The Harmonica in Politics
Al Smith News
& Reviews, Reviews, Reviews!
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Harmonica Events
For the latest information on these events, see the Events page on the SPAH website: www.spah.org

SPAH 2011
Virginia Beach, VA Aug 9-13
www.spah.org
or contact Elizabeth Atkison at ema3395z@hotmail.com

Jon Gindicks’ Blues Harmonica Jam Camp
Clarksdale, MI Sept 27-Oct 1
www.bluesharmonicajamcamp.com
or call Jon at 310-457-8278
The SPAH Corporate Sponsorship Program benefits SPAH, its members and the sponsors. The sponsors listed below have demonstrated their dedication to the preservation and advancement of the harmonica by actively participating in SPAH conventions and other activities and by financially supporting the organization. They deserve the thanks, recognition and support of SPAH members.

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Hello fellow SPAH members. Time is now getting shorter for our next convention which will be in Virginia Beach, Virginia. It is shaping up nicely and the entertainment is, as usual, first class. This year, Marvin Monroe will conduct the open mic in the main gathering area. What a great spot this will be to show off your talents to other members. Dick Lawrence and his guys are going to take a much needed break from being the house band this year. What a wonderful job they have done. L.J. Atkison informs me that the vendors will all be in one room again this year and there will be some exciting displays. Seminars will abound this year also. Manfred Wewers has done a great job on them. The jazz jam will continue as usual on Thursday and Friday evenings under the capable guidance of Joe “SmoJoe” Leone. Joe will carry on the work of the great Randy Singer. Mary Ann Gormley will chair the Harmonicas & Health seminar this year. Hopefully, H&H founding member Terry Rand will find a bit of space in his business schedule to join us.

Our recent email blasts for a membership director and election candidates are paying off. I am pleased to announce that Dave Jones will begin learning the duties of membership director and we expect that he will be up and running by the 2012 convention. Please welcome Dave when you see him with Roger and Nancy at the SPAH registration desk. Dave brings a wealth of computer knowledge with great enthusiasm to SPAH and will usher in our new, online membership program while carrying on Roger Bale’s pro-activities. We also received a number of inquiries for the presidential election that will occur in April, 2012. There is still time to contact Winslow Yerxa (winslowyerxa@yahoo.com) to get on the ballot for this prestigious position. I know there are qualified people out there who could really help SPAH. Don’t be bashful. This year, J.P. Pagán and Bob Cohen will videotape presidential candidates along with their vice-presidential running mate, and place their interview on the web to allow our members to consider who it is they wish to vote for. Even further, if you have declared yourself as a candidate, you can meet and greet other members at the SPAH convention in person. Also, we still need a trainee for SPAH Treasurer...

Speaking of SPAH officers, I am sad to announce that Warren Bachman had to resign as publicity director because of personal endeavors and recent surgery on his back. We will miss Warren and if you wish to send a thank you note for all of his good work for SPAH and a get well message, you can send it to him at wlb@harptime.com.

Well, it’s back to the business of convention preparation. It’s been a long winter and the bad weather isn’t over yet. I am ready for some “Sun, Surf and SPAH” in Virginia Beach… See you there!!
What is SPAH?

SPAH is an organization whose objective is to preserve and respect the colorful past of the harmonica, while advancing its acceptance, in all its many forms, as a bona fide musical instrument. Among the membership are individuals and entire families, accomplished musicians as well as beginners, and people of all ages. Many members have played or do play the harmonica professionally. Their music styles, ranging through Country, Blues, Popular, and Classical, can be enjoyed via recordings or live performances.

The many benefits of SPAH will be available to you as a member. You are welcome to join SPAH regardless of playing ability or style. SPAH also welcomes members who just like to listen to harmonica music. You will be joining people from around the world to preserve and advance the harmonica. For more information on SPAH visit our website at www.spah.org.

Join SPAH - The Society for the Preservation and Advancement of the Harmonica

What SPAH does:
* Sponsors an annual International Harmonica Convention featuring classes, entertainment by professional harmonica players, and camaraderie.
* Distributes information on harmonicas and harmonica playing
* Recognizes and honors those who preserve and advance the harmonica
* Encourages the formation of local harmonica clubs
* Supports groups organizing harmonica conventions
* Maintains a website at www.spah.org
* Sponsors an online harmonica discussion group and an online harmonica club news service

Member benefits:
* Subscription to Harmonica Happenings, our quarterly magazine with harmonica news from around the world including seminar and convention listings, articles on playing techniques, repairs, harmonica clubs and famous harmonica players and groups, and information on recently released recordings and harmonica products.
* Discounts on SPAH’s annual International Harmonica Convention

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Enclose $45 for individual membership or $60 for Family. U.S. funds only, made payable to SPAH, Inc.
Mail to: Membership Director, SPAH, Inc., P.O. Box 865, Troy, MI 48099-0865
If you prefer, you can fill out the membership form and pay your membership fee using a credit card by logging onto the SPAH website: www.spah.org.
Summer’s finally here, both the season and of course the Harmonica Happenings issue. So time to pack your bags—don’t forget your harmonicas!—and hit the road. Maybe you’re headed up north, like me, to catch a cool lake breeze, or maybe you’re driving down to Florida or the Keys for some much needed post-winter-blahs blasts of sunshine. Wherever you’re going or wherever you are, I hope this letter finds you well, and I hope a harmonica’s not too far from your lips.

Speaking of road trips and that other thing I keep mentioning, I hope your room is booked for SPAH, ’cause that’s the summer trip you don’t wanna miss! We’ve worked our way from coast to coast in the past couple of years, so if Sacramento was on the other side of the country for you, Virginia Beach should be just down a major highway or two, so y’all come and sit a spell.

As we gear up for the convention, the staff at HH has been working feverishly to bring you the latest and greatest in harmonica happenings. But when we can’t get the latest, sometimes we just stick with the greatest.

Charles Spranklin dug up one of his inimitable stories from a prior issue, picking up not long after the Don Henry trio piece left off. This time, Charles has left Vaudeville behind and taken up being an animator instead. Hijinks surely ensue.

Manfred Wewers taps into his inner American and his Fourth of July spirit and looks at how the harmonica has been a part of the American presidency throughout the nation’s history. It’ll have you honking out “The Star Spangled Banner” (or maybe “Turkey in the Straw”) in no time flat.

Rob Fletcher brings us the latest about one of the greatest—all that’s new about musician, author and now filmmaker, Al Smith.

And lastly, we have a cornucopia of reviews. Some of these have been waiting awhile to be published, but they’re all new to you! Phil Lloyd does the heavy lifting with not one, not two, but three reviews, and Bill York Yurochko squeaks one in at the end. Many, if not all of the books and CDs mentioned in this issue should be available at the Virginia Beach convention, so be sure to look for them.

We also have some more information on the convention to refresh your memory. It’s been a pretty good year since the last SPAH; hope to see you all—some of you for the first time—at this next one!
By Charles Spranklin

NOTE: Again my creative juices have failed me for this summer's issue. So, I'm reaching into the long past, probably year 2001, for a repeat article that many of you have probably never read or have easily forgotten. It's another "Peril's of Spranklin" story that I hope you will enjoy. It's about a traumatic incident concerning me and my harmonica that I will never forget.

My first career move after the 1955 demise of The Don Henry Trio and my two-year stint in the US Army was motion picture animation. I was trained in the art by relocated Disney animators that had moved to the East Coast to work in the hot new field of TV commercials. I spent ten years on the rise in the industry and finally attained the title of Director of Animation. Hooray for me, I worked hard for that lofty position. Predictably, I never let my harmonica interfere with my new life in the arts. For countless years it lay dormant in a drawer just waiting for my rare monthly urges to test my musical chops on it. Just three or four minutes of aimless tooting were all I could handle.

