



**CREATING
COMMUNITY**

Arts & Culture

JAZZ



in the Gardens



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MIAMI GARDENS, FL - Despite scattered showers in Miami Gardens over the weekend, thousands from the local area and abroad danced and sang their hearts out along with a two-day lineup from the 11th Annual Jazz in the Gardens. Local, National and International talent gave performances worthy of Gardens annual showcase. Saturday's staged was graced with: CriStyle Renae, Ronnie VOP, April Raquel Kouture Funk, Jazz in the Gardens All Stars (Najee, Alex Bugnon and Regina Belle), Average White Band, Michael McDonald, Kool and The Gang and Charlie Wilson. Sunday's stage included: LaVie, Fred Hammond, Brian Culbertson, Janelle Monae, Babyface and Usher. The Jazz in the Garden festival has certainly grown into a mega-event in its 11 years; whether you're sitting in the VIP section or nestled in your lawn chair in general admission indulging in glorious vendor food & drinks, you're enjoying this melanin-filled, melodic party.



Usher & Baby Face



Ronnie VOP



Average White Band



Monae

The local talent was more than just show openers but a powerhouse of talent and showmanship. CriStyle Renae, Ronnie VOP, April Raquel Kouture Funk opened the stage on Saturday afternoon. Each group had signature voices and their own showmanship for commanding the stage. Jazz in the Gardens All Stars (Najee, Alex Bugnon and Regina Belle) performed from their catalog of classics and new compilations to soon be release. It was the first time that Najee and Regina Belle had performed together on stage and Regina's first time at Jazz in the Garden. Backstage Alex shared his perspective on Jazz and its birthplace in America. The Average White Band, Michael McDonald provided perfection to their signature styles and was accompanied by world class musicianship. Kool and the Gang and Charlie Wilson closed out the evening leaving nothing short for fans to experience.



Regina Belle & Najee



Sundays' performances continued from Saturdays high energy with Culbertson impressing the crowd with his thrilling keyboard skills, while Monae remained true to her nature with a high-energy performance and positive affirmations about race and equally for women. The audience undeniably enjoyed Babyface (yes, he still looks under 30 even though he's celebrating his 58th birthday this year), as he performed many of his famous tunes and covered many hits that he wrote/produced for many other A-list R&B artists. One of the many highlights of the night was Usher joining Babyface on stage, causing a pandemonium of ladies screaming and cameras flashing. Usher, the main act, showcased many of his greatest hits proving his tenure in this industry. The event proved to be worth it's annual hype.

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