

Teaching About Roots and Fruits: Hawkeye Herman Presents a Workshop for Musicians and Educators

Written by Karen McFarland

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In November, bluesman Michael "Hawkeye" Herman will spend a week at a festival. At night, he'll perform in concert halls and clubs. During the day, he'll play in schools, jails, halfway houses, and other social-service institutions.

That probably sounds similar to the Blues in the Schools residencies that the Mississippi Valley Blues Society has been hosting for the past seven years. But Herman's November gig is in Paris, France.

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And Blues Sur Seine has invited Hawkeye to come early to its 2007 festival to conduct a retreat for European blues musicians who want to become involved in blues-education programs.

A Quad Cities native now residing in southern Oregon, Hawkeye is a blues artist who's written scores for two plays (*El Paso Blue* and *Handler*), penned a song about the Mississippi River flood of 1993, and performed his own composition about Hurricane Katrina for the BBC.

But he's also been going into schools for 30 years, performing for and teaching children about the blues. Now he's expanded his aim to include instructing musicians and teachers how to become blues educators.

Hawkeye is excited that he's going back to Blues Sur Seine after performing there last year - the only artist asked to return out of approximately 250 over nine years. The festival "asked me to do a two-day workshop similar to the one I'll be doing in the Quad Cities on Saturday, October 6," he said in a recent phone interview. This workshop for musicians and teachers will show them "how to get involved in Blues in the Schools according to their skills and background."

The Mississippi Valley Blues Society (of which I am a board member) is presenting Hawkeye's free workshop on Saturday from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m. at the River Music Experience in Davenport. Blues musicians and educators can register by calling (563) 322-5837.

Hawkeye decided to set up workshops for musicians and teachers because he got so many requests for going into schools that he couldn't fulfill. "There's a huge need for more blues educators," he said. "There are only a few of us who travel nationally and do blues education. Yet every child should have the advantage of knowing the history of our culture.

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Photo by Jerry Eichen, The Register



MICHAEL "HAWKEYE" HERMAN