

The sweet sound of the Blues

The Blues Moon, with host Clair DeLune, offers WUSC's listeners a two-hour taste of the different styles of blues music at 6 p.m. each Tuesday

JOHN LYONS Features Editor

So you think the blues is just sad and depressing music?

Well, you might want to think again because, to hear Clair DeLune talk about it, the blues has a great deal more to offer.

DeLune is the host of the "Blues Moon" on WUSC-FM 90.5 and she covers the spectrum of the blues genre Tuesdays from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

"I don't think the blues is depressing music," DeLune said. "But it's music that can help a depressed person feel better. So while some people may feel that humor has no place in the blues, I strongly believe that humor has an important place in blues music."

The music is filled with humor and emotion and is an important musical genre, DeLune said, whose radio name is taken from the title of a classical song by Claude Debussy.

"To me it's special because it's the first truly American music style," she said. "Even jazz came out of the blues. Blues came out of the cotton fields and jazz evolved out of the blues."

"And to me, jazz is for the head," she said. "Blues is for the heart and soul. Some people have described it in even grittier terms. But the thing is, it hits you in the heart, whereas jazz is thinking music."

"Blues just emerges on its own," she said. "It's like a wildflower as opposed to a hothouse flower."

DeLune has been presenting Columbia with her version of this wildflower since she picked up the Blues Moon during the summer of 1990.

When the blues show was started

at WUSC in the mid-80s, it was a success, in part, because of its position as the only blues show in South Carolina. But the show bounced from host to host and suffered from inconsistency until DeLune picked it up.

Since then, she has infused her personality into the show and become an important figure in Columbia's blues scene.

The Blues Moon is no longer the only place for Columbia listeners to get their blues, but it is still one of a kind. And WUSC blues listeners have learned to appreciate the calm, soothing voice and endearing personality of their host almost as much as music.

"Basically, I started the show and found out that the blues show listeners had a long-standing reputation as the station's best listeners," DeLune said. "They would just call up and say 'Hey, great job' and tell me they enjoyed the show. I've only had two unpleasant calls in all the time I've done the show."

"They're very nice. I think we lost a few listeners when the Breeze started playing beach, boogie and blues, but I have some real loyal listeners who have listened for years."

She said she originally wanted to host the station's oldies show, the Blast from the Past, but that the Blues Moon has become very dear to her.

DeLune has done the show year-round since she started, and she has only missed the show during vacations and periods of time when the station was shut down.

"It's a commitment," she said. "You can't tell people you're going to play them their blues and then say, 'Oh, I have a better offer.' People are depressed, and they need their blues."

In addition to her show at WUSC.

DeLune is working with the Midland Blues Association on developing a blues web page, and she teaches a course on blues appreciation and history for the USC honors college. She said teaching the class has been a very positive experience for her.

"It has been the joy of my life," she said. "I've had two wonderful classes. They are just dear people. Most of them are very excited about it."

DeLune said the students in her class learn to appreciate the connection between blues and contemporary music.

"Blues is the root for so much," she said. "We explore the evolution of blues in the class and by the end of the semester they've started to notice some of the things that have been 'borrowed' from the blues."

"Blues references are everywhere in current song lyrics," she said. "It's just that people don't know it."

DeLune said that blues is underappreciated as a genre at times but that people who are patient and interested enough to listen are rewarded for their efforts.

"Blues artists have an outstanding ability to relate to others," she said. "The songs really embrace all human emotion eloquently; joy and sorrow, life and death, rich and poor, love and hate. You name it."

"Everyone seems to think it's all songs about how life is bad," she said. "But more often than not, the joyous side is there as well."

"As far as I'm concerned it's actually a way of pulling out of depression. Sometimes I come into my show feeling tired or depressed, and by the end of the show, I'm always in a good mood."



JULIE WILSON The Gamecock

Clair DeLune, host of WUSC-FM 90.5's Blues Moon, gets ready to cue up a record during her Tuesday night show. Each Tuesday from 6 to 8 p.m. she presents USC and the greater Columbia area with a well-rounded, carefully researched source of blues music. DeLune has been hosting the show since the summer of 1990, and WUSC has been offering a blues show since the mid eighties.



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