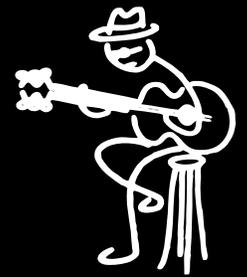


# BLUES

THE BI-MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF

# NEWS

THE BLUES SOCIETY OF TULSA



*Blues Society of Tulsa Celebrating 15 Years!* 2002 - 2017

Volume 15, Number 1

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September/October 2017

## *New Blues Festival is in Planning for Tulsa! Yes!!!*

By Bill Martin

A new Tulsa blues festival is in the initial planning stages with the actual event another one to two years away.

Announcing the plans was Blues Society of Tulsa member **Nathan Alessi**, 37, of Owasso speaking at the monthly meeting of BST August 14<sup>th</sup> at the Cimarron Bar.

Nathan has been appointed by BST President **Bill Martin** as chairman of a newly formed Blues Festival Committee.

Nathan and BST member **Steve Antry** recently met with the Tulsa Chamber of Commerce who have already began work with hotels to accommodate the festival, plus are studying potential sites for the event. Antry is CEO of Eagle Energy LLC in Tulsa and earlier this year formed the **Joyride Blues Band** as vocalist, with Nathan playing bass guitar.

**Larry Schaefer**, who put on the Oklahoma Blues Festival from 1994 through 2006 had one of the biggest and best blues festivals in the country. He says the event drew as few as 4,000 attendees the last year when torrential rains hurt the event headlined by the legendary **B.B. King**. Schaefer added, in a year when there was good weather the fest drew about 8,000 fans.

"I've laid down the baton on the event and have been just waiting for someone to come along and pick it up," he stated.



2017 Tulsa Blues Challenge winner is the Dylan Whitney Band: Michael McClure, Wes Atkinson, Dylan Whitney, Vanessa Oxford and Chris Matthews.

## **Dylan Whitney Takes Top Prize In 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Blues Challenge**

Story and Photos by Bill Martin

Everyone knew it was just a matter of time before the **Dylan Whitney Band** won the Tulsa Blues Challenge. A year ago he placed third in his first attempt, but the second time around proved to be a charm. On August 26<sup>th</sup> on the historic Cain's Ballroom stage, the 20-year-old lead guitarist become the Blues Society of Tulsa's youngest artist to win the band competition. A 22-year-old **Dustin Pittsley** won his first band competition in 2005.

Placing second was the **Joyride Blues Band**, formed earlier this year. Winning the 3<sup>rd</sup> place trophy was **The Boogie** in the eight-band competition. Bands that entered the Blues Challenge were: **Red Sawyer**, **The Dirtboxwailers**, **Stretch-N-The Truth**, **Pipefull of Blues** and the **Anthony Lookout Band**.

DWB scored a total of 571 points and won the competition by an impressive 37-point margin.

The first four songs performed by DWB were originals by Dylan, before closing with a Koko Taylor tune. The set list included *Cold Slaw*, *Someone Isn't Me*, *Green n' Blues*, *Guaranteed*, and a **Susan Tedeschi** version of *Voodoo Woman* (written by **Taylor**). One of the keys to **(Continued on page 4)**

## **INSIDE:**

Best Self Produced-CD Competition, Billy's Blues on Coming Blues Festival, Conor Culpepper: The Youngblood of Tulsa, Joyride Blues Band, The Boogie, Kalo, Jon Spear Band, Miki Free, 1st Morrow-Webster Award is presented, and more!

## Welcome Our New Members!

John E. Terry, David Boaz, both of Tulsa; Connie Smither and Bill Nicholson, Don Law, all of Owasso; Glenna Arnott and Ed Stitt, Jenks.

**Website:** [www.bluessocietyoftulsa.com](http://www.bluessocietyoftulsa.com)  
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Blues Society of Tulsa, P.O. Box 2836, Tulsa, OK 74101, is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization with the purpose of preserving and promoting the blues in Tulsa and Northeastern Oklahoma. Blues News is published bi-monthly and encourages your support through personalized membership card and the Blues News newsletter. BST members are encouraged to submit articles, photos and other materials for publication. Deadline for both editorial items and advertising is the 1st of the month (30 days) prior to publication.

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## BILLY'S BLUES



Nathan Alessi

If you look in the masthead of the Blues News this issue under Committee Chairpersons, you'll notice I have created a new Blues Festival Committee and appointed **Nathan Alessi**, 37, as its chairperson.

The seeds for a major blues festival returning to Tulsa have been planted, but it's going to take a while before it blossoms.



Steve Antry

**Steve Antry**, successful businessman and Tulsa native, is looking to launch a Tulsa blues festival, but it's going to take a year, maybe two. He wants to do it right, plus start out as a relatively small event and gradually build it. Steve views a vital part of this planning to be the involvement and support of the Blues Society of Tulsa. Thus, I have appointed Nathan as our direct liaison with this new venture.

