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SOUTH FLORIDA JAZZ ORCHESTRA

by Bill Meredith



WHEN BASSIST AND UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI

instructor Chuck Bergeron founded the South Florida Jazz Orchestra in 2005, he did so with sound experience in how successful big bands function. The versatile 51-year-old bassist had previously played with clarinetist Woody Herman's famed

orchestra from the early-to-mid-'80s, and then became the final bassist for super-drummer Buddy Rich's big band in 1986-'87.

"I played with Buddy right up until he died," Bergeron says, "and Woody died only a few months later. The Woody gig was predominantly on acoustic upright bass, and Buddy was all electric bass, since I think his hearing may have been fading and it was easier for him to hear. But, wow, what great experiences both of those bands were."

The SFJO crafted much of their early songbook live at trumpeter Arturo Sandoval's since-closed Miami Beach nightclub, then recorded their self-titled 2008 debut CD. The disc featured Sandoval, who's also employed Bergeron in his own touring and recording bands. "Arturo graciously let us have a regular gig to get started," Bergeron says, "so all thanks to him."

The SFJO's sophomore effort, the new themed recording *Trumpet Summit*, links back to the big bands of both Herman and Rich. "Greg Gisbert is one of the guest trumpeters," Bergeron relates. "We met working in Buddy's band. And Mike Brignola, who plays baritone sax and bass clarinet, worked with me in Woody's band. The reason it took nearly five years to get a second record out is that my wife Susan and I had a baby in between."

Jackson Charles Bergeron is immortalized in "Blues for the Terrible Twos," one of two originals by the band-leading bassist; the other is the appropriately titled trumpet workout "Read My Lips." Grammy-winning trumpeter and recent University of Miami faculty addition Brian Lynch contributed the compositions "Peer Pressure" and "One for Mogie," while trumpeter Alex Norris penned the infectious closer "Good Addiction."

The disc's four standards are epic: Duke Ellington's "Sophisticated Lady"; Jerome Kern's "All the Things You Are"; Rodgers and Hart's "Everything I've Got Belongs to You," featuring the ever-soaring vocals of Nicole Yarling; and Clifford Brown's burning opener, "Daahoud." "That was our trumpeter Jason Carder's idea, with three trumpeters [Carder, Gisbert and Norris] going at it," Bergeron explains. "And our producer, John Fedchock, made the command decision that it had to lead off the record."

The brassy CD's other trumpeters are Cisco Dimas, Augie Haas, Wayne Bergeron (no relation) and Kim Pensyl; its trombonists Dante Luciani, John Kricker, Jennifer Wharton, Dana Teboe and Joanna Sabater. The other SFJO saxophonists are Gary Keller, Gary Lindsay, Ed Calle, Ed Maina and Ken Mattis. Rounding out the ensemble are pianists Brian Murphy and Martin Bejerano, drummer John Yarling and percussionists Raymer Olalde and Roberto



SFJO trumpeters with vocalist Nicole Yarling

CHUCK BERGERON & THE SFJO

Quintero. The orchestra's stellar playing, combined with the production of renowned trombonist Fedchok, results in a full, clean, whisper-to-scream sound of a big band in its element.

Bergeron's two-year-old son notwithstanding, the only hurdle toward completing another SFJO CD may be his own schedule in and around the university. "I teach jazz bass, work in the musicology department and I'm the program coordinator," he says. "It's my 13th year at UM — my seventh full-time — and I have 400 students now. There are about seven UM faculty members in this orchestra, plus I play in a faculty sextet; pianist [and UM Frost School of Music dean] Shelly Berg's trio; and I'm working quite a bit with Patti Austin. All while changing diapers along the way."



The South Florida Jazz Orchestra will broadcast live at 1:00PM on Oct. 12 from the WLRN (91.3-FM) Studios. They'll also perform on Oct. 23 with Ed Calle at Miami Dade College; on Oct. 26 for the *Trumpet Summit* CD release party at Avenue D in Miami; and on Oct. 27 with both Nicole Henry at the Miami-Nice Jazz Festival at the Gusman Center for the Performing Arts in Miami, and with Lisanne Lyons at the Banyan Bowl for the Pinecrest Gardens Jazz Series. Visit Southfloridajazzorchestra.net.

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JOHN NEMETH
HOG'S BREATH SALOON, KEY WEST/OCT. 1-7
FLAGLER CENTER, STUART/OCT. 12
BO DIDDLEY COMMUNITY PLAZA,
GAINESVILLE/OCT. 13

Trying to determine whether John Németh is a soulman who sings the blues or a bluesman who can wail on soul is a fool's errand. Either way, the Boise, Idaho, native is an extraordinarily gifted vocalist and harmonica player who writes tunes that stick in your head like sand on a Popsicle. Check out his two new independent releases, *Soul Live* and *Blues Live*. Captured on-stage in San Francisco and Point Arena, Calif., Németh and his exceptional band delve into hook-laden originals from his impressive trio of Blind Pig label recordings.



