

# MORE ROOM FOR THE BLUES

**BUDDY GUY** | Legends moving to 2-story digs next year



Buddy Guy performs at his South Loop club in January. | TOM CRUZE~SUN-TIMES

BY JEFF JOHNSON

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The flagship blues club in this home of the blues will have a new home of its own by next year.

Buddy Guy's Legends is moving up the block from 754 S. Wabash to 700 S. Wabash, a two-story building that housed the jazz and world music club HotHouse until 2007.

Owner Buddy Guy, 73, has long sought to purchase a building for Legends, rather than renting from Columbia College. The new building should provide for larger capacity, better sound and sight lines, the flexibility of a second-floor stage and more exhibit space for blues artifacts.

"You know when I first opened Legends, people were complaining that the club was too big for a blues club," the blues superstar told the Sun-Times. "Now we've become too small and need more space. In the new place we'll have more room for people so when I play or my friends like the Stones or Clapton come play, people won't have to stand outside



Legends currently leases its location at 754 S. Wabash. |

JOHN H. WHITE~SUN-TIMES

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'cause they can't get in."

Unlike HotHouse, Legends will utilize the ground floor as its primary area. There'll be seating for nearly 400, up slightly from 754 S. Wabash, with a second stage upstairs for a total capacity of about 600.

"If it's too big, you lose the intimacy," says Brian Moravec, Legends' general manager. "Blues is better in a more intimate room."

Gand Music and Sound will work with the architects

to design a state-of-the-art sound system. But Isabelle Libmann, Legends' special events and public relations chief, says the new Legends will retain the earthy atmosphere of the best blues clubs.

"I hear people complain that they're afraid that it'll be too big and too clean," she says. "With all these technical upgrades . . . everything else is staying pretty much the same."

A specific timetable for opening the new Legends would be premature, Moravec says. "The city's been very tough with clubs ever since E2 [the 2003 nightclub disaster]. The city's not going to make things easier on us [with code enforcement] just because Buddy Guy is the owner."

Before owning Legends, Guy ran the Checkerboard Lounge, 423 E. 43rd St.

"There aren't many blues clubs left in Chicago, but there are still a lot of blues fans," Guy says. "I'm giving them a place to go."

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## LEGENDS WHO'VE BEEN AT LEGENDS

Buddy Guy's Legends has become the place in sweet home Chicago where blues acts most want to play. Sometimes the odd superstar has graced the club, including:

- 1989: Stevie Ray Vaughan
- 1990: Willie Dixon
- 1993: Van Morrison, jamming with Junior Wells after a downtown concert
- 1994: G.E. Smith & the "Saturday Night Live" Band, recording a live album with Guy

- 1994: Eric Clapton (three nights, with Pete Townshend in the audience on the first night)
- 1996: Julia Roberts, filming the karaoke scene in "My Best Friend's Wedding"
- 2002: Mick Jagger and Ron Wood, post-concert jam
- 2008: B.B. King, post-concert visit



Julia Roberts at Legends in "My Best Friend's Wedding."