

PRIME MOVERS BLUES BAND POSTERS
November 28, 2010

By Michael Erlewine (Michael@Erlewine.net)

I am receiving various requests for historical documents, dates, posters, graphics, etc. on my old 1960's band the "Prime Movers Blues Band," The reason for the requests usually is because Iggy Pop was are drummer, and folks want to know more about Iggy, so here are some of what I could find easily.

The posters I personally designed and silkscreen are marked as such, as well as the graphic designers of the other posters, where known. Flyers and what-not are just posted here. I may not know who designed them.

The Prime Movers Blues Band formed in the summer of 1965, the same time as the Grateful Dead formed out in San Francisco.

Here is some sort of bio written for the All-Music Guide (allmusic.com) by Terry Jenkins. It is more or less accurate. When I have time, I will write one with greater detail and accuracy.

The Prime Movers Blues Band by Terry Jenkins

Although they never released any records, the Prime Movers were a pivotal band in Southeastern Michigan during the late '60s. Where many of their Michigan contemporaries played straight, frat-house rock & roll, the Prime Movers were a blues band. They were purists, inspired first by classic Chicago blues and then by the Paul Butterfield Blues Band, who proved that white boys could play the blues. Led by brothers Michael and Dan Erlewine, the Prime Movers set out on the same path as Butterfield, playing countless gigs at clubs, frat parties, and festivals around the Ann Arbor and Detroit areas. They were slightly older than contemporaries like the Rationals, the MC5, and the Amboy Dukes, and were a core part of the scene -- not only as a blues band, but they also touched on folk and avant-garde music, as well -- and they earned a large local following. They did venture out to San Francisco, playing a few opening dates at the Matrix, Straight Theater, Haight "A", and Fillmore West, yet they never quite achieved national success. Nevertheless, almost all of the band's core members made their mark in music one way or another.

The Prime Movers were formed in the summer of 1965. Initially, the group featured Michael Erlewine on lead vocals and rhythm guitar, Dan Erlewine on lead guitar and vocals, Robert Sheff on keyboards and vocals, Robert Vinopal on bass, and Spider Winn on drums. All the members lived in a house on North Division street. Before too long, Michael began playing amplified harmonica, in addition to lead vocals and rhythm guitar. Vinopal left the band and was replaced by Jack Dawson, while James Osterberg, a former member of the Iguanas, took over the drums. (Since Osterberg played in the Iguanas, the other members called him "Iguana," which metamorphosed to "Iggy," which led to the name he became famous as -- Iggy Pop.) As it turned out, this would be the classic lineup of the Prime Movers -- the one that rose to popularity in Southeastern Michigan, the one whose members went on to greater fame after their disbandment.

Initially, the Prime Movers played frat parties, leaning toward bluesy rock & roll, but they soon decided to concentrate on blues, spiked with a little soul and gospel; they became known for a

cover of the Swan Silvertones' "Seek, Seek and Ye Shall Find." They played frequently around Ann Arbor, traveling from gig to gig in a Dodge van with "Gonna Ring a Few Bells in Your Ear," a quote from Jessie Hill's "Oop Oop Pah Do," on the front and "The Prime Movers" emblazoned on the sides; occasionally, they were mistaken for a moving company.

Early on, they hired Jeep Holland as their manager. As the manager of the Rationals, Holland spearheaded a local success story, and he attempted to push the Prime Movers in a similar direction. He wanted the group to play rock & roll and wear matching jackets, like a British Invasion group. Although they did play some shows on the teen rock circuit (Mt. Holly, Daniel's Den, etc.) in Michigan (as well as a couple of shows in Chicago in places like Mother Blues), they obstinately refused to abandon Chicago blues. One of the hallmarks of the Prime Movers was their dedication to the blues and their stubbornness. Once, Motown courted the band with the idea of having the Prime Movers be their showcase White group that played like a Black group, but they refused to abandon the blues and rejected Motown's offer. Often, the Prime Movers traveled down to Chicago, where they heard such greats as Little Walter, Magic Sam, Big Walter Horton, Buddy Guy, and Junior Wells play. Bob Koester of Delmark Records showed the band around Chicago, but it was the Paul Butterfield Band that turned their heads. Butterfield and his band illustrated that not only were the blues alive, but that White boys could play it -- not only credibly, but astonishingly well. The Prime Movers listened to the Butterfield Blues Band whenever they could and they became friends of the band; Butterfield himself was not the easiest to approach, but Mike Bloomfield and Mark Naftalin were friendly to the Ann Arbor blues band.

