

JAZZ & BLUES

MARCH 2009



F L O R I D A

FLORIDA'S ONLINE GUIDE TO LIVE JAZZ & BLUES



Carol Saboya & Antonio Adolfo



The Nighthawks



Irma Thomas



Terry Adams Crazy Trio



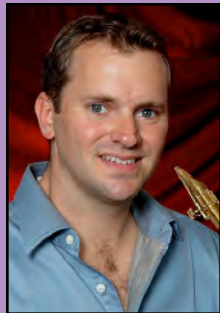
Chick Corea



Legendary R&B Revue



Tom Lippincott



John Michalak



George Benson



Wycliffe Gordon

WINNING SPINS

By Bill Meredith

CHICK COREA MAY BE 67, BUT THE iconic keyboardist is as busy as ever. His 2008 itinerary included a spring tour with vocalist Bobby McFerrin and drummer Jack DeJohnette; worldwide summer dates with his re-formed fusion juggernaut Return to Forever; and a Fall run through Europe with the all-star Five Peace Band featuring guitarist John McLaughlin, saxophonist Kenny Garrett and bassist Christian McBride all of whom will accompany him on the Roots of Fusion Show March 27 at the Arsht Center in Miami. The group will be joined by drummer Brian Blade.

And 2009 looks to be just as eventful. In February, he won his latest Grammy (Best Jazz Instrumental Album) for *The New Crystal Silence*, his latest CD with vibraphonist Gary Burton. And *Duet*, a double-live set recorded with Japanese pianist Hiromi Uehara at the Tokyo Blue Note Jazz Club in late 2007, was released last month on the Concord label.

On *Duet*, Corea proves a masterful duo partner, a skill he's perfected alongside artists as varied as Burton, McFerrin, Herbie Hancock and Béla Fleck. In the technically gifted Hiromi, he finds a near-perfect foil. Although she's nearly 40 years his junior, Hiromi has obviously done her homework. The two pianists conduct a feeling-out process on Bill Evans' introductory "Very Early" while accompanied only by the intermittent clinks of patrons' silverware. Corea shines as both an impeccable improviser and listener, leading and following on several inventive romps.

Listeners will be tempted to pay attention to the pianist taking the lead, but focusing on the accompanist can be fascinating. Hiromi leans toward the piano's upper register by nature, venturing to the deep end on occasion; Corea plays the wise old sage by rhythmically holding down the bottom, which adds extra impact when he traverses the higher-pitched ivories.

The pair includes inspired reads of a variety of standards — the first disc alone features the Beatles' "Fool on the Hill" and Thelonious Monk's "Bolivar Blues" — yet some of the most dizzying exchanges occur on original works. Hiromi's "Déjà Vu" dances between classically influenced structure and free-jazz precipice, as both pianists improvise simultaneously and appear to barely retain control. Ditto Corea's spiky "Humpty



CHICK COREA

Dumpty," which highlights Hiromi's agility in playing musical tag.

Corea first experienced Hiromi's talents 13 years ago when he met the teen prodigy in Tokyo, heard her improvise, and invited her to sit in at one of his concerts. His admiration, particularly for her compositional skills, has grown ever since.

"I had actually met this young lady when she was only 17 years old," he writes in the liner notes. "I was very impressed then, but years later when I first heard her recordings, I was more than impressed... I was inspired."

Disc two features primarily original pieces by both artists. Corea's "Windows," and especially the elegant "Do Mo (Children's Song #12)," set the compositional bar at a high

WINNING SPINS

level. But Hiromi's joyful "Place To Be," and her tonal imagery on "Old Castle, by the River, in the Middle of a Forest," explain why Corea was so knocked out by her writing. The duo also breathes new air into the barely recognizable standard "Summertime," and closes with a cover-and-original medley. Corea playfully coaxes Hiromi into another cat-and-mouse game on the first half, comprising Joaquin Rodrigo's "Concierto de Aranjuez." The pianist's modern standard "Spain" then inspires the crowd to clap along in a raucous finale.

A rising, open-minded fusion star who plays piano and synthesizers with equal aplomb, Hiromi can look to Corea's career as a blueprint. On her own recordings, she has shown similar inclinations toward straddling the fence between acoustic and electric music, traditional jazz and fusion. If she continues on this adventurous trajectory, she might enjoy a career as long-lasting and diverse as that of The Mad Hatter himself.

