

As a youth in eastern Tennessee where country & western music still prevails, Wallace Coleman was instead captivated by the sounds he heard from his radio late at night. It was Nashville's WLAC and they were playing *...the Blues*. The sounds haunted him by day where, he says, "I would be sittin' in class and hear the Howlin' Wolf singin' just as clear in my head..."



*Lockwood said he would never hire a harmonica player...then he heard Wallace Coleman play*

It was on WLAC that Coleman first heard those who would become Blues Legends and who would also become his greatest musical influences: Little Walter, Sonny Boy Williamson, Howlin' Wolf, Muddy Waters. Creating and laying down the guitar foundation on many of those recordings was Robert Jr. Lockwood - a man who, some 25 years later, would play a pivotal role in Coleman's future.



Coleman left Tennessee in 1956 to find work in Cleveland, Ohio. He found steady work and, to his delight, an active Blues community where Jimmy Reed, Sonny Boy Williamson, Muddy Waters, Elmore James, B.B. King and others came to perform.

A self-taught musician, Coleman played the harmonica on his breaks at work. One day a co-worker brought his cousin to the jobsite to hear Coleman play. That meeting sparked a year-long pairing with Cleveland's Guitar Slim at the Cascade Lounge. A real Blues juke joint setting nestled in his city of Cleveland where he could play good old Blues was more than Coleman thought he could ask for.

But the next step was just around the corner.

The Cascade Lounge is where Coleman caught the ear of Robert Jr. Lockwood, who had come to hear him play. Lockwood liked what he heard. He asked Coleman to join his band. Coleman had a while longer to work in order to retire from his full-time job. Lockwood asked Coleman to call him after he retired. One year later, Wallace Coleman did retire, marking the end of his 31 year career at Cleveland's Hough Bakeries. Then he made the call to Lockwood, as promised.

And at the age of 51, Wallace Coleman joined Robert Jr. Lockwood's band...marking the beginning of his professional music career.

Soon he was traveling throughout the United States, Canada, and overseas playing major Blues Festivals and clubs with one of this American artform's most creative architects.

*"...one of postwar Chicago blues' most indomitable torchbearers"  
Blues Revue*



*"...simply an artist at his peak with sweet majestic tones and lines, emanating from his soulful vocals and beautiful harmonica..."  
Ronnie Earl*



*"...Wallace Coleman should be ranked among the very best of today's blues harp players."  
Living Blues*



For the first time, Lockwood would be performing his own music and the songs of his step-father, Robert Johnson, accompanied by harmonica. He asked Coleman to find ways to bring his richest harmonic tone to these songs. An innovator himself, Coleman created and developed 3rd position harmonica parts that perfectly complemented Lockwood's guitar.

Lockwood knew that Coleman had a lot to offer with his playing and singing and recognized that Coleman should form his own band. As time went by, Lockwood encouraged him to do just that. In 1997, Coleman left Lockwood's band, graduating to the post of full-time bandleader. Shortly before leaving, Coleman recorded with Lockwood on his Grammy-nominated "I Gotta Find Me A Woman."

Coleman's introduction to the 1950-60s Cleveland blues scene meant seeing as many of the touring artists as possible. In the 1960s, Lockwood and Sonny Boy Williamson II, who had been performing together in the south, made their way to Cleveland via Chicago, taking up residence and performing.

While Coleman would not meet Lockwood until much later, Coleman often went to see Williamson perform at local venues. The two became friendly, discovering they lived only several blocks apart. Williamson would soon depart for Europe while Lockwood made Cleveland his permanent home. The elders of the Blues inspired Coleman, whose time as a young man new to Cleveland and hungry for the Blues would shape his life for years to come. Little did he know that he would one day take the stage, recognized for his own artistry and contributions.

In the 1940s, Coleman's mother, Ella Mae, saved her money to surprise her young son with his very own radio. This gift opened a new world to young Wallace when the Blues arrived on the nightly radio waves of Nashville's WLAC. They were sounds he'd never heard before. And sounds that would always be with him from then on. Coleman established his own record label, now named Ella Mae Music, in honor of his late mother.

With his Ella Mae Music label, Coleman has produced four CDs - "Stretch My Money," "Live At Joe's," "The Bad Weather Blues," and the newest, "Blues in the Wind" Remembering Robert Jr. Lockwood all critically acclaimed in the US and abroad.