

# JAZZ & BLUES

MARCH  
2011



F L O R I D A

FLORIDA'S ONLINE GUIDE TO LIVE JAZZ & BLUES



BRANFORD MARSALIS



WE FOUR

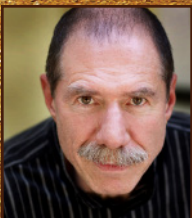
RORY BLOCK



EDDIE SHAW



SPIDER JOHN KOERNER



GIACOMO GATES



DAVINA & THE VAGABONDS



SHARON JONES & THE DAP-KINGS



SFJAZZ COLLECTIVE



HENRY GRAY



PAT METHENY

# WINNING SPINS

by Bob Weinberg

## RORY BLOCK WAS JUST 15 YEARS OLD

when she first encountered Mississippi Fred McDowell. Fleeing from a bitterly unhappy homelife in Greenwich Village, she took off on a cross-country jaunt with boyfriend Stefan Grossman, a young blues guitarist and scholar himself. The couple ended up in Berkeley, Calif., where they went to hear McDowell perform at the Jabberwocky Café. The legendary bluesman touched Block deeply. And somewhat inappropriately, as well.

As she recounts in her riveting autobiography *When a Woman Gets the Blues*, Block was washing dishes at a friend's house when McDowell, 45 years her senior, approached her from behind and grabbed her breast. She was startled but not offended, as the older man smiled shyly and walked away. "I took this as a compliment," she writes. "He was letting me know he thought I was sexy, and to me at the time, it was confirmation of my newfound womanhood." She also points out that McDowell's behavior was in keeping with the time and place in which he lived—the Deep South in the first half of the 20th century—and that he shouldn't be judged by today's standards.

Block sings of the indelible experience on the autobiographical "Mississippi Man," from her new Stony Plain recording *Shake 'Em on Down: A Tribute to Mississippi Fred McDowell*, which also details some advice the blues great imparted to his young charge. "Put a jack knife on the string, make it snap and make it ring/Edginess and half-steps are the secret when you sing/Stomping both your feet, drive it down the line/If you can't sing like Charley [Patton]/Better put that guitar down/Leave your jack knife in the kitchen, if you can't get that sound/Cause you know that you can't fake it, you better call upon the name of Mr. Mac-Dowell."

Block does just that over the course of a dozen tunes, most written by or associated with the Tennessee-born Mississippi Fred. Having recorded tribute albums to Robert Johnson and Son House in recent years, Block wisely eschews imitation. Instead, she calls up the deep feelings and sonic resonances of McDowell's slide playing and vocals. Her blend of influences comes together brilliantly on tracks such as "Worried Mind," which



RORY BLOCK

seems to fuse House's chopping syncopation with Johnson's bent-string pyrotechnics and McDowell's ringing slide. As throughout, Block multitracks acoustic and electric guitar parts, and is otherwise unaccompanied.

But she hardly lacks for firepower. Block's rendition of Sonny Boy Williamson's "Good Morning Little School Girl" is particularly potent when she plays a heartfelt intro to the salacious tune, which is usually performed with a leer and a wink. Still, Block generates the same heat as her male predecessors when she genderswaps the song and proffers an invitation that would have any schoolboy dropping his books in a hurry.

That same sexual energy drives her read of "Kokomo Blues." Maintaining an insistent rhythm, she makes the strings quiver with her metal slide. Somewhere between a moan and a purr, Block's vocals drip with desire, just right for the lyric that substitutes the name of a Mississippi town for a more familiar verb: "Kokomo me, baby/Kokomo me twice/Kokomo your mama like you did the other night."

On the title track, Block embroiders her hard acoustic strum with electric slide guitar, and growls the lubricious lyrics. It's no deal-breaker; but her sweet, multitracked harmony vocals break the lowdown dirty mood. They are, however, quite welcome on the stunning "Woke Up This Morning," a powerful spiritual.



# WINNING SPINS

Hewing closest to McDowell's signature tonalities, "What's the Matter Now" is among the album's most affecting tracks. Vocally and instrumentally, Block summons the hurt and anger of a betrayed lover, echoing lines like "Where were you when the rooster crowed for day?" with spare, reverberating guitar lines that conjure the bleakness of a dark and sleepless night alone. Still, she manages a bitter laugh while she contemplates blowing away the no-good lout with pistol or shotgun.

