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Walkin' Cane to get event off and running Friday

Walkin' Cane, a Cleveland based blues group, will kick off BalloonFest 2000 with their performance Friday at 6:15 p.m.

Cane is comprised of lead singer, Austin "Walkin' Cane" Charanghat, and a rhythm section known as the "Bad Boys of Blues." Making up the "Bad Boys" are Jim Wall, drums, Michael Bay, lead guitar, and Michael Barrick, bass and vocals. The four men have collaborated since 1996.

Charanghat lends his voice the lead vocals and also plays slide guitar for the group. Besides his musical contributions, Charanghat gives the band its name in his nickname he earned when part of his leg was amputated in October 1996.

Charanghat now describes himself as a one legged Indian making a living playing the blues. But besides playing with Walkin' Cane, he also runs Lazy Eye Records in Cleveland.

The arterial condition Charanghat was born with and that took his leg also gave him a chance to develop his music. When the condition forced him to miss school he listened to the blues and practiced his own style.

During this time, Wall practiced with Charanghat. The two had played together since grade school in Rocky River. Wall earned a bachelor's degree in music and has toured and recored with various jazz, blues and rock groups. Wall unites the group with his percussive style.

But Wall isn't the only member of the group with experience. Barrick toured and recorded for 10 years throughout Asia, Europe, and the United States. The Ashland University graduate is experienced as a bassist, trumpeter and vocalist has recorded with several blues, jazz, and country artists.

Finally, Bay, a guitar instructor whose instrument rarely leaves his hand, rounds out the deep blues sound of the group. Bay teaches nearly 100 guitar students each week and performs 20 to 30 nights each month.

This is Walkin' Cane's second trip to Ashland in three months. In March, they performed on AU's campus as part of AU's Department of, Music Guest Artist Series.

Walkin' Cane's song list includes classic blues hits from the Allman Brothers, B.B. King, Jimi Hendrix, Muddy Waters and Bob Dylan. Besides classics such as Otis Redding's "Dock of the Bay" and Wilson Pickett's "Mustang Sally," the group also performs their original work.

After beginning BalloonFest with their initial performance, Walkin' Cane will perform again at 9 p.m.