

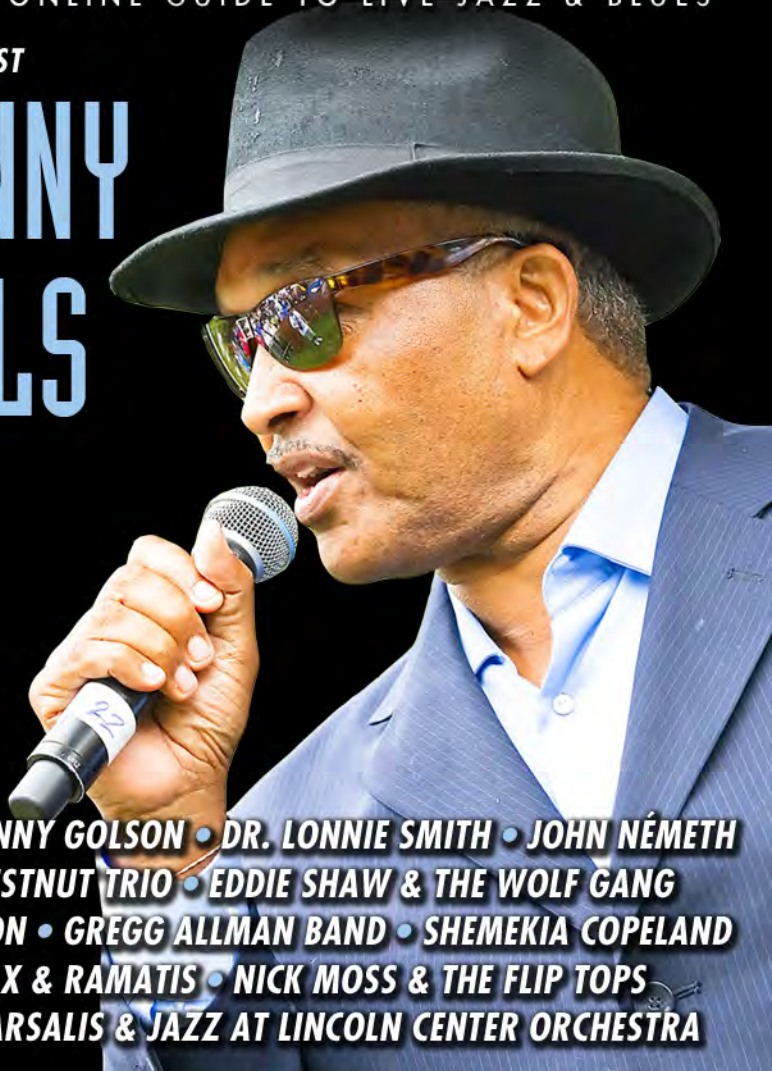
# JAZZ & BLUES FLORIDA



FLORIDA'S ONLINE GUIDE TO LIVE JAZZ & BLUES

FEATURED ARTIST

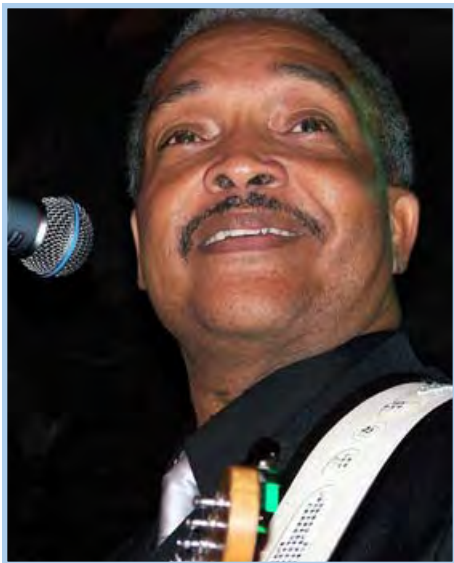
# JOHNNY RAWLS



**B.B. KING • BENNY GOLSON • DR. LONNIE SMITH • JOHN NÉMETH  
CYRUS CHESTNUT TRIO • EDDIE SHAW & THE WOLF GANG  
TIERNEY SUTTON • GREGG ALLMAN BAND • SHEMEKIA COPELAND  
ROSE MAX & RAMATIS • NICK MOSS & THE FLIP TOPS  
WYNTON MARSALIS & JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER ORCHESTRA**

# JOHNNY RAWLS

by Bob Weinberg



**ALTHOUGH HE'S NOT AS WELL-KNOWN** as Otis Redding or Al Green, O.V. Wright deserves recognition in the soul singers pantheon. Johnny Rawls persuasively makes that argument on his latest release, *Remembering O.V.*, a salute to the Memphis soul great. Rawls interprets Wright classics such as "Blind, Crippled and Crazy," "Nickel and a Nail" and "Eight Men, Four Women" with tremendous authority, receiving expert backing from his horn-fueled band, and recruiting longtime pal Otis Clay to sing with him on a few tracks.

