INTERVIEWS

Jay Beckenstein
Spyro Gyra
Blue Note, March 5-10

Miguel Zenon
Village Vanguard, March 12-17

Chuck Israels
Dizzy’s Club, March 6

Jay Leonhart
Birdland, March 21, 24

Benny Green
Piano Master: The Oscar Peterson Story
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Ken Peplowski is reunited with his NYC working group that includes Ted Rosenthal on piano, Martin Wind on bass and Matt Wilson on drums.

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Limitless shows that the partnership is working quite well and in all likelihood hadn’t even hit its ceiling yet.

— S. Victor Aaron, Something Else Reviews

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Charles Tolliver
Fortuitous opportunities at just the right moments ...

Interview by Eric Nemeyer

This is an excerpt from the full interview with Charles Tolliver.

CT: When I was a teenager in high school there was a little neighborhood pharmacy, I delivered medicine from there and I used to watch the two doctors who owned it mixing the medicine, and I thought that was cool. And that stayed with me after I graduated high school. And I decided—you know, with chemistry, musicians, they’re into numbers anyway, so mathematics, chemistry and all that was fun to work with. I got accepted into the School of Pharmacy at Howard, I trudged through for about three years. It was hard because I was paying tuition. But, I mean, I was mostly in the fine arts building in my spare time, anyway. [laughs] And just one day something really clicked. And I said, “I’m history.” I just packed up, came back home. Finding every jam session I could find. That was ‘63.

JI: What kinds of discussions did you have with him that made a significant impact on your artistry and your development that you might share with us?

CT: Well, really, to tell you the truth, we didn’t talk so much about the music, except that he asked me, did I have any tunes. Maybe he was already inside my head, or something, you know? And I’d go by his house and bring him a couple of my tunes, and he said, “Oh yeah, great, we’ll use that. Here’s one of mine.” It was that sort of thing. It was as if I had known him my whole life. It was quite a start for me.

JI: Going to record with him for Blue Note, what kinds of direction, or what kinds of things did you experience from producers? Or did everything go in the studio as he wanted?

CT: Well, one thing I remember was that Jackie was in that phase, he had already done One Step Beyond…

JI: Exploratory freedom.

CT: Yeah. And so he was in that mode, and so even though bebop was hitting, I believe he really had already started to expand it. The first record I did with him, I mean, I had been practicing 2-5-1 chord progressions. And fortunately, I don’t know whether it was his decision—probably it was Alfred’s [Lion] decision—to have that rhythm section. I mean, that record was quite something because it had bebop and free stuff.

JI: But you were working on more traditional, sophisticated, harmonic kinds of vocabulary, and then going in and working with him while he’s suggesting to you that he wants something freer, how did that hit you?

CT: Well, it was quite something. One would be shaking in their boots, so to speak on their first record. But I think what helped me was that I’m very rhythmically inclined. You know, having someone like Roy Haynes and Herbie Hancock there, it made all the difference. I think if it had been another drummer or a pianist, it might not have come off the way it did. That was a great start for me.

JI: What kinds of discussions did you have with Art Blakey?

CT: It was never about the music, because those men, they expected you to get it already. If they tapped you to blow, then they expected that you were ready and were there with what they want. So, it was never a discussion about the music. And there were no rehearsals either, with Art Blakey there were no rehearsals. It was just expected that I would know the repertoire.”

JI: How did your association with Jackie McLean develop?

CT: The summer of ‘63 I got back here and there were little places to go and jam, and there was a fellow named Jim Harrison who was getting little gigs with Jackie because this was really a tough time, even though he was recording at Blue Note. You know at that time, gigs for journeymen—at that time, Jackie, basically that’s what he was, I mean, even though he had made some great Blue Note recordings, there was no work. Besides, he was drying out. And this fella told Jackie about me, and he called me to make a recording without even hearing me. Just went on the word of this fella, Jim Harrison. And that’s how it all started out. It’s actually amazing—cause generally, the guys, they usually go around, even Miles in those days would go out to different clubs and check things out… see if there’s anybody that he could use. So I’m forever in the debt of Jackie McLean.

JI: How did your association with Jackie McLean develop?

CT: When I was a teenager in high school there was a little neighborhood pharmacy, I delivered medicine from there and I used to watch the two doctors who owned it mixing the medicine, and I thought that was cool. And that stayed with me after I graduated high school. And I decided—you know, with chemistry, musicians, they’re into numbers anyway, so mathematics, chemistry and all that was fun to work with. I got accepted into the School of Pharmacy at Howard, I trudged through for about three years. It was hard because I was paying tuition. But, I mean, I was mostly in the fine arts building in my spare time, anyway. [laughs] And just one day something really clicked. And I said, “I’m history.” I just packed up, came back home. Finding every jam session I could find. That was ‘63.

JI: What kinds of discussions did you have with Jackie McLean that made a significant impact on your artistry and your development that you might share with us?
Feature

Charles Tolliver
Jay Beckenstein
Founder of Spyro Gyra, Alto Saxophonist

Interview By Eric Nemeyer

This is an excerpt from the extensive interview with Jay Beckenstein of Spyro Gyra

**JI:** One of the ways artists in jazz have in large part, developed their own styles and or reputations, has been to apprentice—to play in the groups lead by high-profile, established jazz artists for extended periods of time. Could you comment on how your own independent path has helped or hindered your music and opportunity in light of the aforementioned realities

**JB:** I caught the very last, last little part of the apprenticeship era when I spent about a half year with Charlie Mingus at school. I think I'm playing it in that different key. That kind of ear led me to just kind of do it, to be a singer. 95% of the time I can play what I'm hearing. But that other 5%, which would make me a more sophisticated player, would require a different kind of mental knowledge

“the band can change the key of the tune, and I might not notice it. And, I’ll just play it in that different key but not know that I’m playing it in that different key. That kind of ear led me to just kind of do it, to be a singer. 95% of the time I can play what I’m hearing. But that other 5%, which would make me a more sophisticated player, would require a different kind of mental knowledge”

there’s a difference as you go back in history as to the availability to listen to things that people have. Certainly, as you go back far enough, apprenticeship is the only way you heard something that might influence you. You went somewhere to a band stand to hear people play it. It wasn’t like everyone had a Victrola or there was MTV. More and more now, there are alternatives to the teacher -student, one-on-one apprentice kind of thing. There are jazz programs in colleges. There are books on playing jazz. There is every kind of ear led me to just kind of do it, to be a singer. 95% of the time I can play what I’m hearing. But that other 5%, which would make me a more sophisticated player, would require a different kind of mental knowledge – because my ears just want to go where they want to go. So when someone is putting in chord changes that are twisted that are not in their natural place – I can be thrown. At those times, I do have to go, “here’s the chord change, remember that.” Or, “play a G and you’ll hear where you go.” I’ll get through different sections of harder harmonic kinds of things – the sort of thing that Tom Schuman plows through. At those moments I miss not having a Berklee education. Those moments don’t happen a lot. I can’t get around them. Eventually, my ear learns the most twisted of chords, given enough time. The whole beauty of jazz was its natural evolution. Somewhere along the line though, back in the 1960s, a whole bunch of people tried to canonize it – to write it down, to put it in books, to tell you how to do it. The thing that attracted me to it in the first place was that it didn’t stay still.

**Ji:** Yes. And, if you heard ten different versions of “Bye Bye Blackbird” by the same group, playing it in the same key, at the same tempo, each version was different, and you wanted to hear each different version.

**JB:** More than that, when I was growing up, every single Miles Davis record was a new style of jazz. There was this amazing thing that was going on between 1955 and 1965. Then, along came a lot of stuff that didn’t please traditionalists – electric instruments, rock backbeats, combinations of styles. They then sort of took a step backwards and said we better write the book. We better put things in canon – as if to say this is jazz and that is not. I think that was a bad decision on everybody’s part. Considerably later on, along came smooth jazz to lock it into some awful place; and split it off into instrumental R&B.

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Chuck Israels
On Bill Evans, Horace Silver and More

Interview by Eric Nemeyer
Photo by John Meloy

Chuck: I lived in Cleveland Heights from 1946 to 52 and I liked it. It was next to Shaker Heights. It was just south of Shaker Heights. They’re contiguous. I enjoyed my life between the ages of 10 to 16, and I remember that the kids I went to junior high school with, we all knew the names of all the guys on the Cleveland Indians because that was around 1948, they won the World Series.

JI: That’s right, they won the series and 1948 and 1954 when they played the New York Giants in the World Series—but nothing since.

Chuck: Well, those were all people that we knew well. We knew everybody’s names. We knew who they were. I could tell you even today who they were. The kids also knew all the first chair players in the Cleveland Orchestra.

JI: That speaks to what culture was back then as opposed to today.

Chuck: That’s right, and I thought that was a pretty good community.

JI: Of course, the Cleveland Indians played in Municipal Stadium that had a center field that was something like 900 feet away from home plate.

Chuck: [Laughs] One of the bullpen pitchers was Early Wynn, who rented our house one summer when we were away. It was a different world. I was thinking about how to describe what I think is the situation at the moment. There is a preponderance of cheap popular music with improvisation that’s masquerading as creative jazz. And it takes up most of the listening space in the world. And if I had heard that music when I was learning to play, I would never have become a jazz musician.

JI: Well, a lot of it’s produced, so of course it doesn’t grab your heart.

Chuck: Well, you’re old enough to have had a little bit of that experience, and I’m a few years older and so I had that much more of it before the baby boom generation reached adolescence and the whole culture.

JI: Do you have a manager?

Chuck: Well, I haven’t got one. As a matter of fact, I do have someone here who helps me. I don’t have to tell him how to do things because it’s his general character that attracted me to a relationship with him in the first place.

JI: Could you talk about the music of Horace Silver which is the centerpiece of the new album, and why you chose this as a focus for your current project?

Chuck: That was pretty easy. He died, and it caught my attention. He died last year, and I grew up loving his music, looking forward to all the new releases of it. I met him in 1956. There was a record producer named Tom Wilson. He was a Harvard grad, a black man, who remained in Cambridge after he graduated. And he had a record company called Transition Records. I loved Tom. He was a real mentor of mine and we had a close affectionate relationship. He was a few years older than I was, and he kind of took me under his wing and he liked my playing. Because he liked my playing, I got on my first jazz record which was the one that he was producing in New York that had Cecil Taylor and John Coltrane and Kenny Dorham and Louis Hayes.

JI: I remember that album.

Chuck: That was through my relationship with Tom. But before that, he produced a record of Donald Byrd, which was in fact Horace Silver and Art Blakey’s Jazz Messengers with whom Donald Byrd was playing. Tom hired them to make a record that Donald would be the leader, and they recorded it in the radio station at Harvard in that studio. And I was there and I met Horace. I can’t say I ever knew him well, but I would always run into him through the years and we were always friendly and cordial, and he was a nice man, and I loved his music so I would go and hear it at every opportunity. I have this band that plays mostly music that is more like Bill Evans’ music than Horace’s. But the roots of Bill’s music are the same roots that are Horace’s roots, and that is Bud Powell. They both sit on Bud Powell’s music, and they simply take off in slightly different directions from there. I played with Bud Powell too in 1959 for several months in Paris. So all of this is a pretty basic fundamental connection with my beginnings as a jazz musician.

JI: When you were playing with Bud Powell, what kinds of instructions, if any, or words of wisdom did he impart to you that made a significant impact on your development at the time or ever since?

Chuck: Wouldn’t that be nice if that had happened? But Bud was, at that point, not fully relating to the world. He had been traumatized in a number of ways that I don’t know about. Barry Harris talks about it a little bit. He’d been beaten up by the police. He’d been given electroshock therapy at Bellevue, and he was pretty much a mess. So my relationship with him was to show up on a bandstand and play. All he wanted to do was to get five francs so he could buy a cognac which he wasn’t supposed to have. So I didn’t have any real relationship. I had plenty of relationship with G.T. Hogan who was the drummer and with Kenny Clarke who was also in Paris and with whom I also played from time to time, and Lucky Thomson whom I knew a little bit and played with there and much admired. I had graduated from Brandeis, and I was doing my obligatory European trip after college.

