



# OTIS and the ALLIGATORS

**ON A COLD** wintry night back in 1987, in a crowded little roadhouse in the middle of Wisconsin, something very special happened that has changed the musical landscape in these parts, right up to this very day. An audience had gathered to hear "open mic" performances by various local musicians. One such performance was by a blues combo that had literally been assembled on the spot. The audience response was thunderous and the players themselves were surprised at how well their impromptu jam had hung together. The owner of the bar approached the stage and asked: "What's the name of the band?" The bass player looked up and without missing a beat said "**Otis and the Alligators**". The bar owner said "bring your calendar up to the bar and we'll book a couple dates". On the way up to the bar, the musicians were still introducing themselves to each other. Little did they know that they would be introducing themselves to audiences across the upper Midwest for more than ten years to come.

In that time, **Otis and the Alligators** have spearheaded a renaissance of the blues in their native Wisconsin. Back in 1987, the conventional wisdom tended to underestimate the appeal of the blues. Now, however, blues has taken its rightful place among America's most loved cultural traditions. Otis and the Alligators have risen to the occasion. They have performed at a multitude of prestigious venues, including:

The WAMI Awards (Wisconsin Area Music Industry)  
The "Whad 'Ya Know" Show (on National Public Radio)  
Milwaukee's Summerfest.  
Famous Dave's Minneapolis, MN  
The Slippery Noodle, Indianapolis, IN  
The Blues Saloon, St. Paul, MN  
Luther's Blues, Madison, WI  
Whiskey Junction, Minneapolis, MN  
Porter's Oyster Bar, Crystal Lake, IL  
Big Bull Falls Blues Festival, Wausau, WI  
Fargo Winter Blues Festival, Fargo, ND  
W.C. Handy Blues Festival, KY  
Cedarfest, Minneapolis, MN



**Otis McLennon** was born and raised on Chicago's West Side. His given name is Robert. The moniker "Otis" was given to him at age eleven by his childhood friends. His earliest organized musical experience, at age eight, was singing in the boy's choir at the parish church. He continued to sing in choirs until going to college. This experience fostered his appreciation for good music regardless of style. "Don't get me wrong, I got my fill of everything Top 40 radio had to offer but I wasn't locked into it. I might come home from school and listen to classical music on the hi-fi and turn it up loud. Later at night I'd listen to the Black radio stations and soak up the blues, R&B and gospel music." In the mean time he picked up the trumpet and played in the school bands. Otis started playing harmonica at the age of fifteen.

In college, at the University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point, he discovered folk music. "I found that I knew enough about harmonica to play along and the other musicians encouraged my singing and playing. In these early days, performances were limited to playing in the living room or on the front porch but eventually led to playing at parties and coffeehouses. Needing an identity, this first band became the **"Poker Face String Band"**. A couple years later the Poker Face String Band underwent a Dylan-esque evolution adding electric guitars and drums to the mix. The new sound required a new name and thus **"Wheatstone Bridge"** was born. Wheatstone Bridge developed a nice following in Wisconsin and played together for five years until 1981

For the next six years, Otis played with a number of dues paying bands (not much fun and not much money). The exception to this list was a group called **The Belvederes**. This group included some notable players. **Scott Neubert** went on to play guitar for country music's **Hal Ketchum** (Home Town Saturday Nights); and **L.J. Booth**, an award winning singer-songwriter, has garnered a national reputation on the folk music scene.

