

JAZZ & BLUES

F L O R I D A

FLORIDA'S ONLINE GUIDE TO LIVE JAZZ & BLUES

FEATURE:
BLUES ARTIST

TREY WANVIG

JONATHAN BUTLER

SARA GAZAREK

BOB JAMES

LISANNE LYONS

BETH McKEE

MOTOR CITY JOSH

RECKLESS SAINTS

TOO SLIM AND THE TAILDRAGGERS



TREY WANVIG

by Bill Meredith

Many adults look at their teenage years as a time when their reach toward success usually exceeded their grasp. For blues guitarist and singer Trey Wavvig, however, the future is at hand.

The 19-year-old from Sarasota has a resume that already has the earmarks of a successful bluesman three times his age. Wavvig started playing guitar at age 11; wrote original material for his 2018 debut album, *Roadside Blues*, shortly after becoming a teenager, and recorded the release at age 15. And he's already opened shows for, and shared stages with, the likes of Joe Bonamassa, Buddy Guy, Kenny Wayne Shepherd, Eric Gales, Shemekia Copeland, Steve Vai, Bob Margolin, Eric Johnson, and Christone "Kingfish" Ingram.

Wavvig, who's of Norwegian descent, is also currently a double major in music technology and cyber security at the University of Tampa. However, with such an advanced list of credits – plus an uncommon list of old-school influences before even turning 20 years old – this prodigy's musical future already seems secure as

his club dates and festival appearances ramp up while COVID-19, hopefully, continues to recede.

"I was initially pretty much a classic rock kid," Wavvig says, "but when I was in jazz band in middle school and high school, we'd play some blues stuff mixed into the jazz. So I started listening to old-school blues like B.B. King and Freddie King, and then got into Stevie Ray Vaughan. A couple of my teachers stressed that there were a lot of good guitar players out there, but something that sets great musicians apart was singing as well. I'd enjoyed singing, but I hadn't worked on it or had any vocal instruction. So a couple years after I'd started playing guitar, I started working with vocal coaches, and I've been concentrating on both ever since."

In January, Wavvig will travel to Memphis, Tennessee for the fourth consecutive year to participate in the prestigious International Blues Challenge. Living in Sarasota, he isn't far from the acoustically-pristine Ruth Eckerd Hall in Clearwater, where he's appeared as an opening act for many of the headliners listed above. It's where the Grammy Foundation chose Wavvig – who's also an ambassador for the United By Music North America organization, a program for neuro-diverse, neuro-typical musicians who exhibit exceptional musical talent – to participate in its Grammy Music Revolution Project in 2018. He was one of 15 or so young musicians chosen for the program, in which they worked with a variety of prominent international touring performers for several weeks.

The studious young Wavvig's career isn't unlike that of Bonamassa, currently one of the world's best-known blues artists, from a generation earlier. Now 44, that native New Yorker's career got jump-started at age 12 when he opened a series of B.B. King shows. Both Wavvig and Bonamassa are often seen playing Gibson guitars, and each presented a mix of original material and covers on their debut releases. Bonamassa's *A New Day Yesterday* (2000) featured a title track interpretation of a Jethro Tull tune; *Roadside Blues* closes with a cover of Freddie King's "Going Down." With his long blond hair and confident stage presence, Wavvig even resembles the future star version of Bonamassa. While in his early 20s, the then-flaxen-haired guitarist



Wanvig

released his first couple of albums around the same time that Wanvig, currently at work on his sophomore release, was born.

"I was so young when I recorded Roadside Blues. I feel like I've matured a lot since as a songwriter, guitarist, and singer. It turned out pretty well, but I was in the beginning stages of really working on my vocals. There's a big difference now."

