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Blues Traveler - Great American Jam Band Returns To The Stage

By Jay Nault

Some bands are known for their style, others their lyrics, and still others for their on–stage persona.

Blues Traveler is known for all three, and the legendary live band is returning to the stage in 2006. The group has a legion of followers that span several generations, and one commonality is present in their shows - you'll never see the same thing twice. A look at their background will provide some insight as to how they became the band they are.

Early Beginnings

Blues Traveler was formed in 1988, and continues to be known primarily through their lead singer, John Popper. Popper was a musical prodigy from almost his first breath, and his parents noticed this talent almost immediately when Popper would effortlessly sing harmonies at the age of three. They enrolled Popper in several "traditional" musical education classes, but Popper never really enjoyed learning the cello, the piano or the guitar.

The main reason that he gave up all three was that he did not enjoy structure, and bedeviled his instructors by playing all three "by ear." This trend continued throughout his early childhood, until Popper discovered an instrument that he could learn on his own - the harmonica. His parents could not find an instructor, and after seeing the movie *The Blues Brothers*, Popper learned to play their entire ensemble note–for–note.

As Popper entered high school in Princeton, New Jersey, he became a member of the school band, but did not have much success in that structured environment. He became known as "that blues guy" based on his harmonica solos. He also met and befriended the future members of Blues Traveler - Brendan Hill, the drummer, Chan Kinchla, the guitarist and bassist Bobby Sheehan. A commonality they shared was a love for *The Blues Brothers*. This led to their first name: *The Blues Band*.

The Next Step

Following graduation, all the band members except one enrolled in the jazz program at New York's New School for Social Research. Kinchla attended N.Y.U. It was here that the band not only honed

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their performance skills but also learned how to book performances. Their talent was so transcendent that they soon had a schedule that was too packed to manage. As a result, all the band members left school with a new band name: Blues Traveler.

Career Launch

The following year, after several enormously successful live performances, the band released their first studio album, Blues Traveler, and their career as a band took off. The band has since released seven subsequent studio albums and three live cuts, and they are unique in that they encourage live tapings of their performances for dissemination to the general public.

This is how they became known as a legendary "jam" band in the tradition of such luminaries as the Grateful Dead and Led Zeppelin. Their concerts were and are true events, and every show features several extemporaneous tangents, mostly by Popper and his harmonica. Their style appeals to fans of

all ages, and their appeal is universal.

Trials and Tribulations

The band did have to overcome its share of problems, however. Many of their albums did not receive critical acclaim, and their reputation is mainly based on their live performances. They also tragically lost an original member of the band, Bobby Sheehan, to a drug overdose in New Orleans in 1999. He has since been replaced by Ben Wilson.

Popper also had health problems. He was morbidly obese, and weighed as much as 420 pounds at the turn of the century. In 2003, he had gastric bypass surgery, and has lost a tremendous amount of weight. Many believe that this surgery and subsequent lifestyle changes have saved his life given the energy put forth in every performance.

Overall, there is nothing like a Blues Traveler performance. They'll no doubt continue to light up venues all over the world, and 2006 is the next opportunity for their fans to take in a true musical experience.

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How Excited Would You Be To Have Rolling Stones Tickets?

By Jay Nault

If you happen to have heard of one of the biggest bands of all time, perhaps you'd be interested to know that Rolling Stones tickets are available once again for their latest tour. The Rolling Stones are more cultural icons at this point than a band, and their on-stage performances have been legendary for more than 40 years. How many rock and roll bands would still be hip enough to be asked to sing the national anthem at the Super Bowl? The answer is one. A look at their amazing time together may explain how they're so beloved today.

Beginnings

The band came together by chance, when friends Mick Jagger and Keith Richards began to spend time with Brian Jones, another aspiring musician. More than just about everything else, the three all liked to live it up, but they soon began to jam together.

They rehearsed for hours on end, and they soon began playing gigs in local clubs in London. It didn't take long for them to be noticed, and they were signed to a record contract with Decca Records. Their blues-driven style was an instant success. Their first six albums climbed into the top 5 in the UK, and they placed equally well on the US charts. A big-time band was born.

Worldwide Popularity

The Rolling Stones were seen in the United States as part of the "British Invasion" of the early 1960's along with bands like the Beatles. They also became known for their electrifying live performances, and began their still-going tradition of touring heavily, as the band enjoyed playing as much as the audiences loved getting their hands on Rolling Stones tickets.

Over time, the band released over 40 albums, and nearly every one of them went gold or platinum. In all, they have sold an astounding 240 million copies of their albums on several continents, and remain one of the most successful bands of all time.

Struggles

Like many bands of their day, the Rolling Stones also experienced their share of troubles. A source of many of these obstacles was their heavy drug use which enveloped every member of the band at one point to varying degrees.

The first to be stricken was Jones, who descended into a violent cycle of drug and alcohol abuse and was eventually replaced due to the fact that he was too unreliable. Ultimately, in 1969, Jones was found dead at the bottom of his pool surrounded by statues of Christopher Robin and Winnie the Pooh. It was a loss that hit the band hard, but they persevered and continued to record and tour.

Within a few years, Richards was also terribly addicted to drugs and alcohol, and the addiction he would ultimately fight for years took a heavy toll. He withdrew somewhat from the writing duties that he

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had shared with Jagger since they began working together, and he also had more than his share of legal troubles as a result of his addiction.

Recovery

Over time though, the members of the band ultimately put their lives together and continued to record and tour at a dizzying rate throughout the 1980's and 1990's. Their influences are numerous, and countless bands credit them with inventing the hard rock genre that's so popular today.

The Rolling Stones are one of the world's treasures, and even as they move into their 60's, Rolling Stones tickets are still a huge draw just about anywhere in the world.

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