JI: How did you find the atmosphere in Paris at the time, both in terms of the musical environment, as well as the way the Parisians and Europeans related to Americans?

Chuck: The musical atmosphere was good, and the relationship with American jazz musicians was that they were revered. And Bud was certainly revered, even though in a lot of ways he was a shadow of himself. But there was great respect for his history and for his contribution to the music, more respect from the French than from me, which was my error. I think back about my own attitudes at that time, and I was young and I wasn’t thinking very clearly about what Bud was doing. A lot of the time, he was on automatic pilot, and he recorded it in the radio station at Harvard in that studio. And I was there and I met Horace. I can’t say I ever knew him well, but I would always run into him through the years and we were always friendly and cordial, and he was a nice man, and I loved his music so I would go and hear it at every opportunity. I have this band that plays mostly music that is more like Bill Evans’ music than Horace’s. But the roots of Bill’s music are the same roots that are

(Continued on page 11)
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the left bank, with a lousy upright piano that was not always in tune—and I always thought that was a little bit hypocritical to turn him into this hero and not give him a suitable place to play and a good instrument. I was a child. How old was I then? Let’s see, 23. I was lucky to be there and I got a lot of work. I worked with Bud and with Lucky Thompson, with Kenny Clarke, with Daniel Humair, who was a brilliant, brilliant drummer. I had a good time.

JI: What prompted you to move back to the United States?

Chuck: I never had planned to remain in Europe. I don’t think that I was looking for an expatriate existence. I think that’s a difficult life to live away from your home country. People find it necessary. Some years before that, for political reasons, people had been “outed” by Joseph McCarthy and had moved to Europe because they were blacklisted at home. But I wasn’t planning to stay in Europe. I did come home to Boston after that, finding not very much jazz at that moment. I went to work for Acoustic Research and did experimental work on loud speakers for a while until George Russell and I found each other in Lenox, Massachusetts.

JI: What year was that, 1960?

Chuck: Yes, yes, that was the beginning of my New York career.

JI: What was that session like on which you recorded with John Coltrane and Cecil Taylor? What are your impressions?

Chuck: It was professional, and there are stories about it that there were fights and arguments and all kinds of things because people hear the discrepancy in musical style from what Cecil was doing and what everyone else was doing. But I don’t remember any sign of anything but professional courtesy. It was people doing their jobs.

JI: Was there music handed out? What do you remember about the development of the music during the session?

Chuck: Well, we played a couple of blueses. One little counterpoint exercise that I had written, that I had no idea anyone was going to play, was sitting on a music stand. John picked it up and looked at it and said, “Oh, let’s try this.” He and Kenny played this two part invention, and it became something called “Double Clutching.” But there wasn’t a lot of planning for that session. We played a couple of standards and four people played one way and then Cecil played the way Cecil plays—which is rhythmically very choppy and kind of unrelated to the language that the rest of us were speaking. And we did the best we could to find a way to relate to that and to integrate it. It was our job. And for me, first of all, it was the first session I had ever taken part in, first professional one, so I had nothing to compare it to.

JI: I guess you felt like a kid in a candy factory. Everything that was happening was exciting and new.

Chuck: Of course. I also heard myself rush on a playback, and decided instantly that I was never going to do that again. One of my solos—I wasn’t at all aware that it was happening when I was playing. And I heard the playback and said, my God, I’m rushing, that’s terrible. I have to re-orient my experience of my own playing to make sure that I keep a part of me outside of myself listening to what I’m doing to make sure that the music comes out right, comes out the way I want it to.

JI: Did you go back in the practice room for a long time with a metronome to make sure that you didn’t rush?

Chuck: No, I just became aware that my emotional state was misdirecting what I was hearing, and I just fixed it. I just thought that when I feel like that, and I think I’m dragging, I’m not—so don’t pay attention to that. I fixed it right away, I didn’t have any time to go back in the practice room and fix it. I had to fix it on the next take.

JI: Well it’s good that you got to hear it back so you could make those instant changes.

Chuck: Exactly. Recording is a wonderful thing for musicians.

JI: Probably like everyone who has recorded, at one time or another you’ve cringed at hearing the playback and thought that the music was not where you wanted it to be. We all go through that at one time or another. I’ve had experiences where I initially thought that and then let it sit for a month or two months, until you’ve forgotten the “mistakes” that you think you made on the spot. Then later, with clarity, you realize, “Oh my gosh, that sounds really good.”

Chuck: Of course, yeah. But at the moment, it’s like the dancer looking in the mirror. The dancer feels his or her body in a particular position and thinks it looks a certain way, and that’s why they have those big mirrors, to make sure that it looks the way they want it to. And you have to train yourself to observe yourself from a distance. It’s part of your training as an artist to recognize how things are really coming out.

JI: Sure, and it takes training to get to that point. As our ears become more sensitive and attuned to the subtleties, we pick up things we may not have initially heard. I listen back now to recordings that I was listening to when I first became involved in the music—even solos I may have transcribed—and I find myself hearing, discovering subtleties that I never could have imagined when I first started out.

Chuck: Yeah. Well, I found some things in Horace’s music, but not too much that I didn’t know was there. I was pretty aware of how he organized things. First place, his music is very organized. His quintet arrangements are kind of like big band arrangements already. They have shout choruses, they have specific figures in the piano part that he would play the same every night, much to the consternation of a trumpet player that worked for him later, whom I knew well who played in the National Jazz Ensemble. He came back, and we said, “Well how was it working with Horace?” He said, “Oh man, it’s such a drag. He comp the same way every night.” But we talked to this guy and said, “You know, you have to play a different kind of solo. In Horace’s music, that comping is written into the arrangement and it carries part of the story of the piece.”

JI: Sure, the music would be entirely different if Barry Harris or Bill Evans were comping for the same tunes with the same group.

Chuck: Right, and Horace’s comping was part of the arrangement. So in my writing for this album, there’s a bit of orchestration of Horace’s piano parts. So a lot of the things that are beautiful and colorful and swinging on this album actually originate from Horace. There’s a lot of Horace in here and a little bit of me. I don’t mean to minimize my contribution or the contribution of the other guys in the band. But there’s such a strong foundation in that music that it doesn’t take a lot. It takes performing it well, which took us some time. It took some time for these younger players to figure out how the eighth notes had to go, and I was exigent with them about that because if you play Horace with swingy eighth notes in the wrong place, it destroys the line of the music. So we had to work a lot on that. But we did solve the problem, and the soloists were really wonderful about playing solos that fit the piece. So I’m really pleased about how

(Continued on page 12)
Chuck Israels

(Continued from page 11)

the players put themselves inside each piece that we played. And most of them sound like Horace Silver. There are some that have a little bit of different approach to them. I think “Strolling” gets a treatment that Horace probably wouldn’t have given it, and maybe “Peace.” But the rest of them-I think Horace would recognize them right away and feel comfortable and I would hope honored by the respect that we have for what was already there and didn’t feel that it was necessary to change it all that much. I tried to get a variety, and I think I avoided the ones that have osti-nato bass parts (“Song For My Father,” for example) because I don’t have much fun playing them. So even though some of those are the most popular ones, they were not that interesting to me. I picked the ones I knew and that I liked. A couple of them, my daughter suggested because she knows John Hendrick’s versions of them, knows the words, and thought that they were particularly attractive pieces. “Home Cooking” was one of them.

JI: All of his songs seem to have a certain lyricism about them that the average person can relate to.

Chuck: They’re very straightforward, accessible, simple in the best since for the word. They’re distilled Bud Powell. And Horace uses the bebop language and kind of avoids its excesses.

JI: Yes, the old saying that less is more has really been epitomized by his approach to composition certainly I think.

Chuck: Absolutely. What did I do as an arranger? Well, on “Moonrays,” which is this long kind of a mood piece, I added a lot to that arrangement. I added polyphony and some contrapuntal lines to that because I thought there was a lot of room for it with the long lines in the melody. And it develops in a particular way because there’s that room in that piece. But some of the pieces, you didn’t really have to do a whole lot to. Nevertheless, it did take me months to get all the musical ready for this. I don’t do it quickly. It takes a lot of thought and a lot of balancing of elements.

JI: Are you planning to do a follow-up to that one or is this the one and only?

Chuck: I don’t think we’ll do another Horace Silver one. We were going to do a Monk one, but the guys in the band are interested in my pieces. I have a substantial repertoire of my own pieces, and there’s quite a bit of variety in them. And the band members liked playing them and they identified with them, so that’s going to be the next project.

JI: For several years in the 1960s, from ‘61 to ‘66, you played with Bill Evans. Perhaps you could talk a little bit about how you made acquaintance and how your tenure in his trio began.

Chuck: Well, I met him—I’m not sure if it’s true but when Gunther Schuller had the first third-stream concert, which took place at Brandeis in June of 1957, Bill was the piano player. As a matter of fact, my contact with musicians at Brandeis, when I was a student there, became my entre into the New York scene three or four years later. I met Bill, I met George Russell, I met Joe Bonajiri who was the bass player on that job and who later used to send me on gigs subbing for him. I met Jimmy Knepper, I met Art Farmer, Barry Galbraith, a whole bunch of people, Jim Buffington, French horn player. Charlie Mingus was there and we became friendly. Brandeis has a campus that doesn’t have any businesses next to it. It’s in a residential area. So those guys were there for a week or two rehearsing. And when they had breaks, there was no place for them to go to eat except the student union. So I made sure that Steve Kuhn and Arnie Wise and I, who had a trio together, were playing in the student union when those guys had their break. And they all came in and they sat down and they didn’t eat. They were kind of dumbfounded because there was no jazz in universities, and here was a really professional jazz trio. And that was the beginning of getting to know these people. I got to play with Bill through his knowing of me, and liking my playing, having heard me then. And when Scott [LaFaro, Bill Evans’ bassist through June 1961] died, I was in Europe. It’s a complicated story but there were a lot of mutual friends involved. And I knew that Scotty had died. I didn’t get back to New York until October. And there was a phone call waiting for me. Bill had decided that he was going to call me and he was going to wait until I got back, and I went to work for him then. That was kind of the materialization and realization of aesthetic ideas that were already built into my musical background, kind of confirmation of aesthetic direction that I was pointing in, but I didn’t know how to achieve myself. And so I felt very lucky that I was able to participate in that music, in the music that Bill was making-because it was the kind of music I wanted to make and I couldn’t do it by myself. And I stayed there, and probably would have stayed there a lot longer if Bill’s emotional and chemical health had been better. But after almost six years, I felt as if I had to break away from that and do the homework, do the necessary work to make music like that, to come as close to that level of mu-sic making as I could under my own direction. So I had to learn to become a composer and arranger which was not what I started out to do. I started out to be a bass player and I’ve changed my point of view considerably. I play bass now because it helps the guys in my band understand the direction of the music.

JI: With your entree into Bill Evans Trio, were there initially discussions or kind of suggestions that he made verbally that helped you along? What was the whole beginning like in getting acclimated and connected together?

Chuck: Nonverbal. Sometimes it’s hard for people to understand that, but the communica-tion took place in the music. He played the way he wanted to play. He wrote out little chord sheets showing you the harmony with an occasional rhythm, and left you alone.

JI: And your interest in composition evolved during the time of the trio I take it?

Chuck: Yes, I wanted to be able to do that, and I didn’t know how Bill was doing it. In a lot of ways, I didn’t realize how simple and straightforward some of it was. On the other hand, there were other elements of it that were highly sophisticated elements that people usu-ally don’t notice. People tend to notice the beautiful harmony and the great pianistic touch, and they miss the complexity and sophisti-cation of the rhythm and timing. Bill’s rhythm was completely authoritative. You could make mistakes and it would never throw him. I didn’t make many but if I did, if I played something that was good for the music, it would affect the music. You could hear Bill’s response to that instantly. If I made an error, he was so strong that it didn’t throw him. He would not respond to errors.

