

Preserving & Promoting the Blues in the Pacific NW

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

bluesnotes



Sept/Oct 2026

Volume 41 | Issue 5 (FREE)

Paul DeLay and Duffy Bishop

Photo Credit | Norm Eder



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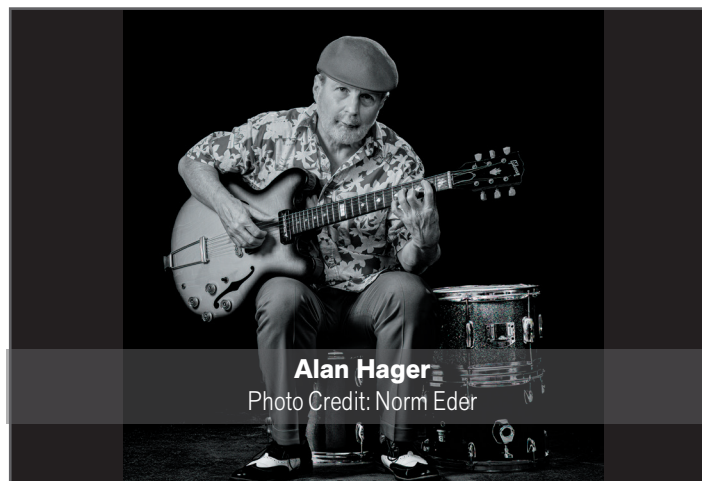
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Looking Back

Portland's Early Blues Music Scene by Nancy Collins

Portland's blues scene didn't happen overnight. Long before today's festivals, jam nights, and packed music venues, a handful of clubs helped establish the city as a place where blues musicians could thrive.

I've been thinking about our current live music scene and reminiscing about the "old days" in the 1970s and '80s. I'm betting that a lot of you don't know about some of the history I'll share with you. This is the first of a series of articles that will explore in more depth the efforts that musicians, club owners, and music and dance lovers contributed to making Portland a city filled with a vibrant live music scene. Lloyd Jones, Tim O'Hare, Alan Hager, and Norman Sylvester are just a few of the notable musicians who have graciously offered to share their memories and knowledge of those remarkable days. For those of you who were there and hazily remember, here's



Alan Hager
Photo Credit: Norm Eder

a little trip down blues memory lane.

Then

Back in the '70s and '80s, Portland had a music and blues scene that was absolutely transcendent. Many of the well-known blues musicians and artists here in Portland had their start in the quirky and eccentric venues located in the waterfront and industrial parts of town. It was an exciting time, as Portland's musicians recognized the artistic importance of blues music. Lloyd Jones remembers that he and other artists would actively persuade club owners to showcase the genre. Whether you remember these places firsthand or

are discovering their stories for the first time, they're an important part of Portland's musical history. Those gritty, industrial rooms provided the perfect raw backdrop for the music to grow.

The "First Era" Clubs

This list doesn't cover every venue, but it highlights the clubs that helped build Portland's early, vibrant music scene.

- **The Cotton Club** was a legendary 1960s R&B, soul, and jazz hotspot in Portland's Albina neighborhood. The Cotton Club became one of the city's most celebrated music venues after Paul Knauls purchased it in

For Blues Fans Why "Looking Back"?

The title of this article was inspired by John Mayall's 1969 album Looking Back. While the album isn't connected to Portland's blues scene, the name perfectly captures the spirit of this article, taking time to reflect on the musicians, venues, and people who helped shape our local blues community.

1963. Known as the only club on the West Coast with "wall-to-wall soul," it welcomed artists such as Etta James, Big Mama Thornton, The Whispers, and Mel Brown, while also attracting celebrities like Sammy Davis Jr. when they were in town. Portland's own Norman Sylvester, "The Boogie Cat," was an important part of this vibrant music scene. Long after the club closed in the 1970s, Paul Knauls remained a beloved community leader, earning the well-deserved nickname, "The Mayor of Albina."

