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 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.

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.

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April 30 — Tim Duffy is trying to preserve the work of America’s older blues musicians.

“It’s not what you get out of this life,” said Duffy. “It’s what you leave behind. I am trying to leave behind a legacy. I love recordings. I love music. I am trying to leave a legacy of recordings behind.”

This week, Duffy was in New Orleans to help musician Little Freddie King get ready for his set at the annual jazzfest. There is not a popular music in the world today, claimed Duffy, which is not touched by the blues.

“It’s the root. It’s the aquifer. It’s what all American musicians drink from. They come up with their own thing, but it comes from somewhere, it comes from black music, from the South. The blues evolved largely from work songs and spirituals and very often express worry or depression.

“We need the phone so we can remind you to go to the doctor’s,” Duffy told Mayer. “It stinks not having a phone.”

More than 100 musicians get help. Little Freddie King got a couple of jobs playing music. He bought himself a new bicycle and the medicine for his glaucoma.

“These musicians want to be recognized,” said Duffy. “These musicians want to work. They want a gig. They don’t want a handout, they want a hand up.”

Duffy’s Early Beginnings

Duffy grew up in Connecticut. His dad was an avid record collector.

“At age 15, he got me a guitar, and that’s all I did for hours and hours. I spent from 15 to 23 doing nothing but playing music,” said Duffy. Duffy has a master’s degree in folklore from the University of North Carolina. It was there that he met a local music legend called Guitar Gabriel.

“I took him inside and [he] played some blues, and it was so real and startling,” he said. “Truly I didn’t sleep for a week. I knew I’d do anything for this guy.

“He would do the same for a lot of others — though it isn’t always easy.

“I’ve talked to screen doors and closed doors for an hour and a half trying to get a guy to open the door to talk to me just because I was a white guy in some weird part of Alabama where white people usually don’t go,” he said.

Duffy and his wife, Denise, run Music Maker from their home in North Carolina. In 10 years they’ve made 50 CDs. The musicians get 100 percent of the profits.

“He’s been wonderful to us,” said Captain Luke of Duffy. “Whatever I need, he’s there or he’ll be there to come to my rescue.”

Hillsborough — Absently strumming his guitar, Kenny Wayne Shepherd sat in a field as an assistant applied makeup and tossed his stylish blond locks.

The 27-year-old blues-rock star usually plays large venues for thousands of people. But Sunday found him in rural splendor — seated by a vegetable garden alongside 70-something bluesmen Cootie Stark and Neal Pattman, cameramen for a documentary.

Even before the makeup artist and camera crew had finished, Shepherd, Stark and Pattman were cooking on “Prison Blues.” Shepherd and Stark chugged along on their acoustic guitars while Pattman spun out verse after verse.

“Every morning ‘bout the break of day, ‘Pick and shovel in my hand. ’... All three players were dialed in, guitarists intertwining as Pattman sang and Stark threw in riffs as commentary. “Uh huh... That’s right... I expect so.” This was too good to miss, and the camera crew scrambled to capture the moment in the fading evening light.

“Let me go, Big daddy won’t be a bad boy no mo’...”

Finally, the song wound down with Pattman quietly murmuring an a cappella codia: “Will I ever make my way back home?”

Several dozen onlookers applauded, and then it was time to strike the set and move on. But the good vibes lingered.

“That was just magic,” producer Jerry Harrison said.

Shepherd is a hotsht guitar from Louisiana with one platinum and two gold albums, and equally credible star power behind him. Ex-Talking Head Harrison produces his albums, and he plays with the late Sceve Ray Vaughn’s Double Trouble rhythm section.

Shepherd’s next album is finished, but won’t be out until September. So Shepherd decided to get an early start on his next project, a still-unthis documentary paring him with older blues players both famous and obscure. The lineup includes B.B. King, Clarence “Gatemouth” Brown, Hubert Sumlin and area acts from Tim Duffy’s Music Maker Relief Foundation stable –– Pattman, Stark, Cool John Ferguson, Essie Mae Brooks, John Dee Holeman and Etta Baker.

