

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
Friday, March 15, 2019

Ruth Eckerd Hall On The Road Announces The Return Of Clearwater's *Blast Friday*



The Series Continues Friday, March 29 With a Free Concert Starring The Rippingtons And Shaun Hopper & The Sun Kings And Continues With Monthly Concerts Through May

VIP Packages Are On Sale Now

(CLEARWATER) Blast Friday returns to the Cleveland Street District in Downtown Clearwater for its 9th season. This free food and craft festival continues featuring a live concert starring **The Rippingtons** and special guests **Shaun Hopper & The Sun Kings** on Friday, March 29 from 5:30 to 10 pm on the *Tampa Bay Times* Cleveland Street Stage. Food trucks and vendors will be serving a wide variety of freshly prepared specialty food and beer, wine and non-alcoholic beverages that will be available for purchase. Concert goers are welcome to bring their lawn chairs to watch the concert. Please see concert listings below (line-up, date and time subject to change). VIP packages are on sale now.

Beer sampling, live local music and other activities will be located in the 600 block of Cleveland Street. Additionally, patrons may visit Second Century Studios for Downtown Clearwater CRA's public grand opening of The Dali Museum's *Dreams of Dali* Virtual Reality Experience. The first-of-its-kind pop-up installation will run through June 2019, providing residents and visitors alike an opportunity to engage in the arts through technology. Take part in the virtual reality experience until 10 pm on Blast Friday, and visit downtownclearwater.com for more information.

Friday, March 29
The Rippingtons
And Shaun Hopper & The Sun Kings

The Rippingtons, known for hits like *She Likes To Watch*, *Caribbean Breeze*, *Snowbound*, *Wild Tales*, are a GRAMMY®-nominated contemporary jazz group, founded by guitarist and composer Russ Freeman in 1985. The group has passed the 30 year mark and continues to innovate. Under Freeman's production, the group has released 22 albums, all of which have attained top 5 *Billboard* status, with 5 of them reaching #1. Their debut album, *Moonlighting*, which *Jazziz* magazine has called "the number one most influential contemporary jazz album of all time."

Friday, April 26

Home Cookin' V – The Greg Billings Band with Ronnie Dee and the Superstars

The Greg Billings Band is a continuation of a phenomenon that began when popular '80s Florida band Romeo signed to Epic Records and released its first album after a name change to "Stranger". The band features two members of Stranger, lead vocalist Greg Billings and bassist Tom 'King' Cardenas and also includes lead guitarist George Harris, drummer Mark Busto, guitarist Kyle Ashley and Rob Stoney on keyboards.

Ronnie Dee and the Superstars recently released their debut album #ThankYouMusic, which includes hit songs like *Ballad Of The Bad Seed*, *Warming Up*, *Depending On Love*, *Soul Biscuits* and more. Dee is the son of '60s rock star Joey Dee and currently resides in Tampa.

Friday, May 31

MARK FARNER
and **Stormbringer**

Legendary all-American frontman and guitarist **Mark Farner** was the engine that pulled the original Grand Funk Railroad to the top of the charts and today, he's a platinum recording artist 30 times over. At age 70, Farner commands the stage with the same intensity and outpouring of love as he did during the summer of '69. The rock patriot's synergy and open heart come through in epic hits that defined a generation like *I'm Your Captain (Closer to Home)*, *We're An American Band*, a recut of *The Loco-Motion* and *Some Kind of Wonderful*.

Boasting the very same members for more than 20 years, **Stormbringer** features soaring lead vocals, crisp four-part harmonies, thunderous drums, dramatic keyboards and crunching guitars in their hundred-plus song repertoire. Legendary Classic Rock heroes hire Stormbringer because the music is reproduced and performed with spot-on accuracy and jaw dropping precision.

A limited number of SUPER VIP packages for all Blast Friday concerts, priced at \$49 are available. SUPER VIP tickets include a seat in the first three rows of reserved general admission seating directly in front of the Tampa Bay Times Stage, a meet and greet opportunity with band members, two complimentary beers or wine and access to super VIP tent, which includes snacks. In addition, a limited number of VIP packages for all Blast Friday concerts, priced at \$29 are also available, which includes a general admission ticket in the reserved seating section directly in front of the Tampa Bay Times Stage and two complimentary beers.

VIP and SUPER VIP packages are available in advance at the Ruth Eckerd Hall Ticket Office located at 1111 McMullen Booth Road in Clearwater or by calling 727.791.7400. The Ruth Eckerd Hall Ticket Office is open Monday through Saturday from 10 am to 6 pm. Patrons may also purchase tickets at www.AtTheCap.com 24/7. Packages may also be available the day of each concert at the Capitol Theatre Box Office.

Be a part of BLAST FRIDAY and join in Clearwater's premier FREE street festival! Become a vendor to offer specialty food items, refreshments, crafts and homemade goods.

Every participating vendor receives a reserved 10' x 10' space at one low fee. Blast Friday is held the last Friday of every month through May. Vendors should reserve their space by downloading and filling out the online application [here](#). For more information, please email blastfriday.vendors@gmail.com.

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Ruth Eckerd Hall, Inc., a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, owned by the City of Clearwater, manages and operates 2,200-seat Ruth Eckerd Hall, the 200-seat Murray Theatre, the newly renovated 250-capacity ballroom, the Margarete Heye Great Room, the Marcia P. Hoffman School of the Arts, the 750-seat Capitol Theatre and Ruth Eckerd Hall On The Road. Our mission is: *Changing lives through performing arts.*

Ruth Eckerd Hall On The Road books and produces a number of off-site events including Friends of Music Member Appreciation Concerts, Blast Friday, the Tampa Bay Rays Summer Concert Series, the Clearwater Jazz Holiday, the Valspar PGA Championship concert at Innisbrook and events in other partner venues including the Palladium, the Tampa Theatre and the Amalie Arena. In 2018, industry trade publication *Pollstar* named Ruth Eckerd Hall On The Road #53 in the world and #33 in the United States of concert promoters.

Blast Friday is produced by Ruth Eckerd Hall on the Road and proudly sponsored by WTSP-TV, the Tampa Bay Times and Cox Media Group and is supported by the City of Clearwater, Downtown Clearwater and the Downtown Development Board.

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