Music Maker Relief Foundation strives to help the true pioneers and forgotten heroes of Southern music gain recognition and meet their day to day needs. We support the health and well being of these legendary musicians. Our organization provides the ways and means to expand their professional careers and share their unique musical gifts with the world. Music Maker does this for the betterment of their lives and for the preservation of our culture.
Adolphus Bell: One Man Band

In the fall of 1996, I was traveling back from Louisville, Kentucky, where I was at a music festival. I was interested in meeting this musician. Eventually, I had to make my exit yet I always wanted to meet with Adolphus Bell, One-Man Band. At the ages of years, I kept hearing about a one-man band playing around the South. My friend Mudcat told me about Adolphus playing on the streets of Atlanta and he was so successful that he had two bodyguards to watch over two buckets of money and was being over. Then I heard of a one-man band performing on the streets of Macon, Georgia. Last fall, Mudcat called me up. He had a telephone number on the “One-Man Band,” he was down in Birmingham, Alabama. I called him up and told him how excited I was to finally meet him and that I would try to book him some shows.

Music Maker was scheduled to perform at the 2004 King Biscuit Blues Festival in Helena, Arkansas. One of our artists had to cancel the show, so I called Jerry Pillow who books the festival and told him my story of the one-man band. I said that I had never heard him, but I had been trying to get him on my show. He told me to call him Jerry, and I have heard of his music. George Benson lived in Birmingham, Alabama. I called him up and told him how excited I was to finally meet him and that I would try to book him some shows.

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Dear Friends,

Summer is here and we hope everyone is doing well! Music Maker artists are performing big shows, visiting artists are spending time at the headquarters, recordings are being issued. Grants are being made for the most basic needs and to keep their show on the road. We are forging ahead with our mission, making things happen and staying strong with the help of our donors.

We were deeply saddened by the passing of Music Maker artist Neal Pattman, and we deeply grieve the loss of Rafi Shores, the 19-year-old son of recipient artist Larry Shores. Our hearts go out to both of these families in this tragic time of loss.

Music Maker continues on its mission to help the true pioneers of Southern music. Many days it is overwhelming to learn of so many music legends that are in need of our programs and we are so limited in our ability to help in their time of need. At present, we are scrambling to serve over 70 artists with a staff of three folks.

This demonstrates the need for the programs that Music Maker delivers. There are literally thousands of potential recipients that need our help. Hopefully in the near future, we will be able to increase our capacity so we can serve more worthy artists.

One of the biggest requests from artists is to help them with getting their music heard. Through our Development program, we grant CDs to artists free of charge to help them make money at their shows. We use the CDs to help find gigs, so these artists can travel and spread their music.

A big part of our work is to introduce to the world, the great music of these unknown artists. So in that spirit, we are introducing a huge CD sale. We are selling all of our CDs for $10 with only a $5 shipping charge. So you can buy 1 for $15, three for $35 or just go ahead and purchase 53 CDs for $535! We strongly urge each customer to add an extra donation to each order to keep our programs funded.

We hope everyone stocks up on CDs for a summer of listening. Enjoy learning about the folks that inspire us to lay it on the line each day and attempt to keep the mission of the Music Maker Relief Foundation alive and well.

With warm regards,

Timothy & Denise Duffy

Music Maker News

Mac Arnold has a distinguished career in the blues from playing with Muddy Waters, A.C. Reed and many other legends. Mac resides in Palmer, SC, where at age ten, he got his first taste of the blues when he learned to play his brother Leroy’s homemade guitar. Going back to his roots, Mac is serving up a mess of Blues with his out on Fat Possum Records. His friend Wack-O-Wade has donated some copies to MMPRF to help fundraise. Check out these incredible artists. Our dream is to book Little Freddie King and Beverly “Guitar” Watkins on the same show and bill it as “The Guitar Battle of the Sexes.”

This past June, Grammy nominee and country star Tift Merritt and her drummer Zeke Hutchins invited John Dee Holmeiken, Cool John and Tim Duffy to open for them at their show at the NC Museum of Art in Raleigh, NC. Zeke grew up in Durham and had played drums with John Dee as a kid. Zeke is an electrifying drummer. John Dee was smiling ear to ear with Zeke’s incredible timing. Cool John pumping chords, John Dee just smoked the packed house of 3,000 Tift was recording that night and they were so kind to give us the sound recordings to check out. Tift and Tim are planning to record a new album with John Dee this summer. If you do not know of Tift Merritt, run out and get her two albums. We are huge fans. Tift is an enormous talent and we are so grateful for her kind words towards MMPRF at the show!

Lee Gates is about to get mad, as we are taking so long to get his second CD out.

