

JAZZ NEWS

Matt O'Ree - King Of The Blues

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Showcasing his musical talents in front of a packed house at the House of Blues Chicago, New Jersey's Matt O'Ree was crowned the nation's best undiscovered blues guitarist at Guitar Center's 2006 Guitarmageddon: King of the Blues grand finals. In addition to the King of the Blues battle between the nation's top seven amateur guitarists, Guitar Center helped kick off the Chicago Blues Festival with a collaborative performance by legendary blues guitarist B.B. King and GRAMMY award-winning artist John Mayer, who paid tribute to the genre's roots, according to Jay Wanamaker, Executive Vice President, General Merchandise Manager for Guitar Center. "Guitar Center's King of the Blues gives aspiring artists the opportunity to become nationally recognized for their talents and further their careers." Wanamaker said. "From sharing the stage with blues greats B.B. King and John Mayer to fronting a band led by GRAMMY award winner Pete Anderson, this was truly a night they'll never forget. We hope a successful music career lies ahead for each of our talented contestants."

In addition to the competition and exclusive joint performance with King and Mayer, Guitar Center assembled a group of L.A.-based hip-hop musicians to open the event with a special one-time set orchestrated by the Beat Junkies' DJ J ROCC. To further illustrate the resurgence of the blues, the special set featured classic blues samples mixed in with today's top hip-hop tracks. Representing Holmel, NJ, 34-year-old O'Ree has played blues guitar for more than 20 years. O'Ree is known as a top-notch performer and instructor throughout the New York blues scene. Aside from connecting with the crowd, O'Ree stood apart from the other six contestants with his rock-influenced style of the blues.

"The King of the Blues experience was bigger and better than I ever could have imagined, " said O'Ree. "To share the stage and shake hands with B.B. King — one of the blues' greats — was the most memorable moment of my life. By being able to perform in front of industry legends and receive such recognition, Guitar Center has provided me with the opportunity to develop my career well beyond what I could have done on my own."

O'Ree was selected from more than 4,000 undiscovered guitarists nationwide who participated in the four-tiered competition that began in February 2006. According to the 10 judges, which included Rick Neilson (Cheap Trick), Hubert Sumlin (Descriptor), Dave Mason (Traffic), and Marcy Levy (Eric Clapton), O'Ree excelled in the categories of originality, technique, style, stage presence and overall performance.

In addition to the coveted "King of the Blues" title, O'Ree took home more than \$40,000 in prizes, including a 2006 Scion tC, a trip to L.A. to record with GRAMMY-winning producer Pete Anderson, a one-year Gibson endorsement deal, a Gibson '59 reissue, and a Gibson GA20 amplifier, among other prizes.