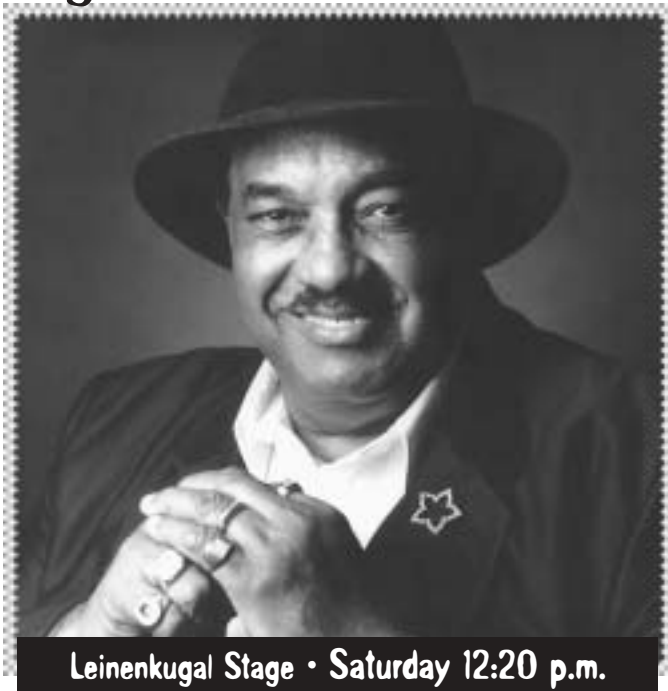


Big Walter Smith and the Groove Merchants



Big Walter Smith is Minnesota's most honored and recognized bluesman. The only performer to have appeared at every Bayfront Blues Festival, Big Walter Smith has been polishing his big-city urban blues sound for more than 40 years. Born 70 years ago in Oklahoma and raised in Kansas City, Walter's blues career was profoundly influenced in the early 1950s by

the singing of Bobby Bland and B.B. King.

After moving to the Twin Cities in 1970 Walter quickly established himself as a musical force to be reckoned with. Forming the Groove Merchants in 1985 he has been a mainstay of the Twin Cities music scene ever since.

Walter delivers his soul flavored vocals with a deep felt passion and love for the blues and has one of the most appealing voices found on any stage in Minnesota. The Groove Merchants feature brassy, big band R&B with some swing and a little funk. The band is led by the exceptional lead guitar playing of Scotty Graves, with Paul Wigen on keyboards, Joe Sherohman on bass, Tom McShane on drums and the Hi-Steppin' horn section of Jim Kogl (saxophone), Ted Thomas (trombone), and Tom Tange (trumpet). The band is fronted by the smooth, sweetly soaring vocals of Big Walter Smith.

The group's most recent CD "Midnight Express," has received widespread acclaim & three years ago the Mayor of Duluth dedicated a Big Walter Smith day honoring him with a citation proclaiming Big Walter Smith "Ambassador To The Blues."

Big Walter Smith & The Groove Merchants continue to deliver one of the best R&B shows in the Upper Midwest. When it comes to blues in Minnesota, Big Walter Smith is the Chairman of the Board. They will also be playing at The Reef on Friday and Saturday night.