

Southside Johnny & The Asbury Jukes – BIO

"I've always wanted to be a Juke...and I still do ." (Jon Bon Jovi) "There's one thing I've always wanted to do," Southside Johnny confesses, "and that is to sing." And he has been doing just that for over a third of a century.

In a business where success is defined as getting a second single and longevity measured in nano-seconds, just surviving for thirty-plus years is a rare accomplishment. But Johnny and the Jukes have not just survived, they have flourished: over thirty albums, several EPs and a box set; thousands of live performances around the globe; a legion of dedicated and enthusiastic fans; dozens of classic songs; a record— HEARTS OF STONE —that Rolling Stone called one of the "top 100 albums of the 70's and 80's"; and the story continues as the band releases its newest studio album, PILLS AND AMMO, full of new material that is already getting rave reviews from fans.

While still tinged with the exuberant rhythm and blues feel that is the Jukes' trademark, and loaded with the driving sound of the legendary Jukes horn section, this new CD has a sharper, guitar-oriented, rock and roll feel to it. A harder edge for harder times. But, as always, the sheer joy of making music is obvious throughout PILLS AND AMMO. Tunes like "Umbrella in My Drink" with guest vocals by Gary Bonds; "Keep on Movin'" a homage to Jerry Lee Lewis and the early rockabilly sound; and "One More Night to Rock" all place the band in their classic, jubilant "let's play all night" mood. And the band has never sounded better.

To Johnny, it's just what he does. "I grew up on music. We listened to Billie Holiday, T-Bone Walker, Muddy Waters and Big Joe Turner. My parents loved music, the louder the better." Born and raised on the Jersey Shore, Southside's fascination for the club scene started early. "My father played in bands for years, and my mother actually went into labor with me at some seedy New Jersey club. I guess some things were just meant to be." Singing and playing in a number of blues and R&B bands at the now legendary Upstage Club, often joined by pals Bruce Springsteen, "Miami Steve" Van Zandt, and Garry Tallent, Johnny worked at making "meant to be" into "is." It wasn't easy. "We played for years on the shore, but it wasn't until Bruce hit with 'Born to Run' that these A&R guys would drive to Asbury Park to see what was happening."

Southside (so nicknamed because of his bent toward the Blues sounds of the Southside of Chicago) and his band, eventually called the Asbury Jukes, worked on growing their reputation as a dynamic live band through the late 60's and early 70's. "We built a big band, a home for lots of musicians, horns and all: sure we called it Southside Johnny and the Asbury Jukes, but it was really just a bunch of guys getting crazy on stage." Then, in 1975, they signed with CBS/Epic Records,

released the critically acclaimed I DON'T WANT TO GO HOME, and a legend was begun. What followed has been over three decades of recording and touring and solidifying a place in rock 'n roll history.

In 1992, the band released the fan favorite BETTER DAYS album, which found Southside reunited with his original Asbury Park collaborators, Bruce Springsteen and Little Steven, and relative "newcomer," Jon Bon Jovi. In the wake of the record industry turmoil that followed, Johnny, never a fan of the "big record business," took a hiatus from the studio, though he continued to work the road. Johnny spent eight years working on the massive record collection he shares with E Street Band bassist, and childhood buddy, Garry Tallent, ruminating on life and his music, and just plain moping until 1999, when he returned to recording on his own terms and on his own label, Leroy Records.

The result, MESSIN' WITH THE BLUES, was a return to making music for the sheer joy of it; a collection of old and new true-blues songs that Johnny had long coveted but couldn't record in the pop-single driven, major label environment. MESSIN' WITH THE BLUES was the catharsis Johnny needed to get the band back in the studio and himself back in the groove. "You can be free do what you want, as you want...we weren't trying to be perfect...we just wanted to play...we were professional about it, while having a lot of fun."

Recharged and reenergized, Johnny and the Jukes have kept up the pace since releasing GOING TO JUKESVILLE, the balls-to-the-wall, honest-to-goodness Jukes record in 2002; an introspective, soulful INTO THE HARBOUR in 2005; a live Internet stream of one of their legendary shows in 2008; a new live record of the legendary HEARTS OF STONE album in 2009; and PILLS AND AMMO, their new studio record released in June, 2010. Southside Johnny and the Asbury Jukes are brassing their way full steam ahead the same way they always have, with no holds barred, good time rock and roll.

"I'll stack my group against any group out there. We enjoy playing, and the audience enjoys having a good time. Music is a shared emotion. We distill it down to that."

When you distill Southside Johnny and the Asbury Jukes, you come down to thirty-five years of great music and good times. . . and counting.