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THUNDER BAY
Blues
FESTIVAL



JOHNNY REID



**KENNY WAYNE
SHEPHERD BAND**



PAUL RODGERS

14TH ANNUAL BLUESFEST • JULY 3 - 5, 2015 • MARINA PARK, THUNDER BAY

JOHNNY REID • ALAN FREW • THE PAUL DESLAURIERS BAND • THE BOARDROOM GYPSIES • KENNY WAYNE SHEPHERD BAND • ALAN DOYLE • THE WALKERVILLES • KELLY RICHEY • BROTHER YUSEF • THE BRANDON NIEDERAUER BAND • THE GROOVE MERCHANTS • LOOSE CANNON • PAUL RODGERS • DOYLE BRAMHALL II • WALTER TROUT • THE SHEEPDOGS • THE BROS. LANDRETH • JORDAN JOHN • THE HARPOONIST AND THE AXE MURDERER • THE KRAZY KENNY PROJECT



Ken Wright

Has the blues, but in a good way. He writes about them. A veteran director of the Thunder Bay Blues Society, Wright puts his writing ability together with an encyclopedic knowledge of blues musicians in the society's newsletter and periodically, in the pages of The Chronicle-Journal. He returns to this special edition as our "writer in residence," previewing every act coming to this year's Thunder Bay Blues Festival at Marina Park. You can meet Ken Wright at the Blues Society tent or down front, digging the sounds of the performers he knows so well.



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THE VOICE...

KEN WRIGHT

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

What is it about a blues festival, that antsy sense of anticipation that we feel? It's a given that the music and its performers will be royally entertaining. Yet, we all arrive with fingers crossed, hoping for that transcendent experience that will reverse the spin of our world if only for an hour to be relived again and again with all who shared it.

There are no guarantees of course. But, from Bessie Smith, Charlie Patton, Robert Johnson, Billie Holiday and Muddy Waters to Stevie Ray Vaughan, B. B. King, Jimi Hendrix, Eric Clapton and Jeff Healey, such eye-opening events have been happening with comforting regularity in blues music for nigh on 100 years.

Many of these legends couldn't read music or tell you the key in which they wrote their songs. What they share in common is a sense of higher purpose, the audacity to make the quantum leap to a grander vision. Not content to play the same old, same old, they confounded purists, kicked down the doors of convention, seized upon transformational advances in technology and turned entrepreneurial showmanship into monetary opportunity. Exciting and fresh, their music redefined the genre leaving their contemporaries and often future generations scrambling to catch up. In so doing, they connected deeply with people. Did then, do now, always will.

Based on timeless story telling, blues music compels us to peer beneath the veneer of disparate externals to see reflections of ourselves in the circumstances of others. With its ups, downs and in-betweens, life's ultimate reality of flux rather than permanence is the universal chord that resonates through all humanity. And, no matter how heavy or complex the baggage we may carry, blues music keeps us grounded in a pragmatic perspective that is sympathetic to a point. Beyond that, the message is sobering. Buckle up and get on with it!

The eternal debt that blues music owes to its rich heritage notwithstanding, with the passage of time, what was once cutting edge becomes the workaday foundation for that which follows. Little in this world is pure. Should any of us be surprised then that the fore bearer of jazz, rhythm and blues, rock, rap and hip hop in the last century should become increasingly imbued by those very same genres in this one?

And, while now and again, we all want to hear something that cleaves closely to the familiar contours of our heroes and heroines, marching passively in place is not an option. Lines of habit scrawled in the sands of today will surely be washed away by the inevitable waves of innovation tomorrow. There is only one reasonable direction and that is forward. To demand otherwise is to bury the blues in the deepest of graves – stagnation and irrelevance.

Bonded by our love for this music, let us as fans and performers listen to a bigger picture, one that allows it the oxygen to breathe, embraces diversity and accepts the ongoing challenge of making it our own.

Rest assured, the next extraordinary blues star and great performance is out there, quite likely at the 2015 Thunder Bay Blues Festival. The anticipation is killing me!

The 14th annual Thunder Bay Blues Festival is a particularly exciting one, presenting from Quebec to British Columbia, 14 of Canada's finest blues and roots acts. Friday night's headliner, Johnny Reid will strut the "show" into "showmanship" with smoke and grit vocals on crowd-rousing rock anthems, bluesy country ballads and impassioned R&B. One of the consummate masters of blues-

rock guitar for more than two decades, Kenny Wayne Shepherd will hot wire the marquee on Saturday. Not to be missed, Paul Rogers, the peerless, 90-million-record-selling, oh-so-soulful voice of authoritative bands Free, Bad Company and Queen will close the festival with the ultimate in front man style and swagger on Sunday.

Newfoundland's unstoppable native son, Alan Doyle, will introduce East Coast reels to Top 40 pop with mandolins, fiddles and bouzoukis. Considered by Eric Clapton to be one of the most gifted guitarists he has ever encountered, you'll hear why Texan, Doyle Bramhall II is the go-to musician, song writer and producer for elite performers like Slow Hand, Sheryl Crow and Elton John.

In a major coup, Thunder Bay will welcome Walter Trout back to the world stage after a lengthy illness when the renowned blues rock guitarist opens his "I'm Back Tour" at the festival.

Singer, songwriter, author and humanitarian, Canada's renaissance man, Alan Frew will regale one and all with Glass Tiger's classic rock hits while trench veterans, The Sheepdogs will counter with an adrenaline jolt of retro-rock bravado.

Guitar lovers will get their fix from Maple Blues Award winning shredder Paul DesLauriers, Kelly Richey, who will take blue notes on the funkier side of their lives and the jaw-dropping, head-turning chops of 12-year-old Brandon Niederauer.

Soul fans will swoon to the exquisite three-part vocal harmonies of Motown revivalists, The Walkervilles while Winnipeg siblings, The Bros. Landreth's windswept amalgam of prairie blues and Southern rock will mesh like replicating DNA and Jordan John will whirl blues, funk and soul into a seductive vibe. In the never fail department, The Groove Merchants Band will brass the blues with 2014 Minnesota Blues Performer of the Year, Jimi "Primetime" Smith.

For the traditionalists in the audience, there's The Harpoonist and the Axe Murderer's visceral, stripped down 21st-century take on the guitar/harmonica duo, a long-standing blues staple. Once heard, everyone will agree that Brother Yusef's self-coined "organic deep fried fatback" description of his brand of bare-knuckle slide and acoustics blues is right on the money.

Setting both the mood and the performance standard each day of the festival is critical. On Friday afternoon, The Boardroom Gypsies' merry note making will slake your musical thirst and commence the weekend escape from the everyday grind. Arguably the hottest blues band in town, Loose Cannon will have the early birds grooving to a set of good-time rocking tunes on Saturday morning. Sponsored by the Thunder Bay Blues Society, they represented Thunder Bay in the band category at the International Blues Competition in Memphis, Tennessee this past January. The Crazy Kenny Project, five stalwarts of Windsor's music scene, will get things hopping on Sunday morning.

These days, brand loyalty is increasingly promiscuous and everything from cell phones, play lists and binge-watched television to coffee, burgers and sandwiches is customized. Blues festivals are in sync, offering their patrons free rein to indulge their preferences in music, friends and food their way.

Most compelling may be the fact that while we live our lives in days, weeks and years, we remember them in moments. Hit the ESC key on July 3 and begin your summer adventure at the Thunder Bay Blues Festival. Moments in your life to be treasured for a lifetime!



FRIDAY JULY 3
5:00 PM

THE BOARDROOM GYPSIES

SUBMITTED PROFILE

re inventing themselves. With a full rhythm section, horns and wonderful vocal harmonies, as the opening act for this year's Bluesfest, Boardroom Gypsies are sure to get the weekend rolling with a powerhouse set of rhythm and blues!

Cheryl Grant: (Vocals)

For inspiration, Cheryl holds fast to her lifelong love of folk roots music that has found a personal comfort zone in rhythm and blues. The experience of a wide variety of local performance opportunities with extremely talented people whom she both loves and respects has been an honour and a privilege.

Nancy Hamilton: (Vocals)

Nancy discovered her love for voice in high school singing and playing guitar in local coffee houses. Her musical journey continued with a group of western-based musicians. Back home, Nancy's versatile voice has been a highlight in rock bands and at weddings and receptions. She feels very blessed to be part of this incredible group of musicians and excited to be singing the music she loves the most at this year's Bluesfest.

Paul Hessey: (Drums)

Paul has laid down a steady beat for many different folks over many years. In addition to holding down the groove for the Boardroom Gypsies, he is the lead drummer for The Roy Coran Big Band, his own jazz trio, PH Balance and, on occasion, with Mood Indigo. This will be Paul's fifth Bluesfest appearance.

Don Skochinski: (Bass)

Don first performed in public in the 1960's at the age of 15 playing a Fender bass in a rock and roll cover band. Still in high school, he joined the Thunder Bay Symphony Orchestra as a cellist while continuing to play bass with local progressive rock bands, big bands and jazz combos. Don earned an Honours Bachelor of Fine Arts in cello performance at McGill University and a Master of Fine Arts in cello performance at Boston University. After performing numerous solo and ensemble situations in the New England states and with many symphony orchestras in southern Ontario, Don returned to Thunder Bay to become the first and only locally raised professional orchestra musician in the TBSO.

