



Inclusive - a newsletter for the Prairie Crossroads Blues Society

February 2012

Taking First Friday by Storm By Sandy Hannum

The First Friday show at Memphis on Main on January 6 was a BLAST.

The evening started off in fine style with The Diva and the Dude, also known as Kathy Harden and Andy Baylor. First we heard some fabulous old classic blues songs belted out “Koko Taylor style” – Mama Thornton’s “Hound Dog” and Ruth Brown’s “Mama, He Treats Your Daughter Mean.” Of course, each song was ended with Kathy’s signature high kick! She quipped that one of these days she may need a leg transplant.



The Diva and the Dude at Memphis on Main January 6
Photo by Eric Frahm

The D and D included a lovely tribute to Etta James, who at this point was very ill. From Etta’s repertoire they did “At Last,” “I Just Want to Make Love to You,” and “Down Home Blues.” Then Kathy and Andy treated us to some of their own original songs. A great swingy standout was “What Are We Gonna Do?”

The audience was thoroughly into the music from the beginning, and some pretty great dancing was going on too. Lots of energy on stage and off!

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Meanwhile, back at the WEFT studio Hurricane Ruth and her band were putting on a live show for the radio audience. You can see from the picture below that Ruth wasn’t holding anything back, even in the confines of the studio.



Hurricane Ruth Performing at the WEFT Studio
Photo by Lorri Coey

When Hurricane Ruth arrived at Memphis on Main, I was sitting at a table with two guitar players, Jim Hannum and Rich Cibelli. They were practically salivating at the equipment being set up by guitarist David Lumsden. There were four guitars, and umpteen different pedals of various sorts. We knew we were in for it.

From the first note of the first song, “Roll Little Sister,” you could feel the vibes escalating in that room. What a powerful voice and stage presence Ruth LaMaster has! It was a pleasure to hear and watch this band perform, and it was impossible to sit still. The dance floor remained full throughout. We heard a variety of rhythms and styles, from heavy rocking to slow, bump and grind. “Let Me Change Your Mind” included a

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stunning guitar solo by Lumsden. "Mississippi Queen" featured the talented drummer Jim Engel. When you wouldn't think it was possible, they did "Take You Higher," and succeeded in getting people even more revved up. Incredible. The set ended with a powerful song called "The Lesson" written by the multi-talented bass player, Gary Davis.



Hurricane Ruth Plays First Friday at Memphis on Main

Photo by Eric Frahm

I can't wait to hear what happens when the aptly-named Hurricane Ruth hits Memphis. The folks there will be blown away. We can be proud that Hurricane Ruth is representing Prairie Crossroads Blues Society at the IBCs.

Big Send-Off For the Sugar Prophets

By Lorri Coey

The Sugar Prophets spent the week before the IBC playing for audiences from Champaign to Chillicothe with stops in Decatur, Peoria and Pekin. Prairie Crossroads Blues Society lent them a hand at their last gig before heading south on Sunday, January 29th at Memphis on Main.

The Painkillers took the opening slot, put on a great show, and gave us a taste off their new CD, "Done Me Wrong." Be sure to put February 11 at the Iron Post on your calendar for their release party and pick up a copy. If you haven't heard this band, you should. The title cut features Carolyn Johnson on vocals and that lady can sing the blues.

The Sugar Prophets started their portion of the evening with their Memphis set of all original songs. They came out rocking and didn't stop for 25 minutes. They've got a great mix of vocals, with Josh Spence, A.J. Williams and Joe Asselin all spending time at the mic, a slamming drum solo by Aaron "A

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Train" Wilson, solid bass by their newest addition Kevin Wilson and even a harmonica blow-out between Josh and Joe. Of course A.J. and Joe rock out on guitar and the songwriting is stellar. We wish these guys the best at the IBC.

The audience had a great time -- Smiles all around, lots of dancing and just general merriment. We made a lot of new friends and we're looking forward to seeing them again. This was a fundraiser to help send The Sugar Prophets to Memphis and the fans were genuinely generous. Raffle prizes included art work by Nick Beery, a guitar donated by Samuel Music, a wine tasting at Alto Vineyards, and more. It was a fun evening.

If you haven't visited Prairie Crossroads Blues Society's Facebook page yet, you might want to do that this week. We're hoping to post photos, maybe even a video or two, along with results from the competition. Check us out at: <http://www.facebook.com/PrairieCrossroadsBlues>.

