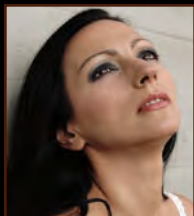


JAZZ & BLUES

APRIL
2011

FLORIDA

FLORIDA'S ONLINE GUIDE TO LIVE JAZZ & BLUES



AMINA FIGAROVA



TAB BENOIT



BIG BILL MORGANFIELD



BONEFISH JOHNNY



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7CROSSING



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LIL' ED & THE BLUES IMPERIALS



MELODY OF RHYTHM



BILL FRISSELL

WINNING SPINS

by Bill Meredith

IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO NAME THE most unpredictable artist in modern jazz, but guitarist Bill Frisell certainly belongs in the discussion.

His 2010 CD *Beautiful Dreamers* featured an unorthodox trio with viola player Eyvind Kang and drummer Rudy Royston. The three soared through a set of evocative Frisell originals, and covers that ranged from Blind Willie Johnson's "It's Nobody's Fault but Mine" to Benny Goodman's "Benny's Bugle" to Stephen Foster's "Beautiful Dreamer." The same trio appears in Miami this month.

Frisell also recently released a duo recording with singing guitarist Vinicius Cantuária (the Brazilian-tinged *Lágrimas Mexicanas*), and a brand-new recording with his 858 Quartet. Due out on April 26, *Sign of Life* (Savoy Jazz) also features Kang, but in a string quartet, of sorts, that's rounded out by violinist Jenny Scheinman and cellist Hank Roberts. And like much of the work throughout Frisell's 30-year recording career—including this same quartet's debut, *Richter 858*, from 2005—the music is virtually unclassifiable.

Whitney Balliett once described jazz as "the sound of surprise," a phrase that Frisell seems to take to heart. *Sign of Life's* opening track, "It's a Long Story," sets the unpredictable tone. The guitarist plucks a delicate, waltzing intro before Roberts fingerpicks a bassline on his cello rather than using his bow. By the time Scheinman and Kang enter with their harmonized lines, the not-quite-long enough story (two and a half minutes) is almost over, although a longer reprise pops up a few tracks later. Throughout the disc, Frisell's signature electric-guitar tone bridges the gap between the instrument and its acoustic cousin.

The subsequent "Old Times" lives up to its title by straddling classical and American folk-music styles. Gray areas between genres are a recurring theme throughout, even as they repeatedly shift. The title track approximates free chamber jazz. Scheinman and Kang's plaintive bowing on the 6/8-timed ballad "Friend of Mine" mixes classical with country and bluegrass, and the gorgeous "Wonderland" blends plucked pizzicato lines with traditional bowed flurries.



BILL FRISELL

Like much modern classical music, *Sign of Life* isn't constrained by only non-American influences. That links Frisell to other unpredictable modern jazz masters who emerged after Miles Davis and his fusion progeny— younger artists such as violinist Mark O'Connor and banjo player Béla Fleck, who weave classical music into their webs without worrying about its supposed purity.

Frisell composed all 17 of the CD's tracks during a three-week period in late 2010, yet their stylistic breadth is vast. For example, the guitarist includes blues influences within "Mother Daughter," incorporates a film-noir soundtrack feel on "Recollection," and folds Cajun nuances into "Suitcase in My Hand."

In a genre he has almost singlehandedly created over the years, Frisell invests electric vitality and fresh expression into familiar song forms. His 2009 *Disfarmer* project provided a stark and dignified soundtrack to

WINNING SPINS

a series of Depression-era photographic portraits, while *Beautiful Dreamers* found him once again refining his view of American song. It's an aesthetic that Frisell has employed in various contexts throughout his career, whether he was performing fusion with the Power Tools trio, beautiful duets with pop vocalist Elvis Costello, or (more or less) straight-ahead jazz with all-stars Dave Holland and Elvin Jones. And certainly, recordings such as 2003's *The Intercontinentals* and this year's *Lágrimas Mexicanas* display his willingness to import sounds and textures from beyond U.S. borders.

So is *Sign of Life* classical, chamber music, bluegrass, Americana, soundtrack music, country, folk, blues or jazz? The answer, of course, is a Frisellian yes.



Bill Frisell performs with Eyvind Kang and Rudy Royston at 8:30pm April 16 at the Colony Theater in Miami Beach. Call 305-324-4337 or visit Tigertail.org.



