

JAZZ & BLUES

NOVEMBER
2010

F L O R I D A

FLORIDA'S ONLINE GUIDE TO LIVE JAZZ & BLUES



Soulive



Diana Krall



Benjamin Herman



Chick Corea



Willie "Big Eyes" Smith



Guitar Shorty



Kenny Drew Jr.



Levon Helm



Ray LaMontagne



Yellowjackets



Blind Boys of Alabama



The Legendary JCs

WINNING SPINS

by Bill Meredith

SINCE THE BREAKUP OF THE BEATLES

40 years ago—and even before—jazz and pop artists from Ramsey Lewis to Frank Sinatra have been putting their stamp on the music of the Fab Four. With stellar tribute albums like George Benson's *The Other Side of Abbey Road* and Booker T. & the MGs' *McLemore Avenue* dating back to 1970, Soulive isn't exactly reinventing the wheel on its own new instrumental ode, *Rubber Soulive* (Royal Family). But the disc certainly merits comparison, as the group updates a couple of classic tunes from *Rubber Soul*, plus a variety of other hits from The Beatles' catalog.

Last year, Soulive celebrated the 10th anniversary of the first recording session by keyboardist Neal Evans, drummer and brother Alan Evans, and guitarist Eric Krasno at the brothers' home studio in Woodstock, New York. Their resulting 1999 debut *Get Down!* catapulted the funky organ trio into jamband stardom through its mix of funk, rock, jazz and R&B. *Rubber Soulive*, which lends the same flavor to compositions by John Lennon, Paul McCartney and George Harrison, makes a fitting bookend to the band's first decade.

The two tracks from The Beatles' 1965 gem *Rubber Soul* appear among *Rubber Soulive's* first three. "Drive My Car" is transformed from pop song to funk vehicle through Alan Evans' sonic backbeat and Krasno's rhythm-guitar prowess. This approach also funkifies the ballad "In My Life," albeit with a creative, harpsichord-inspired solo by Neal Evans.

The Hammond organist's left hand also injects danceable new life into McCartney's nimble bass line on "Taxman," Harrison's leadoff composition from the 1966 album *Revolver*. He also mimics the vocal melody, one of the few tracks where that responsibility doesn't fall to Krasno. The other *Revolver* track is one of *Rubber Soulive's* most experimental. "Eleanor Rigby" opens with an unrecognizable, trancelike melody before Krasno brings in the vocal hook on guitar and the Evans brothers break into double-time rhythm.

All of Soulive's song choices hail from what was arguably The Beatles' most fertile period, the mid-to-late 1960s, and *Rubber Soulive's* centerpiece is a three-song set from



SOULIVE

Abbey Road (1969). Lennon's "I Want You (She's So Heavy)" is given a reverential, near-note-for-note treatment, right down to Neal Evans' unaccompanied, left-hand McCartney bass runs and the trio's chanted chorus (the album's only vocals). Another Lennon masterpiece, "Come Together," is given an insistent double-time cadence by Alan Evans, while Harrison's beautiful ballad "Something" features melodic, bluesy figures by Krasno.

Two tracks also stand out from the 1968 double-album *The Beatles* (commonly referred to as the "White Album"). A high-octane arrangement transforms Lennon's "Revolution" from mid-tempo rocker to gospel raveup, complete with propulsive piano by Neal Evans. Like many Beatles fanatics, the members of Soulive also recognize the under-harvested greatness of Harrison's songwriting. The CD closes with his epic "While My Guitar Gently Weeps," on which Alan Evans turns Ringo Starr's original beat inside-out as his brother and Krasno recite the lyrics with their hands.

The title track from the 1965 release *Help!* also jumps at double the speed of the original. Yet Soulive straddle the fence on "Day Tripper"—which The Beatles recorded during the *Rubber Soul* sessions but released as a double-single with "We Can Work It Out"—by playing half-time verses and double-time choruses.

WINNING SPINS

The only weakness of *Rubber Soulive* is the obviousness and sameness of having Krasno state most of the vocal melodies. But those traits rarely apply to the band's live performances. Soulive's burning, self-titled 2003 live CD; the recent *Live at the Blue Note Tokyo*; and the forthcoming, star-studded *Bowlive* DVD all offer testimonials to their concert prowess. The Beatles' greatest hits are likely to receive a B3 shot from Neal Evans' Hammond organ, plus funky melodic and rhythmic doses from Krasno and Alan Evans, as they ring out over the beautiful Suwannee Music Park during Soulive's Bear Creek Music Fest performance.



