



BLUES PAPER

Cool Issue 180

The Publication of the

Linn County Blues Society

July 2009

★
Guitar Shorty

★
Dennis McMurrin
Mike Zito

BLUESMORE



Bluesmore "Sweet 16" August 1

In this July issue —

- Diplomats of Solid Sound - The REAL DEAL!
- Big Mo's CD review
- Guitar Shorty & Mike Zito bios
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- BBQ' Loo & Blues, Too! July 17-18



Check out *The Diplomats Of Solid Sound's Sarah Cram's CD, Darlin'*.
Thanks for the CD, Sarah!



Koko Taylor
1928-2009

Diplomats of Solid Sound

The real deal!



Article and photo by Bill Ray

I'm glad I waited until just recently to hear The Diplomats of Solid Sound. Several people told me that the group was sounding the best they have ever been and are creating enthusiasm wherever they appear. It must be so, because the two full performances I saw in late May were joyful and spectacular.

The Diplomats of Solid Sound performed in a cabaret /restaurant setting at



Sarah Cram and Kathy Ruestow

the Irish Democrat in Cedar Rapids on Sunday, May 24.

They were coming off a two-day road trip to Milwaukee and St. Louis. If they were weary, they certainly didn't show it. Their jazz, funk and soul tunes had the crowd whooping, hollering, applauding and singing along

Based in Iowa City, The Diplomats of Solid Sound include Doug Roberson on guitar, Nate Basinger on Hammond B-3 organ, Eddie McKinley and David Basinger on saxophones, Paul Kresowik on drums and "girl singers" Sarah Cram and Kathy Ruestow on lead vocals and nifty stage choreography. Roberson also does some lead vocal work and Nate Basinger adds harmony vocals.



Nate Basinger on Hammond B-3

Make no mistake - the young guys playing the instruments in the band are rock-solid veteran musicians and have created a tight, unusual jazzy sound. But the virtuosity of the two female vocalists up front is what makes the whole performance click and astound.

Kathy Ruestow perhaps has the more velvety jazz voice. Sarah Cram seems to have a wider vocal range and can really belt out those higher soul notes. No matter - they're both on the same team. With very similar vocal styles, they can harmonize beautifully or exchange taking the lead vocal on different songs. It's the synchronized dance moves that really catch your attention - reflecting back upon how the girl groups of the sixties used to move on stage. Arms and hands flowing, they shimmy, they dip, they twirl - always close enough to the microphones to sing the words at precisely the right time.

One main reason the Diplomats are in peak mode right now is that they are writing and performing outstanding original songs that they all have collaborated on in creating. Songs like: "Jealous," "Crazy 'Bout You Boy," "Kitchen," "Pistol Allen," "Trouble Me," and "Lights Out!"

Then there are the raucous girl-leaves-boy tunes like "Back Off!" and "Nobody's Gonna Stand In My Way!" that really appeal to females in the audience. Sure to bring down the house is "Bullfrog Boogaloo," while "Promise Of A New Day" is moving and inspirational.

Continued on page 3

The Linn County Blues Society is a way cool, non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation of Blues music in Eastern Iowa as well as to provide charitable contributions to other community organizations. LCBS is an Affiliated Organization in the Blues Foundation's international network. The BLUESPAPER is a monthly publication of the LCBS. Website: lcbs.org

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To learn more about the Linn County Blues Society or to join, see the membership form in this Bluespaper or the LCBS website. Your membership includes;

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Moving? Send your new address to; LCBS, PO Box 2672, Cedar Rapids, IA 52406-2672 so you won't miss a single issue of your Bluespaper.

Another reason the Diplomats are sounding better than ever is the recent addition of Paul Kresowik on drums. Paul comes from a jazz drumming background and has the subtlety, precision and creativity to really add to the percussive foundation of this group. Sometimes he'll play an ascending drum roll or cymbal crash that seems to come out of nowhere and add just the right touch to an already great tune

Could The Diplomats of Solid Sound make a successful transition to the larger democracy of a free outdoor concert? The answer came on May 29 when they performed on a beautiful spring evening on the Ped Mall fountain stage as part of the Iowa City Friday Night Concert Series. Once the large outdoor speakers and amps got dialed in correctly, the guys and gals in the band were clicking on all cylinders. Hundreds of listeners sitting on stone walls and in lawn chairs showed enthusiastic appreciation for all three sets. Hundreds more strolling by certainly



Paul Kresowik on drums

tion of singers and entertainers.