In addition to his increased singing proficiency through vocal training, Wanvig's delivery has deepened due to natural maturation, making his voice more authentically bluesy. As for his guitar chops, one doesn't trade licks with the guitarists he's shared the spotlight with unless they bring the goods. Native New Yorker Vai rose to fame in the early 1980s as the since-deceased Frank Zappa's transcriptionist and "stunt guitarist," and had a memorable guitar duel scene in director Walter Hill's 1986 blues film *Crossroads* in which his character, Jack Butler, traded licks with Eugene "Lightning Boy" Martone (Ralph Macchio, with his phrases played by Ry Cooder). Vai has also appeared in guitarist Joe Satriani's ongoing G3 Tour, as have Shepherd and Johnson, the Texan who inimitably meshes blues, jazz and rock styles and won a 1991

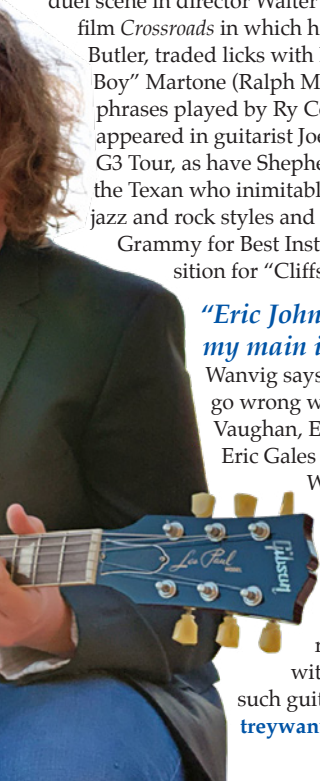
Grammy for Best Instrumental Composition for "Cliffs of Dover."

"Eric Johnson is one of my main influences,"

Wanvig says. "And you can't go wrong with Stevie Ray Vaughan, Eric Clapton, Eric Gales or Kenny

Wayne Shepherd."

Especially when, as in the case of the ahead-of-his-years Wanvig, you're literally rubbing shoulders with the majority of such guitar heroes. More at treywanvig.com.



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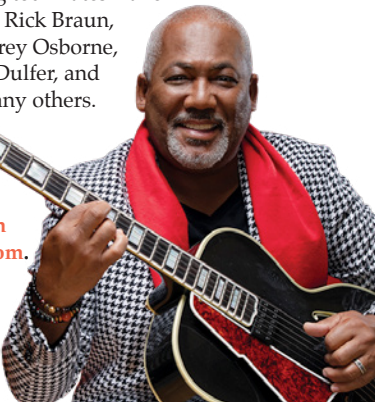
Jonathan Butler

**DAVE KOZ
AND FRIENDS
CHRISTMAS TOUR
NOVEMBER 27
RUTH ECKERD HALL
CLEARWATER**

Born in South Africa under the shadow of apartheid and raised in poverty, Jonathan Butler was the first non-white artist to be played on South African radio

and appear on national television. Nelson Mandela credits Butler's music as having inspired him during his imprisonment. In his early teens Butler won a local talent contest, affording him the opportunity to perform with a touring musical company throughout South Africa. He would occasionally perform at lavish concert halls for whites only, where he would not be allowed to use the bathroom, and the very next night he would perform in a dilapidated local township. Ultimately, his ticket to a new life was music. At age 13, Jonathan's talents caught the attention of producer Clive Caulder. Butler was signed to Caulder's Jive Records, and his first single became the first song by a black artist played by white radio stations in South Africa. It won the South African equivalent of a Grammy. His self-titled debut album earned a Grammy nomination for the pop hit "Lies." The instrumental "Going Home" earned him another nomination, and the mid-tempo ballad "Sarah, Sarah" confirmed Butler's place in popular music. And in spite of all the hardships, Jonathan Butler has an air of playfulness and quiet resilience that is easily visible in his passionate performances. On the heels of his 2018 CD *Close To You* comes the single, "Our Voices Matter," featuring tourmates Dave Koz and Rick Braun, plus Jeffrey Osborne, Candy Dulfer, and many others.

More at
[jonathan
butler.com](http://jonathanbutler.com).