Don Jewitt: (Keyboards)

Born into a musical family, Don picked up the torch from his father who dedicated his life to music. Don studied classical piano with a minor in cello at Brandon University. He has released two CDs of songs that he wrote/co wrote, arranged and co-produced. Don has played with members of the Boardroom Gypsies for many years and is highly respected in the music circles of Thunder Bay.

Bill Ulakovic: (Guitar)

Self-taught, Bill learned to play the guitar in high school listening to a myriad of jazz and rock guitarists and playing with many local talented musicians. He has enjoyed the challenge of performing with numerous jazz combos including The Roy Coran Big Band and Occasional Jazz, accompanying jazz and pop vocalists and playing in local rock bands. He is thrilled to be playing the opening set for this year's Bluesfest as a member of Boardroom Gypsies.

Bob Stewart: (Saxophone)

Sax man, Bob Stewart, discovered a passion for music when he was introduced to the tenor sax in high school. Following graduation he studied jazz at North Texas State University. He played professionally before returning to Thunder Bay where he carried on his interest in the saxophone playing with local bands. Music continues to provide a creative outlet and is an important interlude in his busy life.

Ted Vaillant: (Trumpet)

From The Thunder Bay Symphony to back up for the Temptations, for almost 40 years, Ted has played the trumpet in every possible musical genre. The current director of The Roy Coran Big Band, he leads a group of the city's finest musicians carrying on a tradition that began over 50 years ago. Ted is also a music director and teacher at St. Ignatius High School.



FRIDAY JULY 3
6:15 PM

THE PAUL DESLAURIERS BAND

KEN WRIGHT

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

Music is about learning and respect," proclaims Paul DesLauriers. "I come from an improvisational background and so you learn to be ready at all times to adapt to the other artists on stage." That concise statement of purpose cuts to the heart of DesLauriers' success as a musician more sensitive than most to the ever-shifting demands of band dynamics.

As a child, DesLauriers' hand held a violin bow before grasping a guitar pick at age ten under the stewardship of Rod Robillard, a fixture of the music scene in his home town of Cornwall, Ontario. "Rod was THE guitar guy in town and a mentor to most of us," recalls DesLauriers. No shallow infatuation, DesLauriers ardently pursued his musical studies beyond La Citadelle high school in Cornwall to McGill University in Montreal, Quebec.

In the 1990s, he chomped down hard on the blues bit as co-founder of Black Cat Bone, a name synonymous with hot blues rock in Canada. Going with the flow, DesLauriers' guitar and vocal skills enhanced other noteworthy Canadian talents like Amanda Marshall, Garou and Nicola Ciccone and three personal salients, Limited Edition EP (2003), Ripping into the Red (2006) and Left's Alright (2013).

Constantly gigging since its inception a decade ago, the Paul DesLauriers Band has taken some lengthy strides to become better known outside La Belle Province and to position itself among the nation's blues elite amply illustrated by a plethora of trophies at the Maple Blues Awards (MBA) including Guitarist of the Year for DesLauriers (2014). His reaction? "I am overwhelmed and still in shock!" Collectively, the power trio has amassed 13 Lys Blues Awards, Quebec's recognition of outstanding achievement in the genre.

Recorded the old fashioned way, live off the floor with no technical enhancements, their self-titled CD captures the band's spontaneity and musical chemistry. Topping iTunes' Canadian Blues Chart within a month of its release, critics like John Valenteyn of Maple Blues Magazine are impressed with the outcome. "Extraordinarily inventive guitar playing, powerful vocals and a fantastic rhythm section, how can you go wrong?"

Enter the Gate (2013), an adventurous interplay of traditional blues and Indian ragas with sitarist Anwar Khurshid reflects DesLauriers unshakeable belief in the magic of music. "Music has the ability to overcome generations and cultural barriers," he insists. "It connects us all."

An acoustic side-project with acclaimed Montreal singer Dawn Tyler Watson that began with the release of En Duo in 2007 has paid dividends for both artists. The "Diva and the Virtuoso" have toured North America and Europe together. They placed among the finalists at the International Blues Challenge in 2012 and their sophomore album entitled, Southland (2013) won the MBA for Acoustic Act of the Year.

Despite all of this, DesLauriers remains keenly aware of his rarefied status. "I have been very lucky," he confesses. "I get to play, record and produce music and make a living out of it."

A recent posting on Tatiblues blog describes the Paul DesLauriers Band live. "Brilliant! Just like the album, the show is top quality and full of energy! The musicians are all Canadian blues greats!

www.pauldeslauriers.ca

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**FRIDAY JULY 3
7:45 PM**

ALAN FREW

KEN WRIGHT
SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

Alan Frew must be a time management guru. Multi-platinum vocalist, songwriter and front man for one of the best loved Canadian rock bands of its day, 5-time Juno Award winner, 5-time Canadian Classic Award winner, Grammy nominee, solo recording artist, public speaker, author, humanitarian, actor of stage and screen (both big and small) and comedic wit, his maelstrom of achievement elicits an immediate, involuntary response – Wow!

Born in Coatbridge, Scotland on November 8, 1956, Alan Graham Frew moved to Canada with his family when he was 16. Heartened by the response to his improvised song stylings in local clubs, he devoted hand to guitar and pen to music.

In 1980, Frew became the lead singer of a Newmarket, Ontario pop-rock group called Tokyo while holding down a day job as a hospital orderly and then as a registered nurse. After four years of establishing a reputation and fan base circulating through the Toronto pub scene, the band signed a contract with Capitol Records. Their 1986 label debut, *The Thin Red Line* was credited to Glass Tiger, the new name from Frew's imaginative word games on *Paper Lion*, the title of a George Plimpton book. Ducking the dreaded "teenybopper" descriptor they adopted an edgier, more guitar-centred sound for follow ups *Diamond Sun* (1988) and *Simple Mission* (1991). Despite commercial success, gads of awards, tours of North America and Europe and 7 songs on Billboard's coveted Top 10 Chart, Glass Tiger, haemorrhaging audience to more aggressive grunge competitors, called it quits. Reunited in 2003, they still plays select dates.

Undeterred by the fate of Glass Tiger, Frew pressed on musically issuing two albums as a solo artist, *Hold On* (1994) and *Wonderland* (2000) on EMI. More recently, he co-wrote *I Believe*, the Broadcast Theme for the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympic Games. Originally sung by Nikki Yarofsky, the 4-time platinum hit zoomed to #1 in both Canada and the US. Tweaked for The Tenors it did double duty as the theme of the 2012 Summer Olympic Games in London, England. Frew also co-wrote *Free to Be* (This Is Canada's Song) the rousing new anthem for his favourite NHL hockey team, the Toronto Maple Leafs.

Author of the bitingly humorous autobiography "The Action Sandwich: A Six Step Recipe for Success by Doing What You're Already Doing" (2007) Frew's second sortie into prose, *Free to Be(lieve)* is headed for publication. Frew has appeared on stage in the musical production of *Snow White* and the *Group of Seven*, on the small screen on *Billable Hours*, his own *Road Stories* with Alan Frew and on Sportsnet and TSN during soccer's FIFA Cup. He also had a role in the movie *Gravy Train*.

Justly esteemed for his tireless efforts on behalf of Canadian Arts and especially childrens' charities such as *Easter Seals*, Frew is the recipient of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Award and a 20 year Humanitarian Award. Unsparing of his time, he has travelled to the Balkans and Afghanistan to entertain Canadian Armed Forces.

Recognized and celebrated as Canada's endearing renaissance man, Alan Frew tags all of the bases in the entertainment field. Not to be missed!

www.alanfrew.com





**FRIDAY JULY 3
9:30 PM**

JOHNNY REID

KEN WRIGHT
SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

A quick listen through Johnny Reid's ever-expanding catalogue suggests an artist without a genre to call his own. It's obvious why country buffs have embraced him wholeheartedly – he's won close to 30 Canadian Country Music Awards, including Fan's Choice three years running. But the smoky vocal rasp of a young Rod Stewart, big guitars and thumping drums of sing-a-long pop rock anthems, bluesy ballads, punchy horns and soul-drenched showmanship of R&B are there too, with no apology to the ear. "My goal has been that when someone hears my song on the radio, they don't think that's a pop song or country blues," he confides. "I want them to say, "That's a Johnny Reid song.""

And then there's the buoyant optimism that lifts the heart beat of everything Reid does. His songs portray everyone's biography and celebrate life's essentials – love, family and friendship foremost. But, Reid is always mindful of the little treasures that we all shamefully overlook. His uncanny knack for making each member of his audience feel special has mustered a "Tartan Army" of fans with a PhD in loyalty. "It's about writing songs that help people," he declares. "Songs that help them cry when they need to and help them laugh when they can." There, it all makes perfect sense. For Johnny Reid, content and feel-good entertainment trump category!

Born in Lanark, Scotland, Reid was 14 when he moved to Canada in 1988

after his father, a diesel mechanic, accepted a job in Brampton, Ontario. "I had to go through the new guy thing," says Reid who plumbed unfathomed strengths within himself, the ability to sing and athletics, to make the awkward transition. The latter earned him a scholarship as a kicker on the varsity football team at Bishop's University in Lennoxville, Quebec, where he met his wife Jenn.

After graduation, Reid packed up his young family and settled in Nashville, Tennessee as a song writer. When that prospect shrivelled, he worked where he could while circulating demos of his compositions. Enquiries about the tunes and the unique voice that sang them brought encouraging if modest success with his debut CD, *Another Day, Another Dime* (1997) and a self-titled effort in 2000.

