

Tahoe musician inducted into R&B Hall of Fame



South Lake Tahoe musician Trey Stone on Oct. 4 is inducted into the R&B Hall of Fame. Photos/Lisa Quick

By Susan Wood

For all the focus on the blues and funk, South Lake Tahoe musician Trey Stone was inspired by a musician who may surprise most – Jimi Hendrix. The psychedelic rock and roll artist that made his claim to fame at the renowned Woodstock concert is known for becoming one with his guitar. Hendrix’s “Little Wing” is one of Stone’s favorite songs to play because “it’s all about the electric guitar.”

“He was my first concert,” Stone recalled a show he attended in high school near San Bernardino. The experience prompted

him to forget all about the trombone he played in school. Plus, the guitar worked better at getting the interest of girls.

Stone isn't just a Tahoe musician.

Earlier this month he was inducted into the R&B Hall of Fame next to the likes of notable rhythm and blues artists Aretha Franklin, Ray Charles, Martha Reeves, the Miracles and the Spinners.

Stone was honored for his work with the Fabulous Peps, a soul trio led by Joe Harris and other collaborators who inevitably would end up working together or recommending each other at other points in their careers. Call it six degrees, or rather six notes, of separation for those who put the music first in their lives.



Trey Stone's honor as an R&B hall of famer.

To hear Stone tell it, his music world has been fulfilling and rewarding – despite moving away from the hip, busy Los Angeles scene for the small mountain town of South Lake Tahoe. After all, Lafayette Trey Stone, now 62, has learned to embrace this modest town with its roots embedded in entertainment. The lake

fits the personality of Stone – a man of few words unless one puts a microphone in front of him.

“I’m very proud,” he said with that signature, calm-and-collected grin, while lounging on one recent warm fall afternoon at Alpina Café.

He wasn’t alone. Upon hearing the news of his honor, Stone called his mother.

“She was really happy,” he said in a matter-of-fact manner.

The magnitude of the honor hit him, prompting the longtime vocalist, keyboardist and guitarist of more than 30 years to reflect back on his career.

His high points are notable.

Stone met the king of the blues B.B. King long enough to share the name of his guitar “Shenene,” since King calls his “Lucille.” The two blues men shared moments that will last forever for Stone.

Career wise, Stone collaborated for years with the Undisputed Truth, which brought the haunting hit “Smiling Faces Sometimes.” Even more recognizable, the soul-funk artist who embraced the 1970s era was lead guitarist on “Car Wash” by Rose Royce. (Sitting still to that song would mean you may be 6 feet under.) He earned a Grammy nomination for Keith Washington’s romantic ballad “Kissing You.” He also played with smooth jazz performer George Clinton. More recently, he performed with the Reno Jazz Orchestra.

Stone toured for more than 40 shows with Tower of Power. The timeless jazz-funk, horn-induced mega band wrote the book on songs that tug at your “easy-to-fall-in-love-with” heart. Who can forget “So Very Hard to Go” or “Still a Young Man.”

“It’s a musician’s dream to play with Tower of Power. (It’s) like a people’s band, like a musician’s band,” Stone told *Lake*

Tahoe News.

For fully dedicated blues, jazz-funk musicians like Stone the honor goes without saying to play with band members who invented genres.

“There are a bunch of groups that are true Motown, before Motown (Records),” he said, referring to bands in the trenches unless swept up by record executive Berry Gordy. Think the Jackson 5 and Diana Ross.



Trey Stone, second from right, with other inductees into the hall of fame.

Stone, who grew up in Riverside, thinks of himself as a “musician who sings,” and one who composes as well. Thus, the reputation goes a long way in gaining respect for his dedication to the music itself, instead of worrying about how a certain behavior will play out in an artist’s star power quotient.

Like the difference between being a traveler versus a tourist – Stone is a diversified musician instead of a celebrity. He seems to excel at “sitting in” with groups like Blues Traveler – mixing and mingling.

When asked if he could play with any one artist, who would it be? Hands down, the answer was Prince.

“He’s from the James Brown school,” Stone said. Prince will often emulate Brown’s memorable dance moves on stage.

Different generations who listen to the soulful beats don't seem to miss a step at keeping the timeless tunes alive.

Stone can vouch for that in his personal life. He's found himself in a 17-year, committed relationship with his greatest supporter, Lisa Quick, who doesn't bat an eyelash at filling in the blanks when the soft-spoken Stone gets shy. The family includes two cats, a dog and two teenage boys at home who don't hesitate at sharing their music prowess and likes with the patriarch Stone.

Family means more and more to Stone, who got a wakeup call to what's meaningful when he had a stroke in 2007. Quick found him and acted quickly.

"She saved my life," he said in a poignant tone.

Then there was the pivotal watershed moment in 1994 when he met his father for the first time. A fan saw his show and recognized Stone's name.

"He said: 'I know your father'," Stone recounted.

His father, who retired from the military, came to many of Stone's shows once they connected. He was the president of the For Love of Jazz club.

"He was really proud of me," a sentimental Stone said.

And the pride of Stone's accomplishment goes beyond family.

"He's so thrilled and honored about this," longtime collaborator John Shipley told *Lake Tahoe News*, while driving to the Atlantis Casino to perform with Stone.

Shipley worked with Stone in the band the Funk Brothers and has learned to love Stone's consistency and ability as a musician.

"He's somebody I enjoy being around and being a friend to," he

said. "What's great about working with Trey is all the songs we do, I know."

Shiple, who teaches intro to keyboards, songwriting and audio recording as well as the history of rock and roll at Western Nevada College in Carson City, also enjoys how Stone never appears to be in a bad mood, even if it's obvious he is. He commends Stone for his resilience in staying true to making a living playing music.

"We used to be able to work at it every day," he said, adding; "Now it's weekend work."

Stone's ability to stay with the music as a line of work is a sheer testament to how highly regarded he is, Shiple pointed out.

"Getting his honor of being inducted into the hall of fame is another 'thank you very much'," he said. "He definitely earned that."