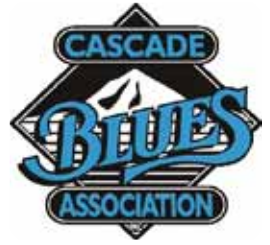


Preserving & Promoting the Blues in the Pacific NW

A bi-monthly publication of the Cascade Blues Association | cascadeblues.org

bluesnotes



May/June 2026

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SUMMER, AMPLIFIED

Photo credit Debra Penk

Outdoor Concerts, Festivals & the Sound of Community

by Evelyn Silverman

Summer, Amplified

Summer in the Pacific Northwest isn't just a season, it's a time for families, friends and music lovers of all ages, to share a picnic blanket, unfold a beach chair and relax as the music surrounds them.

From neighborhood park gatherings to sprawling, multi-day destination festivals, outdoor blues events across Oregon and the greater Pacific Northwest offer something deeper than entertainment. They create temporary worlds—equal parts reunion, discovery, and escape—where the music carries a little further and the community feels a little closer.

The Rhythm of Summer

Festivals like the Waterfront Blues Festival have long stood as pillars of this seasonal rhythm. For decades, it has drawn crowds to the banks of the Willamette River, blending world-class talent with a strong sense of local pride and purpose. It's not just



Photo credit Debra Penk

a concert—it's a gathering point. A place where seasoned fans, curious newcomers, and families alike come together, often returning year after year like clockwork.

But the beauty of the Northwest blues scene is that it doesn't stop there. Not even close.

From City Streets to Open Roads

For every large-scale festival anchored in a city, there's another waiting just off the beaten path—tucked into a scenic valley, perched near a river, or set against a backdrop that feels almost too picturesque to be real – or at your own neighborhood park.

Some festivals, like the Gorge Blues and Brews Festival or the Peninsula Blues Festival are events that invite you to slow down, stay awhile, and let the experience unfold. These destination festivals often blur the line between concert and retreat. You don't just attend—you immerse. With RV setups, tent camping, shared meals, late-night jam sessions, these are the spaces where strangers become neighbors, and neighbors become friends. The music might be the reason you arrive, but it's the atmosphere that convinces you to stay.

The Power of the Small Stage

Not every festival needs a

massive crowd or a headline act to leave an impression. In fact, some of the most memorable moments happen on the smallest stages.

Community Park Concerts and Neighborhood Festivals—often free or low-cost—bring music directly to you, making the blues accessible in a way that feels both intentional and necessary. You might stumble upon one by accident or mark it on your calendar months in advance, either way, it's a joy you can share with those around you, it's about community.

Here, the barrier between artist and audience softens. Conversations happen between sets. Musicians mingle. Kids and adults dance freely without worrying about stepping on toes. It's grassroots in the purest sense—music returning to the community that sustains it.

These smaller concerts and festivals often feature established favorites, they also play a role in nurturing emerging artists. They provide stages where newer, younger musicians can find ▶

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

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▶ their footing, connect with audiences, and become part of a lineage that stretches back generations. Supporting these events isn't just about enjoying a day in the sun—it's about investing in the future of the blues.

A Culture of Discovery

One of the greatest gifts of festival season is the opportunity to discover something—or someone—you weren't expecting.

Maybe it's a band you've never heard before that suddenly becomes your new favorite. Maybe it's a reinterpretation of a classic that stops you in your tracks. Or maybe it's a moment—unplanned, unscripted—where everything aligns just right and it feeds your soul.

Festivals create space for these discoveries in a way that traditional venues sometimes can't. With multiple stages, rotating line-ups, and hours of continuous music, there's always something new unfolding just a short walk away.

And in that sense, every festival becomes a kind of musical map—one that invites exploration rather than dictating direction.

The Role of Community

Behind every festival—large or small—is a network of people making it happen. Volunteers, organizers, sponsors, musicians,



So many outdoor concerts and festivals to choose from this summer!

and attendees all play a role in shaping the experience.

In the Pacific Northwest, that sense of shared responsibility feels especially strong. Many of these events are rooted in non-profit efforts or community-driven initiatives, where the goal extends beyond profit to include preservation, education, and access.

It's a reminder that the blues, at its core, has always been a communal art form. It thrives not in isolation, but in gathering—in the act of coming together and listening, really listening, to what's being played and what's being said.

"It's one of my favorite parts of summer - whether I'm meeting friends or going on my own, I always leave feeling like I've been part of something bigger."