My harmonica and I rusted with the times.

All went well for me in the animation field until, unexpectedly, something in me went sour. It took some heavy duty soul searching before I realized that drawing life into two-dimensional actors on paper with #2 pencils was not such a wonderful thing for me anymore. I realized that I wanted to work with real live skin and bones actors; I was meant to be a live action person. I guess that was deep-rooted in me from my Vaudeville years.

I dumped all of my pencils and papers and joined what was, at that time, the most prominent ad agency in the world, J. Walter Thompson, New York, to produce and direct live action TV commercials. Finally I was happy with my occupation. No animation and no room for harmonicas. As final as that sounds, although I wasn’t actively playing harmonicas, harmonicas were always sounding off in my soul.

Many times I was compelled, without revealing any personal reasons, to wedge harmonica tracks into commercials. In those days, harmonica music really wasn’t considered as gainful to represent hi-class products in advertising. However, once in awhile, I got my way.

I usually left the playing to my professional harmonica friends but now and then, I got in a few notes myself. Coming in contact again with great harmonica players, the result was that I got the urge to start playing again just for the enjoyment of it. The great Charley Leighton and other friends of the harmonica world were always available for jam sessions. In time, I got my chops somewhat up to speed again. Charley and I never played professionally anymore but that wasn’t the idea of it, we were just happy to be playing again.

Over the years I did stay in touch with a number of my former animation colleagues. One of those friends ran an animation production company. From time to time he would call on me to ghost animate for him. When I wasn’t busy, I would accept the chore just to keep my animating abilities oiled. As much as I hated doing it, it was a sin to waste a talent like that.

In the early 90s my producer friend came to me with a commercial project for a New York Health Club. At the time, the animation industry was in a serious slump. His business was hit hard and he was pressed to take on low budget regional commercials. If I accepted the project, I would have to do most of the labor myself. The budget had no room for the assistants that an animation process usually demands. The concept was reasonably simple and I wasn’t busy at that time and he needed the business, so, I took it on. If I had any idea of the hell I was about to face, I would have run for the hills and hidden in a damp cave.

The spot started out as a simple bit of animation showing the array of exercise and social options available. My designs and story concept were received well by the clients and we were granted approval to proceed with production. Suddenly, another animated commer-
tion demanded that the actual precisely timed music and structure must be completed first. I wondered if the Foreign Legion was still recruiting?

I told the truth when I said I was not a composer. For sure I had to enlist some help. Enter my second son Tommy. He dabbled a lot with rock music. He plays guitar and piano and has a good sense of rock structure. Is Cajun considered Rock? Of course not!

Before I called him in, I tried my hand at composing a melody. To my surprise, I was more capable than I thought. In fact, I was having a good time with it. It was only 30 seconds worth of music, but you’d be surprised at how much of an effort that can be, especially if you don’t know what you are doing.

I struggled with it for over a week till I got the tune to make sense. It was only the melody. I couldn’t write chords. That will be Tommy’s chore. With focused effort, he came up with a nice rhythm section background for my melody. He played all of the instruments for the recording. It even timed out to 30 seconds. Great, except, the more I heard it the more I didn’t like it. In my heart I knew that the melody was not right for the action in the spot. I did everything I could to shut out the truth. It was tough enough for me to come up with a decent melody to begin with; how could I abandon it at this late date? Did I think that I could actually dredge up another melody? No way!

I was using a chromatic for the recording. Suddenly it occurred to me. “Would it all work better if I used a diatonic harmonica?” Maybe! But I didn’t have much experience playing diatonics. Nonetheless, I gave it a try. Fortunately, my melody was about as easy to play as “Swanee River.” Wow, what a difference. The whole piece perked right up. I got right to work revising the whole recording. About two days later while I was working on the mix, that sinking feeling trickled back in. It’s better, but it...
still doesn’t work with the planned visuals. I shut down in utter despair. I had to come up with a new melody that would fit the action. I was dead in the water.

There were only three days left to deliver this nightmare. I burned away the first day brooding in desperation. I had very little experience handling failure. The second day I awoke in a deeper funk than the day before. There wasn’t the slightest glimmer of a solution. I shuffled slowly to the bathroom to brush my teeth.

There is no accounting for why weird things happen as they do. For some mysterious reason, looking at myself in the mirror and the rhythm of brushing my teeth jogged loose inspiration in me. The rhythm tracks were playing in my head without my melody. I had a strong feeling that there was something bubbling to the surface. I rinsed and ran to the studio. Halfway up the stairs a garbled melody started rolling out of me. I grabbed my harmonica and attempted to organize the ramble of thoughts onto paper. It was a completely different approach to the melody and rhythm that I had written originally but it still worked with the chord pattern that Tommy had written. Where was this coming from? It was like those dumb movies where a ghost is controlling your hand to write what it was thinking. Each new note I wrote was news to me.

Five minutes later I was staring at a whole new ball game. It played clearly in my head and sounded promising to me. Suddenly I was alive with excitement. I picked up my chromatic to try it out. Could this be my salvation from disaster? It could if I can play it. Good grief, “I can’t play it!”

I struggled with it for a half an hour trying to get it up to speed so I could phrase it the way I heard it in my head. Not once could I play it through. Good grief, I don’t have time for this. It’s now or never. This is what you get for not practicing.

Again I was sinking fast into defeat. I was just about to give up when I got an idea. Maybe if I cut the recording speed I could handle the tempo and play it through. Success would depend on what it would sound like played back at normal speed. The cut speed was perfect; I did it without a flub. OK, let’s speed it up and hear what it sounds like. It was terrible! It was almost harmonica Chipmunks. I quickly sank back into the despair pit. The next half-hour was spent searching my soul for another solution.

I called my producer friend and dumped the dilemma on him. Maybe he had a solution. He didn’t! I could feel him sinking into the funk with me. I hung up the phone and just stared at the recording machine. There was only one solution. Keep trying to play the damn thing. Is it really that difficult? Damn right it is if you haven’t practiced for years. Desperately, my hand
Working on chromatics can be challenging, especially when nails secure the reed plates to a wood comb. First timers should practice on older, worn out instruments. Pay attention to how the pieces fit together and keep an eye on small parts.

Unscrew and remove the cover plates and mouthpiece. Knock out the spring retaining pin with a pin punch and small hammer. Using small needle-nosed pliers, reach into the hole that houses the spring. Firmly grab the spring and pull it out of the comb. Use caution, as the spring may snap free of the pliers if not firmly grasped. Use protective eyewear if available. Remove the cover supports with pliers. Using a knife (or similar edged tool), pry the reed plates off the comb taking care not to lose the nails. When removing and reattaching the reed plates, it is important to perform the action on the second plate immediately after the first, because the wood comb can warp if only one plate is attached.

Any reed plate maintenance (tuning, valve or reed replacement, etc.) can be performed at this time. Replacement parts and answers to your questions are available through the Service Center at 804-591-3745 or harmonica@hohnerusa.com.

To reattach the reed plates, begin by filling each nail and cover support hole in the comb with a toothpick. Use slight pressure to get the toothpick as tight as possible and break off the excess. Use a small file to sand the broken end of the toothpick flush with the comb.

Align the reed plates with the comb insuring the reed plates are positioned properly - not upside down or reversed. Place the ridged edge of the reed plate over the mouthpiece end of the comb. The ridged edges must be flush with edge and facing away from the comb. Clamp both reed plates together to hold them in position. Test the reeds and valves to insure they can move freely.

Using slight pressure, press the nails partially into the comb through the existing holes, just enough to hold the nail in place. While supporting the bottom of the harmonica, drive the nails into place. Avoid shifting the reed plate position or damaging the reeds.