“My next album is pretty major rock ‘n’ roll,” Shepherd said between takes. “So we decided it’s a good time to do this. I’ve always had a lot of blues fans, so this will be all hard-core blues. And we can give some of these people the recognition they deserve.”

Sunday’s session was at the Music Maker compound near Hillsborough, in the midst of a 10-day barnstorm that concludes Friday in Salina, Kan. In traveling the South, the 27-member crew has battled technical glitches and foul weather as well as a tight schedule. There was a power outage in Shreveport, La., and the air conditioning on one of the tour buses broke down in Alabama.

“Man,” Shepherd said soon after getting off his bus Sunday, “there’s bugs here.”

“You’re in the country boy,” said Ken Shepherd, the guitarist’s father and manager.

There were dogs, too. Tiger and Eo, the Duffy family’s large canines, roamed the grounds and even wrestled audibly behind the camera and even became amorous, to the silent snickers of the film crew. Finally, a cameraman picked up a stick and flung it near a nearby woods to get the dogs to leave.

On-camera, director Noble Jones asked the taciturn Pattman how he feels when he plays music (“I feel good”), if he fears death (“No”), and the future of music.

“The blues will always be,” Pattman said simply. “There was a pause. “I think, Nat, that they, uh, want you to talk a little more when you answer questions,” Duffy said.
Dear Friends,

On April 30th Peter Jennings and producer Judy Isikow of ABC News gave us one of the best 10th birthday presents Music Maker has received so far this year by featuring Tim as “Person of the Week.” This great acknowledgement meant so much to all artists and people that have given freely for so many years to our mission. These four and one half minutes on prime-time national television introduced 20 million viewers to the wonderful artists that are associated with the Music Maker Relief Foundation. We thank Andy for what he started with his article in the New York Times and all of the recent attention we have received from media such as “Foreign Correspondent” an Australian based show that airs throughout Asia, Europe and Scandinavia, the Christian Science Monitor and Our State Magazine of North Carolina. We are blessed to have the support of Katharine Walton our genius publicist who has dedicated herself to Music Maker.

After a spring full of traveling and doing our best to keep up with everything, we recently took some time to visit with dear and long time recipient J.C. McCool of Black Mt. North Carolina, an old-time mountain musician for who has been a recipient for 10 years was in fine spirits, Little Freddie King of New Orleans, Louisiana knocked them dead at the Jazz & Heritage Festival. It is amazing how many talented musicians that we keep meeting and who find us. It is much different from our beginnings, when we hopped in our van and drove to little towns in the South, stopping at filling stations to inquire of old musicians in town.

Our world has expanded, and there is a steep rise in the interest in Roots music nationally. However this rarely means that the most real and authentic musicians of these genres receive benefit from such attention to the music their culture created. So, in realizing the 1000s of musicians that are in need of the programs that Music Maker provides, we remain determined to develop this organization and maintain a solid national presence with the resources to help nurture and provide real tangible assistance to our country’s most valuable cultural resource, the men and women who keep our original musical traditions alive.

With warm regards,

Timothy & Denise Duffy

Artists Notes

Henry “Mojo” Thompson, a rocking, bass playing king of the Phoenix blues scene and a friend to Music Maker, passed away in May after a long battle with complications surrounding diabetes. With a musical career that extends back to the doo wop and rhythm and blues classics of 1950’s Arizona and southern California, “Mojo” Thompson and his rollicking bass will be deeply missed.

A number of our artists are suffering with ailments. We visited J.C. McCool recently and he just lost a kidney, his sight is about gone and he cannot hear to well. He played some wonderful guitar and a mournful blues on the fiddle. J.C. was very touched by our visit and told us of how much we have helped him over the years. He said that he prayed for Music Maker and offered to pray for anyone who was in need of a prayer. Many of the artists we work with have health issues. Etta Baker at 91 is suffering with heart disease, but is still performing and selling as many CDs as we sell up. Coopee Stack was diagnosed with prostate cancer this March. He has undergone radiation therapy and is doing well. He is looking forward to a summer of traveling to festivals, a few bookings in the fall and a show in Paris in November. Henry Spencer of Cambridge, MA is suffering with cancer but at the moment seems to be doing well fighting this devastating disease. Carl Hodges is suffering with circulation to his feet, Carl Rutherford remains strong but has many ailments, Captain Luke, Whistlin’ Britches have had slight medical problems. So we plan on calling on J.C. and telling him of the many artists we serve that are in need of a prayer for their health.