In 1987 **Otis and the Alligators** was formed. Initially, Otis resisted naming the band after him. "I had to admit that it was a catchy name but the idea of naming the band after me made me feel self-conscious." However at the urging of the other "founding members" the name stuck. Over the years, the band has gone through many personnel changes. Like any band, The Alligators have had their share of ups and downs. Through it all, Otis stayed on his feet and kept moving forward. The band has released four recordings and is currently planning a fifth. They have had the pleasure of sharing the stage with some of the world's greatest blues bands including:

Lonnie Brooks	John Mayall
Koko Taylor	Chicago Rhythm & Blues Kings
Junior Wells,	Son's of the Blues
Clyde Stubblefield	Little Ed and the Blues Imperials
Jimmy Thackery	Jimmy Johnson
Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown	Sam Lay
Paul deLay	Tinsley Ellis

**Kenny Stevenson**, a Massachusetts native, grew up in Stevens Point, Wisconsin, and attended Lawrence University where he studied **bass** and music theory. As a bassist he has appeared with bands of virtually every genre including Bluegrass ("**Wisconsin River Bluegrass Boys**"), Country, new wave, Alternative Rock ("**Black Helicopter**"), and Blues. In the late 80's and early 90's, Kenny toured with the R&B/Hippie Disco outfit, "**The Stellectrics**" (now known as "**Irene's Garden**"). Often he can be heard at Wausau Wisconsin's Scott Street Pub, playing with the house band known as "**The Petrified Alien Brain Blues Band**". Every Tuesday Kenny hosts a jam session at The Witz End, Stevens Point's legendary music venue with the 70's /retro rock band, **Moon**. Kenny joined **Otis and the Alligators in 1998**.

Guitarist, **Michael Boyle** is a native of Appleton, Wisconsin. He began playing guitar professionally at the age of sixteen. Having decided to pursue a career in music, in 1988, at age of twenty-one, Michael moved to Los Angeles to attend the prestigious **Guitar Institute of Technology (G.I.T)**. While there he studied music theory and advanced guitar technique. Upon completion of his studies at G.I.T. he stayed in Los Angeles and tapped into the music scene there. Before long he found himself playing some of L.A.'s most famous clubs including the "Whiskey a Go-Go", "Gazzarri's", and "The Troubadour" located on the legendary Sunset Strip. However Michael did not forget his roots and finally returned to Wisconsin. He worked with a variety of Blues and Rock bands until joining the Alligators in November of 2000.

Percussionist **Brad Love** hails from Wisconsin's east coast town of Manitowoc. He currently resides in Wausau Wisconsin. He has had a distinguished career as a full time musician. His drum chops are articulate without being too busy. His solos are often described as melodic, an unusual trait for a drummer. He has played professionally for nearly twenty years including several years in a full-time rock band that specialized in opening for such rock legends as REO Speedwagon. Most recently, Brad worked with Wausau's favorite band **The Petrified Alien Brain Blues Band**. Brad joined **Otis & The Alligators** in February of 2000. He is a very cool guy.



**Bill Engel** was born 4/8/52 in Chicago, IL. He started playing the organ at age eight, and, by the time he was eleven, became a church organist. Bill began playing blues & rock at age 13. He then played the concert & club circuit in the Midwest for 10 years.

Numerous studio jobs with people such as **Maurice White** (drummer for Earth, Wind & Fire & Ramsey Lewis Trio), **Phil Upchurch** (Chicago blues, R & B and jazz guitarist) and **Gary Loizo** (American Breed) made Bill an in-demand player.

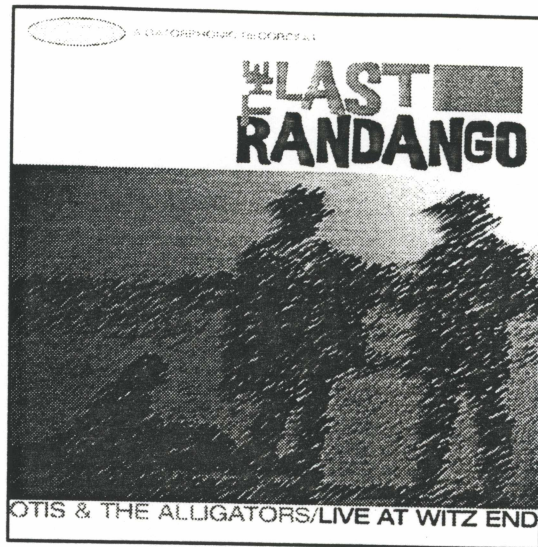
Taking a 20-year hiatus from public performing, Bill concentrated on playing only in church. 1993 found him moving to Wisconsin, playing for a while with **Reverend Raven and the Chain-Smokin' Altar Boys**. In 1997, **The Blues Flamingos** were hatched, with Jim Prideaux, Joe Simonsen & Stuart McDoniel.

