

Poor Charlie

UNB alumnus and blues man "Poor Charlie" Robertson returned to Fredericton last weekend to participate in the Harvest Jazz and Blues Festival, fitting the dates in between vacationing in Maine and a concert in Boston.

Robertson attended UNB between 1959-1964. Upon graduating with a degree in English, History and Latin, was offered a full professorship at the University of Waterloo, where he taught creative writing, courses in popular culture and developed the first university course in Cana-

showcase.

While in Fredericton "Poor Charlie" appeared for one night at the Exchange, three nights at the Lunar Rogue and jammed with AKA at the River Room on Saturday night. Robertson felt imperfectly matched to the Lunar Rogue venue, as the Rogue attracts a talkative crowd, making it difficult for an acoustic due to reach more than the front third of the audience. While the audience clapped, clattered and sang along during upbeat numbers, quieter songs were often buried in the distracting chatter of the

Robertson, Charles
Mt. St. Bruno, Mtl. P.Q.
Arts (English and History Major)

In his first year, big Charlie was in the Mummer's play and the sauce. Also, he became a charter member of the Scottish Nationalists. He continued to drink throughout his second year and in the following year blushing joined the Sports Car Club. As this goes to press, we understand he is in drama — probably a horror show. Surprisingly enough, Charles combined the odd hour of studies with his parties and got good marks.

from
Up the Hill
1964

There are
some things that
will haunt you
forever



dian Literature. In addition to his work at the university, Robertson was active in the Kitchener-Waterloo area arts community: booking bands, hosting workshops, running coffee houses and performing as a solo artist or with several blues bands.

Robertson's musical career led him to jam with blues legends like John Hammond, Howlin' Wolf, and Muddy Waters. He toured Canada, the Southern US and Europe from the mid 60's to early 70's. Although he has kept a low profile musically for the last 15 years, he is beginning to perform again—appearing at the Mariposa festival and the Soul and Blues Festival Toronto and the Best of the South West

crowd. Robertson's appearance with AKA at the Beaverbrook was characterized by frenzied mouth harp and an authentic bluesy vocal on "Stormy Monday." The song showed Charlie and AKA at their best.

For those of you who missed Robertson, you missed an amazing artist on the blues harp, a gorgeous National steel guitar and one of the few white men I've ever seen who can do justice to the classics of blues. Do yourself a favor and go out of your way to catch him live.

By Lilith

Harvest Jazz & Blues Festival

This is the tale of a town gone wild...crazy, delirious, jumping-up-and-down wild.

Here's the secret recipe. Take one reputedly sleepy government-university town cradled in one of the most picturesque river valleys anywhere.

Take 100 spirited volunteers, a non-profit organization and one man with a vision of a musical event the likes of which the town had never seen.

Add nearly 20 Maritime jazz and blues acts over four days...a gamble coupling a community event with the downtown bars and corporate sponsors.

Book acts for multiple gigs, allowing musicians to gather and mix for late night jams.

That was the recipe Rick "Hutch" Hutchins, UNB Alum and former editor of the Brunswickian, had for the Harvest Jazz and Blues Festival three years ago.

If someone had suggested that Fredericton would host one of the best jazz and blues festivals in Canada three years later...well, you know the answer.

But judging by last weekend's city-wide bacchanal, Hutch's dream is indeed a reality. In fact, his original vision has grown to 40 high-octane musical acts over five mind-shattering days in more than a dozen venues around the city.

It's difficult to review a festival of this size and quality in a few inches of type space. Of course, each fest-goer collects their own memories...some a little foggy than others. These are mine.

For me the weekend kicked off Wednesday at the Centre Communautaire St. Anne to see an electrifying New Brunswick percussion group called "Et plus K2," and concluded in a state of complete exhaustion Sunday afternoon in Officers' Square with a rockin' performance by the Toronto blues quartet "The Sidemen."

It says something about the state of our linguistic solitudes in this province that not one English person I know had ever heard of "Et plus K2." Too bad.

My roving clan of blues fans took in no less than four acts Wednesday. After the show at Le Centre, we moved on to the SUB to catch the Hill Brothers from Saint John open for the Shuffle Demons. The Hill Brothers expect their debut CD out this fall. I'll be waiting.

One of the new performers this year, and there were many, was another UNB Alum Poor Charlie Robertson from Kitchener, Ont. This delta bluesman had soul. That's probably why he's managed to play with some of the greats like

Howlin' Wolf and Muddy Waters.

