

Entertainer of the Month Jimmy Hawkins



Jimmy Hawkins (pictured second from right) with the Smokehouse Band circa 1970.

Jimmy Hawkins got his first guitar at age 9, and began a musical odyssey, which has taken him literally around the world. He spent his early years absorbing and analyzing the unending variety of musical styles the river carried to his native town of St. Louis. He paid his dues with a succession of local groups, barnstorming the Midwest from St. Louis to Detroit. Jimmy refined his style and skills with groups such as River City, Smokehouse, and the Knock Down Party Band; and with notables like Marcy Levy, who co-wrote and sang with Eric Clapton on "Lay Down Sally," and Steve Gaines, premier guitar player with Lynyrd Skynyrd.

In 1973, Jimmy caught wind of a new musical movement taking place in the Caribbean. Accepting an invitation to visit Jamaica with a friend, Jimmy decided to stay a while and ended up spending the next ten years immersed in its cultural,

musical, and spiritual world.

Returning to the States in 1983, Jimmy formed the nucleus of what would become the Cyclones. The Cyclones carefully nurtured a fan base throughout southeast Florida and the Florida Keys. This popularity led to a house band berth at Key Largo's famous Caribbean Club,

and many People's Choice awards for

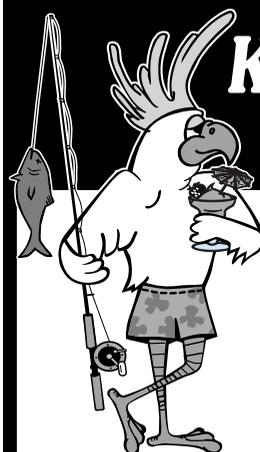
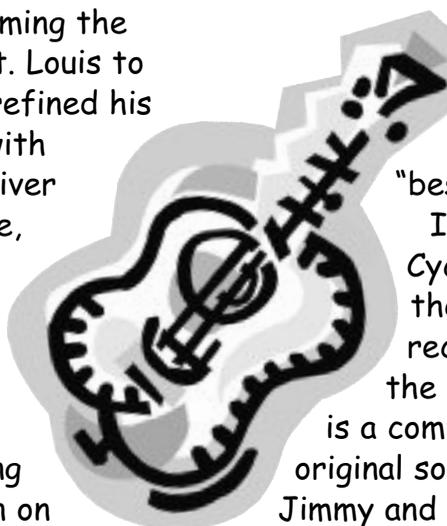
"best local band."

In 1996, the Cyclones released their first CD, recorded live at the Club. This album

is a compilation of original songs written by Jimmy and his son Felix, as well as original arrangements of previously recorded material.

In 2006, Jimmy released a second album called "Thru the Gears," a collection of reggae, rock and blues he recorded live with The Shifters, a Connecticut-based band that annually travel to the Keys. Jimmy says, "The Shifters

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