INTERVIEWS

Marcus Miller
Jazz At Lincoln Center, March 29-30

Duduka Da Fonseca
Dizzy’s Club, March 28-31

Ingrid Jensen
Dizzy’s Club, April 1

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Terell Stafford
Stafford’s exceptionally expressive and well defined musical talent allows him to dance in and around the rich trumpet tradition of his predecessors while making his own inroads.

Joshua Breakstone
His flowing lines on up-tempo cookers are impeccably clean and fiery, bearing the mark of a first-rate improviser, while his chordal work on heartbreaker ballads is the final word in finesse. — Guitar Player magazine.

Ken Peplowski
Ken Peplowski is reunited with his NYC working group that includes Ted Rosenthal on piano, Martin Wind on bass and Matt Wilson on drums.

Stranahan / Zaleski / Rosato
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
Interview & Photos By Eric Nemeyer

JI: Could you discuss some of your sources of inspiration and background?

MM: I’m from a musical family. My father plays the piano. His cousin played piano with Miles Davis. Wynton Kelly was his name. My father’s father played the piano, and my father’s sisters all sang. So music was part of my life. To be honest, it wasn’t anything special. I thought that’s what everybody did. You had choir rehearsals at your house on Wednesdays, and you heard your dad practicing all week. You went to church and listened to that music. Then you went down to the church basement and performed for your family on Sunday afternoons. That’s what I thought everybody did. So music wasn’t really that special—it was just part of my life. But when I heard the Jackson 5, when I was ten years old, and they told me the kid singing was my age—that kind of blew my mind. These guys were so talented. The bass just played three notes over and over of those songs was “Slippin’ Into Darkness.”

MM: This is a completely different one that Michael Jackson and the Jackson 5 recorded.

JI: How about War, one of the other inspirations for the music on your album Renaissance.

MM: So we’re in the same period. I got drawn into the R&B thing with the Jackson 5. Then as a bass player, you start gravitating towards funky bands. War was an incredible band at that time, and Sly and the Family Stone, and a little later Kool and the Gang and Tower of Power were all important bands.

JI: War, led by Eric Burdon, was an outgrowth of his previous band, The Animals. They had hits with “Don’t Let Me Be Misunderstood,” and “House of the Rising Sun.”

MM: Exactly. That was Eric Burdon’s group. In the ‘70’s, they were just coming up with grooves. The grooves had a little bit of a New Orleans flavor to them. The bass line usually stayed in the same place creating a trance. One of those songs was “Slippin’ Into Darkness.” The bass just played three notes over and over again. And that thing just got in your bones. I think I have some theme bass lines that I walk around the street hearing in my head and that’s one of them. So every once in a while, I pull them out and decide to try to do a cover.

JI: Janelle Monáe—her song “Tightrope”?

MM: Well, that’s on the other side because that song was out, like that song was a hit a couple of years ago. But it’s so cool. It reminded me of the songs I loved because it has a bass line that’s really cool. It sounded like a boogie-woogie, New Orleans kind of feeling. So I called Dr. John, whose voice kind of contains New Orleans in it—to have him collaborate with me on this song. We had a lot of fun.

JI: Ivan Lins’ compositions provide a completely different flavor on your CD.

MM: That guy writes such beautiful songs. I recorded with him a few times. I first heard “Setembro (Brazilian Wedding Song)” on a Quincy Jones album—he did a beautiful version, with wordless vocals. I wanted to do it and, of course, I wanted to give it a spin because it doesn’t really make sense for me to try to recreate a song in it’s original style. I wanted to take the Brazilian part and switch it over to Afro-Cuban. So I inserted a vamp in...
Marcus Miller

(Continued from page 4)

there, and got Ruben Blades to collaborate with me to access that side of it. He came up with a chant to sing during the vamp. Then we got Gretchen Parlato, who’s a really well known New York chant vocalist to do the wordless vocals. Then she does a scat solo - and it turned into something really nice.

JI: You were mentioning that sometimes you just pick things up and you don’t even know you’re picking up those ideas. Given the extensive list of musicians with whom you have played – and to pick up some of those things that you might not realize at the time that you are picking up - could you talk about some of the recording sessions that have been highlights for you, that may have contributed.

MM: I started out with Roberta Flack. That was one of my early gigs. Initially, I wasn’t sure whether I wanted to take her offer to play in the road band—because at 19 years old, I couldn’t imagine myself standing there playing those slow songs all night. But I ran into her on the street in New York. She was riding her bike. She said, “You haven’t returned my phone calls. Are you going to go on the road or not?” I couldn’t say no to her face—so I took the gig. It was one of the best things I ever did. I was on the stage, playing these songs that aren’t that difficult to play on bass. But I saw how effective this music was. It was the first time I ever saw people crying based on someone singing a song. It was because it was just so emotionally moving. It was a real huge lesson for me. Luther Vandross was a background singer in the band at the same time. So he was learning the same lesson. After a couple of years with Roberta, Luther and I recorded Luther’s demo for him to get his own record deal. A couple years later, I found myself on the stage by him - watching him affect people in the same way. It was a really strong lesson about the power of music - and how it’s not about playing all the notes, it’s really about playing the right notes. That was confirmed when I found myself in Miles Davis’ band doing the same thing with a trumpet. It’s just about finding these notes to affect people. It has to do with setting them up, doing what they expect up to a certain point. Then, when they really think they know what’s coming, that’s when you go somewhere else and really blow their minds. Roberta was a genius at that. Luther was a genius. Miles was a genius at that. I enjoyed playing on Donald Fagen’s Nightfly. Somebody just reminded me about that album. Brilliant. Donald Fagen was half of Steely Dan. I played on maybe four or five cuts. Just to see him put music together ... He wanted each of the instruments to fit together, to mesh together like a clock, like a Swiss clock. He was really interested in how the bass interacted with the guitar, which interacted with the drums. He wanted them all to fit - to be really synchronized.

JI: How did he communicate that to you or expect you to do that?

MM: I’d play a take and then I’d hear him throw some bass on there. He’d say, “Okay, I’ll see you later.” A year and a half later, they’d show up back in New York. I’d go to the studio after they’d gone all around the world overdubbing musicians to this drums and bass thing that I had left him with a year and a half earlier. This thing was now a tapestry. It was unbelievable – a collage of all these different elements. They had this English rock guitar from Britain and they had guys from the Middle East playing percussion. It was incredible to see somebody make music that way. He was more like a painter than a musician. He would add elements, stand back and look at it for a while, and then add something else. The album was called Boys and Girls. Then we did another called Bête Noire, which was really cool. I remember working with Aretha Franklin. Luther was producing her. After he had his first couple of hits, Clive Davis asked him to produce Aretha.

JI: Was that when she recorded “Who’s Zoomin’ Who” around 1985?

MM: It was right before that. We did “Jump To It.” That was the hit that we wrote for her. Some artists walk in the door and they’re ready to start. They’re at the top of their emotional peak as soon as they start playing. Aretha wasn’t one of those. She had to warm up. She didn’t give it up right away. When she finally started to get warm, it was just about the time that the band was learning the song and that everything was coming together. So, you got these great performances.”

“Wearts and Girls. To It.” That was the hit that we wrote for her. Some artists walk in the door and they’re ready to start. They’re at the top of their emotional peak as soon as they start playing. Aretha wasn’t one of those. She had to warm up. She didn’t give it up right away. When she finally started to get warm, it was just about the time that the band was learning the song and that everything was coming together. So, you got these great performances.”

“Encroachment of freedom will not come about through one violent action or movement but will come about through a series of actions that appear to be unrelated and coincidental, but that were all along systematically planned for dictatorship.”

— John Adams, 2nd President

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Marcus Miller

artist, singer or the saxophone player, or whoever’s album it was, would give their best performances right at the beginning - the first take. So by the time the band really kind of got it together, they’d already peaked. Then those artists were frustrated because they’re like, “Man, I’m trying to capture the magic of that first take and I can’t.” They’re on the down side of the mountain. So I learned about patience. You have to peak as a group, as opposed to peaking as an individual. That was a really, really important lesson.

JI: What kinds of experiences did you have working with Grover Washington? What kinds of instructions did he give you? What kinds of things did you talk about?

MM: You know, with Grover, Ralph McDonald was the producer. I had met Ralph about a year earlier. I was playing with Bobbi Humphrey, who was a really well known flute player. I wrote a song that Bobbi wanted to record. She asked Ralph, who was producing her album, if she could have her young bass player come in and play on the one song that he wrote. Ralph let me come in and play. After the session, Ralph asked, “Can you read music?” I said, “Yes.” He said, “Don’t bullshit me. Can you read it?” I said, “Yes, I can read it really well.” He says, “Okay. I’m gonna start recommending you because I like your sound.” Not only did he start recommending me for sessions, but he started calling me for the sessions he was producing himself and one of those artists that he was producing was Grover Washington. So thanks to Ralph, between the time that he said he was going to start recommending me and three months later, I was working 24 hours a day. In New York, at that time, there was so much work. If you could read and you could play with feeling, there was a lot of opportunity. So Ralph was really instrumental in kind of getting me going. He called me for the Grover sessions. I’m 19 years old. Three or four years before that, I was playing along with records in my bedroom. Now I’m sitting here playing. It actually felt like I was playing along with a Grover Washington record, even when I was recording with him. I did realize that I was actually in the band because I played a lick and then I heard Grover repeat the lick in his solo right after that. I said, “Whoa!” That never happened in my bedroom when I was playing along with the record. The musicians never reacted to me when I was playing along with the record. It was a beautiful experience. The band was Steve Gadd on drums, Richard Tee on piano, Eric Gale on guitar and Ralph McDonald on percussions. It was a great group. It was the Winelight album, and the big hit off that album was “Just the Two of Us.”

JI: Were there some particularly memorable moments that you might share?

MM: I remember a Frank Sinatra session. Quincy Jones was the arranger and he handed everybody music. George Benson was looking at the music like, “Man, this stuff looks complicated.” George is a real natural player. He doesn’t read that much. I looked at it. I said, “Man, don’t worry about it. This is right up your alley.” Frank Sinatra showed up, started singing and after he sang two verses, he said, “Okay George Benson solo.” By that time, George said, “Oh, I got this.” He killed it like he always killed it. It was just funny to see him be a little bit nervous before a session. The album’s called LA is My Lady. The room was full of musicians. Quincy was the arranger and the conductor.

JI: Did you have any discussions with Frank Sinatra? What kind of vibe was there in that session?

MM: I took the elevator up to the seventh floor where the studio was. This big Italian dude was standing at the elevator. “What’s your name?” I gave him my name. It’s the first time I’ve ever had to go through security to get to a recording session. We were all waiting for Frank. Quincy ran the songs over with the band. Frank showed up, sang a couple of takes, then did the next song, and sang a couple of takes. He said, “I think that’s good.” and he left. That was my experience with Frank Sinatra. It was like that a lot. You just go in, you read the music, you do your thing and you leave. You make sure to sign your form first, to make sure you get paid.

JI: You were involved with a lot of film music and you worked with Spike Lee. Could you talk about some of those experiences?

