

# It's gotta be blue

## Guitarist Walter Trout's never changed colour

**WALTER** Trout, the blues guitarist who heads his own band Walter Trout and The Radicals, became a blues guitarist because he didn't heed some good advice. He reminisces: "I was just 16 years old, and it was 1967. I had a chance to speak with B.B. King for nearly two hours. At the end of it, BB said, 'Son, if you want to become rich, stop playing the Blues'. Well, I didn't listen." But the big guitarist, here in Mumbai to play for Johnnie Walker One Tree Festival, has no regrets about playing blues guitar. He says, "It was a lot of fun, and I enjoyed it. I still enjoy it."

It's his second time to India, and Mr Trout was blown away by the previous performance. He gets a little philosophical when he talks about last year's show: "It just shows to me that you can grow up in many different cultures, but as far as emotions are concerned, everyone's the same. It moved people here as much as it did anywhere else."

Mr Trout's early influences, besides Eric Clapton and Jmi Hendrix, were rather obscure blues guitarists. He cites Michael Bloomfield, who played guitar with the Paul Butterfield Blues Band in the '60s as a major influence on his playing. He says, "When I heard Michael play he made the guitar wail. I also wanted to make that sound. It was just the power of the music that I felt then."

He began with playing guitar for LA acts like Deacon Jones, before he got a break with the legendary bluesman John Lee Hocker's band. In 1981, he got a chance to play lead guitar for blues-rock band Canned Heat, which had built up a cult following after its rip-roaring set at the original Woodstock. But those years with Canned Heat were



something that Mr Trout would like to forget, and in fact he has forgotten them. He says, "I don't remember much from those years, I was young and ... a lot of things happened which I don't remember now. It must have been fun though!" The stint with Canned Heat led a gig with the legendary British blues band John Mayall and the Bluesbreakers, putting him into an elite league of guitarists - Eric Clapton and one-time Rolling Stone Mick Taylor both played guitar for Mayall's band. After performing five years with the Bluesbreakers he decided to go solo. "Playing with John Mayall is the pinnacle, you can't really go higher, you have to go solo." During his time at the Bluesbreakers, Mr Trout got an earful from Carlos Santana himself. The legendary guitarist told Mr Trout in no uncertain terms that he was wasting away his

time at the Bluesbreakers by over-indulging. He says, "I've been sober for twenty years since then."

Mr Trout doesn't seem bothered in the least that his guitar technique is often compared to that of Led Zeppelin's Jimmy Page. He says, "He is a great blues guitarist and it's actually very flattering that I'm compared with him." He is also very excited about the future of blues guitarists. He says, "Keep a watch out for Joe Bonamassa, he's a young fellow who has played with me on my new album."

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