

# Mp3 Frankie Spellman - Blues Without A Net



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Dangerous Blues, Twisted Lyrics, Great Vocals Musicianship, Downright Funny Tragic. 10 MP3 Songs

BLUES: Electric Blues, BLUES: Blues Vocals Details: Spellman performs at the Blues Party Dec. 1 By Gage Cogswell Wednesday, November 27, 2002 No one really knew what to expect - on a personal or a professional level. As a property, there is nothing else like it in the region: A historic 17-room house built in 1792 on 1.4 acres smack-dab in the middle of the Merrimack River, on Deer Island, a property currently assessed at \$960,000, but presumably worth much, much more. Yet for Frankie Spellman and his four siblings, it is something else entirely. It was the place where they grew up. It was a "property" that was still filled with the memories of their youth and vivid physical reminders of their mother, Gloria Spellman, who died last August after a long illness. And last weekend the house and everything in it, including the memories, were up for grabs. The Deer Island property was being auctioned off. It was, Frankie Spellman recalls, a madhouse. "It was absolutely ridiculous," says Spellman. "There were 340 people in the house during the walk-through, sitting on my mother's chairs, pulling the mirrors away from the walls and looking behind them, touching everything. I couldn't even get onto the porch. It was such a spectacle." When all was said and done, there were only four serious bidders - and all they could muster up were bids of under \$750,000. The bids were rejected by the family shortly after they were opened on Sunday. "We want to get this resolved," says Spellman, a guitarist and singer-songwriter who will perform this weekend at the Grog in Newburyport. "We want to get past this. It breaks my heart every time I go there and see my mother's stuff just sitting there. But this house is too good to give away to developers. It's important to us to keep the house the way it is." Spellman lives on Cape Cod with his wife and 5-month-old son. A second child is expected in April, right about the time the musician releases a new compact disc. He was born in Wellesley and moved to Newburyport when he was 13. When his parents divorced he split his

time between Newburyport and toney Wellesley. He played his first gig when he was 8 years old - with the Spellman Fore, a family band that played Dixieland at local functions. He played the trombone. By the time he hit high school, Spellman understood the trombone would not fuel his rock-and-roll dreams and switched to guitar. He focused on song writing. He studied communications-film at Emerson College. He played around town, but eventually settled down on Cape Cod and Palm Beach, Fla., to a career with a musical focus. Spellman, who released three collections of songs in the '90s - "Pastels in Shade" in 1991, "Bongo Cafe" in 1994 and "Dreams in the Tide" in 1998 - is a tough guy to pin down, musically. Sometimes he's a warm and fuzzy singer-songwriter type. Sometimes he's a keen, detached observer, commenting on hipster chic. Sometimes he's funny, sometimes he's mean. His influences range from James Taylor to Tom Waits. Last year he released "Blues Without a Net," a blues disc closer to Tom Waits than Little Walter, stylistically. The project was a collaboration with bassist Marty Ballou, now part of the John Hammond band, and a "dream team" of musicians that included drummer Marty Richards. Lined up next were Bulls Eye recording artist "Sax" Gordon Beadle, Roomful of Blues guitarist Thom Enright and keyboardist Dave Lamina. When he comes to Newburyport this weekend he'll be the bluesman. Joining him will be Ballou, Marty Richards, Thom Enright, Bruce Bears and host Parker Wheeler. He played at the Grog last year at about this time of year, just after the release of "Blues Without a Net." The last time he played the Grog before that was nearly two decades ago. You may have heard him on the radio and television if you've caught any of the advertisements for the Rossignol Ski Company. The Burlington, Vt.-based manufacturer is using his song "Holy Hell" in one of its commercials. A sell-out? "I'm not this temperamental artist," he says. "I have to write for a living. At this point I have to head toward that. Up to now it's more of a love than a business." He has a new CD coming out in early spring and, as usual, he's been working on a number of other projects, including writing and recording three songs for a new blues CD that will be completed some time in the future. The new disc finds the musical chameleon Spellman back in the singer-songwriter mode - "heavy on lyrics, light on orchestration," he says. And the house? Legally, the family does not have to do anything. It was not an "absolute" auction. They can remarket the property, give it to charity or keep it in the family. Spellman has no theories about why there were so few bids. Maybe it was all the publicity, he says, maybe it was the fear that the property would sell for a brain-freezing sum. "I'm not sure what we'll do," he says. "It's a unique property. I just I don't want the property paved over and turned into condos." Frankie Spellman performs at the Blues Party from

6 to 10 p.m. Dec. 1 downstairs at the Grog in Newburyport. For more information, call 978-465-8008.

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