

Lil' Ed & the Blues Imperials

Chicago, IL

Electric blues

With his blistering slide guitar riffs, raw-boned Chicago shuffles, and heartfelt slow blues, Lil' Ed Williams and his high-octane road tested band, The Blues Imperials, have been aptly described as “the world’s #1 house-rocking blues band.” Not since the heyday of Hound Dog Taylor has a Chicago blues band served up such sizzling, rollicking sound. Williams, with his deep back bends, high toe walks and shimmering slide guitar work, is the embodiment of the raucous Chicago blues. His band of more than 20 years, consisting of guitarist Mike Garrett, bassist James “Pookie” Young and drummer Kelly Littleton, provide impeccable backup for William’s charismatic music.

The blues runs deep in Lil' Ed’s family. His uncle and musical mentor was the great Chicago slide master, J.B. Hutto, who, with his band the Hawks, helped define the city’s sound in the 1950s. Born in Chicago on April 4, 1955, Ed grew up surrounded by the blues. By the age of twelve he was playing guitar, bass and drums, and soaking up everything that his uncle could show him. In 1975 he formed a band with his half-brother Pookie Young, and began playing clubs in the neighborhood. Lil' Ed and the Blues Imperials quickly went from playing neighborhood joints to performing at clubs, concert halls and festivals all over the country. Tours of Europe, Canada and Japan followed, as well as high profile shows with blues greats Koko Taylor, Lonnie Brooks and Katie Webster.

The road and recording took their toll, and Williams broke up the group and spent some time during the 1990s getting his life together. In 1998 he reformed the Blues Imperials and released a new album, *Get Wild!* They followed up with *Heads Up!* in 2002, signaling that Lil' Ed and the Blues Imperials were back and better than ever. The 2006 release *Rattleshake* caught the attention of late night TV host Conan O’Brien, who invited Lil' Ed to appear on his show in New York. National television exposure brought Ed a host of new admirers and a slew of gigs, including an appearance in June of 2008 on the main stage at the Chicago Blues Festival, where he wowed a crowd of over 100,000 “Ed Heads.”