Johnny Reid really hit his stride in 2005 with *Born to Roll*, the first pearl in a string of platinum-selling releases, charting hits and 3 Juno Awards that glittered through *Kicking Stones* (2007), *Dance with Me* (2009) and *A Place Called Love* (2010). Two Christmas CDs and two live DVDs deserve honourable mention.

"You know, life is very short. I think we're reminded of this every day," he says of the theme behind his latest CD *Fire It Up* (2012), which received a Juno Award nomination for Adult Contemporary Album of the Year.

"All I have ever asked for is the chance to sing my songs, play my music, tell my stories and be part of something bigger than myself," says Reid with trademark modesty. "I'm living proof you should always chase your dream – you never know, one day you might catch it."

P.S. He really is a nice guy.

www.johnnyreid.com


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JULY 3, 4 & 5, 2015 • THUNDER BAY BLUES FESTIVAL 5



**SATURDAY JULY 4
12:00 PM**

LOOSE CANNON

SUBMITTED PROFILE

Loose Cannon is a blues/rock, R&B band formed in early 2012. This hard-working sextet deserve much credit for sorting out diverse group influences from Led Zeppelin and Tina Turner to Joe Bonamassa and Susan Tedeschi to gel as a cohesive unit. Combined with well-wrought originals, their dance-floor-friendly fare reads the preferences of local music lovers like a personal diary. Sponsored by the Thunder Bay Blues Society, they tore up Memphis, Tennessee representing Thunder Bay in the band category at the International Blues Challenge this past January.

Arley Hughes: Vocals & Harmonicas

The dynamic lead vocalist and harmonica player for Loose Cannon, Arley was a member of Tender Mercy's R&B Band. She studied Music at Lakehead University completing her Honours Bachelor of Music and Bachelor of Education in 2007. Arley teaches private lessons out of her home studio.

Sami Chong: Guitar

Born and raised in Thunder Bay, Ontario, Sami is a self taught guitarist who began playing in 2003. Currently working towards a Masters in Clinical Psychology at Lakehead University, she has been playing with Loose Cannon since March 2012. Her main influences are Joe Bonamassa, Jimi Hendrix, John Mayer, Stevie Ray Vaughan, Buddy Guy, Angus Young, and Jimmy Page and it shows!

Chris Saunders: Saxophone & Backing Vocals

Wailing soulfully on sax, Chris has been playing with Loose Cannon since January 2013. He completed his Honours Bachelor of Music at Lakehead University in April of that year. His influences include Dave Matthews Band, Michael Brecker, Cannonball Adderly, Lou Rawls, Eric Clapton and B.B. King.

Gary Hare: Keyboards, Vocals

Gary started his musical career playing in bands on Canada's East Coast before moving to Ottawa where he continued to perform in local bands. After relocating to Thunder Bay, Gary played with Careers Without College before taking a sabbatical to pursue other interests. He returned to the music scene with Tender Mercy's, Rochester & the Roosters and Dr. Buck and the Bluesbangers. Gary has worked as a songwriter, vocalist and keyboardist for Loose Cannon since late 2012. His influences include Howling Wolf, Muddy Waters, Jimi Hendrix, The Allman Brothers, Steve Winwood and The Beatles.

Michael McFarlane: Drums, Backing Vocals

Familiar to Thunder Bay audiences for his work with Stone Ridge, the Wayne Faulconer Group and Tender Mercy's, Michael is a founding member of Loose Cannon. His creative lyrics are featured in many of the group's compositions and he can always be heard singing backup vocals, with or without a microphone. Influences include Delbert McClinton, John Hiatt, Commander Cody and the Lost Planet Airmen, John Prine, Led Zeppelin and the Moody Blues.

Carol Pominville: Bass Guitar

A founding member of Loose Cannon as well as their fearless leader, Carol has been playing the bass for over thirty years. Carol was inspired to take up the instrument in high school after hearing Paul McCartney. Additional influence like John Paul Jones, Gene Simmons, Roger Glover, Mark King, Sting, and Pino Palladino have kept his style in the blues/rock arena. The bassist for the classic rock band Rewind and Nishina & the Hackers, Carol has supplied commendable back up for popular blues performers like Jack de Keyzer, Paul James and Jerome Godboo.

www.loosecannonband.com



**SATURDAY JULY 4
1:15 PM**

THE GROOVE MERCHANTS FEATURING JIMI "PRIME TIME" SMITH

KEN WRIGHT

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL



Sometimes euphemistically referred to as "incorporation" or "research," it's a tradition that's as old as the blues itself. "I stole a lot of s**t. I will admit to that," confesses Jimi "Primitime"

Smith who has spent many an hour stage front learning by watching and listening. "You name anybody out there that ain't stole. It might be a different way but it's all been done before." That candid admission in no way

detracts from Smith's legitimacy as a blues artist. In fact, his credentials are most impressive.

Smith was born in Chicago in 1959 with the blues world literally at his feet. A trail blazer for the times, his mother, Johnnie Mae Dunson, was one of the genre's first female drummers as well as a notable singer and song writer who managed the legendary Jimmy Reed for a spell. Smith made his first recording, "Young Boy with the Blues" when he was 8 and claims a very special connection to Reed. "I'm the only person that he actually sat down and taught to play guitar," he says proudly. Smith was just 14 when he started a two-year stint touring with the blues giant that included shows in clubs from Chicago to Detroit and a performance at the 1973 Ann Arbor Blues Festival.

During his late teens, Smith played around the Windy City backing up blues dignitaries like Big Walter Horton, Etta James, Otis Rush and Albert King. "That was one of the highlights of my life playing with those cats," says Smith. "Whether I got paid or not I was happy."

In 1979, he headed west to his current base in Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota where he became a mainstay presence as a member of a host of Twin City blues bands including Big Walter Smith and the Groove Merchants. He left to have shoulder surgery.

Smith subsequently formed his own band, The Prime Time Players and released a live CD, Give Me Wings in 1998. He changed the spelling of his first name to "Jimi" to avoid confusion with the renowned organ player Jimmy Smith and was tagged with the "Primitime" moniker by a bartender commenting on his dapper dressing habits.

When Big Walter Smith passed away in 2012 it was appropriate that the microphone was handed to Smith, one of dozens of musicians that the great man had mentored over a career that spanned 6 decades. "Everybody thinks Big Walter is my biological father, but he's not. He's my father in the music business," says Smith. "When I first moved here I met Big Walter and he was like a dad to me and he always took me under his wing and did stuff for me. I do feel I'm like one of his adopted kids."

The Groove Merchants Band carries on a long-established legacy of crowd pleasing, horn-driven R&B in the spirit of its founder. "Whether it's one or a thousand, you do your show. You know, play, play from the heart," says the 2014 Minnesota Blues Performer of the Year and Minnesota Blues Hall of Fame Inductee. "Everything I play comes from the heart."

www.groovemerchantsbandmn.com



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THE BRANDON NIEDERAUER BAND

**SATURDAY JULY 4
2:30 PM**

KEN WRIGHT
SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

Twelve-year-old Brandon Niederauer from Dix Hills, Long Island, New York stands on the threshold as the next blues guitar marvel. Youth, early-onset command of raw talent, maturity and confidence beyond his age, an overachiever with boundless potential and uncanny musical instincts headed for greatness, he checks all of the appropriate boxes. And, there's icing. Niederauer's this-is-where-I-belong stage presence is suffused with so much innocent joy and such genuine excitement to entertain that he's totally captivating.

"My parents exposed me to many types of music but I love the improvisational elements associated with the blues," he says of the spark that set this little dynamo on fire. "This musical form has been passed down for us to express our feelings."

Niederauer was 8 when he started taking guitar lessons at All Music, one of Long Island's finer guitar shops and music schools. His father Gary says that after his first lesson Niederauer was transposing melodies on the fret board. One of his teachers gave him the nick name "TAZ" because, when Niederauer played, he was always "ripping" like the Warner Brothers cartoon character the Tasmanian Devil.

The opportunity to learn from seasoned veterans like Butch Trucks and Oteil Burbridge of the Allman Brothers Band and Cody and Luther Dickinson of the North Mississippi Allstars in the supportive environment of the Music Masters Camp in the Catskills in the summer of 2013 strengthened his self assurance. Log on to youtube and watch the videos of Niederauer commandeering the ship, fearlessly jamming with Robert Randolph and Warren Haynes on Jam Cruise 2014. He's also matched his mettle with high-profile celebrities like Gregg Allman, Gary Clark Jr., the Neville Brothers, Steve Vai and Trombone Shorty amongst others.

Niederauer has performed at a list of music festivals as long as your arm and totally charmed Ellen DeGeneres. "She's really funny," he says of the daytime TV hostess. "She's a really good entertainer and knows how to make people laugh." Niederauer was named Blues Kid of the Year 2014 by Fernando Jones.

In 2012, he co-founded BX2 (Brothers Times Two). Billing themselves as "futuristic blues", this quintet, aged 12 to 15, espouses the tight rhythms and scorching guitar shredding of influences such as Rush, Led Zeppelin, Metallica and Guns and Roses. They brought down the house representing the Long Island Blues Society at the International Blues Challenge – Youth Showcase in Memphis, Tennessee in January of 2014.