Later we dropped into the Dock Pub for one of my fest favorites: The Roger Howse band from Newfoundland. It's Roger's sophomore here at the Harvest, and it's a shame he doesn't get off the Rock more often. When the house is rocking, there are few players in the country today that can keep pace with this Juno award-winning artist.

blues band with the somewhat unfortunate name of Bubba and the Roadmasters. Unfortunate because the name doesn't lend itself the credibility the band deserves when alternately fronted by CBC TV's Carol MacNeil, Pat Flannagan and Hutch himself.

Full marks to the band and full marks to the festival for their commitment to local acts.

Halifax's Waterfront Stompers filled out the Bourbon St. show with swinging Dixieland show. Rumor has it that more than 600 people turned out for Bourbon St. All I know is it was packed. Definitely a keeper for next year.

It's a credit to the broad appeal of the festival that everyone from students to civil servants enjoyed themselves.

Saturday was the highlight of the feast for me. Again with some regret, I passed on jazz virtuoso Oliver Jones, in favor of guitar legend Amos Garrett in the Blues Tent.

Amos, who's won numerous blues junos and has played with everyone from Bonnie Raitt to the Paul Butterfield Blues Band was obviously enjoying his first visit to Fredericton's musical Harvest. In fact, he was in an especially good mood after salmon fishing all day on the Miramichi (he didn't catch anything, but word has it he had sturgeon).

The rich-voiced Albertan skillfully displayed his credentials as a blues legend. He combined a wonderful mix of great songs, funny stories, and guitar work that left several other festival guitarists with their mouths hanging open.

Afterwards we stopped in at the Exchange to catch Toronto's Morgan Davis... another national-class performer with a southern drawl and a storyteller's stage presence that doesn't stop at his guitar.

That's only a smidgen of offering from the Harvest. Of course, there's not nearly enough room to cover everything. Actually, I'm just too wiped out to go on. It's going to take a couple of weeks to recover.

However, there are several local acts that

deserve special mention in case you get a change to catch them. Each of these acts distinguished themselves in a crowd of national-class performers: Three People, Eric Bourque Quartet, The Tony George Quartet, Casablanca, Hans Martini, Blind Dog Blues and of course, the band that hosts those late night jams in the River Room...A.K.A.

To the members of A.K.A., I am eternally grateful. You've given me some of the best memories over the last three years.

Thanks everyone for a great, great weekend. Thanks Hutch for the dream. And thanks to this year's tremendously able chairperson Mary Ellen Lake.

Let's get together and do it again next year.

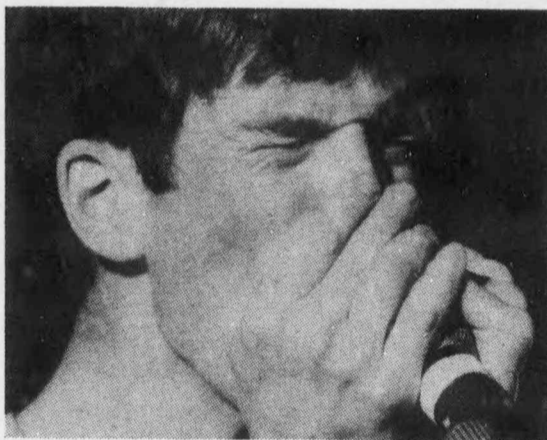


He's also one of the hardest working players in the festival. Not only did he play four of his own shows and host a late-night musician's jam one night in his hotel room, he also jammed with Halifax's Joe Murphy at Trina's and jumped in with Fredericton's AKA at the River Room.

By Gordon Thomas

He also played an extra acoustic show Saturday in the Exchange...Fredericton's newest and classiest club.

Thursday we couldn't resist checking out Roger one last time. This time in the Attic. Then we went downstairs to the first women of Maritime blues: Theresa Malenfant in the Dock Pub. Here's a woman with awesome potential. Then, we slid over 30 yards to see the Shuffle Demons in the fes-



Broken
guitar strings
caused Messo
Blues to offer
us an
impromptu
harmonica
and drum
duet.

tival's temporary party palace...the Blues Tent.

Thursday's highlight was definitely the Shuffle Demons. I don't know quite what to say about the Shuffle Demons. But if you missed it, you missed out.

Of course the other big show was Fredericton's own, and only, international star: Holly Cole. I had my mind set on the blues, so I didn't go. But word has it she sold, sang her heart out and received a couple of well-deserved standing ovations.

By Friday everything was taking on a rosy tint due to the permanently bloodshot state of my optic nerves. The weekend was definitely taking its toll...but what a toll. I took in only one event, a unique new event for the festival: Bourbon St. at the Boyce.

Actually, it was a full-fledged Mardi Gras complete with spicy gumbo, a funny-money casino and two great bands.

The first was a light-rocking