



"I have been taught something that cannot be measured by grades; I have been taught to listen to music. The magic I've found is that through the musician singing about the trials of his life, it manages to brighten up mine. The first time I felt that, I began to understand why the blues came about." - A high school student after attending a Blues In the Schools Event

Blues in the Schools (BITS)

Joe Bonamassa is becoming a torchbearer for the next generation of Blues fans. As a child prodigy, Joe has been recognized as a blues guitar phenomenon since the age of 8 and had the honor of performing with B.B. King at the age of 12, and John Lee Hooker when he was 14! Joe enjoys working with youth, as he knows the importance of introducing them to Blues music at a young age.

WHAT IS BLUES IN THE SCHOOLS?

"Blues In The Schools" is a program developed by the Blues Foundation in Memphis ten years ago as part of their effort to promote and preserve the heritage of Blues music. In most cases, a musician or a group conducts a workshop for students to learn more about Blues music (as well as music in general). These appearances include; live performances, recorded music, slide presentations and informative narratives. Joe's hour-long BITS presentation is structured for middle school, high school and college students as he takes them on a musical journey tracking the evolution of Blues music from the Deep South in the late 1800's up through today's different Blues styles.

WHY BLUES IN THE SCHOOLS?

Music reflects the feelings of the times. By exposing students to Blues music, it can lead them to new found interests that will help them to develop and grow with increased self-esteem and confidence in themselves.

With the exception of Native American music, Blues is the first pure American music form to have its origins in the United States. Coming from the oral traditions of folk music, the Blues serves as the foundation for all other popular music forms today. To fully appreciate all music, it is important to understand the evolution of the musical structure of the Blues. Moreover, much can be gleaned by understanding the ways blues music expresses individual emotions.

There are many things that we can learn about our nation's evolving culture through Blues music. Students can be shown the essential part these rural lyrics played in the African-American oral traditions. Lacking an educational system, these early country blues men and women created beautiful poetry that reflected, and responded to, the conditions of their world. Sometimes the lyrics expressed the anger they could not speak. Other times, they painted a vivid picture of African-American life in the fields. At the same time, the music incorporated danceable rhythms and so called "blue notes" that helps people forget their stress and enjoy being alive.