



JAZZ & BLUES
FLORIDA

JUNE 2014



FLORIDA'S ONLINE GUIDE TO LIVE JAZZ & BLUES

FEATURED ARTIST
2013 IBC WINNER

**SELWYN
BIRCHWOOD**

NOREENA DOWNEY • SHAUN MURPHY
BOBBY RUSH • PETER BROTZMANN TRIO
PAUL BARRERE AND FRED TACKETT • TURK MAURO
STANLEY JORDAN TRIO • PIANO BOB'S 88S
CHRISTIAN MCBRIDE TRIO • NELSON ADELARD BAND

SELWYN BIRCHWOOD

by Bob Weinberg

IN MUSIC AND CONVERSATION, SELWYN

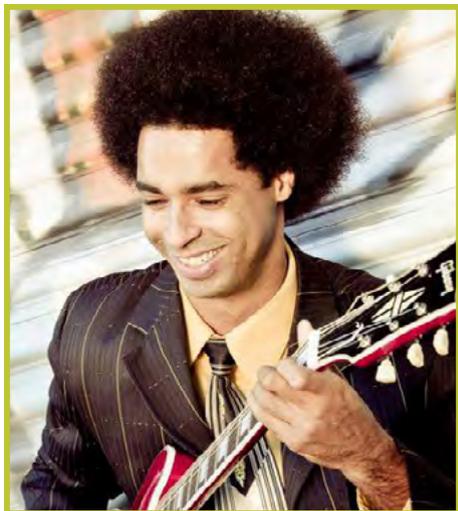
Birchwood is a captivating storyteller. Talking by phone from his home in Tampa, the blues guitarist and singer relates the tale behind “Don’t Call No Ambulance,” the title track to his new, hard-driving debut album for the Alligator label. Apparently, the song’s lyrics were inspired by a woman dancing to Birchwood’s band during a late-night set at a club in Sarasota.

“People seem to get pretty drunk and dancin’ at a lot of our shows,” says the Afro-sporting Birchwood. “This one lady was so drunk that it was terrifying, because she was wearing high heels and she was like a teetering skyscraper. I was worried that she was gonna fall and crack her head. In my mind, she was so drunk, that even if that did happen, she could have blood rushing out of her skull and she would just say, ‘Don’t call no ambulance, I’ll find my own ride home.’ That’s how the song came about. It’s kind of weird when inspiration strikes.”

Birchwood, 29, certainly has inspired confidence in those who’ve recognized his abilities. Among them is Alligator Records chief Bruce Iglauer. The Orlando-born Birchwood first met Iglauer during the International Blues Competition in Memphis in 2012, in which he and his four-piece band were finalists — they’d take first place in 2013. Iglauer expressed admiration for the group, and asked the guitarist to send him new tracks he was working on. Thus began about a yearlong process, which resulted in *Don’t Call No Ambulance*, available this month.

Displaying searing chops on a Gibson ES-335 or slicing keening notes from a lap-steel, Birchwood crafts a swampy, menacing sound that’s more than matched by his deep, raw-throated vocals. The seasoned rhythm section of bassist Donald “Huff” Wright and drummer Curtis Nutall provide a variety of grooves, from funk to boogie, all of it steeped in blues. Saxophonist Regi Oliver adds color and texture on a number of reeds, his raunchy, roadhouse baritone sax becoming a signature of Birchwood’s sound. “Regi’s a great player,” the guitarist raves. “I split everything with him playing-wise. It’s a little more exciting interaction that way.”

Tunes such as “Walking in the Lion’s Den,” “The River Turned Red” and “Brown Paper



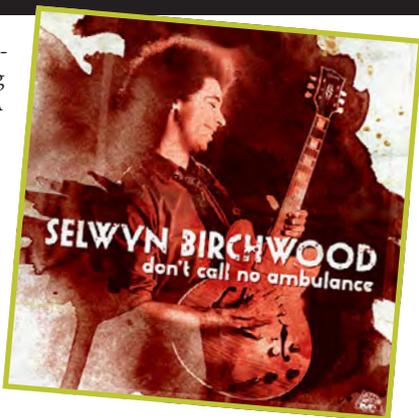
Bag” mark Birchwood as a fresh songwriting voice. Although he says he writes from different perspectives, Birchwood gleaned the wisdom of “Brown Paper Bag,” a cautionary tale about boozing, from both personal experience and observation. “I had spoken with a lot of [older] touring musicians,” Birchwood says. “And they were like, ‘If you want to have some longevity in this, this is what you need to do, this is what you need to not do.’ And listening to their stories, I learned how prevalent it was. It makes sense — if you’re in a bar five nights a week, you can drink a lot and it becomes routine.”

