

JAZZ & BLUES

MARCH
2010



F L O R I D A

FLORIDA'S ONLINE GUIDE TO LIVE JAZZ & BLUES



Béla Fleck



Leo Kottke



Nick Moss



Paulette Dozier



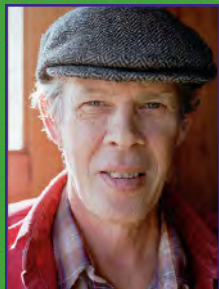
Gary Burton's Next Generation



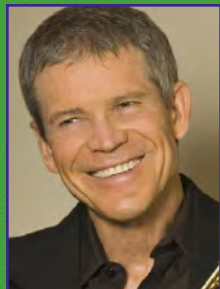
Eldar Djangirov



The Nighthawks



Spider John Koerner



David Sanborn



Cassandra Wilson



Terence Blanchard

WINNING SPINS

By Bill Meredith

TWENTY-THREE-YEAR-OLD PIANIST

Eldar Djangirov seems to have been ahead of the curve his entire life. Born in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, in the former Soviet Union, he started taking classical piano lessons from his mother at age five. By age nine, he was playing at Russian jazz festivals; at 11, he moved to the United States to continue his education. His latest CD, *Virtue* (Sony Masterworks), is the sixth release of his recording career, which started at age 14.

Going only by his first name, Eldar has released his last four albums on the Sony imprint. *Virtue* fulfills the promise of his 2006 CD *Live at the Blue Note* and Grammy-nominated 2007 studio release *Re-Imagination* by blending the energy of a live performance with the immaculate instrumental sounds of a controlled environment—in this case, Avatar Studios in New York City.

Much of that energy derives from the rhythm section. Eldar moved to Manhattan in 2007, and while sitting in with Arturo Sandoval, met electric bassist Armando Gola, who was working with the trumpeter. Drummer Ludwig Afonso was recommended by Gola, and the chemistry among the three musicians is powerful from the first minute of the opening “Exposition.” Also featuring saxophonist Joshua Redman, the track explodes from the start, as Redman and Eldar surf the wave of odd, shifting time signatures set by Afonso and Gola.

Eldar’s touring saxophonist, the Cuban-born, Miami-based Felipe Lamoglia, appears on four tracks. “Blues Sketch in Clave” displays the pianist’s Latin jazz vocabulary, no doubt aided by other members of his fiery touring quartet. Lamoglia’s tenor shines on Eldar’s complex, classically tinged composition “Long Passage,” and the saxophonist adds soprano to Eldar’s electric keyboards on the futuristic closer “Vanilla Sky.” On “Blackjack,” a muscular highlight, Lamoglia and trumpeter Nicholas Payton play darting, interlocking lines as Eldar, Gola and Afonso make standard 4/4 time sound like anything but.

The other half of *Virtue* features only the core trio, but is equally compelling. Eldar plays a beautiful solo intro to “Iris,” a ballad on



ELDAR DJANGIROV

which Gola and Afonso offer delicate interplay, shading and restraint. “Lullaby Fantazia” shifts between 4/4 and 5/4 time and showcases a haunting melody. The frenetic “Exorcist” is also haunting—and not just in title—as Eldar plays both acoustic piano and Joe Zawinul-inspired electronic keyboards over shape-shifting rhythms by Gola and Afonso.

In the liner notes to *Virtue*, Eldar calls the music “a fitting soundtrack to my life and the things I have seen and experienced while living in New York City.” With that in mind, the track “Daily Living” might offer his trio’s best summation. Eldar’s cat-and-mouse piano intro is underscored by backward-sounding synthesizer pulses, followed by shimmering ride cymbal work by Afonso and a pulsating, staccato bass line by Gola. The unpredictable composition simultaneously shows the key-

WINNING SPINS

boardist's respect for jazz tradition and a refreshing penchant for exploring uncharted terrain within the genre.

A decade ago, the 12-year-old Eldar was the youngest guest ever on venerable pianist Marian McPartland's *Piano Jazz* program on National Public Radio. Constantly seeking to improve, he might advance just as far in the next 10 years, especially if he can keep his current simpatico band together. *Virtue's* memorable melodies, rhythmic fury, ace horn players, and the single-minded playing of the core trio mark it an instant classic for adventurous jazz fans.



