As summer sadly winds its way to an end, take heart: there is one last, wildly exuberant outdoor music fest to hit up before you put away your flip-flops for good. This weekend, Berklee's 11th annual BeanTown Jazz Festival is taking over downtown Boston and drowning out the blare of traffic with the sounds of the greatest jazz voices of modern time. Last year's event drew a crowd of 70,000, and this year looks to trump that. And if, amidst the six-block sea of people, instruments, and music, you can't decide what to hit, not to worry: we've plucked out the most anticipated, not-to-be-missed sounds, sights, and foods to get the max out of your experience. — Meara Hamidiani & Becca Fox

Rafael Zaldívar
Born in Cuba and lasting of Manchester, the rising Rafael Zaldívar is on the road to jazz superstardom. This year, the young musician is hoping to make his way up to the big time, Performing in the historic Entre Jazz Piano Competition — before heading off to tour Italy, Spain, France, and Belgium. Catch the hot performance on Saturday at 3:30 p.m. at the Schubert of New England Stage for free admission.

Photo courtesy of Berklee College

The Jazz Urbane
For its 20th anniversary celebration, Berklee’s Jazz Urban Studies, directed by the Jazz Urbane with moving and contemporary tunes. A sports team collaboration with several guest and host musical acts. This year, Berklee-born, 19-year-old saxophonist and jazz master, it’s a must-see on Saturday at 7:15 p.m. at the Berklee Stage.

Photo courtesy of Berklee College

Party Rockin’
Check out the city's biggest block party on Saturday from 12 to 8 p.m. It’s going to be seriously enlivening street fest stretching down Columbus Ave, with three stages hosting an eclectic mix of must-see artists. And, during the free (free) six-block traveling showdown that goes with it, Brazilian music master Marcus Santos and Becco Abravanel will mix Balinese drums with samba reggae and baladasa style rhythms. It's kind of like the Conga line of your dreams.

Photo by Phil Fantasorda

Must-Have Eats
As you watch your favorite jazz artists do their thing, don't forget to fuel your rumbling belly with some seriously good multi-cultural eats. Hop in line for Nia's Jamaiian Restaurant's popular plantains, rice and beans dish, or, if jamaiians not your thing more local plantains for you. Other worthy vendors to check out: Flavors of the World, Big Texas WMMR Ribs, Herrera's Mexican Grill, and Burrito Indian Bites.

Photo via flickr

Danilo Perez
Danilo Perez is arguably one of the most influential figures of today. His music is Pan-American, integrating unique sounds of the Americas with music from all over the world. The jazz genius will be performing twice: 10 and 10 p.m. on Saturday night at the Scullers Jazz Club. Tickets are $25 for the show or $57 with dinner included.

Photo courtesy of Berklee College

Bernie Worrell
Famed and award-winning producer of Parliament Funkadelic, Bernie Worrell presents his most recent music project, Socialism, at the festival on Saturday at 4:45 p.m. on the Natasia Global Jazz Management Stage. With Worrell on keyboards, Melvin Gibbs on bass, Rodney Hayton on guitar and JT Lewis on drums, this is not somethings to just pass up lightly.

Photo courtesy of Berklee College

Oleta Adams
This is it. This is the only jazz fest, and American jazz singer/producer Oleta Adams — yes, the four-time Grammy nominee who toured with Michael Bolton and Phyllis Hyman Oleta Adams — which proves it. As she neals listeners Saturday evening (9 p.m.), telling her signature mesh of gospel, soul, R&B, and urban styling. She’ll be on the Natasia Global Jazz Management Stage, and admission will be free.

Photo courtesy of Berklee College
Enjoy the 2011 Berklee Beantown Outdoor Jazz Festival noon-6 p.m. Sept. 24. Listen to three stages of jazz music and shop at vendors on Columbus Avenue between Massachusetts Avenue and Burke Street in Boston’s South End. Free admission.

Photo by Phil Farnsworth

Visit: http://www.beantownjazz.org
By Patrick Rosso, Town Correspondent

Two local groups are preparing for their time in spotlight at this weekend's BeanTown Jazz Festival.

Students from both the Blue Hills Boys and Girls Club and the Boys and Girls Club of Dorchester will both be onstage Saturday, to perform for the audience and show them what Dorchester has to offer.

