

## ENTERTAINMENT

## Everybody gets blues at enjoyable festival

Tammy D. McMahan  
Sentinel-Voice

Everybody gets the blues as an old saying goes. The crowd at House of Blues got a bad case of the blues during its Labor Day blues festival.

The blues performers didn't play to a packed house, but they were well-received by an audience moved by the sounds of down-home music and sensual ballads.

The House of Blues recreated a Southern feel — like you were on the Mississippi Delta or in New Orleans in an old house with a big, wooden porch. The place was dimly lit, save for a red light shining on a performer who strummin' a guitar and singin' the blues.

The house is part juke joint, part storyteller's haven and part lovers' retreat.

Guitar Mac and His Blues Express Band were first to hit

the stage. Mac, the frontman, had the quintessential blues man look — a snazzy, bright colored suit and a wide-brimmed hat. Mac added a long, multi-colored feather to the hat as if to signify that he could be as funky and outrageous as he wanted to be. Mac could ably imitate blues great B.B. King.

His band played a mix of down home blues and boogie. Mac and company got the crowd grooving when they belted out blues favorite "Mojo Man," replete with a little fancy footwork.

Next up were Big Daddy and the Chicago Blues Boys. A song by a Chicago Blues Boys' about a "big-legged country girl" got hips to swaying and feet moving. Big Daddy energized the ever-growing crowd to hit the dance floor with "Mustang Sally."

The third band was Charlie Love and the Silky Love Band. For their version of the song "The Twist," Love and company mixed blues riffs with the pop sounds of the Chubby Checker hit and the theme from the campy 1960s Batman series. A multi-ethnic crowd of the young, old, couples and singles twisted in joyful response. The band continued to make their own kind of blues tradition by ending their session with The Gap Band's "Early in the Mornin'."

Don Haney and the Street Blues Band played the blue-eyed soul sound of the late Stevie Ray Vaughn. Haney and one of his female backup singers wailed in an evocative way, painting a picture of a blues singer who's lived too hard and loved too much, regrets it, but won't leave the hard life. A harmonica added

to the captivating sound, complimenting the soulful guitar.

The featured performer, Tyrone Davis, made a grand entrance to a jazzed-up version of the theme to the movie "2001." Davis deserved the star treatment because he truly entertained. Decked out head to toe in the color of passion, he unabashedly announced his intent to seduce the audience with his music.

Not only did he seduce with a voice on par with Smokey Robinson, he teased the ladies by touching their hands and doing one gentle bump and grind. Davis' nine piece orchestra well-accompanied him with their crowd-pleasing musicianship, precision moves and well-tailored suits.

The Labor Day Blues Festival filled the audience with the spirit of the blues.

## Ruby Dee reflects on triumphs, travails

LOS ANGELES (AP) — In the entertainment business, award-winning actress Ruby Dee would seem to have all the cards stacked against her: She's a woman in her 70s, she's black, and she has strong opinions about serious topics.

But her recent accomplishments — a one-woman show and two best-selling books — belie the notion that Hollywood is only for ingenues.

"There are as many ways to be an artist as there are ways to be a human being," she said. "Success is like the air — you can't hold it. I act and I write as an African-American, as a woman, as a member of the species. It's all from the perspective of being a human being in this maddeningly hurried, enticing community."

The actress made her Los Angeles stage debut earlier



RUBY DEE

this summer with "My One Good Nerve: A Visit With Ruby Dee," directed by Charles Nelson Reilly.

Her one-woman show was performed first for friends, then on college campuses and at fund-raisers. It was presented off-Broadway a year ago.

"Please don't call it a play, because that means there's a beginning, middle and end," she said. "All of the pieces are separate, each has its own

tone. It gives voice to some perspectives that aren't often heard."

Dee, winner of Obie and Emmy awards, said she discovered her talent for humor through the show.

"I surprised myself because most serious subjects have a twist of humor to them," she said. "I had to learn from audiences that I was screamingly funny even if I'm contemplating the subjects of war, murder, rape, countries toppling, world changes. It's from the darknesses that I find humor."

