

R.I.P. Magic Slim

# R.I.P. MAGIC SLIM

With the passing of Magic Slim we say farewell to one of the greatest traditional Chicago Blues artists of our time. Magic Slim died of complications from a breathing disorder after weeks of hospitalization in Pennsylvania. He was 75.

Though a great singer, guitarist and band leader, it was Magic Slim's undeniable personality that set him apart. He could play heartfelt, rough and tumble Chicago Blues with a zest that was unmatched. Every part of Magic Slim's being was the Blues – his geographical path, his hard partying, fun loving personality, and his far traveling, dedicated lifestyle.

Magic Slim's patented two-guitar driven Chicago Blues sound was both a concert hall pleaser and a dance floor filler. He had, perhaps, the largest repertoire in the Blues, knowing thousands of songs that he could call upon at any time. Living Blues Magazine put it this way: "Magic Slim consistently offers no-frills houserockin' Blues. He and his band are a national treasure."

Born in rural Mississippi to a farming life, Slim lost his little finger in a cotton gin accident at a young age, but that did not seem to hinder his guitar playing. He arrived on the Chicago Blues scene in the mid-1950s and became friends with *Magic Sam*, who gave *Morris Holt* his official Blues name – Magic Slim. At first Slim found the Chicago Blues scene competitive and intimidating so he returned to Mississippi where he spent the next five years working on his craft. And then he returned to the Windy City to find success. After recruiting his brother Nick to play bass, Magic Slim & the Teardrops were formed, and in 1966 their first single "Scuffin" was released. Some years later, Slim's 1975 single "I Wonder Why" produced by *Steve Cushing* (then a drummer in Slim's band) won high praise for its raw, gutsy sound. Throughout the mid-1970s Slim and his tough band worked the South and North Side clubs every night of the week, gaining a huge following and getting the attention of promoters and record labels.



Europe embraced Slim with numerous tours and record releases on labels such as MCM, Black & Blue, Isabel and later Wolf Records for whom Slim would record many albums. Magic Slim was also part of the highly celebrated 1978 Alligator Records compilation series Living Chicago Blues, which earned much U.S. airplay among Blues DJs.

Slim signed with Blind Pig Records and released the CD Gravel Road in 1990. He worked with the label for 22 years, releasing 10 albums and a live DVD. Slim's band became noted for the second guitarist who would play an essential role in Slim's sound and who would open the sets before Slim took over the microphone. This guitar role was defined early on by the great work of *Junior Pettis* AKA "Daddy Rabbit". After Pettis left the

band, a long legacy of artists served as the Teardrops' second guitarist including *Pete Allen*, *James Wheeler*, *Jake Dawson*, *Jon McDonald*, and of course *John Primer* – whose 13-year tenure with this band starting in 1983 is highly celebrated, and served as a launching pad for John's own powerful career.

In 1994 Slim moved from Chicago to Lincoln, Nebraska where he had played for years prior as a popular attraction at the Zoo Bar. In 2009 Slim's beloved brother and longtime musical partner, *Nick Holt* passed away. Slim's son, Shawn "Lil' Slim" Holt has emerged as a great young talent on guitar

and has been a feature of some of Slim's more recent shows. Slim's last release, "Bad Boy" on the Blind Pig label was released in mid-2012. A movie called "We Be Kings" was in the works that would have featured Magic Slim as its lead character in a fictional story of a rediscovered Blues man. We can look back at Magic Slim's long and fruitful career and see a man who has lived his dreams.

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After humble beginnings, Slim's persistent and consistent hard work and talent earned him a rightful place as one of the greatest Blues artists of his time. Slim's recordings will live on as a permanent testament to his greatness with over 30 albums released on labels such as Alligator, Wolf, MCM, Black & Blue, Candy Apple, Rooster Blues, Red Lightnin', Delmark, Evidence, Isabel, Storyville, Tone Zone, and most recently, Blind Pig Records who have annually released top quality albums by this great artist. He received numerous awards and nominations for his recordings, for his band and for his role as an uncompromising traditional Blues artist.