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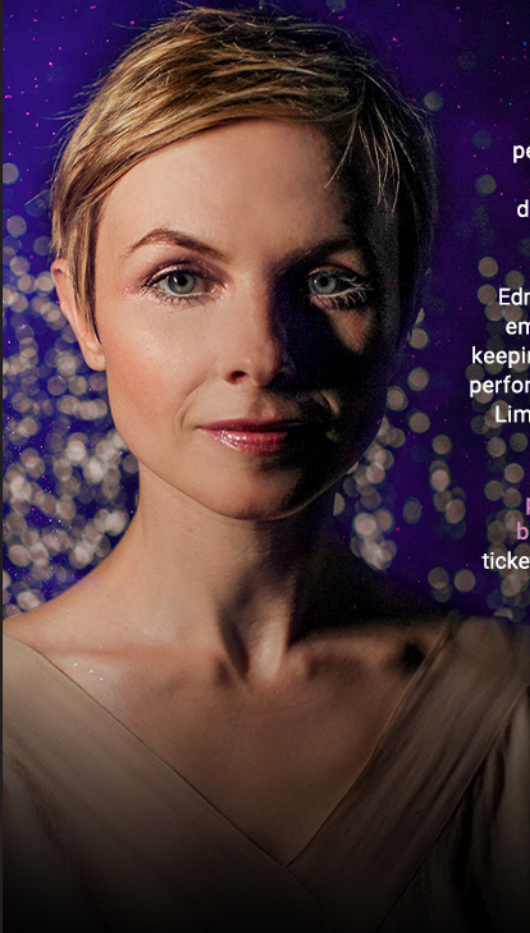


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NOVEMBER 13
DUNEDIN WINES
THE BLUES
DUNEDIN

Beth McKee

Orlando singer-songwriter Beth McKee offers songs of tenacity and purpose, sung to a deep southern groove. A working pianist from the age of 14, McKee’s musical identity began catching wind once she moved to Austin, Texas where she was recruited by Greg “Fingers” Taylor to join his band and embarked on a national tour opening for Jimmy Buffett. McKee then moved to New Orleans to join the band Evangeline, and the group was signed to Buffett’s Margaritaville imprint. After releasing two albums with the group, McKee set off to create her own musical legacy. Her five releases as a solo artist have garnered rave reviews from *Living Blues*, *Downbeat Magazine* and others. McKee’s strong desire to give back to the communities she has visited inspired her to found a network of over 2,500 women dubbed Swamp Sistas – a reference to her musical sound and the region it emerged from. With help from the group, she began hosting gatherings called Swamp Sistas La Las, a vamp on the traditional Creole house party with a purpose. In addition to writing, recording, touring and La La coordinating, McKee mentors other songwriters and conducts songwriting clinics at various southern Universities. Her latest, 2018’s *Dreamwood Acres* is a furtherance of McKee’s signature golden Southern roots kaleidoscope of soul, gospel, blues, folk, pop, and rock. Her Funky Time Band includes her husband Juan Perez on drums, Gerry Wilhelm on bass and Grant Peyton on guitar. More at bethmckee.com.



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Bob James

Discovered by Quincy Jones at the Notre Dame Jazz Festival in 1963, Bob James recorded his first solo album, *Bold Conceptions*, that same year. 58 albums and innumerable awards would follow through five decades. He honed his skills working with noted producer Creed Taylor, overseeing hits for Paul Simon, Neil Diamond and Kenny Loggins. Early career highlights include his composition "Angela," the instrumental theme from the sitcom *Taxi*, for which James composed all the original music used on the series. *One On One*, the first in three collaborations with Earl Klugh, earned a Grammy in 1980 for Best Pop Instrumental Performance, and sold over a million copies. James' 1985 collaboration with David Sanborn, *Double Vision*, was another million-selling Grammy winner. In 1990, James started working with drummer Harvey Mason, Jr., guitarist Lee Ritenour, and bassist Nathan East. These early sessions morphed into the hugely successful supergroup Fourplay. Meanwhile, in 2006, he was awarded the George Benson Lifetime Achievement Award by the Canadian Smooth Jazz Awards. *Altair & Vega*, the 2011 four-hand piano duet collaboration with Keiko Matsui, took nearly 10 years. 2015 brought James' first live album, *Live at the Milliken Auditorium*. James' music has also had a profound effect on the history of hip hop. In fact, two of his songs – "Nautilus" and "Take Me to the Mardi Gras" – are among the most sampled in hip hop history. His latest studio release is 2020's *On Vacation* with trumpeter/vocalist Till Brönner. More at bobjames.com.



