

Preservation Hall Band to open Festival of Arts BOCA

Fresh from backing The Black Keys with Dr. John at the Grammys, the venerable Preservation Hall Jazz Band opens the Festival of the Arts BOCA this year on March 7 under the tented Mizner Park Amphitheater.

With a tradition tied to Preservation Hall, the music venue in the French Quarter founded in 1961 by Allan and Sandra Jaffe to preserve New Orleans jazz, the band literally travels the world. They were so busy during Mardi Gras, questions were answered via email from Ron Rona, their directing manager.

What will the band play in Boca? A little Louis Armstrong, singles from the 50th anniversary collec-

tion? "The band generally plays to their environment. A good amount of the time, they create their set lists on the day of the show," Rona wrote. "Sometimes they'll make musical selections when we're on stage. A lot of it has to do with what the audience brings to band."

"What I can tell you is the band will play some classics, along with some brand new material. But even the new stuff will sound classic," he added.

The band wasn't surprised to be asked to back the new kids on the block who won three Grammys. They've been playing with other performers for years. "We feel that the resurgence of interest in roots music has been running strong for a good few years



PRESERVATION HALL BAND

now," Rona wrote. "It brings the band great joy to see a younger generation out in the crowds dancing to our music. And at the end of the day, it all comes back full circle. People will always be drawn to good music. You just have to make sure there's a place

for them to hear it."

In fact, The Preservation Hall Jazz Band has endured because their music creates a sense of place, said Michael Fagien, the area's resident jazz expert and a festival sponsor. Fagien is planning a March 20 soft opening of Jazziz,

the club, champagne and caviar bar and restaurant at the south end of Mizner Park and he plans to bring names as big as the band's to Boca Raton.

Ben Jaffe, the owners' son, is carrying on his parents' "rich history and heritage," Fagien said. "People are able to identify with a place, a region and a feeling and Jaffe is doing a great job keeping it relevant."

If you ask the band how they came to The Black Keys, who won three Grammys, Rona will explain it wasn't a new collaboration. "We're both fans of each other's work for quite some time and Preservation Hall's relationship with them goes back to Bonnaroo [a festi-

val] a few years ago, when they performed with Dan Auerbach [guitar and vocal for The Black Keys] and Dr. John," he wrote. "Around that time, Dan was producing Dr. John's album. They all share a deep interest in Americana and roots music, especially music from the South. It all came together pretty organically. The band had an incredible time."

They also loved being honored at the NAACP Image Awards. "In many ways, the award brought our mission full circle from the 1960s, when Ben's parents founded Preservation Hall," Rona wrote. "It's not only an achievement for the musicians playing now, it's an achievement for all that played before them."

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