

## **IEBS Newsletter**

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### **Bobby Patterson Band**

by Carol Austin

Bluesman and singer/songwriter Bobby “Fat Tone” Patterson delivers original songs and classic blues accompanied by masterful slide guitar and electrifying leads. Patterson’s nickname derives from the name of the band he fronted for 13 years, The Fat Tones. He plays electric, acoustic and slide guitar and likes to scat. “Scattin’,” he explained, “is singing the same notes that I’m playing on my guitar.” His hot licks garnered him the Inland Empire Blues Society (IEBS) Best Blues Guitarist award in 2004, 2005, 2006, 2011 and 2012. Those awards led to his induction into the IEBS Hall of Fame. “The IEBS helped put me on the map as a blues player,” said Patterson.

Drummer Bill Bancroft provides the solid back line for the band. Originally from the Inland Empire, his earliest influence was rock music, but he ended up touring with top country music acts like Freddy Fender, Dottie West and Chris Le Doux, before returning to the Pacific Northwest in the mid-1980s. He played in the original Too Slim & the Taildraggers and also with Pat Coast. Bancroft was the recipient of the very first Best Blues Drummer award from the IEBS. He’s won many awards over the years, and is in the Hall of Fame. Bancroft also works as an actor and model and is currently polishing a soon-to-be-released book.

Bass player extraordinaire Randy Knowles was named Best Blues Bassist by IEBS in 2015 and 2016. He is a veteran musician who was playing professionally by the age of fourteen. He’s performed in local and regional blues, classic rock, and reggae bands. Knowles’ personal passions include performing at community events and collecting musical instruments, including the '62 Harmony bass and the '62 and '78 Fender basses he plays on stage.

Tom Norton was named Best Blues Keyboardist by the IEBS in 2016. Born and raised in Spokane, Norton has played many genres of music in his 30-year professional career. He honed his funky groove while recording with artists like George Clinton and Sly Stone. He has worked as a session musician and is a 20-year employee of Korg Keyboards and Marshall Amps. Norton has also composed music for films and videos.

Patterson said of him, “I wanted a keyboard player for this band; I didn’t want another three-piece band.” Asked what a keyboard adds, he said, “A keyboard allows more sound and variation, and more interesting music. As a front man playing lead, a keyboard gives me more room to stretch out.” With this many “Best of” and Hall of Fame recipients in one band, you know they have to be good. “I just feel really lucky that this band came together. To have these guys playing my songs is just awesome,” Patterson said. “My first musical memory is of the Beatles coming to America when I was just a little kid. The whole family watched them on the Ed Sullivan Show.” Patterson laughed. “And my dad said, ‘They’ll never go anywhere--they only know three chords.’”

When he was seven or eight, Patterson's mom bought his older brother a little acoustic guitar as a gift. "It was just sitting around, so I picked it up and I liked the way it felt. I really started playing when I got a guitar for Christmas at twelve. From there I talked my mom into an electric guitar." When FM radio started playing whole albums Patterson listened and learned. "I bought some books on how to play rock guitar; they always start out with the blues. You can't play rock without playing the blues because that's where rock and roll came from. Every road leads back to the blues." Patterson's early blues inspiration came from Johnny Winter, Alvin Lee and a few other white blues players. Ten Years After was his favorite band of that era. "I really got into the Stones in the 1980s. I even played in a Stones tribute band," he revealed. No surprise, he played the part of Keith. "The Stones brought me back to the blues. Now I listen mostly to blues: Muddy Waters, Howlin Wolf, Delbert McClinton. I like the old stuff. A new Rolling Stones album of old blues covers is in my car. In my truck I have the Best of Stevie Ray."

Regarding his equipment Patterson said, "I have a brand new guitar made out of redwood and cedar from a boat dock that was sunk for 50 years in Lake Pend Oreille. Lynn Ellsworth makes them and they're called Boogie Bodies. I also have a Les Paul Green Custom . . . I play a Stratocaster . . . I'm not one of those people who plays the same guitar forever." Patterson's favorite venue is the Mt Baker Blues Festival in Bellingham, WA. He's played there since 2005, starting when he was with the Fat Tones. "I convinced the promoter to keep me on with the new band. It's a killer event. Festivals are my favorite venue because they pay well, and you play for a huge crowd on a big stage with great sound and light crews." He added, "As musicians we trudge through the trenches playing in all these bars, lugging equipment, setting up, tearing down. Festivals are a different universe."

When asked about future plans, Patterson said, "Retirement will be when I'm six feet under. Musicians don't retire. You hope you can keep playing forever." Contact and booking: 509-216-0944 or [bobbypattersonband@gmail.com](mailto:bobbypattersonband@gmail.com) , Website: <http://bobbypattersonband.com/> Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Pattersonband/>