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Reared in Lagos, Nigeria, Femi Kuti was expected to be an exact musical replica of his father, Afrobeat legend Fela Kuti. Femi toured with Fela’s band for years, but in 1986 he had a burning desire to become his own man. Breaking away from his father didn’t please many people, until the world heard the Afrobeat fusion that Femi was creating. The sound nuanced with soul-jazz has wowed crowds for more than 25 years. On Jan. 13, Femi and his band Positive Force will perform at Grand Central in downtown Miami, arriving in Miami after performing on the popular Jam Cruise. Opening for the group will be Erick Paredes, a Miami-based producer of electronic world music. The concert, presented by the Rhythm Foundation, costs \$30. In concert, the composer belts out passionate lyrics (many of protest) and springs between the keyboard and saxophone during any given number. Sharing the stage are beautifully adorned dancers, who further bring Femi’s music to life with fast, hip-shaking moves of West Africa. The experience is one to savor. Femi’s career has always taken an original route. In the early 90s he signed with Motown, and about a decade later joined with socially conscious American rappers Mos Def and Common and funkmaster James Poyser for his acclaimed 2001 album Fight to Win. He later returned to Lagos to work on rebuilding Fela’s original nightclub, the Shrine. A popular meeting place for Nigerian dissenters, the Shrine served as a laboratory for cutting edge African music and dance — and inspiration for Femi. “His music has never been as intense as when brewed in a Nigerian cauldron and matured in the hot-house atmosphere of the club,” according to the notes from the Rhythm Foundation. Femi also recorded at the renowned Decca Studio in Lagos, which Parisian producer and Femi’s long-time friend, Sodi, calls, “a very important historical place for Afrobeat and the place have those mystical vibrations that Femi felt.” Today the 50-year-old’s musical creations are not only pleasing to the ear, but call for an end to injustice and give a voice to his poorest countrymen, as related in a story for the BBC: “He’s a constant thorn in the side of the authorities.” Femi is known for his activism as much as his music. After performing at the opening ceremony for the 2010 Football World Cup in South Africa, he met with anti-apartheid heroes. In January of last year, Femi was named Amnesty International ambassador. Though Femi decided to create his own sound apart from his father, he graciously pays tribute to the late Fela, who died in 1997 of AIDS complications. He briefly appeared on stage at the highly acclaimed and successful Broadway show about Fela. When asked if the pressure to perform as greatly as Fela was a curse, he said: “I would never see it as a curse...I have to live up to the heritage of the name, so I know I have to work hard.” Femi Kuti will be live in concert on Jan. 13 at Grand Central, 697 N. Miami Ave., Miami. The show starts at 8:00 p.m. Tickets cost \$30 and are available through [RhythmFoundation.com](http://RhythmFoundation.com) or by phone at 305-672-5202; [www.rhythmfoundation.com](http://www.rhythmfoundation.com). This article also appears in the Miami Sun Post