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Music Maker Relief Foundation, Inc. is a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping the true pioneers and forgotten heroes of Southern musical traditions gain recognition and meeting their day-to-day needs. Today, many such musicians are living in extreme poverty and need food, shelter, medical care, and other assistance. Music Maker's aid and service programs improve the quality of recipients' lives. Our work affirms to these artists that we value the gifts of music and inspiration they have delivered to the world. Our mission is to give back to the roots of American music.

Our criterion for recipients is that they be rooted in a Southern musical tradition, be 55 years or older and have an annual income less than \$18,000.

Music Maker Relief Foundation, Inc. is a tax exempt, public charity under IRS code 501(c)3.

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**Music Maker Programs**

- **Life Maintenance** - Grants for necessities such as food, medical needs, housing, etc.
- **Instrument Acquisition** - Provides quality instruments and maintenance funds to recipient musicians.
- **Tour Support** - Provides funding and services to musicians wishing to tour and record.
- **Emergency Relief** - Substantial one-time grants to recipients in crisis (medical, fire, theft, etc.)
- **Visiting Artist Program** - Brings artists to our headquarters for professional development and assessment of needs.

**MUSIC MAKER**  
 The Official Newsletter of the Music Maker Relief Foundation  
 Spring 2004  
 Vol. 10, No. 2

# BEVERLY "Guitar" WATKINS

*Story and Art by Gary Dumm*

THROUGH THE YEARS AND A SUCCESSION OF ODD JOBS (CAR WASH SIGS AND CLEANING HOMES AND OFFICES) SHE SPENT HER WEEKENDS PLAYING GUITAR AT SHOWS.

BEVERLY ROCKED - ONLY NOW WHEN SHE ROCKS, SHE'S SINGING THE BLUES AND PLAYING LEAD GUITAR LIKE A MAN...

©COPYRIGHT 2004 BY GARY DUMM

BEVERLY "GUITAR" WATKINS WAS BORN ON APRIL 6, 1939, IN ATLANTA, GEORGIA TO A GOSPEL BEAT. AND DUE TO THE MUSICAL INFLUENCE OF HER GRAND-FATHER'S FRONT PORCH BANJO AND THE HAYES SISTERS (HER SINGING AUNTIES) BY 1958 SHE WAS PLAYING RHYTHM GUITAR AND BASS WITH BILLY WEST STONE AND THE DOWNBEATS BLUES/JAZZ GROUP.

GLADYS KNIGHT WENT TO OUR SCHOOL AND SHE WAS THE MAJORETTE. ANYWAY, I ROCKED ON, KEPT GOING.

4  
2K4

AFTER BEVERLY MET PIANO RED SHE BECAME PART OF A BLUES OUTFIT LATER TO GAIN FAME AS "DR. FEELGOOD" AND THE INTERNS. IN THE EARLY SIXTIES THE BEATLES DUG SONGS OF THEIRS LIKE "RIGHT STRING BUT THE WRONG YO-YO" AND "DR. FEELGOOD" ...AND THE INTERNS ROCKED ON, ROCKED ON, KEPT GOING...

A GAL PLAYING LEAD LIKE A MAN... STILL ANOMALY ENOUGH TO DRAW THE ATTENTION AND DISBELIEF OF SOME AUDIENCE MEMBERS, WHO, HEARING HER SHOW QUICKLY BECAME AVID FANS.

BEVERLY SAYS: I KEPT ON, UNDERSTAND.

# Celebrate!

# 10 YEARS OF KEEPING THE BLUEST OF THE BLUES ALIVE!

*Bringing artists together and giving everyone a sense of a musical community has long been part of our mission.*



Willa Mae Buckner, Carl Rutherford, Frank Edwards, Macavine Hayes, Haskell Thompson, Sara, Captain Luke, Cora Mae Bryant, Cootie Stark, Mudcat, Tim Duffy, Pinnacle, NC ©Austin

## Helpful Party Hints

*Here are a few hints for your party. For further information go to [musicmaker.org](http://musicmaker.org) and download the **HOST PACK***

These parties are all about raising money, not spending it, so we know you'll want to keep costs as low as possible. Here are some items to keep in mind when developing your budget, and some suggestions for how to minimize your costs:

**Graphic design and invitation printing:** Use MMRF's sample invitation and flyer, which you can download in a PDF format and customize with the details of your party. Go to [musicmaker.org](http://musicmaker.org).

**Postage:** The Post Office won't donate its services, but you can save money by using email, hand-delivering invitations to friends, neighbors and coworkers, and posting flyers in semipublic places (local shops, the gym, churches, schools, etc.). Of course, please get permission before posting flyers.

**Catering (food, soft drinks, alcohol):** Ask friends to bring food or beverages, or ask local supermarkets, restaurants and liquor stores to donate some items.

**Advertising:** Approach the radio stations and newspapers in your area and ask for donated ads. Every media outlet routinely has last-minute space available (when an advertiser cancels, for instance), and most will consider donating the ad space to a worthy cause. Don't forget to approach weekly papers or local "shoppers" which are even more likely to help out by giving you a free ad or running a story on your party.

Also, think of non-traditional places that might donate an ad or run a story: employee newsletters, church bulletins, school papers, alumni magazines, gym-club newsletters and so on.

**Rental of party location:** Most likely you'll hold the party in a private home or restaurant or bar, and won't have to pay anything for the space. If you do need to rent a party space, try to get the owner to donate or discount the rental (it's tax deductible). Also try to get extras like security, bartenders and sound equipment thrown in for free.

**Decorations, props and signage:** Hand-made is the best, and cheapest option. If you do need something more, balloons are festive and cheap.

**Rental of tables, chairs, glasses, etc.:** Again, only the largest parties will need to rent these items. If you need them, ask caterers, restaurants, and other businesses to lend them to you.

**Music:** CDs are easy and easily accessible. Plus this would be a great time to showcase your MM Collection. If you want live music: ask around about up-and-coming local groups, who might be willing to play for free.

**In short, be creative — and ask lots of people and businesses for their help. Getting local businesses to donate products and services can eliminate many of these expenses. Keep a record of who donates what, and the value of the donation; MMRF can provide them a tax receipt.**

Commemorating ten years of keeping the bluest of the blues alive by illuminating and lifting up the forgotten pioneers of the blues, Music Maker is asking supporters to host a year of fundraising parties. Please consider hosting a Music Maker 10th Birthday Bash in your city or town!

The idea is based on a fundraising party series that Tori Amos has successfully set into motion for RAINN in recent years. Music Maker is a non-profit organization and presently takes no government funding or endorsements. So, small individual donations and grassroots events like the Birthday Bash are the lifeblood of the Foundation. Without the help of supporters, there wouldn't be any way for Music Maker to continue providing the essential financial help to all of its valuable artists, many of which can't survive on social security alone from year to year.

The basic idea of the Birthday Bash is for supporters to organize and throw individual birthday parties raising money for the Foundation. We encourage supporters to make this a late spring and all summer fun-time event, but it certainly can extend into autumn or winter. We expect most supporters to hold parties in their homes, with some bigger parties in restau-

rants, clubs, coffeehouses, and the list could go on... the more creative you get in the planning, the greater your results will be. There are no limits.

Another determining factor in your success will be the organization that goes into the event. There is a lot of information in our online Host Pack to get you started. Each organizer will set a fundraising goal and ticket prices for their party. Music Maker hopes that each party will shoot for a goal of at least \$1,500, though any amount raised will certainly be welcome. Music Maker will be offering incentives to anyone who meets their goal.

Sharing the love of the music and bringing people together has been what has kept Music Maker alive these first ten years, we hope that these events will allow more folks to

share that joy.

We hope these parties may become annual gatherings that people will come to look forward to.

If you are interested in sponsoring a party, you can contact Amy Nolan through e-mail: [info@musicmaker.org](mailto:info@musicmaker.org) or via telephone: (919) 643-2456. You'll receive a packet of information giving you all the specifics and also generating fundraising ideas for your party.



## Dear Friends,

When I first met Guitar Gabriel and Willa Mae Buckner they were both in ill health. My first request was from a family friend for a few cases of Ensure (a nourishment drink) for these artists. Denise and I were living in a tiny house on the outskirts of Winston-Salem, NC at the time. I will never forget that big truck backing down our driveway and unloading two-pallet loads of Ensure. I was soon delivering this life sustaining drink by the caseloads to Willa and Gabe. The effect was staggering, within weeks they both had gained some weight and had energy to perform. For the rest of their lives MMRF was able to provide such basic support to these important artists.

Many of the artists we serve are living on the lowest end of Social Security, and some artists receive absolute nothing at all. So when MMRF can help an artist through our Life Maintenance Program with say \$200 per month, in many cases we elevate an artists income by 50%. I can tell you that this truly makes a difference in someone's life. We have never abandoned an artist we have started on such support.

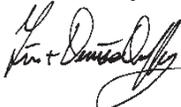
There is nothing unique about poverty, but the musicians we serve are some of the most wonderfully talented, awe inspiring, musicians one would ever hope to meet. These are truly special people with a so much to offer yet their talents are hidden in pockets of our society that are far from view from one's usual day to day.