Soulive will perform at 11:20PM on Nov. 12 at the Bear Creek Music and Art Festival at the Suwannee Music Park in Live Oak. Eric Krasno and Chapter 2 perform at 10:45PM on Nov. 13. For a full schedule and ticket info, visit Bearcreekmusicfestival.com.



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Bare Knuckle is an apt title for David "Guitar Shorty" Kearney's latest recording. Vocally and instrumentally, Shorty delivers bonecrunching sonic beatdowns. At age 71, the Texas-born, Kissimmee, Florida-raised guitarist is hardly a museum piece. In fact, he continues to craft some of the most-potent and up-to-date blues-rock available. "Please Mr. President, lay some stimulus on me," he desperately entreats on the opening "Please Mr. President," "cause I'm just a workin' man, tryin' to feed my family." The steely wail of his guitar makes the case just as forcefully as his blast-furnace vocals. Of course, it's not all politics, as Shorty celebrates "Texas Women"




on the song of the same name, and calls out mistreating lovers on "True Lies" and "Betrayed." Shorty and co. return to Florida for a handful of dates this month, including an afternoon slot at St. Augustine's Lincolnville Heritage Fest. For information and the full lineup, visit Lincolnvillefestival.com. **BW**




RAY LAMONTAGNE/LEVON HELM
TIMES UNION CENTER OF PERFORMING
ARTS , JACKSONVILLE/NOV. 2

POMPANO BEACH AMPHITHEATRE/NOV. 4
RUTH ECKERD HALL, CLEARWATER/NOV. 5
 With his cottony, impassioned vocals and penchant for rootsy ballads and deep soul, Ray LaMontagne has earned comparisons to Van Morrison. His fourth studio album, *God Willin' & the Creek Don't Rise*, finds the singer-songwriter in excellent form on slinky funk, front-porch blues and mellow roots-rock. Throughout, the New Hampshire native heartbreakingly relates his struggle to retain his humanity in a world where the odds are stacked against it. It's safe to say that the music of The Band influenced LaMontagne, and one of that group's driving forces, drummer and singer Levon Helm, will share the bill on this tour. Afflicted with cancer of the vocal cords in recent years, Helm wasn't sure whether he'd sing again. But the Arkansas native, who also plays mandolin, fought his way back. His CDs *Dirt Farmer* and *Electric Dirt* won Grammys in 2008 and 2010 respectively. **BW**





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Nov. 6	Pepper Drive	
Nov. 12	Shawn Pittman Band	
Nov. 13	Twenty on Red	
Nov. 19	Nick Moss & the Flip Tops	
Nov. 20	Mississippi Blues Trail Marker Unveiling Ceremony w/Bobby Rush	
Nov. 26	Joey Gilmore	
Nov. 27	6th Street R&B Review	

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**THE BLIND BOYS OF ALABAMA
LINCOLNVILLE HERITAGE FEST
ST. AUGUSTINE AMPHITHEATER/NOV. 7**

For a group who can trace their origins back to 1939, The Blind Boys of Alabama have remained remarkably relevant. Attribute it to tight harmonies, fervent gospel feel or savvy marketing, but the Blind Boys are riding a crest of popularity. The group has collected five recent Grammy Awards and found new audiences thanks to some very hip collaborations. Their latest recording, *Duets*, chronicles some of those teamups, culling tracks from the Blind Boys' inspired pairings with the diverse likes of Ben Harper, Toots Hibbert, Bonnie Raitt, John Hammond and the late Solomon Burke. The current lineup features the powerful voice



and charisma of founding member Jimmy Carter, who is joined by fellow vocalists Ben Moore and Billy Bowers and a three-piece rhythm section. Join them for a Sunday afternoon Gospel Brunch at St. Augustine's Lincolnville Heritage Fest, following Florida sacred-steel band The Lee Boys. Visit Lincolnvillefestival.com. **BW**

