



PRESS RELEASE

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33rd Annual King Biscuit Blues Festival Announces Lineup

HELENA, AR — The King Biscuit Blues Festival showcases the nation's foremost Blues music.

Paul Thorn calls The Biscuit “one of my favorites” and “a wonderful event.” Carolyn Wonderland says it’s like going to Mecca: “You gotta make the pilgrimage because it’s where the music’s real.” Charlie Starr of Blackberry Smoke looks at the group’s Biscuit date as his job to “make sure we continue to push outwards with our music and continue to grow where we don’t feel stifled or bored or stagnant.”

Each of these acts will perform at the 33rd annual King Biscuit Blues Festival set for October 3 through 6. They represent a commitment to continue a historic thread that’s always made the Biscuit a showcase for the best of the past, present and future of America’s musical art form, the blues.

Dave Mason crowns this year’s King Biscuit Saturday night performing with Steve Cropper. Mason calls his appearance at the festival “a chance to do something a little bit different and for me to do some material that I would never normally do.” One of the founders of the British Invasion rock band Traffic, he shares the stage with Steve Cropper, who co-wrote Otis Redding’s “The Dock of The Bay.” Considered the founder of Memphis soul, Cropper was named the number two guitarist of all time (Jimi Hendrix was number one) by England’s *Mojo* magazine. He played on every Stax/Volt hit of the ’60s including “Knock On Wood,” “634-5789” and “In The Midnight Hour.” He was also the guitarist in the Blues Brothers Band with Dan Akroyd and John Belushi. Together for the first time, these two titans of blues, soul, and rock will take blues fans on a trip back in time. “I’m gonna step back and throw some songs out that I grew up with including songs by the Everly Brothers, Del Shannon’s “The Wander,” Eddie Cochran, and Albert King’s “Born Under A Bad Sign.” Mason has played and recorded with Jimi Hendrix, The Rolling Stones, Paul McCartney and Eric Clapton. He will bring his crack band with him as he and Cropper expand on their legacy and says, “It’s gonna be a rock and soul review, and I want to step out and step back and do some other stuff. I’ve been doing “Dave” for 40 – 50 years. It’s fun to do some songs I grew up with. So, it’ll be a big mix of stuff, and it should be fairly cool.”

Paul Thorn all but stole the show from B.B. King at King Biscuit in 2010. He returns this year to perform Friday night for his eighth consecutive appearance hot on the release of his new album, *Don’t Let The Devil Ride*, which debuted in the *Billboard* Top 100 the first week of release in late March. Thorn calls the music on the album dance pole gospel: “If you listen to the music that’s really sexy sounding, it sounds exactly like the music we sang in church when I was growing up. When we’d go visit the black churches, it was raunchy, man. It was spiritual, but it almost had a sexual undertone to it, and that’s what you hear on some of these songs on this record.” The album was produced by Colin Linden, who is the music director of “Nash-

ville,” the TV show. Recorded with the same band Thorn plays with at The Biscuit, it marks a giant step forward for a unique musician who captured our imagination with *Primps and Preachers*. “I didn’t get into this to take a backward step. I want each one of my records to outdo the other ones if possible,” Thorn said. “Every time I play a festival, I don’t want the last slot. You get more people to see you when you go on next to last ’cause when you go on last, they’re gonna be leavin’ on your last song which is a bummer. When you’re playing that last song, and you’re the headliner, you’re watching people walk out as you’re singing. That’s a bummer, man!,” he added. Thorn is on just before Friday’s headliner Blackberry Smoke.

Billy Gibbons of ZZ Top told Blackberry Smoke in 2008, “Stop trying to be so good. Just let the music go where it’s gonna go.” Where it’s gone is straight up the charts. The band has had two consecutive number one country LPs: *Like An Arrow* in 2016 and *Holding All The Roses* in 2015. Their just-released *Find A Light* album features Robert Randolph on “I’ll Keep on Ramblin’,” The Wood Brothers on “Mother Mountain” and Amanda Shires on “Let Me Down Easy.” One of the last gigs the late Gregg Allman did was to come in and lay down vocals on “Free On The Wing” for *Like An Arrow*.

Band leader Charlie Starr likens their sound to what Led Zeppelin called abstract blues. It’s all about being real. Starr said, “The Allman Brothers opened the door. They were free thinkers, and forward thinkers, and they didn’t want to be tied down by any genre or put in any box, and bands like ours are the direct result of that because we’ve learned over the years that, ok, we want to operate this way, the Spandex pants or leather suits and go do this or sound this way, get haircuts and sound this way because some record company guy thinks we’ll be successful. So, yeah, definitely their thinking is the way.”

Carolyn Wonderland precedes Dave Mason and Steve Cropper on Saturday. This Texas tornado has just joined John Mayall’s band, the first woman guitarist in a position that in 50 years of Mayall bands has made icons out of guitarists Eric Clapton, Peter Green, Mick Taylor and Harvey Mandell. Carolyn Wonderland’s credentials include hanging with some of Texas’ greatest axe swingers, and her voice is often compared to Janis Joplin. “The only time I’ve ever sung ‘Me and Bobby McGee’ was with Kris Kristofferson. That’s it. That the only time I’ve done it. That kind of makes me smile extra. I held out singing Janis until it matters the most and that was it,” said Wonderland.