MM: Spike had had his first breakthrough movie, She’s Gotta Have It. He had to really scratch to get that one made. I think that was his first film or the first one he got released through a major distributor. I was just admire his work from afar and I got a phone call. He said, “Marcus, this is Spike. Listen, I got a beach party, a pool party scene in my next movie. It’s got a bunch of girls with big behinds in bathing suits, and I need you to write a song for it. I need the song to be called The Butt and I need it to be the dance sensation across the nation, okay? Call me when you got something.” That was it. So I had to come up with this tune called “The Butt.” So I got together with my songwriting buddy Mark Stevens—who is Chaka Khan’s brother. We came up with a song and we recorded a demo for Spike and sent it to him. He said, “I love it. Record it.” So we had a big recording session. I really wanted it to be like a party song, and I wanted the record to contain the party— like some of the old ’60’s records—where you can hear people partying on the record. So I asked Spike to bring the whole cast of the movie to the studio. After we recorded the song, we ran the song in the studio and recorded everybody having a good time to the song. Even in the studio, as I was recording it, I already knew it was a hit - because I could see 55 people partying to it. I said, “Oh, this works.” We really had a good time, and as Spike predicted, it was a huge dance hit. As a matter of fact, on MTV awhile back, they had a special called “Famous rear end songs,” and “Baby Got Back” was one of them and “The Butt” was another one. So I’m in good company I guess. Spike asked me to produce the song on a go-go band out of Washington, D.C. called E.U. [Experience Unlimited]. They’re an incredible band. That go-go movement in D.C. is very interesting. It was started by Chuck Brown, who recently passed but it was so interesting because it really has stayed in D.C. It really never became a national thing until this song, “The Butt.” Spike’s movie enabled that go-go sound to reach the rest of the nation.

JI: What other movies did you work on that made an impact on you?

MM: I did House Party. That was my first big one. Then I did Eddie Murphy’s Boomerang, which was a really cool movie – with Eddie Murphy, Robin Givens, Halle Berry, Martin Lawrence, Grace Jones, David Allen Grier, Chris Rock. That was the first time I started using R&B elements in the score as opposed to just using strings or something like that. Because it was an urban movie, I figured it could stand to use some rhythm in the score. I did a movie called Two Can Play That Game with Vivica A. Fox.

JI: To calculate where every piece of music, every note and rhythm went in a film, you used to have to have your slide rule out to calculate the number of frames per second, seconds per frame, and all that. Now it’s so much quicker and easier.

MM: The computer changes all that. You used to have to come to a scoring session with calculators. If you wanted to make sure the orchestra hit when the guy, when the cars crashed or something like that, you had to really do some measurements - to figure out what tempo you could make the music … so that a good beat on the music would correspond with the car crash. Now, your computer can do that in two seconds. So it’s not as difficult. The other thing that makes it not as difficult is that a movie composer had to be able to...
imagine the whole score in his head. All he would do really was to play it on the piano for the director. So, just imagine - it’s gonna be huge. Now, with your samplers and your keyboards and everything, the director walks in the studio and you play it, it basically sounds like an orchestra already - because you have all these samples. So people don’t have the imagination that they used to have, because you can kind of realize anything you want.

**JI:** Remember when you watched movies or TV shows where the themes were overwhelmingly new and original. Some of the most memorable songs were the themes on some of those TV sitcoms and westerns. Now you go to the movies, and when they say buy the score, much of the music is made up recordings that are licensed from current pop albums or are hits from the past that you already know.

**MM:** Well, you know, there did become a division between the soundtrack and the score. If you go to old movies, they were one and the same. The soundtrack was the score. The same music that you heard while you were watching the movie was on the soundtrack that you bought. But after *Saturday Night Fever*, which was the number one selling album of all time before... *Saturday Night Fever* was a perfect movie to do that with because it was a dance movie. They could put some dance songs in there. They realized there was so much money to be made from the soundtracks that they just started putting hits on the soundtracks - even if the hits had nothing to do with the movie. They’d get some great artists to put some hits together, and then they’d put it on the soundtrack and they’d say something like, “music inspired by the movie” - because everyone realizes it didn’t have anything to do with the movie. Well, now because of the economic situation, they’re not even asking artists to create new music. Lots of times, they just go in the catalog and find great songs that they think are appropriate. That’s the new trend now. Plus, with a new song, you can never be guaranteed that it’s gonna be a hit. With an old one, there’s a guarantee. It’s already a hit. So you’re hedging your bet a little bit.

**JI:** In writing music for films, working with either the director or the producer, what have been some of the challenges that you’ve experienced – in the role of creative individual versus corporate decision maker?

**MM:** Well, the first thing you have to learn as a musician is that your job is simply to guide people emotionally through the film. Sometimes when I was first starting to write music for movies, the director would say, “Man, that’s a beautiful piece of music. But no one’s paying attention to my scene because you’ve got too much going on with the music that’s drawing people’s attention. Okay? I appreciate what you did, but you’ve got to help me out here. I could use about a third of what you wrote just to support my scene.” So you begin to realize that your music is simply a component of the overall picture. When you’re making music for a CD, your music is the whole thing - so it has to be a complete picture. But lots of times with movie scores, the music simply has to kind of be an emotional guide for people. If people notice the music in the scene, it means the music is not really doing its job right.

**MM:** Sounds like Stanley. What you’ve got to realize is that if you’re going to go into any kind of musical work where you’re going to be interfacing with people who aren’t musicians - you have to allow for the fact that they don’t know the language. That doesn’t mean they’re dumb. It just means they don’t know the language. So for a lot of people, minor just means that it has a feeling of darkness. It gives them a feeling of darkness. I’ve had a lot of directors who are really smart guys who, when they start using laymen’s terms, when I’m talking to them, I use the musical term. By the end of the movie process, these guys are educated, and they have the language to communicate. For me, the bigger problem is when they know just a little bit about music. That’s a problem. Because then they really start. I had a guy when I did a soundtrack for a film and the producer told me, “Listen, this is primarily for children. Children don’t like minor chords.” I’m like, “Okay.” I’m not sure about that because I’ve been to a bunch of Disney films and the minor doesn’t do anything but set up the major and the end of the film. You need that.

**JI:** Tension and release - that’s a big part of successful music and storytelling and a lot of other things.

**MM:** Yeah. Tension and release and minor chords serve a purpose. I decided that what he really meant was that he didn’t want it to be overly dark. I’m not going to take him literally and not have any minor chords. That’s ridiculous. The whole thing about a kids’ film is to set it up, scare the hell out of them, and then resolve it in a really nice way.

**JI:** What kinds of interesting or dramatic moments have you experienced in recording music for films?

**MM:** I was doing a film for Disney and they had one guy assigned to the session whose job was simply to keep me moving, so that they didn’t spend too much money on this orchestra that was very expensive. The director was there and we were getting towards the end of the session. The director goes on the talk back speakers into the room conducting the orchestra. He said, “Listen man, I forgot to tell you that I need music in this one 15-second section.” The Disney guy is freaking out because we’re getting ready to go into overtime - because I’m going to have to take a break and compose the stuff in the back room, and then send it to the copyist who’s going to have to write it out for all the different musicians. We had 16 people. So I said, “Listen, everybody in the orchestra ... please take out your pencils.” I dictated ... I said violins, chord, note, rest ... eight notes going down from C natural going down to A natural.” I dictated everybody’s part right there on the spot and said, “Okay, let’s try it.” So we did. I changed a couple of things. We got the piece ready to go in seven minutes.

**JI:** Was this a new piece of music, or were you taking thematic material that you were using elsewhere in the score?

**MM:** No, I had to write it right there on the spot. But, you know, I pulled it together in seven minutes and then we recorded it, and we were done. One of my assistants, who does a lot of films said, “You know, you jazz guys have it so easy because somebody throws something at you and you just improvise right there on the spot. It doesn’t freak you out. Somebody else would have had to go in the back room, and sit at the piano for half an hour to come up with something.”
Ernie Watts
The Process Never Ends

Interview & Photo By Eric Nemeyer

JI: How much do you miss Wilmington, Delaware?

EW: [laughs] It was a great place to grow up. Because it was so quiet, it was a perfect place to practice and study and get it together. That’s what I did mostly – just practice and listen to records. Then I graduated from high school there. I went to West Chester College for a year and then I got a Downbeat scholarship to the Berklee School of Music in Boston and I went up to Boston. That’s where I met Alan Broadbent. Alan had won one of the Downbeat scholarships in New Zealand and he came over on a boat from New Zealand so we both got in the program the same year.

JI: When you were in Wilmington, you were a kid when Clifford Brown was still around?

EW: I was after Clifford. I think he died in 1955, ‘56, and I started playing in 1958. I knew of him but missed him. He’s buried about three blocks from the house where I grew up.

JI: You were near Philadelphia, which had a flourishing jazz scene at the time. Did you get a chance to go up there often?

EW: I went up to the Academy of Music. I heard the Jazztet there. We used to go up to Birdland. A friend of mine, a trumpet player, his father had an apartment in New York and we would come up for weekends and go to Birdland. That was the first time I heard Art Blakey’s group, with Wayne Shorter and Freddie Hubbard—that fantastic band with Curtis Fuller, Cedar Walton, Jimmy Merritt. They were trading sets with the Gerry Mulligan Big Band. Mulligan’s Big Band would come on and they would sound like a small group, because they played very quietly. And then Art Blakey’s band would come on with six guys and they’d sound like a big band. [laughs] It was incredible, the energy. We used to do that and that was a lot of fun. Then I used to go the University of Delaware. They used to have concerts. That was where I heard Cannonball play live for the first time. I met him and we talked. He let me play his horn and stuff like that. I was in high school, so it was a really inspiring experience. My first jazz record was Kind of Blue, so I was already very familiar with his playing and with Coltrane’s playing from listening to that record. When I met Cannonball, it was quite an experience. And then later on, we were really good friends. I played with his group and we did some recordings and some TV things and a bunch of stuff in LA. He was a good man.

JI: Did he give you any words of motivation or inspiration when you first met him?

EW: Not really. I mean, it was always playing. It was always through the music. You know, it’s always an amazing thing – when you’re a young kid and you’re playing, and then you start playing with these people that are people you grew up listening to, it’s always quite a thrill to know that people that you love and appreciate, appreciate what you do too. I spent two years with Buddy Rich’s band, just traveling around, meeting all these people and playing with everybody. It was like a family. Everybody was learning, and everybody was learning from everybody. The young guys were learning from the older guys, the older guys were listening to the younger guys and saying, “What’s that?” The process never ends. That’s the thing that’s really alive about it. It’s always evolving, it’s always growing, and it never ends. That’s what keeps you young, because there’s always something to learn. You don’t retire from something that you love. If you’re doing something that you don’t particularly like, then okay, that’s great, you retire – you get away from it. But the thing is, if you do music and you do because you love it, you do it because you want to do it, then what’s to retire from?

JI: When you were playing with Cannonball, who played alto sax, were you playing alto or tenor?

EW: I was playing alto. I started originally with – my very, very first instrument was – the baritone. It’s a funny kind of story. I was interested in art in junior high. This was grade seven. I wasn’t really that interested in learning an instrument. I had a friend that wanted to learn to play the saxophone. It was fall, the beginning of the school year, and the music department at the school had instruments to lend. They were ready to start teaching people. So we went to the music department. I went with him on a lunch break. He wanted to learn the saxophone and I didn’t know, I figured I’d try something, and I wanted to get a trombone. I must’ve seen The Glenn Miller Story on TV that week or something, and I figured, “I’ll try the trombone. That looks like fun.” My friend got a tenor saxophone. They were all out of trombones so I got a baritone saxophone because I was tall for my age and the teacher figured I could carry it in marching band. So I started on baritone, and then a couple of months later they got an alto saxophone and I started playing the alto, through the school system of Wilmington, Delaware. I was studying with the teacher at the school. Practicing – I was immediately drawn to it so I practiced all the time.

JI: Initially, practicing entails reading, learning scales, and so forth. How did you make the transition to developing your improvisational skills and how did that begin?

