

# Singer growls and croons pure Chicago Southside blues at Zoo

By Mike Grant  
Staff Reporter

The atmosphere was nearly ideal at the Zoo Bar Saturday night for listening to Koko Taylor and her Blues Machine.

## Concert Review

Outside, it was a bitter 14 degrees and it seemed the crowd was eager to warm up and forget about Nebraska's 27-7 loss to Oklahoma earlier in the day.

The Zoo was crowded, smoky and alternately hot and cold. Coats were stacked into several layers on top of a beer cooler near the bar. The capacity crowd was ready for the blues.

After a set by The Tablerockers and a short warm-up set by the Blues Machine,

Koko Taylor jumped onstage and roared out "Let the Good Times Roll," a rocking blues song made famous by B.B. King. From that point on, the scenario was set by Taylor's powerful voice.

Taylor grows the blues, starting with a low, raspy voice and stretching out a note with a strong tone that resembles shouting.

Not only is Taylor one of the best vocalists in the business, with rough-and-ready standards like "Hey, Bartender," but she also croons sensitive blues ballads like "I'd Rather Go Blind." Her versatility is probably what most helped her win a Grammy Award in 1984 for Best Blues Record of the Year. Not only does Taylor put her voice into a song, but her whole body starts moving to the music.

"My main influence is Muddy Waters," Taylor said during a concert break. "He's my No. 1. Then there's others like

Howlin' Wolf, Elmore James and Jimmy Reed, who I like."

The influence of the late Muddy Waters is especially apparent when she recreates his "I'm a Man" into "I'm a Woman."

Taylor's blues is definitely not watered down. It's the real Chicago Southside blues. No wonder she's called the "Queen of Blues."

Taylor's latest album, "Queen of the Blues," has the considerable back-up talents of Son Seals and Albert Collins on guitar and James Cotton on the harp.

"We are all on the same recording label, alligator," Taylor said. "It was just a coincidence that they were all free while I was a recording, so they helped me out."

"I like the crowd here in Lincoln," Taylor said. "They're very down-to-earth. They seem to be into what I'm singing."

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