As noted in a page one story, Steve and Nathan have already met with the local chamber of commerce as they start laying the ground work. These two gentlemen have been friends for more than a decade.

The *Blues News* reviewed Steve's new album release **Antry** in the July/August issue. The record already has spent several weeks in the Top 10, worldwide as the #7 album in the blues rock category, plus reached #1 in Oklahoma in all genres. Congratulations Steve!

Tulsa has been without a blues festival since the Oklahoma Blues Festival held its last event in 2006. It was a premiere event and had virtually all of the biggest names in blues at the time.

A short list and only the beginning of the list are few examples: **B.B. King, Albert King, Freddie King, Buddy Guy, John Mayall, Hubert Sumlin, Taj Mahal, Homesick James, Arc Angels, Kenny Wayne Shepard, and Doyle Brammel.** There also were countless regional and local acts on the billing.

Tulsa legendary music promoter **Larry Shaeffer** was the driving force behind those great festivals held for 12 years. Larry told me recently, "It was totally pleasing (putting on those festivals), except for the weather.... The problem is you don't have the blues stars anymore." Larry is right. Most are gone. You have **Buddy Guy**, 81. Otherwise, about the biggest draw is **Joe Bonamassa**. If you expand your view of the blues a little, major acts should be considered such as **Tedeschi-Trucks, Gov. Mule, Beth Hart** and many more.

The Oklahoma Blues Festival was held in the Brady District. "I just couldn't image it being held anyplace else with the beautiful night skyline of downtown Tulsa as a back drop," Larry said.

Now 70 years old, Larry has had some heart problems and received some stints, but says he's in pretty good health. He used to book a lot of **Willie Nelson** shows before Willie cut back his tour schedule, but still books some shows for **Gordon Lightfoot**.

Tulsa owes this man a big debt of gratitude for putting on one of the best festivals of its type in the country. Lots of great memories there. Tulsa is long overdue for another first class blues festival and we're excited it is coming. It's just a matter of when. – **Bill Martin**

## LOCAL BIRTHDAYS

**September 2** – Jacque Garoutte; **5** – Jamie Oldaker; **11** – Peter Delesdernier Leo Kottke; **14** – Steve White, Steve Gaines (1977); **21** – Jesse Ed Davis (1988); **25** – Mike Peace; **26** – Larry Bell; **October 8** – John Heatley; **12** Jim Strader (2009); **17** – Barney Kessel (2004) **18** – Roger Tillison; (2013); **19** Les Moorman (2014); **20** – Danny Baker; Alan Ransom; **21** – Elvin Bishop; **22** – Zac Hanson; **25** – Roger Roden, Scott Russell; **24** – Pat Murray (2012); **26** – Matthew Teegarden.

## BST MONTHLY MEETINGS

are held the second Monday of the month at 7 p.m. The September 11th meeting and the October 9th meeting are at the Cimarron Bar, 26th Street and South Memorial. Non-members are always welcome!



# Conor Culpepper: The Youngblood of Tulsa Blues



Conor Culpepper performing at the Oklahoma Jazz Hall of Fame. (Photo by Elin Stevens Webb)

## By Bill Martin

When **Conor Culpepper** was playing with Tulsa icon, the late **Steve Pryor**, Steve would introduce him as “the youngblood of Tulsa blues.”

At only 17 years old this Tulsa teen has already learned a lot about the music world ranging from blues to jazz. While a student of the trade, he has also absorbed a mountain of musical knowledge from many local artists he has grown up admiring. At the same time Conor has been turning heads with his abundant guitar skills.

It all began at the ripe young age of two when he started playing the ukulele, which soon led to his first acoustic guitar at age four. He has been around music all his life listening to his Mom’s country and his Dad’s rock n’ roll albums.

A junior at Tulsa’s Edison High School, Conor says, “For some reason, I’ve always liked jazz,” which led him joining to the school’s jazz band. This in turn afforded him to be one of the lucky few about 18 months ago playing at the Manhattan School of Music in New York City. There he played a **Charles Mingus** showcase along with other bands from around the world. Conor also is a member of the T-Town Jazz Sound, a statewide jazz band.

When he was seven years old Conor won a Tulsa Public Schools art contest. While the other kids were drawing flowers, Conor’s portrait of **Ray Charles** took first place in the state. At age nine, he learned about a song playing contest the day before the event, so he stayed up all night learning the *Star Spangled Banner* and won the competition.

He also has a special appreciation for the likes of jazz greats **Charlie Christian** (who was raised in Oklahoma City), **Wes Montgomery**, **John Coltrane**, **Miles Davis** and **Chet Baker** (born in Yale, Ok). But then he adds with a chuckle, “Steve Pryor told me jazz was unemployment music.”

