

# Where will the blues bands go?

By Dan Kaufman  
Emerald Contributor

Taylor's Tavern, once the home of Eugene's blues, is closed and is not likely to come back. For blues fans, this is sad reality. However, two other local establishments are picking up the slack and offering inexpensive weekly blues jams.

Every Thursday night at Good Times Cafe and Bar, 375 E. Seventh Ave. and Wednesday night at the Butte Tavern, 211 Washington St., local bands are getting together to play the blues.

The \$1 cover charge makes it the best live entertainment value around.

The blues jams offer a venue for local musicians to play on stage and for audiences to hear some good music.

"I'm surprised it sounded so good, and I didn't realize the musicians had not rehearsed," said Kelly Linder, a patron to the Good Times jam.

Musicians show up at 9 p.m. when sets are arranged, and by 9:45 the blues arrive, usually for a total of six different sets.

Most blues sets at the jams include two guitars, a vocalist, bass, drums and often a harmonica or horn. The musicians who hang around until closing can expect to make a few dollars and a chance to "talk shop" with fellow players.

Often the musicians may not know each other or have even played together. However, the spontaneous nature of the jams creates an atmosphere of excitement because musicians can make it sound great or fall on their faces.

The blues jam idea was generated more than 12 years ago by disc jockey Gavin "The Rooster Man" Fox, Monday nights at the Black Forest Tavern. It then moved to BJ Kelly's (now Oregon West Fitness) and finally ended up at Taylor's about six years ago.

"The Monday night jam will

soon be happening again," Fox said. "It has been going on too long to die."

Community support makes it possible for the two blues jams to continue. They are so popular with musicians that not all can play every week, although the jam organizer tries to make fair cuts each week.

Fans have yet to be turned away from the clubs although the blues jams often draw moderately large crowds.

Ted Essig, a DJ at KLCX and University student, created the Thursday night jam at Good Times earlier this year. Its popularity has been steadily rising, especially since Taylor's has closed.

The Butte jam has been a sporadically running jam for a number of years. Because of changes in ownership, it is loosely organized. However, this helps foster a less strict blues format where rock and reggae can sometimes be heard.

There are a number of reasons for listeners and musicians to check out the blues jams.

Says University student and blues fan Gina Zornes, "I go to more jams (than other forms of live music) because it's cheaper, draws a larger crowd and because the music is really good. You get to see local talents who don't normally play together."

Fox agrees and adds, "You can see a piece of our musical heritage right now. If you went to the jams 12 years ago you would have seen the Robert Crays and Curtis Salgados. Now you see Eugene's blues veterans and the up and coming."

These same benefits apply to musicians, as well. Young players can learn from the old and introduce fresh ideas. Many Eugene musicians hone their skills at the jams and also form bands with the people they meet there.

Chad Broadfoot, a classical

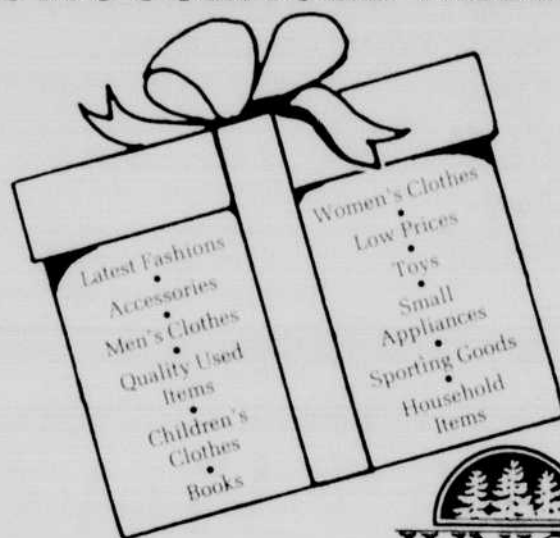
pianist, plays guitar at the blues jams and admits that he learned how to "groove" at the jams as well as learning the politics and business side of music.

If you are interested in playing at a blues jam, take time to learn the blues progression and talk to one of the jam organizers. All players except the drummer must supply their own instruments. Guitar players also need their own amplifiers while drummers need sticks.

Although the two blues venues don't allow minors inside, special arrangements can be made for musicians under 21 years old.

Styles sometimes clash and musicians have off nights. Hopefully, the musicians recover from mistakes and make the next song better. Unpredictability is the nature of the Eugene blues jams. Unlike large metropolitan blues venues, the Eugene jams are all inclusive and allow any interested musician to participate.

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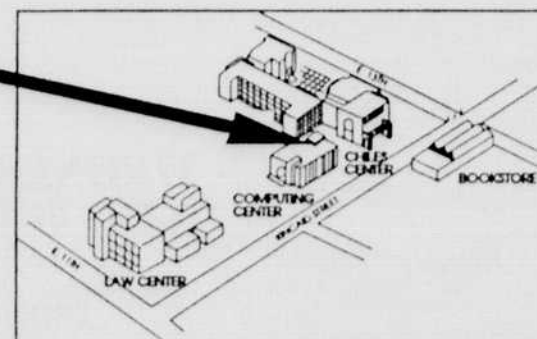
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