

NORTH MISSISSIPPI HILL COUNTRY PICNIC 100 YEARS OF BURNSIDE



THE LOCAL VOICE 2026 NORTH MISSISSIPPI HILL COUNTRY PICNIC GUIDE - FREE - WATERFORD, MISSISSIPPI - 100 YEARS OF R.L. BURNSIDE

nmshillcountrypicnic.com

NORTH MISSISSIPPI HILL COUNTRY PICNIC

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JUNE 26-27 2026

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North Mississippi Hill Country Picnic • Festival Guide • June 26-27, 2026 • NMSHillCountryPicnic.com

PACK YOUR CHAIR AND CATCH THE GROOVE AT THE PICNIC

The goal of the North Mississippi Hill Country Picnic is to enhance appreciation and educate the general public about the native art form of North Mississippi Hill Country Blues music through performance, preservation, and interpretation.

WHAT TO BRING

- Bug Spray
- Blanket or chair for sitting
- Water
- Sunglasses
- Sunscreen
- Hat for shade
- Rain gear
- Shade tent
- More water!

WHAT NOT TO BRING

- No weapons
- No glass containers will be allowed ANYWHERE on the festival site
- For safety reasons – NO motorized vehicles inside the festival (No golf carts or 4 wheelers except by event staff).
- For safety seasons – NO pets
- No professional photography equipment, please restrict photos to the first 2 songs of each artist set and NO video or audio recording.

THE PICNIC HAS

- Portable toilets
- Showers
- Water faucets for drinking water
- Vendors will be selling various food, snacks, and beverages
- Campsites
- The largest collection of authentic Hill Country Blues musicians you can find on one stage in 2025.


TICKETS & GENERAL INFORMATION:

- Tickets are available online at NMSHillCountryPicnic.com and Eventbrite.
- Online ticket sales end Wednesday, June 24 at 11:30 pm. VIP Tickets must be purchased online.
- All ticket sales at the gate are CASH ONLY. There is no ATM available at the festival site.
- Gates open Thursday, June 25 at 5 pm. No one will be admitted early. Music goes from 1 pm till midnight on Friday and 9 am till midnight on Saturday. All Picnic attendees must be off site by Sunday, June 28 by noon—no late departures.
- Friday Only: \$30 • Saturday Only: \$30
 - Camping: \$20 (Flat rate of \$20/person to spend 1-3 nights. If you spend the night you pay \$20, no cars in camp ground.) No open fires on the festival site.
 - RV Fee: \$100
 - Ice Chest inside festival: \$15 (NO GLASS allowed on festival site.)
- CASH ONLY – NO ATM AVAILABLE AT FESTIVAL SITE
- If you go out the ticket gate, you must have your wristband on to re-enter the festival site.
- Parking is FREE!
- Children 12 and under are admitted for FREE
- Really Cool Art Vendors and Picnic Merch are available for sale on site, Picnic Merch is CASH ONLY!

SHADE TENTS

- Shade tents are only allowed in designated area and only as room allows. When that area is full no other shade tents will be allowed. Size limit 10×20, 10×10 is preferred.

WHAT DO VIP TICKETS INCLUDE?

- The VIP ticket includes access to a covered, concrete floor pavilion with tables, chairs, and fans. One meal a day on Friday & Saturday and four non-alcoholic drinks each day. You are welcome to bring your own cooler for \$10 (no glass please), and the very best view of the stage! 



FRIDAY JUNE 26

CAMPGROUND STAGE
1PM OLIVER KOSTRINSKY 2:30 STUD FORD

MAIN STAGE

4:00 **78** 4:45 **ROCKET88**
5:30 **ROBERT KIMBROUGH SR. BLUES CONNECTION**
6:30 **KODY SHADE HARRELL**
7:30 **CHARLIE MUSSELWHITE**
8:10 **KUDZU KINGS**
9:30 **BLUE MOUNTAIN**
11:00 **DUWAYNE BURNSIDE**

SATURDAY JUNE 27

CAMPGROUND STAGE
10AM **JOHN McDOWELL & CHRISTINE CONLEY**
11:00 **ANDREA STATEN**

MAIN STAGE

NOON **NONCONNAH OUTLAWS w/MARLOW DORROUGH**
12:45PM **LIBBY RAE WATSON & BILL STEBER**
1:30 **WOLFEAGLE ft. TRENTON AYERS**
2:10 **CAM KIMBROUGH HILL COUNTRY REUNION**
2:45 **AFRISIPPI** 3:30 **BROWN, BURNSIDE & MUSSELWHITE**
4:30 **ERIC DEATON**
5:45 **KENT BURNSIDE**
6:30 **RISING STARS FIFE & DRUM BAND**
7:30 **ALVIN YOUNGBLOOD HART'S MUSCLE THEORY**
9:00 **KENNY BROWN**
10:30 **GARRY BURNSIDE**



This year's front cover was illustrated by **Taylor, Mississippi**, artist **Megan Wolfe**, who also designed the illustrations throughout this guide.