"This is a really big benchmark for our program, so we are just thrilled to be performing," said Rick Aggeler, music clubhouse director for the Blue Hills Boys and Girls Club and alumnus of the Berklee College of Music, which is putting on the festival.

Both Aggeler and Ayeisha Mathis, music director for the Dorchester Boys and Girls Club and a fellow Berklee alum, will be bringing their members onstage for a short set in the Music Clubhouse Showcase.

The Music Clubhouse, the Boys and Girls Club’s in-house music program, encourages local youth to not only get involved in their community but look for ways to better it through their musical talent.

This year Aggeler’s group Studio Heat will be up on stage with a full band of 10-16 year-olds featuring drums, bass, singers, and rappers.

One particular member in his group Javonn ‘Yung Fresh’ Martin, age 15, will be with the group on the big stage.

Although Aggeler said that ‘Yung Fresh’ has already gained notoriety in Boston for his performances with local superstars, he said the program is also beneficial even without the music.

“He’s learned how to be a great leader. I don’t think he would have learned those types of things without the club,” said Aggeler.

Mathis’ group Club Allstarz, a band of 12-16 year-olds featuring a full rhythm section along with three singers, will also be performing. Mathis said along with just attending the festival she is excited to see all her students get up on stage and perform.

“They all shine in their own way,” she said.

Although Mathis added that this is a big deal for the kids, she has no doubts that they will one day be stars.

“These particular kids have the potential that needs to be tapped into and I’m confident that I will one day see these kids on an even bigger stage,” she said.

The Berklee BennTown Jazz Festival which will celebrate its 11th anniversary this year, will run Saturday Sept. 24 from 12p.m. – 6p.m. on Columbus Avenue in the South End.

The free outdoor concert will have three stages featuring performances from 15 artists including Louis Hayes, Bernie Worrell and Oleta Adams. Along with the music, the festival will also feature food from over 70 vendors as well as Family Park complete with a bounce house and "instrument petting zoo".

Aggeler said his kids are confident and ready to show Boston they mean business.

“The kids’ goal is to be the best act at the festival. They want to leave a mark and not be seen as just another community band," he said.

Both Club Allstarz and Studio heat will be performing on the Atrixis Global Asset Management Stage from 12p.m – 19.m. and they might even be available for autographs after the show unless they be swarmed by the paparazzi.

Email Patrick Rosso, patrick.d.rosso@gmail.com. Follow him @PDRosso.
Oleta Adams delivers the hits during Jazz Festival

Oleta Adams performed last weekend at the BeanTown Jazz Festival. (Photo courtesy of Oleta Adams)

Songstress Oleta Adams blessed the mic Saturday at Berklee’s BeanTown Jazz Festival. The rich alto has been making music for decades and still makes crowds scream when she plays the first few chords from her hit “Get Here” — originally written and performed by Brenda Russell — that made her famous in the 1990s.

Her too short set had festival goers dancing and singing along to her glorious vocals, but Adams really shined when she slowed down the tempo with heartfelt ballads.

The preacher’s kid got her start in church and almost had a career in opera. She decided to go in a different direction and was later discovered by the band “Tears for Fears.”

Though Adams hasn’t been able to reach and maintain platinum status with her later albums, the quality of her voice is awe inspiring. In addition to her eight albums including “Circle of One” and “All the Love,” she has had a number of memorable covers and guest appearances like “Everything Must Change,” “Tears for Fears” song “Woman in Chains” and “Many Rivers To Cross” from “Jason’s Lyric.”

Just before rehearsal a few days before the show, Adams took a moment to talk about musical myths, singing loud in the car and her secret addiction to HCTV.

I read that you had the chance to have a career as a lyric soprano but decided against it. Do you still lean on classical music or training?

I use it all the time. It helps me to facilitate what I’m doing. It helps me sing through different places in my voice. I’ve done some tough singing so I’m glad I have the training.

I still practice at home. I have to work every day on getting new songs into my voice. It’s a muscle that you constantly have to work. Each song has to be in my voice. It’s like trying on new clothes. I have to get it fit. Some people have told me that they heard voice lessons ruin your voice. It is a myth!

