

FLORIDA'S ONLINE GUIDE TO LIVE JAZZ & BLUES

**FEATURED ARTIST** 

# RODNEY KENDRICK TRIO with RHONDA ROSS

FRANC ROBERT & THE BOXCAR TOURISTS • GREGORY PORTER

WALLEN TOUSSAINT • SUBLIME SAXOPHONE SUMMIT

BILL CHARLAP TRIO • BILLY BRANCH & THE SONS OF BLUES

ROCKIN' JAKE BAND - CHAMPIAN FULTON

# RODNEY KENDRICK TRIO

by Bill Meredith

#### PHILADELPHIA-BORN, MIAMI-RAISED

pianist Rodney Kendrick started his professional career by playing R&B and funk with Harold Melvin and the Blue Notes, James Brown and George Clinton. He then moved to New York City, where he still resides, in 1980 to focus on a jazz career that's included work with Abbey Lincoln, Freddie Hubbard and George Benson, plus a half-dozen solo recordings. Just don't try to tell him there's a difference.

"I don't believe in those distinctions," Kendrick says. "I don't distinguish between Charlie Parker, Michael Jackson and Tupac Shakur. It all comes from the same creative ingenuity. James Brown loved to use cats from Miami. George Clinton was hanging out on South Beach in the '70s. And they were making the popular music of their era."

Kendrick's upbringing suits the well-versed pianist. His father, blind keyboardist James "Jimmy Kay" Kendrick, worked with iconic jazz saxophonists Illinois Jacquet, Sonny Stitt and Sam Rivers before his death last December at age 86. His mother, gospel vocalist Juet, is now 95.

"I heard a lot of traditional gospel music through my mother growing up," Kendrick says. "And my father was a bad boy. The reason he got those jazz gigs was that he could play the blues and be funky."

Since 1996, Kendrick has been married to actress and vocalist Rhonda Ross. Her parents, singer Diana Ross and producer and Motown Records founder Berry Gordy, helped to create a vibrant new sound by merging 1960s soul with popular music. But Kendrick doesn't put much stock in that term, either.

"Popular music is a generational thing," he says. "When you look at it historically, ragtime



was the popular music in the black communities from the turn of the century into the 1920s. Then it turned into swing, and then bebop, until people like my father-in-law created the Motown sound.



Then it went into R&B, followed by hip-hop. Now, I feel like it's gospel artists who best encompass the history of black music."

The latest in Kendrick's handful of solo albums is this year's sublime *The Colors of Rhythm* (Impulse!), currently available in the United States only as an import. Bassist Curtis Lundy, who goes back with the pianist to his Miami days, and drummer Cindy Blackman-Santana accompany Kendrick on his original compositions and uniquely arranged standards.

The pianist filters the influence of Thelonious Monk into Fats Waller's playful "Honeysuckle Rose" plus a de-accelerated take on the Juan Tizol/Duke Ellington hit "Caravan," and, of course, into his pensive, unaccompanied intro to Monk's "'Round Midnight." Originals include the slow, Ellington-shaded swing of "Music DNA" and the plaintive ballad "Remembering," with its Charles Mingus undertones and Blackman-Santana's expert brushwork. "Cindy" is Kendrick's energetic showcase for the drummer,

# RODNEY KENDRICK TRIO

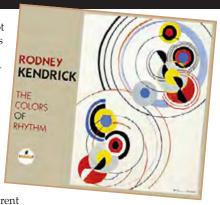
who drops bombs à la the late Art Blakey. "Cindy got very close to Blakey," Kendrick says. "He was a serious mentor to her."

Kendrick's formal schooling at the University of Miami and New York University was interrupted when he got the call to learn while he earned with Harold Melvin and the Blue Notes. Since then, he's been booked everywhere from Big Apple clubs to overseas venues. Surprisingly, his performance this month will be a long-awaited return to his former hometown.

"I'm playing in South Africa soon, but I haven't performed in Miami since the '70s," Kendrick says. "I played a lot there at a club called the Galaxy, and

there was jazz and R&B all over town. I'm sure it's different  $\,$ 

now. Rhonda will sing at this show. Other than that, I don't know who I'll play with yet, or what we'll play. But I know plenty of great Miami musicians, and plenty of tunes."