The project is a personal one for the 62-year-old Rawls. Starting in his teens, he played guitar behind Wright and eventually became Wright's band director. They grew close. And when Wright drew his last breath, after suffering a heart attack in 1980, Rawls was with him in the Cadillac on the way to a Birmingham, Ala., hospital. The lessons he'd learned during their time together proved invaluable.

Growing up in Purvis, Miss., Rawls caught the ear of Carl Gates, his high school band director. Gates recruited the young guitarist to play with his show band, who backed touring soul-blues giants such as Z.Z. Hill, Joe Tex and Little Johnny Taylor when they passed through

town. When they were hired to back O.V. Wright, Rawls could hardly believe his luck.

"It was like a dream come true," he says, speaking by phone from Purvis, where he still resides. "He'd always been one of my idols. I would always play his records on the jukebox in the café and in the juke joints."

Wright was so impressed with Rawls, he hired him permanently a couple of years later. Spending time with the veteran performer, who was 12 years his senior, was like taking a master's class. "Just being on the stage with O.V. Wright, absorbing that soul every night, watching the women cry when he sang 'God Bless Our Love' and 'That's How Strong My Love Is,' it was a heavy impact," he says. "The emotional level was high."

Rawls, who would sing a few numbers to warm up the crowd for Wright, never had the chance to record with his mentor. "He wanted me to sing on a record with him," he relates. "We were rehearsing this James Carr song, 'At the Dark End of the Street,' but he passed away." Rawls continued to perform with Wright's band for a decade, opening and providing backing for stars such as Little Milton, Bobby "Blue" Bland and Little Johnny Taylor.

Around the same time, Rawls began striking out on his own. He came to the attention of Rooster Blues founder Jim O'Neal and worked as a session guitarist and arranger on albums by Lonnie Shields, Super Chikan and many others. His own breakthrough album, 1996's *Here We Go*, was released on JSP and helped him gain a "crossover" audience in the U.S. and Europe.

In recent years, Rawls has won an increasingly wide listenership with a string of excellent recordings. He's racked up 11 Blues Music Award nods, and his 2009 album, *Ace of Spades*, won Soul Blues Album of the Year. It's no coincidence that the disc's title track was an O.V. Wright song. While initially reluctant to record songs by his friend and mentor, Rawls has included an O.V. Wright number on each of his last three CDs. Then, at the urging of XM Radio's Bill Wax, Rawls cut an entire tribute album to Wright.

Rawls' earlier resistance to the idea wasn't because he was intimidated. "It wasn't that I couldn't measure up," he says. "It was that I

# JOHNNY RAWLS

didn't want people to go, 'Awww, he's just capitalizing off of O.V. Wright.' But I looked at it differently. And I got Otis Clay on there with me, too. It don't get no better than that."

The voices of Rawls and Clay blend and contrast beautifully, especially on the autobiographical track, "Blaze of Glory," penned by Rawls and bassist/co-producer Bob Trenchard. Rawls and Clay are also recording a duet CD, slated for February.

No question, Wright's imprint on Rawls is indelible. So is the mark left by the Mississippi town of his youth. Rawls even lives in the same house. "Check this out," he says, "I'm on the same street where I got my first bottle of wine and where I first played my guitar and where I first broke my virginity. On the same street."

He cracks up at the notion, even as he files it away for later use. "I'm gonna write a song about that."



Johnny Rawls will perform at 11:55AM on Dec. 7 at the Bradenton Blues Festival ([Bradentonbluesfestival.org](http://Bradentonbluesfestival.org)), and on Dec. 14 at Bradfordville Blues in Tallahassee ([Bradfordvilleblues.com](http://Bradfordvilleblues.com)), 805-906-0766).

