

local beat

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You know that joke about how many musicians it takes to screw in a light bulb? Well, I want to know how many years it will take the **Memphis and Shelby County Music Commission** to update its Web site. Commission president **Rey Flemings** has made plenty of excuses for the past 12 months, citing the city's 50th anniversary of rock-and-roll celebration, an unsuccessful bid for the MTV Video Music Awards, and other misguided endeavors as his top priorities.

Now Flemings has another distraction: The music commission recently birthed the nonprofit **Memphis Music Foundation**, which, unlike the government-run commission, is privately run. Next month, Flemings is expected to move from commission president to foundation president. But don't go to the commission's Web site for details. **MemphisMusic.org** hasn't been updated since 2003.

Winning ain't everything: Although he lost the competition, one lucky player at the **International Blues Challenge** went home with a brand-new instrument: **John Lowe**, proprietor of Midtown's **Xanadu** music store, gave South Carolina bluesman **John-Alex Mason** one of his handmade cigar-box guitars. "Every year I select one performer," Lowe explains, adding that in previous years, he's bestowed the "Lowebowe" on a number of deserving up-and-coming musicians, including **Richard Johnston**, **Doug Beckman**, and **Slick Ballinger**.

Hip-hop don't stop: So who was representing the Bluff City at the **MemphisRap.com Urban Music Showcase**? **Kentucky Prophet** and the Mississippi-based duo **Souljah Cee** and **Sunny D** swept the two top spots, leaving Memphis soul diva **Michelle Wray** behind in third.

Would-be stars will get another chance to strut their stuff in front of **Sony** A&R reps at the **Xposure Memphis Music Showcase**, a month-long urban talent contest. Preliminaries begin at **Jillian's Atlas Club** this Thursday, February 17th, and run through Monday, February 21st, with the finals scheduled for the **Cannon Center** on Sunday, February 27th. Registration for this competition has already begun. Call 523-2333 for details.

Meanwhile, **II Black** has launched a campaign to conquer the Highland Strip. Earlier this month, the rapper commenced a Monday night residency at the **Highland Cue**, located just west of the **University of Memphis** campus. "I can always perform in the 'hood, but I can't get a diverse crowd to come into the 'hood to see me," II Black says, adding that he plans to use the weekly slot as a chance to woodshed new material and present other artists.

"I keep it nice and mellow, and people seem to dig it," II Black says, explaining that he's trying out cuts from his new **Hoodoo Labs**-produced album **The Representer** and his latest mix tape, **II Black: The Heartstopper**. "During my break, I might have an R&B band, a comedian, or [another rap] group like **The Stretch-Em Squad** onstage, and I want to invite some DJs. I'm intent on putting my name out there because you never know who's listening or watching."

Batten down the hatches: It'll be **GonerFest** redux at **The Buccaneer** this Friday night, when Chicago's **M.O.T.O.** take the stage along with Memphis groups **The Dutch Masters** and **The Secret Service**. Those of you who survived the quadruple-day mayhem last month know just what I'm talking about. Those of

you who missed it well, I can't explain the glory of **King Louie's One Man Band**, the genius behind **Monsieur Jeffrey Evans'** bizarre rock-and-roll rants, or the alcohol-fueled dance parties that lasted 'til 7 a.m. All I can do is recommend you head over to the Bucc for a guaranteed good time this weekend.

Better late than never: Oakland, California-based **HMG Records** has finally released ***Mud Island Blues, The Fieldstones'*** long-awaited follow-up to their 1983 debut, ***Memphis Blues Today***. Fourteen fantastic tracks long, this album -- recorded by **David Evans** at the University of Memphis' recording studio in the late '80s -- includes such gems as **Little Applewhite's** "Hand Me Down My Shotgun" and **Will Roy Sanders'** "Talk to Me, Baby," as well as memorable liner notes from Muddy Waters biographer **Robert Gordon**, who traces the band's evolution from a club called the J&J to Greens' Lounge, one of the greatest juke joints this city has ever known. Pick up *Mud Island Blues* and the HMG compilation ***Memphis Blues Bands and Singers: The 1980s***, which collects sides by the Fieldstones, **The Hollywood All Stars**, and a seldom-heard chestnut called "**King Riders Boogie**" by **Huebert Crawford & the King Riders Band**.

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