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"Just A Few Friends" Festival

FANTASY FEST
"Musical Icons & Iconic Musicals"

FOODIE GUIDE
Taste the Keys, Miami Spice + Good Eats

10 YEARS ANNIVERSARY

Collector's Edition

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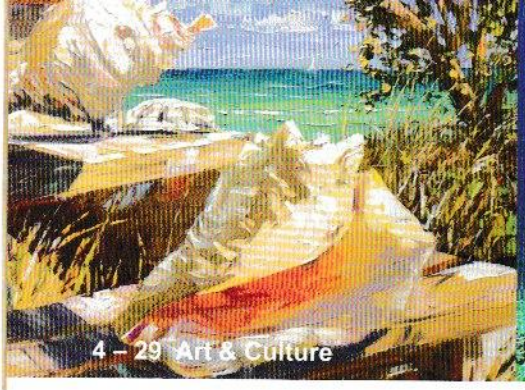
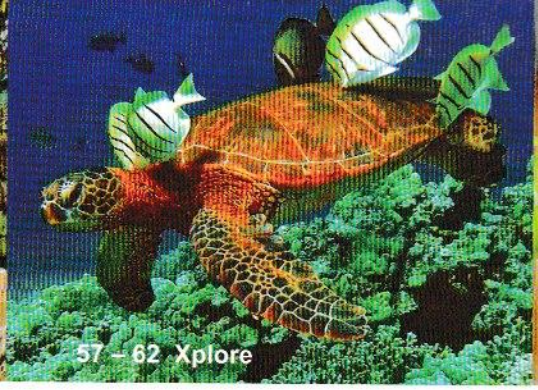
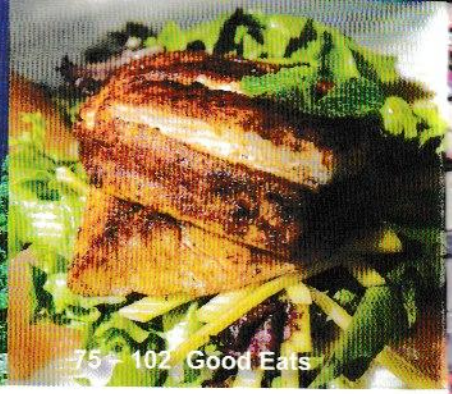
GREATER SOUTH MIAMI-DADE







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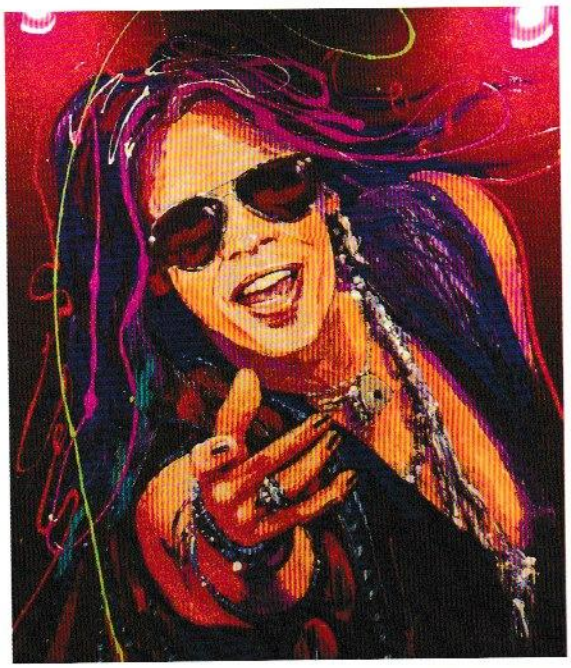
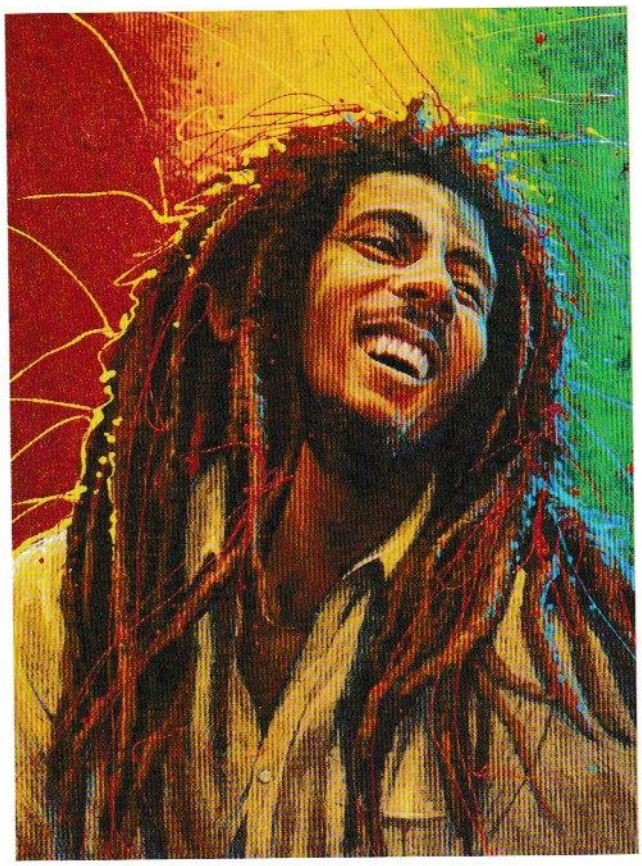
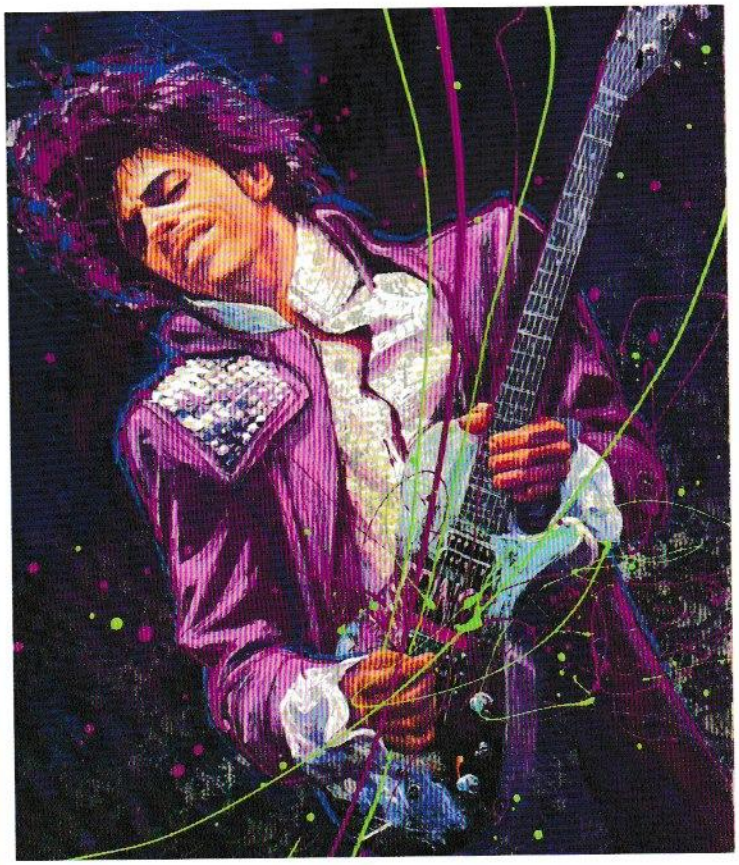
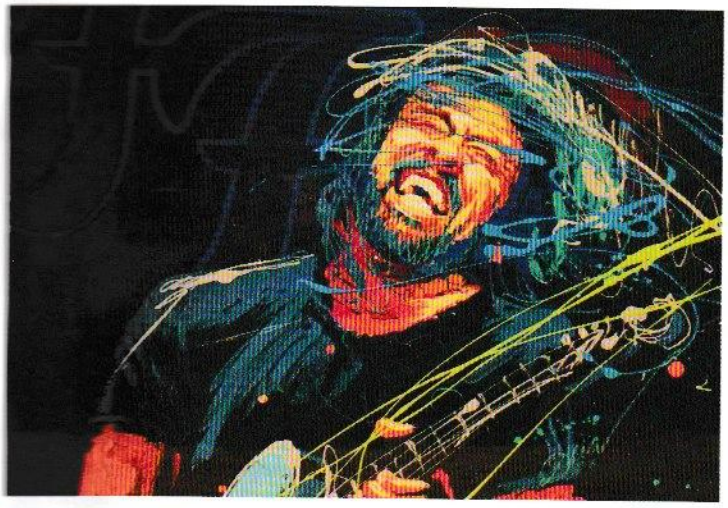
ABOUT THE COVER: Strumming My Six String

