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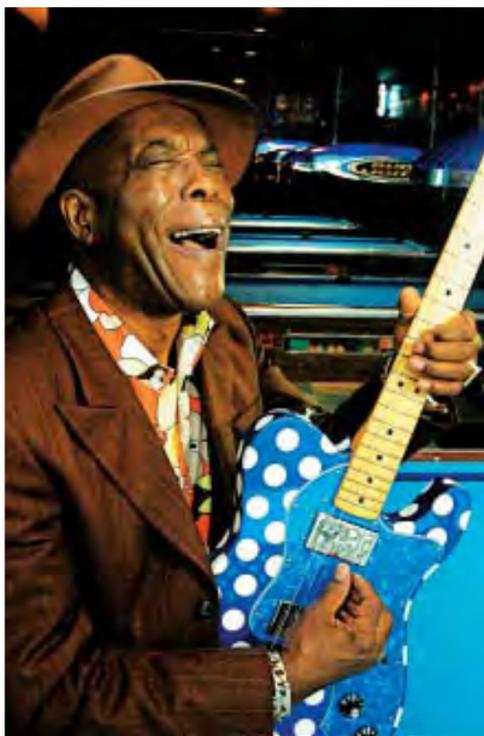
CHICAGO

WHEN THE SCENE HEATS UP IN THE HARD-CORE CLUBS DOWNTOWN, IT'S ALL ABOUT THE MUSIC

BY JERRY SOVERINSKY • GLOBE CORRESPONDENT



PHOTOS BY JOE TABACCA/FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE



Mississippi Heat plays at Kingston Mines on the city's Near North Side. At Buddy Guy's Legends, the dean of blues himself can be found.



It's a few minutes before 10 a.m. when I arrive at Buddy Guy's Legends blues club. Located on South Wabash Avenue in Chicago's South Loop, Legends is wedged inconspicuously among nondescript restaurants, bookstores, and college hangouts.

As I step inside, Guy is perched on a stool next to the entrance, his soft felt hat pulled down just slightly. He's speaking with an employee, so I find my way over to his PR rep, who's expecting me. She waits patiently as Guy finishes his conversation and then introduces me. I extend my hand and begin to speak, but I'm beaten to the greeting.

"I'm Buddy Guy," the man says. I know.

The "world's greatest living guitarist," as Eric Clapton has called him, speaks softly and deliberately, a far cry from the frenetic, whirlwind pace of his concert performances. At 70, he's the dean of blues, an unofficial title that was passed along to him by his good friend Muddy Waters. Shortly before he died, Waters implored Guy: "Don't let them damn blues die on me."

It's a responsibility that Guy has taken to heart; he spends 200 to 250 days on the road each year performing at venues around the world. When he's in Chicago,

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## TAKE THE GIANT STEPS

HITTING A JAZZ CLUB MAKES NEW YORK SOUND MEMORABLE

By David French  
 GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

NEW YORK — My friend and I came up the steps from the basement club elated. We had seen the 14-piece Mingus Big Band from just in front of the stage, where you can feel the bass and the baritone sax, and would almost think you could reach out and grab some of

the notes the trumpets were shedding.

It had rained while we were inside and the lights from Times Square reflected off the misty sky and Broadway's slick surface like a scene from a film noir. We said goodnight to the fashionable Tokyo couple who had been seated next to us, then set off into the buzz and

shuffle of the city, riding a rush of energy, trying to put into words what we had just seen and wondering what to do next.

It is close to 90 years since the Original Dixieland Jazz Band first caused a sensation in New York playing raucous New Orleans music at Reisenweber's Restaurant,

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DAVID L. RYAN/GLOBE STAFF

The history of modern jazz looks out from a wall of fame at the Village Vanguard, the club that is a Greenwich Village institution.



EVAN RICHMAN/GLOBE STAFF

EXPLORE NEW ENGLAND

# MASS.

A SPECIAL SECTION TAKES YOU FROM THE PIONEER VALLEY TO PORTUGUESE NEW BEDFORD, HUBBARDSTON TO BOSTON HARBOR, SOMERVILLE TO DR. SEUSS'S SPRINGFIELD. M7

# Legends to tourists as the Windy City jams

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he's almost always at Legends — sometimes performing, but mostly greeting guests and talking with musicians, engaging everyone with his knowledge and passion for the blues.

