

Blues series boasts a new name or two

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WENATCHEE — The 1999-2000 season concert series will feature all of the rockin' blues you've come to expect from R.L.S. Entertainment Enterprises: Charles White, Too Slim and the Taildragers, Ellen Whyte, Swamp Mama Johnson, Jude Bowerman, D X Biscuit, Huh? D X Biscuit?

That's right. Say it aloud, sort of slurring over the first letter. Sounds like "da ex-Biscuit" — and it should, because that's sort of what it is. The band that regional blues fans have followed for years as the King Biscuit Blues Band has a new name, and will open the show for The Charles White Band in the Nov. 13 season series debut.

The Biscuit's changes won't end with the new name, which became necessary because of a conflict with a New York-based concert processions company over the King Biscuit tag. The band will have new personnel and an expanded musical repertoire.

"The idea is to bring the sound to more of a rockin', jump-swing feel," said D X Biscuit drummer Robert Sandidge, who is also the R.L.S. big cheese. "We're still doing the blues, but a lot of the stuff that's being recorded for this next CD is going to have

concert dates

The 1999-2000 R.L.S. lineup:
Nov. 13: Charles White, with D X Biscuit
Dec. 11: Ellen Whyte and Reflex Blue, with Charles Butts and the Filter Tips
Jan. 29: Swamp Mama Johnson, with JunkYard Jane
Feb. 25: Jude Bowerman, with Etouffee
March 25: Too Slim and the Taildragers, with Smokin' Gun
 more of a swing feel to it."

The band is going into the studio this winter and hopes to release its next CD next spring, Sandidge said.

As for personnel, the band is going from one sax player to two, with Jay Yglesia — a St. Louis native and Methow Valley resident with a swing-music pedigree — joining in on tenor and soprano sax. He'll play alongside Biscuit veteran Bruce Guy (tenor and baritone sax). The band is also hunting for a trumpet/trumbone player.

Shawn Irelan, formerly of Shongo Bongo and Shotgun and a sometime Biscuit player, is now a full-fledged Biscuit member. He and Yglesia join bassist/vocalist Bert Baker, lead guitarist Paul Cowie, Sandidge, Guy and key-



Rick Westerman photo

boardist Arthur Dunn of Seattle.

Fans will get a taste of the new D X Biscuit in the first show of the series along with White, whose performance last fall was arguably the highlight of the entire series. As any blues fan will tell you, the man is so hot as a performer he's practically flammable; a Charles White concert is the musical equivalent of spontaneous combustion.

Tickets for that opening show will be \$14 advance and \$17 the day of the show. Prices during the season at R.L.S. shows, which will continue to be held in the Wenatchee Center grand ballroom, may range as high as \$26, Sandidge said.

"The talent and the level of

production — everything that's on the spreadsheet — causes the price to be what it is," he said.

"If the facility was larger, I could bring in larger acts. Then I could keep the price at a lower level, because more people could physically fit into the facility at a comfortable rate." Sandidge said he wanted to limit the crowd to about 650 for the comfort of the ticket-buyers. Any more, he said, is just too crowded.

For the increased price, though, each show in the series will offer what amounts to two headliners. The Dec. 11 show featuring Ellen Whyte and Reflex Blue will have Charlie Butts and the Filter Tips as an opening act; Butts has headlined a number of

Charles White (left, with guitarist Scott Lind) will have energy to burn when the R.L.S. winter concert series kicks off.

regional jazz festivals. On Jan. 29, Swamp Mama Johnson will be prefaced by JunkYard Jane, a popular Seattle act. The Jude Bowerman Band (March 25) will follow an opening act by Etouffee, led by the energetic Kelly Thibodeaux on Cajun fiddle.

And on March 25, as if Too Slim and the Taildragers aren't enough, the opening act — Smokin' Gun — is a past winner of both Best Blues CD and Best Blues Band in the annual Washington Blues Society award.

"What we're trying to do is interject some new talent for the area, and also bring in favorites that we know that everyone will enjoy," Sandidge said. "This new talent, they're pretty hot."