

A Little About the Blues

Hubert Sumlin (by Reverend Keith A. Gordon, About.com Guide)

An unassuming musical genius and one of the most important and influential of the modern era Chicago blues guitarists, Hubert Sumlin earned his stellar instrumental reputation backing the larger-than-life blues legend Howlin' Wolf for better than two decades. Although he has pursued a successful, albeit understated solo career for almost three decades, Sumlin's enormous influence can be heard in the playing of blues and blues-rock guitarists like Eric Clapton, Otis Rush, Jimi Hendrix, and Michael Bloomfield, among many others.

Born in Mississippi, Sumlin lived there during his early years, moving to Arkansas at the age of eight. It was around this time that Sumlin began to teach himself to play guitar, starting with a single string that his brother had tacked to a wall, diddley-bow style. Later, his mother spent a week's pay to buy him an acoustic guitar, on which he began to learn the rudiments of the blues. At the age of ten, while watching Howlin' Wolf perform at a local juke-joint, Sumlin fell through the window onto the stage. Wolf allowed the youngster to remain and watch, beginning a life-long friendship.

Sumlin met young harp player James Cotton at school. Cotton was also learning his instrument, but had ambitions, so he and Sumlin put together a band with guitarist Pat Hare, who had played with Bobby "Blue" Bland. Adding a piano player and a drummer, they performed at area juke-joints for nickels and dimes. Sumlin's playing was influenced by records that he heard by Charley Patton, Son House, Robert Johnson, and others. Thanks to bluesman Howlin' Wolf, who had a 30-minute program on a local West Memphis, Arkansas radio station, Cotton and Sumlin were given 15 minutes to play their own music on the air.

With a higher profile due to their radio program, Cotton and Sumlin (with Hare) became a popular draw. When Howlin' Wolf relocated to Chicago, he soon asked Sumlin to join him, and the young guitarist moved north sometime around 1954. But after a couple of years playing in Chicago with Wolf, a stern bandleader, Sumlin jumped ship to Muddy Waters' band, which would pay him three times as much. Sumlin lasted about a year with Waters before the rigorous tour schedule changed his mind, and he rejoined Wolf's band, much to the big bluesman's bemusement.

Sumlin would remain with Howlin' Wolf some 20 years, until the blues legend's death in 1976. It's Sumlin's slashing guitar that you'll hear on classic Wolf songs like "Wang Dang Doodle," "Smokestack Lightning," and "Killing Floor" that were recorded during the 1950s and '60s. When an ill Wolf was sent to England to record The London Howlin' Wolf Sessions in 1971, the label wanted Sumlin to stay behind in favor of superstar collaborators like Eric Clapton. Sumlin would be included in the sessions at Clapton's insistence.

Sumlin recorded several solo albums while part of Wolf's band, usually for European labels. He ventured into the studio as early as 1964, recording with pianist Sunnyland Slim and bassist Willie Dixon while in Germany with Wolf as part of the American Folk Blues Festival. France's Black & Blue Records label released Sumlin's My Guitar & Me in 1975 and Groove in 1976, but the guitarist's solo career (continued on back)



Howard Luedtke Upcoming Schedule

- 6/25 Werner's Top Hat Bar, Nelson
(Howard & Pat O'Brien Acoustic)
- 7/2 Mallard Resort, Chippewa Falls
(Howard solo, 2-5pm)
- 7/3 Bullfrog's Eat My Fish Farm, Menomonie
(Howard solo, 1-4pm)
- 7/4 The Other Place, Lansing, IA
- 7/15 Amber Grill, Stevens Point
(Howard Solo, 1-4pm)
- 7/17 Poo's on the Pond
(Howard & Jim Schuh acoustic duo, 2pm)

Next Week (June 21) Left Wing Bourbon

The roots of Left Wing Bourbon go back further than you'd expect for a blues band from West-Central Wisconsin. Seasoned with years of hosting and playing at blues jams, serenading the night from some country porch, or moving the masses to swing their bodies at a summer festival, the collective members of Left Wing Bourbon mix soul, sweat, boogie and booze into a kinetic cocktail that leaves the foot tapping and the body wanting more.

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Tuesday Night Blues 2011

Owen Park, Eau Claire

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*August 3 will be held at Phoenix Park.

- May 31 Lucas K & the Cool Hand Saints**
facebook.com/lucasandthesaints
- June 7 The Jonestones**
AMBlues.com
- June 14 Howard 'Guitar' Luedtke & Blue Max**
HowardLuedtke.com
- June 21 Left Wing Bourbon**
LeftWingBourbon.yolasite.com
- June 28 Sparky & Friends**
Facebook.com/SparkyAndTheWipers
- July 5 Jayson Collins Group**
- July 12 Code Blue with Catya & Sue**
Catya.net
- July 19 The Steve Meyer Band**
MySpace.com/SteveMeyerAndTheBluesDogs
- July 26 Deep Water Reunion**
MySpace.com/DWReunion
- Aug 2 *Pete Neuman and the Real Deal**
PeteNeuman.com
- Aug 9 The Love Buzzards**
LoveBuzzards.com
- Aug 16 The Sue Orfield Band**
SueOrfield.com
- Aug 23 Ross William Perry**
http://www.rosswilliamperry.com/
- Aug 30 Mojo Lemon**
MojoLemon.com

in the U.S. began with the 1986 release of the critically-acclaimed Hubert Sumlin's Blues Party on the Blacktop Records label.

Sumlin would follow his U.S. debut with Heart & Soul in 1989 and Healing Feeling in 1990. In the years since, Sumlin has continued to record and tour, the guitarist especially remaining a large festival draw in Europe. Sumlin has won several coveted Blues Music Awards, including "Traditional Album of the Year" in 2006 for About Them Shoes, "Best Instrumentalist - Guitar" in 2007, and "Traditional Blues Artist of the Year" in 2008. Sumlin was inducted into The Blues Foundation's Hall of Fame in 2008.

Recommended Albums: Sumlin's I Know You, released in 2000, is widely considered as one of the guitarist's most inspired solo works while the 2005 album, About Them Shoes, ranks close behind. Of course, to hear Sumlin at his youthful peak, Howlin' Wolf's classic Moanin' In The Moonlight album features the guitarist on a wealth of the Chicago blues giant's biggest and baddest songs.



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Tuesday Night Bluesletter

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