



Thursday, August 27, 2009

Electro-Fi Records in cooperation with IT * Talent Agency is pleased to introduce three time Blues Music Award nominee (Best Album/Artist), Storyteller and Oral Historian, Fruteland Jackson.

Fruteland is a singer /songwriter performing acoustic blues, from contemporary to traditional, from the blues of early field-holler songs and work songs to Delta and Piedmont Blues, as well as his own original works. Fruteland is one of a select group of Americans dedicated to gathering, preserving and performing acoustic blues in its many styles. Fruteland has performed at venues across the US, Europe and Russia.

As an Oral Historian, he has taken his extensive knowledge of Blues history to schools, colleges and universities across the US. Fruteland is the creator of the award winning "**All About The Blues**"™ series **Blues in the Schools** programs where he currently presents to some 50,000 students annually, in the classroom. He has received awards and acclaim across the country for his research, innovation, curriculum and presentation of the history about the people and music that make up the blues.

Fruteland is a consistent crowd please in the performer arena. He has a style that puts people at ease and they enjoy his presentation of music and humor.

Fruteland is the recipient of the Illinois Arts Council Folk/Ethnic Heritage Award the "Keeping the Blues Alive" for Blues in Education. He presents programs at civic, cultural and educational venues.

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Biography

Fruteland is one of the few Americans dedicated to performing and preserving acoustic blues in its various styles (traditional or contemporary). From fieldhollers and work songs to Delta and Piedmont styles. Fruteland is a singer/songwriter and educator who performs at blues festivals, cultural centers and clubs worldwide. His songs range from blues ballads to folk and gospel standards and what he refers to as "Baby-Boomer" blues. Many of his original works combine contemporary themes played in the spirit of early blues musicians in the classic styles. Fruteland calls himself a blues activist and oral historian promoting *awareness* through education by conducting Blues in the Schools programs. "Mr. Fruteland," as he is known by students range from the *exceptional* to the *emotionally* challenged and the *high risk* students as well as the economically depressed areas who have participated in his *Bluz in the Hood* program and another called *Trading Handguns for Harmonicas*.

Fruteland Jackson was born June 9, 1953, in Sunflower County, Mississippi, the fourth child of six. He was reared in a musical and church going family. His maternal grandparents, Willie and Anna Bradley are founders of a church in Doddsville, MS., the New Jericho M.B. Church, and both living testimonies to the family's oral traditions that date back to *Slavery*. His grandmother predicted, "*This gran'son is gon' be a preacha' and save souls*". Fruteland's work with young people in schools is making his grandmother's predictions ring with truth. Unlike many other African-Americans he is fortunate to be able to document his roots back to 1863. Old Jericho MB Church where Fruteland was baptized in 1965 was founded before Emancipation and no longer stands in the town of Doddsville.

Fruteland's paternal grandfather was a prominent Baptist minister, the Rev. R. L. Chandler of Inverness, Mississippi. Fifty years after the establishment of his first church, it still held five of its original members. The elder Chandler lived to be 96 years old and has a public park and a street named in his honor, located in Indianola and Inverness, MS. He was laid to rest in 1982. Fruteland's parents John Andrew and Ida B. (both deceased) were like many other blacks living in the south in the early 1950's. They headed north to Chicago in search of better employment, civil rights and education for their growing family. His father rose to become a staff sergeant, before being honorably discharged after WWII. His father was determined not to be a farmer and welcomed the bright lights and big city of Chicago, IL. He retired as a insurance underwriter with North Carolina Mutual Insurance Company (the world's oldest and largest African-American life insurance company) His mother attended Alcorn A&M and became a licensed nurse at Chicago's Cook County Hospital. His early childhood was spent between Chicago and Mississippi. Fruteland's "*love/hate*" relationship with Mississippi would cause him to return to the Magnolia State time and time again for growth and refuge.

Fruteland's early exposure to church singing and growing up in a household where blues music was the norm set the foundation for what would become *his life's work*. Fruteland fell under the spell of the musical influences of his "favorite" Uncle Woodrow "Dick" Chandler. He was a locally known guitar and piano player in Inverness, Mississippi and he gave Fruteland his first guitar at 12 years old. "*I broke the guitar's neck and tried to repair it with 3 inch nails.*" The impact of these early influences did not become apparent until Fruteland returned to Mississippi

Frutelard extended his guitar training by learning folk songs and listening to the Motown sounds. *“Back then I liked the blues alright but I did not become consumed until later.”* His formal musical training, however, began in high school where he played the bugle and trombone in the school band and learned music theory. He later attended *Columbia College* as performing arts major (theatre and music) and *Roosevelt University* in Chicago where he studied voice. Marriage would later put the arts in the background, when he became a father. He worked as a licensed Private Investigator and later an investigator with the State of Illinois Department of Human Rights.