The Rodney Kendrick Trio will perform with Rhonda Ross on Dec. 5 at the Betty T. Ferguson Recreational Complex Amphitheater in Miami Gardens. The event begins at 6:30pm. Call 305-474-3011 or visit Miamigardens-fl.gov.

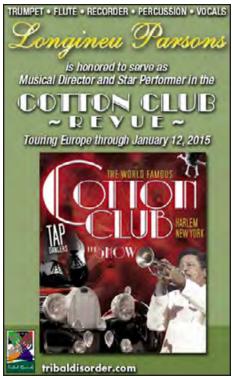






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MARCIA BALL FUNKY BISCUIT, BOCA RATON/DEC. 5 (with Jimmy Thackery & The Drivers)

BRADENTON BLUES FEST, RIVERWALK/DEC. 6

Hailing from Vinton, La., Marcia Ball grew up with the twin influences of Texas blues and New Orleans boogie. The pianist-vocalist also seasons her mix with flavors from the Gulf Coast and the bayou. Her latest recording — among her best — *The Tattooed Lady and the Alligator Man* showcases Ball's original music, which drinks deep from Bourbon Street bars and Austin juke joints, and kicks up its heels at Cajun crawfish boils. Happily, the spotlight remains on Ball's thundering piano, as she boogies with authority on tunes like the carny love story title track and the unapologetic booty-shaker "Can't



Blame Nobody But Myself." She's equally effective on the standout "Lazy Blues," which lives up to its title with a too-humid-to-move tempo and a thirsty vocal. Ball and her seasoned road band will share the bill with Jimmy Thackery & the Drivers in Boca, and she and acoustic picker Dave Muskett will play between acts at the Bradenton Blues Fest BW

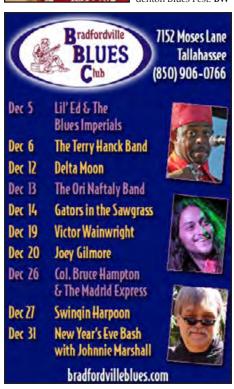
#### GREG ABATE QUARTET UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH, SARASOTA/DEC. 5 CHARLOTTE COUNTY CULTURAL CENTER,

#### PORT CHARLOTTE/DEC. 8

Primarily an alto player, Greg Abate also displays his mastery of soprano and baritone saxes on his new CD, Motif. The Massachusetts native blended bi-coastal learning with earning, beginning in the late '60s. Studies at Berklee in Boston led to gigs including the lead alto spot in Ray Charles' band in 1973. The versatile Abate started his solo-recording career in 1980. On Motif, he's deftly accompanied by pianist Tim Ray and the solid, swinging rhythm section of bassist John Lockwood and drummer Mark Walker. The CD follows Abate's acclaimed



2011 tribute to hardbopper Horace Silver (Horace Is Here, with Hilton Ruiz on piano); a 2012 release with a primary sax influence (The Greg Abate Quintet Featuring Phil Woods); and a 2013 salute to Brubeck (Time for Dave, with Mike Levine on piano). Expect playful numbers from the new disc, like "Swingin' at the Cookie" and "Buddv's Rendezvous." BM





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#### CHAMPIAN FULTON PICASSO'S JAZZ, PENSACOLA/DEC. 9

For Champian Fulton, jazz was a family business. The singing pianist's dad, jazz trumpeter and educator Stephen Fulton, encouraged her from an early age, as did his musician pals. In fact, her first paying gig — at age 10 — was playing trumpeter Clark Terry's 75th birthday. Nearly 20 years later, Fulton is a vital part of the New York City jazz scene and has earned critical acclaim for her recordings. Her latest, *Change Partners: Live at Yardbird Suite* (Cellar Live), captures her on stage at the popular venue in Edmonton, Alberta. Fulton displays her personality, energy and ability to shift from purr to propulsion on enduring standards such as the title track, "Social Call" and "Get Out of Town." Through-



out, her sly vocals and spry playing are supported by saxophonist Cory Weeds, bassist Jodi Proznick and drummer Julian MacDonough. Citing influences such as pianists Bud Powell and Red Garland, and singers Sarah Vaughan and Dinah Washington, Fulton's been named a Rising Jazz Star two years running in Down Beat's critics' poll. BM

