

B.B. King breaks ground on own museum

INDIANOLA, Miss. (AP) - Blues icon B.B. King joined local and state dignitaries Friday for the groundbreaking of a \$10 million museum honoring him in a Mississippi Delta town where he used to live.

King said he was "happy and nervous" about festivities and said he hopes the museum, as a whole, will inspire a new generation of musicians and artists.

"It will be a lot better for students to hear it from us... to have something," King said.

Among those attending the groundbreaking were Lt. Gov. Amy Tuck, House speaker Billy McCoy and former

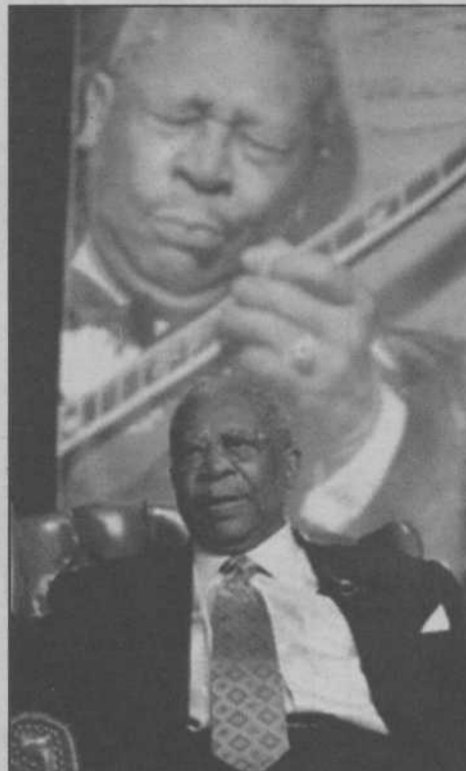
Govs. William Winter and Ray Mabus.

Hundreds of people sat under a blistering sun for a glimpse of King, who was only at the podium for about two minutes.

Riley King was born Sept. 16, 1925, on a cotton plantation in Berclair, outside Itta Bena. He moved to Indianola in 1943.

King earned the nickname "B.B." — for Beale Street Blues Boy or just Blues Boy — during his early career in Memphis, Tenn.

The 18,000-square-foot B.B. King Museum and Delta Interpretive Center will be built around a cotton gin where King once worked.



Hall of fame singer and blues legend B.B. King speaks during a media conference prior to the ground-breaking of the B.B. King Museum and Delta Interpretive Center, in Indianola, Miss., on Friday.

"I had this thought that I would build a house and at my death it would open as a museum," King said during a news conference after the ceremony.

He said Indianola officials called him and told him they could do more than that.

Officials said they still need to raise more

money for the museum.

At least part of the funding is expected to come from the state. During a recent special session, the state House included \$2 million for the museum in a bond bill that eventually failed.

Leland Speed, executive director of the Mississippi Development Authority, told those attending the groundbreaking that the museum is "the first real material act we have made to acknowledge the great heritage of Mr. King."

The museum will showcase four phases of King's life, from his years in the Delta to the present. It is scheduled to open in 2007.

Indianola Mayor Arthur Marble said that with the museum, his small town of 12,000 is "poised to leapfrog into the future."

Marble anticipates several spinoff businesses, including hotels and restaurants. He said there's no doubt that tourism will increase, based on the turnout each year for the concert King gives at a local park.

"To give you an idea of what we're talking about, last year the chamber cleared \$70,000 for that homecoming concert. The man is making that type of contribution to the community," Marble said.

Those attending the ceremony got to see an artist's drawings of the museum and local officials unveiled a portrait of King, painted by Steve Kaufman of Los Angeles, an artist who was a former assistant to Andy Warhol.

On Saturday, the 42nd annual Medgar Wiley Evers-B.B. King Mississippi Homecoming Concert in Indianola will feature King, Little Milton Campbell, Bobby Rush and Eddie Cotton, among others.

Jackson

(Continued from Page 1) prison," Hopkins advised.

