

### Current Issue

Headlines

### Lancaster Edition

Table of Contents  
Feature Story  
Bar/Club Calendar  
Dining/Restaurants

### York Edition

Table of Contents  
Feature Story  
Bar/Club Calendar  
Dining/Restaurants

### Harrisburg Edition

Table of Contents  
Feature Story  
Bar/Club Calendar  
Dining/Restaurants

### General Editorial

Movie Previews  
Concert Listings  
Live Theatre Listings

### Article Archives

Dining/Restaurants  
Bands/Performers

### Feedback

Survey Question  
Letter to the Editor  
Employee of the Month

### About Us

General Info  
Editorial Info  
Advertising Info  
Contact Info

### Links

Bands/Performers  
Area Venues

## Band & Performer Archive

Articles from past issues



### Trey Alexander Band

Published: July 2000  
Story: Dorissa Bolinski  
Photo: George Weir

At 18, Trey Alexander is an extremely accomplished musician. He began playing guitar at the age of 15, and was performing in clubs just two weeks later. He's adept at writing classical, blues, country, and Flamenco guitar pieces and also plays bass and piano. A former guitar teacher even told Alexander that he couldn't give him lessons anymore because Alexander's ability surpassed his. Yet, this considerable talent has not adversely affected Alexander, who remains gracious and humble when reminded of his success.

In fact, he's a quiet young man who prefers to let his guitar speak for him. During a recent conversation, he often peppered his words with various guitar riffs to illustrate different types of guitar forms from straight blues to classical. He spoke of his love of the blues and how the music has the ability to tell a story.

Alexander was home-schooled in a nurturing environment and says that his family completely supports his music career. He explains that it was his parents' idea that he begin lessons years ago. "One night I was listening to Jimmy Hendrix and I picked up an old junk acoustic that had about four strings on it, and I played the song. My parents said, 'We gotta get you lessons.' And I've been playing ever since. Sometimes I practice 10 or 11 hours a day." In addition to Hendrix, Alexander is influenced by other older musicians like Led Zeppelin and Stevie Ray Vaughan rather than most newer bands. "My dad liked the older stuff. He liked just about everything ... but he passed away not too long ago, which was really tough," Alexander says. "He was a really great supporter of my music, and really took me as far as he could with it. He was awesome."

Alexander says he feels obligated, like many blues players, to keep the tradition alive. "There's not a lot of great music out there today. A lot of untalented people are finding a lot of ways to make money. Stevie Ray was one of our best blues players, and when he was gone, there wasn't much left. So we gotta keep it going."

Alexander keeps it going with the Trey Alexander Band which he formed after having played with Blue Voodoo since the age of 15.

### On-Line Archives

[Dining/Restaurants](#)  
[Bands/Performers](#)

### On-Line Articles

[Lancaster Feature Story](#)  
[York Feature Story](#)  
[Harrisburg Feature Story](#)  
[Lancaster Dining](#)  
[York Dining](#)  
[Harrisburg Dining](#)  
[Lancaster Club Calendar](#)  
[York Club Calendar](#)  
[Harrisburg Club Calendar](#)  
[Area Concerts](#)  
[Live Theatre Listings](#)  
[Movie Previews](#)



For the past four months, Alexander has been joined in his band by Hassan Estakhrian on bass and Ryan Bencak on drums. The group performs a mix of blues standards and original material.

Alexander acknowledges that a lot of young performers who choose to play the blues are not taken as seriously as their older counterparts because of the old notion that you have to have lived a long and hard life to really understand the nature of the music, but he says, "the thing about that isn't that the blues is about what you've experienced over all the years of your whole life. The blues is about somebody good feeling bad about something. It doesn't matter how old you are, you have pains in life. It doesn't matter if it's about a girl ... anything. I mean, my father passed away. If that isn't blues, I don't know what is."

He continues, "People don't realize that the blues can just be something you enjoy to play. It's something that's very fun to do, you know? You don't have to be suffering to play a blues song. You're telling a story with the music ... you sort of talk with it. It has personality. You can change it from a mellow sound to a kind of angry sound. So, it's not that you have to live it, but everyone goes through hard times, and it's definitely a way to express yourself. You can let out feelings that are inside of you."

Alexander doesn't mind when older musicians doubt his credibility because he knows that he's the best player he can be right now. "It's not that I've ever felt I had to be better than anyone else to prove anything," he states. "It's that I had to be better for myself. I put in a lot of hours to become the guitar player I am. I really busted my butt."

"I've had older musicians tell me I suck," he laughs, "but I think that's almost a compliment sometimes. I think it comes back to the fact that people don't believe I can really play the blues because I've lived such a short life. I think some of the older musicians get a little angry, but I can't help that; I play because I love it."

Alexander's dream is to open for an act like the Black Crowes, Jimmy Vaughan, or B.B. King. He hopes to make young adults more aware of the blues and other types of music that's out there. "There are a lot of young kids today who don't ever get exposed to really good music," he says. "I'd like to change that."

Since he's at that age, Alexander is considering a possible stint at college to study music, but he's wary. "Some colleges are too strict in what they let you do musically," he explains. "You can't really expand because they do it their way."

He says if he does decide to go, he'd lean toward Berklee College of Music. "That's a really standard school, but they also have really good musicians teaching there."

It all depends on how you pick your teachers because there are so many good musicians out there," he says.

Right now, though, Alexander is content to continue studying on his own, performing, and teaching guitar at Manor Music Mansion in Lancaster. In addition, the Trey Alexander Band is about to enter the studio to record their first CD.

Alexander is aware of his accomplishments but the thing he's most proud of in his career is his positive relationship with his supportive family. "I was really close with my father, which a lot of kids aren't these days, but where would I be without my dad? My parents have done a lot for me, and just to know that I've been pleasant to them and appreciate them makes me feel good. Sure, I feel really

good about how I've accomplished playing guitar in three years, but I wish I was better, but it takes time. You have to wake up and know that you can't be the best overnight. It takes time."

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