The Diplomats of Solid Sound are the real thing. With growing popularity, they are performing more in regional venues and in surrounding states. In late July they travel overseas for about ten days of performing at outdoor music festivals and clubs in northern Italy. A just reward for their hard work.

Locally you can catch performances on July 3 in Coralville, July 4 (at 2 PM) on the main stage of the Iowa City Jazz Festival and July 10 in Cedar Rapids. I'm looking forward to the completion and release of their new CD.



David Basinger, Eddie McKinley and Doug Roberson on guitar.

stopped to hear a few songs.

Eddie McKinley was really wailing on tenor sax. David Basinger lent talented support on baritone. Doug Roberson structured the songs with his guitar work. Nate Basinger did some terrific solo work on the keyboards and Paul glued everything together on drums.

The two female lead vocalists were really working the crowd with covers of classics like "Hip Drop," "The Thang," and "Don't Need No Doctor." What caught my attention was about a dozen pre-teen girls near the stage dancing to the Diplomats' original tune "Fascination" in flattering imitation of their female role models on stage: moving their arms, doing the shimmy, hip drops and sliding back and forth in stylized dance movements. Whether Sarah and Kathy realize it or not, I think they are helping to create a future genera-

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Buckwheat Zydeco
Lay Your Burden Down
Alligator Records
Release Date: May 5, 2009

Cooling Hot Zydeco

Buckwheat Zydeco's first release since Katrina is more introspective and thoughtful than the happy-go-lucky efforts of the past. It has five originals and some excellent covers with help from everyone from Capt. Beefheart & Warren Haynes to Jimmy Cliff & Trombone Shorty (at ICJF). There's some great foot patting music for sure, but the overall mood is quieter and more serious. The music is well conceived and produced and keeps reaching out to grab you as you track through the CD. BZ plays organ behind some screaming slide guitar on a few tunes and is better at it than I expected. The original tunes are a little weak, but overall it's a fine effort. Stanley Dural, Jr. (born 1947) is still going strong and still has something to say.

— John Heim (A.K.A. "Big Mo")

*Them pains, when blues pains grab you,
 you'll sing the blues right.*

— Otis Rush

Guitar Shorty & Mike Zito Bluesmore 2009!

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guitarshorty.com

"Defiant, electric blues with piercing intensity and raw venom that'll leave your ears singing" --Chicago Tribune

Guitarist/vocalist and blues legend Guitar Shorty is a man of the people. With the ability to pack clubs and festivals as one of the blues' most celebrated live performers (even before he had any nationally available recordings) and now among the top-selling recording artists in the blues world, he is clearly the people's choice. Between his blistering, rocked-out guitar work and his fierce, soulful vocals, the power of his music is unmatched, and his perceptive and meaningful lyrics unique among modern bluesmen. Credited with influencing both Jimi Hendrix and Buddy Guy, Shorty has been electrifying audiences for five decades with his supercharged live shows and his incendiary recordings (beginning in 1957 with a Willie Dixon-produced single on the Cobra label). Through the years, Shorty has performed with blues and R&B luminaries like Ray Charles, Sam Cooke, B.B. King, Guitar Slim and T-Bone Walker. Although he had recorded a handful of singles for a variety of labels, it wasn't until the 1990s that the wider world opened its collective ears to one of the blues' most exciting performers. His albums since then all received massive critical acclaim, and his legendary live performances have kept him constantly in demand all over the world. His 2004 Alligator Records debut, *WATCH YOUR BACK*, became the best received, best-selling album of his career. *GuitarOne* magazine said, "Guitar Shorty is a superb bluesman who can scorch your ears off with lethal licks and heavyweight blues-rock grooves." With his new CD, *WE THE PEOPLE*, he's prepared to continue what he's started, taking his music, and his fans, to deeper places and even greater heights.

Produced by Wyzard and Brian Brinkerhoff, *WE THE PEOPLE* finds Guitar Shorty singing and playing with ferocious urgency and a fierce righteousness.

WE THE PEOPLE burns with heavy rock and roll fire from start to finish, putting Shorty's infectious energy and guitar pyrotechnics on full display. And more than ever before, his songs tell the story of the harsh realities of everyday life in terms both stark (*We The People*), pointed (*Cost Of Livin'*) and poignant (*Down That Road Again*). What he began with *WATCH YOUR BACK*, Shorty accelerates with *WE THE PEOPLE*, creating an album that is as memorable for its menacing guitar work and defiant vocals as it is for its incisive and wide-ranging stories.