Bill has been with the Alligators since the summer of 1999, adding the classic sounds of a powerful soul vocal and an original writing style, as well as that Hammond B-3 organ, which he's dubbed "The Blonde Woody"!

Over the years, Bill has played on the same bill with acts such as:

**Wilson Pickett**  
**New Colony Six**  
**Cryin' Shames**  
**Jimi Hendrix**  
**Styx**  
**The Fuggs**  
**John Mayall**  
**Buddy Guy**  
**Lonnie Brooks**  
**W.C. Clark**

# DISCOGRAPHY



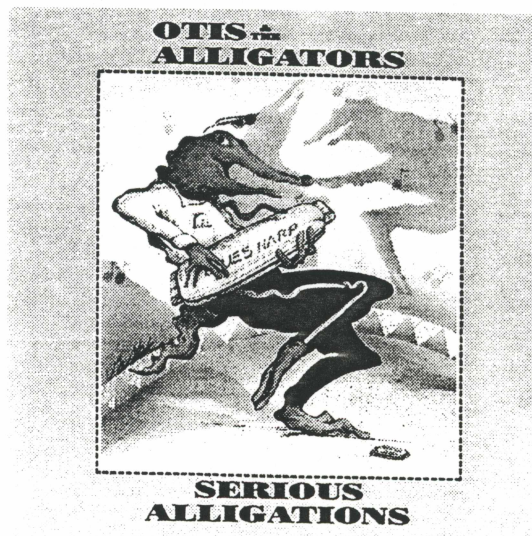
## **"THE LAST RANDANGO"**

i don't believe  
shake and fingerpop  
walkin' the streets at midnight  
no money, no honey  
help me  
made a mistake  
what's the big idea  
boom boom  
too late  
low down dirty shame  
i can't hold out  
mississippi burnout



## **"TAIL SHAKIN' BLUES"**

too late  
paying the cost to be the boss  
i can't hold out  
the next time you see me  
walkin' the streets at midnight  
the chill  
damn your eyes  
what's the big idea  
she's into something  
bring back the night  
don't look for me  
gimme one more day



## **"SERIOUS ALLIGATIONS"**

shake and fingerpop  
bad barbecue  
mojo crossroads  
brick layin' man  
lady  
i'll move on  
paid too much  
it ain't that i don't love you  
same old grind  
part time love  
the thrill is gone  
sailor's grill and rec  
i didn't come to dance  
love is aflame



# SONG LIST

This is just a sampling of our repertoire.  
The Otis and the Alligators songlist is always growing...

HELP ME  
NEXT TIME YOU SEE ME  
CHECKIN' ON MY BABY  
LITTLE BY LITTLE  
SHE'S INTO SOMETHING  
NO MONEY NO HONEY  
BEEN SO GOOD UP TO NOW  
I DON'T WANNA KNOW  
BRING BACK THE NIGHT  
BECAUSE OF YOU MY BEST FRIEND IS THE BLUES  
SHAKE AND FINGERPOP  
MOVE ON DOWN THE ROAD  
I DON'T BELIEVE  
FUSS AND FIGHT  
DRIVING WHEEL  
PAYIN' THE COST TO BE THE BOSS  
I WISH YOU WOULD  
I CAN'T HOLD OUT  
LOOKIN' FOR A WOMAN  
COMPLAINER'S BOOGIE WOOGIE  
RUNAROUND  
WALKIN' THE STREETS AT MIDNIGHT  
WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA  
BOOM BOOM  
C JAM BLUES  
THE CHILL  
STOP YOUR GROANIN'  
SWEET NIGHT TIME  
LONG GONE  
MESSIN' WITH THE KID  
LOW DOWN DIRTY SHAME  
THE THRILL IS GONE  
I PAID TOO MUCH  
I MADE A MISTAKE  
BAD BARBECUE  
TOO LATE  
BRICK LAYIN' MAN  
DON'T DENY ME  
BLOW WIND BLOW  
DAMN YOUR EYES  
THAT'LL NEVER DO

