

8 Cool Things About Cool John Ferguson

Written by Lisa Annelouise Rentz
Tuesday, 27 May 2008 07:26

1. His next blues concert is on Saturday, May 31st and there is no charge. His appearance is part of the free Street Music on Paris Avenue series, which is produced by the Arts Council of Beaufort County and presented by the Town of Port Royal. Cool John starts at 5:30; bring your chairs and dancing shoes.



2. Cool John was playing the guitar by the time he was five years old and growing up on St. Helena Island. His momma brought it home, but not for him, and he had to prove that he could play. “I saw that guitar and fell in love. It was something mystical,” Cool John remembered, “She found me on the porch one day playing a song, and that was history.”

3. He’s got roots. Plenty of locals remember him as a young man, when the self-taught blues musician played local churches and praise houses, and appeared on Lowcountry Sing. He combines gospel, blues, funk, country, jazz, and rhythm & blues, and has played tent revival circuits, with LaFace Records of Atlanta, GA, and sound tracks too.

4. He has mastered the guitar. He can play all parts of Green Onions by Booker T & the MGs—a soul instrumental hit from 1962, the twelve bar blues tune with a rippling organ line that was also featured in Quadrophenia the film— all at the same time. Soul comes home.

5. He lives in Beaufort, and he’s international. Taj Mahal ranks this smooth Sea Island native “among the five greatest guitarists in the world. He is a force to be reckoned with in the music industry. He is with the ranks of Jimi Hendrix, Wes Montgomery and Django Reinhart.” He has collaborated with Taj Mahal, Kenny Wayne Shepard, BB King, the Stylistics, Beverly Guitar Watkins, Captain Luke, and was honored by Living Blues Magazine for two consecutive years as “Most Outstanding Guitarist.”

6. He got his name because he really is cool. He drives a long and noble chariot with mood lighting in the back seat. He dresses to jam every day: all black, precious metals partially visible and audible, a low-crown Stetson on top. “I moved to North Carolina, and the local people were, you know, checking me out and saying ‘you’ve got a cool walk,’ ‘you’ve got a cool talk.’ So they summarized it to Cool John.”

7. He’s got a following, and they look good and they dance good too. “When I play a show, I try to capture the spirit of the room and give some of that spirit back to everyone, amplified and transformed into something pure and beautiful,” Cool John said. “I’ve just finished work on a new CD, “With These Hands.” It presents fifteen new originals, ten with vocals, and is more of an R&B record than my previous work, but it has a lot of rock, funk, blues, love songs, and even a little Caribbean and Brazilian flavor in the mix as well. It’s packed with hot leads and cool

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vocals. A drummer friend of mine from high school, Ian Davis, has produced, engineered, and drums on this, and I'm very happy with it. This is my first release on my new label Cool John Records."

8. He knows what it is. "To me it's a feeling of achievement for the artist to perform in front of people, knowing that you have what they want. It's a warm feeling, and that's all it is." For more information, visit www.cooljohnferguson.com and www.beaufortcountyarts.com.