

Mountain Beat with Sky King



Tony Mason Red Hot Blues!

I remember the first time I met Tony like it was yesterday. As host of the Green House open mic night I was waiting outside as a few musicians, regulars were making their way to the door and among them, an unfamiliar smile attached to a guitar case and a small amplifier. A big man with a big warmth emanating from his eyes, I just got that vibe that made me like him right away.

That first meeting was profound. Unlike other musicians and performers that grace our stage every Thursday evening, Tony came equipped with a small amplifier, an electric guitar and a bag full of electronic pedals and such that turned out to be his back up band so to speak. After getting him signed up and assessing his needs, he explained that he prerecorded his back up music in order to play lead guitar. Now it is a very common practice these days for solo performers to have prerecorded tracks and drum machines and many of these said performers actually record the tracks themselves, but for the most part my experience has been that these types of performers fall into the top 40 realm. With Tony this was not the case. From the minute he engaged his foot pedal to activate those tracks we knew we were in for something different, something quality, something very bluesy!



Performing his own version of a Wilson Pickett song "Midnight Hour" the searing guitar riffs made all in the house turn their head, and when he kicked in with his deep gravely baritone voice, all eyes and ears were glued to the stage. Tony Mason had made his mark on the Green House and was immediately recruited to be a regular performer on the schedule.

Since then Tony has played the Green House family Restaurant many times and still attends many an open mic. He has also expanded his show to include simple acoustic numbers without the use of back ground tracks. His song list is always eclectic even within the blues genre filling the evening atmosphere with many familiar tunes

while always pulling out a rare Lead Belly song or some other archaic gem. Audience participation is always encouraged as when the song "Got My Mojo Working" comes around the crowd cannot help but join in in the energetic call and response.

There are also the music history lesson to be give by Professor Mason. Many times he will prelude his songs with a story of the original writer or a story of how he came to learn the song. Genuine and sincere, even when talking to the crowd it feels like Tony is talking only to you, the effect is always charismatic.

One such song that I always request is an old show tune. After hearing Tony sing the first time I asked him if he knew this particular number to which he responded that yes he played it years back but would have to go back and relearn the song as it was full of minor chords and complicated progressions. Sure enough the next time Tony arrived to play he started telling the story of how I asked him to play this song and then launched into the most incredible version of "Old Man River" that I have ever heard. And it encompasses the entire stage version from the Broadway play.

You never know where you might see Tony play as he is always gigging somewhere around the area. But be assured that when you see his posters advertising "Red Hot Blues", you will not be disappointed!