Willie Dixon  
Junior Parker  
Junior Wells  
Junior Wells  
Muddy Waters  
Ball and Sultan  
Lyle Lovett  
Jim Liban  
Otis and the Alligators  
Otis and the Alligators  
Junior Walker  
Billy Boy Arnold  
Doug Sahm  
Joe Louis Walker  
Roosevelt Sykes  
BB King  
Billy Boy Arnold  
Elmore James  
Charles Ford Band  
William Clarke  
Otis and the Alligators  
Davenport/Sampson  
Paul DeLay  
John Lee Hooker  
Count Basie  
Otis and the Alligators  
Paul DeLay  
Otis and the Alligators  
Otis and the Alligators  
Junior Wells  
Carey Bell  
BB King  
Otis and the Alligators  
Jim Liban  
Otis and the Alligators  
Willie Dixon  
Otis and the Alligators  
Gregg Allman  
Muddy Waters  
Etta James  
Albert King



# What's summer's best show?

It's been a summer full of fun for fans of live music, here and around in the state.

Locally, country stars Tim McGraw (Holiday Inn) and John Berry (Riverfront Rendezvous) drew big crowds. Waylon Jennings, Jessi Colter and Patty Loveless were the biggest names ever to perform at Plover's Golden Sands Festival. The north side home of the blues, Witz End, had Luther Allison in on a steamy June night and welcomed D.C.'s Jimmy Thackery last week.

When bluesman Jimmy Thackery tours the U.S., he keeps things nice and tight. His thrumming, and when well as Thackery's other guitar?

Last week at Witz End, Thackery added a band member. He invited Steve McLennon of Otis and the Alligators on stage to play harp. They played several songs together in the first set, and then part-way through the second set, Thackery's voice boomed, "Where's Otis?" They played several more songs together.

Last week at Witz End, though, Thackery added a fourth band member. He invited Stevens Point's Otis McLennon of Otis and the Alligators on stage to play harp. They played several songs together in the first set, and then part-way through the second set, Thackery's voice boomed, "Where's Otis?" They played several more songs together.

## Audience is key: *Radio host salutes people*



**MICHAEL FELDMAN** (right) talks with a contestant on the phone while George Perkins of Madison listens during the quiz portion of the "Whad'Ya Know" radio show in Madison recently (AP photo)

### Local talent was featured

Michael Feldman's Whad'Ya Know Show plumbed local talent on at least one occasion.

The show hit the road on Oct. 2, 1993, traveling to the Grand Theater in Wausau for a morning performance.

A guest on the show that day was Plover author Justin Isherwood, who read from his book,

**The featured musical group was Stevens Point-based Otis & The Alligators.**

*The Alligators.*

The show was rebroadcast last November, and the Journal subsequently received several inquiries from around the country about Isherwood's book.



# Over 300 turned out for Main Street Blues Bash

by JOHN PAUL SCHALLER  
Staff writer

Sparta Main Street Manager Mark Hayes was a little hesitant to call the downtown revitalization project's latest fundraiser an annual event.

Hayes wasn't sure what kind of response local residents would give to Thursday's Main Street Blues Bash.

But shortly after Glenn Davis began performing his classic blues tunes at The Classic Nightclub Thursday, Hayes knew the event was going to be a success.

More than 300 people turned out for the Blues Bash, which featured Davis, along with Otis and the Alligators in a four-hour show.

