

Taj Mahal and the Phantom Blues Band



Leinenkugel Stage • Friday 8:00 p.m.

Friday nights at the Bayfront Blues Festival ends with a bang this year. Taj Mahal is fresh off a European Tour and ready to show why he is one of the most in-demand blues performers in the world. Along with the Phantom Blues Band, Taj is sure to provide the best country-blues and so much more.

Taj has already had an amazing year. He picked up his second Grammy when his latest recording "Shoutin' in Key" won for Best Contemporary Blues Album. His first was in 1997 for "Senor Blues." He and his Phantom Blues Band also won the W.C. Handy Award for Band of the Year.

Born Henry St. Clair Fredericks, the name Taj Mahal, he has said, came to him early in life in a dream. Taj has proven to be undeniably one of the most diverse and long lasting musicians of his time. The son of a West Indian jazz pianist and a Southern gospel singer, Taj has used these and many other influences to become an artist whose

music is difficult to classify. Throughout, he's confounded those critics who want to categorize him as a blues revivalist when, in fact, he has become a living artist in his own right whose primary well of inspiration is the deep blues and R&B traditions of America, but whose pioneer inclinations have directed him to connect those blues expressions to other family members, both distance and ancestral. He is a master of finger-picking country blues, bluegrass banjo, slide guitar, southern blues, soul, and R&B, reggae, music of Hawaii, the Caribbean, and beyond. His influences and abilities are seemingly endless and his energy to share and perform is equally as deep.

A self-taught musician, Taj plays over 20 instruments, including the National Steel and Dobro guitars, and his remarkable voice ranges from gruff and gravelly to smooth and sultry.

In addition to his regular work, Taj has acted in films and composed motion picture scores. Among the esteemed titles he has been associated with are Phenomenon, The Mighty Quinn, Once Upon A Time When We Were Colored, Sounder I and II, The Man Who Broke A Thousand Chains, Scott Joplin - King of Ragtime, and the Wynton Marsalis-scored Pulitzer Prize winning epic, Rosewood. He also wrote the Grammy-nominated score for the Broadway production Mule Bone, based on a play by Langston Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston. Taj has recorded several Grammy-nominated children's albums and provided voices for popular cartoon characters, such as "Sage," from the forthcoming animated series, The Blues Brothers.

With his unmistakable and unique voice, talent that can not be learned, and a spirit which keeps him in a state of perpetual artistic growth and evolution, Taj Mahal has always, and will always, play music that he loves. For that, he continues to pull fans, new and old, from every conceivable walk of life and continues to open our eyes to all that the art of music can be.