

# Warm up to the blues at annual Anti-Freeze Festival



STEPHANIE A. CASOLA

Last January, the weather managed to put the freeze on the Detroit Blues Society's annual fund-raiser, the Anti-Freeze Blues Festival. On the second and final day of the festival, 14 inches of snow caused a cancellation. So this year, the Magic Bag and DBS have turned up the heat.

What was once referred to as the Deep Freeze Blues Festival brings together the best of national and local blues entertainers. The Magic Bag's Jeremy Haberman, DBS chairman R.J. Spangler and Howling Diablos' Jeff Grant worked as co-artistic directors in organizing this year's event.

## Singing the blues

"It's probably the single biggest fund-raising event for the Detroit Blues Society," said Spangler, who promised the shows will feature something for everyone. Headlining this year's festival are Roomful of Blues — a band that played jump-swing blues 20 years before the trend took hold — and Pinetop Perkins — a legendary blues pianist who helped establish Chess Records as "The Blues Label" in the 1950s.

Not convinced? Just ask local bluesman Al Hill, he'll tell you

the festival includes "some of the best blues bands in the area."

His own Ann Arbor-based band, Al Hill and the Love Butlers, is just one of the groups sure to stir up the Ferndale club with a mixture of blues, boogie and soul.

"I play a lot of New Orleans-style in that genre," added Hill. The Love Butlers have been together for six years. Hill, who sits Ray Charles among his musical influences, said the blues is simply what he does.

"It's what I've always done," Al Hill and the Love Butlers will make their first appearance at the festival. Spangler asked Hill to join. The two are bandmates with Johnnie Bassett and the Blues Insurgents.

Johnnie Bassett, who will also take the stage at the Magic Bag, is a 64-year-old bluesman who moved from Florida to Detroit in his youth. By age 18 he was playing with John Lee Hooker and can be heard playing on some of the first Motown recordings. Along with his band, Bassett has performed for audiences in 40 states, nine provinces and 15 European countries. "I'm very proud of work my with Johnnie," said Spangler.

## Yesterday and today

Bassett, along with Joe Weaver and Alberta Adams (another former Chess Recording artist) bring a bit of Detroit Blues history to the mix this year, while other performers like Robert

Noll's Blues Mission and Nikki James and The Flamethrowers represent a more contemporary style. And Hill, according to Spangler, is a heck of a blues singer and a great guy.

The Detroit Blues Society is a non-profit organization supporting blues music in the city and surrounding area. It was originally established as the Detroit Country and Classic Blues Society in March 1985. The society uses money raised at these events to fund a series of blues performances at Detroit's Scarab Club. The shows remain free to the public.

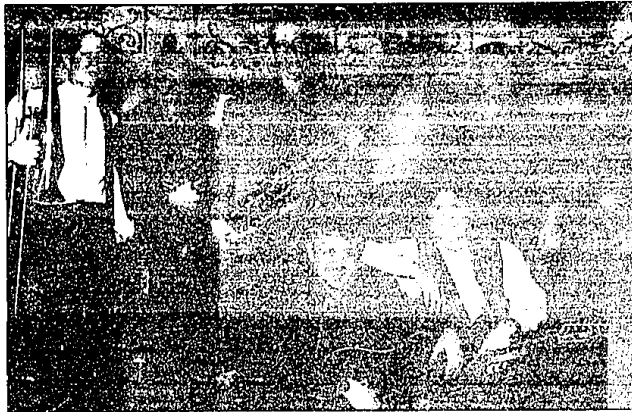
"It's the promotion of blues, keeping blues alive and keeping people aware of it," said Hill, who considers now to be a good time for blues in the Metro area. "I think there's a lot of variety in the Metro Detroit area. There's always been an element of the Detroit sound."

He describes that "Detroit sound" as having an intensity, being a bit over-the-top (in a good way) and having a heavy guitar-oriented sound. "I suppose you would say it's very guitar-oriented. People in this area, working class people, like to hear that grinding guitar."

Hill made a personal invitation: "Come on out for Antifreeze."

Spangler said: "It's a worthy cause. We need your support, blues lovers."