NOVEMBER 13
PINECREST
GARDENS
PINECREST

 A promotional poster for a Christmas tour. The background is green with white snowflakes. On the left, a large portrait of Dave Koz is shown. To his right are four circular portraits of his band members: Jonathan Butler, Richard Elliot, Rick Braun, and Rebecca Jade. At the bottom, the tour title and date are prominently displayed.

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Roy Schneider was 16 and in hiding when a friend loaned him a guitar. Schneider had just broken out of a Straight, Inc. facility after a year-long incarceration where he had been denied the right to play an instrument or even listen to music. Having access to a guitar again – as well as the support of good friends – helped him survive while he waited to turn 18 and begin his lifelong love affair with making music, leading to three solo CDs culminating in 2015's *Ten From The Pen*. Schneider's

passion for the many flavors of music that define the Americana genre, combined with his innate ability with strings, led folk icon Tom Paxton, whom Schneider accompanied on his last solo tour in Florida, to pronounce him "one of those horrible people who seemingly can play anything they pick up and play it beautifully." Schneider was making a living performing in local bars when he met Kim Mayfield. She added keyboard, mandolin, rhythm guitar, harmony vocals, and the idea to take the music on the road. Describing their sound as "blue twangled folk 'n' roll," the newly-minted duo's 2018 self-titled debut CD hovered in the top 50 on Roots Music Reports Americana Country chart since shortly after its release, and was included in their Best of 2019 and Best of 2020 lists. More at recklessaints.com.



FROM A PHOTO BY JAN PAVNE PHOTOGRAPHY

Trey Wanvig

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7:30PM PioneerPalooza
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Sarasota

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Lisanne Lyons

WITH THE SOUTH FLORIDA
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FT LAUDERDALE

Currently teaching Studio Music and Jazz at the University of Miami's Frost School of Music and serving as Director of Jazz/Contemporary Voice at Florida International University, Lisanne Lyons was previously

an Associate Professor of Music at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. There she founded the vocal jazz program and directed the award-winning vocal jazz group the New Virginians. Lyons' career began immediately following high school as the featured vocalist for three Air Force bands. She has been featured with the Woody Herman Orchestra, Maynard Ferguson, Arturo Sandoval, Palm Beach Pops, and various bands and orchestras across the country. She has produced two solo CDs – *Right as the Rain* and *Smile* with the John Toomey trio – along with two CDs as lead soprano in the DC-based Uptown Vocal Jazz Quartet, with whom she performed at major jazz festivals across the country and abroad. Following her Master's degree she joined the national touring company of *City of Angels*. Along with numerous performing, recording, and back up singing credits, she also performs with a capella group Mad Romance. The recipient of several *DownBeat* awards, Lyons has headlined the Ottawa, Detroit and Clearwater Jazz Festivals, and La Nuit du Jazz (France). She was the first to perform live the Nelson Riddle arrangements of the George Gershwin Songbook that he wrote for Ella Fitzgerald, who only recorded them. Her FIU Jazz Vocal Ensemble received the 2021 *DownBeat Magazine* Student Music Award for Undergraduate College Outstanding Large Jazz Vocal Performance. More at carta.fiu.edu.



