

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE ##

**Fruteland Jackson** has just completed his **2009 Northeast BITS and Concert Tour**. After a four year retreat, Fruteland makes his first return to the Hudson River and Putnam Valley areas of New York State. Although some 5,000 thousand students attended the Blues101 presentation, the one-millionth student will probably be reached in the fall of 2009. This years Itinerary included:

- **Niagara Falls Community College**- Niagara Falls, New York
- **Wallkill High School**- Wallkill, New York
- **Columbus Ohio School District** -Columbus Blues Alliance
- **Western Pennsylvania School District**-Blues Society of Western Pennsylvania
- **Gateway Arts Org**,-Pittsburgh Pennsylvania
- **SWEIO Teachers Conference**-Madison WI
- **Washington County** Public Schools, Marietta, Ohio -Blues, Jazz, Folk Music Society
- **WVSU Charleston, WV** - West Virginia Blues Society

Many school districts across the US celebrated African American History month with a day for music education and the Blues. **Three time Blues Music Award Nominee and KBA recipient**, author, lecturer and storyteller, **Fruteland Jackson** whom has described his trip as a "One of the best BITS tours ever," added, "Blues in the schools programs are alive and well."

**Fruteland Jackson** was invited to present a **Blues-in-the-Schools** lecture/performance entitled *Blues 101*, or a concert performance or both. The Blues 101 lecture/performance lasts about an hour. It incorporates an historical overview of the history of blues music and its evolvment in American culture, and provides a question and answers session with composing and a singing-the-blues workshops included for student participation (See Course Description). **Fruteland** begins each session asking three questions. What is the Blues? Why is it important? Where did it come from?

The tour began February 2-4 at **Niagara Falls Community College** in Niagara Falls New York, just outside of Buffalo, New York. **Fruteland** worked with theater/acting students with his storytelling techniques and the ability to transmit culture from one generation to the next. He performed the "**Life and Legend of Robert Johnson**". He conducted a guitar/slide workshop and the audio/visual departments w student assisted in producing a radio podcast and a documentary video. *"The video documentary was an excellent piece of work and the podcast speaks for itself."* said Fruteland Jackson





Under the guidance of the Music Departments **Director Lois Hall** who invited Fruteland to NCC College, **Fruteland** added, "I met some amazing folks there who made me feel at home on the first day. The students were eager and ready to learn. I also visited **Niagara Falls**, the waterfall on the coldest day of the year."



On Wednesday February 11, in the morning hours at the **Plattekill Elementary School**, Plattekill, New York **Fruteland** met with a 14 year old child prodigy guitarist named Andrew (rpm9 on youtube) who along with his dad held a one-on-one workshop. Fruteland completed a morning and afternoon *Blues 101* workshops at Plattekill Elementary School.

At **Wallkill Senior High School**, Wallkill, New York, **Fruteland** performed at a rare rate never before seen in BITS history. Instead of his normal 2 workshops a day, one session before and one after lunch he survived 8 *Blues 101* workshops during daylight hours, on a normal teachers schedule and lived to tell about it. The use of poetry to write blues music was the highlight of the visit. There were a half dozen students who's wordsmith skills proved to be exceptional and worthy of publication on some level. **Chief Librarian Ellen Rubin** is also blues fan and was responsible for inviting Fruteland, who is an honorary Wallkill Panther with the t-shirts to prove it.

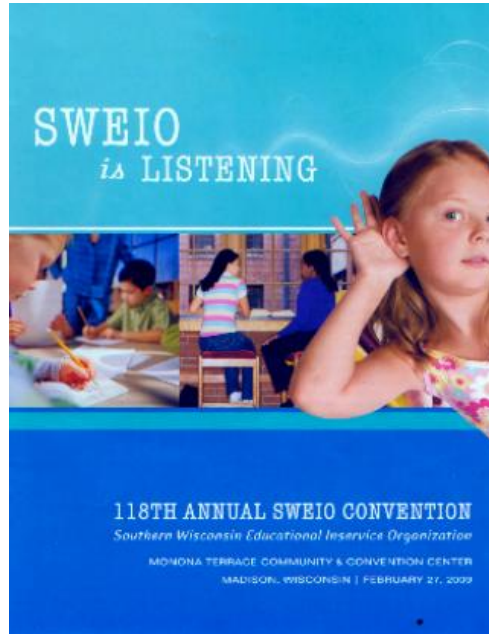
On February 14 Fruteland arrived in **Putnam Valley** where met many local musicians and performed at the **Bungalow Restaurant**, Carmel, New York. Fruteland was headquartered with longtime friend, and one of the great drummers/music teachers in the "Valley", **Gary Schwartz** of **Gary and the Bluerays**. Fruteland said, "*It was refreshing to visit old friends and go out to hear other musicians like, The Chris O'Leary Band,*" at the Beachtree Grill in Poughkeepsie, New York