Planning Your Summer Soundtrack

With so many outdoor concerts and festivals to

choose from, the challenge isn't finding something to attend, it's deciding where to go and how many you can realistically fit into a single summer.

Some will draw you in for a single afternoon. Others will ask for a full week-end—or longer. Some will be familiar favorites, while others might push you just far enough outside your comfort zone to become something new.

And that's the point.

Whether you're packing up for a multi-day camping experience or simply bringing a lawn chair to a neighborhood park, each event adds a new layer to the season. A new memory. A new story.

More Than Music

At the end of the day, the end of the evening, at the end of the weekend, or the end of the summer—what lingers isn't just the music. It's the feeling.

The sound of applause echoing across open space. The hum of conversation between songs. The quiet satisfaction of being exactly where you're supposed to be.

Outdoor blues concerts and festivals in the Pacific Northwest offer more than performances—they offer perspective. A chance to step outside the routine, reconnect with the music, and remember why it matters.

So as the days grow longer and the calendar fills up, consider this your invitation: go. Explore. Stay a little longer than you planned. Listen a little closer than you usually do.

Because out there—somewhere between the stage and the sky—the blues is waiting. And when you're ready to find your next moment—the next stage, the next song, the next stretch of sky—visit the Cascade Blues Association website. We'll be keeping our calendar updated throughout the season, along with featured articles to help guide your journey through the music.



Visit CascadeBlues.Org

Your Road to Memphis Starts Here

Entries are open
May 1 to May 21.

The Cascade Blues Association's annual Journey to Memphis competition is your chance to step onto a bigger stage and represent the Pacific Northwest at the world-renowned International Blues Challenge in Memphis.

Each year, bands and solo/duo acts compete for the opportunity to advance to this global gathering of blues musicians, held on the legendary Beale Street. It all begins here at home, with Round One taking place on June 7, followed

JOURNEY TO MEMPHIS COMPETITION
 THE ROAD TO BEALE STREET STARTS HERE
ENTER MAY 1 – MAY 21

Enter at:
CascadeBlues.org

Round 1: June 7
 Finals: July 3

by the Finals on July 3.

Whether you're an emerging artist ready to take the next step or a seasoned performer looking to showcase your sound, this is your moment. The Journey to Memphis has long been a launching point for some of the region's most talented blues artists—and it could be yours.

Entries are open May 1 through May 21.

Visit the Cascade Blues Association website for full details, requirements, and how to enter.

Your road to Memphis starts here!

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

WEDNESDAY, MAY 6

The Flowtenders 

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WEDNESDAY, JUNE 3

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

A New Blues Radio Show is Hitting the Airwaves!

Sundays at 6pm

Blues Avenue launches April 12 on Portland Radio Project (99.1 FM) and will stream worldwide, bringing a fresh, community-driven take on blues to listeners every Sunday from 6–7pm.

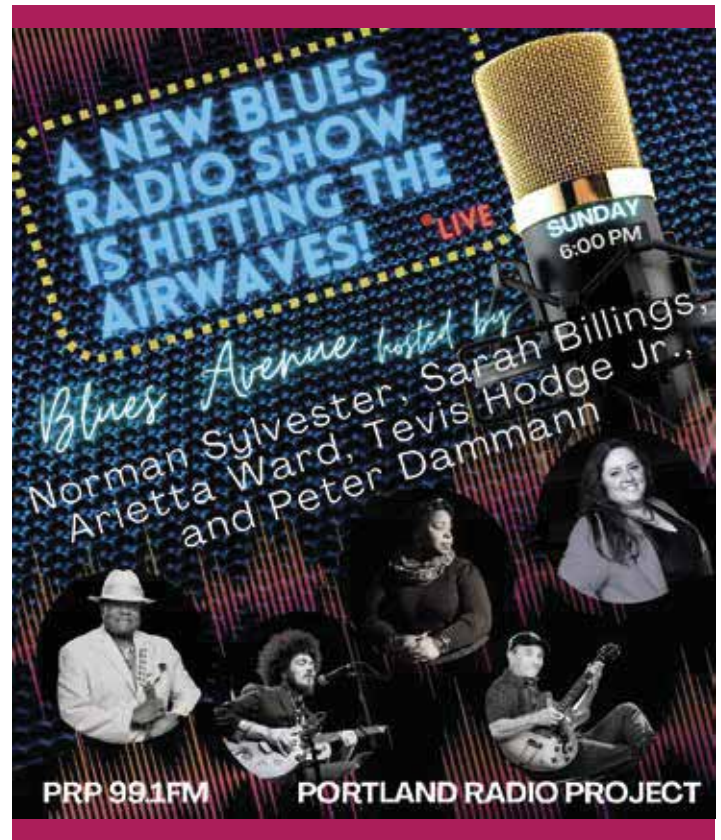
Hosted by a rotating lineup of respected local musicians and voices from the scene—including Norman Sylvester, Sarah Billings, Arietta Ward, Tevis Hodge Jr., and Peter Dammann—Blues Avenue will spotlight artists from across the Northwest alongside