The first concrete symptoms of his *blues calling* surfaced in the mid- eighties when he returned to Mississippi this time settling in Biloxi, he opened a wholesale seafood company specializing in high quality shrimp and oysters. At about this juncture in his life, Frutelard began strumming blues rhythms and listening to the *Blues Doctor*, Bill Ferris out of the University of Mississippi. His business the Camel Seafood Company would, after four years, become a casualty to hurricane Elena. With this hurricane, came the blues. *“The blues was a comforter for me always my healer during difficult times.”* Nearly stranded on the Gulf Coast with family he did what it took to survive while imbibing daily on blues music. *“I dug up old records. My fathers old seventy eight’s.”* He began to reclaim his past, putting names with faces. He began to immerse himself in blues music. From the wail of field-hollers to B.B. King Frutelard was rediscovering what he knew as a child. The music spoke loudly, and this time **Frutelard** was listening. He was moved and shaken. *“My father, grandfather and uncles all had the blues and brought them home daily... it wasn’t no festival either.”* Frutelard had heard Robert Johnson, Howling Wolf and his guru Johnny Shines, Little Walter, Muddy Waters and his uncle Woodrow, but now, for the first time he was listening.

His grandmother’s prophecy was now undergoing contractions. The “crossroads would beckon” *“I thought of my uncle Woodrow, the guitar with the nails and Grandpa Willie who as a teenager, saw and heard Charley Patton and Bill Hadley play guitar.”* For the first time in forty years Frutelard figured out where he was suppose to be and doing what he was suppose to be doing. He had found his pulpit to champion the downtrodden and those who dare to listen through blues education. He would assert himself. He now could communicate with peers and oppressors. *“The blues is the recognition of a tragedy and an optimism to deal with it.”*

Since that time Frutelard has endeavored to educate and entertain as a blues artist and oral historian. As an educator he has taken the blues into the classrooms. The Programs have been presented at the top rated Hotchkiss School, N.Y., **The Kildonan School** (serving the needs of dyslectic students). Other educational institutions include the **University of Illinois (Circle Campus), IL. DePaul University, IL, University of Mississippi, Center for Southern Studies, MS and SUNY colleges of New York State Washington Montessori, CT Poughkeepsie Day School, NY and Mosinee School District, WI.** These Programs have proven to be an excellent tool for gifted students, the physically/emotionally challenged and inner city, high-risk students, providing a well-rounded educational curriculum, and many other educational institutions, to bring the history, music and style of the Blues to all students of any age.

Club Appearances

Buddy Guy's Legends, Chicago, IL
Koko Taylor's, Chicago, IL
Rosa's, Chicago, IL
Heartland Café, Chicago, IL
Park Place Café, Chicago, IL
Puffer's, Chicago, IL
N & N Smokehouse, Chicago, IL
Milwaukee Roadhouse, Libertyville, IL
Fitzgerald's, Chicago, IL
Harlem Avenue Lounge, Berwyn, IL
Tommy Guns, Chicago, IL
Lotto's, Chicago, IL
The Attic, Detroit, MI
The Gin, Oxford, MS
Proud Larry's, Oxford, MS
Blind Jim's, Oxford, MS
Barrelhouse Blues, Indianapolis, IN
Front Porch, Valparaiso, and IN
The Court, Valparaiso, IN
T-Bones, Charleston, SC
Holly Hotel, Holly, MI
Chelsea's, Eureka Springs, AK
Center Street Bar, Eureka Springs, AK
Lion Heart, Albany, NY
Morganfield's, Portland, ME
Left Bank Café, Blue Hill, ME
House of Blues, Boston, MA
The Wintertide, Martha's Vineyard, MA
Pressroom, Portsmouth, NH
Four Corner Grill, New London, NH
Jack's Sugar Shack, Hollywood, CA
Blue City Café, Long Beach, CA
Hopland Brewery, Hopland, CA
Sacred Grounds, San Pedro, CA
Sweetwater's, Mill Valley, CA
The Fifth String, Sacramento, CA
The Palms, Davis, CA
The Ace, San Francisco, CA
Freight and Salvage, Berkley, CA
Beans and Cornbread, Quincy, IL
Focal Point, St. Louis, MO
Oshkosh Opera House, Oshkosh, WI
Java Hut, Davenport, IA
Alaska Klondike Coffee Co, Florissant, MO
B.B.'s Jazz, Blues and Soups, St. Louis, MO
Founder's Hill, Downer's Grove, IL
O'Grady's Pub and Brewery, Arlington Heights,
Tavern on the Fox, Aurora, IL
The Taproom, Albany, NY