Also in 2014, Niederauer contributed his talents and energy to a quartet of youngsters who call themselves Lions on the Moon. They describe their sound as "an original blend of rock, pop, funk and blues...filled with optimism, emotion and intent...a genuine love of music, a passion for performing and a burning desire to create original art." Delivering on that mission statement, they're leaving crowds awe-struck wherever they perform.

In his spare time, Niederauer enjoys basketball, tennis, climbing trees and just being a kid. Wouldn't you know it, he's good at math too!

It's going to be fun watching him develop and grow. One day you just might find yourself telling someone, "I heard Brandon Niederauer play when he was 12!"



www.facebook.com/**branonniederauer**

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BROTHER YUSEF

**SATURDAY JULY 4
3:45 PM**

KEN WRIGHT
SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

"No producer, no record label, limos or entourage or even groupies," says Brother Yusef assessing his status as a self-contained and self-sustained blues man. "I don't have a fan base as big as the Stones, but what's cool is I've literally met all of my fans personally. I must have handed out and signed thousands of CDs. It's all in how you look at it." Wisdom knows that life is about perspective and compromise.

Brother Yusef's earliest musical recollections are of the gospel and blues that he heard while attending a small church with his grandparents. Searching for personal edification through music, piano and regimented lessons held no appeal. But at 19, Brother Yusef picked up the guitar, exploring jazz, R&B and reggae.

For almost 18 years he lived a split existence as a part-time musician and a graphic designer who ran a screen printing business before making the break to focus exclusively on his music career. Fittingly, it was hearing a soloist playing a hymn on guitar at his grandfather's funeral in that same church from his childhood that reconnected him with the blues.

A dread-locked blues troubadour, Brother Yusef is cast in the same free-spirited mold, as Robert Johnson and his ilk. Emotion-packed vocals, tambourine around one ankle, right thumb laying down a percussive bass line while fingers play rhythm and lead lines on acoustic or resonator guitar, his performances are as raw, honest and real as the genre ever aspired to be. "It's the most intense, hard core, no holds barred just let it all out blues," he says. "There's nothing polished, nothing slick about the way I approach it." His strong reliance on the sting of slide guitar and a sound updated and urbanized for today have drawn favourable comparisons to Guy Davis, Keb' Mo' and early Alvin Youngblood Hart.

Brother Yusef coined a phrase to describe his multi-faceted performance style - organic deep fried fat-back blues. "It's a rich mix of Delta, Chicago, Texas and West Coast blues all rolled up in one acoustic guitar with a strong helping of Louisiana hot sauce in a Memphis stew," he says. After hearing his handiwork you'll agree that it's pretty close to the mark.

While the native of Bakersfield, California has played festivals in North America and Europe, his steady gig, one that he has held down for over 10 years, is on Thursday, Friday and Saturday at Downtown Disney at Disneyland Resort in Anaheim, California.

Over the past decade or so, Brother Yusef has recorded six self-produced, foot stomping albums, one take, no overdubs, in his home studio. Another is nearing completion. He recently developed a Blues in the Schools program to educate and entertain 4th, 5th and 6th grade students about the origins of the blues and its influence on music of all stripes.

There is also a humanitarian aspect to his music. "I always equate being a musician as like being a doctor," he says. "You're healing people. You're giving people the right to cry, to laugh, to heal so they can get on with their lives. Because, life can be hard."

www.**brotheryusef**.com



**SATURDAY JULY 4
5:00 PM**

KELLY RICHEY

KEN WRIGHT
SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

From the time that her toddler fingers could reach the keys, Kelly Richey tried to play the family piano. Her mother, a classically trained pianist, arranged for lessons. But reading sheet music and books proved to be a heartbreaking ordeal for Richey, an innocent victim of cognitive dysfunction that could not smoothly negotiate a page or easily decipher words. The Lexington, Kentucky native struggled for years with underachievement and low self esteem until, as a young adult, she was diagnosed with Dyslexia. "Had I not gravitated towards music I honestly don't know what I would have done," she confides. "My life would have turned out much differently, I'm sure."

When a neighbour's drum kit followed Richey home, her father bought his 15-year-old daughter an electric guitar, a quieter, more melodic option. She bonded like epoxy to the instrument. "I never set it down," recalls Richey who practiced up to 12 hours a day. "I took it to school, I took it to the kitchen table and if I took a walk it was strapped on."

Her professional career began in 1986 with Stealin' Horses before progressing in 1990 to The Kelly Richey Band. 1997 was a propitious year marked by the release of her third CD, Eyes of a Woman, the launch of her Sweet Lucy record label and a new base of operation in Cincinnati, Ohio. Sweet Lucy now boasts a dozen of her live and studio albums. The all-original Sweet Spirit (2013) which elevates Richey to a pedestal of bluesy, rocky, funky glory and the all-instrumental Speechless (2006) which uncategorically etches her staggering six-string chops are particular standouts.

Discussing memorable moments in her 30-year career Richey defaults immediately to mentor Lonnie Mack and her fret-to-fret encounter with Albert King. "We duked it out," she thrills. "It was the most fun experience and the most learning experience I've ever had in my entire life."

Life may have pushed Kelly Richey around, but this dynamic lady just keeps pushing right back. As an instructor, she has taught guitar to hundreds of students, now online with TrueFire. And, while she has been portrayed in the press as "Stevie Ray Vaughan trapped in a woman's body with Janis Joplin screaming to get out," and "not for the faint of heart," Richey has added an acoustic set to her expanding resume with the caveat that there's nothing "strummy strummy" about it.

Suffering from burn out, she regrouped in 2010 to get reacquainted with Kelly Richey the person emerging enriched as a life coach, music business consultant and public speaker.

Ultimately, Richey finds herself caught in a conflicting musical dichotomy, put off by the draining realities of constant touring but undeniably attracted to its rewards. "Music is the one thing that's like a true reflection," she says with conviction. "Whatever I put into each night, I am guaranteed to get exactly that out of it."

As for the unsurpassed exhilaration she can only find in performing before a live crowd. "Happiness is when I look out on the audience and I see on someone's face that they are feeling what I'm playing. There's nothing better than that!"



www.kellyrichey.com

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**SATURDAY JULY 4
6:15 PM**

THE WALKERVILLES

KEN WRIGHT
SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

Much more than dumb luck, a niche that works in today's music business is the happy place where preparation meets opportunity.

For singer, songwriter and guitarist, Pat Robitaille, that niche, Motown and soul music, wasn't initially on his agenda. But, growing up in Windsor, Ontario, literally living and breathing in the cultural shadow of Detroit, Michigan, it was simply unavoidable. "I think there's a classic but fresh sound to Motown," says Robitaille who came under the genre's sway while thumbing through worn copies of bargain-priced vinyl in used record bins. "It's the kind of music that any generation can relate to and enjoy. The music is real, it's honest and it's fun."

A precocious talent who creates music because it's ingrained in his nature, Robitaille got his start plucking James Taylor tunes on a Fisher-Price plastic guitar. He was soon writing songs and recording them on a digital 8-track machine in his bedroom. The quality of his demos brought Robitaille to the attention of major studio hit makers in Los Angeles and Nashville.

The experience, while educational, made him realize that artistic integrity was everything. "I did what I had to do," says Robitaille of his crucial decision to retain control of his output and make a go of it as an independent artist. "I bought a van and started touring North America on my own."

Clocking 300,000 kilometres on the odometer, he released 4 CDs, topped the Much More Music countdown and shared stages with The Tragically Hip and Gordon Lightfoot.

Back in Windsor searching for something musically different, Robitaille reconnected with long-time friends, bassist Michael Hargreaves and drummer Stefan Cvetkovic (both formerly of the folk-rock band Michou), to form The Walkervilles. Thus far, Hargreaves who, coincidentally, had been listening to Motown, Sam Cooke and Nat King Cole, has been the band's principal songwriter.

The trio took their name from the historic model town, now a Windsor suburb, founded by distiller and entrepreneur Hiram Walker famous for Canadian Club Whisky and the earliest site of the region's automotive manufacturing industry.

Husband, father and owner of a vintage store called Hodge Podge, Robitaille has a renewed appreciation for his hometown. "Windsor's it for us, man, it's our creative hub and has inspired and encouraged us the most of anywhere we've been," he says. "The support of this city has been crazy."

Although they have only been together for about 5 years, the group has nailed the style and emotion of Motown, familiar R&B and contemporary pop rock. That sound and feel were vividly captured on Live at Mackenzie Hall (2013), the band's 10-track CD recorded in a Windsor heritage building, a former jail and courthouse. Last year, the Motown revivalists headed to Austin, Texas to record Rebirth of the Cool. With producer Gordie Johnson (Big Sugar) at the helm, they've reached a new plateau of sophistication, their pitch-perfect vocal harmonies more sensuous than ever.

"Even to this day, my music is my therapy," states Robitaille philosophically. "I think in turn, it becomes the therapy my fans need in their lives too. That's how music connects us all."

www.walkervilles.com



ALAN DOYLE

**SATURDAY JULY 4
7:45 PM**

KEN WRIGHT
SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

Alan Doyle is the embodiment of a seemingly genetic trait, an affable down-home humanity that defines the good people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Its source can be traced to his modest but colourful upbringing in the fishing village of Petty Harbour, where a resourceful family of six shared a two-bedroom home. Indoor plumbing was an oxymoron, clothing was hand-me-down, leftovers were unheard of and TV consisted of the CBC. By the age of 10, Doyle was at work cutting out cod tongues. When there was no fuel for the furnace, friends, cards, drinks and song gathered in the kitchen for an "out of oil" party, heat radiating from the oven, minus its door.