Many media accounts had presumed that Jackson would be found guilty. One *New York Times* headline read, "Makeup of Jackson Jury Seems to Favor Prosecution."

And the Associated Press had even predicted that a guilty Michael Jackson would be assigned to the Corcoran State Prison, "located 100 miles northeast of the gated estate where prosecutors charge Jackson molested a 13-year-old boy."

At a news conference after the verdict was announced, many of the jurors said prosecutors failed to prove their case.

"We expected, probably, better evidence... something that was a little more convincing, and it just wasn't there," said a person identified only as juror No. 10.

On the other side of the country, in Washington, D.C., some still believe that Jackson is guilty.

"I think the verdict was wrong," says Jan Mitchell, 21, a graduate of Howard University. "I think he needs help. Either he needs to get psychological help or he needs to go to jail."

Another Howard graduate, Melvin Barrolle, does not share that view.

"I believe he is innocent," Barrolle says. "I felt that he did live in an alter-

nate reality, but I didn't feel that that was enough to convict him on these kinds of charges. So, in many ways, it came out the way it was supposed to come out."

Jesse Jackson said heavy-handed law enforcement officials transformed Jackson from an alleged perpetrator to a victim, at least, in the eyes of the public.

"The very aggressive sheriff went into his home [Jackson's Neverland Ranch] with 75 armed deputies," Jesse Jackson said in an interview with the NNPA News Service. "They occupied his home and ransacked his home. Many in the news media indicted him before he was even tried. Then the judge was so generous in allowing [the prosecutor] to bring up all this old stuff. It seems that the odds were against Michael. In a great sense, at some point, Michael became the victim. A persecuted hero is a different hero than a guilty hero." Many experts believe Michael Jackson can now put the emotional and often embarrassing trial behind him.

"He'll be able to bounce back," says Attorney Hopkins.

"He, obviously, has a worldwide fan base, and the fans may just want to rebel against those who prosecuted him in the first place and go all-out to show that he hasn't lost a thing. He's got enough resources to bounce back.

And with the right public relations, he can go right back to the top."

Public relations experts believe Jackson, 46, can remain a major force in the music industry for years to come.

"He will have an opportunity to restart his career," says Ofield Dukes, a public relations executive who has had many prominent entertainers as clients. "It's interesting that White fans throughout the world traveled to California because they had greater respect for his integrity than many Black fans. If Michael Jackson were to come to the MCI Center [in Washington, D.C.] tonight, it would be packed, and, probably, 90 percent of the fans would be White."

According to Julia Hare, that's the problem.

"I hope that Michael Jackson, at this time, will sell Neverland [Ranch] and that he will come to realize who he is and learn his lesson in Blackness: that when it comes down to it, no matter how White you become, at the end of the day, the ones who are praying for you are your extended family of Black fans."

Contributing to this report were NNPA Washington Correspondent Hazel Trice Edney, National Correspondent Makebra M. Anderson and Special Contributor Tessa Corie Smith.

Honeymooners

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into the picture as Dodge, the street hustler hired to train the reluctant pooch.

Dodge's irreverent asides actually supply the movie's funniest moments, but they also set a distinctly different tone. It's unfortunate that it only takes a few lines of gratuitously crude dialogue to spoil an otherwise tyke-friendly flick which could have worked just as well clean. Otherwise, the tension starts to build towards the big finale, though I dare not divulge the resolution, of course.

While this film fails to measure up to the TV show, I feel comfortable recommending

it as light, family entertainment most likely to resonate with kids of the current cattleprod generation whose attention-deficit issues apparently mandates their incessant over-stimulation. Rather than engage us in a deliberately-paced, complicated adventure, this dizzying picture unfolds as a disconnected series of skits and one-liners, which will undoubtedly satisfy the youngsters, while simultaneously infuriating the nostalgically-inclined.

Good (2 stars). Rating: PG-13 for sexual innuendo and crude humor.



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