



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: October 4, 2012

- WHAT:** SPIRITUALS TO FUNK
DR. JOHN & THE BLIND BOYS OF ALABAMA
- WHEN:** Thursday, November 8 at 7:30 p.m.
- WHERE:** Fine Arts Center Concert Hall
University of Massachusetts Amherst
- TICKETS:** Call 1-800-999-UMAS or 545-2511 for tickets or go online to <http://www.fineartscenter.com/>
- IMAGES:** To download images relating to this press release please go online to <https://fac.umass.edu/Online/article/Images>

DR. JOHN, THE SPIRIT AND SOUL OF THE CRESCENT CITY, JOINS THE BLIND BOYS OF ALABAMA FOR CONCERT AT THE FINE ARTS CENTER

Dr. John and The Blind Boys of Alabama will bring a touch of New Orleans to Amherst with a program of "Spirituals to Funk" on Thursday, November 8 at 7:30 p.m. in the Fine Arts Center Concert Hall. Under the direction of Rock & Roll Hall of Fame inductee Dr. John, the world premiere of Spirituals to Funk represents the first- ever touring partnership between two icons of American music. Dr. John, a few members of his Lower 911 band, and The Blind Boys of Alabama will build on this legacy synonymous with their "Big Easy" style. Based on the legendary Carnegie Hall concerts produced by John Hammond in the 1930s, this version of Spirituals to Swing features an integrated show that explores the connections between gospel, blues, and jazz. Just prior to the concert ticket holders are invited to a talk by UMass Professor of Afro-American Studies, Steven Tracy, at 6:30PM at the University Club. A complimentary shuttle will be available from the UClub to the Concert Hall.

The show is one of the FAC's "The Arts Give Back" performances: audience members are encouraged to bring a new, unwrapped toy, game, article of winter clothing, or non-perishable food item to donate to families through the Amherst Survival Center. Visit <http://www.amherstsuvival.org/> for a wish-list of needed items.

Dr. John is universally celebrated as the living embodiment of the rich musical heritage exclusive to New Orleans. His very colorful musical career began in the 1950s when he wrote and played guitar on some of the greatest records to come out of the Crescent City, including recordings by Professor Longhair, Art Neville, Joe Tex, and Frankie Ford.

A notorious gun incident forced the artist to give up the guitar and concentrate on organ and piano. Further trouble at home sent Dr. John west in the 1960s, where he continued to be in demand as a session musician, playing on records from a little-known classic Doug Sahm LP that featured Dr. John with a complement of top musicians, from Bob Dylan to David Bromberg. He also performed on The Rolling Stones' wildly infamous *Exile On Main Street*.

During that time he also launched his solo career, developing the charismatic persona of Dr. John The Nite Tripper. Adorned with voodoo charms and regalia, a legend was born with his breakthrough 1968 album *Gris-gris*, which established his unique blend of voodoo mysticism, funk, rhythm & blues, psychedelic rock, and Creole roots.

After Hurricane Katrina and government bungles bashed New Orleans in 2005, Dr. John immediately stepped up to the plate with both generous relief fund-raising concerts, recordings, and angry public words of protest. In 2008 he released *City That Care Forgot*, an album winning him a Grammy for Best Contemporary Blues Album. His most recent album, *Locked Down*, produced by The Black Keys' Dan Auerbach, is already being talked about as a high point of Dr. John's 50+ year career.

The Blind Boys of Alabama formed at the Alabama Institute for the Negro Blind in 1939. Since then they have been recognized worldwide as living legends of gospel music. Celebrated by The Grammys and The National Endowment for the Arts with Lifetime Achievement Awards, inducted into the Gospel Music Hall of Fame, sung for two presidents in the White House and winners of five Grammy Awards, they have attained the highest levels of achievement in a career that spans over 70 years and shows no signs of diminishing. Longevity and major awards aside, The Blind Boys have earned praise for their remarkable interpretations of everything from traditional gospel favorites to contemporary spiritual material by acclaimed songwriters such as Curtis Mayfield, Ben Harper, Eric Clapton, Prince, and Tom Waits.

Tickets for Dr. John and the Blind Boys of Alabama are \$40, \$35, and \$15; Five College, GCC, STCC students and youth 17 and under are \$10. For tickets call the Box Office at 545-2511, toll-free at 800-999-UMAS, or purchase online at fineartscenter.com. The performance is sponsored by Baystate Health, Finck & Perras Insurance, *The Valley Advocate*, *The Daily Hampshire Gazette*, the UMass Hotel at the Campus Center, New England Public Radio, and 93.9 The River.

PHOTOS

Hi-res photos available for download: <https://fac.umass.edu/Online/article/Images>.

PRESS PASSES

Limited press passes are available. Please contact Shawn Farley at 413-545-4159 or sfarley@admin.umass.edu.

ABOUT THE FAC

The Fine Arts Center, located on the UMass Amherst campus, is a presenter of music, dance, theater and the visual arts, bringing hundreds of outstanding and provocative artists to the Pioneer Valley for over 35 years.

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