

ALL THE
Blues
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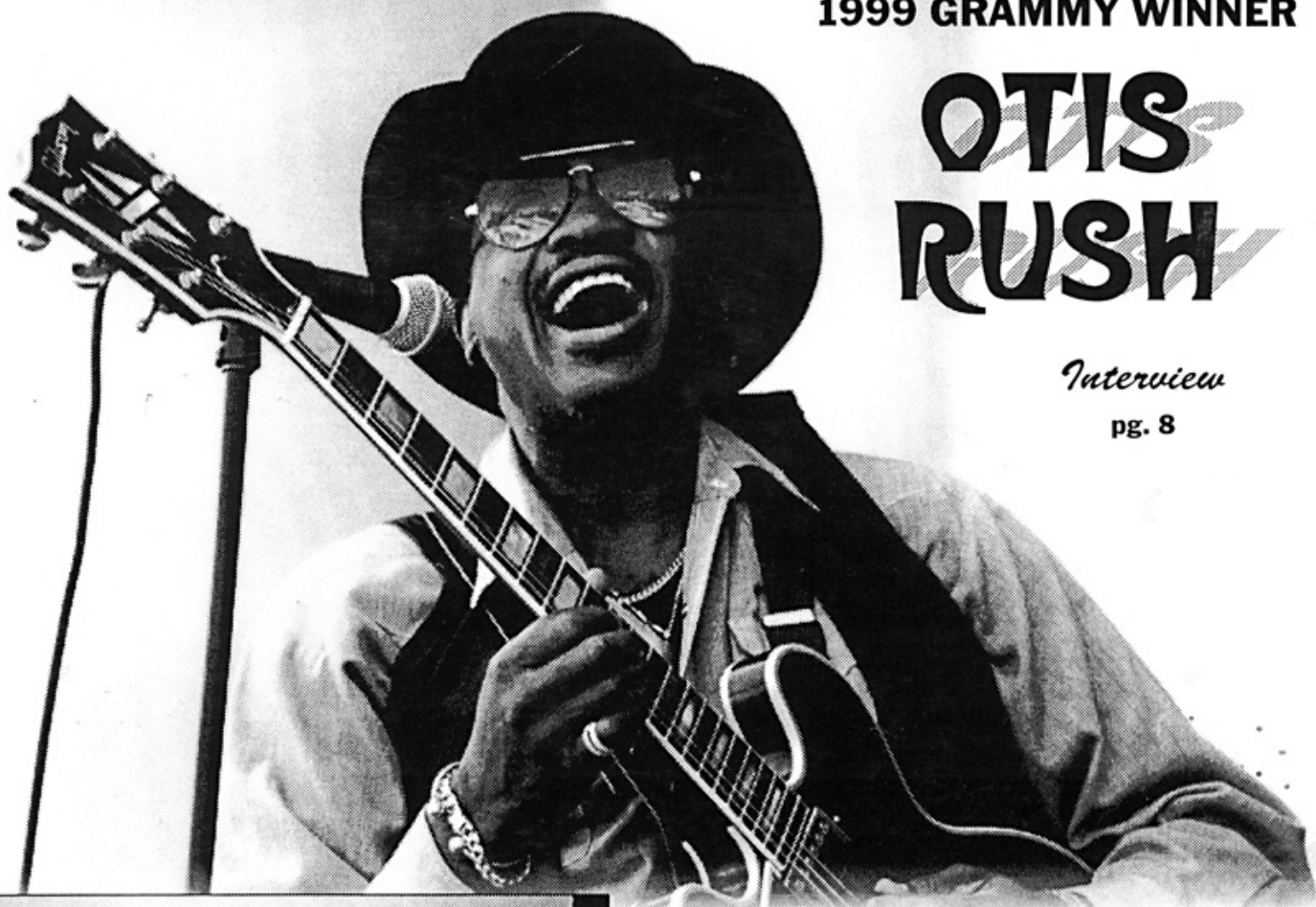
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Blues Beat

1999 GRAMMY WINNER

OTIS RUSH

Interview
pg. 8



The Coupe De Villes

INTERVIEW pg. 12

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

SUPER JAM '99

THE FLORIDA SCENE

THE RETURN OF EDDY B.

STORYVILLE

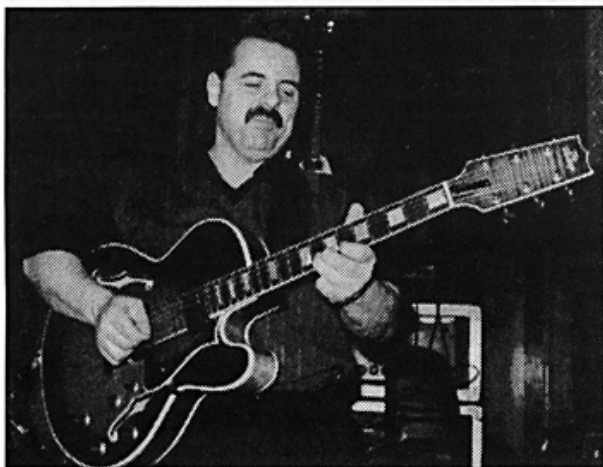
CONCERT REVIEWS:

