

Preserving & Promoting the Blues in the Pacific NW

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bluesnotes



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A Journey Built on the Blues

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A Journey Built on the Blues

by Evelyn Silverman

Back to Beale Street

In 2020, Ken Johnson, his wife Susan, and his Hudson Rocket bandmates traveled to represent the Cascade Blues Association (CBA) at the International Blues Challenge (IBC) in Memphis. Today, that same path—known as the CBA Journey to Memphis—continues to carry Pacific Northwest musicians and their supporters from Portland stages to the heart of Beale Street.

Each spring, the Cascade Blues Association reaches out to performers across the region, inviting solo and duo acts, as well as full bands, to step into the competition. The response is so strong in some years that the preliminary rounds stretch across two full days.

The top three acts in each category advance to the finals, which for many years were held on the Front Porch Stage at the



Waterfront Blues Festival. In 2025, the finals took place aboard the WBF Cruisin' to Memphis Blues Cruise.

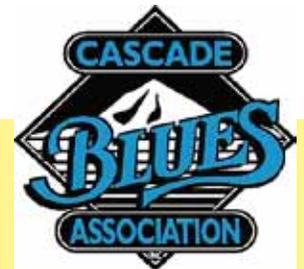
The 2026 Journey to Memphis truly began when Lilla and the Nikki Jones Band were announced as winners. Over the next five months, they worked side by side with the Cascade Blues Association to raise funds for travel, food, and lodging. The artists rehearsed, refined, and received guidance from musicians who had made the journey before—passing down hard-earned knowledge about the stages, schedules, and the city itself.

Each year, a youth act also represents the Cascade Blues Association at the IBC—not as competitors, but as participants in the Youth Showcase. They travel their own road, and raise much of their own support, often with the help of family and friends.

This year, that honor went to Sleeper Wave, a band of four high school musicians, ages 15 to 18. Once in Memphis, they met professional artists from around the world, stepped into late-night jams, and experienced moments that will stay with them long after the trip home.

Beyond the rules, the rehearsals, and the scorecards lies the human side of the International Blues Challenge: The late nights. The unexpected friendships. The moments on and off stage that shape musicians long after the final note fades.

Ken and Susan Johnson returned this year alongside nearly 50 CBA members to support Lilla, the Nikki Jones Band, and Sleeper Wave, and to enjoy the unique experience of the International Blues Challenge in Memphis.



See CascadeBlues.org/bluesnotes-magazine for a day-by-day account of the 2026 IBC Experience: A Week on Beale Street by Kevin Kelley

Blues Notes is a publication of the Cascade Blues Association

Help us promote & preserve the lyrical emotion & sultry sounds of blues music in Portland - become a member!

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The 2026 Muddy Awards

A Night to Honor the Blues

The Annual Muddy Awards are one of the region’s premier blues celebrations, lighting up the night with live performances from past winners and nominees, Hall of Fame inductions, heartfelt tributes, and a moving remembrance of cherished community members lost during the year. Presented by the Cascade Blues Association (CBA), this beloved tradition honors outstanding achievements



across the Pacific Northwest blues community, from southern Washington through the Portland metro area and down to Central Oregon.

Named for legendary blues icon Muddy Waters, the Muddy Awards celebrate the musicians, venues, festivals, and rising stars who keep the region’s blues scene alive and thriving. Entirely membership-driven, CBA members guide the nomination and voting process across more than 23 award categories, including Best Band, Best Venue, Best Festival, Traditional Blues Act, and Contemporary Blues Act.

The 2026 Muddy Awards take place March 22 in the Ballroom of the

Milwaukie–Portland Elks Lodge #142. General Admission tickets are available, along with a VIP experience featuring premium seating, dinner, a signed event poster, and special gifts—because a night this good deserves a little extra shine.



