CRYSTAL FALLS—Crystal Theatre welcomes central Wisconsin's premier blues band to the stage Sunday, July 1, at 2 p.m.

The performance by Otis and the Alligators is part of Crystal Theatre's 2012 "Gem of a Season."

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According to leader Otis McLennon, the band was the result of an informal jam session in Stevens Point, Wis., in 1987.

McLennon and a few other musicians took to the stage one night and played several standard blues songs together.

"We hit it and we sounded tight," McLennon said. "When we finished playing and the bar owner asked, 'What's the name of your band?;' one of the quick-thinking musicians said, 'Otis and the Alligators'."

When the bar owner asked if he could book them, the ad hoc group looked at each other, shrugged and said, "Okay!" The band was born and the unique name stuck.

Fronted by the wailing harmonica playing and raw powered vocals of McLennon, the band quickly developed a devoted following of blues fans. A typical set features old soul and rhythm and blues classics and 12-bar saloon standards as well as "Alligator originals."

The Alligators include Jim Prideaux on guitar and vocals, Joe Fittante on keyboards and vocals, Ken Stevenson on bass guitar, Mark Piasecki on saxophone, and Ben Petree on drums and vocals.

Advanced tickets for the event may be purchased for $12 at Ben Franklin's in Crystal Falls, Central Arts and Gifts and the Iron County Chamber Office in Iron River, Steamin' Joe Coffeehouse in Florence and the Music Tree in Iron Mountain.

Tickets may also be purchased online at thecrystaltheatre.org or by phoning 875-6867.

Admission at the door is $15 for adults and $5 for youths under 18.