At the invitation of the **Columbus Blues Alliance** and Blues society official Herb Sollars **Fruteland** presented Blues 101 at the **Arts Impact School at Fort Hayes Academy** on February 18-19. The creative elements abounded and the music student picked up the blues in short order and composed a song which was performed that evening on stage Fruteland Jackson. "*I met two exceptional music teachers Jeff McCargish and Jeff Jones who love for blues and jazz is reflected in their students.*"

Fruteland met up with **Amanda Huckinson** in Columbus, Ohio. She is visiting from the United Kingdom and headquartered in Chicago while completing a doctoral thesis on the beneficial and remedial effects of blues in the schools programs and self-esteem, at **Nottingham University**. After observing my workshops in Columbus, Ohio and Pittsburgh she left to return to Chicago and Santa Barbara, CA, to observe other **BITS** presenters. "*It is about time that the intellectual community has taken notice of BITS and will analyze and publish the power and popularity of these programs,*" said Fruteland Jackson.

On February 23-24, The **Western Pennsylvania Blues Society** and the **Gateway Arts Organization**, Hosted Fruteland for a two day tour BITS tour ending with a concert at the legendary **Moon Dogs** blues club a cross section of 4 four schools that responded with delight and applause. The WPBS scheduled the **CAPA High School** in downtown Pittsburgh which is a performing arts school and **Wilksburg Middle School**. The students were held in rapt attention by Fruteland Jackson as he presented Blues 101. The Gateway Arts Organization scheduled the **Edgeworth Elementary** and the **Mount Royal Middle Schools** for Blues 101. A hearty thanks to **Heidi Brandt**, program coordinator at Gateway Arts Organization.

For the 3<sup>rd</sup> year in a row **Fruteland** has been invited to **the Southern Wisconsin In-Service Organization's 118<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention**, held February 27. This teacher's conference was held across the street from the Wisconsin State Capitol Building. This convention attracts some 500 teachers. Individuals with unique programs showcase their work. The All about the Blues Series, Blues in the Schools programs w/Fruteland Jackson presented a BITS presentation to educators in Southwest Wisconsin.



February 28 @ **Buddy Guys Legends (acoustic set)**

On March 2 Fruteland begins the **Washington and Wood County schools in Marietta Ohio** sponsored by the **BJFM Society**.



Steve Wells, photographer and point man for the blues society, provided logistics and resources to reach the largest amount of students. It was some 2000 students, including 1000 6<sup>th</sup> graders.



**Lynn Doebrich**, who enforces attendance requirements in the school district, took Fruteland to the **Beverly-Center Elementary and Frontier Middle School** in Washington County. PHOTO: Steve Wells



Also, the **Blennerhassett School** in Parkersburg, WV, and in Wood County, at the **Belpre Elementary School**, Belpre, Ohio and later at **The Washington County Juvenile Center** in Marietta. PHOTO: Steve Wells

“But, in my mind, the most significant thing that happened during this run of BITS happened at the **Washington County Juvenile Center**. While this was our smallest audience of the 3-days, I got a strong feeling that these are the young people we can actually help the most. After Fruteland's presentation to the attentive and well-behaved group, several of the counselors at the Center approached us to thank us for being there. But I could see this meant more to them for some reason than the normal thank you's we get. One counselor said "these kids are usually forgotten about." Another told us "these kids could use a lot more of this type thing." – The Voice



According to **Fruteland**, this was a “most interesting visit and a first” in many areas. It began on March 5-6. It was the first time he had visited Charleston, WV. The first time he visited West Virginia State University (a traditional black college) and the first time he drove 65 miles from his hotel in the curvy mountains of West Virginia, to present a BITS program. Fate was busy, from the **Davis Fine Arts Theater** to the **Emanuel Baptist Church** that kept an after School Program (another first) for young and old in the community. **Fruteland** said, “It was a nice place to hang out”. PHOTO: Steve Wells





At six o'clock in the morning Fruteland, headed to Raleigh County to the **Trap Hill Middle School**. He was scheduled to appear in the music room to meet the music teacher, **Yvonne Seay** and her choir students. They all took part in the Blues 101 workshop. This BITS program was sponsored by the **West Virginia Blues Society**. These folks are working diligently to keep the blues alive in this coal mining region of our country. Two thumbs up to **Doris Fields, Antonio Ritchie, Ron, Julius Jackson** and the charming **Ms. Clo'**. Fruteland sends his best and thank you all for being a great hosts and helpers during his stay.



Fruteland sits at the end of a long tour and following a concert in Charleston, WV at the Davis Theater for the Fine Arts. A look of satisfaction beams from his face as he contemplates the ride home, getting the rental a car back in time and writing "thank you" notes" to all of the individuals who were in place to make this tour a sweeping success. PHOTO Julius Jackson