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MUDDY WATERS BIRTHDAY TOUR
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EARL'S HIDEAWAY, SEBASTIAN/APRIL 3
THE ORANGE DOOR, LAKE PARK/APRIL 4
SEMINOLE CASINO, COCONUT CREEK/APRIL 6**

As the undisputed king of Chicago blues, Muddy Waters influenced everyone from Buddy Guy to The Rolling Stones. His legacy also extends to his son, Big Bill Morganfield, an accomplished performer whose voice and charisma mirror that of his old man's. Big Bill didn't grow up with Muddy in Chicago—he lived with his maternal grandmother in Fort Lauderdale—but his father's imprint was indelible. That link can be heard on any of Big Bill's recordings, a couple of which employ Muddy's former



bandmates Pinetop Perkins, Bob Margolin, Paul Oscher and Willie "Big Eyes" Smith. Naturally, Big Bill covers his pop's classic tunes, but he also displays fine songwriting chops on his own material. For this "birthday tour" honoring Muddy expect plenty of tunes from Dad's songbook. Also dig Big Bill's opener: the Orlando-based Shaun Rounds Blues Band. **BW**

**JOHN MOONEY & BLUESIANA
BLUES, BREWS & BBQ FEST
SEMINOLE CASINO, COCONUT CREEK/APRIL 8**

John Mooney offers a tantalizing mix of grooves that conjures dark nights on the Delta and rollicking revels on Bourbon Street. His 2006 CD *Big Ol' Fiya* expertly showcases Mooney's signature blend. He salutes country-blues great Son House, an early mentor, with a stomped-down read of "Louise McGhee," and pitches a party with New Orleans colleagues Jon Cleary on keyboards, Uganda Roberts on percussion and the late Jeff Sarli on bass. Mooney also includes a potent version of Grayson Capps' second-line groover "Drink a Little Poison (4 U Die)," which he performed alongside the Soul Rebels Brass Band on an episode of HBO's



Treme. A searing slide guitarist with an instantly identifiable sound, Mooney also sings with great conviction, having lived through some of the harrowing experiences of which he sings. On stage, he's among the most powerful, sweat-raising performers in the blues today. He'll return to the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Fest later this month. **BW**

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**TAB BENOIT and
THE VOICE OF THE WETLANDS ALLSTARS
VINYL MUSIC HALL, PENSACOLA/APRIL 6
SEMINOLE CASINO, COCONUT CREEK/APRIL 9
TAMPA BAY BLUES FEST/APRIL 10**

A passionate advocate for Wetlands preservation, Tab Benoit has fought for years on behalf of the rapidly disappearing ecosystem. For his efforts, the Houma, La.-born guitarist received the 2010 Governor's Award for Conservationist of the Year from the Louisiana Wildlife Federation. On his smoldering CD *Medicine*, a songwriting collaboration with Anders Osborne due out this month, Benoit delivers a heartfelt plea for preservation on the swampy cut "A Whole Lotta Soul." And his Otis Redding-inspired pipes are showcased on



tunes like the original "Sunrise" and the slow-blues classic "Nothing Takes the Place of You." He draws plenty of fire from his fingertips, evident in his gritty, textured leads. Benoit's Wetlands Allstars comprise home-state royalty: percussionist Cyril Neville, harmonicist Jumpin' Johnny Sansone and Mardi Gras Indian leader Big Chief Monk Boudreaux. **BW**

**LIL' ED AND THE BLUES IMPERIALS
BRADFORDVILLE BLUES, TALLAHASSEE/APRIL 15
WICKHAM PARK PAVILION, MELBOURNE/APRIL 16
SKIPPER'S, TAMPA/APRIL 17
CHEF JOHN'S, JUPITER/APRIL 20**

Lil' Ed Williams turns 55 this month and he's celebrating all over Florida. The wildly entertaining slide-guitarist and vocalist burst out of the Windy City in the '80s, after Alligator Records' Bruce Iglauer featured him on the label's *New Bluebloods* anthology. Ed's manic energy in the studio was so explosive that Iglauer immediately offered him a contract, and he's been among their top blues artists ever since. Williams learned his steely, spark-throwing slide craft from his uncle, blues master J.B. Hutto, also known for his outrageous



stage getups and high-energy performances. Williams honors Hutto with colorful outfits and his trademark sky-high fez. With half-brother Pookie Young's bedrock bass, Michael Garrett's expert rhythm guitar and Kelly Littleton's exciting drum work to back him up, Williams continues to amaze us with slide runs, duck-walks and a voice as big as Lake Michigan. **BW**

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**BONEFISH JOHNNY WITH PIANO BOB
COCONUT GROVE SAILING CLUB, MIAMI/APRIL 8
THE BIG EASY, HOLLYWOOD/APRIL 14**

The term "guitar hero" is usually reserved for the fastest or flashiest fret shredders. But the expertise and affection guitarist Bonefish Johnny Stacey brings to blues, soul, funk, R&B and roots music makes him even more deserving of the title. Bonefish's tenure with The Groove Thangs, the band he started with his brother Pat in 1984, showcased an ever-expanding library of licks, from funk and reggae to soul and blues. The band's wild mix of styles encompassed a variety of roots music, and Bonefish, an avid scholar of obscure and underappreciated roots arcana, navigated them expertly. After Pat moved to South



Carolina, Johnny carried over his signature "sugarcane soul" to the Shack Daddys, with whom he continues to perform alongside original GT bassist Carl "Kilmo" Pacillo. Teaming up again with boogie maestro Piano Bob Wilder, Bonefish will likely boot up classic blues from his vast repertoire; could be anything from Jimmy Reed to B.B. King. **WB**

