

# JAZZ & BLUES

AUGUST  
2009



F L O R I D A

FLORIDA'S ONLINE GUIDE TO LIVE JAZZ & BLUES



*Jeff Prine Group*



*Delfeayo Marsalis*



*Patti Wicks*



*Nicole Yarling*



*Harry Allen with Nate Najjar*

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# WINNING SPINS

By Bill Meredith

**SOME MUSICIANS' GIFTS ARE** obvious. The talents of trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie or pianist Art Tatum were immediately recognizable through the speed and technique with which they played. By comparison, the magic of Miles Davis or Shirley Horn unfolds more subtly, as each relied on the spaces between notes. West Palm Beach-based singer and pianist Patti Wicks also masterfully plays and sings with such spaces in mind.

As both a vocalist and a pianist, Wicks warrants comparisons to Horn. Her new CD, *Dedicated to...* (Geco), showcases a similarly breathy and understated vocal delivery, as well as the pop-to-classically influenced playing and subtle humor that were Horn hallmarks.

All of this has endeared Wicks to jazz fans in Italy. Her most-recent CDs have been released on Italian labels, and she employs a supportive Italian rhythm section in double-bassist Giovanni Sanguineti and drummer Giovanni Gullino. Guest saxophonist Scott Hamilton joins the trio on *Dedicated to...* . On the opening instrumental, the Oscar Hammerstein-Jerome Kern standard "The Song Is You," Wicks matches the tenorist's intro solo with her own improvisations. During her impressive break, Wicks feeds off of—and accents with—Gullino before sparsely supporting Sanguineti during his solo.

The rhythm section creates a supple pocket for Hamilton and Wicks on David Raskin and Johnny Mercer's "Laura," as Sanguineti locks in his dancing bass pattern with Gullino's rimshots. Two other Mercer co-compositions, "I Remember You" (written with Victor Schertzinger) and "Emily" (Johnny Mandel), spotlight the drummer's own soloing capabilities.

Also adept with brushes, Gullino shades Wicks' chords and sly vocals on Ray Noble's ballad "The Very Thought of You." The pianist sings more sparsely than she plays, using her voice to lure one in. Especially on ballads, Wicks seduces listener into paying complete attention, since not doing so means running the risk of missing humor or nuance. Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart's "Little Girl Blue"—a song associated with Nina Simone—is delivered solo by Wicks and makes another strong case in point.

Like many outstanding keyboardists (Tatum, Ray Charles, George Shearing, Stevie Wonder), Wicks' eyesight is impaired, hers due in part to being born two months



premature. Piano seems to be the instrument that best connects the brain and hands for such second-sighted musicians.

Wicks and Hamilton both play beautifully on other standards, like the instrumental ballads "My One and Only Love" (written by Robert Mellin and Guy Wood) and "Lela" (Haydn Higgins), but the singing pianist's most tongue-in-cheek performance is saved for when she's pulling double-duty. On Al Dubin and Harry Warren's "You're Getting To Be a Habit," Wicks displays every facet of her talents. She locks in with Sanguineti and Gullino, using chords to make the piano part of the rhythm section—which it often is, since the instrument's use of both strings and hammers makes it the link between bass and drums. Yet she still finds ways to creatively accent her vocals, which range from staggered phrasing to scat-sung syllables that approximate one of Hamilton's sax solos.

Wicks gained wide acclaim for her 2003 CD *Love Locked Out* (MaxJazz), and an appearance on Marian McPartland's National Public Radio program *Piano Jazz* that year heightened her now-international profile. Yet *Love Locked Out*, with its all-ballad formula, only presented a portion of Wicks' diversity. *Dedicated to...* is not only one of her best recorded efforts, but it also might be the best display of her estimable all-around gifts.