100 YEARS OF BURNSIDE

1926 - 2026



by Scott Barretta

Today if you ask blues fans to list their top artists, it's likely that R.L. Burnside, whose centennial birthday will be this November, will be frequently mentioned. The most well-known figure in the subgenre of North Mississippi Hill Country blues, Burnside symbolized that blues remained a vigorous tradition, and, notably in Oxford, he became an iconic figure, inspiring t-shirts and trucker caps emblazoned with his catchphrase "Well, well, well" and "Burnside style."

If you posed the same question in 1990, though, it's unlikely his name would come up. Then in his mid sixties, Burnside was a beloved juke joint entertainer in rural Marshall County, while collectors knew him from relatively obscure recordings. What changed?

First, some background. Burnside [R.L. is alternatively explained as standing for Rural L., Robert Lee or simply R.L.] was born in Lafayette County on November 23, 1926, near Harmontown in an area subsequently flooded during the creation of Sardis Lake. His musical heroes included John Lee Hooker, Lightnin' Hopkins, and Muddy Waters (a cousin by marriage), but his primary local inspiration was Mississippi Fred McDowell, who first called him up to perform at local house parties. Burnside lived in Chicago for a couple years but mostly in northern Mississippi, where he worked as a sharecropper, tractor driver, and commercial fisherman, supplementing his income by selling moonshine and hosting blues house parties with his wife of over fifty years, Alice.

Burnside first recorded

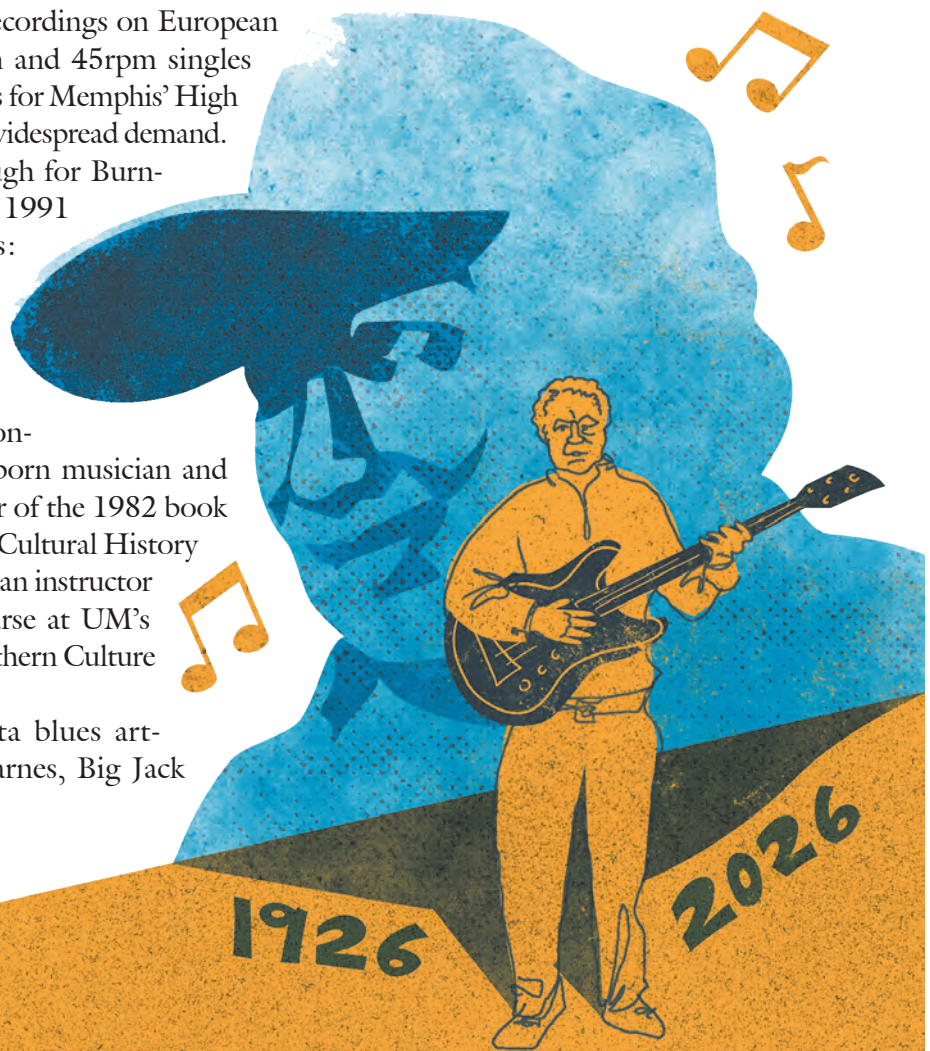
in 1967 for folklorist George Mitchell on acoustic guitar; six tracks appeared on the 1969 Arhoolie LP Mississippi Delta Blues Vol. 2, leading to appearances at blues festivals in the United States and Europe. The blues audience declined over the next decades, though, and his recordings on European LPs, a cassette-only album and 45rpm singles recorded by Dr. David Evans for Memphis' High Water Records didn't spark widespread demand.