Block's sharp songwriting is showcased on a couple of tunes that truly evoke McDowell's world. On the opening "Steady Freddy," she tells the bluesman's tale from his perspective.

She's more than up to the challenge and can surely relate to parts of his story. "The Breadline," which strings together several of McDowell's signature licks, revisits the hardships and inequities of the Depression and their parallels in today's economic downturn.

*Shake 'Em on Down* is indispensable for Block's loyal listeners, or anyone interested in a canny update of country blues. The album will be available on March 29. Block's autobiography can be downloaded at [Roryblock.com](http://Roryblock.com).



**Rory Block will perform with Roy Book Binder, Paul Geremia and Jimmy "Duck" Holmes at 8PM March 5 at the Palladium Theater at St. Petersburg College. Call 752-822-3590 or visit [Spcollege.edu/palladium](http://Spcollege.edu/palladium).**



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MAR 18



BORDER  
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MAR 19



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MAR 23



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THE FAT CATS

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**SHARON JONES AND THE DAP-KINGS**  
**VINYL MUSIC HALL, PENSACOLA/MAR 17**  
**PONTE VEDRA CONCERT HALL/MAR 18**  
**THE RITZ YBOR, TAMPA/MAR 19**  
**THE FILLMORE, MIAMI BEACH/MAR 20**

Don't call Sharon Jones and the Dap-Kings retro- or neo- or throwback-soul. Certainly, the Brooklyn-born nine-piece harks back to the golden era of Stax, Motown and The Sounds of Philadelphia. But their craft is so genuine and masterful that listeners might think they were hearing a classic soul band from back in the day rather than a postmodern echo. Several tracks from the group's outstanding 2010 recording *I Learned the Hard Way* could have been smash radio hits 45 years ago. Big, horn-fueled arrangements, warm production, expert



backing vocals and, of course, Jones' mighty lead vocals provide the same thrills soul-music fans find in the grooves of treasured 45s. And as brilliant as their albums are, the band's live shows are guaranteed to raise a sweat, as Jones grabs the mike and drives the band like a souped-up, vintage MG. (See listings for additional Florida dates.) **BW**

**EDDIE SHAW AND THE WOLF GANG**  
**BRADFORDVILLE BLUES, TALLAHASSEE/MAR 11**  
**BONITA BLUES FESTIVAL, RIVERSIDE PARK,**  
**BONITA SPRINGS/MAR 12**

Henry Gray is not the only Howlin' Wolf alumnus to visit the Sunshine State this month (see page 14), as mighty saxman Eddie Shaw blows into Florida with his band. A teenage phenom with Ike Turner's band, Shaw was soon snapped up by Muddy Waters. A few years later, Shaw was tapped by Wolf, with whose band he remained until Wolf's death in 1976. Boasting a huge, gritty tenor sound, Shaw also performed and recorded with Freddy King, Otis Rush, Magic Sam and Buddy Guy. He released some singles back in the day, but truly hit his stride in the 1980s and '90s with a



string of albums. Still playing and singing powerfully—he won raves for fronting the Howlin' Wolf tribute band that headlined the 2010 Chicago Blues Fest—Shaw continues to tour with his Wolf Gang, which features his son, guitar star Vaan Shaw. Once again, the sax great has been nominated for a Blues Music Award for best horn player. **BW**

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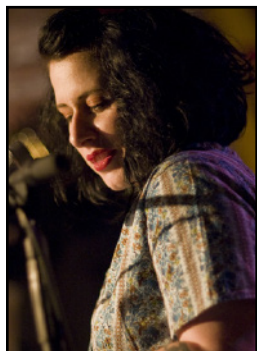
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**DAVINA AND THE VAGABONDS  
BRADFORDVILLE BLUES, TALLAHASSEE/MAR 25  
MCWELLS, ORLANDO/MAR 26  
ALLIANCE FOR THE ARTS, FORT MYERS/MAR 27  
BOSTON'S, DELRAY/MAR 29**