After hearing the Butterfield band, the Prime Movers were more dedicated to the blues than ever. Unlike many of their contemporaries, they now played frat parties only rarely, concentrating on clubs like Schwaben Inn, the Town Bar, Mr. Flood's Party, the 5th Dimension, and Clint's Club, the only Black bar in Ann Arbor; they also played free concerts and concert halls like Mothers (in Ann Arbor) and the Depot House. Among the Detroit venues, they played at the Grande Ballroom, the Chessmate, Wisdom Tooth, and a number of times at the Living End.

Despite earning a local fan base, the group never had much money. They all lived at the same house, and they often took as much catered food from frat parties that they could possibly carry. Nevertheless, they all stuck it out for the love of music -- not just blues, either. Michael and Dan Erlewine had a deep love of the blues, but they also knew folk well. Robert Sheff, who was a classically trained musician, was involved with the Once Group, a collective that performed the work of modern classical composers like Bob Ashley, Gordon Mumma, and John Cage. Iggy -- who, by all accounts, was a shy, well-mannered, quiet guy during his time with the Prime Movers -- worked hard on his drumming, and he sang the occasional song with the group. Iggy left the group around early 1967, and he was replaced by J.C. Crawford; Crawford also became known as an emcee and announcer at such places as the Grande Ballroom.

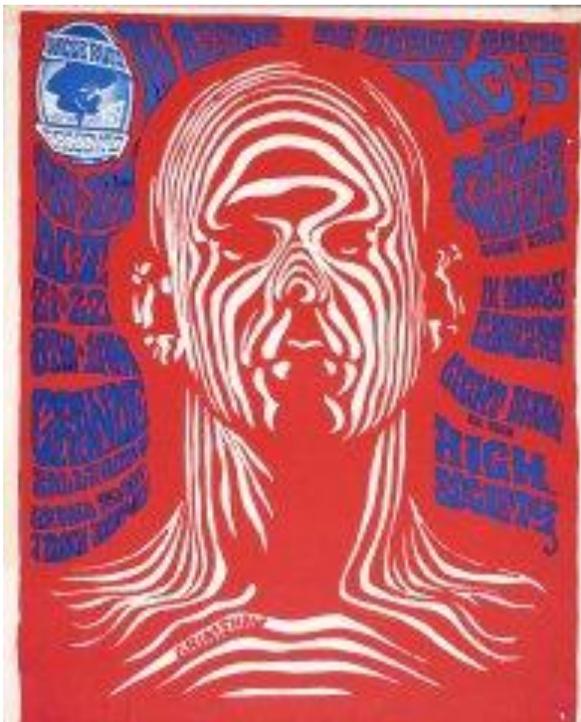
During the summer of 1967 -- the summer of love -- the Prime Movers went to San Francisco. Mike Bloomfield, the former guitarist in the Butterfield band and the founder of the Electric Flag, helped the group secure a place to stay near the Sausalito heliport, which is also where they practiced. The group played a couple of shows at a rib joint, as they spent the days auditioning for headlining gigs. When the Electric Flag couldn't make a gig, Bloomfield asked the Prime Movers to fill in for his new band at the Matrix. At that show, they opened for Cream.

Upon returning to Michigan, they returned to the bar/frat/teen circuit. They also became the honorary house band at Mothers, where they supported traveling R&B bands like the Shang-ri