Renowned for capturing the essence of some of the world's biggest rock stars, Ray Drea is also regaled for harnessing his deep passion for Harley-Davidson motorcycles into powerful works of art. "Strumming My Six String," Ray's stunning cover painting of Jimmy Buffett, is just one of his prolific works. See more on pages 12 – 13 or visit raydreastudios.com. Ray will also be painting live on October 22 — 24 at Key West's acclaimed Zazoo Fine Art Gallery, 622 Duval St.

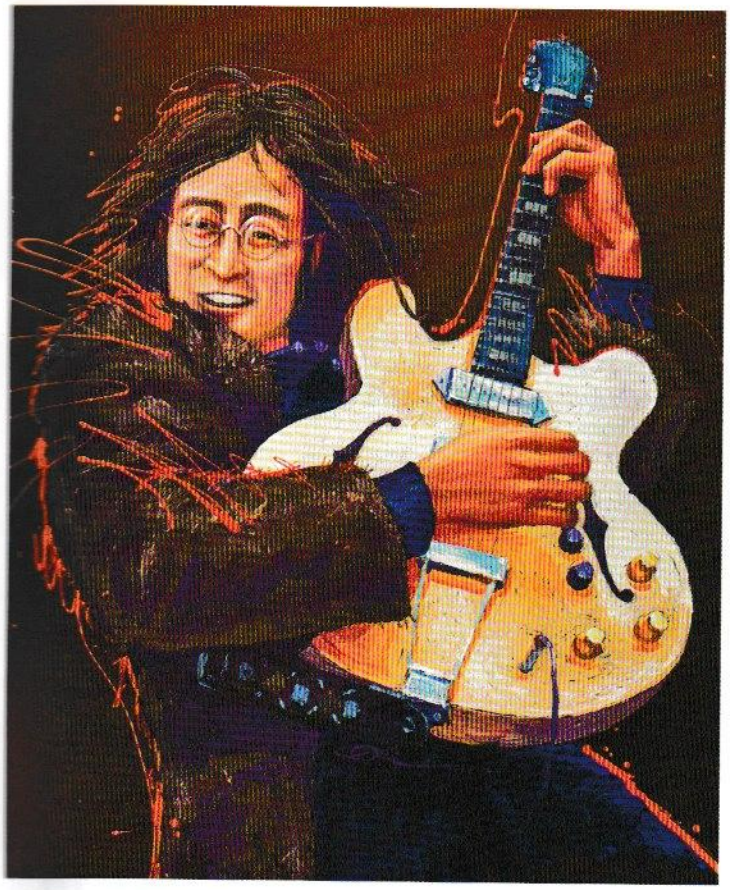



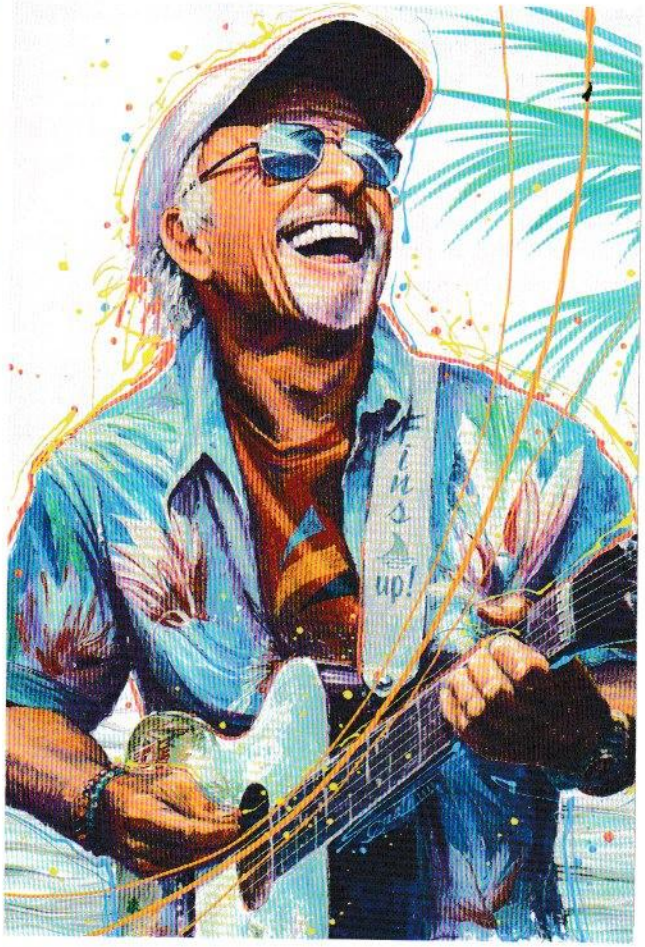
The powerful rendition of "Key West's Favorite Son" gracing our 2026 Fall cover is just one of Ray Drea's "Music Icons." In addition to Jimmy Buffett, the prolific artist has also created an entire series of iconic figures including Mick Jagger, Bruce Springsteen, Bob Marley, Debra Harry, Jimi Hendrix, the Beatles, and other greats.



