

Entertainment and fine dining at Johnny T's Bistro and Blues on Farish St.

By Meredith C. McGee
Jackson Advocate Contributing Writer

A Jackson multi-business owner launched a new entertainment spot in the old Crystal Palace on Farish Street July 24, 2015.

Blush décor and stunning renovations preserve the integrity of the Farish Street Historic District while highlighting the district's musical connection to jazz and blues.

John Tierre Miller, the owner of Johnny T's Bistro and Blues, said, "Bistro means small restaurant." The term bistro is associated with century old French style home cooking eateries where liqueur coffee was served.

Johnny T's Bistro and Blues is a very sizable operation which offers an upscale dining experience, serves wine and alcoholic beverages, and features live entertainment.

The executive Chef Brian Myrick and his assistants slow cook dishes with fresh herbs to perfection. John said, "Brian, who previously was a chef at Char Restaurant in Highland Village Shopping Center, is good at what he does."

Lunch is served Mon.-Fri., 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., and dinner from 6 p.m. until. Doors are open Thurs.-Sat. until 2 a.m.

The building's exterior displays original bricks which glisten in the sun like new money. The restored building complements the good old days when legends like Lena Horne, Duke Ellington, and Louis Armstrong rocked sophisticated crowds at the Crystal Palace in the ballroom on the upper level. Stomp, stomp, happy feet bounced to art forms which transformed American music.

In those days, money turned over seven times. A dollar floated from The Big Apple Inn to Peaches, from Dr. Britton to Holmes Dining Room, from Coleman's Records to Jack Lane's Café and back down to Myles Grocery. One hand washed the other.

Omaha, Nebraska, native John believes those days are coming back. In fact, his business associates were feeling his dream of a rebirth in the historic black district and donated



Johnny T's Bistro and Blues owner, John Tierre Miller is committed to bringing back the true meaning of "bistro" – century old French style home cooking! (Advocate photos: Kevin Bradley)

where he obtained a BA in Business Administration and a MA in Public Policy. "I am a show by example guy," he determined, who takes calculated business risks cautiously. He credits JSU with having grounded his academic business foundation. "I enjoyed my entire HBCU experience," he recalled with a great sense of pride.

Jacksonians are rooting for this new business which can spur further growth in the district. John appreciates every patron. "The Mayor (Tony Yarber) had a Chew and Chat in my establishment; scenes from the

A stage made for live entertainment by distinctive standing, swaying, singing, dancing, and wooing musicians, vocalists, poets, and comics who shine during Open Mic is the first thing you see when you enter the main area.

A 1940s mural depicting Farish Street, which was named for Walter Farish, a former slave who lived on Davis Street and present day Farish Street, is on the wall.

John cherishes the history of the historic district which is the only African American historic area which was built by former slaves, whose great-great grandchildren still work, worship, and live in it.

Before dawn patrons enter the business to enjoy the vibe, place orders for dinner, indulge in cocktails, and exchange small talk. Management is planning to pump up the volume to entertain out-of-town guest and locals seeking entertainment in the Capital City.

Johnny T's Bistro and Blues joins Freelon's Bar and Groove, Frank Jones Corner, and another after hour entertainment spot in the historic district. The chit chat about the new entertainment in the area is stirring a renewed interest in Farish Street.

Blues legend Bobby Rush has wined and dined at Johnny T's Bistro and Blues. More blues legends are coming. Most will entertain guests on the upper level which is also a reception venue. Local weddings are booked, and live concerts are in the works.

The Big Apple Inn business owner Gene (Geno) Lee, II said, "New activity in the district is encouraging."

