

1st European Blues Masterclass, August 18th - 23rd 2009

featuring

Steve Baker - Harmonica Blues and Beyond

Martin Röttger - The Cajon in Blues, Rock and Folk

Dick Bird - Fingerpicking Blues and Slide Guitar

**Price: €499,00 with full board and lodging
(course fee + 5 nights accomodation + 3 meals per day)**

Coordination and registrations: Robert Koch
rok68@free.fr or tel. (+33) 608.30.96.59

The 1st European Blues Masterclass presents courses by three of the finest exponents on their instruments working in the European blues scene today. Steve Baker, Martin Röttger and Dick Bird have been performing professionally for decades and all have extensive teaching experience. The courses are directed at amateur musicians of all ages and levels of ability and offer four days of intensive instruction, combining theory and musical practice, with ample opportunity for sessions in the evenings. The event will culminate in a full evening concert by all three instructors on Saturday, August 22nd.

La Maison du Kleebach

The idea of presenting a combined masterclass culminating in a concert appearance has been ripening for several years but was never realized due to the lack of a suitable venue. At Le Kleebach, near Munster in Alsace, France (home of the famous Munster cheese!), the team has now found an ideal setting, located in the idyllic countryside of the Vosges only one hour by car from Strasbourg, 20 minutes from Colmar and 45 minutes from Freiburg (Germany). The modern, well appointed house offers seven separate teaching rooms (five of them with a piano), full board and lodging for up to 72 people in rooms with 1 – 3 beds + bathroom (single room surcharge), an open air concert stage, a comfortable bar, barbecue facilities and much more. The meals are prepared on the premises by the house chef using natural products from the region. With Strasbourg (France) and Basel (France/Switzerland) there are two international airports close by and Munster also has a main line railway station. Alsace is rightly famed for its food and wine and this historically fascinating region is rich in high quality tourist attractions, which will ensure that non-students (spouses, children) can be sure of a great holiday in beautiful surroundings. The forest bordering onto the property offers numerous opportunities for walking tours and a full size swimming pool is located only a ten minute walk away.

The Classes

Steve Baker - Harmonica Blues and Beyond

Steve Baker is one of today's most highly regarded harmonica players, with an impressive track record of thousands of live performances and hundreds of studio recordings in a wide range of styles. He is the author of The Harp Handbook, the Interactive Blues Harp Workshop CD-ROM, Blues Harmonica Playalongs vols. 1 - 3 and several other seminal works on the instrument and has also released numerous CDs under his own name including "King Kazoo" with Dick Bird (2008). He has worked as a consultant for leading harmonica manufacturer Hohner since 1987 and has been teaching ever since. Steve gave the first ever harmonica course at the renowned Schorndorfer Guitar Days in 2000 and 2002 and also taught classes for several years at the Mediterranean Music School. In 2003 he initiated the Harmonica Masters Workshops in Trossingen, now regarded as the premier teaching event for blues harmonica in Europe.

The course will concentrate on mastering the essential playing techniques on the diatonic harp and integrating them into a musical context. Steve has always placed great value on learning to treat the harmonica as a musical instrument like any other and this will be reflected in the course, which covers not only blues, but will also look at how to use the instrument effectively in a variety of musical styles. Exact content will depend on the interests and abilities of the students.

Topics will include some or all of the following (not necessarily in this order):

Improving your basic sound: How to hold the harp most effectively; Breathing, air column & resonance chamber; Lipping / Tongue block; Intonation, building tone, ear training

Improving your technique: Learning controlled note bending; The topography of the harp - which note is where, and why every note is different; Vibrato - the different types and how to create them; Enclosure, hand effects; Tongue blocked intervals (octaves & other intervals); Trills and double notes, playing "dirty"; Overblows and how to use them simply and effectively

The commonest positions and how they work: Cross harp / 2nd position, blues basics; 1st position folk and blues; 3rd position folk and blues; Other positions

Playing with others: Accompaniment; Timing & rhythm; Phrasing - how to make it swing; Improvisation; Harmony & the harp; The harp in other styles - rock'n'roll, country, funk, pop; Microphones & amps, other gear such as effects

Taking it further: Tuning & repair; Alternate tunings (Country/Major 7th, SBS, Natural minor & others)

Jamming: The last lesson every day will be spent jamming together, either to playalongs, guitar accompaniment or unaccompanied. Students can choose what they would like to approach in these sessions.