national acts. Each show will explore the roots and branches of the blues—from Delta traditions to R&B, gospel, jazz, soul, and beyond.

This isn't just a radio show, it's a platform for the community, powered by the community, and a new way to stay connected to the music and the people who keep it alive.



Tune in Sundays at 6pm on 99.1 FM or stream live online.



Message from the CBA President

Looking Ahead

The Cascade Blues Association is entering an exciting new chapter. While I may have big shoes to fill as Interim President, I'm energized by the momentum we've built—and even more inspired by where we're headed.

Over the past few years, the CBA has evolved in meaningful ways, guided by the voices of our members and the needs of our community. We've brought back the Blues Notes music calendar, reimaged the Muddy Awards experience, expanded opportunities for



artists through the International Blues Challenge, and revived our Blues in the Schools program to reach the next generation. Not every change lands the same for everyone, and that's okay—but each

step forward is made with the long-term health of the blues community in mind.

Looking ahead, we're focused on strengthening our foundation and widening our reach. That means growing our committees, refreshing our fundraising efforts, building deeper connections with other blues organizations, and making better use of local media to share what we do. Most importantly, it means creating more ways for people to get involved.

Whether you're a longtime member, a musician, or someone discovering us for the first time, there's a

place for you here. From volunteering for a few hours to simply showing up and supporting live music, every contribution matters.

Membership comes with benefits, free admission to monthly showcases and our annual picnic, discounts on Muddy Awards tickets, voting privileges, and access to our monthly newsletter, but the real reward is being part of something bigger.

Thank you for helping us keep the blues alive.

Sandy
(CBA President)

