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Mud Morganfield has this to say about being the son of Muddy Waters, who also sired (in a less literal way) Chicago blues: "It's a curse, and then sometimes it's a blessing. Because people begin to compare you."

Don't feel too sorry for Morganfield, though. His career is built on re-creating the Muddy Waters sound, and he's almost begging for the comparison.

"I wanted to represent my dad's music, and what he stood for," Morganfield said in a recent phone interview. "It came natural to me. ... People think maybe I was somewhere in the basement studying it, and listening to recordings. You can't get that close with that. I do what I do because I'm his son. That's just all there is to it."

Written by Jeff Ignatius

Wednesday, 23 June 2010 05:48

Although he's played music most of his life -- starting with the drums his father bought him each Christmas, and then graduating to bass -- he only began a professional career in the past five years, when he was already past age 50. Morganfield said that after Muddy Waters died in 1983, he began visiting his son in his sleep: "It started with me having dreams about my dad -- reoccurring dreams, same thing. [He] never would talk to me, but [he was] always just there playing and singing. ... Maybe he wanted me to do something. And here I am."

When he appears at the IH Mississippi Valley Blues Festival, expect a mix of old and new. "I try to mix it up, with a few of mine and a few of Pops'," Morganfield said.

He declined to name his favorite Muddy Waters songs. "All of 'em," he said. "He was my dad. Even on them that some people think he didn't do well on, I love 'em. Anything that came out of my father's mouth, I loved 'em. I love him."

Morganfield said that when he's performing his father's music, he feels close to him. "Unbelievable. It's just like he comes inside of me or is sitting right next to me," he said. "Always. I can't hit those kind of notes and do that kind of blues like that It has to be God and my dad."

In reviewing *Fall Waters Fall*, Morganfield's debut, STLBlues.net noted that he "possesses a singing voice that is very reminiscent of his father's, especially when singing in a lower register. Mud can definitely channel the elder Morganfield's enunciating, of the way Muddy would 'hit' (or stress) certain syllables for emphasis or emotional impact."

The CD of his own songs, Morganfield said, was an attempt to craft an identity distinct from his father's. "My dad came up in one era, and I came up in another era," he said. "I have my own blues, too."

He also has a live album, and he's preparing for a new studio CD. "I'm trying to establish myself now as my own bluesman," he said. But he stressed that Muddy Waters will always be a touchstone: "Quote me on this: There will *always* ... be something in my work pertaining to my dad. Always. ... I'm going to always put some of my dad's stuff somewhere in there."

2010 Blues Fest -- "Pretty Close to Pop": Mud Morganfield (Friday, 7 p.m., Bandshell)

Written by Jeff Ignatius

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But Muddy Waters hasn't returned to his dreams, Morganfield said. "He hasn't done that," he said. "Since I started this career, actually. Sometimes I look for that.

"My dad was always on the road. And he didn't get a chance to really be right there. I saw more of my Pops going to work to support us than I saw him in his face.

"I wish he could come to me sometimes now still. Kind of explain to me. Sometimes I get discouraged. I get blues like anybody else. I need that kind of guidance and talking."

But Morganfield said he doesn't doubt that he's effectively capturing his father's spirit: "I've heard way worse, and I'm going to leave it at that. I've been told it's pretty close to Pop."

Mud Morganfield and his band will also perform on Thursday, July 1, at 8 p.m. at The Muddy Waters (1708 State Street in Bettendorf). Cover is \$5.