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Revue to light stage at Kingsport center



(Left Photo) Billy Crawford, left, and Lightnin' Charlie play their guitars at the Down Home. (Right Photo)E.G. Kight will perform at the revue. (Photos / Contributed)

By Doug Janz
Press Tempo Writer
djanz@johnsoncitypress.com

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KINGSPORT — The Red Hot and Blue Revue comes to the Kingsport Renaissance Center on Friday, offering four different regional acts with a distinct Americana flavor.

The show will feature Lightnin' Charlie, blues singer E.G. Kight, surf band The Thunderheads and the Billy Crawford Band. The show will culminate with an onstage jam. It's part of the Art Nights/City Lights performing arts series put on by the Cultural Arts Division and Arts Council of Greater Kingsport.

“We want it to be a kind of Americana revue,” Lightnin’ Charlie said. “It’s different styles of music in one package, in a family-friendly theater-style venue. You can see this kind of thing at festivals like Rhythm and Roots, but not in an indoor setting.

“The common thread is American music styles. It’s good music for good people. Families, kids and grandparents, they can come hear this music that they don’t get exposed to in a live setting very often.”

Cost is \$18 for general admission, \$15 for students. Showtime is 7:30 p.m.

Most of the performers played a show at the Renaissance Center a few months ago as a benefit honoring George Hammonds, the local blues bass player who passed away. That show caught the attention of not just the musicians but also facility management, who suggested to Lightnin’ Charlie they do a blues show with a variety of artists. Charlie and Billy Crawford, who heads up his own group as well as leading The Thunderheads, put together the lineup but expanded it from just blues to other styles, with a little country, folk and surf included.

Lightnin’ Charlie does an eclectic set ranging from bluesman Jimmy Reed to country legend Hank Williams. The BC Band will focus on blues.

“We thought booking E.G. Kight would be good, too, because of her eclectic repertoire,” Charlie said. “She’s as likely to perform Willie Nelson as Muddy Waters; she does some Etta James, and she’s just a really, really good singer. I was blown away by her singing the first time I heard her.

“The Thunderheads do the old surf stuff like The Ventures or Dick Dale, and they just nail that stuff. Billy’s just phenomenal. Then the Billy Crawford Band will back up E.G., plus we’ll have an all-star jam.

“It’s all kind of a throwback to those packaged shows that used to be big. And it all came about because of the George Hammonds benefit.”

Charlie said plans are in the works for a two-day revue in 2009 with the idea of bringing in a big-name blues artist as a headliner for one night.

Lightnin’ Charlie will also be showing off his new book, “Off The Record: The Trials and Tribulations of a Travelin’ Troubadour.” It contains chapters based around his “Lightnin’s Lowdown” stories posted on his Web site, describing wild and unlikely happenings from his years on the road as a musician.

“I tell these tales of crazy anecdotes that have happened,” he said, “but ultimately it’s my testimony as a Christian. Some things happen that are

rough, risqué, but that's my story. It's a real balancing act to tell it like it really was, behind the scenes, but not offend people."

The Kingsport Renaissance Center is located at 1200 E. Center St. For tickets, call 392-8417. For more information on the artists, visit www.myspace.com/redhotandbluerevue.