"I've gotten a lot of feedback - both at the concert and after and it was all very good," said Hayes.

"I think they created a niche for blues music in Sparta on a frequent basis," he added.

Although Hayes was pleased with the fundraising part of the event - more than \$1,500 was raised for Main Street - he was elated at the reception the community gave to the blues acts he booked.

"I think we had a great combination of talent up on that stage. Glenn played some great classic blues numbers and Otis and the Alligators showed they are a prominent blues dance band," explained Hayes.

"It was very evident to me that both of these acts love to play the blues and I think that generated to the audience," he continued.

Hayes said the reception the audience gave to both acts was

very encouraging to him.

"The reception was just tremendous. That will encourage me to keep trying new kinds of entertainment," said Hayes.

Hayes was pleased with the number of local people who turned out to hear the blues and support Main Street, but he was also impressed with the number of people from outside the city who were at the concert.

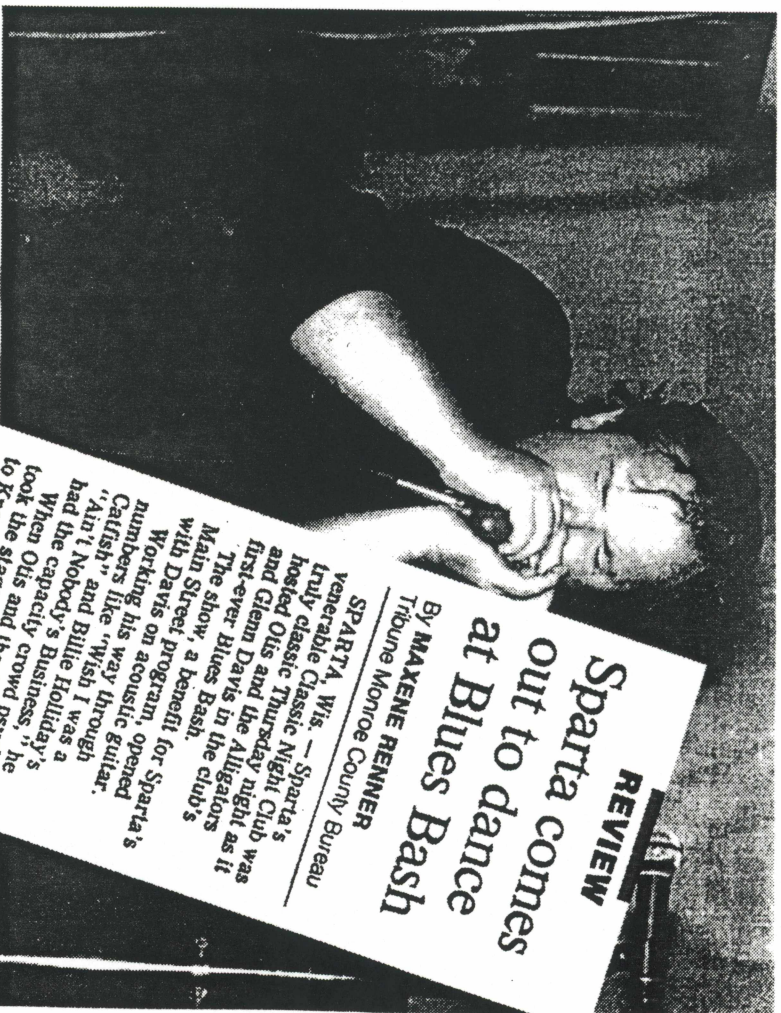
"We had a lot of people there from a lot of different areas. There were people from Stevens Point, Eau Claire, Black River Falls, Tomah and La Crosse," said Hayes.

"Some even stayed overnight in local motels and ate at local restaurants. That was a nice side benefit, because they may come back - not just to hear the blues - but to experience the other tourist attractions we have in Sparta," he predicted.

Hayes said close to \$1,500 was raised through ticket sales for the event. In addition, Bob Nichols - the owner of The Classic Nightclub - donated a check to Main Street to help with the fundraiser.