Eldar performs with his quartet at 7PM March 11, and with the Russian National Orchestra at 7PM March 12, at the Count de Hoerle Amphitheater at Mizner Park in Boca Raton as part of Festival of the Arts Boca. Call 561-368-8445 or visit festivaloftheartsboca.org.

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**THE NIGHTHAWKS
THE BACK ROOM, BOCA/MARCH 5
ACE'S LOUNGE, BRADENTON/MARCH 6**

Amps? The Nighthawks don't need no stinkin' amps. On their latest recording, *Last Train to Bluesville*, D.C.'s toughest blues band chugs through an unplugged set of jukebox faves by Big Joe Turner, Muddy Waters, Little Walter, Sonny Boy Williamson and Slim Harpo, among others. Captured live and acoustic in Sirius/XM's D.C. studios, veteran harpmeister Mark Wenner effortlessly leads the four-piece through these genre classics. Wenner started The Nighthawks with guitarist Jimmy Thackery in the early '70s. Drummer Pete Ragusa came aboard in 1974, but *Last Train* marks his final stop with the band. While Ragusa will be missed, he leaves his kit in the capable hands of Mark Stutso.



Rounding out the band are bassist Johnny Castle and guitarist Paul Bell, whose virtuosity extends from rockabilly and jump to Chicago and Delta blues. By the time you read this, the 'Hawks may have collected three Washington Area Music Awards (the "Wammies" were held Feb. 28). **BW**

**SPIDER JOHN KOERNER
LUNA STAR CAFE, NORTH MIAMI/MARCH 14
DEERFIELD BEACH ROTARY CLUB/MARCH 21
THE GREEN PARROT, KEY WEST/MARCH 26-28**

"Koerner was tall and thin with a look of perpetual amusement on his face," Bob Dylan wrote in *Chronicles, Volume One*, describing the singer and guitarist he befriended at the University of Minnesota. "He was soft-spoken, but when he sang, he became a field-holler shouter." Fifty years later, Dylan's sketch of Spider John remains apt. While passionate about the tunes he performs—from country blues to mining-camp stomps to obscure folk gems—Koerner peppers his sourmash vocals and sparkling 12-string delivery with wit and irreverence. That sly sense of fun has been obvious since he hooked up



with similarly minded guitarist Dave "Snaker" Ray and harmonicaist Tony "Little Sun" Glover, with whom he recorded the seminal 1963 LP *Blues, Rags and Hollers*. Last year, a live recording of Koerner and Glover was released—Ray passed away in 2002—of a 2006 performance at their Minneapolis stomping grounds, The 400 Bar. **BW**



SATURDAY, APRIL 10

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PAULETTE DOZIER
HEIDI'S JAZZ CLUB, COCOA BEACH/MARCH 12-13
GLENRIDGE PERFORMING ARTS CENTER,
SARASOTA/MARCH 14

After studying at Brooklyn College, Panama City, Florida-born vocalist Paulette Dozier ventured abroad, finding audiences throughout South America and Europe, where she also delved into contemporary club music. Returning to settle in her hometown in the early '90s, Dozier also returned to her jazz roots, which are in abundance on recordings like 2007's excellent *Over and Over Again*. In collaboration with pianist and producer Mike Levine, with whom she wrote the sexy title track, the singer invests plenty of emotion into standards such as "You'll Never Know" and "The Very Thought of You," displaying impeccable intonation and creative yet tasteful phrasing. Just as much of a treat are her jazz interpretations of pop chestnuts such as Chicago's "Saturday in the Park," Van Morrison's "Moon Dance" and Al Green's "Let's Stay Together," and her backing by A-list area horn players Ed Calle, Dante Luciani and Jason Carder. **BW**



and activist Dr. Cornel West lends spoken word to six of the disc's 15 tracks, and saxophonist Walter Smith III, guitarist Lionel Loueke, pianist Fabian Almazan, bassist Derrick Hodge and drummer Kendrick Scott contribute to one of Blanchard's best recent releases. Blanchard has achieved the rare trifecta of Grammy, Emmy and Golden Globe noms, and has won four Grammys. **BM**