MUSIC ICONS

BY ARTIST RAY DREA







Many of his works are currently on display at Zazoo Fine Art Gallery, 622 Duval St and at raydreastudios.com. Rock on!

with the US Navy to develop submarine escape methods, and was also the first man to freedive over 200 feet! View Croft's experimental underwater contact lenses, as well as his NOGI award, which were both recently donated by the Croft family. Takes place daily from 10 am – 5 pm at The History of Diving Museum, 82990 Overseas Hwy. Info: 305-664-9737; divingmuseum.org.

WEEKLY

TUESDAY – SATURDAY

EXHIBITION:

Mote Marine Coral Reef Exploration

Islamorada: Boasting three aquariums, educational storyboards, interactive kiosks and video monitors, this immersive new exhibit provides both a beautiful and educational view of our unique coral reef ecosystem, as well as the challenges it faces. Major themes include the 1935 Labor Day Hurricane, Henry Flagler's Overseas Railway, and our fishing and maritime heritage. Takes place on Tu – Su from 10 am – 5 pm at the Florida Keys History & Discovery Center, 82100 Overseas Hwy (on the grounds of the Islander Resort). Info: 305-922-2237; keysdiscovery.com.

TUESDAY – SATURDAY

EXHIBITION:

Pirates, Wreckers and Salvagers

Islamorada: From the alleged exploits of Black Caesar, the Keys' most famous pirate, to Captain Ben Baker, the King of the Florida Wreckers, this engaging exhibit delves into the facts and fiction of those men who plied their trade along the dangerous Florida Reef. See it Tu – Su from 10 am – 5 pm at the Florida Keys History & Discovery Center, 82100 Overseas Hwy (on the grounds of the Islander Resort). Info: 305-922-2237; keysdiscovery.com.



TUESDAY – SATURDAY

Movies at the Museum

Islamorada: This ongoing series of fascinating "Shorts" runs throughout the day, and includes films about Henry Flagler's Overseas Railroad, the Keys' 1935 Hurricane, and an overview of the Islamorada area's State Parks. Films begin at 10:30 and continue throughout the day, with the last showing at 4 pm. Takes place at the Florida Keys History & Discovery Center, 82100 Overseas Hwy (on the grounds of the Islander Resort). Info: 305-922-2237; keysdiscovery.com.

FRIDAYS

Islamorada Artisan & Gourmet Market

Tavernier: Shop a curated mix of culinary and artistic vendors, including small-batch foods, local art, and music in a serene garden space. Takes place from 10 am – 4 pm at Island Home Garden Nursery, 88720 Overseas Hwy (MM 88). Info: 786-971-2299; islandgardencenter.com.

MONTHLY

Third Wednesday

Immerse Yourself!

Islamorada: This free monthly presentation occurs on-site at the History of Diving Museum, or virtually so, you can tune in from wherever you are. Experts cover maritime history, archeology, diving, and marine science topics. Coming up: The Future of Underwater

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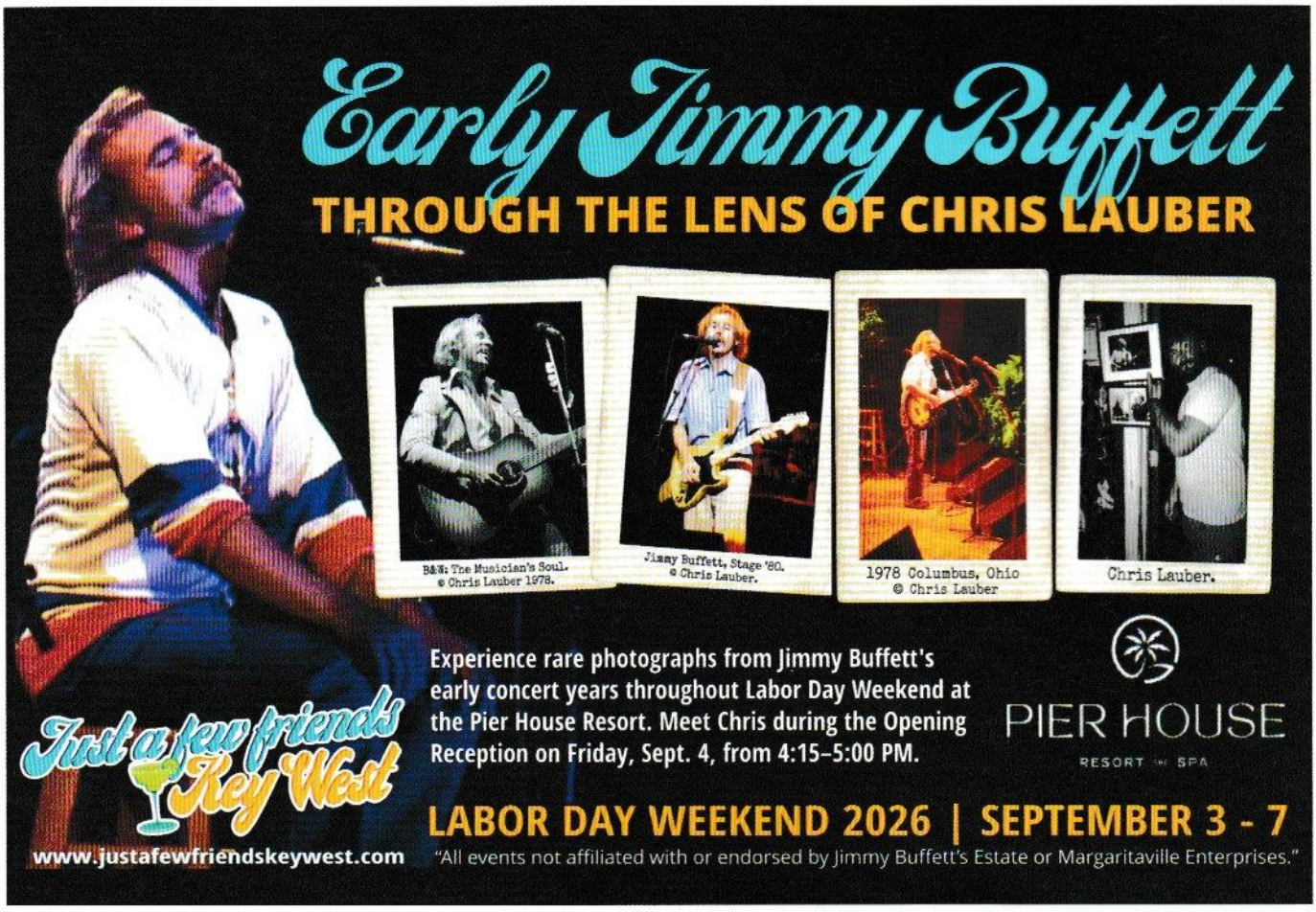


Vintage Buffett—

The Man Behind the Lens



Chris Lauber has been a "Parrothead Super-Fan" for five decades, long before it was a moniker for Jimmy Buffett's devotees. On March 14, 1977, Lauber was a 19-year-old Boston College Freshman when he scored a primo spot at his first general admission Jimmy Buffett concert in Springfield, MA.