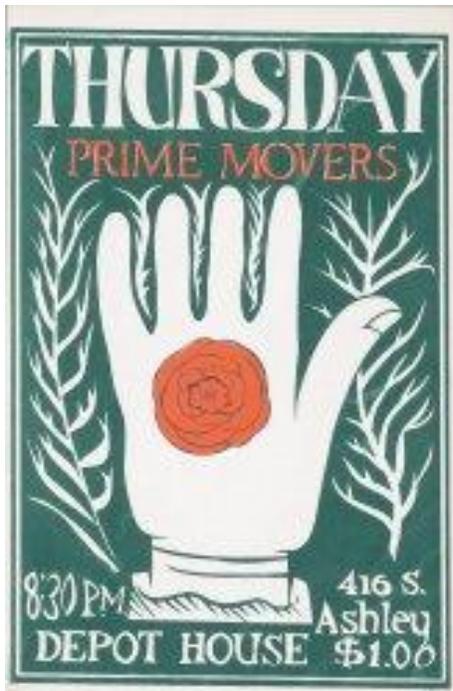
La's and the Contours. The Prime Movers also were a big part of the first three Ann Arbor Blues Festivals. The group also became regulars at the 5th Dimension, where they often played as an after-hours band, starting their shows after they completed their set at Clint's Club around 2:00 A.M..

The Prime Movers did make some recordings, but they were never released. The band continued in various incarnations -- according to Michael's estimation, some 37 musicians passed through the band over the years, as the group added keyboards and horns, and then shed them -- until 1970. Throughout it all, Michael and Dan Erlewine were at the core of the band. Following the group's slow disbandment, Dan became an internationally known guitar repairman and a monthly columnist for Guitar Player magazine. Michael played as a solo piano act for about a year; after his marriage in 1971, he stopped playing music. In 1977, he founded Matrix Software, which was the first astrological computer software company in the nation. In 1991, he founded the All Music Guide, which became the largest music database in the world; he also helped found AMG's companions, All Movie Guide and All Game Guide.

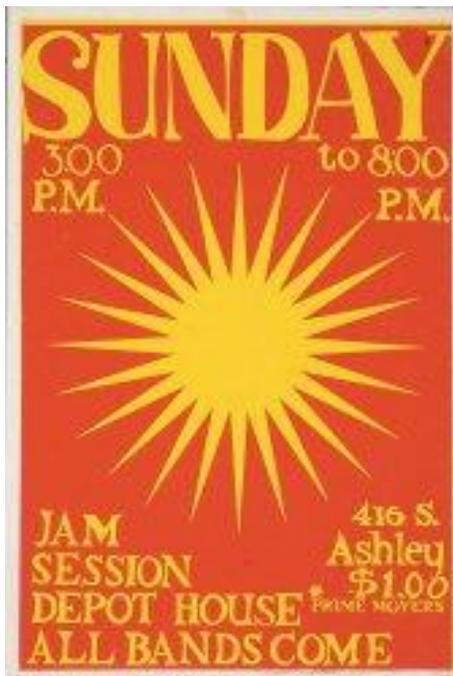
Robert Sheff became a well-known avant-garde composer under the name Blue "Gene" Tyranny. Jack Dawson became the bassist for the Siegal-Schwall Blues Band before fading away from the spotlight. Iggy Pop, of course, became a punk rock legend. ~ Terry Jenkins, Rovi.



Poster Designed by Gary Grimshaw.
A gig at the Grande Ballroom in Detroit.



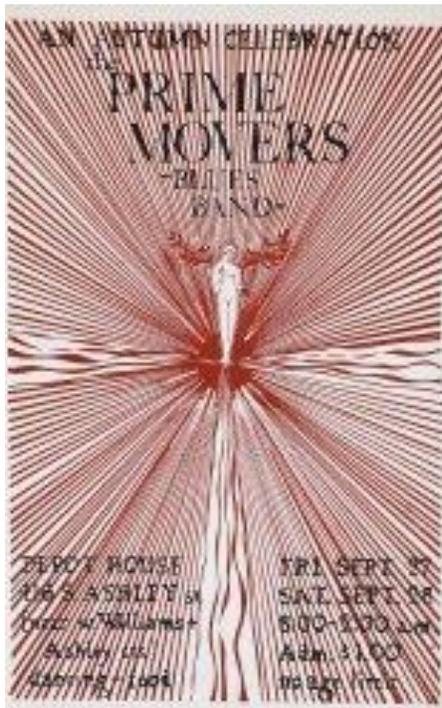
Poster designed by Michael Erlewine.
Poster for the Depot House on South Ashley Street in Ann Arbor.