Thanks to Slim's manager *Marty Salzman* and road manager *Michael Blakemore* for their amazing behind-the-scenes support work. Also thanks to the booking work of *Max Cooperstein*, *Concerted Efforts*, *Adrian Flores*, and *Jillina Arrigo* for their contributions over the years. Slim always lived his life on his terms and he met and exceeded his dreams. We can look back and think of all the times that he brought a smile to our face. He was the consummate bluesman and we will always love him for that. May he now rest in peace after his tireless work here on earth. We thank God for blessing us with the Blues of Magic Slim.

*BOB CORRITORE*

## MAGIC SLIM AND WOLF RECORDS

The Story starts in summer 1986 – I, *Hannes Folterbauer*, the owner of Wolf Records went to WISE fools club to see Magic Slim & The Teardrops. Wolf Records was founded in 1982 and recorded Chicago greats like *Eddie Taylor*, the Houserockers and many others. I saw Slim the first time in 1975 in a South Side Club where *Bob Koester* (Delmark Records) brought me! Since this time I was a Slim fan – until today! He was one of the greatest for me – like *Howlin' Wolf*, *Muddy Waters* and *J.B. Hutto* – for me he was J.B. Hutto without Slide-guitar!! So in the WISE Fool Club Slim played a terrific set with *John Primer* on guitar, *Nick Holt* on bass and *Nate Applewhite* on drums.

In a break I went to Slim and asked him if I can make a record with his guitar player John Primer because I have not so much money to pay him! After thinking over 5 or 10 minutes Slim asked me: "How much money do you have?" I told him ... \$. He said to me: "OK. When do you have time for a record session – next Sunday?" So I arranged a record session in Chicago, wrote down the songs which I liked when he was playing at WISE fools and the session could start! So after 6 hours we recorded Slim & The Teardrops at their best – they (and Wolf Records) won a W.C. Handy Blues Award for that CD!

From this session Wolf Records & Slim worked together for 26 years! Slim recorded different Live and studio CDs, mostly recorded in EUROPE, but also in the US. A CD together with Nick Holt and one of the Live CDs – Live On The Road – got also a W.C. Handy Blues Award!

A main step for Slims and Wolf Records career was the 5 CD collection ZOO Bar Collection Vol. 1–5 and the "only" acoustic solo CD: Magic Slim – Alone & Unplugged – Thanks to



*Phil Hammer*. Yeah the band with *Jr. Pettis* and John Primer as rhythm guitarists at the Zoo Bar Collection is Blues history. Slim's live energy was captured on CD!

Slim made many tours to Europe – thanks to *Didier Tricard* and his mother – and Slim visited very often my hometown Vienna. The most people (40.000) came to a festival in Budapest, Hungary. Slim and I had never any problems – only



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with the size of the beds, I knew I have to arrange a big bed, otherwise Slim couldn't take a rest!

Also in Chicago I saw Slim at many concerts (at B.L.U.E.S., at Blues etc., at Buddy Guy's Legends and Blue Chicago), the last concert I saw him was at Kingston Mines! *Frank Pellegrino* (Kingston Mines) made the best announcements for the Magic Man! Magic Slim is part of the US-music – the Blues culture – and therefore he is national treasure – he created a band sound which was 100% originated in the 30's in Mississippi and modified by Muddy Waters and Howlin' Wolf to the Chicago Blues.

The first time I thought Slim will have bad health problems was at a gig at B.L.U.E.S. He got a drink from a so called friend, but in the drink was poison! So after 2 songs after a break, Slim fell down – from 1 second to another. I thought that Slim got a heart attack, but after the ambulance brought him to a hospital, I visited him on the next day at his South Side home and he was O.K.!

Slim visited Vienna in 2010 the last time, so last year in 2012 I wanted to see Slim again at a concert in Germany but he could not make it, we felt so empty, a concert hall full of people – but no Slim – it was like today – he will never play again! Because I had done great recordings from his last Vienna concerts, I asked *Marty Salzman* – Slims manager – if we can do another great CD by Slim & his new teardrops! So in November 2012 we signed a contract and the CD will be out early October this year! It is a proof that Slim played his music more than 60 years with the same energy and love!! His Blues became never old!

Slim played the real, down home Blues – he was a great singer, guitar player, showman and played always with a band of his own – the Teardrops! He didn't want to play with other musicians, so he got a sound nobody could reach! His band members were also great musicians: his brother Nick was a great singer and bass player, Jr. Pettis played a great rhythm guitar, but John Primer was one of the best – he & Nick gave Slim the back up which he wanted, which will always be Blues history!

