Written by Jeff Ignatius
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The phrase "hornets' nest" is usually employed as a metaphor, and it is in the lead track from Joe Price's new record, *Rain Or Shine*. But the origin of the song called "Hornet's Nest" is quite literal.

"I realized that it was time to start writing some words to some of these grooves," Price said in a phone interview this week, "so I went out to the shed and ... I started playing a little groove, and the next thing I know I had hornets all around me. And they were buzzing me. ... There were hornets' nests all over the damned shed. It was the *slide*, the sound of the slide, that made them curious. They never did sting me."

It could have been as simple as the slide guitar, but I'd like to think it might have been something more mystical that stirred up the hornets: the energy of creation after a songwriting and recording layoff of almost a decade.

{mp3}joe-price-hornets-nest{/mp3}

Price - the blues guitarist, singer, and songwriter who was inducted into the Iowa Blues Hall of Fame in 2002 and played in the legendary Mother Blues Band - will perform with his wife Vicki on Friday at Davenport's Dam View Inn.

Although *Rain Or Shine* is Price's first record since 2000, there's no evident rust. Price's gnarled blues include acoustic stompers and electric furies and slow-burners, split evenly between songs and instrumentals. Recorded live to two-inch tape, the album could have come from deep in the last century. The acoustic numbers feel ancient and authentic, like field

recordings, while the electric tracks sound straight from the roadhouse. And it's all appealingly immediate - visceral, unfussy, and played with the clear articulation of a veteran bluesman.

"I wanted to record differently than I did with the *Designated Driver* record," Price said. "It was all done old-school. ... I think it's a warmer sound."

Price admits that "I was way overdue" with a new album. "I had a little spell there where I couldn't write very well." His mother died in 2001, he said, and that was the main thing preventing him from writing and laying down new songs.

He never stopped writing or performing, he said, but the writing wasn't productive. "I go through periods where I don't take it seriously," he said. This batch of tunes began coming together a few years ago, and it took him about a year to finish them.

"I don't consider myself a writer," he said. "I don't even consider myself a singer. I'm just a guitar picker. A barroom entertainer. That's all I am.

"It's hard for me to do anything. I don't learn very fast, and I don't write fast. It takes me forever to write a song. Whether it be an instrumental or a vocal, it's tough."

But don't expect to wait another nine years for a Joe Price record.

Following Joe's *Rain Or Shine* and Vicki's *A Brand New Place* (from last year), the couple is planning a joint album that he said could be out as early as next year.

"Our audience wants me and Vicki to put a record out together," he said. "We get that all the time. ... It's going to be a while, but we're working on it."

Joe & Vicki Price will perform at the Dam View Inn (410 East Second Street in Davenport) on Friday, May 22, in a fundraiser for the Mississippi Valley Blues Society. The show starts at 9 p.m., and cover is $5.

For more information on Price, visit JoePriceBlues.com or MySpace.com/joepriceblues .