**YELLOWJACKET'S
HARRIET HIMMEL THEATER
WEST PALM BEACH/NOV. 11**

One of the most popular acts in contemporary jazz, the Yellowjackets actually started out as session musicians. Band members played on guitarist Robben Ford's 1977 album *The Inside Story*, and Ford returned the favor on the Yellowjackets' early recordings, including their self-titled 1981 debut. But the group has certainly carved out its own identity since Ford's departure. Mix the fusion muscle of founding bassist Jimmy Haslip with the smooth-jazz leanings of co-founder Russell Ferrante on keyboards and the big-band knowledge of saxophonist Bob Mintzer, and you have a blueprint for contemporary jazz. The Yellowjackets'



latest CD, *Lifecycle*, was its first to feature a guitarist (all-star pal Mike Stern) in nearly 25 years. Drummer Will Kennedy (who was with the band circa 1986-1999) has returned in time for its upcoming release. The quartet consistently delivers stellar live shows by eschewing smooth studio nuances in favor of its traditional jazz and fusion roots. **BM**

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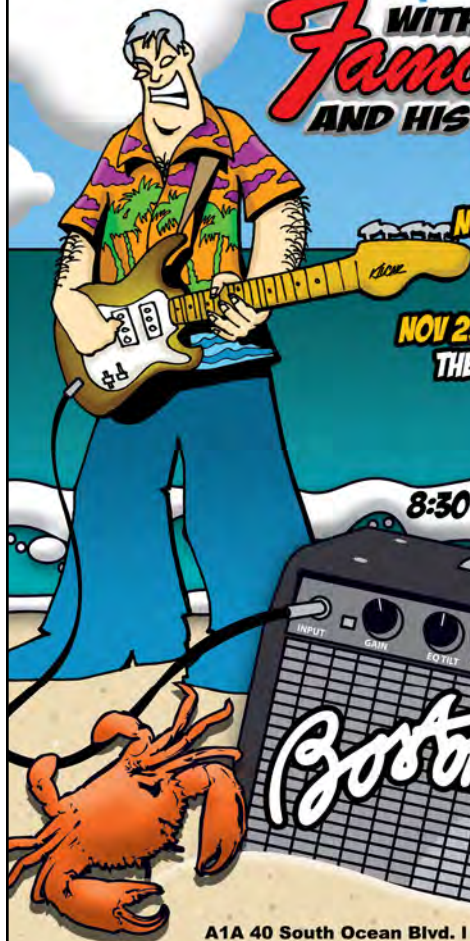
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WILLIE "BIG EYES" SMITH
ACE'S LOUNGE, BRADENTON/NOV. 11
BACK ROOM, BOCA RATON/NOV. 12
PIONEER PARK, DUNEDIN/NOV. 13

Willie "Big Eyes" Smith made his name as Muddy Waters' drummer, but his swinging, locomotive rhythms are hardly all he has to offer. Smith started out as a harmonica player, but took up the sticks in 1957 so he could work more frequently. Now, Smith is making up for lost time, as he continues to release outstanding blues albums on which he sings and blows harp. On his latest recording, *Joined at the Hip*, the 74-year-old Smith joins forces with fellow Muddy Waters alum pianist Pinetop Perkins for one of this year's best traditional-blues releases. The two display an effortless



mastery as they work through a set of sublime Chicago blues, incorporating strong Delta roots and plenty of jump rhythm. Great backing is provided by guitarists John Primer and Little Frank Krakowski, bassist Bob Stroger, and Smith's son, Kenny, on drums. Willie Smith sings and blows harp with the rhythmic sensibilities of a drummer, never failing to swing. **BW**

THE LEGENDARY JCS
FLORIDA CITRUS BOWL, ORLANDO/NOV. 6
DOWNTOWN SANFORD/NOV. 11
PIONEER PARK, DUNEDIN/NOV. 13
BEAR CREEK FEST, LIVE OAK/NOV. 14
COMMON GROUNDS, GAINESVILLE/NOV. 20

Delivering gritty Southern soul, blues and R&B with gospel intensity, The Legendary JCs come across like a modern incarnation of the Chambers Brothers, Otis Redding and James Brown. Like their predecessors, the JCs—short for "Joint Chiefs"—can pack a dance floor with their sweat-raising vintage-soul update. During the past decade, the eight-piece, Winter Park-based groove machine has been doing just that with high-energy performances. Lead singer Eugene Snowden



displays a supremely soulful presence and receives superb backing from horns, guitars and a right-on rhythm section. For a taste, pick up one of their three live CDs or hit one of their gigs this month, including the Dunedin Wines the Blues Fest (Dunedin winestheblues.info) and The Bear Creek Music and Art Fest (Bearcreekmusicfestival.com). **BW**