But Doyle's boyhood was rich in adventure, laughter and music. His mother baked bread daily and taught him piano. He joined his uncle Ronnie's band, the New Sandells as a teen of 16 and was half of a duo evocatively named Staggering Home.

Relocated to the provincial capitol of St. John's, he earned a BA in English from Memorial University. In 1993, with three university friends, he stepped into his most renowned role as the singing, multi-instrument playing, song writing front man for Great Big Sea (GBS). "I had no idea, no one did, that my young life would prepare me so well for that job interview," says Doyle in whom the requisite qualifications of hard work, low financial expectations and shared living quarters were ingrained. A national treasure, for 20 years, GBS's East Coast Celtic rock has shaken the footings of the world stage, their nine albums and two DVDs, all certified platinum or gold.

In 2012, Doyle released his first solo album, the Juno-nominated *Boy on Bridge*. The title is his casting credit as a child extra in the movie *A Whale for the Killing* based on Farley Mowat's book. Doyle, 46, has had starring roles in the major motion pictures *Robin Hood* (2010) and *Winter's Tale* (2014) with long-time friend Russell Crowe and on the Canadian hit television drama *Republic of Doyle*.

With GBS on hiatus since their 2013 twentieth anniversary tour, Doyle's solo career is on a rampage. In 2014 he became the best-selling author of *Where I Belong*, a candidly affectionate memoir of his youth. "It was always sort of meant to be a love letter to my family, my mom and dad and to Petty Harbour," he says. "It's a real thank you to my childhood which was glorious to say the least."

Tossing the rule book in the dust bin, that same year Doyle entered the studio with the "most successful modern music makers that I could get to work with" to record *So Let's Go*, a counter-intuitive union of folk instrumentation and lavish Top 40 pop production. "All of the best pop songs have something honest and true at the heart of them," he says of the reels-that-rock concept. "So why not have that part be me and my story?"

Life is short and Alan Doyle is going to show us how to make the most of it. "It's a general review of my musical life," he promises, "to make the greatest kitchen party in the history of Ontario."



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www.alandoyle.ca

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Thunder Bay Transit

"Ticket to Ride" - July 3-5, 2015

Bluesfest and Thunder Bay Transit have partnered to create an exciting joint initiative where Bluesfest ticket holders are able to use Transit for free. This initiative is not only to increase concert goers, but to ease traffic congestion & parking requirements, lower the event's carbon footprint, help eliminate drinking and driving, and introduce Transit to new passengers. No matter where you live in Transit's service area, ticket holders are able to take Transit for the full valid date of their Bluesfest ticket.

For more information, please pick up a brochure at the Thunder Bay Community Auditorium or the Thunder Bay Transit Office.

Gate

The Gate opens at 4:00 pm on Friday, July 3, and at 11:30 am on both Saturday, July 4, and Sunday, July 5. The gate closes at 9:30 pm each night.

Parking

Ticket holders may access the site from the Camelot Street pedestrian cross-walk. VIP, Production, and Vendor Parking is only available from the north end overpass.

No regular parking onsite. Free parking at the Heart of the Harbour Parkade from 6:00 pm Friday and 4:00 pm Saturday and Sunday. Handicapped parking on Marina Park site; limited spaces available.

Free parking available at the Thunder Bay Community Auditorium. You may access Thunder Bay Transit from the Beverley St. Bus Stop - directly across from the Auditorium. Parking at the Auditorium Parking Lot is at your own risk.

Security

Ticket holders attending the Thunder Bay Blues Festival will be subject to a voluntary search. Acceptable identification (driver's license, passport, BYID card, Age of Majority, Canadian Armed Forces ID card) may be requested. Individuals under 30 years old must be prepared to show ID. All bags and lawn chairs will be checked by security. No pets. No bicycles. No cups or drink containers. Ticket holders not adhering to these requests may be denied access to the site. Thanks for helping ensure safety and security during the Blues Festival.

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VENDOR MAP & LOCATIONS



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3. Churrasqueira Gallo
4. Pizza Hut
5. Sweet North
6. Kakabeka Legion
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8. LU Radio
9. Tastebuds Pitstop
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- + FIRST AID
11. Knights of Columbus
12. Fox on the Run
13. TB Blues Society
14. Thai Kitchen
15. Recycle Bin
16. OLG
17. Pinewood Ford
18. Dougall Media
19. Tbaytel
20. Victoria Inn
21. Merchandise
22. Caricatures
23. Superior Hearing Center
24. Country 105



**SATURDAY JULY 4
9:30 PM**

**KENNY WAYNE
SHEPHERD BAND**

KEN WRIGHT
SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

There are fringe benefits to having a father who is a radio personality and concert promoter, in the case of Kenny Wayne Shepherd, life altering ones. Just 3 when he saw Muddy Waters and John Lee Hooker on the same bill, it was being "pretty mesmerized" as a 7-year-old sitting stage side on an amp case watching the incomparable Stevie Ray Vaughan that sent his motivation reeling into overdrive.

Six months later, Shepherd was teaching himself to play the guitar, painstakingly picking out legendary riffs note by note from his father's vast collection of blues albums on a "cheap Yamaha wanna-be Stratocaster...made out of plywood, basically."

Now, universally recognized as one of the foremost guitar players of his generation, Shepherd has carried forward the 1980s legacy of Stevie Ray Vaughan and Robert Cray by etching blues music on the public retina for the past 20 years.

A five-time Grammy nominee who has sold millions of albums worldwide including six #1 blues albums and a string of #1 commercial-radio-friendly blues rock singles, Shepherd was a 16-year-old high school student when he exploded onto the music scene in 1995 with the platinum-selling Ledbetter Heights. His 1998 follow up, Trouble Is which also went platinum, still holds the title for the longest-running album on the Billboard Blues Chart.



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While Shepherd lofts two Blues Music awards, a pair of Billboard Music awards and a brace of Orville H. Gibson awards, his crowning achievement may be the Blues Foundation's Keeping the Blues Alive award for his acclaimed CD/DVD documentary, 10 Days Out: Blues from the Backroads, the best-selling blues package of 2007. A humble pilgrimage of gratitude through the South, it films Shepherd accompanying some of the last surviving originators of the genre in their kitchens, yards and local clubs. "The goal was to get intimate recordings in intimate places and maintain authenticity," says Shepherd. "Live as it went down, we kept it as real as possible."

Other recording highlights must include Live! In Chicago from 2010 and Can't Get Enough recorded in 2013 under the band name The Rides with Stephen Stills (Buffalo Springfield/Crosby Stills Nash and Young) and Barry Goldberg (Electric Flag, Steve Miller). Shepherd's eighth release is Goin' Home a 12-track labour of love that pays tribute to his musical heroes with contributions from a short list of luminaries like Ringo Starr and Keb' Mo'. It was recorded in Shreveport, Louisiana where Shepherd was born Kenny Wayne Brobst on June 12, 1977. "This record is me revisiting the soundtrack of my childhood," he says fondly. "These are all the songs that I grew up listening to when I was a kid teaching myself how to play guitar."

One of the foremost contemporary interpreters of the blues tradition, Shepherd's unflinching confidence in the future of the blues is reassuring. "We could lay out a world map, throw a dart and go there to play blues – and people are gonna love it," he insists.

That upbeat attitude pays premiums in concert. "That's the big payoff," says Shepherd. "To walk on stage every night and watch the fans sing along – it's total fulfilment. It's what playing music is all about."

www.kennywayneshepherd.net



**SUNDAY JULY 5
12:00 PM**

THE KRAZY KENNY PROJECT

SUBMITTED PROFILE

No chronicle of the Thunder Bay Blues Festival would be complete without a tip of the hat to Windsor, Ontario. That city's Reverb Rockers were instrumental in launching the event with their talents as a group and as the festival "house band" backing many great performers including the legendary Johnnie Johnson. The Thunder Bay Blues Festival is pleased to reconnect with its "Sister City in the Blues" via The Crazy Kenny Project whose members have been mainstays of Windsor's music scene for many years.

"Krazy" Kenny Koekstat: Bandleader, guitar, vocals

Krazy Kenny was inspired to play the guitar watching his paperboy perform to adoring girls at a teen dance and by his friend Domenic Troiano. He fronted his own bands (Hearts of Stone, Gass Inc., Dagwood) for many years, opening for a lip-synching Stevie Wonder, Paul Revere & the Raiders and the Drifters. On the road, he shared bar stages throughout Canada and the US with the MC5, SRC, Johnny Thunder, Dick Wagner and Janiva Magness. Kenny raised his family in Windsor, Ontario where he was a career police officer and the face of the Crime Stoppers program for 33 years. His weekend dance band Brand X Live, continues to thrive.

Owen Jones: Drums, vocals

Owen has sung and played drums for countless Windsor bands over four decades, including The DocTones, Southside Gino & the Notebenders, Jump Katz, ABX, Brand X Live and Nil-a-Nova Big Band. With those bands he has opened for Blue Oyster Cult, Jeff Healey, Savoy Brown, Mitch Ryder, Dutch Mason, Downchild Blues Band, Rita Chiarelli, Glamour Puss and Sean Kellerman. A retired journalist, Jones is the author of Music From Windsor: Generations of Local Minstrels Tell Their Tales (2013).

