

FLORIDA'S TOP 100 EVENTS

Dance, Music & Theater Events

BILLBOARD LATIN MUSIC CONFERENCE & AWARDS The most prestigious Latin music conference to date, the 19th annual event brought more than 1,000 music industry professionals to the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino in Hollywood April 6 to 10 to honor the most popular albums, songs, and performers. Determined by sales and radio airplay data gathered for *Billboard's* weekly charts, the awards were sponsored by Heineken. Peripheral events included educational seminars, nightly networking parties, and the Billboard Bash—a preshow event featuring performances by the finalists—at Spirits nightclub the night before the awards. The 2009 event, sponsored by State Farm Insurance, is scheduled for April 19 to 23 at the Eden Roc resort in Miami.

CLEARWATER JAZZ HOLIDAY What started as a 10-day series of jazz concerts held on the back of a flatbed truck has evolved over the past 30 years into an international jazz festival. The free, four-day event—presented by Mercedes-Benz and Marine Max—attracts 60,000 jazz enthusiasts to the Tampa Bay area each year. Jazz 'n' Art Walk (running in conjunction with the festival) debuted in 2008 and will double its size to include 50 displaying artists in 2009. The Clearwater Jazz Holiday Foundation, the City of Clearwater, and its volunteers coordinate the event, which will celebrate its 30th anniversary October 15 to 18.

FLORIDA FOLK FESTIVAL Held at the Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center State Park in White Springs, the folk fest celebrated its 55th year in 2008. More than 20,000 attendees enjoyed dance workshops, arts and crafts, banjo and fiddle contests, and of course, folk music. Originally started by Ada Holding Miller—president of the National Federation of Music Clubs—in 2002, the Florida Park Service produces the festival. The 2009 event is scheduled for May 22 to May 24.

FLORIDA MUSIC FESTIVAL & CONFERENCE The music industry takes over downtown Orlando every spring for this four-day event consisting of concerts, seminars, music video screenings, and industry parties. The 2008 event featured more than 250 artists

at 15 venues throughout the city. Sean Perry and Rick Wheeler are the founders and directors of the fest, produced by aXis Productions & Events. The music returns to Orlando from May 14 to 17.

INTERNATIONAL BALLET FESTIVAL OF MIAMI In its 13th season, the festival has become a major international ballet event, featuring nearly 120 dancers representing more than 25 dance companies from around the world. Workshops, dance film showcases, ballet master classes, and the presentation of 94-year-old Frederic Franklin with a lifetime achievement award were among this past year's highlights. The festival is the creation of Pedro Pablo Peña, founder of the Miami Hispanic Ballet, and will take place August 28 to September 6. **LANGERADO MUSIC FESTIVAL** In its sixth year, the jam-band-based music festival relocated from Sunrise's Markham Park to the Big Cypress Indian Reservation, in the heart of the Florida Everglades. The four-day festival attracted more 25,000 revelers in 2008 with bands like R.E.M and 311. Produced by co-founders Ethan Schwartz and Mark Brown, Langerado moves yet again for 2009 to downtown Miami's Bicentennial Park from March 6 to 8, with featured acts such as Snoop Dogg and Death Cab for Cutie.

ORLANDO INTERNATIONAL FRINGE FESTIVAL Created in 1992 by Terry Olson, the festival is now the longest-running Fringe festival outside of Europe, Australia, or Asia. It has evolved from using empty storefronts as venues to using the Orlando Shakespeare Theater and the Orlando Repertory Theater. Twenty-five thousand guests and 500 artists attended and participated in 2008. The festival—whose philosophy is to be 100 percent unjuried, uncensored, accessible, and profitable for the artists—returns May 14 to 25.

PENSACOLA JAZZ FESTIVAL In spite of some rain, the 25th Annual Pensacola JazzFest—held April 5 to 6, 2008—drew more than 10,000 to downtown's Seville Square. Butch Thompson's Big Three, the Shelly Berg Trio, and Jazz Guardians were amongst the nationally known headliners. Produced by the Jazz Society of Pensacola, the 2009 event will take place the weekend of April 4.

