

Your New Guitar Hero



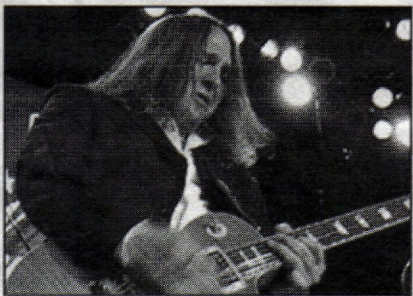
matt o'ree

"I was in my hotel at NAMM in L.A. and I saw the ad for the contest in *Guitar World*," recalls Matt O'Ree about what led to him to enter the Guitar Center's "Guitarmageddon King of the Blues" contest. "I just kept thinking about how great it would be to win the whole thing. When I got home, I went up to the NYC store and signed up."

When the smoke cleared, Matt ended up in Chicago for the finals, being judged by the likes of Hubert Sumlin, Rick Nielson and John Mayer. And to top it off, just as he imagined back in L.A., he won the contest.

Chris Duarte, Indigenous and Robby Kreiger. He has shared the stage with legendary drummer Buddy Miles and he was invited to play at Les Paul's birthday party. He performed at the NYC tribute to legendary blues-rock guitarist Rory Gallagher, and won a standing ovation from the sold out crowd.

Matt has a new CD out, to go along with two he released in prior years. His 1997 debut, *88 Miles*, garnered him national reviews and airplay. His second album, 2001's *Chalk It Up* continued the momentum. His newest effort, the just-released



Besides the prestigious title, he walked away with over \$40,000 in prizes, including a Scion TC car, a Gibson SG, a Gibson ES-335, a Gibson Hummingbird Acoustic, a Gibson 59 Historic reissue Les Paul, a Gibson GA20 hand-wired amp, a Dell laptop computer, a \$6,000 shopping spree at Guitar Center, \$2,500 for the Levi's store in L.A., a one-year endorsement deal with Gibson and a trip to record with legendary producer Pete Anderson in L.A. "There's also gonna be a four-page spread in *Guitar World* magazine in the September issue on the whole event," he adds.

Of course, Matt is no stranger to fans of the Jersey music scene. He won the "Top Guitarist" and "Top Blues Band" categories at the 2004 Asbury Music Awards. He has opened shows for Buddy Guy, Gov't Mule, Robin Trower, Johnny Winter, Dickey Betts, The Screamin' Cheetahead Wheelies,

Shelf Life, is what he hopes will lift him to the next level. "This album is a step in another direction," he says. "When I started writing these songs, I wasn't sure what to think, it all just came out. It's a more rock direction than I've done in the past and I have to say, it really felt great to stretch out musically. I'm really proud of this CD. I think it really marks a step of where I'm going next." The album continues his collaboration with drummer Bob Pantella, who also mans the skins for local heavy rock luminaries Monster Magnet.

Matt's band, which usually includes bassist Gene Boccia (Southside Johnny & The Jukes, Henry Lee Summer) along with Bob, backs him on his local shows, but the contest consisted of solo performances. "The first four rounds were performed by using a background track CD, so there weren't any actual real songs," says Matt. "In the last round, the Pete Anderson Band was the backup and they learned the tracks from the CD that all the performers picked. The contest started out with over 3,000 people and in the last round there were seven. Also, in the final round you had to perform a two-minute acoustic solo piece that you wrote."

The trip to Chicago was a treat for Matt, in addition to winning the competition. "It was really awesome to be in that town, with so much history to the blues," he says. "To perform at the House Of Blues to a sold out audience was such a great honor, one of the best moments of my life."

The future looks to include more travel, as well as upcoming shows at The Stone Pony and Six Flags/Great Adventure. "I'll be headed out to Austin, TX, to perform at the Summer NAMM show from July 13-16," he relates. "The new CD is doing great, getting great reviews and receiving more and more airplay. Just shopping it around for a label as we speak. We'll see what happens."

Matt keeps his spirits high through his music and constant performing, but he has been around long enough to realize what the life of a working musician is like. "The more time that goes on in the realm of a musician's life, the more you realize that the creators of Spinal Tap were right on the mark," he laughs. "There's never a dull moment, but rock stories have to stay on the road..."

You can get further information about Matt's performances and about his new CD via his website at mattoree.com

**Matt O'Ree will perform at
The Saint in Asbury Park,
NJ on July 27.**

