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## Feeling the Blues in Owen Park

**blues society starts summer concert series**

words by **Trevor Kupfer**

Its songs draw from the basic and natural, originating from spiritual chants, rhythmic call-and-response while working, and moody ballads often reflecting pain. Its many styles range from minimalist delta blues like Son House and Blind Willie McTell, to the quazzi-pop rhythm and blues paid tribute to by Dan Aykroyd and Jim Belushi, or even the garage rock blues of Jack White.

“The blues is one of those things that keeps a following,” said local blues hound Ken Fulgione. “It’s a foundation-type music.”

The local following of blues can be historically traced back at least as far as the original days of The Joynt and Stones Throw, and many of the acts that played therein. But nowadays the beacon of blues shines from the Chippewa Valley Blues Society, which formed a mere two years ago yet has organized a cavalcade of events to promote the blues, including Blues on the Chippewa (Durand), Blues in the Park (Durand), the Coalition Blues Fest (Eau Claire), and, now, Tuesday Blues in Owen Park (Eau Claire).

The society’s newest endeavor is perhaps its most ambitious, but stands to create a surge in our blues scene, both in the number of followers and the number of musicians.

“At the last Coalition Fest, it rained like hell,” said Fulgione, the society’s president, “so there were 250 people sitting out in the rain listening to the blues.”

Shortly after the festival last fall, Fulgione said they looked at the Sounds Like Summer Concert Series in Phoenix Park and said, “Why put all our eggs in one basket? Let’s do blues throughout summer.”

Taking in account the society’s 200 members, plus the crowds at their current events, and the more the dozen talented local blues bands with followings of their own, a half dozen of society members organized the summer concert series.

We're trying to spread the music around and get people involved," Fulgione said of members Buck Barrickman, Dan Kebschull, John Berman, Dan Callan, Mike Fischer, and Gordy Pillar.

The series runs roughly from Memorial Day to Labor Day, with each evening of music starting at 6:30pm and running until 8pm. It will all go down in Eau Claire's Owen Park, adjacent to Water Street and along First Avenue, known for the bandshell, benches, and playground.

Several Tuesday nights during the 15-week series will help raise funds for non profits such as United Cerebral Palsy, Feed My People Food Bank, Community Table, Homeless Vets, and the Humane Society. The Blues Brothers (or at least local look-alikes) will make occasional appearances, and a Young Blues Night will invite young musicians to jump on stage and jam with members of Mojo Lemon and SOB.

"We've always had a really solid blues foundation in Eau Claire," Fulgione said, "... but this could make the difference for the number of young people involved in blues."

*To become a sponsor or vendor at the event, or sign up for the weekly Bluesletter, e-mail Buck (bdbarrick@charter.net or mikefischer@yahoo.com). Visit [www.cvblues.com](http://www.cvblues.com) for more info.*

#### **TUESDAY BLUES IN OWEN PARK**

May 26 – Howard Luedtke  
June 2 – Mojo Lemon  
June 9 – Sue Orfield Band  
June 16 – Blues Dogs  
June 23 – The Pumps (done Blue)  
June 30 – Young Blues Night  
July 7 – Left Wing Bourbon  
July 14 – Lucy Creek  
July 21 – Eau Claire Blue All Stars  
July 28 – The Love Buzzards  
Aug 4 – Tommy Bentz Band  
Aug 11 – Catya's Trio  
Aug 18 – Ellen Whyte & SOB  
Aug 25 – The Jones Tones  
Sept 1 – Mojo Lemon