

Idlewild South Blues Band gears up for New Year's Bash

By Constance Scrafield

New Year's? Here is an invitation to join the Idlewild South Blues Band for dancing 'til (almost) dawn, at the Orangeville Agricultural Society (OAC) Events Centre for the party of the year.

What a night this will be. Hockley Valley resident David Menard, band leader, drummer and vocalist, has brought together musicians some of whom have played around North America with the best in the business. They are Sam Carothers, on bass, James Légère, lead guitar and vocalist and Walter Taylor on keyboard.

There will be a buffet catered by Lavender Blue, a cash bar and music ? music for rocking and dancing. This was a big emphasis on the part of the band members with whom we had an interview during a break at their last gig.

?We'll play rock and roll, dance music,? said Mr. Légère, ?and some blues, but not just blues.?

Guitar player and vocalist, James Légère, a multi instrumentalist, generally plays the lead guitar with the Idlewild South Blues Band. He has his own band as well, Shankstreet Social, and is currently working with rapper Eh-K-Eh at other times.

A composer of songs since his early days, Mr. Légère has penned more rock and roll songs that are performed than ?any other man his age? in Canada.

On the bass is Sam Carothers who was friends with the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame inductees in the USA, the Allman brothers, Greg and Duane, when they all went to high school together in Daytona Beach, Florida. Band Leader, David Menard, went to the same high school as the Allman brothers and Sam Carothers, graduating some eight years later. During those years in Daytona, Mr. Menard got to know Greg Allman quite well. Mr. Menard's older brother used to shoot pool with Greg and Duane.

In fact, the name of the band, Idlewild South Blues Band, is taken from the Allman brothers' second album.

Before Mr. Carothers came to Toronto, he played with blues dance bands in the American south. Attracted by the Canadian songwriters of the 1970's Mr. Carothers came to Canada. Once here, he played in Toronto nightclubs and hotels with such luminaries as Ronnie Hawkins and, in a contrasting musical style, The John Arpin String Orchestra. He has played with a long list of well known artists, including Larry Kurtz and ?Trouble and Strife,? Gayle Ackroyd, Harrison Kennedy to name a few.

Mr. Carothers is a career music educator with public school boards. Meanwhile, he loves to play in the bands. He is a member of Little Caesar and The Consuls, which is currently in its 56th year, the longest-running Rhythm and Blues dance band in Canada. Of course, he is, as he says, ?very pleased to be a member of the Idlewild South Blues Band, preserving the culture and music that produced Southern Rock.?

Wild man on the keyboard, Walter Taylor, was invited to join the band this year in June. He too has a long history of music in his life, playing with bands from high school to the present day. Although, he loves to play and travel with the bands, Mr. Taylor had a career in Municipal Government for over 35 years. There is a park in Uxbridge named after him in honour of his service.

He too has been a member of Little Caesar and the Consuls, since 2003. David Menard comes to us from living in Texas, to where he moved from Florida, having purchased a property in Hockley Valley in the early 2000's. He has been playing the drums since 1966, engaged with blues bands in the south and eight years with the W.C. Clark Blues Review in Texas. W. C. Clark was the musical mentor for Stevie Ray Vaughan.

There was the New Year's Eve, 2000-01 when Mr. Menard was playing for Bobby Boyd. The Bobby Boyd Band played with Willy Nelson and shared the night's celebration with that famous star. The Bobby Boyd Band opened for Willy Nelson in Austin in 2003.

Mr. Menard has played with Trouble and Strife and has had his own band for several years now.

It was at this point in our conversation that they wanted to acknowledge Larry Kurtz: ?He is the guy who brings music to Orangeville and he was the ?common thread' that brought us together.?

There has been a lot of thought into putting together the best New Year's Eve Party.

With the cash bar, they gave consideration to transportation. So, free shuttle buses are running from 7:00 pm until 4:00 am from three locations: the Wal-Mart parking lot, Westside High School and Big Tyme Fitness and Boxing to bring partiers to and from the venue. Travelling every 20 minutes to get as many people as want to, to come to the party, the busses are all part of the ticket price.

The ticket price is \$20. This includes the shuttle buses, buffet and live music.

We observed that this is very reasonable and Mr. Menard explained: ?We wanted to keep the price low so that lots of people could come and enjoy a great party. It is another way for us to promote our band and really introduce ourselves into the music life of Orangeville and the area.?

Idlewild South Blues Band has a Facebook page with lots of information and photos.

Tickets are available from Broadway Music, Aardvark, the Hockley General Store and by telephone at 519-278-0032. You can also buy tickets at the door, whether you drive to the Agricultural Centre on Mono's 5 Sideroad or catch one of the shuttle buses. They will take you there for free even without a ticket in order to buy one there.

Everybody: have a great evening with the Idlewild South Blues Band and Happy New Year!