

# Little Arthur Anderson

## Harmonica Man



There's a popular old-school term that veteran musicians use to describe their colleagues when they have unique style and personality. They call them "cool cats". Little Arthur Anderson is one.

You just need 60 seconds to realize that this is the kind of guy who you'd like to have a beer with and listen to stories all night long. He's just special. Harmonica guys are like that.

Born in Detroit, Little Arthur was a late bloomer. He didn't formally take up the harmonica till he was 50 years old or play with a band till he was 62. But he's now 70 and cruisin' through the Blues nightclubs of The Motor City like a spry teenager. And, boy, can he play.

You can see Arthur performing at popular Detroit-area venues like Nancy Whiskey's, The Blue Goose, The Toy Box, Bert's Warehouse, Cliff Bell's, and Callahan's. But before going further, Arthur has a very colorful story to tell about how his music career evolved.

**Little Arthur Anderson • 313.729.3176**

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Arthur never planned on being a musician – although he took up the violin in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and was pretty good at it. Instead, he gravitated toward sports and played football and basketball in junior high and high school. Playing music just wasn't on Arthur's radar.

After high school Arthur joined the Army in 1966 and was stationed in Seattle for two years. After returning to Detroit, he took up a job installing phone systems for Western Electric. But being immersed in the Motown Music Wave of the mid-60s triggered something inside him and he began collecting all the Motown music albums he could.



In 1972, Arthur got married. A year later he began taking music theory classes at Wayne County Community College and hanging out at the houses of local Rock & Roll musicians to learn music by osmosis. He brought along a harmonica and began jamming with local bands. One harmonica player who formerly played for Jimi Hendrix was fascinated by Arthur's unique style of playing and asked, "How do you do that?" Arthur replied, "I never had harmonica training. I don't know how to actually 'play' it – I just know how to make music 'come out of it'." Arthur was simply a "natural" who "felt" music and played by ear. Soon, the music of Jimmy Reed, Bob Dylan, and John Mayall became his roadmap.

In 1976, Arthur took a job with a tech company in Pasadena. He left that project and moved to nearby Santa Monica. There he began gigging with local musicians and playing for tips on the beach. He carried his harmonica with him wherever he went. He didn't really know any particular songs or music keys – he just played what he felt while sitting in with other musicians or playing solo.

In 1980, Arthur returned to Detroit to work again for Western Electric and stopped playing as a regular musician. It would be 19 years till Arthur would start jamming again with fellow musicians.

In 1998, Arthur was gone from Western Electric and began making a living again off the streets again. He hustled as a chess player 10 hours a day at Rouge Park playing 5-minute games for \$1 each. He played his harmonica in-between.

In 2007, Arthur was cruising past Olympia Stadium where musicians were playing on the sidewalk in front of Dave's Soul Food. They invited him to sit in. It went so well that he ended up playing two summers there with them.

In 2009, their drummer, Clyde "Poppa" Lee, began taking Arthur with him to Bert's, Raven, Olympia Bar, and Callahan's to connect with top Detroit musicians. He was making the rounds.



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In 2010, Arthur went down to Memphis and began playing his harmonica on stage at a popular park. Another harmonica player performed and sang and challenged Arthur to add singing to his performance to become a more complete entertainer. It motivated Arthur.

Upon returning to home, Arthur began singing “My Baby” at Tudge’s Bar in St. Clair Shores during a jam session and lit up the crowd. Singing would now be a staple of his shows.

Up until 2010, Arthur had always performed under his real name of Ronald Anderson. But after leaving the jam session, “Poppa” Lee told him that he needed a “cool” name if he wanted to be memorable. So Poppa took his middle name and added the adjective – and Ronald has been “Little Arthur Anderson” ever since.

For the next few years, Arthur did sporadic gigs. He mostly spent his time practicing and learning more songs to add to his repertoire. And he began writing and arranging.

In 2014, Arthur released his first CD entitled, “Little Arthur’s Second Time Around”, and sold about 1,000 copies. It put him on the musical map.

In 2015, Arthur played The Toy Box Bar in Detroit every Thursday with James Jamerson, Jr., whose dad was one of the original Motown Funk Brothers. He continued to play there on and off the following year.

Now in 2017, Arthur is still making the rounds at places like Bert’s, Nancy Whiskey’s, The Toy Box, and other noted Blues venues. He remains one of the most beloved musicians in Detroit.

When asked to share one of his special memories, Arthur tells of a story of a guy who came up to him after having performed at The Fat Iguana Bar in Madison Heights. He said, “Arthur, I recently got laid off and am having financial problems. But after hearing you play tonight, I’m feeling a lot better. You lifted my spirits. Thanks.” Arthur responded, “That’s my job. I try to touch people with my music.”

Harmonica players are a rare breed - often leading gypsy style lives traveling from city to city and bar to bar. Little Arthur Anderson has lived that life and picked up lots of music and wisdom along the way. His music is The Blues and he plays his harmonica from the heart. He’s one of Detroit’s Grand Old Men of Music. A very “cool cat”.

Enjoy him here:

[Little Arthur Anderson - Blues Harmonica](#)



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