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Monty Alexander Jazz Festival is One of the Region's Growing Jazz Events

As the third annual Monty Alexander Jazz Festival gets underway on Labor Day weekend, August 31 through September 2, 2012, festival goers will be treated again to internationally-known jazz musicians performing in the intimate club setting of the Historic Avalon Theatre in Easton, MD. The Festival, which originated in 2010, continues to draw top-drawer musicians. While the Festival headlines on Saturday night at 8 p.m. legendary jazz pianist Monty Alexander, the Festival's artistic director and namesake, this year it will also boast such jazz greats as emerging trumpet player Dominick Farinacci, who will kick off the Festival on Friday night at 8 p.m., the brilliant vibes master Chuck Redd, and jazz and gospel vocalist Dee Daniels.

Al Sikes, chairman of the event, presented by Jazz on the Chesapeake, a program of Chesapeake Chamber Music, comments, "While there are hundreds of jazz festivals across the country, we started out by headlining world-class talent. We have been able to do that in Easton with the help of Monty Alexander, who helped us found the Festival."

Sikes explains that the Festival grew out of Chesapeake Chamber Music, which is a logical evolution. He states, "Jazz really is the American version of chamber music. Both involve small ensembles playing in intimate venues. While chamber music is based in European classical tradition, jazz has a mix of musical and ethnic influences."

This year's event has expanded with the Festival increasingly as a weekend destination. Sikes adds, "There is a richness to our Festival – it is really exciting to see what it is becoming and the quality of the performers we are attracting."

In addition to expanding the length of the Festival, Sikes states that the Festival program has evolved this year to include local and regional elements, embodying an eclectic mix. There will be a "Tribute to Duke Ellington" on Saturday, September 1 at 4 p.m. by Chuck Redd, a Shore favorite, along with the University of Maryland Jazz Ensemble. Redd, who has performed with the Charlie Byrd Trio and the Mel Torme All-Star Jazz Quintet, has toured with such jazz greats as Dizzy Gillespie, Dick Hyman, Frank Vignola, and Monty Alexander. The University of Maryland Jazz Ensemble is one of only three elite bands invited to perform annually at Washington, DC's UDC Calvin Jones Big Band Jazz Festival.

Wrapping up the weekend of jazz, a new event has been added on Sunday, September 2 at 2 p.m. featuring Dee Daniels and her Trio, along with Easton's own Asbury Celebration Choir, headlining a jazz gospel concert, "A Salute to Mahalia Jackson." The "Los Angeles Times" says, "Daniels' hardy tones, jazz-wise phrasing and triumphant scat showed why she's considered among the cream of mainstream jazz singers."

The Festival weekend also includes an outdoor jazz brunch on Saturday at 11:15 a.m. at the Tidewater Inn featuring The Conservatory Classic Jazz Band, as well as the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum's Academy for Lifelong Learning's lecture, "Jazz and the African American Experience," by Bill Edgar,

PhD, scholar, author and esteemed jazz pianist at the Academy Art Museum on Friday afternoon at 2 p.m.

Sikes concludes, "Interest in jazz music is growing on Delmarva with such venues as the Avalon Theatre's Stoltz Listening Room, NightCat in Easton, and The Mainstay in Rock Hall offering jazz concerts that are really expanding the jazz experience for Shore residents."

There is something for everyone at the Monty Alexander Jazz Festival this Labor Day Weekend. The Jazz Festival offers tickets ranging from \$15 for individual seats to some concerts up to \$140 for premium seat weekend packages. For a direct link to tickets, go to <http://www.instantseats.com/events/MAJF>. For further information about Jazz on the Chesapeake, www.chesapeakejazz.org or call the CCM office at 410-819-0380.

Photo #1: Pictured is accomplished vibraphonist and drummer Chuck Redd who will lead "A Salute to Duke Ellington" with the University of Maryland Jazz Ensemble on Saturday, September 1, 2012 at 4:00 p.m. at the upcoming 2012 Jazz on the Chesapeake Festival on Labor Day weekend

Photo #2: Pictured is sultry vocalist Dee Daniels who will perform a jazz gospel concert, including "A Salute to Mahalia Jackson" with Easton's Asbury Celebration Choir, on Sunday, September 2, 2012 at 2 p.m.

Photo#3: Pictured is Easton's Asbury Celebration Choir, under the musical direction of Ricky Caldwell, who will perform with jazz vocalist Dee Daniels at the Labor Day Monty Alexander Jazz Festival in Easton.