The first big breakthrough for Burnside was Robert Mugge's 1991 documentary *Deep Blues: A Musical Pilgrimage to the Crossroads*, which featured older artists in Memphis, the Delta, and northern Mississippi. An on-screen host was Arkansas-born musician and critic Robert Palmer, author of the 1982 book *Deep Blues: A Musical and Cultural History of the Mississippi Delta* and an instructor of a rock'n'roll history course at UM's Center for the Study of Southern Culture in the late '80s.

The film featured Delta blues artists Roosevelt "Booba" Barnes, Big Jack Johnson, and Lonnie Pitchford and Jack Owens from Benton

but the most riveting and surprising music for many viewers was by Jessie Mae Hemphill from the Como/Senatobia area, Junior Kimbrough from Holly Springs, and Burnside—artists soon recognized as stalwarts of "North Mississippi Hill Country Blues," a genre only widely recognized in the latter 1990s.

Kimbrough and his band were featured playing a hypnotic, eight-minute-long version of his signature "All Night Long" for dancers at the Chawalla Rib Shack in Holly Springs, and Burnside was captured playing his standards "Jumper on the Line" and "Long Haired Doney" on electric guitar on the porch of his house.



The film was positively received and led some intrepid fans—including myself, then resident in Sweden—to make the pilgrimage to witness Burnside and Kimbrough play at Junior’s Place, a juke joint in Chulahoma, southwest of Holly Springs. Burnside and his family lived next door, and many of the children and grandchildren of both men performed at Junior’s. The Burnside family jams are captured on the 1991 album *Bad Luck City*, which appeared on a new Oxford-based label, Fat Possum, founded by former *Living Blues* editor Peter Lee and UM student Matthew Johnson.

If *Bad Luck City* left the impression of Burnside trying to keep up with the young folks, the 1994 Fat Possum follow up *Too Bad Jim*, produced by Robert Palmer and recorded at Junior’s Place, captured the iconic and ferocious slide-guitar driven, one-chord groove sound that still resonates throughout the blues and rock worlds today.

Burnside, Kimbrough and Fat Possum roster members T-Model Ford and Paul “Wine” Jones began playing regularly at Oxford’s Syd and Harry’s, now occupied by City Grocery, and toured the country incessantly as the “Fat Possum Blues Caravan.” Their raw sounds heightened interest among veteran blues fans, excited music critics who normally didn’t bother with blues releases, and attracted alternative rockers who ate up Fat Possum’s often cartoonish promotion of their artists’ music as chaotic and “not the same old blues crap.”

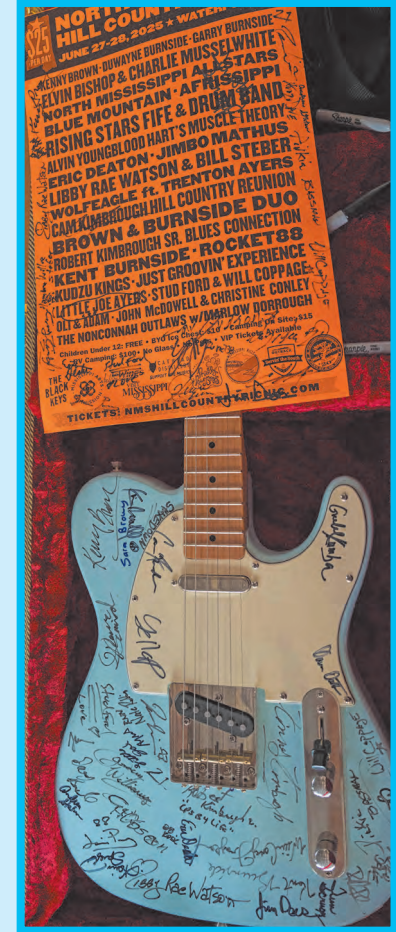
Burnside reached an even broader audience via the 1996 album *A Ass Pocket of Whiskey*, a “collaboration” with the Jon Spencer Blues Explosion that featured Burnside’s basic sound—aided by longtime second guitarist Kenny Brown—overlaid with Spencer and company’s screaming, use of the Theremin, and distorted guitars. I saw the tour in Malmö, Sweden—Burnside, Brown, and Cedric Burnside played an opening set, and there was no onstage interaction with the Explosion. Burnside chuckled backstage about Spencer’s music and told me he enjoyed the money.