Dave Willick: Bass, vocals

Dave started on trumpet playing Herb Alpert tunes with his Conquistadors ensemble in the 1960s. He joined the Motor City rock scene as a member of Blues Train, opening for MC5, Iggy & the Stooges, Ted Nugent, Bob Seger and others. Switching to keyboards, he played Top 40 songs with his sisters and local acts (Rainbow, Six Grand, Fractions, Fiesta). Dave now plays bass guitar in the rockabilly trio Jump Katz and the Nil-A-Nova Big Band and trombone with the Silver Ambassadors concert band. A retired high school music teacher, this true renaissance musician is an accomplished arranger and songwriter.

Wayne Lealess: Keyboards, blues harp, guitar

The utility man in the Krazy Kenny Project, Wayne took piano lessons as a child. Hearing his first live rock 'n' roll band in high school, he picked up the guitar, playing in several rock bands (the Establishment, Murphy & the All Stars, Zachary Polk, Bluewater Fountain, and "Il Vagabondi") throughout high school, university, and his early working years. Wayne retired from music to focus on family and career. Years later he found music a therapeutic way to deal with the stresses of the day job and gradually jammed his way back onto the scene.

Dave Belch: Saxophone

A native of Peterborough, Dave settled in Windsor in 2010 after four decades working in Toronto's mortgage market. The tenor saxophonist is steeped in what he likes to call "the great southwestern Ontario R&B tradition," and over the years has played in small groups and large ensembles covering a cross-section of rock, R&B and jazz. A member of Toronto's Barking Sharks blues band for over a decade, he currently plays with The 519 Band. An honorary member of Brand X Live, Dave recently joined the Nil-A-Nova Big Band.

www.brand-x-band-windsor.ca



**SUNDAY JULY 5
1:15 PM**

THE HARPOONIST AND THE AXE MURDERER

KEN WRIGHT

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

While it could be the title of a gruesome Gothic romance, The Harpoonist & the Axe Murderer (HAM) is, in fact, one of Canada's most talked about blues acts. The ear-arresting moniker is a clever lyrical extraction from Kris Kristofferson's classic blues ode, Me & Bobby McGee, in which a "harpoon" is slang for a harmonica. An "axe" is, of course, a well-worn reference to a rock guitar.

"We'd always seen it as a late-60s Jethro Tull kind of band name," says Shawn "the Harpoonist" Hall. Adds Matthew "the Axe Murderer" Rogers, "It has been an interesting name to defend."

Hall grew up in Toronto where he worked as a microwave truck operator for City TV. Interestingly, he played the cello before approaching the harmonica, a gift from his grandmother when he was 12. Rogers, a Vancouver native, was a noted film score composer with a commission from the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra.

They met in 2002, when Hall hired Rogers to supply the guitar parts for a radio jingle that he was writing for a Vancouver pizza restaurant. The two became friends, worked as sidemen in local bands, then struck out as a blues folk duo in 2007.

Their first two albums, the aptly titled, The Blues Can Kill You (2007) and a self-titled effort (2008), were primarily covers of blues standards gleaned from old record collections including the archives of folklorist Alan Lomax freshened up with originals and contemporary twists. "We take a lot of our inspiration from the really early guys like Robert Johnson," says Rogers. "For us the blues is just a good starting point."

Always stripped down and visceral, HAM's sound became more electric and groove-based when they graduated to playing for dance-oriented crowds in noisy clubs. That's also when they began to appreciate that their success and unique sound was a function of their dissimilarities. "Our personalities couldn't be more different musically and in life," says Rogers of the edgy synergy that he and Hall bring to the stage. "It's a source of frustration but it's also the reason we make a good team."

Currently, HAM is about as meteoric as Canadian blues gets. 2012 brought Maple Blues nominations for New Artist of the Year and Recording of the Year for their third album, Checkered Past. In 2013, they were named Blues Artist of the Year at the Sirius XM Indie Awards and received a Maple Blues Award nomination for Entertainer of the Year. Billed as Canada's answer to The Black Keys, they performed at 16 major festivals that summer. Their just completed Juno nominated CD is A Real Fine Mess.

There's an uncommon insight prevalent in the attitude and music of HAM. The Mississippi Delta is a stand in for wherever you happen to be in life, the blues is how anyone might feel right now and you can't bask in borrowed light. "We're trying to convert people into realizing that they do like the blues," says Rogers. "It's just that they've been listening to the wrong types."

A fan captures HAM in a nutshell. "Blues that gets you in the crotch."

www.harpoonistaxemurderer.com


BLUES FESTIVAL

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JOHNNY REID • ALAN FREW • THE PAUL DESLAURIERS BAND • THE BOARDROOM GYPSIES • KENNY WAYNE SHEPHERD BAND • ALAN DOYLE • THE WALKERVILLES • KELLY RICHEY • BROTHER YUSEF • THE BRANDON NIEDERAUER BAND • THE GROOVE MERCHANTS • LOOSE CANNON • PAUL RODGERS • DOYLE BRAMHALL II • WALTER TROUT • THE SHEEPDOGS • THE BROS. LANDRETH • JORDAN JOHN • THE HARPOONIST AND THE AXE MURDERER • THE KRAZY KENNY PROJECT

JULY 3, 4 & 5, 2015 • THUNDER BAY BLUES FESTIVAL 13



**SUNDAY JULY 5
2:30 PM**

JORDAN JOHN

KEN WRIGHT
SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

Chances are, you've never heard of Jordan John. But it's a sure bet that the Oakville, Ontario native will be the talk of Marina Park after finishing his performance at the 2015 Thunder Bay Blues Festival.

Starting out on snare, tom tom and cymbal at 13, John has compiled a been-there, done-that list that is the green-eyed envy of his peers. He jammed on drums with Prince at 16 and sites a concert by that consummate artist that he attended fresh out of high school as driving his devotion for singing and playing the guitar professionally. John spent a decade as a side man honing his skills on electric, acoustic and slide guitar, bass and keyboards in and around Toronto before creating his own band, the Blues Angels. The popular trio consistently packs The Orbit Room in the heart of Toronto's Little Italy neighbourhood on College Street during their regular Monday night gig.

John has backed Booker T. Jones, Jeff Healey, Burton Cummings, Wide Mouth Mason, Lucky Peterson and Matt Schofield among many others and opened concerts for Ray Charles, Johnny Winter and Robert Cray. But the 28-year-old's greatest thrill to date was warming up a twenty-thousand-strong audience for The Queen of Soul, Aretha Franklin (at her personal request) at the 2011 Toronto Jazz Festival.

Based on a video of that scintillating performance by John, legendary music producer and chairman of Universal Music's Verve label, David Foster signed him to a virtually unprecedented 5-album recording deal in 2012. But upon reflection, John had serious misgivings about surrendering artistic control and opted to exit the contract on agreeable terms that help finance his 15-track praiseworthy CD, *New Day* (2013).

Less obvious, but paramount, is the guidance of John's father, Rock and Roll Hall of Fame bassist, Prakash, the groove meister for such iconic figures as Lou Reed, Alice Cooper, Edgar Winter, James Brown, Paul Shaffer and The Blues Brothers and founder of Canada's most funkified R&B group, The Lincolns. Prakash, who now plays bass in the Blues Angels, encouraged his son to do justice to the masters, to become a well-rounded musician and instilled in him a code of conduct and performance standard of the highest order. The results are manifest in John, who has a positive attitude and comports himself with poise and class on stage.

But the listener, whether purist or casual, came to hear some great music and Jordan John and the Blues Angels deliver a powerful yet polished, reverent yet fresh tango of blues-permeated soul and R&B. This masterful combo knows how to build a set of reupholstered covers and high calibre originals to a fevered climax and tosses in a few wide-ranging medleys just for fun. Stevie Wonder? Marvin Gaye? Al Green? Daryl Hall? Jordan's voice is warm, sweetly supple and elastically expressive. It's some of the tastiest guitar work, funkier slap and pull bass and deep-pocket rhythms that you're likely to hear anywhere for a long time.

Tap your feet or close your eyes and get lost in the sounds of Jordan John and the Blues Angels. A mandatory two encores please!



www.jordanjohn.com

BLUES FESTIVAL

FRIDAY, JULY 3TH • SATURDAY, JULY 4TH • SUNDAY, JULY 5TH • www.tbayblues.ca

JOHNNY REID • ALAN FREW • THE PAUL DESLAURIERS BAND • THE BOARDROOM GYPSIES • KENNY WAYNE SHEPHERD BAND • ALAN DOYLE • THE WALKERVILLES • KELLY RICHEY • BROTHER YUSEF • THE BRANDON NIEDERAUER BAND • THE GROOVE MERCHANTS • LOOSE CANNON • PAUL RODGERS • DOYLE BRAMHALL II • WALTER TROUT • THE SHEEPDOGS • THE BROS. LANDRETH • JORDAN JOHN • THE HARPOONIST AND THE AXE MURDERER • THE KRAZY KENNY PROJECT



**SUNDAY JULY 5
3:45 PM**

THE BROTHERS LANDRETH

KEN WRIGHT
SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

Last September, at the 15th annual American Music Festival, 165 international acts performed "filled-to-fire-code" showcases in nine venues around Nashville, Tennessee. Among the highlights, Rolling Stone Magazine underscored The Bros. Landreth as the Best Blues from the North Country, applauding their "quiet storm of slide guitar solos, blue notes and three part harmonies" during a set that, more "sway" than "sweat," understood that "in blues music, 'it's all about the swagger, not the speed.'"