Through These Eyes

By Rich Cibelli

By the time you get around to reading this piece, I hope to be stepping out on Beale Street, down in the home of the blues, Memphis, Tennessee.

Yes friends, call it what you want, but to my wife Sherry and I, well we call it our home away from home. I guess we think of Memphis as that favorite vacation spot you can't get enough of.

Did I mention that Memphis is also the home of the blues? You bet I did. And in particular the city along the muddy Mississippi River opens its arms to the world this week and hosts the International Blues Challenge.

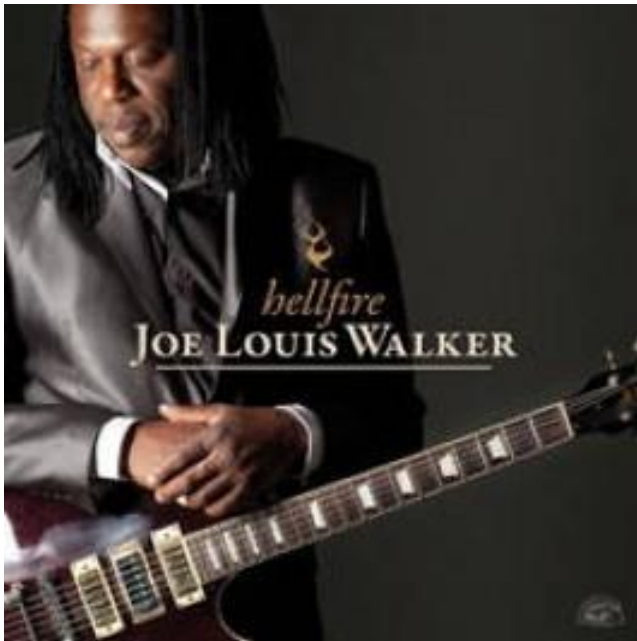
Bands from every corner of the universe will travel to Memphis to compete and hopefully be named as the winner of this year's challenge. It is truly a special event from start to finish. It all gets rolling at the Fed Ex International Showcase at the historic Daisy Theater on Tuesday night and ends four days later on Saturday at the renowned Orpheum Theater. In between there are two nights of quarterfinals followed by the semifinals.

For the Prairie Crossroads Blues Society, this year's International Blues Challenge offers something extra special, as two of our member bands are heading down to compete. Hurricane Ruth, our local challenge winner, will make the trip for the first time this year. I can't wait to see her compete and hear her great voice and awesome band. I know she's pumped and ready to give it all she has.

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The Sugar Prophets, who last year made it all the way to finals, are going back this year as well. Josh Spence and his band really turned some heads last year. I can't wait to see what they have in store for this year's competition.

I know a few members of PCBS are going down to Memphis to cheer on our bands. We'll all do our best to keep everybody back home updated as this year's event unfolds. It's worth mentioning again that PCBS is a proud affiliate of the Blues Foundation and all the great work they do throughout the year. I urge you to become a member of this fine organization and support their cause just like you do the Prairie Crossroads Blues Society.



Hellfire

By Joe Louis Walker

Reviewed by Rich Cibelli

Hey, you better stop what you're doing because Joe Louis Walker's new release "Hellfire," on Alligator Records is sure to grab your attention. It did mine.

Beginning with the CD's title track you'll hear the raw energy and sheer greatness of Walker's unique sound. This guy's been around for while and he knows just the right buttons to push to make his guitar excel and sound fantastic. Add some outstanding vocals and piano work on "I Won't Do That," and you've got the makings of a wonderful listening experience, that you'll want to repeat again and again.

"Ride all Night," the release's third track features Walker's versatility as it offers a chance for the artist to showcase his

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slide work and have some fun with a seductive theme. Lending support is the multi-talented Reese Wynans (of Stevie Ray Vaughn and Double Trouble) on piano and Hammond B-3.

Learning to play the guitar by age eight, Joe Louis Walker is credited with recording over 20 albums in his career beginning with "Cold Is the Night," on the High Tone label back in 1983 and now with "Hellfire," with Alligator Records. There's no telling what he has coming up next.