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- DEC 14    Maguire's Hill 16  
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- DEC 20    The Funky Biscuit  
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- DEC 21    Bayside Grille  
          & Sunset Bar, *Key Largo*
- DEC 22    Dubliner  
          *Ft. Lauderdale*
- DEC 28    Maguire's Hill 16  
          *Ft. Lauderdale*
- DEC 31    Boston's On The Beach  
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**EDDIE SHAW & THE WOLF GANG  
HOLY SMOKE, ORLANDO/DEC. 5  
BRADENTON BLUES FEST, RIVERWALK/DEC. 7**

Eddie Shaw may have been born in Stringtown, Miss., but his huge, sooty tenor-sax sound is pure Chi-Town, Ill. After jamming with Shaw down South, Muddy Waters invited the young saxophonist to join his band in Chicago in 1957. Shaw later switched allegiances to Muddy's rival, Howlin' Wolf, with whom he worked for 14 years. Along the way, he also played with Freddie King, Otis Rush and Magic Sam. While that history is deeply ingrained in Shaw's playing and singing, he's no museum piece. At age 76, he continues to thrill Chicago crowds, and tour and record like he still had something to prove. *Still Riding High*, his 2012



CD, was nominated for Best Traditional Blues Album of the Year at this year's Blues Blast Music Awards, where Shaw collected a Lifetime Achievement Award. And, for the fourth time, he won a Blues Music Award for Horn Instrumentalist of the year. Adding bite to Shaw's Wolf Gang, is his guitar-slinger son, Vaan Shaw. **BW**

**TIERNEY SUTTON  
BROWARD CENTER, FORT LAUDERDALE/DEC. 11**

Vocalist Tierney Sutton has toured and recorded with the same personnel in her self-titled quintet since 1998. However, she took a breather during the past couple of years to work with other artists, and created a high-water mark recording in the process. On the new *After Blue*, Sutton re-imagines gems from the Joni Mitchell songbook. The singer earns high points for her creative interpretations of tunes such as "Big Yellow Taxi," "Woodstock" and "The Dry Cleaner From Des Moines." Guests include recent collaborators the Turtle Island Quartet, bassist Kevin Axt (from her band), flutist Hubert Laws, vocalist Al Jarreau, keyboardist Larry Goldings, and drummers



Peter Erskine and Ralph Humphrey. For her Fort Lauderdale show, Sutton will be joined by a trio led by a fellow former educator at USC's Thornton School of Music — pianist Shelly Berg, Dean of the Frost School of Music at the University of Miami. Sutton currently heads the vocal department at the Los Angeles Music Academy. **BM**

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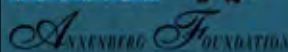
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**BEACH/DEC. 8**

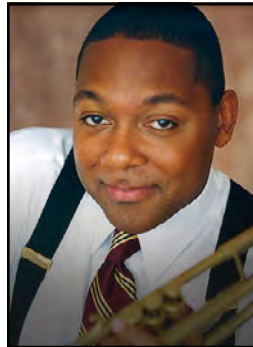
A few months ago, at the Iridium club in Manhattan, Shemekia Copeland was inducted into the New York Blues Hall of Fame. Making the honor all the more poignant for the 34-year-old blues singer was a fellow inductee — her dad, Johnny “Clyde” Copeland, who died in 1997 and with whom she performed in her teens. Having won multiple Blues Music Awards, and been nominated for a Grammy this past year, she’s fulfilled her promise. And Copeland continues to stretch her vocal and interpretive abilities, as heard on



her 2012 release *33 1/3*. She soars on tunes such as the hard-kicking “Lemon Pie,” the gospelly “Somebody Else’s Jesus” and the slowburning “Ain’t Gonna Be Your Tattoo,” the latter of which features the heated riffage of Buddy Guy. As song titles and lyrics indicate, the singer hardly shies away from controversial topics. **BW**

**WYNTON MARSALIS**  
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vocalist Cécile McLorin Salvant, whose 2013 debut CD, *WomanChild*, has been earning raves. During his 31-year recording career, Marsalis has earned nine Grammys and a Pulitzer, and was recently named Director of Jazz Studies at Juilliard. Between the orch shows, Marsalis will also be featured with the Naples Philharmonic on Dec. 18. **BM**

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## JOHN NEMETH

BRADENTON BLUES FEST, RIVERWALK/DEC. 7

Rather than declaring himself a soul singer who plays blues or a blues singer who plays soul, John Németh simultaneously released albums in both fields last year. Utilizing the same seven-piece crew, the Memphis-based singer and harmonica ace delved into his catalog of original tunes — and a few choice covers — for the dual *Soul Live* and *Blues Live* CDs. The results were strong enough to earn Németh five Blues Music Award nominations, a couple of Blues Blast Music Award nominations and a Living Blues Award nomination. The Boise, Idaho, native has been winning raves since his 2007 breakthrough album *Magic Touch*, which showcased his powerful tenor vocals, seasoned



harp skills and superb songwriting abilities. Two more excellent CDs — *Love Me Tonight* and *Name the Day!* — completed a trifecta on the Blind Pig label, and Németh digs into the content of those albums for the independently released *Soul Live* and *Blues Live*. And certainly, hearing him live is the best way to appreciate his exciting artistry. **BW**