Perennial Biscuit favorite Bobby Rush headlines Thursday night. Winner of the 2017 Traditional Blues GRAMMY® award for his CD *Porcupine Meat*, he was nominated again this year for yet another GRAMMY. He’s treated with messianic adulation by men and women alike of all ages with his hilarious songs about human nature and sexual obsessions in meticulously produced shows honed from decades as the King of the Chitlin Circuit who has “crisscrossed” over into the pop mainstream. Rush will also host a special Wednesday warmup dedication to Sunshine Sonny Payne, host of King Biscuit Time, the longest running daily radio show in the country. Sonny passed away in February at 92. He had been with KFFA since the King Biscuit Time first aired in 1941 and was host since 1951. The show had done approximately 18,000 broadcasts and was the first show to feature live blues on the air. Another Biscuit favorite, Memphis vocalist Reba Russell, will sing her “Sunshine Sonny Payne” homage on Wednesday.

The Biscuit’s roots go back to 1941 when a teenaged B.B. King was still working in the cotton fields of Indianola, Mississippi, but on lunch break he would listen to Sonny Boy Williamson and his King Biscuit Entertainers on KFFA, AM 1360 out of Helena, Arkansas. He told journalist Don Wilcock, “I used to listen to KFFA every day. I was in the fields plowing, The King Biscuit Time show did good for me ’cause I enjoyed it.”

The 33rd Anniversary of King Biscuit Blues Festival commemorates the life and times of “Sunshine” Sonny Payne. John William Payne, better known as “Sunshine” Sonny Payne, was the host of the King Biscuit Time radio show on KFFA in Helena, Arkansas from 1951 until his death in February 2018. In 1992 he received the George Foster Peabody Award for outstanding achievement in the field of radio and broadcast journalism. He received the Blues Foundation’s “Keeping the Blues Alive” award twice and was inducted into the Blues Foundation’s Hall of Fame on May 5, 2010.

2018 LINEUP

Thursday, October 4th

Main Stage

SBBS Battle of the Bands Winner - 12:00pm to 12:50pm
Sterling Billingsley - 1:10pm to 2:15pm
Heavy Suga & The SweeTones - 2:35pm to 3:40pm
Keith Stone with Red Gravy - 4:00pm to 5:10pm
Rick Estrin & The Nightcats - 5:30pm to 6:40pm
John Nemeth - 7:00pm to 8:10pm
Bobby Rush (HEADLINER) - 8:30pm until

Friday, October 5th

Bit-O-Blues Stage

Six Strings Andrew - 9:00am to 9:30am
Grace Kuch - 9:45am to 10:15am
D.R. Diamond & Birthright Blues Project - 10:30am to 11:00am
Jamiah "Blues Superman" Rogers Band - 11:15am to 12:00pm

Lockwood Stackhouse Stage

David Dunavent - 12:00pm to 12:45pm
Robert Kimbrough, Sr. - 1:00pm to 1:45pm
Spoonfed Blues featuring Mississippi Spoonman - 2:00pm to 2:45pm
C.W. Gatlin Band - 3:00pm to 3:45pm
Wampus Cats - 4:00pm to 4:45pm
Charles "Skeet" Rodgers and the Inner City Blues Band - 5:00pm to 5:45pm
Lonnie Shields - 6:00pm to 7:00pm
Willie Cobbs - 7:20pm to 8:30pm

Gospel Stage

First St. Paul Choir - 6:45pm to 7:10pm
St. Peter Choir - 7:15pm to 7:40pm
Wofford Chapel Choir - 7:45pm to 8:10pm
Silver Cloud Choir - 8:15pm to 8:40pm
Hope Choir - 8:50pm to 9:20pm

Main Stage

Knock Knead Sally - 12:00pm to 12:55pm
Kymestri - 1:10pm to 2:10pm
Reba Russell - 2:30pm to 3:40pm
Erin Coburn - 4:00pm to 5:10pm
Anson Funderburgh & the Rockets - 5:35pm to 6:45pm
Paul Thorn - 7:10pm to 8:20pm
Blackberry Smoke (HEADLINER) - 8:45pm until

Saturday, October 6th

Lockwood Stackhouse Stage

Little Joe Ayers - 12:00pm to 12:45pm

Andy Coats - 1:00pm to 1:45pm

Pure'D Blues Band feat. Butch Mudbone - 2:00pm to 2:45pm

Louis "The Gearshifter" Youngblood - 3:00pm to 3:45pm

Millage Gilbert - 4:00pm to 4:45pm

BB Queen - 5:00pm to 5:45pm

Sweet Angel - 6:00pm to 7:00pm

Oakland Blues Divas - 7:20pm to 8:30pm

Gospel Stage

Phillips County Community Choir - 5:30pm to 5:50pm

Chris K. - 6:00pm to 6:20pm

Neomi Roberts & Company - 6:25pm to 6:45pm

Dixie Wonders - 6:50pm to 7:10pm

A-1 Gospel Singers - 7:20pm to 7:50pm

Hughes Singers/New Life Singers - 7:55pm to 8:15pm

BJ Generations - 8:20pm to 8:50pm

Carter Family - 8:55pm to 9:15pm

ReRe & God's Children - 9:25pm to 10:00pm

Main Stage

Backbone Blues Band - 12:00pm to 12:55pm

Kenny "Beedy Eyes" Smith, Bob Margolin & Bob Stroger - 1:10pm to 2:15pm

Jack Pearson - 2:35pm to 3:40pm

Hamilton Loomis - 4:00pm to 5:10pm

Andy T Band with Alabama Mike & Anson Funderburgh - 5:30pm to 6:35pm

Carolyn Wonderland - 6:55pm to 8:10pm

Dave Mason and Steve Cropper (HEADLINER) - 8:40pm until

More stages and artists will be announced, including the CeDell Davis Memorial Stage and Front Porch Stage at Delta Cultural Center.

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