Learn more, view award categories, and get tickets at: cascadeblues.org/muddyawards/

Message from the CBA President

Right Here, Right Now

The Cascade Blues Association’s Muddy Awards are nearly upon us. If it feels like it’s been more than a year since the last Muddy’s, that’s not the Mandela effect. Due to multiple considerations, the ‘25 Muddy awards will be held March 22, 2026, at the Milwaukie Elks Lodge.

The change in venue is a reflection in the CBA’s desire to return to the communal event



environment of shared tables as opposed to theater seating. Additionally, the new venue provides better accessibility to all of our members, volunteers, and performers.

A new venue and date aren’t the only

improvements; this year you’ll see a new Muddy Award design. And with recent updates in the Hall of Fame qualifications, you’ve already seen fresh names on the nomination list, and will likely see some first-time Muddy

Award winners this year. The Muddy Award winners have been chosen by you, the CBA Members. But we all win because of the community that we collectively continue to create. I can’t wait to see you at the show!

Timmer

(CBA President)



The Great Women in Blues

by Mike Penk

Lisa Mann's
Northwestern All-
Stars, featuring
Terrie Odabi

This live album, *The Great Women in Blues*, captures an exceptional show—and everything that makes live recordings so special. Studio albums can be polished, layered, and (sometimes) heavily edited. Live recordings, on the other hand, bottle the electricity of the moment: the raw edge, the adrenaline of the band, and the crowd's real-time response. The tradeoff can involve muddy sound, uneven mixes, or a few “whoops, that was the bridge” moments..

Not here.

The Great Women in Blues avoids the usual pitfalls and delivers a vibrant, exciting performance with near-studio clarity. It feels like you're in the room, without sounding like you're standing behind the bar next to the ice machine.

The set pays tribute to songs made famous by some of the most



revered women in blues. But this isn't a note-for-note recreation. These musicians reinterpret the material and reveal new facets in familiar tunes—whether it's a love song, a hard-hitting anthem of injustice, or a humorous number where the onstage banter lands as well as the grooves.

“I'd Rather Go Blind,” with vocals by Lisa Mann, is a bold choice—and she makes the song her own. Her intonation and the emotionally resonant delivery convey the pain of being stabbed in the heart by the knife of unrequited love.

The album closes with

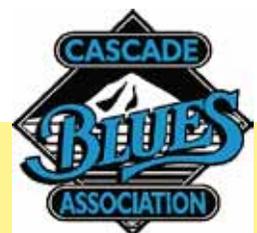
the classic “Wang Dang Doodle,” a working person's permission slip to cut loose with friends for the night. Lead vocalist Terrie Odabi expertly pulls the room into the performance, urging the audience to get on their feet. The crowd becomes part of the music—singing along, cheering, and reacting in a way that lifts the entire track.

It would be impressive for any veteran ensemble to document a performance like this after a 50-city tour. What makes it remarkable is how quickly it came together. This recording was captured on the second night of three shows

at the Atlantis Club in Basel, Switzerland, during Groove Now Blues Weeks on June 9, 2023—after only minimal prep time before the group flew halfway around the world.

This Portland-based supergroup was assembled by Blues Music Award-winning bassist and vocalist Lisa Mann, joined by acclaimed drummer Jimi Bott; guitarists J.T. Thomas and Ben Rice; B-3 powerhouse Louis “King Louie” Pain; and Oakland's own “blues goddess,” Terrie Odabi. Released in 2025 and deftly mixed by Jimi Bott, *The Great Women in Blues* is a testament to both the individual firepower and the tight cohesion of Lisa Mann's Northwestern All-Stars.

And if the album leaves you wanting more: this tribute comes to Alberta Rose Theatre on April 8th, 2026.



The CD is available via Lisa Mann's Bandcamp page.

