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Last Call for Blues and the 12:01 Blues Band at Lynn City Hall Saturday night

By Debra Glidden / The Daily Item

LYNN -- The Blues will be taking City Hall by storm at 7 p.m. on Saturday with "Shore Blues."

The concert in the refurbished Lynn Veterans Memorial Auditorium will feature Marty Rowen and the Last Call for Blues along with the 12:01 Blues Band.

Last Call includes Rowen on piano, harmonica and vocals, Benny Benson on drums, Mike Miksis on bass, and Bruce Bartlett on guitar.

Benson, however, is out of the country so Bruce Owens will be filling in on drums for the Shore Blues show.

"I've been the piano player for Last Call for Blues for 32 years," said Rowen, the only original member still playing with the band.

Rowen, a Lynn native, said his first gig was at the First Baptist Church on North Common Street in Lynn at age 13.

The Last Call for Blues Band is shown, including members, from left, Bruce Bartlett (guitar), Marty Rowen (piano, harmonica and vocals and an original member of the band), Benny Benson (drums) and Michael Mixsis (bass). Last Call for Blues, along with the 12:01 Blues Band, are set to perform Saturday night at Veterans Memorial Auditorium at Lynn City Hall, in a show called 'Shore Blues.'

"In the mid-1970s the band was very active in Lynn," he said. "But it's been at least 20 years since I played a venue in Lynn. We played all the local haunts in Lynn back in the day. It's going to be a lot of fun playing back in my hometown and I'm really looking forward to it. I went to the auditorium when I was a kid to see movies and magic shows. I went in the other day to check it out and it looks and sounds great."
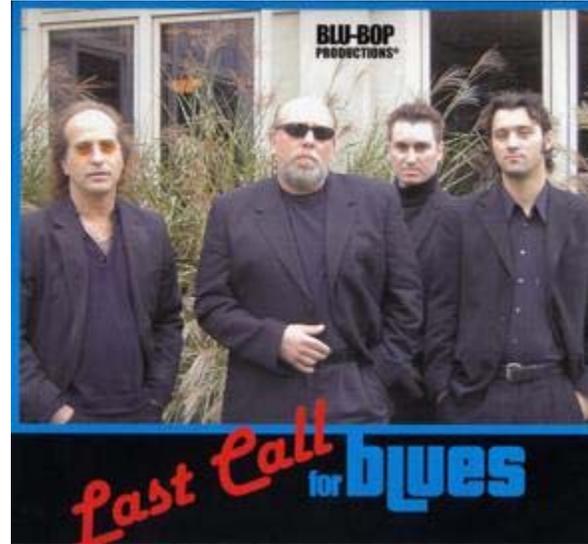
Rowen, who is a 1976 graduate of Lynn English High School, said he has a lot of fond memories of Lynn.

"I grew up in East Lynn down by the beach," he said. "I'm a graduate of Kiley (Park) U. Our last home base in Lynn was The Swizzle on corner of Chatham and Essex Streets. We had our rehearsal space in one of the apartments out back. Back then there were a lot of places in Lynn to play. There were many, many more musical venues than there are today. When things dried up we went from an eight-piece group down to a quartet. We worked whenever and wherever we could. You know, we tried to keep the vibe alive."

Rowen, who has worked with James Cotten and Joe Turner, describes the music his band performs as "Blu-Bop."

"It's a combination of jazz and blues," he said. "It's a little bit more bee-bop jazz as opposed to straight ahead Chicago Blues, which is why I thought it would be good to have the 12:01 Blues Band open up."

The 12:01 Blues Band was formed in the 1990s and the quartet has established itself as one of the North Shore's most popular bands, with classic sound and stage presence.

While the Chicago style blues of Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf, and Little Walter is at the heart of their sound, other influences include the Texas blues rock of Stevie Ray Vaughn and ZZ Top along with touches of B. B. King, Ray Charles, and Van Morrison.

Larry Power, who plays lead guitar and is the lead vocalist, has played professionally for more than 30 years. He opened for Jimi Hendrix in 1968 and he said his greatest memory is jamming with the Allman Brothers Band and playing slide guitar face to face with Dicky Betts.

Danny Klane, who plays saxophone and sings in the 12:01, is best known for his distinctive gritty sound and vocals.

The show at Lynn Veterans Memorial Auditorium inside Lynn City Hall begins at 7:30 p.m. Doors open at 7 p.m. Tickets are $10 for general admission and are available at City Hall in advance or the night of the show.

The city relaxes on-street parking restrictions the night of shows and there is plenty of free parking in area parking lots including the Salvation Army, St. George's Greek Orthodox Church, the Visiting Nurses Association, Lynn District Court and the Lynn Police Station. The MBTA parking garage will also be available free of charge on show nights.

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