

Tijuana Brass Legend Herb Alpert at Boca Festival of the Arts

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By Caryn Stumpf

The Pineapple Contributing Editor

A few weeks shy of his 81st birthday, legendary jazz/pop/R&B trumpeter Herb Alpert is still keeping the faith. The energetic, creative innovator, artist, producer and philanthropist continues to perform live and record new records to this day. He recently released *Come Fly With Me*, a mix of new music and classic American standards performed with the unique Alpert touch in September 2015. He'll be performing on stage at Mizner Park Amphitheater next month with his wife of over 40 years, Grammy-award-winning vocalist Lani Hall, and a three-piece band.

This dynamic American Renaissance man remarked that he's looking forward to his upcoming show during the Festival of the Arts Boca next month. "I've heard it's a nice venue," speaking of Mizner Park Amphitheater. "My wife and I have been traveling off and on with the same group for 10 years. I'm doing what I love to do. The good feeling I get from playing keeps me going."

Playing a little bit of everything including a jazz set, a Tijuana Brass medley and a Brasil '66 medley, Alpert said about his upcoming Boca Raton show, "We'll mix it up. Every show is different. We like to take chances and create," he said. "It's delightful for me to do this every night. I'll keep doing it as long as I'm healthy."

Born March 31, 1935, in East Los Angeles, Alpert started playing trumpet at age eight. Founding the phenomenally popular group, Herb Alpert and the Tijuana Brass, in the early 1960s, Alpert developed a distinctive, unmistakable trumpet sound that continues to this day. He released 30 albums and sold more than 72 million records over his career, spanning the 1960s to today. He's won nine Grammys and had 14 Top 40 hits and five No. 1 hits as both a musician and vocalist.

Alpert founded A&M records with his partner Jerry Moss in 1962, and developed A&M into one of the most successful independent record labels of all times from the 1960s through the 1980s, working with some of music's biggest stars, such as Janet Jackson, the Carpenters, Cat Stevens, Sergio Mendes and many others. He reportedly sold A&M for \$460 million to Polygram in 1989.

In addition to his music, Alpert is a prolific artist. He creates abstract paintings and sculptures. His art has been shown at galleries and museums in Los Angeles, Nashville and across the country and Europe. Currently, he's exhibiting his monolithic, bronze sculptures, *Totems in Brass*, at the Chicago Field Museum. "Art is a great release for me. I'm in the moment when I'm painting, sculpting and making music. It's hard to find that feeling when I'm not doing it. That's the seductive thing about it. I love that feeling," he said.

Alpert's also a generous philanthropist, funding school arts programs and donating more than \$130 million to help keep music and the arts alive for generations to come. He's founded two college music schools and gives multiple \$75,000 grants (\$1 million annually) to young up-and-coming artists through the Herb Alpert Foundation. "I think it's the responsibility of everyone that can afford it to give back. I was able to pick up trumpet as a kid. I wish kids had the same opportunity in school today. It should be a part of core education ... it could be music, writing poetry, acting, dancing ... with practicing and focusing on it, that discipline will spill over into academics," said Alpert.

Alpert has received numerous awards, including Grammys and being inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame as a music industry icon but none so humbling as receiving the National Medal of the Arts, the nation's highest honor for arts excellence, from President Obama in 2012 for his musical, philanthropic and artistic creations.

He met his wife, Lani, known for her emotional vocal interpretations, through A&M Records when she was a singer for Sergio Mendes' band, Brasil '66. A&M had signed Brasil '66 to their label and produced their first few records in the late 1960s. He was married to his first wife at the time and "caught up in the trappings of Beverly Hills." Calling Lani his "muse," Alpert said, "She changed my life. She brought a certain honesty to it and snapped me into gear." The couple has been married for 42 years and live in Malibu, Calif.

"My new album, Come Fly With Me, is a collection of new and classic songs that haven't been done quite the same way before. I'm not doing covers or duplicating the songs. I'm interested in doing things different and bringing something new to it." For example, in the title song originally done by Frank Sinatra, Alpert added a steel drum after the bridge, giving it a Caribbean feel. With his trumpet he always plays the lyrics of the song. "I'm conscious of trying to play the lyrics through the instrument," he said. "I just have a grand old time playing."

Regarding his influences, Alpert said, "I'm a jazz man. I love jazz and classical music. It's what I listen to." Alpert studied music formally for several years and loves Beethoven and impressionistic composers Debussy, Ravel and others. "There are only 12 notes ... our job is figuring out the different ways to scramble these notes. It's definitely different ... I'm not copying them (classical artists) but they're still inspirational."

Alpert, a native Los Angeleno, is not Hispanic or Latino – a common misconception. His father is from Russia and his mother from Romania. A musical family, his father played mandolin and mother played violin, his brother was a professional drummer and his sister played piano. "I had no choice," said Alpert about becoming a musician. "My dad gave me a hard time about it at first but I had to do it. I was seduced by it. Most people are creative but afraid to let it fly. I think you should do your own thing. I do what feels right to me. I'm a right-brained guy. Sculpting, painting and making music gives me pleasure.

"Performing is a big responsibility for me. People love to hear the old songs. I get great feedback – they thank me for the concert and for playing that 'upbeat music,'" he said. "With my concerts, I'm looking to bring myself up... it's very fun and energizing. I don't get tired after a show. On the contrary, it gives me energy. I'll say this," said Alpert about his upcoming Boca Raton show, "people will not be disappointed in the performance."