Steve Means, the mayor of Gadsden, AL, claimed June the 19th will be Jerry “Boogie” McCain day from now on.

Adolphus Bell has got his passport after great difficulty. His CD should be coming out soon!

Ettta Baker at the age of 92 has been suffering greatly. She recently almost died but remarkably has made yet another recovery and is looking forward to finishing her banjo CD.

Mudcat is out there working hard and making tremendous progress in his European touring. Check out mudcatblues.com to learn more.

Beverly “Guitar” Watkins is feeling great. She was a huge success at her recent performance in Italy! She played a guitar solo for Cootie Stark that just shook the heavens and had the crowd all on its feet.

Mac Arnold and Plate Full of Blues. To learn more, get his new CD and check out his touring schedule. Please visit www.macarnold.com.

Skeeter Brandon and his band opened the summer music series at the American Tobacco Historic District in Durham, NC. It was a great turnout and Skeeter and the band were amazing. Please check out skeeterbrand.com to learn more of this amazing man, musician and singer.

Little Freddie King was recently featured in Living Blues Magazine and has a great new CD out on Fat Possum Records. His friend Wack-O-Wade has donated some copies to MMPRF to help fundraise. Check out these incredible artists. Our dream is to book Little Freddie King and Beverly “Guitar” Watkins on the same show and bill it as “The Guitar Battle of the Sexes.”

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Silent Strings

Neal Pattman had the aspect of an iron wall, was as solid and strong of a man one might ever meet. He lost one arm as a boy after it got stuck in a wagon wheel. Having one arm didn’t slow Neal down. He was told to you that he could chop more wood, pick more cotton, fight more men, than most men with two arms. You knew he was not lying. When Neal exclaimed “This is the biggest fire I ever had to put out, stayed in jail 58 years!” you believed him. Not because you thought he would do anything wrong - but because he was tough enough to survive that long.

Neal Pattman (b.1926) died on May 4th, 2003 in Athens, Georgia. He passed just three weeks after his good friend and music partner Cootie Stark. Both men died of prostate cancer.

Neal was born in Washington County, Georgia in the same town as the legendary harp master Sonny Terry. He learned the harp from his father and grew up playing his blues at country juke joints, calewalks and dances. Neal met Guitar Gabriel and me in 1991 and Neal decided to join Gabe and move to Winston-Salem. Soon after, Neal met his next wife and did not make the move to North Carolina but remained in close friendship with Music Maker for the remainder of his life.

Neal was such a gentleman and was a thorough joy to be around. When we were spending an afternoon with rock star Lou Reed, jamming with jazz legend Lee Konitz, or meeting a fan for the first time, Neal was always respectful, cordial and willing to spend some time with anyone interested in him.

In 1996, I introduced Neal to South Carolina blues historians and Rutgers Professor C. Frank Evans, director of the two struck up a unique musical partnership. Together they traveled with a Blues Revival Tour sponsored by R. J. Reynolds that lined them up in 42 cities performing with blues legends Taj Mahal. An advertisement of a photo of Neal and Cootie ran in over 98 national magazines and 115 weeklies in 1998 and 1999. It seemed as if millions of impressions of their faces were distributed, arguably the most print exposure of unknown blues artists in history.

I traveled a great deal with these men throughout the United States and Europe. I will never forget the day Neal saved Cootie Stark’s life. The train we were riding had stopped in Paris and the doors opened, but not in front of the correct platform as it was six feet below the train door. Cootie just walked out the door and he began to fall. Neal instinctively jumped down caught Cootie’s hand with his one hand as Cootie was disappearing under the train, ran his feet on the platform and pulled Cootie straight up in the air and Cootie landed on his feet next to Neal. It was an unbelievable sight. As I joined them, a fellow ran into me, rifled through my pockets, grabbed my camera and began to shake down Cootie. Neal raised his hand and the shelf ran.

Later that night, at a small hotel, we all got stuck in a tiny elevator for one and one half hours. Belly to belly with Neal and Cootie. Neal pulled out his harp and began playing the blues, until the elevator was fixed. Later in our rooms, we discovered that the heat did not work and it was winter time. We wrapped up in our jackets and slept under the blankets. It was a rough day on the road, yet there was not a word of complaint from either Neal or Cootie. These two men were very inspired travelers.

Neal understood what we were trying to build at Music Maker and was always willing to pitch in with great effort. He spent weeks with me in New York City meeting potential sponsors, traveled to Long Island on small planes, got in vans and drove down to Florida, whatever it took. Neal was ready. It was such a joy to be on an airplane heading out. Neal would pull out his harp and begin to play and sing. When he finished, folks would just applaud. Next thing you knew you were in the air; the nervousness of the “take-off” was washed away by Neal’s great spirit.