"To me - one of the best things about this was the fact that we were able to hold the concert right downtown in The Classic. Bob Nichols was great because he gave us all of the ticket sale and he wrote us a check beside said Hayes, adding that Bj Ballman and Nick Hagen were also instrumental in the promotion of the Blues Bash.

"We really appreciate the fact that people came out and had good time and supported the Main Street program," Hayes concluded.



## Blues Bash

Otis McLennon, lead singer of Sparta Main Street Blues Bash, attended the concert, which

**REVIEW**  
**Sparta comes out to dance at Blues Bash**  
By MAXENE RENNER  
Tribune Monroe County Bureau

SPARTA, Wis. — Sparta's venerable Classic Thursday night club hosted Otis and the Alligators' first-ever Blues Bash. The show, a benefit for Sparta's Main Street program, opened with Davis on acoustic guitar.

Working his way through numbers like "Wish I was a Catfish" and "Billie Holiday," he had the capacity crowd psyched. When Otis and the Alligators took the stage with "I Don't Want to Know," the crowd knew it wanted to dance.

The house rocked with the power of Otis' harmonica and the raw power of his voice. By the time the band was into its second number, "The Next Time You See Me," they had the dance floor full and the balcony was rolling.

Mark Hayes, the city's Main Street director, said he was thrilled by the turnout, which filled the club.

"This is a huge crowd and they're still coming in," Hayes said. "You're talking in." Hayes said of exposure to this (music). This is just super."

onica during Thursday night's concert. More than 300 people



FOR 15 YEARS... A CIVILIZED ALTERNATIVE

# TWIN CITIES Reader

FREE

## FRIDAY

**Otis & the Alligators** • Hoppin' blues-rock from the wilds of Wisconsin. A typical Alligators' set features tasty originals, some old soul and R&B classics, and 12-bar saloon standards ("The Thrill Is Gone," etc.). It's a happy, danceable brew. *The Blues Saloon*, 601 Western Ave. N., St. Paul, 228-9959. Tickets \$5. —Surowicz

Thursday, August 20

NO COVER

## THE BLUES DUDES

Friday, August 21

## OTIS AND THE ALLIGATORS

Saturday, August 22

Rounder Record Artist  
Louisiana Soul Man

## DALTON REED

"A voice as smooth as Kentucky bourbon and a delivery as full of Southern grit as a plate of black-eyed peas..."



## 6TH ANNIVERSARY WEEKEND BASH

with • Champagne • Food • Favors •

Friday, Sept. 20

## TINSLEY ELLIS



Saturday, Sept. 21

## OTIS & THE ALLIGATORS

Hey, it's also Miki's Birthday!

Sunday, Sept. 22

## THE GROOVE CATS

NO COVER

Sept. 26 MISSISSIPPI UPTOWN

Sept. 27-28 THE MELLOW FELLOWS

Sept. 29 MILWAUKEE SLIM ALBUM RELEASE PARTY

## SATURDAY

**Otis & the Alligators** • This gig not only serves as an unofficial release party for my fave band from the Wisconsin boonies' spanking new CD, *Serious Alligations*, it's also part of The Blues Saloon's annual anniversary festivities — which come complete with free food and free champagne at midnight. That explains the somewhat steep cover charge for a regional act. The Gators are in fine fettle on *Serious Alligations*, by the way. Augmented by a crack horn section, they dish up corric original shuffles worthy of Little Charlie & the Nightcats — "Paid Too Much" is a standout. Plus full-bodied Albert Collins-style boogie — "Sailor's Grill and Rec" really *smokes*. And for good measure, some timeless R&B standards: Junior Walker's "Shake & Fingerpop" gets tenor man Jim Meyers's juices flowing, while Little Johnny Taylor's big ballad, "Part Time Love," is neatly transformed into a hot rocker, powered by Tony Menzer's rubbery, galloping bass line. *Serious Alligations* has a few windy, histrionic ballads (e.g., "I'll Move On") and at least one badly over-familiar selection (B.B. King *owns* "The Thrill Is Gone" — sorry, guys), but the good news is that there's more than 60 minutes of music, and it's 90 percent sound. Expect tough harp, gruff vocals, plus plenty of energy and soulfulness tonight. *The Blues Saloon*, 601 Western Ave. N., St. Paul, 228-9959. Tickets \$10. —Surowicz



