

Los Angeles Times

J.J. Jones, 77; Blues Guitarist Was Fixture in L.A. Area

BY MARY ROURKE

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TIMES STAFF WRITER

J.J. "Bad Boy" Jones, 77, a blues guitarist and composer who performed in Los Angeles clubs for more than 40 years, died Monday of a heart attack in Los Angeles, according to his manager, Diem Van Groth. Jones had been visiting a friend in Los Angeles and died on his way to his regular Monday night performance at the Gaslite in Santa Monica, according to Dennistine Lyle, a friend and ex-wife.

Born Esserlaine Jones in Baton Rouge, La., he began playing the guitar at age 5 and singing in a Baptist church choir soon after.

At 16 he took a job as a long-haul truck driver and started to compose lyrics as he drove. He quit his day job after undergoing back surgery in 1996, Lyle said. He was almost 70 at the time. Small in stature with a powerful voice, Jones arrived in Los Angeles in the late 1950s and began performing in local clubs and bars.

He was faithful to the blues music he grew up with in the South, playing songs made popular by a number of his friends, particularly Albert King; King's brother, B.B. King; Stevie Ray Vaughn; and Jones' cousin, Eddie "Guitar Slim" Jones.

Jones' friends called him the "bad boy" of blues guitarists as a sign of respect, and he was dubbed J.J. by Albert King as a compliment suggesting his own legendary brother.

With his band, "The Bad Boys," Jones regularly performed at Harvelle's Blues Club in Santa Monica, B.B. King's Club at Universal City and Babe's and Ricky's Inn in Los Angeles.

"J.J. was a fixture in the Los Angeles blues scene," said Jan Garfinkle, who played keyboard with Jones' band for many years. "He played traditional blues and he was an excellent guitarist, even in his 70s." Jones recorded three albums. The best-known, "Ashes in the Wind" (Aries Records), was released in 1998.

A memorial service is planned for today at 6 p.m. at Pete's Cafe & Bar, 400 S. Main St. in downtown Los Angeles.

--Added To Article.

For more information, contact Van Groth @ www.jjbadboyjones.com