Congratulations go out to Music Maker’s and War-West Virginia’s own Carl Rutherford. On May 29th he won the Wandala Award. This honor is presented by the West Virginia Division of Culture and History annually to a West Virginia who has made outstanding contributions to the continued state’s folk heritage. The award recognizes lifetime achievement in the performance, creation or perpetuation of the West Virginia traditional arts. Carl received two standing ovations at the event, after his performance and again after receiving the award at the West Virginia State Theatre of the Cultural Center. Carl’s original music and masterful musicianship blend a plethora of folk stylings that have to be heard to be believed, making this award much deserved – so if you haven’t already, check out Carl’s Turn Off the Fear album to see why.

Renowned drummer and co-founder of The Band, Levon Helm wants to “put both feet” in with Music Maker. Levon hopes to meet, perform and record with Music Maker artists as soon as he can. Mark Coltrain writes: I recently spoke to the candid Mr. Helm over the telephone. He was at his home in Woodstock, NY. Helm says he’s excited about meeting up with Tim and rocking Congress. The two recently met through mutual friends and mutual love of Blues music. He’s also very adamant in his championing of the Music Maker cause saying, “I can find no fault with anything Music Maker does.” Helm expresses his enthusiasm in particular for Music Maker’s Renovation Acquisition Program; and he’s especially pleased with Music Maker’s no frills album production style. “Everything should serve the music,” he says, “what Tim is doing is great. The music is not over produced in fact the fact that it’s recorded cleanly helps to make the music as timeless as it is.”

Helm also said he’s looking forward to working with Tim on many more projects in the near future. Keep your eyes and ears open for updates on this great newfound friendship.

Mudcat is busy preparing to record a live CD at the Northside Tavern.

Slewfoot checks in and is having an incredibly depressing hard time busking on the streets. If anyone has any work for Slew and Carey down in New Orleans please contact us.

Benji Griffith and Tim recently traveled to Sanford, FLA and visited 91 year old Henry Byrd who actually met and performed on the streets with musicians such as Blind Boy Fuller. He is in amazing shape and plays some incredible music. We were also honored by an incredible impromptu performance by David Butler.

Josh Mordecai and Lisa Bonehead of the Bull City Kings is smoking hot.

J.C. McCool, Black Mountain, NC J.C. McCool is the last surviving member of a group of musicians in and around Black Mountain, NC that had a profound impact on early country music. His best friend and Wax Doctor and had the first hit single of the early country music scene. J.C. has been a recipient of our Life Maintenance program since our inception and has been a great example for how, even somewhat comfortably at his old home place.

Captain Luke was able to get his cell phone turned back on. It’s quite a site to see Luke in his captain’s hat with a shiny new cell phone attached to his belt.

Eddie Tigner of Atlanta was born on August 14th. Eddie is looking for gigs for the summer. Send Birthday Cards to: 2000 Hutchinson St, Atlanta, GA 30307.

Little Pink Anderson is doing well. Selling a great number of CDs and looking forward to doing as many shows as he can. He is playing great and is truly the real deal.

Haskell “Whistlin’ Britches” Thompson is doing better after his finger surgery in May. He’ll soon be back up to his old tricks at upcoming Music Maker concerts – watch out for this always entertaining clowns prince of the Blues.

Way to go Lee Gates, who’s a growing phenomenon on XM radio. Mr. Gates (also the current featured artist at www.maker.org) has a much-anticipated new album for a Fall 2004 release. I hope I’m not letting too many cats out of this blues bag, but this new release will feature the likes of Cool John Ferguson, Taj Mahal, and Kenny Wayne Shepherd. I think it’s safe to say that this one’s gonna come on like gangbusters and rock well in the proverbial pigs sprout wings. Keep your eyes and ears peeled and hold on to your suspenders.

