

# JAZZ & BLUES

OCTOBER 2011

F L O R I D A



FLORIDA'S ONLINE GUIDE TO LIVE JAZZ & BLUES



## SAMMY FIGUEROA

PLUS...

- A NIGHT IN TREME WITH THE SOUL REBELS BAND
- IKO-IKO WITH NICOLE YARLING AT HOODOO VODOO
- GIACOMO GATES WITH DOUG CARN



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# SAMMY FIGUEROA'S

by Bill Meredith

## UNLIKE SCORES OF NEW YORKERS

who come to Florida to retire, Bronx native Sammy Figueroa has become energized by life in the Sunshine State.

Based in Miami since 2001, the 62-year-old percussionist doesn't look, act or sound like he's ready for shuffleboard and early-bird specials anytime soon. The relocation even inspired him to start his first band, Sammy Figueroa & His Latin Jazz Explosion, after being the Big Apple's first-call, all-purpose session percussionist for 30 years.

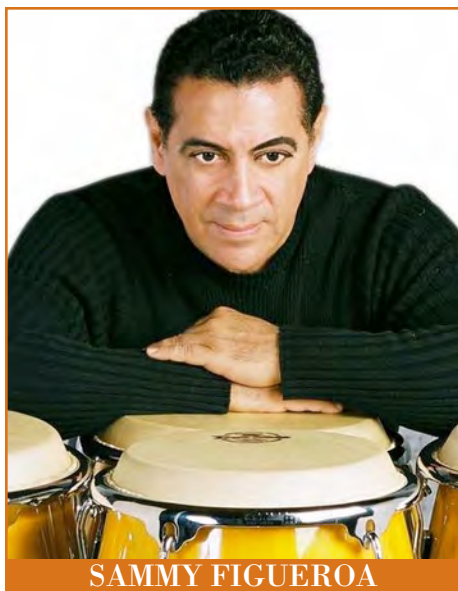
"I live in South Miami Beach now and love it," Figueroa says by phone from California, where he was touring with saxophone colossus Sonny Rollins in September. "I got tired of the neuroses of New York and had reached a certain age where I needed to settle my mind down. Up there, I was working so much that I was risking neglecting friends and loved ones. If you do that, you lose your soul. I was finally ready to lead a band and wanted some tranquility, because as Sonny says, silence is where the music is."

Figueroa's session recording credits require a scroll. They range from stars in rock (David Bowie, Joe Cocker, Mick Jagger), R&B (Luther Vandross, Ashford & Simpson, Roberta Flack) and Latin jazz (Chico O'Farrill, Eddie Palmieri, Arturo Sandoval) to New Age (Paul Winter, Michael Shrieve, Glen Velez) and traditional jazz (Miles Davis, George Benson, Rollins).

"I just did the Monterey Jazz Festival with Sonny," Figueroa says. "He's such a legend that all 20,000 people went crazy. I first worked with him in New York City 30 years ago, and then we went our own ways. But he did a show in Miami a couple of years ago and went nuts when he saw me backstage. He called me a couple of months later, and I've been with him ever since."

Rollins has succinctly stated, "There is no better percussionist than Sammy Figueroa."

The first two CDs by Figueroa & His Latin Jazz Explosion, 2005's *And Sammy Walked In* and 2007's *The Magician*, earned Grammy nominations. A recently released third recording, *Urban Nature*, follows suit in presenting the percussionist's worldly Latin



SAMMY FIGUEROA

jazz with his stellar band of keyboardist Silvano Monasterios, bassist Gabriel Vivas, trumpeter Alex Pope Norris, saxophonist John Michalak and drummer Nomar Negroni. Guests include saxophonist Ed Calle, keyboardist Mike Orta and percussionist Jose Gregorio Hernandez.

