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February 16, 1995

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Blue Moon Coffeehouse, Feb. 25

Chicago Blues Guitarist, Fruteland Jackson, to Perform at IWU

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.--Chicago blues guitarist Fruteland Jackson will take center stage, Feb. 25, at Illinois Wesleyan University's Blue Moon Coffeehouse.

Jackson's performance is one of several IWU activities in February, celebrating Black History Month.

Jackson's performance is at 8 p.m. in the Main Lounge of IWU's Memorial Student Center, 104 E. University, Bloomington.

All Blue Moon Coffeehouse shows are free and open to the public.

Reviewer Donald E. Wilcock wrote: "Jackson is a 40-year-old acoustic blues artist who is forging new ground with uncompromising lyrics that address today's issues from an African-American perspective. He tempers the simple cold reality of chilling experiences with a cathartic understanding of the healing power of music."

An example of the power of Jackson's lyrics is found in "Drive By," where he comes down hard on a generation of young African-Americans for shooting each other over gang colors.

"The song begins," Wilcock wrote, "with the sound effects of screeching getaway cars, and Jackson addresses the drive-by assassins directly, 'You say the white man causes this, the murder of yourself. But does a white man point a loaded gun at his race or himself.' The song concludes, 'You're self destructing, brother, with undetermined haste. Soon, there will be no more lives to waste. You ain't nuthin' but a coward.'"

Robert Behre, a reviewer for the *Charleston (S.C.) Post and Courier*, wrote: "In addition to some standards, Jackson sang a newer blues song about a person very upset with himself because he loved his best friend's wife while his friend was in Vietnam. The vibrato of Jackson's voice gave him a distinct, friendly sound, and while his guitar playing was often very simple, he could use the instrument to great effect, as he did by mimicking the sound of church bells . . ."

(more)

Jackson-IWU Blue Moon Coffeehouse/2

Jackson, born in 1953 in Sunflower County, Miss., is one of few African-American blues guitarists who performs acoustic blues in its various styles. He is a singer, song writer, and storyteller.

Jackson spent his childhood in Chicago and Mississippi. His grandfather was a prominent Baptist minister in the Mississippi delta, who introduced Jackson to gospel singing and country blues music. Jackson's formal music education began in high school, where he played the trombone. He attended Columbia College and Roosevelt University in Chicago, studying music theory and voice, respectively.

In recent months, Jackson has performed at 17 college campuses; 14 blues and folk festivals; six theatres, museums, and concert halls; and 23 night clubs. He also has appeared on nine radio and television programs, and received three awards.

His music has been recorded for National Public Radio's "Bluesstage" program and he has been filmed for a public television documentary set for broadcast this year.

In 1992, Jackson was honored by the Chicago Historical Society with an exhibit focusing on his blues song--"Chicago, the City I Love, (She's Gettin' Washed Away)"-- which is about the Great Chicago Flood. The song was used for the soundtrack of a documentary film for the Chicago Historical Society's archives.

IT Records released Jackson's 1993 debut cassette, "Being Free."

Jackson conducts a Blues in School program for college and elementary school students. The program is a lecture/performance with a slide presentation that discusses blues from its beginnings to contemporary styles.

The blue moon is the second full moon occurring in a month--a rare and unusual phenomenon fraught with possibility and excitement. IWU's Blue Moon Coffeehouse brings to campus and the community a wide range of music and entertainment. Doors open at 7 p.m. and performances consist of two sets beginning at 8 p.m. Flavored coffees and light pastries are available, along with a varied menu of acoustic music, spanning traditional to contemporary folk music, with some reggae and salsa for spice.