Chick Corea performs in the Roots of Fusion concert 8PM Friday, March 27 at the Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts in Miami. Call 305-949-6722 or visit Arshtcenter.org/jazzroots.

Chick with guitarist John McLaughlin of the Five Peace Band



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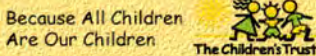


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TOM LIPPINCOTT*

SUNTRUST SUNDAY JAZZ BRUNCH/MARCH 1
 Hollywood-based guitarist Tom Lippincott's unique style is the result of his stellar fingerpicking technique, intensive studies at the University of North Texas and University of Miami, and a custom-made Conklin eight-string guitar. In what he refers to as a case of "pianist envy," Lippincott wanted a stringed instrument that could cover the wider chordal range of a piano. The Conklin allows for this free flow of creative ideas in solo situations, duos with either singing saxophonist Jody Marlow or percussionist David Schanzer (with whom he'll be performing at the Suntrust Sunday Jazz Brunch), and in his self-titled trio with bassist Randy Ward and drummer

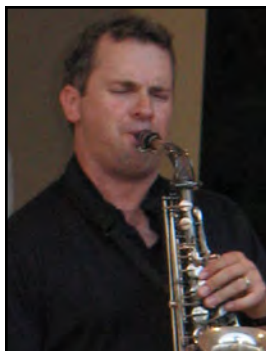


John Yarling. The New Jersey-born, Oklahoma-raised Lippincott also shares his knowledge as an instructor at Miami Dade College in Kendall and the New World School of the Arts in Miami. **BM**

JOHN MICHALAK*

RISTORANTE BOVA/MARCH 2

John Michalak moved to South Florida from Annapolis, Maryland, 20 years ago, and he's since become a first-call saxophonist for everything from solo appearances to international tours by Grammy-winning stars. An established member of vocalist Gloria Estefan's group, Michalak also has recorded and toured with Julio Iglesias, Carlos Santana, Patti LaBelle, Ricky Martin, Jon Secada, David Lee Roth, Sammy Figueroa, and KC & the Sunshine Band. Before he goes to Central and South America with Estefan in April, the versatile Michalak will perform with singing guitarist Jeff Taylor's swing group Oop Bop Sh'Bam, and with his own flamenco, Latin and



smooth jazz trio Urban Gypsy, featuring guitarist Islay Rodriguez and percussionist Michael Rivero. Find the threesome Mondays at Ristorante Bova in Boca Raton, and Tuesdays at The Blue Fish in Delray Beach. **BM**

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THE NIGHTHAWKS* THE BACK ROOM/MARCH 6

The term "bar band" was invented for outfits like The Nighthawks, whose jukebox repertoire and bare-knuckle approach are best appreciated with a cold brew and a lungful of smoke. Ink-skinned frontman Mark Wenner has been leading a version of the band for 36 years, his cutting harp tone and countrified vocals giving The Nighthawks its distinctive sound. Along the way, the 'Hawks have opened for blues royalty such as Muddy Waters and Big Walter, toured with John Lee Hooker and John Hammond, and launched guitar standouts Jimmy Thackery and Danny Morris. The latest incarnation, featuring Wenner and original drummer Pete Ragusa, just released the superb CD



American Landscape. With guitarist-vocalist Paul Bell and bassist-vocalist Johnny Castle on board, the 'Hawks offer a tough, rootsy, expertly-played set that ranges from Tom Waits to Bob Dylan to Marvin Gaye. Castle contributes a couple of raucous originals, and Wenner caps it all with a spirited version of the *Andy Griffith Show* theme. **BW**

CAROL SABOYA & ANTONIO ADOLFO QUARTET MINIACI PERFORMING ARTS CENTER MARCH 7

South Florida Jazz presents a musical family affair, as vocalist Carol Saboya performs with her father, renowned Brazilian pianist Antonio Adolfo. The Rio de Janeiro-born Saboya has released critically acclaimed solo CDs, and also teamed with Adolfo for the 2007 duo release *Ao Vivo/Live*, recorded at Gusman Concert Hall in Miami. The pianist, a Miami Beach resident, became a major figure in Brazil's bossa nova movement of the 1960s. He's toured with Elis Regina and Milton Nascimento, and his songs have been covered by Herb Alpert, Stevie Wonder, Sergio Mendes and Dionne Warwick. A renowned



educator in his homeland, Adolfo also opened a music school here in Hollywood. For this concert of Brazilian and jazz standards, Saboya will be accompanied by Adolfo's quartet plus special guest Gary Campbell, noted saxophonist and professor at Florida International University. **BM**