CASCADE BLUES ASSOCIATION

Muddy
2026
Awards

Sunday, March 22
4:00 PM

General Admission
or VIP Package

Milwaukie-Portland Elks Lodge 142
13121 SE McLoughlin Blvd, Oak Grove, OR

Visit cascadeblues.org/muddyawards/
or scan for more info & to purchase tickets



CASCADEBLUES.ORG

Music Millennium Turns 57: Time to Find a Successor

A new steward is needed for this iconic business

For 57 years, Music Millennium has been a constant in Portland's music landscape—kept alive by the customers who walk through its doors and the staff who've made it home. Owner Terry Currier credits that community for the store's longevity, and he also honors the founders who opened the doors on March 15, 1969: Don and Laureen MacLeod, along with Danny and Patti Lissey.

Currier's path to leading one of the Northwest's most beloved record stores didn't start with vinyl stacks or hours spent studying charts. He grew up playing music and planned to attend college on music scholarships. Recorded music came later—and it arrived through a simple catalyst: a car radio.

In 1972, Currier's family moved from Seattle to Ridgefield, Washington. At 16, he traded his motorcycle for a 1966 Mustang, pushed in that direction by the Northwest's steady drizzle and cold. Currier began



“It’s time to find a successor to carry Music Millennium forward.”

listening to KVAN in his car, the Vancouver station that signed on at sunrise and off at sunset. He remembers their nightly ritual: the Beatles' “The End,” followed by an hour of Catholic Mass—part of the station's FCC arrangement.

KISN played the hits, and KVAN played what was then called “underground” music—Grateful Dead, Quicksilver Messenger Service, Spirit—and plenty of choices driven by the DJs themselves. For Currier, this opened his musical senses.

A week after turning 17, he attended his first concert: Leon Russell & the Shelter People. He describes it as a religious experience. Two weeks later, he applied for a job at a record store called DJ's Sound City, preparing to open at Jantzen Beach Mall. They hired him even though he had limited knowledge of recorded music.

“The record store became my university,” Currier says. He never went to college; he learned music by living inside it—working, listening, recommending, and absorbing. Soon after he started, a friend brought him to Music Millennium for the first time. The store had import records he couldn't find elsewhere, and Currier began visiting two or three nights a week after work. He got

out of school at noon, worked 40 hours a week during his senior year, and funneled nearly every dollar into music.

Currier spent 12 years at DJ's—more than 11 and a half in management—working in stores across Seattle, Everett, Honolulu, and Portland. Then, in 1984, he received a call that changed his future: Don and Laureen MacLeod were taking Music Millennium back over. They had sold the company in 1979, and the ownership in between was preparing to file bankruptcy. Currier applied to be general manager and stepped into a tough situation. The business carried roughly \$500,000 in debt, and suppliers had largely stopped selling product to the store for almost a year.

Over the next three years, Currier and the team addressed the debt and rebuilt momentum. Now, 42 years later, and having recently turned 70, Currier says he's still as excited about Music Millennium as he was the day he first walked in.

That excitement comes with a clear-eyed next step: it's time to find a

▶ successor to carry Music Millennium forward. Over the years, Currier has turned down every offer from developers interested in buying the building. His goal is for the building to remain part of Portland's landscape—and for Music Millennium to stay inside it for decades to come.

He's sharing this message because he knows music fans understand what's at stake. If someone is interested in taking over—or knows someone who might be—Currier

is open to a thoughtful transition. He's willing to work with a future owner during a handoff period and teach them what makes Music Millennium tick. He's also flexible on the structure: he may sell the building along with the business, or sell the business separately while offering a long-term lease to ensure stability.

In a city that changes quickly, Music Millennium has lasted—one record, one recommendation, one conversation at a time. Currier's message



is both gratitude and a call: if Portland wants this landmark to continue, it needs the next steward ready to keep the needle moving forward.

If you are interested, please reach out to Terry directly to get more information terry@musicmillennium.com

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Saturday March 7, 2026
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21 & Older Only Event • Thank You to Our Sponsors
www.winterbluesfest.net

Curtis Salgado & Alan Hager | Kivett Bednar Band | Billy Stoops & The Dirt Angels | Polly O'Keary & The Rhythm Method | Rae Gordon Band | Rich Layton & Tough Town | Sugaryray Rayford

CASCADE BLUES ASSOCIATION

Bloomin' Boutique
Where Culture Meets and Inspires Your Soul

CBA Monthly Showcase: All Ages Welcome!