Audiences were somewhat surprised to learn that the Landreth siblings, Joey (guitar and vocals) and David (bass and vocals), were not Americans from the lower 48 but Canadians from Winnipeg, Manitoba.

From birth to boyhood, the two prodigies were weaned on the catharsis and closure of blues and roots music. "Dad was a working musician who backed up people like Amos Garrett," says David of their father Wally, a veteran songwriter and bass-for-hire. "Mom would take us in the bassinet and stick us under the bar tables." "We were always around music," adds Joey recalling the sounds of Ry Cooder, Boz Scaggs, John Hyatt and Little Feat that pervaded the family home. "We had no choice! We were baptized into it."

There were teenage dalliances with groups named Hockey Mom and Team Landreth. Then, for the better part of the next decade, David and Joey followed in their father's influential footsteps becoming successful freelance musicians but in different touring bands.

It was on his 25th birthday that Joey, taking stock after a particularly gruelling tour, decided the time was right for the brothers to flex their well-toned muscles on their own songs. "I called Dave up and said, 'Why don't we do our own thing? We don't have to go crazy, just write some songs and play some coffee shops.' We got together and started writing and before we knew it we had a record, a band and a business account."

Joey describes their 2015 Juno-Award winning CD, *Let It Lie*, as an "amalgam" of all of the music they've played over the years." Filled with the thrum of slide guitar and meshing vocal harmonies that evoke the windswept topography of yearning hearts and prairie expanses on mid-tempo blues and cowboy ballads, it has elicited comparisons to the Allman Brothers, the Eagles and Jackson Browne.

Bonnie Raitt was totally smitten by their performance at the 2014 Winnipeg Folk Festival. "I haven't liked a band as much as The Bros. Landreth in a long time," she commented. "To hear this kind of funky, Southern-style rock played with such originality and soul will knock you out."

At the 2014 Folk Music Awards the Bros. Landreth were named the New/Emerging Artist and *Let It Lie* was nominated for Contemporary Album. They also received nominations at the 2014 Western Canadian Music Awards for Roots Duo/Group Recording and Songwriters.

Three years into their enterprise, the brothers are sticking to basics, making honest music that speaks from artist's heart to listener's heart. "The whole idea is to just keep it as true to the original idea as possible: two brothers wanting to play music together," says Joey. "If we achieve some success along the way, fantastic."

www.thebroslandreth.com



THE SHEEPDOGS

KEN WRIGHT
SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

Fortune grinned when a contact at Atlantic Records entered a CD by The Sheepdogs, an obscure group from Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, in the contest that the label was sponsoring with Rolling Stone magazine to find an unsigned act to appear on a future cover of the publication. The band amassed enough of the 1.5 million votes cast to beat out 1200 initial aspirants and 15 other finalists in a surreal win.

Emblazoned on an enormous billboard in New York's Time Square, that August 18, 2011 cover set wheels spinning at a heart-pounding clip. Freshly minted international super stars, The Sheepdogs were opening for the Kings of Leon and John Fogerty, performing at major music festivals and on late night TV, releasing the digital EP, Five Easy Pieces and the subjects of a documentary film.

But, The Sheepdogs were no flash-in-the-pan upstarts. From construction jobs and humble beginnings when they were known as The Breaks, they paid their dues down in the trenches of watering holes like Saskatoon's Lydia's Pub. Hard scrabble times scraping together gas money for their rusty Dodge tour van, replacing stolen gear and financing three independent albums were the norm. "We've been working hard for a long time," declares front man Ewan Currie. "All we needed was the attention."

The band was constructed around the mutual appreciation of three high school friends for the honest bluesy roots music that they heard on Napster a peer-to-peer music file sharing service. "Napster meant that you didn't have to listen to just what was on the radio," explains bassist Ryan Cullen. "You could listen to what your friends were listening to yet go down this rabbit hole of musical experience."

There was never any question about the pedigree of their output either. The retro rockers' third CD, Learn and Burn, the cause of the Rolling Stone commotion, went platinum, collecting three Junos in 2012 for Best New Group, Rock Album and Single of the Year (I Don't Know). Certified gold, the self-titled follow up was produced by The Black Keys drummer Patrick Carney, received three Juno nominations and debuted at #1 on the Top 200 SoundScan Chart.

Shaggy beards, tousled hair and faded Levis, The Sheepdogs resemble their namesake. With blazing dual guitar leads and layered vocal harmonies driving merciless rockers and rebel boogies their live show is tailor-made for hoisting a few brews. They are uncompromisingly dedicated to the vintage sound of the 1960s and 1970s icons that have been the nostalgic bread and butter of classic rock's radio waves for decades. "We want to make killer albums that people really want to listen to and when we come through town we want to be the hottest ticket there," says Currie voicing The Sheepdogs' two simple goals.

Untarnished by fame the band's unpretentious charm and humility still manage to shine. "We haven't been diluted by luxury hotel suites and fat stacks of cash," jokes Currie.

Weighing the evidence surrounding the hype it's safe to say that The Sheepdogs earned it, deserved it and won it. Now, let's sit back and listen to what they do best - rock it!

www.thesheepdogs.com



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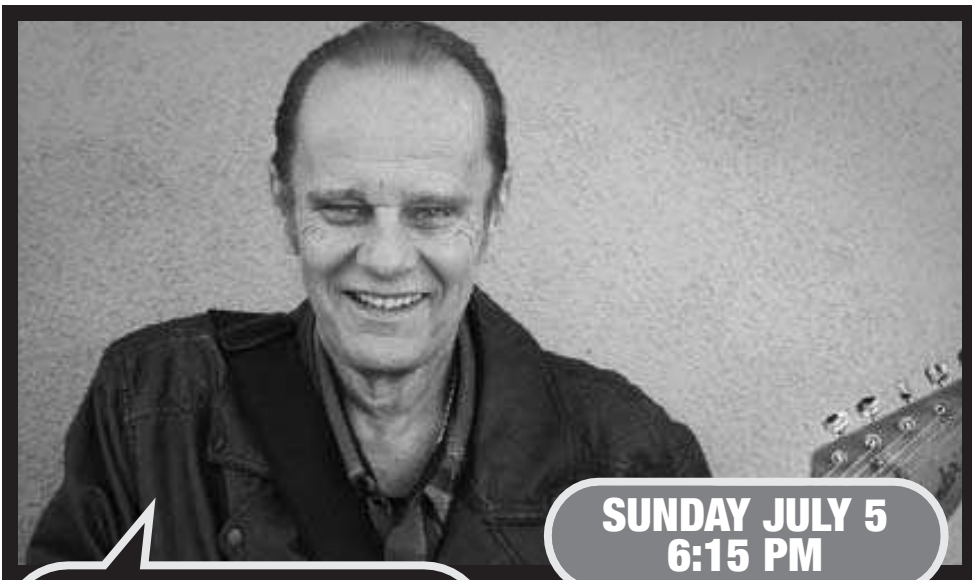
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**SUNDAY JULY 5
6:15 PM**

WALTER TROUT

KEN WRIGHT
SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

For Walter Trout fans, the wait is finally over! Following a life-saving liver transplant and a year of recuperation, the iconic blues rock guitarist's "I'm Back Tour" of North America and Europe kicks off at the Thunder Bay Blues Festival. "When I think about looking out into the crowds of people and connecting with everyone on a soul level and sharing the experience of music with them, this is what kept me fighting to get back," says the Huntington Beach, California resident of his much anticipated return to the world stage. "My family and my music is my lifeline. These days it means more to me than ever before."

Trout's reflections on a stunning 50 year career, thoughts on mortality and redemption through music were recently captured on his latest CD, *The Blues Came Callin'* and in his life-affirming official biography, *Rescued from Reality – The Life and Times of Walter Trout*. Always controversial for his over-the-top live performances, note-laden lead lines and socially aware lyrics, he has never strayed from a simple premise. "The blues shouldn't be a museum...the music ought to constantly expand and be alive."

Born in Ocean City, New Jersey, Trout played the trumpet in the school band. A 10th birthday surprise meeting with Duke Ellington arranged by his mother charted a musical course made irreversible by an older brother who introduced him to the music of Michael Bloomfield and John Mayall.

In 1973, Trout packed up his VW Beetle and headed for Los Angeles where he did yeoman service behind John Lee Hooker, Percy Mayfield, Joe Tex and Big Mama Thornton. To his future detriment, Trout succumbed to substance abuse, the bane of too many entertainers.

Starting in 1981, he spent 3 years with venerable boogie bluesers Canned Heat before receiving the coveted call from John Mayall. For the next 5 years, Trout and fellow guitar great Coco Montoya raised the Bluesbreakers' popularity to unprecedented heights.

On his 38th birthday, March 6, 1989, a clean and sober Walter Trout went solo. "To walk away from the Bluesbreakers, a lot of people thought was completely crazy," he says. "So, that was a huge decision and it was scary, but I had to do it because I knew I had more." 26 years, 24 CDs, the adulation of millions of fans (\$250,000 was raised over the internet to defray medical expenses) and dozens of rave reviews of his live shows and recordings have proven the wisdom of Trout's timing and instincts.

