

BRANDON SMITH

by Andy Kehe

It's been said of young Memphis blues harp player Brandon Santini that he "displays the harp ability of a Mark Hummel, the soul of a Curtis Salgado and the pizzazz of a Rod Piazza."

That's high praise for a 36-year-old who is still early in his development as a highly sought-after harp player seeking to carve out his place among the greats of the genre.

Santini, a multiple Blues Music Award nominee, resumes that quest before a Blues Society of Central Pennsylvania membership crowd on Dec. 2, at the annual BSCP Christmas Party at the Hummelstown Fire Department Hall.

Admission is free with a current BSCP membership card. Expired memberships can be renewed and new memberships can be purchased at the door \$15.

Santini, born in Piedmont, North Carolina, cut his teeth in the same Memphis Beale Street Clubs that were once filled with the sounds of Robert Johnson, Muddy Waters, B.B. King and dozens of others.

"While his harp playing is clearly what sets Santini apart, he also commands a huge, smoky voice that perfectly complements the music," wrote a reviewer for Blues Blast Magazine in 2014.

Santini has released three albums to date – the third of which was a live effort titled "Live & Extended" was performed in Quebec in July 2015. It ranked No. 17 on Blues Blast Magazine's top 50 albums of the year. Blues Blast Magazine described the live Quebec performance this way:

"The packed house responds quickly as Brandon Santini and his tight touring band hit the stage with all the raw blues power and impact of the 1970s-era Paul Butterfield or James Cotton Blues Band. The band feels the energy and responds with over an hour of the hard-hitting harmonica-driven blues that's been causing fans and BMA critics alike to tap Santini as one of the most quickly-rising blues stars of his generation."

Santini identifies Butterfield and James Cotton as two of his key influences.

Live & Extended was nominated for a Blues Music Award in 2015. Santini earned a BMA nomination that same year for Best Male Blues Artist.

Other awards and nominations to Santini's credit include: BMA nominations in 2016 in categories of Harmonica Instrumentalist, and Contemporary Males Blues Artist; two BMA nominations in 2014, and BMA nominations in 2013 and 2014 in the category of "Sean Costello Rising Star."

To read Blues Blast Magazine's feature on Santini, cut and paste this link into your browser:
<http://www.bluesblastmagazine.com/issue-8-40-october-2-2014/>

To read The Memphis Blues Society's review of Santini, cut and paste this link:
http://www.memphisbluessociety.com/content.aspx?page_id=22&club_id=539640&module_id=190171 .

To hear a sample of Santini's music, go to these links:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bzzi1eqj9K8>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zR_FT0NsXJ4

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vb_lRttJv7o

or go to www.brandonsantini.com