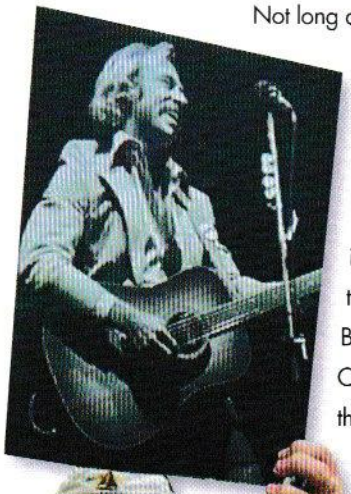
Back then, Jimmy was just an up-and-comer, opening for the Eagles' "Hotel California Tour." When he took to the stage, Lauber snaked his way through the standing-room-only crowd with his little Keystone pocket camera held high.

The horde of fans parted like he was Moses at the Red Sea. When Lauber reached the stage, he caught Jimmy's eye and tossed him a small, silver cigarette case stashed with "relaxing smokes" (wink, wink!). It was Lauber's first face-to-face with Jimmy Buffett and the only concert where he shot the rising star using his pocket camera. Chris Lauber was hooked.

When summer rolled around, the budding photographer blew his first paycheck as a lifeguard on a spanking new Fujica 35mm camera.

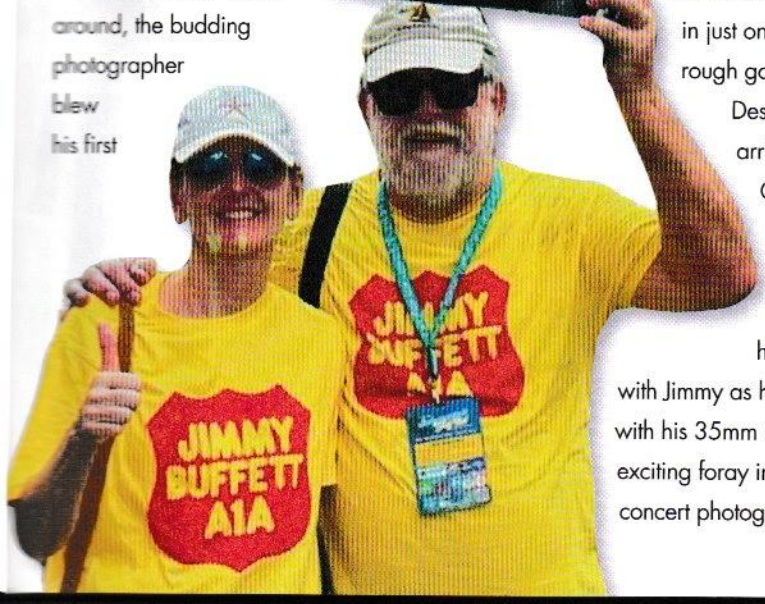
On March 9, 1978, Chris once again found himself eye-to-eye with Jimmy. But this time, it was from the front row of Boston's Orpheum Theater. That night, he shot a full roll of color film and another roll of B&W. It was a night that forever changed the direction of Lauber's life.

From that moment on, Lauber's dreams exploded with fantastical images of his photos popping up on album covers, in magazines, in books, and Hell yes, even on billboards. Little did he know that it would take more than 40 years for his fantasy to come to fruition.



Not long after the Orpheum concert, Lauber began scheming, dreaming, prepping, and planning his own coming-of-age journey. His sole goal: to meet Jimmy Buffett in person. Chris focused on three straight Buffett concerts: Buffalo, NY; Columbus, and Cincinnati, Ohio. Then he hit the road. Hitchhiking 450 miles from Boston to Buffalo in just one day was a rough go, but it paid off.

Despite his last-minute arrival at the New Century Theatre, Lauber scored a front-row seat. Once again, he was eye-to-eye with Jimmy as he fired away with his 35mm Fujica. It was an exciting foray into the world of concert photography, but the real turning point came on March 20, 1978. However, it took some real chutzpah.



Denied an official Photo Pass for Buffett's Columbus gig, and without a concert ticket, Lauber took matters into his own hands. He snuck into the Veterans Memorial Theatre during the sound check, hid for three hours, and brazenly claimed an empty seat in the second row. And then he got to work shooting roll after roll of stage-front concert photos: from the stage-front, from the balcony, and from the center aisle. It was truly a coup de grace.

On March 22, 1978, the fifth day of Lauber's hitchhiking adventure, he finally scored a Backstage Pass to Jimmy Buffett's Cincinnati show. Having this kind of inside access allowed Lauber to shoot the "Island Troubadour" from a new and unique vantage point. It also enabled him to capture the energy, spirit, and evolution of an artist whose future connection to Key West became part of music history.

That Backstage Pass was another turning point for Lauber. And meeting Jimmy backstage was a lifetime dream catcher.

Buffett absolutely loved Lauber's photos from the earlier Boston concert. He even asked for copies of his own before autographing Lauber's personal prints.

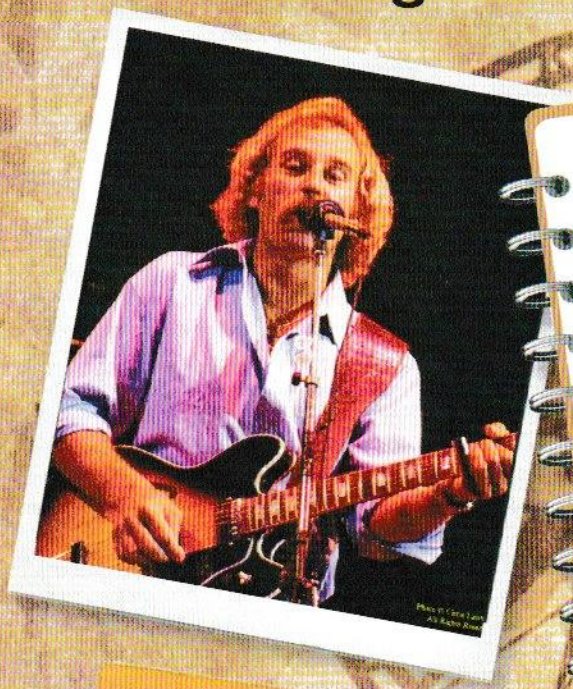
But this is just the start of the story.