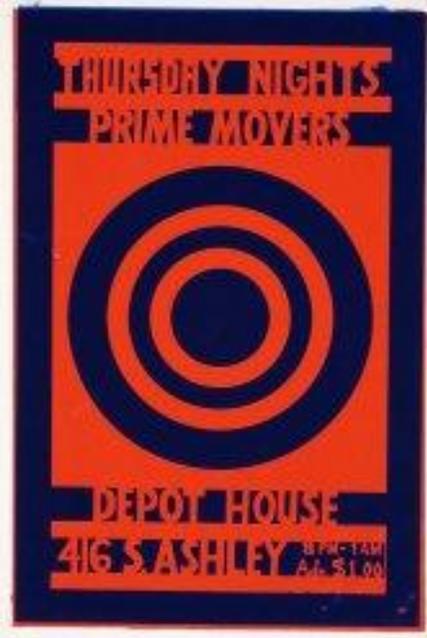
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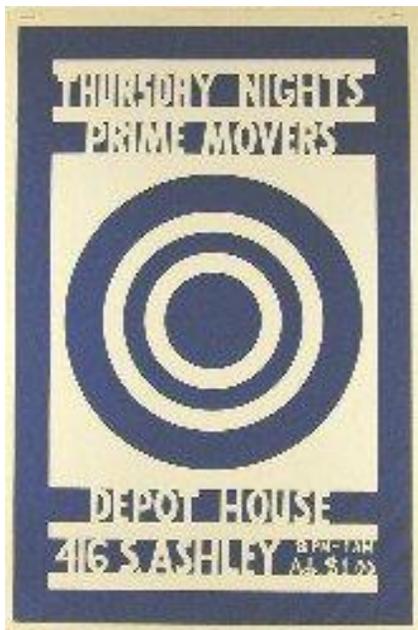
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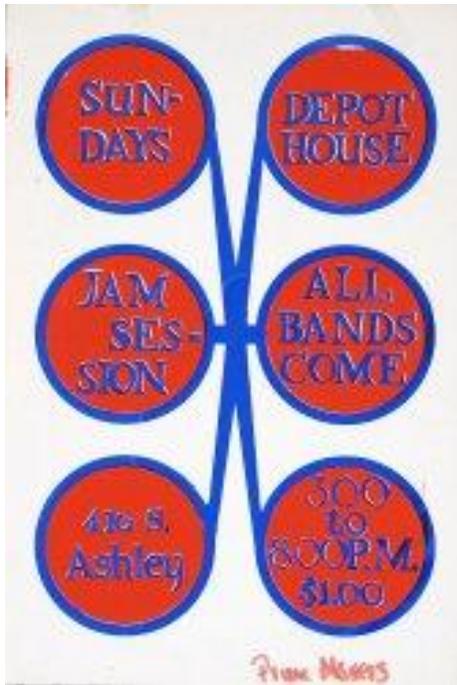
Poster designed by Michael Erlewine.
Poster for the Depot House on South Ashley Street in Ann Arbor.