JI: That’s amazing.

Chuck: There weren’t a whole lot of them, but when it did happen it never threw them.

JI: What were some of the recordings like? Do you remember any interesting or dramatic or humorous moments that you’d like to share?

(Continued on page 34)
CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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Saturday, February 9
- Freddy Cole Quintet: Songs For Lovers; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & B’way
- The Clayton Brothers Quintet; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- George Cables Trio - George Cables, Piano; Dezion Douglas, Bass; Victor Lewis, Drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Smalls Showcase: Dave Meehan Adam; Tominsbaum Quartet; Darrell Green Quintet; Philip Harper Quintet; Small's, 183 W. 10th St.; Small's, 183 W. 10th St.
- John Pizzarelli Trio; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Ron Carter’s Blue Note Winter Residency; Gideon King & City Blog; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Sunday, February 10
- Freddy Cole Quintet: Songs For Lovers; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & B’way
- Jazz For Kids; The Clayton Brothers Quintet; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- George Cables Trio - George Cables, Piano; Dezion Douglas, Bass; Victor Lewis, Drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Scott Reeves Jazz Orchestra; The Afro Latin Jazz Orchestra; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Ron Carter’s Blue Note Winter Residency; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Monday, February 11
- Brussels Jazz Orchestra & Tutu Puone: We Have A Dream; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & B’way
- Mingus Big Band: Celebrating 10 Years At Jazz Standard; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Vanguard Jazz Orchestra; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Ronnie Burrage & Holographic Principle; Jonathan Barber Quartet; Jon Elbaz Trio “After-hours”; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
- Lorna Dallas; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Wallace Roney Quintet - February Residency; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Tuesday, February 12
- Brussels Jazz Orchestra & Tutu Puone: We Have A Dream; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & B’way
- Vanguard Jazz Orchestra; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Catherine Russell and Her Septet; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.

Wednesday, February 13
- Brian Charette: Music For Organ Sextette; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & B’way
- Double Date With Tierney & Kate: From Django To Joni; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Vanguard Jazz Orchestra; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- John Stetch & Vulneraville; Dave Pietro Quintet; Davis Whitfield Trio “After-hours”; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
- Catherine Russell; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Thundercat; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Thursday, February 14
- Valentine’s Day: Kim Nalley Sings Love Songs; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & B’way
- Tierney & Kate; From Django To Joni; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.

Friday, February 15
- Kim Nalley: Love Songs; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & B’way
- Dianne Reeves, 2018 NEA Jazz Master, Valentine’s Day weekend, 8PM, Rose Theatre, Jazz at Lincoln Center, 60th & B’way
- Mingus Big Band: Celebrating 10 Years At Jazz Standard; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Vanguard Jazz Orchestra; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Michael Weiss Quartet; Alexander Claffy Quintet; JD Allen “After-hours”; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
- Catherine Russell and Her Septet: Alone Together; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Thundercat; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Saturday, February 16
- Kim Nalley: Love Songs; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & B’way
- Dianne Reeves, 2018 NEA Jazz Master, Valentine’s Day weekend, 8PM, Rose Theatre, Jazz at Lincoln Center, 60th & B’way
- Mingus Big Band: Celebrating 10 Years At Jazz Standard; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Vanguard Jazz Orchestra; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Small’s Showcase: Dean Taur Saxophone Choir; Michael Weiss Quartet; Alexander Claffy Quintet; Brooklyn Circle; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
- Catherine Russell and Her Septet: Alone Together; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Thundercat; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Sunday, February 17
- Kim Nalley: Love Songs; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & B’way
- Jazz For Kids; Mingus Big Band: Celebrating 10 Years At Jazz Standard; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Vanguard Jazz Orchestra; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Vocal Masterclass with Marion Cowings; Emanuele Tossi Quintet; Bill Goodwin Trio; Joe Magnarelli Group; Ben Zweig Trio “After-hours”; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
- Birdland Latin Jazz Orchestra; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Thundercat; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Monday, February 18
- Juilliard Jazz Ensembles; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & B’way
- Mingus Orchestra: Celebrating 10 Years At Jazz Standard; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Vanguard Jazz Orchestra; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Ari Hoenig Trio; Joel Frahm Trio; Sean Mason Trio “After-hours”; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
- Judi Silvano and The Zephyr Band; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Wallace Roney Quintet - February Residency; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Tuesday, February 19
- John Chin; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & B’way
Godwin Louis; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
Steve Nelson Quartet; Frank F兰y’s Tromboniverse; Malik McLaunrie Trio “After-hours”; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
Saxophone Summit with Joe Lovano, Dave Liebman, and Greg Osby; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
David Sanborn; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Wednesday, February 20

Bobby Broom Orm-Sation; Soul Fingers; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bdey
An Evening With Branford Marsalis; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
Dayna Stephens Quartet - Dayna Stephens, Piano; Ben Street, Bass; Greg Hutchinson, Drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
Rob Bargad’s Reunion Set; Harold Mabern Trio; Micah Thomas Trio “After-hours”; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.

Thursday, February 21

Dayna Stephens Quartet - Dayna Stephens, Saxophone; Aaron Parks, Piano; Ben Street, Bass; Greg Hutchinson, Drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
Dayna Stephens Quartet; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
David Sanborn; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Friday, February 22

Warren Wolf Quartet Featuring Joe Locke; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bdey

Saturday, February 23

Warren Wolf Quartet Featuring Joe Locke; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bdey
Spanish Harlem Orchestra; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
Saxophone Summit with Joe Lovano, Dave Liebman, and Greg Osby; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
David Sanborn; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Sunday, February 24

Warren Wolf Quartet Featuring Joe Locke; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bdey
Jazz For Kids; Spanish Harlem Orchestra; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
Dayna Stephens Quartet - Dayna Stephens, Saxophone; Aaron Parks, Piano; Ben Street, Bass; Greg Hutchinson, Drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
Emilio Solla Tango Jazz Orchestra; The Ktet; The Afro Latin Jazz Orchestra; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
David Sanborn; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Monday, February 25

Matthew Shipp Trio; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bdey
Mingus Big Band: Celebrating 10 Years At Jazz Standard; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
Vanguard Jazz Orchestra; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
Lucas Pino Nonet; Rodney Green Group; Jon Elbaz Trio “After-hours”; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
Victoria Shaw; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
Wallace Roney Quartet - February Residency; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Tuesday, February 26

Allison Miller; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bdey
Steve Slagle’s A.M. Band; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
Terell Stafford Quintet - Terell Stafford; Trumpet; Tim Warfield, Saxophone; Bruce Barth, Piano; Peter Washington, Bass; Billy Williams, Drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
Eric Harland’s Voyager; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Wednesday, February 27

Black Art Jazz Collective; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bdey
Joey DeFrancesco Trio With Troy Roberts And Billy Hart; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
Terell Stafford Quintet; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
Michael Stephens; Quartette Oblique; Amos Hoffman Trio; Davis Whittel Trio “After-hours”; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
Cyrille Aimee; A Sonheim Adventure; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
Eric Harland’s Voyager; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Thursday, February 28

Black Art Jazz Collective; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bdey
Alfredo Rodriguez/Pedrito Martinez; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
Terell Stafford Quintet - Terell Stafford; Trumpet; Tim Warfield, Saxophone; Bruce Barth, Piano; Peter Washington, Bass; Billy Williams, Drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
Cyrille Aimee; A Sonheim Adventure; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
Cory Henry Birthday, The Revival; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Friday, March 1

Azar Lawrence Experience; Late Night Session; Jeffery Miller; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bdey
Alfredo Rodriguez/Pedrito Martinez; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
Terell Stafford Quintet; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
Cyrille Aimee; A Sonheim Adventure; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
Cory Henry Birthday Residency; The Revival; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

(Continued on page 16)
Saturday, March 2
- Alfredo Rodriguez/Pedrito Martinez Duo; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th
- Terell Stafford Quintet; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Cyrilie Amee; A Sondheim Adventure; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Cory Henry Birthday Residency: The Revival; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd

Sunday, March 3
- Alfredo Rodriguez/Pedrito Martinez Duo; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th
- Terell Stafford Quintet; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Papo Vasquez Mighty Pirates Troubadours; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Cory Henry Birthday Residency: The Revival; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd

Monday, March 4
- Monday Nights With WBGO: Gwilym Simcock; Takeshi Ohbayashi Trio; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & 8th
- Mingus Big Band; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Vanguard Jazz Orchestra; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Dizzy Gillespie Afro Cuban All-Stars; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd

Tuesday, March 5
- A Gothere Kings Mardi Gras Celebration; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & 8th
- Ravi Coltrane, Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Ambrose Akinmusire; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Nelle Mikay; Karrin Allyson; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Spyro Gyra; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Wednesday, March 6
- Chuck Israelis Nextet Featuring Aaron Diehl; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & 8th
- Ravi Coltrane; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Ambrose Akinmusire; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Nelle Mikay; Karrin Allyson; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Spyro Gyra; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Thursday, March 7
- Renee Rosnes Quartet; Dizzy’s, Jazz At Lincoln Ctr, 60th & 8th
- Ravi Coltrane, Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Ambrose Akinmusire; Trumpet; Walter Smith, Tenor Sax; Sullivan Forther, Piano; Harish Raghavan, Bass; Justin Brown, Drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Nelle Mikay; Karrin Allyson; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Spyro Gyra; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Friday, March 8
- Ravi Coltrane, Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Ambrose Akinmusire; Trumpet; Walter Smith, Tenor Sax; Sullivan Forther, Piano; Harish Raghavan, Bass; Justin Brown, Drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Nelle Mikay; Karrin Allyson; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Spyro Gyra; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Saturday, March 9
- Ravi Coltrane; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Ambrose Akinmusire; Trumpet; Walter Smith, Tenor Sax; Sullivan Forther, Piano; Harish Raghavan, Bass; Justin Brown, Drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Nelle Mikay; Karrin Allyson; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Spyro Gyra; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Sunday, March 10
- Jazz For Kids; Ravi Coltrane, Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Ambrose Akinmusire; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Brian Newman & The New Alchemy Jazz Orchestra; The Afro Latin Jazz Orchestra; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Spyro Gyra; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Monday, March 11
- Brubeck Institute Jazz Quartet With Special Guest Lewis Nash; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & 8th
- Mingus Big Band; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Vanguard Jazz Orchestra; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Will Reynolds; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.

