

THE RON THOMPSON BLUESLETTER

JANUARY 2005 EDITION

www.rtblues.com

2005 is proving to be a busy year already! We've got a lot of sizzling news for you, so kick back and enjoy this early release of Ron's quarterly Bluesletter!

CD Release Parties

Bay Area Fans! Do NOT miss Ron's next CD Release Party at Biscuits & Blues in San Francisco, Friday, January 28th. Ron's extraordinary band will be joined by special guest, Oliver Brown, a master percussionist from Los Angeles. This is going to be a fantastic show and you need to be there:

Friday January 28th

Biscuits and Blues

401 Mason St, San Francisco CA 415/292-BLUES (2583)

Opening for Ron will be The Bottoms Up Blues Gang

TWO shows at 8:30 PM & 10:30 PM ~ \$15

<http://biscuitandblue.citysearch.com/>

Good news for our friends in Los Angeles! Ron has just added another party to his roster at Café Boogaloo in Hermosa Beach:

Saturday, February 5th

Café Boogaloo

1238 Hermosa Ave, Hermosa Beach CA 310/318-2324

10 PM – 1 AM ~ \$10

<http://www.boogaloo.com/>

Upcoming parties also include the Fat Cat Music House & Lounge in Modesto on February 20th and Rancho Nicasio in Marin on March 11th. Check Ron's online calendar for more information:

<http://www.rtblues.com/calendarjan.html>

Blues Benefit

Enjoy great blues and help a good cause as well. Ron is proud to be part of an evening of music to raise funds for the Fresno Children's Heart Association.

Saturday, March 12th

Beer, Wine & Blues Festival

Fundraiser for the Children's Heart Association

Regency Palace

600 Willow Ave (Shaw & Willow), Clovis CA

5 - 10 PM - \$25 (available through Ticketmaster

<http://www.ticketmaster.com/>

Open bar all evening.

Other bands include: Three Guys Playing the Blues, A.C. Myles Band, and Aja Vu.

Ron in the News and On the Air

Live Radio

Ron will be interviewed live on Tom Mazzolini's Blues by the Bay show this coming Saturday, January 29th, at 1 PM. Tune in to KPFA 94.1 FM or listen online:

<http://www.kpfa.org/>

If you can not listen to the live broadcast, you still have a chance to hear the show. KPFA archives the shows for one week after they air.

You can also catch a live interview with Ron on Friday, January 28th, at 11 AM, on John Goldfarb's The Blues Bar show. Tune in to KFJC 89.7 FM or listen online:

<http://www.kfjc.org/>

Newspapers and Magazines

Tim Simmers, Staff Writer for the Oakland Tribune and the Alameda Newspaper Group (ANG) which includes the Hayward Daily Review, Fremont Argus, Tri-Valley Herald, San Mateo Times, & Alameda Star, interviewed Ron recently and wrote *Resistance is futile where Ron Thompson is concerned*. The story ran January 21st. Full text of the article is posted on Ron's website://www.rtblues.com/news.html

Watch for this week's (January 26th) issue of the San Francisco Bay Guardian. Lee Hildebrand, longtime blues writer and drummer, has reviewed *Still Resisting*. The review appears in the Guardian http://www.sfbg.com/39/17/x_second_time.html and will also appear in the March issue of Living Blues Magazine <http://www.livingblues.com/>

Reviews & Recollections, the Past & Present

A very special thanks to Steve Edmonson and Don Yonder for the sensational story and review we'd like to share with you here:

King of West Coast Blues Guitar

I just want to tell a little story about Ron Thompson. Years ago (1983?), I did a gig with Eugene Huggins band opening for Ron Thompson. I had heard Ron play many times at that point, since the early-seventies at least. I used to see him backing many of the acts at Mark Nafatalin's "Blue Monday Parties," at the Sleeping Lady Café in Fairfax. I saw Ron back so many greats of the blues there, I can't even remember them all. Waaay back, even before that, Ron's bass player, Byron Sutton, went to my high school, so I think that is where I first heard about Ron. Byron played in The Resisters until he was forced to take a long hiatus (a sad story.) In any case, I'm sure he didn't remember me at that time (anybody who remembers that time, probably wasn't there anyway, hehe).

Back to the story... After we played our set, Ron came up to me and said, "You have a good feel, and you can play the guitar, but you don't know shit about the blues." If anyone else had said this to me, at that time, I think I would have clocked them. I had been listening to and playing what I thought was blues all of my life. Hell, I was a friggin' Jimmy Vaughan clone, man! Ron said, "If you really want to learn about the blues, here's my number, call me, and you can come over to house and I can show you some shit."