At one point when listening to the **Rolling Stones**, he got to checking out some songs and discovered they were written by **Muddy Waters** and other blues greats. This led him deeper into the

world of blues and today cites some of his influences ranging from **Freddie King** to **Lightnin’ Hopkins**, **Elmore James**, **Howlin’ Wolf**, **Little Walter**, and Ray Charles.

Conor fondly remembers the time Pryor said to him, “You’re the only red headed white boy I’ve met that listens to Ray Charles.” Steve then asked for Conor’s phone number and told him, “We’re going to be brothers for life.”

No doubt, Pryor has been his biggest musical influence. He recalls going to the Blue Rose Café and had never met Pryor, but knew the guitarist the moment he walked into the venue. There was just an aura about him.

In another memory, Conor recalls a day when he was six years old and had spent the day on Skiatook Lake with family. “I got my first taste of the blues that day seeing **Pete and Jennifer Marriott** at the Crosstimbers Marina. Pete was playing guitar. Then at seven years old I got my first electric guitar and wanted to be **Eric Clapton**,” Conor says.

(Continued on page 6)

A black and white advertisement for Curt's List. The text reads: "Curt's List TULSA'S ONLY RELIABLE LIVE MUSIC SOURCE. A Weekly, Continuously Updated LIST of Concerts &amp; Live Music Events In &amp; Around Tulsa, Oklahoma. CurtsList.Com. Curt Fillmore (918) 760-9895 curtfillmore@yahoo.com". There is a QR code and a photograph of a guitar on a stage.



3rd Place 2017 Blues Challenge, **The Boogie**: guitar, C.J. McClellan; bass, **Dusty Robison**; vocals, **Lindsay Rae**; and drums, **Christian Perez**.



# Best Self-Produced CD Deadline is September 22

The 12<sup>th</sup> Annual *Best Self-Produced CD* competition sponsored by the Blues Foundation is underway which honors artists that have achieved excellence in the studio. Acts can be bands, solo or duo acts, trios, full choirs or any other combination. The purpose of this award is to assist blues musicians in the pursuit of their professional goals. Your entry must have been released between **November 1, 2016** and **October 31, 2017**. Judging is based on:

- (1) Blues Content (is this a blues recording)
- (2) Musical Performance (Musicianship)
- (3) Audio Quality of the Presentation (Production Values, Levels)
- (4) Cover Art and Design (Professional Packaging. Ready for the rack at your favorite music outlet.)
- (5) Credit and Liner information (Informative, Professional)

Entries must be sponsored by a Blues Foundation affiliate. The Blues Society of Tulsa entry **deadline is September 22<sup>nd</sup>**. It must either be postmarked by this date, or hand delivered to a BST officer or awards committee member by 6 p.m. on 9/22. Five copies of your entry are required. Please mail entries to: Blues Society of Tulsa, P.O. Box 2836, Tulsa, OK 74101.

## Blues Challenge Winner... (continued from page 1)

the DWB win was the tightness of the band including the dynamic rhythm section of drummer **Chris Matthews** and bassist **Wes Atkinson**, who have played together in various bands for 12 years, although Wes only rejoined DWB a few months ago. Besides Dylan on guitar/vocals, there was the impressive play of guitarist **Michael**

**McClure**. Last but not least is the recent addition of vocalist **Vanessa Oxford**, whose first performance with DWB was last May at the *Bixby BBQ & Blues Festival*.

As a result of the victory DWB earns the right to compete January 16-20 at the International Blues Challenge in Memphis sponsored by the Blues Society of Tulsa and representing Tulsa and Northeastern Oklahoma.



**2<sup>nd</sup> Place 2017 Blues Challenge, Joyride Blues Band:** lead guitar, Mike Vines; keyboard, Pat Sharp; lead vocals Steve Antry; rhythm guitar, Greg Douglass; and bass, Nathan Alessi.

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# CD REVIEWS



## **Kalo:** **WILD CHANGE** (Something Blue Records)

*Wild Change* by **Bat-or-Kalo** shows just how much she has changed.

Kalo came to dusty ole Oklahoma from Haifa, Israel with some wild classical guitar riffs. But while here in the past few years has put on big time swagger, an heavy duty blues rock riffs in her performances, not to mention her vocals have moved up to a top shelf level.

On *Wild Change*, she has added horns on *Upside Down* and *Pay to Play*. But my favorite track is *Bad Girl*, which might put her on top. Kalo is touring everywhere in support of this new release including the famous *Bitter End* in New York City.

Contact or listen at [kaloband.com](http://kaloband.com), or on Apple Music; or download on iTunes. Take a listen and I assure you no one will be disappointed! – **Freddie Morrow**



## **Jon Spear Band:** **HOT SAUCE**

Here's a brand new, third album from West Virginia blues quartet **Jon Spear Band** boasting two guitar slingers that also write and sing all of their very tasty, guitar driven blues originals.