Németh's "Blue Broadway," "Fuel for Your Fire" and "Name the Day" (on *Soul*) and "Country Boy," "She Did Not Show" and "You're an Angel" (on *Blues*) are damn-near unshakable. And the singer's roots run deep; he exuberantly covers Wilson Pickett and Robert Johnson, proving that soul and blues are two sides of the same coin. **BW**

OTIS TAYLOR
DAYTONA BLUES FEST,
JACKIE ROBINSON BALLPARK, OCT. 5

Otis Taylor is a most singular blues artist. While the Denver-based musician builds on blues, folk and African traditions, he also employs a playwright's keen observation of human nature, and a historical-fiction writer's eye for the personal detail that explains a larger truth. These gifts couple with Taylor's songcraft, which encompasses Hill Country drones, flat-out boogies, lilting African-inspired melodies and stark acoustic meditations, all sung in a cottony, emotive plaint and accompanied by masterful picking on guitar and banjo. Taylor's latest recording, *Contraband*, rates among his best, packed with incisive musical playlets, such as the



spare and gorgeous "Blind Piano Teacher" and the heartbreaking "Open These Bars." Of course, Taylor can also get down with the best of 'em, as on the driving groover "The Devil's Gonna Lie" and the banjo-fueled "Lay on My Delta Bed." Solo, or with his band, Taylor's a riveting performer. Wake up early for his 9:30-11:00AM set at the Daytona Blues Fest. **BW**

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**RICK ESTRIN & THE NIGHTCATS
BRADFORDVILLE BLUES, TALLAHASSEE/OCT. 5
DAYTONA BLUES FEST,
JACKIE ROBINSON BALLPARK/OCT. 6**

With his sharp suits, pompadour and shades, Little Charlie & the Nightcats frontman Rick Estrin crafted a persona perfectly suited to the band's humorous blend of Chicago blues and jump-swing. After 30 years, Little Charlie called it quits, but Slick Rick rolls on with his own version of the band. While Estrin's original tunes are hilarious, his musical abilities are no joke; tone and texture wise, he ranks among the best harmonica players alive. Following 2009's *Twisted*, Rick & the 'Cats have returned with *One Wrong Turn*, another superb set of rocking, jazzy, funny, salty blues. Estrin is unctuous as



ever, crooning salacious lyrics on "D.O.G." and "I Met Her on the Blues Cruise," and dispensing hipster wisdom on "Callin' All Fools" and the title track. This side of Little Charlie, Estrin could hardly find a better foil than dynamic and versatile axman Kid Andersen. Bassist Lorenzo Farrell and drummer J. Hansen keep the beats slinky and propulsive. BW

**JOE "SURVIVAL" CARUSO
ARTS GARAGE, DELRAY/OCT. 20**

Joe "Survival" Caruso earned his stage moniker. The New Orleans native survived a stint in Vietnam and lost his home in Hurricane Katrina, but continues to masterfully perform the blues while based in Debarry, Florida. Caruso's 2011 recording *I Got the Voodoo Baby* showcases his alternately joyful and haunting vocals and fine guitar work in both acoustic and electric settings. Caruso goes from deep-country blues to full-band boogies, relating life experiences in personal detail. "Born and raised in New Orleans, home of the voodoo queen," he sings on the evocative title track. "My mother was a spiritual woman, my father was a hoochie-coochie man." You can also trace Caruso's



musical inspirations in his tunes, particularly on "Jammin' Guitar Joe." "I played the blues for Freddie, Albert and B.B. King," he sings, citing three influences on his playing, and promising, "I'm comin' to your town, gonna raise a whole lot of sand." Expect no less when Caruso and his Boogie-Woogie Boo-Fay band play the Arts Garage this month. BW

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**STEADY ROLLIN' BOB MARGOLIN
BRADFORDVILLE BLUES, TALLAHASSEE/OCT. 20**

Bob Margolin continues to expand upon the lessons he learned while playing with Muddy Waters for seven years. The Boston native was in his 20s when he replaced Sammy Lawhorn in Muddy's band. Margolin has since established himself as an A-list journeyman steeped in old-school Chicago blues, and he's worked with an encyclopedia of blues artists, from Pinetop Perkins and Hubert Sumlin to Nappy Brown and Billy Boy Arnold. In addition to his extensive list of recording credits, Margolin has amassed his own impressive discography. His most recent album, *Blues Around the World*, puts him out in front of Italian blues guitarist