Ron and I were both living in Marin at that time, so I called him and went over to his place in Novato. He proceeded to teach me all sorts of blues licks, turn arounds, etc., all the time talking about the history of the music, and playing 45's of the greats of blues/soul/R&B. One thing that Ron taught me, through his playing, was the idea that is at the very heart of my concept of playing not just blues, but music in general. This is especially true if you want to make a career as a sideman. Keyboardist, Jimmy Pugh later told me the very same thing, and that is, to understand the intricacies of as many styles (particularly of blues) as you can, so that when playing each style, you can play it like you have never played any other style in your life. I think Ron and I only got together twice for a lesson, but both times I left my tape recorder running. I listened to the tapes over and over and learned from them what I could, and then stuck them away some where. I always loved Ron's playing, and as I continued to go to see him perform live, as well as running into him socially on occasion, we became friends.

Once, when a guitar playing friend of mine lost his arm in a motorcycle wreck, Ron stepped in and headlined his benefit for free. I should mention that the following folks appeared for free that night also: Ron Hacker, Johnny Nitro, Johnny Ace, Walter Shufflesworth, Kenny Blue Ray, Rusty Zinn, Lisa Kidred, Rob Douglas, Chris Cobb, Mark Naftalin, Brian Bisesi, Jim Overton, Audie DeLone, Dave Wellhausen, Justin McCarthy, Burt Winn, Steve Wolf, Robin Roth, Eugene Huggins and more...

Fast forward almost twenty years...I'm rummaging through my stuff and I run across the old tapes that I made at Ron's house. I put one on, and I'll be damned if there wasn't a wealth of stuff that I just wasn't ready to comprehend back then, that now came to me easily. In other words, Ron had given me twenty years of free guitar lessons, hehe!

I'll tell you another quick Ron related story... One time I was sitting in the audience at one of Ron's weekly Fourth Street Tavern gigs in San Rafael, and he did this long T-Bone tune that was so on the money, it moved me to tears. I jumped in my car, drove home, grabbed my cherished old T-Bone Walker poster off the wall, raced back to the club, and gave the poster to Ron. I figured if anyone deserved that poster it was him.

People often associate Ron with the wilder side of his playing, like the Magic Sam boogie thing (which he does better than anyone), but the man can play so many styles of Blues & R&B! And he can sing like Ray Charles...it just ain't fair!

Though I haven't seen Ron in years now, I can say that if you haven't seen Ron perform, run, don't walk to his gigs whenever he is in town. If you have seen him, then you will need no encouragement from me.

Aside to budding guitarists:

I once asked Ron who he thought I should be listening to learn more of the rhythm side of blues guitar. I assumed from listening to his playing that he might say Jimmy Rogers or Eddie Taylor. He told me, "Listen to Steve Cropper on the Albert King Stax sides...rhythm guitar is rhythm guitar, and it just don't get better than that."

Ron is (to use a term from a recent Blues-L thread,) "The King of West Coast Blues Guitar!"

My Two Cents on Ron Thompson,
Steve "too much coffee again" Edmonson
www.payne-edmonson.com

West Coast Roadhouse Blues

After playing two shows with CC Cole and Soul Nation, I decided to kick off my "Bluesyear" by attending a local show that featured a living legend. I noticed that on Sunday Jan.2nd Ron Thompson was at The Florence in Niles. I hopped into Blackie and dropped her into Ramblin on my Mind and proceeded to snake thru the canyon called Niles. Soon enough I found myself cruising down the main drag in the quaint little town of Niles.

Many years ago Niles was sort of a Hollywood north and Charlie Chaplin made some of his movies in and around the area. Today Niles is known for antique shops, and a huge annual flea market that features a Charlie Chaplin lookalike contest. The Florence is a great old Blues haunt with a storied past. Many great Blues artists have appeared there over the years. If you've never been there you should check out this little treasure that's right here in our own backyard.

After stashing Blackie on a side street, I headed for The Florence full of anticipation. As I approached I was greeted by the smiling faces of the "smokers". Once inside I grabbed a barstool and took in the unique aroma of leather, Aquanet, and spilled beer. I didn't see anybody that looked like Charlie Chaplin, but I did see a few that looked like Charlie Manson. A friendly barmaid approached and I ordered. No Sierra Nevada beer on tap, but plenty of bottled brew and other liquor choices. I spotted Ron at the other end of the long bar and noticed the band was set up in a corner towards the back. Resistors Leonard Gill on bass and Buddy Wiggins on drums were finishing tuning up.