Burnside likewise didn’t play much of an active role in the 1998 album *Come On In*, on which producer Tom Rothrock remixed Burnside’s basic sound through sampling, looping, and use of enhanced bass and hip-hop beats (some created by Cedric). The experimentation was controversial but effective—“It’s Bad You Know” was featured in *The Sopranos*. Later, a remix of Burnside’s “Rollin’ Tumblin’” appeared in a Nissan TV commercial.

The resulting royalties allowed Burnside to take it easy, though he continued touring and recorded several more albums for Fat Possum with a more conventional sound.



Don’t forget to get your raffle tickets at the Picnic for the chance to win plenty of incredible items, including this guitar signed by all of the 2025 artists. The guitar is a custom build, made by Chuck Lirette. Some more items include swag from Cat Head Delta Blues & Folk Art, The End of All Music, Fat Possum Records, and many more. You must be present to win, so make your plans to attend the 2026 Picnic and you could be the owner of some really cool stuff!



2026 NMSHCP GUIDE CONTRIBUTORS

Scott Barretta is a lecturer in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at the University of Mississippi, the longtime host of *Highway 61* on Mississippi Public Broadcasting, the former editor of *Living Blues*, and a writer/researcher for the Mississippi Blues Trail.

Davis Coen is a seasoned news and magazine writer in North Mississippi, and has covered The Black Keys, Maggie Rose, Oxford Blues Festival, Juke Joint Festival, and Double Decker Arts Festival. His writing appears regularly in several publications, as well as promotional documents for clients of Blind Racoon, a Memphis-based music marketing company. Coen has also enjoyed a long music career, which has included a dozen tours of Europe, 11 full album

releases, 20 years of regular play on SiriusXM radio, and original music on the 2003 PBS special *The Blues* by Martin Scorsese.

Jean Frank has been documenting concerts with her exceptional photography for years. She lives near Birmingham with her husband, Mitch.

Robb Roaten is a graphic designer based in Memphis, Tennessee, and plays in the band 78, who will perform Friday at 4 pm.

Megan Wolfe, based in Taylor, Mississippi, is an illustrator, photographer, and local business owner of Offbeat in General. When it comes to new business ventures or creative projects, she’s a firm believer in digging in with the local community first.

The label also re-released older acoustic recordings of Burnside which provided a more nuanced view of his artistry.

Burnside died on September 1, 2005, but his music lives on via his progeny. Notably, Cedric Burnside has enjoyed a successful solo career, including collaborative work with his slightly older uncle Garry Burnside, who recently joined his touring band. And the community of Hill Country musicians is reinforced every year via festivals staged by members of the Burnside, Kimbrough, and Otha Turner families, as well as the annual Mississippi Hill Country Picnic, co-run by Kenny Brown, which honors the legacies of the genre’s founders. **TV**



MAIN STAGE FRIDAY, JUNE 26, 2026 LINEUP

11 pm

DUWAYNE BURNSIDE

DuWayne Burnside, son of the legendary bluesman **R.L. Burnside**, carries on his father's musical legacy while carving out his own distinctive path in the blues world. DuWayne grew up immersed in the sounds of Hill Country blues, learning from his father and other local musicians. He inherited R.L.'s raw, hypnotic style but has evolved it with his own modern sensibilities, infusing elements of funk, soul, and rock into his music. DuWayne has collaborated with artists like **North Mississippi Allstars** and **Cedric Burnside** to keep the Hill Country blues tradition alive and thriving. With albums like *Under Pressure* and *Bout 2 Get Wild*, DuWayne continues to captivate listeners with his electrifying performances and soul-stirring songs, ensuring that the Burnside family's musical legacy remains a vital force in the blues landscape.



DuWayne Burnside



Blue Mountain

9:30 pm

BLUE MOUNTAIN

Blue Mountain, formerly **The Hilltops**, emerged in Oxford, Mississippi in the early '90s, led by hard-working guitarist, singer-songwriter **Cary Hudson**, with the talented **Laurie Stirratt** on bass and vocals. Hudson has also released several solo albums on the record label, **Black Dog Records**, and performs sometimes with daughter **Anna**.