When both reed plates are secure, sand the mouthpiece and reed plate edge with 120 grit aluminum oxide sand paper until flush. If the reed plates are not flush, the mouthpiece will not sit properly and cause air leakage. When sanding is complete, vacuum out the dust.

Use a drill, if necessary, to clear any wood out of the spring retention pin hole. Reinsert the spring into the spring hole, with the longer leg toward the outside edge of the comb. Align the spring coil with the spring retention pin hole. Hammer the retention pin flush into the comb, making sure that the pin secures the spring by going through the coil.

Secure the cover supports using the same method as the reed plate nails. Reinstall the cover plates and mouthpiece.
reached out and hit the start button. The countdown
clicked off, 1, 2, 1, 2, 3, 4, I whipped the chromatic to
my mouth, and suddenly… I was playing it!

How could this be? A half-hour ago I couldn’t get
through it to save my life. I quickly tried it again. It
was even better the second time. In the years that have
passed, I have never been able to account for how that
was possible. What physical mechanism is there in us
that carries us past despair into seemingly impossible
success? Back then I hadn’t the time to dwell on that. I
had a recording to do. I got it in three takes. It worked.
It was perfect for the visuals. My relief was so great
I wanted to break into tears. No way man, I was so
pressed for time I couldn’t even spare one tear.

Next up, the mix. That is the process of balancing
and equalizing the individual music tracks into a final
blend. It was a fairly simple mix and went along with-
out a hitch. I had a clear blend that featured the lead
cromatic melody line. It wasn’t Cajun but it swung.

Suddenly on the next playback the whole track
turned weird. The lead line was not the same chromatic
sound as it was on the last playback. What the heck has
happened now? I played it a couple of more times but
couldn’t figure out how the sound changed so drasti-
cally. I soloed the lead track and it was fine. Playback
the mix and that strange sound was back. Suddenly I
realized what it was. I had never erased the slow down
track. I was hearing the Mickey Mouse track mixed
with the chromatic lead. Man, how dumb can you get?
On the other hand, it did have a funky sound. A few
more passes and I realized I had something unique here.
It was no longer just a harmonica track. I couldn’t help
giggling. Whoever my ghost was, he or she had a sense
of humor. It was a keeper.

As the mix proceeded I began hearing things that
I could add to it. I had abandoned the diatonic harp
with the last piece. Why? I grabbed the harp and went
into the booth, turned on the machine and adlibbed an
answer to a line. Right on man, the harp added some
juice. Then I realized that the release section was a little
naked. I couldn’t add anymore harmonica. It would
start sounding like an accordion. It occurred to me that
the whole melody was scat. Why not add a scat singer.
I looked around the studio. I didn’t see one scat singer.
Did I have a choice? All I did was double the melody.
I’m not a singer but it worked fine.

The final run-through was like a miracle of healing.
The piece was pure fun. The visuals in my head were
suddenly alive. All was well. I was lifted out of the path
of failure. All I had to do now was get it through my
producer friend and the clients. I slept well that night.

The next day the producer arrived early and very de-
jected. His face read like an end-of-the-world billboard.

I pressed the start button on the recorder. I had raised
the volume for maximum impact. In thirty seconds his
expression went from death’s door to jubilation. When
the track stopped, all he could only say was, “What’s
wrong with that?” I answered with pure relief and joy
in my heart. “Absolutely nothing!”

The clients loved the track and the animated visuals.
The characters that I designed became icons for their
print advertising. In short, the spot was an advertising
success.

I’ll never forget the fear and anguish I went through
in those weeks trying to create that jingle. Yes, it was
my fault for accepting such a ridiculous task. It’s the
price of ego. However, if I had known then what was to
be the fate of that jingle I would never have believed it.

The original commercial ran periodically for several
years. It was a kick for me considering that all 30 sec-
onds of it was all me. The campaign ran on TV and in
print for about 6 years; probably a record in advertis-
ing. Over the years I worked on about five more spots
that used my basic character designs and animation
against new story lines, all using the original track. In
short, my mysteriously divined music became the cli-
ent’s signature. That’s an advertiser’s dream.

At one of our Leighton’s Leightons Club Tuesday
jam sessions; there were about four Top-Gun harmoni-
ca players and me. I think it was Randy Weinstein who
complimented William Galison for the music on the
Health Club spots. William responded, “You know,
I’m getting compliments from a lot of people for that,
but it isn’t me.” As the group responded to him in sur-
prise, I sat there trying to rationalize that they were
talking about me. How can that be, I’m the only one in
the group that really isn’t capable of doing that. I’m not
a composer or a studied musician or even a great har-
monica player. My mouth answered before my brain
collectsed itself: “That’s me!” When the awkward shock
wore off their faces, the compliments of surprise flowed
out. William asked, “Was that you playing?” “Yeah,
me and my son on the background instruments,” I soft-
blushed out. More surprise compliments flowed. Ran-
dy, “Who was the singer?” “Me.” It was a grand slam.
What a great day it was for me. I will never forget it.

Whenever William and I were together at a gather-
ing; if someone complimented him for the Health Club
track, he would, with pleasure, give all of the credit to
me. The disastrous mess that my producer friend and I
got me into turned out to be a wondrous experience for
me. As the great song “That’s Life” puts it: “Just pick
yourself up and get back in the race!” Oh Yeah!
WHEN WE MADE THE FIRST HARMONICA WITH STAINLESS STEEL REEDS 5 YEARS AGO, WE THOUGHT OF ALL THE PLAYERS, WHO WERE TIRED OF BORING SOUNDS AND BROKEN REEDS. OUR NEW STEEL REEDS LAST UP TO 5 TIMES LONGER THAN CONVENTIONAL BRASS REEDS – OUR CLIENTS’ SATISFACTION LASTS EVEN MORE.

NOW WE AGAIN OFFER A NEW HARMONICA WHICH WILL GIVE YOU MUCH MORE MUSICAL POSSIBILITIES AND A LOT MORE FUN. AND THE BEST PART IS, THE INSTRUMENT COSTS LESS THAN YOU MIGHT THINK.
In Matthias Hohner’s 1860’s vision, the harmonica was destined to become the instrument for everyone. It would have no social, economic or cultural barriers. Thusly, it would not be out of place in becoming the instrument of choice for a number of American presidents.

Republican Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865) made an incredible journey from a log cabin to the White House (1861-1865). Legend has it that a harmonica accompanied him. Although unconfirmed by Abraham Lincoln’s own family, author Carl Sandburg had Lincoln waving a harmonica while saying “Douglas has a brass band with him in Peoria but this will do me,” during his 1856 Senate campaign against Stephan Douglas. It would not have been impossible for Lincoln to have a harmonica, which had reached the North American shores by that time. Furthermore, legend has it that Lincoln wrote a letter to the German Hohner Co., “telling how he enjoyed playing the harmonica to relax.” The Trumpet Call, a publication for harmonica collectors, provided a more direct quote from the same letter, “Two of my favorite things are sitting on my front porch smoking a pipe of sweet hemp, and playing my Hohner harmonica” (11.3: 1). Nice story; but, is it true? It would be nice to see this letter. The legend continues.