Tuesday, March 12
- New York Youth Symphony Jazz With Ryan Keberle And Matt Holman Late Night Session: Davis Whitfield; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & 8th
- Kurt Elling’s “The Big Blind”, A JAZZ Radio Drama - World premiere of vocalist Kurt Elling’s dramatic musical production, featuring vocalist Dee Dee Bridgewater, actor Clarke Peters, and a swinging band with vocalist John Pizzarelli, pianist rainy; Rosenthal, guitarist Scott Henderson, and bassist Yasushi Nakamura, and pianist and music director Christian Sands; 7PM, 9:30PM, Rose Theatre, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & 8th
- Charles Tolliver 50th Anniversary Paper Man: Bartz/iyer/White/ Williams; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Wednesday, March 13
- Lakeeda Benjamin; Jazz Takes Flight; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & 8th
- Chris Bergson Band; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Miguel Zenón, Alto Sax; Luis Pordomo, Piano, Hans Glawischnig, Bass; Henry Cole, Drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Beegie Adair and Monica Raimy; Pete Malinverni Trio; On The Town The Music of Leonard Bernstein; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Eddie Palmieri; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Thursday, March 14
- Joan Belgraver Quintet; Dizyy’s, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & 8th
- René Marie; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Miguel Zenón; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Enid Asherie; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Charles Tolliver 50th Anniversary Paper Man: Bartz/iyer/White/ Williams; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Friday, March 15
- Johnny O’Neal Quartet Celebrates The 100th Birthday Of Nat “King” Cole; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & 8th
- René Marie; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Miguel Zenón, Alto Sax; Luis Pordomo, Piano, Hans Glawischnig, Bass; Henry Cole, Drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Birdland Big Band; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Charles Tolliver 50th Anniversary Paper Man: Bartz/iyer/White/ Williams; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Saturday, March 16
- Late Night Dance Session: Zaccai Curtis CUBOP; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & 8th
- Monterey Jazz Festival On Tour Featuring Cécile Mclorin Salvant And Christian Sands - Featuring vocalist Cécile Mclorin Salvant, trumpeter- Bria Skonberg, saxophonist Melissa Aldana, drummer Jamison Ross, bassist Yasuhiro Nakamura, and pianist and music director Christian Sands; 7PM, 9:30PM, Rose Theatre, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & 8th
- René Marie; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Miguel Zenón, Alto Sax; Luis Pordomo, Piano, Hans Glawischnig, Bass; Henry Cole, Drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Eric Comstock; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Charles Tolliver 50th Anniversary Paper Man: Bartz/iyer/White/ Williams; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Sunday, March 17
- Jazz For Kids; René Marie; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Miguel Zenón, Alto Sax; Luis Pordomo, Piano, Hans Glawischnig, Bass; Henry Cole, Drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Bobby Livell Jazz Orchestra; The Afro Latin Jazz Orchestra; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Charles Tolliver 50th Anniversary Paper Man: Bartz/iyer/White/ Williams; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Monday, March 18
- Jazz At Lincoln Center Youth Orchestra With Special Guest Marshall Gilkes; Dizyy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & 8th
- Mingus Big Band; Celebrating 10 Years At Jazz Standard; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Vanguard Jazz Orchestra; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Will Calhoun’s Zig Zag Power Trio; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Tuesday, March 19
- United States Army Field Band; Jazz Ambassadors; Dizyy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 50th & 8th
- Carla Bley, Andy Sheppard, Steve Swallow; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- The Bad Plus; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Nate Smith + KINFOLK; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Wednesday, March 20
- Uptown Jazz Tentet; Dizyy’s, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 50th & 8th
- Carla Bley - Trios With Andy Sheppard / Steve Swallow; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
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Sunday, March 24
- Jazz For Kids; Jimmy Greene Quintet; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- The Bad Plus - Reid Anderson, Bass; Orrin Evans, Piano; Dave King, Drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Jane Scheckter “I’ve (still) Got My Standards” With Mike Renzi, Jay Leonhart, and Vito Lesczak; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Sadao Watanabe Quartet; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Monday, March 25
- Brandon Goldberg Trio; Mike Lee & Friends; Dizzy’s Club; Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & B’dwy
- Mingus Big Band: Celebrating 10 Years At Jazz Standard; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Vanguard Jazz Orchestra; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Afro Latin Jazz Orchestra; T. Oliver Reid Celebrates Bobby Short; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.

Tuesday, March 26
- Judy Carmichael Quartet With Special Guest Harry Allen; Late Night Session: Alina Engibaryan; Dizzy’s Club; Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & B’dwy
- Broken Shadows – Tim Berne, Alto Sax; Chris Speed, Tenor Sax; Reid Anderson, Bass; Dave King, Drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- New York Voices; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Ron Carter’s Blue Note Winter Residency; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Wednesday, March 27
- Ralph Towner Solo; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Broken Shadows – Tim Berne, Alto Sax; Chris Speed, Tenor Sax; Reid Anderson, Bass; Dave King, Drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- New York Voices; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Ron Carter’s Blue Note Winter Residency; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Thursday, March 28
- Duduka Da Fonseca, Helio Alves And Maucha Adnet; Dizzy’s Club; Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & B’dwy
- Ralph Towner Solo; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Broken Shadows – Tim Berne, Alto Sax; Chris Speed, Tenor Sax; Reid Anderson, Bass; Dave King, Drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- New York Voices; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Broken Shadows – Tim Berne, Alto Sax; Chris Speed, Tenor Sax; Reid Anderson, Bass; Dave King, Drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- New York Voices; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Bobby McFerrin & Gimme5 w. Joey Blake, Dave Worm, Judi Vinar & Rhiannon

Friday, March 29
- Avishai Cohen Quartet; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Broken Shadows - Tim Berne, Alto Sax; Chris Speed, Tenor Sax; Reid Anderson, Bass; Dave King, Drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- New York Voices; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Bobby McFerrin & Gimme5 w. Joey Blake, Dave Worm, Judi Vinar & Rhiannon

Saturday, March 30
- Avishai Cohen Quartet; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Broken Shadows - Tim Berne, Alto Sax; Chris Speed, Tenor Sax; Reid Anderson, Bass; Dave King, Drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- New York Voices; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Bobby McFerrin & Gimme5 w. Joey Blake, Dave Worm, Judi Vinar & Rhiannon

Sunday, March 31
- Jazz For Kids; Avishai Cohen Quartet; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Broken Shadows - Tim Berne, Alto Sax; Chris Speed, Tenor Sax; Reid Anderson, Bass; Dave King, Drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Renee Manning/Earl McIntyre Septet; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Bobby McFerrin & Gimme5 w. Joey Blake, Dave Worm, Judi Vinar & Rhiannon

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“...among human beings jealousy ranks distinctly as a weakness; a trademark of small minds; a property of all small minds, yet a property which even the smallest is ashamed of; and when accused of its possession will lyingly deny it and resent the accusation as an insult.” - Mark Twain
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A system of morality which is based on relative emotional values is a mere illusion, a thoroughly vulgar conception which has nothing to do in it and nothing true.

— Socrates

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18
Interview & Photo by Eric Nemeyer

Benny: As you may be aware, everywhere you go in Japan, in restaurants, in shopping centers, elevators, you actually hear classic Blue Note and Prestige and Riverside records from the 1950s and the 1960s playing all over Japan. And myself and my comrades, we speculate on the fact that it can’t be the case that all the places this music is being played in Japan, the people are playing the music actually even know what it is. But somehow, it’s become embedded in the culture that this particular era of like hard bop jazz recordings, American hard bop jazz recordings, as I said, it’s especially epitomized by those labels, Blue Note and Prestige and Riverside, those classic records are played all over the place in Japan. That’s obviously not the case here in the U.S. You do hear it at times in out of the way places, which is always a pleasant surprise for me. There’s a big department store in in the last two, three, four years, a real influx of young people coming out to hear the kind of music we play—straight ahead, four-four jazz. And I think there’s something inherent in the integrity of the music itself, as much as ourselves—but in straight ahead jazz, and its disciplines and beauty that young people are really hungry for today. With such an emphasis that’s come I guess with the advent of first music video, and how the internet generation and sensationalized award shows like American Idol and The Voice, that there’s just a real push for shock value in music…. I forget if it’s American Idol or The Voice, it now has Harry Connick as a coach they bring in at times for young vocalists. And it’s interesting because some of these young vocalists will be covering 20th century American popular songs. And Harry Connick is really representing kind of the old school approach with these students—saying you’ve really got to consider the lyric here and the story that’s being told thing that’s very refreshing in the older recordings is that when you go back generationally to that period, it was more often the case that the group of musicians, often on these Blue Note records … it was five musicians like a trumpet, saxophone, piano, bass and drums … they’re working together on each track to just try to expound on the mood and vibe that’s established right in the melody, the arrangement of the melody and the character of the melody itself of the tone they’re playing … more so than the individual players showing their wares and kind of showing off by proving something of a cutting edge nature of what their style is—trying to distinguish themselves as individuals … which has kind of become an emphasis in recent times that the musicians somehow within the achievement of all their virtuosity, they can just lay in the cut and just work together to create a mood and a feeling in these tracks. The kind of ambiance that they achieved is a profound thing to me. Emotionally, it’s thorough. I can go back to these tracks and listen to them again and again and over the years, and the kind of places that they take me just visually and in terms of just like an inspirational kind of mood are really deep and beautiful things - whereas, a lot of what I hear in jazz is represented today by younger players. It comes across to me as having more of an emphasis on just proving something of a stylistic nature.

JI: To amplify on what you were just saying … When you would hear players like Thad or Joe Henderson or whoever, and regardless of what music they were playing, their identity was instantly recognizable by their sound. They probably weren’t trying to develop a unique sound. It was just their identity. A lot of younger players I hear now, coming out of school, have astonishing acrobatic technique. Is it an athletic sport or is it an artistic endeavor? When you make that distinction, then you realize it dovetails with what you were saying. The harder they are trying to impress with their technique often is inversely proportional to the unique identity that they are hoping to project … and the less I’m able to distinguish one from the next.

Benny: I hear what you’re saying. One of my students at University of Michigan said, everyone is so intent on trying to sound different that they all sound the same.

JI: It’s hard to argue against that.

Benny: Because, in fact, so many kids – how many kids can stand up and say they’re really earnestly going about trying to learn the history? I mean, there’s so much history to even learn.

(Continued on page 22)
Ji: I learned a lot by reading the backs of all those album jackets on those classic labels we were just talking about.

Benny: Me too, absolutely. It gives you the personnel, the history, what other records they’ve made, who else they have played with, who their inspirations were, which is huge, who they’re coming out of. I was always fascinated by that. But I want to say it’s like getting a chance to be a teacher now, I’m trying to take a proactive approach because it’s not the kid’s fault I feel it’s the culture today. For Wynton Kelly to become the composer that he was, he had to be playing all the time in all sorts of different quality situations, all the time though. But you can’t comp like Wynton Kelly or Tommy Flanagan in a laboratory. And today, it is in fact the case that we spend much more time in the practice room than we actually do performing. There’s not as much work to have an actual consistently touring straight ahead jazz group and straight ahead being my focus. I know the word jazz is used to mean all sorts of eclectic things these days. But I’m referring to it meaning straight ahead jazz — the kind of music that we play, You’re going through hard bop. Something kind of culminated there with that band and those recordings. And when we went through those recordings, it’s really got everything in it. It’s incredibly hip and fresh—hipper and fresher than anything that’s come since. It’s got the blues in it and they’re taking chances, and it’s very melodic and you can sing it … and it comprehensible, it’s incredibly sophisticated on a level that you can’t quite write down on paper. A lot of the elements that make jazz really great and exciting are there on those recordings—the essence of it. A lot of what has made jazz so universally beloved gets overlooked in the whole sort of clinical process of young people getting their chops together. There is a fascinating phenomenon that’s been happening all along with recorded music, and the fact that young people can come along and sort of hear recorded representation of a particular artist’s lifelong journey, sweat and tears, the young person can kind of come along and say, oh, you mean like this, and piggyback on it and get a lot of the surface of what someone gave a whole lifetime to get together. And that’s potentially a really good thing. But how the music is being used… One thing that Freddie Hubbard said when I was playing with him, echoing with something you said about the kind of chops that young people have today, is that a lot of the young players had more chops in Freddie’s opinion than some of the guys had when Freddie was coming along. Freddie said, “But I miss that feeling.” There’s a certain kind of warmth in music. I felt like for me, my older mentors, Betty Carter and Art Blakey and Freddie Hubbard and Ray Brown and Oscar Peterson—these people had such a love and such a spoken and unspoken humility and reverence to their forefathers that you got to see being around them and you saw the relationship with the music. I saw these people, most of the people I mentioned, not every single one of them, cry tears at some point talking about their heroes and mentors that not to be exclusive. just want to say, it’s very difficult, as you realize to actually have a group with the economy. And also, I think the artists should accept some onus too here—its how we play the music. There is a way. When I listen to myself and a lot of my comrades … consider the Miles Davis quintet of the sixties and the final recordings of that acoustic group, Nefertiti and The Sorcerer and those records, Miles’s quintet. They’re an “A” pick in that particular heritage of the trumpet saxophone quintet … maybe the shorter history kind of starting with Bird and Diz, be-bop. They lost over the years. I think young people don’t see as much of that, if at all these days. And that informs the music and the emotion in music. Now I’m fond of telling a funny little anecdote about my first rehearsal with Betty Carter, but it indicates something that you don’t get today. I was 20. We were rehearsing a ballad. Betty said, “Now gentlemen, I want you to think about the last time you made love.” She turned to me, and she said, “You, you just use your imagination.” She just read me. The beautiful thing is nobody laughed. The guys didn’t laugh and that’s exactly what happened. So the other guys in the group, they thought about the last time they made love, and I just used my imagination and just imagined what it would be like. But what it did, Eric, was it put us all on the same page when we played this song. We have some imagery there, and it gave Betty what she wanted. There was a vibe when we played this song. Things like that aren’t as considered today, and those things are like kind of essential to what music is for in terms of communication and touching people.