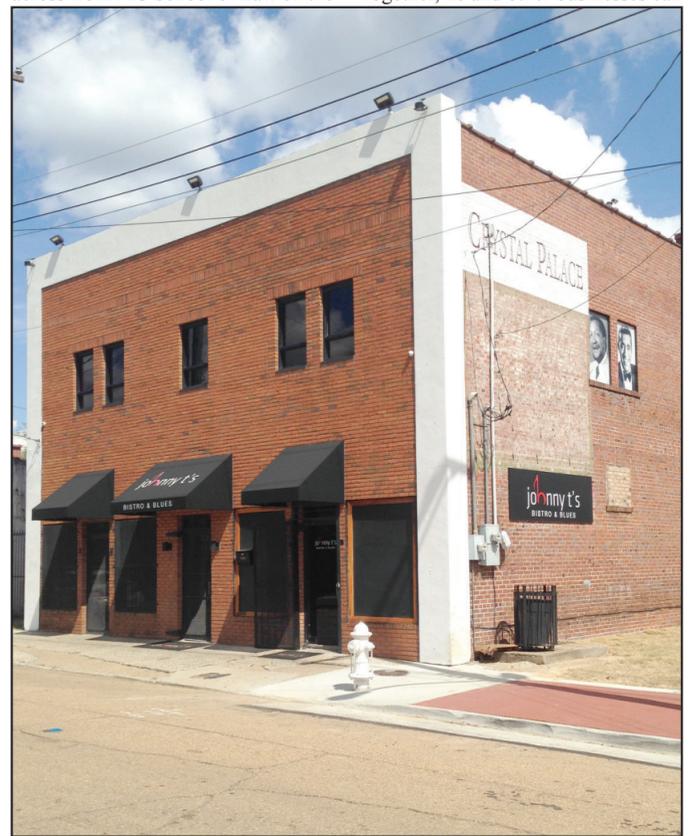
Willie Mae Howard, a former resident of the district, plans to patronize Johnny T's Bistro and Blues. "I remember when Farish Street was popping," she recalled. Howard said in the 1970-80s, Farish Street had a lot of eateries and night spots. She stated, "When I moved to California in 1987 every building on

Farish Street was open for business."

Johnny T's Bistro and Blues was one of the sponsors of the 35th Annual Farish Street Heritage Festival which was held on Sat., Sept. 26, 2015 in conjunction with Jackson State University's Tiger Fund and W.C. Gordon Football Classic outdoors across from MC School of Law on the

recently expanded from Monument Street past the Smith Robertson Museum and the side of Johnny T's Bistro & Blues to Farish Street. "The newly paved street beside us is the perfect place for future block parties and activities," John stated.

He is right. He has the ball. Together, he and other businesses can



corner of Griffith Street and Farish Street. The festival highlighted J.J. Thames, Stevie J., Love Notez, and Andre Lee, and brought new faces to the district.

John proposed property owners can continue to reinvigorate the district by bringing buildings up to code and converting facilities into "turn the key operations."

Dr. Jessie Mosley Drive was

keep the ball rolling until every building on Farish Street is lit. In the meantime, next time you drive up Capitol Street turn on Farish Street and see what's popping. Johnny T's Bistro and Blues, which is Site 14 on the City's Civil Rights tour, is popping. Check em' out.

<https://www.facebook.com/JohnnyTsBistroandBar>
<https://instagram.com/johnnytsbistroandblues/>



their plumbing, painting, roofing, and skilled labor to renovate the building which speaks volumes that a new day dawns every afternoon at 538 Farish Street.

John is the principal of John Tierre Goodwin Group, Inc., which holds five businesses: four of them – Norma Ruth Restaurant, The Kut Factory, Red Room Hair Studio, and Stax Hip Hop & Urban Fashion – are located in Foursquare Shopping Plaza across from Pearl Street AME Church on Ellis Avenue.

John came to Jackson to attend JSU

movie *Same Kind of Different As Me* were shot here; and Melvin Priester (City Council President) stopped by and dined in," John stated. The movie features West African native Djimon Hounsou who starred in *Amistad*, *Gladiator*, and *Blood Diamond*.

Tyrone Lewis, first African American sheriff in Hinds County, known for unseating long term incumbent Sheriff Malcolm McMillin, and Canadian actor Daniel Edward "Dan" Aykroyd held a fund raiser in the facility during the recent Democratic runoff.

