

# Brighton's Smokin' Jazz & Barbecue Blues Festival 2024

## FRIDAY

5-6 p.m.

### **Sean Dobbins Quintet**

Sean Dobbins got his start as a sought-after Detroit area jazz sideman at a young age, playing regularly with Blue Note artist Louis Smith. As Dobbins' career progressed, he found himself the recipient of many awards and accolades including the Woody Herman Jazz Award for outstanding musicianship, as well as the Louis Armstrong Scholarship. Due to Dobbins' great talent both as a player and an educator, he has been the focus of countless news articles, jazz radio programs, and documentaries.

Though still young by jazz standards, Dobbins has amassed an impressive list of playing companions. He has performed/toured/recorded with Johnny Basset, Benny Golson, Dr. Lonnie Smith, Frank Morgan, Joey DeFrancesco, George Cables, James "Blood" Ulmer, Marcus Belgrave, Larry Willis, Rodney Whittaker, Claude Black, Johnny O'Neal, Paul Keller, Tad Weed, Kurt Krahnke, Jon Hendricks, David "Fathead" Newman, Donald Walden, Cyrus Chestnut, Barry Harris, David Baker, Randy Johnston, Marion Hayden, Mose Allison, and many others.

The drummer's sound can best be described as hard-driving, solid rhythm with refreshing melodic sensibility. Some of Dobbins' influences include Art Blakey, Jeff Hamilton, Jeff "Tain" Watts, Ed Thigpen, and Sonny Payne as well as Detroit area greats Gerald Cleaver and the one-and-only Elvin Jones.

6:20-7:20 p.m.

### **The Brothers Groove**

Detroit's funkier trio, The Brothers Groove are famous for their frenzy-inducing live gigs and an instrumental interplay that borders on the telepathic. Formed in 1999 by vocalist/keyboard player Chris Codish and bassist James Simonson, they have released three CDs -- the critically-acclaimed *Clamp it Down*, the live *Layin' in The Cut*, and their latest, *So Glad You Came*.

Fans and peers have been spreading the word about this dynamite band, which also includes drummer Skeeto Valdez, that has been honored with over 15 Detroit Music Awards. So, what does The Brothers Groove sound like? How about a soul food stew of Detroit funk, hipster jazz, and rock, seasoned by the ups and downs of living in one of the most fertile music cities in the world. Oakland Press and AP writer Gary Graff describes the group as "virtuoso funk/rock/jazz alchemists".

The only way to really find out is to see them live and experience their unique musical chemistry. The Brothers Groove have a habit of join the stage and join the action. These have included drop-in guest appearances by Kid Rock, N'Sync's J.C. Chavez, and Blues Traveler's John Popper.

7:40-8:40 p.m.

### **Brett Lucas Band**

Brett Lucas started his professional musical career in his late teens as a guitarist performing in Detroit blues clubs with some of the city's legendary blues performers. Since then, Lucas has

performed on stages across the world (Carnegie Hall, Montreux Jazz Festival, Austin City Limits, Conan O'Brien Show, The Jay Leno Show and The Late Show with David Letterman) and toured extensively throughout the United States, Europe, Australia, Japan, Africa and South America.

As a guitarist, he has recorded and performed with Thornetta "Queen of Detroit Blues" Davis, Jeremy Spencer of Fleetwood Mac fame, and Bettye Lavette -- the "Great Lady of Soul", among many others.

As a songwriter, singer and guitarist, Lucas has released four albums: *Second Avenue Crush* (2009), *Saint Cecilia* (2011), *Over the Seas* (2017) and his latest releases, *Soul and Courage* (2019), and *Fortunate Man* (2019).

Lucas can be seen performing with his own band and performing with Tosha Owens, Ben Sharkey, Thornetta Davis and two tribute bands -- The Rattlesnake Shake (a tribute to Peter Green's Fleetwood Mac) and REVIVAL: A Tribute to the Allman Brothers Band. He also works in the studio as a producer, arranger and session guitarist.

9-10 p.m.

### **Thornetta Davis**

Crowned Detroit's Queen of the Blues, international singer/songwriter/recording artist Thornetta Davis has opened for blues legends such as B.B. King, Ray Charles, Etta James, Koko Taylor, Johnny Johnson, Bonnie Raitt and more. A 2018 Kresge Foundation honoree, she also won the 2023 Blues Foundation Blues Music Awards for Best Soul/Blues vocalist female. A winner of over 30 Detroit Music Awards, Davis received six of those honors in 2018 and also won several in 2017 for her album *Honest Woman* (including Outstanding Record Producer, Outstanding Blues Recording, Outstanding Blues Vocalist and Outstanding Live Performance).

In 2017, the winner of awards from Blues Blast Magazine (Best Soul/Blues Album) and Big City Rhythm & Blues Magazine (Coolest Blues Song) also garnered international attention by winning first place in the International Songwriting Competition for Best Blues Song ("I Believe Everything Is Gonna Be Alright"), and the following year earned the prestigious French La Academie du Jazz Award for Best Blues Album (*Honest Woman*).

From Down Beat Magazine's 2018 Monterey Jazz Fest performance review: "The follow-up at the Garden Stage on Saturday blew the crowd away. In her first time performing at Monterey, Detroit's Queen of the Blues, Thornetta Davis, sang with no-nonsense sass, fearless in her missives against lovers, as she preached the Blues."

## **SATURDAY**

5-6 p.m.

### **Alex Anest Organ Trio**

Alex Anest is an American guitarist, teacher, and bandleader currently based in southeast Michigan. His projects as a leader or co-leader have included The Alex Anest Organ Trio/Electric Four, Nomad, The Ann Arbor Guitar Trio, and Giraffe, among others. These groups focus on improvisation, groove, creativity and, most of all, a commitment to connection -- both among the group members and with the audience.