## Tail Shakin Blues Otis and the Alligators (False Dog Records)

From the land known for polkas and cheese comes a smokin' blues band that knows how to deliver a hefty dose of good-time blues.

*Tail Shakin' Blues*, the third release by this Stevens Point, Wisconsin-based blues group, features twelve selections that include three originals and nine well-chosen covers.

The party gets started with Willie Dixon's "Too Late" and continues to the closing of John Mayall's "Gimme One More Time." Opening with an up-tempo infectious groove featuring snappy horns, and fired by strong vocal, this group defines the term "party." Before long, you'll be looking for a place to dance. Only twice does the band deliver a change of pace with slow lowdown blues.

These veteran musicians put it all together and cover all the bases, from shuffles to down-home blues. The rhythm section provides a firm base upon which the others can develop. The solos all seem to be the right length. There is no-waste. Everything has its purpose, and it fits like a glove. By keeping their ears open, this band has learned its blues lessons, and it shows in their tasteful adaptations of traditional structures, deliveries and licks.

Otis McLennon and Joe Simenson founded the group in 1987. Joe made up the group's name off the top of his head when a bar keeper wanted to hire them after a jam session.

Early critics compared Otis to David Clayton Thomas of Blood, Sweat and Tears fame; Simenson disagrees. "Otis is Otis. He is not copy. He is a natural performer who has developed his own style and delivery."

Otis, and perhaps the blues in general, are enjoying a broad audience. "Our second release, our first CD, became the number - one played disc in a country bar, long before we had the opportunity to perform there."

Having seen the band recently at the Silver Moon, I find this release a true reflection of their live performance. Get ready to have a real good time.

- Rich Gordon

# Flowing with the blues

By REBECCA AVERBECK, Assistant Lifestyle Editor

**Y**ou can get something for nothing. Admission to the River of Blues Festival with five bands on Saturday is free of charge. That's right, free. A bargain like that is hard to find, but don't look far. It's right here, downtown in Veterans Park. Near the east bank of the Wisconsin River, blues musicians will perform from noon to 8 p.m. Up first for the third annual event will be The Boilerhouse Blues Band, followed by King Swing, Otis and the Alligators, The Westside Andy & Mel Ford Band, and Sugar Blue. The first three are from central Wisconsin. Westside Andy is from Madison, and Sugar Blue hails from Chicago.

■ Otis and the Alligators of Stevens Point has performed blues at Milwaukee's Summerfest and The Pabst Theatre and on National Public Radio's "Whad 'Ya Know." The band has shared the stage with Koko Taylor, Jimmy Rogers, Little Ed and the Blues Imperials, The Chicago Rhythm and Blues Kings and many others. Otis is harmonica player and vocalist Otis McLennon of Stevens Point. His Alligators are drummer Don Berry of Stevens Point, guitarist Chris O'Keefe of Wausau and bass guitar player Bentley T. Harder of Eau Claire. Otis and the Alligators have three recordings and one in the works.





# Otis and the Alligators snap up following

It all started because they were in the right place at the right time, and it has led Otis and the Alligators to gain what has been called in music magazines a cultlike following.

In 1987 several blues artists were getting together regularly in Stevens Point for jam sessions. Otis McLennon and a few others decided to get on stage and play four or five standard blues songs together.

"We hit it and we sounded tight," McLennon said. "So we got done playing and the bar owner asked 'What's the name of your band?'"

