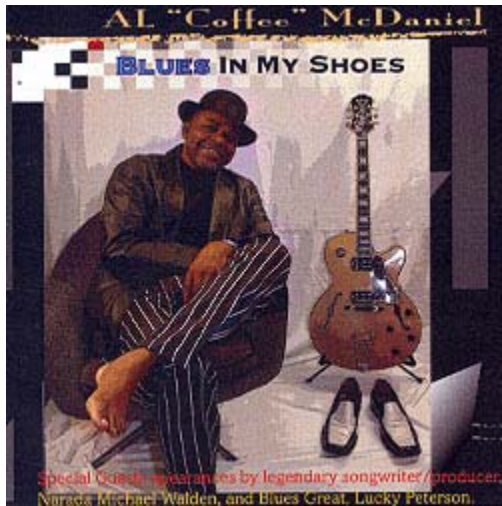


Local Spotlight

'Coffee' McDaniel Pours Smooth Blend Of Blues, R&B

By CURTIS ROSS The Tampa Tribune

Published: October 12, 2007



Tampa blues artist Al "Coffee" McDaniel made his latest album, "Blues in My Shoes," with help from some big-name friends.

Renowned guitarist-keyboardist Lucky Peterson came in to do one session and stayed on to play on and/or produce six more tracks.

"I guess he liked what he heard," says a pleased-sounding McDaniel.

An even bigger coup came with Narada Michael Walden, the musician-producer behind hits for Mariah Carey, Whitney Houston, Aretha Franklin and more.

An acquaintance of McDaniel's is Walden's cousin, and the producer heard some early cuts of songs from the then in-progress album.

"I let him hear a couple of cuts and he was impressed," McDaniel says. "I got a call from him a couple months after that saying, 'What can I do?' I said, 'You can help me get some exposure,'" McDaniel recalls.

Walden produced and played drums on a remake of the B.B. King classic "The Thrill Is Gone."

Walden's name may draw some attention to "Blues in My Shoes," but the star of the album is McDaniel's voice, a deep, smooth instrument as comfortable with low-down blues as it is with sly, slinky R&B.

McDaniel, 53, grew up in Tampa, near Ybor City, leaving when he joined the Air Force at age 18. He later worked for the post office, pursuing music in his spare time.

He left the post office about 10 years ago to focus on music, originally seeking a career in contemporary gospel.

He released a pair of albums and "did OK, but not enough to pay the bills," he says.

Blues and R&B have proved more lucrative, with "Blues in My Shoes" garnering popularity in the United States as well as Europe and Australia, McDaniel says.

McDaniel says his music operation is in-house, and he's not kidding. He owns his own recording studio, duplicates his own CDs and distributes them on his own CPA Records.

McDaniel performs regularly around the area. He'll be at SouthBeach Sports Grill on Clearwater Beach tonight. Other dates are posted on his Web site (almcdaniel.com).

The nickname "Coffee" came during a stint in a teenage R&B group. While performing The Floaters' 1977 hit "Float On," the band members would each introduce themselves.

"When I'd talk, I'd say, 'They call me coffee 'cause I grind so fine,'" McDaniel says with a hearty laugh.