Speaking of upcoming releases, here’s another one to anticipate. Tim’s in the process of putting together a boxed set of Etta Baker’s material for a late Fall 2004 release just in time for Christmas. Now, this material isn’t just what has been recorded with Music Maker; but stuff that spans this brilliant lady’s life...stuff that’s not too readily available anywhere else...recordings I’ll bet you haven’t ever heard...Piedmont guitar magic that has to be heard to be believed...catch my drift? This is something not to be taken lightly so be on the lookout to dip in and dive on this soon to be available treasure chest.

Pura Fei, “Follow Your Heart’s Desire” is finished and is in the process of getting the art-work complete. It is the first Music Maker release for this unique lady whose strong spiritual presence and wisdom are translated directly from her intimate, soulful voice to your heart of hearts. Pura Fe called in and proudly announced that Ulali the singing/drum group that she has traveled with for the last 18 years just honored them with an award for their “Inspiried Voice” along with Buffy St. Marie, Taoon Cardinal, Cicely Tyson and Lisa Bonnet.

This summer’s Warehouse Blues Series is still rolling successfully along in Durham, NC and will continue to through September. For more information on who’s performing when in order to make your required presence known, head on over to musicmaker.org.
Essie Mae Days

Mark Coltrain, MMRF Intern who recently graduated from UNC-G, spent an afternoon with gospel legend Essie Mae Brooks.

When Amy asked me if I would pick up Essie Mae Brooks at Raleigh/Durham Airport for the recording session of an upcoming album featuring several Music Maker artists with Kenny Wayne Shepherd, I jumped at the chance. Not only would I be able to lend a hand to a busy group of folks preparing for a hectic weekend, but I would finally get to meet the lady who is behind the most inspiring album in Music Maker’s catalog, Rain in Your Life and who is featured on a recent favorite that lead to a popular world tour, Sisters of the South.

Essie Mae’s flight arrived at RDU a little after 10:30am on Saturday, June 12 and, after narrowly avoiding a ticket on my illegally parked car from airport security, I found her sitting in the baggage claim area patiently waiting for her bags and her ride to Hillsborough. After getting her luggage and loading up the car, we headed west and proceeded to converse about her life and the sanctifying music she creates with her one of a kind voice and poetic songwriting.

Living and thriving most of her life in and around Perry Georgia, the seat of Houston County in Georgia’s heartland, Essie Mae remembers a hard-working but good childhood. Like most folks from the area Essie Mae grew up on a farm of mostly cotton, but unlike most folks her upbringing was in a family of musicians. She recalls her father as an entertaining drummer, her uncle as a guitar player and drummer and grandfather who played harmonica who all encouraged her musicality which initiated her vocal aspirations. Essie Mae would get up on chairs in her house and sing along with her father, grandfather, or just by herself from about age 3 or 4 and said she enjoyed every minute of it. She has been more appreciative of the opportunity to sing in her local church on Sundays. As she grew and her voice matured, Mahalia Jackson became a big influence on her and rightly so.

When it comes to gospel outside of Rosetta Tharpe, there is no better source of influence and inspiration than Jackson. But as the years were bountifully more apparent at she has seen now that Essie Mae brings a genuine earthy quality to her singing and songwriting that makes it among the most contemplative, intimate and ultimately accessible gospel with a hint of blues there is to be heard. Her is the shining voice of an experienced matrarch whose faith and unassumingly energetic demeanor serves as an example to all.

We drove on Guest Road in a brave for eating and continued to talk about her children and grandchildren, who have come to live close to recently. Essie Mae in Perry, the farthest one away being a son in Atlanta about two hours north. She has another son who plays blues and gospel guitar. They play and sing together often and she mentioned the hopes of doing a recording project with her son and Tim sometime in the next year or so. Until then she is content performing not only at home but it is frequently asked to share her gifts in many other congregations around the area.