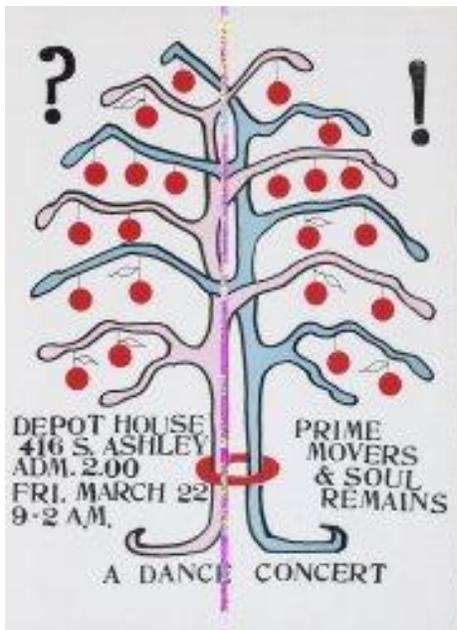
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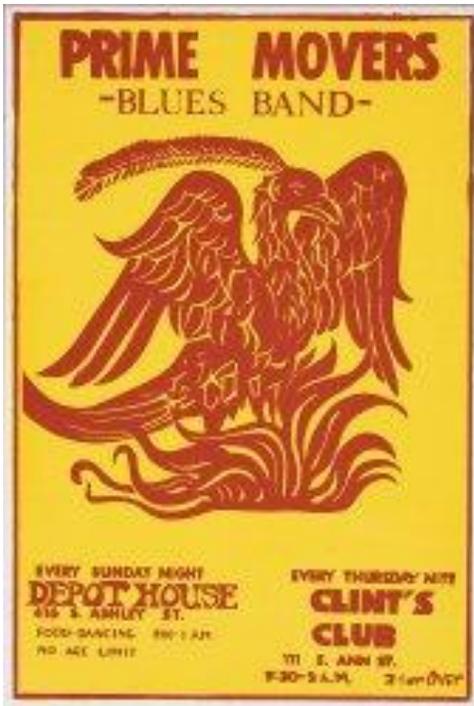
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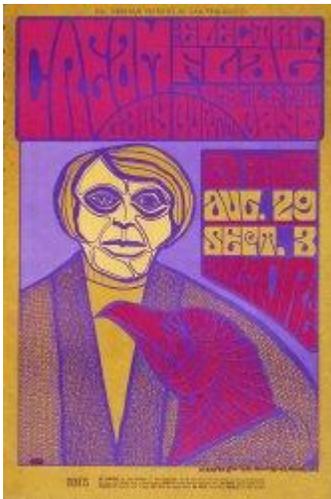
Poster designed by Michael Erlewine.
 Poster for the Depot House on South Ashley Street in Ann Arbor.



Poster designed by Michael Erlewine.
 Poster for the Depot House on South Ashley Street in Ann Arbor and Clint's Club on Ann Street in Ann Arbor.



Poster designed by Carl Lundgren.
A gig at the Grande Ballroom in Detroit.



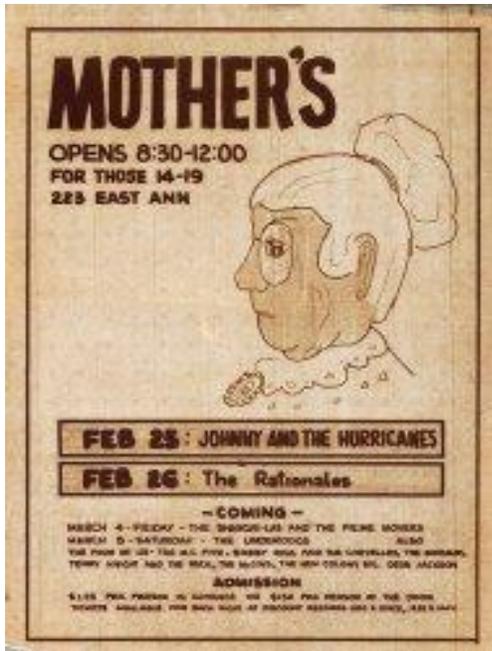
Poster designed by Jim Blashfield.
A gig at the Fillmore Auditorium in San Francisco, opening for Cream, the Prime Movers Blues Band substituting for the Electric Flag, August 1967.



A gig at the Haight A in San Francisco, September 17, 1967.
Poster designed by Loren.



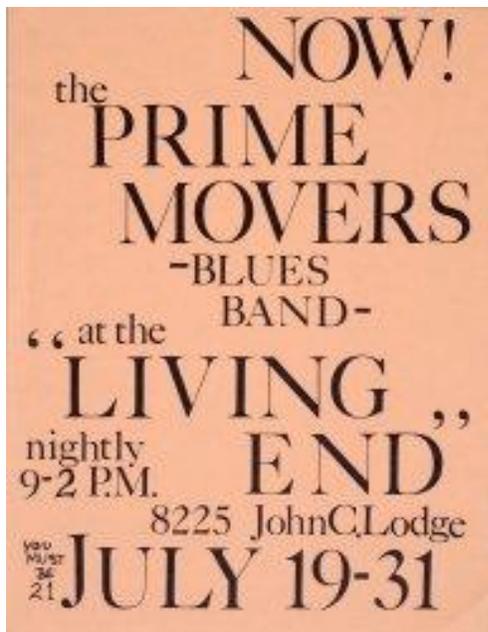
Friday March 18, 1966.
The Prime Movers Blues Band backing up the Contours. At the Armory in Ann Arbor.



