

How Jason & the Scorchers Stood By Founding Bassist Jeff Johnson After His 2023 Stroke

The story of a founding member's medical crisis and what it revealed about the bond that has held this band together since 1981.



Nashville, Tennessee Aug 4, 2026 ([Issuewire.com](https://www.issuewire.com)) - In September 2023, Jeff Johnson -- the founding bassist of [Jason & the Scorchers](https://www.issuewire.com) -- suffered a stroke while in Mexico. The news traveled fast through the tight-knit community of musicians and fans who have followed the band since its formation

in Nashville in 1981. The response was immediate. Jason Ringenberg and guitarist Warner Hodges reunited for a benefit show to support their longtime bandmate -- the kind of gesture that has defined this group as much as any record they ever made.

Johnson was there from the beginning. He joined Ringenberg, Hodges, and drummer Perry Baggs in the fall of 1981 when Jason & the Nashville Scorchers were just finding their footing at venues like Exit/In in Nashville. He played bass on their debut EP, *Reckless Country Soul*, and was part of every recording through their 1986 album *Still Standing*. He left in 1987 when EMI dropped the band, then came back in 1993 -- by his own initiative -- to anchor the reunion lineup that recorded *A Blazing Grace* and *Clear Impetuous Morning* for Mammoth Records in the mid-1990s. He was there at the Ryman Auditorium in 2008 when all four original members performed together for the first time since January 1997 to accept the Americana Music Association's Lifetime Achievement Award in Performance.

Ringenberg described that 2008 performance with warmth: "Jeff, in spite of not really playing bass anymore, rose to the occasion and played great." That quality -- showing up and delivering -- has defined Johnson's relationship with the band across stops, starts, and reunions stretching back to 1981.

The bond between the members of [Jason & the Scorchers](#) has always been tested by circumstance. The original lineup watched A&M Records get acquired on the day *Thunder and Fire* was released in 1989, taking their album with it. They lost Perry Baggs -- the drummer and co-writer who wrote "White Lies" and sang the band's harmonies -- to renal failure and diabetes complications in 2012. They have faced the pressures that break most bands many times over. What has held them together is not nostalgia. It is loyalty between people who built something real together in 1981 and never stopped knowing it.

The benefit show for Johnson was a quiet act in keeping with that history -- two founding members of one of Nashville's greatest rock bands doing what needed to be done for a third. Jason & the Scorchers have never been a band that made the obvious choice. Taking care of each other, it turns out, has always been the one exception they've held to.

ABOUT JASON AND THE SCORCHERS

Jason & the Scorchers are a Nashville-based rock band formed in 1981. Widely regarded as founders of the cowpunk and alt-country movements, they have released eight studio albums and received the Americana Music Association's Lifetime Achievement Award in Performance. The band is led by vocalist and songwriter Jason Ringenberg, with guitarist Warner Hodges as a constant creative partner.

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