FRANC ROBERT & THE BOXCAR TOURISTS SPRINGER'S SALOON, NEW PORT RICHEY/DEC. 5 FISHERMAN'S SHACK, HUDSON/DEC. 12-13 FLORIDA BOTANICAL GARDENS, LARGO/DEC. 18 (solo, 6:30 and 7:30 PM)

THE COVE, HUDSON/DEC. 19

#### MUSIC IN THE PARK, CRYSTAL RIVER/DEC. 20

Franc Robert is no tourist when it comes to the blues. Just cue up any track to his powerful 2014 solo-acoustic album *Ride the Iron Road*. With great intensity and humor, he recalls icons such as Son House and Charley Patton on originals that sound like country-blues classics, but also incorporates Bo Diddley beats and Chicago blues influences. A fixture on the Tampa scene since the '90s, Robert has helmed his trio, the Boxcar Tourists, since



2010. The singular vocalist and expert picker and slide guitarist performs with bandmates Sam Mudd on bass and Dave Simmons on drums, but also goes it alone for the Largo shows. The latter should provide a spotlight for Robert's bottleneck-slide skills on National Steel guitar, as well as originals from Ride the Iron Road, including a homage to his chihuahua BW





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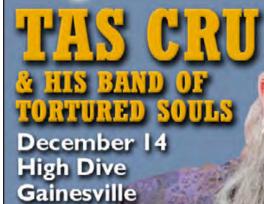
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#### BILLY BRANCH & THE SONS OF BLUES BRADENTON BLUES FEST, RIVERWALK/DEC. 6

You could hardly ask for better training in Chicago blues than the kind Billy Branch received. The now-62-year-old harmonica ace was still in college when Willie Dixon took him on the road with his Chicago All-Stars. Having spent a half-dozen years alongside Dixon, Branch formed Sons of Blues in the '70s, recruiting other young up-and-comers such as Lurrie Bell and Carl Weathersby and continuing to tour and record with various incarnations over the years. And their hard and funky Chicago blues sound rolls on, as can be heard on Blues Shock, the group's latest CD, released earlier this year. Branch remains one of the blues' most exciting harp blowers, his sound deeply rooted in Windy City



tradition, but hardly stuck in the past. Boasting a gritty tone, Branch nods to heroes such as Carey Bell and Little Walter, and sings originals and blues classics in an engaging, throaty style. SOB drum stalwart Moses Rutues Jr. provides the beats behind Branch, guitarist Dan Carelli, kevboardist Sumito Ariyoshi and bassist

#### BILL CHARLAP TRIO

#### BROWARD CENTER, FORT LAUDERDALE/DEC. 10

The odds of Bill Charlap's becoming a musician were pretty solid. He was born in New York City 48 years ago to Moose Charlap, a Broadway composer, and Sandy Stewart, who sang with Benny Goodman's band and had a pop hit in 1962. In fact, the lyrical pianist's 20-year solo-recording career includes a 2005 duet CD with his mom, Love Is Here to Stay. Charlap has also created extended musical families. He married pianist Renee Rosnes in 2007, and in 2010 the couple released the acclaimed dual-piano CD Double Portrait. Then there's Charlap's trio with bassist Peter Washington and drummer Kenny Washington. He's toured and recorded with the unrelated rhythm experts since



1997, and their latest release is the superb 2007 CD Live at the Village Vanguard. During their Fort Lauderdale concert for the Gold Coast Jazz Society, the trio might play songs by Gerry Mulligan (in whose band Charlap once played), Cole Porter, George Gershwin and Leonard Bernstein, to all of whom the pianist has paid recorded tribute. BM







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#### JIMMY HEATH/BENNY GOLSON/JAVON JACKSON MINIACI CENTER, FORT LAUDERDALE/DEC. 13

Tenor saxophonist Javon Jackson, 49, learned to respect his elders, in part, by playing in the last incarnation of Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers from 1987 until the nurturing drummer/bandleader's death in 1990. Jackson returns the favor by hosting two of his primary tenor influences, Jimmy Heath and Benny Golson (pictured), in this one-time-only summit. The Philadelphia-born Heath, 88, was so accomplished on alto sax — Charlie Parker's instrument — that he was nicknamed "Little Bird" before her switched to tenor. One of the legendary Heath Brothers (along with bassist Percy and drummer Albert, a.k.a. "Tootie"), he's worked with Dizzy Gillespie, Miles Davis and Freddie Hubbard during a 70-year career. Golson,