Do you play any other instrument besides the keys?

No, I don’t. I think singing and playing is enough.

I think it’s great that you play and sing. A lot of singers aren’t instrumentalists.

What kind of music do you play when relaxing at home?

I love gospel music a lot. I love music that makes me calm like classical music and jazz, too. I spend a lot of time listening to music that has no words. I listen to Alan Pasqua’s “My New Old Friend.”

We bought eight copies and put it everywhere. I immediately put it on in the car and listen to it over and over again. I never get tired of it. I’m also on a kick with Damon Meader of New York Voices. Beautiful! I like Fred Hammond, too!

Love Fred Hammond. He has this song “LO.U.D.” on his last album that makes you want to dance and sing!

I know! I love his music. I am always singing and dancing with my mouth all open wide. Sometimes people pull up alongside me and stare because they can’t hear my music. It makes me think I should stop.

When you’re not performing, what else do you like to do?

I am in a 12-step program for HGTV! I love it.

Me too, it’s crazy. I watch it all the time.

I have it on 24/7. I love interior design. Also, I love to sew strange things. I make cases or covers for my husband’s strange instruments. I made him a lightweight stick bag out of denim.

What can the audience look forward to at the show?

Usually I like to sit down and listen to what the audience yells out. I’m looking forward to working with Terri Lynne Carrington. I worked with her before in Chicago and I love her playing. She is so very talented.

I also got to go up to the school and meet the kids at Berklee. They’re so young and talented. I was singing before they were even born.

Yes, but that doesn’t stop them from knowing your music. Certain songs just become classics. The kind of songs that you play years from now and they still resonate, spark emotion. That’s how “Get Here” is for me.

It’s true. When you hear it, you instantly get into it. There’s hardly any place in the world where I don’t get asked to play that song. It’s a great composition.
Joshua Redman Leads James Farm To Beantown Jazz Festival

BY ANTHONY BROOKS
Sep 21, 2011, 3:40 PM

In the world of jazz, it's not every day that a new band comes along — especially a band that includes a player like Joshua Redman.

But the great saxophone player has teamed up with pianist Aaron Parks, and along with bass player Matt Penman and drummer Eric Harland, they call themselves James Farm.

James Farm embraces a mix of influences — from rock, soul, blues, even electronics. At its heart, though, the band is steeped in the traditions of jazz improvisation. James Farm released its first self-titled album earlier this year and will play at the Beantown Jazz Festival Friday.

Guests:

- Joshua Redman, saxophone
- Matt Penman, bass
Berklee BeanTown Jazz Festival 2011

Terri Lyne Carrington, James Farm, Danilo Pérez and the New Gary Burton Quartet highlight this versatile Boston fest

By Bill Beuttler

Boston’s 11th annual Berklee BeanTown Jazz Festival, held Sept. 23-25, was its usual mixed bag of big-name nighttime headliners (James Farm, Danilo Pérez and the New Gary Burton Quartet) and a free Saturday-afternoon street festival offering other, more crowd-courting genres alongside some solid jazz.

The festival had actually kicked off officially that Tuesday, with Berklee professor and BeanTown artistic director Terri Lyne Carrington hosting a free meet-and-greet concert at the college’s 939 Club. Drummer Carrington led a group including trumpeter Ingrid Jensen, saxophonist Tia Fuller, pianist Helen Sung and bassist Tamir Shmerler through material from her new album, The Mosaic Project, a tune-up for two nights of album-promoting performances she was booked for the next week at New York’s Jazz Standard.

But BeanTown is primarily a weekend festival, and the weekend got underway at the Berklee Performance Center on Friday evening with the all-star collaborative quartet James Farm: Joshua Redman, tenor sax; Aaron Parks, piano; Matt Penman, bass; Eric Harland, drums. Counting the audience-demandenced encore, the set managed to accommodate stretched-out versions of nine of the 10 tunes on the band’s namesake debut album. (The exception was Redman’s “Star Crossed.”)