Originally from San Francisco, and born on Christmas day back in 1949, Walker is no new-comer to the blues music industry. For decades he's performed around the globe, but might be better known for his early days honing his craft. Moreover, Walker learned from countless hours of playing with the greats. Most notable was his relationship with Chicago born Michael Bloomberg and countless others who are connected to the world of Blues music.

Another side to Walker's career includes a stint in the gospel arena. His talents in this genre come through loud and clear on the sixth song on "Hellfire," simply named "Soldier for Jesus." I find the strength of Walker's vocals really come from within. He really seems to be enjoying the opportunity to spread the gospel with The Jordanares (of Elvis Presley, Patsy Cline, Ricky Nelson, and Jim Reeves) who help out background vocals.

Walker slows things down a bit with his soulful "I Know Why." Complementing this track is a nicely arranged horn section comprised of Matt White on trumpet, Roy Agee on trombone and Max Abrams on Saxophone.

"Too Drunk to Drive Drunk," is another example of what I reference as foot stomping blues rock n' roll. Add in the steady beat of drummer Tom Hambridge (of Buddy Guy, B.B. King, Johnny Winter, and Lynyrd Skynyrd) and you've got yourself a catchy tune that is sure to get its share of attention.

Trying once again to expound on his gospel days Walker's up-tempo "Black Girls," shows the fire and pure energy that remains inside this singer's heart. With it he serves up another example of how versatile and willing he is with his music.

The last two selections on "Hellfire," being "Don't Cry," and "Movin' On," serve perfectly. They help conclude what I believe is a wonderful CD full of life and outstanding sound. Much credit has to go out to Bruce Iglauer and his staff for tapping into the endless talents of one Joe Louis Walker. Once you get a chance to listen to "Hellfire," I think you'll agree!



Etta James in 2009

Photo by Rick Diamond/Getty Images

Etta James is Gone Too Soon By Sandy Hannum

American singing legend Etta James died on January 20 of leukemia. She was well-known and loved across many genres, including blues, jazz, rock and roll, gospel, soul, and R&B.

She was born Jamesetta Hawkins in 1938 in Los Angeles to a 14-year-old mother and a father she never knew. The story goes that the famous pool shark "Minnesota Fats" might have been her father, but he could never confirm or deny the claim. She was raised by another couple known as "Sarge" and "Mama Lu." Her early singing experiences were with gospel music in a church choir.

Her real mother came back into her life in 1950 when Mama Lu died. They went to San Francisco where Jamesetta was drawn into the R&B music scene. At the age of 14 she formed a girl group called the Creolettes. Johnny Otis took notice of the group and helped them sign with Modern Records, changing their name to the Peaches. Otis also changed Jamesetta to Etta James. In 1955 they had their first big hit with "Roll with Me, Henry."

In 1960 Etta signed with Chess records and had several R&B hits. In 1961 she released "At Last" which was to become her signature song. In the mid-sixties she released the blues classics "Tell Mama" and "I'd Rather Go Blind", two of my personal favorites. She continued to record with Chess records, and performed live at many festivals throughout the sixties and early seventies.

From 1978 to 1988 her career was at a standstill while she struggled with drug and alcohol addiction. However, Etta was able to pull herself up and get back on the scene and all the way to the top. She worked on several different rock and roll, R&B, and jazz projects, including a tribute album called "Mystery Lady: Songs of Billie Holiday."
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In 1999 she released "Life, Love & the Blues" and in 2002 she released "Matriarch of the Blues" both of which were nominated for awards. In 2001 she was inducted into the Blues Hall of Fame. In 2004 she released "Let's Roll" which won Best Contemporary Blues Album.

Etta James received the Soul/Blues Female Artist of the Year award from the Blues Foundation nine times. Rolling Stone magazine has included Etta James on their list of 100 Greatest Artists of All Time. Artists who have noted the influence of Etta James on their work include Christina Aguilera, Janis Joplin, Shemekia Copeland, and Joss Stone.

Etta James created great pleasure with her voice and touched many lives. She will be sorely missed.



Danny & The Devils

Photo by T. Johnson/Mod Shots 2010

Danny & The Devils Headed Back to Champaign By Lorri Coey

The power blues trio, Danny & the Devils, are headed our way on March 2 for the First Friday Blues series.