We dropped the Sisters of the South tour which took Essie Mae, along with Sweet Betty and Beverly “Guitar” Watkins, to no too a number of diverse cities around the United States but even as far as Switzerland. She spoke enthusiastically of the tour and the travel and was quick to add how she became especially fond of Beverly’s guitar magic. It’s things like the tour and recording an album she enjoys most about being a part of Music Maker. As an artist who was been with Music Maker since near its beginning, Tim and Denise entered Essie Mae’s life as sources of hope and inspiration so she, in turn, could provide the same for the thousands of others who have experienced her own uniquely personal songs and singing voice.

After our meal, I dropped Essie Mae off at Denise and Tim’s house and thanked her for her interesting conversation. I smiled all the way home and looked forward with great anticipa- tion to the next day as Essie Mae, along with John Dee Holman, Neal Patton, and Cowie Stark would all be recording with Kenny Wayne Shepherd in Hillsborough.

When I arrived on Sunday afternoon, I learned that things were running behind, so the recording wouldn’t begin for a couple more hours. Things were still running crazy around the Fortress of Blues-nude a couple of dozen people making last minute preparations after stopping outside to nod my head and cop a listen at the calm eye in the midst of that frenzied storm to John Dee, Cowie, and Neal jam ming in tribute to the late great Ray Charles playing “Georgia On My Mind,” I found my way inside the house to Essie Mae, calm and patiently waiting on Tim and Denise’s sofa, much like I had first found her the day before in the middle of a busy airport.

We picked up right where we left off the day before and I asked her why she wasn’t outside where all the action was.

“The air out there’s not good for my voice, you know,” she replied.

Indeed, while not too hot, the cloudy day air hanging thick with North Carolina humidity made sense to avoid in addition to all the technical crews buzzing around. We continued chatting about what she would have been doing at home on a normal Sunday to which she replied, “singing in church until about 2:00 or 3:00 in the afternoon.”

While excited about the recording session, Essie Mae seemed eager to get back home and keep on doing what she’s been doing for over sixty years – singing her songs: brightening lives and spreading the good news to all listeners.

Music Maker News

We would like to thank everyone who attended

The 1st Annual Congressional Blues Festival will be held on Tuesday July 20, 2004. This fundraising event will support the Music Maker Relief Foundation, which was created ten years ago to make certain the Blues tradition would survive by supporting not only the artists music, but the artists themselves.

For more details please visit www.bluesinthesouth.org

Music Maker Relief Foundation

In recognition of the 100 years of musical and cultural impact that the blues has had, Congress proclaimed 2004 the “Year of the Blues.” This is the year that the 1st Annual Congressional Blues Festival… keeps this mission on the Hill alive.

This event is more than your typical “blues festival.” We are creating an intimate event for key decision makers on Capitol Hill wherein the Music Maker mission can be promoted and advanced. The festival will certainly be an embodiment of the truest meaning of the words: also serve as a public marriage between Congress and a great American tradition. It is our goal to not only provide first class entertainment but also have Senators and Congressman and their respective staffs directly involved.

The line up includes Cool John Ferguson, Little Sammy Davis, Leon Helm, Beverly “Guitar” Watkins, and Mudcat.
Henry Byrd, Sanford, FL © T. Duffy

Henry Byrd at the age of 91 is doing well, living by himself, and having a good time with his friend Scott Riggs. Playing the music he learned in the late 1920s, Henry is originally from a little town outside of Perry, GA. It is there where he learned to play the blues. In the 30s he hoboed throughout the country on the train. He met and played with many of the blues musicians of his day, folks such as Blind Lemon Jefferson, Blind Blake, Blind Boy Fuller and others. His music is wonderful, stemming straight from the source with no adornments.

Etta Baker, Morganton, NC © Lucy Duffy

This spring Etta received the highest state honor in the arts by the Governor of NC. Etta is 91 and has been suffering with heart disease but on our recent visit she gladly pronounced to us that she is fully recovered. Etta’s guitar playing on her recordings issued in 1956 made a deep profound influence on American music. Bob Dylan spent his 21st birthday with Etta and her fingerstyle influence is very apparent on his early recordings especially songs like “Don’t Think Twice.” We are just finishing up mastering the recording sessions she did with Taj Mahal and helping her issue her early recordings which she never gave consent to issue or has received on payment in the nearly 50 years these recordings have been in constant print.

