

SPAH 2025
San Antonio, TX

**WELCOME TO THE
62nd Anniversary Harmonica Convention
San Antonio, TX**

Program for the visually impaired

Presented by
**The Society for the Preservation and Advancement of the
Harmonica**
Hosted by
The Alamo HOOT Club in San Antonio
Tuesday, August 12th — Saturday, August 16th, 2025

Attendees with pre-paid registration may collect their registration packets on Tuesday, August 12th, starting at 1:30pm.

Registration onsite opens for all others at 3:30pm Tuesday. Registration Desk is open Wednesday—Friday, 8:30am—5pm, and Saturday from 8:30am until 2:30pm

Please join us in the Salon Del Rey Pre-function/Mezz for the SPAH Welcome Reception, with music starting at 3:30pm, Tuesday, August 12th

The Blues Blowoff kicks off at 6:30pm on Tuesday evening on the Founders' Stage

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Please keep in mind that all seminar and performance information is subject to last minute changes. By attending the SPAH convention, you acknowledge that SPAH reserves the right to retain and use photographs/videos of you in its publications and promotional material. Except at the designated Swap Meet, SPAH convention attendees are to refrain from visibly marketing or selling any products or services or establishing a place of business in any public areas on the convention premises unless the attendee is an authorized seminar presenter or performer (during or immediately following their seminar or performance) or unless the attendee is a credentialed sponsor or vendor (at their booth). SPAH reserves the right to request any attendee violating this policy to leave the convention premises. Private transactions between attendees—one buyer and one seller—are permitted provided that they do not violate this policy.

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Winslow Yerxa, Paul Davies, Tom Stryker, Michael D'Eath

To many others that are too numerous to list, SPAH thanks you so much.

VENDORS

CHECK OUT THE SPAH 2025 VENDORS

Ask about your entry for the Vendor Treasure Hunt

From every model of harmonica, you could care to see from major manufacturers, to harmonica accessories, microphones, amplifiers, and much more, the vendor area puts it all in one place. a list of just some of our vendors:

ADVERTISING SOLUTIONS • ALAMO MUSIC ALBERT
HARP • BADASS HARMONICA BLOWSMEAWAY
PRODUCTIONS
BUSHMAN MUSIC WORKS • DYNA-MIC EASTTOP •
HOHNER USA • JDR HARMONICA JOEY & JC CORP •
KONGSHENG MUSIC
LONE WOLF BLUES CO. • SEYDEL TONOVA MUSIC •
YONBERG HARMONICA

SEE SCHEDULE FOR VENDOR ROOM HOURS

SPAH WILL ONCE AGAIN SPONSOR A VENDOR “TREASURE HUNT”, OFFERING PRIZES FOR ATTENDEES WHO VISIT ALL THE VENDORS DURING THE CONVENTION. PRIZES FOR COMPLETED CARDS WILL BE SELECTED AT RANDOM AT THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON SATURDAY AFTERNOON, LA VISTA (FOUNDERS’ STAGE) /22.

Featured Performances: Tuesday

JOSH BACA

Josh Baca is a Grammy Award-nominated accordionist. In 2012, Josh joined his uncle's Grammy Award-winning band, Los TexManiacs, and he now delights audiences worldwide with his signature sound. Baca has performed on *Austin City Limits* and *A Prairie Home Companion*, as well as at the New Orleans

Jazz Fest, the Library of Congress, the Kennedy Center, the Ryman Auditorium, and other notable venues. He has performed live with Flaco Jimenez, Augie Meyers, Colin Hays (Men At Work), Los Lobos, Los Lonely Boys, Kevin Fowler, Grupo Fantasma, Tom Russell, Bob Schneider, Garrison Keillor, Joe Ely, Los Super 7, and many others.

Wednesday

BLUES HARMONICA SHOWCASE

There are many traditions at SPAH, and one of them which is not to be missed is the traditional Blues Showcase on Wednesday. Hosted by Joe Filisko, this event is one that always draws a crowd of players in the audience, because you never know who you'll see come up on stage, and throw down some blues, and there are sure to be some unrehearsed, in the moment collaborations which wouldn't happen anywhere except SPAH. Joe Filisko always has his ears open for special talent, and whether it's a household name who deserves a spot, or a gospel stalwart who can throw down some mean Albert King, Filisko will be sure to present a showcase that touches you, takes you back, takes you away, and thrills you.

ALAMO HOOT

Let's hear the fantastic members of our host club this year, The Alamo Chapter of the Harmonica Organization of Texas (Alamo HOOT) is a nonprofit harmonica organization dedicated to fostering knowledge, growth, and community through music.