Danny Baron, guitar and vocals, Mark Bonasera, percussion, and Kramer, bass and vocals, put out a big sound, in fact, much bigger than most trios.

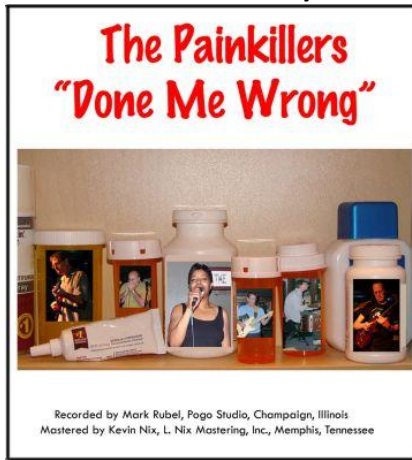
The Electro Glide recording artists are based in Chicago and feature high energy originals as well as more mellow grooves. Their influences include BB King and Buddy Guy, of course, but also The Allman Brothers, Beatles and Rolling Stones.

You can check out their style on Reverbnation:

<http://www.reverbnation.com/dannyandthedevils>

Danny & the Devils will be at WEFT at 8 pm for the Blues Live show and then head up to Memphis on Main for their live show. Stay tuned for information about an opening act.

The Painkillers – “Done Me Wrong” CD Release Party



The Painkillers are excited to release their new CD “Done Me Wrong” and are having a party to celebrate the release with their friends and fans. Their CD Release Party will be Saturday February 11 from 6 to 9pm at The Iron Post, 120 S. Race St. in Urbana. There promises to be lots of Friends, Cake, Music and Brews.

The International Blues Challenge By Bob Paleczny

What do you get when you gather 110 bands and 80 solo/duo performers from around the world, together with thousands of blues fans in Memphis, TN., the Home of the Blues? You get the International Blues Challenge. It kicked off with an International Showcase on Tuesday Jan. 31 and both the band and solo/duo finals will wrap up the challenge on Saturday February 4.

Every year the Blues Foundation hosts a challenge to find the best up and coming blues band and solo/duo act, from among those that win their local competitions run by their affiliated local Blues Societies. It's a tremendous chance for artists, music industry representatives, Blues Society members and fans to get together and network. It's a chance to learn about new bands and performers, learn tips from other Blues Societies and meet old friends. There's four days of competition that take place in about 20 venues all within a four block area of historic Beale Street in Memphis. There are late night jams hosted by some of the big name blues pros that highlight many of the best new competitors. Mix in some great food from Memphis ribs to great BBQ and delta tamales and a few beverages of your choice and you've got the makings for a great weekend.

Central Illinois will be well represented at the IBC. Prairie Crossroads Blues Society's own entry, Hurricane Ruth, put on a great 1st Friday Blues show at WEFT 90.1FM and Memphis on Main Jan. 6th. As you recall they won the PCBS IBC competition on Oct. 22nd. They've been working hard on their original tunes and honing their skills at other live performances around (Continued in next column)

the area. Led by vocalist Ruth LaMaster they play power blues that will blow you away. They have been signed to appear at Champaign Blues Brews & BBQ's coming up June 29 and 30th, as well as several other area festivals this summer. They hope to have their debut CD ready by the time they arrive in Memphis.

The Sugar Prophets, from Champaign-Urbana, after advancing to the finals in last year's competition are headed back. This time they're representing the River City Blues Society in Peoria. They had a great Send-Off Party/Fundraiser at Memphis on Main Jan. 29th to help them on their way to the competition. They are a strong five member band, led by front man Josh Spence on vocals and harmonica. Guitarists A.J. "Apple Jack" Williams and Joe Asselin trade off lead guitar riffs and both sing lead vocals on occasion. Joe will also pick up his harmonica and join Josh on a song or two. The band is backed by a solid rhythm section featuring Kevin Wilson on bass and Aaron "A Train" Wilson on drums.

Tombstone Bullet is the entry from the Illinois Central Blues Club in Springfield. They're a six-member band that plays hard-drivin' blues and features two powerhouse vocalists. They play blues in the traditions of Albert Collins, Luther Allison, Susan Tedeschi, Janiva Magness and Son Seals. Also going from the ICBC in Springfield, keyboardist Robert Sampson will compete in the solo/duo category. In 2008 Sampson made it to the final in the solo/duo classification.