According to Guy, blues music can use all the ambassadors it can get — a sharp contrast to how things used to be.

"If you'd been here 40 or 50 years ago, you wouldn't have made it here on time," he explains. "They had blues up and down the streets, they had little speakers outside the clubs . . . they were everywhere."

When Guy moved to Chicago in 1957 from Baton Rouge, La., the blues scene here was flourishing. Music lovers from around the globe flocked to the Windy City to experience what became known as "Chicago Blues," a supercharged, guitar-drum-piano mix that influenced rock, jazz, R&B, soul, hip-hop, and almost every other contemporary musical genre. The Rolling Stones, Jimi Hendrix, and Fleetwood Mac, among a great many others, have cited the sounds of Waters, Guy, Howlin' Wolf, and other Chicago greats as providing direct inspiration for their work.

## WAILING WALLS

See the blues venues at boston.com that have kept Chicago the capital of this American music.

The pecking order was firmly established, as Guy explains: "I was in the studio doing 'My Time After Awhile' in 1964 and the Stones were there. They lined [them] up against the wall . . . and I'm in the middle of a session and they brought them in there while I'm singing and I told 'em to stand beside the wall to be quiet, I was making a record. And of course, they did."

During the next two decades, rock music took off, and the popularity of blues declined. Chicago-based blues record labels merged or closed; Chess Records, the most famous, went under in 1975. By that time, many of the popular clubs on Chicago's South and West sides had begun to close.

Since then, there has been a modest resurgence in interest in the blues, some of it a result of rock devotees searching for their music's roots. Even so, things are different today from the heydays of the 1950s.

Frank Pellegrino, manager of the club Kingston Mines, counts more than 100 clubs in Chicago-land that offer blues, including popular tourist spots like the House of Blues, Blue Chicago, and Blue Chicago on Clark. But the number of hard-core Chicago blues clubs has dwindled. Not that the quality has changed, Guy maintains, just the number of devotees. "Radio just doesn't give us the play it used to," he says.

Still, where it is played, the power of the blues is undiminished. Guy is asked: "When someone visits Buddy Guy's Legends, whether you're here or not, what would you like them to leave here with, as far as their experience?"

He pauses for a moment and a smile spreads across his face. "That this is as close to Chicago's original blues as you can get and I'm trying to carry on."

He raises his head just a bit, before nodding slightly and adding with a wink, "Other than that, we'll blast you out of here."

Almost any night of the week, authentic blues is being played somewhere in Chicago. Here's a sampling of some of the best places in town.

## Rosa's Lounge

The best description of Rosa's starts with a list of what it is *not*: It's not close to downtown (about 6 miles northwest, or a \$16 cab ride); it's not in a great area (straddling the border of the Logan Square and Humboldt Park neighborhoods); and it doesn't attract a crowd that's easily categorized (typically a melting pot, much like the neighborhood).

That said, what Rosa's *is* becomes immediately apparent as you step inside and wander over to the bar for a drink served by — who else? — Rosa. Settle in for as pure and authentic a musical experience as can be found in Chicago. This is the quintessential blues club, an unpretentious, intimate room that is, above all else, about the music.

Tony Mangiullo, an accomplished drummer, moved to Chicago in 1978. He became a regular at Theresa's, a South Side club that launched dozens of musical careers in the 1950s and '60s. Eventually with the help of the late Ju-



PHOTOS BY JOE TABACCA/FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

Cadillac Dave and his band at B.L.U.E.S., where seating is limited and weekend fans know to arrive early; Mississippi Heat's Pierre Lacombe at Kingston Mines, voted Chicago's best blues club; neon beckons at B.L.U.E.S.; and Sharon Lewis at Rosa's Lounge, which also attracts a dedicated crowd, all clockwise from above.



nior Wells, Mangiullo and his mother opened Rosa's in 1984.

