

## Buddy Guy performs at the Schermerhorn

by Cass Teague and Marti Ryan • July 3, 2015

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Buddy Guy is now the preeminent blues guitarist on the planet. The 78 year old performed an unforgettable two-hour set in Laura Turner Hall of the Schermerhorn Symphony Center on Monday, June 29 to put an explosive exclamation point to Nashville's Black Music Month. Guy is no stranger to the Music City, having recorded several of his most recent albums here, and also having been a featured performer on the Experience Hendrix Tour at TPAC a few years ago.

George "Buddy" Guy was born on July 30, 1936. He is an African American blues guitarist and singer, an exponent of Chicago blues. He has influenced many of the best (-known) guitarists of all time, including Jimi Hendrix, Eric Clapton, Jimmy Page, Jeff Beck, John Mayer and Stevie Ray Vaughan. In the 1960s, Guy played with Muddy Waters as a house guitarist at Chess Records and began a musical partnership with harmonica player Junior Wells.

Guy's early career was held back by both conservative business choices made by his record company (Chess Records) and "the scorn, diminishments and petty subterfuge from a few jealous rivals." Chess, Guy's record label from 1959 to 1968, refused to record Buddy Guy's novel style. While Buddy Guy's music is often labelled Chicago blues, his style is unique and separate. His music can vary from the most traditional,

deepest blues to a creative, unpredictable and radical gumbo of the blues, avant rock, soul and free jazz that morphs at each night's performance.

Buddy Guy has been called the bridge between the blues and rock and roll. Guy has opened for the Rolling Stones on numerous tours since the early 1970s. Guy's pathfinding guitar techniques also contributed greatly to rock and roll music. His guitar playing was loud and aggressive; used pioneering distortion and feedback techniques; employed longer solos; had shifts of volume and texture; and was driven by emotion and impulse.

In recognition of Guy's influence on Hendrix's career, the Hendrix family invited Buddy Guy to headline all-star casts at several Jimi Hendrix tribute concerts they organized in recent years, "calling on a legend to celebrate a legend." Jimi Hendrix himself once said that "Heaven is lying at Buddy Guy's feet while listening to him play guitar." Songs such as "Red House", "Voodoo Chile" and "Voodoo Child (Slight Return)" partly came from the sonic world that Buddy Guy helped to create.

According to the Fender Players' Club: "Almost ten years before Jimi Hendrix would electrify the rock world with his high-voltage voodoo blues, Buddy Guy was shocking juke joint patrons in Baton Rouge with his own brand of high-octane blues. Ironically, when Buddy's playing technique and flamboyant showmanship were later revealed to crossover audiences in the late Sixties, it was erroneously assumed that he was imitating Hendrix."

Guy was ranked 30th in Rolling Stone magazine's 100 Greatest Guitarists of All Time. His song "Stone Crazy" was ranked 78th in Rolling Stone's list of the 100 Greatest Guitar Songs of All Time. Clapton once described him as "the best guitar player alive". Guy's autobiography, *When I Left Home: My Story*, was published in 2012.

Local singer/songwriter Marti Ryan was the PRIDE's guest for the show. Here are her observations:

"It is always a pleasure to attend a performance at the Schermerhorn, and Monday's concert was a real treat. Settling into my seat, I realized I hadn't seen who the opening act was. My ticket was a last-minute invite, and I always jump at any chance to hear live music, but I only focused on Buddy Guy. When the lights dimmed, I had one of those "you know you're from Nashville when" moments. You know you're from Nashville when you attend a concert and someone you know is the opening act.

"It shouldn't have been a surprise. Tom Hambridge is known for his work with Buddy Guy – winning a Grammy for co-writing and producing Guy's "Living Proof" album, and performing with him multiple times. As a long-time fan of Nashville songwriter Jeffrey Steele, I had been treated to Hambridge's drum skills in Steele's band, but never heard Hambridge front a performance. Armed with only a snare drum and a keyboard player, Hambridge's smooth voice with a whisper of gravel around the edges set the mood for an evening of solid music.

"And solid it was! A four-piece band laid down this solidarity, and out walked Buddy Guy. The sounds that came out of that man's guitar ranged from screaming distortion to sultry murmurs. And when he stood in front of the mic, you knew it. His voice

commanded your attention even when he wasn't cursing – which was sprinkled throughout the evening and provided humor and punctuation when he wanted it. He proudly announced and even sung about his age – and then promptly proved he didn't act it when he walked off stage and through the audience, blinding everyone with close-up action of his fingers flying all over the place. He even went up in the balcony. Returning to the stage, Guy proceeded to play WITH his guitar, flipping it over backwards, scraping it against his shirt, and then making sounds by taking it off and throwing a towel on the guitar neck. Buddy Guy's humor and enthusiasm shone beyond his musical talents, and above everything, his devotion and love of music surrounded him, his band, and us lucky souls in the audience."