As a developing teenage guitarist, Birchwood traced Jimi Hendrix’s roots and discovered Buddy Guy. After seeing Guy perform in Orlando, he became obsessed with the blues, building up a record collection and also taking inspiration from Florida blues heroes such as Shaun Rounds, Josh Miller and Joey Gilmore. Then, a school friend introduced him to a neighbor — lap-steel virtuoso Sonny Rhodes. Invited to Rhodes’ house to jam, Birchwood quickly won over the veteran bluesman. “He stopped me and said, ‘Do you have a passport?’ he recalls. Birchwood became part of Rhodes’ touring band, playing shows throughout the U.S. and Canada. “He really gave me an education in what it is to be a traveling blues musician, so I’m forever grateful.”

SELWYN BIRCHWOOD

At the same time, Birchwood was receiving a more-traditional education; he holds a degree in marketing from the University of Central Florida and an MBA from the University of Tampa. A brief flirtation with the corporate world didn't take, but what seemed like a distant dream — making a living playing music — has become reality. Winning the IBC last year, he says, "unlocked a lot of doors." And the opportunity to record for Alligator is just icing on a very sweet cake.

"I listened to a ton of [Alligator] recordings," Birchwood says. "In my house, I've got a bunch of records framed on my wall. And it's weird, looking at some of these records and seeing the Alligator logo, and then looking at my record and seeing it." He laughs, then adds, "It's very surreal."



The Selwyn Birchwood Band performs June 6 at Skipper's Smokehouse in Tampa (Skipperssmokehouse.com), June 7 at The Alley in Sanford (Thealleyblues.com), and June 10 at Boston's in Delray Beach (Bostonsonthebeach.com).

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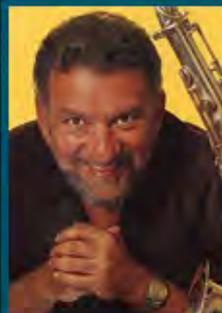
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**FAZIO DRIVING RANGE, PALM BEACH GARDENS
JUNE 14 (5:15 PM)**

As noted in the item about Shaun Murphy, Little Feat is a classic-rock institution. The rootsy, bluesy, jazzy combo is beloved for their enduring FM staples such as "Dixie Chicken," "Fat Man in the Bathtub," and "Oh, Atlanta," all played expertly by the late slide-guitarist/vocalist Lowell George and his band of aces. Among them was guitarist Paul Barrère, who wrote or co-wrote Feat gems such as "All That You Dream," "Old Folks' Boogie" and "Time Loves a Hero." Little Feat returned in 1988 with a new lineup that included six-string wiz Fred Tackett and released the hit-spawning album *Let It Roll*.



Barrère and Tackett frequently perform as an acoustic duo, but are currently touring with the allstar New Orleans Suspects. Comprising veteran players from the Neville Brothers, Radiators and Dirty Dozen, as well as former SoFla fave Jeff Watkins on sax, the Suspects will join these Feat men for a post-Burger Bash concert. (Call 561-627-2000.) **WB**

NOREENA DOWNEY

**RIVERWALK JAZZ BRUNCH, ESPLANADE STAGE,
FT. LAUDERDALE/JUNE 1**

Noreena Downey studied both music and psychology at the University of Miami. But the Ft. Lauderdale-based singer is so talented, she hasn't had to use mind games to gain entry into South Florida's top nightclubs, country clubs and resorts. Downey's expressive voice colors jazz standards, dance numbers and pop, rock and R&B hits. Factor in A-list accompanists including pianist Jauí Schneider, trumpeter/flutist Steve Ahern, bassist Kai Sanchez and drummer Abner Torres, and you have a unit capable of playing nearly anything. Downey possesses a naturally sonorous voice that covers several octaves on standards such as "All of Me," "Body and Soul" and "Stormy



Weather," and she showcases impressive scat-singing abilities on her version of "This Can't Be Love." Material by Sade, Stevie Wonder, Van Morrison, and Prince also pops up on her song list, along with originals like "Gentle Rain" and "Where Is Romance." She'll return to the Riverwalk Jazz Brunch, with the above-mentioned side players sharing the stage. **BM**

