirits Pub, Portland
- 20 - Rose City Blues Mardi Gras Jambo-ree at Alberta Abbey, Portland
- 25 - Soul Cookin' at Blue Diamond, PDX

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 Cascade-Blues.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)





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TEVIS HODGE JR

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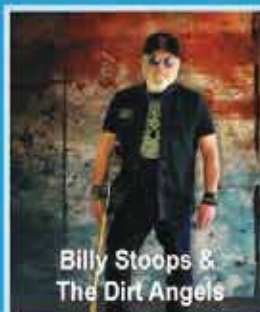
[www.winterbluesfest.net](http://www.winterbluesfest.net)



Curtis Salgado & Alan Hager



Kivett Bednar Band



Billy Stoops &  
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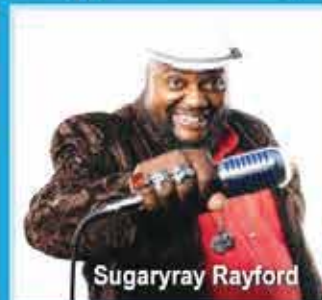
Polly O'Keary &  
The Rhythm Method



Rae Gordon Band



Rich Layton & Tough Town



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## Send-Off



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**Lilla**  
**Nikki Jones Band**

Support local acts going to the  
International Blues Challenge Special Performances  
by Rae Gordon & Journey to Memphis All-Stars



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**CASCADEBLUES.ORG**



# Anthony Roberts Memorial CD Fund

By Evelyn Silverman

## Awards its First \$10,000 Grant

The Cascade Blues Association is honored to announce the winner(s) of our newest initiative that will lead to a lasting impact on our region's blues community: The Anthony Roberts Memorial CD Fund.

This fund, created through an endowment in memory of beloved community member Anthony Roberts, will award \$10,000 to help a Pacific Northwest blues artist record and release their first commercial blues CD. It's an opportunity to ensure that our region's blues talent reaches audiences far beyond our local stages.

Applications were accepted October 1st to November 12th, 2025, and were open to all CBA member musicians who live within the CBA's geographic region and have not previously released a commercial CD. A review committee of experienced CBA members carefully considered all submissions using a fair and confidential scoring system, selecting the artist who showed the greatest potential to succeed — and who will most benefit

from this pivotal step in their musical journey.

The ideal candidate has already made an impression in our blues community — through performances, participation in the Journey to Memphis competition, Muddy Award nominations and involvement with the CBA. The grant recipient was announced at the CBA Holiday Party on December 7th, 2025.

The grant winner will have 18 months to complete their debut CD, with mentorship available from the CBA throughout the process. Once the album is ready, the CBA will help promote and help host the official CD release event.

We are excited to announce the winner is Kivett Bednar! His CD will perpetuate the memory of Anthony Roberts, who's name will live on

with each album release.

As a bonus, the CBA will award \$300 to Josh Makosky to complete his first commercial Blues CD release. ■





# One Way Out PDX

Allman Brothers Tribute  
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## The Get Down

with special guests

## The Kivett Bednar Band

Saturday, Jan 10, 8 pm

680 SE 6th Ave, Portland, OR  
[www.thegetdownpdx.com](http://www.thegetdownpdx.com)  
[www.onewayoutpdx.com](http://www.onewayoutpdx.com)

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Sunday, March 22, 2026 4:00 PM



Milwaukie-Portland Elks Lodge  
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## **Become a Member!**

- **Online:** [cascadeblues.org](http://cascadeblues.org)
- **Email:** [membership@cascadeblues.org](mailto:membership@cascadeblues.org)
- **Mail:** Cascade Blues Assoc., PO Box 6566, Portland, OR 97228



## Advertise in the

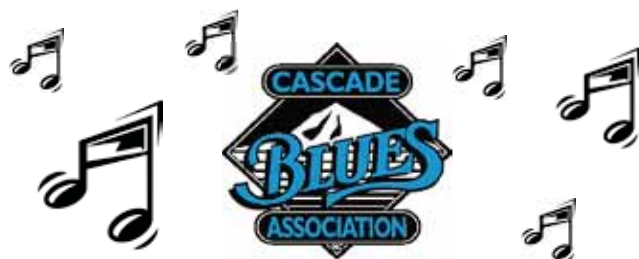
# bluesnotes

and support the blues in Portland!

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