- **The Euphoria Tavern** was a legendary 1970s and early 1980s music venue ▶

Blues Notes is a publication of the Cascade Blues Association

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Layout/Design: Michael Wong

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Published by:

Lithtec Printing Solutions
6770 NE Century Blvd
Hillsboro, OR 97124
503.866.4959
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By Nancy Collins

► and hippie bar located in a funky old warehouse near SE 3rd Avenue. Visiting musicians often stopped by after their shows, including Muddy Waters (in the late '70s), Albert Collins, Ry Cooder, Bonnie Raitt, Tom Waits, Tina Turner, and Elizabeth Cotten. Cotten, famous for "Freight Train," even recorded her live album *Euphoria Blues* (Live Portland '75) there in February 1975. One of the most recognized nationally touring performers to come to Portland, known for electrified blues and energetic rock, George Thorogood performed a high-octane, 90-minute set at the Euphoria in April of 1979. And yes, I was there and lived to tell about it.

- **Sack's Front Avenue** was another cornerstone of the Portland waterfront nightlife scene in the late 1970s and early 1980s. It had a quirky vibe—most memorably serving cold beer out of completely sterile, clear glass hospital bedpans and urinals. Hey, it was the time. The club was a regular spot to catch the Paul deLay Band, Johnny and the Distractions (Johnny had no shortage of admirers, and I might have been one of them), Slowtrain, and Seafood Mama, who later became Quarterflash.

- **The Fat Little Rooster** venue at SE 17th Avenue and Hawthorne Boulevard



was a happening place from 1977 to 1983, known for its "gut-bucket blues," earthy roots-rock, and early Pacific Northwest alternative music sets. The Robert Cray Band and Paul deLay's Brown Sugar were fixtures on the calendar, along with the Clamtones, Steve Bradley's Sleazy Pieces, and The Holy Modal Rounders. When The Fat Little Rooster closed in 1983, brothers Mike and Brian McMenamin bought the venue and reopened it as McMenamins Barley Mill Pub. This marked the official beginning of the McMenamins enterprise, which happily continues to offer live music across many of its Pacific Northwest locations today.

- In the 1970s, **The White Eagle Tavern** management here wanted to shift the vibe from a rough biker bar to a live music venue that was attractive to local industry workers. By the

1980s, the White Eagle was packing in live music lovers with regular appearances by Paul deLay and Curtis Salgado. In 1997, the building was added to the National Register of Historic Places, and in 1998, McMenamins purchased the building and restored it as a neighborhood pub and music venue.

The Scene Today

Portland has a beloved blues scene rich with musicians who play a variety of styles, many of whom tour both nationally and worldwide. We are lucky to have local musicians, young and old, who are passionate about keeping alive the raw acoustic Delta sounds, amplified electric Chicago blues, Piedmont picking, and other historic styles. Best of all, they are eager to teach and share their craft with us.

Blues lovers today have plenty of opportunities to catch this music live. Venues like The Blue Diamond,

The Jack London Revue, McMenamins White Eagle Saloon, Clyde's Prime Rib, and Spirits Pub regularly feature live blues. Add to that list the Alberta Street Pub for blues and jazz, the newly opened Downbeat Bar, and The Muddy Rudder Public House — where you can catch Lloyd Jones's swampy blues, back-porch pickin', and Piedmont blues every Monday night — and there is absolutely no shortage of choices for enjoying live music.

Here is the secret sauce, though: we have to actually go out and listen.

Author's Note:

In a future article, I'll write about some of the "Second Era Clubs" including the beloved Candlelight Cafe and Bar, known to all as "The Candlelight." Get ready for another trip down blues memory lane. If you have any fun stories to share, please send them in. Feeling unsure? Take me out for a coffee and tell me anyway, discretion is my middle name. Send your stories to me at vp@cascadeblues.org.

About the Author:

Nancy Collins is the Vice President of the Cascade Blues Association. A longtime supporter of Portland's blues community, Nancy enjoys preserving and sharing the stories that have helped shape the region's vibrant music scene.

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**WED
OCT 7**



HANK & BILL SHREVE DUO & NIKKI JONES BAND

Message from the CBA President

Memphis is calling!

In less than five months, our Journey to Memphis winners will represent the Cascade Blues Association at The Blues Foundation's International Blues Challenge (IBC) in Memphis.

