

# BIG CITY RHYTHM & BLUES

**Juking at the  
2021 Juke Joint  
Festival  
In front of Ground Zero  
Clarksdale, Mississippi**



**ON THE ROAD  
From New York  
to Minnesota,  
from Atlanta to  
Mississippi**

ences on the rest of the country's music."

Blues weaves its way throughout the exhibit by showing the rise of St. Louis as a piano town where ragtime and barrelhouse held sway in the early 20th century. A major section explores how and why the blues came here in 20s and 30s and the aspect of generational musicians. The more than 200 artifacts, mostly donated or loaned by local patrons, includes Henry Townsend's piano, Albert King's flying V, and rare copies of Peetie Wheatstraw and Lonnie Johnson 78s. There will be a QR code at the entrance that allows visitors access by phone to 100 full track songs that correspond to each section.

All the musical themes will be incorporated into the museum's popular summer Twilight Tuesdays summer series as well as additional musical programming being planned. Here's the best part, like our other world-renowned facilities in Forest Park, the Zoo and Art Museum, it's free. If you plan to visit STL make sure the St. Louis Sound, The National Blues Museum and the Scott Joplin House are on your "to do" list.

Coinciding with the Sound of St. Louis opening is a new music festival, Meeting at the Intersection (ticketed), scheduled for September 10-12, 2021. Delayed for a year, this event, sponsored by the Kranzberg Arts Foundations and the Steward Family Foundation, couldn't be timelier. Kranzberg Executive Director, Chris Hanson, summed it up nicely in a recent Post-Dispatch interview: "This is a true celebration of St. Louis' rich and diverse musical heritage and a representation of our past and present. It's jazzy, it's soulful, it rocks, it loves hip-hop, and it loves the blues. It's everything we're known for - genres we birthed and genres that are the foundation of our St. Louis sounds."

The sixty acts (40 local) will appear in premier venues like the historic Fox Theater, The Sheldon Concert Hall and Grandel Theater, Dark Room, and Big Top. National acts were selected because of their St. Louis connections. Blues-oriented headliners include Bettye LaVette, Marquise Knox, Booker T Jones, Lalah Hathaway, Mike Zito, Roland Johnson, and

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The Lady J Huston Show: Lady J blowing her horn!

Nikki Hill.

While St. Louis Sound and Meeting at the Intersection celebrates our music so do our live music venues. The primary blues clubs were Covid-battered but remain standing. BB's, Broadway Oyster Bar, Hammerstones, 1860's, Highway 61 Roadhouse, Venice Café, Blues City Deli, Al's Lounge, Evangelines, the Old Rock House and the Blue Strawberry Showroom are all open. One big loss was the closing of the multi-stage Atomic Cowboy in The Grove District, a favorite stop of Mike Zito and Jeremiah Johnson. That closure led to new venues as the Cowboy's booker, Drew Jameson, owner of Jamo Presents, sought new opportunities.

Jameson found a big empty lot adjacent to Busch Stadium, BB's and the Broadway Oyster Bar where he put up a stage, set pods for 248 fans, food and drink delivery to your pod and a lineup of great local and regional acts. Seven weeks, twenty-eight shows and nearly 5,000 tickets later, The Lot is a success. Jameson says they will do it again.

Others have taken note. Allegro, another private event production company, entered the game with a West County outdoor stage site that includes food trucks and craft tables. One of our leading blues artists, Lady J Huston and her hot trumpet, was the opening act for the biweekly series that will run through the summer.

The outdoor stage spread to existing venues like the Grandel that featured jazz and blues. Their big outdoor tented stage with warm air and good circulation now has 40 weeks of programming in place for 2021. And, down the street, The Big Top, a small circus tent, was converted into an outdoor music stage. Both the Grandel and the Big Top are part of the Kranzberg Arts Foundation efforts in support of the Arts District.

Another new venue, the City Foundry, features a big food hall, multiple restaurants, workspaces and music. The rehabbed mid-city foundry is presaging its full opening with lots of music events. Little Dylan

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## St Louis

### The St. Louis Sound Rebound

By BOB BAUGH

There is nothing that makes a blues club owner happier than a full house. BB's Jazz Blues and Soups sold out fundraisers in early May for David Dee and drummer Chuck "Popcorn" Loudon made John May smile. After a yearlong Covid winter, it was a sign of changing times. The easing of covid restrictions, warm weather, new venues, increasing gigs, and big events in the offing have the blues community excited.

One of the big events coming will be the opening of The St. Louis Sound exhibit at award-winning Missouri History Museum in Forest Park on August 28, 2021. The sprawling show, which echoes many of the themes explored in the Jan. 2020 *Meet Me in St. Louis* issue of Big City Rhythm and Blues will run through January 2023. It covers all popular music history here from the dawn of recorded sound in the late 1800's all the way to the early 2000's. Andrew Wanko, the Public Historian and Curator of the exhibit, gets excited when talking about the St. Louis legacy:

"We are calling this St. Louis Sound but there isn't one sound. It's the sound of America. We are the last eastern city, gateway to the west, equal parts north and south, we have absorbed all the greatest parts of this country's sounds and put out even better things. No other city, apart from Los Angeles or New York, has had so many leading lights in different genres. Scott Joplin, Josephine Baker, Albert King, Ike and Tina Turner, Miles Davis, Clark Terry, Chuck Berry, Nelly and more. They weren't just popular; they were formative influ-

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Triplet, Al Holiday and the East Side Rhythm Band and the Funky Butt Brass Band have all been featured.

The National Blues Museum reopened on a reduced-hour basis, but its Legends stage remains closed. However, the music has moved outside for weekly concerts through the summer. Their Al Fresco summer series begins on the last weekend of May with Saturday afternoons concerts from 4-7. Conversations continue with the Arch Foundation about the Friday night Blues at the Arch series in August. Also, the museum just opened two exhibits at the St. Louis Airport. One is a cigar box guitar history display featuring 28 instruments from top notch builders around the county. The other features the Green Book and explains how black musicians and travelers found road housing in a Jim Crow America.

The rest of the festival scene is slowly coming together. Marquise Knox is returning to the stage for the first time in a year at a festival he has helped organize. The Black Wallstreet 314 Festival (free) in the Wellston Loop June 26, 2021 will feature his band, Skeet Rodgers and the New Inner City Blues Band, and Hy-C and the Fresh Start Band. The Roots N Blues Festival (ticketed) in Columbia, MO, has been pushed back to September 24-26, 2021 but it is a go with a powerhouse lineup of women that includes Mavis Staples, Shemekia Copeland, Larkin Poe, Amanda Fish, Tanya Tucker, Brandi Carlisle, and Sheryl Crow. Sadly, The Big Muddy Blues Festival remains in Covid limbo with its usual site and supporters. Laclede's Landing, beset by construction and financial issues.

The reopening of the National Blues Museum coupled with the Sounds of St. Louis offers a great two for blues lovers visiting our town. And there's plenty of live music and good food waiting to be served around town. While nothing is truly back to normal on the music scene in St. Louis, it does feel like "these times they are a-changing" in a good way.

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