85, was also born in Philly, and his tone and influence are likewise inimitable. Many of his compositions, like "Killer Joe" and "Whisper Not," have become standards. Attendees can expect to hear these titles, plus Heath classics like "For Miles and Miles," and other timeless selections by Jackson during this Sublime Sax Summit of tenor titans BM

#### ALLEN TOUSSAINT RITZ THEATRE, JACKSONVILLE/DEC. 13

After Katrina chased him from his native New Orleans in 2005, legendary songwriter Allen Toussaint relocated to New York City. There he found receptive audiences for his solo-piano shows, in which he revisited hits he wrote for everyone from Dr. John, Irma Thomas and Ernie K-Doe to Three Dog Night, Glen Campbell and The Pointer Sisters. While he's since moved back to the Crescent City, Toussaint was captured during a couple of shows at Joe's Pub, his New York headquarters, in 2009, for the career-spanning 2013 CD/DVD Songbook. Alone at the piano, he charmingly recounts the origins of his songs, then proceeds to play them with an elegantly rollicking touch and sing in a soulful,



engaging tenor. The results are a lesson in New Orleans songcraft spanning five decades, as he digs into staples such as "Mother-in-"Working in Law," the Coal Mine," "It's "Brickyard Raining," Blues" and "Get Out of My Life, Woman." At 76, Toussaint's still among his own best interpreters. Don't miss his one-night stand in Iacksonville. BW



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ROCKIN' JAKE BAND FUNKY BISCUIT, BOCA RATON/DEC. 4 CRAWDADDY'S, JENSEN BEACH/DEC. 19 SMOKE INN, DELRAY BEACH/DEC. 20 JOHNSON STREET BANDSHELL, HOLLYWOOD BEACH/DEC. 27

Rockin' Jake is another artist chased from New Orleans by Katrina. Currently based in West Palm Beach, the harmonica ace brings the sizzle every time he hits the stage, masterfully serving up a mix of Chicago blues, swamp-pop and boogie. The Connecticut-born harpster cut his teeth on a red-hot Northeast blues scene — Jerry Portnoy, Duke Robillard, Roomful of Blues — before hitting the Crescent City in 1990. There he found work with stalwarts such as Eddie Bo, Mar-



va Wright and Coco Robicheaux, and hit the road with Maria Muldaur. His own versatile band - guitarist Anton LaPlume, bassist Frederick Cleveland and drummer Maurice Dukes — can play anything from Jimmy Reed or Slim Harpo classics to Rockin' Jake anthems like Time Work, Part Time Pay" or "Goin' Back to the Big Easy." BW

# Featuring Jimmy Heath, Benny Golson and Javon Jackson SATURDAY DECEMBER 13, 2014 8:00 P.M. TICKETS & INFORMATION: 954,462,0222 OR (HERE) Miniaci Performing Arts Center at NSU 3100 Ray Ferrero, Jr Blvd, Davie, FL 33314

#### GREGORY PORTER, RAMSEY LEWIS & LISA FISCHER

#### ARSHT CENTER, MIAMI/DEC. 19

Vocalist Gregory Porter was set to become a football star at San Diego State before a devastating shoulder injury changed his career course. Now, his soulful singing and original tunes are as recognizable worldwide as his face-framing headwear. Boasting an expressive voice that effortlessly ranges from gospel-tinged croon to rapid-fire scat, the singer earned a Grammy for his third and latest CD, *Liquid Spirit*. On the disc, he covers Dobie Gray's 1960s R&B hit "The In Crowd," an instrumental version of which put 79-year-old pianist Ramsey Lewis on both the jazz and pop charts nearly 50 years ago. So expect Porter and Lewis to collaborate during this one-



time Jazz/Roots series concert, which will also feature seasoned soul singer Lisa Fischer performing holiday favorites. Fischer has toured with The Rolling Stones since 1989, with increasing duets alongside Mick Jagger. She stood out among several prominent backing vocalists in the Oscar-winning 2013 documentary 20 Feet From Stardom BM









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