

## HOW IT ALL BEGAN....

Way back in the 1980's, my partner and I were driving on i10 out of Baton Rouge, as we often did we took a detour off the Interstate to stop at a small town for lunch. It often seemed to us, we were seen as, in the nicest meaning of the word, a novelty. On this occasion we were en-route to New Orleans to join in the Jazz we knew and loved. Blue's at that time was something we hadn't really thought about until this time we stopped at a small café. The usual conversation about people's father's and grandfathers who served with the US Air force in the UK during WW2 and of course the many questions about our Royal Family. During the conversation the 'Blue's came up together with Jazz and a mysterious genre, Zydeco (Never heard of it).

Not wishing to appear stupid, after all, my cousin who we'd been visiting with in Houston pointed out that it depended where in the US you were, how dumb your question was. The conversation went like this. 'Drive down this two lane backdrop until you come to a small town; I don't recall the name. You'll see a bar on your right, you'll get the blues there, and so we did. My partner's statement *If you think I'm going in there, you've got another think coming'* may give my reader an idea of what this place looked like, a low place didn't adequately describe it.

Following a discussion in the car we decided we'd go in have a quick drink and drive on – 4 hours later we left with the 'Blues' firmly in our DNA.



This isn't the place, but you get the idea – I wish we'd taken a photograph. Wooden tables and chairs, dusty and even dirty. The guy behind the bar looked like he'd just got out of bed. I guess there were perhaps 20 patrons, none of which were Caucasian ... As we stepped through the door, a silence that you could have cut with a saw, and then – Hi you guys come on in ... from that moment we enjoyed a true welcome.

We sat with our drinks talking to people and generally enjoying the atmosphere, even my partner relaxed. About half an hour after we arrived, a lady of ample proportions and a guy with what looked like a homemade guitar climbed onto the small platform. He began to play and she sang. Since that day, a dear friend Graham (The Doc) told me, you either feel the blues or you don't, if you don't you're just listening to music, it could be anything. I didn't know it then, but I could have been listening to Bessie Smith.

This lady sang the blues, blues that spoke to us of misery, deprivation and poverty we were incapable of understanding, but could feel by the way she sang – 'Authentic blues'. Four hours later, we realised as the 'Doc' later said, you were listening to the REAL blues. We left that afternoon with the 'Blues' in our soul and a need to grasp the privilege of presenting the authenticity of the blues from their roots across the world.

Thank you, for joining our 'Backtracking' journey.