Mike Sponza's band, with whom he's toured Europe. Margolin and company revisit some favorite original songs and a few classics in both electric and acoustic settings. And speaking of blues around the world, Margolin performed in Russia in September, again proving the music's international appeal. **BW**

**MARIA MULDAUR
& THE RED HOT BLUESIANA BAND
THE MOON, DAYTONA/OCT. 26
FUNKY BISCUIT, BOCA/OCT. 27
SKIPPER'S SMOKEHOUSE, TAMPA/OCT. 28**

For the 40th entry in her discography, Maria Muldaur gives it up for another red-hot blues mama — Memphis Minnie. An all-star cast assembles for *First Came Memphis Minnie*, which also features performances by blues queens Rory Block, Bonnie Raitt, Phoebe Snow and Koko Taylor. Muldaur is no Janie-come-lately to classic blues; in the '60s, she sang old-timey numbers with Jim Kweskin's Jug Band, and her recordings have always reflected her love for the sexy, brassy pioneering blueswomen. Albums from recent years, including



the exceptional *Richland Woman Blues*, and *Naughty, Barwy & Blue* have found Muldaur in her comfort zone. Although she sings with as much of a wink as a leer, the singer can still elicit a blush with her sensuous delivery. Muldaur & the Red Hot Bluesiana Band perform the classic stuff, as well as more modern tunes from her recent album *Steady Love*. **BW**

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VICTOR WOOTEN
PONTE VEDRA CONCERT HALL/OCT. 4
CULTURE ROOM, FORT LAUDERDALE/OCT. 5
ROCK FOR HUNGER FEST,
PLAZA THEATRE, ORLANDO/OCT. 6
STATE THEATRE, ST. PETERSBURG/OCT. 7

Since he emerged on Béla Fleck and the Flecktones' 1990 debut CD, Victor Wooten has been among the few bassists to measure up to the late Jaco Pastorius. His advanced, athletic arsenal of slapped, tapped and finger-picked lines were nurtured within his musical family, which includes his brothers, guitarist Regi Wooten, and drummer and Flecktones bandmate Roy "Futureman" Wooten. The forward-looking bassist recently unveiled his latest conceptual project, the simultane-



aneously released *Words and Tones* (featuring an assortment of vocalists) and *Sword and Stone* (instrumental arrangements of the same songs). Wooten's tour band features singing multi-instrumentalists adept enough to switch instruments mid-song. Wooten included: The leader plays electric, tenor and upright basses, cello and guitar. **BM**

DAVE LIEBMAN
WITH THE FROST CONCERT JAZZ BAND
FESTIVAL MIAMI, GUSMAN CONCERT HALL,
UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI/OCT. 9

Dave Liebman rose to fame in Miles Davis' fusion bands, appearing on iconic albums like *On the Corner*, *Dark Magus* and *Get Up With It* from 1970 to '74. But the 66-year-old tenor and soprano saxophonist and flutist was in drummer Elvin Jones' group before that, and he's done plenty in the nearly 40 years since. The Brooklyn native is the longtime leader of both a self-titled quartet and an 18-piece big band; has appeared on recordings with Chick Corea, John McLaughlin and McCoy Tyner; and authored the 2012 autobiography *What It Is: The Life of a Jazz Artist*. Lieb is such an in-demand session player



that his recent releases are on labels based in the U.S., Switzerland, Italy, Germany and France (with artists like saxophonist Lee Konitz, pianist Richie Bierach and guitarist John Abercrombie), and he was named a 2011 NEA Jazz Master. For this performance, he'll appear with the University of Miami's highly regarded Frost Concert Jazz Band. **BM**

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FIU Big Band / James Hacker, Director

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 12, 7:45PM

"Let's Misbehave: The Music of Cole Porter"
Cheryl Bentleyne, Jazz Vocalist



WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 9, 7:45PM

"Majesty of the Trumpet: From Armstrong to Faddis"
Jon Faddis Quartet

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 7:45PM*

"Going to the Mardi Gras"
Michael Kaeshammer, Pianist/Vocalist



WEDNESDAY, MARCH 6, 7:45PM

"Long Live the King: Allan Harris Sings Nat King Cole"
Allan Harris Quintet

FRIDAY, APRIL 12, 7:45PM

"Mays at the Movies"
Bill Mays Trio



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ESPERANZA SPALDING

FLORIDA THEATER, JACKSONVILLE/OCT. 21

Anyone surprised by the Grammy-winning success of 27-year-old bassist and vocalist Esperanza Spalding couldn't possibly know what she was doing at age 5 while growing up in Portland, Ore. The 2011 Best New Artist Grammy winner, whose fourth solo release is this year's *Radio Music Society*, taught herself to play violin well enough at that age to be accepted into the child-and-adult Chamber Music Society of Oregon. By age 15, she'd been named concertmaster. Spalding's arc then continued on bass, as her proficiency on both the acoustic and electric variations of the instrument (plus a soaring voice) led not only to her graduation from the Berklee College of Music — but also to her becoming