TERENCE BLANCHARD
ROBINSON THEATER, UNIVERSITY OF N.
FLORIDA, JACKSONVILLE/MARCH 25

Trumpeter Terence Blanchard's latest release, the vibrant 2009 live CD *Choices*, may have been cathartic for the New Orleans native after its two heart-wrenching predecessors. Blanchard has composed the soundtrack to every film by director Spike Lee since 1991, but writing music for Lee's post-Hurricane Katrina documentary *When the Levees Broke* in 2006 literally hit close to home, as evidenced by the trumpeter's anguished commentary in the HBO film. Blanchard also released the haunting *A Tale of God's Will (A Requiem for Katrina)* in 2007. On *Choices*, the mood is lighter, but still thought-provoking.



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 6:30PM MAGIC SLIM &
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LEO KOTTKE

**CAPITOL THEATRE, CLEARWATER/MARCH 19
COLONY THEATER, MIAMI BEACH/MARCH 20**

Guitarist Leo Kottke became a troubadour early in life. The Athens, Ga., native, who was raised in 12 different states, soaked up a variety of musical and cultural influences. His peripatetic upbringing, and influences, including Mississippi John Hurt and John Fahey, helped him create an idiosyncratic acoustic guitar style all his own. Kottke's fingerpicking technique on early classics, like the 1971 album *6 and 12 String Guitar*, displayed a blend of folk, blues, jazz and classical influences as he mixed original compositions with Bach classics like "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring." After achieving cult status in the '70s, tendonitis caused Kottke to downshift his performing schedule and abandon fingerpicks for a classically influenced fingerplucking style. A pair of collaborations with Phish bassist Mike Gordon, 2002's *Clone* and 2005's *Sixty Six Steps*, introduced this ahead-of-his-time guitarist to a 21st-century audience. Ever the charming raconteur, Kottke is also known for his humorous stage patter and engaging vocals. **BM**



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GARY BURTON'S NEXT GENERATION MINIACI THEATER, NSU CAMPUS, FORT LAUDERDALE/MARCH 13

Hard to believe, but Gary Burton actually started his recording career 50 years ago. The vibraphonist was only 17, and playing a Nashville session with guitarists Hank Garland and Chet Atkins. Four years later, his work with saxophonist Stan Getz introduced Burton to worldwide acclaim. Some of the musicians in his Next Generation band may have been as green as Burton was in the early '60s, but have gained valuable seasoning alongside the master vibist and educator. Ukrainian pianist Vadim Neselovskyi, its elder statesman, is barely in his 30s. Bassist Luques Curtis and drummer James Williams are in their mid-20s, and guitarist Julian Lage was discovered by Burton while playing on the 1998 Grammy Awards telecast at age 11. Lage's delicate ballad "Clarity," which closes this band's self-titled 2005 debut (as a duet with Burton), displays



depth beyond his years, as does his 2009 solo debut *Sounding Point*. The group also revamps standards, like Rodgers and Hart's "My Romance," with an ease and grace befitting its leader. **BM**

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**BELA FLECK & THE AFRICA PROJECT
PLAZA THEATER, ORLANDO/MARCH 8
SUNRISE THEATER, FORT PIERCE/MARCH 9
FLORIDA THEATER, JACKSONVILLE/MARCH 10**

Most things that banjoist Béla Fleck has touched over the past 20 years have turned to gold, usually with his funky bluegrass-jazz hybrid band Béla Fleck and the Flecktones. But lately, his Midas touch has applied to everything but. Last year's stellar *The Melody of Rhythm* release seamlessly blended genres as Fleck worked alongside tabla master Zakir Hussain, double bassist Edgar Meyer, and the Detroit Symphony Orchestra. Fleck's 2008 documentary film *Throw Down Your Heart* traced the banjo's roots back to Africa, and featured collaborations with African musicians. Its soundtrack



won two Grammys, and Fleck released a second volume through his website. It too features fascinating cross-cultural performances. The Africa Project band with which Fleck is touring includes Bassekou Kouyate and Ngoni Ba, musicians who play the *n'goni*—the original banjo of Mali—as well as vocalist/thumb pianist Anania Ngoliga and guitarist John Kitime. **BM**