To hear more and to meet Chris Lauber, check out his Labor Day Weekend "Through the Lens" Exhibition during Key West's "Just A Few Friends Festival." The opening reception is on Friday, September 4, from 4:15 – 5 pm at the Pier House Resort, One Duval. Info: Justafewfriendskeywest.com.

Fins Up!

Margarita Memories

Through the Lens of Chris Lauber



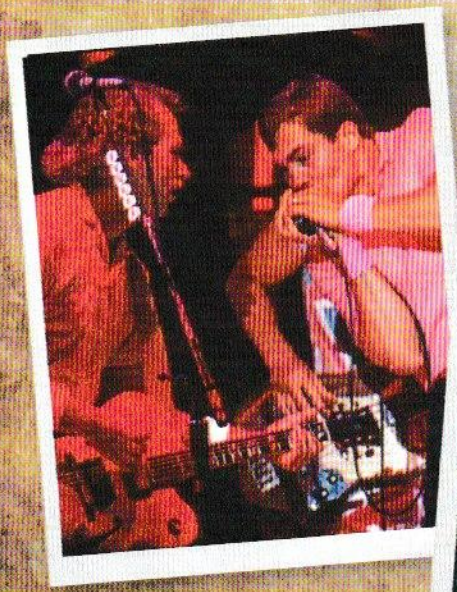
Shot during the 1970's, Chris Lauber's vintage concert photos of Jimmy Buffett capture the early years of "Key West's Favorite Son."

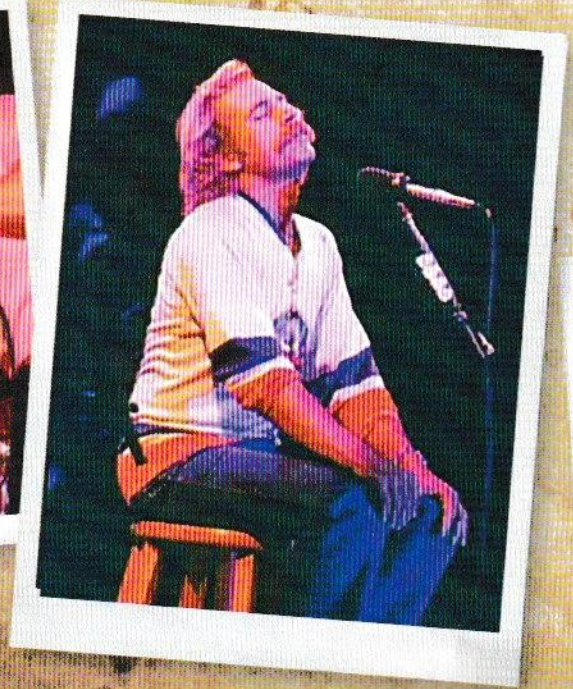
His amazing curated collection goes beyond nostalgia — it provides a first-hand visual record of a formative era, offering an intimate look at the energy, spirit, and evolution of an artist whose connection to Key West became part of music history.

You can see more of Lauber's up-close-and-personal photos during Key West's 3rd Annual "Just A Few Friends" Festival which takes place over Labor Day Weekend.

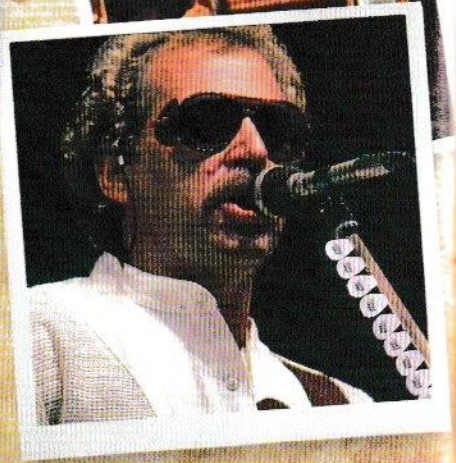
Opening Reception on Friday, September 4 from 4:15 – 5 pm and on view daily during the Festival at the Pier House Resort, One Duval St. Info: justafewfriends.com.