Her show is a cohesive compilation of some of the short stories, humor and poetry in her book of the same title, which was published by John Wiley & Sons.

She explained: "My One Good Nerve" began with a pile of things, some that I wrote down as far back as a decade ago. It began with my

making notes when I was asked to speak at funerals and special occasions. I didn't think of them as a book, just as things I had been thinking about for a long time."

The book takes on all topics, including racism. One of the poems is a version of the nursery rhyme "Jack and Jill." It goes like this: "Jack and Jill moved up on a hill to get away from the slaughter. And things were going real swell until a minority married their daughter."

Dee is working on a second volume of the book, which was No. 1 on the *Los Angeles Times*' local best sellers list for several weeks.

With Ossie and Ruby: In This Life Together," published by William Morrow, chronicles her marriage to actor Ossie Davis. This book made the *Times*' Top 10 list at the same time as "My One Good Nerve."

## Gumbel

(Continued from Page 5) news reader position this summer but failed when ABC matched its salary offer, according to published reports. ABC is not expected to try and block her departure for the more lucrative anchor position.

With morning TV one of the few growth areas for the networks, CBS is moving boldly to end its perennial doormat status in the time slot. CBS is spending between \$20 million and \$30 million to build a new storefront studio across from

New York's Central Park. CBS has hired Laurie Hibberd to report on pop culture, author Lisa Birnbach and former MTV VJ Martha Quinn to periodically talk about aging baby boomers and Mark McEwen to deliver weather and entertainment news.

Martha Stewart and Bob Vila are expected to return from the current show.

Elsewhere in the morning wars, ABC unveils its new Times Square studio for "Good Morning America" on Sept. 13.

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EARL SANDERS  
Vice President

## Tres Jazz

(Continued from Page 2)

shows the leadership of Arthur Goldberg and Park Place to be the first casino property on the Strip to make available a restaurant setting for an African-American company. We think it will be unique and it will be a tremendous draw for this casino."

Goldberg is president and CEO of Park Place Entertainment Corp., a spinoff of Hilton Hotels Corp. which operates Bally's and Paris Las Vegas.

Johnson has considered building a Las Vegas hotel-casino and said Tres Jazz will help him gauge the climate for such a project.

"Our immediate goal is to give everybody a fine dining experience and to give them a wonderful introduction to jazz music both from local and national jazz performers," he said. "We also want to demonstrate to the city of Las Vegas, and particularly the other hotel-casino operators, that they ought to consider opening up a little bit more diversity in the restaurant business in the Strip hotels and casinos."

"We think there's a casino in BET's future," Johnson added. "It's just a matter of finding the right property. We've got the concept and it's just a matter of economics."

The Frontier has been added to the list of possible sites for a BET hotel. Other potential properties include Coast Resorts Inc.'s Barbary Coast, located on the corner of Flamingo Road and Las Vegas Boulevard.

"It shows that people are still interested in the concept of a casino that targets the urban, African-American market," Johnson said of recent talks with casino operators.

"The attention to detail is what we've emphasized on this project," Gina Cunningham, public relations manager for the Paris Las Vegas and Bally's, said of the Paris-Tres Jazz marriage.

"Unlike some of the other clubs we've had here in Las Vegas, this is an upscale restaurant and the main emphasis is on the restaurant as opposed to the jazz," Cunningham said. "We don't want to call it a jazz club. It's a restaurant accented by jazz. They'll both be major focal points, however, because of the need for it in this city."

Playing now is a 5-person group led by drummer and band leader Kendall Lewis, son of the great jazz pianist, Ramsey Lewis. "Las Vegas needed a closed off room where you can enjoy the intimacy of the music, as well as the fine dining, and here you can get it all in one," said Lewis, a Chicago native now living in Las Vegas. "The lights, the sound, the music, the food, the atmosphere and the camaraderie of people that want to enjoy good jazz music.... I think it (Tres Jazz) is a throwback.... it's 2000. I think it's something Las Vegas definitely needed."

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