

Musician cures curbside blues

By Tammy Batey
Emerald Reporter

Students rush around 13th Avenue, seeking that elusive text at the bookstore, extracting cash from an automatic teller machine or pursuing the day's first cup of coffee.

But whatever the errand, they are usually not too busy to stop for a few minutes to listen to the man at the curb, playing the blues on his guitar and harmonica.

"People like what I do; it brings people up," says Eagle Park Slim, who often performs on 13th Avenue. "People tell me, 'You made my morning' or 'You made my day.' It makes me feel good knowing I made someone's day."

Slim started singing the blues more than 30 years ago in Eagle Park, Ill. He began playing the harmonica at age 9 and was playing guitar by 12.

His mother owned a club and band members who played there gave Slim their old harmonicas. "I didn't choose it (blues music), it chose me," Slim says. "At the time it was handy. There were always three or four harmonicas laying around."

By age 15 he had his own rock 'n' roll band — Eagle Park Slim and the Blue Flames. The band played local halls and school talent shows and soon became a well-known act in Eagle Park, Slim says.

Slim says he has played with some of the biggest names in the music business, including Chuck Berry, Tina Turner, Red Hot Chili Peppers, Jimmy Reed and Joe Cocker.

However, after having an agent, Slim realized several years ago he wanted to handle his own career, he says.

"Money sounds good but it don't make you happy. I'm my own manager. An agent is just going to take half your money," Slim says. "I go places. This is not just a street thing. I know I can take my act anywhere, but I choose to do it here and I'm making a living out of it. There's a business in doing this if you do it right and you make people feel good."

Slim says he has a message in his music. "There's peace through music," he says. "When there's music on the street it changes the atmosphere of people's minds. I had a guy listen to my music one day and say, 'I was about ready to break in a place,' but I gave him something," Slim says.

Slim has been adding his blues sound to the streets of Eugene for about 10 years now. He also travels to Canada, Seattle, St. Louis and Kansas



Photo by Sean Poston

When he's not playing outside the bookstore, Eagle Park Slim travels the country, playing at shows and fairs.

City among other places to appear in fairs and shows.

"I don't wait for anyone to book me. I book with people who are going to book me now," Slim says.

Blues music means a great deal to Slim, who says blues is a form of music that everyone can relate to.

"Blues music is the true meaning of life. A lot of people get the blues and don't even know they got them. Blues is not just by a woman, but there are other kinds. If you left your checkbook at home, you've got the blues. You could have a million dollars but it don't make a difference," Slim says.

Eagle Park Slim will next be seen performing at the Eugene's Saturday Market the weekends of Oct. 9-10 and Oct. 13-14. The Eagle Park Slim Band will be featured at the EMU Beer Gardens on Oct. 19.

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