

### FLORIDA'S ONLINE GUIDE TO LIVE JAZZ & BLUES



**Tinsley Ellis** 



John Ricci

Albert Castiglia



E.G. Kight



Kenny Clarke Trio



Jesse Jones Jr.



**Big Bill Morganfield** 



Victor Wooten



Sonny Rhodes



By Bob Weinberg

"IT'S KA-STEEL-YA, DAMMIT!"

T-shirts emblazoned with those words began cropping up in South Florida blues clubs over the past few years, the inside joke referring to the frequent verbal mangling of Albert Castiglia's last name. However, a greater number of blues lovers outside our region are becoming hip to the music, if not the nomial pronunciation, of the guitarist and vocalist who grew up in Miami. In fact, last year, Castiglia's original tune, "Bad Year Blues," was nominated for a Song of the Year Blues, Music Award, and actually won that honor from subscribers to the widely read Illinoisbased Blues Blast.

And if he continues to create recordings as strong as *Keepin On*, his third release for the New Jersey-based Blues Leaf label, Castiglia's star should continue to ascend. Over the course of a dozen tunes, the guitarist showcases his ever-increasing skills while delving into blues rock, traditional blues and funk with equal mastery and enthusiasm.

Keepin On kicks off with a hard-rocking read of the Sir Mack Rice-penned "Cadillac Assembly Line." Unlike Albert King's classic rendition, Castiglia eschews the song's underlying sadness and instead plays up its promise of the better life awaiting a Southern sharecropper seeking work in the Motor City. The track's insistent funk riff, speeded-up tempo and fuzzed-up guitar make for a potent update, and Castiglia uncorks a sizzling solo that underlines the song's theme of liberation. As throughout, bassist AJ Kelly and drummer Bob Amsel keep the rhythmic intensity boiling.

Castiglia cranks up the reverb for his original "Keep on Keepin' On," a blue-collar manifesto that takes on the financial crisis. His lead lines crunch and sting as he excoriates the greedy exects in the boardrooms, while at the same time acknowledging that the only option for the working man is to put one workboot in front of the other. Castiglia's vocals, as well as the song's content, nod to one of his greatest Miami influences, Iko-Iko's Graham Drout.

The tune makes the perfect companion piece to Castiglia's cover of Peter Green's sultry "Could Not Ask for More," which celebrates the simple joys of sinking into the arms of a lover at the end of a busy day. "When I put



ALBERT CASTIGLIA

down those dirty old tools and need to sweat no more," he sings, sounding appropriately worn, "I find you waiting at the station/And I could not ask for more." Bill "Mighty" Quinn augments the proceedings with some moody, Otis Spann-style piano, and an uncredited Sandy Mack lends lassitude with some humid harmonica blowing.

A fine Dobro player himself, Castiglia recruited the masterful Toby Walker to play the resonator alongside his own acoustic guitar on a couple of tunes. The pair generate a chugging rhythm on Castiglia's "Sweet Southern Angel," a standout that shows how deeply rooted both players are in the traditional idiom, as they maintain a relentless country-blues groove. They also revisit Robert Nighthawk's classic "Murderin' Blues," bringing it from the urban milieu of Chicago's Maxwell Street to a Mississippi Delta frontporch, while unmistakably calling up Nighthawk's steely, sparkthrowing slide.

Castiglia expertly evinces John Lee Hooker's dirty boogie on "Goin' Upstairs," which features Quinn's heated Hammond B3 licks, and nods to T-Bone Walker with a sparse and slinky



version of "My Baby is on My Mind." The latter spotlights the leader's interaction with just Amsel and Kelly, and allows him space for a taut yet dazzling solo that honors T-Bone without being imitative.

Concluding the album with some of his most jawdropping solos, Castiglia sends listeners out the door with his own "Closing Time," bending and blurring strings with great dexterity and emotion. The guitarist builds the tension on this last-call slow-burner and then lets loose with flurries of notes that accumulate into a veritable snowstorm, relating his tortured inner state on successive solos.

Having recently returned from a midwest tour, Castiglia is poised for fame beyond the borders of the Sunshine State. As documented by his recordings, his already impressive talents just keep growing deeper all the time.

Albert Castiglia performs at 5:45PM July 3 at Boston's Red, White and Blues Fest in Delray Beach. Visit Bostonsbluesfest.com for a full schedule. Castiglia also performs July 10 at Maguire's in Fort Lauderdale; July 13 at The Field in Dania; July 16-17 at the Green Parrot in Key West; and July 20 at Fat Cat's in Fort Lauderdale.