SPAH has also contributed to the Lincoln harmonica legend by reporting, in its “Newsey Notes”, that: 
Samantha Fudley Crick who at 133 is believed to be the oldest woman in the US said in an exclusive interview with Mike Royko that she once had ‘an intimate relationship’ with President Abraham Lincoln. ‘At first our relationship was just friendly, I used to play the harmonica for him. His wife hated harmonica music, but he enjoyed it. He said it relaxed him and helped him ponder great decisions. The day he wrote the Gettysburg Address, I played “Turkey in the Straw” and “Eatin’ Goober Peas” two of his favorites-over and over again.’” (Summer 1976: 3)

During Lincoln’s term in office, there was an explosion of music in the United States as well as a Civil War with both the North and South publishing large amounts of music to stir up war fervor. This was also the era of Stephen Collins Foster (1826-1864), who wrote nearly 200 songs, the last being “Beautiful Dreamer” which came out in 1864, before the end of the Civil War. During the four years of war, the soldier harmonica player or president could have played Foster’s “Old Folks at Home” (1852), “Camptown Races” (1850), “My Old Kentucky Home” (1852), “Jeanie with the Light Brown Hair” (1854), and “Oh,
Susanna” (1848). Lincoln, attending numerous social gatherings, formal concerts and state and military events, would have been surrounded by music. How would history have been written had he attended a concert instead of a play on April 14, 1865?

Next came the era of the Wild West, the cowboy and the harmonica. Republican Theodore Roosevelt (1858-1919), Rough Rider and explorer, would personify that image. As president (1901-1909), supporting and promoting the arts he stated, “Let the love for literature, painting, sculpture, architecture and, above all, music enter in your lives.” (M. Hohner, Harmonica 3-5). Today’s harmonica collectors eagerly search for that prized Our Teddy harmonica.

Democrat Woodrow Wilson (1856-1924) felt that “music now, more than ever, is a national need” (M. Hohner, Harmonica 3-5). The nation and the world were at war, and music and war are deeply linked. Wilson was a harmonica and violin player while in office (1913-1921). Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826) and John Tyler (1790-1862) were two other violin playing presidents.

Republican Warren G. Harding (1865-1923) played numerous instruments including alto horn, cornet and harmonica. It is said that he entertained visitors to the White House with music during his brief tenure (1921-1923).

Republican president and harmonica player, Calvin Coolidge (1872-1933), felt that “music is the art directly representative of democracy” (M. Hohner, Harmonica 9). According to The Globe and Mail, during his stay at the White House (1923-1929), Coolidge “used to pour out his soul on the harmonica” (1.31.1939: 11).

Coolidge was replaced by a non-harmonica player, Republican Herbert Hoover (1874-1964) and in October 1929, during his term (1929-1933), the stock market crashed making everyone in the United States very depressed. To be fair to Hoover though, when he was inaugurated on March 4, 1929, a harmonica band from Lake Worth, Florida, did take part in the ceremonies (Philadelphia Evening Bulletin, April 12, 1929). While at the White House to receive an award, thirteen year-old Bryan Untiedt of Colorado, played his harmonica. Among his audience were President and Mrs. Hoover (GM 5.2.1931: 4).

Republican Dwight D. Eisenhower (1890-1969) was “an avid harmonica fan and no mean performer on that instrument. The Toronto Star reported that in his courting days, Ike wooed Mamie with the mouth organ” (1.14.1961: 26). In 1959 Richard Bain, formerly with Borrah Minnevitch’s Harmonica Rascals, played his harmonica at President Eisenhower’s forty-second wedding anniversary (TS 9.2.1960: 19). Eisenhower’s White House days (1953-1961) followed a long and active military career. Soldiers of all ranks, throughout the years and many wars, have been known to play the harmonica.

Somewhere, former President Jimmy Carter, a Democrat, picked up the harmonica, perhaps encouraged by his harmonica-playing sister, Gloria Spann. Carter joined Willie Nelson on stage in Atlanta, Georgia, and played harmonica on “Georgia on my Mind” instead of singing it. Richard Eldredge reported in the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, “Carter’s a better harmonica player than (Bill) Clinton is a sax player” (6.29.2008). Did Carter play the harmonica during his stint in the White House (1977-1981)?

There was mention on Harp-l by Winslow Yerxa, that musician Kenny Loggins presented Bill Clinton, a Democrat, with a Joe Filisko harmonica in the mid 1990’s.

In March 1979, Gloria Spann, Carter’s sister, was arrested in Americus, Georgia, “because she wouldn’t stop playing her harmonica in a downtown diner.”
She donated a coffee maker to the local police department in memory of her first arrest according to the Toronto Star (3.4.1979: A22).

Republican Ronald Reagan (1911-2004) was an actor and a president (1981-1989) before he became a harmonica player. The early 1980’s saw John Lennon, who had played the harmonica, shot on December 8, 1980, and President Reagan wounded, during a failed assassination on March 30, 1981. Reagan started playing the harmonica while recovering from the shooting (Krampert 261). Apparently, he favored the “cowboy” songs; the cowboy, the harmonica and Hollywood are inseparable. The question of whether or not the harmonica delayed the onslaught of his Alzheimer's remains to be answered.

In 1984, Reagan sent a letter to SPAH, congratulating the organization for promoting the harmonica, which “has come to be a key part of the American musical scene in all its various forms” (Harmonica World Autumn 1984: 5). To commemorate both Reagan and Gorbachev for their efforts in promoting the end of the Cold War and the Berlin Wall, the Hohner Co. issued the Reagan and Gorbachev harmonica, a sign of the changing times. The harmonica is not apolitical.

Some of the other presidents, such as Hoover, although not harmonica players, invited harmonica players into the White House. Johnny Puleo, in his long career, performed for three American presidents, who all played the piano (GM 4.4.1983: 15). Franklin Roosevelt (1882-1945) and Harry Truman (1884-1972) were both Democrats while the piano and accordion playing Richard Nixon (1913-1994) was a Republican. On June 15, 2004, the Sgro Brothers performed at the White House for President George W. Bush, a non-player and another Republican. Most recently in 2009 Democrat Barack Obama was seen to be given a harmonica by Stevie Wonder, an ardent supporter. Will there be yet another harmonica player residing in the White House?

I end with a word of advice. If you are going to Washington to lobby for harmonica support, make sure that the person living in the White House is a harmonica player and a Republican. You will have better odds at success.

Harmonica Happenings
Confessions of Harmonica Addicts Goes Into Second Printing!

Al Smith’s labor of love, Confessions of Harmonica Addicts, recently sold out the first print run. A second printing has been ordered and the book is once again available. Confessions of Harmonica Addicts spins compelling tales of the Golden Era of harmonica ensembles from the 1930s to today. It traces the history of the most famous harmonica groups of all time and goes behind the scenes to reveal what really happened, from the Harmonicats’ smash success “Peg O’ My Heart,” to how the Harmonica Rascals’ Borrah Minievitch and Johnny Puleo met and many, many more.

Deeply researched, exhaustively inclusive, the first half of the book explores the stories of the great groups and the amazing players in them. Here’s a short list of groups and players Confessions investigates: Cappy Barra, Philharmonica, Harlequins, Harmonica Rascals, Johnny Puleo’s Harmonica Gang, Morton Fraser Gang, David Macklin, Eddy Manson, Stan Harper, Jerry Murad, Al Fiore, Don Les, Dick Gardner, Danny Wilson, Bob Bauer, George Miklas, Al Data, the Mass Trio, Bud Boblink, Cappy Lafell, Pete Pedersen, Hugh McCaskey, Stagg McMann, Sgro Brothers, Cham-Ber Huang, Chuck Fendall, Frank Warner, Ray Tankersley, and on and on.

The second half of the book recounts stories from Al Smith’s amazing life in harmonica, the groups he was in and the virtuosos and characters he played with and met along the way, from playing in the Harmonica Rascals, to his long association with the genius David Doucette to forming the Harmonica Hotshots with his wife Judy. Al is a powerful model for applying persistence and showing grit.
And story after story in the book about his life will have you either in stitches (Al is a funny guy) or flabbergasted as well as he recounts what he accomplished and what it took to make a life in harmonica happen. In a phone interview Al said, “I started playing harmonica when I was twelve and I’ve been playing professionally for over 60 years. My whole life has been devoted to the harmonica.”