It has been our mission for the last 10 years to locate such men and women and to illuminate their music for the world to cherish. By nurturing these folks along the way their art has brought change, enlightenment and joy to our nation. In our small way we have helped build bridges which bring people from all walks of life together, all with the common bond of the love of the music and the artists that create it.

There is not room enough on these pages to reflect on all the accomplishments of the last decade. We are blessed to have worked alongside over 100 artists who have been with us through the good times and the hard.

It is time to celebrate this Music Maker milestone. We are asking everyone to throw a party and raise funds for our mission. Whether five people get together and raise \$25 or a group of friends raise \$200,000 we need your contributions so we can maintain and grow our programs. These events should be fun for everyone involved. Please let us know if we can be of any assistance.

With Warm Regards,



Tim and Denise Duffy



Guitar Gabriel, Port Townsend, WA © Gallagher

Guitar Gabriel was the artist that got Music Maker started. His artistry was of true genius. His recordings are magnificent and remain some of the most imaginative country blues recordings ever to come from the Carolinas.



Othar Turner and Sharday, Aliceville, AL

© Duffy

MM sponsored Othar to bring his group to Willie King's picnic one year. His grand daughter played the bamboo fife like a master. We are happy to see that she recently recorded with Corey Harris on his new CD.

up to be on his email list at [Abereid@abereid.com](mailto:Abereid@abereid.com).

We are delighted to be introduced to Willie "Sonny Boy" King of Haynesville, Alabama. Willie performs in the seldom-heard one-man band style.

Tommy Brown of Atlanta, Georgia is a new MM recipient. Tommy was an integral part of Atlanta's rhythm and blues scene of the late 40s. Tommy is an incredible singer, dancer, songwriter, producer and comedian. He recorded in the 50s for labels such as Savoy, King, Dot, United, Groove and Imperial and in his day had a #1 Billboard hit, "Weepin' & Cryin'." Tommy recently lost everything in a house fire and we were able to make a contribution. Tommy has a classic CD of his old hits and a new release. Contact Tommy at [Thomas.a.brown@worldnet.net](mailto:Thomas.a.brown@worldnet.net).

Willie King is preparing his 21st Annual Blues Festival in Aliceville, Alabama. For the last several years it has been called The Freedom Creek Blues & Gospel Festival. MMRF has proudly supported this event for the last 7 years. The festival brings people together from all walks of life. Willie and the Rural Members Association, a 501 (C) 3 non profit organization, are seeking support to stage this event created to bring forth harmony and love. This event is scheduled for June the 5th. Please send your contributions to: Rural Members Association, 791 Old Memphis Road, Aliceville, AL 35442.

Banjo playing innovator Billy Faier now resides in Terlingua, Texas. He recently donated his archive of recordings to the Southern Folklife Collection at UNC Chapel Hill.

Dave McGrew is making a quick trip out to Hillsborough to perform at the Shakori Hills Grass Roots Festival and to put cedar shingles on the MM offices that were recently donated to us by Chris Sewall of Lebanon, Maine.



Dave McGrew, War, VA

©Kustner

Cora Mae Bryant of Oxford, GA is doing well, writing new songs and has been playing the guitar in which she has developed her own very unique style.

Clyde Langford, Beverly "Guitar" Watkins, Lee Gates, Mudcat, and the late Mr. Frank Edwards all have new CDs!

Beverly Watkins is a minister of music at St. Luke Baptist Missionary Church in the neighbor-

hood of Vine City in Atlanta, GA and is supported by a six-year old boy, Brendon Stevens who is a prodigy of the drums. Brendon been tutored by Dan Witner. Beverly invites everyone to join her on Sundays at her church.

For the music that she makes and the traditions she keeps alive, Etta Baker received the 2003, North Carolina Award for Fine Arts-the highest civilian honor given by the state for a lifetime of achievement in the fields of public service, fine arts, science, and literature.

Beverly "Guitar" Watkins' Red Fender Mustang Guitar was recently stolen in Atlanta, GA. If you know anything about this please contact us.

## Music Maker News

Many of our CDs are now available on I-tunes.

The Chicken Raid honoring Mr. Frank Edwards was an incredible weekend!

Ken Ray is our webmaster and he does an excellent job! Check out our site, Ken keeps it current, easy to use and navigate. Ken truly helps out MM, so if anyone out there needs a webmaster, we highly recommend our friend.

The 11th Annual Texas Film Festival gave our short doc. Film "Living the Blues" their "Directors Choice Award."

Emily Huffman our booking coordinator has headed out to San Francisco. She did an incredible job securing work for MM artists. We are presently seeking artist representation with an agency. Anyone have any leads for us, please send them on.

Check out [www.deltaimages.net](http://www.deltaimages.net)

Bill Lucado's recent staging of Taj Mahal, Mudcat, Derek Trucks, Jimmy Herring, Kester Smith, Bill Rich and Sammy Blue on the beaches of Zancudo, Costa Rica was among the most dreamlike and visionary concerts witnessed in a long time.

We are close to issuing our 50th CD. Recently we counted another 45 albums we have recorded and ready to go. We plan on paying tribute to Mr. Frank Edwards with our summer record club.

We are sorry to say that the Roots on 9th Festival will not happen this year. This free event on the streets of historic Durham was truly a jewel example of a grass-roots festival, featuring largely Music Maker artists of our region. We hope that we can raise awareness and sponsorship in the coming months so that this event is kickin' next year. If any corporation wants to help sponsor this event next May please contact us.

We are always seeking interns here at our headquarters. Mats Lemberger of Dartmouth College is interning with us from September through January. We are searching for housing for Mats during this time.

We are seeking inexpensive housing for an artist in the Orange, Durham, Person County, NC region. Please contact us if you have any leads.

If you are a skilled graphic artist willing to donate their efforts to design CD art please contact Amy Nolan here at MM.

## Artist Notes

Butch Ruth of MS wrote to us about Lili' Bill Wallace a blues singer/guitarist down there. Butch writes that he has a big history that is not really appreciated.

Little Freddie King was recognized by the seven member New Orleans City Council and presented a Proclamation from the City by Oliver Thomas, chairman of the council. They are recognizing him as a Cultural treasure - blues master and one of the giants in New Orleans music for over fifty years. Also of note is that Little Freddie King has



Music Maker House ©Duffy  
Kari, friend of Dave McGrew and Larry Shores, from Washington State, made this miniature Music Maker house. Look closely and you will see the Mr. Q mailbox as well as many other Music Maker icons. Thanks for this great piece of art!

recently recorded a CD for Fat Possum Records.

Abe Reid has been helping us with our work with musicians since 1988. He is a real deal authentic young Carolina musician, straight from the heart of the bible-belt of Southern music. Abe is an awesome singer, harpist and guitarist and has offered his music to MMRF. We are hoping to schedule a recording session this year. Abe has just completed a fantastic CD and maintains a constant performing schedule with his road seasoned band The Spikedrivers. Sign

## Cool John Ferguson Band of the Month Interview reprinted from the Independent Weekly, February 25 – March 2, 2004

You could see it build. With each Saturday night that Cool John Ferguson, a native of St. Helena Island off the South Carolina coast and now based in Durham, performed at the All People Grill in North Durham, the crowd grew exponentially until it was no longer a surprise to see cars parked in the adjoining filed and folks flowing out of both of the Grill's doors. What draws the masses is guitar hero Ferguson's no-boundaries blend of blues, rock, jazz, even country, and true to his nickname, a certain intangible cool. The Independent Weekly spoke to Cool John Ferguson about his earliest days, his guitar style, and the Music Maker Relief Foundation.

**IW:** According to your Web site, you began playing guitar at the age of 3. What are your earliest guitar memories?

**CJF:** My earliest memories are probably from the year before I started first grade, but they say I've been playing since I was three. I believe it, because my mom used to do domestic housework on Parris Island. The man of the family was transferred to Okinawa, so they gave her a Harmony guitar because, you know, they couldn't take it. So she brought it home and put it up in the closet. There was just something mystical about it. I'd go up in the closet when she was at work, standing up on chairs and stuff, and take it down. I got spanked for it three or four times. Then one day she came home, and I was sitting out on the porch actually playing a song, "Just a Closer Walk with Thee." She said "My God, I believe this boy is gonna play this guitar." So she stopped spanking me and gave it to me.



Cool John Ferguson, All People Grill show sponsored by the Independent Weekly. ©Jon Gardner

**IW:** You have a unique way of playing – both the way you physically hold the guitar and the music that comes from it. If possible, can you put into words how you play guitar?

**CJF:** The way I play, I'm left handed, and that first guitar was for a right-handed guitar player. With being a lefty from birth, I just flipped it over and strummed it the way it was. I've been playing that way ever since. At first, I started playing in a thing called open E, an open E tuning. Then I advanced from there to standard tuning, and I've mastered them both. Plus, I have my won little thing that I haven't shown anybody, my won little private tuning.

it as anybody.

By the time I heard that record, I was the product of a hellish life: a mother who killed herself with her own gun, years locked up, the whole nine yards. I was waiting for the Blues, and when it came I finally came home and finally realized that I really could be not just a musician, but a good enough musician that I could make others happy by being one. That's all I ever wanted, and I will always say thank you to New Orleans for bringing me to this point.