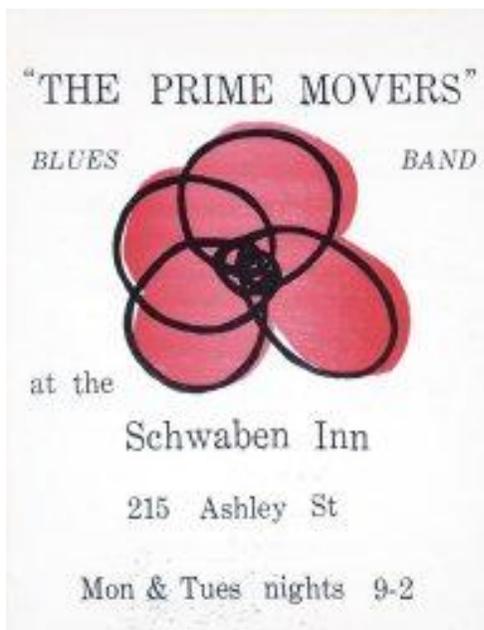
February 1966.
 The Prime Movers Blues Band at Mothers, held at the Armory in Ann Arbor.



Prime Movers Blues Band ad in the Michigan Daily.



Flyer for the Prime Movers Blues Band at the Living End in Detroit, July 1966.



Flyer/Poster for the Prime Movers Blues Band at the Schwaben Inn on Ashley Street in Ann Arbor, every Monday and Tuesday nights from 9 PM to 2 AM.

THE LIVING END PRESENTS

825 John C. Lodge
Cape View Square 825490

THE PRIME MOVERS BLUES BAND

JUDY HENSKE

THE PAUL BUTTERFIELD BLUES BAND

Cedric Smith

Gordon Lightfoot

MARC FIELD

Fred Thompson

Good Luck Phil!

Flyer for the Prime Movers Blues Band at the Living End, August 1966 in Detroit.

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MOVERS
-BLUES
BAND-**

at the
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nightly
9-2 P.M.