Ji: Right.

Benny: But I want to help. I don’t want to just shake my head at the younger generation and say they don’t get it. I want to just try to make positive exemplification as best I can. The essence of how I see my work as a teacher is being a bridge to the recordings. I feel like what the real deal, all the people that you’re mentioning, on the record … if you want to listen to Joe Henderson … if I can hip them to Larry Young, Unity, then I’m being a good teacher. Point them to the record. I’m not the source but I can definitely be a bridge to this 20th century integrity that I’ve gotten to experience.

Ji: You’ve had experience playing with a number of instantly identifiable, influential jazz artists — Ray Brown, Milt Jackson, Freddie Hubbard, Art Blakey. Could you talk about any words of wisdom you received, your experiences. There are obviously many, but maybe you could cite one or two in some of these cases that have made a significant impact on you—that were dramatic or funny or interesting or unique or that somehow or another moved you or stayed with you.

Benny: Well, you mentioned Milt Jackson. Once, Milt was a guest with Ray Brown’s trio. And as you’re probably aware, Milt and Ray were like literally musical brothers going all the way back to the mid-1940s in Dizzy Gillespie’s big band. So Milt would often make appearances with the trio which was great for me and great for the audience. We were in Japan and we’d just played a set, and
Milt was burning. I was feeling the magic as we walked offstage. Milt was walking in front of me, and I just asked him kind of a geeky question, meaning to be rhetorical. I said, “Milt, can you just tell me how does it feel to swing like that?” Without hesitation, Milt turned around and looked me in the eye and he said, “Natural,” with such a conviction. It was as if he was prepared for my question. To me actually that said quite a bit. It’s a way of life. He just explained it plain and simply—and that said so much to me, that the way one plays is a way of life. You’ve got to know who you are when you’re up there in the first place. So it’s not like he got up to his vibraphone and then turned on some inner swing mechanism. It’s how he walks, how he thinks, how he chews his food. Consistently, with all these masters you’ve mentioned that I was privileged to get to be around, I saw that they lived with an ongoing awareness and love for their musical heroes and inspirations. They answered to those people at all times, and yet they had reached a certain kind of level of self-awareness and self-acceptance. And they also knew who they were. For example, Oscar Peterson said to me, quoting, he said, “Every time I play, I endeavor to pay homage to three gentlemen, not that I’m always successful, because those three gentlemen are Art Tatum, Nat King Cole, and Henry Hank Jones.” This is me talking now. I’m saying, if you listen to Oscar Peterson, in the course of about eight or sixteen bars, if you’ve really checked those people out, who he’s talking about, you can actually hear their influence in his very voice. Yet, you can also say it’s pure Oscar Peterson. Oscar Peterson’s voice is built from those people and some others of course, he’s pointed out. Dizzy Gillespie really influenced his sense of accent. He’s illustrated that to me. So without them, we have no Oscar, and yet when you hear it, it’s unmistakably Oscar Peterson. That’s a very important example of something that my teacher, my New York father, Walter Bishop Jr., started talking to me about when I was 19, that there are these three logical stages of evolution, one having to follow the other—imitation, assimilation and innovation. Not that most of us get to the third one, but they sort of have to go in that sequence. I make no secret of the fact that I’ve really never endeavored to become an innovator. I think innovation by definition is a rare and special thing. It’s been suggested to me, which I think you were saying yourself in other words earlier, that the voices these people achieved, was not necessarily a result of their intent on trying to sound different, or trying to distinguish their sounds. But it occurred through their hard work and their passion just becoming better musicians. So if two people individually were locked in a room with the same records to study, obviously what they’re going to come out with is going to be unique.

**Ji:** Could you talk about your experiences playing with Art Blakey and The Jazz Messengers?

**Benny:** So many things. The first thing comes to mind was just experiencing, just feeling the kind sweep of color and emotional dynamic that Art would give us, the Messengers, the players in his band, compared to how it felt playing the piano during that same timeframe that I was in his band with any other drummer. So when I was on Art’s bandstand, it truly felt as if I had some sort of wings and it truly felt that I was rather invincible, so powerful that I was invincible. When I would go and play with another drummer, it would feel as if the bottom dropped out. Whatever that incredibly magical thing that had been going on was, wasn’t there anymore. Then you realized that Art was playing you. He has that kind of drive that he could just breathe life into what you were doing and instill a confidence in it. He had this whole trajectory, this whole intention of grooming the Messengers to become band leaders themselves. He would encourage you to write music for the band. As he said, “After we’ve been playing your beat for a few weeks, you won’t even recognize it’s the same tune anymore.” That was true. But he didn’t want you to make a career out of staying in the band. He helped you develop your style as a writer and as a player, your voice, and then he would boot you out of the nest and save it for somebody younger. He was a kind of vampire himself. But in the group, I found confidence, not so much of an egotistical swagger, but just actually Art showed me how it could feel driving the band from the piano. By him driving me, there was a connection there. It’s a little difficult to put into words, but you feel it. And just feeling this dynamic sweep, as I said, it really gives you a whole new kind of expanded canvas to consider as a bandleader. And then that’s your responsibility, that’s your job what you do with that. But just that opportunity to feel that with Art is a very special kind of privilege.

And I worked very hard to get to play with Art. I want to note that to young musicians because from the time I heard the band in person with James Williams in San Francisco at the Keystone Corner around 1978, until I heard the next edition of the band with Donald Brown playing piano just prior to moving back to New York in 1982, and determined that I was going to be a Messenger more than I wanted to be in the band. This was going to happen. I felt a conviction about this. It was about five, six years before I actually was invited into the band. I think it’s really important for young people to consider that if there’s someone they really want to play with or they have some kind of musical or artistic goal … I don’t want to speak of career goals, I want to focus on the music. I meet a lot of young people who want to ask career related questions. But the career I have been privileged to realize has all come through me taking care of the music. Nothing swayed me year after year after year after year after year. Nothing swayed me from my goal to be a Messenger. My focus to keep going to hear the band as much as possible and sneak my little walk-man cassette recorder into the shows and record them and stay abreast of the band’s repertoire, practice along with tapes, practice along with their records, and really consider what the pianists in the band Johnny O’Neal and Mulgrew Miller and then Donald Brown again before I joined the band, what they were doing and how they played with Art, as much as I’d considered Horace Silver. I just really stayed focused on being this pia-

**“I’ve got to consider what is my core objective as a jazz artist, as a jazz messenger ... it is essentially to be able to play the music with quality, and integrity, and honesty, and have it be heard.”**

(Continued on page 24)
Benny Green

(Continued from page 23)

nisten that Art would want in the band. So I think it’s very important for young people not to give up, not to be shortsighted, give up after a month or a year on a vision. If they really want it, you’ve got to stay with it. I had just a note of you mentioning Thad Jones and Mel Lewis and Roland Hanna. When I was in high school and I got to be a member of what’s now called the Next Generation Jazz Orchestra at the Monterey Jazz Festival. At the time it was the high school all-stars, the year I was there was in 1978. Thad Jones and Mel Lewis were guest directors. So someone re-hearsed us during the week prior to the weekend and Thad and Mel actually showing up. So I had these piano charts with these chord charts, page after page, all these chords written, slash marks for beats. But I’d listen to the records and I heard that there was a lot of time where Sir Roland was strolling, where if you look at the chart it would almost infer literally that you’re supposed to play it where there’s a chord symbol lit. So when Thad finally showed up, I told him that I was listening to the record and I noticed that although these chords are written on all these pages, that a lot of times Sir Roland wasn’t playing. And Thad’s face just lit up. He said, “That’s right.”

He said, “That’s good.” Of course, he didn’t want me playing all the time. But I must confess, hearing Sir Roland on those records, Eric, as a kid listening to Herbie and Chick and everything, I couldn’t quite, quite appreciate the subtlety of a lot of what he was doing. It wasn’t flashy, per se.

JI: Right. It fit right in and it didn’t stand out from the whole, but contributed to make the whole greater than the sum of the parts.

Benny: Amen, as it was endeavoring to do. I understand what you’re saying now, but at the time, as a kid, sure enough as I’m like sort of round about kind of accusing these kids of today, I was looking for chops. What’s the edgy thing he’s doing? Where’s the stylistic thing that’s hot? In keeping with what I appreciate more now as an older person, he was in fact as you said, serving the music.

JI: Absolutely, yeah. When you were playing with Freddie Hubbard, what kinds of instruction or ideas did he suggest or more than that?

Benny: On my first few gigs with Freddie Hubbard, something happened which was really kind of embarrassing. Freddie would be reaching a certain point in his solo and the energy would be kind of peaking, and Freddie would sort of turn his head in the direction of the piano and shout audibly to the audience, lay out. That happened on the first couple of gigs. I realized after it happened a second time, this was definitely not good. I couldn’t afford for this to happen a third time because I’d probably get fired. I had to figure out what was going on, and my instincts told me not to bother Freddie with it, not to ask him. I was going to have to really put on my thinking cap, Eric. So that’s what I did. I said, okay, what’s going on here. There’s something I’m doing that’s obtrusive. So I had to think about what it was that Freddie didn’t want happening, and I considered how his solos were feeling... where the energy was going as his solo was developing, to a point that midway in his solo, he would want me to stop playing. Then it rather suddenly occurred to me some similarities in what Freddie Hubbard does as a writer and player filtered down—with his being influenced by John Coltrane and Coltrane’s music. I just thought about John Coltrane’s quartet, which I would only know by listening to recordings of the John Coltrane quartet of course—since I wasn’t there at the time the group was happening, that on the records of the John Coltrane quartet. It was often the case that the four instruments would start together and at some point in Coltrane’s solos, McCoy Tyner might drop out. Then maybe later, Jimmy Garrison might drop out too. It might end up being a duet with Coltrane and Elvin Jones on the drums. I just considered that maybe that’s what’s going on with some of these solos Freddie is playing with this certain intensity to start with—and it’s building that really at some point, the piano should drop out. I should figure that out—just kind of really tune into the arc of his solo and figure that out musically on my own—without him having to interrupt the flow of what he’s doing to say to me don’t play. So, the next time I got on the bandstand with Freddie, I had it in mind that I am going to drop out at some point, and start listening from the time the solo begins to the shape of it, and the rhythmic density, and just feel when it’s a good time to kind of dovetail and just kind of back out of there. That’s what I did, and that never happened again that Freddie shouted at me to lay out, and I stayed on the gig for a few more years. I eventually stopped playing with Freddie when I joined Ray Brown’s trio. I kind of kept doing both jobs for a while. Then it came to a point where I had to sort of decide which I was going to do. So I went with Ray which was incredible for me—and it ended for me being my longest tenure as a sideman in any one group, four and a half years. So I mention that story about Freddie, and considering what was going on, when he wanted me to stroll, and thinking about Coltrane, referencing the Coltrane recordings, as an example of why, just one reason, it’s essential for kids to listen and absorb the history through records. But I’m like you, Eric. No one had to tell me you need to listen to records of the John Coltrane quartet like saying you need to eat your vegetables. I couldn’t get enough of it. JI: Well, the way we became curious about other jazz musicians and learning the history was by reading the often elaborate liner notes on the back of those album jackets on Blue Note, Prestige, Riverside, Contemporary and other labels. You’d look at the back of one album and you’d see the name of some other sideman you had not heard of, and then you’d go to the record bin with his name on it and start the process all over again.

