

# Walker will bring the blues to town to help with hurricane relief

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He's played with blues greats such as Bo Diddley, John Mayall, and Johnny Winter — to name a few. He's also won recognition from Carnegie Hall, who hired him in 2006 to be a part of its "American Roots" program, which brings the history of blues music into middle-school classrooms. Toby Walker not only plays the blues, but also he spends a good deal of time educating younger generations on the cultural significance of a genre that could easily be pegged as the roots of modern American music.

Originally from Long Island, Toby moved to [Denville](#) after meeting his wife, Carol, a Denville resident, at a show. Toby spent some time in his younger years traveling to some of the blues' hot spots, specifically the Mississippi Delta, where he tracked down obscure and seasoned bluesmen such as Eugene Powell and James "Son" Thomas simply by asking around.

Spending time sitting, talking, and learning from the elder bluesmen helped Toby develop a style that is as much his own as it is an authentic representation of an era that often goes overlooked in modern times. The clearest example of this nostalgic style can be heard on Walker's 2011 release, "Shake, Shake Mama."

Rather than reinvent the wheel, Walker opts to pay homage to many of the forefathers of the blues as well as honoring the old blues' tradition of taking the songs of those you respect and putting your own spin on them. On "Shake, Shake Mama," Walker plays songs from McKinley "Muddy Waters" Morganfield, Robert Johnson, and Huddie "Leadbelly" Ledbetter, among many others.

His wife, Carol, even plays the upright bass on the album while Walker breaks out a varied collection of guitars to give each song the appropriate feel.

"I used a bunch of vintage instruments on that CD in order to give the music an 'authentic' flavor," Walker said. "Meaning that those instruments were of the era when many of those songs were first recorded by the original blues musicians."

But a vintage guitar can only do so much if you can't play it. Fortunately, the simply produced songs, all done in one take, feature precise and soulful slide and finger-picking guitar work. The only thing Walker would need to do to make "Shake, Shake Mama" anymore authentic, would be to record it by playing into a big metal cone that vibrates a needle into a spinning record blank.

Nevertheless, "Shake, Shake Mama" isn't the only thing Walker has been up to. He recently was in an educational music DVD produced by Homespun Tapes, in which Walker demonstrates an assortment of blues finger-picking techniques. The goal of the video is not just to give the viewer an understanding of finger picking, but also to show them how to do in a way that is unique to their playing style.

Additionally, on Nov. 19 at 7:30 p.m., Walker will be playing the [Denville](#) Community Church on Diamond Spring Road as part of a benefit for the ongoing flood relief efforts.

More information can be found at [www.DenvilleHurricaneRelief.org](http://www.DenvilleHurricaneRelief.org) and [www.LittleTobyWalker.com](http://www.LittleTobyWalker.com)