



Billtown Songwriter Showcase

Friday, September 17, 2010

The Billtown Blues Association will host the *Billtown Songwriter Showcase* on Friday, September 17th, at 7 pm, in the Capitol Lounge, at the Community Arts Center, 220 W. Fourth St, Williamsport. It will be formatted "in the round." This event is designed to highlight local and regional artists who have shown great promise in the area of songwriting and have brought their talents to the people regularly in an effort to promote not only their own careers but to keep the music alive and well in our local communities. Featured national artist for this event will be **Doug MacLeod**. Joining him will be local favorites **Greg Burgess**, **Brennon John** and **Antares Barr**. The Songwriter Showcase highlights the fact that some great talent has made its way to the public, even in a place as obscure as rural Pennsylvania.



Doug MacLeod spent many years as an apprentice before forming his own group. He worked as a sideman for many different artists from the Los Angeles-area blues scene, including Big Joe Turner, Charles Brown, Pee Wee Crayton, Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson, and George "Harmonica" Smith and others. He learned from the old masters, lived the music, survived the life and carries forward a valuable tradition. MacLeod is known for his superb songwriting, guitar wizardry, warm soulful vocals, wit and unforgettable live performances. At the heart of this is his knack for storytelling, bringing characters - from the faceless to the legendary - to strikingly real life. Over 26 years, 13 studio albums, several live records and two DVDs, MacLeod has consistently earned raves. His songs have been covered by many artists including Albert King, Albert Collins, Joe Louis Walker and Eva Cassidy. He has co-written songs with Dave Alvin and Coco Montoya. MacLeod's songs have been featured in many TV movies and the hit show "In the Heat of the Night." Every bit the real deal, Doug is one of the finest performers in his field. His ability to bring the events in his songs to life makes him a rare treasure indeed.



Antares Barr is another artist who will not be pigeonholed. An exceptional singer, songwriter and musician with a voice that might be considered sultry; Barr has a deep rooted love for the music and is not afraid to mix things up a bit. She draws her inspiration from experience, giving her music a richness and an emotional power that can only come from the heart of the performer...one of those things that separates the everyday run of the mill singer/songwriter from those who have that certain something that sets them apart. While I have admittedly not yet heard her perform live, I have reason to believe that she will surpass even my expectations.

Brennon John, while fairly new to the local circuit, has been doing his musical thing from an early age. Raised in Altoona, he wandered to Nashville to study music. There he sharpened his skills and picked up the tools that would make him unique. With over a dozen albums of primarily original material compiled he is quite a force to be reckoned with. Whether solo or in a band setting, he is one artist who refuses to be put into a box. Just when you think you have him figured out, he pulls a rabbit out of his hat, taking things in a whole new direction. Primarily a guitarist, his skills stretch farther than one might imagine. If my time with him has taught me anything, it is to expect the unexpected. Brennon is a masterful player and songwriter who plays well with others, making him a major asset in a band situation.



Greg Burgess is one of the area's premiere piano players, well versed in the works of the bluesmen who came before him, from Memphis Slim, Sunnlyland Slim, Henry Gray and many more. He has been a part of Billtown's blues circuit since before there was a blues circuit here to speak of, jamming with area musicians long before the formation of the Billtown Blues Association. He worked with Joe Beard, Big Joe Turner, Buddy Guy, Junior Wells, Taj Mahal and others, honing his already formidable skills. He has borrowed from jazz, blues, rock & roll, r&b and anything else he might need to make his pieces work. Musical leader of the area trio *Burgess, Mitchell and Seal*, he can be seen regularly on the scene in Williamsport, PA and the surrounding area.

In essence, there is no need to travel to New York, Los Angeles, Nashville or the Mississippi Delta to find good, down-home original music. A trip to your local club may just satisfy all your needs. The greatest talents of all time have been culled from out of the way spots, many much more obscure than Williamsport. All one really needs to do is to go out and listen...with an open mind. Hope to see you on Friday, September 17. - Bill Wilson

INFO: 570-584-4480 or www.billtownblues.org