

Ronnie Baker Brooks returns to the Minnesota Music Cafe

Written by



The Minnesota Music Cafe, 499 Payne Ave., St. Paul, announced the return of "The Visionary Guitarist " from Chicago, Ronnie Baker Brooks.

Baker Brooks will bring his band to The Minnesota Music Cafe on Thursday, Mar.21. Doors open at 6 p.m. and tickets are \$10 in advance and \$15 at the door.

As the son of blues legend Lonnie Brooks, Baker Brooks grew up steeped in American music tradition. He came of age watching the fieriest guitar players and most soulful singers of a previous era express their deepest feelings through their music. He knows the transcendent release at the heart of soul, blues and rock.

As in the Olympic tradition, when the torch gets passed on, the idea is to keep it burning, while

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at the same time move it forward. It's a fitting image for Baker Brooks. Not only does he sing with soulful fire and play with a white-hot intensity; he's also carrying the torch from the previous generation of soul and blues greats and moving the music into the future.

"I grew up among the best of the best," said Baker Brooks. "Every time I play, I feel like I've got to do it with the authenticity and passion that I saw in guys like Buddy Guy, Muddy Waters, B.B. King and my father. But I also have to put my twist on it. None of those guys repeated what came before them."

Baker Brooks' twist involves fusing blues-rock with deep soul and modern hip-hop vocals and funk rhythms. Working with legendary producer Jellybean Johnson, Baker Brooks takes roots sounds and transforms them into something that spans the ages. He draws on the choppy, hip-shaking rhythms of funk, the emotional truth of soul and the forcefulness of rock to bring a distinctive dimension to his groundbreaking sound.



"I wanted to do something that would bring young people to the blues, and then give them the real hardcore thing at the same time," said Baker Brooks. "When I grew up, all my friends listened to rap and funk, and I listened to the blues. So I heard their music and they heard mine. I think we both saw some connection between them. I like that line in the movie 'Hustle & Flow' when they say this new rap song ain't nothing but 'Backdoor Man' written for modern streets. It's a hip-hop world right now, but I want to bring a little blues to the party."

Baker Brooks has earned his spot on the front lines. He spent a dozen years backing his father, watching how the master entertainer drew enthusiastic responses night after night. For years, Baker Brooks put to use his lessons learned on stage every night, opening his father's show to great response. With his father's blessing, he left the band to strike out on his own shortly after releasing his own debut album, "Golddigger" in 1998. "Golddigger" won Best New Blues Album in 1998 from Real Blues Magazine.

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Like his father before him, Baker Brooks became a Chicago blues mainstay, playing regularly in Chicago area clubs. After the release of his second album, 2001's "Take Me Witcha," he hit the road for what turned out to be a seemingly non-stop three-year tour, picking up devoted new fans all along the way. And while he hadn't planned to take five years between recordings, he wanted to do it right. The fusion blues man made up for lost time by packing as many tunes as possible on "The Torch," which was released in 2006. The Boston Herald declared that "The Torch" is, "ferocious and unrelenting and may be the year's best blues album."

When Baker Brooks' music was exposed to younger listeners it has proven to be a welcome introduction.

The Minnesota Music Cafe will be jumping on Thursday, Mar.21 when this virtuosic guitarist and his band take the stage to perform their unique brand of blues music. For more information or for advanced tickets, call (651) 776-4699 or visit www.minnesotamusiccafe.com.