Course language: English or German as required, French translation on the spot

Musical requirements:

Students need to be able to play clear single notes with correct intonation. They should also know how to bend notes on the Richter harp and be able to hit bent notes directly.

Martin Röttger - The Cajon in Blues, Rock & Folk

During the past five years Martin Röttger has made a significant contribution to the rapidly growing popularity of the cajon in the area of blues and roots music, taking it into new places and moving outside the traditional area of flamenco. Originally a drummer, his cajon playing is characterized by grooving rhythms and infectious energy and has inspired numerous others to take up the instrument. Röttger has reached a wider audience through his live performances with Steve Baker and Abi Wallenstein in BluesCulture. Their eponymous CD was released in March 2007 and won the quarterly prize of the German Record Critics. In the late 1990s he founded the drum and cajon school "Drummatic" in Hamburg and has since taught at various other musical education institutes including the renowned Dante Augustin School in Switzerland. Today he is very active as a workshop instructor, presenting the first ever cajon courses at the Schorndorf Guitar Days and the Mediterranean Music School as well as working as a studio musician and performing live all over Europe. He cooperates closely with leading cajon manufacturer Schlagwerk and is also an endorsee for Sonor, Paiste and Beyerdynamic.

The course will reflect the fact that the cajon has come to be regarded as an instrument in its own right and is now an essential part of the arsenal of any drummer or percussionist. Nowadays it is often used instead of a regular drum set and is ideal for small line-ups and club concerts. The modern cajon offers the player the possibility of adapting drum kit grooves to a quieter and more compact medium which reflects the realities of performance today.

Topics will include:

The basic strokes on the cajon:

Tone, bass, slap, tap

Fundamental exercises

Commonly used techniques

Various rhythms for large percussion groups

Drum grooves and how to adapt them for the cajon

Working with playalongs

Different types of cajon

How to set up and tune the cajon

Microphoning the cajon

Course language: German or English

Musical requirements:

Students of all levels are welcome

Dick Bird - Fingerpicking Blues and Slide Guitar

Dick Bird has been playing guitar professionally since 1975 and started his career in London with Steve Baker as a member of the legendary jugband Have Mercy. He was a founder member of B-Sharp and has since performed with numerous blues and rock artists including Inga Rumpf, Johnny & the Hurricanes and Long John Baldry. Dick is one of the finest exponents of acoustic fingerstyle blues and slide guitar performing in Europe today as well as an expressive singer. He has taught guitar for many years and took over the guitar class at the Harmonica Masters Workshops in 2006. As well as playing on numerous recordings as a studio musician he has recorded CDs with Have Mercy, B-Sharp and the Mudsliders. His latest CD with Steve Baker, "King Kazoo", was released in November 2008.

The main emphasis of the course will be on learning to use fingerpicking techniques in country blues, country swing and slide guitar. As well as picking patterns, rhythmic components will play an important role here. Much of this music was originally dance music and was performed with a driving and syncopated beat which many later guitarists have overlooked or neglected. In addition, Dick's 20 years of experience in music retail have given him an extensive technical knowledge of the instrument and he will be spending a little time towards the end of the workshop demonstrating the various techniques involved in setting up your instrument to your own requirements. He also has a wide knowledge of vintage guitars, basses and amps and will be pleased to answer any questions on these subjects.

Topics will include:

Commonly used chord shapes and progressions

Fingerpicking patterns

Basic ragtime blues forms

Damping with the left and right hand

Examples in the styles of Blind Blake, Mississippi John Hurt, Big Bill Broonzy,

Rev. Gary Davis & Blind Boy Fuller

Introduction to slide guitar technique

Setting up the guitar for slide

Open tunings (open G, open D, Dropped D)

Chord shapes in open tunings

Which slide, which finger?

Damping and blocking with the left and right hand

Intonation and vibrato with the slide

Examples in the styles of Tampa Red, Muddy Waters & Ry Cooder

Setting up your instrument

Vintage Guitars, Basses and Amplifiers

During the classes pupils may choose to record parts of the lesson if they wish.

Participants will require a reasonable quality acoustic steel string guitar incl.any neck adjustment tools they have for their instrument. Pencils, TAB and chord sheets will be supplied.

Course Language: English or German

Musical requirements:

Intermediate and advanced level players only.