

# SHOWCASE

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## Electricity carries the Long Beach Blues weekend

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Country blues kept coming back to remind city blues of its roots, at the Long Beach Blues Festival Saturday, but the electricity generated by such rocking actors as Little Milton and Koko Taylor finally won out over tradition.

Still, tradition had its moments.

Kicking off the festival's two-day line-up was Katie Webster, who played her own particular style, fashioned loosely after boogie woogie. She brought an easy, swinging feel to such songs as "Let the Good Times Roll" and "Sea of Love."

She set the mood for the first day of the two-day festival at the California State University, Long

Beach campus.

Rockin' Dopsie and his Zydeco Twisters brought the New Orleans sound to the event. With the bethroned Prince Dopsie himself on accordion and two played formerly of Clifton Cherner's band (bassist Alonzo Johnson and guitarist Sherman Robinson), the Twisters couldn't miss.

The superb but quiet set by pianist/vocalist Sunnyland Slim and guitarist Robert Jr. Lockwood, which preceded Milton's, presented the best of the folksy side of the music.

The 79-year-old Slim still maintains an effective (if somewhat raspy) voice for crooning a slow, mellow blues. And Lockwood's piercing guitar style complements rather than drowns out

Slim's softer sound.

In tribute to Lockwood's stepfather and blues originator Robert Johnson, the pair played "Walkin' Blues" and "Kind-hearted Woman."

Despite sound problems, their performance was memorable.

Little Milton followed with a sound not unlike that of B.B. King and with just as much flash. His big city brassy horn sound, combined with his brusque vocals, gave his songs depth.

Just about the time Little Milton blasted away reminders of the previous performers' acoustic sets, an unexpected

guest, 86-year-old Whistling Alex Moore, took the stage to play some piano blues, sounding fresh out of the Texas nightclub.

But it was right back to the Chicago sound afterward, when Koko Taylor and her Blues Machine went on. And that's the way it remained.

Taylor's gravelly vocals gave fresh treatment to "I Would Rather Go Blind," "Come to Papa" and "Hey Bartender."

But it was her extended version of "Wang Dang Doodle" that got most of the spectators on their feet. The song was especially pertinent since its author

Willie Dixon, was listening backstage.

Topping off the day's events was a guitar showdown between Matthew "Guitar" Murphy, Johnny Copeland and Buddy Guy. Their heated guitar licks on such songs as "Down Down Down" and "Everyday I Have the Blues" kept the atmosphere static.

The following evening it was the harmonica players (James Cotton, Junior Wells and Rod Piazza) turn to show off — and to finish out the event.

This year's festival many not have had a major blues act on the bill — but it didn't need one.