The Sixth Annual Anti-Freeze Blues Festival features Roomful



BLUES PHOTOGRAPH

**Jumpin' blues:** Headlining the first night of the Anti-Freeze Blues Festival is Roomful of Blues, (left to right front) Chris Vachon and Steve Kostakes, (left to right rear) John Wolf, Bob Enos, Rich Lataille, Mac Odom, Mike Warner and Greg Silva.

of Blues, Johnnie Bassett with Joe Weaver and Alberta Adams, Al Hill and The Love Butlers, and Nikki James and The Flamethrowers 8 p.m. Friday, Jan. 7, followed by performances from Pinetop Perkins, Robert Noll's Mission, Madcat and Kane

and The Hastings Street Grease Revue with Harmonica Shah. 8 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 8, all at the Magic Bag, 22920 Woodward Avenue, Ferndale. \$20 a night or \$35 for a 2-day pass. Call (248) 544-3030.

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## Get surfing: Where to look for local and national music on the Web

BY STEPHANIE ANGELYN CASOLA  
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Haven't you heard? There's a revolution on the horizon.

The Internet is stepping into the big shoes once filled by record company executives, and it's making some people very nervous. Anyone now can mass market new music with a computer and a dream — all right, you have to have a few connections and a good dose of know-how.

Here are a few sites for music maker and music lovers to check out:

## Detroitmusic.com

Detroit area artists are either listed on this site or don't know about it yet. More than 600 local bands and performers can be found at detroitmusic.com, but that's not all. Visit the musicboard to share thoughts on the current music scene in the metro area or get in touch with other musicians. Membership is free.

Musicians will find it useful to be listed and can submit MP3s of their work. There is a media list, which gives musicians a way to reach local journalists and let them know what's going on with

the music, when they are performing and how the public can get in on the scene. Look for all this and more at www.detroitmusic.com.

## MP3.com

With 16 music and spoken-word categories, MP3 offers a peek into the newest music, local and live events and Web casts. The site gives recommendations and a personalized site my.mp3.com. It was the most highly publicized place for artists to showcase their music this year. Local bands like the Howling Diablos released entire albums on MP3 only.

East Lansing's power pop celebrities Fat Amy know the power of MP3. Their song "Purple" from the album "Ice Cream Headache" was chosen to be the Number 19 song on the 1999 Alternative Top 20. Check it out at www.mp3.com

## Atom-Bomb.com

This is a newly established

site that caters to independent musicians, filmmakers and artists who seek greater exposure, without having to compromise their work. By downloading its submission form, the site makes it easy to get started.

Musicians can include songs, photographs, biographies, and even offer a live Web cast of a performance on the site, which will instantly increase exposure

and promotion worldwide. For more information, check the site at www.atom-bomb.com.

Other music sites that each appeared in 1999 include Riffage.com, Cosmic Music Network, Jimmy and Doug's Farm Club, Lycos' Listening Room program, RioPort and RollingStone.com. Plug in your head phones and get surfing.

## Stay tuned...

Hey, listen up. Planet 89.3 has done it again. The local radio station raised \$51,000 in donations Dec. 23 to benefit the Rainbow Connection, a non-profit organization that grants wishes to children with life-threatening illnesses.

Members of the "Johnny in the Morning" show got together for the second year to raise money. And they thought of a clever way to do it. From 8 a.m. to midnight, the crew played requested songs — and

I do mean anything — in exchange for donations.

There was no format, no DJ, no reason to the radio madness, but it worked. Even Detroit's Kid Rock called in to donate money, and challenge fans to request music by local artists. For each donation of that kind, he vowed to match the pledge.

While some kids will get their wishes granted — thanks in part to our Kid — The Offspring still claims "The Kids

Aren't Alright." And their not too concerned about it. Thanks to that hit, and songs like "Pretty Fly (For a White Guy)," and "Why Don't You Get a Job?" the band has received the honor of being named Modern Rock Artists of the Year at the 1999 Billboard Music Awards. Their multi-platinum album, "Americana," has become an international success. These kids sure sound like they're doing all right.

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