Al is like a bulldog. Once he decides to do something, he doesn’t let go, doesn’t stop until it’s done. Confessions is a great example. “I spent 30 years putting it together,” Al told me. Thirty years! When you get your new copy of the book you’ll see those 30 years created a very impressive body of work. Now, want to be more impressed? Guess how Al laid it out. No, he didn’t hire a graphic designer. He did it in Microsoft Word! 516 pages, 328 photos (with captions)...all in Microsoft Word. I find myself both flabbergasted and bemused by this. Which if you know Al is a pretty common state to be in when you hear about what he’s been up to lately.

Of course, I’m a little biased. Al is one of my personal heroes and one of the most inspirational characters I’ve been lucky enough to meet, talk to and hear and see play. Like Bud Boblink, Al and Judy Smith embody the qualities that I really admire - virtuosity, humor, showmanship, energy, and big-heartedness.

I’ve seen hundreds of amazing live performances in my life: Peter Gabriel, U2, the Who, Junior Wells, Toots, even Miles Davis, but the top of my favorite performers list is occupied by Al and Judy, the Harmonica Hotshots. And the pinnacle of their show for me is their Star Wars melody...and I’m not even a Star Wars fan. It’s a deep disappointment to me they weren’t booked for this year’s SPAH convention but I’m still going...because I’ll at least get to hang out with them there. I love them so much, my girlfriend Laura hired them to play at my 40th birthday party as a surprise present for me. It’s the best present I’ve ever received.

Confessions of Harmonica Addicts is one of those books that I refer to again, and could easily re-read immediately after finishing it. Every time I pick it up I learn something new or remember something I’ve forgotten. As a person starting out in a harmonica trio, it’s amazing to have this wealth of information to refer to, understand the history of the genre and inspire me. I feel like I missed out on meeting many of the heroes of the harmonica but the book brings them to life for me.

The flip side of that sad fact contains one of the beauties of playing harmonica—in this field you actually get to meet your heroes in person. So the book is handy to collect autographs by the greats that we meet at SPAH and the Garden State Harmonica Festival. I felt like a kid that had just met Mickey Mantle when Bud Boblink signed his photo in my copy of Confessions of Harmonica Addicts.

Another nice feature of the book is that it is interesting for people even if they don’t play harmonica. Al likes to say, “This book is not a how to—it tells how it was.” I leave my copy out and when friends come over they invariably pick it up and get interested. A recent comment is a case in point: “Even though I don’t play harmonica, every time I pick it up I get sucked in. It’s fun to read.”

Read what some other enthusiastic readers are saying about Confessions of Harmonica Addicts:

“...I started reading at page one and it became like a who-done-it page-turner. I just couldn’t put it down. You are a marvelous writer with a really delightfully understated sense of humor.”  
-Canadian harmonica sensation Ingo Andersen

“Fantastic book. Next to satisfying your needs by listening to harmonica music, this book satisfies with great stories, told by a great storyteller. If you’re a harmonica addict too, you shouldn’t miss this book!”  
-Rob Janssen, Fata Morgana

“I really believe that your book is a one of a kind—a giant hall of fame to the harmonica and its history. Many names that I have vaguely heard of came to life, and reading their stories made them familiar. I found myself going to my computer every few pages and trying to find the player or group I have just read about on YouTube. I salute you for the time, patience and energy you have put into it.”  
-Dror Adler, the Adler Trio

“Reading the book makes me feel proud to be part of the worldwide harmonica community.”

“Should be required reading for every harmonica player.”

“It’s great to learn more about many harmonica players I only know by name and by recordings, and about many other players that I have met in person.”

“Its informative, well-written and the production values are equally impressive.”

“...is the most relaxing experience to read.”

“...most interesting, informative and every page is a treasure.”

“...it’s fun to put stories to faces.”

“...this is not only your memoir but the memoirs of the people you had the foresight to interview via tape, letter or in person.”

“If as time passes, your book is

Harmonica Happenings
not considered the definitive book on harmonica bands, it will be high on the list of resource material.”

The first printing of Confessions of Harmonica Addicts sold out fast. There may not be a third printing so order today. Send check or money order in U.S. dollars for $30 plus $5 for shipping ($35 total). Make it out to Al Smith and send it to him at 2398 Southern Road, Richfield, OH 44286.

If you want to use credit card you can also find the book (and other CDs that Al appears on) on Danny G’s wonderful harmonica store and site www.newharmonica.com. Simply type the word ‘addicts’ into the search feature on the upper right hand side and it’ll come right up.

Al is generous with sharing knowledge, music, videos—in fact everything he has, and Confessions of Harmonica Addicts is no exception. A true labor of love, Confessions is an act of generosity towards harmonica groups, their history and the harmonica loving public. I invite you to receive that generosity and order a copy of Confessions today. And if you have a copy already, be generous and order one for someone you love!

Videos of The Harmonica Rascals and Harmonica Hotshots can now be found on YouTube.com

Here are two other projects that Al has generously given to us.

Al recently launched a YouTube channel, AandJSmith (as in Al and Judy Smith). There are now 122 videos on his channel! You’ll find great performances by the Harmonica Hotshots, Sharp Harp Quintet, Harmonica Junction, Harmonica Express, Harmoni-Hats and more. There’s a wealth of playing stored there, and also includes most of the Hotshots’ crowd favorites, such as the Star Wars medley and the Musical Gloves number.

How to find it: Go to www.youtube.com/AandJSmith

Also online, The Harmonica Rascals movie compiles footage of live performances of the Rascals from 1954 and features Johnny Puleo in a 15-minute tour-de-force. The video is utterly amazing. Not only for the performance itself, which is jaw dropping and hilarious (my favorite moment is when Johnny Puleo conducts the band) but for the clearly unbelievable amount of time Al spent reconstructing and editing footage and adding music and sound effects in. I can only imagine the amount of time and work Al ‘the bulldog’ put into this. He did us a great service with this. Thank you Al!

How to find it: Google (or search YouTube) “Harmonica Rascals 1954 movie.”

“Buddy Greene is an American musical treasure. On this latest release, his head shaking, jaw-dropping virtuosity amazes as always, but Buddy’s innate musicality insures that it is used, as it should be, in the service of the music. Wonderful arrangements, superb support from the other musicians and a somewhat eclectic selection of songs makes this CD a winner in every respect.”

-Jerry Portnoy

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-I am so proud to be included on the new CD by Buddy Greene. It is a great combination of entertainment and musicianship. When it comes to harmonica, I am one of Buddy's biggest fans.”

-Charlie McCoy

“Buddy makes the songs on Harmonica Anthology come alive with his endlessly tasteful melodic phrases and rock solid groove. I recommend this new CD to all fans of the harmonica and to anyone who loves Buddy.”

-Joe Filisko
Harmonica player Pierre Lacocque is back leading his band Mississippi Heat through another hard-driving mellow blues CD, *Let's Live It Up!*

He formed the first aggregation of the blues band in 1991 that has always featured a strong blues shouter and his singular crossharp talents and hasn’t missed a beat since. Though he fronts the band, his on stage role is confined to his deft harp playing in support of the band and a female singer. He wrote eleven of the fourteen songs this album.

From the first track to the last it’s clear that there is nothing really sad about the blues; it’s more party music than sadly departed music. Although, the basic form is the I, IV and V chords, the variations on the form is what keep the music fresh.

A listen to any of the tracks demonstrates Pierre commitment to the essence of classic Chicago blues that eschews the usual harmonica clichés, as he continues in the tradition of the blues but does not play the predictable harmonica riffs that’ve been overdone. A few of them suggest blues standards, others just allude to them in form.