Established in 2004, Alamo HOOT is committed to being the central resource in Texas for harmonica enthusiasts of all experience levels. The organization offers a range of activities, including educational workshops, concerts, and monthly open jams and social gatherings.

JIMI LEE

Jimi Lee grew up in the San Francisco Bay Area. When Lee was a teenager, he opened shows for giants: Muddy Waters, John Lee Hooker, and Bobby Blue Bland. In his twenties, Lee played harmonica for legends such as Willie Nelson, Stephen Stills, Clarence Clemens, and Pinetop Perkins, among others. Lee spent 12 years in Hawai'i, where he earned "Best in the State" by the Hawaiian Blues Society.

MICHAEL RUBIN'S VARIETY SHOW

Michael Rubin is a harmonica player/ singer/ songwriter/ teacher from Austin, Texas. He has performed on Broadway in the Tony-nominated show The Civil War and with such luminaries as Cyril Neville and Ruthie Foster, including on her Grammy-nominated album Healing Time. His album, I'll Worry If I Wanna, shows his humor and feel for both the diatonic and chromatic harmonica in a blues setting, but Rubin plays a variety of styles of music well. Perhaps this is why his annual SPAH Variety Show choices are so strong.

Thursday

ROSEBUSH YOUTH SHOWCASE

Rupam Das, a 16-year-old chromatic player from Kolkata, India, has been for about 4 ½ years. He plays a fusion of light Indian melodies and popular Western songs. He heard about the convention from two local club members who had previously attended the convention.

Ananya Gururaja is a 22-year-old chromatic player from Bangalore, India. She began her musical journey in 2016 on the tremolo but later transitioned to the chromatic, aiming to better capture the nuances of Indian music. She has learned to play several Indian classical (Carnatic) pieces on the harmonica and has won multiple awards at inter-college fests, including national-level competitions. Her goal is to bring out the subtleties of Indian classical and film music on the harmonica and to blend the richness of traditional Indian music with modern musical styles.

Rohan Singhal is a 19-year-old diatonic player from Indore, India. He's been playing for the past 13 years and enjoys blues, jazz, funk, rock, fusion, and Western and Indian classical music. He'd like to promote the diatonic in India, as it is not as commonly played as the chromatic. Rohan is a student of Howard Levy who has participated in and won at various international competitions in the UK, Germany, and China.

Taran Caston is a 16-year-old diatonic player from Oxford, England. He has a passion for all things harmonica. He's been playing for 5 years and, like many, picked it up during COVID lockdown. He and his band are inspired by the music of Jason Ricci and Will Wilde and the blues rock genre. He hopes to expand his understanding of music theory and work using the diatonic chromatically with the technique of Howard Levy.

Nick Spencer is a 17-year-old blues player from Bedford, New Hampshire. He's played guitar and sung all his life and decided to add harmonica three years ago. Nick is mostly self-taught and worked with Billy Branch at the Pinetop Perkins masterclass last summer. His goal is to play gigs at a professional level.

Kyren Allen is a 20-year-old diatonic player from Commerce

City, Colorado, who began playing the diatonic three years ago. He's been studying with Jason Ricci and has a fast, funky, and rhythmic style. Kyren also has been taking lessons with the great swing jazz player Mariano Massolo and started studying Neoclassical Metal and Classical music. His main influences for the latter two genres are Yngwie Malmsteen, Jason Becker, and Joey Tafolla.

BEN BALMER

Ben Balmer is a singer, songwriter, harmonica player, and guitarist from Asheville, North Carolina. Balmer has played in all 48 contiguous United States, as well as in Canada, Japan, and the United Kingdom. Balmer's music is colored not only by his musical influences (everything from Bela Bartok to the J. Geils Band) but also by novelists such as C.S. Lewis and Cormac McCarthy. His rootsy, lyric-driven Americana is meticulously crafted yet has undeniable mass appeal. Balmer's third and latest album *Honky-Tonk Macbeth* (2021), was hailed as "...one of those pleasant oddities that pops up now and then, an effort that brims with clever ideas matched with top musicianship" by *Texas Music Magazine*.

DAVE MOORE

Dave Moore is a singer-songwriter who plays guitar, button accordion, and harmonica. Moore resides in Iowa City and records for Red House Records. He has been a frequent performer on "A Prairie Home Companion" and toured extensively throughout the United States and Canada. Moore's first instrument was the harmonica, and he continues to play it on a neck rack.