The Blues Expressions won the band competition at the IBC Challenge put on by the Decatur Blues Society. The Blues Expressions were formed in 2007 by bassist Adrian Meux, Sr. They feature a great rhythm section, outstanding guitar work and great vocals and horns. In the solo/duo category DBS will be represented by John "The Doctor" & "Magic" Frank. This Chicago-area duo play a variety of styles from acoustic delta guitar and harp to a grittier Maxwell Street electric style.

The IBC is truly something that every blues fan should experience. If you can't make it to Memphis, check our Facebook page. We'll try to keep you posted on how the bands from central Illinois are doing.

Corporate Sponsorships

We greatly appreciate our Corporate Sponsors for supporting the PCBS with their funds and their missions.

Memphis on Main regularly brings impressive Blues talent to Champaign.

Fluid Events brings the Urbana Blues, Brews, and BBQs festival to town every summer, along with other Blues music events throughout the year.

Skins-N-Tins Drum Shop provided a drum set for use in the Prairie Crossroads Blues Society IBC challenge.

Donors

We are grateful to the following individuals and businesses that have provided donations to support the work of the Prairie Crossroads Blues Society.

Cody Sokolski and Marci Dodds
One Main Development, LLC
Slumberland Furniture
SuperValu

Band Memberships

Alex Jenkins & the Bombers are playing in Danville at the Friendly Tavern on the 12th and Ike's Bar on the 25th.

The Diva and the Dude are our newest member band. Check out their web pages!

The Kilborn Alley Blues Band has been doing lots of traveling around the states. Their new CD "Four" hit the #1 spot on the Living Blues radio charts in December. Way to go!

King's Highway are playing at Jack's Tavern in Tolono on the 4th, and the Pink House in Ogden on the 11th.

The Sugar Prophets are going to Memphis for the IBCs! We wish them all the best in the competition and hope everything goes great on their trip.

The Sweet Wood Band is playing at the Galveston Steakhouse and Blues Club in Michigan City, IN on the 11th.

The Painkillers have a new CD called "Done Me Wrong." Celebrate with them and get yourself a copy at their CD release party February 11 at the Iron Post from 6 to 9 pm.

Timmy D & Blind Justice are playing at the Stop in Urbana on the 16th.

Prairie Crossroads Board of Directors

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PCBS Business

The next Prairie Crossroads Blues Society Meeting is scheduled for 7:30 pm on February 15 in room 222 of the Champaign Public Library.

Inclusive, a newsletter of the PCBS, is always looking for new contributors and submissions of finished or unfinished content. Deadline for the next newsletter is February 25. Please submit articles, ideas, or comments to smhannum@gmail.com.

Inclusive Staff

Editor: Sandy Hannum

Writers for This Issue: Rich Cibelli
Lorri Coey
Sandy Hannum
Bob Paleczny

Tech Consultant: Bob Paleczny and BP Computers
Mojo Tech: Sherry Cibelli

It may be time to renew your membership in the PCBS! Check the date on your membership card. You can renew online using PayPal.

Mt. Bluesmore



Hey, Muddy! It's IBC time again.

Yeah! And we've got some great local bands from central Illinois going to compete. The competition is going to be fierce and wonderful to behold.

I wouldn't miss it for anything!

EVENTS

Feb 1 – The Blues Foundation International Blues Challenge – Memphis, TN – 4 pm

Kilborn Alley Blues Band – D.R. Digger’s – Champaign – 9 pm

Feb 2 – The Blues Foundation International Blues Challenge – Memphis, TN – 4 pm

Feb 3 – Kilborn Alley Blues Band – Chicago Blues Roots Revue – Rum Boogie Cafe – Memphis, TN – 2 pm

