

# Bar gigs to Billboard

Blues Traveler started out with keg party jammin' and ended up with national band success



Courtesy Photo  
Blues Traveler will perform at the Lane County Convention Center tonight.

By Layne Lakefish  
Emerald Entertainment Editor

In the beginning they called themselves The Blues Band. Simple. To the point. But since then, that point has changed.

Now they're called Blues Traveler. They stuck with Blues, and added the word Traveler to immortalize Gozer the Traveler from *Ghostbusters*. Presto, a new name. There is one slight problem though — they don't consider themselves blues musicians.

"The music we play is more rock 'n' roll," said Brendan Hill, the band's 21-year-old drummer. "It's like blues jazz."

It's exactly that sound that

Blues Traveler will be performing tonight at 9 p.m. as they take to the Lane County Convention center stage, 796 W. 13th St. Tickets can be purchased at the EMU Main Desk for \$13.50 or at the door.

That rock-blues-jazz combination is one thing that hasn't changed since the four band members first joined forces back in 1983. They all met in New Jersey and proceeded to become known as keg party entertainment. Then, in 1987, they packed their bags and headed for New York City.

"I made a decision when I was 18," Hill said. "It was either go to college and all that, or go on with music. We were all really into it, and we just said, 'Let's do it.'"

With that move came their name change. "When we got to New York, there were so many blues bands we decided to change our name," Hill said. With that new name, they went in search of gigs — and found them.

They started playing at two different bars, but quickly moved on when they realized they were playing their unique blend of musical styles for purist audiences. From there they landed a few more gigs, here and there, and soon they were playing 20 shows a month.

By then they had developed a following, and one night one of the followers turned out to be an A & M representative. "We moved to New York City,

played in clubs for three years and then hooked up with A & M," Hill said.

Not a bad story for four men from New Jersey — four young men. Ranging in age from 21 to 24, these guys have already toured the country and released two albums, of which the most current one has already hit the Billboard charts.

"This tour has been going really well," Hill said. "We're usually an underground, word-of-mouth band, but we hit the Billboard charts. I think we're at number 125."

Now, instead of looking for house parties to play at, they're living the rock 'n' roll life. "We got a share of fame,

but it's less of an ego-fame and more like friends," Hill said.

"This is the experience of a lifetime," he said. "One out of a million get to do this. Everyday is a party, but you've got to keep your head under control."

Their shows are big parties too. "Our live shows are much more aggressive than our albums," Hill said. "The opening band, Widespread Panic, comes out to get the crowd's reaction. Then the rest of the night is a party."

As for the future, it looks like they're going to stick with music. "We all have the music in us for now, but who can tell," Hill said.

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