

September 7, 2010 Bohemian blog by Gabe Meline

[Jessica Felix Reinstated for Healdsburg Jazz Festival; Current Board of Directors Resigns](#)

posted in [News](#) |



BRIGHT MOMENTS: Jessica Felix with Billy Higgins.
(Photo by Andy Caudillo.)

The Healdsburg Jazz Festival is back. And so is Jessica Felix.

After the outpouring of support for Felix, the current Board of Directors of the Healdsburg Jazz Festival has [voted unanimously](#) to reinstate Jessica Felix to the Board and to elect her Chairperson. All five members of the current Board are resigning, effective immediately. Felix will book a jazz festival in 2011, and will form a new Board.

This isn't just great news—it's incredible news. How rare is it that an entire Board of Directors resigns over public outcry? Over a small little town's jazz festival?

I called Felix, who'd just returned from signing papers and putting her name back on the bank account. "I'm so glad," she told me. "I'm just overwhelmed by all the support. It's been heartwarming to know how much people care."

As reported [earlier](#), Felix was [fired five weeks ago](#) from the Healdsburg Jazz Festival, which she founded in 1999, and the Festival Board announced a hiatus for the 2011 season. [Multiple media outlets](#) covered the actions taken by the Board, including [this one](#), and comments [protesting](#) the decision piled up at the festival's website. The Board bluntly erased them all, [apparently oblivious to Google cache](#); this only prompted [more online comments](#) from fans and musicians alike, including George Cables, David Weiss, Charlie Musselwhite, Bennett Friedman, Adam Theis and many more.

Key among the responses were those from Kathy Martin of Santa Rosa Systems, pledging to cancel her annual \$25,000 sponsorship, and Babatunde Lea, who vowed without Felix not to participate in the Operation Jazz Band program in area schools, the only activity the Board had planned for 2011.

Felix said she heard the news by email.

“We have a victory—we’ve got a festival back with a tremendous debt,” she laughed. “It was a fight for jazz, and jazz won, and we haven’t won the battle yet, but jazz really won out here.”

Winning the economic battle means erasing the \$30,000 debt that the festival faces, and to that end, Felix is planning the 2011 Festival as a benefit. She also says she’ll increase her outreach to area restaurants and wineries. “Now people realize finally that this festival cannot be taken for granted, and that it *meant* something,” she said. “That’s what shocked me. How much it meant to people.”