Mangiullo books some of the most recognizable names in blues, in turn creating a dedicated following among music fans all over the world. Check out the photo on the wall of Mangiullo and former Czech Republic president Václav Havel, taken during Havel's early 1990s visit to Rosa's.

**Rosa's Lounge**  
3420 West Armitage Ave.  
773-342-0452  
rosaslounge.com  
Tuesday-Friday 8 p.m.-2 a.m.,  
Saturday 10-3. Cover charges  
\$10-\$15.

## Kingston Mines and B.L.U.E.S.

These are unrelated venues, but they share many of the same acts, are located about 100 yards from one another, and on Sundays offer a cover charge that is valid at both clubs. Located in the Lincoln Park neighborhood on Chicago's Northside, both clubs offer the very best of Chicago's blues talent 365 days a year.

Kingston Mines is the far larger space, with two adjoining rooms. Both rooms provide community tables, affording visitors an enthusiastic, interactive experience among a diverse crowd that includes students, conventioners, and residents from the surrounding neighborhoods.

"Chicago's Best Blues Club," as voted at the Chicago Music Awards for the past nine years, Kingston Mines is also its oldest, at 38. It's a distinction that's impressive, but one that also carries with it the lamentable by-product



of camera-toting visitors.

B.L.U.E.S., a far smaller club, is ideal for nursing your favorite cocktail while taking in an intimate blues experience. Seating maxes out at about 100, so you'll need to arrive early on weekends for a barstool. You're just as likely to squeeze next to a local DePaul University student as you are to a Japanese or European visitor.

**Kingston Mines**  
2548 North Halsted St.  
773-477-4646  
kingstonmines.com  
Sunday-Friday 8 p.m.-4 a.m.,  
Saturday till 5. Cover Sunday-  
Wednesday \$12, Thursday-Satur-  
day \$15. (Full-time students 21  
and over get in free Sunday-  
Wednesday, \$10 Thursday-Satur-  
day.)

**B.L.U.E.S.**  
2519 North Halsted St.  
773-528-1012



chicagobluesbar.com  
Sunday-Friday 8 p.m.-2 a.m.,  
Saturday till 3. Cover varies by  
night and act, up to \$10.

## Lee's Unleaded Blues

On Chicago's far South Side, Lee's is a 30-year-old institution that showcases blues and R&B talent to a mostly blue-collar crowd. If you're staying downtown, it's a hefty cab ride to get here (figure \$25 each way), but there's free on-site parking if you're comfortable with rental cars and Mapquest.

High-octane jams ring out from the club's snug space, a far cry from some of downtown's larger, tourist-filled clubs. What you'll find besides mirrored walls and deep-red carpeting is an appreciative local crowd focused on Lee's gritty blues and an intimate atmosphere.

The music ventures out from some of the predictable playlists of

other blues clubs, incorporating a healthy mix of soul, jazz, and R&B. It's a welcome departure, ensuring the crowds are constantly challenged and engaged.

**Lee's Unleaded Blues**  
7401 South Chicago Ave.  
773-493-3477  
Sunday, Tuesday, Thursday, Fri-  
day, 8 p.m.-2 a.m., Saturdays till 3.  
Closed Monday and Wednesday.

## Buddy Guy's Legends

Few times in your life can you say that you witnessed the world's best actually doing what it is they do best. But every weekend in January, you'll have the opportunity to do just that, as Buddy Guy performs live at his Legends club.

Guy's showmanship is truly unique; his concerts are paradoxically both as intimate and explosively as any you'll experience. He constantly roams around the stage

and room, deftly controlling the collective energy as he blasts through originals and covers at a whirlwind pace.

If you're not lucky enough to score a ticket to Buddy's January performances, a visit to Legends is always a treat. The club attracts top musical acts eager to play the same stage that has hosted the Rolling Stones, David Bowie, John Mayer, and Bo Diddley — among a very long list of top-name talent.

**Buddy Guy's Legends**  
754 South Wabash Ave.  
312-427-1190  
buddyguy.com  
Monday-Friday 11 a.m.-2 a.m.,  
Saturday 5 p.m.-3 a.m., Sunday  
6-2. Cover charge varies by night;  
weeknights occasionally are free.

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