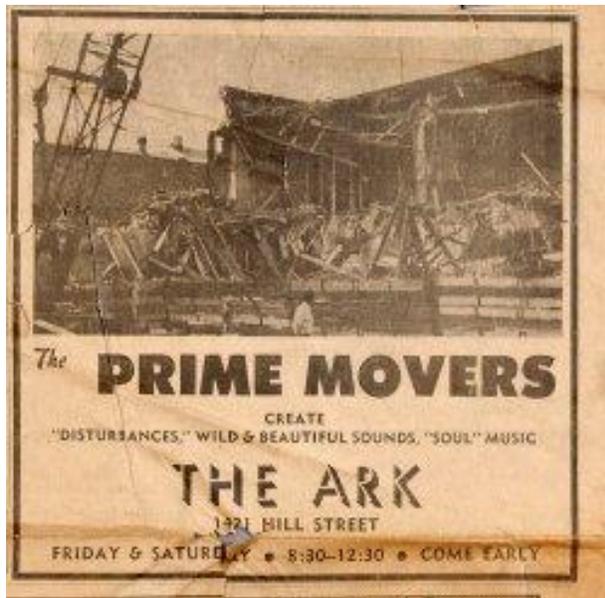
8225 John C. Lodge

JULY 19-31

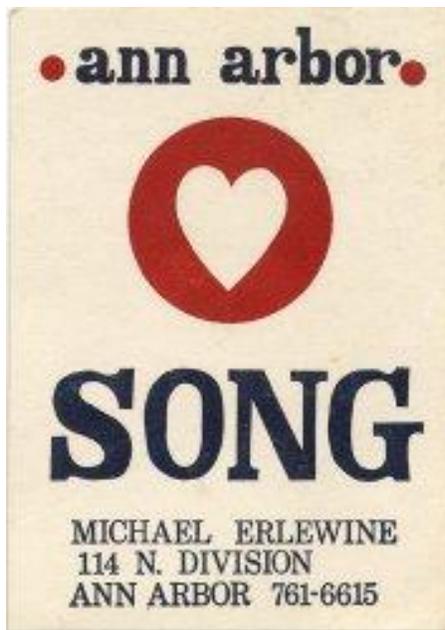
YOU MUST BE 21



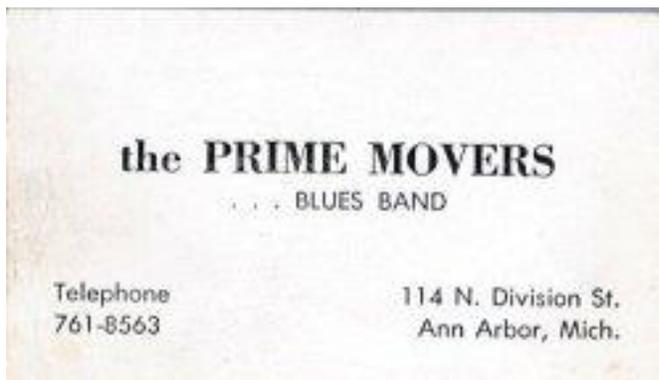
Photo in the Michigan Daily, the student newspaper on local music scene. Image of Michael Erlewine.



The Prime Movers at The Ark on Hill Street in Ann Arbor, circa 1966.



Business card for Michael Erlewine as a solo act, playing piano and singing, 1971.





This is when I was playing solo piano under the name "Ann Arbor Heart Song."



Who knows what this is, but it is on newsprint.

PRIME MOVERS BLUES BAND

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 T.G.'S - \$60.
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CHECK OUR EXPERIENCE:

DETROIT: Grande Ballroom, Living End, CHESSMATE, Wisdom Tooth
 ANN ARBOR: 5th Dimension, Schwaben Inn, DePiet House, Town Bar, Clinto Club
 CHICAGO'S: Mother Blues, BERKELEY'S: New Orleans House
 SAN FRANCISCO: Fillmore Auditorium, Matrix, Straight Theater, Haight 'X'
 MICHIGAN: Mt. Holly, Daniel's Den, Bluenote, MOTHERS, ETC.

WE PUT OUT WITH THAT GOOD GOOD FEELING!
DONT WAIT! BOOK NOW!
PHONE: 769-1583

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GET GOOD MUSIC!!

Obviously some attempt to get gigs. I hope I did not make that, but I probably did.

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THE SOUTHBOUND FREEWAY

THE WHA'S?

THE GANG

THE CHOSEN FEW

SIX SCREAMING BANDS IN AN ALL-OUT MIND-BLAST!

psychedelic dance ballroom dares you to remain sane through the entire 2 BUS NITES performance! 8PM-1AM

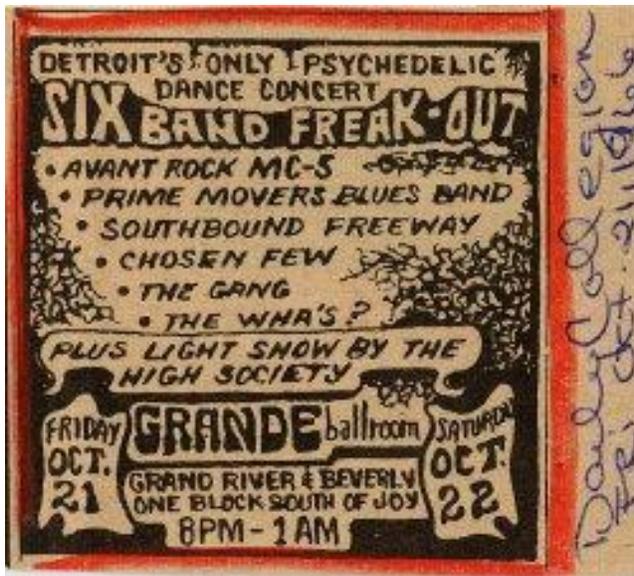
FRIDAY AND SATURDAY, OCT. 21-22

WORTH ONE FREE ADMISSION WHEN PRESENTED WITH ONE PAID ADMISSION!

GRANDE BALLROOM

Daily Collegian
 Thurs. Oct. 20, 1966

Ad for the Prime Movers Blues Band at the Grande Ballroom in Detroit. Circa 1966.



Ad for the Prime Movers Blues Band at the Grande Ballroom in Detroit. Circa 1966.