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Jarreau's coming our way!

MENTION Dave Grusin, Michael Frank, Spyro Gyra, Grover Washington Jr., Earl Klugh, Bill Withers, Tommy Li Puma, Randy Crawford, and immediately a certain era and sound would come to mind.

Of course there are more names, and the list would certainly not be complete without this name, Al Jarreau, one of the most unique voices with an amazing vocal range.

For the baby boomers of the 80s, Jarreau and, well, popular TV series Moonlighting will be well remembered as the latter sang the theme song for the series.

But really, Jarreau is much more than just the Moonlighting theme song. He has influenced countless vocalists and musicians with his original interpretation and delivery.

His innovative musical expressions have made him one of the most sought-after jazz singers, holding the distinction of being the only singer in history to win the Best Vocalist award in three different categories - jazz, R&B and pop at the 1992 American Grammy Awards.

Jarreau began his career in Los Angeles famed nightspots including Dinofounds, The Troubador and the Bitter West End.

Shortly after, he branched out to the Big Apple where he gained television exposure with the likes of Johnny Carson, Merv Griffin, David Frost and Mike Douglas. He also teamed up with guitarist Julio Martinez to accompany up-and-coming comics like John Belushi, Bette Midler, Robert Klein, David Brenner, Jimmie Walker at the popular comedy venue, The Improv.

In 1975, Jarreau was spotted by Warner Bros. Records and landed himself a contract. His debut album, We Got By, which was released in no time became a hit.

We Got By was accepted across the continent and over the Atlantic, gaining him a German Grammy for Best New International Soloist in the same year. The second German Grammy came his way with the release of his follow-up album, Glow.

In 1977, Jarreau embarked on his first world tour, from which the selections for Look To The Rainbow, his double "live" album were culled.

It was followed by a string of innovative and original offerings, including the 1980's This Time, and the million-selling Breakin' Away which brought him a broader audience and two more Grammys for Best Male Pop Vocalist and Best Male Jazz Vocalist.

The follow-up to Breakin' Away was High Crime which spawned a string of R&B and pop hits and further cemented him as an international superstar.

Al Jarreau Live In London, recorded at Wembley Arena in the United Kingdom in 1985, continued to solidify Jarreau's reputation as a world-class "guru" of both studio and stage.

Following the "live" album, Jarreau teamed up with producer Nile Rodgers for L Is For Lover which brought some new styles and sounds to the singer's repertoire.

In 1987, Jarreau was still topping the charts. Soon, Heart's Horizon was released, containing the R&B smash hit So Good and earned him another Grammy nomination, this time for Best R&B Album.

Next was Heaven and Earth for which he garnered his fifth Grammy for Best R&B Vocal Performance.

In 1994, Tenderness was released. On this Marcus-Miller produced gem,

Jarreau was joined by an all-star cast - saxophonist David Sanborn, Joe Sample, Steve Gadd - with a host of familiar contemporary compositions and a revisit of a few of Jarreau's classics!

1996 brought some exciting career challenges for Jarreau. While on a break from touring, he accepted a three-month stint on Broadway playing the role of Teen Angel in the hit musical Grease!

Other recent credits include appearances on New York's Undercover and Touched By An Angel.

To commemorate his 20-year career, Jarreau released his first-ever compilation album, Best Of Al Jarreau, a collection of 14 of his popular songs alongside two new tracks produced by long-time friend, jazz giant George Duke.

The good news is, the five-time Grammy award winner is coming our way. Jarreau's performance will be held on June 18 at the Merdeka Hall of the Putra World Trade Centre in Kuala Lumpur at 8.30pm. The show will see Jarreau sizzle with his eight-piece band.

The event is organised by the Malaysian Youth Orchestra Foundation (MYOF) and marks its first fund-raising event.

According to MYOF chairman Mirzan Mahathir, Jarreau is in the midst of his Asian tour to promote his latest album, Tomorrow Today (to be released here this month). Jarreau will be in town after his Australian stint.

"We are very proud to have this dynamic singer together with his sterling cast of musicians for the first time in Malaysia.

"It will be a good chance for music lovers and budding local musicians to watch him in action," says Mirzan.

"As far as the local youth is concerned, I believe Jarreau serves as a role model as his string of successes as a performer could motivate would-be musicians."

Mirzan also mentions that from the concert, MYOF hopes to raise between RM200,000 and RM300,000. The funds collected would be used to carry out activities for the benefit of MYOF members.

With more music-related projects carried out for youths, Mirzan says, the standard of musical expertise among the locals would be elevated.

"We are looking at organising competitions where judges comprise experts from the different sections of the orchestras. Hopefully, this will be MYOF's annual affair," he says.

Currently, MYOF is looking for two promising individuals from a pool of budding talent as the opening act for Jarreau.

Tickets, priced at RM120 (Level 4), RM80 (Level 5) and RM50 (Level 6) are available at all Salem Cool Planet outlets.

Credit card reservations, however, can be made via Ticket Express Hotline at 03-40454455 from Mon-Fri, from 9.30am-5.30pm and Saturday from 9.30am - 1pm or bookings may be faxed to 03-40454445. Reservations can also be made via e-mail at tesb@po.jaring.my.

All proceeds will be forwarded to the MYOF fund.

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