



# Slim DeNunn influenced by blues legends, Cash, Elvis

By Josh Davis  
For Go! Magazine



**SALISBURY** — Though new to the scene, Slim DeNunn and the High Rollers have quickly become a go-to band for local blues, constructing a rich sound built up from basics of the art form.

“Dr.” Jay Carlander and Brian “Lips” Veditz pull lead duties on guitar and harmonica while the rhythm section lays a hearty backbeat with Chuck “Mr. Martini” DeMartin on drums and Todd “Slim DeNunn” Smith on upright bass.

Smith also handles the vocals duties.

Slim DeNunn and the High Rollers will be playing at Escape Restaurant and Bar as part of Salisbury’s Third Friday events.

## What can you tell me of the history of the band?

We started as the

Watershed Blues band back in the fall of 2006 and played a few shows — the line up was me on electric bass, Dr. Jay and Greg Mann on guitars, Lips and Bill Grogan on harmonica and Tom Moriarty on drums. We disbanded in the summer of 2007. I joined Muskrat Sally with Matt Feuer on guitar, Lips on harmonica and Dean “The Machine” Wendland on drums. Matt transferred to a new job across the bridge early in 2009 and that brought an end to Muskrat Sally on the Eastern Shore. I asked Dr. Jay and Lips if we could put together a new

group. As we rehearsed, we tried some different material but the blues beckoned and so we refined our set list to what we like — Chicago-style, Texas-style, Rockabilly, and Jump blues — plus some old Merle Haggard and some Johnny Cash because it makes us happy — and seems to fit. We “discovered” Sean Costello on YouTube and his playing and song choices inspired us further.

## What are some of your influences?

The blues legends. Willie Dixon, Howlin’ Wolf, Muddy Waters, Elmore James and some more modern blues artists. Sean Costello, Stevie Ray Vaughn, James Harman, Paul Butterfield. Also, ZZ Top, Elvis Presley, Carl Perkins, Merle Haggard, Johnny Cash, Gram

Parsons, Al Greene, Buck Owens — too many to list.

## That bass is a monster. How/when did you get into playing upright?

I first started playing upright bass as a seventh-grader in the junior high orchestra after playing cello in elementary school. I got a paper route to buy my first electric bass and amp when I was 13 and joined a band. I couldn’t bow the bass well, so I quit the orchestra after ninth grade. I still sound like I’m sawing the thing in half when I bow — I don’t do it in public.

When I was 25, my friend’s mom was the music teacher at a Catholic elementary school and she called to tell me about a damaged upright bass they were throwing away and I could have it if I came to

pick it up. I did, fixed it up so it would play (it had two big holes in the side and was missing some parts) and I would play it from time to time. I learned to slap rockabilly bass line on it. One day in 2007, I was re-balancing my retirement savings and starting thinking about life after work — I wanted to play music but the thought of playing electric bass as a senior citizen didn’t appeal to me. I thought, “Electric

bass is for teenagers — but if I start now by the time I retire I might be good enough to play some jazz on the upright — that’s something befitting a man of seasoned status!” And so I started playing only upright bass and learning jazz bass lines (which is really hard — it’s going to be a while.) Once I felt like it might be all right, I bought a 1969 Kay bass for about a \$1,500 a few years ago that I play now.”

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## Do you have any plans for any kind of studio recording?

Not at this time. But we have some material of our own in development and it is a distinct possibility.

## How did you get involved with Third Friday?

We all live in Salisbury and come out to Third Friday with our families. They invited us to play. It's a good thing that gets people out and downtown — we are delighted to support it. I hear stories of how downtown Salisbury used to be; I'd like to see it return.

## If you go

**WHAT.** Slim DeNunn and the High Rollers  
**WHERE.** Escape Restaurant and Bar, 213 W Main Street Downtown Plaza, Salisbury  
**WHEN.** Friday, 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.  
**COST.** Free  
**CALL.** 443-859-8322

## What do you hope people take away after seeing the band perform?

First — I want people to feel an unrelenting desire to see us again. But after that, I hope they leave with an appreciation for the

blues as an art form. We try to be as authentic and true to the form as we can be given it's 2010, we are who we are, and the electric blues became a genre more than 60 years ago.