STEVE GUYGER

Steve Guyger has been honing his skills on the harmonica and delighting blues audiences for 30 years with his own band, The Excellos, and touring with celebrated bluesman Jimmy Rogers. *Living Blues* magazine describes his album

Past Life Blues as “sturdily rooted in the postwar Windy City tradition and laced with swooping, muscular harmonica excursions that never overstay their welcome.” Guyger has appeared on shows or sat in with some of the greats in blues, including Son Seals, Buddy Guy, James Cotton, Big Mama Thornton, and more. William Clarke called Guyger “one of the best harp players I’ve ever seen.”

Gerry Hundt is a blues and old-time multi-instrumentalist who plays as many roles as he does instruments, performing as a bandleader and a sideman, in full bands, quartets, trios, duos, and solo. He is a former sideman with Nick Moss & The Fliptops, Easy Bill & The Big Beat, and fronts his own one-man band. Illinois-born Andrew Duncanson has been proving himself for over 20 years as one of the most authentic interpreters of Chicago blues. He’s been a founding member of The Kilborn Alley Blues Band and is part of the all-star blues trio The Dig 3.

THE DIG 3 FEATURING RONNIE SHELLIST

The Dig 3 is a blues/roots trio consisting of vocalist/guitarist Andrew Duncanson, known for his work with the Kilborn Alley Blues Band, harp master and teacher Ronnie Shellist, and multi-instrumentalist Gerry Hundt. The Dig 3 plays killer old-school blues with taste, subtlety, and emotion, all while having an absolute blast doing it. Ronnie Shellist has been spreading the joy of learning and playing the harmonica for over 25 years. He spent several years on the road with the Hohner Roadshow, where he detailed the Hohner line of harmonicas, performed and taught groups of folks around the U.S. how to get started playing the instrument. Ronnie now offers online blues harmonica classes and guest artist classes monthly through Harmonica123.com. In addition to teaching blues harmonica, Ronnie has been recording and touring with his newest musical project, The Dig 3. His dedication and passion for performing and teaching the

harmonica shine through in his performances and teaching.

Friday

MIGHTY MICHAEL MENDELSON

“Mighty” Michael Mendelson, 17, performs regularly with legendary three-time Hall of Famer Billy Davis and The Billy Davis Rhythm Machine Band on harmonica, guitar, and vocals. He can be seen at many metro Detroit jams, gigs, and at many community and civic events locally and nationally, which have included the International Blues Challenge Youth Showcase in Memphis and the King Biscuit Blues Festival in Arkansas. Mendelson has recorded with Billy Davis, Brenda Taylor, Thelma Stubbs, Muruga Booker, Peter Madcat Ruth, Tony P Funk Thomas, and many others. In 2024, he released his third album of original songs.

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NEIL ADLER

Neil Adler is a pianist and chromatic harmonica player performing as an international headliner. He is active in teaching privately and at conferences, and enjoys helping players of all levels learn to play the chromatic harmonica. His trio recording *Emi’s Song* received rave reviews. Upon listening to Adler, his mentor, Toots Thielemans said, “My favourite harmonica player at the moment.” Adler plays a variety of genres and believes that rhythm, above all, makes music sing.

THE TOM STRYKER BIG BAND

By popular demand, Tom Stryker’s Harmonica Big Band makes a repeat appearance and performs arrangements written by prominent and great harmonica players of the past/present. These include: Joe Mullendore (Cappy Barra leader/ composer/arranger & of Hollywood movie fame), Dave Doucette (“The Pencil”), Chuck Fendall, David Bugli,

Steve Watne, Chris Bauer, and Al Smith, all incredible harmonica geniuses. These arrangements will be performed by some of the best players of our time, including Tom Stryker, Chris Bauer, Mike Runyan, Winslow Yerxa, Steve Watne, George Miklas, Alex Windmeyer, and Boaz Kim. Maestro David Bugli, a SPAH member, will conduct the band.

CHERYL ARENA

Harmonica player, vocalist, and songwriter Cheryl Arena began immersing herself in the blues in 1987. Her earliest childhood memories of music involved listening to and singing along with her mother's Louis Armstrong and Billie Holiday records. She eventually discovered the harmonica. In her 30-plus-year career, Arena has toured nationally and internationally with her band and shared the stage with many well-known blues artists, including Junior Wells, R.L. Burnside, Honeyboy Edwards, Charlie Musselwhite, Duke Robillard, Lazy Lester, among others. Arena has recorded several CDs; her most recent album, *Blues Got Me*, is a 13-track CD produced by Robillard. Arena also runs "The Harmonica Experience," a five-day workshop held twice a year in May and September at the Shack Up Inn, Clarksdale Mississippi.

GIANLUCA CASELLI

Gianluca Caselli is an Italian chromatic harmonica player based in Bologna. Caselli has played in numerous festivals in Italy, Europe, and Asia. His most successful project is the Armonauti Harmonica Trio, for which he is renowned worldwide within the harmonica community. Caselli usually plays the chromatic harmonica, but over the years, he has become a specialist in the chord and bass harmonica.