This year, we're proud to send **Kevin Selfe** to compete in the Solo/Duo Division and the **Kivett Bednar Band** to compete in the Band Division. If you're not familiar with their music, I encourage you to check them out on Spotify. Our Youth Showcase representative will be selected on **October 11** at Hōkū Events on Madison, where one outstanding

young act will earn the opportunity to represent the Cascade Blues Association at the **International Blues Challenge Youth Showcase** in Memphis.

As we head into fall, we're excited to present a fantastic lineup of **Journey to Memphis (J2M) fundraising events**. These events are open to everyone, so invite your friends, family, and fellow music lovers! Each fundraiser features multiple outstanding bands while helping send our Journey to Memphis representatives to Memphis in January.

Please mark your calendars:

- **October 18** - Billy Blues Bar & Grill
- **November 15** - Me-kong Bistro
- **January 10** - Hōkū Events on Madison

A \$15 - \$25 tickets will be available online or at the door. These donations help offset travel expenses for our 2027 International Blues Challenge competitors and Youth Showcase representative.

We're also excited to unveil a brand-new **Journey to Memphis T-shirt**! This year's design is one you'll be proud to wear year after year. Shirts will be

available to order through the Cascade Blues Association website and at our fundraising events. And if you're planning to join us in Memphis for the International Blues Challenge, you'll definitely want one to show your CBA pride while cheering on our representatives!

I'm also excited to share that our **silent auction is moving online** this year! By taking the auction online, we'll be able to reach more people than ever before, including those who can't attend our fundraising events in person. You'll be able to browse auction items, place bids from anywhere, receive notifications if you've been outbid, and conveniently pay online if you're the winning bidder.

To make our auction a success, we're especially looking for donations of **experiences and services** - concert or sporting event tickets, music lessons, restaurant gift certificates, vacation stays, salon services, photography sessions, and other unique opportunities that create memorable experiences.

If you'd like to help, consider donating tickets to a concert or sporting event. If you own a vacation rental, an overnight stay would

make a wonderful auction item. If you own a business, perhaps you could donate a service such as a massage, salon treatment, photography session, or music lessons. We're also looking for volunteers to assist after the auction by delivering items to winning bidders or helping send thank-you letters to our generous donors.

Every donation and every volunteer helps send our musicians to Memphis to represent the Cascade Blues Association on the international stage.

Thank you for supporting our artists and helping showcase the incredible talent of our blues community. If you'd like to donate an auction item or volunteer, please contact me or email president@cascadeblues.org.



Sandy
(CBA President)

2027 Journey to Memphis T-shirt

Available to order online and at Journey to Memphis fundraising events. Every purchase helps send our CBA representatives to Memphis. cascadeblues.org/journey-to-memphis/



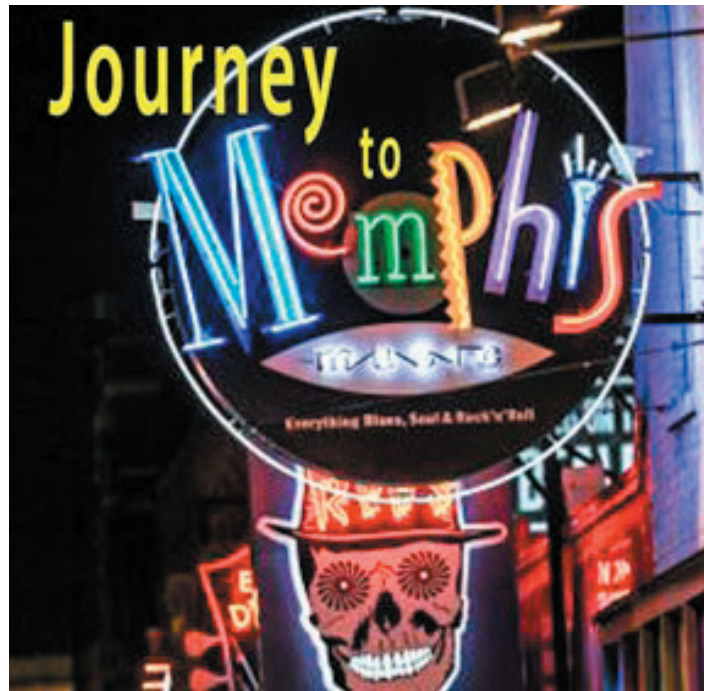
International Blues Challenge Planning Guide