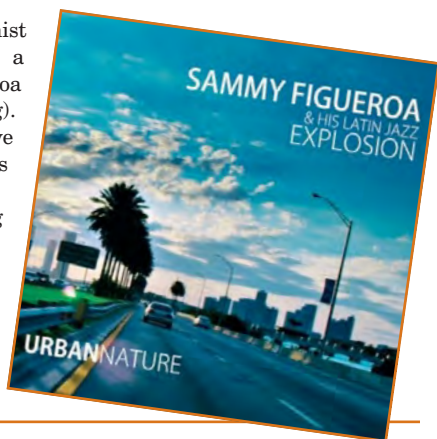
Band members boast a United Nations-worthy mix of geographic ancestries that includes Puerto Rico (where Figueroa's father, Charlie Figueroa, was a singer), Venezuela, Cuba and the U.S. With producers' credits shared by Figueroa, his longtime business partner Rachel Faro, Monasterios and Vivas, the CD features compositions by the keyboardist and bassist that range from traditional cha-cha and frenetic fusion to relaxed folk and humorous bebop. The disc is climbing up both the *Billboard* jazz and world music charts, but in Figueroa's hands, everything is Latin jazz. In addition to playing the subgenre's usual complement of handdrums, timbales, djembes, tambourines and shakers, he also employs unorthodox items like Caribbean steel drums and the futuristic ZenDrum, which samples his own percussion sounds.

All the world's a stage for the gregarious, open-minded percussionist. In recent years,

# LATIN JAZZ EXPLOSION

he's led a touring tribute band to the late vibraphonist Cal Tjader called Sally's Tomato, and started a popular weekly radio program, The Sammy Figueroa Show, on WDNA (88.9FM and wdna.org). While performing music that includes Native American, African and Turkish, he further stretches any perceived Latin jazz boundaries.

"It's a big stew pot," he says. "I'm thinking that my band's next record will include Brazilian guitarist Chico Pinheiro and Hammond organist Joey DeFrancesco. We could use the sound of Jimmy Smith's organ trio, add horns and Brazilian elements, and take Latin jazz into a whole new dimension."



Sammy Figueroa & His Latin Jazz Explosion perform at 7:15pm on Oct. 15 at Coachman Park as part of the Clearwater Jazz Holiday (Clearwaterjazz.com), and at 8pm on Oct. 22 for Jazz at Pinecrest Gardens at the Banyan Bowl in Miami (Pinecrestgardens.org).

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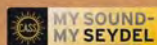
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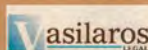
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**JOHN NEMETH**  
**DAYTONA BLUES FEST/OCT. 7**  
**BUCKINGHAM BLUES, FORT MYERS/OCT. 8**  
**OCTOBER FEST, BACK ROOM, DELRAY/OCT. 9**  
**HOG'S BREATH SALOON, KEY WEST/OCT. 10-16**  
**ACE'S, BRADENTON/OCT. 17**  
**PARADISE BAR, PENSACOLA/OCT. 19**  
**BRADFORDVILLE BLUES, TALLAHASSEE/OCT. 21**

Blues, soul, R&B — when you sing like John Németh, categories are irrelevant. The 35-year-old Boise, Idaho, native knocked out blues fans during gigs with Junior Watson and Anson Funderburgh before signing with Blind Pig in 2006. His third album for the imprint, 2010's *Name the Day!* finds Németh in excellent voice, as he soars above a punching horn section on an almost

entirely original set of songs that recall the heyday of rhythm and soul. The singer's positivity suffuses tunes like "Tuff Girl" and the fingerpopping title track. There are also cautionary tales, such as "Breakin' Free" and "Do You Really Want That Woman." Németh was nominated for Most Outstanding Blues Singer by *Living Blues* (he won last year). **BW**



**DAMON FOWLER BAND**  
**BAMBOO ROOM, LAKE WORTH/OCT. 1**  
**CLEMATIS BY NIGHT, WEST PALM BEACH/OCT. 13**  
**BLUZ & BBQ FEST, HIXON PARK, TAMPA/OCT. 15**  
**ENGLEWOODS ON DEARBORN, ENGLEWOOD/OCT. 20**  
**COCKTAILS, NEW PORT RICHEY/OCT. 21**  
**RINGSIDE CAFE, ST. PETERSBURG/OCT. 22**  
**ACE'S LOUNGE, BRADENTON/OCT. 29**