Ron sat down and kicked things off with some fabulous guitar instrumentals. Honky Tonk and Guitar Boogie Shuffle were met with whistles, cheers, and couples jumping up to crowd the dance floor. As always Ron was a triple threat on guitar, keyboard, and harp. Ron's singing is flat out great and really matches well with the overall sound. His song choices featured many Blues classics, and I just sat in amazement watching him switch from piano to guitar, all the while keeping the groove. He switched guitars and played some killer Elmore James classics like I'm Worried. I really liked this part of the show because I'm a huge Elmore fan too.

At this point while watching Ron and the band in the corner under the neon beer signs, with the PA accenting the midrange of Ron's vocals with just the slightest hint of distortion, I realized that I was witnessing West Coast Roadhouse music at its finest. I felt so privileged to hear this fantastic mix being played with the passion and intensity of this powerhouse trio. Ron and the Resistors continued to lay it down one great song after another, never once losing the fire of the moment. After three excellent sets I jumped into Blackie clicked her into Mellow Down Easy and rolled into the black night. On Friday Jan. 21st Ron will appear at The Mojo Lounge in Fremont. On Friday Jan.28th Ron will have a CD release party at Biscuits & Blues. I strongly urge all fans of the Blues to consider attending one of these shows and letting Ron and The Resistors take you to the "West Coast Roadhouse."

Hip Shakin, Soul Bakin, Blues Quakin Good Time

After consuming a one of my favorite Friday dinners, a CVSB W/G (Don Yonder code for a chile verde super burrito with guacamole). I gently asked Corinne Yonder to saddle my pony and bring me my black mare, to which she promptly replied "HUH?!" No matter, I could see the clock on the wall said it was Blues thirty, and time once again to journey down the Blues Highway.

Upon leaving the manor, I noticed that the valley was engulfed in fog, delicious fog. I like fog. As I ascended the Sunol grade, the Wolf wanted to know "Who's been talking" and How many more Years was I gonna wreck his life? I wasn't sure, but I knew that maybe, just maybe if I could get Smokestack Lightning to let a poor boy ride, perhaps I could avoid the Killing Floor.

As a teenager, I remember spending a couple of summers on my grandparents apricot ranch in the Centerville district of Fremont. Tonight I am headed to the Mojo Lounge in Centerville to spend time with fellow

lovers of the Blues, and enjoy a show by Ron Thompson and The Resistors. Being originally from Newark, this was sort of a homecoming gig for Ron, as old friends and family came to cheer and clap for a true hometown hero.

After greeting Dennis the owner, I ordered my favorite barley beverage from the lovely Tiffany. I then headed to the front of the club to grab a seat. I introduced myself to the lovely and friendly Jackie McCort who graciously offered me a seat at their table. I accepted knowing I would witness the show up close and personal.

As the club swelled with people, I received my lucky raffle ticket and wondered what the grand prize would be. Ron, Leonard, and Buddy kicked things off in fine fashion and the dance floor quickly filled with gyrating bodies. Ron did a great slow Blues sans microphone which made for a real intimate moment. Song after song with hardly a break between them showed the professionalism of the band.

Ron really gets into the music when he plays, which became apparent when after he accidentally became unplugged, he calmly walked over to the side of the stage while Leonard and Buddy kept the groove. Ron grabbed another guitar, plugged in and continued right where he left off. And then it happened. As Ron dug deeper and deeper into the heart and soul of the Blues he began to tremble and shake and KABOOM! He's over the neck, he's under the neck, there's gonna be a wreck on the neck, at what seems to be light speed, creating molten hot licks that have to be heard to be believed! Ladies and Gentleman this is Blues showmanship at its finest! Some personal highlights for me were a song called I'm Shakin', an Elmore James nugget called Pickin' the Blues, and the classic John Lee Hooker tune Dimples.

When the second set started Ron was joined by the great JC Smith, who promptly broke a string. Those that left before the third set missed a treasure trove of every great song you loved growing up. Whether it was Little Richard, Jerry Lee Lewis, or Wilson Pickett, Ron and the Resistors performed them with authority and finesse. If you haven't seen Ron lately, get ready for a Hip Shakin, Soul Bakin, Blues Quakin good time! After the show Jackie introduced me to Ron and we spoke briefly. What a night! I then bid Ron, Jackie, and Dennis good night, hopped into Blackie, and drove off into the fog. Delicious fog. I like fog. "Keep on Supporting The Blues."

-- Don Yonder

FROM RON: Thanks to: Deryl Harlan, Steve Edmondson, Don Yonder, Don Wright, Eric Benson, Tim Simmers, and Lee Hildebrand.

"Blues is like a medicine, or religion to me, it'll cleanse your soul."

-Ron Thompson