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# Aspen Daily News

## TACAW will have the blues Thursday

**Jacqueline Reynolds, Aspen Daily News Staff Writer May 30, 2023**

Coming to The Arts Campus At Willits on Thursday is Louisiana blues guitarist Tab Benoit with supporting act Matt Andersen. The seated show is for all ages and will start at 8 p.m.; doors open at 7 p.m.

Benoit is a Grammy-nominated singer, songwriter and guitarist who has built a career on the foundation of his gritty and soulful Delta-swamp blues. For more than 30 years, Benoit has acquired a devoted legion of fans, as well as five Blues Music Awards, including BB King Entertainer of the Year (twice) and an induction into the Louisiana Music Hall of Fame.

Hailing from the bayous of south Louisiana, Benoit was born in Baton Rouge in 1967 and grew up in the nearby oil and fishing town of Houma, where he still resides today. Musically, he was exposed early on to traditional Cajun waltzes and the country music broadcast on his hometown's only radio station.

Benoit's father was also a musician, and the family home was filled with instruments. Benoit started playing drums but switched to guitar because the only gigs in rural Louisiana were held in churches, and loud drums couldn't be played in this setting.

In the late '80s, Benoit started hanging out at the Blues Box, a music club in Baton Rouge that was run by guitarist Tabby Thomas. He'd



Electric blues guitar master Tab Benoit, a native of the southern Louisiana coast, will perform Thursday night at The Arts Campus At Willits. Tickets are \$45 on the day of the 8 p.m. show and \$40 in advance. Benoit plays regularly at venues in the Roaring Fork Valley and across the Western Slope. Courtesy of [tabbenoit.com](http://tabbenoit.com)/Jean Frank Photography

play guitar alongside Thomas, Rafal Neal, Henry Gray and other high-profile regulars at the club, learning first-hand from living blues legends.

Today, Benoit's guitar tone is recognizable. He doesn't rely on any effects and his set up is simple: guitar, cord and Category 5 Amplifier — the sound effects come from the strum of his fingers.

Benoit's accomplishments as a musician are matched by his devotion to the environmental health of his native Louisiana wetlands. Following the release of "Wetlands" — an album which definitively marked the musician's progression into his own original sound and style — Benoit founded in 2004 Voice of the Wetlands, a

nonprofit working to preserve the coastal waters of his home state.

In 2010, Benoit received the Governor's Award for Conservationist of the Year from the Louisiana Wildlife Federation. The musician also starred in "Hurricane on the Bayou," a documentary of Hurricane Katrina's effects and a call to protect and restore the wetlands.

Since the early '90s, Benoit has been playing shows across the country and continues to tour frequently. The blues artist has played venues in Aspen and the Roaring Fork Valley over the years and returns to perform at Basalt's TACAW as a stop on his

current tour, which has featured another bluesman, Matt Andersen, as the opening act.

Andersen, a Canadian singer, songwriter and guitarist, is a musician on the rise. With a soul-filled voice and commanding stage presence, Andersen has built a formidable following the old-fashioned way: touring worldwide and letting his audiences and new devotees spread the word of his tunes.

Since his music career launched in 2002 with the New Brunswick band, Flat Top, Andersen has always brought the same attention to detail and commitment to his poignant body of work and live shows.

In addition to headlining major festivals, clubs and theaters throughout North America, Europe and Australia, Andersen has shared the stage and toured with artists, like Bo Diddley, Buddy Guy, Greg Allman, Tedeschi Trucks Band, Randy Bachman, Little Feat, Jonny Lang and Serena Ryder, among others.

Andersen's current tour is in support of his latest album, "The Big Bottle of Joy," which he said was based around the band of the same name and that some of the songs were written in collaboration with members of the band.

"This is the first time that going into a project I knew exactly who was going to be playing on the recording with me — usually, that's an afterthought; usually, the songs are written, I decide on a producer and a studio, and finally I decide who I'll be working with in the studio," Andersen said. "It was an exciting way to get prepared for an album, knowing what players, and what they could do, opened

up the writing process in a way that took the guesswork out of the end results."

As far as sound goes, Andersen said that the band is best live, and that's how they recorded "The Big Bottle of Joy" — "a band live off the floor, very little overdubs," he said.

"For the most part, none of the musicians heard the songs before we started to record," Andersen said. "It makes for a very real and honest record."

On this tour, Andersen said he's riding solo, with just his guitar and himself on stage, telling stories and singing songs, much like Benoit's live performances.

"It feels like a really good combo, and the shows have been going great," Andersen said. "This tour has been all new venues for me, and mostly new towns — that means all kinds of new people hearing me for the first time, it's the kind of tour that will help me build my own audience in tours to come."

Following his performance at TACAW on Thursday, Andersen said he hopes to leave the audience wanting more.

"You want to leave an audience feeling like they've just shared an experience with each other and with the artists on stage — something they want to experience again and again," Andersen said.

Tickets are \$40 in advance, \$45 day of and \$35 for members. Tickets can be purchased at [tacaw.org](http://tacaw.org).