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Albert Castig

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# SPOTLIGH

#### BIG BILL MORGANFIELD LOU'S BLUES, INDIATLANTIC/JULY 2 SEMINOLE CASINO, COCONUT CREEK/JULY 3 EARL'S HIDEAWAY, SEBASTIAN/JULY 4

Carving out an individual identity as a blues artist is difficult enough, but what if your dad was a genre icon? Such is the challenge set before Big Bill Morganfield, son of the late Muddy Waters. Not that Morganfield has run from the association: His recordings have included his father's tunes and surviving bandmates. And certainly, his big voice carries more than a bit of Muddy's genetic influence. However, over the course of four albums, Big Bill has indeed forged his own persona, undoubtedly calling on Muddy's legacy but also updating it with his own songs and point of view. His



latest release, last year's Born Lover, finds him interpreting classics such as "Too Late Brother" and "One Kiss," as well as adding to the blues canon with titles such as "High Gas Prices" and "X-Rated Lover." For his Florida shows. Morganfield, who grew up in Fort Lauderdale, will be joined by Melbourne's own Steve Thorpe Blues Orchestra, BW

#### E.G. KIGHT BRADFORDVILLE BLUES, TALLAHASSEE/JULY 9 EARL'S HIDEAWAY, SEBASTIAN/JULY 11

E.G. Kight consistently wins over blues fans with her soulful Southern vocals, impressive guitar chops and superb songwriting. The seasoned vet, who's also known as "the Georgia Songbird," topped the roots blues charts with her 2008 release *lt's Hot in Here*, which enjoyed frequent play on Sirius XM satellite radio. In May, she performed for an appreciative hometown crowd—and many more—when Garrison Keillor featured her on his *A Prairie Home Companion*, which was recorded live at the Fox Theatre in Atlanta, Ga. In addition to show-casing her dazzling, Phoebe Snow-like vocals on a pair of original tunes—the ripping "Somewhere in Atlanta"



and the moving "I'm New at This"— Kight revealed that her real name is "Eugenia Gail." In fact, she joked, she sometimes receives calls from telemarketers asking for "Egg" Kight (she tells them that "Egg" isn't home, but they can speak to "Bacon" or "Grits"). Catch this charming and multitalented performer this month īn Tallahassee or Sebastian. BW



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# S P O T L I G H T

#### VICTOR WOOTEN PLAZA THEATRE, ORLANDO/JULY 10

Victor Wooten plays his instrument so differently from other bassists that a comparison to basketball superstar Lebron James makes sense. The most athletic bassist since Jaco Pastorius, Wooten began making a name for himself in 1990 as a member of the genre-bending Béla Fleck & the Flecktones. The group's rhythm section also featured drummer and older brother Roy Wooten (a.k.a. Futureman, nicknamed for his guitarshaped drum synthesizer). The youngest of five musical Wooten brothers, the agile bassist—who is capable of slapping, tapping and fingerstyle playing—augmented his work as a sideman with a solo career in the mid-1990s. His touring configurations have ranged



from a duo with drummer J.D. Blair to full bands featuring his oldest brother, guitarist Regi Wooten. On his 2008 CD Palmystery, Wooten features all of his brothers-Roy, Regi, saxophonist Rudy and keyboardist Joseph. A Grammy five-time winner, Wooten has also earned "Bassist of the Year" honors three times from Bass Player magazine. BM

#### JESSE JONES JR. HARD ROCK HOTEL, HOLLYWOOD/JULY 21, 28 LOEWS HOTEL, MIAMI BEACH/JULY 23

Miami saxophonist Jesse Jones Jr. just released a new CD, Father of Scat Hop, that might surprise longtime fans. Jones' previous releases, Soul Serenade and The So Then Collection, were postbop recordings that featured Florida pedigreed musicians like Jones' trumpet-playing brother Melton Mustafa, organist Dr. Lonnie Smith, bassist Curtis Lundy and drummer Danny Burger. The Miami native's new effort, however, is essentially a duo pairing with arranger, producer, programmer and multi-instrumentalist Hugh J. Hitchcock that melds jazz and hip-hop sensibilities. Cameos by guitarists Dennis Sierra and Ike Woods,



vocalist Val Wood and percussionist Joe Collado accentuate Jones' alto. soprano and baritone saxes and flute. But most prominent are Jones' humorous scathop vocals, which blend Southern scat-singing with funk and hip-hop rhythms. This month, Jones teams up with the jump-swinging Dale Powers Band in Hollywood and vocalist Yvonne Brown in Miami Beach, BM





