

# JAZZ & BLUES

SEPTEMBER  
2010

F L O R I D A

FLORIDA'S ONLINE GUIDE TO LIVE JAZZ & BLUES



Larry Coryell



Nick Trill



Bird Dog Bobby Band



Sean Chambers



John Yarling



Doug Carn



Randy Bernsen



Mike MacArthur



Taj Mahal

# WINNING SPINS

by Bill Meredith

## TO CALL LARRY CORYELL A JAZZ

guitarist isn't inaccurate, yet it's a description that doesn't exactly paint a full picture of his artistry. Sure, the 67-year-old icon has displayed the influence of traditional guitar predecessors like Django Reinhardt, Grant Green, Wes Montgomery and Barney Kessel over the past 45 years. But Coryell also harnesses the power of rocker Jimi Hendrix, the phrasing of bluesman Albert King, the lyricism of The Beatles' George Harrison, and the fleet-fingered Nashville sound of Chet Atkins to create his own fusion of jazz, blues, pop and country. And all are on display on the new collection *Prime Picks: The Virtuoso Guitar of Larry Coryell* (HighNote).

The CD is a compilation drawn from Coryell's five HighNote recordings, made between 1999 and 2003 and utilizing various personnel. Joe Henderson's title track from Coryell's 2001 disc *Inner Urge* opens the set. The guitarist and the venerable pianist John Hicks sound truly inspired by one another. Bassist Santi Debriano and drummer Yoron Israel capably navigate the challenging melodic line and rhythmic pulse as the two veterans take memorable solos.

The tune is the first of three tracks from the mostly straight-ahead *Inner Urge*. On saxophonist Harold Land's composition "Compulsion," trumpeter Don Sickler joins the quartet for an acrobatic romp. Coryell and Sickler play the melody early before the guitarist takes a fluid, Montgomery-influenced solo, and with a purpose. The song dates back to Land's 1960 album *West Coast Blues*, which featured the guitar pioneer. On Ray Bryant's "Tonk," Coryell slows the pace on acoustic guitar in an unorthodox trio format, with lighthearted, sans-bass accompaniment by only Hicks and Israel.

The standard "Star Eyes" is the only representative from the 1999 CD *Monk, Trane, Miles & Me*, but Coryell's Latin approach takes the piece beyond standard fare. Featuring the contributions of Hicks, Debriano and Israel again, the track showcases the guitarist and the pianist playing complex chords that drive one another toward exploratory solos.

"Limehouse Blues" is the only track from the 2002 release *Cedars of Avalon*, yet it offers



LARRY CORYELL

a two-for-one special. Inspired by Kessel's solo-guitar version, Coryell overdubbed two separate acoustic tracks. The results echo his flamenco-inspired side, plus his duo and trio work with John McLaughlin and Paco DeLucia.

Two tracks from the 2000 CD *New High* further point out Coryell's multifaceted facility. Vibraphonist Mark Sherman is present on both, and his composition "Spiral Staircase" sports a traditional feel. Pianist Ronnie Mathews, bassist Buster Williams and Israel complete the quintet, and contribute to the piece's playful nature. *New High's* title track, the first of two originals by Coryell, adds trumpeter Shunzo Ono within another Latin cadence. The guitarist, the trumpeter and the vibist masterfully play the melody in unison.

Three cuts from 2003's *The Power Trio: Live in Chicago* further accentuate Coryell's range. His solo reading of Harrison's "Something" is

# WINNING SPINS

sublime, complete with rearranged chords and snippets of other Beatles hits. Montgomery's composition "Bumpin' on Sunset" builds from a Latin-tinged, bluesy simmer to a fusion boil through Coryell's interaction with the Chicago-based rhythm section of bassist Larry Gray and drummer Paul Wertico. Each player effortlessly downshifts to a lower gear before the song's coda. Coryell's own "Good Citizen Swallow," written for bassist Steve Swallow, is a tour-de-force of a closer, with powerful solos and trades worthy of The Eleventh House, Coryell's influential 1970s fusion band.

The continuity in this diverse collection comes from Coryell's tone and phrasing, which are heard at their expressive best throughout *Prime Picks*. The guitarist's long career has encompassed various styles played at varying tempos and volumes, all of which meld into a cohesive signature style uniquely his own.