James Farm, despite the band’s relative newness, already has its detractors, who allege its music to be overly song- and groove-oriented in a bid for festival friendliness. Not surprisingly, a couple of critics admitted to leaving the BeanTown concert early and unimpressed. But there was a minority opinion. The music may have been more easily approachable, even pop-oriented, than the band members’ work elsewhere. But the musicians were obviously both pushing and full-on enjoying themselves. The drill usually involved opening with an arresting theme, with Redman following close behind with a solo that he would build slowly toward a rollicking climax that concluded with him exiting the stage, still blowing his horn, to thunderous applause.

Parks would calm things down with a solo well-wrought and soulful, and Penman and Harland would keep the rhythm dancing energetically beneath everything throughout. An exception to that general pattern was Park’s lovely waltz-time ballad “Bijou,” whose free-floating bluesy vibe called to mind Keith Jarrett’s stellar 1970s quartet with Dewey Redman (Joshua’s father) on tenor. Another was Harland’s “1-10,” which he introduced with a bravura drum solo. None of what got played would be mistaken for straight-ahead jazz, but the level of musicianship and improvisation was high and there were no serious grounds for grousing.

The straight-ahead stuff came on Saturday afternoon, albeit confined mostly to one of the three outdoor stages along the festival’s several-block stretch of Columbus Avenue. At one end of the event, just around the corner from the venerable jazz club Wally’s Café, was the Berklee Stage, where the music generally had links to the college and wasn’t always exactly jazz. Bona fide jazz alto-sax up-and-comer (and Berklee undergrad) Grace Kelly, for instance, sat in with Berklee prof Bill Banfield’s group the Jazz Urbane for a set dominated by seriously funky R&B grooves. Dave Samuels and the Caribbean Jazz Project and the Pablo Abalnodo Cetot were Berklee Stage acts whose music came closer to fitting more traditional definitions of jazz, but this stage drew a respectable sized, appreciative crowd through the day nonetheless.

The Noticias Global Asset Management Stage generally stretched the definition past its breaking point, but generally drew the largest crowds, in part owing to the children’s activities close by. The acts here—among them Bernie Worrell and Souljazz, the Berklee P-Funk Ensemble and Oceana Adams—also tended to be louder than anything else at the festival, which sometimes proved problematic given their proximity to the Subaru of New England Stage, where the actual jazz was concentrated. P-Funk especially the duo of celeb Eugene Friesen and pianist Tim Ray, whose refined chamber-jazz project had to contend with both Worrell’s group and, more egregiously, Marcus Santos & Bloco AfroBrazil, who marched their drums within a couple-hundred feet of the Subaru stage and then planted themselves there for most of a Friesen-Ray arrangement. It’s a safe bet said arrangement hadn’t meant to include a marching-drum ensemble.

Still, there was strong, recognizable jazz to be heard at that third stage. The Berklee Global Jazz Institute was up first, followed by the Louis Hayes Cannonball Legacy Band. Veteran drummer Hayes led a quartet featuring saxophonist Vincent Herring through material from Cannon’s canon that included brother Nat’s all-time well-known “Work Song.” And the afternoon concluded here later on with a well-attended set of hard-driving straight-ahead jazz from the Neal Smith Quintet, whose stellar lineup included Andrew Beals on alto sax, Steve Nelson on vibraphone, Eric Reed on piano and David Williams on bass. The discovery of the afternoon, though, was the young Montreal-based trio of Cuban pianist Helen Zadilfar. The trio, with Hémi-LeBlanc on bass and Philippe Melanson on drums, spent the bulk of its set playing free-leaning interpretations of familiar material, among it Monk’s “MOOo” and a reconstituted “What Is This Thing Called Love?” that Zadilfar announced as “What Is Against Our Love?” Zadilfar, who has an album in the works featuring Greg Osby on two tracks, concluded the set unaccompanied with a riveting improvisation on part one of the Ernesto Lecuona classic “La Comparsa.”