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PETER BROTZMANN TRIO

TIMUCUA WHITE HOUSE, ORLANDO/JUNE 1

Saxophonist Peter Brötzmann, 73, was born in Germany during World War II, and those unpredictable surroundings may have helped shape the future free-jazz artist's career. Self-taught, Brötzmann initially played in Dixieland bands before his avant-garde immersion, learning wind instruments from alto, tenor and baritone saxes to clarinet and tarogato. The multi-instrumentalist plays with a meaty tone and improvises with a musicality that's earned him collaborations with artists such as keyboardist Carla Bley, trumpeter Don Cherry, trombonist Albert Mangelsdorff, and fellow multi-reed icon Anthony Braxton since the 1960s. Brötzmann has led ensembles from duos to big



bands and was part of bassist Bill Laswell's free-fusion band Last Exit with drummer Ronald Shannon Jackson and guitarist Sonny Sharrock. Personnel for his Orlando performance will include the all-star, anything-can-happen rhythm section of bassist and multi-instrumentalist William Parker and drummer-percussionist Hamid Drake. **BM**

SHAUN MURPHY

FUNKY BISCUIT, BOCA RATON/JUNE 6

SKIPPER'S SMOKEHOUSE, TAMPA/JUNE 7

Among classic-rock aficionados, Little Feat is an institution. During the band's renaissance in the late-'80s, powerhouse vocalist Shaun Murphy was recruited to sing backup on their smash album *Let It Roll*, and on subsequent recordings, as well. She was granted full membership in 1993, bringing a new dimension to Feat's live shows, and staying with the band for nearly 16 years. While Murphy has impeccable rock credentials — Clapton, Seger, Meat Loaf — her first love was the blues of heroes such as Koko Taylor, Etta James and Big Mama Thornton. For the past few years, she's been leading her own blues band and earning raves.



Behind the strength of her live shows and her *Ask for the Moon* CD, Murphy won Female Blues Artist of the Year and Contemporary Blues Album of the Year from the Blues Blast Music Awards in 2013. Her most recent recording, *Cry of Love*, features classic blues and soul such as "I'm a Woman" and "Nickel and a Nail" with excellent backing. **BW**

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S P O T L I G H T

BOBBY RUSH

BRADFORDVILLE BLUES, TALLAHASSEE/JUNE 6

On *Decisions*, his latest recording, chitlin-circuit veteran Bobby Rush gets serious — for about a minute. While the disc starts with a couple of moody, atmospheric tracks, including his teamup with Dr. John on “Another Murder in New Orleans,” it doesn’t take long for Rush to return to the party. On “Bobby Rush’s Bus,” the Louisiana-born singer and harp blower takes listeners on a tour of his shag wagon, with guests such as saxophonist Mindi Abair and harmonica king Billy Branch along for the ride. And with backing from the versatile blues band Blinddog Smokin’, Rush dips into funky groovers such as “If That’s the Way You Like It, I Like It” and slinky, old-school blues numbers like



“Love of a Woman.” Punctuated by a tight horn section, female backing vocals and even Rush’s own rap, “Funky Old Man” is a hilarious highlight: “I’m a funky old man, ain’t got no money/ Got rheumatism and I walk kinda funny/ I had a hip replacement and angioplasty, I like young women and I’m kinda nasty.” Rush’s shows are unforgettable. **BW**

STANLEY JORDAN TRIO

JAZZIZ NIGHTLIFE, BOCA RATON/JUNE 2-3

To the uninitiated, hearing Stanley Jordan play guitar is like hearing a guitar played for the first time. Which helps to explain why his 1985 debut album *Magic Touch* made him a rare jazz star by going gold and earning a Grammy nomination. Classically trained as a pianist, Jordan uses a two-handed tapping technique to simulate the piano by playing melodies and chords simultaneously. Other guitarists have employed this method, but not to Jordan’s degree of mastery. On his latest CD, 2011’s *Friends*, Jordan imprints his singular style on original compositions and covers ranging from John Coltrane’s jazz standard “Giant Steps” to Katy Perry’s pop hit “I Kissed a Girl.” The album features



Jordan’s powerful trio with bassist Charnett Moffett and drummer Kenwood Dennard, plus fellow axmen Bucky Pizzarelli, Mike Stern and Russell Malone. On-stage, Jordan’s magic trick of playing two guitars — one around his neck, the other mounted on a stand — or even a guitar and piano simultaneously is simply astounding. **BM**