John Dee Holeman and Kenny Wayne Shepherd, Hillsborough, NC © T. Duffy

John Dee is a real gentleman and his music is superb. It has always been, but it seems to just get better and better. We thank him for helping get Kenny Wayne interested in our mission. Kenny Wayne is a major label artist that enjoyed great success at an early age. At 28 he wants to give back to the culture from which he arose, the blues from the South. Kenny came by before a show in Charlotte, NC and recorded with John Dee Holeman. Cool John and appeared in our piece with “Foreign Correspondent.” Of course we were thrilled that he chose to donate a very substantial portion of the profits of his upcoming blues CD/DVD to MMRF. B.B. King has joined in on the project as well as a slew of the greatest blues artists among us today.


These two are the finest connoisseur’s of drink houses that I know. I showed up with the Australian film crew around 12, and we did our shoot, after we wrapped up Capt. Luke invited us to a new place he had found. We went to the outskirts of town and what a place indeed. There was a big garden out back, you could buy freshly made sauce meat, and the finest corn liquor I have tasted in years. The people were nothing but hospitable. We played music, shot more film, and I am sure it made wonderful footage for “Foreign Correspondent.”

David Butler, Sanford, FL © T. Duffy

We stopped by to visit David while in Sanford. He was more worried about when his motorcycle would be fixed as he needs to get around and had no transportation. However he picked up my guitar and graced us with a beautiful set of music. His style is absolutely unique. All of his songs are parables that speak to his community on what they will learn if they travel and what to watch out for.

Pura Fe, Hillsborough, NC © T. Duffy

Pura Fe is an activist and council member of the Tuscarora Indian Nation of North Carolina, the most Southern band of Iroquois peoples. Pura Fe explained to us the musical contributions made by Southeastern Indigenous people. “My Nation has been systematically disenfranchised and disregarded. Many people think we have nothing to do with the development of Southern culture. In fact Native and African people traded extensively before the invasion of the Western Hemisphere. Not only were we captured and shipped off to West Africa, we were bred together on slave plantations during colonization of our land. Also maroon colonies and the Underground Railroad ran through most of Indian occupied territory on old trade paths. African and Indian slaves were harbored, escorted and smuggled across the Canadian border through Indian country. This union gave birth to a rich new culture blending religion, dance, food, good looking people and the Blues! Many of these grandchildren became influential musicians. Charley Patton the first King of the Blues is Choctaw, Scraper Blackwell is Cherokee, Guitar Gabriel, Jim Hendrix, Don Cherry, Duke Ellington, Thelonious Monk, Taj Mahal, Lina Horne, the Neville Brothers, Lilette Richardson, Tea Turner, Chaka Khan…. There are so many blues and jazz pioneers that have expressed their Native ancestry through their work.”
He tends the roots of American Music

By: Kim Campbell
Staff writer: Christian Science Monitor

New York — Until a few years ago, the world was unfamiliar with Cootie Stark. Blind for most of his life and living in Hillsborough, N.C., he played music primarily on the streets, sharing the songs he learned from the bluesmen that came before him. He might have disappeared like they did if a young producer named Tim Duffy hadn’t met him in 1995. It was—n’t long before the 68-year-old had a new guitar and the first CD bearing his name.

To the artists Mr. Duffy works with, he is a man with solutions. Need to be warm? He’ll buy a heating stove. Need to play? He’ll find a guitar. He books tours and pays medical bills, arranges transportation and tombstones. Most of all, he makes sure that his ever-expanding roster of older musicians are able to carry on with an American musical tradition.

Out of a building next to his home in Hillsborough, N.C., Duffy and a tiny staff, including his wife and co-founder, Denise, run the Music Maker Relief Foundation, where they carry out their motto: “Keeping the blues of the blues alive.”