Saturday

SATURDAY MORNING COUNTRY GOSPEL SHOW

Organized several years ago by L.J. Atkison, former Vice President of SPAH, SPAH presents a Saturday morning harmonica gospel show. In this Saturday morning show you will hear different approaches to gospel music, as expressed on the harmonica. The Saturday Morning Gospel Show will return as one of SPAH's outreach programs in 2025. Phil Duncan, a published author with Mel Bay Publication, Inc., and a performing artist with Hohner, Inc., heads the group. He has enlisted the help of several harmonica players. This year, performers will include: Todd Parrott, Chris Bauer, Joe Filisko & Eric Noden, and Phil Duncan. Over the years, this show has become a popular Gospel venue, offering a reflection on the week's activities at SPAH, enjoyment of the harmonica and thankfulness for the camaraderie of this wonderful harmonica community. This show is open to the public, so invite your local friends. See you there!

SHANE SAGER

Shane Sager is a musician, teacher, and writer born and based in Boston, Massachusetts. He began playing the harmonica at the age of fourteen and turned professional at twenty. He attended Berklee College of Music for two years before leaving to pursue the harmonica. He toured as a featured soloist with Grammy Award winner Sting for five years (2019-2024) and has performed to millions worldwide. He has played at iconic venues such as the Montreux Jazz Festival, Carnegie Hall, Times Square, and the Hollywood Bowl. During his time with Sting, he toured over 60 countries. In addition to his work with Sting, Sager has played with various blues outfits, including Tas Cru, Gabe Stillman, and Vanessa Collier. Featuring: Jason F Crisp: Dallas, Texas (Bass), Eric Heideman: Salt Lake City, Utah (Guitar), Jan Flemming: Cologne, Germany (Keyboards), Jay Moeller: Austin, Texas (Drums)

MARIANO MASSOLO

Mariano Massolo is an internationally known Argentine harmonica player and the founder and director of the Harmonica Institute of Buenos Aires. Massolo has contributed to numerous Grammy-nominated albums and performed on stages worldwide. His initial projects, Mariano Massolo and Dark Eyes, were praised by the press and media, establishing him as a master of the harmonica. His new album, Swing Colors, was recorded with his orchestra and features Dolby Atmos technology. Beyond his musical prowess, Mariano's role as the Director of the International Harmonica Institute reflects a commitment to global musical education.

SPAH would like to thank Joe Filisko for his continued commitment to bringing the best teachers to SPAH. Find more Teach-In info in the Seminar Descriptions.

SPAH 2025 Joe Filisko Teach-In Sessions Salon Del Rey (Main Stage)/Mezz Thursday, Friday & Saturday featuring:

Charlie Barath	Don Ceasar
Rob Roy Parnell	Ross Garren
Deak Harp	Chris Bauer
George Miklas	Grant Dermody
Lonnie Joe Howell	Michael Rubin
Todd Parrott	Ronnie Shellist
PT Gazell	

And the invaluable assistance from: Dan Rupp

SPAH Welcomes Troubadours:

Jerry Devillier, Robert Bonfiglio, Bill Morris and Will Scarlett
Please visit with them out and about in the hallways!

SEMINAR DESCRIPTIONS

Listed by day and by seminar title, alphabetically. Please check the schedule board for any last-minute changes.

Wednesday Seminars

Beginning On the Chromatic, Neil Adler

This seminar will show beginners on the chromatic how to work on the fundamentals necessary to play melodies. Participants will receive general exercises and skills as well as individual suggestions for advancing on the chromatic.

Harmonica Fun 101, Lonnie Joe Howell

An entertaining session demonstrating the amazing sounds and effects that can be created on the harmonica and how they can be used in various situations, songs and performances. Lonnie Joe Howell will teach duck calls, trumpet sounds, train sounds and whistles, accordion examples, piano glissandos, bagpipe songs, and many basics taught in a humorous, yet interesting manner. This seminar is designed for all ages. Bring a key of C diatonic harmonica and join in, have fun and the learning will take care of itself.

Intro To Position Playing, *John Frazer*

When a player tells me they only play blues, and that means to them that good old crosssharp is all they need, I would like to open their eyes and ears to the possibilities that they are missing.

Beginners Blues Jam, Michael Rubin

All levels and instruments welcome. We will be mostly play in the key of G. Students will get to participate in an improvisational jam. Between each song, Michael Rubin will explain strategies.

