



WHY YOU DON'T WANT TO MISS IT

KING BISCUIT BLUES FESTIVAL OVERVIEW: Presented in the fertile birthplace of Delta blues on the banks of the Mississippi River on land where cotton is king and the blues artists sing, The Biscuit this year fills in the threads between the never to be forgotten legacy of native sons Sonny Boy Williamson and James Cotton with an unparalleled lineup that's the best of the best from the past, present and future of the blues.

WHAT'S SPECIAL ABOUT 2017: This year's line-up is the sweet spot that presents the blues in all its permutations: Saturday's headliner Gov't Mule is a fundamental link between the blues fathers and their contemporary sons and daughters, while Thursday's headliner Tab Benoit ("the voice of the wetlands") is the standard bearer of a new generation of Cajun blues musicians. Beyond that, you have the blend of performers like Sonny Burgess, who rubbed shoulders with Elvis Presley in Arkansas clubs at the birth of rock and roll and Bob Margolin, Muddy Waters' guitarist fresh off The Last Waltz 40th anniversary tour. You have Paul Thorn who stole the show from B.B. King in 2010 and C.W. Gatlin, who played with Sam Carr and Helena's own Frank Frost who brings a sense of true blues history with him. Add to that another four dozen performers, plus the opportunity to discover up-and-coming talent on the Rising Biscuit stage and from some of the grittiest busker street performances you'll find anywhere.

2017 FESTIVAL LINE-UP IN-DEPTH: What follows is a day-by-day, act-by-act introduction to the artists that will be performing on each of the major stages at the festival. We want you to understand what's special about them, why we're excited about them, and how they fit into the arc of the blues tradition KBBF uniquely celebrates.

Thursday, October 5, 2017 Main Stage

12 Noon-12:50 p.m. - Mississippi Bigfoot: The members of Mississippi Bigfoot came together at Ground Zero in Clarksdale, MS. Vocalist Christina Vierra has arranged vocals for Aretha Franklin and Madonna and has recorded as the voice of Janis Joplin in a biopic being released by Sony Pictures. Guitarists Ashley Bishop and Chris Pitts both have a decade experience playing Beale St. in Memphis with artists like Blind Mississippi Morris and Bobby Rush.

1:20-2:15 p.m. - Sonny Burgess & The Legendary Pacers: Sonny Burgess is a great grandfather of rock and roll. He was playing in a blend of rockabilly and primordial, blues-inflected country music while rubbing shoulders with Elvis Presley when the King was still performing in Arkansas clubs. One of the Sun Records originators, he's still got the mojo 60-some years into his career.

2:35-3:40 p.m. - Sterling Billingsley: Helena native Sterling Billingsley is President and Music Chairman of the Arkansas Blues and Heritage Festival. A walking encyclopedia of Helena's rich blues history, he's involved as both a performer and promoter of the King Biscuit Blues Festival.

4:00-5:10 p.m. - Chris O'Leary: Chris O'Leary for six years was lead singer and front man for Arkansas native Levon Helm's band The Barnburners and has recorded with Bill Perry and Hubert Sumlin.

5:30-6:40 p.m. - Rodney Block: Rodney Block cites players as diverse as John Scofield, David Gilmour, Eric Johnson, David Grissom and Angus Young as influences and his style of play definitely reflects this. Rodney Black cut his teeth in Austin with a Thursday night residency at a prominent 6th Street club for over a year playing an eclectic mix of acid jazz, rock, vintage power pop and blues covers and originals.

7:00-8:10 p.m. - Joe Louis Walker: Joe Louis Walker has a Chuck Berry Everyman appeal with his hard driving blues and creds that range from living with Paul Butterfield's late guitar master Mike Bloomfield to hanging out in San Francisco under the shadow of the Fillmore West in its heyday. His series of CDs for Alligator Records have become a showcase for that label's calling card, contemporary blues with a frenzied bite.

8:30-TBD - Tab Benoit: Thursday night's headliner Tab Benoit is "the voice of the wetlands." A native of Houma, Louisiana, he calls himself the "new kid from the old school," having released 18 CDs since 1993. He is the standard bearer of a new generation of Cajun blues musicians and a tireless crusader for the preservation of the rapidly vanishing wetlands of his native region.

Friday, October 6, 2017

Main Stage

(One of the strongest Friday main stage lineups in King Biscuit history!)