First Wednesdays
6:30 PM



Jody Carroll

The Cascade Blues Association's Monthly Showcase takes place on the first Wednesday of each month at Mekong Bistro, bringing the community together to celebrate live blues in all its forms. These evenings highlight exceptional regional and visiting talent, offering a chance to connect with the music and

the musicians - all while supporting the artists who keep our blues community thriving.

Performing in March

- **Jody Carroll** is a Blues & Roots performer and songwriter whose bold interpretations of traditional blues come alive through original songs, storytelling, and improvisational musical journeys that feel both timeless and personal.
- **Rafael Tranquilino**, Seattle-based frontman and guitarist of The Rafael

Tranquilino Band, delivers a fresh, high-energy fusion of rock, blues, and funk, blending soulful grit with an alternative edge.

Performing in April

- **Christi Michelle** is a Washington-based singer and multi-instrumentalist often performing as a one-woman band. Known for her soulful vocals, she crafts original music alongside Blues inspired covers.
- **Portland's The Bon Ton Rulers** bring the party with a lively, New



Christi Michelle

Orleans-inspired sound, mixing Cajun rhythms, blues, soul, and country blues into an irresistibly danceable experience.

Free for members | \$5 for non-members | 13 and under free | \$25 annual memberships available at the door

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2026 MONTHLY BLUES SHOWCASE
First Wednesdays Doors 6:00 PM Music 6:30 PM

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 4
Jody Carroll
Rafael Tranquilino

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 1
Christi Michelle
Bon Ton Rulers

FREE for CBA members*
\$5 non-members
*\$25 Memberships available at door
All Ages Before 8:00 PM

cascadeblues.org

Diary of an IBC Newbie

by Kevin Kelley

My Journey to Memphis

2025 marked the third time I'd entered the Cascade Blues Association's Journey to Memphis Competition. In 2022, the Pat Stilwell Band made the J2M finals and had the opportunity to perform at the Waterfront Blues Festival. That was the year Timothy James... excuse me... T.J. Wong won the competition. In 2024, the Nikki Jones Band competed and fell short to a very entertaining performance by the Beacon Street Titans. 2025 was our year! Lord knows we put the time in preparing. We'd been rehearsing virtually every Wednesday night for over 2 years.

Here is a recap from my journey to Memphis.

- Tuesday afternoon, Taylor Newville and the Riders were featured in an hour long interview and performance on Radio Memphis!
- Tuesday night we traveled to Clarksdale, Mississippi, home of the Crossroads, for the "Mississippi Mingle".
- Wednesday afternoon, the Pacific Northwest Showcase took place at Club 152 on Beale Street.
- Wednesday evening the challenge began. There were 64 bands from all over the world competing at 10 different venues. Our venue, the Blues City Cafe is right next door to Club 152, so we did not have far to go. There were several really fine bands at our venue including the Chicago Dawgs from Connecticut and Michael King and the Icebreakers from Dallas, Texas. When it was time for us to play, our attitude was simply "go out there and do what we do and play our best."
- Thursday afternoon, the National Women in Blues Showcase took place at Alfred's, one of the largest rooms on Beale Street.
- Thursday night, round 2 of the IBC quarter finals took place and it was easily the best performance of the week for the Nikki Jones Band!!
- Friday, during the day, was the first time all week that the band could take a breath and we all needed it.
- Friday night the



semi-finals took place. There were 24 bands playing in a handful of locations. Our turn was at the Blues City Cafe.

Did I make the finals?

I had one more performance after hours that night. Michele Siedman, creator of the National Women in Blues, made arrangements for Taylor to play at the late night jam at Alfred's, hosted by a guy from Pittsburg, PA known as Billy the Kid. It was quite a jam!!