Train Imitation Rhythm/Breath Boot-Camp, David Kachalon

The best possible way to expedite one's playing and progress

on the harmonica is by smartly practicing the Train Imitation. Committing 5 minutes a day to this is the most direct path to building better rhythm, tonal variation/controlled fluctuation, blues breath control, dynamics, relaxation, and throat tremolo. It's also the easiest thing to do because it can be played using ONLY chords. No tongue blocking is required! This should be eventually set to a metronome at one's comfortable "cruising speed" so we can maintain the rhythm steady and get in sync with the breathing, click and groove.

How To Make Good Tone, Michael Handler

One of the biggest complements you can get as a player is "Good tone, man (or ma'am)!" That comes from years of perfecting your output as a harp player...is your tone flat with no life, or is it alive with color and purpose? Is it making a statement, telling a story, or just a bunch of random notes, hopefully in the right key? Does your position matter with producing good tone? I'll share some insights into this important area, and let you in on the little secret Howard Levy told me about backstage at a Bela Fleck concert in California over a bottle of beer. So, two questions remain what was the secret, and what happened to the bottle of beer? Both questions will be answered at my seminar all levels welcome.

Songwriting, Dave Moore

I started playing harp at the age of 21, and guitar at 24. Country blues. The last thing I thought I'd be doing is writing songs. But I caught the bug, and kept at it. It became what I do. It's a great feeling, stumbling on one, working on one, delivering it. We'll talk about my own experiences in songwriting, using some songs as examples. We'll take questions. When I was young, most of us just fell for an instrument, and went to woodshed. These days, seems like everybody is writing songs. So, one question I will ask is - do you really have to write songs? There are many ways to have a good time with the music.

Singing For Harp Players, Richard P. Bennett

Whether you're thinking about adding vocals or already front a band and just want to sound better, you'll get some helpful tips in this one-hour class. This class covers the basics of singing in a way that's easy to understand with practical advice on how to support properly, improve your sound, and increase your range. It also covers why you should warm up your voice before gigs and how, some of the challenges peculiar to going back and forth between harp and voice, and what getting great tone on your harp and in your voice have in common. The class is geared for blues, country, rock, and related styles, but the technique works for all styles of music and all are welcome.

So, You've Made It to The Stage. Now What, Charlie Barath
Becoming proficient on your instrument is a crucial first step; a step that cannot be skipped. But once you spend an ample amount of time in the wood shed, there's still a long way to go on your journey to becoming a performer. Let's have a discussion about things like playing with other people, jam etiquette, playing in front of an audience, engaging that audience, stage appearance and behavior, having a plan, and being prepared to adjust to the unexpected.

Small Hands/Big Sound: A Look at The Bullet Chamber & 3d Printing, Christof Hettiger

A further detailed look into the invention of the Bullet Chamber, its purpose, use, and target audience. This product was highlighted in the SPAH magazine Fall 2024 edition, written by Tom Ellis. Additionally, this is a semi-autobiographical account of how 3D print technology has changed the game in creating more adaptive music gear for myself, and hopefully eventually for others (i.e. custom harp containers, cases, etc.)

Wide Open Tone, Grant Dermody

We will identify, and remove anything that is in the way of an

open, relaxed harmonica tone. We'll introduce some tunes that lend themselves to practicing tone. A key of A diatonic harmonica is needed for this workshop.

Thursday Seminars

Country Tuned Harmonica: Licks & Songs, Lonnie Joe Howell
This seminar will show a new musical discovery of playing a complete major scale in second position on the 10-hole diatonic harmonica by altering one note. Many advantages of this special tuning will be revealed. A short lesson on Lonnie Joe Howell's blazing fast (but easy to play) version of "Orange Blossom Special" will be a part of the grand finale. For best results bring a Country Tuned key of C harmonica to the seminar or one can be provided.

Paul Butterfield: The Woodstock Era. Better Days, Levon Helm & Muddy Waters, Tom Ellis
Paul Butterfield's evolving playing style and musical directions during his time living in Woodstock in the 1970s.

Playing At a Blues Jam, How/ Where to Start, John Frazer
What does "Take it from the five" mean? What is a shuffle? What does 4/4 mean? How do you communicate succinctly and effectively to get the other jammers on the same page with you? Let me give you some clues for jamming success.

Vamping, Splits, Pull Slaps, Ghost Chords, David Kachalon
Learn: Chicago Style Blues Vamping/Rapid Vamping- explosive, loud, punchy and crunchy sound found in classic Chicago Blues recordings; Folk Style Rhythmic Vamping - a much more subdued and nuanced sound that can create the illusion of two separate instruments playing at once. Gentle, soft, controlled and rhythmically precise. It is found much more in Old Timey and Country Blues; Ghost Chording/Soft Shuffle: Using the tongue to create a Full Block (holes 1, 2, and 3) and quickly lifting the tongue and then returning it

back down into the full block. A quintessential sound in Chicago Blues harmonica. A rhythmic “Chordal Effect” that can be used for fills as well as accompaniment playing.