So Pierre comes up with a batch of originals designed to work in the tradition of classic blues without being overly familiar. It’s the same technique used in his harp performance. He is firmly locked into the cross harp tradition, but Pierre does not sound like an imitation of any of the harmonica players he has he followed and learned from. Instead the horn lines on the harp meld with each song rather than a stock arrangement of the same blues variations standard turnarounds for each tune.

Pierre uses diatonic harps in the keys of Bb, C, D, F, A, Dm and Gm as well as chromatics in the keys of C and Bb, as he outlines in the key chart for the album he provided to the author.

*Let's Live It Up* is Mississippi Heat’s third recording for Delmark Records. (The group has released nine CDs since 1992.) Special guest John Primer sings on three tracks. Blues guitarist Carl Weathersby and keyboardist Chris “Ham Bone” Cameron perform throughout the album. Inetta Visor sings on nine tunes, while singer Rhonda Preston does one song. Also on the album are the Chicago Horns, percussionist Ruben Alvarez, and background vocalists.

*Mississippi Heat* plays uptown blues, more on the order of B.B. King than Muddy Waters -- with a horn section, backup singers and the sidemen each taking a chorus from time to time or trading riffs with Pierre’s harmonica. The focus is on the band, not the harmonica player writing most of the songs and fronting the band because Pierre is not the lead singer. Keep in mind, that short sound bites of the tunes are likely available on the web. Also, check out iTunes for individual track downloads.

“*Let’s Live It Up*” is a fast tempo rocker, an urgent call for a party, with a staccato harp riff punctuating each phrase. The song suggests an influence of the classic “Baby, Please Don’t Go.” A searing guitar opens the tune joined by the B3. “*Let’s Live It Up!*” might be subtitled the “Empty Nest Blues -- Let’s..."
Party.” As Pierre’s lyric says, “The kids are gone all weekend long, no one’s home, baby, so we can turn it on. The rent is paid up, the shopping is done we got money left, baby, let’s go have some fun.” It’s time to dance the night away. The song features horn hits punctuating the phrases before Pierre takes a chorus on the harp.

“Steadfast, Loyal and True” has John Primer vocals. The guitar-driven stop-time tune with piano support also features an extended harp break by Pierre. “Like the good man from Galilee I’m steadfast for your love.”

“Jumpin’ in Chi-Town” is an uptempo jump blues, with Chicago Horns with Pierre alternating between horn figures and harp riffs on his harmonica, joined in by the Chicago Horns. “Let’s jump to the beat!”

“She Died from a Broken Heart” (written by Inetta Visor and Christopher Cameron) opens with an interplay between Pierre and the Chicago Horns as this dour lyric unfolds.

“Betty Sue” is a driving jump blues with John Primer vocals. This tune features choruses on piano and harp with Pierre exploiting the top octave beyond the runs of Jimmy Reed.

“Another Sleepless Night” provides some strong support from the Chicago Horns. Seems the woman in question is spending a restless night tossing and turning while her man sleeps, breathing easy, totally unaware of the turmoil he has caused in her life.

“Peace Train” starts out as a slow mournful gospel song before it ramps up into a riff that recalls “I’ll Be Glad When You’re Dead, You Rascal, You.” Which provides nice irony as the lyrics continue in the gospel spirit.

“Been Good to You” kicks off with some biting lead guitar with heavy B3 support, including some unison riffs. It’s that old refrain, I’ve been good to you but I sure get the feeling that you’re somebody else’s back door man. Even the backup singers sense it.

“I Want to Know” (written by Badger-DeSanto-Geddins has a nice Latin beat and a driving harp. The message: “I really love you so, so why did you go? I want to know.”

“Enlighten Me” opens with a harp break punctuated with descending warbles. Some of the harp figures recall those pioneered by John Lee “Sonny Boy” Williamson.

“Daggers & Spears” is an easy blues with a nice blues guitar solo. Rhonda Preston sings, “The devil must be having a field day with me and my heart is bleeding from daggers and spears” because she just lost her job.

“Don’t Cry for Me” is an uptempo blues with lyrics that belie the peppy tune as Pierre takes up the harp with the Chicago Horns providing support and horn accents.

“I Got Some News Today” (written by John Primer) starts off with the lyric, “Hello Baby, I just got the news today” and the way the song shuffles along recalls Baby Boy Warren’s “Hello Stranger (Mattie Mae),” which features the harp of Sonny Boy Williamson II.

“Until We Meet Again” sounds like an end-of-evening song, not just the last track on the album. “Bye bye everybody, good bye and good night, bye bye everybody, good bye and good night without you here the sun wouldn’t shine so bright.

As an extra added attraction, Peter “Madcat” Ruth provided liner notes to the album. It’s always valuable to have another veteran harpist proving insightful observations.

Mississippi Heat’s Delmark Records CD Let’s Live It Up! is available at the Heat’s website: www.mississippihat.net Amazon.com, Best Buy, FYE.

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Key chart courtesy of Pierre Lacocque

2. Band key = E; second position [A harp].
3. Band key = C; second position [F harp] Exit notes: I use a natural minor harp in Cm [cross position] to do the chromatic notes down and end the song.
4. Band key = Dm; natural minor harp [Dm], second position.
5. Band key = E; second position [A harp].
7. Band key = G; cross harp [C harp].
9. Band key = G; cross harp [C harp].
10. Band key = E; second position [A harp].
11. Band key = C; cross harp [F harp], Bb chromatic, third position for ending of song.
12. Band key = F; cross harp [Bb harp].
13. Band key = G; cross harp [C harp].
14. Band key = F; cross harp [Bb harp].
For those players looking for a way to get off a plateau in their playing and looking for some new ideas, there is no better place than David Barrett’s latest book and CD project from the Harmonica Masterclass.

Mel Bay has just released David Barrett’s Harmonica Masterclass Blues Harmonica Jam Tracks & Soloing Concepts #3.

He not only demonstrates each of the patterns but he provides examples of how to build a song with his guest artists demonstrating their styles. He also includes 7 jam tracks and a key chart for harps and positions used.

One of the major problems of the average blues player is finding someone to explain how to play their interesting riffs.

Many instant blues books are available, but they’re for beginners. Anyone who is working at an intermediate level usually has a difficult search because outside of the David Barrett Harmonica Masterclass, there is not much material out there.

As David points out in his introduction, players really need to have mastered the techniques covered in the Series 1 and Series 2 books in Harmonica Masterclass series because the techniques covered in Blues Jam Tracks and Soloing #3 are classified as intermediate and advanced. Basically, this means a good knowledge of bending and tongue-blocking.

The books opens with Section 1 outlining the harmonica tablature and rhythm and the notation specific to harmonica, particularly those techniques that David covers in his series. The book assumes previous knowledge of how to execute the techniques. These techniques are not defined in this book, they are explained in earlier books.

For David, a number indicating the hole – 6 -- means draw because draw notes are considered “normal” notes in the blues, which is mostly cross harp. Blow notes are indicated with a + sign, so 4+ would be 4 blow. Others symbols are used for two notes (double stop), half-step bend, whole step bend, minor third bend, dip, cut, two-hole shake, slap, pull, octave, flutter and glissando.

Instructional CD Review

Jam Tracks List:
1. “Serious Fun”
2. “Lick Train”
3. “Pretty Girls Everywhere”
4. “Chicago Style”
5. “Don’t Fight It”
6. “A Real Romance”
7. “Feelin’ Good”
Section 2 deals with heads, hooks and bridges. The head is the main theme of the composition, twelve bars or one time through the form. The hook is up to four bars, usually two bars, a catchy phrase that is repeated. The bridge connects two sections.

