

Delta Moon Rising

Written by Lisa Annelouise Rentz
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I been hanging with my Uncle Jack
Down in Cabbagetown across the railroad track
Told him all about me and you
Said, I love her, Jack, but what can I do?"



He said, I don't know about women
Don't know nothing 'bout love
One thing in the whole wide world
You can be sure of
All whiskey ain't the same
Good moonshine
Burns with a Clear Blue Flame

- from Clear Blue Flame, by Tom Gray of Delta Moon

On Saturday, June 14th, slide guitar duo Delta Moon will perform in Port Royal, as a part of the Street Music on Paris Avenue performance series. Produced by the Arts Council of Beaufort County and presented by the Town of Port Royal, these free performances start at 5:30pm in the heart of Old Town Port Royal on Paris Avenue.

Slide guitarists Tom Gray and Mark Johnson first met in an Atlanta music store. When Tom tried to sell Mark a Dobro guitar out of the trunk of his car, the girl with Mark started whispering, "Let's get out of here." Mark didn't buy the guitar, but he and Tom exchanged phone numbers. Soon the two were getting together regularly, Tom playing lap steel and Mark on bottleneck slide guitar.

At first, neither gave a thought to the idea of forming a double slide guitar band. Then Mark saw Ry Cooder and David Lindley perform together at the New Orleans Jazz Festival. "It was like a light came on over my head," Mark said. "I thought, that's what Tom and I do." Their idea was to weave the two slide guitars into one big sound, in the tradition of great two-guitar bands like the Rolling Stones, the Allman Brothers, and the early Fleetwood Mac.

Playing clubs and festivals around Atlanta and the South, the band quickly gathered a wall full of local "best" awards. After Delta Moon won the International Blues Challenge in Memphis in 2003, the band widened its travel to include the western US, Canada, and Europe.

"I didn't start out to sing lead in this band," says Tom, "but like kudzu I've taken over." Actually, he has plenty of experience fronting a band. In his pre-lap-steel days Tom was songwriter, vocalist, and keyboard player for a group called The Brains that recorded two albums on Mercury. His songs have been recorded by Cyndi Lauper, Manfred Mann, Carlene Carter and many other artists. As Mark says, "Delta Moon has found its voice."