*Larry Coryell performs 6-9PM Sept. 26 at The Garlic Restaurant as part of the New Smyrna Beach Jazz Festival. Visit [Nsbfla.com](http://Nsbfla.com) for more information.*

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## TAJ MAHAL & THE PHANTOM BLUES BAND AMERICAN MUSIC FESTIVAL BANDSHELL, DAYTONA BEACH/SEPT. 4

Blessed with a throaty holler tailor-made for the blues, Taj Mahal has been one of the genre's most celebrated interpreters since his 1968 debut recording. Accompanying himself on guitar, banjo and harmonica, and playing in acoustic and electric settings, the New York native revived the songs of country-blues greats such as Blind Willie McTell, Sleepy John Estes and Leadbelly, and contributed classics of his own ("Going Up to the Country, Paint My Mailbox Blue," "She Caught the Katy"). Over the years, he's immersed himself in an encyclopedia of roots music, from Caribbean to Hawaiian to African. But out in front of his excellent



Phantom Blues Band, as he'll be when he plays Daytona's American Music Festival, Taj will likely focus on rave-up blues and old-school R&B. With pros such as guitarist Johnny Lee Schell, saxman Joe Sublett, trumpeter Darrell Leonard, bassist Larry Fulcher and drummer Tony Braunagel, it's no wonder Taj has been revving up the Phantom for more than 15 years. **BW**

## HARMONICA BLOWOFF CHEERS, FORT LAUDERDALE/SEPT. 5

Subtitled "A Roomful of Wind," the South Florida Blues Society's eighth annual Harmonica Blowoff showcases a dozen of the region's sharpest harpsters. Among the fire-belching Mississippi saxophonists will be long-time faves such as Big City Blues Band's Jumpin' Jack Bluni and original Groove Thang Cadillac Chuck Grundt. (Check out the GT's 1985 video of Chuck playing Jimmy Reed's "Take Out Some Insurance" with Down Pat and Bonefish Johnny, posted on YouTube and elsewhere.) The Blowoff also features area stalwarts such as Nick Trill (at left), Hurricane Hawk, Pix-e Ensign, MuDDfish Mike Edwards and Clay Goldstein. Though event participant Josh Rowand



is known as "The Pitbull of the Blues" for his sizzling guitar skills, the Outta da Blues fretshredder also blows a mean harp, inspired no doubt by bandmate Nico Wayne Toussaint. As the backing band for the evening, Graham Drout's mighty Iko-Iko will expertly provide the blues, rock, roots and voodoo they do so well. Music kicks off at 3PM. **BW**

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THE ALLEY, SANFORD/SEPT. 25**

"Bird Dog Bobby" Rhoads has had a long love affair with the gritty textures of amplified blues. From his first gig in a Kansas high school gym to gigging through central Florida, the Bird Dog has clearly picked up the finer points of his trade. The Orlando area showman is so well-considered that he's opened for six-string masters such as Gatemouth Brown, Albert Collins and Ronnie Earl. Backed by bassist Gary Whitehead and drummer Reno Mussatto, Rhoads rips solos that conjure the likes of Elmore James, Johnny "Guitar"



Watson and T-Bone Walker, and sings in a smooth yet emotional croon. The trio was captured live last year on the CD *Live at the Plaza Theatre*, playing blues, jump and funk originals, and reinterpreting classics by the likes of Howlin' Wolf and Elmore James. Bird Dog knows his guitars and amps from the inside out; he repairs them at his music store in Chuluota. **BW**

**WILLIE BROWN BLUES BENEFIT  
RICK'S ON THE RIVER, TAMPA/SEPT. 26**

In his fevered "Cross Road Blues," Robert Johnson gave a shout-out to his "friend-boy Willie Brown." While Brown never achieved the posthumous fame of Johnson, the older artist played a vital role in the development of country blues. Not only did he perform and record with Charley Patton and Son House, he reportedly taught young Robert the basics on guitar. Brown's classic 1930s Paramount recordings, "Future Blues" and "M&O Blues," indicate a sophisticated songwriter and dynamic performer. Largely overlooked, he died in 1952, and his grave in Prichard, Miss., remains unmarked. Now, a handful of Florida-based musicians are coming together to raise money for a headstone.



