



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Local Jazz Organizations Jazz Cruises and Jazz St. Louis Join Forces for Concert Series, Creating Largest Jazz-Promoting Partnership in Midwest

Grammy®-winning guitarist/vocalist George Benson will kick off the series with a special concert at The Factory on May 12, 2022

St Louis (February 16, 2022) --- St. Louis-based [Jazz Cruises](#) and [Jazz St. Louis](#) are joining forces to launch a series of high-profile Jazz concerts throughout the year. Jazz Cruises will execute the shows and handle programming using its production expertise and industry relationships, covering the cost of production with Jazz St. Louis as the beneficiary of proceeds. With nearly \$5 million in combined annual booking fees of jazz artists, this for-profit benefiting the non-profit venture has created the most significant jazz-promoting partnership in the Midwest.

The first concert will feature legendary guitarist, vocalist, and 10x Grammy® Award winner, George Benson, performing at The Factory on **May 12, 2022**, exactly five years to the day since his last appearance in St. Louis. Also appearing on the bill is an all-star group led by 3x Grammy® winner saxophonist Eric Marienthal and 7x Grammy® winner trumpeter Randy Brecker. Joining them on the piano is 2x Grammy® winner George Whitty. Tickets are on sale now. More artists will be announced at a later date. Learn more about upcoming events and purchase tickets [here](#).

Though *Jazz Cruises* first produced its full ship charters in 2001, it can trace its origins to other jazz cruise formats as far back as 1975 under the direction of founder Anita E. Berry. *Jazz St. Louis* has had a similar trajectory under the leadership of its founder Barbara Rose. The first incarnation of *Jazz St. Louis* began in 1995. As fate would have it, not only did Berry and Rose know each other, they were good friends and bridge partners.

“Somewhere in heaven, Mom [Berry] and Barbara are sharing a smile about all of this. Though it took nearly 50 years to accomplish, the two organizations they created are now working together to bring the very best in jazz to St. Louis,” says Michael Lazaroff, son of Anita E. Berry and longtime Executive Director of *Jazz Cruises*.

A child prodigy raised in the jazz-rich city of Pittsburgh, George Benson started his career as a sideman with organist Jack McDuff in the '60s. Benson made his debut album, *The New Boss Guitar*, when he was just 21 years old. He would record more than three dozen albums, including the three-time Platinum-selling *Breezin'*. A 10-time Grammy Award winner, Benson was named an NEA Jazz Master in 2009, the highest honor for a jazz musician, and was given a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. A headliner at festivals worldwide, the dynamic singer and guitarist is one of the most famous jazz and R&B musicians of his time.

Joining Benson at The Factory is an all-star group led by Eric Marienthal and Randy Brecker, who have won 11 Grammy Awards. Their latest release, *Double-Dealin'*, is nominated for a Grammy this year. The group also includes noted keyboardist and producer George Whitty, who has performed and recorded with the Brecker Brothers, Chaka Khan, Herbie Hancock, Santana, Grover Washington, Jr., and many others.

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About Jazz Cruises

St. Louis-based *Jazz Cruises* has been the premier producer of jazz and music cruises since 2001, including The Smooth Jazz Cruise, The Jazz Cruise, and Blue Note at Sea. Over the years, *Jazz Cruises* has produced other land-based events, which will be the 4th time it has presented George Benson. For more information about *Jazz Cruises*, visit yourjazzcruises.com.

About Jazz St. Louis

Jazz St. Louis is the preeminent producer of jazz programs in St. Louis. This non-profit organization advances the uniquely American art of jazz through performance, education, and community engagement, each year presenting over 270 performances in its internationally acclaimed concert series. *Jazz St. Louis* takes a three-pronged approach to its work: presenting jazz, encouraging and educating future audiences, and nurturing budding musicians. For more information about *Jazz St. Louis*, visit jazzstl.org.

About The Factory

The Factory is a brand-new music venue that is the first built from the ground up performance venue in the Midwest in over 20 years. Its 152,000 square feet was constructed specially for live music, with every detail designed for the performer and the audience. The industrial style of The Factory takes cues from old factories and manufacturing spaces with appointments like weathered wood, open metalwork stairs, exposed brick, industrial lighting fixtures, and polished concrete. Located in St. Louis' upscale community of Chesterfield, The Factory is one of the anchors in the new entertainment complex, The District. It is surrounded by restaurants, shops, and entertainment options designed to appeal to everyone. For more information, visit thefactorystl.com.

Jazz St. Louis Media Contact:

Name: Travis Estes

Email: travis@jazzstl.org

Office: 314-881-3088

Mobile: 314-443-8161

Jazz Cruises Media Contact:

Name: Jolyn Matsumuro

Email: jolyn@brookescompany.com

Office: 310-558-3000 x202

Mobile: 213-407-5774