On this twenty-fourth Mardi Gras of mine, I am still mourning the deaths this past few months of both James Durant, who played sax in my band and whose wonderful song "You Gonna Get It" graces our first CD, Grasshopper Pie, and who also played for years as both sax and vocalist with Rebirth Brass Band, as well as the passing of Tuba Fats. Tuba was Anthony Lacien (hope I'm spelling it right) and aside from being one of New Orleans' most cherished musical treasures, was also one of the oldest consistent street musicians in this city. Tuba Fats played with me way back when, early nineties at the Maple Leaf, and I'll miss him dearly. The significance of his passing, to me, is the fact that now I am one of the oldest street musicians in New Orleans. Tuba came before me, as did David and Rosylyn, but to my knowledge there isn't anyone else who's been around as long. I know this probably means next to nothing, but to me, with all the memories, all the joy, the sadness, the good times and bad, well, yes, it does mean something.

I've been spit on, had eggs and drinks tossed in my face, ridiculed, ripped off, harassed by cops, treated like dirt so many times I can't begin to be fazed any more by just about anything negative aimed my way behind me playing out there. I've seen it all, been there and done that, been hurt so many times, for absolutely no reason other than the fact that I'm sitting there

**IW:** Your abilities and improvisational skills can leave players and nonplayers with a sense of awe. Are there any guitar players that have that effect on you? Who are some of your favorite musicians?

**CJF:** One of my inspirations was the late, great Jimi Hendrix. I got into Hendrix because he did more stuff with a guitar that I've ever heard in my natural life. A lot of his chords was stuff that I'd come up with during my developmental years in the early '60s, and he just got a break, a lucky break. But that didn't stop me. I played

gospel in churches for years. I did a lot of weddings, funerals, what have you. I just play music, you know. Right now I'm playing the blues simply because I was into the religious circuit, and it just didn't pay as much. And I've always wanted to be a musician, so I have to choose the most lucrative scenario. But my heard in deeply rooted in gospel because I acknowledge the fact that my talent comes from God.

**IW:** You are closely affiliated with the Music Maker Relief Foundation. Can you tell us about some of the Music Maker recordings with which you've been involved as well as the other work you do for Music Maker?

playing music. Most of the people who've perpetrated unkind acts have been those who, on the surface look like upstanding, "normal" folks. A lawyer in a three-piece suit stole a dollar bill and ran. Another lawyer in yet another red necktie simply punched me in the jaw and ran. Doctors and college football fans have been the most consistent as far as being generally snobbish, hateful and looking down on me. After seeing this, you might wonder why I still bother to play out there at all, especially if I already have inside gigs and a day job to pay the bills. Please allow me to end this letter by answering:

I'm still out there because you are, America, and despite your negative sides, the goodness and joy you've brought me far outweighs any bad memories I might have. Your three-year-old answered me when I sang "Mojo." Your mom danced when Cary sang the song she wrote about the rain on Dauphine Street. Wasn't it you that had tears in your own eyes as you threw a five dollar bill into my guitar case after we sang "Cowboy Song" for the five-hundredth time? My point is this, America: I started this letter out telling you how I came to be a part of this music called the Blues. Because of you and all the years you've supported me both spiritually and financially, many of those years playing straight up on the street, I finally became what I had dreamed and hoped to be for all those years. Thanks to your applause, all I have to do is be myself. I don't have to try and sound like a seventy-year-old guy on a porch in Mississippi. All I have to do is sound like me, and I truly believe that it is solely because of your collective love and support that I have been allowed to live what is, in solid fact, a dream come true. Please believe me now when I don't just say thanks to New Orleans; Because now I say "thanks, America," and I mean it, with all my heart. Aloha.

**CJF:** I've played with just about all the Music Maker artists, like Beverly "Guitar" Watkins. We just came back from Maine about two weeks ago, and that turned out great. The Winston cigarette company and Music Maker paid for a 32-city tour. We went to Las Vegas, we went to Los Angeles, we went all over the place doing shows. The founder of it (Music Maker), Tim Duffy, is a real swell guy. He's done a lot for my career, and I can never not mention his name. He was really despondent when Guitar Gabe died. He called me in Atlanta, and he was crying, "My best friend..." Gabe showed him the ropes of how to get into the little local drink houses and find the real blues in Winston-Salem and places like that. Anyway, when Gabe died, Tim said, "Hey, man, why don't you move up here. I'll get you some work." He said, "Stick with me, and I'll do what I can for you." And he has proven to be a very meaningful and helpful in his endeavors, and I've been sticking with Music Maker. I'm loyal to Music Maker.

And thank you guys for making me the Band of the Month. I finally saw the ad today, and I picked up about 100 copies. (laughs) It's really cool, you know?

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**April 17** - Little Freddie King at French Quarter Festival - New Orleans, LA [www.frenchquarterfestivals.org](http://www.frenchquarterfestivals.org)

**April 17** - Sisters of the South (opening for Percy Sledge) with Sweet Betty and Essie Mae Brooks at Columbia Green Community College 4400 Rt. 23, Hudson, NY 12534 Performing at 7 pm

**April 24** - Little Freddie King at New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival - New Orleans, LA [www.nojazzfestival.com](http://www.nojazzfestival.com)

**April 24** - John Dee Holeman's Birthday Join John Dee with friends Harvey Arnold and Billy Stevens for his 75th Birthday celebration! All People Grill, 6122 Guess Road, Durham 620-9591 9:30 pm. Cover: \$10

**April 30** - Cool John Ferguson - Pittsboro, NC, The Independent Weekly Best of the Best Party. Join Cool John and others from the triangle for a night of music at the Ferrington Farm, 2000 Ferrington Village Center Pittsboro, NC 27312, 919-542-1212

**May 22** - Cool John Ferguson, Hayti Heritage Center, Durham, NC.

**May 16** - Cool John Ferguson Wake County Arts Association, 5pm, apart of Annual outdoor concert series.

**June 5** - Willie King Freedom Creek Festival Old Memphis, Alabama The music will start at around noon and end at sundown. Bring your own food and drink, or buy fresh BBQ and sodas at the festival. Parking and camping space is available free of charge. This is going to be a great event! Admission: \$7

**June 13** - Morris Museum of art, Augusta, GA - Beverly "Guitar" Watkins. 2 pm 11 Tenth Street, Augusta, GA 706-724-7612. [www.themorris.org](http://www.themorris.org)

**July 4** - The Mississippi Valley Blues Festival Davenport, Iowa A host of MM artists will be performing at the festival including: 2:30 pm - Cootie Stark workshop 4 pm - Lee Gates 5:30 pm - Cootie Stark w/Taj Mahal 6 pm - Sweet Betty The event will be held at LeClaire Park Davenport, IA 563-322-5837

**July 10,11** - Ottawa Blues Fest, Ottawa, Canada Festival featuring Mudcat, Lee Gates, John Dee Holeman, Cool John Ferguson, and Beverly "Guitar" Watkins.

**July 10** - 9th Annual Fleet BluesFest, Albany, NY. Join Essie Mae Brooks and Cora Mae Bryant for this festival. [www.ogs.state.ny.us/plaza](http://www.ogs.state.ny.us/plaza)

**October 12 thru 17** - Little Freddie King at Nancy Jazz and Pulsation Festival Nancy, France [www.nancyjazzpulsations.com](http://www.nancyjazzpulsations.com)

## Letters From Louisiana By: Slewfoot

As I write this letter to all the wonderful people who support the Music Maker Relief Foundation, I realize that I'm going into my twenty-fourth Mardi Gras celebration as a resident of New Orleans, Louisiana. Oh, Lord, I feel old sometimes. I came here in 1980, right around Thanksgiving, not knowing a thing about Professor Longhair, the Wild Tchoupitoulas or the Wild Magnolias, both incredible, visually overwhelming "Mardi Gras Indian" tribes, and, to be very honest, knowing even less about the true histories involving most of the music that later came to totally shape and engulf my whole life. I learned, ya'll...

A freezing night in the lower ninth ward, on Charbonnet Street, while house-sitting for a friend, I found a Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee album: it had "Hole In The Wall." It had "Packin' Up, Getting Ready," as well as "Rock Island Line." Eight or nine hours and about a twelve-pack and a half later, the sun finally came up and this overjoyed me; sunrise meant I could finally turn the volume as high as I could get it. I had been turning the record over, listening to each side, all night. I couldn't stop. It was absolutely no different from a religious awakening: this was what I had been searching for all my life: not just searching but waiting for as well. "The Blues Done Got Me" was one of my earliest attempts at writing in this idiom.

I learned pretty quick that the Blues doesn't happen overnight. I made a fool out of myself many, many times before I even came close to sounding real. It took years for me to realize and accept the fact that no, I am not a seventy-year old African-American with a gravel voice and a broken bottle for a slide. On the other side of this coin is the solid fact that I truly have Blues running in my veins and I have as much right to sing it and play it and love it and share



## Jerry "Boogie" McCain "Boogie" is My Name



Boogie is My Name, the latest release by Jerry "Boogie"

McCain, boogies, bops, and boogaloes its way through ten of the most backbone slipping songs you ever wanna hear. Very rarely is one able to give the blues harp a voice as dirty and finger licking unique as Mr. McCain, who's been blowing since age five. And though the harp is the obvious highlight of the album, Mr. McCain's matter of fact celebratory demeanor and often-hilarious songs set a playful tone that make the album a good time on all sides, but his dynamite band with their bluesy swagger shouldn't go overlooked either. Ardie Dean on drums, Greg "Boom" Rowell on bass and acoustic guitar, Ralph "Salty" Lusian on electric guitar and organ, and Clay Swafford on piano all rock and roll in a easy going fashion that only serves to compliment Boogie's genius.