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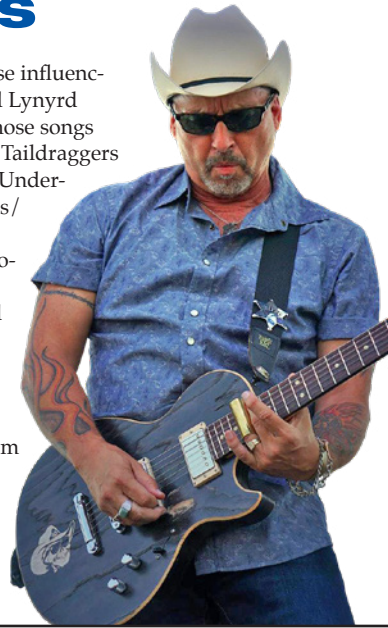
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NOVEMBER 12
CRAFT BEER &
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Too Slim & The Taildraggers

Tim "Too Slim" Langford is a monster blues rock guitarist whose influences run the gamut from Lightnin' Hopkins to Duane Allman and Lynyrd Skynyrd to Robin Trower. He is a prolific singer/songwriter whose songs have thus far yielded an impressive 13 studio Too Slim and the Taildraggers albums, two solo albums and several live CDs – all on his own Underworld Records imprint. The Taildraggers are Zach Kasik on bass/vocals and Jeff "Shakey" Fowlkes on drums/vocals. 2020's *The Remedy* is the latest giant step in the evolution of their contemporary blues/rock sound. Their previous release *High Desert Heat* charted 11 times on 2018's *Billboard* Top Blues Album Chart and was nominated for Best Blues/Rock album at the 2019 Blues Music Awards. Its predecessor *Blood Moon* was nominated for Blues Rock Album of the Year at the 2016 Blues Blast Music Awards, was voted Blues Rock Album of the Year at the 2016 Jimi Awards, and reached No. 6 on the *Billboard* Top Blues Album Chart in 2016. *Anthology* was voted the No. 1 Blues Album of the Year in the Blues Matters Writers Poll in 2015. Langford has received Lifetime Achievement and Hall Of Fame awards by three Northwest blues societies, as well as more than 40 regional and national music awards. More at tooslim.net.



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Sara Gazarek

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NOVEMBER 20
SOUTH MIAMI-DADE
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CUTLER BAY

NOVEMBER 21
CENTRAL PARK
PERFORMING ARTS
CENTER, LARGO

Hailed as an artist that “may well turn out to be the next important jazz singer” by the *LA Times*, Sara Gazarek has been a leading light in an impressive generation of jazz vocalists since her brilliant emergence at age 20. Her career has been

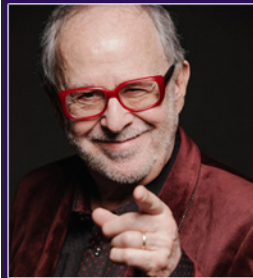
the picture of success: five acclaimed albums, an ardent fanbase, enthusiastic reviews, and opportunities to collaborate with some of her most celebrated peers. Given the personal and professional development Gazarek has undergone since her last solo release, the playful Blossom Dearie tribute *Blossom & Bee*, it would be surprising if her music had emerged unchanged. Her latest album, the double Grammy-nominated *Thirsty Ghost* laces the dazzling light that’s always been present in her music with a deep vein of heart-rending sophistication. Gazarek studied at the University of Southern California, where she’s been a faculty member for eight years. Teaching is a learning experience, and her connections with students have helped lead Gazarek to this transformative point. Audiences have marveled at Gazarek’s evolution on illustrious stages around the world, where she’s headlined and worked with such modern jazz greats as Billy Childs, Fred Hersch and Helen Sung. Her mature sound has also been guided and inspired by the likes of Kurt Elling and John Clayton Jr. Gazarek now views the volatile past few years as “a beautifully orchestrated ballet that finally brought me to the place I’d long desired to be – even if I didn’t know it.” More at saragazarek.com.