Benny: Absolutely.

JI: One bit of information would lead you to the next, and you’d explore your way “geographically” through the music of these different players—players who you’d hear and develop a curiosity about. You’d often be teaching yourself and filling in the blanks for yourself—as opposed to somebody telling you that should do this or you should listen to that

the voices these people achieved, was not necessarily a result of their intent on trying to sound different, or trying to distinguish their sounds. But it occurred through their hard work and their passion just becoming better musicians.”
Benny Green

because a third party told you that you should, as opposed to your being attracted to the music organically. Maybe it’s hip to be un-hip.

Benny: Yeah. If there is such a thing as being hip, it must have something to do with being yourself, just being authentic to yourself. I can trace … when you mentioned tangents … McCoy is my second hero, after Monk. I discovered Monk because my father was listening to his records at home. They did that tour around 1978 or so. I keep mentioning that year for some reason—the Milestone [label] All-Stars, Sonny Rollins, McCoy, Ron Carter, and Al Foster. There ended up being some kind of award show on public television—a duet of Sonny Rollins and McCoy Tyner playing. I recall there being “My One and Only Love.” I was just transfixed just checking out what McCoy Tyner was doing and just watching Monk—such a unique thing. The way he connects with the piano is like nothing else. So I went to the public library here in Berkeley, and I found Coltrane Live at Birdland.

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There are photographs inside. You could open up the album’s book like jacket. There are these photographs of him with his hair cut close and sweating. I was imagining being on that bandstand at Birdland. As you know, they miss all that with mp3s.

JI: Part of the interest and development of your understanding of the music and the discography and everything else—whether from the standpoint of a fan, a listener, a musician … was that the songs on each album were sequenced to create a whole, an entire artistic presentation and experience—whether it was an album by the Beatles, Sinatra or Coltrane or anyone else. There was intelligence, focus, reason behind the sequencing of the tracks on album—however many those tracks happened to be – six or eight or whatever on an album, you know, side one, side two, or even with a CD. The sequencing would create a certain mood and feeling and understanding that was as essential as the performance and sound of the individual tracks themselves. The sequencing suggested things to the ear and the body—and that might elicit certain universal understandings as each of us resonated with the music on the album. The album might start with an up-tempo tune, and then maybe a Bossa Nova, or some other groove. Then maybe there was a ballad that just cooled down the mood, and grabbed you in a certain way … because you had your eyes closed, or it was the evening and you were looking out over the park, or something like that. That gets lost today—as listeners can simply go online, isolate certain single tracks of entire recorded performances, and download those—completely bypassing that other overarching message that the artist may have embedded in the completed artwork by virtue of the sequencing of the songs. So, people and hear single songs. Imagine going to the Museum of Modern Art, and looking at a Picasso, or a Rembrandt, or something, and the top magical place. I also felt like there were hidden secrets to aspects of the photograph in the notes on the tracks I’m listening to. I really believed that. It was that enchanting to me. Of course, I was a child. I was like barely ten years old. Even trying to find one of those Blue Note records … you just had a little small image inside a sleeve … and you actually found a copy in a used record store. It was a real romance. You felt like it was meant for you to find that copy of the record.

Benny: I’m with you, man. The size of the LP cover [12 inches square] was also a factor. Like just the Wayne Shorter records on Blue Note—I would look at the cover of like Speak No Evil or Juju or Night Dreamer, and just stare at those covers while listening to those six tracks.

Benny: Totally. It’s like you’re going to a totally different situation. You have this “golden dust” that came over you to connect you with and be transported to another realm.

Benny: Yes. I feel like that is something that music is for. It can bring us into another realm.

JI: I don’t get that feeling in as high a ratio with the numerous recordings that we receive for review—as I did from releases in the past. Maybe that’s because there are just so many more albums being released in this independent music environment and reality and corresponding fewer barriers to entry or quality controls. And in all fairness, many of the albums to which I’m referring are tops from an

(Continued on page 26)
audio standpoint with musicians whose technique has been honed to Olympic perfection in every way. Yet, there is some kind of emotion missing sometimes, or the feeling that the artist is trying too hard to be different to communicate that they have a unique voice or sound—by using or forcing some odd time signature, assimilating some styles of music from different cultures, making a form have some unusual number of bars, and going to harmonically varied places … contrived to be different for the sake of being different in hopes of being recognized.

Benny: The pretense. I hear you man. Well, admittedly, I keep my head buried in the sand. The records that I’m talking about, those classic records, listening to my favorite pianist, and saturating myself in their recordings—that has no end. I’ll be doing that for the rest of my life.

Ji: There a motivational speaker who I had heard, who passed away a few years ago, Jim Rohn. At one point about – he said that when he would go to the movies or hear a piece of music that he wanted to have that movie take him somewhere. He was referring to the possibilities that those experiences might expand his understanding of the world, or of people, of human nature and so on. I think that can accurately be applied to the music we listen to. It’s 40 years later, and I’m still listening to Miles [Davis] at the Blackhawk, and finding more and more to like about it as I become more and more attuned to the subtleties I had missed when I first started listening. I remember years ago transcribing Hank Mobley’s solo, and Wynton Kelly’s solo on “Bye, Bye Blackbird,” and then “All of You.” I always thought there was something missing on “All Of You” on the LP. Sure enough it was Hank Mobley’s solo that they surgically cut out of there to accommodate the time limitation of the LP. The bottom line is that the music attracted me when I first heard it—even though I had very little idea about what I was listening to.

Benny: Yeah. I’m sure we could agree there’s a reason why that is, because the Blackhawk, that music you’re talking about—it’s built on something which is built upon something which is built upon something. And it’s got deep, deep, deep roots going back to, you know, they’re actually playing the blues on that record. And a lot of young people today consider Coltrane to be old.

Ji: From time to time an independent musician will tell me that they have nothing to promote—because their current album was released six months ago or a year ago. But, unless the music has an expiration date on it, their self-sabotaging perspective does not make sense. And, in all likelihood most prospective listeners for their music, don’t even know that the album exists, let alone that they might think it is outdated as the musicians themselves have lamented to me. So I ask musicians—have you ever heard of the album *Kind of Blue?* It was recorded in 1959. It’s still one of the biggest selling jazz albums—and artistically aware people wouldn’t call it outdated. It is timeless. It may not be your favorite or my favorite album, but the fact is that unless you think that your music is not timeless, or what you put into creating that song that you’re writing, or that song you’re recording is not of some timeless nature, and a snapshot of who you are at the moment …. then perhaps your perspective may benefit from being more open.

Benny: Yes. I’m with you. And a huge lesson among others for us in *Kind of Blue* is the fact that it conveys no influence of an A&R director telling Miles what record of Chet Baker’s was selling that year, and how Miles should try to make his record more like that.

Ji: Yes. Whereas today, it seems like every other album is a tribute to some past artist.

Benny: Yes, yes, yes. Well, that’s really embarrassing. You know, I had a successful domestic festival appearance with my trio this spring. I won’t say which festival, but it’s a respected festival in this country, and were well received, well reviewed, and the promoter wants us back next year. Wonderful, right? But he asked if next year we could do it with a Bud Powell theme. And like now let’s put a name on the Bud Powell theme. And I just want to say, look, obviously if not for Bud Powell and all the other founding fathers, I wouldn’t have a note to play. I wouldn’t have a career as a jazz pianist.

Ji: I think that it makes sense to pay tribute to one’s mentors from time to time.

Benny: I think so too. My point is, and at least it’s organic that he’s not asking me to a tribute to Sting or something, a tribute to one of my actual heroes. But, on the other hand at some point, I think what an honest jazz band leader is fighting for is the right to be able to actually program their own set. I just did that, and based on what I did, being able to program my own set—the audience loved me, the critics appreciated it, and they want us back. That’s being overlooked. It wasn’t just how the three of us played our instruments. It was in fact the repertoire and the presentation that was part of this whole thing. It’s part and partial, and just an indicator of this generation and how things become marketed on the internet, and us needing buzz words and titles. And it’s just so different from how music was created. But I do realize I need to be able to be aware of what’s happened before that I appreciate, that we can benefit from, that I have some kind of responsibility having been shown by mentors who have passed on to uphold today. I also can’t be blind to realities of today. I’ve got to consider what is my core objective as a jazz artist, as a jazz messenger …. it is essentially to be able to play the music with quality, and integrity, and honesty, and have it be heard. I’m wanting young people to get a chance to hear this music played in person, music that swings and has some blues and it still feels fresh and hip. You get to experience that in person—and not just come to equate it only to something that’s old on an old record. So I’m very happy to see that’s taking place, that there are young people – not just young musicians, but folks in their twenties and thirties and teenagers coming out to hear our music. That means there’s something inherent in the feeling of the music itself and how we’re playing it that’s meaningful to these kids.
Terell Stafford
Village Vanguard, February 26-March 3

© Eric Nemeyer
Miguel Zenon
“focus on the things that matter the most”

Interview by Eric Nemeyer

JI: Could you discuss your CD, *Identities Are Changeable* and the evolution of that recording from initial concept to completed work of art?

MZ: This recording is inspired by the idea of national identity from the perspective of the Puerto Rican community in the United States, specifically in the New York City area. I wrote the music around a series of interviews with various individuals, all of them New Yorkers of Puerto Rican descent. Those conversations led to specific themes such as “Home”, “Language” and “Identity”. Those themes eventually turned into the compositions on the CD. The whole idea of “Identity” and the phenomenon that is the Puerto Rican community in New York City is something that has interested me for a very long time. My father lived in New York for a long time and I have a lot family here from his side. When I was about ten years old I came over to New York City for the first time to visit them and got my first taste of the community here. It felt then as being around something very familiar—same language, same food, music, etcetera—but very alien at the same time—high rise buildings, subway trains... Even at that young age it had a profound effect on me. Later in life, when I moved to the States for good, first to Boston and then to New York, I was able to experience these same feelings from a more mature perspective. It was just amazing to me to see this level of commitment to an Identity, especially from individuals who could barely speak Spanish and had visited the island only a few times, if any at all. It all seemed contradictory to me at the time—a feeling that has changed dramatically after working on this project. In any case, my interest in the matter continued growing the longer I lived here and away from Puerto Rico. About 4 or 5 years ago I met a gentleman by the name of Juan Flores after a gig in the city. We quickly realized that we had a lot of friends in common. Juan—one of the greatest academic voices on the subject of the Puerto Rican community in the US, specifically in the New York City area. We performed it in its entirety a few times together the video installment for the piece. We performed it in its entirety a few times before recording in early 2014.

JI: What were the challenges to your musical passion and pursuits that you experienced growing up in a housing project in San Juan, Puerto Rico?

MZ: I grew up in a place called “Residencial Luis Llorens Torres”, the largest housing project in the Caribbean—150 buildings and thousands of residents. Although it is considered one of the roughest places in the island if not the roughest, my childhood there was not rough at all. The people in my household made sure that I stayed on the right track and that I had a good circle of friends. Plus I was a disciplined kid, made aware early on about the consequences of poor decisions and bad company. It was in this neighborhood where I had my first formal exposure to music, from Ernesto Vigoreaux, a gentlemen who taught music to kids in the neighborhood free of charge.

JI: How did your classical saxophone studies prepare you for your subsequent interests and developments in jazz?