Davina Sowers grew up listening to classic jazz and blues records played on her stepdad's vintage Victrola. And, judging by the music she makes with the Minneapolis-based Vagabonds, the stylus sank deep. With a smoky, sultry voice that recalls Billie Holiday and earlier blues and jazz singers, Sowers interprets classics such as "Knock Me a Kiss" and the ballad "The Clock," as well as originals that sound as if they could've been found on dusty old 78s. One such number, "St. Michael Vs. the Devil," brought her to the finals of the 2009 International Songwriting Competition. A classically trained pianist with a great feel for old-timey blues and jazz, Sowers receives expert accompaniment from trombonist Darren Sterud, trumpeter Daniel Eikmeier, drummer Connor McRae, and her husband, string bassist Michael Carvale. A new recording, *Black Cloud*, is due this spring. **BW**



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**SPIDER JOHN KOERNER  
LUNA STAR CAFE, NORTH MIAMI/MAR 6  
GLORIA HOLLOWAY'S HOUSE CONCERT SERIES, TAMPA/MAR 10  
THE BIG EASY, HOLLYWOOD/MAR 19**

*Blues, Rags and Hollers* was the title of Koerner, Ray and Glover's seminal 1963 recording, and Spider John Koerner's mastery of those idioms has only deepened over the decades. With his 12-string guitar ringing like a juke-joint piano, his foot stomping the floor like a bass drum and his voice containing the raw potency of corn liquor, Spider John could have performed at the lumber mills, turpentine camps and gambling dens of an America long gone. On *Live at the 400 Bar*, his 2009 recording with harmonica master Tony "Little Sun"



Glover, the 72-year-old folk-blues icon showcases his profound understanding of and affection for great American song. He injects deep feeling and fun into favorites such as "Careless Love," "Stewball," "Ezekiel Saw the Wheel" and his standard sign-off, "Goodnight Irene." For his Hollywood concert, he'll be joined by fellow folk-blues vet Joel Zoss. **BW**

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**WE FOUR: CELEBRATING JOHN COLTRANE  
MINIACI PERFORMING ARTS CENTER,  
DAVIE/MAR 12**

There are countless tribute shows to deceased jazz legends, and many of those honor tenor titan John Coltrane. But unlike most, the South Florida JAZZ presentation *We Four: Celebrating John Coltrane* features a musician who actually played with Trane before his death in 1967. Drummer Jimmy Cobb, still playing great at age 82, was a bandmate of Coltrane's in the late 1950s when both worked with trumpeter Miles Davis—including on the seminal 1959 album *Kind of Blue*. Tenor saxophonist Javon Jackson (pictured here) recorded and toured with Elvin Jones, the late drummer who played on Coltrane's equally historic 1965 release *A Love Supreme*. Pianist Mulgrew Miller is 25 years younger than Cobb, and bassist Peter Washington and Jackson (who works in multiple Cobb-led bands) 10 years younger than that. Yet all are steeped in the Trane tradition, and will follow the supreme musicianship of their ageless drummer. **BM**



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**SFJAZZ COLLECTIVE: THE MUSIC OF  
STEVIE WONDER**

**UF PHILLIPS CENTER, GAINESVILLE/MAR 19**  
Based on pure talent alone, any SFJAZZ Collective concert is worth the price of admission. (SF stands for "San Francisco," not "South Florida.") The band's stellar lineup comprises saxophonists Miguel Zenon and Mark Turner, trumpeter Avishai Cohen, trombonist Robin Eubanks, pianist Edward Simon, vibraphonist Stefon Harris, bassist Matt Penman and drummer Eric Harland. But the octet, launched by the California nonprofit SFJAZZ in 2004, brings extra intrigue through its United Nations-worthy makeup—members hail from the U.S., Puerto Rico, Israel, Venezuela and New Zealand—and its choice of material. Each year, SFJAZZ commissions new compositions by group members, which are interspersed with classics by the composers honored by their themed tours. Past tours have celebrated Ornette



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**BRANFORD MARSALIS  
JAZZ IN THE GARDENS,  
SUN LIFE STADIUM, MIAMI GARDENS/MAR 20**

Trumpeter Wynton Marsalis' rigid adherence to jazz tradition may earn him headlines, but older brother Branford Marsalis is the family's creative kingpin. Hailing from a New Orleans musical dynasty, the saxophonist has traversed styles from bop and pop to classical and hip-hop. In addition to his mastery of tenor and soprano saxes, Branford also recorded on the alto horn for the first time in 20 years on 2009's *Metamorphosen* (Marsalis Music). The latest release by his quartet—pianist Joey Calderazzo, bassist Eric Revis and drummer Jeff "Tain" Watts—the album topped many critics polls and showcased strong writing



from each player. In the band's current incarnation, Justin Faulkner takes over for Watts. Branford has followed his father, pianist Ellis Marsalis, into the jazz education field through his Marsalis Jams residencies, and helped to rebuild New Orleans after Katrina by co-conceiving Habitat for Humanity's Musicians' Village with Harry Connick Jr. **BM**