As soon as we were off the stage I texted Nikki, who was across the street, where the announcement was being made as to who made the finals and would perform in the Orpheum Theater on Saturday. Nikki said it was so loud she couldn't hear the entire announcement, but in the end our name was not called. Disappointment: Yes. Reality check: Yes. But in the end, we had the satisfaction of knowing that we did our best. The road was long, but now we could rest.

Saturday we all had time to wind down. Some in the house stayed home for much of the day, recuperating from the crud. Others went to the finals. It was a 6-hour event, lasting from noon to 6pm. Jerry and I went to see the first half and then strolled Beale Street later. I did get to see Big Mike and his band play one more time, but in the end, they placed third. I never got a chance to see the eventual winners, Derrick Dove and the Peacekeepers from Alabama. Nikki did see them Friday night and predicted that they would win.

I've given you a day by day account of all of the events, but that really doesn't tell the IBC story. What I will always remember and cherish was the interaction with so many people. The love between all of our bandmates grew exponentially. We ALL got to know, love, and understand each other at a much deeper level.

Thank you, thank you, thank you Cascade Blues Association for providing this opportunity for the Nikki Jones Band, Lilla and Sleeperwave!!! It really was one of the highlights of my life!

To read the full unedited version of Kevin's amazing story to the International Blues Competition, visit cascadeblues.org/bluesnotes-magazine

Treat Yourself to Local Music

CBA Local Blues Calendar

Shows in March

- 2 - Ronnie Baker Brooks at Alberta Rose Theatre, Portland
- 4 - CBA Monthly Showcase & Member Mtg at Mekong Bistro, Portland
- 5 - Kevin Selfe and The Tornadoes at Billy Blues, Vancouver
- 6 - Bottleneck Blues Band at Wild Hare Saloon, Oregon City
- 7 - Winter Music Festival, Elks Lodge, Milwaukie
- 7 - Chris Baum Project at Headliners Club, Lake Oswego
- 13 - Kevin Selfe and The Tornadoes at Arri-vederci, Milwaukie
- 13 Taylor Newville and the Riders at the Red Monkey as part of the Walla Walla Guitar Festival
- 14 - Lloyd Jones and Friends at Spirits Pub, Portland
- 14 - Bottleneck Blues Band at Skyway Bar & Grill, Zigzag
- 14 - Mavis Staples w/ Shirley Nanette at Revolution Hall, Portland
- 14 - Kevin Selfe and

Weekly Shows

Mondays

- Lloyd Jones at Muddy Rudder, Portland
- Tevis Hodge Jr with Bayou Boyz Band at Mekong Bistro, Portland
- Ben Rice & the PDX Hustle at Alberta Street Pub, Portland (Third Mondays)

Wednesdays

- Soul Cookin' at the Blue Diamond Bar & Grill, Portland (Last Wednesdays)
- CBA Monthly Showcase & Member Mtg at Mekong Bistro, Portland (First Wednesdays)

Thursdays

- Ed Newman & Friends at CI Bar, Tualatin

The Tornadoes at ilani Line & Lure, Ridgefield

- 18 - Vintage Soul at the Blue Diamond Bar & Grill, Portland
- 18 - Taylor Newville and the Riders at 64 TapHouse, Hood River
- 19 - The Record Company at Aladdin Theater, Portland
- 19 - Tevis Hodge Jr. at Produce Row, Portland
- 19 - Norman Sylvester at ilani Line & Lure, Ridgefield

- Fenix Rising Band at Blue Diamond, Portland

Fridays

- Lloyd Jones and Mark Steele at Artichoke Music, Portland (First Fridays)

Saturdays

- Myrtle Brown's Executive Groove at Canary (First Saturday)
- Claes Almroth Trio @ Mock Crest Tavern, Portland (Third Saturdays)

Sundays

- Bayou Boyz at Spirits Pub, Portland
- Suburban Slim Band at Slims, Portland (First Sundays)