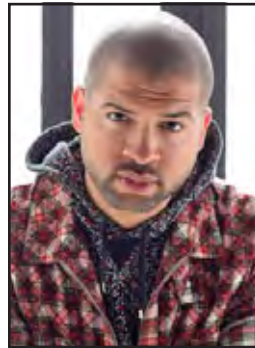


the youngest instructor there at age 20. Her studies at Berklee also helped spread the word about the young phenom, leading to sessions with the likes of Pat Metheny, Joe Lovano, Stanley Clarke, Mike Stern and Jack DeJohnette, as well as the versatile Spalding's own worldly, multicultural catalog of jazz and classical music. **BM**

JASON MORAN AND THE BANDWAGON

FESTIVAL MIAMI, GUSMAN CONCERT HALL, UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI/OCT. 24

Most recording artists start their careers as green as new corn, but pianist Jason Moran has always been wise beyond his years. The Houston native recorded sessions for saxophonist Greg Osby while still studying at the Manhattan School of Music, which in turn led to the pianist's own recording contract. Moran's 1999 debut, *Soundtrack to Human Motion*, set the then-24-year-old on a path toward both critical and commercial success. At 37, he's now artistic adviser for jazz at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. Alternately inspired by Thelonious Monk, classical composer Maurice Ravel and visual artist Jean-Michel



Basquiat, Moran first formed his trio The Bandwagon (with bassist Tarus Mateen and drummer Nasheet Waits) for 2000's *Facing Left*. The group celebrated their 10th anniversary with the aptly titled 2010 CD *Ten*, and will offer a glimpse into the chemistry and telepathy that come with keeping a gifted trio together for more than a decade. **BM**

PONTE VEDRA CONCERT HALL



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Victor Wooten



October 18
George Clinton



October 19
John Hiatt
& The Combo




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MELTON MUSTAFA
ARTS GARAGE, DELRAY BEACH/OCT. 26

The title of Melton Mustafa's fourth CD, *The Traveling Man*, is ironic, since the reason the soaring trumpeter isn't a global star is likely that he hasn't traveled enough. Rather, Mustafa decided to pay his talent and knowledge forward, becoming an iconic regional educator and performer in the process. A Miami native, he's played with big bands led by and named for Jaco Pastorius, Count Basie and Duke Ellington. The director of jazz studies at Florida Memorial University joined the faculty in 1996, and the school instituted the annual Melton Mustafa Jazz Festival, which celebrates its 17th anniversary in February. The small-combo recording *The Traveling Man* follows big band outings *Boiling Point* and



St. Louis Blues, as well as the quartet album *Scenes From Miami Vol. 1: The Softer Side*. The new disc also finds the trumpeter in A-list company: pianist Mulgrew Miller, bassist Essiet Essiet and drummer Victor Lewis. Mustafa, who recently battled prostate cancer, performed a rousing big band concert last month for the Sunshine Jazz Organization. **BM**

DEE DEE BRIDGEWATER
MIAMI-NICE JAZZ FESTIVAL, GUSMAN CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS, MIAMI/OCT. 26

Vocalist Dee Dee Bridgewater was born in the blues hotbed of Memphis and raised in the Motown satellite of Flint, Mich. A masterful interpreter, she cut her teeth alongside jazz giants Sonny Rollins, Dizzy Gillespie, Max Roach, Dexter Gordon and the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Big Band in the '70s. The singer also found success in the theater, winning a Tony for her performance in *The Wiz* in 1975, and starring in productions of *Sophisticated Ladies* and *Carmen*. Bridgewater has long had an affinity for Billie Holiday; she portrayed the tragic jazz icon onstage in *Lady Day*, and she copped her third Grammy last year for the tribute CD *Eleanora Fagan (1915-1959)*:



To Billie With Love From Dee Dee. The vocalist's latest CD, *Midnight Sun*, is a compilation of standards from several previous releases (including the double-Grammy-winning *Dear Ella*). Bridgewater recently performed at the Monterey Jazz Fest's 55th anniversary celebration, and she is part of the festival's **c o m m e m o r a t i v e** touring band. **BM**



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