

At present, Big City Blues are a cover band, and it remains to be seen if they can manage that great hurdle to original material. They certainly have the physical skills, but now it is time to see if they have the creativity to take that next step. If they do, then it won't be long before we won't be seeing them free no more.

All Bloozed Up were playing at the Blues Tent. The crowd really started to warm up with their bluesy rendition of "Lean on Me" but the tent exploded into dance with the subsequent Cajun rhythm songs. The musician singing lead got the audience participating with the "Allons Dancer" number. I couldn't keep my legs still. The atmosphere was overwhelming, everywhere you looked people had smiles on their faces. Of course, the booze helped.

The Morgan Davis Band brought its no-frills blues act to Dolan's Pub for the HJ&B Festival. Right off the top Morgan Davis himself told the assembled crowd that their act was not to be a rockin' blues show, but that these were to be nights of traditional blues. This suited the crowd just fine, as the trio played to packed houses for each of their three nights in Fredericton. Despite the fact that their repertoire includes a wide selection of Robert Johnson tunes, this is very much a happy band. At times, however, they struck me as being a bit too happy. The cheerful nature of the band's personality comes through in their original material, most of which—although definitely firmly rooted in a blues tradition—was of a somewhat cheerful nature. This is a very tight band which managed to win an award last year for Blues Band of the Year. While far from the most dynamic act at the Festival this year, they were certainly among the most appreciated.

If there is one thing that Fredericton seems to really enjoy, it is Cajun music - for the past few festivals the Cajun shows have been among the ones that people hold dearest to their hearts. So it is with no surprise that the Bourbon Street concert did extremely well again this year.

There was the usual casino element where you could win all kinds of prizes, or alternatively lose all you fake money very quickly and seek solace in some spicy Cajun home cooking.

But what of the music? I can't think of a better way to start off the evening than with a quick burst of Sandra Wright who captured a few more hearts with another performance.

And then the headliner for the evening come on, and the whole place really started to dance. Really dance. C.J. Chenier and the Red Hot Louisiana Band got the place jumping almost instantly with that wonderful accordion-driven that makes it just about impossible to stay still.

C.J. knows exactly how to cater to a hungry audience - give them exactly what they want to hear. He kept the mood upbeat with the likes of 'Jambalaya', and even when the songs slowed down the energy level was still high. My utmost respect goes to rubboard player Clifford Alexander whose look of absolute intensity was incredible, and he also kept the rhythms going strong. A wonderful evening that will keep the Cajun beats going in our heads for another twelve months.

*Saturday, September 16th.*

The staging of a jazz summit seemed a little on the ambitious side at first, but they really did pull it off at the Lord Beaverbrook Hotel on Saturday. A capacity crowd saw the Graham Rhodes Jazz Experience start things off with some great jazz grooves, with the almost typical solos to everyone in the band. But it really did work, and set the scene for the evening.

The Maritime Jazz Orchestra is a seventeen piece almost-big band that relies on the vocals of Jeri Brown for its impact. Unfortunately, sometimes her vocals got lost under the sheer power of the brass section, but the main premise did still make its way through. This is the kind of jazz performed by Ella Fitzgerald with the majority of the material being jazz standards like 'It Had To Be You'. It made for an enjoyable evening, and one which I hope will be repeated next year.

If you like the Blues (with a capital 'B') then you really should have caught one of Luther "Guitar Junior" Johnson's shows at the festival as he is without a doubt the best blues performer I have seen at the Harvest festival. You might recognise him from *The Blues Brothers* movie, but after seeing him live that seems to very unimportant. As all there is to him is the music. The blues.

Hailing from Chicago, he has played over the years with the likes of Magic Sam, Muddy Waters and other blues legends. In fact, legend maybe not be a bad word to use to describe him. His blues comes right from his heart, and the best way to tell that is the way that they travel straight to yours. Or maybe your stomach. Wherever they go, it leaves you feeling warm inside, as if witnessing his cleansing has somehow left you in a similar state. And if all that sounds more than a little hokey, then you just weren't there because if you did you would understand.

The band that he has assembled over the years play an incredibly tight set not wasting a single note as they worked their way through all the finest songs, both originals and classics. The wailing sax, the driving bass, the almost mellow rhythms of the drums. And then Luther made his guitar sing. Just sing. It was an absolute joy to behold, it really was. I hope deep down in my heart (where all the blues reside) that they manage to get him to come back this way again as this way the best that the Harvest Jazz and Blues Festival had to offer, and a fitting way for my nightly trips round the venues to come to a close.

*Contributions to the diary were made by Alastair Johnstone, Mark Savoie, Janice McConnell, Heather Labreque and Michael Edwards*



*Even professors get into the act. Prof. David Bedford jams with Paul James and the guitar player from Sandra Wright Band. If you didn't volunteer you didn't get to see it.*



*The audience was quickly captured by the high-energy of the Philosopher Kings show at the Blues Tent. With the Market having sold out weeks before, the tent soon reached capacity.*



*Nova Scotian a capella group Four the Moment amazed the audience at Wednesday night's family show with their singing. Their rapport with the children delighted both young and old.*

**FREDERICTON, NEW BRUNSWICK**  
**SEPTEMBER 12 TO 17, 1995**