(Continued on page 11)
Ernie Watts

(Continued from page 10)

EW: Well it all worked together. At that time in my school system there was no jazz department, so I studied classical music with the teacher at the school. Eventually I started studying classical music at the conservatory in Wilmington, learning all of the transcriptions for saxophone – the Bach and the Beethoven, and then the beautiful French music. I was reading music and studying the classical technique for the saxophone and my neighbor, Ali Jenkins, he had a wonderful record collection. Our house was a rowhouse, so he lived next door. He could hear me practicing through the wall. He started lending me records. The first record he loaned me was a Dave Brubeck record called Jazz Moves to College and I heard Paul Desmond. Paul played so melodically and so clearly that I could play those things with him on the record player. That’s how I started improvising and dealing with the concept of improvising – playing with records. I learned intuitively. I learned the saxophone technically and physically to play through classical music. I learned all my scales, the correct embouchure, how to play the instrument “correctly.” But then at the same time I was listening to records and improvising and learning to improvise by ear, the intuitive way. After a while, my mother realized that I wasn’t going to quit. I was always self-driven. They never made me practice. So I kept practicing and my mother realized that I wasn’t going to stop, so what she did was she joined the Columbia Record Club one Christmas. She brought me a little stereo record player. Everything that I used to get, I grew up out of the Sears catalog. So Sears had this music section called Silvertone. She ordered me the Silvertone stereo. She joined the Columbia Record Club and the first record she got for me, which was a freebie that year, was Kind of Blue. That was the new jazz record that year. That’s why I figured it was 1958, ’59. I heard that and that was it for me. I heard everybody in the band. I heard Paul Desmond, Bill Evans, and Wynton Kelly. Then I heard Coltrane and it was like this revelation to me. It was like sticking my finger in a light socket. I mean the hair just stood up on the back of my neck when I heard him play. Being thirteen or fourteen, I couldn’t explain what he was doing. The only way I could explain it was it sounded like he was playing in another key, but it worked, right? Because everybody in the band, they had a certain vocabulary and they dealt with the harmony in a particular way, and they all kind of had the same vocabulary so their music was in a mid-range. But when Coltrane played, he just took it to a whole other play, harmonically and technically. So to me as a kid, it sounded like he was playing in another key, but it worked. So that was it. From there on, I always wanted to play in the other key. [laughs] But then after a while I learned about chord-scales, the diminished scales, and all of the mixolydian patterns and all of those things. But as a kid, that was the way I figured it out for myself. Then, that’s all I did was listen to Coltrane. I took my lunch money and every week I’d buy a Coltrane record. I had a little stack around my record player so every night, I’d put three or four Coltrane records on the stacker and then I’d go to sleep listening to Coltrane. So I was hearing all those melodic things intuitively – fourths and dominant scales and all of those things. I was playing them and I didn’t know what they were, but I was still dealing with the vocabulary. Later on I learned what they were. Listening to Cannonball, Charlie Parker, Eric Dolphy, all of these incredible players, and then as I kid, being thirteen or fourteen, I figured, “Well, that’s just the way you play. That’s the way the saxophone sounds.” That’s the way I learned how to play. I was about thirty years old before I realized that that was some of the most involved music that there ever was. I thought, “Well, that’s jazz. That’s what you do.” [laughs] That’s the way I learned to play.

JI: Did you later, in an effort to expand on what you knew intuitively, transcribe solos or otherwise do things to connect the dots?

EW: No, I never transcribed a lot of solos. I still study a lot of solos. I study a lot of Coltrane things, because they’re just so wonderful. He was one of the great all-time virtuosos. But I get them from Andrew White in Washington, D.C. I just got a bunch of stuff from Andrew a couple of weeks ago. I did the Tonight Show for twenty years with Doc Severinsen’s band and I met Andrew when he was playing electric bass with The Fifth Dimension. So he comes on The Tonight Show and we introduce each other. He’s a great guy. He says, “I’m ready to publish these transcriptions. What do you think of that? Do you think people would be interested?” I said, “Man, that sounds great!” He started doing it, I guess, in the seventies. I enjoy that. I study some classical repertoire and the Coltrane things, just as studies. As far as playing goes – this was way before I started studying Andrew’s things – I learned from the energy of the music. I always tapped into the energy. So I never transcribed what Coltrane was playing, but I got in touch with the energy of it. Intervallically, I could tell what he was doing. But it was always my own choice of notes. I never memorized the solo to “Giant Steps.” I never memorized the solo to any of the great, famous saxophone solos. For some reason, I got it in my mind when I was very young, that jazz was a creative art form, and everybody had a right to their own, their own concept, and their own way of assimilating the information and creating their vocabulary. That’s what it was supposed to be. The jazz vocabulary was supposed to be a unique, individual vocabulary. So I didn’t really learn from memorizing licks. I learned from getting in touch with the melodic energy. These guys were such incredible players, but there a melody that went through everything. I listen to a lot of Keith Jarrett. I don’t listen to a lot of saxophone players; I listen to a lot of piano. I listen to Keith a lot because everything he plays is a melody. Everything, everything has a melodic context to it. Coltrane, as bizarre as his stuff got at the end, as free and open as it got, there was always a melodic core. Same thing with Cannonball. Same thing with all great players. If you start doing research on what makes an instrumentalist great, the people that you respect and the people that you hear, that you really love and keep going back to, are all the people that were in touch with a melodic thread.

JI: You mentioned the intuitive aspect. You can teach the theory first, but if somebody doesn’t feel the electricity from the music itself, they’re not going to be able to communicate that. You don’t have to know exactly what you’re doing while trying to emulate what you’re hearing. You can always apply the theory later.

EW: And it all works together. But the thing is, I think the beginning, the essence of it, is just really loving the music. The energy that you put into learning and putting all the pieces together is related to this deep love that you have for wanting to play this music. Then you do whatever you need to do to learn how to get better.

Continued in the next issue of Jazz Inside Magazine
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Sunday, March 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; Dezron Douglas, Bass; Victor Lewis, Drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Vocal Masterclass with Marion Cowings; Billy Kaye Quartet; Brandon Sanders Quintet; Nick Hampton Band; Alon Near Trio “After-hours”; Smalls, 183 W. 10th St.
- Ron Carter’s Blue Note Winter Residency; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Monday, March 11
- Brussels Jazz Orchestra & Tutu Puacone: 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 Burage & Holographic Principle; Jonathan Barber Quartet; Jon Ebzery Trio “After-hours”; Smalls, 183 W. 10th St.
- Lorna Dallas; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Wallace Roney Quintet - March Residency; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Tuesday, March 12
- Brussels Jazz Orchestra & Tutu Puacone: We Have A Dream; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & B’way
- Vanguard Jazz Orchestra; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Jeremy Manasia Quartet; Abraham Burton Quartet; Malik McLauren Trio “After-hours”; Smalls, 183 W. 10th St.
- Catherine Russell and Her Septet: Alone Together; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Thundercat; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Wednesday, March 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”; Smalls, 183 W. 10th St.
- Catherine Russell and Her Septet: Alone Together; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Thundercat; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Thursday, March 14
- Valentine’s Day; Kim Nalley Sings Love Songs; 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.
- Phil Stewart Quartet; Chris Byars Original Sextet; Jonathan Thomas Trio “After-hours”; Smalls, 183 W. 10th St.
- Catherine Russell and Her Septet: Alone Together; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Thundercat; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Friday, March 15
- Kim Nalley: Love Songs; 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.
- Michael Weiss Quartet; Alexander Claffy Quintet; JD Allen “After-hours”; Smalls, 183 W. 10th St.
- Catherine Russell and Her Septet: Alone Together; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Thundercat; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Saturday, March 16
- Kim Nalley: Love Songs; 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.
- Smalls Showcase: Deon Tior Saxophone Choir; Michael Weiss Quartet; Alexander Claffy Quintet; Brooklyn Circle; Smalls, 183 W. 10th St.
- Catherine Russell and Her Septet: Alone Together; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Thundercat; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Sunday, March 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; Emanuel Tozzi Quintet; Bill Goodwin Trio; Joe Magnarelli Group; Ben Zweig Trio “After-hours”; Smalls, 183 W. 10th St.
- Birdland Latin Jazz Orchestra; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Thundercat; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Monday, March 18
- Juillard 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”; Smalls, 183 W. 10th St.
- Judi Silvano and The Zephyr Band; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Wallace Roney Quintet - March Residency; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Tuesday, March 19
- John Chii Quintet; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & B’way
- Godwin Louis; 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.
- Steve Nelson Quartet; Frank Lacy’s Tromboniverse; Malik McLauren Trio “After-hours”; Smalls, 183 W. 10th St.
- Saxophone Summit with Joe Lovano, Dave Lieberman, and Greg Osby; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- David Sanborn; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Wednesday, March 20
- Bobby Broom Organ-Sation: Soul Fingers; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & B’way
- An Evening With Branford Marsalis; 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.
- Rob Bargad’s Reunion 7tet; Harold Mabern Trio; Micah Thomas Trio “After-hours”; Smalls, 183 W. 10th St.
- Saxophone Summit with Joe Lovano, Dave Lieberman, and Greg Osby; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- David Sanborn; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Thursday, March 21
- David Binney’s Angelino Quartet; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & B’way
- Spanish Harlem Orchestra; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Catherine Russell and Her Septet: Alone Together; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Thundercat; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.


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**March 22 - Friday, March 22**
- Warren Wolf Quartet Featuring Joe Locke; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & B’way
- 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.
- Santi Debriano and Flash of the Spirit; Alex Sipiagin Quintet; Philip Harper Quartet; 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.
- Randy Brecker; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- 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.
- Santi Debriano and Flash of the Spirit; Alex Sipiagin Quintet; Philip Harper Quartet; 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.

**Saturday, March 23**
- Warner Wolf Quartet Featuring Joe Locke; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & B’way
- 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.
- Santi Debriano and Flash of the Spirit; Alex Sipiagin Quintet; Philip Harper Quartet; 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.

**Monday, March 25**
- Matthew Shipp Trio; 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.
- 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 Quintet - March Residency; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

**Tuesday, March 26**
- Allison Miller’s Boom Tic Boom; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & B’dwy
- 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.
- Robert Edwards Quantum; Abraham Burton Quartet; Malik McLaurine Trio “After-hours”; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
- Eric Harland’s Voyager; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

**Wednesday, March 27**
- Black Art Jazz Collective; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & B’way
- Joey Defrancesco Trio With Troy Roberts And Billy Hart; 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.
- Michael Stephens; Quartette Oblique; Amos Hoffman Trio; Davis Whitfield Trio “After-hours”; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
- Cyrille Aimee: A Sondheim Adventure; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Eric Harland’s Voyager; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

**Thursday, March 28**
- Black Art Jazz Collective; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & B’way
- Alfredo Rodriguez/Pedrito Martinez Duo; 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.
- Brandi Disterheft Quartet; Amos Hoffman Trio; Jonathan Thomas Trio “After-hours”; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
- Cyrille Aimee: A Sondheim Adventure; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Cory Henry Birthday Residency: The Revival; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

**Friday, March 29**
- Avislai Cohen Quartet; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Bobby McFerrin & Gimmie w Joey Blake, Dave Worm, Judi Vinar & Rhannon; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.
- Birdland Big Band; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Duduka Da Fonseca, H ello Alves And Maucha Adnet; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & B’dwy
- Marcus Miller: Electric Miles - Bassist and long-time Miles Davis collaborator Marcus Miller leads a wide-ranging exploration of Davis’ bold experiments with jazz, rock, funk, hip-hop, and electronic fusions. 8PM, Rose Theater, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & B’dwy

**Saturday, March 30**
- Avislai Cohen Quartet; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Bobby McFerrin & Gimmie w Joey Blake, Dave Worm, Judi Vinar & Rhannon; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.
- Eric Comstock; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.