**BELA FLECK/ZAKIR HUSSAIN/EDGAR MEYER
PHILLIPS PAC, UF GAINESVILLE/APRIL 3**

Banjo player Béla Fleck, tabla drummer Zakir Hussain and bassist Edgar Meyer collaborated on the 2009 CD *The Melody of Rhythm*, and only such advanced musicians could've ensured that the title wasn't a musical oxymoron. By mixing elements of bluegrass and jazz with classical and Middle Eastern music, the disc showcased Fleck's ability to bring out the percussive aspects of the banjo, Hussain's melodic approach to the tablas and Meyer's gift for harmonically linking his bandmates together. The players share a history of blurring lines between genres. Hussain was integral in guitarist John McLaughlin's Shakti project and in Grateful Dead drummer Mickey Hart's world-percussion ensemble Planet Drum. Meyer collaborated with classical cellist Yo-Yo Ma on the CD *Appalachian Journey* and enjoys a 25-year association with Fleck. And the banjoist's recent exploits include *Throw Down Your Heart*, a col-



laboration with traditional vocalists and instrumentalists in Africa. Fleck continues to work with his fusion group The Flecktones, with whom he'll release a new CD and tour in May and June. **BM**



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7CROSSING CORAL GABLES CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH APRIL 3

Chances are that you've heard the playing of members of the new band 7Crossing—just in a very different setting. Keyboardist Clay Ostwald, guitarist Lindsay Blair, bassist Jorge Casas, drummer Olbin Burgos and percussionist Edwin Bonilla were all members of Miami Sound Machine, the group led by vocalist Gloria Estefan that topped dance-music charts in the 1980s. That veteran quintet is joined by vocalist Joy Francis and saxophonist David Fernandez in 7Crossing, which will debut material from its debut CD, the Ostwald-produced *Relentless*. The disc features a Chick Corea influence in Latin-tinged workouts like the title track, and an occasional Brecker Brothers resemblance through the intertwining lines of Fernandez and Ostwald, who expertly mimics horn parts on "Sedona." Blair's soloing excels throughout, whether on fusion tracks or ballads such as "Once I Loved" and "I'll Remember You," both of which feature Francis' soaring vocals. **BM**



AMINA FIGAROVA SEXTET MINIACI PAC, DAVIE/APRIL 9

Like many jazz musicians who hail from across the Atlantic Ocean, Azerbaijan-born pianist Amina Figarova started out studying classical music (in her case, at the capital city's Baku Conservatory). But with parents who adored Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington and Ella Fitzgerald, she eventually switched allegiances to jazz at the Rotterdam Conservatory, where an exchange program allowed her to continue her education at Boston's Berklee College of Music. And like many prominent non-American jazz composers, Figarova has since excelled in jazz by respecting the genre's traditions while not being shackled by them. The pianist's 2005 CD *September Suite* is an often-intense



response to the 9/11 attacks, as evidenced by her sextet's YouTube performance of one of its tracks, "Trying to Focus." Flute-playing husband Bart Platteau, saxophonist Marc Mommaas, trumpeter Ernie Hammes, bassist Jeroen Vierdag and drummer Chris Strik round out the sextet, which will likely play tracks from its 2010 release *Sketches*. **BM**

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STEINWAY PIANO GALLERY OF NAPLES/APRIL 14

When a child pianist starts improvising while playing works by Mozart and Chopin, it's likely she'll gravitate toward something other than classical music. Such was the case with Bronx-born jazz pianist Lenore Raphael. A classical prodigy at age 7 who even performed at Carnegie Hall, her career shifted when she heard her brother's recordings by trumpeter Clifford Brown. Set to become a music instructor as she graduated from college, Raphael was hit by another thunderbolt when she heard pianist Oscar Peterson. She put teaching on hold, opting to become the burning performer seen in



videos of standards such as "There Is No Greater Love" and "Have You Met Miss Jones?" With a handful of recordings that also showcase Bud Powell's influence—including the live 2008 trio release *Class Act*—Raphael is now a festival fave, a regular at Steinway galleries, and host of *Lenore Raphael's JazzSpot* on PureJazzRadio.org. **BM**

VINCENT HERRING & JEREMY PELT

MUSEUM OF ARTS AND SCIENCES,
DAYTONA BEACH /APRIL 17

Saxophonist Vincent Herring and trumpeter Jeremy Pelt team up this month for a North East Federation Jazz Association concert (2:30PM) pairing two A-list jazz talents. Herring honed his Cannonball Adderley-influenced sound while playing with that icon's cornet-playing brother, Nat Adderley, from 1987 to 1993. He'd previously toured with vibraphonist Lionel Hampton. Pelt arrived in New York in 1998, after graduating from the Berklee College of Music in Boston. He's enjoyed a standout career as a sideman (Ravi Coltrane, Greg Osby, the Mingus Big Band) and as a solo artist. Like Herring, the Miles Davis-influenced



trumpeter can easily shift from cool to fiery, as evidenced on his new CD *The Talented Mr. Pelt*. Expect selections from that album and its stellar predecessor *Men of Honor*, as well as from Herring's deep catalog. The reedman's ability to alternate among alto and soprano saxes and flute will likely dictate the duo's set list. Visit NEFJA.org for more. **BM**

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