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the organization, which has channeled $2.3 million through its programs and helped 108 artists over age 55. Along the way the group has collected fans in the recording industry such as Eric Clapton, Moby, B.B. King, and Bonnie Raitt. Several are on the group’s advisory board, while others, such as Taj Mahal—who calls the blues an “aquifer” that nourishes modern music—are members of its board of directors.

Even with the attention, raising money and distributing CDs are among the biggest challenges for the nonprofit group, which helps musicians from West Virginia to Nevada. To Duffy, his work is about saving and documenting a vital part of U.S. culture—and treating the people who make it like family. “These people have given so much to an industry that has created billions of dollars off their musical traditions,” he says by phone. “Why can’t we pay back something?”

Duffy’s passion for helping these “living roots” of American music was ignited back in 1989, when he was a graduate student in folklore at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He was documenting the work of James “Guitar Slim” Stephens, who told him to look up another bluesman, Guitar Gabriel. Duffy then encountered one artist after another—always part of a tradition he had been told hardly existed anymore. “I realized there was this whole hidden world,” he says.

Appalled by the choices many of the musicians had to make each month—between food or medicine, rent or the car—Duffy drove them to the grocery store, to pay bills, and to get to welfare lines, while trying to book them gigs, record their music, and swing record deals. It was a new model for maintaining the blues community, where only a few, like B.B. King, have made a living off their music.

“Tim has really worked individually with these people,” says Taj Mahal, who has produced, recorded, and toured with Music Maker musicians. “Beyond just him seeing them as artists, he’s seeing them as people and has sought to stabilize their lives so they can continue doing the great things that they’re doing.”

One recipient is guitarist Etta Baker. Now in her 90s, she’s been playing since she was 3. “He is just wonderful,” she says of Duffy, who has provided her with money and free CDs of her music to sell to help pay for food and medical bills. “I don’t know how I’d ever have [paid] these high doctor bills if it hadn’t been for Tim,” Ms. Baker says.

“Just sitting down talking to Tim, it showed me where I was losing a lot by just not trying.”

Duffy says that over the years, artists were sometimes approached by people who wanted to record them, but never returned with a finished product. Today Duffy has people calling from around the US for assistance. Those they help have an annual income of under $18,000, and the average is about $6,000 a year.

“He’s helped me in so many different ways,” says Rutherford, who is in his mid-70s. “He’ll find out through the grapevine or wherever that I’m having trouble meeting the expenses of about $635 worth of drugs a month.... And he’ll send me a check and help me with that.”

“He’s just plumb full of love and he spreads it all over the place,” he adds.

Duffy’s arranged for the musicians to perform overseas and in such venues as Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center. “We develop these artists,” he explains. “We met Cootie when he was 68 and now he’s 77, he’s a much better artist than he was at 68. They get better.”

Music Maker sold about 10,000 albums through its website, musicmaker.org, and direct mail last year. The Duffy’s are discussing a possible partnership with the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill that would allow their operation to grow. Music Maker is a model that could benefit other forms of American music—Native American, Hispanic—and is already expanding beyond the blues, says those tracking it.

[These genres] don’t sell a lot of records. But they’re very significant. They reflect working-class American values, the struggles of men and women to make a living, and they voice that world within their music,” says William Ferris of the Center for the Study of the American South at UNC. “It’s potentially a model that could extend in a very powerful way throughout our nation.”

Tim Duffy, Chris Startwich and Pat Sky © Lucy Duffy
We ran into founder Chris Startwich and folk legend Pat Sky at the Mc.Airy Fiddler’s convention. We all had an impromptu dinner party at this wonderful yearly festival.

Jerry “Boogie” McCain © T. Duffy
Blues legend Jerry “Boogie” McCain will be inducted into the Birmingham Collectors Hall of fame August 21st. What a great honor! Check out www.boogiemccain.com to learn more about the Boogie McCain Music Hall.

add $5 to your tax deductible donation

you will receive Captain Luke, Cool John or Cootie Stark Shirt.
You pick out the size and we’ll pick out the artist!

and get a free t-shirt today!
see order form for more information
see page 6 for order form
Little Pink Anderson

Crawford County, Alabama

“Of the signature chords of my guitar vocab-
ulary comes from two sources of Railroad Bill. I
enjoyed this beautiful album of guitar instru-
m ents,” - John Prine

Eisie Mae Brooks

Eisie Mae was her real name and she was a great
bluegrass musician. She accompanied her mother
with her guitar and在市场上 found themselves
on the road.