(Continued on page 16)
**Monday, April 1**
- William Paterson University Jazz Orchestra & Quintet With Ingrid Jensen; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bway
- Vanguard Jazz Orchestra; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Ari Hoenig Quintet; Joe Farnsworth Trio feat; Buster Williams; Jon Elia Trio "After-hours"; Smalls, 183 W. 10th St.
- Georgia Middeman and Gary Bura; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Deborah Davis, 21st Annual Jazz Benefit; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

**Tuesday, April 2**
- J.D. Allen Quartet Featuring Liberty Ellman; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Yotam Silberstein Quartet Featuring John Patitucci; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bway
- Sullivan Fornter Trio - Sullivan Fornter, Piano; Ameen Saleem, Bass; Jeremy ‘Bean’ Clemons, Drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Hilile Salem Quintet; Abraham Burton Quartet; Malik McLaunrie Trio "After-hours"; Smalls, 183 W. 10th St.
- Benny Green; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Joshua Redman Quartet; Aaron Goldberg/Reuben Rogers/Gregory Hutchinson; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

**Wednesday, April 3**
- J.D. Allen Quartet Featuring Liberty Ellman; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Yotam Silberstein Quartet Featuring John Patitucci; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bway
- Sullivan Fornter Trio - Sullivan Fornter, Piano; Ameen Saleem, Bass; Jeremy ‘Bean’ Clemons, Drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Brent Brolickhead; Sam Dillon Quartet; Davis Whifield Tri"After-hours"; Smalls, 183 W. 10th St.
- Clint Holmes Celebrates The Jazz of Sammy Davis. Jr From The Copa to Broadway; Joe Atemman; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Joshua Redman Quartet; Aaron Goldberg/Reuben Rogers/Gregory Hutchinson; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

**Thursday, April 4**
- Veronica Swift; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- An Evening With Ben Vereen; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bway
- Sullivan Fornter Trio - Sullivan Fornter, Piano; Ameen Saleem, Bass; Jeremy ‘Bean’ Clemons, Drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Aaron Seeber Quartet; Francesco Melo and the Crash Trio; Malick Koly "After-hours"; Smalls, 183 W. 10th St.
- Diane Marino; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Joshua Redman Quartet; Aaron Goldberg/Reuben Rogers/Gregory Hutchinson; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

**Friday, April 5**
- Veronica Swift; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- An Evening With Ben Vereen; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bway
- Sullivan Fornter Trio - Sullivan Fornter, Piano; Ameen Saleem, Bass; Jeremy ‘Bean’ Clemons, Drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Ecki Zigmund Quintet; Ken Fowser Quintet; JD Alien "After-hours"; Smalls, 183 W. 10th St.
- Birdland Big Band; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Joshua Redman Quartet; Aaron Goldberg/Reuben Rogers/Gregory Hutchinson; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.
- McCoy Tyner and Charles McPherson At 80; Pianist McCoy Tyner and saxophonist Charles McPherson join the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra with Wynton Marsalis for an 80th birthday celebration. 8PM, Rose Theater, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bway

**Saturday, April 6**
- Veronica Swift; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- An Evening With Ben Vereen; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bway
- Sullivan Fornter Trio - Sullivan Fornter, Piano; Ameen Saleem, Bass; Jeremy ‘Bean’ Clemons, Drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Ecki Zigmund Quintet; Ken Fowser Quintet; Brooklyn Cicle; Smalls, 183 W. 10th St.
- Joshua Redman Quartet; Aaron Goldberg/Reuben Rogers/Gregory Hutchinson; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

**Sunday, April 7**
- Jazz For Kids; Veronica Swift; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- An Evening With Ben Vereen; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bway
- Sullivan Fornter Trio - Sullivan Fornter, Piano; Ameen Saleem, Bass; Jeremy ‘Bean’ Clemons, Drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Jerry Maasia Quartet; The Zebet; Music of Saul Zebulin Rubin; Alon Neor Trio "After-hours"; Smalls, 183 W. 10th St.
- Afro Latin Jazz Orchestra; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.

**Monday, April 8**
- Mingus Big Band; Celebrating 10 Years at Jazz Standard; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Manhattan School Of Music Jazz Orchestra; Manhattan Sings; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bway
- Vanguard Jazz Orchestra; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Justin Robinson Quartet; Frankly Tromboniverse; Malik McLaunrie Trio; Smalls, 183 W. 10th St.
- James Carter Organ Trio; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Dizzy Gillespie Afro Cuban All-Stars; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

**Tuesday, April 9**
- SFJAZZ Collectives plays Miles Davis; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Julien Labro & The Chansson Experiment; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bway
- Steve Wilson & Wilsonian’s Grain; Steve Wilson, Alto Saxophone; Ornir Evans, Piano; Ugona Okegwo, Bass; Ulysses Owens, Jr., Drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Remy Le Louuf Quartet; Mike Lee Trio; Davis Whiffield Trio "After-hours"; Smalls, 183 W. 10th St.
- James Carter Organ Trio; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Dizzy Gillespie Afro Cuban All-Stars; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

**Wednesday, April 10**
- SFJAZZ Collectives plays Miles Davis; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Mason Brothers Quartz; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bway
- Steve Wilson & Wilsonian’s Grain; Steve Wilson, Alto Saxophone; Ornir Evans, Piano; Ugona Okegwo, Bass; Ulysses Owens, Jr., Drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Carlos Abadie Quartet; Jeremy Weldon Quartet; Jonathan Thomas Trio "After-hours"; Smalls, 183 W. 10th St.
- James Carter Organ Trio; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Arturo Sandoval; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

**Friday, April 12**
- SFJAZZ Collectives plays Antonio Carlos Jobim; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Sherman Irby & Momentum; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bway
- Steve Wilson & Wilsonian’s Grain; Steve Wilson, Alto Saxophone; Ornir Evans, Piano; Ugona Okegwo, Bass; Ulysses Owens, Jr., Drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- James Carter Organ Trio; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Arturo Sandoval; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

**Saturday, April 13**
- SFJAZZ Collectives plays Antonio Carlos Jobim; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Sherman Irby & Momentum; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bway
- Steve Wilson & Wilsonian’s Grain; Steve Wilson, Alto Saxophone; Ornir Evans, Piano; Ugona Okegwo, Bass; Ulysses Owens, Jr., Drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Ralph Bowen Quartet; John Marshall Quartet; Philip Harper Quintet; Smalls, 183 W. 10th St.
- James Carter Organ Trio; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Arturo Sandoval; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.
Sunday, April 14
- SFJAZZ Collective plays Antônio Carlos Jobim; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Sherman Irby & Momentum; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & 62nd
- Steve Wilson & Wilsonian’s Grain; Vanguard Jazz Orchestra; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Monday Nights With WBGO, Yale Jazz Ensemble Featuring Randy Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Mingus Big Band; Celebrating 10 Years at Jazz Standard; Jazz Arturo Sandoval; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.
- Afro Latin Jazz Orchestra; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Arturo Sandoval; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Monday, April 15
- Mingus Big Band: Celebrating 10 Years at Jazz Standard; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Monday Nights With WBGO, Yale Jazz Ensemble Featuring Randy Brecker And Wayne Escoffery; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & 62nd
- Vanguard Jazz Orchestra; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Joe Martin Quartet; Joe Farnsworth Trio; Jon Elbaz Trio; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
- Jed Levvy; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Purchase Jazz Orchestra: Conducted by Jon Faddis w/ Ken Peplowski; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Tuesday, April 16
- Michael Leonhart Orchestra; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- American Pianists Association Competition Winner; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & 62nd
- Tom Harrell “Infinity” - Mark Turner, Tenor Saxophone; Charles Arlutra, Guitar; Ugonna Okegwo, Bass; Johnathan Blake, Drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Spike Wilner Trio; Josh Evans Quintet; Malick McLaurine Trio; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
- Daryl Sherman “Sprint Fever” with Art Baron, trombone; Boots Maleson, bass; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Big Sam’s Funky Nation; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.
- Wednesday, April 17
  - Ario Mho Hazama and m. unit “Dancer in Nowhere”; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
  - Jazz At Lincoln Center Gala - Dizzy’s Club Closed
  - Tom Harrell “Infinity” - Mark Turner, Tenor Saxophone; Charles Arlutra, Guitar; Ugonna Okegwo, Bass; Johnathan Blake, Drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
  - Stephen Riley Quartet; Harold Mabern Trio; Micah Thomas Trio; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
  - Sheila Jordan; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
  - Hector Del Curto w/Paquito D’Rivera; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Thursday, April 18
- Larry Goldings/Peter Bernstein/Bill Stewart; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Monty Alexander Trio; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & 62nd
- Tom Harrell “Infinity” - Mark Turner, Tenor Saxophone; Charles Arlutra, Guitar; Ugonna Okegwo, Bass; Johnathan Blake, Drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- New York Jazz Nine; Moutin Factory Quintet; Malick McLaurine Trio “After-hours”; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
- Sheila Jordan; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Terence Blanchard & The E-Collective; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Friday, April 19
- Larry Goldings/Peter Bernstein/Bill Stewart; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Monty Alexander Trio; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & 62nd
- Tom Harrell “Infinity” - Mark Turner, Tenor Saxophone; Charles Arlutra, Guitar; Ugonna Okegwo, Bass; Johnathan Blake, Drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.

Saturday, April 20
- Larry Goldings/Peter Bernstein/Bill Stewart; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Monty Alexander Trio; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & 62nd
- Tom Harrell “Infinity” - Mark Turner, Tenor Saxophone; Charles Arlutra, Guitar; Ugonna Okegwo, Bass; Johnathan Blake, Drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- George Burton Quartet; JD Allen; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
- Sheila Jordan; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Michael Wolff Trio; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Terence Blanchard & The E-Collective; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Monday, April 22
- Mingus Big Band: Celebrating 10 Years at Jazz Standard; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Purchase Jazz Orchestra With Special Guest Steve Nelson; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & 62nd
- Vanguard Jazz Orchestra; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Ari Hoenig Quartet; Joe Dyson Quintet; Sean Mason Trio “After-hours”; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
- Roy Haynes 94th Birthday Celebration; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Tuesday, April 23
- Darcy James Argue’s Secret Society; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Sam Reider & Human Hands; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & 62nd
- Gerald Clayton Quartet - Logan Richardson, Alto Saxophone; Walter Smith III, Tenor Saxophone; Gerald Clayton, Piano; Joe Sanders, Bass; Marcus Gilmore, Drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Gene Jackson Trio; Frank Lacy’s Tromboniverse; Malick McLaurine Trio “After-hours”; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
- Kurt Rosenwinkel; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Roy Haynes 94th Birthday Celebration; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Wednesday, April 24
- Darcy James Argue’s Secret Society; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Evan Christopher: The Kings Of New Orleans Clarinet; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & 62nd
- Gerald Clayton Quartet - Logan Richardson, Alto Saxophone; Walter Smith III, Tenor Saxophone; Gerald Clayton, Piano; Joe Sanders, Bass; Marcus Gilmore, Drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Matt Pavlovic’s Horns Band; Dave Baron Quintet; Micah Thomas Trio “After-hours”; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
- Kurt Rosenwinkel; Dena DeRose Featuring Special Guest Artist: Houston Person; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Roy Haynes 94th Birthday Celebration; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Thursday, April 25
- Stefon Harris & Blackout; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- “New York, Old Friend”: Songs Of Kenneth D. Laub With Clint Holmes, Steve Nelson Quartet; Abraham Burton Quartet; Malik McLaurine Trio “After-hours”; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
- Frank Catalano Quartet; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.

Saturday, April 27
- Stefon Harris & Blackout; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Monty Alexander Trio; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & 62nd
- Gerald Clayton Quartet - Logan Richardson, Alto Saxophone; Walter Smith III, Tenor Saxophone; Gerald Clayton, Piano; Joe Sanders, Bass; Marcus Gilmore, Drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Christopher McBride & The Whole Proof; Noah Preeminger Quintet; Philip Harper Quintet; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
- Kurt Rosenwinkel; Dena DeRose Featuring Special Guest Artist: Houston Person; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Manhattan Transfer; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.
- Wynton Marsalis and Ken Burns: Country Music - Jazz At Lincoln Center Orchestra With Wynton Marsalis and vocalists Emmylou Harris, Rhannon Giddens, and Marty Stuart perform country hits. Plus get a sneak peak at Ken Burns’ latest documentary, Country Music. 8PM, Rose Theater, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & 62nd

Sunday, April 28
- Stefon Harris & Blackout; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Kenny Baron Quartet; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & 62nd
- Gerald Clayton Quartet - Logan Richardson, Alto Saxophone; Walter Smith III, Tenor Saxophone; Gerald Clayton, Piano; Joe Sanders, Bass; Marcus Gilmore, Drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Chris Byars Original Sextet; JC Styles Group; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
- Ken Pepowski Big Band with Special Guest John Pizzarelli; Afro Latin Jazz Orchestra, Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.