MZ: I attended a performing arts middle school-high school called “Escuela Libre de Musica” from age 11 to 17. My training there was exclusively classical, but it was very good. I was trained extensively on ear training, solfege, classical harmony and ensemble playing. When I eventually came over to the states to study jazz all this training helped immensely, because I was very well prepared on all my fundamentals and on the technical aspects of the instrument.

JI: What were some of the experiences, recordings or artists that sparked your interest in jazz and opened the door for you to develop your skills as an improviser?

MZ: My first exposure to jazz came around age 15. Some of my friends at school started passing around tapes and I eventually got to hear Charlie Parker for the first time. I was very impressed by his control, technique and sound; but when I realized that he was mostly improvising I was blown away. The concept

(Continued on page 30)
of improvisation is obviously not exclusive of jazz music and was not entirely new to me, but I had never witnessed at this level. Jazz in many ways represented to me the perfect combination of something that was both heartfelt and intellectual. From there I found others: Miles, Coltrane, Cannonball, Monk. I became obsessed with jazz and eventually realized that this was what I wanted to do with my life.

**JI:** What were the circumstances that led you to study at Berklee College of Music?

**MZ:** When I decided that I wanted to study jazz more formally it was quickly evident that I had to leave Puerto Rico to do so. There were no higher education institutions for jazz at that time, plus the scene was very small. I did a bit of research and it seemed like Berklee was the best option for I was looking for then. Unfortunately my family could not provide me with any financial support, so after graduating high school I stayed in Puerto Rico for about a year and a half, basically working time at Berklee. People like Billy Pierce, Hal Crook and Ed Tomassi inspired me tremendously. Plus I was greatly inspired by my fellow students, most of whom were a lot more advance than I was in terms of the jazz language and indirectly forced me to push myself harder in order to progress musically. People like Avishai and Anat Cohen, Jeremy Pelt, Antonio Sanchez and Jaleel Shaw were all at Berklee while I was there. But the person who had the most profound effect on me while I was in Boston was Danilo Perez. Danilo was one of my greatest sources of inspiration back then—still is, actually. Not only because of his music, but because—as a Latin American musician playing jazz music—he represented a lot of the things I wanted to achieve. I introduced myself to him after a concert and he was immediately very receptive and welcoming. I would get together with him constantly, to play or talk about music and life. I figured out a lot of stuff about myself because of his help, and will be eternally grateful to him for that. It was also through Danilo that I met David Sanchez, who sort of took his place as my mentor once I moved to New York City.

**JI:** Could you share some of the words of wisdom or motivation that you received, or conversations that you may have had with artists or mentors in or out of the music world - that have developed as key understandings for you?

**MZ:** They are too many to mention, really. Some of the greatest lessons have come from my musical elders: how to present yourself on stage; how to organize a set of music; how to act as a sideman and as a bandleader; how to deal with the road, etcetera. A lot of these lessons also had to do with what not to do: how not to treat your band mates, etcetera. You learn by example and by making mistakes, which I think is one of the greatest things about this music.

**JI:** How did your additional schooling at the Manhattan School of Music contribute to your development as a performer and or composer?

**MZ:** Once I graduated for Berklee I wasn’t sure about what to do. Going to New York made a bit of sense, because I had family there, but I didn’t feel comfortable with moving there without a pre-set agenda. So I opted for graduate school, which gave me something to do while acclimatizing to the city. Manhattan School of Music was one of my first options and they gave me a good scholarship, so I went there. I got the most there from Dick Oatts, my saxophone teacher there, and again from my peers—guys like Dan Weiss, Miles Okazaki and Ben Gerstein. But I also got to take some survey and composition classes from the classical department there, which really opened up my mind and ears from a composer’s perspective.

**JI:** What have you discovered about conducting business from your various activities as a sideman, as a leader, as a record label artist, and so on?

**MZ:** I’ve learned that the creative and business sides of music are very different. The creative side is in many ways that ever-growing thing that keeps you going, and the business side is sort of like a game that you have to learn how to play in order to survive. Strangely enough, both are almost equally important, although is very hard to stay on top of both.

**JI:** What were the challenges that you experienced when you arrived in New York?

**MZ:** I would imagine that the challenges I encountered then are the same a young musician would encounter these days. Most of the musicians we admire are based in or around New York, so by being there you are basically in competition with them. Plus, there are a lot of young musicians like you, eager to make an impact and get better. So, being able to make a living from music becomes a lot harder than it would be elsewhere. It takes a lot of hard work and even some luck to be able to stay in the city for a long time. There were a lot of great things about it also. Like being able to interact with some of your heroes and learn from them. Also, feeling part of a community, a collective of individuals that, although very different, are all striving for the same things.
Miguel Zenon

JI: Having been awarded a MacArthur Genius Award, a Guggenheim Fellowship, among other accolades and high profile media coverage, how have you maintained your balance and avoided allowing these experiences to inflate your ego?

MZ: It is, of course, very rewarding to be recognized for your work. In some ways it makes you feel that is worth the grind and that you’re on the right path. But on the other hand I’m very aware that, although recognition might make me and my music more visible to some, it does not make me better as an artist. I’m a firm believer on being my own judge and not losing sight of what I need to work on to get better, all on my own terms.

JI: What words of advice would you offer to other musical artists, in the jazz world, that might lead them on a path to develop their lives and experience the kind of notoriety you have attracted in the past few years?

MZ: This is what I feel has worked for me: Respect the tradition, respect your peers, work as hard as possible, be professional and responsible, have confidence without losing your focus, be honest about your music and be proactive when dealing with the music business side of things.

JI: What are some of the noteworthy understandings that you have gleaned from your associations with members of the SF Jazz Collective—such as Bobby Hutcherson? Joshua Redman? Others?

MZ: Working with The Collective is probably one of the most fulfilling musical experiences of my life. It is a leader-less ensemble that functions as a true collective. We work on a new book of music every season, so it also works as a composer’s workshop, something that has been very helpful to me. We are treated very well and with a lot respect by SFJAZZ and get a two-week rehearsal period every season to put this music together. PLUS I’ve gotten to play with some of the greatest exponents of this music: Joshua, Bobby, Brian Blade, Nicholas Payton, Renee Rosnes, Dave Douglas, Joe Lovano, Eric Harland and many others. I personally couldn’t ask much more out of a musical situation that what I have with this ensemble.

JI: How has your heritage from Puerto Rico contributed to the development of your voice, sound and vocabulary as an improviser in jazz?

MZ: Even though I grew up in Puerto Rico, surrounded by a lot of music and culture, I didn’t really start paying serious attention to that stuff until much later in life. It wasn’t until after I graduated Berklee and starting taking my first attempts at writing my own music that I realized that I had never studied Puerto Rican music from a musicians perspective. So I made it sort of a personal goal of mine to go do just that, get a bit deeper into the development and history of that music. The more I did it, the more natural it felt. Eventually I started identifying elements from Puerto Rican, Caribbean and Latin-American music in general that I could incorporate into my music in an organic and honest way.

JI: Could you talk about how your artistry and playing has developed from Jíbaro (2005), and continuing with Esta Plena (2009) and Alma Adentro: The Puerto Rican Songbook (2011) (both Grammy-nominated), and Oye!!! Live In Puerto Rico (2013) and now into 2015—during the ten year period? What changes have you observed about yourself over this period?

MZ: Like I mentioned before, a lot of my own efforts as a band leader during the past decade have been concentrated on the music and culture of Puerto Rico, and the Caribbean, and finding ways to balance that with ideas that come from the jazz tradition. I still feel like I have a long way to go and many more things left to explore, but I feel comfortable about the road I’m in at this point in my life.

JI: The core idea of your new CD Identities Are Changeable is based on a series of English-language interviews you conducted with seven New Yorkers of Puerto Rican descent — inspired after you read the book—The Diaspora Strikes Back: Caribeño Tales of Learning and Turning, a book by cultural theorist Juan Flores. What kinds of discoveries or enlightenment did you glean about human nature as a result of those interviews? How did that undertaking give you greater insight into yourself and your artistic pursuits and development?

MZ: I went into the project with one big question in mind: What does it mean to be Puerto Rican? Or for that matter: What does it mean to be from anywhere? What defines our National and Cultural Identity? Of course I understand now that there is no “correct answer” to that question. It depends so much on each personality, each life experience, opportunities that are presented to us and what we decide to do with them. The variety of responses I encountered during the process was really the most enlightening thing for me. On top of that it made me think about my place here in the United States, having lived here now for more than half of my life. It also brought family into perspective: My daughter Elena was born in New York City, and even though my wife, who is also Puerto Rican, and I will do everything in our power to make sure that she’s exposed to as much as we were exposed growing up in the island, we do understand that eventually our daughter’s identity will be hers to decide.

JI: Identities Are Changeable is composed and arranged for a 16 piece ensemble – big band instrumentation. Who are some of the arrangers and what are some of the big band, and or other compositions and scores that you have studied that have contributed to your own development as a writer?

MZ: It helped to get a lot of experience playing in large ensembles myself: The Village Vanguard Orchestra, The Mingus Big Band, Jason Lindner’s Big Band, Guillermo Klein, y Los Guachos, and many others. That definitely put a sound in my head, and gave me an idea of how it felt to deal with something like that. When going into the project I did check (Continued on page 32)
out a lot music: from Duke Ellington, Bob Brookmeyer and Bill Holman to more modern composers like John Hollenbeck and Darcy James Argue. It helped me figure out what would suit both me and the project best.

JI: What kind of guidance and or inspiration did Charlie Haden provide you during your experiences on and or off the stage working with him?

MZ: I met Charlie in 2003 at the North Sea Jazz Festival. He came to listen to our band and we talked for a long time after the show, mostly about music we liked, like Charlie Parker and Silvio Rodriguez. He mentioned a few projects he had in mind that he would like me to be a part of: One was Land of the Sun, a project he was putting together in collaboration with Gonzalo Rubalcaba. The other was a revival of The Liberation Music Orchestra. Working with Charlie was a highlight of my life so far, not only musically but also on a personal level. He loved music, was incredibly passionate about it and we could talk for hours about specific musicians and recordings. And no matter what, when it came time to play he left it all there; gave it all to the music - a very special human being who will be dearly missed.

JI: How do your activities as an educator at New England Conservatory of Music support or challenge your artistic pursuits?

MZ: I’ve come to really enjoy teaching. It makes me discover things (even things about myself) that I wouldn’t have discovered otherwise and I feel it makes me a better musician. Plus I get the opportunity to share with younger musicians and maybe help them find the tools that could make them become better at what they do. And New England Conservatory is a really good place to teach. Students there are, for the most part, very talented, hard-working and respectful, and the folks who run the department do a very good job at it.

JI: Given the nature of the niche that jazz is, the current reality of this being a contracting market, the challenges of selling prerecorded music, because of illegal downloading, copyright infringement and so on—what kind of vision do you have for yourself about experiencing some of your hopes and goals in the next five or even ten years?

MZ: Is hard to tell where is all going, since it seems to change almost daily. I try not to stress about it too much to be honest. Just stay the course, working hard and staying focus on the things that matter the most.

JI: What are your perspectives on balancing a purity of purpose about creating music that you hear and want to see come to life, with the simultaneous attractor and consideration of trying to connect with and or please your current and potential audiences?

MZ: I think it is obvious that when we make music we want others to enjoy it and respect it. Sharing is sort of an essential part of what this is all about. But I feel that, from my creative standpoint, making music to please others is not only dis-honest but also counterproductive. The music we make should be an honest reflection of us as artists, and we should set our own standards in terms of what deserves to be shared and what does not. We should be celebrating the fact that we’ve been provided with a vehicle to express ourselves as artists. If, after taking all these things into consideration, our music is also recognized and accepted, then that gives us something else to celebrate. But it should not be our priority.
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(Continued from page 12)

Chuck: Boy. You know, it was concentrated work. A guy interviewed me - not so smart guy - a couple of weeks ago and asked me, “Well, when you’re playing with Bill, since Scott LaFaro was such a powerful iconic musical personality and he preceded you, were you thinking about what Scott had done?” I answered him alright, but really the answer to that is what do you think people have time to do?