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# SPOTLIGHT

#### KENNY CLARKE TRIO FEATURING MICHAEL LEASURE MATT'S CASBAH, MELBOURNE/JULY 8, 22

Based in Palm Bay, versatile Hammond organist Kenny Clarke plays jazz standards with his eponymous trio, blues with Big Bill Morganfield and rock with George Terry (of Eric Clapton's band), among others. The keyboardist moved to the Sunshine State from Rhode Island in 1989, and his playing echoes influences both vintage and modern—from Jimmy Smith, Jack McDuff and Larry Young to Dr. Lonnie Smith, Larry Goldings and Joey DeFrancesco. Also featuring guitarist Michael Leasure and drummer Jeff LoForte, the Kenny Clarke Trio sounds like an organ version of Erroll Garner's piano trio. On the standard "How High the



Moon," Clarke allows Leasure to solo first, and the guitaristoften a guitar-synth specialist—displays creativity and clean tones worthy of Pat Martino. Then, with Leasure and LoForte providing propulsive undercurrent, Clarke imaginatively blends simultaneous lefthand bass lines, grinding melody and a broad range of ideas as a soloist. BM



Jacksonville-based tenor saxophonist John Ricci's debut CD, the self-released *Holding Time*, earned a 2009 Independent Music Award in the best jazz song category for his composition "Mode Time." An impressive accomplishment, but just look at Ricci's background. Raised in a musical family in which his mother sang opera in Argentina, Ricci studied with saxophonist Jerry Coker at the University of Tennessee, and privately with pianist and former Jazz Messenger Donald Brown. With a robust tone influenced by icons from John Coltrane and Ben Webster to Wayne Shorter and Branford Marsalis, the saxman now recycles his

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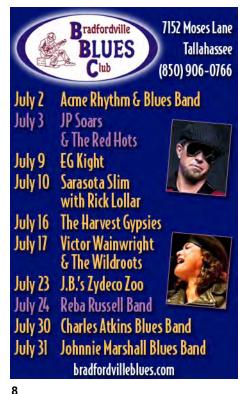
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knowledge as director of jazz studies at Jacksonville University. Holding Time features three graduates of the University of North Florida (where Ricci assistant taught with sax great Bunky Green) in Jacksonville: pianist Joshua Bowlus, bassist Billy Thornton and drummer Peter Miles. All make great contributions to the disc, which was recorded with no overdubs. BM



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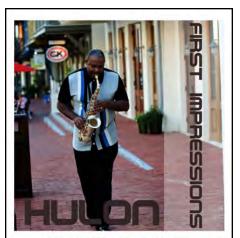
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#### TINSLEY ELLIS BOSTON'S ON THE BEACH, DELRAY/JULY 2 MOJO KITCHEN, JACKSONVILLE/JULY 3

Tinsley Ellis makes unapologetically ear-bruising blues rock. For more than 20 years, his recordings have combined his love of electric blues icons such as Albert King and B.B. King with his passion for 1960s rock gods such as The Yardbirds and Cream. And his most recent release, *Speak No Evil*, follows directly in that path. The Atlanta-born, Hollywood, Floridaraised guitarist unleashes fluid, fiery solos and fuzz and crunch textures worthy of Jimi Hendrix (dig his wah-wah work on the standout "Amanda"). However, Ellis' solos always serve the song, and his hooks are strong and deeply embedded. On *Speak No Evil*, he



once again brings great emotion to his playing and singing, and pens irresistibly catchy riffs and clever turns of phrases. Listeners will marvel at his instrumental dexterity, but it's the songs that stay with you after the stringbending solos have faded. For the full schedule of the threeday Red, White and Blues Fest, visit Bostons bluesfest.com. BW



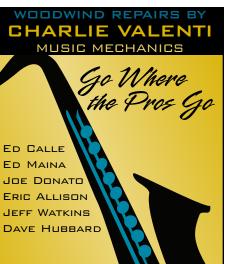
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#### SONNY RHODES BRADFORDVILLE BLUES, TALLAHASSEE/JULY 10 "I'm a traveling bluesman, that's all I wanna be,"

Sonny Rhodes sings on his joyful tune "Travelling Bluesman." "I love to play the blues, that's the only thing that satisfies me." The track hails from Rhodes' 2008 recording, *I'm Back Again*, which finds the 69year-old, Texas-born guitarist and vocalist in great shape on a set of revealing, autobiographical numbers. The title track says it all, as Rhodes recommits himself to the music he loves. On "Smithville Texas," a John Lee Hooker-meets-Slim Harpo-style groover, Rhodes relates how he left his hometown to forge his path in the blues. The singular artist, who's renowned for his crying, lap-style slide guitar, played all over Texas with



Albert Collins and Johnny Clyde Copeland in the late '50s, before moving to California. While his recordings were often critically hailed, Rhodes became best known for his live performances, winning over audiences with his powerful vocals and instrumental prowess. Since then, he's been honored by Congress as a "Blues Legend" and recognized by the Smithsonian Institute. **BW** 



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