We will miss Slim and he will always be in our hearts – with his music and as a human being! Bye bye Slim!

**HANNES FOLTERBAUER**  
WOLF RECORDS



*One of Magic Slim's W.C. Handy Awards*

### MAGIC SLIM ON WOLF RECORDS

- › Zoo Bar Collection Vol. 1–Vol. 5, [CD 120.301 – 120.306](#)
- › Magic Slim: Tin Pan Alley, [CD 120.809](#)
- › Magic Slim & The Teardrops: Rough Dried Woman [CD 120.820](#)
- › Magic Slim & The Teardrops, [CD 120.849](#)
- › Teardrops Blues Jam, [CD 120.855](#)
- › Magic Slim & Nick Holt, [CD 120.856](#)
- › Magic Slim: Live "On The Road", [CD 120.864](#)
- › Magic Slim: Magic Blues, [CD 120.870](#)
- › Magic Slim: Alone & Unplugged, [CD 120.882](#)
- › Magic Slim & The Teardrops: 44 Blues, [CD 120.895](#)

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### FUNERAL

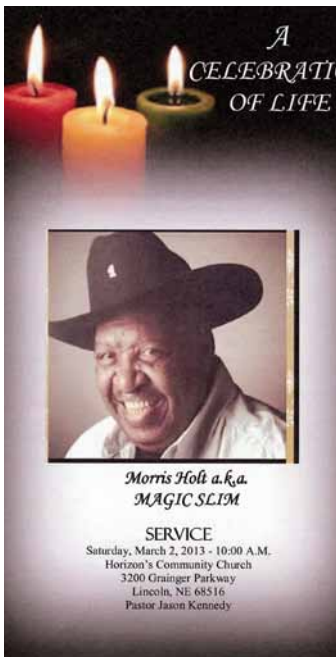
Lincoln is a small city in Nebraska, near the main city, Omaha. Just one cab-driver is waiting for the coming visitors from the airport. The driver knew Slim and knew that Slim died. In Lincoln Slim was famous, he played there for 30 years, mostly at the Zoo-Bar on 14<sup>th</sup> street downtown. But Slim will never play there again, today is his funeral-ceremony at Horizons Community Church! Lincoln residents and Blues fan *Phil Hammar* wants that Slim's children grow up in a safe neighbourhood, not get killed from the South Side gangs in Chicago!! Lincoln is a city, where all people live together!! This was Slim's home for 20 years!

But today is a sad day, *Marty Salzman*, *Didier Tricard*, *Michael Blackmore* and myself went by car to the church, where the ceremony started. We went first to the hall, where we met Slim's family: his 10 children, his wife Ann and all his re-

latives were there, also some of the teardrops – *Jon McDonald* and *Chris Biedron*. In the big church around 600 people were there and it was sooo sad! We could see Slim on DVD – he played “Crazy Woman” and “I’m a Blues Man”. After the ceremony Marty spoke to the audience, different memories about Slim – from South America to Europe, from Japan to his home-country! He had friends everywhere! Yes, Slim we will miss you!! After the ceremony we thought we have to go to the Zoo Bar, where Slim played everytime he came home from his tours! There is space for about 250 people – similar to the club B.L.U.E.S. in Chicago! The stage was empty – so empty, just one light was burning! But Slim's spirit will always be there!

Anyway we were glad we could be there to see the place where Slim lived and wrote Blues history!!!

HANNES FOLTERBAUER



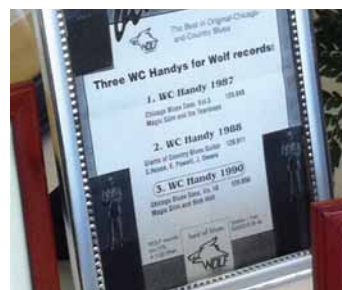
Michael Blackmore, Didier Tricard, Marty Salzman



Michael Blackmore, Didier Tricard, Hannes Folterbauer



Slim's awards



W.C. Handy Awards



Key to the City of Granada, Mississippi



The Zoo Bar



Empty Stage in the Zoo Bar



The Zoo Bar



Two Teardrops at the Funeral (Chris Biedron, Jon McDonald)



Phil Hammar (the producer of the Zoo Bar collection) and his ex-wife