Damon Fowler gets downright spooky when he runs slide across strings. On his latest recording, *Devil Got His Way*, the Brandon-born blues and roots artist raises hackles with his searing slidework and songs that conjure the mysterious swamps of Florida. On tunes such as the title track and "Cypress in the Pines," Fowler paints evocative portraits of the people

and places in his part of the peninsula, utilizing image-laden lyrics, soul-drenched vocals and textured leads to conjure the appropriate vibe. But Fowler also delivers shivers with the ballad "After the Rain," and elicits chuckles with his double-entendre salute to his "Fruit Stand Lady" and the boozey, rueful singalong "Happy Hour." **BW**



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**KILBORN ALLEY BLUES BAND  
BRADFORDVILLE BLUES, TALLAHASSEE/OCT. 20**

Kilborn Alley Blues Band has earned raves for their potent mix of Chicago blues and Southern soul. Admirers include Buddy Guy, who books them often at his Chicago club Legends, and Nick Moss, who has released three of their recordings on his Blue Bella label. The Champaign, Illinois-based band's excellent recording, 2010's *Better Off Now*, showcases the growling but far from one-dimensional vocals of Andrew Duncanson in settings from straight-up Windy City blues to Memphis soul balladry to chugging funk. While harmonacist Joe Asselin has since moved on, Kilborn Alley keeps on chooglin' with its seasoned lineup of guitarist Josh Stimmel, bassist Chris Breen and drummer Ed O'Hara. Having been recognized several times by the Illinois Blues Blast Awards — they took Song of the Year for the way-soulful title track to *Better Off Now* — the group was also nominated for Best Band honors in this year's Blues Music Awards. Their next album is due this month. **BW**



**JOE LOUIS WALKER  
RED, WHITE & THE BLUES  
POLK MUSEUM OF ART, LAKELAND/OCT. 21**

With his flamethrowing vocals and bruising guitar attack, Joe Louis Walker torches any stage on which he strides. Check out his all-star 2010 recording *Joe Louis Walker's Blues Conspiracy: Live on the Legendary Rhythm & Blues Cruise*. Captured in concert aboard the floating venue, JLW and his band welcome a raft of guests, including Johnny Winter, Duke Robillard and Deanna Bogart. The guitarist joyfully shares instrumental duties, but always shines. Dig his inventive soloing on the opening "Slow Down GTO" or the string tsunami he unleashes on "Sugar Mama." JLW continues to rack up accolades, too. This year, he was nominated for three Blues Music Awards: B.B. King Entertainer of the Year, Contemporary Blues Male Artist of the Year and Instrumentalist - Guitar. His recording *Between a Rock & the Blues* was awarded the 2010 BMA for Album of the Year. Walker will perform at Red, White & the Blues at Lakeland's Polk Museum of Art ([Polkmuseumofart.org](http://Polkmuseumofart.org)), as will Tampa's own Selwyn Birchwood. **BW**



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BIG EASY, HOLLYWOOD/OCT. 15  
SATCHMO, FORT LAUDERDALE/OCT. 31**

When it comes to hair-raising tunes, you can't do better than Miami's Iko-Iko. Swamp poet Graham Wood Drout displays a penchant for the macabre and mysterious, as he delves into the darker side of the blues and Southern folklore in his self-penned tunes. Crypt-kicking jams such as "Don't Mess With Voodoo" or atmospheric ghoulfests such as "Miller's Wood" are sure to have you checking over your shoulder in the parking lot after the show. Iko has existed in several incarnations during the past 30 years, and its current lineup is a strong one.



Drout's growling vocals and imagistic lyrics are underlined by guitarist John Wenzel, bassist Mitch Mestel, keyboard maestro Ron Taylor and drummer Daniel East. Dynamic violinist and vocalist Nicole Yarling adds even more depth to the blend of roots and blues. Iko performs on Oct. 31 as part of the two-day Hoodoo Voodoo Blues Ball. Visit [HoodooVoodoo.com](http://HoodooVoodoo.com). **BW**

**HADDEN SAYERS BAND  
BACK ROOM, DELRAY/OCT. 14  
BLUZ & BBQ, HIXON PARK, TAMPA/OCT. 15**

After a string of bad fortune, Texas songsmith Hadden Sayers hung up his '57 Strat and picked up a hammer. While rehabbing a crumbling fishing shack in Southern Ohio, he struck up a friendship with a stonemason. The craftsman not only helped Sayers rebuild a chimney, but helped him regain his confidence. Shortly after, fellow Texas blues artist Ruthie Foster came calling, looking for a guitarist/writing partner and effectively ending Sayers' exile. His 2011 recording *Hard Dollar* marks a happy return. With sourmash vocals and a wry writing style that recall John Hiatt and Joe Ely, Sayers celebrates the Lone Star State ("Take Me