The Diatonic Harmonica’s Secret to More Stage Time: Rhythm Playing, Joe Filisko

The diatonic harmonica is often seen as a single-note instrument, similar to a horn, primarily used for solos and fills between vocals. However, its true potential as a rhythm instrument is often overlooked. The harmonica’s rich, built-in chords are an untapped superpower that can transform you’re playing. Join harmonica expert Joe Filisko along with acclaimed guitarist Eric Noden. Together, they’ll show you how embracing rhythm playing can make you a more sought-after musician—getting you invited on stage more often.

The Art & the Importance of Listening, Joost Jansen

Raise your awareness of the often overlooked but essential art of listening, both before, during, and after playing.

Listening is the key to becoming a better harmonica player. I share insights into what to pay attention to when listening to music. By actively listening, you can discover the deeper layers of music and enrich your own playing. The workshop includes practical examples and tools that empower you to develop listening skills. We practice distinguishing different instruments, recognizing harmonies, and picking up on subtle nuances that make a difference in musical expression. After this workshop, you will be able to experience music on a deeper level and enhance your own playing by paying attention to the rich details often overlooked.

Chromatic Master Class, Neil Adler

Chromatic players of all levels will play an excerpt or two and receive individual, supportive and non-threatening feedback to progress to the next level. Last year’s master class was a big success with good participation and improvements seen.

Effortless Singing, Brenda Freed

Would you like to front your own band as a singer and a harmonica player? Would you like to feel more confident about singing? Brenda Freed has an MA in Music Education/Music Therapy. She has been performing since childhood and has been teaching voice for over 3 decades to all ages, ranging from those who could not match pitch to professional singers. Brenda is intuitive and has the ability to pinpoint vocal problems and offer suggestions on how to make immediate improvement. Her techniques include how to: breathe properly, project and avoid hoarseness, increase vocal range and stamina, improve pitch and tone, and become more confident about singing. This workshop is designed to be experiential, fun, and applicable for all participants. Have a song in mind on which you'd like some coaching from Brenda. To get the most from this opportunity, bring a copy of the lyrics and chords for that song if possible. Handout provided. [www. EffortlessMusicInstruction.com](http://www.EffortlessMusicInstruction.com)

Filisko Teach-in, Joe Filisko

Join Joe and all his special guests on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday for a series of mini-workshops on every aspect of the harmonica covered by some of the world's very finest specialists. There will be help for beginners, intermediate, advanced, chromatic and diatonic. This informal three-day event allows you to interact with each specialist for a few hours a day in more of an informal and relaxed setting than ever before.

Everything You Can Do with Your Tongue, Robert Bonfiglio Seminar on corner switch, tonguing out of both sides, use of tonguing in pucker; basically, everything you can do with your tongue and position playing on corner switch, every possible combination of notes on harmonica.

Gypsy Swing: How To Play Different Positions in The Same Song, Mariano Massolo

I'm going to explain what I've taught to many students around the world: how to play in different keys and scales

within the same song. The foundation of swing, using primarily the most powerful tools of the diatonic harmonica.

The Game Changer, Blues Shifter, The Knittlinger, John Hall
Two new harmonicas were launched in 2025 that will forever change the harmonica world - The Bushman Game Changer in the Blues Shifter note layout and the Bushman Knittlinger. We will demonstrate all that these new instruments can do, and the doors they open. The Blues Shifter note layout makes it so a diatonic harmonica can now do anything a chromatic can do, only with more expression, and the Knittlinger is the easiest playing double reed harmonica of all time!

Tips For New Chromatic Harmonica Players, Keith Mitchell
Just picked up your first chromatic harmonica? This session will guide you through the essential first steps to build confidence and control.

We'll dive into software tools and Knit linger methods that help you start playing real melodies right away. If you've never read music before, no worries—we'll show you easy ways to get started with notation so you can unlock a wider range of tunes. And if you've ever heard a chromatic solo and thought, "I want to play that," we'll break down the steps to help you tackle even the trickiest passages.

Friday Seminars

What Key Are You Playing? How To Identify Chords Being Played on The Guitar, Brenda Freed

Attendees will learn chord shapes being made by a guitarist so you will no longer be at the mercy of others to call out the key of the songs. You will learn to identify first position chords made in the first 3 frets in relation to I, IV, V chord progressions. The effect of a capo on those chords will be discussed and related to identifying bar chords. Handout will be provided.