12 Noon-12:55 p.m. - Dylan Bishop: Dylan Bishop is a Dallas Fort Worth based blues singer and guitar player, who draws his inspiration from blues greats such as Johnny "Guitar" Watson, Mercy Baby, Frankie Lee Sims, and Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown.

1:10-2:10 p.m. - Tracy Nelson & The Bel Airs: Tracy Nelson is best known for fronting Mother Earth, a '60s band named after the Memphis Slim song of the same name. There's YouTube video of her jamming with Eric Burdon, Buddy Miles, Jimi Hendrix, and Lee Oskar. Her 26th album, Victim of The Blues released in 2011 is named after a Ma Rainey song. More recent projects include singing with the Chicago Blues Reunion, a collaboration with blues-rock veterans Nick Gravenites, Harvey Mandel, Corky Siegel, Sam Lay, and The Blues Broads with Angela Strehli, Annie Sampson, and Dorothy Morrison. She told one reporter, "Facebook and Twitter go for the least common denominator; Blues goes straight to the heart."

2:30-3:40 p.m. - Reba Russell: Reba Russell was baptized on Beale by Rufus Thomas who once told the young singer, "I think you have something special, and I hope you'll keep doing it and don't give up." She's done background vocals for U2 at Sun Studio and is the unofficial queen of the Biscuit with her song "Heaven Came to Helena" that brings down the house every year.

4:00-5:10 p.m. - Nikki Hill: The terms whiplash and fireball have been used to describe Nikki Hill, a young Carolina girl who brings a Tina Turner intensity to her singing. Downbeat magazine called this international performer "a revelation" and "a punky rocker with a thrilling voice, charged stage persona and a killer band."

5:35-6:45 p.m. - Anson Funderburgh & The Rockets: Anson Funderburgh & The Rockets are a Biscuit staple. A Texas native Anson's style incorporates both classic Texas and Chicago blues influences. They have recorded and played around the world since 1979.

7:10-8:20 p.m. - Paul Thorn: Paul Thorn, a former boxer and skydiver, first captivated the King Biscuit audience in 2010 and has been coming back ever since. His unique homespun view of the world is colored by his background as the son of a preacher and collaborations with artists as varied as Sting and Carol King.

8:45-TBD - J.J. Grey and Mofro: Headliner J. J. Grey and Mofro. J. J. Grey told King Biscuit music journalist Don Wilcock in 2007: "When the empire has finally collected and chewed up every regional culture — everything that's specific to one place

and one time – and spits it all out into one big pile of vanilla that’s not connected to anything, then this empire will fall like everyone before it did for the same reason.” His influences include Jerry Reed and Otis Redding. He’s opened for the Allman Brothers and played Bonnaroo. The band has stops at Tipitina’s in New Orleans and Red Rocks Amphitheatre before coming to the Biscuit. Grey lives on a former chicken farm in north Florida that was run by his maternal grandmother and grandfather. He sings about what’s real and his band plays music connects in its raw honesty.

Lockwood Stackhouse Stage

12 Noon-12:45 p.m. - Spoonfed Blues featuring Mississippi Spoonman: Mississippi Spoonman of Spoonfed Blues told-music journalist Stacy Jeffers, “I started playing spoons when I was a little baby. At my grandma’s house I’d pull them out and play them. Beat on the dashboard. My great-great-grandfather was a peddler; he carried a box of pens and old razor blades and stuff. He’d tell me, you’d better stop banging on that dashboard unless you can make some money out of it. Everybody laughed. Elvis was hot then.”

1:00-1:45 p.m. - Akeem Kemp Band: The Akeem Kemp Band is fronted by a powerful young guitarist from Morrilton, Arkansas whose energetic physical presence made almost as much of a sensation at the 2016 International Blues Challenge as his raw electric playing.

2:00-2:45 p.m. - Leo “Bud” Welch: Leo “Bud” Welch was born in 1932 and was a lumberjack for 30 years. His music career began in 2014. He plays guitar and sings gospel blues and has two CDs on Big Legal Mess Records, Sabouga Voices and I Don’t Prefer No Blues.

3:00-3:45 p.m. - C.W. Gatlin Band: The C.W. Gatlin Band is fronted by a guitarist who worked with Helena’s own Frank Frost and Sam Carr and has been inducted into the Rockabilly Hall of Fame. His credits read like a who’s who of rockabilly: Levon Helm and The Band, Mack Self, W.S. Holland of The Tennessee Three, Robert Nighthawk, Ace Cannon, and Paul Burlison.