SPRINGING THE BLUES FESTIVAL Known as Florida's largest free outdoor blues festival, the three-day event draws more than 40,000 attendees to the city of Jacksonville Beach. Held annually on the first weekend in April, the festival is planned and executed by the Springing the Blues Society, and attracts renowned blues

artists from all over the country to perform at Jacksonville Beach's oceanfront Sea Walk Pavilion. Other events at the fest include a 5K run, a surfing contest, and a bike ride for cancer research.

SUMMER SHORTS FESTIVAL City Theater presented its 13th annual theater program to thousands of viewers at two south Florida performing arts centers, the Adrienne Arsht Center and the Broward Center. The theater creatively divided the program's works into age-appropriate formats: "Shorts 4 Kids," "Undershorts" (for adults only), and "Signature Shorts" (consisting of 16 plays divided into two programs). The 2009 theater program will take place throughout May and June at both venues.

SUNFEST Founded in 1982, this waterfront music and art festival brings more than 300,000 people to West Palm Beach annually. Top names such as Santana, Ludacris, Sheryl Crow, and Kool & the Gang have performed. Produced by Sunfest of Palm Beach County Inc. and a structured board of directors and members (including Jimmy Buffett as an honorary member), the 2009 concert is set for April 29 to May 3.

TAMPA BAY BLUES FESTIVAL Some 45,000 blues fans head to St. Petersburg's Vinoy Waterfront Park for the three-day Tampa Bay Blues Festival every year. The 2009 festival—sponsored by Florin/Roebig personal-injury lawyers—is slated for March 20 to 22, and will feature performances by Delbert McClinton and Irma Thomas, as well as an official after-party at independent event venue Nova 535.

WINTER MUSIC CONFERENCE Going into its 24th year, WMC is an annual weeklong music conference in March, offering more than 500 performances, seminars, and networking parties. Held in more than 30 Miami venues, the 2008 event attracted 2,211 of the world's most celebrated artists and DJs like Lady GaGa and Bob Sinclair, as well as 3,726 industry delegates and more than 62,000 music lovers from 70 countries. The electronic music industry will return to Miami from March 24 to 28.

ULTRA MUSIC FEST The closing event of the Winter Music Conference, Ultra draws more than 40,000 revelers to Bicentennial Park to witness more than 200 musicians and DJs perform on 10 stages. With sister events in Ibiza, Brazil, New York, and Puerto Rico, the event—founded and produced by Russell Faibisch and Alex Omes—is the largest of its kind in the United States. The 11th annual concert is March 27 and 28 featuring Tiësto, Moby, and the Prodigy.

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annual In the Garden Gala—the newly renovated Fontainebleau in Miami Beach—was not going to be ready for the November 1 event, a new location needed to be found to accommodate a large turnout just a few weeks before the event. The Miami Beach Convention Center was chosen, and Barton G. went to work transforming the grand ballroom and lobby into a scene reminiscent of Venice, Italy. From the classically dressed masked performers to the trellises weaved with greenery and the large gondola in the center of the bar, Venetian style was abundant. Switching off each year with the Party in the Park fund-raiser, the gala will return to Miami in 2010.

INTERCONTINENTAL MAKE-A-WISH BALL The 14th annual InterContinental Make-a-Wish Ball took place on November 8 in Miami, once again attracting a star-studded crowd, including live-auction host Kim Kardashian. Sutka Productions transformed the property's lobby and ballroom into an enchanted forest, with ferns lining the steps to the hotel, ambient lighting throughout, a horse wearing a unicorn horn that posed for photo ops, tables draped in leaf-printed linens, a variety of mythical creatures entertaining guests, and more. Recognized as one of the premier fund-raising galas in South Florida, the 2008 event raised \$1.6 million for the charity.

INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS BALL The 52nd annual International Red Cross Ball was scheduled for January 31 at Donald Trump's Mar-a-Lago Club in Palm Beach. Recognized as one of the most anticipated events of the Palm Beach social season, the gala is known for its elegance, with guests clad in white ties, tails, tiaras, and couture gowns. Coordinated by American Red Cross' Greater Palm Beach Area chapter, the affair raised \$1 million

for the charity in 2008.