Travel Tips by
Sandy Gilman

From January 19-23, 2027, the **43rd International Blues Challenge (IBC)** will bring more than 200 acts from affiliated blues societies to Memphis, where they'll perform in clubs up and down historic Beale Street. Musicians earn their place by first winning local or regional competitions hosted by Blues Foundation affiliates, making the IBC one of the most prestigious showcases in the blues community.

For the artists on stage, the IBC can be a career-changing opportunity, opening doors to festival appearances, industry recognition, and new audiences. For everyone else, it's an unforgettable opportunity to experience the blues in its many forms while spending five days immersed in one of the world's most vibrant music communities.

The IBC is also a gathering place for the extended blues family. Last year, more than **40 people from the Pacific Northwest** made the trip to cheer on the Cascade Blues Association's Journey to Memphis



representatives while enjoying world-class performances, educational seminars, late-night jam sessions, and the unique atmosphere that makes Memphis unlike anywhere else. Whether you're a musician, fan, dancer, photographer, volunteer, or simply someone who loves the blues, the IBC offers something to discover.

Packing for Memphis.

Mid-January in Memphis is typically crisp and chilly, with average daytime temperatures around 51°F (11°C) and overnight lows near 34°F (1°C).

Dress in warm, removable layers. You'll spend most of your time inside

music venues, but you'll appreciate a warm jacket, scarf, gloves, and a beanie while walking between clubs on Beale Street. Comfortable walking shoes are a must.

Flying from Portland

There are no nonstop flights from Portland (PDX) to Memphis (MEM), so you'll need to book a one-stop itinerary.

When choosing a connection, consider airports that are well equipped to handle winter weather. A little planning can help reduce the risk of delays if winter storms move through your connecting city.

Major airlines serving Memphis include Delta, United, and American.

Tickets.

One of the pleasant surprises about the IBC is how affordable it is.

The Blues Foundation expects to announce 2027 ticket packages and hotel discounts on October 1.

Last year's pricing included:

- **Single-day venue wristbands:** approximately \$10–15
- **Full-week pass:** approximately \$125, including Tuesday's opening celebration, quarterfinals, semifinals across more than 20 venues, and daytime educational seminars.

The Saturday Finals at the historic Orpheum Theatre were included with the full-week pass, while individual Finals tickets were also available, along with optional premium seating.

Staying Near Beale Street.

Staying downtown makes it easy to enjoy the music without worrying about transportation late at night.

Recommended options include:

- **Peabody Hotel** – Luxury accommodations one block from Beale Street, famous for its daily Duck March.

- **Hyatt Centric Beale Street** – Located at the foot of Beale Street near the Orpheum Theatre.
- **Canopy by Hilton** – Contemporary, music-inspired hotel within easy walking distance.
- **Hampton Inn & Suites Downtown Memphis** – A comfortable option about one block from Beale Street.

Places to Eat

You'll find plenty of great restaurants near Beale Street. Three longtime favorites include:

- **Blues City Café** – Known for excellent gumbo and catfish.
 - **Gus's Fried Chicken** – A Memphis classic.
 - **B.B. King's Blues Club** – Soul food served alongside live music.
- If You Have an Extra Day...** If your schedule allows, consider making the drive to Clarksdale, Mississippi, one of the birthplaces of the Delta blues.

Highlights include:

- **The Crossroads of Highways 61 and 49**, forever linked to the Robert Johnson legend.

- **Delta Blues Museum**, home to one of the world's finest collections of blues history and artifacts.
- **Ground Zero Blues Club**, co-owned by Morgan Freeman, where live music and Delta culture come together.
- **Cat Head Delta Blues & Folk Art**, an essential stop for books, records, regional art, and blues history.

Whether you're cheering on the Cascade Blues Association's representatives, discovering musicians from around the world, or simply

experiencing Beale Street at its musical best, the International Blues Challenge offers a unique window into today's blues community.