**NICK MOSS AND THE FLIP TOPS
PARADISE BAR & GRILL, PENSACOLA/MARCH 7
B.B. KING'S, ORLANDO/MARCH 9
B.B. KING'S, WEST PALM BEACH/MARCH 10
THE BACK ROOM, BOCA/MARCH 11
BONITA SPRINGS BLUES FEST/MARCH 12
MOJO KITCHEN, JACKSONVILLE BEACH/MARCH 13
COMMON GROUNDS, GAINESVILLE/MARCH 14**

Guitarist Nick Moss built his rep as a traditional Chicago bluesman, whose heroes, mentors and employers have included Jimmy Rogers, Jimmy Dawkins and Willie "Big Eyes" Smith. Moss and his Flip Tops brought new vigor to the rhythmic Windy City sound and earned critical raves. But he takes a hard right turn into heavy, crunching blues-rock with *Privileged*, his eighth release and first to drop the "and the Flip Tops." Moss invests the same passion he has for straight-up Chicago blues into his high-volt hybrid, and *Privileged* doesn't feel like a purely commercial compromise. Moss amps up tunes by Howlin' Wolf and Sonny Boy Williamson, and classic rock lovers will hear echoes of Hendrix, Clapton and Page in his leads. **BW**



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Friday 12	Blues Dragon	Friday 26	David Shelley Band
Saturday 13	Randi & Bluefire Band	Saturday 27	Randi & Bluefire Band

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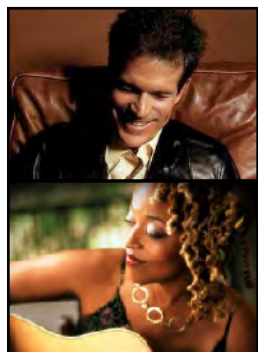
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**DAVID SANBORN, CASSANDRA WILSON
JAZZ IN THE GARDENS, SUN LIFE STADIUM,
MIAMI GARDENS/MARCH 21**

With a lineup heavy on R&B superstars, the two-day Jazz in the Gardens festival presents a couple of heavy jazz cats on Sunday. Alto-sax giant David Sanborn has long straddled the jazz and pop worlds, and his recognizable sound has graced hits by David Bowie, Paul Simon and James Taylor. Although he's cut smooth-jazz albums over the years, Sanborn's heart and chops are never far from the blues. This is particularly evident on his latest CD, *Only Everything*, on which he pays tribute to heroes such as Hank Crawford, David "Fathead" Newman and Louis Jordan through a set of gritty jukehouse classics. Like Sanborn, vocalist Cassandra Wilson comfortably dips into the pop world.



Throughout her career, the singer has lent her honeyed contralto to tunes by Joni Mitchell, Neil Young, Sting and U2. The singer is equally at home with jazz standards, as her Grammy-winning 2008 recording *Loverly* aptly displays. When she digs into the blues, you can feel the humid air of her Jackson, Miss. home town. For more, visit Jazzinthegardens.com. **BW**

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Advertising Info or Listings, contact
our Main Office at 561.313.7432 or
P.O. Box 2614, Palm Beach, FL 33480**

PUBLISHER: Charlie Boyer

charlie@JazzBluesFlorida.com

CONTRIBUTING EDITOR: Bob Weinberg

bob@JazzBluesFlorida.com

ART DIRECTOR: Hope Jason

hope@JazzBluesFlorida.com

CONTRIBUTING WRITER: Bill Meredith

PHOTO CREDITS: Leo Kottke Spotlight by Demi Ebrite Nick Moss cover and Spotlight by Kate Moss, Terence Blanchard cover and Spotlight by Jenny Bagert

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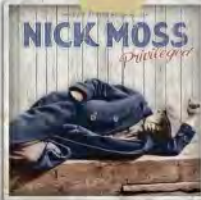


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