

The Blind Boys of Alabama featuring Clarence Fountain

THE BLIND BOYS OF ALABAMA FEATURING CLARENCE FOUNTAIN, have been pilgrims on the gospel highway for nearly sixty years. The seeds of the group took root among friends singing informally in 1937 at Alabama's Talladega Institute for the Deaf and Blind. Fountain, not yet in his teens, was singing in the Glee Club when he enlisted his friends Johnny Fields, J.T. Hutton, Ollice Thomas, George Scott and Vel Bozman Traylor into a group called the Happy Land Jubilee Singers. Except for Hutton, all of them were blind. Fountain fondly recalls their first performances where they would sneak out to perform at the nearby army base. The enthusiastic response they received eventually inspired the group to drop out of school and hit the Gospel Highway in 1945. To compete with another blind gospel singing group called the Five Bind Boys from Mississippi the group changed their name in 1950 to the **FIVE BLIND BOYS OF ALABAMA**. These two Blind Boys groups would square off in epic battles of hard Gospel shouting which provoked pandemonium in their audiences. During the 1950's the group recorded for Art Rupe's Specialty label. Fellow label mate Sam Cooke, who had recently left the **Soul Stirrers** to pursue a secular musical career, encouraged them to leave the Gospel singing and join him in the more lucrative pop field. **THE FIVE BLIND BOYS** never strayed from their path however, continuing to tour and record for Vee Jay throughout the 1960's. Fountain left the group during the 1970's but rejoined them before they achieved greater success with their Broadway performance in the *Gospel at Colonus*. With over 20 albums released since 1948, the Blind Boys recorded their first live album at the House of Blues in 1995. "I Brought Him With Me" has received world wide acclaim



and captures Fountain in peak form with the group's gritty, revival-style. **THE BLIND BOYS OF ALABAMA** easily slip between blues, Christian pop-soul and a cappella harmony. In fact, **THE BLIND BOYS OF ALABAMA** combine astonishing harmonies with stately fervor that manages to be both dignified and ecstatic at the same time. Like a freight train gathering speed, **THE BLIND BOYS OF ALABAMA FEATURING CLARENCE FOUNTAIN** take their sold-out audiences on a richly rewarding and soulful musical journey that ends with the crowd shouting and dancing in the aisles.

Friday • 8 pm
MICHELOB GOLDEN
DRAFT STAGE