Educational Institutions- Cultural Centers Museums

University of Mississippi, Oxford, MS,
Lecture/Performance
University of Illinois at Chicago, IL, Lecture
Loyola University, Chicago, IL,
Lecture/Performance
Depaul University Chicago, IL,
Lecture/Performance
Bradley University, Peoria, IL,
Lecture/Performance
Eastern University, Charleston, IL,
Lecture/Performance
Columbia College, Chicago, IL,
Lecture/Performance
Malcolm X College, Chicago, IL,
Lecture/Performance
Kennedy-King College, Chicago, IL
Lecture/Performances
Wright College, Chicago, IL,
Lecture/Performance
Valparaiso University, Valparaiso, IN,
Lecture/Performance
Indiana University, Gary, IN,
Lecture/Performance
Illinois Wesleyan University, Bloomington, IL,
Performance
DeVry Institute of Technology, Chicago,
Lecture/Performance
Savannah State College, Savannah, GA,
Lecture/Performance
Northwestern University, Chicago, IL,
Performance
Barat College, Lake Forest, IL, Performance
Calumet St. Joseph College, Whiting, IN
Lecture/Performance
Illinois Institute of Technology, Chicago,
Lecture/Performance
Melcaln Technical Institute, Milwaukee, WI
University of Wisconsin, Richland Center,
WS,
Monmouth College, Monmouth, IL,
Performance
Western Illinois University, Macomb, IL,
Performance
Washington University, St. Louis, MO,
Performance
King Biscuit Blues Festival, Helena, AK, Artist
Residency
Robert Johnson Day, Grant School, Chicago,
Lecture/Performance

Educational Institutions- Cultural Centers Museums

Highland Park high school, Highland Park, IL, Performance
Milwaukee Inner City Arts Council, Milwaukee, WI, Performance
Arts Council of Greater Baton Rouge, Baton Rouge, LA,
Dubose Middle School, Charleston, SC, Artist Residency
Columbia Blues In the School, Columbia, SC, and Artist Residency
Charleston Blues In the School, Charleston, SC, Artist Residency
Minnechang Regional High School, Wilbraham, MA,
Boston English High School, Jamaica Plains, MA, Performance
Horace Greeley High School, Chappaqua, NY
Quincy Public Schools, Quincy, IL, Lecture/Performance
Burlington Public Schools, Burlington, IL Lecture/Performance
Chicago Public Schools, Chicago, IL
Birmingham Public Schools, Birmingham, AL
Davenport Public Schools, Davenport, IA
Chicago Cultural Center, Chicago, IL
Warrenville Folk Festival, Warrenville, IL

Blues and Folk Festivals

Chicago Blues Festival, Chicago, IL
Classic Blues Festival, , Keewatin, Canada
Baton Rouge Blues Festival, Long Beach, CA
Sonoma County Blues Festival, 1, Santa Rosa, CA
Memphis in May Festival, Memphis, TN
Battle Alley Blues Fest, , Holly, MI
Kalamazoo Blues Fest, Kalamazoo, MI
Flint City Fest, Flint, MI
Poconos Blues Fest, 1994, Blakeslee, PA
King Biscuit Blues fest, ' Helena, AK
Michigan Fest, East Lansing, MI
Eureka Springs Blues Eureka Springs, AK
Charleston South Carolina Blues Festival, Charleston, SC
Fort Wayne Blues and Folk Festival, Fort Wayne, IN
Cary Nation Festival, 1993, Detroit, MI
Bliss Fest, Petosky, MI
Harbor Front Festival, Toronto, Canada
River walk Festival, Fort Lauderdale, FL

Chicago Fest, ' Chicago, IL
Waterside Festival of the Arts, 1997, Louisville, KY
Sunflower Blues Festival, Clarksdale, MS
Bayfront Blues Festival, Duluth, MN

Tours

Great Britain

Spain

Italy Switzerland

France Russia Iceland

National Summer Guitar

Workshop

Seminar Series Blues101 and Delta Blues
Toronto, Canada
New Medford, CT

Endorsements

Gibson Guitars & Strings, Nashville, TN
Hohner Harmonicas
Enroute Porch Boards

Awards, Publications and Honors

Nominated for 2004 /2008 W.C. Handy award for Best Acoustic Album/Artist

Beginning Delta Blues Guitar Video, Alfred Publishing 1998

2004 Blues in he Schools Implementation Guide 2008 BITS Workbook

The Preservation of Maxwell Street
September 16, 1997

Recipient of W.C. Handy Award "Blues In Education" 1997 Illinois Arts Council Folk/Ethnic Heritage Award 1996. * 3 time Blues Music Award Nominee

Discography

- Tell Me What You Say - *2008
Best Album/Best Artist
- Blues 2.0/Electro-Fi Records – *2004
Best Album
- I Claim Nothing But The Blues – 1998
Electro-Fi Records
- Fruteland Jackson ...Is All I Crave -
1995
- Being Free– IT Records
- Fruteland Jackson Plays Robert
Johnson and Significant Others– IT
Records