## ROSE MAX AND RAMATIS

264 THE GRILL, PALM BEACH/DEC. 3

Rio de Janeiro-born, Miami-based vocalist Rose Max and guitarist Ramatis Moraes both have Brazilian jazz in their blood. Their latest CD, *Bossa Nova Sinfónico: Recordando a Antonio C. Jobim*, honors the greatest of all Brazilian composers, with contributions from fellow South Floridians — keyboardist Mike Orta, bassist Jamie Ousley and drummer Carlomagno Araya — and the Costa Rica Symphony Orchestra. Max grew up in Rio within a musical family: Her great-grandfather was noted composer, conductor and flutist Cupertino De Menezes, and her grandfather was guitarist-composer Manuel De Menezes. The vocalist, who started her career with the Octeto Rio Orchestra, moved to Miami



in 1993. It didn't take long for Ramatis to get on a first-name basis with bossa nova and samba styles, either. The guitarist played his first professional gig at age 12, only five years after starting classical training. His advanced finger-picking and Max's Portuguese lyrical stylings should prove well-suited to the intimate 264 The Grill. **BM**

"YEAH, WELL I THINK I'LL GO DOWN IN GAINESVILLE, JUST TO SEE AN OLD FRIEND OF MINE..."  
'DEEP DOWN IN FLORIDA,' BY MUDDY WATERS  
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- Dec 28 Alley Blues Bar, Sanford
- Dec 31 Great Outdoors, High Springs

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# CYRUS CHESTNUT

WITH **RUSSELL MALONE**

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**NICK MOSS & THE FLIP TOPS**  
**BOSTON'S, DELRAY/DEC. 10**  
**BAYSIDE GRILLE/CAPT. MORGAN'S BEACH BAR,**  
**KEY LARGO/DEC. 11**  
**EARL'S HIDEAWAY, SEBASTIAN/DEC. 15**

If you came aboard the Nick Moss & the Flip Tops train early, and haven't checked in with them lately, you might not recognize their sound. Founded by guitarist and vocalist Moss, who worked with legends such as Jimmy Dawkins and Jimmy Rogers, the band made its bones playing Chicago blues. Their seven albums, released on Moss' own Blue Bella imprint, earned plenty of accolades and branded them as traditional-blues standardbearers. Then, in 2010, Moss took the band in a harder-edged rock direction. The socially concerned CD



*Privileged* still maintained a brick-tight blues foundation, and Moss and the 'Tops earned three Blues Music Award nominations for the effort. Their followup, *Here I Am*, doubled down on the formula and earned the band a 2013 BMA nod for Rock Blues Album of the Year. And the band continues to win converts wherever they go. **BW**

**BENNY GOLSON**  
**ARTIS-NAPLES/DEC. 11**

At age 84, tenor saxophonist Benny Golson still plays with an assertiveness that marks him among the torchbearers of the bebop and hard-bop eras. And he's the composer of standards like "Killer Joe," "Whisper Not" and "I Remember Clifford," to boot. Golson has outlined several other jazz legends with whom he worked, including Dizzy Gillespie, Lionel Hampton and Art Blakey. The Philly native's solo-recording career started in 1957, and includes the 1960 classic *Meet the Jazztet*, a session co-led by trumpeter Art Farmer. His 2009 release, *New Time, New 'Tet*, and a recent *Jazztet Complete Sessions* box set, reveal the importance of the short-lived group on Golson's development. The



saxophonist has a full range of tones, from hushed, husky and bluesy to the hardened, bop-influenced sound he helped to create in his youth. And he'll display all facets with talented trumpeter Dan Miller and the Naples Philharmonic, the burgeoning orchestra that often makes waves with prominent guest artists along Florida's west coast. **BM**


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Jan 2 Dancin' Shoes Jazz Jam – Heritage Center Vero Beach, 7-9:30, \$8

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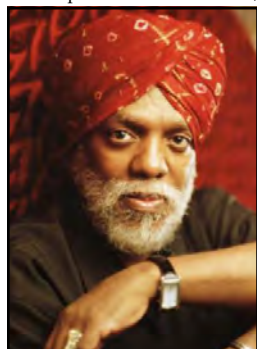
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**DR. LONNIE SMITH TRIO**  
**ARTS GARAGE, DELRAY BEACH/DEC. 20-21**