A quick-thinking musician said "Otis and the Alligators," and the bar owner asked if he could book them. "We said OK, looked at each other and rolled our eyes."

The band will perform at 7:45 p.m. Saturday at the Clark County Fair in Neillsville.

Because the startup of Otis and The Alligators came as a surprise to them, some changes had to be made. McLennon said the drummer of the original session really had committed his life to doing something else, but he stayed with the group for the first couple of shows,

**"We get a wide variety and range of people who come to hear us play, between 20 and 70 years old."**

— Otis McLennon

until a replacement was found.

Keyboard player John Gun eventually left the group to play with local bands, to avoid all of the unexpected travel. McLennon also had to make some changes in his life.

"I had a print shop and was enjoying it less. Eventually the band came first. I knew it was going to take over my life and knew my focus would be getting split. Soon, I was getting out of printing and expanding the band."

The change in personnel has acted as a spice to their group, McLennon said.

"It is interesting to follow a band and see how they evolve. In a large part, the vocals have stayed pretty

constant," he said. "We get a wide variety and range of people who come to hear us play, between 20 and 70 years old. The whole approach is to make the music undeniably good. That's the goal we keep in mind — no matter who you are, you are going to like it."

Blues music has been given a bad rap, McLennon said.

"Everybody has been trained to think cool music is rock 'n' roll, and the truth is that rock came from blues," he said. "Blues is good danceable adult music. It's not about crying in your beer and feeling bad for yourself."

The band's set at Clark County Fair will include original songs from the Otis and the Alligators' CDs "Blue Vision," "Serious Alligations" and the soon to be released "Tale Shakin' Blues."

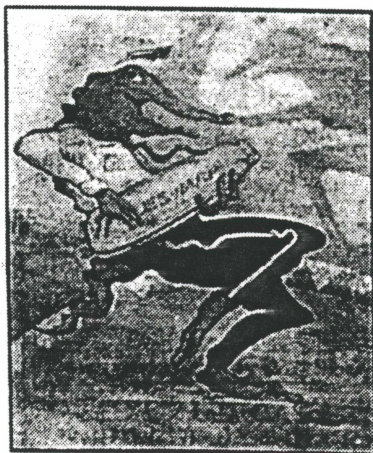
Among McLennon's favorites are "Bill's Bad Barbecue," written about a downtown Chicago establishment, open 24 hours a day, and "I Paid Too Much," which McLennon wrote after an advertisement caught his attention while he was watching a late-night movie.

Those attending also will hear some of their favorite artists' recordings.

"Life is a smorgasbord; let's turn up the variety," McLennon said. "We don't want to be like a lot of other bands. We want to expose our audience to new music. If people want the same music, they can stay home and listen to their record collections or the jukebox. Otis is the place to go."

— Pat Adamson

## OTIS and the ALLIGATORS



Host of the Big Bull Fall's Blues Fest Otis McLennon and his band the Alligators are a tight rhythm and blues outfit from central WI. Expect excellent vocals, tight band, and a full house. Three recordings on False Dog label.

### Otis and the Alligators Tail Shakin' Blues

[False Dog]

Tail Shakin' Blues breaks ground all around thirsty Central Wisconsin with endearing images of foot stompin' blues, barstools, and Point Special beer—a local favorite. Blues-harp-playing Otis McLennon and his Alligators deliver their second disc with power and veracity, laying down a mixture of classic tracks, like "Too Late," originally recorded by Chess Records master bassist and blues songwriter Willie Dixon, and "Gimme One More Day," by bluesbreaker and truth-seeker John Mayall, with a deft appreciation and maturity.

Tail Shakin' Blues takes a big step beyond Serious Allegations, Otis and the Alligators' debut effort, with a thoughtful mixture of blues classics and homespun originals. Also, the addition of the Windy City Pocket Horns gives the CD a more distinctive brass sound. Otis and the Alligators have established their own regional flair, which has delivered notoriety and popularity that are both well deserved.

Jeff Micholic