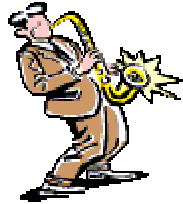


## SEPTEMBER 2, 2000 – OAKLAND BLUES FESTIVAL



Anywhere they play good Blues, there you'll find the best people. And the best people were rocking out the blues this weekend down in old town Oaktown. The annual Oaktown Blues festival took place, as usual, with not an ad on radio, TV or newspaper and still they came in droves. People who love the blues just know.

This year, the fest is complemented by various artisans who have fled the high rent prices in Babylon, giving blues 2000 the name "Blues and Art on the Bay". Saturday kicked off with the Oakland Jaz Choir and JJ Malone, but Sunday brought out the big guns in the Elmer Lee Thomas Revue, Roy Tyler and Sonny Rhodes. Yes, THE Sonny Rhodes. On the Broadway stage Ms. Dee followed by Freddie Hughes blasted what remained of the rainy weather clean out of the sky, turning the day into delightfully warm and sunny.

We got there in the middle of Ms. Dee's set on the Broadway stage. Ms. Dee and her backup band of young musicians blew the covers off of "Mustang Sally", segueing midway through into "Low Rider", before returning to the original for a whalloping finish. She did a soft ballad, resplendent in fuschia dustcoat and leopard skin hat, before taking ownership over a version of the old blues "Take

me to the River". Starting with a crunching rock beat, moving through a Jimi Hendrix styled instrumental with overdrive set on nine before rocking the crowd with a gospel-blues shouting, stomping, eaves-rattling vocal, Ms. Dee made you forget the Talking Heads ever existed.

Fred Hughes and his band took over at two PM, when the sublime Chris Burns returns on keyboards to infuse the sound with his Dr. John riffs and boogies. On lead guitar, Steve Gannon provided his accomplished and distinctive Eric Clapton meets Steve Vai and Trent Reznor virtuosity. Steve has played with John Lee Hooker and other Greats, so it was no surprise to see him backing Fred Hughes, who first established his rep in 1962 with the Soul Machine. Mr. Hughes, riding high on a CD due out on a major label in November began with a solid bluesy "Last 2 dollars" before reprising his 1968 hit "Send My Baby Back". Chris Burns returned to provide solid piano lead and backing. Also joining on stage was Vinnie Jones on sax. After a nice rock'n soul "Long Time Coming", the crowd enjoyed another rocking version of "Take me to the River". When Hughes did "Stand By Me", the pit, the side aisles and the whole back area was filled with people drawn to the sound.

The fun continues on Labor Day tomorrow.