Guitar Shorty was born David William Kearney on September 8, 1939 in Houston, Texas and raised in Kissimmee, Florida by his grandmother. He began playing guitar as a young boy, excited by the sounds of B.B. King, Guitar Slim, T-Bone Walker and Earl Hooker. After a move to Tampa when he was 17, Kearney won a slot as a featured guitarist and vocalist in Walter Johnson's 18-piece orchestra. Being younger—and shorter—than the rest of the band, the club owner bestowed the name Guitar Shorty on him, and it stuck. After a particularly strong performance in Florida, the great Willie Dixon, who was in the audience, approached Shorty and said, "I like what you're doing. You've got something different. I gotta get you in the studio." A few weeks later Shorty was in Chicago and, backed by Otis Rush on second guitar, he cut his first single, *Irma Lee b/w You Don't Treat Me Right*, for Chicago's famed Cobra Records (the first label home for Rush, Magic Sam and Buddy Guy) in 1957. "Willie Dixon was a huge influence on me and my singing," Shorty remembers. "If it hadn't been for him, I never would have recorded."

After recording the Cobra single, Shorty's fortunes continued to rise, as the great Ray Charles hired the young guitar slinger as a featured member of his road band. While touring Florida, Shorty met one of his idols—guitarist/vocalist Guitar Slim, famous for his hit *Things That I Used To Do* as well as for his wildman stage antics. Slim's manager offered Shorty the opening slot on the guitarist's upcoming tour,



Guitar Shorty

and Shorty jumped at the chance, following his hero to New Orleans. Inspired by Slim, Shorty began incorporating some of the older artist's athletic showmanship into his own performances. Before long, he was doing somersaults and flips on stage. Between his blistering talent and his wild stage shows, Guitar Shorty found his audience growing even larger. He recorded three 45s for the Los Angeles-based Pull Records label in 1959. Those six sides—all Guitar Shorty originals incorporating techniques learned from Willie Dixon—showcased his first-rate vocals and his dynamic guitar style.

He gigged steadily through the late 1950s and 1960s, working with Little Milton, B.B. King, Lowell Fulson, Sam Cooke, Otis Rush, Johnny Copeland and T-Bone Walker. Settling down in Seattle, he married Marsha Hendrix, Jimi's stepsister. Hendrix loved his guitar-playing brother-in-law, and confessed that in 1961 and 1962 he would go AWOL from his Army base in order to catch Shorty's area performances, picking up licks and ideas. "I'd see Jimi at the clubs," Shorty recalls. "He'd stay in the shadows, watching me. I hear my licks in *Purple Haze* and *Hey Joe*. He told me the reason he started setting his guitar on fire was because he couldn't do the back flips

like I did.”

Guitar Shorty cut his debut album for the JSP label in 1990 while on tour in England. Released in 1991, My Way Or The Highway received the Blues Music Award for “Contemporary Foreign Blues Album Of The Year” and revitalized Shorty’s career in the U.S. With all the attention Shorty received, the New Orleans-based Black Top label signed him and released three albums (Topsy Turvy, Get Wise To Yourself and Roll Over, Baby) during the 1990s, and in 2001 Evidence Records issued I Go Wild. All received an abundance of positive press as he barnstormed his way across the U.S. and around the world, with stops in Europe, China and Malaysia. The Chicago Tribune declared, “Shorty’s forte is his high-energy style and fluid, imaginative fretboard work.” DownBeat raved, “Guitar Shorty’s music is a funky, boisterous buffet of off-the-wall blues fun.” Appearances at major fes-

guitarshorty.org

tivals like The Monterey Bay Blues Festival, The San Francisco Blues Festival and The King Biscuit Blues Festival brought him to larger and larger audiences. At the 1998 Chicago Blues Festival, Shorty opened for his old boss Ray Charles and thrilled an audience of thousands with his jaw-dropping stage show.

