

**Mighty Sam McClain**  
rhythm & blues / soul  
Epping, New Hampshire

Although it might come as a surprise, New England is home to one of the finest soul singers in America. Raised in the South during a period when even undeniable talent such as his could be hampered by the social and economic difficulties of the time, Mighty Sam McClain's name is not as universally known as some of his musical counterparts such as Al Green or Solomon Burke. Still, after a lifetime of hard fought battles, his voice is as strong as ever, his presence in front of an audience is commanding, and his legacy, though still being formed, is deserving of heartfelt praise.

Sam McClain's musical odyssey began over half a century ago in Monroe, Louisiana when he began singing in his mother's church at the age of five. He left home when he was 13 to escape an abusive stepfather, and hooked up with a local R & B musician, "Little Melvin" Underwood, touring the Chitlin' Circuit. By the mid-1960s he had recorded several singles, among them Patsy Cline's "Sweet Dreams," "In the Same Old Way," and "Fannie May," which were regional hits, but his musical career never really took off. Over the next two decades he spent time in Nashville and New Orleans, working odd jobs between gigs while honing his singing and songwriting skills.

His flagging career was jump started in the 1980s when the Neville Brothers recognized his extraordinary talent and arranged for Sam to tour and record in Japan in 1989. Shortly after that, New Orleans producer Hammond Scott teamed McClain up with a group of Boston-based musicians, which brought him to New England, and led to recording contracts with Audio Quest and Telarc. These recordings brought Sam McClain Grammy and W.C. Handy award nominations and a host of new admirers. In 1996 McClain finally took control of his career, founding his own management and publishing companies after decades of frustration with the music industry. He's producing his own work, picking the musicians he wants to work with, and writing the bulk of the material he performs. The results are stunning. He is equally at home belting out a blues classic like "Down Home Blues", or crooning Sam Cooke's "A Change is Gonna Come," and there are echoes of both these great singers in his work, but he's more versatile than either. Today, after more than four decades of musical ups and downs, Mighty Sam is at the peak of his career.