MAGNOLIA BALL The H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center & Research Institute once again held its annual Magnolia Ball at the A La Carte Event Pavilion in Tampa. Corina Wian-Literski, event designer for the pavilion, designed and created the spring-themed event, which raised \$3.2 million for the organization, exceeding the 2007 net results by \$600,000. The 2009 gala is scheduled for April 25, with the Beach Boys as headlining performers.

MARINERS HOSPITAL BOUGAINVILLEA BALL The Mariners Hospital held its annual Bougainvillea Ball at the Cheeca Lodge & Spa in Islamorada again. More than 400 guests stepped out on January 26 and raised \$154,000 for the hospital. Coordinated by the hospital's in-house event planner Wendy Gentes and designed and executed by Deco Productions, the "Follow the Silk Road"-themed 19th annual event channeled the Orient with its use of orchids, flowing silk, and bright colors. The 2009 event was scheduled to take place January 31.

STORYBOOK BALL This Ronald McDonald House Charities of Tampa Bay annual fund-raiser is always themed after a classic fairy tale. For the 2008 affair on May 17—which raised \$390,000—Vicki Walters of Gold Productions brought to life *Where the Wild Things Are* by Maurice Sendak with Busch Gardens' Jungala dancers leaping about while "King Max" and his wild things roamed throughout the A La Carte Event Pavilion. Lasso the Moon will be the theme for the 2009 gala on May 16.

TASTE OF THE NATION Share Our Strength's Taste of the Nation is the country's preeminent culinary benefit supporting anti-hunger and anti-poverty efforts. Beginning April 29 at the Ritz-Carlton, Palm Beach, the annual culinary showcases took

place across the state, with Fort Lauderdale's 16th annual event held on June 11 at the Broward County Convention Center, Miami's 20th annual held at the Ritz-Carlton, Key Biscayne on July 24, and Orlando's on August 9 at the Orange County Convention Center.

THE UNGALA GALA The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art's 23rd annual fund-raising event took place on October 18 in the museum's 1920s-style courtyard and gardens overlooking Sarasota Bay. The 1,200 black-tie guests are by invitation only with the theme each year kept a tightly guarded secret until guests arrive with hints given to the appropriate attire by the design of the invitation. The event—named "Best Black Tie Event" in *Black Tie* and *Sarasota* magazine's Best of the Best in 2006—is organized by the museum and raised nearly \$50,000 at the retro Ringling-themed event in 2008. The 2009 event will take place October 17.

VIZCAYAN BALL Every November, Vizcaya Museum and Gardens hosts its annual Vizcayan Ball to raise money for the restoration and upkeep of the house and gardens. Held on November 22, the 2008 gala—dubbed the Preservation Ball in celebration of the half century of work put into restoring, protecting, and preserving the property—welcomed 500 guests to the James Deering estate for an elegant dinner from Thierry's Catering. The evening concluded with a fireworks display over the waters of Biscayne Bay.

X-CUISINE DINNER AND DESSERT The Museum of Science and History holds its annual X-Cuisine benefit—a night where culinary demonstrations, science discovery, historical reenactments, and live entertainment collide—every September to raise money for the museum's programs. Scheduled for September 12, the 2009 dinner and dessert event will feature *Top Chef* participant Richard Blais, the X-Fire and X-Elimination food and trivia challenges, and more.

Parades & Festivals

BLUE ANGEL AIR SHOW HOMECOMING The U.S. Navy's Flight Demonstration Squadron, the Blue Angels, entertained more than 15 million spectators in 38 cities across the country on the 2008 national air show tour. The six-month tour concludes in November at the squadron's home base, Pensacola Naval Air Station. The homecoming air show is a mix of formation flying and solo routines using F/A-18 Hornets, with pilots performing about 30 maneuvers during the hour-and-a-half-long demonstration. More than 200,000 attendees from around the country gather to celebrate.

FANTASY FEST The 10-day festival held the week leading up to Halloween is estimated to attract 90,000 revelers to Key West. Fantasy Fest is comprised of an outrageous assortment of events, including a pet masquerade parade, celebrity look-alike competition, beach party, masquerade march, and street fair, as well as the highlight Duval Street Promenade and Captain Morgan's Fantasy Fest Parade. The revelry returns October 23 through November 1.

