

BSCP Proudly Presents The Cash Box Kings

Saturday, October 6, 2018 – Champions Sports Bar, Highspire, PA

By Andrew Kehe

The entertainment world is littered with partnerships which went on to parlay extraordinarily different individual styles and personalities to achieve enormous success.

Rowan and Martin, Sonny and Cher, Simon and Garfunkel, Martin and Lewis, Cheech and Chong, Penn and Teller - just a sampling of such duos.

Here's another: Wilson and Nosek. This odd couple of the blues community may not match the iconic status of those greats listed above, but when it comes to Chicago Blues, there may be none more prolific.

Joe Nosek, born in Wisconsin, and South side Chicagoan Oscar Wilson, 20 years Nosek's senior, comprise the backbone of Alligator Records' The Cash Box Kings, a multiple BMA awards nominee which has successfully stayed true to the Chicago Blues style while staying contemporary and relevant in its delivery and content.

Two nights after performing at Buddy Guy's Legends in Chicago, The Cash Box Kings take to the stage at Champions Sports Bar and Grill in Highspire for an 8 p.m. show on Oct. 6, presented by the Blues Society of Central Pennsylvania. Popular local blues fusion band Buzzard Luck will open the show.

Nosek, The Cash Box Kings' founder in 2001, a teacher by trade, singer/song writer and harmonica player, and graduate of University of Wisconsin, saw the potential for something special when he brought in the blues journeyman Wilson in 2007 to add the Muddy Waters-like deep, gritty vocals he thought the band needed.

It was a match made in heaven.

"Oscar is my best friend in the music world," Nosek notes on the Alligator Records website. "The band is a marriage made in heaven for both of us. Oscar is godfather to my oldest son. We have each other's back."

The band has established itself as a diplomat of Chicago Blues, but not a slave of original Chicago Blues tunes. It sets out to play Chicago Blues in a style unique to The Cash Box Kings – that of Wilson's throaty, enthusiastic vocals complimented by Nosek's vibrant harmonica riffs and solos, plus contributions by an always changing compliment of accomplished musicians.

"I would say (The Cash Box Kings) is a throwback to the golden age of blues with some kickin' fresh young blood, but yet not goin' overboard," Wilson told Blues Blast Magazine during a 2017

interview. “You can tell what it is without there being a bunch of notes in there sayin’ nothin’. You got a lot of people out there claiming they play the blues – and I’m not sayin’ it’s not the blues for them – but we try to stay with the traditional sounds, although our musicians are a little fresher. But our music is all about the feeling it gives you.”

The band does not shy away, either, from taking on contemporary issues, evidenced by two cuts on its latest release “Royal Mint,” a 2017 BMA nominee for Best Traditional Blues Album. “Blues for Chi-Raq,” calls attention to the extreme violence the city of Chicago is experiencing, and “Build That Wall” is Nosek’s satirical commentary on people’s intolerance for minorities and immigrants.

Wilson’s comedic nature comes through in “If You Got a Jealous Woman, Facebook Ain’t Your Friend,” and on a cut not on the album, “Gotta Move Out To The Suburbs.”

“We really strive to avoid being a museum piece,” Nosek told the Chicago Tribune in 2017. “I never sit down and try to learn Little Walter solos note for note. I know a lot of old-school blues bands do that and then they go and reproduce them on the recording or live. We take the spirit of that music, but at the same time we try to put our own spin on it. We’re rooted in it, but we’re not imprisoned or bound by it.”

The Cash Box Kings, named after a long defunct magazine, has drawn accolades from reviewers and musicians alike.

From the Pittsburgh Post Gazette: “It’s one thing to say you’re interested in this old music and even to be able to play a few of the tunes with some accuracy. But it’s another thing entirely to be able to re-create the originals and write new material that’s faithful to the 40s and 50s style and do it with authentic vitality.”

Grammy Award-winner Charlie Musselwhite is a big fan: “The Cash Box Kings play with real taste and feel. Not only is it good blues but it’s a jumping good time, too!”

“I ain’t lyin’.”