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TERRY ADAMS CRAZY TRIO ALLIGATOR ALLEY/MARCH 14

Blending Jerry Lee Lewis' aggressiveness and Thelonious Monk's unorthodox approach, any performance by manic keyboardist Terry Adams could be labeled "crazy." Still, his approach will not only crack you up, but leave you in awe of his incredible musicianship. The Kentucky-born, Massachusetts-based Adams is an original member of NRBQ (New Rhythm & Blues Quartet), the influential roots music band that was founded in Miami in 1967 — although the band soon split for points Northeast. For this trio, the keyboardist recruited original NRBQ drummer Tom Staley, plus guitarist Scott Ligon. Predict the unpredictable: Adams will do



whatever it takes to keep audiences entertained, from playing requests and material by Monk and Sun Ra to interpreting Tin Pan Alley songs and movie and TV themes. **BM**

IRMA THOMAS TAMPA BAY BLUES FESTIVAL/MARCH 20-22

Vocalist Irma Thomas proved that time was indeed on her side, as she copped the first Grammy Award of her 50-year career for her 2006 CD *After the Rain*. The 2007 winner for Best Contemporary Blues Album was followed by the suitably titled 2008 release *Simply Grand*, on which the singer furthers her reputation as "Soul Queen of New Orleans," accompanied by some of the Crescent City's best pianists. Thomas rose to prominence alongside Aretha Franklin and Etta James, albeit without the same commercial success. Certainly, The Rolling Stones knew who she was, as they charted a huge hit with a faithful cover of her B-side gem "Time is on



My Side." The Louisiana native has amassed a huge cult following, especially in the New Orleans area. She appears regularly at the annual New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival, and was inducted into the Louisiana Music Hall of Fame in 2007. **BM**

"[Triff mines] that tension of being both compelled by and standing back from nostalgia."
—The Miami Herald

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He'll turn 66 on March 22, but George Benson remains an ageless double-threat, recognized as much, if not more, for his warm and soulful vocals as for his supple and sinuous guitar mastery. As a teenager, the Pittsburgh native gained recognition as a sideman with organist Jack McDuff, and later, on funky Blue Note recordings with saxophonist Lou Donaldson and Dr. Lonnie Smith. Benson became the heir to Wes Montgomery during the late 1960s, thanks to a string of solo and session gems (like Miles Davis' *Miles in the Sky*). After reaching the pinnacle as a player, Benson peaked commercially in the 1970s



and 1980s by adding his rich tenor voice to the mix on pop hits like "This Masquerade" and "Give Me the Night." Benson is the guitar equivalent to a brilliant jazz pianist who later became a vocal star, making his "Unforgettable Tribute to Nat King Cole" concert at the Hard Rock a logical fit. **BM**

**WYCLIFFE GORDON
HARRIET HIMMEL THEATER/MARCH 24**

Trombonist Wycliffe Gordon may be the youngest member of the U.S. Statesmen of Jazz, an ensemble put together by the U.S. State Department, but he's an old soul. After the Georgia native graduated from Florida A&M University, he worked with jazz luminaries such as Lionel Hampton, Shirley Horn and Tommy Flanagan. Influenced by J.J. Johnson and Jack Teagarden, Gordon caught the ears of Wynton Marsalis and became a member of the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra in 1989. Commissioned by Jazz at Lincoln Center, the trombonist's updated score to the 1925 Paul Robeson silent film *Body and Soul* won Director's Choice honors at last year's Park City



Utah Film Music Festival. For this Jazz Arts Music Society presentation, Gordon will be performing with the Johnny O'Neal Trio, and perhaps presenting pieces from his latest recordings, *Boss Bones* and *You and I*. **BM**

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THE LEGENDARY RHYTHM & BLUES REVUE

by Bob Weinberg

BACK IN THE DAY, RHYTHM & BLUES revues were all the rage. For one admission, audiences would get to see artists such as Fats Domino, Chuck Berry and LaVern Baker battling it out for R&B supremacy. In that spirit, an all-star group of contemporary blues stars has assembled under the banner of The Legendary Rhythm and Blues Revue, and will be rolling into City Limits in Delray Beach on Friday, March 20.

