

MUSIC

JT Bowen to perform free Sunday concert at historic Turf Club in Asbury Park



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It's a September bonus at the Turf Club in Asbury Park.

JT Bowen, former frontman for Clarence Clemons and the Red Bank Rockers, and Arlan Feiles, accompanied by vocalist Layonne Holmes and drummer Santo Rizzolo, will play from 3 to 5 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 25, at the Turf Club on Springwood Avenue.

Bowen has just released the new album, "Dig Deep," a Feiles production. The free show is presented by the Asbury Park African-American Music Project, aka Asbury-AMP, and it is part of the group's drive to raise awareness about, and restore, the Turf Club.

"We are a small group, but we're dedicated and committed to the project," said Yvonne Clayton of Asbury-AMP and a member of the city council. "What has been especially energizing, is that musicians come in and they say they can feel the spirit of other musicians and what happened in the Turf Club."

The Turf Club is the last of the great Springwood Avenue clubs on the West Side of the city that still stands. Lenny Welch, the Broadways, Clemons (before he joined the E Street Band) and more played the spot in the 1960s.

The once vibrant music and cultural scene on Springwood came to an abrupt end in the summer of 1970, when a civil disturbance tore apart Asbury Park. Blocks of Springwood that were not burned down during the riots were later bulldozed in a failed attempt at revitalization.

The history is being rediscovered and the music is starting to come back. Asbury-AMP's Tuesdays at the Turf Club shows over the last two summers have been a big part of that.

“Our vision is for it to be a part community center, part museum and then definitely a performance space for live music — for musicians to have a place to play and for the community, to have a place to go and experience what it’s like,” Clayton said.

Recent grants from the National Trust for Historic Preservation's 2022 African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund and the Monmouth Arts Council have helped the cause, said Clayton, and Asbury-AMP member Jennifer Ward Souder.

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As of now, the venue has no electricity beyond generators, no plumbing and no roof — but maybe that's part of the appeal.

“The musicians are saying, 'Do you have to put a roof on?' ” Clayton said. “There's a thing about playing in the open air and the sound reverberates in such a unique way. We're looking at plans where maybe we'll not leave it open, but we'll have it be transparent so the light can come in. Amazing things are happening.”

Go: JT Bowen and Arlan Feiles, 3 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 25, Turf Club, 1200 Springwood Ave., Asbury Park. Free. www.asburyamp.org.

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