Section 3 covers non-12 bar blues chord changes. This section is where things get a bit more complicated than the standard I IV V chord forms. These would include the forms: I6, VI7b9, ii7, V7b9, iii7, VI13, ii7 V9 and I19. The chords are spelled out and shown in notation.

Section 4 has some song construction examples, and features special guests Gary Smith, R.J Mischo, Gary Primich, Andy Just, Tom Ball, Joe Filisko, Mitch Kasmar and Mark Hummel with some examples.

Section 5 deals with the student writing ten licks and applying them to the chorus forms. Then the student selects the catchiest lick and plays it along with the appropriate jam track.

Section 6 is composed of jam tracks from the album Serious Fun by David Barrett and John Garcia. For those who want to get further into this exercise, they can purchase the CD or a transcription of the music on the CD. This CD as well as a full transcription set for this album are available at the harmonicamasterclass.com website.

In addition to the book considered in this review, Solo & Jam 3 book/CD, Blues Harmonica Jam Tracks & Soloing Concepts #1 and Blues Harmonica Jam Tracks & Soloing Concepts #2 are available from harmonicamasterclass.com or melbay.com (1-800-8-MELBAY).

Key chart for the jam tracks

1. “Serious Fun” – Shuffle in the key of E, A harmonica in second position
2. “Lick Train” – Shuffle in the key of E, A harmonica in second position
3. “Pretty Girls Everywhere” -- Rhumba, Key of B-flat, A-flat harmonica in third position
4. “Chicago Style” -- Shuffle, Key of A, D harmonica in second position
5. “Don’t Fight It” -- Swing, Key of B-flat, A-flat harmonica in third position
6. “A Real Romance” -- Swing, Key of A, D harmonica in second position
7. “Feelin’ Good” -- Slow Blues (Guitar Only), Key E, A harmonica in second position

Harmonica Happenings

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A couple of years ago, a group of harmonica players got together to cover the blues harmonica tradition from before World War II up until the modern days.

A double CD recording was the result of these performances and offers in one neat package the opportunity to explore the range of blues harmonica without shuffling CDs or iPod downloads that would certainly cost more than this set.

Each song track is preceded by an introductory track, so the listener can learn the background of the song the first time through the CD and just play the song tracks (by judicious skipping) on subsequent listenings.

For details on the harps used and positions used, check out the accompanying key chart. Since this is a history, the CDs are titled Chapter 1 and Chapter 2.

Many people know Joe Filisko as simply one of the best harp customizers in the country. But he is equally skilled as an expert performer of the early blues harmonica. Joe Filisko starts the evening performing for and educating the audience about Pre-War and Country Blues Harmonica covering the period from 1920 to 1950. These are the unplugged or unamplified years, the time before the mic-cupping technique made famous by Little Walter.

Joe Filisko starts the first CD with a steam engine train imitation – a de-rigueur performance of all early harmonica players. Since steam locomotives were so widespread, everyone hearing the harmonica would recognize that it was imitating steam power, complete with train whistle. This is followed by a “Lost John” and “Fox Chase” (with hounds barking) medley. Then he does a Sonny Terry medley. Next is Blues Birdhead’s “Mean Low Blues” and “Stove Pipe Blues” by Daddy Stovepipe. Then there is “Sugar Mama” by John Lee Williamson, the original Sonny Boy Williamson. Then “Bye Bye Bird” by Rice Miller (aka Sonny Boy II). “Blue Light” by Little Walter finishes the set by Joe.

David Barrett next performs the Post-War era of blues harmonica from 1950 o 1970). His first song is “Evan’s Shuffle” by Little Walter. This is followed by Little Walter’s greatest hit, “Juke,” which is based on the Les Brown theme “Leap Frog.” The next tune is “Roller Coaster,” also by Little Walter. This is followed by “Just Whaling” (Louis Myers). Next is Big
Walter Horton’s version of Ivy Joe Hunter’s hit, “I Almost Lost My Mind,” which Horton calls “Easy.” Then there is “Walter’s Boogie” from Little Walter. George Harmonica Smith’s “Sharp Harp” follows. Then is “Steady” from Jerry McCain and “Chitlin Con Carne” from Junior Wells and “Juicy Harmonica” from George Harmonica Smith. David finishes his set with his own “Matchstick.”

Paul Butterfield expert Kinya Pollard performs a tribute to Paul Butterfield called “Everything’s Gonna Be Alright.” Then of course, “Work Song.”

Dennis Gruenling finishes the evening, symbolizing the future of blues harmonica with his renditions of “Flying Home,” “Bluesmith” (a tribute to George Harmonica Smith), and “Harmonica Party.”

Key chart courtesy of Harmonica Masterclass Workshop

Joe Filisko
1. “Train Imitation” Medley [Key of F, Low-F harp in 1st position]
2. “1st position Medley” [Key of G, G harp in 2nd position]
3. “Lost John”/”Fox Chase” Medley [Key of D, G harp in 2nd position]
4. “Sonny Terry Medley” [Key of E, A harp in 2nd position]
5. “Mean Low Blues” (Blues Birdhead) [Key of G, G harp in 1st position]
6. “Stove Pipe Blues” (Daddy Stovepipe) [Key of C, C harp in 1st Po/Key of F, C harp in 12th position]
7. “Sugar Mama Blues” (John Lee Williamson) [Key of F, B-flat harp in 2nd position]
8. “Bye Bye Bird” (Rice Miller) [Key of G, Low C harp in 2nd position]
9. “Blue Light” (Little Walter, by Joe Filisko) [Key of D, C Chromatic in 3rd position/G harp in 2nd position]

David Barrett
1. “Evan’s Shuffle” (Little Walter) [Key of E, A harp in 2nd position]
2. “Juke” (Little Walter) [Key of E, A harp in 2nd position]
3. “Roller Coaster” (Little Walter) [Key of E, A harp in 2nd position]
4. “Just Whaling” (Louis Myers) [Key of F, B-flat harp in 2nd position]
5. “Easy” (Big Walter Horton) [Key of F, B-flat harp in 2nd position]
6. “Walter’s Boogie” (Little Walter) [Key of E, A harp in 2nd position]
7. “Sharp Harp” (George Harmonica Smith) [Key of F, B-flat harp in 2nd position]
8. “Steady” (Jerry McCain) [Key of F, B-flat harp in 2nd position]
9. “Chitlin Con Carne” (Junior Wells) [Key of A, D harp in 2nd position]
10. “Juicy Harmonica” (George Harmonica Smith) [Key of F, B-flat harp in 2nd position]
11. “Matchstick” (David Barrett) [Key of E, A harp in 2nd Po]

Kinya Pollard
1. “Everything’s Gonna Be Alright” [Key of F, B-flat harp in 2nd position]
2. “Work Song” [Key of Fm, B-flat harp in 2nd position]

Dennis Gruenling
1. “Flying Home” [Key of E-flat, A-flat harp in 2nd position]
2. “Bluesmith” (Tribute to George Harmonica Smith) [Key of D, C Chromatic in 3rd position/G harp in 2nd position]
3. “House Party” [Key of C, Low-F harp in 2nd position/B-flat harp in 3rd position]

Special Guests: Michael Peloquin (Sax), John Garcia (Guitar and Vocals) and Rusty Zinn (Guitar).