Much of what we take for granted as part of modern music comes from the old blues artists. Just a guy standing in front of a drum set with a guitar and singing — that started with the blues. Those old recordings are out there on the Internet — on YouTube you can even see a video of an old juke box dishing up some Big Joe Turner or Muddy Waters. I love that. I show my 7-year-old daughter those videos so she can understand that while all the music she loves can fit in the palm of her hand, it didn't used to be that way. You had to do some real work if you wanted to listen to music.

Now I sound like my dad.

# Get out! { Bar and music listings for Nov. 19-25 }

## BERLIN

**ATLANTIC HOTEL**, 2 N. Main St., Berlin, 410-641-3589.  
[www.atlantichotel.com](http://www.atlantichotel.com)  
**Monday:** Earl Beardsley

**THE GLOBE**, 12 Broad St., Berlin, 410-641-0784,  
[www.globetheater.com](http://www.globetheater.com)  
**Friday:** Full Circle  
**Saturday:** Oh Boy! A Tribute to Buddy Holly  
**Sunday:** Brunch with Racquel Orsini  
**Tuesday:** Movie night "A Christmas Story"

**STEER INN**, 10514H Racetrack Road, Berlin, 410-208-1900.  
**Friday:** Crowded Outhouse  
**Saturday:** Bond and Bently  
**Wednesday:** Karaoke with Hey Mick  
**Thursday:** Tim Cyphers

## BETHANY BEACH

**CHALKBOARD TAVERN**, Route

1, Sea Colony Marketplace, Bethany Beach, 302-539-7482.  
**Monday:** DJ Skip Dixxon  
**Wednesday:** Ladies 80s Night with DJ Aquanet  
**Thursday:** Everett Smalls

**DIFEBO'S**, 789 Garfield Parkway, Bethany Beach, 302-539-4550.  
[www.difebos.com](http://www.difebos.com)  
**Saturday:** Everett Spells

## CAMBRIDGE

**JIMMIE & SOOKS RAW BAR & GRILL**, 421 Race St., Cambridge, 443-225-4115,  
[www.jimmieandsooks.com](http://www.jimmieandsooks.com)  
**Friday:** The J. Guy Band  
**Saturday:** Jackson Mansour  
**Wednesday:** Anna Burgess  
**Thursday:** Blake Mills

## FENWICK ISLAND

**SMITTY MCGEE'S**, Route 54, Fenwick Island, 302-436-4716.  
[www.smittymcgees.com](http://www.smittymcgees.com)  
**Friday:** Randy Lee Ashcraft and the Saltwater Cowboys  
**Saturday:** Kevin Poole  
**Tuesday:** Team Trivia  
**Thursday:** Randy Lee Ashcraft Duo; Speed Bingo

## FRUITLAND

**ADAM'S RIBS**, 219 N. Fruitland Blvd, Fruitland, 410-749-6961,  
[www.adamsribs.com](http://www.adamsribs.com)  
**Sunday:** Semiblind acoustic

## OCEAN CITY

**BJ'S ON THE WATER**, 75th Street and the bay, Ocean City, 410-524-7575.  
[www.bjsonthewater.com](http://www.bjsonthewater.com)  
**Friday:** Lenny and the Soulsenders  
**Saturday:** Full Circle  
**Wednesday:** Poole and the Gang

**GALAXY 66 BAR & GRILLE**, 66th Street and Coastal Highway, Ocean City, 410-723-6762,  
[www.galaxy66barandgrille.com](http://www.galaxy66barandgrille.com)  
**Friday:** Jazz Friday

**GREENE TURTLE NORTH**, 11601 Coastal Highway, Ocean City, 410-723-2120.  
[www.greenturtle.com](http://www.greenturtle.com)  
**Friday:** DJ Wax  
**Saturday:** DJ Wood  
**Thursday:** Ravens Wrap Radio Show



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