If Memphis has been on your list, this may be the year to experience it for yourself.

About the Author:

Sandy Gilman is President of the Cascade Blues Association and a longtime supporter of the Pacific Northwest blues community. A frequent attendee of the International Blues Challenge in Memphis, she enjoys helping musicians and blues fans alike discover everything the experience has to offer.




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RAE GORDON BAND**

**Sunday, November 15
MEKONG BISTRO
1PM - 5PM**

Updates
& More



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Ticket sales & your donations help cover travel, lodging, & other expenses for the musicians representing the Cascade Blues Association at the International Blues Challenge in Memphis, Tennessee

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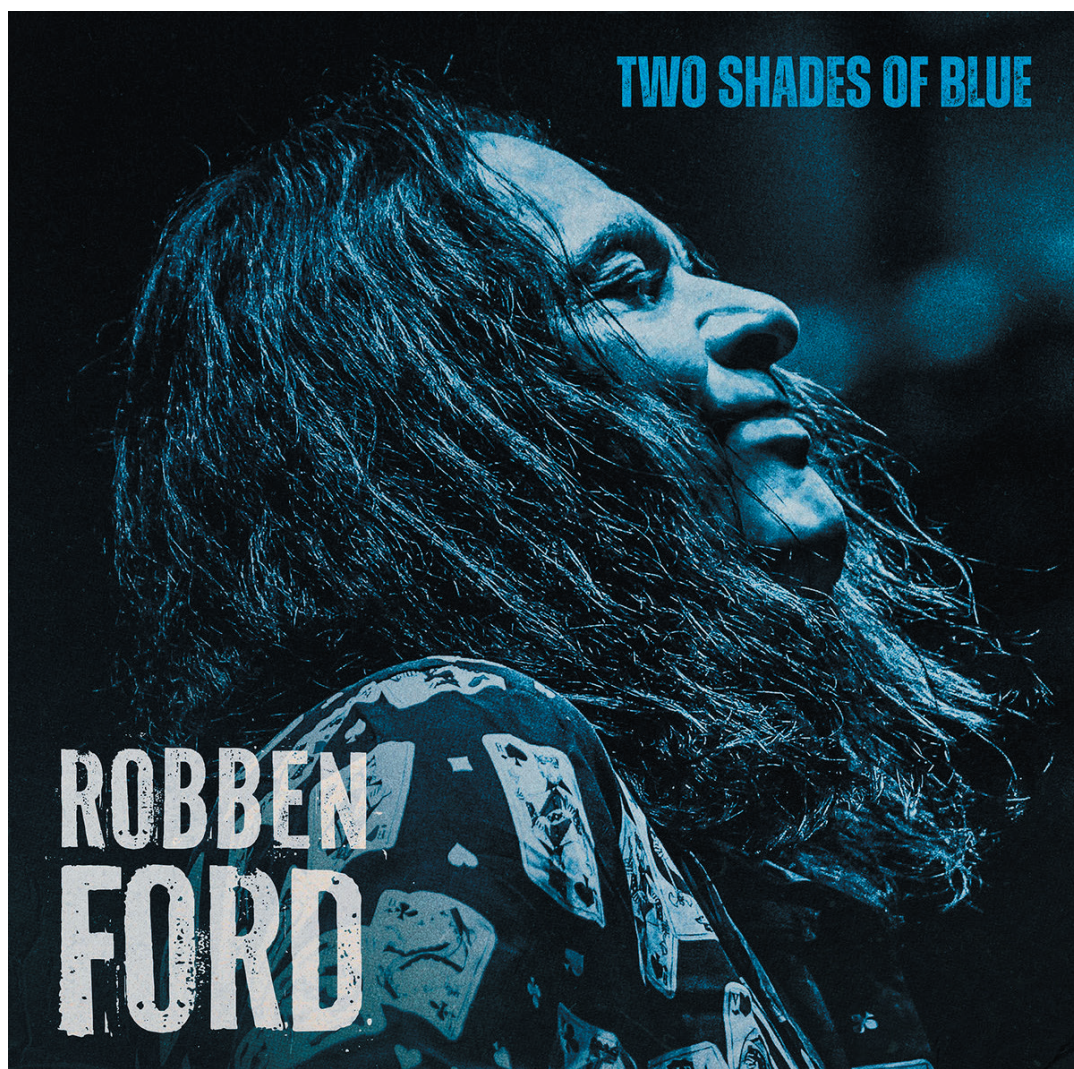
Robben Ford - Two Shades of Blue