The title track, "Boogie is My Name," begins the album and declares a truth we already know to be self-evident but never hurts to be reiterated, especially by the man himself through gritty vocals and the usual blow your mind harmonica. "My New Next-Door Neighbor" takes a satirical jab at those neighbors who borrow you out of house and home only to return nothing. I wanna get to know "Big Butt Sara" and find out about that loving she's been laying down but Mr. McCain might not let me once he finds her. Slowing things down a bit after the first free-wheeling and rollicking three, the laid-back chinstroke, "Potato Patch" employs the frequent and applauded blues institution of sexual innuendo to the tune of head nods and devilish grins. The Saturday night hip shake groove of "House Party Boogie" sounds a slightly reminiscent tribute of John Lee Hooker's "House Rent Boogie," but with a much more feel good blues jam overtone. "Short Skirt and Big Legs" is a low-down juke joint swamp shout that sweats along to the tune of lord have mercy ain't she fine... All I can say for the "Lowdown Dirty Rat" that's been slinking around Mr. McCain's digs is that he'd better watch his sheet nibbling step, 'cause I'd hate to see what Boogie's capable of considering how bad he whoops it on the harp. In "Jimmyroll," Mr. McCain and his amazing band lay all their cards, even the aces up their sleeves, on the floorstomp tabletop for this ass-kicking joyful noise. "Cry'n Won't Do No Good" is a contemplative head hung low slow jam that reaches so far down you're wondering how to get back up until you hear the testifying organ roll for "Demons of My Body." Boogie bears witness to near nine minutes of true-life aggravating and death baiting ailments at the Old Stone Holiness Church in Vinemont, Alabama. This sanctifying amen session exorcizes whatever may be plaguing you—which I can, as the Right Reverend Boogie's witness, truthfully proclaim goes for the whole praise the blues and pass the harp, revelatin' album.

## Reviews by Mark Coltrain

Mark Coltrain has been of great service to the Music Maker Relief Foundation as an intern from the University of North Carolina Greensboro. Besides helping with the everyday chores of the office Mark has written a series of CD reviews and artist profiles.

## Frank Edwards Chicken Raid



Frank Edwards was on his way home after just finishing the last recording session for this album. As it turns out, this was the last recording session he'd ever grace because he suffered a heart attack during his car ride home.

He died shortly after being rushed to a nearby hospital in Greenville, S.C. just two days after his 93rd birthday on March 22, 2002. Even without that knowledge, *Chicken Raid* is one of the most haunting records I've heard in recent years...it is also one of the most powerful. *Chicken Raid's* ethereality will sneak up on you, hook you, and pull you in one hypnotic swoop. Whenever I listen to it, Mr. Edwards' music will not let me focus on anything else. I've used the term sophisticatedly simple before and I'll use it again with this work of art. The majority of the album is Mr. Edwards accompanying his wise old man Mose's voice with a gentle ebb and flow lulling along on guitar and harp. A few tracks recorded in Atlanta feature Mudcat on accompanying guitar and Janet Daniel on drums, and yet a few more features Cool John on a sandpapered understated drum shuffle.

You can divide the songs on this album into four solid although distinct sections, giving the album a circular structure much like the rhythm and lyrics of the blues it contains. "Chicken Raid," "When the Saints Go Marching In," and "Evil Woman" were all recorded in Atlanta back in 1996. The album's title track quietly proclaims some finger-shaking blues while swaggering you into the world of Mr. Edwards. He breathes incredibly probing depth often not found into "When the Saints Go Marching In" and socks it to the woman who put the whammy on him in "Evil Woman." "Gone with Another Man" continues the theme of that evil woman which seems to result in the 90 proof "Done Got Drunk." This song shuffles along preaching the gospel of a situation where many of us have been at one time or another. Both songs were recorded in Atlanta in 2001. "She's Mine," "My Baby Quit Me," "My Baby Gone," and "I Know He Shed His Blood" all come from his last recording session in Hillsborough in March of 2002. It's hard to believe these songs were recorded only two years ago because they could just have easily come from fifty years ago. Cool John Ferguson drums on these tracks giving these gritty songs a subtle beat that serves to compliment Mr. Edwards' weary traveler soulful blue sheen. It is also on these four tracks that he seems to outdo himself on his harp blowing, which stood out more than any of the low down dirty except for "I Know He Shed His Blood for Me." Like his version of "When the Saints Go Marching In," the otherworldly spirituality transcends all.

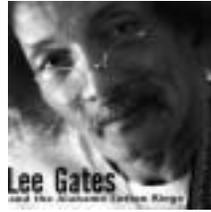
We are served a juicy sweet swaggering hunk of Mr. Edwards' early recordings for dessert on the final four tracks of *Chicken Raid*. "Sweet Man Blues," "Three Women Blues," "Terraplane Blues," and "We Got to Get Together" were recorded in the late 1930's and early 1940's, most likely for the Chicago-based Okeh label, although "Three Women Blues" was probably recorded in Memphis 1939. These early songs (with Washboard Sam accompanying) demonstrate that Mr. Edwards' proficiency and musicianship was as good back then as it is on his newer recordings. Out of this bunch, I must say the fast paced shuffle and clever lyricism of "We Got to Get Together" is my favorite and quite possibly the best representation of Mr. Edwards' charm and skill.

On the whole, this album ranks among the finest of the Music Maker recordings ever produced. With a professional career spanning 79 years, Frank Edwards was a true testament to the enduring influence of blues and a legend in his own time.

*Chicken Raid* is essential for every music collection.

# Music Maker's New Releases

## Lee Gates and the Alabama Cotton Kings



This first release by Milwaukee bluesman, Lee Gates leaves me panting and craving more. His relentless guitar attack has a distinct and unforgettable voice that begs the question, why in the world hasn't this magi-

cian been recorded before?

This self-titled album recorded (in only three hours!) at Mill Kids Studio in Huntsville, Alabama flows through and through with no outlandish attempts at surprise or fancy put-on frills. Its charm lies in its reliability and genuine house-rocking sound. Backing up Mr. Gates are "Nawlines" Bob Walters on bass and rhythm guitar, Lance Almon Smith on rhythm guitar and bass, Ardie Dean on drums, and of course Lee's guitar, Lucy. Mr. Gates and his unstoppable three soldiers in the army of the blues deliver on a combination of groove-infected raucous instruments like, "Sweet Lucy's Groove," "Lee's Boogie," "Lucy's Voodoo," and my personal favorite: the slow deep down swaggering shake your head, "Lucy's Cryin'."

The rest of the songs are complimented not only by the dazzling guitar-work of Mr. Gates, but by his frankly earnest voice that interacts with Lucy's pleas to get up offa your thang and shake it 'till you break it. This divine interaction detonates a blazing chain-reaction in songs like, "I'm Going Back Home," "You Gotta Love Me Baby," and "I Got a Honky Tonk Woman" that give birth to the true life of any party.

I got a lingering feeling that this isn't the last we've heard of Lee Gates – my only question concerns his return to the studio: When?!? I hope it to be sooner rather than later.

## The Feelings of Beverly "Guitar" Watkins



Coming off the success of her first release for Music Maker, Back in Business, Beverly "Guitar" Watkins is back again with a new album in her full flamboyant flavor: *The Feelings of Beverly "Guitar" Watkins*, Lemme

tell you, she's still in business alright and if you listen to her new album, she'll make the blues your business.

This CD is a ticker-tape parade showcasing this lady's talents far and wide through dirty guitar playing that Cool John Ferguson better watch for, singing and shouting that would make a preacher sweat, and song writing whose poetic sophistication cannot be overstated. This lady'll put the triple whammy on you.

Her haunting poeticism and guitar playing is nowhere more apparent than in the sobering response to what's been happening in the Middle East, "Baghdad Blues" – yes, the same popular song featured on *Sisters of the South*.

The inclusion of a synthesizer and saxophone on many of the other tracks certainly give this album more layers than your typical blues jam. They give it a funkier feel, pleading with you to "Get Out on the Floor." Then there are the classy and sassy soulful slow jams like, "As I Was Walking" and "Just Make Believe." "Melody Midnight Cruise" is reminiscent of the post-Clyde McPhatter Drifters. "Right Don't Wrong Nobody," "Late Bus Blues," and "D Harp Blues" all reinforce the loving blues notion flowing freely from Mrs. Watkins. "Sugar Baby Swing" gives a wink to that swinging cousin of the blues.

However, I must admit, my favorite song on

the album is the final track, "Jesus Walked the Water." This infectious bluesy gospel shuffle shines a little light into even the darkest corner and can be described as nothing less than a musical smile. It is one conveyed in a carefree faith that leads the leaping listener through this eclectic album, ending it on the perfect high note.

## Mudcat Kickin' Chicken



This newest released by Mudcat and his clan is an all out uniquely original romp. I can appreciate the band's infectious enthusiasm as this is their fourth album and their popularity as one of the best-kept

Southern secrets has far from waned on the club scene below the Mason Dixon line the past several years.