Monday, April 29
- Mingus Big Band: Celebrating 10 Years at Jazz Standard; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Temple University Jazz Band With Terell Stafford And Marshall Gilkes; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & 62nd
- Vanguard Jazz Orchestra; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Ari Hoenig Trio; Koeni 4; Jon Elbaz Trio “After-hours”; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
- Natalie Douglas “Nat Sings Nat: The Songs of Nat King Cole” With Mark Hartman, Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.

Tuesday, April 30
- International Jazz Day - Camille Thuman With The Darrell Green Trio; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & 62nd
- Joe Locke Group + Special Guest Raul Midon; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Glad Hekselman; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Steve Nelson Quartet; Abraham Burton Quartet; Malik McLaurine Trio “After-hours”; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.

...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 feigning deny it and resent the accusation as an insult.”

-Mark Twain
INTERVIEW

Julian Priester

Here I Am

Interview and photo by Ken Weiss

Julian Priester (born June 29, 1935, Chicago, Illinois) is one of the most influential trombonists in history. He’s a highly advanced and extraordinarily versatile artist capable of playing bebop, hard bop, post-bop, R & B, fusion, gospel and avant-garde jazz. After performing around Chicago with bluesmen Muddy Waters and Bo Diddley, Priester spent time with Sun Ra, Lionel Hampton, Dinah Washington, Max Roach, Duke Ellington, Art Blakey, Dave Holland and Herbie Hancock. He’s not been performing as much as he’d like since devoting himself to teaching at Seattle’s Cornish College of the Arts [1979 to 2011] and battling significant health and life issues, but he’s now ready and able to be more active. This phone interview took place on January 12, 2019.

Jazz Inside Magazine: Your contribution to music has been significant since the mid-’50s. Collaborating with Sun Ra, Lionel Hampton, Dinah Washington, Max Roach, John Coltrane, Duke Ellington, Art Blakey, Herbie Hancock should afford you recognition as a master composer, arranger, and able to be more active. This phone interview took place on January 12, 2019.

J-Priester: I wanted to create brilliant music. There was a need to sell records. I’m not a talker, a showoff. I resented the spotlight and the glamor that my relationship with the industry. How can I put this? I wasn’t as marketable as I should have been. I resented the spotlight and the glamour needed to sell records. I’m not a showoff, a talker. I’m kind of shy, I guess that’s the best word for it, at least off the stage. I get aggressive with

Ji: What do you feel is your biggest contribution/innovation to music and the evolution of trombone playing?

J-Priester: I strove to elevate the character of the trombone. My hero was J.J. Johnson, and although he was a great study, I wanted to get away from J.J. I learned a lot by listening to him, but didn’t think it was beneficial for me to sound like him, so I chose to study saxophone players, especially Sonny Rollins and Charlie Parker, who was the number one influence in my career. The tenor saxophone and the trombone share the same register, so I studied jazz music listening to tenor saxophonists and trying to imitate that instrument’s flexibility on the trombone. Of course, there was no way I could actually do that because of the mechanics of the two instruments, but I was able to develop a style that was sort of reaching into that direction and it was far enough away from J.J. Johnson. That gave me a better chance to market myself. There were other great trombone players - Slide Hampton, Curtis Fuller, Grachan Moncur, and others, and I don’t mean to diminish they’re contributions, but I desired to be different. I really respect musicians who are innovative. You have to have a unique voice to really be recognized and noticed, because if you sounded like someone else, you were really promoting their endeavors. That’s the problem that Sonny Stitt had. He sounded like Charlie Parker and he suffered emotionally and physically.

J-Priester: That follows my thoughts. My ambition was to not be still, I wanted to evolve. It was important to keep pushing forward and looking for musical ideas. I felt that as great as bebop was, and as inspirational as it was in my development, that I should be looking ahead. I think that my exposure to Sun Ra very early in my development was important. His habit was to force his performers to be creative, and he would do that by not giving specific instructions. He would just point to the player to take a solo. There were no chord changes, we just had to use our ears to recognize and convert sounds into what we knew would work musically. I learned not to panic when something musically unplanned came.

Ji: How do you handle musical mistakes?

J-Priester: There are no mistakes, it’s how you react to what was unintentional. If you flinch, then that’s (Continued on page 22)
Julian Priester

(Continued from page 20)

a mistake. Let the accident influence what your next idea is. I got into a head space where if an accident occurred, I would resolve it by repeating that accident, so that it was no longer an accident now. I accepted that mistake and made it part of the structure of the musical idea, and that works. Don’t let the audience know that you didn’t intend to play what you just played. Play it again, and that eliminates the mistake. I’ve always been adamant about staying on the front edge of creativity. When I recognize myself repeating ideas over and over again, it really bothers me. I strive to be fresh of ideas. I’m not successful all of the time, because it’s all spontaneous and sometimes you just arrive at a certain point that you’ve been there before. My philosophy has been to go with it.

JI: What are you still working at to improve on, if anything?

JP: I play by ear. With all the knowledge that I have, I found it more creative to listen to the sound of the group and not think about the chord changes. I’m identifying the sound and playing within that sound. I know what the chords are by hearing them, so it’s a more instinctual approach rather than an academic one. That’s mostly what I’m doing now in terms of garnering the information that I use to create solos. I’m also thinking about form and getting away from what’s become normal. I want to be fresh and in the moment. So I’m getting away from what I’ve studied and practiced when I create solos. When I play a solo, it’s spontaneous. I use the term spontaneous composition which comes closest to the method that I use. Of course, I’m following the musical rules of harmony, rhythms and melody.

JI: You’ve lived on the West Coast for the past 45 years, the great majority of that time in Seattle. How is it to spend most of your career secluded away from jazz’ East Coast epicenter, especially after being super involved in the scene during the start of your career?

JP: Ahh, that’s a great question. I have had many problems trying to live the two lives – the domestic life and the jazz life. They’re incompatible, as long as I’ve been playing. I’m on my third marriage now and the failure of the first two marriages were closely connected to the inability of me to be the domestic provider as a jazz musician, and the desire to be a jazz artist. After many years in my career, I realized I was more satisfied in being a jazz artist rather than a jazz musician, seeking work in the bands of others. I wanted to be brilliant as a trombonist, unique as a trombonist, and that would qualify me as a jazz artist. I’m still capable but, by choice, I’m not seeking work in the commercial music field. I’m seeking work in the creative music field and that’s impacted my life. Here in Seattle, there’s not much going on for the creative music artists.

JI: Are you saying that you moved out to the West Coast in order to survive or to save one of your marriages?

JP: No, I wasn’t married at the time. Staying on the West Coast was purely accidental. It occurred when Herbie Hancock broke up the Mwandishi band in San Francisco. I got married, for the third time, and when my first son was born, the incident of the [1978] assassination of the mayor of San Francisco [George Moscone] influenced my decision to leave there. I had an invitation to be on the faculty of Cornish Coll-

“There are no mistakes, it’s how you react to what was unintentional. If you flinch, then that’s a mistake. Let the accident influence what your next idea is.”

Stallion is not what he used to be. [Laughs] I’ve remained here but I’m not completely satisfied. I’d love to be able to go out on tour but it’s more expensive for a promoter to bring me to Europe to perform than it would be from the East Coast.

JI: Your first instrument was piano but after being forced to play glockenspiel in the high school orchestra during parades you changed instruments.

JP: Right, I came across the trombone almost by accident, I guess it was fate. My first exposure to music was through piano. My mother was an accomplished church pianist and I used to sit at her side, looking over her shoulder. I was the youngest sibling of six in the family and one of my brothers was a jazz fan and he exposed me to that music, and I was impressed with him and his friends in the way that they reacted to the music. This was back in the ’50s so it was vinyl and they would take the needle and put it back to the passage that they loved, over and over, and that impressed me. That impressed me. Also, the names of the artists stood out – Bird, Diz, Monk, Hawk, Newk, and Miles. Those names, for me—I was young, a pre-teen—those names were like fantasy names. I was captured by that, the excitement that my brother displayed and by the unusualness of those names, and from that moment on, I wanted to do that. When I got into high school, I wanted to join the jazz band, but I was also required to play in the orchestra, which also doubled in playing as the marching band for the sports teams and a yearly parade. For the marching band, of course you couldn’t carry a piano around, so they gave me a glockenspiel, which wasn’t pleasing to my ear. I asked instead to play a horn, such as a trumpet, but there was already a line to play that, so my instructor gave me a euphonium to play. It has the same fingering system as a trumpet so the idea was that in the future, I would be able to switch to trumpet when a chair became available. But it so happened by coincidence, the Mouthpiece for the euphonium was the exact same as the one used for the trombone. I wanted to join the jazz band at school but there was no precedent, at that time, for a euphonium in jazz, but there was a precedent for trombone in jazz, so the trombone came into my life, and it became my livelihood. I wasn’t aware at the time that the trombone wasn’t the premiere jazz instrument, perhaps I would have made a different choice had I known.

JI: You had to learn to stand up for yourself in order to be heard.

JP: Yes, as a result of me choosing the trombone, I had to be aggressive on stage. I would go to various jam sessions in Chicago and there was competition to get to the microphone. The saxophone players could play for a long time because there were no endurance issues that there were for the trumpet and trombone players. It became my habit to get to the microphone before the
saxophone players and that aggressive approach turned into a plus, an asset, in terms of my attitude, my image, and the impact that I had on the audience. It gave the message that I was ‘special,’ to the audience, and I guess I carried that attitude with me throughout my whole career, especially if there was a saxophone player in the band. [laughs] That competitive spirit was alive and well and influenced my musical character on stage. I’m blessed as a result of having that experience and assuming that posture.

JI: The famous ‘Captain’ Walter Henri Dyett was the musical director at DuSable High School, where you trained. There are numerous colorful stories about his tough love schooling. What can you share about your time with him?

JP: I have to mention Norman Vincent Peale, whose philosophy Captain Dyett mentioned to his students to make us aware of the power of positive thinking. He did that to shape our minds. He outlawed the word can’t. if you used that word, you were punished, maybe even kicked out of class. He insisted on discipline and honesty, and those ideas I’ve kept close to me even to this day, and I credit that attitude to explain the success that I’ve garnered in my career. I came into the school band with some musical knowledge – I could already read music and had studied the piano. I was a little ahead of most of the students in the class and Captain Dyett recognized that I had a little attitude. He once asked me to play a passage from one of the concert pieces. I was still playing the euphonium and the baritone horn at that point, and he asked me to play this gorgeous euphonium solo. He came and stood behind me and rested his hand on my shoulder, which had the effect of destroying my confidence and impairing my ability to play that particular solo, although I had already played it many times before. What he was doing with his hand on my shoulder, he was gradually tightening his grip, and you can imagine the effect that that had on me. He tightened his grip, which made it personal. It was somewhat painful, and I could not ignore it. He was doing that to knock me off my perch, my attitude that I was better could not ignore it. He was doing that to knock me off my perch, my attitude that I was better, which had the effect of destroying my confidence and impairing my ability to play that particular solo, although I had already played it many times before. What he was doing with his hand on my shoulder, he was gradually tightening his grip, and you can imagine the effect that that had on me. He tightened his grip, which made it personal. It was somewhat painful, and I could not ignore it. He was doing that to knock me off my perch, my attitude that I was better could not ignore it. He was doing that to knock me off my perch, my attitude that I was better.