The lineup of Tommy Castro, Ronnie Baker Brooks, Magic Dick and Deanna Bogart has traversed the globe and developed more seasoning than Emeril's spice rack. A recording of this high-octane blues summit, *Command Performance*, is now available from the Delta Groove label.

A stinging blues guitarist, charismatic performer and soulful vocalist, Tommy Castro exploded on the Bay Area music scene in the early '90s. On his 2007 recording, *Painkiller*, Castro showed an easy command of blues and R&B. Although he nods to heroes such as Albert Collins and Freddie King, Castro penned most of the tracks here, and offers a terrific read of Gary Schermer's "Big Sister's Radio." For his efforts, in 2008 Castro copped Contemporary Blues Album of the Year honors at the Blues Music Awards, as well as the coveted B.B. King Blues Entertainer of the Year title. The Tommy Castro Band recently signed to the Alligator label, and a new disc should be out soon.

The Torch is the title of Ronnie Baker Brooks' 2006 recording, and it refers not just to his acetylene guitar licks, but also to his legacy. One of the blues-playing sons of powerhouse guitarist and vocalist Lonnie Brooks, Ronnie updates his dad's sound with a modern edge. On "Born in Chicago," the autobiographical opening track to *The Torch*, the younger Brooks shows just how much he absorbed while growing up in the Windy City and witnessing the blues greats who have long called it home. Of course, he also had the perfect spot from which to observe his dad, spending a dozen years as a sideman with Lonnie.

One of the founding members of the J. Geils Band, Magic Dick Salwitz provided the group's signature harmonica sound, often whipping audiences — and his bandmates — into an ecstatic frenzy. Goaded by frontman Peter Wolf's motor-mouth introduction, Magic Dick blows his face out on the Geils Band classic "Whammer Jammer," captured on the band's 1972 *Live! Full House* recording. Magic Dick continued as an integral part of



TOMMY CASTRO



DEANNA BOGART



MAGIC DICK



RONNIE BAKER BROOKS

the group through its '80s hits, and later showcased his deeply ingrained blues chops with 1994's *Bluestime* recording alongside guitarist Geils.

"OK, I'll Play the Blues" is the title to one of Deanna Bogart's plucky original tunes, and the words seem to resonate with the singer and multi-instrumentalist. While she's branched out with adult-contemporary-styled R&B, fans will always want to hear Bogart ripping boogie-woogie on keyboards and blowing fire on saxophone. (She won a Blues Music Award for Horn Instrumentalist of the Year in 2008). Of course, Bogart can also sing the hell out of a ballad, as she does on her own "They Said It Wouldn't Rain," and calls up funky Philly soul and Motown inspirations, as well. The Baltimore-based triple threat has a new disc scheduled for release this year.

For the Legendary Rhythm and Blues Revue tour, each artist will perform a half-hour set backed by the Tommy Castro Band. And don't leave early; at the end of the night, everybody takes the stage for an all-out jam.

The Legendary Rhythm and Blues Revue takes place 8PM Friday, March 20 at City Limits in Delray Beach Call 561-279-8222 or visit citylimitsdelray.com.

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John Fedchock
Four Freshmen
Jon Gordon
Wycliffe Gordon
Jeff Hamilton Trio
Eddie Higgins
Henry Johnson
Tom Kennedy
Kristin Korb
Johnny Mandel
Butch Miles
Bob Millikan
Johnny O'Neal Trio
Ken Peplowski
Houston Person Quartet
Tom Scott Quintet
featuring Paulette McWilliams
Bill Mays Trio
Claudio Rodito Quintet
Lynn Seaton
Marlena Shaw with Trio
Gary Smulyan
Helen Sung Trio
Terrell Stafford
Denise Thimes
Warren Vache
The Wild Magnolias
Scott Whitfield
Anthony Wilson
Rickey Woodard

... and more to be announced
by December 31, 2008



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