

Artist tells how it all came to be... “Buddy Guy: The Blues Chase The Blues Away”

In 2006 my wife Tammy and I were attending our second Buddy Guy concert, this one at the Telus Convention Centre in Calgary. I was bringing along a set of my promo posters, the famous blues musicians and the blues history series, which features my Buddy Guy painting enlarged on the portrait's promo. I brought them along just in case I had a chance to somehow give the set to Buddy Guy.

Arriving inside and grabbing a table at the back of the hall, I went directly to the stage door which was guarded by a very large man. I asked the guard whether I could give Buddy Guy these promo posters that I had brought for him, to which he replied a stern NO. So I rephrased my request to "could YOU please give these promo posters to Buddy Guy for me?" to which again he replied NO. Being shot down twice, I turned away disappointed and joined my wife at the rear of the hall and tossed them onto the empty table we were sitting at.

Well the opening act was Shemekia Copeland, our first live concert with this fast-rising blues woman. Tammy and I were both aware of her music already, also her relationship as daughter to the famous bluesman Johnny Copeland who had passed away in 1997, but we really didn't know what to expect when the lights went out and the music started. Well all I can say is that she completely blew us away. Her performance and music took us right back to the sixties. It was like a trip back in time to those psychedelic sounds we all loved so much. The band performed seamlessly for an hour like one long amazing song that you never wanted to end, while Shemekia's vocals reminded us of rock & roll concerts decades in the past.

While tearing down the stage to set up for Buddy Guy, Shemekia retreated to the rear of the hall to sign CD's after their set. Being at the back of the hall ourselves, we headed straight over to meet her. Tammy was first to chat with her as I picked out a CD to have her sign for us. We were surprised that no one was else was lining up behind us for the meet and greet with Shemekia, so we decided to stay and talk with her even longer. I took a great photo of Shemekia with Tammy, as we had all the time in the world with her it seemed. Shemekia then asked where we were sitting, so pointing out the table only a few feet away, she asked if she could join us. We said we'd be delighted!! At that point a few more fans had just walked up so she told us she'd be over in a few minutes...

Within minutes, Shemekia did show up at our table just like she said and sat down to wait for the Buddy Guy performance. She happened to glance down at the table and took notice of my promo posters that I had brought for Buddy Guy. Leaning forward to see them better, she asked "What are these?!", and in response, I said they were a set of my promo posters which I had hoped to give to Buddy Guy that night. I said I paint Blues Musicians and Blues History for a living, but there was no way of getting them to him. Shemekia instantly reached out for them saying, "Gimme those, I'll go give'em to Buddy myself", and backstage she went to deliver them herself.

After returning a few minutes later, I thanked her dearly, but wishing I had brought a second set for our extraordinary encounter with her. We enjoyed the entire Buddy Guy concert in Shemekia's company, which was truly a special memory for Tammy and I. Never really thinking much about if Buddy Guy had kept the promo posters or he had left them behind, it was an amazing night to remember.

Now, flashing 15 years ahead, I get a call in October 2020 from Hudson Payer, a producer from Scheme Engine Productions, telling me they're currently producing a feature-length documentary on the life and career of blues legend Buddy Guy. He then went on to say the director of the film had seen a poster of my work while in Chicago, and is now interested in featuring my paintings in the film to

add to the telling of Buddy's story.

Yes, I was definitely interested I told Hudson, but where did your director see a poster of my work? Hudson replied he didn't know, but would ask his boss and get back to me about it. Well it was about four weeks later when Hudson called me to say he found out where the film director Devin Chanda saw my work on a poster... It was while he was at Buddy Guy's house doing takes for the film!! Wow! My mind started piecing it all together, it had to be the promo posters Shemekia had given to Buddy for me that night of the concert in 2006. It's the only way it could've happened, if it wasn't for so many amazing coincidences that night, it would not have ever come to this film offer.

Such a memorable night with Shemekia in 2006 opened up a chance of a lifetime in my career in 2021. I really feel Shemekia bearing my gift to Buddy made everything turn magical. Two amazing stories for me are connected by two amazing blues artists a decade and half apart. BLUES is the most powerful music in the world.

Thank you Shemekia Copeland and Buddy Guy.

Sincerely,

Earl Klatzel