8:10 pm KUDZU KINGS

Hailing from Oxford, Mississippi, the Kudzu Kings are renowned for their eclectic blend of rock, country, and Southern roots music. Formed in the mid-'90s, the band quickly gained a loyal following with their infectious melodies, tight harmonies, and high-energy performances. Drawing inspiration from their Southern surroundings, the Kudzu Kings infuse their music with a distinctive sense of place, capturing the essence of small-town life in the Deep South. Over the years, the Kudzu Kings have become beloved fixtures of Oxford's music scene, embodying the spirit of community and camaraderie that defines the vibrant landscape of Mississippi.



Kudzu Kings

7:30 pm

CHARLIE MUSSELWHITE



Charlie Musselwhite

Charlie Musselwhite's journey through the blues was from his birth in Mississippi to Memphis, Chicago, and California. Arriving in Chicago in the early sixties, he was just in time for the epochal blues revival. Fifty years of nonstop touring, performing, and recording have reaped huge rewards. Charlie Musselwhite is living proof that great music only gets better with age. More than 20 albums later he is at the top of his game, a revered elder statesman of the blues nowhere near ready to hang up his harps, his depth of expression as a singer and an instrumentalist unexcelled and only growing deeper.

6:30 pm

KODY SHADE HARRELL

Sardis-based musician Kody Shade Harrell brings his signature "modern Mississippi music" to the Picnic roster. A versatile multi-instrumentalist who apprenticed under Hill Country masters R.L. Boyce and Eric Deaton, Harrell seamlessly blends deep regional blues traditions with psychedelic textures and rock 'n' roll grit. Whether he is holding down the bass overseas for Cedric Burnside or engineering at Kenny Brown's Potts Camp studio, his reverence for local history shines through. Catch him fronting his own "trio duo" alongside drummer Bryan Shaw, delivering an impressive fingerstyle performance packed with original songwriting.



Kody Shade Harrell

Junior Kimbrough. From an early age, Robert was steeped in the sounds and life of North Mississippi and its distinctive style of blues. Growing up, Robert listened, first-hand, to Mississippi blues royalty that played with his father at home, at **Junior's Juke Joint Club**, and the ever frequent weekend house party and porch jam session. The blues was simply part of everyday life as a Kimbrough.

4:45 pm

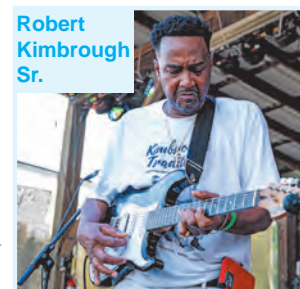
ROCKET 88

Formed in the summer of 2005, Rocket 88 continues to bring its Mississippi-soaked sound to audiences. Sometimes referred to as "Oxford's House Band," **Rosamond Posey** (vocals, rhythm guitar), **Jamie Posey** (vocals, lead guitar, harmonica), and **Nathan Robbins** (bass, vocals) make up the core.

5:30 pm

ROBERT KIMBROUGH SR. BLUES CONNECTION

Robert Kimbrough Sr. continues the **Cotton Patch Soul Blues** style created by his father, the legendary



Robert Kimbrough Sr.

4 pm 78

78 combines influences from the North Mississippi Hill Country Blues, pre-war Memphis, and the funky side of Americana. Hailing from Memphis and North Mississippi, 78 brings classic juke blues and originals. **TV**

INSIDE THE HILL COUNTRY BLUES GUITAR WORKSHOP

with **Kenny Brown, Garry Burnside, Cary Hudson, and Eric Deaton**

For generations, North Mississippi Hill Country blues has been passed from musician to musician the old-fashioned way—at front porches, juke joints, family gatherings, and long nights spent watching another player's hands.

That same spirit remains at the center of the Guitar Workshop connected to the 2026 North Mississippi Hill Country Picnic, where four musicians deeply tied to the tradition—**Kenny Brown, Garry Burnside, Cary Hudson, and Eric Deaton**—will guide students through the unique language of Hill Country blues during a four-hour clinic on Thursday, June 25.

Rather than functioning like a formal classroom, the workshop centers on direct interaction between students and musicians who learned the style firsthand from older generations of Mississippi blues artists.

“You can Google these licks now,” Hudson explained during a recent interview. “But there’s something about learning them from somebody who learned them from somebody else.”

Hudson—who hails from down in Sumrall, Mississippi, but founded roots-rock band Blue Mountain in Oxford in the early-90s—described the workshop as part of a much longer musical lineage.

“I consider myself to be part of a Mississippi lineage,” he said. “One person shows another person. That’s magic.”

Few musicians embody that lineage more directly than Kenny Brown. Widely regarded as one of the defining guitarists of the Hill Country blues tradition, Brown began absorbing the music as a child while hearing artists like Otha Turner and Napoleon Strickland perform near his family home in Nesbit, Mississippi. As a teenager, he apprenticed under Mississippi Joe Callicott before later becoming the longtime musical partner of R.L. Burnside, who famously referred to Brown as his “adopted son.”