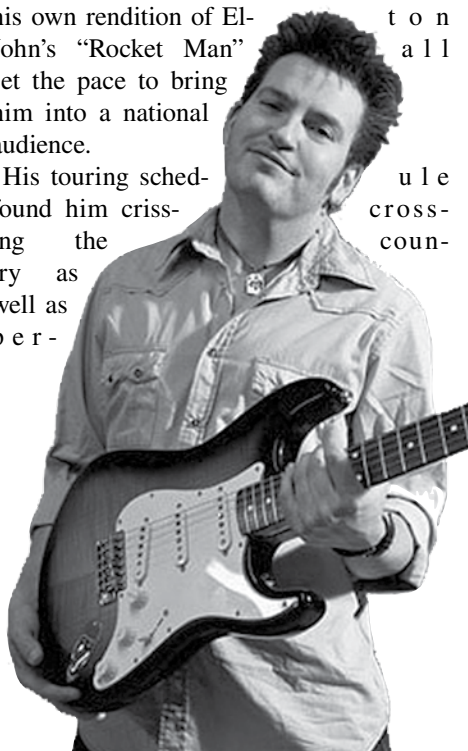
With the release of WATCH YOUR BACK in 2004, Guitar Shorty’s long rise to blues stardom grew exponentially. The outpouring of soulful emotion, the power of his playing and the strength of the material added up to the toughest album of Shorty’s renowned career. Living Blues called Shorty “a blues rock original [who plays] screaming, empowered guitar and sings with streetwise defiance.”

Mike Zito

five, when he began singing and performing. It didn’t take long for him to discover his instrument of choice – electric guitar – after receiving a Van Halen record for his birthday. His education and journey were just starting – little did he know he would find himself among such legends at a local guitar shop just out of high school. “Everyone from Chuck Berry to Bennie Smith came in that store,” Zito shares of his experience. “I soaked up the sounds of that store and began building my own style.”

Zito’s journey took off at the age of 19, when he busted into the local St. Louis music scene, developing his sound even further from the stage. His first independent release arrived in 1996, titled “Blue Room” which included raw and funky songs “Hollywood” and “Pull the Trigger”. His songwriting experience would break through on his sophomore release titled “America’s Most Wanted” in 1999. This album shares his pop sensibilities and intense guitar work. “Crazy People”, “Deal Me In” and his own rendition of Elton John’s “Rocket Man” set the pace to bring him into a national audience.

His touring schedule found him crisscrossing the country as well as performing



mikezito.com

Growing up in St. Louis, Missouri, Zito was immersed in the gritty sounds of the south side that would unknowingly become the groundwork of his future in music. Like the legends before him, music has coursed through his veins from the early age of

forming a regular dose of 6 nights a week in and around St. Louis when not on the road. He would also have the opportunity to play overseas for the USO during that same time period. With such a crazed schedule and lifestyle, drugs and alcohol took their effect on him. Zito was slid-

ing downhill fast. Walter Trout pulled Zito aside one night after a show and explained to him that he had been down that path himself, and that it was no good. He told Zito about the responsibility he had to the music and to the people to perform honestly and unaffected. His abilities suffered and he drifted around the country a bit lost and confused, ending up in Southeast Texas. Zito fell in love with his now wife and had found the love and support to help him clean up and refocus on his career.

With a clean slate and real world experiences to include in his songwriting, Zito released “Slow it Down” in 2004. Including songs like “Long Dark Road,” “Change My Ways” and the title track, “Slow it Down” Zito share what life experiences had taught him. He formed a new solid band and began again playing full-time across the country with over 250 shows in 2005. “Music can change everything...how you feel, how you see and what you believe,” Zito explains.

He would find his true sound from all his experiences, new and old, and release his fourth album, “Superman” in 2006. Touted as “Soulful pop” critics would pen it as Zito’s sound with his voice and vocals rising above the music. His formative influences blend with additional musical heroes and legends such as Prince, Van Halen, Jimi Hendrix, Eric Clapton, SRV, Walter Trout, B.B. King, Buddy Guy, Danny Gatton, and even rising artists like John Mayer. His journey has lead him to a critical point in his life and career to a larger audience and sharing the stage with national recording artists such as Chuck Berry, Fabulous Thunderbirds, Tab Benoit, Walter Trout, Bernard Allison, Coco Montoya, Joe Bonamassa and many more.

In 2007, Zito’s path has crossed with Randy Chortkoff of Delta Groove Music. Within months he’s penned a deal and gained full support with Chortkoff’s label Eclecto Groove Records and Rick Booth of Intrepid Artists. With a new chapter of his life unfolding - full label backing, new management and larger audiences, Zito has only begun to scratch the musical surface yet again.

The blues was like that problem child that you may have had in the family. You was a little bit ashamed to let anybody see him, but you loved him. You just didn’t know how other people would take it.

