



Seven things you didn't know about...

George Benson

Sprightly jazz guitarist turned soppy pop balladeer Benson is a safe but satisfying choice to close the du World Music Festival on Friday March 16. The 68-year-old's legendary chops will thrill the musos, while more casual fans will reminisce with American heartthrob side, who sold 70 million records of soul-pop. Here are a few more facts from the man himself.

He's a Dubai regular.

'This is my fourth time in Dubai – it's beautiful. I've seen it come from nothing more than desert. When I first came they'd just built that golf house that looks like a sail [we think he means Dubai Creek Golf and Yacht Club] – that's how long I've been coming to Dubai. I think people there know where I am; I'm not trying to reinvent myself. People love my songs, so I'm bringing them the George Benson they know.'

He once shared a stage with Luciano Pavarotti.

'That was the greatest duet I ever did. We were in Pavarotti's home town in Italy and we sang 'The Greatest Love of All' with a full orchestra. It was incredible to hear him singing like that from just a few metres away. I said to myself, "What am I doing?"'

He's had to deal with a lot of flack for 'selling out' on jazz.

'I really don't pay [the critics] much mind. Its human nature – people always want what they haven't got, nothing ventured nothing gained. I'm a scientist by nature, I'm a musician second, and not all innovators are recognised. I take in the criticism but I don't let it change my direction. The critics have got to stop complaining and tell me what's not right – I ask, "tell me what it is?" and they can't.'

He was a big fan of the late Whitney Houston.

'I met her as a kid, just 18 years old. She was the greatest. She told me, "You're my favourite artist." When she said she was going to cover my song "The Greatest Love of All" I couldn't

believe it. Every time I think I've heard the best, someone else pops up out of nowhere – she was one of those.'

The most intimidating musician he's met is guitarist Pat Martino, who played at the du World Music Festival on Friday March 9.

'When I got to New York [in 1960] I thought I was on the ball as a guitar player. In my home town [Pittsburgh] I was one of the few – everyone always praised me. That all changed when I ran into this 17-year-old kid called Pat Martino – I'd never heard anything like it in my life. I said, "I'm getting out of here, I don't belong." [Later] it made me realise you don't really know what you can do until you try. You have to get away from the fear and not be worried about stepping on someone's toes. I learned that from Pat, I still love that guy today.'

He turned down the invitation to join Miles Davis's band after appearing on the trumpeter's 1968 album, Miles in the Sky.

'That was very intimidating because I didn't know what he wanted. He had this incredible reputation; very ambiguous, mysterious – he's not like that. He wanted me to be in his band but my manager said no. He thought I was going to be bigger than Miles. I said, "bigger than Miles? You can't get bigger than Miles!" He happened to open up for us for a couple of shows – but the respect didn't change.'

At 68 years old, he shows no signs of slowing down.

'I think I've made my mark. I wouldn't change my life for anyone. I've used the gifts that God has given me to the best of my ability. I'll keep going as long as my two voices hold out. My [guitar] chops have got to stay at 90 per cent and my voice at 85 per cent. When I hear the deterioration I wouldn't want to play.' *Interview: Rob Garratt. George Benson plays the du World Music Festival on Friday March 16. Dhs195-500. Doors 6pm, show 9pm. Burj Park, Downtown Burj Khalifa, www.timeouttickets.com*

Upcoming: previews

Gabrielle

Double Brit Award-winning Gabrielle dominated airwaves in her native UK back in the '90s: 'Dreams' and 'Rise' both topped the charts, followed closely by top five hits 'Out of Reach' and the East 17 duet 'If You Ever'. The tides of time have not been entirely kind – her last three singles failed to make the Top 40, but that doesn't lessen the power and appeal of those early hits. To her credit, the forty-something mum has ditched those kooky eye patches and never took the easy route back to the limelight through reality TV – and instead of nightclubs she confesses her vice to be chocolate. *Dhs195-500. Doors 6pm, show 9pm, Friday March 16 (with George Benson) Burj Park, Downtown Burj Khalifa, www.timeouttickets.com*



Sir Bob Geldof

Boomtown Rat and legendary philanthropist Geldof is no stranger to Dubai. We've lost count of his like-clockwork appearances; landing at The Irish Village to celebrate St Patrick's Day. This year is no different, so expect more of the same – bedraggled hits, a legion of loyal revellers and gallons of the dark stuff. The 60-year-old Nobel Peace Prize nominee is looking increasingly aged these days, but is said to still be on energetic form. Last year saw the release of his first album in a decade, the wittily-titled *How to Compose Popular Songs That Will Sell*, so expect new tracks between the Boomtown back catalogue. See www.timeoutdubai.com for a full interview. *Dhs150-995. Doors 6pm, show 9pm, Thursday March 15. The Irish Village, Garhoud, www.timeouttickets.com*



Russell Peters

Reportedly the fastest-selling show ever hosted in the UAE, 5,000 tickets for Peters' gig were lapped up in just 50 minutes. A second date was swiftly announced, but tickets for that were snapped up swiftly too. Still, if you're lucky enough to have a ticket, we hope you know what to expect. Canadian-Indian comic Peters is renowned for straight observational comedy, often about his dad. But since his last Dubai dates in 2008 he's both got married and had a child of his own, so this time we're expecting lots of fishwife moans and nappy jokes. Read more in our interview on page 24 – and see if there are two free tickets inside this issue. *Tickets are sold out. Monday March 19-Tuesday March 20. Dubai World Trade Centre, www.timeouttickets.com*