For decades, Brown helped carry the Hill Country sound to audiences around the world through performances and recordings alongside artists including Junior Kimbrough, Jessie Mae Hemphill, T-Model Ford, Cedell Davis, and the North Mississippi Allstars. More recently, Brown appeared on The Black Keys’ Grammy-nominated album *Delta Kream*, recorded with Eric Deaton and the band in Nashville.

Brown and his wife Sara also remain among the driving forces behind the Hill Country Picnic itself, helping preserve and promote the region’s blues culture for new generations.



Musicians hanging out backstage at the Picnic. Left to right: Justin Showah, Cary Hudson, Nate Robbins, and Eric Deaton.

by **Davis Coen**

Garry Burnside offers students another direct connection to the roots of the music. As the youngest son of R.L. Burnside and a former member of Junior Kimbrough’s Soul Blues Boys, Burnside grew up immersed in the rhythms and phrasing that define the Hill Country sound. Performing publicly since childhood, he developed a style that blends traditional Hill Country blues with rock and other Southern influences while remaining grounded in the groove-heavy approach associated with his father’s music.

Hudson and Deaton both emphasized that groove—rather than flashy technique—as one of the workshop’s central lessons.

“It’s more about the groove,” Hudson said. “It’s not really an opportunity to show off licks.”

Hudson noted that one of the key adjustments he made as a player involved learning to abandon a flat pick in favor of fingerstyle playing.

“One thing I had to learn was playing with my fingers instead of a pick,” he said. “That’s an important part of it.”

Deaton teaches from that same perspective. Currently touring as the bassist with The Black Keys, Deaton has participated in the workshop for more than a decade and said the sessions are intentionally designed to feel personal and informal.

“They divide the workshop group into about three or four groups of people,” Deaton explained while preparing for a tour stop in Portland, Oregon. “You usually end up teaching three or four classes of anywhere from two to five people at a time.”

The smaller format allows instructors to spend focused time with each participant regardless of experience level.

“I just try to have several Hill Country type

A vertical advertisement for a guitar workshop. At the top, it says 'Learn the Hill Country groove from the pros' in a stylized font. Below that is a large image of a yellow and black electric guitar. The background is dark with colorful fireworks. At the bottom of the guitar, it says 'June 25 \$150'. Below the guitar, it says 'tickets available online at nmshillcountrypicnic.com/tickets/'.

things for them to learn,” Deaton said.

Like Hudson, Deaton avoids heavily structured lessons or written materials during the clinic.

“I don’t write anything for them either,” he said. “It’s just sit there and absorb what you can.”

That approach reflects the way many Mississippi musicians originally learned the style themselves—by spending time around older players and gradually absorbing the rhythms, phrasing, and feel that cannot easily be written down.

“There are things you can’t really notate,” Hudson said. “You have to know the language.”

The workshop regularly attracts everyone from beginners to seasoned regional musicians looking to deepen their understanding of Hill Country blues. Deaton recalled teaching fellow musicians over the years who specifically wanted to strengthen that side of their playing.

“We all know different stuff,” he said. “Especially those of us who haven’t come up in the blues thing, there’s things you can show those guys.”

The workshop continues to stand out because of both the atmosphere that Brown & company create, and this rare opportunity for practicing musicians to learn directly from players on the top of their field.

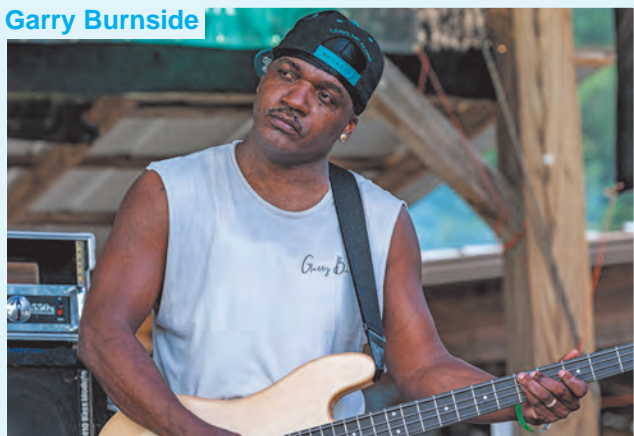
“The Picnic workshop is always interesting, and I enjoy meeting all the people,” Brown said. “There is a lot of knowledge to be gained at the workshop.”