FIESTA OF FIVE FLAGS This annual summertime festival celebrates the founding of Pensacola which has since had five different flags flown over it: the Spanish, French, British, Confederate, and American. One of the oldest and largest heritage festivals in the state, the 2008 event featured the traditional boat parade, in which people can either decorate their own boats and join the parade at the mouth of Bayou Chico or watch from the shores. The Fiesta Forces coordinate the event each year with the assistance of nearly 400 volunteers. The 2009 event is scheduled for May 1 to June 14.

GASPARILLA PIRATE FESTIVAL The annual festival is named in honor of legendary pirate Jose Gaspar, who invaded Tampa centuries ago with his crew. In 2008 nearly 400,000 people gathered in

downtown Tampa to watch a reenactment of the invasion by Ye Mystic Krewe of Gasparilla—complete with a ship and blasting cannons. Organized by Tampa Bay and Company, the festival also features the Gasparilla Parade of Pirates and Pirate Fest Street Festival, with food and beverage tents set up along the 3.5-mile parade route.

GAY DAYS Beginning as a single day in 1991 where the gay community was encouraged to "wear red and be seen" while visiting Disney World, Orlando's Gay Days has evolved into a weeklong celebration with more than 50 different events citywide. Held June 3 to 9, 2008, it attracted more than 145,000 celebrants—up 10,000 from 2007—including gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered people from around the world. Organized by the Gay, Lesbian & Bisexual Community Center of Central Florida, the event brings in \$100 million annually and is scheduled for June 2 to 8.

HEMINGWAY DAYS American legend Ernest Hemingway comes to life every July during Hemingway Days in Key West. The three-day festival consists of a series of parties and events, the highlight of which is the Hemingway look-alike contest, which attracts participants from around the world. The event is produced by an unofficial board of locals and with Hemingway's granddaughter Lorian Hemingway, who's also a Pulitzer Prize-nominated author. The 29th annual celebration will be July 23 to 25.

MIAMI BOOK FAIR INTERNATIONAL The 25th annual Miami Book Fair International, recognized as the country's largest book fair, took place November 9 to 16 in downtown. The event has three parts: the Festival of Authors, a two-day street fair, and the International Pavilions Village. For those unable to attend, podcasts of select book-fair presentations were available on iTunes. A partnership between Books & Books owner Mitchell Kaplan and Miami-Dade College, the 2009 fair is scheduled for November 8 to 15.

SPHERION ORLANDO CITRUS PARADE Just before the Capital One Bowl at the Florida Citrus Bowl Stadium each December, thousands of people from around the world tune in to watch this popular parade, which is broadcast in more than 150 international markets. Presented by Delta Air Lines and produced by the Florida Citrus Sports Committee, it is part of a three-event celebration, with more than 50 corporations involved. The event celebrated its 29th anniversary in 2008 with 12 marching bands and six citrus floats made up of more than 100,000 grapefruits, oranges, and tangerines—all donated by local citrus growers Heller Bros., Leroy Smith Inc., and Conoley Citrus Packers. Nearly 85,000 onlookers lined the two-mile parade route in downtown Orlando.

WHITE PARTY WEEK This week of parties and events at Miami's hottest clubs and hotels includes the renowned White Party, which featured Cyndi Lauper in 2008 and is held annually at Vizcaya Museum & Gardens. Produced by Care Resource, an HIV/AIDS awareness organization, the 24th annual event took place November 26 to December 1 and annually raises more than \$1 million. The event attracts more than 10,000 gay men and women from around the world and is being held November 25 to 30 this year.

WINTERFEST BOAT PARADE Sponsored by Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino in Hollywood, the 2008 parade was held on December 13. The 37th annual event had participants transforming 100 boats into elaborate displays of color and light employing the "Rockin' the Night Aweigh" theme. The parade draws nearly one million spectators along its 12-mile route each year, making it the seventh largest one-day event in the country. The International Festival and Events Association have also ranked it the 20th-best parade in the world of more than 50,000 in the U.S. alone. The 2009 event is planned for December 12.

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