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Blue Note Club Announces Inaugural Jazz Festival

By Matthew Oshinsky

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The Blue Note Jazz Club, a New York institution since its inception in 1981, announced on Tuesday its inaugural jazz festival, which will run throughout the month of June in honor of the club's 30th birthday.

To make room for dozens of acts and more than 80 shows in total, the club, in addition to organizing a special series in its own space, has also scheduled concerts at the Beacon Theatre, Town Hall, B.B. King Blues Club & Grill, the Highline Ballroom, Terminal 5, Joe's Pub, Mercury Lounge, Rose Hall at Lincoln Center, (Le) Poisson Rouge, the Lehman Center for Performing Arts and the Katonah Museum of Art.

Many of jazz's brightest lights are expected, including Dave Brubeck, Chris Botti, Nancy Wilson, Bobby McFerrin, the Roots, Chaka Kahn, McCoy Tyner, Youssou N'Dour, Bill Frisell and Madeleine Peyroux.

"We're presenting musicians all over New York who have played the Blue Note since the beginning, as well as new ones who we hope will continue to come back for many years," the club's owner and operator, Danny Bensusan, said in a statement. "Thirty years ago, I never could have dreamed the Blue Note would become what it is today. It wasn't easy to convince the artists to play here at first. We had help from some of the musicians who believed in what we were trying to do—Ray Brown and Dizzy Gillespie, in particular—and as we started bringing in bigger names, the reputation of the club grew. Once they played the Blue Note, they always wanted to come back."

In addition to spotlighting many of the jazz legends who have passed through its famously cramped confines, the Blue Note will include in its festival a series at the Mercury Lounge devoted to emerging artists in a variety of genres. It will also sponsor educational programs for the nonprofit organization JazzReach and its "ELLINGTON!" program at the Highline Ballroom, which will host hundreds of New York City public-school students each day over a period of three afternoons.

A complete schedule of events and ticket information is available at the official festival website, BlueNoteJazzFestival.com.