4:00-4:45 p.m. - Wampus Cats: Wampus Cats are a rockabilly band.

5:00-5:45 p.m. - Veronika Jackson: Veronika Jackson sings folk blues with the kind of intensity and authority rarely seen since Odetta in her heyday. A native of St. Petersburg, Florida, she also plays simple rhythmic Piedmont guitar.

6:00-7:10 p.m. - Big George Brock & His Houserockers with Renee Smith: Big George Brock & His Houserockers are fronted by a man who claims to have seen Muddy Waters dive into the Mississippi the day he broke away from plantation life. Brock grew up picking cotton in Mississippi, operated several blues clubs in St. Louis, was a boxer, and cut the title song for the film *M For Mississippi: A Road Trip Through The Birthplace Of The Blues*.

7:30-8:40 p.m. - James “Taildragger” Jones Band: Taildragger channels Howlin’ Wolf who gave him his nickname. He emigrated from Altheimer, Arkansas to Chicago in 1966 and has worked with Willie Kent, Hubert Sumlin, Carey Bell, Mack Simmons, Big Leon Brooks, and Eddie Shaw. He is a colorful fixture of the Windy City’s West Side’s blues scene.

Bit O’ Blues Stage

9:00-9:30 a.m. - Six Strings Andrew: An 11-year-old who currently resides on the Mississippi Gulf Coast, he frequently plays with local musicians at venues in the area.

9:45-10:15 a.m. - Grace Kuch: Grace Kuch is a 13-year-old multi-instrumentalist from Colorado. In 2015, she became the youngest musician to ever play her own blues set at Northern Colorado’s largest Blues Festival, Greeley Blues Jam. She was the youngest musician to ever lead a set there.

10:30-11:00 a.m. - D.R. Diamond & Birthright Blues Project: Electrified Texas roadhouse blues infused with rock, acoustic down-home country blues, front porch pickin' delta style blues.

11:15-12 Noon - "Stud" Ford: T Model Ford's grandson

Saturday, October 7, 2017

Main Stage

12 Noon-12:55 p.m. - Marcus "Mookie" Cartwright: At 23, this acoustic guitarist has already played with Hubert Sumlin, Eddie C. Campbell, David Kimbrough, Big Jack Johnson, Bob Margolin, and Pinetop Perkins. He's played King Biscuit and the Juke Joint Festival. He doesn't have a CD yet, but Living Blues called him a "charismatic young bard, shockingly good musically and dangerously handsome."

1:10-1:45 p.m. - Kenny "Beedy Eyes" Smith, Bob Stroger & Bob Margolin: Bob Margolin is fresh off The Last Waltz 40th anniversary tour. As Muddy Waters' lead guitarist he was the only musician on the tour who performed at the original last hurrah by The Band captured in Martin Scorsese's famous film The Last Waltz. He rubbed shoulders on that tour with Warren Haynes, Michael McDonald, Ivan Neville and Don Was. Now, he returns to the Biscuit with blues' highest profile drummer Kenny Smith and the venerable Chicago blues bass player Bob Stroger to bring Muddy's infectious energy to life, a combination so close to his mentor's epic sound that, if you close your eyes, you'll think you're in Chicago's South Side circa 1956.

2:35-3:40 p.m. - Jack Pearson: Jack Pearson played lead guitar with Dickey Betts in the Allman Brothers from 1997 to 1999. The Nashville-based musician has also done studio and stage work with Vince Gill, Jimmy Buffett, Lee Roy Parnell, Faith Hill, and Delbert McClinton. Noted music journalist Ted Drozdowski says Pearson left the Allman Brothers in 1999 prior to the return of Warren Haynes, because of tinnitus. "I was having a lot of ringing and pain in my ears, and Dickey refused to turn down or even try a different stage setup so I quit. It was a hard decision to make, but I did the right thing."

4:00-5:10 p.m. - Bruce Katz: From 2007 to 2013 Bruce Katz was a regular piano player in Greg Allman and Friends. He currently has side projects with Allman Brothers founding member Butch Trucks in two different groups - Butch Trucks and the Freight Train Band and Les Brers, a band that contains five members of the Allman Brothers Band and Katz on keyboards, Lamar Williams Jr. on vocals and Pat Bergeson on guitar, in addition to Butch Trucks, Jaimoe, Marc Quinones, Oteil Burbridge on bass and Jack Pearson on guitar. Katz is an associate professor at the Berklee College of Music in Boston. Early in his career, he played bass for Big Mama Thornton and toured the world with Barrance Whitfield and the Savages. He's written for and played piano for Ronnie Earl and the Broadcasters and toured with Delbert McClinton, Duke Robillard, Joe Louis Walker, Debbie Davies, David "Fathead" Newman, John Hammond and others.