JI: You’re too busy making music. It’s like the quote that goes, “Don’t worry about what people are thinking about you. They’re too busy thinking about what you’re thinking about them.”

Chuck: Exactly. And I also thought that if you were given the chance to be with Marilyn Monroe, would you spend any time thinking about [her ex-husbands] Joe DiMaggio or Arthur Miller?

JI: Of course not.

Chuck: So I was simply enjoying - that’s too limited a word - I was in deep satisfaction just making my sound be part of that music.

JI: Sure. The thought by any of us who play music to wonder, Gee, am I playing enough like-fill in the name of your hero or predecessor-is preposterous. Who cares? Once you get way past the point of learning all the scales and the chords and the licks and the patterns, and you can let all that go and let it become some reservoir of knowledge and ability and emotion that floats around inside of you, your mind, your soul, so you can immerse yourself in the moment to create some sort of meaningful conversation with whoever you’re with-it would be very limiting to be thinking about whether you’re playing like somebody else? I had heard that when someone told Hank Mobley that he was sounding like some other saxophonist, he did everything he could to not sound like that other player. Eventually, after enough effort, experience and life, you can’t help but have your personality come out through your music-not unlike your gait when you walk down the street.

Chuck: Of course. And in fact, I am imitating people. I’m imitating Oscar Pettiford and Red Mitchell. If I played as well as Oscar Pettiford and Red Mitchell, I’d be really happy. Oscar Pettiford’s general playing and Red Mitchell’s solos - nobody plays bass solos better than Red Mitchell, and a little bit Paul Chambers who was a contemporary of mine and whose style I liked a lot. And, yeah, we do imitate people. But it just comes through you. Unless you’re a particularly good mimic, even in my effort to sound like Oscar Pettiford I can’t do it. In the shortfall, my personality emerges.

JI: Sure. You’re translating it, by nature, through whatever talents and limitations that you have physically, emotionally, mentally at any given moment.

Chuck: Right. So my life with Bill was fulfilling, deeply fulfilling while it lasted, and then I wanted control-which meant that I had to do my homework and learn to be a composer/arranger, and I’ve spent my life doing that. It’s taken me years and years and years to be able to listen to my own music and feel as if it stands comparison with Bill’s music.

JI: Once you left Bill and you began going out on your own in 1966, what were the kinds of professional situations that you began to be involved in for those several years beyond that, before the National Jazz Ensemble?

Chuck: The National Jazz Ensemble was my effort at doing what Wynton has done with much more success 20 years later. But I worked with J.J. Johnson, which I very much enjoyed. I worked with Bobby Timmons also, I enjoyed that. I got a lot of different little jobs, and then I got work in Broadway theater in order to survive. I hated that, but it did make me a living.

JI: Were there any noteworthy shows that you initially enjoyed the music that you were playing?

Chuck: I don’t think anyone enjoys playing the same music the same way eight shows a week.

JI: Of course not. What were the shows at that time?

Chuck: Well, I played in Promises, Promises with a lot of other jazz musicians, many other jazz musicians—Joe Newman, Johnny Coles, Frank Perowsky, George Barrow, Al Porcino, Dave Taylor bass trombone, Julian Priester, a bunch of jazz musicians in that show. Bobby Thomas was the original drummer in that show and then after Bobby was Alphonse Mouzon and Billy Cobham. They were all drummers in that show. So it was a place people made a living. Then I found my way into academic life and became a college professor and that saved my psyche actually. It kept me from having to play bad music. So I spent a great deal of my life teaching other people at the same time as I was learning myself, learning to write and to make the decisions that are necessary to make the music go the way I wanted it to go.

JI: Talk about the National Jazz Ensemble which I believe began in 1973.

Chuck: That’s right. I started it because I had had a rehearsal band and I was learning to write. And the rehearsal band had different people in it from time to time, but it had all of the best musicians in New York. They would all come and play for you. For whatever reasons, they found it an attractive activity and you could learn a lot because the players were so good. You knew if the music sounded bad, it was your fault not theirs. And I tried to figure out a way to have a band that would be able to get kind of public subsidy. And I thought, well, symphony orchestras do it, and this is how they do it, and it’s not boring. And they can play Mozart and Bartok on the same evening, so could we play Jelly Roll Morton and Thelonious Monk on the same evening? Probably so. I found people who liked to do that. And there were some extraordinary musicians involved in that—Jimmy Maxwell, a great trumpet player; Tom Harell; Jimmy Knepper, whom I had met at Brandeis; Rod Levitt; Greg Herbert; Bob Mintzer; Sal Nistico; Bill Dobbins; Bill Goodwin; Dave Berger, who became my partner in that and was tremendously helpful. It was a great band and I kept it together as long as I could and never had the kind of backing that Wynton has been able to get from Lincoln Center. It was before its time. Some of the recordings that we have-I have a lot of live recordings of that band that are better than the recordings that we made in the studio ... a lot better. And a record company is now interested in releasing those.

JI: Where were the live recordings made?

Chuck: Various places, different schools that we played at - Purchase, Ithaca College, Corning, New York, Eastman School of Music, various places that we had performances. South Carolina, we did a tour of South Carolina at one point and quite a number of the recordings come from that tour, some at the New School. We played at the New School and we had some guest soloists-Gerry Mulligan, Budd Johnson, Tommy Flanagan. It was an interesting time. Who knew that it was the good old days? I look back on that and say, “Boy, if I could find players like that now.”

JI: A few years ago one of the six players who came up in the New York loft scene in the 1960s and 70s explained how everyone would listen and share ideas because there were few texts to learn how to improvise. When he arrived at one of the colleges to teach, he was astonished to see that everything was laid out like scriptures.

Chuck: Well, that happens to any art that gets institutionalized. Once you institutionalize something, you change its character. And the easiest things to hold still become the scripture. So chords and scales that you can study, you can write down on a piece of paper, become the language-language, in fact, they are no more the language than any written language is language. Written language is always impoverished compared to its spoken version.

JI: Sure, and you can speak the King’s English and be the most incredible “Thespian” in the English language. But if you have nothing to say, who cares? You can always teach the nuts and bolts, the scales and chords and the letters and words and so on. But you can’t tell someone to feel something that they are not, or can not. Making music, feeling it, or feeling some music and not other music, and or being attracted to it as a listener, is directly related to your heart and soul.

Chuck: We do our best. We write down what we think is necessary in order to get the message across and then people have to make their contribution to that. They have to interpret it and add human elements that are not there. I use Finale Playback to check things in my scores, but I never believe that I’m hearing the piece.

JI: It’s a great tool to be able to see if the notes sound right, if you haven’t made a mistake with a sharp or a flat or there’s something out of whack. But it doesn’t substitute for real live playing, that’s for sure.

(Continued on page 35)
Chuck: Not at all.

JI: Could talk about working with Eric Dolphy?

Chuck: He was a lovely man and everybody liked him, for good reason. He was a generous, sweet-natured guy. Before playing with Bill, I was in Europe with the Jerome Robbins Ballet Company. It was a job I had been sent on by Joe Benjamin who didn’t want to do this long tour. And I was in Copenhagen, and I had worked with Eric with Gunther Schuller, so we knew each other. Eric was giving a concert. I got through my work with the ballet company early and I went to go hear Eric, and he simply asked me to come up and play with him. So now I have an association with him that is a result of a rather casual, incidental encounter. His bass player had a good bass and Eric Dolphy wanted to play with me and it got recorded. Later, to my surprise, I received a check for that recording. Now part of my identity as someone who played with Eric Dolphy. But I didn’t have a long relationship with him. I liked the guy a lot. I’d say he was a really, really sweet guy.

JI: What was that like?

Chuck: Well, it was great. In the first place besides those two, Larry Bunker who’s one of the best musicians I ever worked with was on that record. Brilliant, brilliant musician. Wonderful drummer. And that was great fun. I also worked for two weeks when Larry Bunker had to go back to California when his father in law died and he was playing with Bill’s Trio. We were at the Café au Go Go and I suggested to Bill that he hire Jim Hall for those weeks, rather than look for another drummer. So for a couple of weeks I played with Bill Evans and Jim Hall and I can’t even remember what it was like. I just know it had to have been heaven for me. I can’t remember the music. I wish someone had recorded it or I had recorded it. Jim Hall was a great hero of mine. He lived downstairs from my parents on 12th Street.

JI: Are there some things that I haven’t prompted you about that you would like to promote or otherwise talk about?

Chuck: Well first of all I’m grateful for the attention, and I recognize that my time with Bill is the biggest single chunk of my musical career and it’s what people know me for and I don’t mind that, I’m proud of it. And the aesthetics of that live with me all the time. They were there before that and they are the same aesthetics now that they were then. I guess what I don’t want to do is beat a dead horse. I don’t want to be a necrophiliac with that. Sometimes the most lucrative jobs I get offered are jobs playing Bill’s music with piano players who are selected by promoters and producers who don’t know what they’re doing. And really I don’t know any piano player who wants to put themselves in that position and I wouldn’t put anybody in that position and it’s one of the reasons I have a five-horn band. Because my aesthetic is Bill’s aesthetic and you cannot ask another pianist to do that. How-
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New CD Release from Dallas Area Pianist

John A. Lewis

John A. Lewis, piano
Merik Gillett, drums
Robert Trusko, bass

TRACKS:
- Backstory
- Deadline
- Jacked
- Complicity
- Bylines
- Liable
- Precocity
- Excerpt from the “Ancient Dance Suite”
- What Say I
- A Cautionary Ruse

All compositions by John A Lewis

Visit JohnALewisJazz.com
When it comes to superb vintage drums you need a true expert. I have over 40 years of experience with vintage drums and have authenticated and brokered some of the rarest and finest sets in existence, including sets owned by some of the world’s most renowned drummers.

Whether you want to purchase or sell a fine vintage snare drum or drum set, or perhaps purchase something owned by a famous drummer you admire, trust the industry’s leading expert.

When you call or email, you get me. I am available and I want to speak with you. Feel free to call or email with questions and requests.

No one does “vintage” better, and you deserve the best.

www.maxwelldrums.com

Serving the Community of Professional Drummers and Drum Lovers

Midtown Manhattan 242 W. 30th Street, New York, NY 10001 Ph: 212-730-8138 Hours: 11–7 M–F; 11–6 Sat

Chicagoland 2000 Bloomingdale Road, Unit #110 Glendale Heights, IL 60139 Ph: 630-237-4997 Hours: 11–6 Fri; 10–5 Sat | Additional hours by appointment.

Our experience:
In addition to operating our NY and Chicagoland stores, I currently serve as manager and curator of the world's finest private collection of rare and celebrity owned drums in the world.

We have authenticated and brokered the sale of instruments owned by such famous drummers as Buddy Rich, Joe Morello, Elvin Jones, Mel Lewis, Tony Williams, Sonny Greer, Don Lamond, Cozy Cole, Papa Jo Jones, Philly Joe Jones, Gene Krupa, Peter Erskine, Stan Levey, Dave Tough, Louie Bellson, Jake Hanna, Earl Palmer, Billy Gladstone and more.

We have sold more of the world’s rarest drums and drum sets than anyone in the world. Items such as: the finest known Ludwig Top Hat and Cane drum set; the finest known and unique example of Leedy’s Autograph of the Stars set; four of the twelve known examples of ‘50s era Gretsch cadillac nitron green “Birdland” drum sets; more Gretsch round badge era 12-14-18 drum sets than any dealer worldwide; eight of the rare Billy Gladstone snares (of which only 25 exist) and one of the only two complete Billy Gladstone drum sets.

Our worldwide clientele consists of serious players; collectors, investors and anyone else who loves the finest examples of rare vintage drums. Our expertise runs deep and is rooted in the superb instruments crafted by US manufacturers from the 1920s through the 1970s.