Music Review: Howlin' Waters

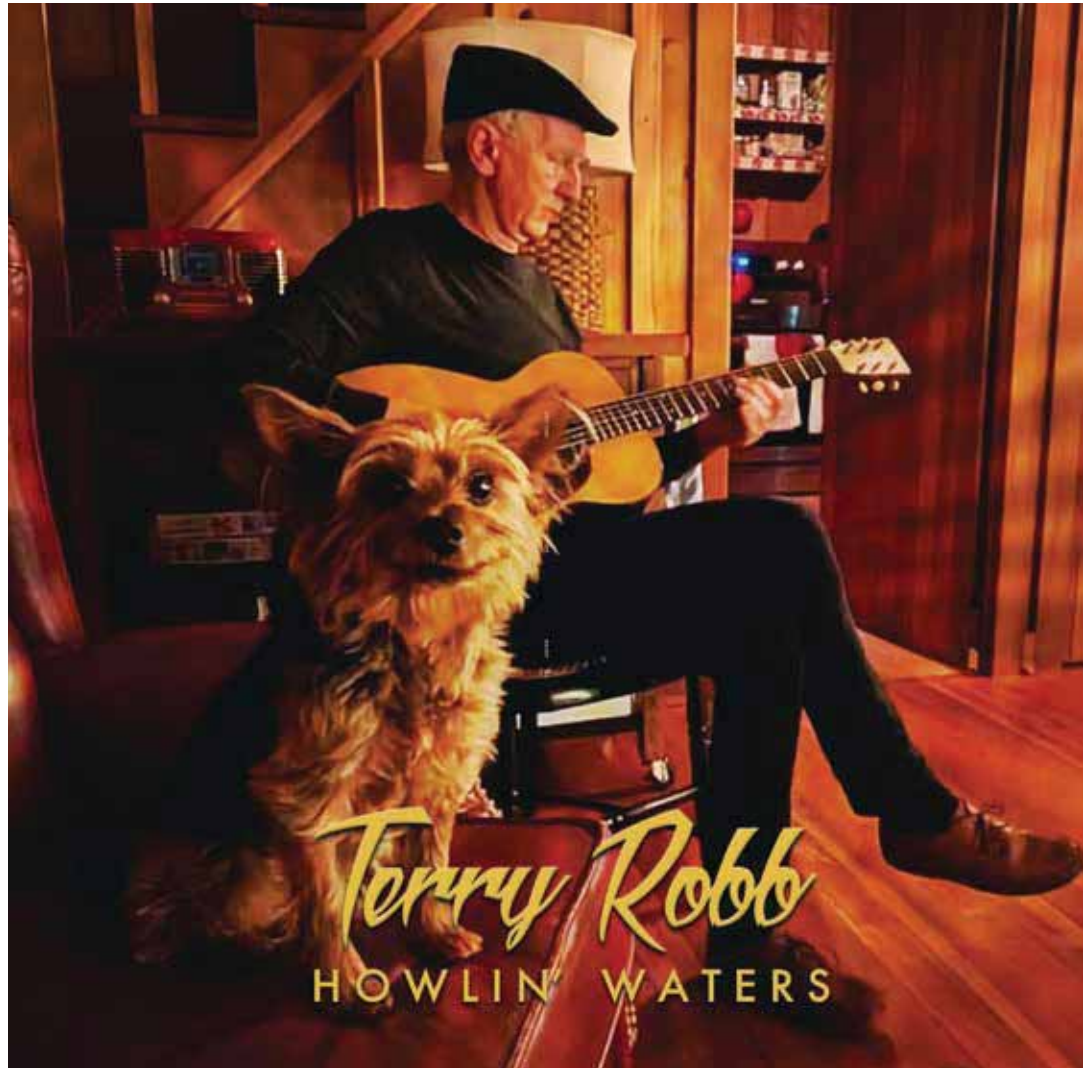
by Mike Penk

New CD by Terry Robb

Howlin' Waters, the new CD by Terry Robb, features 13 original songs that clock in at a lean and muscular 31 minutes. Robb's unique world class finger picking style is immediately on display on the first two songs, the excellent "St. Charles St. Rag" and "Alleluia Shuffle." These instrumentals, performed only on guitar, are melodic, engaging and well-constructed.

On "Back Door Mirror", Robb is joined by Dave Captein on bass, Gary Hobbs on drums, and Eddie Parente on violin. Captein's bass line sets the groove, providing a strong backbone for this great instrumental. The interplay between Robb and Parente has sparks flying, echoing the Hot Club of Paris.

Robb draws inspiration from a variety of different influences. This is evident on "One Way Train", the first song with lyrics, as it is run through the Terry Robb blender and stirred up into a tasty ragtime, Delta Blues and jazz smoothie. "But Not Now" is a showcase for Robb's slide guitar- a Delta blues back porch song with the lament that "things used to be all right, but not now." He's feeling blue, but there is a hint of optimism in the final lyric, "Things are going to be all right, but not now."

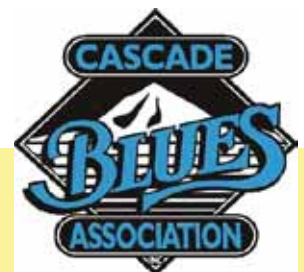


With this outstanding collection of songs, Terry Robb has released one of the finest records of his long and prolific career. There are so many little eddies and pools to discover while listening to this musical adventure. The central theme running throughout is a strong feeling of a distant time and place. For me, this music evokes memories of my father telling me about growing up on a farm during the Great Depression and Dust Bowl years. I can smell the

fresh mowed hay and taste the dust on my tongue as I walk down the gravel road of rural America. Long after the final note fades, Howlin' Waters lingers like a memory you didn't know you still carried.

Terry Robb is an award-winning member of the Oregon Music Hall of Fame and the Cascade Blues Hall of Fame. Howlin' Waters reinforces why Terry Robb is considered a master of the acoustic guitar. This is blues music played with

authority, history, and heart- Terry Robb at the height of his powers. Robb is based in Portland, and catching him live is the perfect extension of an album this deeply felt. You'll be glad you did.