For the four instructors, the clinic represents far more than a guitar lesson. It remains an opportunity to preserve a uniquely Mississippi tradition in the same way it has always survived - through direct human connection, shared experience, and the passing of knowledge from one musician to another. **TV**

MAIN STAGE SATURDAY, JUNE 27, 2026 LINEUP

10:30 pm GARRY BURNSIDE

Garry Burnside



The son of the legendary **R.L. Burnside**, **Garry Burnside** has carved out his own niche while honoring his father's legacy. His guitar playing is distinguished by a raw, powerful style that evokes the rugged spirit of the Delta, and his performances are a testament to his deep-rooted connection to the genre. Throughout his career, he has collaborated with many artists and bands, including the Burnside Exploration and the North Mississippi Allstars.

In addition to his work as a performer, Garry Burnside is also committed to preserving and promoting the blues. Through his dedication to both his craft and his heritage, Garry Burnside not only upholds the legacy of his famous father but also ensures that the soulful sounds of the Mississippi blues will continue to resonate with audiences for years to come.

9 pm KENNY BROWN

Kenny Brown is a highly respected blues musician renowned for his mastery of Mississippi Hill Country blues. Born and raised in **Nesbit**, Mississippi, Brown honed his skills playing alongside legends like **Mississippi Fred McDowell** and **R.L. Burnside**. His unique blend of traditional blues with elements of rock and punk has earned him a dedicated following and critical acclaim.

Brown's distinctive style, characterized by raw, hypnotic rhythms and blistering slide guitar work, pays homage to the rich musical heritage of the Mississippi Delta while pushing the boundaries of the genre.



Kenny Brown

7:30 pm ALVIN YOUNGBLOOD HART'S MUSCLE THEORY

Alvin Youngblood Hart is a virtuoso guitarist and multi-instrumentalist deeply rooted in the blues tradition. Hailing from California but steeped in the rich musical heritage of Mississippi, Hart's style effortlessly blends Delta blues, country, rock, and folk influences into a captivating tapestry of sound.

Throughout his career, Alvin Youngblood Hart has garnered critical acclaim and earned numerous accolades, including a Grammy Award for Best Traditional Blues Album. He is known for his technical prowess on the guitar, seamlessly shifting between slide and fingerstyle playing with precision and flair.

With a discography spanning over two decades and collaborations with luminaries like **Taj Mahal** and **Ben Harper**, Alvin Youngblood Hart continues to inspire and influence generations of musicians with his unparalleled talent and unwavering dedication to the craft.



Alvin Youngblood Hart



Rising Stars Fife & Drum Band

6:30 pm RISING STARS FIFE & DRUM BAND

Traditional fife and drum music is a vanishing American folk music tradition derived from country blues, martial music tradition, and African rhythms. The late **Otha Turner** founded the **Rising Star Fife & Drum Band**, which is now led by his granddaughter **Shardé Thomas**.



Kent Burnside

5:45 PM KENT BURNSIDE

Kent Burnside, grandson of the iconic bluesman **R.L. Burnside**, carries on his family's musical tradition with passion and authenticity. Hailing from **Holly Springs, Mississippi**, Kent learned the blues from his grandfather and other local musicians, soaking in the raw energy and emotional depth of the Hill Country blues style. With his gritty vocals, soulful guitar playing, and driving rhythms, Kent channels the spirit of his forebears while infusing his own modern twist into the genre. Embracing the raw and unfiltered essence of the blues, Kent Burnside mesmerizes audiences with his electrifying performances, keeping the flame of Mississippi blues burning bright for new generations to discover and cherish.

4:30 pm ERIC DEATON

Eric Deaton is a torch-bearer of the North Mississippi Hill Country blues tradition, having received an apprenticeship first-hand from the masters of this particularly hypnotic, backwoods strain of blues. Eric has recorded albums with **The Black Keys** and **Hank Williams, Jr.** Eric's band includes **Junior Kimbrough's** son **Kenny**.

3:30 pm BROWN, BURNSIDE, & MUSSELWHITE

2:45 pm AFRISSIPPI

Afrissippi is an afro-beat/blues/experimental band based out of **Oxford, Mississippi**, with **Guelel Kumba** (voice and guitar), **Eric Deaton** (guitar and voice), **Kinney Kimbrough** (drums) **Justin Showah** (bass), and **Papa Assane M'baye** (hand-drum). Guelel Kumba comes from the **Futa Tooro** region of West Africa, and is a member of the **Fulani** people. "The blues is close to my music. The lyrics are different, but the emotions are the same," he says. "I loved the melodies but I was too young to understand the anguish yet."

CAMPGROUND STAGE

Friday, June 26

1 pm
OLIVER KOSTRINSKY

3 pm

STUD FORD

Saturday, June 27

10 am
**JOHN MCDOWELL &
CHRISTINE CONLEY**

11 am

ANDREA STATEN



Cam Kimbrough & Trenton Ayers

2:10 pm
**CAM KIMBROUGH
HILL COUNTRY REUNION**

Cam Kimbrough is a Hill Country artist, producer, drummer, guitar player, songwriter, rapper, and vocalist. Grandson of the legendary Junior Kimbrough, he is continuing the Hill Country music tradition with a very original and modern approach. Kimbrough recently spent several years performing regularly throughout the Southwestern U.S.