Those taking part in the benefit include guitar-slinger Sean Chambers (at left); country-blues picker Eddie Wright; piano whomper Lee Pons; the raucous Backwater Blues Band; and roots specialist Damon Fowler. Admission is free, but there will be raffles, auctions and a donation bucket to raise the \$2,100 needed for the headstone. Visit [tdblues.com](http://tdblues.com). **BW**

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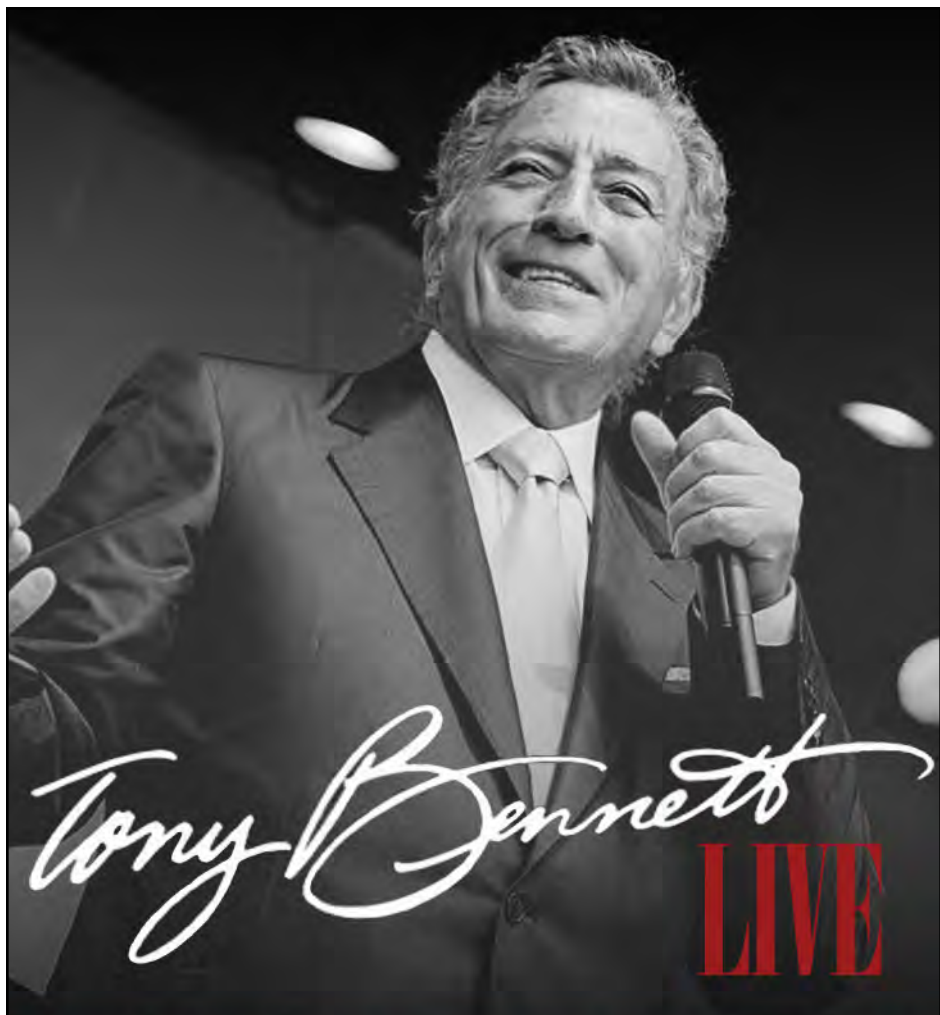
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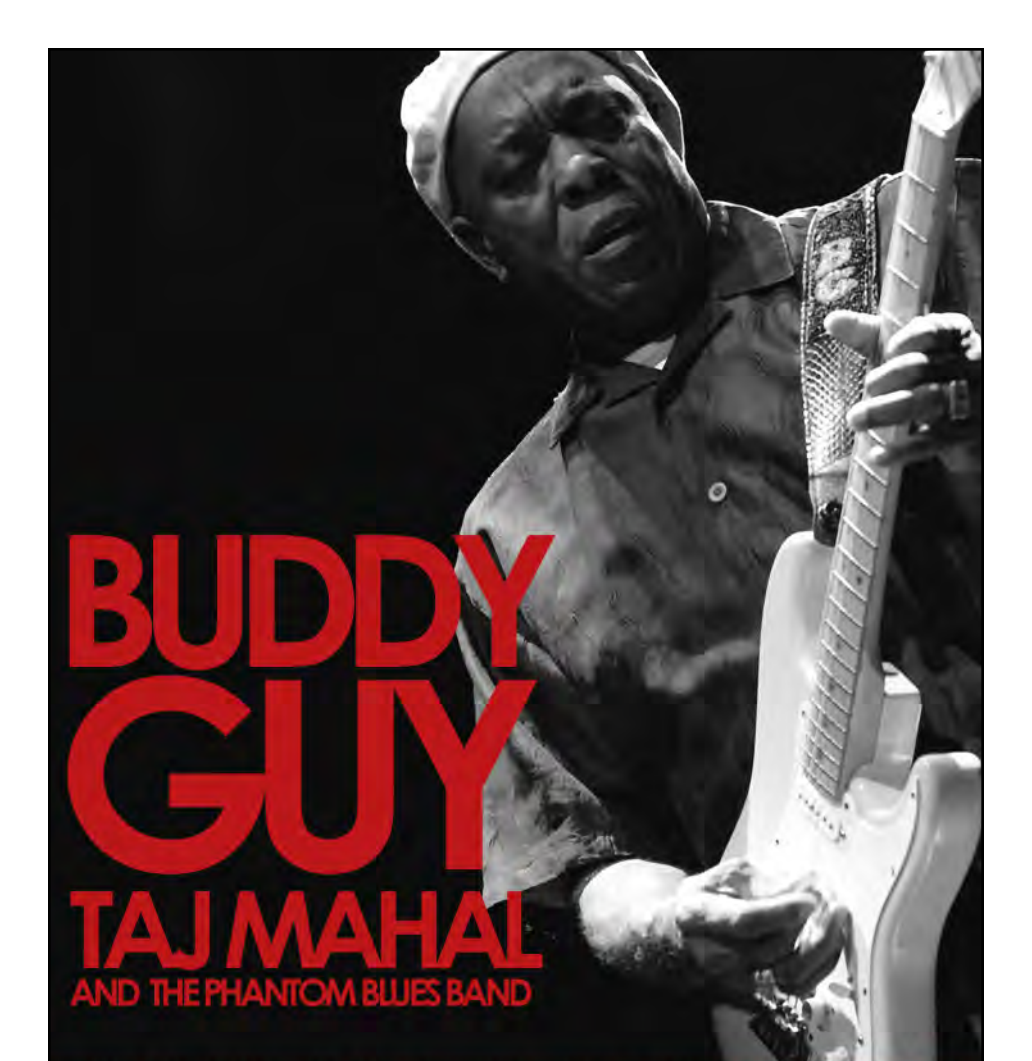
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## SAXES GONE WILD SKIPPER'S SMOKEHOUSE, TAMPA/SEPT. 12