MAY/JUNE 2026 CALENDAR

MAY

- **1 - Kevin Selfe** at the Gemini/The Cut Supper Club, Lake Oswego
- **2 - Timothy James Trio** at Stoller Wine Bar, Newberg
- **2 - Norman Sylvester Band** at the Blue Diamond Bar & Grill, PDX
- **2 - Bottleneck Blues Band** at Celebrities Parkway Bar & Grill, Fairview
- **2 - Nikki Jones Band** at the Pink Elephant, Salem
- **3 - The Bible & the Blues w/ LaRhonda Steele** at Reedwood Friends(Quaker) Mtg, Portland
- **3 - Kathryn Grimm's Babes** in Portland Showcase at Mekong Bistro, Portland
- **6 - CBA Monthly Showcase & Member Mtg** at Mekong Bistro, Portland
- **9 - Norman Sylvester Band** at Clyde's, Portland
- **12 - Denny Bixby** at DeNicola's Italian Restaurant, Portland
- **14 - Kevin Selfe** and the Tornadoes at Billy Blues, Vancouver
- **16 - Bottleneck Blues Band** at Waltz Brewing, Forest Grove, OR
- **16 - Kevin Selfe Trio** at Ilani Casino-Line & Lure, Ridgefield, WA
- **16 - Timothy James** at Portello Wine Bar, Bend, OR
- **16 - Harvey Brindell & Cryin' Hearts** at Wankers Corner Saloon & Cafe, Wilsonville
- **19 - Arietta Ward w/Norman Sylvester** at Revolution Hall, PDX
- **20 - Vintage Soul** at the Blue Diamond Bar & Grill, Portland
- **21 - Norman Sylvester** at Ilani Casino-Line & Lure, Ridgefield
- **22 - Kevin Selfe** and the Tornadoes at Arrivederci Wine & Jazz, Milwaukie
- **22 - Lenanne Sylvester** at Wilf's Restaurant and Jazz Bar, Portland
- **22 - Johnny Wheels & the Swamp Donkeys w/TC Coleman & Sleeper Wave** at Alberta Rose Theatre, PDX
- **23 - Norman Sylvester** at Nehalem Bay Winery, Nehalem, OR

- **23 & 24 - The Strange Tones** BBQ Blues & Brews on the Bay, Coos Bay OR
- **29 - Timothy James** at the Verdict, Oregon City
- **29 - Norman Sylvester** at the Spare Room, Portland
- **30 - Timothy James** at Ilani Casino-Line & Lure, Ridgefield WA
- **30 - Kevin Selfe's Pig Pickin'** w/sp guest Curtis Salgado at Blue Diamond Bar & Grill, Portland

JUNE

- **3 - CBA Monthly Showcase & Member Mtg** at Mekong Bistro, Portland
- **6 - Kevin Selfe** and Tornadoes at the Bargeway Pub, The Dalles
- **10 - Tab Benoit Soul** of the Swamp Tour at Aladdin Theater, Portland
- **12 - Kevin Selfe** and Tornadoes at the Tigardville Station, Tigard
- **13 - Kevin Selfe Trio** at Ilani Casino-Line & Lure, Ridgefield WA
- **13 - Norman Sylvester** at Clyde's Prime Rib, Portland
- **16 - Vintage Soul** at the Blue Diamond Bar & Grill, Portland
- **18 - Norman Sylvester** at Ilani Casino-Line & Lure, Ridgefield WA
- **19 - Bottleneck Blues Band** at Oregon Brews & Blues BBQ (Father's Day) Bash, McMinnville
- **20 - Bottleneck Blues Band** at Everybody's Brewing at Northwood, Battleground WA
- **26 - Bottleneck Blues Band** at the Blue Diamond Bar & Grill, PDX
- **26 - Ben Rice** and the PDX Hustle at Dos Mariposas Vineyard, Medford
- **27 - Norman Sylvester** at Mosier Music Festival, Mosier WA
- **27 - Ben Rice/PDX Hustle** at Rooster Crow Weekend, Rogue River
- **29 - Bottleneck Blues Band** at Cascadia Brewing

For most up to date information visit CascadeBlues.org/calendar

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Upcoming Festivals



May 14 – 17

- Sunbanks Blues, Americana, Country Festival, Electric City, WA

June 19 – 20

- Gorge Blues & Brews Fest, Stevenson, WA

July 2 - 4

- Waterfront Blues Festival, Portland, OR

July 17 – 19

- Winthrop Blues Fest, Winthrop, WA

August 14 – 15

- Peninsula Blues Festival, Ocean Park, WA

August 14 - 16

- Tacoma Blues Festival, Tacoma, WA

August 15

- Beaverton Music Fest, Beaverton, OR

September 10-13

- Sunbanks Blues/Roots Fest, Electric City, WA

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