Back to Texas"), its lovely women ("Sweet Texas Girls") and the best way to travel its highways (in a "Flat Black Automobile"). He also duets with Foster on the aptly titled "Back to the Blues" and offers a slowburner worthy of Little Milton or Bobby Bland with the smoldering "Room 155," which he penned in honor of his late pal, Sean Costello. **BW**

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**BENNY GOLSON**  
**FESTIVAL MIAMI, UM CLARKE RECITAL HALL/OCT. 6**  
**GUSMAN CONCERT HALL/OCT. 7**

Even if you don't recognize Benny Golson's name, you'll know the bandleaders who've employed him, including Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Benny Goodman, Lionel Hampton and Dizzy Gillespie. The Philadelphia-born tenor sax icon has enjoyed a 65-year career during which he composed jazz standards like "Killer Joe," "Blues March," "I Remember Clifford," "Whisper Not" and "Along Came Betty." Golson also played a pivotal role in Tom Hanks' 2004 movie *The Terminal*. The film tells the story of a European man who becomes stranded in a U.S. airport while seeking to complete a collection of autographs of the jazz legends immortalized in the 1958 Great Day in Harlem photo. At the 2011 Festival Miami, Golson will offer insight into his creative approach and career longevity during an afternoon matinee before performing the following night with the Frost Studio Jazz Band. The group is one of the award-winning small ensembles representing UM's Frost School of Music. **BM**



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**MUSEUM OF ARTS & SCIENCE,**  
**DAYTONA BEACH/OCT. 8**

Vocalist Giacomo Gates started his singing career in 1990 at age 40, and the latebloomer has been winning critical raves ever since. The expressive baritone's new release, *The Revolution Will Be Jazz: The Songs of Gil Scott-Heron*, pays tribute to the Chicago-born protest artist whose mixture of blues, funk, jazz and spoken word predated hip-hop. After a particularly influential career through the 1970s, Heron fell prey to the habits he often poetically ranted against and died in May of 2011 at age 62 — three months before the release of Gates' tribute. With its title taken from Heron's best-known song, "The Revolution Will



Not Be Televised," and featuring Gates' swinging delivery on classics like "Show Bizness," "Legend in His Own Mind" and "Is That Jazz?" the album seems even more poignant. Under-rated Florida-born pianist and organist Doug Carn will provide accompaniment, as Gates applies his masterful storytelling abilities to the works of the late, great tale spinner. **BM**

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*All programs, artists, dates and times are subject to change.*

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**BELA FLECK & THE FLECKTONES**  
**LYRIC THEATRE, STUART/OCT. 18**  
**CULTURE ROOM, FORT LAUDERDALE/OCT. 19**  
**JANNUS LIVE, ST. PETERSBURG/OCT. 20**  
**HOUSE OF BLUES, ORLANDO/OCT. 21**  
**MAGNOLIAFEST, LIVE OAK/OCT. 22**

A jazz-fusion band with guys who played banjos and guitar-shaped drum synthesizers was unheard of until 1990, when the self-titled debut CD by Béla Fleck & the Flecktones arrived. But the unusual instrumentation was secondary to the improvisational artistry. While Fleck has pursued far-reaching projects, he continues to play with the group that put him on the map. For the first time since 1992, keyboardist/harmonica player Howard Levy has returned to the



lineup, and their 2011 release *Rocket Science* is a welcome reminder of what his keyboard playing and diatonic harmonica wizardry bring to the mix. Combined with Victor Wooten's otherworldly bass playing and telepathic, elastic rhythms with his brother Roy (drum-synth player *Futureman*)—the resulting tones still sound futuristic more than 20 years later. **BM**

**REGINA CARTER & REVERSE THREAD**  
**FLORIDA THEATER, JACKSONVILLE/OCT. 20,**  
**PHILLIPS CENTER, GAINESVILLE/OCT. 23**

