

Kansas City Blues Legend Queen Bey and Lemuel Sheppard will be leading off the first set of the Flatland Blues Festival this year at Russell's Memorial Park and County Fair Grasslands the first weekend in June.

Queen Bey has a deep voice and a laid-back style of jazz and blues. Aside from being a superb singer, she has an extraordinary warm and charming presence on stage. *Variety* magazine says, "Her set seems more like an intimate conversation between friends than a concert."

She comes from a vocal tradition that is rooted in older African American blues, spirituals and gospel. She has a real command and understanding of those powerful singing traditions when she performs.

As a child, Queen was in a Kansas City radio talent show called "Stars of Tomorrow" which resulted in her singing at the Orchid Room jazz club when she was just twelve years old. Queen's mother worked nights and jazz greats such as Billie Holiday, Dinah Washington, Sarah Vaughn, Ella Fitzgerald and Linda Hopkins became her chaperones and her teachers.

Ms. Bey has also acted on stage and television and in film, including Broadway musicals "Ain't Misbehavin'", "One Mo' Time" and "Blues in the Night." In 2001 she started as Mother Butler in a movie based on the Ninth Street area in Junction City. The movie also included songs by and starred Isaac Hayes and Martin Sheen.

Queen has received the Kansas Governor's Arts Award and has been honored as an inductee of the Elder Statesman of Kansas City Jazz, Inc. She is officially recognized as Kansas City's Ambassador of Jazz and travels internationally promoting jazz and blues music.

Lemuel Sheppard is returning to the Flatland Blues Festival after a year's absence. . He has gained a reputation as an authority on African American folk music and can perform many historical and geographical blues styles. He feels his cultural heritage is his greatest asset as a performer.

Lemuel began playing guitar at the age of nine in Kansas City. He is self-taught and composes much of his own music. He was the first American to perform at the Eisteddfod International Music Festival in Johannesburg, South Africa and represented the state of Kansas in a solo performance at the Kennedy Center in 1999.

The U.S. Embassy in Brazil referred to Lemuel as "the perfect touring artist...talented, flexible, interested in the local culture, and knowledgeable of his own."

Other musicians performing at the Flatland Blues Festival include Cephas and Wiggins, Anthony Gomes, Shemekia Copeland and Watermelon Slim. Tickets for the festival will go on sale next week and ticket locations will be announced. Updated information is available at www.flatlandblues.com .