**Jon Spear** and **Dara James'** blues music has taken them to the 31st International Blues Challenge as well as numerous nominations for

prestigious blues awards and opening for a growing list of legendary blues performers

This one has a little bit of everything; fun, boogie woogie dance music with a wailing sax, **Doobie Brothers** sounding Latin tinged guitar blues with some great bongo drums, sad ballads, and uplifting rockers. Stand out tracks include; *Bottom of the Bottle*, *Geographical Cure*, the title track, *Hit The Quarter*, and *Blues for a Soldier*. Very Sweet! - **Curt Fillmore (CurtsList.Com)**



## **Micki Free:** **TATTOO BURN**

(Mysterium Blues Records)

Native American, singer, songwriter and guitar slinger **Micki Free** has won a Grammy for his contribution to the *Beverly Hills Cops* movie

soundtrack as a member of R&B Pop Band **Shalamar** as well as two Native American Music Awards. He's jammed with **Santana** and recorded with Gibbons. Micki is also Director of Promotions and Special Events for the Seminole Tribe of Florida, owners of Hard Rock International. Micki's new album is all original and written by Micki except for the opening track, and is completely full of incredible Texas Blues style guitar. The entire album is a stand-out listening experience with tracks of note; The title track, *Greens & Barbeque*; the B3 organ and piano soaked *Six Feet Down In The Blues*, *Mojo Black Coffee*, *Hey Baby (The New Rising Sun) (Remix)*, and *Sometimes In Winter*. You'll be glad you gave this one a listen, It's real good! - **Curt Fillmore (CurtsList.Com)**

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## Conor Culpepper...(Continued from page 3)

His young musical journey then took him to the British artists. Upon discovering their influences it led him to the old black blues legends who started it all.

Conor plays a Fender Stratocaster powered by a Deluxe Reverb amp that has the custom magic workings of the late **Rick Potter**. And that Strat had to be black because Pryor's Strat was black.

Conor is quick to credit the encouragement and accessibility of Tulsa musicians. They range from **Dustin Pittsley** who was the very first to invite him to perform on stage, to **Polly Ess**, a *Blues Choice Award Vocalist of the Year*, who is helping him develop his vocals and has also been a mentor.

He also appreciates other Tulsa artists such as **James Groves** and **Danny Baker** who have invited him to play.

Other important influences are Oklahoma Blues Hall and Music Hall of Famer **Junior Markham** and **Charles Tuberville**. Junior invited Conor, as well as **James Groves**, **Polly Ess** and **Gary Eldridge** to play with him and The Caretakers at the Shack Up Inn in Clarksdale, MS where Conor also visited Red's Juke Joint.

Conor has already performed with blues greats such as **Bob Margolin**, **Duke Robillard**, **Earl Cate**, **Marc Benno**, **Chuck**

**Blackwell**, the late **Rocky Frisco**, **Jamie Oldaker**, **Pryor**, **Anne Bell** and **Samantha Fish**.

Sporting one of the thickest, most beautiful heads of red hair imaginable, during the past year Conor has blossomed from a very shy kid, who obviously is growing up fast and is now much more outgoing. At the same time he remains humble and can't say enough good things about so many artists and obviously was raised well by his parents.

Conor looks forward to having his first band, probably a trio. He envisions it as being a "nomadic type of thing," when you never know who will be sitting in at a gig.

"I'm looking for more ways of being creative, working with guys that are into the same type of music; Mississippi blues and Chicago blues, such as **T-Bone Walker**, **John Lee Hooker**, **Mississippi John Hurt**, **Junior Kimbrough**, etc."

At the same time, he wants to play some jazz and rock. With youngblood like Conor coming onto the blues scene, the future looks much brighter.

As Conor says, "Blues is kind of a dying art form. Only two percent of the population listens to the blues, and only two percent of the population has red hair. I guess I'm part of that four percent."



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Jasmine Jeffers accepts the Morrow-Webster Keepin' the Blues Alive Lifetime Achieve Award on behalf of her late father, harmonica virtuoso Stewart Jeffers, 62, who passed away in July 2016 in a motorcycle accident. Presenting the Award July 15<sup>th</sup> was the Blues Society's Freddie Morrow at his Birthday Party held at American Legion Post 192 in Spavinaw. (Photo by Bill Martin)

# Blues Society of Tulsa

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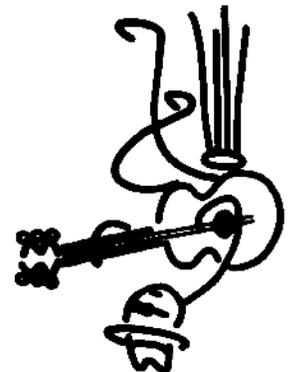
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