JI: Charles Davis recruited you into Sun Ra’s band [1952-3] when you were 17 and still in high school. At the time, Sun Ra was having difficulty attracting musicians because they felt his music and arrangements were strange, his rehearsals were 7 days a week, 8 hours long, and filled with lectures. What attracted you to him?

JP: My love of music. I would play whether there was money involved or not. If there was an opportunity to play some music, I was there. I had a good relationship with Sun Ra, but what changed everything at seventeen was that I got married and that became an influential element in my life. I had to become more serious about making money. With Sun Ra, we played every day, rehearsing for little or no money, and as a married person I found that particular situation undoable. It came to a head after we had an engagement that lasted for eleven weeks, and every week the money would be short, and at the end of the eleven weeks, I calculated that I had been paid for seven of those weeks. That convinced me that I should leave Sun Ra and find work to support my family. We were suffering. I attempted to find a real job, [laughs] and that didn’t work out because I felt that I was being taken advantage of. I was working in this mail order house with the promise that after a certain amount of time I’d be getting a raise, and when that time expired, instead of getting a raise, they transferred me to another department which required another seven weeks before I would be eligible for a raise. I left that job because if I was to suffer, I was going to suffer as a musician. So I left Sun Ra, and Richard Evans, a fellow student at DuSable who was working as a bassist for Lionel Hampton’s band, recommended me when the trombone chair became available, and that’s how I joined that band.

JI: How were things with Lionel Hampton?

JP: The money situation was strange there too, although I did get paid every time I worked, but only when I worked. I didn’t make a weekly salary, or anything like that. I got paid a paltry rate because I was one of the youngest members of the band. Lionel Hampton took advantage of me. I was inexperienced yet qualified to do the job and he felt that he did not have to pay me the same amount that he paid the more experienced, older musicians. I stuck with him because I loved to play but when the opportunity came to leave the band, I took advantage of it. The end came when his band had a tour of Australia, along with the Stan Kenton Orchestra, and what the promoters decided to do was to take half of each of the orchestras and have the leaders take their turn with the band. So, as a young member, it was decided that I would not make that tour. I was to stay in New York City and wait for them to return. I still had a wife and two kids in Chicago that I had to send money to. Here I was in New York, without a salary, told that if I was still there when the band came back from Australia, I had a job waiting for me. I still had to pay rent, which eliminated my ability to send money back to Chicago, so I left Lionel Hampton’s band for that reason. Fortunately, one of the saxophone players in Lionel Hampton’s band, Eddie Chamblee, had just married Dinah Washington and he was interested in putting together a small group to tour with her. He asked me if I was interested, and since I was stranded in New York, I had no choice but to say yes. I was desperate. So, I went on the road with Dinah Washington and a weekly salary that rescued me from poverty. Dinah lived in New York, so I put a lot of time there, and a year later, I made the official move from Chicago to New York City by bringing my family there. It worked out great. I was accepted as an available trombonist and I was getting work. I’m proud of having the rare distinction of performing with four major drummers at that time – Philly Joe Jones, Max Roach, Elvin Jones and Art Blakey. I feel unique in that regard, to have worked with all of those giant “Artists.”

JI: What was the demand for trombonists at the time you moved to New York in 1958-’59?

JP: There was work commercially for trombonists. I hired myself out to the Yonkers Pops Orchestra, as a requirement actually, to be eligible to play for the Broadway shows. You had to have had some orchestra experience to be hired so I used that to qualify me. I did that for several years until I had good opportunities to play jazz. I got a leave of absence from the theater to go to Europe with the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Orchestra and then a couple months later, I got a call from the bassist in the Duke Ellington Orchestra. Apparently, the trombone player hadn’t shown up. (Continued on page 24)
Julian Priester

(Continued from page 23)

up for this recording session, so I showed up to the recording studio and made a recording on one piece with Duke Ellington Orchestra. That put me in the position to be thought about when the trombone chair became available in that band. When it opened up, I applied for a leave from the pit orchestra at the Shubert Theatre to go on the road for a State Department tour to the Asia, but would you believe that I was not granted to take another leave since I had taken a leave earlier? So, I quit and that ended my commercial career in New York City. I guess I was put on the do not hire list because I didn’t receive anymore calls to appear with the theater, but I was happy with that because my heart was in performing jazz music as a creative artist.

JI: Did Duke Ellington influence you an artist?

JP: I think Duke Ellington helped me adopt my future attitude. We were leaving the army base in Laos, flying to Thailand, on an army airplane with its hard-future attitude. We were leaving the army base. Did Duke Ellington influence you an artist? I guess I was put on the do not hire list because I didn’t receive anymore calls to appear with the theater, but I was happy with that because my heart was in performing jazz music as a creative artist.

JI: Johnny Griffin introduced you to Orrin Keepnews (V.P. of Riverside Records at the time) who gave you a job in the label’s shipping department. You worked there with Philly Joe Jones, Chet Baker, and Kenny Dorham. Talk about that experience.

JP: [Laughs] Oh, boy, that enabled me to pay my rent. Orrin Keepnews was a gem. He helped introduce me to the musical community and gave me the opportunity to record. I credit him with giving me my start. I was the youngest working there and I was just in awe of Philly Joe Jones, Chet Baker, and Kenny Dorham, especially Kenny Dorham, who was one of my heroes as a bebopper. My ego was blown in the presence of those players, they were on another level. I was young and clean, not exposed to the other side of “the jazz life” that involves alcohol and drugs, whereas everyone of those gentlemen were. [Laughs] They were veterans. There was one incident that occurred there that stands out. Philly Joe Jones and Chet Baker were observed on the corner of 125th and 7th Avenue, selling Riverside records out of boxes taken from the recording studio and made a recording on piece with Duke Ellington Orchestra. That put me in the position to be thought about when the trombone chair became available in that band. When it opened up, I applied for a leave from the pit orchestra at the Shubert Theatre to go on the road for a State Department tour to the Asia, but would you believe that I was not granted to take another leave since I had taken a leave earlier? So, I quit and that ended my commercial career in New York City. I guess I was put on the do not hire list because I didn’t receive anymore calls to appear with the theater, but I was happy with that because my heart was in performing jazz music as a creative artist.

JI: You made a number of memorable recordings with Roach including 1960’s We Insist! Freedom Now Suite which was done during the peak of the Civil Rights Movement. What was the reaction from the audience to that music, particularly the white audience?

JP: Back in New York, people supported Max and his efforts to bring attention to the horrible situation that African Americans were subject to, as far as opportunities that were available to them. It was time for change, and we were part of the community there and they were part of us. The listeners were educated and realized we were all humans. It’s a mystery to me how people, any people, can feel ownership of the world, of our space. We all own this globe.

JI: The violent side of Max Roach is well documented, and you may have set the record for being attacked three times by him. The first inci-

“I have to mention Norman Vincent Peale, whose philosophy Captain Dyett mentioned to his students to make us aware of the power of positive thinking. He did that to shape our minds. He outlawed the word can’t. if you used that word, you were punished, maybe even kicked out of class.”
“I happened to have a conversation with Duke about an upcoming recording project ... if it was going to be released, I would like to be paid for it ... Duke’s reply was classic. He said, ‘Well, what do you want, Julian? After all, you’re just a trombone player.’ Hello! [Laughs] That knocked me off my feet. That changed my whole attitude about myself and the direction I should be going in.”

waited for the music to start up again, Max left the microphone and walked over to where I was and squatted me in the face. Bam! Out of the blue, unexpected, unanticipated, and for no reason that I knew. I was stunned. [Laughs] My reaction was to quit. I left the stage, packed my horn up, and I was on my way back to New York, but the club owner came to the dressing room, saying he was sent by Max asking me not to quit. It was a Sunday matinee and he wanted to finish the engagement. So, me, as a nice guy, accepted what was extended as an apology. But I asked the club owner why Max wasn’t there himself with the apology, so the owner left and shortly thereafter, Max arrived, and he was so pent-up that he was talking through his teeth. His teeth were clenched, he was talking without opening his mouth. I went back on stage and during the middle of my solo, on the first song we played, I didn’t hear any drums. My back was turned to the drums and when I turned around to see why I couldn’t hear the drums, Max was actually climbing over the drums, coming towards me, and the expression on his face was rage. He came up to me and we tussled at Pep’s Showbar in Philadelphia. The stage was elevated inside of this oval-shaped bar. We wrestled on stage, knocked the drums over, which were on a higher riser, and they fell into the bar area, knocking over a few bottles of whiskey, and then Max and I actually rolled off the stage. I think it was the bartender who was the only one that threw any actual blows because Max and I were tussling. [Laughs] Meanwhile, the audience was applauding. They reacted as if it was entertainment. Of course, we got fired and went back to New York. About 3 o’clock in the morning, I got a phone call from Max asking me to accompany him to go see his psychiatrist, which I agreed to do. It was then that I learned that Max had a condition where when he drank alcohol, his body did not process it, it built up in his body. He had been drinking as a result of Booker being ill, and he didn’t have control over his emotions, and he attacked me as a tonic. He was relieving himself of some of the angst. He knew I wasn’t gonna’ hurt him. I learned at that moment that Max was attacking me for a forgivable reason. I didn’t have any hard feelings and we collaborated after that.

JJP: The second Roach incident came shortly after you rejoined him. This time you were at his apartment celebrating Abbey Lincoln’s birthday. JI: I brought my girlfriend with me and she and I were in the kitchen talking. Max came into the kitchen and attacked me. He grabbed me by my shoulders and was just shaking me. I was standing in front of these kitchen cabinets and my head was bouncing off the cabinets. My reaction was to stop him from shaking me and so I struck him in the face and knocked out the cap that was on one of his front teeth. He bled from that on my suit and I startled a few people when I got on the elevator with all this blood on my clothes. It’s all water over the bridge. I’m not angry, all of that’s forgiven. Max and I, we love each other and nothing’s gonna’ change that. I understand that he was mentally ill. I kind of suspect that he resented the fact that I had brought my girlfriend to his apartment. I don’t know, I don’t have any proof of that. We never spoke of that issue afterwards.

JJP: Why would he resent that? Were you married at the time?

JI: No, I was divorced, but we did later marry. Max had certain ideas about male-female relationships that I was not privy to. Max had lived in the jazz world and had been exposed to the dark side of that. My girlfriend had had experiences on that dark side, and I think Max became aware of that and lost respect for me, which led to that incident. He shook me in an effort to “wake me up,” at least that’s how I’m interpreting it. Again, we never fell out of our friendship after that, although I did perform less often with him due to having other opportunities.

JJP: After Roach, you settled in as Blue Note Records’ unofficial on-call studio trombone musician, as well as working often with Atlantic Records from 1965-67. How did you get that opportunity?

JI: Because of my work with Max and my work on Philly Joe Jones’ Blues for Dracula recording, which impressed Max and was instrumental in Max taking me on in his band, other jazz artists thought that including me on their recordings would be beneficial to their project. I have to mention Duke Pearson. He was like the musical director for Blue Note Records, and he had a large ensemble that I was also performing in. When Blue Note was looking to use a trombonist, I was the natural choice as a member of the Duke Pearson Orchestra because I was right there and available.
ended in a bad experience, this time over money.

**JP:** Yes. Art respected me. I have to acknowledge that, but he put me in an [awkward] position where I had to defend the band against his outside habit of taking the money he was supposed to pay the band and using it to buy drugs, so there was no money to pay the band. The incident that broke the camel’s back came after we had performed in Boston. After the performance, Art instructed us to meet him at the place I was staying once we got back to New York to get our money. So, here’s the band, waiting at my place for Art to come by and pay us. We waited all night. The sun was coming up and we were still waiting on Art. I tried to call him, and he would not answer. His wife answered and she just made excuses for him. When the sun came up, I decided that I wasn’t gonna’ wait any longer, I was just going to go to Art’s house and get the band’s money. So, we went to his house and banged on his door. At first, he wouldn’t answer, so we continued to bang on his door. We could hear recorded music playing inside. Because of the noise that we were making, one of his neighbors opened their door, saw these black guys banging on Art Blakey’s door and yelled, “Call the police!”