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< **RIM SHOTS**
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ERIC ALLISON, MUSIC DIRECTOR
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**CHICK COREA
MINIACI PERFORMING ARTS CENTER
DAVIE/NOV. 20**

Witnessing a solo performance by pianist Chick Corea can be both exhilarating and challenging—the only thing a listener can predict is his brilliance. The 69-year-old keyboardist boasts a 45-year recording career that encompasses everything from acoustic jazz and electric fusion to traditional Latin and classical music, all of which display his singular touch, sense of adventure and melodic gifts. He might perform a piece from one of the Miles Davis albums he appeared on between 1968 and 1970 (*Filles de Kilimanjaro*, *In a Silent Way* and *Bitches Brew*), or material from one of his own solo landmarks. Perhaps he'll revisit his modern standard "Spain" from Return to Forever's 1972 release *Light As a Feather*, or a piece from his Grammy-winning 2008 duet CD with vibraphonist Gary Burton, *The New Crystal Silence*. When Corea performs, what he actually performs is secondary. Expect a one-of-a-kind performance from this 17-time Grammy winner and jazz legend. **BM**



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**DIANA KRALL
VAN WEZEL PERFORMING ARTS HALL
SARASOTA/NOV. 20**

A gifted pianist with a breathy, conversational singing voice, Canadian-born, Berklee-trained Diana Krall became one of the breakout jazz stars of the '90s. Krall's 1993 debut recording, *Steppin' Out*, caught the ears of veteran producer Tommy LiPuma, who crafted the sound of her 1995 sophomore effort, *Only Trust Your Heart*. Momentum built toward the 1999 smash *When I Look in Your Eyes*, a collection of standards that earned her a Best Jazz Vocal Performance Grammy. The disc was also the first jazz release to be nominated by the Grammys as Album of the Year in a quarter-century. Krall's talent, looks and crossover success



have since resulted in her appearing on the pop-oriented Lilith Fair roster and in films. Married to Elvis Costello since 2003, Krall co-wrote some deft original material with her husband on 2004's *The Girl in the Other Room*. Last year's *Quiet Nights* reteams her with arranger Claus Ogerman for an set of bossa nova standards by the likes of Jobim and Porter. **BM**



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**KENNY DREW JR. WITH LARRY CORYELL
HILLSBOROUGH COMMUNITY COLLEGE
PERFORMING ARTS BUILDING
YBOR CITY/NOV. 21**

Like his father Kenny Drew (1928-1993), Kenny Drew Jr. is a New York City-born pianist. But while his father played bebop and traditional jazz with the likes of Charlie Parker, John Coltrane and Buddy Rich, Drew Jr.'s career has straddled jazz and classical music since he won the Great American Jazz Piano Competition in Jacksonville in 1990. The St. Petersburg-based pianist's MySpace page alone features his bluesy, swinging original material, jazz classics by Miles Davis and Thelonious Monk, and classical pieces by Schubert and Liszt. The classical influence started



through lessons from his mother and grandmother after his father moved to Copenhagen in 1964, yet Drew Jr. has dedicated recordings to his father and recorded with the likes of the Mingus Big Band, Stanley Turrentine, Stanley Jordan and Slide Hampton. The pianist will perform with guitar great Larry Coryell at Hillsborough Community College. **BM**

**BENJAMIN HERMAN QUARTET
BYRON CARLYLE THEATER
MIAMI BEACH/NOV. 13**

The name of Dutch alto saxophonist Benjamin Herman may not yet be recognizable to most jazz fans, but that could change after his current debut tour of North America. While he was named "Best Dressed Dutchman" of 2008 by *Esquire* magazine, Herman is no retro poseur. As is sometimes the case with European jazz musicians, Herman isn't burdened by expectations of tradition within the American art form. He freely injects R&B, punk, surf and funk elements into the mix. Recent Herman releases include *Blue Sky Blond* and the double-disc *Hypochristmastreefuzz*. The latter features compositions



by avant-garde piano legend Misha Mengelberg and a bonus CD of the sax man's performance at the 2009 North Sea Jazz Fest. The quartet is stocked with like-minded players in bassist Ernst Glerum, drummer Joost Patocka and guitarist Anton Goudsmit, who was wildly entertaining in Miami Beach last year with trumpeter Eric Vloeimans. **BM**

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