Neal Pattman issued Prison Blues on the Music Maker label, a CD on Gary Erwin’s Label and a cassette on Global Village. He was a featured artist on Sol-Value Blue and was a featured performer in the yet unreleased Music Maker Film Living the Blues. Last spring, Cootie and Neal traveled together for their last time to the MMF headquarters in Hillsborough, North Carolina to join Kenny Wayne Shepherd in his upcoming CD/DVD 10 Days Out, Blues from the Back Roads. Neal and Cootie play key roles in this film.

Neal Pattman was a Georgia blues legend whose music affected thousands of fans around the world. He will be profoundly missed.

Elmer Elijah Mackall, 81, renowned church pianist and gospel singer, a Chesapeake Bay aristocrat since age 12, died May 22 of emphysema in his home in Prince Frederick, Maryland. He performed at the Smithsonian Folk Life Festival, was awarded First Place in Vocal Performance through the Maryland State Arts Council and released a solo album, which has won international acclaim.

A Bright Side Somewhere, released in 2003, features Mackall’s zesty performances on piano and voice. His piano accompaniment, a rhythmic fusion of ragtime and barrelhouse styles, has been widely sought after by Maryland churches, both black and white, for services in Prince George’s County.

Mr. Mackall ensured that his children were good harmony singers, and in the tradition of his mother, his children performed with him in churches throughout the community. Today his children carry on the legacy by performing in three ensembles of the Edwin E. Frank Singers, The Traveling Angels, and Hard Way Connection. Mr. Mackall was born into an African American tobacco sharecropping family in Calvert County, Maryland. His mother, Rose Mackall was known throughout the county and beyond for the power of her voice and for the ensemble formed with many of her thirteen children, as mother and children traveled to churches and camp meetings throughout the region, creating a legacy remembered by elders today. Mr. Mackall kept alive a repertoire of songs sung by the late Rose Mackall, who was born in 1879.

Ella Baker came from page 1. A young girl, she said, her father “set me up in the middle of the bed and put a guitar in my lap.” It was a miniature Stella. Baker was tiny, but she learned to pick and play chords.

As an adult, Bakerraised nine children and worked at the Buster Brown shoe plant on N.C. 181, north of Morganton. She played for fun but never thought of doing anything else.

Then, one day in 1958, “this musician came by and said, ‘Ella, why don’t you quit the Buster Brown plant and play music for a living?’” she said. “I said, ‘I can’t do that.’”

“But he said, ‘You ought to quit that hard work,’ and I did.” This was on Wednesday. I went in and told ’em I was quitting on Friday and I never did go back.

Her first gig was at the old Reynolds building in Statesville, accompanying a man named James Stephens, better known as Guitar Slim. Was she nervous?

“No.”

Why not?

“I was too glad to be out of that plant.”

Over the years, she’s released several albums, the latest of which is “Ella Baker with Taj Mahal.” In 1991, she won national recognition for “One-Dime Blues”; the same year, she won her NEA fellowship and got to meet Taj Mahal.

“And he is the nicest person,” she added — unlike another luminary she’d shared stage with.

“They Ray Charles, he had a temper;” she said with distaste. “Somebody got his keyboard out of whack, and he used some language I wouldn’t use in the woods.”

She won’t be pulling that kind of attitude today. Etta Baker, 98, maintained these bouquets of praise people keep heaping on her — that she’s a treasure, the living embodiment of the Piedmont blues, a legend in her own time.

“Nobody was thinking about that,” said Baker, referring to her family and all the other blues musicians who preceded her. “They was just hav- ing a good time.”

Ella Baker Day

Ella Baker Day was celebrated at Morganton’s weekly TGO! concerts, at 6 p.m. today on the grounds of the old Burke County Courthouse.

Saturday, July 8, 2006, 6:00PM – 8:00PM. Drink Small will be a part of The Evening of Jazz, Blues & Gospel At Goldsboro’s Dillard Middle School Auditorium, 1101 Devereaux Street, Goldsboro, NC. $15.00 info: 252-453-1773

July 9th – Music Maker Review in Pinehurst, NC. Come out for the Blues Crawl and catch Abe Reid, Slowfow, Little Pink in venues around town, and then a night of fun with Cool John Ferguson, Macavine Hayes, Whistlin’ Britches and Captain Luke. Check out sunrisetheater.com for information as it becomes available.

July 10th – Little Pink Anderson and Cool John Ferguson, Parker County, Maryland. Henry Stoker and his family will be having their annual party at the Music Maker Relief Foundation at their home in Parker, Maryland on July 16th. If you are interested in attending, please call Henry during work hours (8am-5pm) at 410-308-6109.

