



Wayne Baker Brooks

By Amanda Elliott

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StreetWise Contributor

Third generation blues musician, Wayne Baker Brooks, has compiled a new blend to the blues and a new inspiration behind his lyrics.

When Brooks debuted his version of blues—a combination of funk, hip-hop, and blues in his 2004 CD, *Mystery*, it received four stars from *All Music Guide*. Now, he is continuing his creative flow with his album debuting this fall. Rather than releasing his music all at once, he is giving each song its moment in the spotlight.

His song, *Something's Going Down in the City*, released on February 15, was inspired by President Obama—particularly when he was giving a speech. “He had his jacket off, and he was drenched in sweat and hovering over the mic, and I was in awe. I have never seen a politician get as passionate as Obama,” Brooks said.



By Alex Kluff

With his unique musical blend, Brooks appeals to the younger demographic. “When you look at the crowd, it is 35 and up and it’s a beautiful thing, but that crowd can’t water roots like it should.”

As a whole, sales in the music industry have plummeted with the progression of the digital age. “Blues only represents one percent of the market—it’s more like less than one. So, if the music industry is going down, we are going to feel it first,” Brooks said.

“When Clinton was president, I would be booked 250 dates of the year to perform live. When Bush got in, it got cut in half—and each year it got cut in half.”

Rather than continuing with traditional blues, Brooks relates to Obama’s mission to change. He initially had the idea of mixing music genres when he performed in 1991. When he suggested putting blues and rap together, he said his friends responded, “What are you going to be called—blap?”

Brooks relies on the next generation to carry on the rhythm of blues. “[They can] help buy and grow with the music. It can teach the history of American music, which is the blues. All the music that you like, it wouldn’t be without blues. You have to water your roots in order to grow.”

On March 4, Brooks performed alongside Eddy “The Chief” Clearwater at the House of Blues to benefit Zacharias, a sexual abuse center.

Eddy Clearwater

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Elton John may bolt out his song about the blues, but Eddy “The Chief” Clearwater, a blues artist for the past 50-some odd years, has a different take on his genre.

Clearwater describes it as “Many stories about many conditions about life: sickness, love affairs that people go through.” Through the years he has added depth and wisdom to his musical compilations. “You experience things as you grow older that you never witnessed before.”

One way for people to send their message is through music. Music has a variety of purposes: to dance to sing, to cry, to laugh.

Clearwater wants an audience, “that enjoys what I am playing, not necessarily has to dance, but enjoy paying attention to what I’m saying.”

Rich in history and culture, the blues genre has in turn nurtured other music forms. Clearwater’s music mixes gospel, jazz, and rock and roll. Inspired by Chuck Berry’s rock and roll take on the blues, Clearwater is particularly gift-



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ed with the guitar, which he can play upside down.

“With his powerful left-handed guitar playing, unique hybrid of West Side blues, relentless rockabilly and high energy performances, Eddy ‘The Chief’ is Chicago’s premier blues showman,” noted the *Chicago Tribune* in a review of his *West Side Strut* CD carried on Amazon.wcom.

Clearwater is not “blue” about the current economic downturn, but uses it in his music. “By the economy being down, that’s what blues songs are about—about being down, that’s where faith comes in and songs that lead to positive thinking,” Clearwater said.

He has a new CD coming out next November, untitled at the moment. Clearwater promises “different material about using common sense.”



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