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**Patti Wicks performs with bassist Susan Merritt and drummer Marty Campfield Aug. 7 at Fire Rock Restaurant Bar & Grill in downtown West Palm Beach.**

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BOSTON'S, DELRAY BEACH/AUG. 18**

For more than 20 years, Jeff Prine has been a standout on the South Florida blues scene. The Brooklyn-born guitarist and vocalist's versatility can be heard on his recently released CD, *Currents*, which travels from Prine's jazzy, Allman-esque instrumental title track to his boogie-blues "Who Died and Left You Boss?" to his interpretations of blues classics such as "Woke Up This Morning." Influences from Dickie Betts and Duane Allman to B.B. King and Peter Green can be detected in his nimble fretwork. Prine smartly surrounds himself with some of this area's top talents, including Hammond B3 player Mitch



Goldstein, drummer Jack Ciano and pianist Mike Orta. He's also enjoyed a long partnership with South Florida blues treasure Juanita Dixon, with whom he'll be performing this month at the Village Grille. For his Jazz Brunch show, Prine welcomes vocalist Carrie Furman and B3 expert Ken Burkhardt. **BW**

**NICOLE YARLING AND THE WELD  
BOSTON'S, DELRAY BEACH/AUG. 4**

Vocalist and violinist Nicole Yarling ranks among South Florida's most-gifted jazz interpreters. But anyone who knows her history knows that she plays — and teaches, through her courses at Florida Memorial University and the University of Miami — in many styles. Through her long-standing partnership with singing guitarist Dave Brophy in The Weld, the Stuff Smith-inspired violin virtuoso explores the rootsy side of her musical persona. In fact, the band's name actually references the welding together of various genres. So whether it's Yarling or Brophy taking a lead vocal, listeners can expect a hearty gumbo of blues, R&B, funk, rock and New Orleans feels with



PHOTO BY FLMAGES.COM

glimmers of everything else (jazz, gospel, hip-hop, and African spirituals and field hollers) that Yarling teaches at both Miami universities. **BM**

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**DELFEAYO MARSALIS  
CORAL GABLES CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH  
AUGUST 13**

The younger brother of saxophonist Branford and trumpeter Wynton, Delfeayo Marsalis wisely chose to take up the trombone. Hailing from a New Orleans jazz dynasty that also includes patriarchal educator and pianist Ellis, and drummer and youngest brother Jason, Delfeayo continues in the family business as a respected musician, composer, educator and producer. On Delfeayo's 2006 recording, *Minions Dominion*, brother Branford plays counterpoint to his own fluid, intricate 'bone patterns. The disc also showcases some of the last recorded work of iconic drummer Elvin Jones, who died in 2004; the trombonist, who just turned 44, was a part of the drummer's final band, the Elvin Jones Jazz Machine.



An upcoming release, *Sweet Thunder*, recontextualizes Duke Ellington's classic 1957 suite (*Such Sweet Thunder*) inspired by William Shakespeare. For his performance at the Coral Gables Church, Marsalis will be joined by his quintet. **BM**

**HARRY ALLEN WITH NATE NAJAR  
PALLADIUM THEATER,  
ST. PETERSBURG COLLEGE/AUG. 21**

You know you've arrived when you've played with venerable jazz guitarist Bucky Pizzarelli and your playing has been called "nothing less than perfect" by his son, vocalist-guitarist John Pizzarelli. At 43, tenor saxophonist Harry Allen has worked with legends from late (Rosemary Clooney, Ray Brown) to living (Tony Bennett, Hank Jones), as well as contemporary pop stars like James Taylor and Sheryl Crow. The Washington, D.C.-born reedman's taste, tone and technique have been his calling card since childhood. His father, a big band drummer, played him records before kindergarten classes, which inspired the switch from accordion to sax.



Allen's latest release, *Plays Music from South Pacific*, is a perfect vehicle for his ever-lyrical playing. For his show at St. Petersburg College, the saxman will be joined by Nate Najjar, who plays swinging, straightahead jazz on a classical guitar. (Najar's trio will be featured Aug. 14 at the Museum of Fine Arts, also in St. Petersburg.) **BM**



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