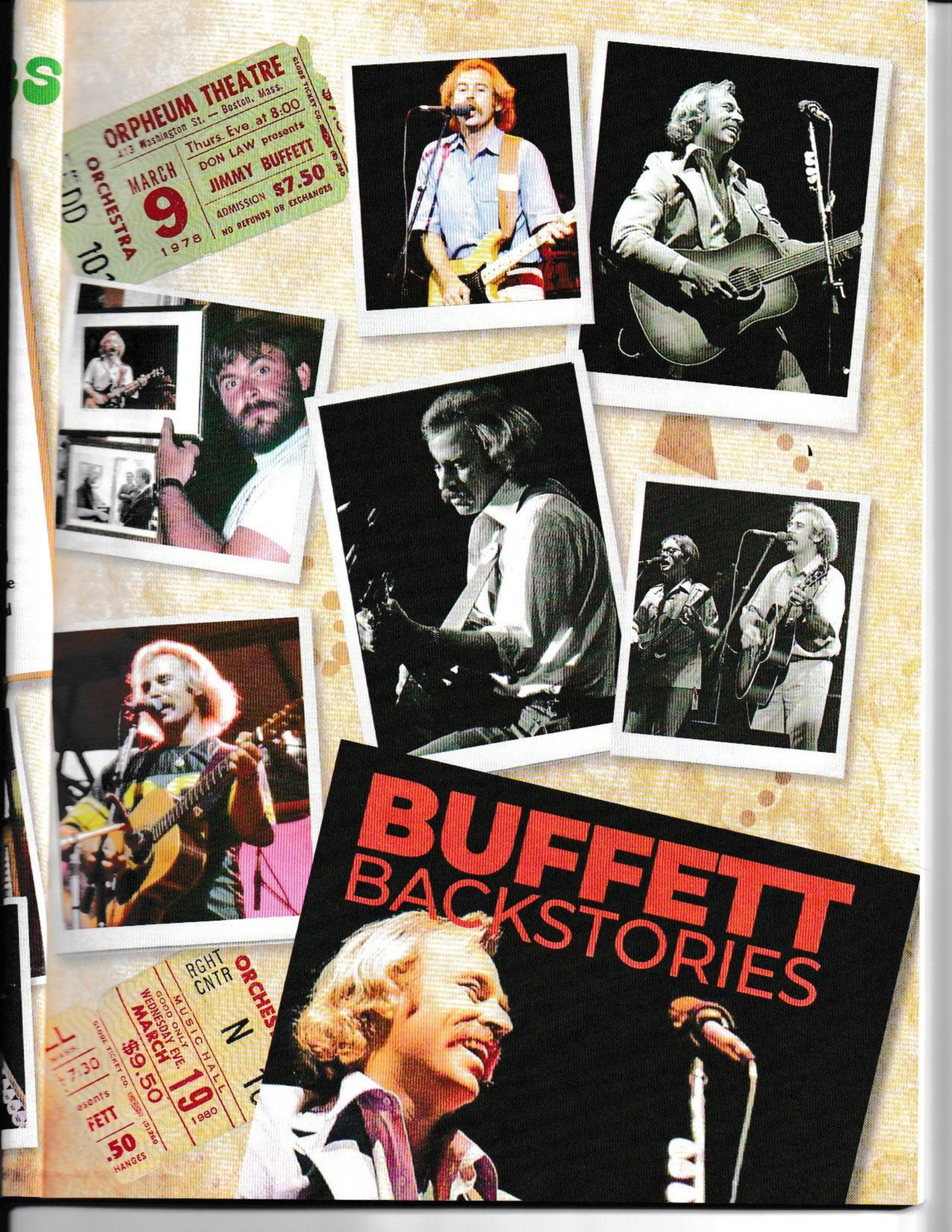








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ORCHESTRA
BUFFETT
BACKSTORIES
MUSIC HALL
GOOD ONLY WEDNESDAY EVE. MARCH 19 1980
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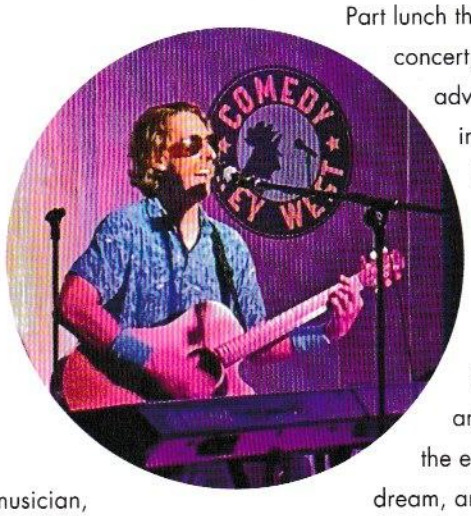
A Pirate Looks Back—

One of Key West's Greatest Tales Ever Told!

Hold on to that shaker of salt. Because when Caleb Hogan takes to the stage, you'll be tripping down Memory Lane for an unforgettable, magical moment in "Margaritaville."

"A Pirate Looks Back," Hogan's original one-of-a-kind Jimmy Buffett Tribute Show, celebrates the songs, spirit, and the island where the legend began.



An acclaimed musician, actor, and Buffett historian, Hogan appears in character as Key West's Favorite Son and delivers a spot-on performance that will, quite literally, blow out your flip flops.

Part lunch theater, part tribute concert, and part educational adventure, Hogan's immersive tribute blends live music, storytelling, humor, and of course... Cheeseburgers! It's a journey back in time to a place where artists and misfits lived the eclectic Bohemian dream, and our favorite "Grandson of a Sailor" roamed the land.



"A Pirate Looks Back" is an absolute MUST-SEE for all Buffett fans, music junkies, or anyone who wants to laugh, learn and sing along during Key West's most entertaining lunch experience.

Takes place from 12:30 – 2 pm at Comedy Key West, 218 White St. Info & tickets: 305-985-7370; comedykeywest.com.

FYI: This independent tribute performance is not affiliated with, endorsed by, or sponsored by Jimmy Buffett, Margaritaville Holdings LLC, or the estate of Jimmy Buffett.

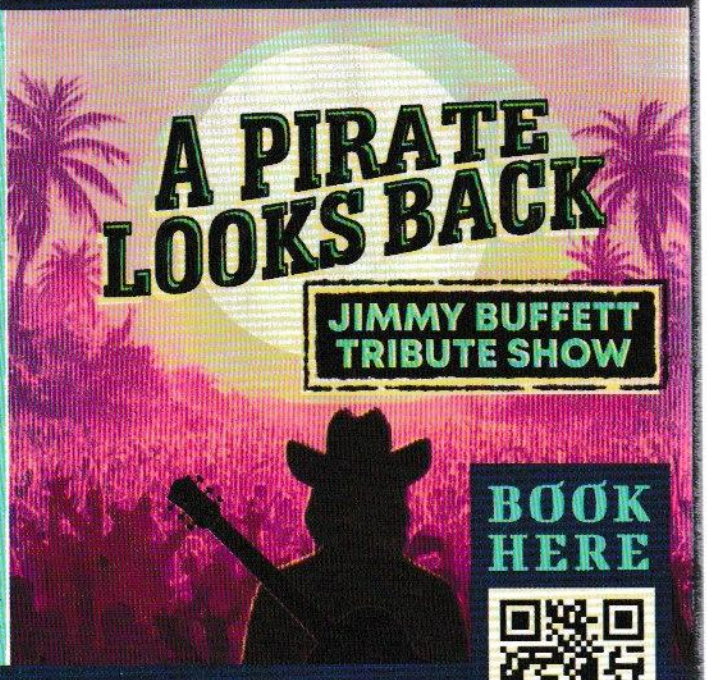
YOU DON'T KNOW KEY WEST UNTIL YOU KNOW HIS STORY.

This is not your ordinary Buffett tribute. It's a recollection of **one of the greatest Key West tales ever told.**

Travel back to 1971 and celebrate the stories and songs that made a Key West legend. Filled with heart, humor and the hits, this LIVE show is a MUST for Parrot Heads and newcomers alike.