— B.B.King

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July Blues Calendar

Thur. 2 ★	MVBF, LeClaire Park J.M. O'Malley's Chappy's Safari	The Blue Band, Bandshell, 5-6:30PM 4 Box O Rocks, 9-1 Mike & Rob Show, 9-1
Fri. 3	Checkers Tavern & Eatery Ernie's Clear Lake Celebration	Reddoor, 9-1 Tom Bruner & Dan Johnson, 6-9PM The Blue Band, Town Square, 7-11PM
Sat. 4 ★	Ernie's Firehouse- JAM Chrome Horse Saloon Windsor Heights IC Jazz Festival IC Jazz Festival IC Jazz Festival	McMurrin & Johnson, 6-9PM Various players, 4-8PM Jeff Bruner The Blue Band, Colby Park, Des Moines The Tornadoes, 1:30-3:30PM Diplomats of Solid Sound, 2PM Johnny Kilowatt, 5:30-6PM & 7:30-8PM
Sun. 5	Summerset Winery	The Blue Band, Indianola, IA 3-6PM
Thur. 9	Wine Room, Mt. Vernon J.M. O'Malley's	The Blue Midnight Trio Electric Mule, 9-1
Fri. 10 ★	Checkers Tavern & Eatery Zona Rosa District, KC, MO Cocktails & Co. Ernie's	Twist & Shout, 9-1 The Blue Band, 6-9PM Diplomats of Solid Sound, 9PM McMurrin & Johnson, 6-9PM
Sat. 11	Firehouse- JAM Big Barn Harley-Davidson	Various players, 4-8PM Blue Band, 81 NW 49th PL. Des Moines, IA
Sun. 12	Checkers Tavern & Eatery Pour Sports Mahoney's Irish Pub	Li'l Dave Thompsen Band, 9-1 Merrill Miller, DJ & Steve Hayes, 6-9PM Steez, 6PM
Thur. 16 ★	Shuey's Checkers Tavern & Eatery J.M. O'Malley's Central Park Gazebo Cedar Landing	McMurrin & Johnson, 6-9PM Matt Gogel, 9-1 Perry & The Pumpers, 9-1 The Blue Band, 5:30-7:30, Grinnell, IA Mike & Rob Show
Fri. 17 ★	Checkers Tavern & Eatery The Java House Chrome Horse Saloon BBQ'Loo & Blues, Too Live At 5, Ottumwa, IA Cedar Landing Icehouse, Riverside, IA	Smokin' Guns, 9-1 The Blue Midnight Trio, 8-10PM Funk Daddies, 6:30(out) Pumpers (in) 9PM Lincoln Park, Downtown Waterloo, 5:30-9 The Blue Band, 5-8PM Electric Mule, 9-1 4 Box O Rocks
Sat. 18	BBQ'Loo & Blues, Too ★ Firehouse- JAM Shuey's Pleasant Hill SummerFest Chappy's Safri Gus', Coralville Clayton River Fest, Clayton	Lincoln Park, Downtown Waterloo, 5:30-9 Various players, 4-8PM Jeff Bruner, 9-1 The Blue Band, 7-10PM, Des Moines, IA Johnny Kilowatt, 9-1 Electric Mule, 9-1 The Pumpers, 7PM, O'Connell Bros., 5PM
Sun. 19	Mahoney's Irish Pub RAGBRAI Party, Red Oak	Ken Valdez, 6PM The Blue Band, 6-8PM, Pork Belly Ventures
Thur. 23	J.M. O'Malley's ★ The Firehouse	Merrill Miller w/ Gibby & DJ, 9-1 Mike & Rob Show, 9-12:30
Fri. 24 ★	Checkers Tavern & Eatery Cambridge Jubilee Days Jerseys, Cedar Rapids Chappy's Safri Ernie's	Triple Shot Band, 9-1 The Blue Band, 8-12, Cambridge, IA Mike & Rob Show, 9-1 Perry & The Pumpers, 9-1 McMurrin & Johnson, Miller, Douglas, 7PM
Sat. 25	CR Landing Firehouse- JAM Shuey's Wells Fargo/BIX dance	McMurrin & Johnson Band & Skeeter, 9PM Various players, 4-8PM Chubby Duo, 9-1 The Blue Band, Davenport, IA

"White folks hear the blues come out, but they don't know how it got there."
— Ma Rainey

July Calendar cont.