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- Bookkeeping
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- Interact with CPA
- Assist CPA with tax return preparation
- Assist with membership
- Handle SPAH store
- Computer literacy
- Familiar with QuickBooks
- Attend conventions
- Attend board meeting conf calls

It’s also time to elect a new SPAH president and vice president (see the President’s Letter in this issue). At the 2011 SPAH Convention, candidates for SPAH president and their vice presidential running mates will present their campaign platforms to SPAH members. Elections will take place in April 2012, and the new president and vice president will take office at the end of the 2012 SPAH convention. If you’re interested in running or wish to suggest a candidate, please contact Election Committee Chair Winslow Yerxa at winslowyerxa@yahoo.com.
Photos by: Grant Kessler, Jerry Deall, Ernie Roberts, Jerry Devillier,
SPAH 2010
HIGHLIGHTS

August 9-13

Holiday Inn Virginia Beach-Norfolk Hotel and Conference Center
757.499.4400 or 800.567.3856
www.hivabechnorfolk.com

Special rate for SPAH attendees if you book by July 24! Use Group Code: SPA

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Including performances by:</th>
<th>And Seminars like:</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td><em>Buddy Greene</em>: soulful harmonica with a revival meeting feel</td>
<td><em>Brandon Bailey</em>: <em>Looping and Harpboxing—</em> a Modern Approach to Rhythm and Groove Harmonica</td>
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<tr>
<td>*International classical virtuoso Robert Bonfiglio</td>
<td><em>Pat Bergeson</em>: <em>Jazz Improvisation</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Harmonicamento</em>, a harmonica quintet from Germany’s Black Forest</td>
<td><em>Phil Duncan</em>: <em>Beginning Diatonic; Beginning Chromatic; How to Play Melody</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Buzz Krantz</em>, the Santa Claus of the blues and everyone’s close, personal friend</td>
<td><em>David Fairweather &amp; Professor Roger Myerson</em>: <em>Fourkey Tuning</em></td>
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<td><em>Grammy Award-winner Peter Madcat Ruth</em></td>
<td><em>Joe Leone</em>: <em>Country Tuning and More</em></td>
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<td><em>Winslow Yerxa</em> and <em>Tuula Cotter</em>, intertwining harmonica and violin in music from the far north</td>
<td><em>Robert Bonfiglio</em>: <em>Playing the Harmonica Classically; Chromatic for Diatonic Players</em></td>
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<td><em>Blues/swing masters Dennis Gruenling and Steve Guyger</em></td>
<td><em>Reach Mann</em>: <em>Hand Percussion &amp; Effects</em></td>
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<td><em>Pat Bergeson</em>, Chet Atkins protegé and double threat on harmonica and guitar</td>
<td><em>Grant Osborne</em>: <em>Intro to Diminished Tuning</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Stan Harper</em>, the legendary master of the chromatic harmonica</td>
<td><em>Peter Madcat Ruth</em>: <em>Playing Harmonica in a Rack; Rhythms, Trains, etc.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Sgro Brothers</em>, playing timeless favorites with verve and showmanship</td>
<td><em>Richard Sleigh</em>: <em>Harmonica Gymnasium</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Jimi Lee</em>, Jelly Roll Johnson, Steve Baker, and more!</td>
<td>*As well as Dennis Gruenling, Steve Guyger, Buddy Greene, Al and Judy Smith, Filisko’s Teach-in and Paul Davies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Performance and seminar listings are incomplete and subject to change. Check spab.org for updates. For questions, suggestions or to volunteer, please contact Elizabeth Atkison at ema3395z@hotmail.com or 816.914.0223.
SUN \hspace{1cm} SURF \hspace{1cm} SPAH

Hang ten with:
Buddy Greene
Robert Bonfiglio
Harmonicamento
Buzz Krantz
Peter Madcat Ruth
Winslow Yerxa
&Tuula Cotter
Dennis Gruenling
& Steve Guyger
Pat Bergeson
Stan Harper
Sgro Brothers
Jimi Lee
Jelly Roll Johnson
Brandon Bailey
Al & Judy Smith
Joe Filisko
and more!

48th ANNUAL SPAH CONVENTION
AUGUST 9-13
VIRGINIA BEACH, VA

VENDOR BOOTHs NEARLY SOLD OUT!
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By Bill York Yurochko

During the 1970s whenever I visited Al Smith in San Jose, California, I could count on being rewarded with attending a rehearsal of the original Sharp Harp, an amazing harmonica ensemble with eight members all of whom were either professional or ex-professionals who had played in the Harmonica Rascals or the Harmonica Harlequins.

During the 1980s the number of players in the Sharp Harp dwindled to three chromatics and a chord player and interest in the group was faltering. But then Judy Simpson, a bass harmonica player from Ohio married Al Smith and moved to San Jose. She joined the Sharp Harp playing bass and the ensemble survived for five more years as a quintet until Judy and Al moved to Ohio in 1990.

The Sharp Harp was a music reading group that gathered weekly around a dining room table for the sheer joy of creating big harmonica band sounds. The recordings on this CD are not studio quality. The tracks were recorded by simply placing a small cassette recorder in the middle of the rehearsal table for “bare bones” recording. Enhancements such as equalization, mixing, balancing, and reverb were not possible on the small recorder. Nonetheless, this CD, with 24 tracks of top-notch harmonica artistry is truly a treasure and a collector’s item. The selections feature accomplished polyphonia playing by Ray Tankersley, jazz improvisations by Pete Blasberg and lightning-fast solos by Jimmy Kreuzer (especially in “Putting All My Eggs In One Basket”) as well as Al Smith’s intricate chord rhythms playing off Judy’s bass lines.

Track List:
1) Front Page
2) So Rare
3) A Foggy Day
4) Give My Regards To Broadway
5) I May Be Wrong
6) I’ll See You In My Dreams
7) On The Sunny Side Of The Street
8) Sweet Georgia Brown
9) Putting All My Eggs In One Basket
10) My Wild Irish Rose
11) Bye Bye Blues
12) Darn That Dream
13) Jalousie
14) Time Was
15) Valse Bluetta
16) Always In My Heart
17) Take The “A” Train
18) Here’s That Rainy Day
19) Charmaine
20) Chelsea Bridge
21) When Irish Eyes Are Smiling
22) Moonlight In Vermont
23) Moonlight Serenade
24) Shiny Stockings

CD Review

In Rehearsal
Hear the Sharp Harp Quintet keepin’ sharp

By Bill York Yurochko

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The result of over 100 years of tradition and German craftsmanship, it is still the number one choice of top professionals and the most recognizable model all over the world, known for its full tone and wood comb.

1896 MARINE BAND family

THE 1896

The result of over 100 years of tradition and German craftsmanship, it is still the number one choice of top professionals and the most recognizable model all over the world, known for its full tone and wood comb.

365 STEVE BAKER SPECIAL

This 14 hole version of a Hohner Marine Band is tuned with the first note an octave lower than a normal 10 hole in C thus offering a wider range for great warm deep tones.

Special 20

Awesome response, superior bendability and the sweetest tone ever. Its special airtight design makes it the most recommended go-to harp for harmonica players of any style, including blues, country, folk or rock.

364 SOLO

A 12 hole single reed diatonic harmonica great for players looking for an extended range. This harmonica is tuned an octave lower than its standard 10 hole cousins in the key of C (G & D has same tuning as traditional 10 hole) and offers warm deep tones from its wood body.

THE DELUXE

Combining the features of the legendary harmonica with a variety of state-of-the-art improvements, the Marine Band Deluxe produces greater volume and faster response while retaining the richness and power of the harmonica’s classic sound.

CROSSOVER

The revolutionary laminated bamboo comb (patent pending) is completely sealed, making it water repellent and exceptionally stable. In combination with the screw together assembly the Crossover is extremely airtight, with fast, even response and a raspy, powerful sound.

has a NEW addition

Thunderbird

The latest member of the legendary Marine Band product line, creates a new benchmark for low and super low diatonic harmonicas by incorporating:

- Special new reed profiles for fast response and high volume even at an extremely low pitch.
- Patented triple laminated and layered bamboo comb construction.
- Conical lower cover design by Joe Filisco prevents reed rattle.
- Cover and plates fitted with Phillips head screws for easy maintenance.

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LJ Atkinson