Weekdays | 12:30pm
Check calendar for show dates
218 Whitehead St

Air-Conditioned Venue
Cheeseburger Lunch Option Available
Reservations Recommended



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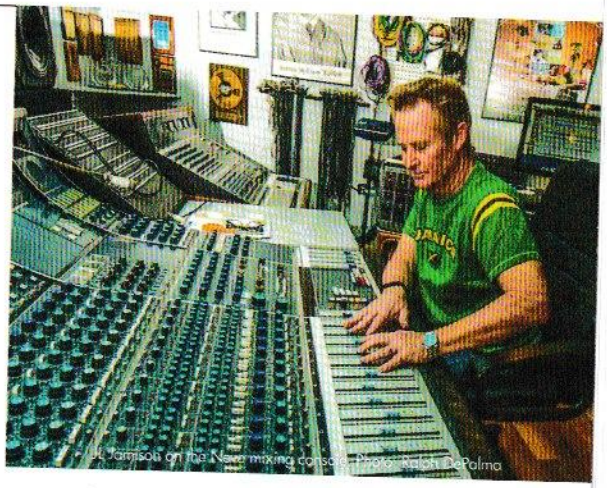
Shrimp Boat Sound—

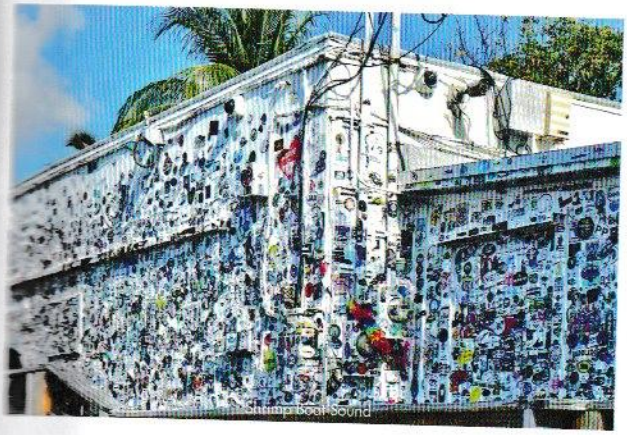
Where the Music Still Lives...


JL Jamison on the Neve mixing console. Photo: Kelsey DePalma

Along Key West's Historic Seaport sits a small, white, weather-beaten building. Thousands of people stroll by it every day without a second glance.

There are no flashing lights. No grand stage. And no admission gate. To most passers-by, it looks like just another waterfront warehouse. But nothing could be further from the truth.

For nearly four decades, this former shrimp icehouse was home to "Shrimp Boat Sound," one of America's most respected recording facilities, and also, a creative refuge for Jimmy Buffett.


Shrimp Boat Sound

More than thirty albums were recorded or mixed here as Buffett escaped the pressures of Nashville and LA to create music on his own terms. Shrimp Boat Sound never felt like a commercial recording studio. It felt more like Jimmy's living room — that is, if your living room was literally "wallpapered" with Platinum Records and a showcase for other vintage memorabilia, including a relic of Jimmy's seaplane, the Hemisphere Dancer.

News of Shrimp Boat Sound spread throughout the music industry like wildfire. Country music great George Strait became one of the Studio's biggest champions. Joining him were Alan Jackson, Kenny Chesney, Zac Brown, Toby Keith, Billy Corgan, Old Dominion, Mac McAnally, and members of the Coral Reefer Band. They all came for more than the island itself— they came to record the old-fashioned way: performing together in the same room instead of assembling tracks one at a time.

At the heart of the studio was John Lynch "JL" Jamison, Jimmy Buffett's longtime Road and Studio Manager. In 1986, Buffett brought JL to Key West to help open the original Margaritaville before entrusting him with Shrimp Boat Sound.

For nearly forty years, JL welcomed artists, maintaining the legendary 1969 Neve Mixing Console, formerly owned by Gordon Lightfoot, ensured that the music always came first.

After Jimmy's passing, fans from all over the world transformed Shrimp Boat Sound into a place of pilgrimage, covering the walls with handwritten notes, flowers, photos, guitar picks and thousands of stickers. What began as an expression of grief morphed into one of the most heartfelt tributes Key West has ever witnessed.

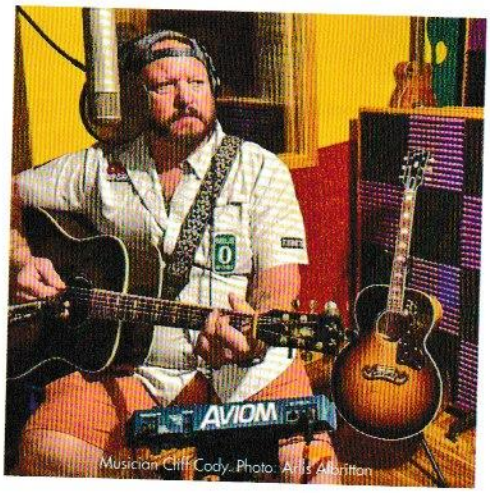
Today, Jimmy's Shrimp Boat Sound studio sits empty. The legendary Neve Console, Jimmy's personal mic, and every piece of sound equipment were sold. Now a little more than four walls, the building's future is uncertain.

The story, however, is far from over.

Over Labor Day Weekend, Shrimp Boat Sound is being celebrated during the annual "Just a Few Friends" festival. Walking tours will launch from the studio; plein air artists will capture the famous landmark on canvas, and filmmaker Michael J Kirk will share a behind-the-scenes look at the documentary he's currently filming: *Shrimp Boat Sound: Echoes From the Edge*. Key West singer-songwriter Cliff Cody, who recorded the last full-length album there, will also perform his tribute ballad, *Rest in Paradise*, during the Jimmy Buffett Day Proclamation.

While the studio currently sits silent, a proposed lease would restore Shrimp Boat Sound as a working studio, interactive music museum and small outdoor tropical drink bar. Stay tuned for updates!

Jimmy Buffett once wrote, "Some of it's magic. Some of it's tragic." Standing outside Shrimp Boat Sound today, it's impossible not to realize that he understood both.



Musician Cliff Cody. Photo: Arris Albritton

Just A Few Friends Key West

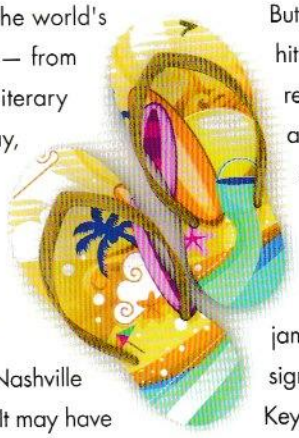
Celebrating The Life & Legacy of Jimmy Buffett



Key West has always been a magnet for some of the world's most notable names — from Blackbeard the pirate and literary icons like Ernest Hemingway, to mega performers like Kenny Chesney.

In November 1971, aspiring Mississippi-born country singer Jimmy Buffett migrated to Key West from Nashville to help jumpstart his career. It may have been one of the best moves he ever made. The island's influence on Buffett's music was indelible, and he became an early pioneer of the Trop Rock movement.

As the story goes, Buffett got his start at Key West's storied Chart Room Bar at the Pier House Resort. It was here that Buffett performed some of his earliest works in exchange for free drinks. Of course, the Chart Room was just one of many Key West venues that were touchstones for Jimmy Buffett's magic. *Sloppy Joes, The Green Parrot, Hogs Breath, Capt Tony's, and the former Crazy Ophelia's Cafe* (now Antonia's Restaurant) all bear his mark.