LONNIE SHIELDS, EDDIE KIRKLAND & LIL' ED

NEW ORLEANS AND DULUTH FESTIVALS

MAGIC IN THE MAKING: *The Coupes De Villes*

There are two types of magic in this world. Magic with a little 'm' (magic) and magic with a big 'M' (Magic). The former is used for those guys in top hats doing card tricks, sawing ladies in half, etc. The latter is reserved for something different and hard to describe. It is a more "spiritual" thing and is more felt than said. The Coupes De Villes must have Magic to have weathered 16 years

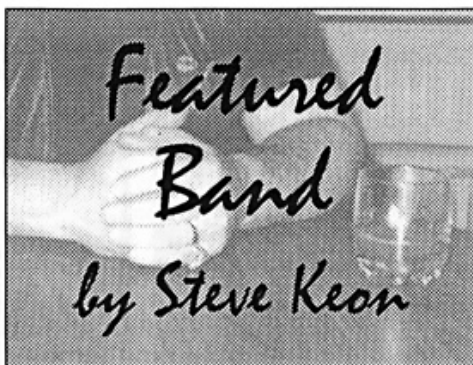


Lead guitarist Tommy Bianchi.

of band life and still have all their original members. "On and off the field we're friends," says guitarist, Tommy Bianchi. "We've gone through what every band has gone through--up and down points. There's been no problem we haven't been able to work out."

From their start as friends getting together to play music, other than the top forty music, they advanced to sharing the stage with acts like B. B. King, Dr. John, Little Feat and The Fabulous Thunderbirds. From record deals that never panned out, to having their song *Tuff Life* picked by Whoppi Goldberg to become one of the theme songs for the HBO special, *Comic Relief 90*, The Coupes (as they are fondly called by their fans) have seen both good and bad in their history.

Says Bianchi: "If you don't like what

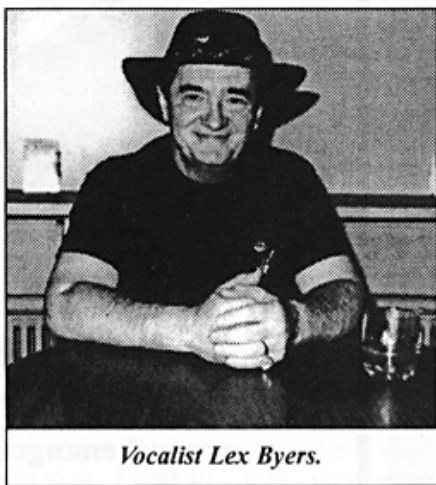


you're doing, why do it? Disco was the death of the bar bands. Before disco you could play cool stuff like *Tower Of Power* and funk. Then disco came along, and the playability was gone, and you were trapped because you needed the money. Music became a job." And so The Coupes were formed. The band classifies their sound as rhythmic with a funk drive and applies those stylistic elements to not only their original songs but to covers they may choose to do. "We may do something from B. B. King or Albert Collins, but we do it Coupe's style."

"We started out playing Sunday nights, Monday nights, Tuesday nights and it just grew from there. We found a market

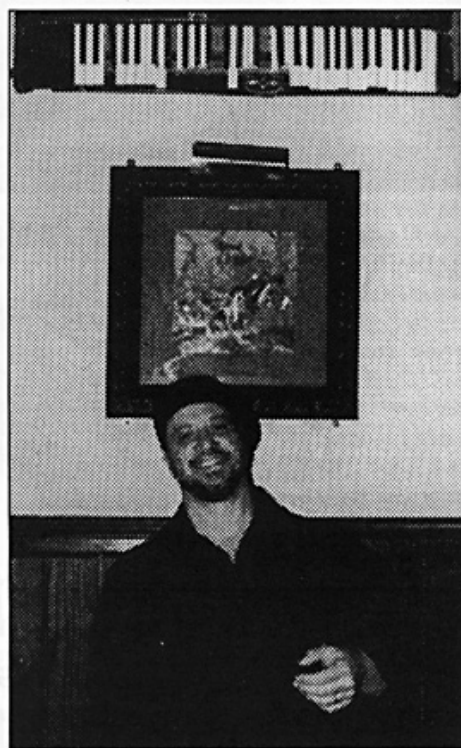
for the band, even when blues wasn't cool to play. We just kept at it," says Bianchi. "For a long time I was playing 'butchered blues'--1950's stuff," notes keyboardist/vocalist, John Cianciola, while bassist/vocalist, Chris DeFazio, can list to his credits that he toured with Walter Scott (who had a million seller single, *The Cheater*) and had a radio show on WGMC. Lead singer, Lex Byers, has been singing for 36 years and the percussive end of the band is held down by George DeMott.