Regina Carter's ability to fuse disparate genres and influences has arguably resulted in her becoming the most accomplished jazz violinist since Jean Luc-Ponty. The 45-year-old Michigan native proved capable enough at rootsy fiddle stylings to appear on the soundtrack to Ken Burns' 1990 PBS documentary *The Civil War*. And her early classical training was put to great use on her 2003 CD *Paganini: After a Dream*, which documented Carter's trip to Genoa to play the famed 1743 Guarneri violin owned by the revered Niccolò Paganini. The ever-creative Detroit artist also reveals hints of Motown roots among her effortless evocation



of folk, world and Afro-Cuban elements. Carter's latest release, *Reverse Thread*, is a jazz translation of African folk tunes. Her violin nimbly interweaves with the colors of kora player Yacouba Sissoko, guitarist Adam Rogers, accordionists Will Holshouser and Gary Versace, bassists Chris Lightcap and Mamadou Ba, and drummer/percussionist Alvester Garnett. **BM**

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WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 14, 7:45PM  
**"Singing the Great American Songbook"**  
*Mad Romance*



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**"The Music of Duke Ellington"**  
*Duke Ellington Legacy Band*

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 7:45PM  
**"Taking Love Easy"**  
*Sophie Milman, Jazz Vocalist*



WEDNESDAY, MARCH 7, 7:45PM  
**"Swinging with the Big Bands"**  
*University of Miami Frost Concert Jazz Band and Kathy Kosins, Jazz Vocalist*

FRIDAY, APRIL 13, 7:45PM  
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*Harry Allen Quartet and Bucky Pizzarelli, Guitar*



WEDNESDAY, MAY 9, 7:45PM  
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**THE SOUL REBELS BRASS BAND with**  
**KERMIT RUFFINS, DONALD HARRISON and**  
**GLEN DAVID ANDREWS**  
**SOUTH MIAMI-DADE CULTURAL CENTER,**  
**CUTLER BAY/OCT. 21**

With the popularity of the HBO series *Treme*, New Orleans and its music have received a brilliant post-Katrina spotlight. Yet the series was predated by more than 20 years by the Soul Rebels Brass Band. Funky, danceable and joyous, the eight-piece group mixes Crescent City traditions (their first CD was a Louis Armstrong tribute) with covers of hip-hop artists like Jay-Z and OutKast. The percussive brass band has opened for the Neville Brothers, James Brown, Lionel Hampton and The Roots. The Soul Rebels have also appeared on *Treme*, as have their guests for the high-octane concert they're hosting at the new South Miami-Dade Cultural Center: trumpeter Kermit Ruffins, saxophonist Donald Harrison and trombonist Glen David Andrews. Look for a new Rebels' release titled *Unlock Your Mind* toward the end of January. **BM**



trumpeter Kermit Ruffins, saxophonist Donald Harrison and trombonist Glen David Andrews. Look for a new Rebels' release titled *Unlock Your Mind* toward the end of January. **BM**

**LYNNE ARRIALE**  
**HILLSBOROUGH COMMUNITY COLLEGE**  
**PERFORMING ARTS BUILDING,**  
**YBOR CITY CAMPUS, TAMPA/OCT. 2**

If you're a fan of a pianist who's also a bandleader, seeing him or her perform solo might be considered a lesser option. But in the case of Lynne Arriale, a solo performance is a separate-but-equal entity, even when considering her impressive bandmates past and present. A Wisconsin native, Arriale earned a Master's degree studying classical music before she started playing jazz in her mid-20s. Yet that classically inspired touch — along with the influence of Keith Jarrett and a wide-open mind — has served her well. That mix helped Arriale win the 1993 Great American



Piano Competition, after which she started her 15-year recording career. She now tackles jazz and pop standards with equal aplomb — her 2011 CD *Convergence* features jazz arrangements of material by The Beatles, Rolling Stones, Sting, Blondie and Nine Inch Nails. During this solo performance, genres will merge seamlessly under Arriale's skilled touch. **BM**



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- Oct 15 Big Bend Hospice Benefit
- Oct 20 Kilborn Alley Blues Band
- Oct 21 John Nemeth
- Oct 22 Johnnie Marshall Blues Band
- Oct 28 Harper & Midwest Kind
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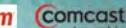
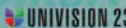
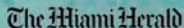
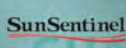
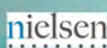
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**December 13, 2011**

