

JAZZ & BLUES

MAY
2009



F L O R I D A

FLORIDA'S ONLINE GUIDE TO LIVE JAZZ & BLUES



Bettye LaVette



Yellowjackets



Sir Mack Rice



Harmonica Shah



Chuchito Valdés



Gina Sicilia



Felipe Lamoglia



Nicole Henry

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JAZZ
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BETTIE LAVETTE
SUNFEST/MAY 3

Bettye LaVette's tale proves second acts do happen in show biz. The distinctive soul singer, who recorded for Atlantic in the 1960s but never lived up to her commercial promise, performed at Barack Obama's inauguration celebration in January. The Michigan native provided a highlight of the ceremony, duetting with Jon Bon Jovi on a powerful rendition of "A Change Is Gonna Come." (She similarly stole the show with her stunning read of The Who's "Love Reign O'er Me" at last year's Kennedy Center Honors.) LaVette's late-career success was sparked by her 2003 recording *A Woman Like Me*, which snared a W.C. Handy Award, and has grown into a steady flame. In 2005, she released the



Joe Henry-produced *I've Got My Own Hell To Raise*, which found her emotively interpreting the likes of Sinéad O'Connor, Roseanne Cash and Fiona Apple. She reprised that effort in 2007 with *The Scene of the Crime*, which paired LaVette with the roots-rockin' Drive-by Truckers and was nominated for a Grammy. **BW**

FELIPE LAMOGLIA
VAN DYKE CAFE/MAY 14

He's lived in the U.S. since 1999, but saxophonist Felipe Lamoglia's roots are firmly planted in his native Cuba. After studying, performing and teaching in both his homeland and Brazil, the saxophonist gravitated toward Cuban stars like singer Celia Cruz, trumpeter Arturo Sandoval and pianist Gonzalo Rubalcaba as a sideman while living in America. The past few years have significantly heightened Lamoglia's profile — he helped win a Grammy Award for Rubalcaba (for 2004's *Paseo*), a Grammy nomination for drummer Ignacio Berroa (for 2006's *Codes*), and yet another Grammy for Sandoval's 2007 CD *Rumba Palace*, on which he was a performer, composer,



arranger and producer. Lamoglia also found time to release his own solo debut, *Dimensions*, that same year. It's unsurprising that he covers Coltrane's "Wise One" on the disc; as the *Village Voice* points out, Lamoglia owes "more to Coltrane than the Caribbean," even as he peppers his music with Afro-Cuban spices. **BM**

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CHUCHITO VALDES ATHENS THEATRE/MAY 1

If the name Jesus "Chuchito" Valdés looks familiar, there are two generations of reasons why. Born and raised in Havana, Valdés is the third-generation Cuban pianist in a trilogy that includes father Chucho Valdés and grandfather Bebo Valdés. A child prodigy, Chuchito accepted both the advantages and pitfalls of having a famous name, playing his first professional gig as a teenager. After taking his father's spot in the influential Cuban jazz band Irakere, Chuchito established his own name. Currently living in Cancun, Mexico, Valdés likely will perform material from his 2007 CD *Keys of Latin Jazz* during his performance at the historic Athens



Theatre in DeLand. The concert, which is part of the Daytona Beach International Festival, features Valdés and His Latin Jazz Trio. **BM**

BLUES ON THE GREEN with SIR MACK RICE FORT MYERS GOLF COURSE/MAY 2-3

Vocalist Sir Mack Rice bills himself as "The Old Gangster of Hip Hop Blues," and if you're among the skeptical, consider his credentials. Mack joined the 1950s vocal group The Falcons after moving to Detroit. That combo included Eddie Floyd (who would have a huge hit with "Knock on Wood") and Wilson Pickett (who would do the same with Mack's composition "Mustang Sally"). He also wrote hits for the Staple Singers ("Respect Yourself"), Rufus Thomas ("Do the Breakdown") and Albert King ("Cadillac Assembly Line"). Joining Mack on the bill of this two-day blues festival are Motor City star Harmonica Shah; Ohio-by-way-of-Mississippi vocalist



Willie Pooch; and South Florida-based guitarist and International Blues Competition winner J.P. Soars with saxophonist/vocalist Terry Hanck. **BM**



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**NICOLE HENRY
AMATURO THEATER/MAY 13**

Philadelphia-born vocalist Nicole Henry took a circuitous route toward a now-thriving musical career. After studying cello and singing in choirs in her youth, she received a scholarship to the University of Miami — for academics, not music— where she studied architecture. She became a full-time entertainer in 2000, performing around Miami and scoring a pop hit with “Because You Are You,” but switched to jazz in 2002. It proved a savvy move. Henry’s recordings, *The Nearness of You* and *Teach Me Tonight* earned her high praise and chart action, especially in Japan. On her third CD, *The Very Thought of You*, Henry interprets standards by George and Ira Gershwin, Irving Berlin



and Antonio Carlos Jobim, and performs songs associated with Etta James (“At Last”), Sinatra (“All the Way”) and Johnny Hartman (the title track). Recorded in Miami, the disc also features a host of area A-list musicians, including pianists Mike Orta and Brian Murphy, bassist Jamie Ousley and drummer Danny Burger. **BM**