The Zadilfar trio also watched that night’s festival headliner, Danilo Pérez, from the bar at Scullers Jazz Club. Pérez was there leading a super hot trio that included its regular drummer Adam Cruz and had John Pattuci filling in for Don Street on bass. Perez and Pattucci are no strangers, having played together in Wayne Shorter’s quartet for years. But the new blood seemed to energize the trio for the night. Pérez emphasized new material early in the set, including a piece he’d been working on earlier that day and named for his young daughter “Dalia” and her quick changes in mood. The trio also took a spin through Monk’s “Ask Me Now.” Pérez’s trio has always been much influenced by his work with Shorter—the music full of freedom and its inherent risks, without being off-putting to ordinary listeners. Pérez, in fact, makes a point of engaging his audience, via guest artists, sing-along and what he choose to talk about from the stage. This night he was focused on getting Washington to work better, bringing out flutist Matt Marvuglio to join the trio on a black plastic flute constructed from recyclable materials—Jorge Pérez-Albelo would join them on cajon later in the set—and suggesting that politicians ought to be able to achieve such collaboration if musicians can.

The festival concluded the next night with the New Gary Burton Quartet at the Berklee Performance Center. Burton retired a few years ago from Berklee after a long career there as an educator and administrator, and he retained a professorial air when pausing to announce the titles of tunes. But he could also be funny, such as when he expressed pity for guitarist Julian Lage’s students, who were obliged to wrestle with “Etude,” a Lage composition that Burton himself said he found difficult to get through error-free. His four-meal vibraphone work, though, was as dazzling, vibrant and precise as ever. Bassist Scott Colley and drummer Antonio Sánchez have worked together quite a bit before—they’d been through Scullers a few months prior in a group led by pianist Kenny Werner, for instance—and it showed in their exceptional rapport. Lage, a veteran Burton sideman and leader still in his early 20s had no trouble keeping pace with his phenomenal elders; his extended solo introduction to “My Funny Valentine” was arguably the most memorable of the set’s many highlights. The quartet added covers of “Afro-Blue,” “I Hear a Rhapsody” and Monk’s “Light Blue” to material drawn primarily from their new album, Common Ground, ending the concert—and the festival—with an encore of Sánchez’s bluesy “Did You Get It?”
Sept. 18, 2011: Berklee Beantown Jazz Festival

It's back! The Berklee Beantown Jazz Festival runs from September 23rd to the 25th with the FREE outdoor music festival on Saturday September 24! Spanning 5 blocks of the South End's Columbus Avenue by Northeastern University, the festival is in its eleventh year and continues to grow!

We take a look at newcomers to the stage Jazz Urbane, and hear from artistic director and drumming legend Terri Lyne Carrington on the festival as well as her successful new album the Mosaic Project!

And what's even better? A special jazz performance in our studio! Jeff Ramsey, a performer at the festival, brings a team of talented alumni and friends to CityLine to give us a taste of what's to come at the festival! It's going to be a great ride!

Host Steve Schwartz previews some of the artists performing at The Berklee Beantown Jazz Festival including drummer Louis Hayes and vibraphonist Gary Burton.
Beantown Jazz Fest Garners Major Acts

Massive crowds gather for tenth annual event.

This year’s outdoor Beantown Jazz Festival, spanning a few blocks of Columbus Avenue, managed to gather an impressive mass of people.

Three separate stages featured well-known national acts such as pianist Jon Batiste alongside local, Berklee-based groups like Al Kooper & the Funky Faculty and Boston’s own saxophone wunderkind Grace Kelly.

On the streets, closed-off blocks housed numerous food stands from local purveyors. Throughout the festival one’s nostrils could almost taste the scent of delicious barbecue ranging from Korean specialties to jerk chicken.

Julian Lage Trio Serves Up Jazz-Folk Fusion

The music itself was, for the most part, transcendent. The Julian Lage Trio, named for its leader, a former child-prodigy and Berklee graduate, served up a sort of jazz-folk fusion that sounds new and exciting in a scene filled with straight-ahead players and forays into hip hop.

During one tune, Lage’s drummer, Tupac Mantilla, left his kit to play hand percussion on bassist Jorge Roeder’s upright, creating an interesting amalgamation between rhythm and melody. Mantilla sat out entirely on “Ode to Elm,” a bass-guitar duet during which Roeder and Lage could be seen smiling at each other and fitting through changes in feel and style almost telepathically.

While much has been made of Lage’s jazz-meets-bluegrass aesthetic, the indubitablename highlight of the afternoon was Andy Milne’s Dapp Theory, a long-standing experimental outfit that mixes jazz, rock, hip-hop, spoken word and various world musics into a heady brew of odd-meter grooves and angular improvisations.