1:30 pm
**WOLFEAGLE FT.
TRENTON AYERS**



Trenton Ayers

Trenton Ayers has been playing guitar since age four. The son of Earl “Little Joe” Ayers, he has played with **The Electric Mudd**, **Cedric Burnside Project**, and more. He was nominated for a GRAMMY in 2015 for his album *Descendants of Hill Country*.

12:45 PM
**LIBBY RAE WATSON
& BILL STEBER**

Libby Rae Watson is an authentic blues woman who has been playing since the early 1970s, when she discovered the blues in her hometown of Pascagoula. She helped organize the talent for the very



Bill & Libby Rae

first **Delta Blues Festival in Greenville, Mississippi**, in 1978. Libby Rae has played many festivals and music venues all over the world.

noon
**NONCONNAH OUTLAWS
WITH MARLOW DURROUGH**

ANDREA STATEN SET FOR SOLO SPOTLIGHT AT CAMPGROUND STAGE

Mississippi guitarist and singer **Andrea Staten** will bring her deep love for Hill Country Blues to the campground stage on Saturday morning, continuing a musical journey that first began for her as a curious fan more than a decade ago.

Staten said her connection to the event started shortly after moving to Oxford in late 2011. At the time, she knew little about Hill Country Blues, despite growing up in the Charleston area surrounded by Mississippi music traditions. She had seen advertisements for the picnic, but had never actually attended before 2012, when she decided to fully immerse herself in the experience by taking the festival’s guitar workshop and camping throughout the weekend.

“I didn’t really understand the difference,” Staten recalled. “I knew Delta Blues, but I didn’t know Hill Country Blues.”

That changed quickly after attending the workshop, where she learned directly from respected musicians including Kenny Brown, David Kimbrough Jr., Duwayne Burnside, and Garry Burnside.

The experience left a lasting impression.

Held in the summer heat at Betty Davis’ Ponderosa, the workshop introduced Staten to open tunings and the hypnotic rhythms that define Hill Country Blues. One of the first things Brown showed her was how to play in open G tuning, opening up a new musical direction that she still explores today.

Since then, Staten has become a familiar face at the picnic, performing there every year since 2013. This year’s appearance marks her first solo performance in the campground area, a setting she says feels especially personal.

Staten describes her music as heavily influenced by the Hill Country style, built around droning bass notes and rhythmic finger work that creates a trance-like groove. “It’s a rhythm that’s very different from anything else,” she said. “A lot of people call it hypnotic.”

Fans attending her set can expect a blend of originals, traditional influences, slide guitar, and songs inspired by legendary North Mississippi musician Jessie Mae Hemphill, whose work has become an important touchstone in Staten’s performances. Though she remains modest about her songwriting,



by Davis Coen

Staten said she plans to include several original songs during her campground appearance. Among them are tunes she has performed at regional festivals in recent years, including a song tentatively titled “Traveling Light.”

The song reflects on heartbreak and personal growth. Staten explained that the song centers on realizing that the end of a difficult relationship had ultimately turned out to be a good thing. Her style balances raw Hill Country energy with thoughtful songwriting and a

relaxed stage presence that fits naturally into the laid-back atmosphere of the picnic campground.

For many longtime attendees, the campground area has become one of the festival’s most beloved gathering spots—a place where musicians and fans connect in a more informal setting throughout the weekend, including a late night jam session after the festival music ends. Staten says that atmosphere is part of what keeps drawing her back.

“The campground people are really into it,” she said. “They come for the whole experience.”

Outside the picnic, Staten has quietly become part of several important projects within Mississippi’s blues community. She recently contributed rhythm guitar and backing vocals to Gary Burnside’s album *It’s My Time Now*, recorded at Royal Studios with producer Boo Mitchell. Staten described the sessions as both exciting and rewarding, especially since it marked one of her first experiences recording backing vocals in a professional studio environment.

Staten spoke enthusiastically about the collaborative spirit surrounding many of the musicians connected to the Hill Country scene, noting that friendships and creative partnerships often grow naturally through these festivals and workshops. That sense of community remains one of the strongest elements of the picnic itself.

What began for Staten as a chance to “maybe learn something” from a few experienced musicians has grown into more than a decade of friendships, performances, and musical development rooted in Mississippi tradition.

Now, as she prepares to perform once again at the picnic, Staten seems perfectly at home within the same musical culture that first welcomed her years ago in that North Mississippi summer swelter. **TV**

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