**HARMONICA SHAH AND EDDIE KIRKLAND
WITH RJ’S RHYTHM ROCKERS
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Neither was born in Detroit, but Seward “Harmonica” Shah and Eddie Kirkland became blues legends in the Motor City. Shah hails from California, but was raised in Texas before emerging in Detroit in the late 1960s. His harmonica style owes much to legendary Chicago predecessors Junior Wells and Little Walter, and his vocals recall classic blues singers such as Muddy Waters. But Shah’s got his own tale to tell, as evidenced by his all-original 2006 recording *Listen at Me Good*. Jamaica native Kirkland spent his formative years in the Deep South, hitting the road at a young age and landing in Detroit in 1943. He worked with John Lee Hooker for



more than seven years, was band leader for Otis Redding, and toured with Little Richard. The stogie-chomping, barrel-chested octogenarian remains a powerful presence on vocals and guitar, and continues to tour and record. Shah and Kirkland will be backed by Detroit’s own RJ’s Rhythm Rockers, led by drummer RJ Spangler. **BM**

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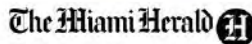
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YELLOWJACKETS: FLIGHT of the BUMBLEBEES

by Bill Meredith

THE YELLOWJACKETS HAVE

alternately been labeled a fusion band and a smooth jazz band. They could just as easily be dubbed the last band standing, having survived three decades of recording, touring and personnel changes. The group's original members started working together in 1977, when they were hired as session players to back guitarist Robben Ford for his solo album *The Inside Story*.

By 1981, Ford's group had released a self-titled debut under its stinging new name, with the guitarist still aboard. *Yellowjackets* helped create a blueprint for contemporary jazz that's still part of the genre's framework 28 years later.

Ford stayed with the band until 1983. Keyboardist Russell Ferrante, bassist Jimmy Haslip and drummer Ricky Lawson carried on as a trio until Tower of Power alto saxophonist Marc Russo joined in 1984. Lawson left in 1986, and was replaced by Will Kennedy, who stayed on for 12 years. Russo lasted until 1990, when he was replaced by tenor saxophonist Bob Mintzer, now in his 20th year with the band. Original members Ferrante and Haslip will celebrate their 30th recording anniversaries in 2011.

All of this makes Yellowjackets drummer Marcus Baylor, 32, not only the youngest of the musicians, but also the new kid on the block — despite the fact that he's nearing his own 10-year mark. In fact, he now holds the second-longest tenure in the band's drum chair, after Kennedy.

"Wow, I hadn't thought of that," Baylor says, speaking by phone from the home in Cherry Hill, New Jersey, that he shares with wife, Jean Baylor, a guest vocalist on three Yellowjackets CDs since 2003. "I still feel like the new guy."

The Yellowjackets returned to their guitaristic origins in 2007, when Mike Stern joined them onstage at the Montreal Jazz Festival. The group's 2008 release *Lifecycle* also featured the guitarist, who toured with the quartet through last month.

"Mike has a new recording coming out, so he's playing in Mexico the night we play in Fort Lauderdale," Baylor says, referring to the May 9 gig that brings the band to the Miniaci Performing Arts Center. "And two days after that show, the four of us fly to Europe." The quartet spends the remainder of the month touring Germany, Sweden,



Italy, the Netherlands and Norway, and will have a new live DVD release by late 2009.

Lifecycle, which was nominated for a Grammy in the Best Contemporary Jazz Album category, is a collaborative effort with Stern, who appears on seven of its 10 tracks. All five musicians earn songwriting credits, and the simpatico results sound like anything but a core group that invited a guest.

"It turned into a really fun thing with Mike," Baylor says. "I look at it more as him being a part of the band — five guys working together — than us bringing him on-board. Texture-wise, he makes it a little different than the quartet. But he's a great guy and an amazing musician. Recording with him provided a format, but then he helped us make the music evolve over a period of time by playing it live."

Baylor's own evolution as a drummer began at age two in his native St. Louis, when he started mimicking the drummers at the church where his father was pastor. In junior high, he was introduced to jazz when a friend played him a Yellowjackets album.

Since 2000, he's appeared on several of those, including *Mint Jam*, *Time Squared*, *Peace Round*, *Altered State*, *25* and *Lifecycle*. Baylor's touring and recording credits now also include Cassandra Wilson, Kenny Garrett, John Scofield and Joshua Redman.

Not bad for a newcomer.

South Florida JAZZ presents the Yellowjackets, 8PM Saturday, May 9, at the Miniaci Performing Arts Center at Nova Southeastern University in Davie. Call 954-462-0222 or visit Southfloridajazz.org.

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