

# THEO HUFF INTERVIEW

*By Mike Stephenson*



Theo Huff, Chicago, 2016. Photo: Mike Stephenson.

**Chicago bluesman Theo Huff has had two CDs released since 2014 and has now become a regular on the Chicago blues scene as well as touring the U.S.A. and Europe. Mike Stephenson talked to him about his career so far.**

I was born on the west side of Chicago, Illinois on July 10th 1988, I started singing in church at Walls Memorial CME Church and later on I got hooked up with Jimmy Tillman who used to play with Jimmy Reed and Willie Dixon. He kinda helped get my career started. He started putting me in school talent shows and I won a good ninety per cent of them and I then started winning money and stuff like that.

From high school we started doing cafes and started going up the ladder. Jimmy introduced me to Jackie Taylor who played in movies like 'Cooley High', 'Hoodlum' and 'Barber Shop 1 & 2' - she is a professional actress and she helped mould me when it came down to performing and the business, so I thank God for being able to be around a lot of good people who took me under their wings.

I was singing a lot of Sam Cooke back then, like 'Change Gonna Come' and 'Bring It On Home To Me' and then it escalated to Tyrone Davis and Johnnie Taylor, Otis Redding, and I started reading about Otis Rush, Otis Clay, Willie Henderson, Alvin Cash, Gene Chandler, Dee Clark and the records labels like Brunswick Records and Chess Records. Jimmy, he introduced me to Willie Henderson.

In my earlier years I was mixing with a lot of the Chicago soul/blues singers and one of my mentors was Otis Clay and he would sit down and talk to me and give me knowledge about the music industry. Cicero Blake did the same also, about what not to do and what to do and also learn some things the hard way as well. I also grew up under the Scott Brothers - Walter Scott, Hollywood

Scott and Howard Scott. All of these people really encouraged me and nurtured me. They would pull me to the side and tell me to try this and that and they would bring ideas that have enhanced my performance.

From having a first CD out, called 'Now Is The Time' in 2014 I've just released my new CD this year which is called 'The New Beginning' on T.M.P. Records and it's a big title for me. I had the privilege to work with a great artist, Marzette Griffith, on the CD and the producer is Paul Richmond, who wrote hits for Tyrone Davis and Willie Clayton. It was recorded in South Holland, Illinois in the South

suburbs of Chicago. I have had a couple of singles out : 'Wet Pannies' from 2013 on P.M.T. Records and 'Just Enuuff Rope' from 2015 on R.G.H. Records.

I was on Brittney Records owned by Mel Waiters before he passed but when he passed we still went with the project. Mel also helped me with a couple of songs as well. It motivated me so much to have such talented people to work with. It took us about seven to eight months to put the latest CD together.

I have become established around Chicago these days and I've played the Chicago Blues Festival a number of times, I've also got a birthday show in July, at B&B's Lounge on Madison here in Chicago. I played the Porretta Soul Festival in Italy, I have played there three times in a row. In the past I've done the festival with Chick Rodgers from Chicago. My backing band is Hollywood Scott And The Platinum Band and they backed up Tyrone Davis and Otis Clay, and I love those guys because they put time and dedication into what they do because they love what they do, and that's what I believe in as I do the same thing and, when you have everybody in the same court, you can't do nothing but right.

I've won some awards such as 'Best New Artist Of The Year' in 2015 in Chicago. Otis Clay was a big help to my career as well and all I try to do is keep his legacy alive and everything he worked hard for, we try to keep it alive for the people. We are doing a tribute to Otis at this year's Chicago Blues Festival along with Willie White, Cicero Blake, Nicky Duffy. That will be with the Otis Clay band and we are trying to keep his legacy alive. Music is nearly a full time thing for me, although I work at the Board Of Education here in Chicago. I'm a porter at Oscar DePriest Elementary School.

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