July 28-31 – Cognac, France – Willie King and the Librarians, George Higgins, Adolphi Bell and Tim Duffy, Baker will be joined by two of the bouquets of Blues Passions festival in Cognac, France. Visit http://www.bluespassions.com to learn more.

Saturday, July 29th – Cool John Ferguson at the Durham, NC Bimbo Festival, 5pm in Durham Central Park, 506 Foster Street, July 30th.


Saturday, Aug. 4th at – Dalton GA - Sisters of the South Sweet Betty, Beverly “Guitar” Watkins and Essie Mae Brooks will join together for a night of music in at the Wink Theater. Visit winktheatre.org for directions and contact information.

Thursday, Sept. 19 – Cool John, Captain Luke, Macavine Hayes and Whistlin’ Britches, Durham, NC. Will be joining the poster for the outdoor series at the American Tobacco Campus across the street from the New Durham Bulls Stadium.

Saturday, Oct 1 – Madison, GA – Beverly “Guitar” Watkins Be sure to check out the Lake Oconee Jazz and Blues Festival for a great day of music. Visit www.lakecountryjazz.com for more information.

WAREHOUSE BLUES

Warehouse Blues Summer Schedule Durham, NC

6-8pm West Village Courtyard, 604 West Morgan Street (near Main)

Aug 5th – Taj Mahal, The Traveling Angels, Guitar Slim, Lightnin’ Wells & George Higgins

Aug 19 – John Dee Holeman & Benton Flippin’

Aug 21 – Lightnin’ Wells & George Higgins

Aug 30 – Pura Funk & Cool John Ferguson

Free To the Public

Music Maker Rag 3

Givin’ it Back Record Club
In Memory of Neal Pattman
1926 - 2005
This album was made in the field, not in a recording studio. The recording quality is absolutely first-rate. It's a great CD and a unique piece of American music.

For sale: Summer CD from Music Maker. This CD presents eighteen selections from a dozen artists to the streets of America. These are real songs from the streets of America, as performed by the artists themselves. This album is a great addition to any collection of American music.

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Trouble rhythm section, McCain claims the less well known gentleman on this record created better music. Who’s to argue as McCain and his less well known cohorts sound mighty fine delivering a looser, stripped down jukie groove. McCain is without a doubt one of the finest amplified harp blowers on the scene with a big, clear tone throwing down an endless stream of inventive licks. He also happens to be one of the Wittiest song writers around a fact well showcased on a set that features all originals including the shuffling anthem “Boogie Is My Name” which kicks things off in romping fashion and the hilarious “My New Door Neighbor” an update of his classic 50’s Excello rocker “My Next Door Neighbor.” There’s not a bum track in the bunch with favorites going to the insistent groove of “Big Butt Sara,” the back alley vibe of “Lowdown Dirty Rat” and the remarkable nearly nine minute closer “Demons Of The Body.” On his latter tune McCain goes to church, literally taking on the guise of Rev. Boogie McCain as he serenades on those “Open Up The Body” like rheumatism, bursitis and cancer back by an organ and the shouts from the congregation. Can I get a witness! Unlike McCain, Lee Gates remains a local legend although this release may soon rectify that. Lee Gates was born in Mississippi and moved to Milwaukee as a teenager where he has been playing ing his brand of down home blues for the past 50 years. Gates also happens to be the first cousin of Albert Collins and you can definitely hear it in his stringing guitar work. Despite coming late in life Gates was lucky to record as far too many great bluesman pass without getting that opportunity.

Gates makes the best of that opportunity on “Lee Gates And The Alabama Cotton Kings” (the record was cut in Alabama) backed by his band including the excellent drummer Ardie Dean who also played on McCain’s record. What we get hear is plenty of stomping good time party blues as Gates unleashes some aggressive, stringing axe work reminiscent of his more famous cousin. The entire album was cut in three hours and indeed if it wasn’t for the fact that there’s no crowd noise you could swear Gates cut this right from the blueprints. Gates gets right to work on the blistering instrumental “Sweet Lucy’s Groove” before wrapping his gritty vocals around numbers like the funky “You Gotta Love Me,” “I Got A Honky Tonk Woman” and the mid-tempo grind of “Down To The Ghettos.”

Gates uncorked a few more steamy instruments that “Lucy’s Voodoo” and the tromm Lee’s Boogie,” before wrapping it up as the bus back north. As always it’s important to note to Music Maker is much more than a record label. Music “Do The Greenwich Village mission is to raise the standard of living for down and out traditional musicians and help them perform. In this they have been hugely successful and along the way have released some great music. With a recent article in the New York Times let’s hope Music Maker receives even more support so they can keep their remarkable mission rolling along.

Jeff Harris, Bad Dog Blues