JAZZIZ NIGHTLIFE

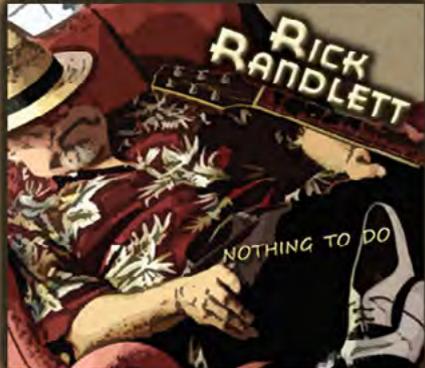
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**CHRISTIAN MCBRIDE TRIO
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When the saxophonist and vibraphonist from bassist Christian McBride's Inside Straight quintet couldn't make a concert date, the leader decided, sink or swim, he'd simply perform with the group's remaining members. Five years later, McBride's trio with pianist Christian Sands and drummer Ulysses Owens Jr. has been churning the waters like Olympic gold medalist Michael Phelps ever since. Their 2013 CD, *Out Here*, features a variety of moods, from an imaginative 5/4-timed take on the standard "My Favorite Things" and the relaxed swing of Dr. Billy Taylor's "Easy Walker" to a high-octane arrangement of Oscar Peterson's



"Hallelujah Time," with impressive solos by all three participants — notably McBride, with a bow on his upright bass. One highlight, the trio's tour-de-force take on Ray Noble's chestnut "Cherokee," effortlessly segues from waltz-time to warp-speed hard-bop. Sands and Owens return to the studio this month for another recording with McBride. **BM**

**PIANO BOB'S 88S (w/ Bonefish Johnny & Nick Trill)
FRITZ & FRANZ BIERHAUS, CORAL GABLES/JUNE 6**
Piano Bob Wilder is a veritable encyclopedia of the blues. His knowledge extends from barrelhouse and boogie-woogie to jump-blues and swing to early rock 'n' roll and postwar New Orleans R&B. So, at his shows or on his recordings, you might hear tunes by Leroy Carr, Amos Milburn, Fats Domino and Professor Longhair, all played with affection and expertise. Over the years, the Miami-raised pianist has performed with various blues artists, including guitarist Ken "Snowman" Minahan, with whom Piano Bob collected a W.C. Handy Blues Award, the precursor to the Blues Music Award. His talents — and his signature fedora and suspenders — have long been recognized by fans and colleagues such as Louisiana Red, Henry Grey and Hubert Sumlin, with whom he's performed. Piano Bob's 88s consists of a rotating cast of South Florida blues talent. For his Coral Gables show, Wilder will be joined by deeply knowledgeable axeman Bonefish Johnny and harmonica blower Nick Trill, both of whom will sing, too. **BW**



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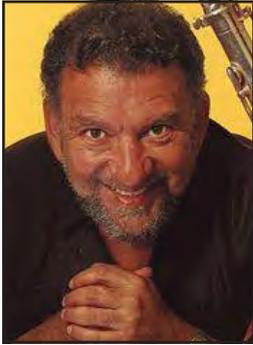
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TURK MAURO
ARTS GARAGE, DELRAY BEACH/JUNE 28

Most people move to South Florida to retire, but tenor saxophonist Turk Mauro did the opposite 20 years ago. The native New Yorker, who'd been living in Paris at the suggestion of Sonny Rollins, actually jump-started his career by moving south to care for his elderly father in 1994. Mauro met Prestige Records founder and area resident Bob Weinstock in South Florida, and his influence led to the powerful-yet-fluid saxophonist's straightahead 1995 and 1997 Milestone gems *Hittin' the Jug* and *The Truth*. Mauro, who also played in the bands of Dizzy Gillespie and Buddy Rich, returns from New York to the scene of his



supposed retirement party two years ago — the Arts Garage. He will celebrate his 70th birthday at the burgeoning Delray Beach listening room with an area all-star band made up of vocalist-violinist Nicole Yarling, drummer Danny Burger, and brothers Mike Orta and Nicky Orta, on piano and bass, respectively. **BM**

NELSEN ADELARD BAND
JOLLIMON'S GRILL, DUNEDIN/JUNE 7

Nelsen Adelard has been playing the blues for more years than he hasn't. Starting out as a 15-year-old prodigy, the harmonica and guitar ace has opened for and performed with James Cotton, Matt "Guitar" Murphy, Pinetop Perkins and Muddy Waters. In fact, AnneMarie Adelard recalls Muddy hearing her husband sing while backstage and proclaiming, "Man, that boy can sing!" A standout on the Los Angeles blues scene, Adelard moved to McComb, Miss., several years ago (as chronicled on his 2008 release *South by Southwest*). Now residing in Dunedin, Adelard continues to perform around town with an excellent band. And no question, he



more than lives up to Muddy's assessment. A superb harp blower and guitarist, the cat sings boogie and blues on a level with Kim Wilson or Mark Hummel. Check out his CDs *Take Me Back* or *Unplugged*, or YouTube for a recent performance at Ella's in Tampa. Adelard and his crew will return to Jollimon's for their monthly gig. **BW**



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