CD Review by
Mike Penk

During a distinctive career spanning over more than 50 years, Robben Ford has gained a reputation as a chameleon regarding his ability to change his musical approach to each album. Robben is a phenomenal guitarist who explores blues, rock and jazz. He was ranked among the top Greatest Guitarists of the 20th Century by Musician Magazine, so he has the chops capable of this feat.

The funky opening song on the album, "Make My Own Weather," features the horn section and cooks right out of the gate. Robben joins in on top of the great Memphis soul groove with both piercing and growling guitar lines. There are two cover songs on the album. The first one, "Jealous Guy", is a John Lennon classic that Donny Hathaway also turned into a gospel soul classic. Here, Robben reimagines the song as a Memphis soul piece, with a recording that honors the legacy of the Stax/Volt record label.

It is important to recognize that Robben worked with two different groups



of musicians on this album, giving it two different views of the blues. The album is aptly titled Two Shades of Blue after all. The final three songs feature such musical luminaries as Larry Goldings on organ and synthesizer, Darryl Jones on bass, and Gary Husband on drums. The album is also dedicated to Jeff Beck, and his influence is especially noticeable on these last three songs which are all instrumentals- "The

Fire Flute", "The Light Fandango", and "Feeling's Mutual". Robben uses this superb backing to full effect, telling the story through his guitar. It is a love embrace to Jeff Beck's musical legacy, exploring some of the areas that Beck didn't previously traverse.

Robben Ford has spent his entire career searching for new ways to express himself and his music. With the release

of Two Shades of Blue, he adds another pearl to the string of excellence in his musical journey.

About the Author:

Mike Penk is a longtime Cascade Blues Association member and passionate music enthusiast. In addition to his love of the blues, he attends hundreds of live music performances each year and enjoys sharing his insights through album reviews and articles that celebrate the artists and music he loves.

Blues Calendar: September & October, 2026

Experience the Blues upclose and personal

September 2026

- 1 - Duane Betts & Palmetto Hotel, Alberta Rose Theater, Portland
- **2 - CBA Monthly Showcase, Mekong Bistro, Portland**
- 3 - Sonny Landreth, Alberta Rose, Portland
- 5 - Bottleneck Blues Band, Cascade Bar & Grill, Vancouver
- 5 - Eric Johanson, Jack London, Portland
- 5 - Kevin Selfe Trio, Ilani Casino Line & Lure, Ridgefield
- 5 - LaRhonda Steele & the Adrian Martin Quintet, Alberta Rose Theatre, Portland
- 5 - Nikki Jones Band, Ice House, Oregon City
- 5 - The Strange Tones at Skyway Bar & Grill, Zigzag
- 11 - Nico Wind Cordova, Ruzzo's Retreat, Damascus
- 11 - Norman Sylvester, Wilf's Restaurant, Portland
- 12 - Curtis Salgado, The Headliners Club, Lake Oswego
- 12 - J & The

- Causeways, Jack London, Portland
- 12 - Nikki Jones Band, Elysium Botanicals, Independence
- 12 - Terry Robb Trio, Artichoke Music, PDX
- **13 - CBA Picnic w/ Johnny Wheels & the Swamp Donkeys, End of the Oregon Trail Park, Oregon City**
- 16 - Boz Scaggs, Schnitzer Theater, PDX
- 17 - Tommy Castro & The Painkillers, Polaris Hall, Portland
- 17 - Tevis Hodge, Jr, Produce Row, Portland
- 19 - Bottleneck Blues Band, Everybody's Brewing, Battle Ground
- 19 - Johnny Wheels & the Swamp Donkeys, Elysium Botanicals,

