

Watermelon Slim - Artist Biography

"The most exciting and authentic blues performer I've heard in years." *A.W., Paste Magazine*

2x Winner: 2008 Blues Music Award Band of the Year and Album of the Year

2x Winner: 2006 & 2007 MOJO Magazine's #1 Blues Album of the Year

Winner: 6th Annual Independent Music Awards Blues Album of the Year

ARTIST BIO: An ever-expanding career of ramshackle grandeur.

Bill "Watermelon Slim" Homans has built a remarkable reputation with his raw, impassioned intensity. HARP Magazine wrote "From sizzling slide guitar...to nitty-gritty harp blowing...to a gruff, resonating Okie twang, Slim delivers acutely personal workingman blues with both hands on the wheel of life, a bottle of hooch in his pocket, and the Bible on the passenger seat." Paste Magazine writes "He's one hell of a bottleneck guitarist, and he's got that cry in his voice that only the greatest singers in the genre have had before him."



The industry agrees on all fronts. Watermelon Slim & The Workers have garnered 17 Blues Music Award nominations in four years including a record-tying six in both 2007 & 2008. Only the likes of B.B. King, Buddy Guy and Robert Cray have landed six in a year and Slim is the only blues artist in history with twelve in two consecutive years. In Spring 2009 he was the cover story of Blues Revue magazine. .

Two of Slim's records were ranked #1 in MOJO Magazine's annual Top Blues CD rankings. Industry awards include The Independent Music Award for Blues Album of the Year, The Blues Critic Award and Canada's Maple Blues Award for International Artist of the Year among others. Slim has hit #1 on the Living Blues Charts, top five on the Roots Music Report and debuted in the top ten in Billboard. One of Slim's most impressive industry accolades may be the liner notes of The Wheel Man eagerly written by the late legendary Jerry Wexler who called him a "one-of-a-kind pickin' n singing Okie dynamo." Slim has been embraced for his music, performances, backstory and persona. He has appeared on NPR's All Things Considered, The BBC's World Service and has been featured in publications like Harp, Relix, Paste, MOJO, Oklahoma Magazine and Truckers News as well as newspapers like The London Times, Toronto Star, Chicago Sun-Times, The Village Voice, Kansas City Star, Philadelphia Inquirer, and Michelle Shocked's JAMS Magazine.

The Memphis Flyer led its terrific CD review with the question "Does anyone in modern pop music have a more intriguing biography than Bill "Watermelon Slim" Homans?"

Slim was born in Boston, his father was a progressive attorney and freedom rider and his brother is a classical musician. He was raised in North Carolina listening to the housekeeper sing John Lee Hooker songs. Slim attended Middlebury on a fencing scholarship but left early to enlist for Vietnam. While laid up in a Vietnam hospital bed he taught himself upside-down left-handed slide guitar on a \$5 balsawood model using a triangle pick cut from a rusty coffee can top and his Army issued Zippo.

lighter as the slide.

Slim first appeared on the music scene with the release of the only known protest record by a veteran during the Vietnam War. The project was Merry Airbrakes, a 1973 protest tinged LP with tracks Country Joe McDonald later covered. In the following 30 plus years Slim has been a truck driver, forklift operator, sawmiller (where he lost a partial finger), firewood salesman, collection agent, funeral officiator and at times a small time criminal. Due to aforementioned criminality, Slim was forced to flee Boston where he had played peace rallies, sit-ins and rabberoused musically with the likes of Bonnie Raitt. Recently Raitt singled out Slim to her audience as a living blues legend during a summer 2009 performance.

From Boston Slim landed in his current home state of Oklahoma farming watermelons - hence his stage name. Somewhere in those decades since Vietnam Slim completed two undergrad and a master's degree, started a family, painted art and joined Mensa, the social networking group reserved for members with certified genius IQs. When he's not on tour Slim loves to fish and garden.

The big turning point was 2002 when Slim suffered a near fatal heart attack. His brush with death gave him a new perspective on mortality, direction and life ambitions and thus his second emergence as a performing musician. Eleven albums later he says, "Everything I do now has a sharper pleasure to it. I've lived a fuller life than most people could in two. If I go now, I've got a good education, I've lived on three continents, and I've played music with a bunch of immortal blues players. I've fought in a war and against a war. I've seen an awful lot and I've done an awful lot. If my plane went down tomorrow, I'd go out on top." And when you watch him perform, you know every word is true.

Throughout his storied past, it has always been truck driving that Slim returned to. While trucking and hauling industrial waste for thankless bosses at hourly wages to support himself and his family, his id yearned for release of the musician inside. In fact, many of Slim's current songs began a cappella in his rig keeping him awake and entertained. Slim's music captures those long hours of now and then, finally and cathartically acquiescing to his id.

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