

# The winter blues

Fans pack Buddy Guy homestand **TEMPO**



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CHICAGOLAND

### MUSIC REVIEW

## Artist in residence

Fans pack Legends to see Buddy Guy at work during annual homestand

By **Bob Gendron**  
Special to the Tribune

Seeing Buddy Guy in January at his Chicago club has long been a rite of passage for music fans the world over. But this year, the local icon's winter residency at Buddy Guy's Legends is taking on extra-special significance.

The 19-concert stand, which began Thursday, marks the final time the "Buddy Shows" will occur at the venue's original location. Legends is soon relocating to an as-yet-unannounced destination, a move that was on the minds of many attending Friday's sold-out gig.

Pam Frank traveled from Bristol, Tenn., just to catch two performances. While she has seen Guy more than a dozen times, Frank wanted to watch the guitarist on his home turf.

"It's the last run of shows here. That definitely factored in my decision to come," she said.

South Side resident Brian Holloran voiced similar thoughts. Holloran also wanted to share in a tradition that started with his now-deceased dad. "He told me stories about seeing Guy walk through the crowd here," Holloran recalled. "If I see that tonight, it'll be awesome."

Holloran got his wish. During a 90-minute set, Guy repeatedly waded into the audience as he ripped serrated notes from his electric guitar. Wearing a red suit, black fedora and milewide smile, the 71-year-old didn't need a spotlight's illumination to command attention. He toyed with the crowd like a yo-yo, teasing onlookers with torrential riffs, soft-loud contrasts and trips outside the venue's entrance.

Much of the act revolved around shtick Guy has honed for decades. Nearly every move — the one-finger solos, hands-free feedback passages, embellished cries, drumstick-tapped guitar chords — functioned as a showstopping device. However far his act may be removed from gritty Chicago blues, Guy remains first and foremost a charismatic entertainer.

In addition to executing the obligatory antics, Guy flashed raw prowess on several tunes. Backed by a quartet, he molded blaring distortion into finite melody on "I Just Want to Make Love to You" and harmonized a cover of Otis Redding's "I've Got Dreams to Remember." The Louisiana native also jammed with 8-year-old guitar phenom Little Chris, whom the host cited as an example of the blues' future.

Yet Guy was best when in legacy mode, alone with his band. He gave the audience a history lesson that magnified his connection to an age when Chess Records' Michigan Avenue studios represented a Mecca to young rockers — Eric Clapton and Jeff Beck among them — with the same musical curiosity that continues to draw generations to Guy's showcase affairs.

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Tribune photo by Bob Fila

Buddy Guy gives 'em what they want during a sold-out performance at his blues club, Legends.

### 5 things to know about guitarist Buddy Guy

**1** Guy built his first guitar from a pesticide can and strings stripped off a wire screen.

**2** Etched into Guy's polka-dot Stratocaster guitar is the number 92557. It signifies the date (September 25, 1957) he arrived in Chicago.

**3** Blues great Muddy Waters fixed Guy a salami sandwich after hearing him play for the first time.

**4** Chess Records founder Leonard Chess originally dismissed Guy's playing as "noise."

**5** A five-time Grammy winner, Guy entered the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2005.