Anest has released 14 recordings as leader or co-leader and has appeared on another 25 records

by a staggering variety of other artists, including Gayelynn McKinney, Evan Veasey, Makadem, Nancy Ambrose King, Kevin Meisel, and Dave Sharp. Music has taken him around the U.S. as well as to Switzerland, Austria, Germany, and Italy.

Regardless of the setting, Anest is an inventive and exciting player. In addition to performing and recording, he has extensive private teaching experience and was described by jazz pianist/educator Ellen Rowe as "an excellent explainer of the guitar", Anest holds degrees from the University of Michigan and Bowling Green State University and will be joined by Gayelynn McKinney on drums and Clif Metclaf on organ.

C Andrew Hovan writing on the recording Anest, Kendrick & McKinney: Live at the Blue Llama

Volume 1 & 2 for All About Jazz: "With big ears and far-reaching interests, Anest has learned the vernacular of not only the jazz genre, but also other styles such as progressive rock. His sound is distinguished by a warm and ringing tone, yet he doesn't shy away from the use of pedals and other effects...Clearly this is an organ trio with great potential. As such, further developments will be highly anticipated."

6:20-7:20 p.m.

### **Lexie Blue**

Lexie Blue is a captivating blues singer with a deep soulful voice that resonates with raw emotion. Lexie started her musical career singing in Las Vegas, Nevada as a teenager. She discovered her love for music at an early age and quickly became mesmerized by the power and expressiveness of blues music. Her rich, soulful tone captivates audiences and leaves them yearning for more. Whether belting out a heart-wrenching ballad or delivering an upbeat and energetic performance, Lexie has an undeniable stage presence that commands attention. With each performance, she effortlessly connects with her audience, making them feel every note and leaving an indelible mark on their souls. Lexie Blue continues to push the boundaries of blues music, infusing it with her own unique style and bringing a fresh perspective to the genre. Her passion for music and her remarkable talent make her a force to be reckoned with in the blues world, and her deep soulful voice is sure to leave a lasting impression on anyone who has the pleasure of hearing her sing.

She has won best blues artist in 2019 and 2022 by Detroit Channel 4's Vote for the Best and has opened up for Derek St. Holmes (original Ted Nugent singer), Mark Farner from Grand Funk Railroad, Anthony Gomes, and Night Ranger. Writing and singing the blues is what she does best, so she debuted her original blues band in 2022; they write and perform everything from blues, soul, blues-rock, and funk music. Her blues crew consists of some of the most talented musicians in the Jackson, Mich. area: Alexandria Bailey (Lexie Blue) as lead singer, Pete Bullard on lead guitar, Kevin Schoepke on bass guitar, and Gary Martin (Drums). You won't want to miss this group live -- they bring the blues to you!

7:40-8:40 p.m.

### **Big B & The Actual Proof**

Big B and The Actual Proof are an inspired fusion of modern blues, film noir soundtracks, and psychedelic rock. Their original music features dynamic arrangements fueled by powerful, emotional guitar, clear, convincing vocals, wailing saxophone, first-rate keys, and a rhythm section that booms, rattles and shakes.

This emerging quintet is led by three-time Detroit Music Award (DMA) nominee Brian "Big B" Burleson, the ex-bandleader, singer, and guitarist of former Detroit blues standouts Big B and

the Magic Bullets. Burleson has been playing guitar for more than three decades, bringing a level of skill and intensity that accompanies his experience. Joined by rock-solid Mitch Sharpe on bass, veteran drummer Erin Pitman, young phenom Cam Dixon on keys, and sax savant Joshua James, this five-piece powerhouse stands ready to make their ascent to festival and club headliner status.

The band began as a trio, releasing their ambitious debut, *The Noir Album*, in October 2022. Inspired by the plot themes present in film noir and rendered by award-winning producer and Grammy lifetime member Peter Jay, the 10 -song collection spent a year on the Roots Music Report's Weekly Top 50 Blues Rock Album Chart, finishing in that category's Top 100 Albums.

Accolades include International Blues Challenge Semifinalists (2022), Capital Area Blues Society Band Challenge Winners (2021); International Blues Challenge Semifinalists (2018); and Detroit Blues Society Band Challenge Winners (2017).

9-10 p.m.

### **Nick Moss Band**

This year, the Nick Moss Band once again was named the Blues Foundation Band of the Year backed with their latest recording, *Get Your Back Into It!*

Guitarist/vocalist/songwriter Moss has been recognized as one the great players of his generation, garnering accolades from Buddy Guy and praise from Jambase, Relix, and Gratefulweb.com among many others. His recording career spans several decades, and his albums are staples at blues radio outlets worldwide and are now in rotation at stations with jam and rock formats.

Rodrigo Mantovani is recognized as one of top blues bass players in the field. Born and raised in Brazil, he has always had a deep love for American blues and roots music from a very young age. This has led him to being one of the most recognized and requested bass players around the world.

Drummer Pierce Downer grew up in the western suburbs of Chicago. He discovered his love for music at a young age, listening to his father's band, a popular jump, rhythm-and-blues band in the Chicago music scene. Hearing the music as they practiced in their living room, he felt an instant connection to the "old school" music that they were playing. Just a few short years after his high school graduation, he received the call to join the Nick Moss Band.

The Nick Moss Band has a legion of fans that flock to his shows, knowing that each night will be a grand musical experiment. There will be sonic textures to discover and new sounds to stir the soul.