**JI:** Hancock used a lot of post-production work on the recordings. Did you always like what he did to your sound?

**JP:** I accepted it because of my attitude that all music is valid. I used to resent electronic music because I thought it was demeaning to acoustic music. I prefer to be doing acoustic music although electronics add another instrument—the use of synthesizer. You can’t really imitate the sound of live instrument, it’s not real sounding and sound is what drives response. Music is special because not only will it attract your attention, it stimulates your emotion.

**JI:** I have inside information that Hancock didn’t pay extravagantly well at the time. It was $300 per week and you had to cover your own meals and hotel rooms.

**JP:** That’s true, but I was happy to have the opportunity to play that music regardless of the circumstances. It reminds me of working with Lionel Hampton. [Hampton’s] salary was not weekly, it was $25 only on the days that the band worked. Working with Herbie was a wonderful experience for me. It was a learning experience and I was exposed to venues and audiences that I never would have had the opportunity to be exposed to if not for that association. One experience leads to the next experience.

**JI:** How was it decided that all members of Mwandishi would take a Swahili name and how did you come to be Pepo [pay-po] Mtoto, as well as “Spirit Child?”

**JP:** That came about from an association that Herbie and Buster Williams had established with Tootie Heath’s son, who influenced them to adopt Swahili names in support of the spiritual movement by African Americans to draw attention to the people who were suffering because of the social environment they were living in. It also attracted attention to the band, having these names. It set the band up in a different category of not just being jazz players, but jazz players with unique properties. We were devoted to the music and to each other, and we were projecting a certain character. My name came about after one of the first engagements we had, which was up in Vancouver. In the hotel, we each had cooking units. I invited the band for breakfast to my apartment and cooked a whole breakfast.
Julian Priester

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They were impressed by that effort, they enjoyed the meal, so they selected an African name for me that translated into being “The Great Cook.” Now that did not define me at all. So I rejected that name, and when they inquired into what I wanted to be called. The name “Spirit Child” came to mind so they translated Spirit Child into Swahili and they called me Pepo Mto-to. So, I’ve lived with that name ever since, at least amongst my family and close friends. I think I’m somewhat of a spiritual person, personality-wise, coming from the experience of coming up in the church.

JP: Mwandishi was special, that’s obvious when hearing the ex-members of the band speaking about it. When you performed in Philadelphia recently you opened up on stage about the two tragic losses in your life – the death of your mother when you were nine, and the time Herbie Hancock disbanded Mwandishi. Would you address the breakup of the Mwandishi band?

JP: That was devastating because of the importance of what we were doing. The members of the band felt that we were innovators and that we were on the path to be special. We presented that to the audience through our music. Originally, when I first joined the band, we had the idea that we were gonna’ be a cooperative organization with everyone contributing to the music, which we did, idea-wise and material-wise. We thought that we could do this cooperative group, but it didn’t work on the business side. We didn’t know that at the start. We were just overjoyed at being brothers in this musical adventure but the management, David Rubenstein and his organization, denied this. The main reason was that on the contract there was only one individual’s signature, and that was Herbie’s. The rest of the band was just hired musicians to accompany Herbie, which I don’t agree with that philosophy. I personally avoid being regarded as a sideman.

JI: Stanley Crouch in his book Considering Genius described Mwandishi as, “one of the great ones of the era and perhaps any. No one had ever heard anything like it... Had it lasted, a strong alternative to what became known as fusion would have been out there to inspire others to hold on.”

JP: Yes, I support that thought. One of the reasons that I was in love with that band, all of us were striving to reach forward, trying to increase our musical output, not just the sound of the music, but understanding the importance that music has, its impact on the human psychic, and recognizing that, it puts music in a different category. It’s more than entertainment, it’s more than just background entertainment. My goal has been for the music to reach that level. Hallelu-iah, [Laughs] to borrow a term from the church. [Laughs]

JI: After Mwandishi you made your own classic fusion album Love, Love [1974, ECM] before returning to your acoustic music roots. What was your attraction to making fusion records as a leader? Did that music resonate with you or was that for financial reasons?

JP: No, it was the music. It wasn’t financial at all. It was an extension of the music that I was involved with when I was working with Herbie. Pat Patrick was very instrumental in providing the electronics with the Herbie organization, and the idea to do the Love, Love album was actually a combination of Pat and my own ambition to extend the music that we were making with Herbie. I saw the impact that the Mwandishi band had on listeners and we wanted to continue that. Of course, with me being a trombonist, my having access to the sophistication of electronic music was limited, so I wasn’t able to continue along that path. Not that I would have accepted doing only that. I don’t think that would be very wise, to have only one style. I don’t subscribe to that. I would not hesitate to perform rock n’ roll, or blues, or soul music, or even Dixieland if the opportunity presents itself.

JI: The bulk of your latter career was spent teaching at Seattle’s Cornish College of the Arts [1979-2011] which you take great pride in. Were you surprised that you enjoyed teaching so much and what aspect of it did you enjoy the most?

JP: I enjoyed the music element of it. I was brought there to teach improvisation, the elements of music, and to develop the skills and attitude that are necessary to develop a devotion to music that will inspire one to not be affected by the perils that accompany the life of a jazz musician, the incompatibility of the jazz life with domestic life. I knew very many potential jazz players who would still be valid if it hadn’t been for the pressure put on them to provide food and shelter. The jazz life is not dependable. There are choices to be made in order to follow the musical path. You really have to ignore other aspects of social life in order to be successful as a musical artist. It demands too much time and commitment.

JI: That’s quite harsh criticism.

JP: I’m really saddened at the incompatibility of the jazz life and domestic life. I’m on my third marriage and failure of the first two were directly influenced by schisms between supporting a family and performing. It’s sad and I’m suffering emotionally as a result of that. I can’t even devote myself to either of them, one is taking away from the other, and I want to be a full participant in both. I don’t like being bitter. I still want to hold onto the philosophy that Walter Henner Dyett instilled in me that positive thinking will pay off. Don’t use the word can’t. Don’t use it, don’t think it. You can, always.

JI: How do you relay this information about the jazz life to students without crushing their dreams?

JP: Yes, I do talk about this, I emphasize it. I stress innovation and using what’s right there in front of you. Recognize the element that can be incorporated into the music you create. I make them aware of the music that’s in the air around us. Motion creates sound. Everything is evolving, and that in itself is gonna’ create sound. It’s gonna’ move air and create sound, especially when it comes in contact with objects. I teach to open your ears and identify what you are listening to.

JI: How active were you as a performing artist during your teaching career in Seattle?

JP: There was a lot of music when I got to Cornish and I wasn’t just teaching while I’ve lived here. I remained very active. I went on the road with Charlie Haden, as well as the Timeless All-Stars. I went to Europe with George Gruntz and toured with Lester Bowie. I was also in a group called Quartett with Jay Clayton, Jerry Granelli, and Gary Peacock, who were all also faculty members of the college. I also did a lot of work with Hadley Caliman, who was living up here, as well as recording on Diane Schuur’s first record. My most recent group, Priester’s Cue, was made up of Cornish graduates – pianist Dawn Clement, drummer Byron Vannoy and Geoff Harper on bass. An album was already released featuring that band and we also recorded a beautiful album at Van Gelder Studio which I am looking to release now.

JI: Unfortunately, you’ve dealt with some very significant health-related issues during your latter years. You survived two organ transplants – a liver transplant in 2000, as well as a kidney transplant a few years later, as a result from taking the anti-rejection medication needed for the liver transplant. If that wasn’t enough, you lost your home when you were unable to work with your ailments.

JP: Not only that, there were age issues. Cornish College decided they wanted a younger faculty and they invited me to retire which, because of my health issues, I accepted their invitation because my health was impacting on the students. But, along with that, the college did not offer a pension to its faculty, so upon retirement, I was out of an income. I wasn’t performing much either because I had been off the scene in academia, so people were not thinking to use me as a trombone player. I’m not working now as a jazz artist, so economically I’m not footing the bill here. It’s not working. I could go out and be a trombone player for hire any day but that’s not where my heart lies. At my age, I feel I deserve to be who I want to be and it’s a struggle. I’m still picking up the trombone, making music.

JI: I hope this interview and the others to follow get the word out that you are back as a jazz
artist. You recently toured with pianist David Haney and the music played was totally improvised. Is that how you’re playing these days? What type of music attracts you now?

JP: On occasion, I will play with David [in a totally free setting]. It’s something that I’m used to doing since the days of Sun Ra. I enjoy doing creative music like this, working with a sensitive artist who also listens and accompanies without letting their ego influence their musical ideas. I like people who can join in as a musical unit so that we are all playing the same music at the same time. The object is to pair up ideas.

JI: What are your interests outside of music?

JP: I like good food. I like TV but I find it confusing, you’ve got to sit there and watch it. I came up with the radio and you didn’t have to sit there with the radio. You could move around and still absorb it. I like educational documentaries on TV, but I don’t like the normal television fare. I don’t find it appealing only because of the use of time that I could be using for more rewarding projects. I could be writing music, reading books, gaining knowledge, just being aware of what’s around me. I listen to NPR and MSNBC, which is one of my favorites.

Robin Eubanks (trombone) asked: “I was honored to follow you as the trombonist in Dave Holland’s band. What do you feel are the advantages or disadvantages about playing in a band, such as David’s, with no chordal instruments [piano, guitar, vibes]?”

JP: First of all, I was used to that with my relationship with Max Roach. He wasn’t using a keyboard, so it wasn’t an oddity. I really enjoyed creating music with Dave because his musical taste was on the cutting edge of pushing music forward. He wasn’t about regurgitating something that had already been alive.

Famoudou Don Moye (percussion) asked: “My memories of performing with you are numerous and always a source of pride and respect. My question is how you felt about the fun, excitement and challenges of playing with Lester Bowie’s Brass Fantasy and touring with Lester Bowie’s N.Y. Organ Ensemble. I know that we had some great moments!”

JP: Yeah, we did. Another similar situation where the music was on the cutting edge, it was out front, it wasn’t trying to impress anyone. It was telling the truth about life, about music. It was harsh in parts, and that’s part of life, it’s all valid, and the individuals in the band were all of the same mind, attitude and approach to the music that was being created. We weren’t tied down to musical tradition. Again, it was like Sun Ra’s music. The band was out of Chicago and came out of the same environment. They weren’t looking to regurgitate music and there was a social message in the music. There was a courage needed just to participate in introducing music of that style. It was amazing and that music was important as a mirror of society.

Curtis Fowlkes (trombone) said: “I remember seeing Monk at BAM on a double bill with Art Blakey. You were in the front line of Blakey’s band, along with tenor player Billy Harper and trumpeter Bill Hardman. I wonder if you remember that night because Monk ended his set by walking offstage and not returning, and people were boozing to the point where Blakey came out and scolded the audience. I was in a group of young teenagers who were sponsored by the community organization with tickets to attend the performance and we weren’t understanding of the mental issues that plagued Monk.”

JP: I remember that. He was a character. Take a close look and examine Thelonious Monk, his character. He was not a person who felt that it was necessary to suck up to the audience. He, like Miles Davis, felt that the music that he was producing was important and valuable, and that’s enough. If he wanted to get off the piano and walk around, it was his prerogative. That was his character, and I think because of that, he qualified to be on the cover of Time Magazine. If that’s not respect, what is? [Laughs] I love him for his uniqueness.

Samuel Blaser (trombone) asked: “Here’s a question that’s been with me for some time. ECM Records doesn’t seem to have many trombone players as a leader in its catalogue. You may be the only one, along with Yves Robert. You recorded two wonderful albums - Love, Love and Polarization for the label. Is there any specific reason why you didn’t record more music for Manfred Eicher? I wonder if Eicher really likes the trombone.”