After 16 years, the popularity of The Coupes hasn't waned. While many other local bands are now at the point of doing reunion shows every few years, The Coupes don't need to do that because they remain a staple throughout New York and Ontario, Canada. "We play hard every night no matter the size of the crowd. The people deserve that."



Vocalist Lex Byers.

It's an interesting amalgam of band members that make up The Coupes. Of the three members I talked with, Bianchi seemed to be the most vocal and always ready to answer a question directly and honestly. Cianciola (who, along with Bianchi, composes most of the band's material) is very soft spoken and considerate when talking, while DeFazio is almost sphinx-like. He will support or clarify a point being made, but more often than not, remains quiet and thoughtful, like a sage intending to NOT clutter up the conversation. "Why hear the same thing from a different person? They (Bianchi and Cianciola) are saying everything I would."

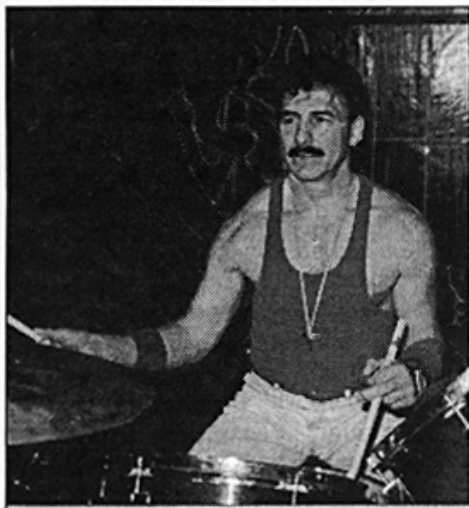


Keyboardist John Cianciola.

Perhaps most noteworthy is the band's loyalty and consideration of not only each other, but those who have supported the band (fans, former members and the technicians) over the years. The band stressed the importance of mentioning amplifier technician/builder, John Nau, (a Rochester legend in his own right) and former saxophonist, Vince Finocchio, in this article. Nau builds and repairs The Coupes amplifiers and is endorsed by the band. Finocchio left the band three years ago to pursue his jazz muse and has not been replaced. Bianchi: "Vince was part of the band for 13 years. People ask why we haven't replaced Vince in the band. The truth is we could never consider replacing Vince, because no one is as good as he is."

The band is constantly looking forward.

With a new CD, *Blues For You*, a live recording with former Rolling Stone, Mick Taylor, "in the can" and a CD's worth of new songs waiting to be recorded, there is no shortage of material or product for the band. And although they've had offers from record companies to buy some of their material for



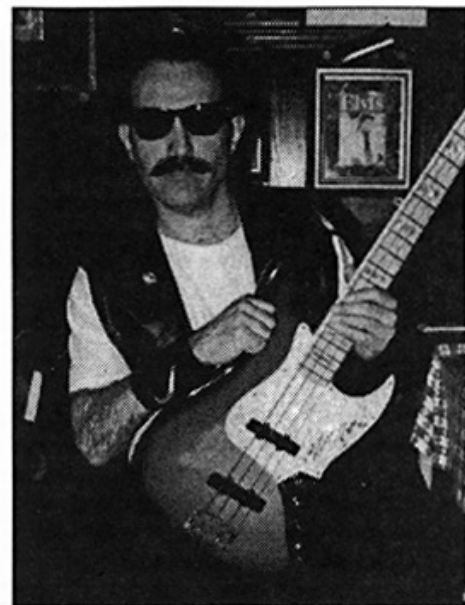
Drummer George DeMott.

label artists, the band is looking to sign a multi-album deal and include their previous catalog of material in the albums *Tuff Life* (1988) and *Burnin' Blues* (1993). Additionally, the band is starting to sell their

albums via the Internet at their web site <http://www.coupedevilles.com> "We can now release the *Burnin' Blues* album, and the call for the album between Syracuse, Rochester, Buffalo, and Toronto is incredible. If we had copies every night, we could sell a bunch." As a note, *Burnin' Blues* has sold in 33 countries, and there is some interest from distributors in Europe and England for new material/product.

On the road, the band is all business and completely professional. No one gets drunk or takes drugs. When the night is over, they are in the manager's office with their briefcases ready to settle up the night's receipts. Too many musicians forget that it IS a business. They have played clubs, as well as big festivals like the Memphis Blues Festival and the Indianapolis Blues Festival. This summer, they will once again be opening for The Fabulous Thunderbirds, as the T-Birds make their area visit to Darien Lake.

The Coupes are not at a loss for honors either. In addition to *Tuff Life* being used for Comic Relief, they placed third in the 1990 Blues Foundation's International Blues Competition in Memphis, they have received a Certificate of Achievement from Billboard magazine for their independently released song, *Time For You To Pay*, and were in consideration for a 1999 Grammy Award nomination for Best Contemporary Blues Album



Bassist Chris DeFazio.

for *Blues For You*.

Perhaps the greatest honor comes from fellow musicians. I was recently at an audition, where one of the musicians that was putting together a band was given a tape of music to learn. One side was almost completely filled with songs by The Coupe De Villes. The "Magic" showed through.