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*plus*  
comedian Lee Stanley



**January 17, 2012**

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9	10 	11 *Little Big Band JAZZ JAM Black Box 7-10PM Cover \$8.00	12	13	14	15 Jazz Market (Arts & Crafts) 8:00AM-1PM
16 Welcome Back Jazz Brunch Pirates Cove Stuart 1 - 4 PM	17	18 JAZZ JAM Black Box 7-10PM Cover \$5.00	19 JAZZ JAM PSL Botanical Gardens 6:30-9:30 PM	20	21	22 Jazz Market (Arts & Crafts) 8:00AM-1PM
23	24	25 ** 18 Pc Big Band JAZZ JAM Black Box 7-10PM Cover \$8.00	26	27	28	29 Jazz Market (Arts & Crafts) 8:00AM-1PM
30	31					

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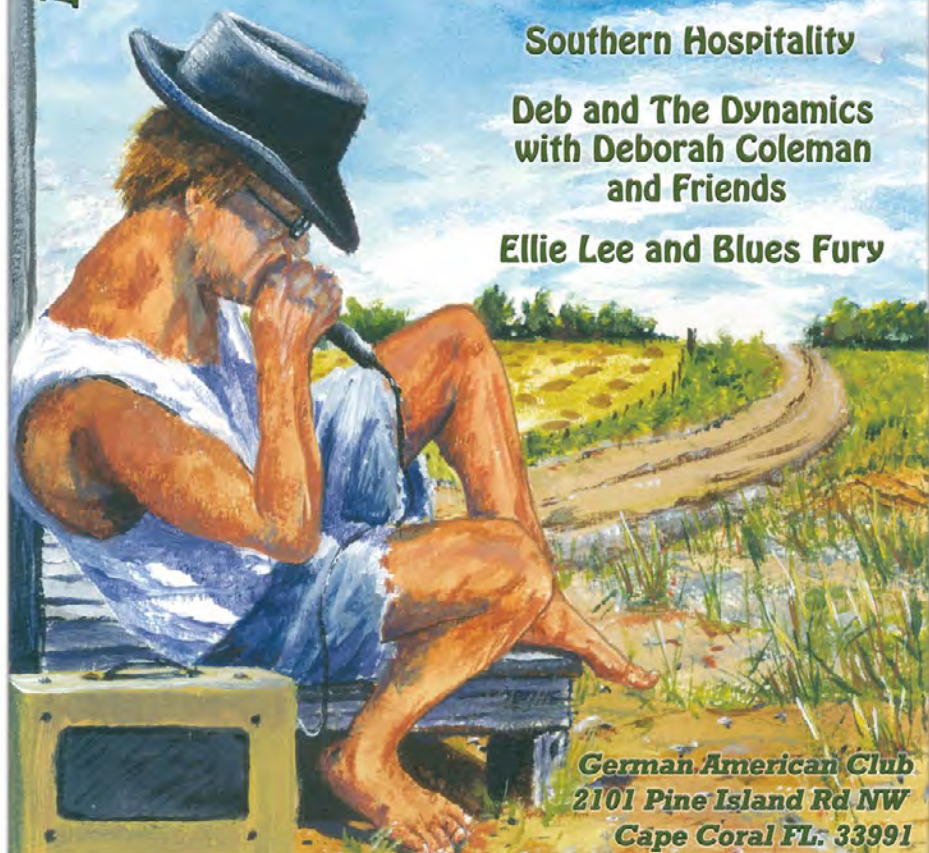
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- February 18 ... Hot Club of San Francisco
- March 2 ..... The Puppini Sisters
- March 3 ..... Barrage
- April 27 ..... Meow Meow



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November 19  
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January 14.....Chinese Golden Dragon Acrobats  
April 14 .....Skippyjon Jones

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February 3-4...Luna Negra Dance Theater  
February 24-25.....Aspen Santa Fe Ballet

March 23-24  
.....Pilobolus



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January 18 .....Amernet String Quartet  
February 8.....Chamber Orchestra Kremlin\*  
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