"We’re Going to Get Funky For You Boston!"

Improvisation is truly key to the band’s approach, as even the vocalist, John Moon, must have been coming up with his jerky, intense flow on the spot if not the actual words of his performance. While the entire band was a pleasure to hear, loose and yet always together, drummer Kenny Grohowski was on fire at Beantown, imbibing every fill with the energy and abandon of a rabid animal. An older couple walked by the stage and you could see the man plugging his ears and making a face; this is usually a good sign that something interesting is happening at a jazz show.

"We’re gonna get funky for you Boston!" shouted Grace Kelly, adorned with her ubiquitous blue ribbon, before her band opened their set with a retooled smooth jazz version of Gershwin’s “Summertime.” While her saxophone chops are impeccable and her stage presence charismatic in the extreme, it’s hard to listen to Kelly’s music without hoping for something more than overdone (and half-baked) grooves.

On “Summertime” she soloed for all of one chorus, as if to parody the idea that “less is more,” while other members of her band would go on and on, trying to prove to us that, yes, they were capable musicians in spite of the elevator music they were playing. Later in the set, Kelly jumped on the Esperanza Spalding bandwagon and sang a pop song, “Gone,” that she had written.

Overall, Beantown was a great success; it attracted a much larger audience than can be expected for a small festival, showcased some great music and managed to keep the price of bottled water down to a dollar at almost all vendors. This was the Berklee Beantown Jazz Festival’s tenth year in existence, and if the size of its crowd and their enthusiasm for the music was any kind of indication, it should be happening again next year at around the same time.
NEW BACKING PUTS BERKLEE STUDENTS ON A SUMMER CONCERT TOUR OF BOSTON

BY ALLEN BUSH

Berklee College of Music announced on May 23 that Natixis Global Asset Management (NGAM), an asset-management company based in Boston and Paris, will be presenting sponsor for more than 70 free outdoor concerts from May through September. The performances make up Berklee’s 2011 Summer in the City series, a celebration of diversity with students and alumni playing pop, rock, jazz, bluegrass, Latin, blues, and reggae in neighborhoods throughout Greater Boston. One of these concerts will take place at the Mothers Rest playground in the East Fens on July 20 at 6pm.

“As a global company, it is a privilege for NGAM to be associated with an institution like Berklee that brings people around the world together through the power of music,” said John Hailer, president and chief executive officer of Natixis. “We are working with Berklee and our core non-profit agencies to create programs that will bring free music education, live events, and extraordinary artists into both communities and classrooms.”

Berklee alumni have won a total of 205 Grammy Awards, and students represent more than 80 countries. The summer concerts will include performances by rising stars Grace Kelly, Tuffus Zimbabwe, Sierra Hull and many others. Performance venues range from the Prudential Center (see the arts calendar on page 8), the Institute of Contemporary ART and Georges and Spectacle islands to Jamaica Plain, Roxbury, East Boston, and the South End.

NGAM’s backing of the series represents part of a sponsorship program designed to identify the firm with efforts to preserve cultural experience through music. It will also lead sponsor for this summer’s Newport Jazz Festival.

The Fenway concert—this summer’s “Swinging at Mother’s Rest” performance—will feature world music vocal ensemble Women of the World and singer Vaughnetta. Other performers this summer include Lollapalooza-bound Julia Easterlin (June 25, Georges Island); Caribbean and Latin America dance band Grupo Fantasia (June 26, Mozart Park in JP); reggae Tubby Love (July 7, ICA); Wyclef collaborator Will Wells and Dynamic Sound (August 4, ICA); Saturday Night Live keyboardist Tuffus Zimbabwe (August 7, Highland Park in Roxbury, behind Roxbury Community College); rising national jazz saxophonist Grace Kelly (August 25, Kendall Square in Cambridge); and Rounder Records recording artist Sierra Hull and Highway 111 (September 1, Kendall Square).

“Natixis is a great partner in the concert series,” said Berklee President Roger Brown. “They challenged us to offer the most fresh and creative music to the people of Boston this summer, and we have designed a program that delivers all that and much more.”

Allen Bush is the Director of Media Relations at Berklee College of Music. The full concert schedule is available at berklee.edu/events/summer.