**PAT METHENY TRIO  
MINIACI PERFORMING ARTS CENTER,  
DAVIE/MARCH 21**

Electric guitarist Pat Metheny's current trio, with drummer Antonio Sanchez and bassist Ben Williams, is the latest of his countless endeavors during a 40-year career of performing, teaching and recording. With more than 20 million records sold and 17 Grammy Awards, Metheny has achieved extraordinary success in jazz, a genre where some acoustic-minded listeners, critics and musicians still shun fusion, the subgenre with which he's most closely associated. Expect some material from *Quartet Live!*, Metheny's 2009 CD with his mentor and vibraphonist Gary Burton, bassist Steve Swallow and Sanchez; some from Metheny's far-reaching 2010



solo disc *Orchestration*, and perhaps a taste of *Trio 99-00*, the 2000 release by his trio with bassist Larry Grenadier and drummer Bill Stewart. Metheny's phrasing owes as much to horn influences Miles Davis, John Coltrane and Clifford Brown as to Wes Montgomery, and his use of effects and guitar synthesizer often creates tones that sound more like a horn than a guitar. **BM**

**SHARON JONES AND THE DAP-KINGS**

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03/19 "SPIDER" JOHN KOERNER & JOEL ZOSS

03/24 MATT "GUITAR" MURPHY  
& GRAHAM WOOD DROUT

03/25 HEP CAT BOO DADDIES

03/26 SISTA MARY BETH

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DAVIS AND DOW  
JAZZ BAND  
MAY 11 AT 7:45PM



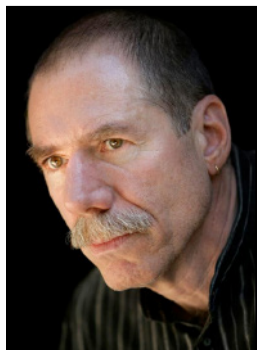
All shows are on Wednesday nights at the **AMATURO THEATER**  
**JAZZ RIFFS** Join Stu Grant of WXEL's *Jazz Impressions* for pre-show jazz talks at 7pm  
2-FOR-1 DRINKS at Jazz Happy Hour 6:30pm • [goldcoastjazz.org](http://goldcoastjazz.org)

## GIACOMO GATES

**BLUE JEAN BLUES, FT. LAUDERDALE/MAR 23**  
**VAN DYKE CAFE, MIAMI/MAR 24**

**HEIDI'S JAZZ CLUB, COCOA BEACH/MAR 25-26**  
**RINELLI'S YELLOW TAIL RESTAURANT/MAR 27**

There's an endearingly workmanlike quality to the craft and mannerisms of singer Giacomo Gates, and for good reason. Before starting his musical career in 1990 at age 40, the Connecticut-born vocalist drove cattle transporters, school buses and 18-wheelers and was a construction worker on the Trans-Alaska pipeline. Yet his creativity needed a different conduit. He found it in vocalese, the process of setting original lyrics to existing compositions that was pioneered by artists such as Eddie Jefferson and Jon Hendricks. Gates



attaches his creative, often-witty wordplay to everything from standards like "Comes Love" to the Thelonious Monk bop classic "Let's Call This." The singer's 2008 recording, *Luminosity*, also features his original material and a bluesy version of Jimi Hendrix's "Up From the Skies." On his next album, Gates will interpret the songs of Gil Scott-Heron. **BM**