Mudcat's smoothly eclectic sound brings to mind Doug Sahn meets Commander Cody meets Jimbo Mathus. They are far from pretentious or stereotypical when it comes to handling such traditions as the Blues though not overlooking the plethora of other styles present in their musical stew: rhythm and blues, blues, jazz, folk, country, rockabilly, blue-eyed soul, gospel...see what I mean?

Kickin' Chicken is dizzying in its expanse, breakneck speed, and almost all original not to mention clever songs – my favorites being "Fernando" and "Chicken Man." And, with the impressive list of names backing up Mr. Mudcat coupled with the obviously high production quality – someone on top of their craft apparently wanted to create a piece of art that goes unmatched on today's music scene.

This album succeeds without argument or complaint. I encourage anyone with any sort of musical sensibility or anyone who just wants to have fun to pick up this amazing piece of work by an artist consistent in what he does best and staying true to what he loves.

## Clyde Langford High Steppin' Momma



I made a call Sunday afternoon, March 7 to bluesman and lifetime resident of Centerville of Centerville, Texas, Mr. Clyde Langford. Centerville lies in the Eastern Texas county of Leon about 100 miles northwest

of Houston. We had a long conversation about his life, music, and future plans that was about as pleasantly meandering and laid-back as the music he plays so well.

Almost 70, he's been playing and singing his own brand of Texas blues since he was 13 – blues stylings that are directly descended from the likes of Joel "Thunder" Hopkins and his little brother, Lightnin'—yes, the same Lightnin' Hopkins. Cousins to Langford, he learned much about the guitar from the Hopkins brothers, especially Joel, beginning at a very early age. His encounters with the Hopkins brothers weren't his first encounters with music. As a child, Langford remembers listening to mainly country and western music on a battery-powered radio because his family had no electricity. Before "Thunder" and "Lightnin'" there was Roy Acuff, Gene Autrey, and the Smoky Mountain Boys – music he recalls quite affectionately and says influenced quite a bit. Langford carried those radio shows and early guitar lessons from his cousins quite a long way—first to a radio show where he, managed by a local businessman, played his guitar and sung on Sunday mornings in nearby Crockett, Texas; then all the way to

Masaw, Japan to arrive again in his own back yard after a "two year five month nine day" stint with the Air Force back in the mid-1950s.

While in Japan, however, he performed in clubs to some success among the Japanese and also around the base for his peers, where he once won a trophy in a talent show of which he's still extremely proud. After arriving back in the states, he followed in the footsteps of his father and became a well-digger, but that certainly didn't discourage his music-making...in fact, he and three of his friends formed a small group that played in bars and juke joints around East Texas. He eventually decided to head to Houston where he performed with cousin Lightnin' for a short period, but after some disagreements between the two, Langford came back to Centerville where he soon married and had 4 children with new-found love, Annie Louise. Unfortunately, it was during this period that he ceased playing his blues because after seeing how his music made the ladies swoon at his shows, his wife would have none of it.

Several years after her death about sixteen years ago at age 35, Langford began playing again a little bit in public around Centerville. He has since started playing in local nursing homes, at local festivals and celebrations, and has been featured in a detailed article by Bryan Woolley for the Dallas Morning News in November of 2000, which is how Tim Duffy got word of him. Shortly after a meeting with Langford, Tim recorded him playing and singing his laid-back, earthy style of Texas blues this past September down in Centerville.

This resulted in the Music Maker Recordings 2004 release of Langford's first-ever album, *High Steppin' Momma*, including original and traditional material from Langford and his Gibson guitar. While he hopes to record another album soon, Langford doesn't plan to take his show on the road, but hopes to bring people to Centerville – a community that he talks about with great love and respect, never wanting to live anywhere else.

Langford and about 40 other locals are trying to build and open a bluegrass, country, and blues music venue called the Leon County Opera House. They have purchased a six-acre tract of land on Highway 75 about a mile and a quarter south of Centerville. So far, they've built an outdoor stage where Langford and a few other locals have performed already, but hope to have a building erected by Spring 2005 using money they've procured through various grants, donations, and benefits they've held recently. Mr. Langford is quite enthusiastic about the project and is quick to point out that that he is the only bluesman involved thus far with the project in a group of bluegrass and country musicians – a fact that he is quite fine with, although he says they are looking to find more blues musicians to participate in addition to himself.

As of now, short of taking a trip to Centerville to see Langford demonstrate his mastery as a key figure in the Texas blues lineage, the best way to experience his loose easy-going brand of blues is through *High Steppin' Momma*. It is an album that is essential for any fan of acoustic blues, Texas or otherwise.

## Life in the Banana Fields: Checking in with Dangerous Dave



I had the great opportunity of conversing with Dave McGrew this past Thursday afternoon, February 19, via telephone about his life and history with Music Maker Relief Foundation. He

is living it up and enjoying his time, crashing with an old friend on the Olympic Peninsula way out in Washington State where, despite all his travels around the country, he has spent many of his days since he called it his childhood home. He says things are going well working construction though he misses tending and picking fruits and vegetables from the various farms and orchards on the West Coast – something he used to do much more frequently than he does now. The available jobs that used to be plentiful back in the 1970s, 1980s, and obviously before have been coming fewer and fewer because of the growing population of Hispanic migrant labor in the area up from the South. He doesn't complain about it though because, "if I were them, I'd probably be doing the same thing."

Dave gave us the amazing and insightful breath of fresh air album, "Fruit Tramp Ballads of the Great Northwest" last year. Recorded for Music Maker, this genuine piece of art from the soul of an American original who's seen our country through Johnny Appleseed tinted glasses provides us with a voice rarely heard anymore – one of Woody Guthrie cum Johnny Paycheck cum Neil Young cum Bob Dylan cum Kerouac and Cassidy...I could go on – his influences are expansive and true and well-represented. He is one of the few remaining men of his kind – a traveling Renaissance poet of a laid-back easy going demeanor, earthy grit, wise voice, and humility that once gave our now digitized mcountry its heartbeat. His compatriots are now few and far between, making this follow one to be appreciated and learned from because his voice of experience is one like I promise you've never heard or felt.

Dave has been crossing the United States from West to East and back again since the mid-1970s. He's been hitchhiking around the Pacific Northwest since he was thirteen – his mom used to write and sign and note of hitchhiking permission for him to keep on his person in the event he should be picked up by the authorities. He's picked fruit in the Auburn area of Washington since he was five – the same time he also had his first guitar lessons, but he didn't seriously pick up the guitar and begin composing songs until he was about 15. He's managed orchards since his late teens. He's worked in various fruit orchards from Washington to Hawaii (where one was eventually overtaken by lava from a nearby volcano – listen to "Midnight on the Aw Ha" from his album). He's pruned bushy firs and harvested Christmas trees in Oregon and has even grown and tended a crop or two of marijuana in his days. In addition to his fruit and vegetable farm-

ing and musicianship, Dave is a handy man, a carpenter, and a father of three kids: two sons, ages 25 and 15 and a daughter, age 22. He's played backup with a slew of Music Maker artists. This man has done it all. If none of all that convinced you, then dig this – Dave and Larry Shores, converted an old barn sitting next to Tim and Denise Duffy's house in Hillsborough into the current Music Maker facilities – if you've never seen them, I'd encourage you to go take a look and be amazed. There doesn't seem to be a thing this man who says of himself, "I'm just not cut out for a steady job like other folks" isn't capable of.

Tim and Dave have been friends since Tim's older brother Paul introduced the two when Tim was a teenager visiting his brother out west. In addition to the literal, Dave helped Tim build Music Maker in a more figurative sense through traveling around with Tim in the early days playing on and helping to make field recordings and just through the asset of friendship and support.

As I mentioned, Dave's currently up in Washington working construction writing a new song from time to time to add to his already fat repertoire and just living each day as it comes. When the notion grabs him, as he says, he'll be up and off again to only he knows where in his old van. Dave said he does plan on making the trip to North Carolina later this year – something he usually does at least once a year. He's also looking around for gigs and perhaps even a little radio airplay for his album around the Pacific Northwest – a couple of services this musical original more than deserves.

Though he plays his guitar nearly everyday, there aren't any current plans for another solo album anytime soon he told me, but I wouldn't be surprised to see one in the making once word gets out about Dave McGrew on the West Coast.

## Pura Fe

Pura Fe is busy. This singer-songwriter, musician, dancer, artist, seamstress, actress, activist, teacher, and cultural sage is currently on short break from year round touring with her two musical groups: the popular a cappella Native American Women's group, Ulali; and The Deer Clan Singers – a group of young Tuscarora singing in the revered Long House style. She is also in the process of recording a new album, *Follow Your Heart's Desire*, with Willie Lowery and Tim Duffy for Music Maker Recordings. In addition, she is working on a DVD with some colleagues that parallels the creation story with the scientific view, which recently got put on hold while the group searches for grants to help them finish the project. When I gave her a call on Monday night, March 8, she was busy scanning photographs onto her computer for her website that she hopes to have up and running soon.

Born in New York City in August of 1959 and was raised by her mother and Tuscaroran family. Her name Pura Fe (Spanish for "Pure Faith") was given to by her father who is from Puerto Rico. It is no surprise that singing is her principal means of expression because she comes from "four generations of seven singing sisters in a row." Her mother's family is from

North Carolina, which is where she relocated about eight years ago.