Cora Mae Bryant

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"She had a very long career and her music was
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Cool John Ferguson

Here's Cool John Ferguson, a uniquely brood-
ished, almost mythic character, whose music
data in the vaults of music history.

Guitar Collection

This CD compilation features the music of Cool John Ferguson,
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most popular and influential songs, showcasing their musical
abilities and contributions to the world of music.

Stay Cool in a Music Maker Tee!

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Edition! Three CDs (Guitar Gabriel, Deep in the South,
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Expiration: September 2023

ALL CDs $19

Little Pink Anderson

Crawford County, Alabama

“Of the signature chords of my guitar vocab-
ulary comes from two sources of Railroad Bill. I
enjoyed this beautiful album of guitar instru-
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Eisie Mae Brooks

Eisie Mae was her real name and she was a great
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Dear Amy,

I really enjoyed Big Boy Henry's cd, "Beaufort Blues" that you put out a couple of years ago. I haven't heard much from Big Boy lately - how's he doing and what's he been up to?

-Dante Pendergrass from Greensboro, NC

We love Big Boy thanks for asking. Mark Coltrain was in the office and had never spoken to Big Boy and he jumped at the chance to write something on him.

Big Boy Henry Interview, June 11, 2004

I had the privilege of conversing with the humble spirit of Big Boy on the telephone recently. He was watching a little TV lounging around on a humid Friday afternoon in middle June. "I ain't been up to too much; taking it easy, you know. Things are going pretty good - I can't grumble." We also discussed his wonderful music and plans for the future.

I asked Big Boy if, in one of my personal favorites of his impressive repertoire, "Mr. Ball's Warehouse" - it's a song he wrote on a whim that he never expected to be so enjoyed by other folks.

In fact, his whole "Beaufort Blues" album is a joy to behold. We should be thankful he was able to record this brilliant piece of work before arthritis and diabetes stopped him from making his wonderful style of Carolina Blues. But, in his mid-eighties, Big Boy's not done yet - he still has a couple of aces up his sleeve. He has a number of unissued recordings he made of himself in a small studio he had in his old house from about 10 to 15 years ago. There are plans for Tim to remaster and make an album out of these recordings in the not so distant future, which is certainly music to this fans ears.

But wait...inspiration from his father, Luther Henry, Big Boy's son who was featured on Beaufort Blues singing "Tell Me What to Do," has plans to record an album himself with that beautifully earthy voice passed from father to son.

So, some interesting and good news indeed coming out of Beaufort, NC. Keep your eyes and ears open for more information to come.

Only the music and camaraderie of our Tournament surpasses the natural beauty of Zancudo! Our group is large enough that everyone will make new friends and small enough that you will keep them for life.

This trip is the ultimate cure for your wintertime blues and helps to keep the blues of the blues alive! What will make you feel even better is that half the fee is tax-deductible! Do reserve your spot early as we are limited to 32 fishermen (we sell out every year).

February 6th 2005 – Travel to Zancudo
February 7th – Fishin’ February 8th – Fishin’ February 9th – Fishin’ and Awards dinner February 10th – Concert (optional touring, beach party or more Fishin’) February 11th – Rest & Relaxation (optional touring) February 12th – Depart for home Reserve by August 1st and save $500: The entrance fee for this tourney will be $6,250 ($3,000 tax deductible). This fee includes roundtrip airfare from Atlanta or Miami, all transfers, room (double occupancy), fishing fees, meals and drinks. If you make your full payment on or before August 1st, you receive a $500 discount off your fee and come away just $5,750 ($2,500 tax deductible). There will be a few spaces available for non-fishing companions; the cost will be $5,000 ($2,500 tax deductible). Book prior to Aug 1st for $4,500.

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Music Maker Rag II