5:30-6:35 p.m. - Andy T. & Alabama Mike: Guitarist "Andy T" Talamantez is a veteran of Smokey Wilson's band and Guitar Shorty's band. He recorded three albums with Nashville blues vocalist Nick Nixon, and played the Biscuit last year with Alabama Mike.

6:55-8:10 p.m. - Larry McCray: The 2015 recipient of the Sunshine Sonny Payne Award for Blues Excellence, Larry McCray began recording 1990. AllMusic called Ambition a "stunning debut set was a convincing hybrid of blues, rock, and soul, McCray combining the interrelated idioms in sizzling fashion." He's recorded eight albums since then.

8:40-9:50 p.m. - Gov't Mule: Saturday Main Stage headliner Gov't Mule is a fundamental link between the blues fathers and the jam bands. Warren Haynes reinvigorated the Allman Brothers, showed the Grateful Dead there was life after Jerry Garcia and, with Gov't Mule, created a body of work that is the template for contemporary improvisation. Equally at home jamming with blues masters and rock monsters, he is one of the most highly visible and versatile guitarists on the scene today. His first love and primary creative outlet, Gov't Mule, channels the fundamentals that defy genre labels, cuts across the fertile American songbook and captivates a fan base with a broad spectrum of tastes.

Lockwood Stackhouse Stage

12 Noon-12:45 p.m. - Deak Harp: Deak Harp for about 8 years showcased his one-man show at the King Biscuit Blues Festival in Helena, AR, as well as the Juke Joint Festival in Clarksdale, MS. Combining diddley bow, snare drum, stomp box, amplified harmonica, and vocals, Deak's one man band became a regular feature in the Delta.

1:00-1:45 p.m. - Libby Rae Watson: Libby Rae Watson has been playing Blues since the early 1970's. She helped organize the talent for the very first Delta Blues Festival in Greenville, MS in 1978. Furry Lewis, Eugene Powell, Houston Stackhouse, Big Joe Williams and Sam Chatmon were among the musicians at that festival.

2:00-2:45 p.m. - Jimmy "Duck" Holmes: Jimmy "Duck" Holmes has recorded eight CDs. In 2008, Holmes and the Blue Front Cafe were featured in the documentary M for Mississippi produced by Konkel and Roger Stolle. He appeared in the 2015 documentary film I Am the Blues.

3:00-3:45 p.m. - Rev. John Wilkins Band: Wilkins is best known for "That's No Way to Get Along" and his reworked gospel version, "The Prodigal Son" (which was covered under that title by the Rolling Stones), "Rolling Stone," and "Old Jim Canan's."

4:00-4:45 p.m. - DuWayne Burnside Band: Guitarist, singer, and songwriter Duwayne Burnside is one of 14 children born to legendary North Mississippi musician R.L. Burnside. He has been a frequent performer with the North Mississippi Allstars since the early 1990s, when that group, fronted by Luther and Cody Dickinson, formed. His albums under his own name include Live at the Mint (1998) and Under Pressure (2005), both for B.C. Records. An album celebrating his father's life and music remains in the works.

5:00-5:45 p.m. - Phillip Stackhouse Band: Phillip is the grandson of guitarist Houston Stackhouse, one of Sonny Boy Williamson's original King Biscuit Boys. Phillip is a regular at the Biscuit and band leader since 2007 playing a blend of high energy music.

6:00-7:10 p.m. - Chicken Bone Reunion Band featuring Brotha Ric Patton: The band started at a surprise birthday party at a farm out in Triana, Alabama. Old musicians fakers shakers and hustlers. At the party they started jamming on the Delta Low low down blues.

7:30-8:40 p.m. - West Coast Blues Review with Fillmore Slim: In the documentary American Pimp, Fillmore estimates that in his entire career as a pimp he pimped more than 9,000 prostitutes in San Francisco. He was inducted into the West Coast Blues Hall of Fame in 2008, and received the Lowell Fulson "Jus' Blues" Award in Memphis in 2011. Fillmore Slim's life and times are currently in production for a film, The Legend of Fillmore Slim.