One of Tampa's longest-standing live music venues hosts a remarkable gathering of saxophonists this month. "Saxes Gone Wild" features Tampa Bay area sax stalwarts Mike MacArthur, Jarred Armstrong, Gene Cannon, Alan Darcy, Tim Eddy, Mike Gibilisco, Valerie Gillespie, Jerry Kenney, Jeremy Powell, Butch Thomas and Austin Vickrey. Tenor man MacArthur hosts and leads the venue's house jazz band, which also features keyboardist Jeremy Douglass, bassist Tim George and drummer Dave Reinhardt. And if the host and 10 other saxophonists aren't enough, there will also be a special bass-saxophone performance by Jeremy Carter and a set by local high school group the Saxophobia Sax Quartet. MacArthur (at left), a former member of Maynard Ferguson's Big Bop Nouveau Band, is worth the price of admission alone. The native New Yorker has released multiple CDs, leads his own band, and often works with noted international touring artist Diane Schuur. **BM**




MacArthur (at left), a former member of Maynard Ferguson's Big Bop Nouveau Band, is worth the price of admission alone. The native New Yorker has released multiple CDs, leads his own band, and often works with noted international touring artist Diane Schuur. **BM**

## RANDY BERNSEN THE GRATEFUL PALATE, FT. LAUDERDALE SEPT. 4 & 11

While he makes his home in Ft. Lauderdale, guitarist Randy Bernsen is a globe-traveling superstar with a remarkable resumé. Bernsen's jazz and fusion expertise, on both guitar and guitar synthesizer, was featured on three MCA label releases during the 1980s. *Music for People*, *Planets & Washing Machines*, *Mo' Wasabi* and *Paradise Citizens* featured saxophonists Wayne Shorter and Michael Brecker, keyboardist Herbie Hancock, bassist Jaco Pastorius and drummer Peter Erskine. The guitarist's subsequent, self-released recordings include performances captured in his hometown (1997's *Live at Tavern 213*) and in Mexico



(2001's *Live in San Miguel de Allende*). He now releases most of his original material online, and plays quite a bit of it on Saturdays with bassist Jeff Carswell and drummer Steve Rucker at the Grateful Palate. "ASCAP came in looking to collect for the cover songs played there," Bernsen says, "so the owner actually requested that we play all originals." **BM**



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## JOHN YARLING & CUT-IN/CUT-OUT BASS MUSEUM OF ART, MIAMI BEACH/SEPT. 24

When it comes to first-call, all-purpose drummers in South Florida, there's John Yarling and then there's everyone else. The Detroit native made South Florida his home after studying jazz performance at the University of Miami, where he now teaches jazz percussion. Yarling's seemingly effortless playing has since enhanced the music of international jazz stars like vocalist Kevin Mahogany and multi-instrumental icon Ira Sullivan's Inter-Outer Continental Quintet, plus regional favorites like the South Florida Jazz Orchestra, fusion guitarists Randy Bernsen and Tom Lippincott, and blues and funk groups The Weld and the Shack Daddys. His Cut-In/Cut-Out quartet features



tenor saxophonist Alex Weitz, violinist Nicole Yarling and bassist Chuck Bergeron, and will play music by composers who Yarling feels deserve more recognition. "The first set will be material by New York City bassist Mark Helias," he says. "The second is music from the late '70s and early '80s by avant-garde violinist Leroy Jenkins [1932-2007]." **BM**

## DOUG CARN EUROPEAN STREET CAFE LISTENING ROOM, JACKSONVILLE /SEPT. 14 NEW SMYRNA BEACH JAZZ FESTIVAL, TRADER'S SPORTS PUB/SEPT. 25

Keyboardist Doug Carn was born in New York City, but that's where his standard-jazz upbringing ended. The unique education he received after his family moved to Florida certainly fueled his original organ sound. Carn's mother taught music in public school, and he started piano lessons at age 5. He added alto sax a few years later, then oboe in high school, earning a scholarship to Jacksonville University (where he'd later return to teach). But studies with Larry Young, the organist in drummer Tony Williams' Lifetime band, cemented



Carn's status as a keyboardist in the 1970s. So did his propensity for writing lyrics to instrumental jazz classics. Carn's adaptations of the Wayne Shorter compositions "Infant Eyes" and "Adams Apple" (title tracks to his 1971 and 1975 LPs) featured former wife Jean Carn's soulful vocals and helped to define an era. Carn's Jacksonville date features his quartet. **BM**

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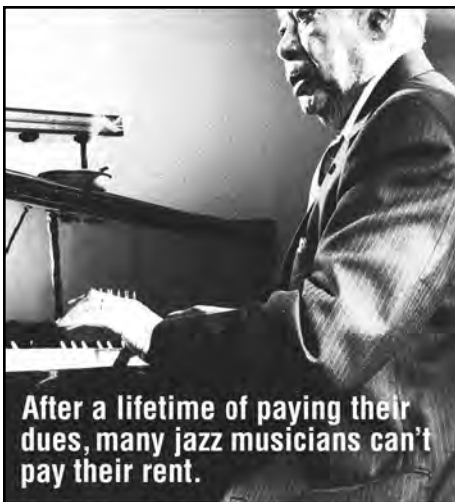


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APRIL 13, 2011 7:45PM



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Spotlight by Jon Hardison, Larry Coryell  
cover by Mauro Zanotto, Mike MacArthur  
cover by Patrick Dean

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