At age 71, Hammond organ specialist Dr. Lonnie Smith is enjoying a wave of popularity and influence that rivals the start of his recording career. In 1967, Smith released his classic funky debut album, *Finger-Lickin' Good*, and also appeared on two landmark recordings with guitarist George Benson, *It's Uptown* and *The George Benson Cookbook*. From the 1970s through the '90s, Smith released sporadic solo efforts, worked with saxophonist Lou Donaldson, and played in the house band at O'Hara's in Fort Lauderdale. In recent years, he achieved a long-standing dream by establishing his own label, Pilgrimage Productions. The imprint's second release, 2013's *In the Beginning*,



*Volumes 1 and 2*, features mesmerizing new reads of some early Smith gems with an octet. These trio shows, however, will more likely resemble the label's stellar 2012 debut *The Healer*, on which the good doctor torches ballads and blues, funk and fusion, with guitarist Jonathan Kreisberg and drummer Jamire Williams. **BM**

**CYRUS CHESTNUT TRIO with RUSSELL MALONE**  
**MINIACI CENTER, FORT LAUDERDALE/DEC. 14**

Fifty-year-old, Baltimore-born pianist Cyrus Chestnut has fused his gospel-music upbringing and a Berklee College of Music education into a unique jazz style. At age 3, Chestnut reached for the keys of his parents' piano — dad was a church organist, mom a choir director. The first album he bought a few years later was Thelonious Monk's greatest hits. And Monk's influence is still evident in Chestnut's attack, from the spiked chords and unorthodox harmonics to impeccable improvisation and use of space. Throughout his 20-plus-year solo-recording career, the pianist has offered jazz renditions of hymns and spirituals; revisited both Vince Guaraldi's *A Charlie Brown Christmas* and the catalog of Elvis Presley; and composed several original works.



A piece like Chestnut's "Little Jon," from his latest release *Journeys*, features New Orleans-inspired melodic lines, a deft bass line by Dezron Douglas, and intricate brushwork by drummer Neal Smith. The trio will be joined by international guitar star Russell Malone for this performance. **BM**

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**Saturday, December 14**

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12:30pm	Franc Robert & The Boxcar Tourists
2:00pm	Ben Prestage
3:30pm	Johnnie Marshall Band
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8:30pm	CS Holt Blues Band

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**GREGG ALLMAN BAND (w/ JJ Grey and Mofro)**  
**FLORIDA THEATER, JACKSONVILLE/DEC. 31**

In their early days, the band that would become The Allman Brothers generated rabid local followings in Florida and Georgia. But one ingredient was missing: a kickass vocalist who could match their firepower. Duane Allman knew that only his little bro would fit the bill. Blessed with a preternaturally seasoned blues voice, Gregg Allman took up the mic and the Hammond organ and led the band to its rightful place in rock history (which you can read about in Alan Paul's upcoming book *One Way Out: The Inside History of The Allman Brothers Band*.) A superb interpreter of blues and soul, Gregg also penned some of the band's best tunes: "Tied to the Whipping Post," "Dreams," "Melissa." In



addition to anchoring the ABB, Gregg has enjoyed a notable solo career, from the introspective 1973 treasure *Laid Back* to 2011's *Low Country Blues*. The latter finds him interpreting Skip James, Muddy Waters and Bobby "Blue" Bland. With Allman back in Jacksonville, this New Year's Eve show, with Mofro opening, should be a real treat. **BW**

**B.B. KING**  
**RUTH ECKERD HALL, CLEARWATER/DEC. 31**

As 2013 comes to a close, B.B. King has much to celebrate. How many 88-year-olds can cover as much turf as ol' B., whose November and December tour dates had him hopscotching from Indiana to Arizona to Texas to California to Florida, where he'll toast the New Year and play a couple shows in January. Blues fans are well-acquainted with King's tale, how he overcame poverty and racism in his native Mississippi; influenced generations of guitarists, including Eric Clapton and Michael Bloomfield; transcended musical boundaries by crossing over to white rock audiences; and became a true icon of his genre. Of course, this didn't happen overnight. King labored at his craft, developing his



signature tremolo guitar style and expressive vocals while touring relentlessly. His Grammy-winning 2008 CD *One Kind Favor* showcases B's mature artistry, with nods to inspirations such as Blind Lemon Jefferson, T-Bone Walker and Lonnie Johnson. Fingerstyle guitarist Shaun Hopper will open the New Year's Eve show. **BW**

Marty Stokes



For Press Releases, CD Reviews, Advertising Info or Listings, contact our Main Office at

**561.313.7432** or

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