- 20 - Ruthie Foster with Adam Gabriel at Alberta Rose Theatre, Portland

- 20 - Bottleneck Blues Band at Edgefield Winery, Troutdale

- 21 - Nikki Jones Band at Headliners Club, Lake Oswego

- 21 - Bottleneck Blues Band at Everybody's Brewing at the Northwood, Battle Ground

- 22 - CBA Muddy Awards at Milwaukie-Portland Elks Lodge, Milwaukie

- 26 - Billy D at McMenamins Kalama Harbor Lodge, Kalama
- 27 - Taylor Newville and Lilla at Blue Diamond, Portland
- 27 - Kevin Selfe and The Tornadoes at ilani Rock & Brews, Ridgefield
- 28 - Bottleneck Blues Band at Blue Diamond, Portland
- 28 - TJ Wong Trio at Headliners Club, Lake Oswego

Shows in April

- 1 - CBA Monthly Showcase & Member Mtg at Mekong Bistro, Portland
- 3 - Al Polito's Songwriters on the Edge 1-year Anniversary Show at Covert Café, Portland
- 4 - Timmer's Guitar-mageddon at Headliners Club, Lake Oswego
- 8 - Lisa Mann's Northwestern All-Stars w Terrie Odabi at Alberta Rose, Portland
- 10 - Kevin Selfe and The Tornadoes at Tigardville Station, Tigard
- 10 - Taylor Newville and the Riders at Low Places, Springfield



Taylor Newville

- 11 - Joel Astley at Beach Hut Deli, Tigard
- 11 - Kevin Selfe and The Tornadoes at ilani Line & Lure, Ridgefield
- 16 - Tevis Hodge Jr. at Produce Row, Portland
- 18 - Norman Sylvester at ilani Rock & Brews Lounge, Ridgefield

- 18 - Johnny Wheels & The Swamp Donkeys at Headliners Club, Lake Oswego
- 19 - Johnny Wheels & the Swamp Donkeys open for Rick Estrin & the Night Cats at Salem Historic Grand, Salem



If you'd like more information or would like to see the updated calendar, visit us at CascadeBlues.org/calendar

Blues Jams

Mondays

- Chad Rupp & the Sugar Roots Jam at McMenamins White Eagle, Portland

Tuesdays

- Vic Sorisio at Billy Blues, Vancouver, WA

Wednesdays

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

Thursdays

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

Sundays

- Kevin Selfe Blues Jam at Blue Diamond, Portland
- Scott Steele 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
- Timmer Blakely Jam at Beach Hut Deli, Tigard

If you have a show that needs to be added to this calendar, Email BluesNotes@cascadeblues.org

Message from the Editor

Thanks for reading the Blues Notes!

Welcome to the March/April issue of Blues Notes — I'm the new editor, and I'm grateful to be joining a publication with such a long, community-built history over the past 40ish years.

My aim is to build on the strong foundation that's already here and keep Blues Notes feeling fresh and easy to engage with — for longtime members and new readers alike. As always, the heart of this magazine is the people

Current Volunteer Opportunities

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- **Give us your ideas!**

[Contact](mailto:CBStaff@CascadeBlues.org)

CBStaff@CascadeBlues.org

who make our scene what it is: the artists, venues, volunteers, and fans who keep it alive.

I joined the CBA at the Waterfront Blues Festival a few years ago because

I love the music, and Mike Day described how we support musicians, and the member benefits were pretty cool too. The free entry to the Monthly First-Wednesday Showcases made it more than worth the \$25 membership alone, but I was also looking for a meaningful volunteer opportunity, which I found here!

That said, the Cascade Blues Association is in need of volunteers for a variety of functions. Blues Notes is always open for contributors, editors, and ad placements. Perhaps you're

a hands-on person or more of a technical whiz behind the scenes, or you have some other talent or idea you'd like to share as a volunteer? Let us know!

Thanks for reading and supporting the Blues Notes, and for being part of the Cascade Blues Association.

Michele (Mickey) Maupin

(Blues Notes Editor)



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