

Howard 'Guitar' Luedtke and Blue Max has been playing the Blues since 1982. With 40+ years of playing guitar in the Midwest and on international stages, Luedtke is a Blues icon..

"I grew up with the Beatles, Hendrix, and the Stones," says Luedtke. "Then in '69 or '70, I was first exposed to the classic Blues and was fascinated by it." Howard played in a variety of Blues, rock and country bands in the Wisconsin area during the early seventies, including Black Cat Bone Band in 1974.

Rounding out the band are Howard's wife, **Deb Klossner**, on bass, and a talented selection of drummers, including "Wild" **Bill Weiss**. Originally from New Ulm, MN, Klossner had been performing since 1983. After four years of performing with several rock bands in Southern Minnesota, Klossner joined Blue Max in 1987.

When Luedtke was first learning guitar, he fell in love with the playing of Travis Wammack and two of his instrumentals: "Fire Fly" and "Scratchy." "I just loved the guitar picking on 'Fire Fly.'" Luedtke knew little of Wammack until Klossner discovered the artist had 13 CDs and a book in 2013, and offered all of them up to Luedtke for his birthday. Soon after, Luedtke contacted Wammack and arranged a meeting and recording session at the legendary Muscle Shoals studio. "We went down there, and I walked up to him for the first time and I said, 'Sir, I've been looking for you for 50 years,'" Luedtke said.

Over the years Howard 'Guitar' Luedtke & Blue Max have opened for the likes of Long John Baldrey, Sugar Blue, Lonnie Brooks, Clarence 'Gatemouth' Brown, Lil' Ed and the Blues Imperials, Debbie Davies, Tinsley Ellis, Jeff Healey, Jimmy Johnson, Kenny Neal, A.C. Reed, Eddie Shaw and the Wolfgang, James Solberg, Hubert Sumlin, Koko Taylor, George Thorogood and the Destroyers, Joe Louis Walker and Howard's guitar idol, Johnny Winter.

Luedtke's guitar playing and larger-than-life presence has earned him a place in the hearts of fans. He can be heard performing solo, as a duo with his wife Deb on bass, or with the Blue Max Band, performing an average of 150 nights per year.

Tuesday Night Blues 2022

All shows begin at 6:30

May 31: 7 Swings The Blues

June 7: Joyann Parker

June 14: Paul Tweed Band

June 21: Bridget Kelly Band

June 28: Tommy Bentz Band

July 5: Ross William Perry

July 12: Jay Stulo Band

July 19: Howard 'Guitar' Luedtke & Blue Max

July 26: Whyte Orfield Band

August 2: Josh Hoyer & Soul Colossal

August 9: Stefan Geisinger Band

August 16: Avey Grouws Band

August 23: Mark Cameron Band

August 30: Mojo Lemon

Find out more about the bands and listen to samples at **TuesdayNightBlues.com**

Tuesday Night Bluesletter

July 19, 2022 at Owen Park

Howard 'Guitar' Luedtke & Blue Max



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A Little About the Blues

Most of you have heard the song “**When the Levee Breaks**” as made famous by the British rock band Led Zeppelin on their 1971 album Led Zeppelin IV. But many don’t realize the significance of the event that inspired the song.

In 1927, the Mississippi River flooded over 27,000 square miles of land under as much as 30 feet of water, killing hundreds of people and destroying towns, farms and homes along the Mississippi River in Louisiana, Arkansas, Mississippi, and the Mississippi Delta. Considered the most destructive river flooding in U.S. history, “The Great Flood of 1927” inspired several blues songs of the era, including “Backwater Blues” by Bessie Smith in 1927, Lonnie Johnson’s “Broken Levee Blues” in 1928 and Charlie Patton’s 1929 song “High Water Everywhere.” It also inspired Mississippi natives Kansas Joe McCoy and Memphis Minnie to write and record “When the Levee Breaks” in 1929.

On Good Friday, April 15, 1927, 15 inches of rain fell in New Orleans in 18 hours. More than 4 feet of water covered parts of the city. A group of influential bankers in town met to discuss how to guarantee the safety of the city, as they had already learned of the massive scale of flooding upriver. On April 29th they arranged to set off about 30 tons of dynamite on the levee at Caernarvon, Louisiana, releasing 250,000 cubic feet per second of water. This was intended to prevent New Orleans from suffering serious damage, and it resulted in flooding much of the less densely populated St. Bernard Parish and all of Plaquemines Parish's east bank.

The words of “When the Levee Breaks” tell a clear story of misery, desperation, and sadness.

If it keeps on rainin', levee's goin' to break

If it keeps on rainin', levee's goin' to break

And the water gonna come in and we'll have no place to sta

African-American plantation workers were forced to work on the levee at gunpoint, piling sandbags to save the neighboring towns:

I worked on the levee, mama, both night and day

I worked on the levee, mama, both night and day

I worked so hard to keep the water away

After the levee breached, African Americans were not allowed to leave the area and were forced to work in the relief and cleanup effort. They were made to live in camps with limited access to supplies. Many of them left at the first chance since there was no work in the Delta after the destruction of the plantations; hence the lyrics: (continued)

Oh, mean old levee taught me to weep and moan

Yeah, the mean old levee taught me to weep and moan

Told me leave my baby and my happy home

By August 1927 the flood subsided. Hundreds of thousands of people had been made homeless and displaced; properties, livestock and crops were destroyed. African Americans, comprising 75% of the population in the Delta lowlands and supplying 95% of the agricultural labor force, were most affected by the flood. Historians estimate that of the 637,000 people forced to relocate by the flooding, 94% lived in Arkansas, Mississippi and Louisiana. 69% of the 325,146 who occupied the relief camps were African American. Over 13,000 evacuees near Greenville, Mississippi, were gathered from area farms and evacuated to the crest of the unbroken Greenville Levee where many were stranded for days without food or clean water. The resulting disruption to life contributed to the Great Migration of African Americans from the Southern United States to the industrial cities of the North and the Midwest that began with first World War in 1916 and ended around 1970.

These American migrants took their culture with them, everything from their food to their blues. The musical genre underwent a momentous transformation in Chicago starting in the 1940s. A popular destination for many Mississippi blues artists, Chicago offered a dynamic music scene, incredible musical talent, and trends toward bigger bands and amplification. When Muddy Waters brought the Delta blues to the city and plugged in his guitar, the new urban and energetic sound electrified the blues music scene, literally and figuratively, and helped launch an exciting and influential new subgenre known as Chicago, urban, or electric blues.

Sources:

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wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Mississippi_Flood_of_1927

Next Week (July 26, 2022)

Whyte-Orfield Band

Ellen Whyte and Sue Orfield met at the 1998 Kettle Full of Blues Festival in Washington, igniting a friendship that has been at the forefront of their musical endeavors. Despite the distance between their home states, the two powerhouse musicians have continued to perform together, touring the Midwest every summer since 2005. Whyte and Orfield are a perfect pairing of heart and on-stage fire!

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