How To Perform w/ Backing Tracks, Chris Bauer

Learn the ins and outs of backing tracks: where to find them, how to make them, and how to perform with them.

Racking Up & Rocking Out: Playing Guitar and Harmonica Lonnie Joe Howell

Basics of this skill will be revealed, such as: Choosing the right harmonica, and harmonica holders, microphones amps and setting everything up. Scales, Rhythms, Licks, and Grooves, plus Folk, Blues, and Country songs will be demonstrated. Advantages of using effects and the capo will be discussed. This is a great teaching session on music theory as well! Don't miss it!

How To Hold Down a Groove by Yourself Grant Dermody

We will explore the fine art of rhythmic playing. We'll learn 12 bar bass lines and one chord grooves. You'll need a key of A diatonic harmonica. Accurate bends on the two and three hole are needed to get the most out of this workshop.

Bass Maintenance & Playing Techniques, Bill Morris

Will discuss and cover reed work, tuning, gapping, comb repairs and playing techniques.

The Anatomy of The Diatonic Harmonica, Ronnie Shellist

Learn more about the layout of the notes on a diatonic harmonica, and how to ear train effectively. In this class we will be mapping out the notes, practicing musical patterns and working on smart exercises to make you a more aware and agile player. We will also work on some fun bluesy ideas in class.

Filisko Teach-in, Joe Filisko

Singing For Harp Players, Richard P. Bennett

Whether you're thinking about adding vocals or already front a band and just want to sound better, you'll get some helpful tips in this one-hour class. This class covers the basics of singing in a way that's easy to understand with practical advice on how to support properly, improve your sound, and

increase your range. It also covers why you should warm up your voice before gigs and how, some of the challenges peculiar to going back and forth between harp and voice, and what getting great tone on your harp and in your voice have in common. The class is geared for blues, country, rock, and related styles, but the technique works for all styles of music and all are welcome.

Minor Key Scales In 3rd, 4th, And 5th Positions, Zip Robertson
This seminar presents three different minor scales achievable on the diatonic harmonica without overblows/overdraws, for blues, pop and folk songs. In addition to the scales themselves, a list of well-known songs will be provided for practice, and “House of the Rising Sun” is tabbed for all three positions in both the low and middle registers. Anyone wishing to play along should bring a diatonic harmonica in the key of C.

Playing The Harmonica on The Rack, Dave Moore
How to use a harmonica on the rack and still get good tone and power. I’ve been playing rack harp for decades. In some ways, I feel I play better on the rack, than off. Why is that? Of special interest will be that I will have with me an Elton harmonica rack that predates the standard ones from the 50s. I promise—they got it right the first time! This rack has no nut and bolt, has a better design, it’s a wonderful rack that has been my mainstay for decades. Easy to loosen, and stays tight. The best, and most elegantly designed harmonica rack I’ve ever seen. We’ll also go back and touch base with the great rack harp players of the past and just do some rack playing!

Saturday Seminars

Trochilus Basic Blues Licks, Learn & Play, Peter Hogaboam
Trochilus is powerful instrument for basic blues. With simple tab handouts for classic blues licks. I’ll teach everybody how to play common, well-known licks in new ways. Potential

examples: “Help Me” bassline, “Juke” lick up an octave and in alternate positions, “Hoochie Coochie” lick, etc. To participate attendees will need a Trochilus in C, but of course observers are welcome.

Caring For Your 10-Hole Friend, Greg Albert

This beginner’s workshop will teach harmonica players how to clean, tune and gap their 10-hole harmonicas. The presenter, a professional refurbisher, will show how to disassemble and clean a harp, and how to tune and gap the reeds using inexpensive devices, cellphone downloads and tools. This will be a hands-on workshop wherein the participant will actually tune a used and out-of-tune Marine Band 1896 harp using tools provided by the workshop leader and offered for sale afterwards. Handouts of various tuning schemes will be provided. This workshop is limited to 25 and will last one hour.

Better Harping Through Technology, Ross Garren

A discussion and demonstration of the Overblow Booster, Trochilus/Gamechanger, and other innovations that seek to extend the diatonic harmonica’s capabilities.

Effortless Harmony Singing & Playing, Brenda Freed

Would you like to sing or play harmony, or play descants so that you can provide interesting accompaniments to other harp players or to a singer? In this fun workshop, participants will learn the basic music theory of harmony and experience singing and playing harmonies with each other. This workshop is designed to be educational, experiential, and fun. Bring a C harp. Handout provided.