- Independence
- 19 - Norman Sylvester Band - Spare Room, Portland
- 20 - Kim Field & The Perfect Gentlemen, Old Market Pub, PDX
- 21 - Shemekia Copeland, Jack London Revue, Portland
- 24 - Rich Layton & Tough Town, Rock Creek Tavern, Hillsboro
- 26 - Sleeper Wave, Corvallis Fall Festival
- 27- Chance Hayden's Desert Room All Stars, Al's Den, Portland
- 27 - Texas Headhunters, Show Bar, PDX
- 27 - Jesse Roper, Jack London, Portland
- 29 - Samantha Fish, Revolution Hall, PDX

- 30 - The Zac Shulze Gang, Music Millennium, Portland

October 2026

- 2 - Kevin Selfe, Tigardville Station, Tigard
- 6 - Blues in the Gorge Guitar Masters, Alberta Rose Theatre, PDX
- **7 - CBA Monthly Showcase, Mekong Bistro, Portland**
- 7 - Nick Moss Band, Jack London Revue, Portland
- **11 - Journey to Memphis Youth Competition, Hoku Events on Madison, Portland**
- 14 - The Infatuation, Arrivederci, Portland
- 16 - Booker T Jones, Alberta Rose Theatre, Portland

Blues Jams

Mondays

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

Tuesdays

- Vic Sorisio, Billy Blues, Vancouver, WA

Wednesdays

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

Thursdays

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

Sundays

- Blues Jam, Calapooia Brewing, Albany
- Trails End Boys Jam, CI Bar & Grill, Tualatin

- Kevin Selfe Blues Jam, Blue Diamond, Portland
- Scott Steele or Kirk Bryant/Josh Makosky (alternating) Jam, Montavilla Station, PDX
- Jerry Jacques Jam, 99 Saloon, Vancouver
- Eric Savage, Bobby Ferrante, Eric Rabe, Ben Jones, M&M Lounge, Gresham

Weekly & Monthly Shows

Mondays

- Lloyd Jones Blue Monday, Muddy Rudder, Portland
- Tevis Hodge Jr with Bayou Boyz Band, Mekong Bistro, PDX
- Ben Rice & the PDX Hustle, Alberta Street Pub, Portland (3rd Mondays)

Tuesdays

- Blues Dancing, Hoku

Events on Madison, PDX

Wednesdays

- Soul Cookin', Blue Diamond, Portland (Last Wednesdays)
- CBA Monthly Showcase & Member Mtg, Mekong Bistro, PDX (First Weds)
- Cascade Zydeco, Hoku Events on Madison, Portland

Thursdays

- Ed Neumann & Friends, CI Bar, Tualatin
- Fenix Rising Band, Blue Diamond, PDX
- Blues at Produce Row feat. Tevis Hodge Jr, Portland (Third Thursdays)

Fridays

- Lloyd Jones & guests, Artichoke Music, Portland (First Fridays)

Saturdays

- Myrtle Brown's Executive Groove,

Canary, Portland (First Saturday)

- Lloyd Jones & Friends, Spirits, Portland (Second Saturdays)
- Claes Almroth Trio, Mock Crest Tavern, Portland (Third Saturdays)

Sundays

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

- ▶ 17 - JT Wise Band, Rose City Coffee, PDX
- 17 - Nikki Jones Band, Yard Food Park, Salem
- 18 - Journey to Memphis Fundraiser, Billy Blues Bar, Vancouver
- 20- Gary Clark Jr, Revolution Hall, PDX
- 23 - Bottleneck Blues Band, Celebrities Parkway, Fairview
- 24 - Kevin Selfe Trio, Ilani Casino Line & Lure, Ridgefield



cascadeblues.org/calendar

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To join the CBA, visit cascadeblues.org

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FREE!
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Mike Todd - A+ Carpentry, Patrick McDougall

★ \$150

Bruce Powell, Dale Query, Ed Reckford, Gary & Sandra Shuler, Gloria Geiser,
Jac Weber - Confluence Winery, Janet Frein, Karen Gaddis, Mark Bowden, Randy Murphy,
Michael Allen & Anne J. Schagen, Roxanne Doty, Shawn Sullivan, Will & Beth, the Dancers

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