

## Big Blues hits with second annual Blue Wing Blues Festival

Contributed by T. Watts  
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UPPER LAKE &ndash; Perhaps the Stars of Lake County should include a new category for their annual awards banquet. Something like the &ldquo;Small Town Marketing Genius of the Year.&rdquo;

The envelope, please.

And the winner is Bernie Butcher of the Tallman Hotel/Blue Wing Saloon and Caf .

With Butcher&rsquo;s second annual Blue Wing Blues Festival, Big Blues have hit Upper Lake one more time. As the legendary star of Wednesday night&rsquo;s opening show, Charlie Musselwhite, would say, &ldquo;I ain&rsquo;t lyin&rsquo;.&rdquo;

First things first. Even the opening act on Wednesday night are stars. The great Kathi McDonald with Rich Kirch and David Hayes sport resumes that boast tenure with some of the greatest names in music.

At the tender age of 19 McDonald became the first white woman to be an Ikette. In a post show interview McDonald spoke highly of both Ike and Tina Turner. She actually lived with the Turners and was a witness to the many talents of them both.

McDonald has also worked with Big Brother and The Holding Company, Joe Cocker, Leon Russell, The Rolling Stones and many others. She has appeared on more than 150 albums. Her own first solo project, &ldquo;Insane Asylum,&rdquo; is a collector&rsquo;s item.

Guitar man Rich Kirch was born in Chicago and learned that style of blues first hand. He became a member of the Jimmy Dawkins Band which secured him a regular spot on the Chicago Blues scene. He has played in Musselwhite&rsquo;s band and spent 13 years with John Lee Hooker. Visit Kirch at his Web site, [www.richkirch.com](http://www.richkirch.com). 'Nuff said..

David Hayes has played bass for Terry and The Pirates, Van Morrison, Southside Johnny and The Ashbury Jukes, Jesse Colin Young and many others. For more information on his music visit [www.davidhayesmusic.com](http://www.davidhayesmusic.com).

McDonald, Kirch and Hayes played a dynamic set of tunes to open the show, covering the likes of Sonny Boy Williamson, Peter Frampton, Muddy Waters, Freddie King and others. McDonald&rsquo;s three-and-a-half-octave voice was in fine form and the band&rsquo;s set was very explosive. They set the stage for local favorites Twice As Good.

Father and son team Rich and Paul Stewart notched up the energy immediately upon taking the stage. They opened their set with their theme song, &ldquo;2XG,&rdquo; and followed it with T-Bone Walker&rsquo;s &ldquo;T-Bone Shuffle.&rdquo; Paul lost his porkpie hat while cavorting through the crowd but didn&rsquo;t miss a lick. The band, featuring Bruce Hodge on drums and Chris Hoke on bass, burned through &ldquo;Bad Case Of Love,&rdquo; &ldquo;Don&rsquo;t Treat Me Right,&rdquo; &ldquo;Shake Your Money Maker,&rdquo; &ldquo;Going To Mississippi&rdquo; and &ldquo;Shame, Shame, Shame,&rdquo; among others.

The legendary Charlie Musselwhite joined Twice As Good onstage for the last hour of their set.

Musselwhite, Mississippi born and blues bred, has recorded more than 25 albums and is an elder statesman of the genre. He introduced the crowd to a form of Brazilian blues that he learned on a recent trip there.

The stage marriage of Twice As Good and Musselwhite is seemingly one cast in Blues Heaven. The dance floor was frantic with Lake County dancers and one observer was heard to declare, &ldquo;Hell, Musselwhite oughta just take Twice As Good on the road with him.&rdquo;

Sounds like a plan to me.

T. Watts writes on arts and culture for Lake County News, and hosts his own music program on KPZ 88.1 FM. He's covering the blues festival this week in Upper Lake.

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