Before moving down South, she sung with the Mercer Ellington Orchestra in addition to many jazz groups, rock bands, and for commercials, jingles, and studio recordings for several well-known labels and musicians. In 1995, Pura Fe released a solo album, *Caution to the Wind* through the Shanachie label. She has even appeared on Broadway. The impact she has had with her native Tuscarora people after moving to North Carolina is incalculable. Pura Fe began by volunteering at the North Carolina Indian Cultural Center in Pembroke back in 1996, working especially with "The Seventh Generation" youth group. She says, "Tuscarora songs, dances, creation stories, beadwork, dance regalia, and moccasins were a start that led into a dance troop of about thirty-five kids. It kept these 'younguns' out of trouble and pulled some of them into the Long House community. Ceremonies and socials celebrating the traditions of the moons, seasons, tribal responsibilities, and the elders, helped to grow strong roots and spiritually balanced values in the hearts and minds of our youth. They know who they are and as a result, they are teachers."

Quite a few members of these young dance and singing groups have performed at places as varying as schools, museums, National Native Conferences, Pow-Wows, The New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival, The Grass Roots Festival, Merle-Fest, and have even opened performances for Ulali – the internationally renowned group for which Pura Fe was a founding mother back in 1987.

Critics and the public alike have credited Ulali for bringing contemporary Native music to the forefront of the mainstream scene. The group has been featured on two soundtracks: Miramax's *Smoke Signals*; and the Turner documentary series, *The Native Americans*. Two of Ulali's songs, "Mahk Jachi" and "Ancestor Song" were featured on the album, *Robbie Robertson and the Red Road Ensemble*; their voices are also heard on the *Indigo Girls'* 1997 release, *Shaming the Sun*. A quote from a small bio soon to appear on Pura Fe's website sums up Ulali quite well: "Ulali's natural fusion of traditional and contemporary native song, language, and experience has created a bridge that brings wide audiences of every age and race to their concerts. They have broken the mold of the stereotypical 'Injun' with their powerful hair-raising harmonies, humorously educational performances. Being the first of their kind, Ulali has inspired and helped cultivate other Native women's groups, which has given rise to a whole new musical genre."

Awhile back, Pura Fe formed a relationship with Music Maker after meeting Tim Duffy through William Ferris the Senior Associate Director for the Center for the Study of the American South at UNC Chapel Hill and filmmaker Malinda Maynor that resulted in her album project. Follow *Your Heart's Desire* is due out in later this Spring. Keep your eyes and ears open for Pura Fe's concerts once the album is out because she is one performer not to be missed.

## Hello Mr. Duffy,

It was good to see you in Northampton with the Sisters of the South show with Beverly "Guitar" Watkins, Sweet Betty and Essie Mae Brooks, it was really a great event and good to see the place sell out and a very good crowd. I really enjoyed all the performances and the whole event was very well put together by you guys and the staff at the Academy of Music. It was a perfect place to hold such a performance as the sound was great and a nice closed environment, it really enhanced everything.

It was good to see the entire show this time since you guys got cut short at the Portsmouth Blues Festival last year. I loved all

the performances and the energy from the stage and each of the ladies was very contagious. The way you guys worked with James Montgomery and the bass player was very impressive and they were incorporated very well. Cool John's versatility is pretty much awe inspiring, be it playing some great gospel piano behind Essie Mae, or playing nice, smooth understated guitar behind Sweet Betty or letting lose on the given occasion, it's a lot of fun to watch. Needless to say I really enjoyed each of the women and it was good to get to hang for a second, I hope your mother and everyone else had as much fun as I did.

Well just wanted to stop in and send my greetings and best wishes in all that is still to

come for you guys. I wish you the best in all that you do and that much of it will be a success. I'll continue to be looking forward to the new releases and continue to support your cause, as it really is something special, which can't be said enough.

Best Wishes,  
and Continued success,

**Kris Handel**



Sisters of the South: Essie Mae Brooks, Sweet Betty and Beverly "Guitar" Watkins, Northampton, MA ©Duffy



**Benjamin Tehoval, Pinnacle, NC** © Duffy  
Benjamin is from Strausborg, France and is the premier one-man band performer. Benjamin came to the states and helped us locate Cool John Ferguson, traveled with Guitar Gabe and Captain Luke. You can download his album off I-Tunes.



**Cootie Stark, Lincoln Center, NY** © Neal Alber  
Cootie performed on street corners for over 50 years. He was more than happy to travel all around Europe, the United States performing his music, recording CDs and meeting people. With all this activity later in life, Cootie's artistry developed and has become stronger and stronger.



**Beverly "Guitar" Watkins, Irving Plaza, NY** © Felicia Graham  
Beverly prowls the stage and lights it on fire. Audiences go wild and jump in the air within moments of her first guitar solo. She is truly a God gifted star.



**Cool John Ferguson, Lincoln Center, NY** © Neal Albert  
Cool John gave a stunning performance this afternoon in NY. His artistry is magnificent.



**Mr. Q, Pinnacle, NC** © Austin  
When Mr. Q played the piano it just made you smile, his performances were truly eccentric, you never really knew if he was a genius or just truly nuts. Hopefully one day soon we will release a CD by this wonderful gentleman.



**Rev. Perry Tillis, AL** © Kustner  
Denise and I went to visit the Rev. one day. He would sit you in an area that was screened off which had a phone, then he would walk off, the phone would ring, and it would be the Rev. talking all this wonderful stuff about angels, God. Really it is hard to remember, as the experience was so jarring and weird, it made us want to leave as quickly as possible. I wish we lived closer, so I could have gotten over that.



**J.W. Warren, Ozark, AL** © Kustner  
J.W. was good friends with Big Momma Thornton when they were both young. He was truly a great artist and a highly skilled guitarist.



Macavine Hayes, Captain Luke, Willa Mae Buckner, Cootie Stark, Winston Salem, NC © Duffy

# The New York Times

## Blues Musicians Get Help Overcoming Hard Times

By: Andrew Jacobs  
First published: March 21, 2004, NY Times

No one ever said the blues was any way to make a living.

Beverly (Guitar) Watkins knew that, and returned to cleaning offices in Atlanta when the Holiday Inn lounge gigs dried up.

Broke even in good times, Little Freddie King survived by playing juke joints in New Orleans until old age left his body broken. Deprived of a steady income, he went

without dentures or glasses, and one night, a heavy rain brought down the ceiling of his bedroom.

Without an audience for his quirky style of music, Haskel (Whistling Britches) Thompson ended up in a Winston-Salem homeless shelter.

From the Appalachian highlands to the Mississippi Delta, musicians who got by on drink house tips and street corner busking have found themselves living in decaying mobile homes, formerly nimble fingers twisted with age, their homespun repertoires lost with their deaths.

"These people are our culture, our folk musicians, and no one is looking after them," said the bluesman Taj Mahal. "We're always putting our hands over our heart and saying the Pledge of Allegiance and honoring Davy Crockett, yet we're allowing these people and their music to fall through the cracks."

In the 1980's, while recording old-time mountain musicians in North Carolina, Tim Duffy came to a similar realization. As a student studying folklore at the University of North Carolina, he grew obsessed with

Mr. Duffy, who lives in Hillsborough, N.C. "And the recordings don't put food on their table, it doesn't get them a gig."

Over the last two decades, Mr. Duffy, 41, has turned his passion into a nonprofit organization, the Music Maker Foundation, which is part recording company, part artist management service and part social welfare agency. For those able to perform, the

ences who eagerly await the next Music Maker recording. Mr. Duffy has produced 45 CD's, and many of his artists can be booked for appearances through the foundation's Web site. A dozen artists recently had their work added to Apple Computer's iTunes site, which allows customers to download songs.

William Ferris, author of the "Encyclopedia of Southern Culture," said popular interest in roots music had grown in recent years, especially after the PBS series produced by Martin Scorsese, "The Blues," and films like "O Brother, Where Art Thou?" and "Cold Mountain."

"It's an exciting time for indigenous music," said Mr. Ferris, who is the associate director of the Center for the Study of the American South at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Still, the bulk of these musicians, he said, live in anonymity, their lives dominated by the struggle to survive. "The blues has always been the stepchild in the family of American music."

On his front porch in the morning cold,

John Dee Holeman cradled his steel guitar and plucked out a mournful tune. Although slowed by a recent stroke, Mr. Holeman, 76, can still produce nearly 100 songs, many his own creations.

"Fingers aren't as swift as they used to be," he complains, but they easily glide across the neck of Big Boss, the name he has given his guitar. He recalls how he taught himself to play as a child, stealthily grabbing a few moments on his half-brother's Silvertone during breaks from working the tobacco fields. "I'd come in for water and steal a tune and put it back just like it was."

Mr. Holeman got his first guitar at 15, a \$15 Sears, Roebuck model. As a teenager, he honed his style with Blind Boy Fuller, considered the father of the Piedmont Blues, a more buoyant version of the Mississippi Delta blues.

Despite his talent, Mr. Holeman worked most of his life as a heavy machinery operator, with nights spent stripping the wood out of tobacco leaf at the Liggett Meyers factory up the street from his home in Hayti, Durham's historically black section. On weekends, he would play local drink houses, or birthday parties. In

the 1970's, he began appearing at a blues festival in Durham.