## HENRY GRAY AND THE CATS

**COLONY THEATRE, MIAMI BEACH/MARCH 11**

As the pianist in Howlin' Wolf's band for a dozen years, Henry Gray is rightly considered Chicago blues royalty. But the rollicking sounds of his native Louisiana exert a powerful tug on his heart and hands. At the age of 85, Gray continues to thrill audiences, singing and playing with unquestionable authority. Moving to the Windy City in 1946, Gray received a boost from piano legend Big Maceo Merriweather and soon became a fixture on the bustling blues scene. In addition to joining Wolf's band in 1956, Gray cut classic sides with Jimmy Rogers, Jimmy Reed, Billy Boy Arnold and Junior Wells. But his fierce piano work on Wolf LPs such



as *Moanin'* in the *Moonlight* and *The Rockin' Chair Album* has earned him immortality. Gray, who moved back to his home state decades ago, performs annually at the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Fest. He'll make a rare South Florida appearance with his band this month, thanks to Mary Luft's Tigertail Productions. **BW**

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**SAT 3/5 Rastus Kain Band \$5**

**Fri 3/11 Johnny Allender Band FREE!**

**SAT 3/12 BLUESFEST: Johnny Allender Band, Tommy Lee Cook & the Boys of Buckingham, Crady Champion \$7**

**Fri 3/18 Harry Cassano & the Blues Majority FREE**

**Fri 3/26 Certified FREE**

**SAT 3/26 BLUESFEST: Tommy Lee Cook & the Allstars, AZ Kenny & 5G Deluxe \$7**

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**JAZZ WEEK** Brown Bag Lunch Series:  
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Monday, March 7	Joe Donato and the Miami All Stars
Tuesday, March 8	Ft. Pierce Jazz Ensemble featuring Nathan Skinner
Wednesday, March 9	Ft. Pierce Jazz Ensemble featuring Bob Sagnella Mark Green's Tribute to Satchmo
Thursday, March 10	Oscar Salas and Friends
Friday, March 11	James McCreavy Quintet with vocalist Tommy Mitchell

**JAZZ JAMS**  
 Tuesdays 7-10pm  
 Sunrise Theatre Black Box, Ft. Pierce - \$5 cover - Cash bar  
 Alternate Wednesdays 6:30-9:30pm  
 Port St. Lucie Botanical Gardens - \$3 cover - Wine & Beer





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**Funky Blue Tones**  
8pm-midnight

**Friday 18**

**Poppa E** 4-6:30pm

**Victor Wainwright & His  
Wild Roots Band** 7-9pm

**Albert Castiglia**  
9:30-10:30pm

**JP Soars** 10:30pm-1am

**Saturday, March 19**

**Deck 52** 1-3pm

**IKO IKO** 3:30-5:30pm

**Lynn Noble &  
Rob Friedman Band** 6-8pm

**Biscuit Miller & the Mix**  
8:30-10:30pm

**Hep Cap Boo Daddies**  
10:30pm-1am

**Sunday, March 20**

**Piano Bob's 88s** 1:30-3pm

**The Lady A Blues Band** 3:30-5pm

**Cry Wolf** 5:30-8pm

**Thursday 5pm – midnight**  
**Friday 5pm – 1am**  
**Saturday 1pm – 2am**  
**Sunday 1pm – 11pm**  
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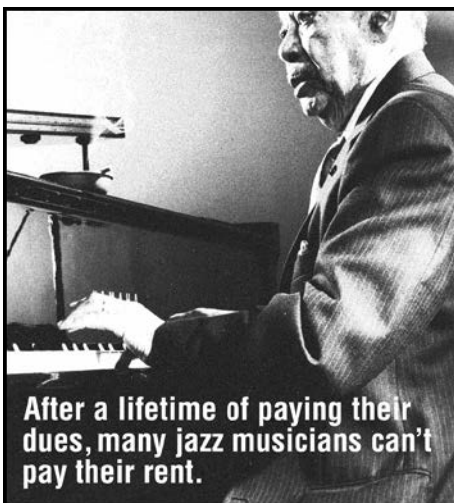
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—The New York Times



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The JFA also assists by staving off evictions, preventing homelessness, paying rent arrears, providing emergency living expenses, offering substance abuse counseling, advocacy, and career counseling. In the past year, the JFA assisted nearly 1300 musicians, including saving many from homelessness.

Please help this work to continue by donating to the Jazz Foundation.  
Call (212) 245-3999 [www.jazzfoundation.org](http://www.jazzfoundation.org)



# JAZZ & BLUES

## FLORIDA

FLORIDA'S ONLINE GUIDE TO LIVE JAZZ & BLUES

**For Press Releases, CD Reviews, Advertising Info or Listings, contact our Main Office at 561.313.7432 or P.O. Box 2614, Palm Beach, FL 33480**

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