"It's hard to believe I'm still alive, to be honest," he confides. "I should have been dead by 30 with the life I was leading. But I still have a career and at 64, I'm still climbing the ladder, which keeps it exciting, instead of trying to rekindle past glories. I feel like I play with more fire than when I was 25."

"I don't want to say, 'I regret this', or 'I regret that'", says Trout scaling the upside of mistake. "Because I feel like I am able to put some emotion and experience – maybe even a tiny bit of knowledge and wisdom – into my music."

Walter Trout's Facebook posting announcing his Thunder Bay performance? "Gonna be fun!!!"

www.waltertrout.com



THUNDER BAY BLUES FESTIVAL LINEUP

FRIDAY, JULY 3TH

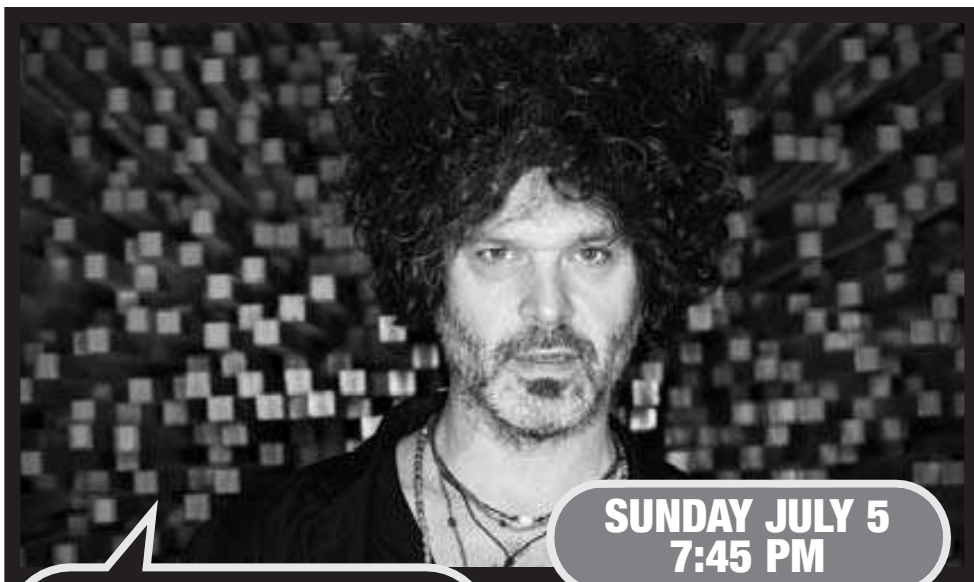
- 5:00PM THE BOARDROOM GYPSIES
- 6:15 PM THE PAUL DESLAURIERS BAND
- 7:45 PM ALAN FREW
- 9:30PM **JOHNNY REID**

SATURDAY, JULY 4TH

- 12:00 PM LOOSE CANNON
- 1:15 PM THE GROOVE MERCHANTS
- 2:30 PM THE BRANDON NIEDERAUER BAND
- 3:45 PM BROTHER YUSEF
- 5:00 PM KELLY RICHEY
- 6:15 PM THE WALKERVILLES
- 7:45 PM ALAN DOYLE
- 9:30PM **KENNY WAYNE
SHEPHERD BAND**

SUNDAY, JULY 5TH

- 12:00 PM THE KRAZY KENNY PROJECT
- 1:15 PM THE HARPOONIST AND THE AXE MURDERER
- 2:30 PM JORDAN JOHN
- 3:45 PM THE BROTHERS LANDRETH
- 5:00 PM THE SHEEPDOGS
- 6:15 PM WALTER TROUT
- 7:45 PM DOYLE BRAMHALL II
- 9:30PM **PAUL RODGERS**



**SUNDAY JULY 5
7:45 PM**

DOYLE BRAMHALL II

KEN WRIGHT
SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

"I'm Eric Clapton's left-hand man," says Doyle Bramhall II. Considered by Clapton to be one of the most gifted guitarists he has ever encountered, Bramhall, a south paw, plays the instrument strung for a right-handed person but upside down like Jimi Hendrix and Albert King. Since contributing 2 songs and his prodigious chops to *Riding With the King*, Clapton's Grammy-winning collaboration with the legendary B. B. King in 2000, Bramhall has been strategically involved with virtually every one of the blues icon's musical projects be it recording, tour or Crossroads Guitar Festival.

"My role with Clapton has changed over the years," he explains. "In the beginning my role was as a songwriter. That turned into me opening for him on a couple of tours, which then led to me being in his touring band as a guitar player. For the last while I've been working on producing with Eric."

One can hardly blame the Dallas-born, Austin-raised Texan for thinking that he woke up in a dream. His father, Bramhall Sr., was a Lone Star state blues institution who manned the drum kit behind Lightning Hopkins and wrote songs with Stevie Ray Vaughan. Unwilling to stand in a deep parental shadow, Bramhall created his own spotlight. He learned to play the guitar watching and jamming with Texas' finest.

Bramhall quit high school in grade 11, convinced that he could make a living at music. Recruited by Jimmie Vaughan as second guitar for the Fabulous Thunderbirds' 1988 *Powerful Stuff* tour, he never looked back. "We had all grown up together anyway so it was a natural fit," Bramhall says of the T-Birds.

In 1990, he teamed up with Charlie Sexton and Double Trouble (Chris Layton and Tommy Shannon) to form the southern blues rock quartet Arc Angels at the Austin Rehearsal Center (ARC). Despite commercial success and critical acclaim, they disbanded in 1994 after releasing one self-titled CD.

A second solo album *Jellycream* (1999), alerted Pink Floyd genius Roger Waters to tap into Bramhall's distinctive multiple talents for his *In the Flesh* tour. Bramhall found time in 2006 to record the DVD *Live from the Great Wall of China* with his band Smokestack.

Recently, the in-demand composer, guitarist, producer and singer has worked with Gregg Allman, Gary Clark Jr., Bettye LaVette, Sheryl Crow and Elton John. That, and tours in 2014 with the Tedeschi Trucks Band (India and Japan), the Experience Hendrix tribute and Smokestack illustrate what an integral, if publicly not well known, figure Bramhall has become in contemporary blues and roots music.

Anticipating a return to the studio to apply what he's learned to a much-anticipated fourth solo album Bramhall has been holding back a cache of material. "I've been very prolific, but all of the songs have not been released!" he says with a laugh. "I've been very greedy with my work."

"I've found a balance just in my own music in general," he continues. "I don't have any boundaries or anything. So it'll be interesting to see how the record comes out, because it's the first time I've really just been cool with where I'm at."

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**SUNDAY JULY 5
9:30 PM**

PAUL RODGERS

KEN WRIGHT
SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

A sexy masculine roar tempered by a melodic sensitivity that never overpowers, Paul Rodgers is known in the business as "The Voice." For 45 years, he's been the consummate front man whose ageless vocals on such classics of the rock repertoire as All Right Now, Feel Like Makin' Love and Can't Get Enough have set the standard for others to emulate. Most famous as the leader of the hugely influential blues band, Free and platinum-platter makers Bad Company, Rodgers has sold a mind-boggling 90 million records – and counting.

When Rodgers was a teen, his father told him to get a trade. Sage advice for a member of a working-class family of seven children growing up in Middlesbrough, a port city in northeastern England. But Rodgers had already discovered blues music and his guiding light for vocal nirvana. "When I was 14, I heard Otis Redding in a club and I was blown away," he recalls. "I set my sights on singing like that."

With opportunity beckoning, Rodgers headed for London, arriving on the high tide of the British blues revival. In 1968, he formed Free. Named by Alexis Korner, the godfather of British blues and noted for its stripped-down bluesy sound the band charted more hits than Led Zeppelin in an intense 5-year run. "Free really did understand the value of simplicity, allowing a space that the audience could step into," Rodgers says. "There was a real magic to what we had."

In 1973, he formed the harder-edged Bad Company, touring the world, performing to 10 million people and recording 6 multi-platinum albums before quitting in 1982. "I always knew when it was time to step back

and replenish my energy and recharge my creative batteries," Rodgers explains.

Cut Loose (1983) for which he wrote all of the tracks and played all of the instruments, marked the beginning of a prolific solo career. The Firm was a 2 album, 2 tour mid 1980s collaboration with Led Zeppelin guitarist Jimmy Page. 1993 brought the Grammy nominated Muddy Water Blues, his heartfelt tribute to an icon. Between 2005 and 2009 he charmed the world as Queen + Paul Rodgers highlighted by an Aids Benefit concert for 350,000 fans in the Ukraine. Recently, he toured with a reworked version of Bad Company in celebration of the band's 40th anniversary.

In 2013, Rodgers came full circle with The Royal Sessions, his first new album in 13 years. Recorded at the legendary Royal Studio in Memphis, Tennessee, Rodgers realized his soul dream covering a baker's dozen by such pivotal influences as Otis Redding, Albert King and Sam Cooke. "They were my teachers," he says fondly of the project. "Through their music I learned how to live, how to be true to myself and how to tell my story as a songwriter the way that I was feeling it."

Reflecting on his career, Rodgers comments, "It's given me so much and taken me all around the world. It's given me the opportunity to share the music with audiences and we all go to a better place for a moment or two."

Paul Rodgers has called Canada home for 14 years. He became a Canadian citizen in 2011 and lives in Surrey, British Columbia with his wife Cynthia. Currently, he only performs 25 to 30 shows per year!

www.paulrodders.com

The Chronicle-Journal
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