When Mr. Holeman met Mr. Duffy in the early 1990's, his world opened up. Mr. Duffy arranged for him to get his \$1,200 guitar, made sure he had a steady supply of nutritional supplements and helped him record two CD's. Over the past decade Mr. Holeman has appeared at festivals in Washington, Turkey and Japan. He performed at the Library of Congress, and he took part in a State Department-financed cultural tour of Africa. "Sometimes people stop me on the street and say, 'Aren't you famous?'" he said. "Now that's real nice."

Another of Mr. Duffy's proud discoveries is Ms. Watkins, 64, whom he met at a shopping mall in Atlanta.

"She was prowling the sidewalk like Jimi Hendrix, flailing, playing the guitar behind her head, falling to her knees, as if she was performing for a packed concert hall," Mr. Duffy said. "She was on fire. I couldn't believe my eyes."

Mr. Duffy gave her a \$20 tip and said he



Whistlin' Britches, Chris Bennett, Sol, Tim Duffy and Macavine Hayes perform in Winston-Salem, NC ©Sara Davis

foundation he and his wife, Denise, run from their converted wood shop promotes roots music and offers artists a touring career; for those too old or sickly, he sends monthly checks that average \$100.

When unexpected hardships strike, as in the case of Little Freddie King's collapsing ceiling, Mr. Duffy provides emergency cash. When he learned that Mr. Thompson was living in a shelter, he arranged for him to stay with another Music Maker artist, Captain Luke Mayer, a smoky-voiced baritone who lives in a Winston-Salem housing project. Mr. Duffy also helps Mr. Mayer keep the van that ferries a half-dozen musicians to the grocery store, to doctors' appointments and to gigs around the state.

More than 100 musicians are served by the foundation, which has arranged whirlwind tours for musicians like Ms. Watkins, who still performs on the streets of Atlanta, and has appeared at blues festivals across the country and in Europe.

The foundation also puts CD's into the hands of men like Cootie Stark, a blind guitarist from Greenville, S.C., who had never had his music recorded until he met Mr. Duffy at age 68. Mr. Stark, now 77, one of the last surviving purveyors of the Piedmont Blues, has since

taken to the stages of Lincoln Center, the Rockport Rhythm and Blues Festival at Newport and other concert venues around the world. He earns about \$8,000 a year selling his CD's.

"It should have happened 45 years ago, but I finally got a break," he said.

In the process of helping the musicians, Mr. Duffy has helped cultivate new audi-



Whistlin' Britches and Taj Mahal perform in Winston-Salem, NC

©Sara Davis preserving the sounds of these unheralded musicians. But as he traveled the rural South with recording equipment, he grew even more troubled by the poverty that left many artists without instruments and too strapped for heating oil or medicine.

"Their music ended up in archives but the problem is no one gets to hear it," said



Captain Luke, Winston-Salem, NC

©Sara Davis

wanted to help her reach a wider audience. "I'm ready," she says she told him. "Let's rock on."

She was soon booked on a 42-city tour sponsored by Winston cigarettes that

included a dozen other Music Maker acts. She has been to Italy, Portugal, France and Switzerland.

"There are no lack of artists we could be helping," said Mr. Duffy, who said he raised about \$500,000 last year in grants and donations. He pointed to a rack of digital audio tapes he said contained the raw material for 45 recordings.

"I can't get them out fast enough," he said, adding that every year, three or four musicians die before he can get their music out. "I feel like I'm racing against time."



John Dee Holeman

©Sara Davis

# Fishin' Blues 2004

Playa Zancudo, Costa Rica, all photos ©Austin



# Fishing the Blues

The 2nd Annual, Music Maker, Taj Mahal Fishin' Blues Tournament was a resounding success as twenty-seven anglers showed up to Roy's Zancudo Lodge in Zancudo, Costa Rica, to kick back with a few fish, enjoy some incredible music, and hopefully win one of the coveted solid-gold necklaces up for grabs. When the final tally was done, Mel Whitcliffe won the sailfish category, releasing three sails, biggest other fish was won by Carl Kinnunen, the Sportmanship Award went to Peter Hoffman and Jimmy Herring (guitarist for The Dead) took home the marlin category releasing an estimated 500-pound black marlin that he fought on 50-pound tackle.

Despite the slower-than-usual fishing, perfect weather, gourmet food, good tunes and the heavenly location kept all anglers reeling in delight. With musicians such as Mudcat, Derek Trucks, Sammy Blue, Jimmy Herring, and the legendary Taj Mahal, those competitors who managed to keep their eyes open after fishing ten hours a day, were treated to

Catching that fish was a dream come true for Derek and me! Thanks for helping to make it a reality!  
-Jimmy Herring

lures as if he were moving his fingers along the neck of a delicate antique guitar. He drags the hookpoints of each lure across his finger-nail making sure they're all razor sharp, and tests the drag on each of his reels.

"Fishing and music is all integrated," Taj says. "Fishing is an optimistic kind of thing. You fish if you're an optimist."

Optimism was the name of the game at Roy's Zancudo Lodge. Hosts Bill Lucado and Tim and Denise Duffy, as well as Roy himself kept anglers positive that the catch would improve. It remained steady and several anglers stayed in the hunt for victory until the very end. All told, the competitors released 28 sailfish, two blue marlin and one big black marlin. But in the end it was the Music Maker Relief Foundation, who won, raising just over 60 thousand dollars for their ongoing efforts to bring more music out of obscurity. Everyone I spoke to couldn't wait to head back to Zancudo next year.

By: Charlie Levine,  
Managing Editor of Marlin Magazine



500 lb. Marlin caught by Jimmy Herring.  
©Herring

We wish to thank Steve Bashinsky of Macon, GA for donating these 18k Gold awards to the event for the past 2 years.  
©Duffy



Joe Smith, Charlotte, NC © Spitzer  
Joe used to pitch healing oil with Guitar Gabe back in the 50s. Joe and I made up a batch and began selling it around town. We brought Joe to a festival and he did his pitch except his memory slid back to the old days and he barked, "Only 10 cents a bottle!" We were almost crushed by the crowd rushing in to scoop up everything we had.



Denise Duffy & Robert Thomas, Society Hill, AL © Duffy  
Denise wrote an excellent chapter, which describes the down, and dirty of doing blues field research in our book. Robert Thomas is a very special man, and we regret that we have not been able to go see him in a long time.



Lori Beth Edgeman, Irving Plaza, NY © Felicia Graham  
Lori Beth is a dear friend of Music Makers. When we toured the Winston Blues Revival around the country, she sang with Mudcat's group and acted as our spokesperson, letting everyone know of our mission.



Tim Duffy, Bill Lucado, Willie King, Aliceville, AL © Duffy  
Bill Lucado and I took a trip down to visit Willie King and truly enjoyed our selves at his Freedom Creek Blues Festival. Soon after Bill donated a tractor to Willie's, Rural Members Association.



Taj Mahal & Algia Mae Hinton, Morgantown, NC © Austin  
Taj Mahal has been a champion of the roots music his entire career. His dedication to our mission has helped Music Maker immeasurably. All the artists love to spend time and play music with this great man.

## Givin' it Back Record Club

Sign up for a year's worth of Music Maker

You can help issue CDs for the recipient artists. Most of these men and women have spent a lifetime performing their music and have never recorded.

Join the "Givin' it Back Record Club" for \$100, and you will receive a new Music Maker CD every three months for one year. The CDs are mailed out in December, March, June, and September. You will be the first to receive a brand new release prior to us offering it to our website and mailings. "The Feelings of Beverly Guitar Watkins" is our current selection for March.

We thank you for your support and we hope you join with us in trying to issue as many in this series as we can.



Beverly "Guitar" Watkins plays low-down, hard stompin', railroad-smokin' blues. She'll tell you, "people are impressed to see a black woman play like a man."



Mr. Frank Edwards' "Chicken Raid" is our selection for June.

## MUSIC MAKER Relief Foundation

# 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Taj Mahal Fishin' Blues

Playa Zancudo, Costa Rica

Mark your calendars for 2005

Fishin' Blues Feb 6-12!

Go to [musicmaker.org](http://musicmaker.org) to find out more of this yearly event.



Samuel Turner Stevens, Asheville, NC © Duffy  
This gentleman was one of the first artists I met when I came to NC in 1982. When Denise and I came back from Kenya and had no place to stay, Sam took us in and helped us make our start. Sam was a wonderful instrument maker and specialized in making fretless banjos. He could sing songs for hours, play the fiddle, guitar, piano and dulcimer. Sam was killed tragically by a speeding car, crossing the road in front of his house.





# Ask Amy

Email your questions for MM Artists to amy@musicmaker.org!