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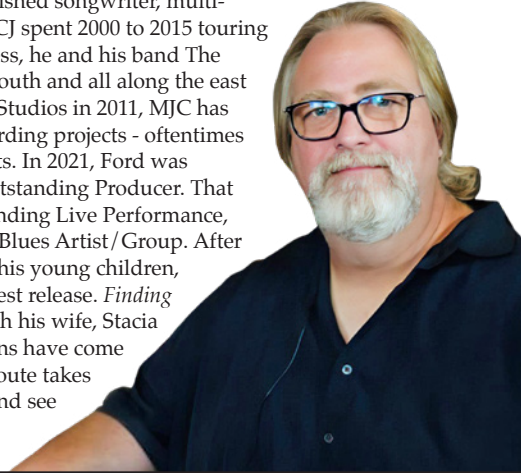
NOVEMBER 6
BRADFORDVILLE
BLUES CLUB
TALLAHASSEE

NOVEMBER 10
PARADISE BAR
& GRILL
PENSACOLA BEACH

Motor City Josh

The appropriately titled *Finding A New Gear* is the 13th album from veteran Detroit blues journeyman Motor City Josh. Born Joshua Steven Ford to parents who were both preachers, he was earning a living as a full-time musician by the age of 19. His earliest heroes included such legendary artists as Howlin' Wolf, Albert Collins, and Taj Mahal - all of whose influences still echo in Ford's best work. An accomplished songwriter, multi-

instrumentalist, and renowned slide guitarist, MCJ spent 2000 to 2015 touring relentlessly throughout the lower 48. In the process, he and his band The Big 3 amassed a loyal following throughout the south and all along the east coast. Since opening The Sound Shop Recording Studios in 2011, MJC has engineered and/or produced more than 250 recording projects - oftentimes collaborating and co-writing songs with the artists. In 2021, Ford was awarded the Detroit Music Award (DMA) for Outstanding Producer. That award followed his three 2020 DMAs, for Outstanding Live Performance, Outstanding Blues Songwriter, and Outstanding Blues Artist/Group. After taking eight years off from the road to help raise his young children, Motor City Josh & The Big 3 are back with his latest release. *Finding A New Gear* (which includes several co-writes with his wife, Stacia Petrie Ford) packs the punch that his longtime fans have come to expect. Look for him next year as his touring route takes him further south in Florida to play past stages and see old friends. More at motorcityjosh.com.



FESTIVAL UPDATE

NOVEMBER 6 • GAINESVILLE
Downtown Fest & Art Show

NOVEMBER 12 • CASSELBERRY
Craft Beer & Blues Fest

NOVEMBER 13 • DUNEDIN
Dunedin Wines the Blues

NOVEMBER 19 • CLEARWATER BCH
Suncoast Jazz Festival

DECEMBER 3 • BRADENTON
Bradenton Blues Fest

JANUARY 14 • ZEPHYRHILLS
Pigz in Z'Hills BBQ & Blues

JANUARY 28 • POMPANO BEACH
Pompano Beach Jazz Festival

CLICK FOR OUR COMPLETE
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INFORMATION WAS CORRECT AT TIME OF POSTING
Send updates to Charlie@JazzBluesFlorida.com

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WDIG 1450AM - DOTHAN, AL





"I THINK I'LL GO DOWN IN GAINESVILLE
JUST TO SEE AN OLD FRIEND OF MINE..."
"DEEP DOWN IN FLORIDA," - MUDDY WATERS

The North Central Florida Blues Society

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BIRTHDAY BLUES BASH

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 12 • HIGH DIVE

210 SW 2nd Avenue • Gainesville • 5:30 - 10:30PM

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ZITO**

**ALBERT
CASTIGLIA**

**BRIDGET
KELLY
BAND**

ROOT REDEMPTION



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NCFBS members \$10

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BY A GRANT FROM THE CITY OF
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