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Mississippi River from Mud Island
Dan Ball



Memphis Queen Paddle Boat on the Mississippi River
The Commercial Appeal

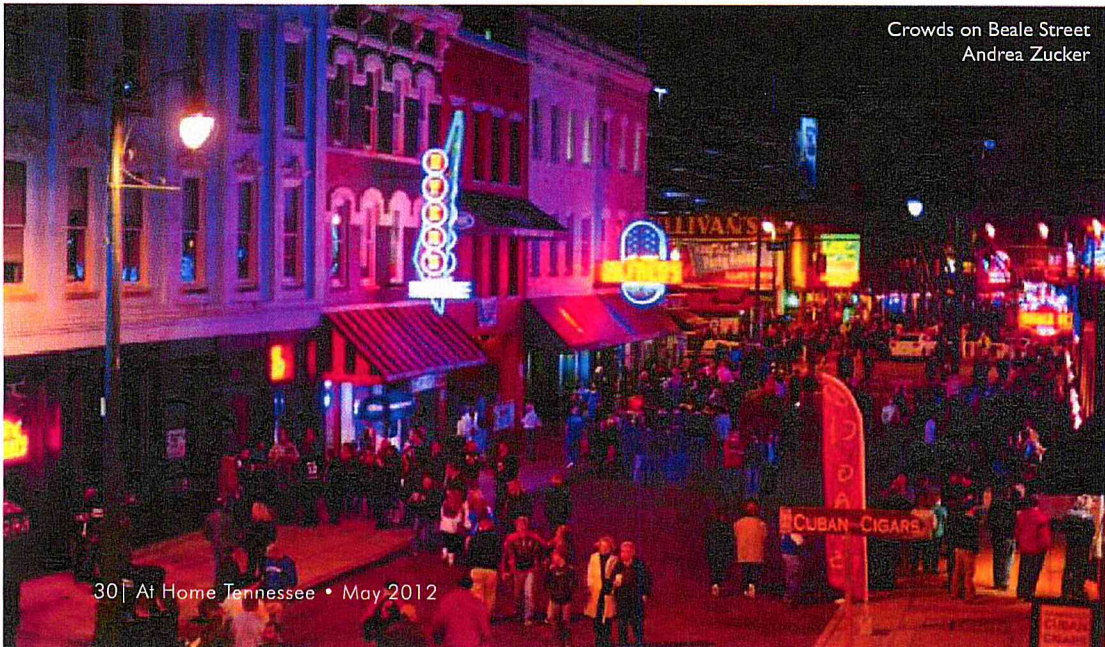


MEMPHIS RENAISSANCE:

The Bluff City's Riverfront Revitalization

TEXT BY TIFFANY LANGSTON

Crowds on Beale Street
Andrea Zucker



B.B. King Blues Club
Dan Ball



The month of May marks the culmination of a rebuilding year for Memphis. This time last year, the city's riverfront was submerged under record floods and desperate plans were being made to relocate the Memphis in May World Championship Barbecue Cooking Competition from Tom Lee Park to Tiger Lane at the Fairgrounds. While the flooding was contained to the river's edge and small low-lying pockets, some of the national media coverage gave the perception that the entire city was under water. Tourism then suffered as vacationers altered travel plans because they believed Beale Street and other popular attractions were closed due to flooding. This year, however, with the return of Memphis in May and several new projects on the horizon, marks the beginning of an exciting Memphis river renaissance.

MEMPHIS IN MAY

While most people think of Memphis in May as a celebration of music and food, another goal of this well-known event is to give students an opportunity to experience the customs and cultures of other countries. In order to accomplish this feat, festival organizers pick one country each year to honor through educational events, guest speakers, contests and programs. This year, the festival salutes The Philippines, giving students across Memphis and Shelby County varied opportunities to learn about the island nation.

Memphis in May festivities kick off with the Beale Street Music Festival. For over 30 years, the Mississippi River has been the backdrop for talents such as the Dave Matthews Band, Santana, Sheryl Crow, Cee Lo Green, Beck, James Taylor, John Mellencamp, Van Morrison, Foo Fighters and countless others during the annual three-day slice of everything from rock 'n' roll to soul to blues. In the last decade alone, more than 1.1 million concertgoers have experienced this one-of-a-kind music extravaganza at the foot of iconic Beale Street. This year's lineup continues that tradition, with acts such as Florence + The Machine, Three 6 Mafia, Jane's Addiction, Alison Krauss & Union Station featuring Jerry Douglas, Lupe Fiasco and Grace Potter & The Nocturnals will grace event stages May 4-6.

The Memphis in May Festival continues May 17-19 with The World Championship Barbecue Cooking Contest. Hundreds of competitive barbecue teams vie for over \$100,000 in cash and prizes.