**Q** I recently gave a call and asked Cora Mae Bryant why she was hesitant to give interviews; she explained to me:

**A** What do they want with my interviews I wonder. Don't take advantage. Getting my family pictures, putting them in books, put it in books without asking me. I don't belong to anyone but God. I don't have to interview with everyone. I do what I can do. I don't know what they want. I wasn't born like that. I was born with what God gave me. I don't live with the world. It's not their business about my family, I don't have to tell them about me and my daddy. Mine comes from God, the songs came to my daddy the way they come to me. You got to live a life, baby, blues ain't nothing but life. That's the way I am. I don't write. They come to me. Mine is different. If they don't know about the blues, then they are singing other peoples. I have a heap of news you will never. I could tell you something all day long. You young. You don't really understand. Tim came to Georgia looking for Cora Mae Bryant. People done took advantage of me and my father. They put lies in the books. Put my Momma in books, put lies. That's my family. I could tell you something. They come here and want me to tell them everything, and I'm going to tell you the truth. You aren't born with it you will never understand it. Then that's somebody else's life. I had to be born in Newton County. If I hadn't went to liquor store I couldn't have not gone. This is my life. This is my blues. The other blues, I didn't live those life, those aren't my blues. It started when I was itty bitty, and all the way when I was big.

You don't understand, and you will never understand. So what do they want? You got to have a



Cora Mae Bryant, Charlotte, NC ©Kunster

reason. They want something from me, but they don't give me a reason. So the blues in school you don't need to worry about it. It's not there, and will never be there. It's from God. I don't read. I read the true book and don't nobody know who wrote it. Raise 12 children, God that book and know how to treat people. Tell me how to treat you and that's how I will treat you.

All that history, that I'm telling you, you can tell them what Ms. Cora Mae said. I can write a book. I don't have to state what I done. I can see up when I was little. I think. I will be seeing where I came from. Don't take what I got and put it in a book and sell it. That not the way to do this. You got to do it God's way. I could write a history. A teacher from college, or school, you are not going to find what Cora Mae can tell you. And you will never know it.

**Q** I have the new release, *The Feelings of Beverly "Guitar" Watkins*, and I would like to know more about the supporting musicians.  
-Jim Walton Raleigh, NC

**A** I gave Ardie Dean, long time supporter and producer of the album a quick call and here is what he had to say:  
Here's the skinny.  
Of course besides Bev (who wrote everything) here's the list of players.

I (Ardie Dean) played all the drums and percussion (congas, tambourine, shakers, chimes and produced, mixed and help master. I'm from Owens Crossroads Alabama

Greg Rowell - Bass guitar on all tracks (except "Jesus Walked The Water"). Acoustic and electric Guitar, sound effects Also engineered, provided the studio and mixed. From Cullman Alabama good local musician plays with Jerry McCain

Larry Lee - Guitar, Veteran R&B musician from the 70's local legend band "Stamp Of Approval". Later played with Legendary Artist "Jackie Wilson" (was band leader). He arraigned many of the tunes and helped construction of basic tracks.

James Ganzberg - Piano, Organ, Keyboards, from Indianapolis Veteran R&B musician used to play with Larry Lee That's him playing strings on "Make Believe". Also arraigned, Incredible player.

Rohan Cannon - Guitar, Mixed "Make Believe" and "Right Don't Wrong Nobody". Imported from Sydney Australia just for this session. Very talented!

Jerry "Boogie" McCain - Added his genius to "DHarp Blues",  
Chris West - Sax Master, He did most of the section parts, meaning he played baritone, tenor and alto saxes. From Nashville, took time out from his music studies at Vanderbilt to record this.

Jim Beck - Saxophone, Top session player from Arab Alabama. That's him on the opening

track, very soulful and creative. plays with Jeff Cook from the band Alabama right now.  
Ralph Lusian - Guitar from Jerry McCain's band played on one tune. From California lives in Tuscaloosa Alabama  
Jim White - Trumpet, Background on one tune. From Huntsville, Alabama  
Melvin Davis - Bass guitar, From the gospel group Sensational Gospel Starlights" played a very cool bass part on "Jesus Walked The water". Lives in Huntsville, Alabama  
William Clay, Melvin Davis, Steve Gray, James Wilson, Evan Davis, James Ganzberg - "The Sensational Gospel Starlights" This is James Ganzberg's gospel group that is electrifying to witness in a little black backwoods church on a hot Saturday night.



Beverly "Guitar" Watkins, Atlanta, GA ©Duffy

We are so happy that **John T. Edge** responded to our call to help **Willie King** and the Freedom Creek Blues Festival. Check out [www.southernfoodways.com](http://www.southernfoodways.com) for more info. Check out what fun this is going to be!



**Alabama in Black and White Fourth Annual SFA Field Trip**  
**Alabama in Black and White**  
**Birmingham, Alabama, June 4-6, 2004**

Join the **Southern Foodways Alliance** as we celebrate racial reconciliation through food. Gather with us in Birmingham, the crucible of the Civil Rights Movement, for a weekend of conversations and presentations and libations commemorating the 40th anniversary of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Feast on a Lazy Susan Supper of barbecue and biscuits and greens. Sip wines from South Africa, curated by the Palm Wine Society. Join us as we barrel through the Alabama countryside, bound for the Freedom Creek Blues Festival where Willie King and friends celebrate interracial bonds through down home blues and great home cooking. Return with Southerners of different hues and hometowns to Birmingham, as we embrace a city of renewed hope, no longer shackled by Jim Crow.

## Highlights THURSDAY NIGHT Arrival and Registration

Your registration packet will include a list of area restaurants. Choose your fancy, from rib shacks to hot dog joints, Greek seafood restaurants to temples of haute Southern cuisine.

## FRIDAY

Take a Seat at Birmingham's Welcome Table

After a breakfast prepared by Goren "Dawg" Avery and Verba Ford, we walk to the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute. We'll have plenty of time for wandering about, but you'll want to be in attendance for a special briefing

by Frye Gaillard, author of *Cradle of Freedom: Alabama and the Movement that Changed America*. Along with Odessa Woolfolk, founder of the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, he will put the exhibits in context and frame the weekend by explaining the impact of the public accommodations clause of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

We lunch at Highlands Bar and Grill, Frank Stitt's landmark restaurant. Stitt is a founder of the SFA and a much-heralded interpreter of Southern foods. His Highlands Meat & Three will feature trout with country ham and redeye gravy, creamy grits, fried green tomatoes, and peas with snaps. On hand to pour wines of South Africa -- yes, you read that right -- will be Jerome Crawford of Grassroots Wine and founder of the Palm Wine Society, one of the oldest African American wine groups in the country.

Following lunch we convene a panel discussion featuring Stitt; Martha Hawkins, proprietor of Martha's Place in Montgomery; and Clayton Sherrrod, local culinary entrepreneur. A lively discussion

will focus upon recollections of their mentors as well as upon the ongoing struggle to operate public spaces where people of all races freely congregate and celebrate.

That night, we feast on a Lazy Susan Supper, served in the soaring lobby at the heart of the Southern Progress corporate campus. Five years ago this summer, at a meeting in this very space, a diverse group of fifty founded the Southern Foodways Alliance. In commemoration, we will spin Lazy Susans loaded down with the bounty of our farms and pass platters of barbecue smoked by the good folks at Jim 'N Nick's. Ribs slathered with sauce. Shoulder wreathed in hickory smoke. Ethereal cheese biscuits. Rest assured we'll feed you well.

Though we gather to celebrate what the modern South has forged, we will not lose sight of our past. Honored at the dinner will be the women and men who fed the Civil Rights Movement, the church cooks who baked casseroles and stacked sandwiches to fuel the marchers. Our evening reaches its zenith when a gospel group takes the stage, singing the freedom songs that brought the marchers of the movement to their feet.

## SATURDAY

### Freedom Riders en route to Freedom Creek

We begin with a true eye-opener. Charles Moore, a native of Tusculumbia, Alabama, who chronicled the pivotal events of the Civil Rights Movement, will show striking photographs from his book, *Powerful Days*.

By ten or so, we board buses for a Freedom Rider outing to Aliceville, Alabama, home to Willie King's Freedom Creek Festival. The drive will take one and three-quarter hours or so. On board to give context to our journey will be historian Frye Gaillard and Colonel Stone Johnson, who led the 1961 rescue of a besieged band of

Freedom Riders in Anniston, Alabama.

Waiting on us in Aliceville will be, among others, Scott Barton of Voyage in New York City; John Currence of City Grocery in Oxford, Mississippi; John Fler of the Inn at Blackberry Farm in Walland, Tennessee; and Chris Hastings of Hot and Hot Fish Club in Birmingham. They will join in arms with local cooks to feed you treats like Conecuh County sausage and sweet tea-brined fried chicken. And they will feed the crowds who gather to hear down home blues and celebrate racial reconciliation and social justice.

Proceeds raised by the sale of their good cooking will benefit Willie King's work with the Rural Members Association, a local not-for-profit dedicated to community-building through the reservation and promotion of African American folk culture. And though we welcome you to toss a few extra dollars in the kitty, we'll take care of your ticket, your eats, and your drinks.

For those few who depart the festival on the first shuttle at 4:00, we will arrange dinner in Birmingham. But for the great majority of you, we'll come home when things simmer down at Freedom Creek and, upon arrival in Birmingham, point you to the late night haunt or the comfy beds at the Tutwiler.

## SUNDAY

You're on your own. For those of you inclined to attend a religious service, we'll provide directions and entrée. Among the nearby houses of worship is Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, where four little girls lost their lives in a 1963 bombing. When that collection plate comes around, dig deep, but please know that, on your behalf, the SFA will also make a contribution to the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church.