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## PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Flint Guitarist Wins Canadian Blues Honors**

Flint, Michigan December 16, 2010 – Flint resident "Sweet Willie Tea" was proclaimed the solo/duo winner of the Canada South Blues Society (CSBS) Blues Challenge at Caesars Casino Windsor. After five weeks of competition, Willie advances to represent southern Canada at the prestigious 2011 International Blues Challenge in Memphis, TN.

Willie began playing guitar as a teenager inspired by his father's Johnny Cash records and in the 1980's released one record with the punk rock band "Toll". In the 90's he had a commercial success as front man for the blues/rock show band "Cidy Zoo". Their "Something for Everyone" release included the single "Talk Louder", the classical crossover instrumental "25 Strings" and the popular "Buick City Blues". All three received airplay and "Talk Louder" eventually charted at #15 on the AAA radio charts. After that success, the band went on hiatus for several years and Willie found other work as an artist and actor. Cidy Zoo eventually released another single titled "Waitin' On You", then an accident left Willie's left hand paralyzed.

Though he never missed a performance date, Willie had to depend on a brace to hold his fingers in place on the guitar and he learned to play the piano and harmonica. After a long year as a one-handed musician, his arm slowly began to mend and Willie was able to "relearn" how to play his beloved guitars.

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That sobering year of uncertainty inspired Willie to "never take a moment of life or music for granted" and he decided to focus exclusively on writing and playing his own roots blues music. Like the original American minstrels, he performs as a one-man-band using vintage instruments and percussion.

The 2011 International Blues Challenge will be the 27th year of Blues musicians from around the world competing for cash, prizes and industry recognition. The Blues Foundation will present the 27th International Blues Challenge February 1-5, 2011 in Memphis, TN. The world's largest gathering of Blues acts represents an international search by The Blues Foundation and its Affiliated Organizations for the Blues Band and Solo/Duo Blues Act ready to take their act to the international stage. In 2010, 110 bands and 80 solo/duo acts entered, filling the clubs up and down Beale Street for the semi-finals on Thursday and Friday and the finals at the Orpheum Theater on Saturday.



(l to r) CSBS President Bernie Martin, Sweet Willie Tea, CSBS Music Coordinator Ted Boomer.



Sweet Willie Tea with sponsor Molson Canadian reps at Caesars Casino Windsor.



CSBS solo winner Sweet Willie Tea reacts to audience applause at awards announcement.

Photo credit: Blues photos by Don McGhee

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