But it was Jimmy Buffett's 1977 hit song, "Margaritaville," that really propelled him to stardom and transformed Key West into a world-famous dream destination. Penned on the Seven Mile Bridge during a bumper-to-bumper traffic jam, Buffett's song became his signature anthem and a symbol of Key West's free-spirited lifestyle.

As "Key West's Favorite Son," Jimmy Buffett's indomitable impact on our tiny island is legendary. And to celebrate his legacy, the city is staging its 3rd Annual Tribute to him over Labor Day Weekend.

"Just A Few Friends Key West: A Favorite Son Celebration" officially kicks off on Thursday, September 3, and runs through Monday, September 7, but there are also plenty of "Pre-Party" happenings taking place on Wednesday, September 2.

The lively tribute weekend includes a colossal array of events, including Walking Tours, Outdoor Concerts, Tribute Shows, a Cheeseburger Beach Battle, an Early Buffett Concert Photography Exhibit and a slew of other fun activities.

On Sunday, you can enjoy the epic Second Line Memorial Walking Parade, which culminates with a free "Party in the Park" music festival and the Key West Artisan Market in Truman Waterfront Park.

Come Monday, the weekend wraps up with a Pencil Thin Mustache Contest, Sunset Music Cruise, and so much more.

You've just gotta love it — we know Jimmy would!

For a full calendar of events, hit up: justafewfriendskeywest.com.




3rd Annual
Just a few friends
Key West
Favorite Son Celebration
Celebrate Jimmy Buffett's Legacy
• Free concert every night
• Second Line Parade & Party in the Park
• Margarita Strolls, brunches, cheeseburger contest
• Sunset sails, tiki cruises & beach parties
• Book signings, film screenings & panels
• Easy stay hotel packages
• Commemorative charity festival badges - raised $75,000!
MAC McANALLY
WILL KIMBROUGH
HOWARD LIVINGSTON
& THE MILE MARKER 24 BAND
GARY & THE
LANDSHARKS BAND
THE
WHEELAND BROTHERS
NADIRAH SHAKOOR
ROGER BARTLETT
CAYMAN
& THE MANGO MEN
GYPSIES IN THE PALACE
TRIBUTE BAND
CALEB HOGAN
BUFFETT TRIBUTE
LABOR DAY WEEKEND 2026 | SEPTEMBER 3 - 7
BOOK YOUR HOTEL PACKAGE NOW!
The Florida Keys & Key West
come as you are
www.justafewfriendskeywest.com
"All events not affiliated with or endorsed by Jimmy Buffett's Estate or Margaritaville Enterprises."

FANTASY FEST®

2026

Musical Icons & Iconic Musicals—

October16 – 25 | Key West

Not for the faint-hearted, Key West's world-famous Fantasy Fest® celebrates over four decades of fun and debauchery.

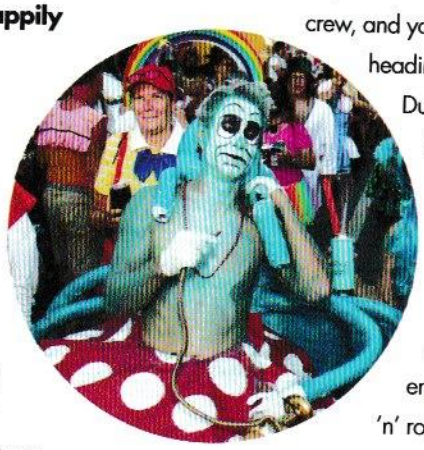
Launched in 1979, Fantasy Fest® was the brainchild of a small group of local visionaries looking for novel ways to boost off-season business.

Their creativity paid off.

Today, over 70,000 worldwide revelers flock here for ten days of exotic events, costume competitions, street fairs, parades, parties, and more. Here are just a few highlights:

Raw, funny, and unapologetically edgy, **"Hedwig and the Angry Inch"** takes to the stage on Th, Oct 15 – F, Oct 25 at the Waterfront Playhouse. This sterling production of the groundbreaking glam-rock musical is immersive theater at its best. Info and tickets: waterfrontplayhouse.org.

The festivities officially kick off on F, Oct 16 with the **"Happily Fur-Ever Royal Coronation."** Sponsored by the Florida Keys SPCA, the fabulous 2-hour show includes an outstanding line-up of local celebrities. Showtime: 7 pm at Coffee Butler Amphitheater (21 E Quay Rd).



Key West's annual **Goombay Festival**, an exuberant, family-friendly street party, rocks historic Bahama Village from noon 'till midnight on F and Sa, Oct 16 — 17.

On Sa, Oct 17, and Su, Oct 18, the **Arena Rock Show** stages the ultimate high-energy, theatrical tribute to Classic Rock & Roll. The 7 pm show trips you back to the 70s and 80s, turning Sunset Pier (Zero Duval) into a full-blown rock arena.

On M, Oct 19, you can dance, sing, and even swing from the rafters at the **Green Parrot's Beatles Tribute** (601 Whitehead St). This "Sixties Dress-Up Dance Party includes three free shows (5:30 pm, 9 pm, and 11 pm) by Key West's very own Beatle Band.

It's all about "Swifties" on Tu, Oct 20. Grab your friendship bracelets, your crew, and your favorite cocktail before heading over to Sunset Pier (Zero Duval for a free **Taylor Swift Tribute Concert** from 6 — 9 pm.

On W, Oct 21, it's time to **Party Like a Rockstar**. This once-in-a-lifetime night of music, energy, and spirited rock 'n' roll takes place from 6 pm — midnight at the Key West EmPOURium (618 Duval St).

If you're feeling especially frisky, check out Fantasy Fest®'s famous **Pet Masquerade**. Local fur babies perform for fame, fortune, and prizes starting at 6:30 pm at Coffee Butler Amphitheater (21 East Quay Rd).



For some true Woodstock-style partying, head on over to Schooner Wharf Bar (202 William St) for **Wharfstock**. This retro celebration transports you back in time with the Hippie Band from 7 pm — Midnight.

Feathers, glitter and glue take center stage on Th, Oct 22 during the renowned **Headdress Ball**. With a First-Place Prize of $5,000, this costume competition is both fun and fierce. Showtime: 8:30 pm at Coffee Butler Amphitheater (21 E Quay Rd).

On F, Oct 23, the **Masquerade March** kicks off at 4 pm with a thirst-quenching Block Party at Fleming & White St. The parade of revelers then sashays over to the **Duval Street Fair & Costume Contest**. This weekend-long street party of arts, eats, and island beats continues on Sa, Oct 24, followed by the world-famous **Fantasy Fest Parade** at 7 pm.

Wrapping it all up is **"The Fat Lady Sings" Tea Dance** on Su, Oct 25 from 4 — 8 pm at La Te Da (1125 Duval St).

And that's not even the half of it!

For a complete list of events, hit up fantasyfest.com.