The Blues Foundation International Blues Challenge – Memphis, TN – 6 pm

The Blues Deacons – The Travel Lodge – Springfield, IL – 8 pm

Triple Shot – Donnie’s Homespun Pizza – Decatur, IL – 8 pm

The Beeson Brothers – Illinois Brewing Co. – Bloomington, IL – 10 pm

Feb 4 – The Blues Foundation International Blues Challenge – Memphis, TN – 1 pm

King’s Highway – Jack’s Tavern – Tolono, IL – 9 pm

Feb 6 – Matt O’Ree Band – the Alamo – Springfield, IL – 8 pm

Feb 10 – Billy Galt – Katz Piano Bar – Decatur, IL 7 pm

Feb 11 – The Painkillers – CD Release Party – The Iron Post – Urbana – 6 pm

Sweet Wood Band – Galveston Steakhouse & Blues Club – Michigan City, IN – 8 pm

Kilborn Alley Blues Band – Player’s Pub – Bloomington, IN – 9 pm

King’s Highway – The Pink House – Ogden, IL – 9 pm

Triple Shot – Paco’s Sol Bistro – Decatur, IL – 9 pm

Feb 12 – Deak Harp – Douglas Heart Nature Center – Mattoon, IL – 3 pm

Alex Jenkins & the Bombers – The Friendly Tavern – Danville, IL – 4 pm

Roy Marcelin Memorial Show featuring Candy Foster, Kilborn Alley, Jim “Junior” Angel Trio, and members of Razor Sharp and the Sugar Prophets – The Iron Post – Urbana – 7-10 pm

Feb 13 – Hurricane Ruth – The Alamo – Springfield, IL – 8 pm

Feb 16 – Matt O’Ree Band w/Timmy D. & Blind Justice – The Stop – Urbana – 7 pm

Feb 17 – Billy Galt – Katz Piano Bar – Decatur, IL – 7 pm
Tombstone Bullet – South Side Pub – Springfield, IL – 9 pm

Feb 20 – The Distillery – The Alamo – Springfield, IL – 8 pm

Feb 25 – Tombstone Bullet – Walnut Street Winery – Rochester, IL – 7 pm

Alex Jenkins & the Bombers – Ike’s Bar – Danville, IL – 9 pm

Feb 27 – The Blues Deacons – The Alamo – Springfield, IL – 8 pm

Mar 1 – The Sugar Prophets – Cowboy Monkey – Blues Jam – Champaign – 9:30 pm

Mar 2 – The Blues Deacons – The Travel Lodge – Springfield, IL – 8 pm

Mar 5 – Blue Monday at the Alamo – Springfield, IL – 8 pm

Mar 7 – Kilborn Alley Blues Band – D.R. Digger’s – Champaign – 9 pm

Mar 10 – Little Ed & the Blues Imperials w/ Tombstone Bullet – Knights of Columbus – 7:30 pm

Timmy D. & Blind Justice w/Cocobutter Kids – Boomerang – Urbana – 8 pm

Mar 12 – Todd Wolfe – The Alamo – Springfield, IL – 8 pm

Mar 16 – Timmy D. & Blind Justice w/King’s Highway – Memphis on Main – Champaign – 8:30 pm

Mar 17 – Timmy D. & Blind Justice w/Lou Dibello Band – Cowboy Monkey – Champaign – 8 pm

Triple Shot – Bourbon Barrel – Decatur, IL – 8 pm

Mar 18 – King’s Highway – Elbo Room – Chicago – 8 pm

Mar 19 – Blue Monday at the Alamo – Springfield, IL – 8 pm

Mar 26 – Blue Monday at the Alamo – Springfield, IL – 8 pm

Mar 31 – The Blues Deacons – The Trading Post – Springfield, IL – 9 pm

Apr 2 – Blue Monday at the Alamo – Springfield, IL – 8 pm

Apr 4 – Kilborn Alley Blues Band – D.R. Digger’s – Champaign – 9 pm

Apr 5 – Deak Harp – Krannert Uncorked – Krannert Center – Urbana – 5 pm

The Sugar Prophets – Blues Jam – Cowboy Monkey – Champaign – 9:30 pm

Apr 6 – The Blues Deacons – The Travel Lodge – Springfield, IL – 8 pm

Apr 7 – King’s Highway – The Pink House – Ogden, IL – 9 pm

Apr 9 – Blue Monday at the Alamo – Springfield, IL – 8 pm

Apr 11 – Deak Harp – Red’s Lounge – Clarksdale, MS – 9 pm

Apr 16 – Blue Monday at the Alamo – Springfield, IL – 8 pm

Apr 23 – Blue Monday at the Alamo – Springfield, IL – 8 pm

Apr 28 – The Blues Deacons – The Pink House – Ogden, IL – 8:30 pm

Apr 30 – Blue Monday at the Alamo – Springfield, IL – 8 pm