



# Blues Brother

Edwin Holt isn't just another ethnic wannabe. He's a white guy who's making it in a black man's world.  
by Stacey Yervasi

Sporting closely clipped hair, a pressed plaid shirt, blue jeans, and cowboy boots, Edwin Holt doesn't look like a guy who has an intimate knowledge of South Dallas juke joints. He definitely doesn't appear to be the type who can belt out a blues song and pepper it with searing harmonica riffs. In fact, he stands out for one main reason: he's white. "I never have been with a 'white' band," the 37-year-old Holt says with a hint of pride. Instead, he has paid his dues in South Dallas music halls,



where his pale brethren rarely tread. For nearly 15 years Holt has sharpened his talents at places like the renowned R.L. Griffin's Blues Palace—where, according to Holt, "you find the best musicians"—all the while earning the crowd's respect.

He currently plays with a 12-piece group that formerly backed blues great Johnnie Taylor, kind of a Dr. Dre to Holt's Eminem. "If there was an Elvis for the black community, it was Johnnie Taylor," Holt says. He still treasures the memory of opening up for Taylor before his death four years ago. Another highlight included a recent invitation to perform at a reunion for C.B. Dansby High School, a now-shuttered school that once had an all-black population. That's just another step on the road toward Holt's ultimate goal: "I want to be the first white guy signed to an all-black label," he says. "That would be the ultimate affirmation."

But he certainly doesn't do it for the money. He lives comfortably in Greenway Parks, not far from the Mockingbird Station office of his design firm, which is a world away from his South Dallas stomping grounds. Lately, though, it has become more difficult to keep a full schedule.

"I'm married. I have responsibilities. I go to church on Sunday," he says. "It's really hard to say, 'You know, honey, I'm going to be out until 2 or 3 in the morning.'"

Now, whenever he gets the itch to perform in a more authentic atmosphere, Holt joins the gospel choir at the Bon Air Baptist Church in Oak Cliff. "I can get my fix in the church just as well as in a juke joint," he says. "But every now and then, I've got to go down to the juke joint." When your religion is blues, the juke joint is your place of worship.