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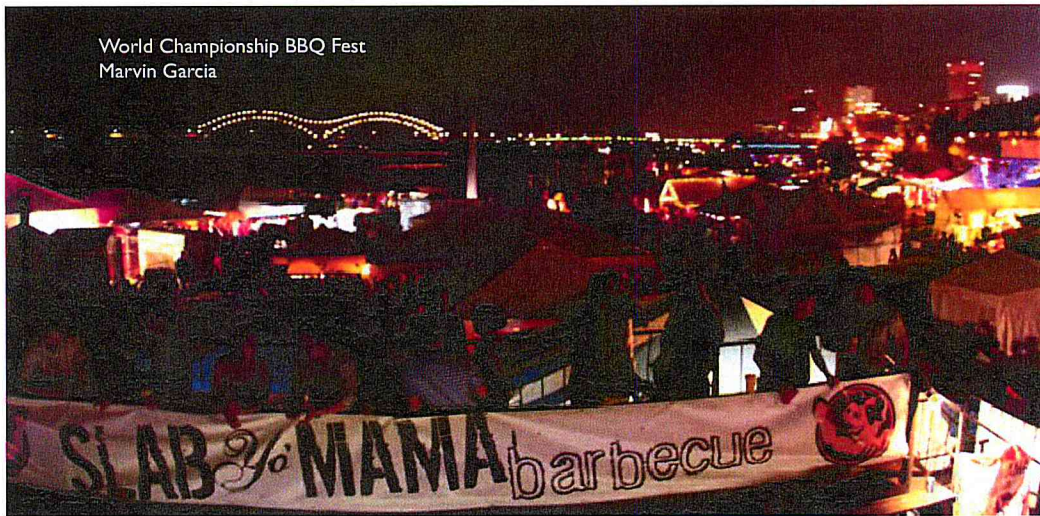
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Riverwalk at the Mud Island River Park
Dan Ball



World Championship BBQ Fest
Marvin Garcia

The smell of sweet, smoky barbecue is only one of the weekend's sensory enjoyments. Each grilling booth will be decked out with all types of pig embellishments – including their team names, such as “Slab Yo Mama,” “Swine & Dine” and “The Best Little Boardhouse in Memphis” – just to name a few. Visitors can also experience the Ms. Piggie contest, in which participants' costumes will be judged, along with their vocal talents. Although local health regulations prohibit teams from serving food directly to the general public, some of Memphis' best barbecue and other local delicacies may be purchased from a variety of vendors throughout Tom Lee park.