Sun. 26	Blues On Grand	Tinsley Ellis, time-TBA
Wed. 29	Checkers Tavern & Eatery	Kevin BF Burt, 7PM
Thur. 30	The Mill, Iowa City J.M. O'Malley's	The Tornadoes, 8-11:30PM DDog & The BBits, 9-1
Fri. 31	Checkers Tavern & Eatery Downtown Fridays, IC ★ The Mill, Iowa City	Roughstock, 9-1 McMurrin & Johnson, Demo Band, 7-9PM The Blue Band

The LCBS meets the 1st Monday of each month.
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for the LCBS Board & Member meeting.
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Koko Taylor

Queen of the Blues 1928-2009

Alligator Records

Grammy Award-winning blues legend Koko Taylor, 80, died on June 3, 2009 in her hometown of Chicago, IL, as a result of complications following her May 19 surgery to correct a gastrointestinal bleed. On May 7, 2009, the critically acclaimed Taylor, known worldwide as the Queen of the Blues, won her 29th Blues Music Award (for Traditional Female Blues Artist Of The Year), making her the recipient of more Blues Music Awards than any other artist. In 2004 she received the NEA National Heritage Fellowship Award, which is among the highest honors given to an American artist. Her most recent CD, 2007's Old School, was nominated for a Grammy (eight of her nine Alligator albums were Grammy-nominated). She won a Grammy in 1984 for her guest appearance on the compilation album Blues Explosion on Atlantic.

Born Cora Walton on a sharecropper's farm just outside Memphis, TN, on September 28, 1928, Koko, nicknamed for her love of chocolate, fell in love with music at an early age. Inspired by gospel music and WDIA blues disc jockeys B.B. King and Rufus Thomas, Taylor began belting the blues with her five brothers and sisters, accompanying themselves on their homemade instruments. In 1952, Taylor and her soon-to-be-husband, the late Robert "Pops" Taylor, traveled to Chicago with nothing but, in Koko's words, thirty-five cents and a box of Ritz Crackers.

In Chicago, "Pops" worked for a packing company, and Koko cleaned houses. Together they frequented the city's blues clubs nightly. Encouraged by her husband, Koko began to sit in with the city's top blues bands, and soon she was in demand as a guest artist. One evening in 1962 Koko was approached by arranger/composer Willie Dixon. Overwhelmed by Koko's performance, Dixon landed Koko a Chess Records recording contract, where he produced her several singles, two albums and penned her million-selling 1965 hit 'Wang Dang Doodle,' which would become Taylor's signature song.

After Chess Records was sold, Taylor found a home with the Chicago's Alligator Records in 1975 and released the Grammy-nominated I Got What It Takes. She recorded eight more albums for Alligator between 1978 and 2007, received seven more Grammy nominations and made numerous guest appearances on various albums and tribute recordings. Koko appeared in the films Wild At Heart, Mercury Rising and Blues Brothers 2000. She performed on Late Night With David Letterman, Late Night With Conan O'Brien, CBS-TV's This Morning, National Public Radio's All Things Considered, CBS-TV's Early Edition, and numerous regional television programs.

Over the course of her 40-plus-year career, Taylor received every award the blues world has to offer. On March 3, 1993, Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley honored Taylor with a 'Legend Of The Year' Award and declared Koko Taylor Day throughout Chicago. In 1997, she was inducted into the Blues Foundation's Hall of Fame. A year later, Chicago Magazine named her Chicagoan Of The Year and, in 1999, Taylor received the Blues Foundation's Lifetime Achievement Award. In 2009 Taylor performed in Washington, D.C. at The Kennedy Center Honors honoring Morgan Freeman.

Koko Taylor was one of very few women who found success in the male-dominated blues world. She took her music from the tiny clubs of Chicago's South Side to concert halls and major festivals all over the world. She shared stages with every major blues star, including Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf, B.B. King, Junior Wells and Buddy Guy as well as rock icons Robert Plant and Jimmy Page.

Taylor's final performance was on May 7, 2009 in Memphis at the Blues Music Awards, where she sang Wang Dang Doodle after receiving her award for Traditional Blues Female Artist Of The Year.

Survivors include Taylor's husband, Hays Harris, daughter Joyce Threatt, son-in-law Lee Threatt, grandchildren Lee, Jr. and Wendy, and three great-grandchildren.



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— Chuck Berry (Charles Edward Anderson)

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- 10-11 PM - The Crawfish Circuit
- 11 PM -midnight - The Melting Pot
- Midnight Blues CD