

DELTA GROOVE

MUSIC, INC.

BILL SIMS, JR. & MARK LAVOIE (AMERICAN BLUES ROOTS DUO)

Bill Sims Jr. and **Mark LaVoie** have been working together for 15 years mostly in Vermont. In the early 90s while working in Burlington, Vermont, Bill met Mark and they became fast friends after discovering their shared love of acoustic Blues. At the time they were working within an electric format but that soon gave way to the Acoustic duo. Since that time they have become a fan favorite at Blues venues throughout Vermont and are now ready to bring their special form of Blues to the world.

BILL SIMS, JR.:

Bill Sims Jr. learned his lessons well while attending Ohio State, where he majored in music and had the privilege to play with many great Blues Legends, that performed at the University. Sitting in the piano chair, of Muddy Waters, Howlin Wolf, Freddy King, the Ojays, Jerry Butler and many more. He is currently considered one of the best musicians in the New York Blues scene. He tours both domestic and internationally. In 1999 the 10 hour PBS special "American Love Story" (a story about Bill and his family) ran for four nights, and featured the music of Bill Sims Jr. at the end of each show. These videos are on Bill's web site. www.billsimsjr.com Bill toured in the stage production "Lackawanna Blues" with playwright Ruben Santiago-Hudson for three years. It became an HBO movie "Lackawanna Blues" and was produced by Halle Berry. Bill appeared in the band scenes. He also worked with Ruben Santiago-Hudson in August Wilson's play "Seven Guitars" featuring original music written for the production by OBIE winner and Blues Legend Bill Sims Jr.

Comments from the New York Times, Theatre Review/ "Seven Guitars": The rhythm of "Seven Guitars" is translated here into a natural flow, underscored by new music written by Bill Sims Jr. that makes this production an improvement on the Broadway version, which is something to say! Bill recently played on the sound track of "American Gangster" starring Denzel Washington. Ruben Santiago-Hudson plays Denzel's driver. Bill has been on the set of "Cadillac Records" a movie about Leonard Chess and the artist on the Chess Label, and is the music technical advisor on the film. He is teaching actor Jeffery Wright (who plays Muddy Waters) how to play in the blues style that Muddy was playing when Alan Lomax discovered him in 1940. Bill is playing guitar on the "Stovall Plantation scenes". He also has a part playing bass in Muddy Waters band, and a part playing piano in Howlin Wolf's band. Beyonce is playing Etta James. Mark LaVoie is a master harmonica player, and is a protege of harmonica virtuoso Sonny Terry. He was Sonny's driver in the summer of '76 and performed with Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee. Sonny said "Mark, take something from me, but play it the way You feel it" Mark LaVoie has a style that is all his own. The American roots blues duo Bill Sims Jr. and Mark LaVoie were recently featured in the line up at the 3rd Annual Delta Groove All-Star Blues Revue in Clarksdale, Mississippi on Friday May 9th. When they finished the last song of their show case, the audience gave them a thunderous applause, and Master of Ceremonies Randy Chortkoff said, "now that's some real blues"!

MARK LAVOIE:

For more than 30 years **Mark LaVoie** has been performing for crowds both large and small. His passion for and commitment to music, particularly blues harmonica, is admired by the many musicians who have played with him. Mark enjoys spreading the word about harmonica music and is an active member of national groups working to preserve and promote the harmonica as

an accessible, inexpensive instrument.

Mark had the opportunity to travel and perform with Sonny Terry, harmonica virtuoso and half of the popular duo Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee, during the '70s. Mark has recorded with many Vermont musicians, from John Gailmor to Big Joe Burrell. He is part of a duo, Cooper and Lavoie, who play regularly at special events, clubs, and ski areas throughout Vermont. He has recorded most recently with Warner Brothers recording artist Bill Sims, Jr. Bill and Mark have performed together at blues festivals and clubs for the past three years.

During his live, all ages show Mark plays and sings traditional blues and demonstrates how to play simple chords on the 10 hole diatonic harmonica. Most people have a harmonica somewhere in the back of a drawer and Mark's show often inspires audience members to go home, dig out their harmonica, and give it a try.

One of Mark's favorite activities is instructing groups of students, young and old, in harmonica. He has given lessons in a small private school, college classroom, and for a high school music class. These instructional workshops can take place during one day or for a series of days. Mark is a Hohner harmonica endorsee and is able to get discount rates on harmonicas for group instruction.

"Mark is a brilliant, exciting, and perceptive player. He has a long history of experience with authentic blues performance. He does a great presentation and is an excellent teacher. I was very impressed with how he lead an entire class through the basic steps and had them playing right away. I also noticed how, in the time since his visit, everything he told the class has helped them continue to improve."