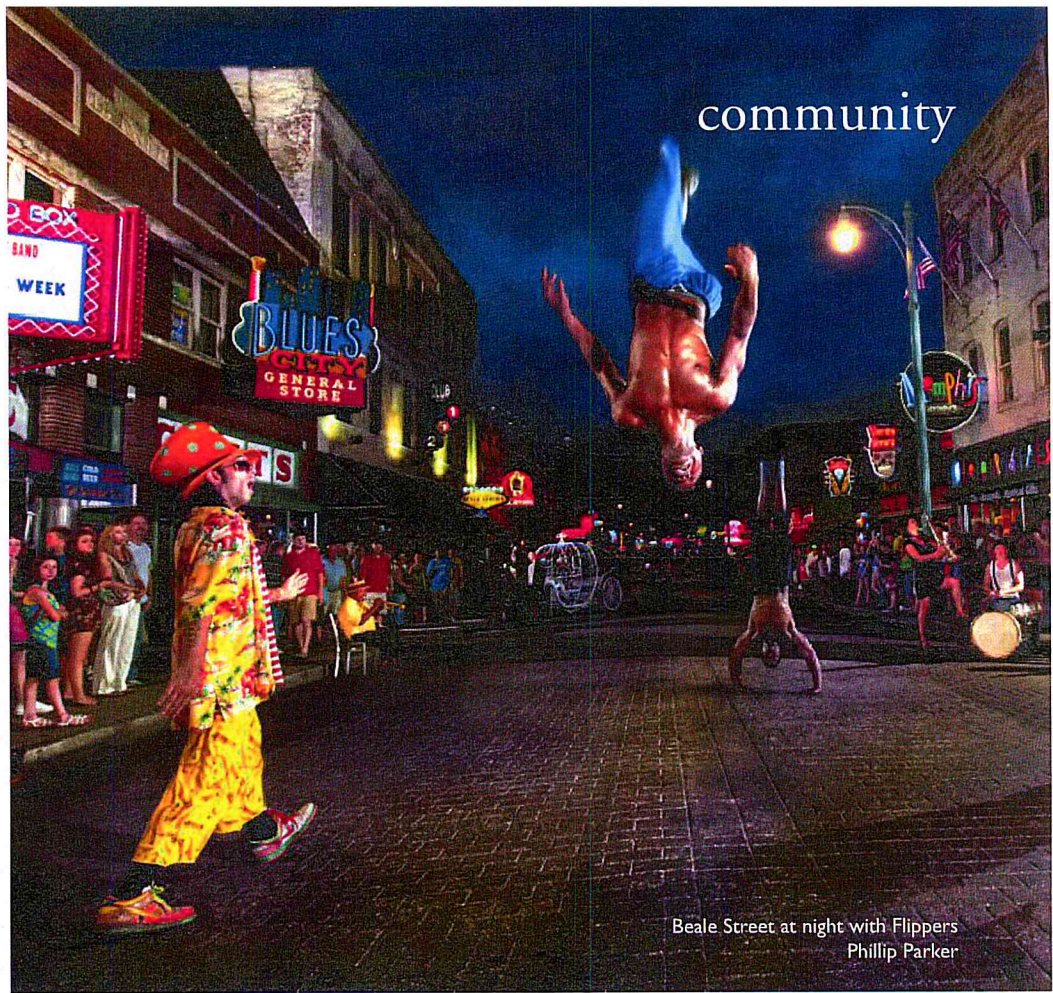


Memphis Neon Sign
Andrea Zucker

Since Memphis is known as the Home of the Blues and the Birthplace of Rock 'n' Roll, it is no wonder that Memphis in May begins and ends with music events. The month-long celebration wraps up on high note with its oldest event, the AutoZone Sunset Symphony on May 26. A golden sunset over the Mississippi River is the perfect backdrop for this family-friendly event. Fans bring blankets, lawn chairs and picnic fare to Tom Lee Park and make a day of it. Local performers start the day at 2 p.m. followed by an air show featuring vintage WWII aircraft performing aerial stunts and high-speed fly-bys at 6 p.m. As the sun goes down and the fireworks light the way, as the Memphis Symphony Orchestra takes center stage with special guests The Bar-Kays.

BEALE STREET LANDING

Memphis has always been a river town, as the city sits at the widest point along the Mighty Mississippi and has hosted a number of vessels for decades. Now that the American Queen will be traveling along Old Man River, Beale Street Landing will offer a handicap-accessible dock for her and the two other riverboats that will make approximately 50 stops in Memphis every year. This new, state-of-the-art landing will also create a dramatic overlook for all riverfront activities. Located where the historic cobblestone landing meets Tom Lee Park, Beale Street Landing will provide the perfect terminus for Beale Street at the Mississippi River. The new landing will afford tourists, walkers, joggers, cyclists and casual river watchers an up-close-and-personal view river. Beale Street Landing will offer the ideal spot for a summer picnic; tourists and locals alike can bring lawn chairs and beach towels and dine outdoors while watching the boats travel down the Mississippi. The unmatched views will make Beale Street Landing a prime location for a picturesque family photo, an intimate party or even the perfect romantic proposal.



Beale Street at night with Flippers
Phillip Parker



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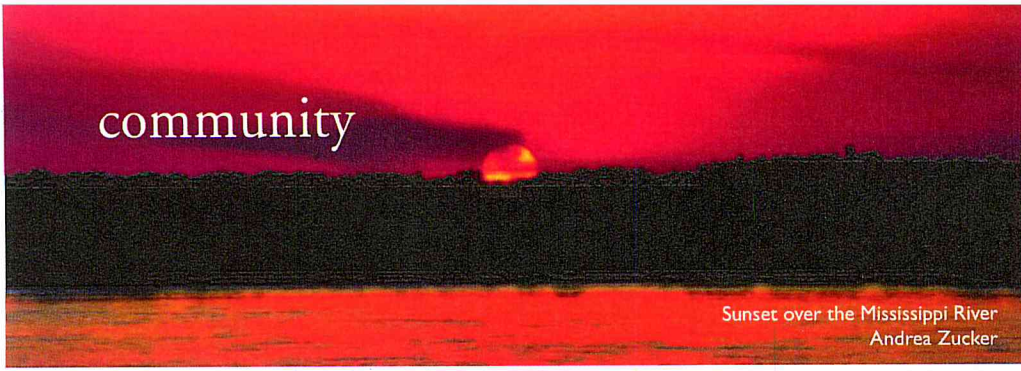
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Sunset over the Mississippi River
Andrea Zucker



Mississippi River Queen



Bass Pro Shop Store Renderings
Alan Barner with O.T. Marshall Architects

In July 2012, a new restaurant, Riverside Grille and Dockside Bar, will open its doors inside Beale Street Landing. The casual dining restaurant will offer an authentic taste of Memphis, featuring local BBQ and seafood along with sunset happy hours.

According to construction plans, the Riverfront Development Corporation will add approximately four acres of land to the shoreline and three additional patio areas coming right up to the river's edge. Visitors will be as close to the river as possible without actually getting wet.

BASS PRO SHOP

The Pyramid is an iconic part of the Memphis city skyline. Opened in 1991, the Pyramid was originally built primarily as a sports arena, but as newer venues popped up, the number of events at the Pyramid decreased. Empty since 2007, the Pyramid had fallen into a state of disrepair, but Bass Pro Shops is breathing new life into the Bluff City landmark. Construction will begin later this year to turn the Pyramid into the most unique Bass Pro Shop around. The store will also serve as an anchor for additional shops, restaurants and offices.

By August 2013, the tired Memphis monument will finally be transformed. Officials believe that this will not only help bring hundreds of jobs to the city, but will also have a great economic impact. The new Bass Pro Shop will help revitalize the area around the Pyramid and assist in the continuing efforts to restore beauty and commerce to Memphis' Mississippi Riverfront. ■

Carriage ride along the Mississippi River
Baxter Buck