Intro To Canva & Video Editing on A Mobile Device, Adam West

Creating graphics posters and cover art for your videos with Canva. Capturing video for your project: Equipment needed: Simple video editing using Capcut; Converting most Audio to video using Easy Voice Recorder Pro; Capturing audio or

Video for use in your Projects; Using Google or Apple cloud to organize and share your Content. It is my hope that this will empower artists of all types to create content for booking, instruction and exposure for use on social media.

Chord Maintenance & Restoration, Bill Morris

Will cover customizations, reed work, tuning, gapping, comb repairs.

AI In Music: Benefits, Challenges, And the Inevitable Future, Bruce Weinstein

Artificial Intelligence is changing the way music is created, recorded, and performed—but what does that mean for us as harmonica players? Is AI a useful tool, a potential threat, or simply an unavoidable development? In this engaging panel discussion / town hall meeting, we will explore: The benefits: How AI can assist in songwriting, generate chord progressions, suggest melodies, and even improve recording and mixing; The challenges: The artistic and ethical questions AI raises—how much is too much AI in music? Can AI-generated material truly be considered original? The future: AI is already shaping the music industry in ways both large and small. Should musicians engage with it, ignore it, or push back against it? The legal landscape: Who owns AI-generated music? What rights do musicians have when AI is trained on their work? We'll discuss copyright concerns, fair use, and what harmonica players need to know about protecting their art. Bring your questions and concerns and leave with a better understanding of how AI might enrich our songwriting and performance. Whether you're excited, skeptical, or strongly opposed, this session will be a thought-provoking look at the role of AI in music—and what it means for harmonica players.

JAMS & MORE

Acoustic Blues Jam, Nightly in the Salon del Rey (Main Stage/Mezz). Hosted by Dan Rupp.

Country Jam, Nightly in the La Reina. Hosted by Lonnie Joe Howell.

Gospel Jam, Nightly in La Condesa. Hosted by Todd Parrot.

Jazz Jam, Calling all jazz players and enthusiasts. Please come to the Lobby Lounge & Bar after the Main Stage performance on either Thursday or Friday, and play or listen to some of the best harmonica jazz. Sign up when you get there.

The bar will be open!

Open Mic, Here's your chance to play solo or with others. Leave some space in your day to play.

Swap Meet, SPAH members are invited to bring their extra "harmonica stuff" outside the La Vista (Founders' Stage) / 22 on Friday between 12:15 and 2:45 p.m. Find space on a table and you're set to go. You can sell some old treasures or buy new ones. You are responsible for all your items.

Note: If you are interested in selling new products, please work with someone in the vendor area. Out of respect for SPAH registered vendors, the Swap Meet is the place to sell your "extra stuff", not a place to set up shop. Thank you.

Troubadours, SPAH Troubadours are selected each year to represent the spectrum of harmonica instruments and styles, including diatonic, chromatic, and trio, from across many musical genres. We hope you will join us in celebrating their knowledge, personality and skill at every opportunity. For 2025, please welcome SPAH Troubadours: Bill Morris, Robert Bonfiglio, Jerry Devillier and Will Scarlett. SPAH Troubadours will share their skills anywhere at the Convention, in the hallways, at a jam, on the open mic stage or on the patio!

SPAH In Memoriam

Please join us at the SPAH Awards Banquet to remember some of those we have lost since 2010. SPAH will present a short In Memoriam video so that we can reflect on the many SPAH members and influential harmonica players who have lost their lives since 2010 (and not recognized last year).

You can view the 2025 In Memoriam video on our YouTube channel: @SPAH-MainStage) Over the course of the past several months, SPAH members and friends have submitted the names of those we have lost, together with photos, brief bios, and information about their relationship with SPAH & harmonica clubs. If we have missed someone, please submit their names to us next year.

SPAH 2025 President's Breakfast

Dear Harmonica Organizations, Vendors, and Corporate Sponsors: This year, SPAH will host the annual President's Breakfast on Saturday, August 16th at 8:00 AM in the Stetson Room. We're inviting a single, leading representative from each Harmonica Club, Blues Club, or similar organization, as well as from each Sponsor and each SPAH Vendor. This gathering is to further cooperation, information exchange, collaboration, and networking with our partners as we look to the future of the harmonica and of SPAH.

SPAH is also looking for organizations that would be interested in hosting future conventions in their city. We would be pleased if you would attend on behalf of your organization. Please confirm your attendance by completing the form at the Registration Desk and returning it to the SPAH Registration Desk before 5:00 PM on Wednesday, August 13th.

Thanks.

Jerry Deall, president – Steve Watne, vice president

Let Your Voice Be Heard!

Come to the SPAH Annual Meeting
Saturday, 3:30 p.m. on the Founders' Stage