JP: I don’t think it was that simple. I think it was due to the implementation of Manfred’s association with the label. He regarded the label as his instrument and the product of that label was his creation. He insisted upon control of personnel. For instance, on the Polarization album, he didn’t approve of my drummer. He wanted to cancel the recording session, reschedule, and bring Billy Hart over from New York to play drums. I felt that that was a little bit over stepping his position, although I understand that he was the owner of the company. What capped off the relationship between me and Manfred happened as a result of another incident. I was in Europe performing with George Gruntz’ band recording for ECM and I realized that I was being treated as a sideman in Gruntz’ band. I wasn’t being given the opportunity to solo and that went against my whole personality. So, I mentioned it to Manfred. I told him that I wasn’t very happy with what was going on. He resented me approaching him in that way so that created a schism in our relationship. I know that was years ago and I should not be harboring any ill feelings towards Manfred because of that incident, but it did create a sour note in my attitude towards Manfred and I never approached him again to do any recordings for his label.

Richard Davis (bass) [also a Captain Dyett student] asked: “Would you talk about your experience with Clifford Jordan?”

JP: Oh, good question. Clifford, a fellow DuSablelite. We became dear friends in Chicago, musically and personally, and Clifford was inspirational. I mentioned earlier that I drew my inspiration from saxophone players and Clifford was one of the saxophonists who influenced my musical output. I remained friends with Clifford after I moved to New York. He was living there. We collaborated on musical projects and recordings. As a matter of fact, the apartment that I was living in during the Art Blakey era was originally Clifford’s apartment. He had moved in with his wife and so that apartment became available and he let me take it over. Clifford was a hustler, I mean he knew how to get work. He was preaching to me how to approach the venue owner and ask him how much he would charge me to perform in his place. Now that’s odd, so odd that the more I thought about it, the more sense it made. How much to rent the place and all the funds that came through the door would be mine after I paid the owner a commission. It did make business sense, but it was an approach that was so different from anything that I had ever been exposed to, it wowed me. I didn’t know how to deal with it. Of course, I never tried to implement it, I didn’t have the wherewithal to do it. I admired Clifford for his mind, musically and streetwise. I saw it as a benefit for me to adopt his street knowledge when dealing with business, but I just didn’t have the courage. [Laughs]

Steve Swell (trombone) asked: “It was phenomenal playing and hanging with you recently. On [Max Roach’s] Freedom Now Suite you take a terrific solo on “Freedom Day.” How many takes were needed for that tune and how many in general for the session?”

JP: Oh my God, I don’t remember. That’s too long ago but I would think it all went down in one take. In fact, I do recall Max was not involved in over dubbing or multi-recording. His attitude when he was performing was so disciplined that everything worked on the first time through, and I believe that’s what happened on that album. As far as my solo, I remember the terror of having been put in this position where I had to play those fast tempo [songs]. The trombone, on a fast tempo, is terrorizing, particularly as fast as Max Roach plays, [Laughs] but you find a way to survive.
Julian Priester

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Steve Swell also asked: “What are your spiritual practices? Meditation or a formal practice?”

JP: It’s difficulty for me to put it into a category but I think meditation perhaps would be relative to my practice. I dropped out from going to church after my mother passed away. My experience at the funeral was devastating for me. I lost it, I lost it, and I’m still suffering from that. Uhm, even talking about it makes me uncomfortable. I’m still under the influence of Captain Dyett, and you can put that in the category of a spiritual practice. I’m spiritually devoted to being positive and denying negative responses to the events of daily life. That’s my practice, and so far, I’m satisfied. I’m still alive. I’ve made it past the 83rd revolution around the Sun. What more can I ask for?

Steve Davis (trombone) said: “You are a true master who’s worked as a sideman on so many recordings. A few of my favorites being McCoy Tyner’s Tender Moments, Freddie Hubbard’s Hub Cap, work with Max Roach, as well as Herbie Hancock’s Mwandishi! I love your 1960 Keep Swingin’ recording. With that said, my question is having played with such an array of masters over many decades, how have you approached delivering the language of jazz music through the trombone?”

JP: My love for music made it so that at the drop of a hat, I will play, and I’ve carried that attitude with me all these years. I was also influenced by Max Roach in terms of commanding dignity for the music. I believe that I hit the nail on the head when I said I really didn’t need an excuse [to play]. I wasn’t doing it for the money, so anytime there was an opportunity to play some music, I was there. That was my attitude when I was doing all that recording with all those people that I loved. It was all the same to me. After my conversation with Duke Ellington when he was accusing me of being just a trombone player, I started thinking that I should be emphasizing the artistic element, and that’s what I did.

Joseph Bowie (trombone) asked: “I admire your tasteful and modern approach to improvising. Do you use chord patterns/scales to fashion your solos or do you create your own original phrases?”

JP: I would think it’s a mixture of both. In learning music, I went through the path of learning the relationship of chordal movement and how it impacts the flavor of the music. For instance, if you compare the music of Thelonious Monk to the music of Horace Silver, both are brilliant, but radically different from each other. Chords are integral to producing music. Without chords you can make sounds that can be musical sounds but without the organization that is afforded with using chords, the music will not sound familiar and that’s important if you want listeners to relate to it. If they can’t relate to it, it falls into another category such as noise.

JI: So what is your connection to free music?

JP: I rejected free music because I recognized that it was not organized, and without organization how can you identify it? The term free music is a valid term, but it describes something that is separate from its relationship to history and the human experience. Music is a mirror image of life, and there are rough aspects of life, and perhaps free music does speak to that aspect, but it’s not something that pleases me as a listener. I enjoy creating, but even in that free environment, I want it to be musical. You have to use harmony and follow the melodic pattern, both are key elements in the manufacture of pleasant sounds. Free music is music, but I can’t connect emotionally to that. It doesn’t allow for intimacy.

Eddie Henderson (trumpet) said: “I have quite a few memories of you and I together. Do you remember the time you and I were riding across the country with the Mwandishi group? Everybody had separate cars, and at that time I had a Ferrari. You were in the car with me and in the middle of Utah or Wyoming I let you take over driving. You didn’t know what kind of car it was, you had thought it was just a little cheap sports car. We switched seats and after about an hour, you looked down and you’re cruising at 120 mph per hour, and you looked at me and said, ‘What kind of car is this?’ [Laughs] That was a rare moment. What memories do you have of being together with me?”

JP: My buddy, oh boy. Very pleasant memories of all the members of that group. We all became very close, but Eddie was special – musically and personally. He played the trumpet and was fulfilling his training as a doctor when I first met him, and we convinced him to stay with band which meant that he had to drop out of his training. His first inspiration was music and he gained a lot of respect for making that decision to stay in the music life for as long as he has, as well as staying in the medical field as a psychiatrist.

JI: Do you have a memory to share about Eddie Henderson?

JP: Well, I’ve got other memories but I’m not gonna’ publicize them! [laughs] Ask Eddie about it! Yeah, anyway, I love him. He’s great.

Jerry Granelli (drums) said: “We spent so many great hours talking about life, music, and all of it. I’ll never forget our conversation once after a concert in Vancouver with Jay Clayton. I said, ‘You sounded great, Priester,’ and you said, ‘Thanks, but I heard all that before. I’m really interested in what I haven’t played yet.’ That was not said with any sense of false humility, that’s you.”

JP: I can feel myself saying that. That fits right in with the mindset that I’ve had. Those two were also on the faculty of Cornish College of the Arts when I joined there. We had many opportunities to make music and share ideas.

Bennie Maupin (sax) said: “I simply can’t think of one question. You’re one of the few innovative giants of your generation that is still on this planet. My mystical brother, friend, and truly a musical mentor. Unsurpassed. What I can say is this - I’m eternally grateful for having spent a brief moment, live together with you, creating some of the most unique and beautiful music of my life. Words cannot express my gratitude and appreciation for the great Julian Priester. Thanks for the opportunity to sing my praises for the great musical spirit, AKA Pepo Mtoto.”

JP: Bennie is unique as a player, creator and artist. He is impressive personally. Our relationship is so intimate that we had both good times and bad times. Sometimes we were angry with each other, sometimes we were in love and demonstrated that love. It all turned out to be good – our relationship and the music we produced. I appreciate his comments and I believe that he is honest in his feelings for me, as I am with my feelings for him. You know, it pains me, it all stems from the Mwandishi band breaking up. It was a painful experience, and to this day, forty-years later, the pain is still there. I imagine Bennie also feels the same way.

[Addendum by Julian Priester’s wife- Nashira Priester]: The most hilarious thing we talked about when we read the interview was over the years I had the chance to ask a friend who was from Zimbabwe and I asked him and some other Zimbabweans, as well as looking it up on the computer, and, well, Pepo Mtoto does not mean “Spirit Child,” it means “Ghost Baby,” or “Demon Baby!” It’s so amusing but we can’t fix it now, it’s too late in life to be going away from “Spirit Child.” Our son has made a thesis film when he graduated from school with an art degree called Spirit Child.
Duduka Da Fonseca

Believe in what you do

By Eric Nemeyer

JI: Could you discuss your recent recording release and how it developed?

DF: I met Toninho (Horta) more than forty years ago and I can say that without exception I love all his compositions. I believe that Toninho deserves much broader recognition worldwide. In 2000 I had the pleasure to meet David Feldman when he was studying at the New School for Jazz and Contemporary Music in New York. We started playing together right away and the chemistry between us was man from the south of Brazil, Guto Wirtti. We started the session and I said to myself, “Wow! This rhythm session sounds so right! It feels like a walk on Ipanema Beach.” I came back to New York, and started to think that I really wanted to do a trio project with these two fabulous young musicians. At the time I was playing quite a bit with Toninho around Europe and in New York, with a project of mine called “Samba Jazz and the Music of Jobim.” Then the idea clicked in my head: “I am going to do a Trio album playing the music of Toninho Horta.” That same year I went back to Rio and we recorded the album. The recording process was a fantastic

“I love all his compositions. I believe that Toninho deserves much broader recognition worldwide.”

and we had many places to be play. I am so I taught and I have learned a lot watching and hanging with some fantastic musicians from that golden era of Brazilian Music even though I was a kid at the time. I learned from musicians like Edison Machado, Tenório Jr, Edison Maciel, João Palma, Milton Banana, Raul De Souza, Dom Salvador, Victor Manga, Sergio Barrozo Neto, Luis Carlos Vinhas, Tião Neto and many others, by watching them play and playing along with theirs albums, which I believe is a great way to learn. These days in Brazil is extremely difficult to play “Samba Jazz.” Most of my friends in Brazil make a decent living, either working in a studio playing commercial music, or playing for a pop star singer, and I think that is OK. As a matter of a fact Maucha Adnet, my wife is a singer and I love playing with her. I have played with many other singers and I really enjoy it, it is a completely different musical approach, and I like the challenge but in my opinion it should be an option, not the only option. I always wanted to meet and play with American Jazz musicians and mix Brazilian and American cultures. The only way that I found to pursue my dream was by moving to New York, the place where you find the best in the world. One of my musical goals in life, is to make a perfect blend of Samba and Jazz, and that is what I have been developing and refining my entire musical life.

JI: Talk about your move to the United States and the challenges and opportunities you experienced.

DF: In December of 1975, I moved to New York to follow my dream of playing with American Jazz musicians and blending these two beautiful cultures. Two months after I arrived in New York, I got called to do a recording session in Los Angeles. I played with the late, great trombone player Frank Rosolino, Raul de Souza, and performed a “drum duet” with Harvey Mason. I thought, “Wow, this is the American Dream!” I returned to New York and spent all of my money. I bought a beautiful set of Gretsch drums, another dream come true, and then everything changed. For more than one year, there was hardly any work. Although those were very difficult times, I would do it all over again. It has been a great learning experience and a fantastic journey. I am very proud to be one of a few musicians who in the late ‘70s helped revive the Brazilian Jazz scene in New York City. I have been blessed to play, record, and become friends with many wonderful musicians.

JI: What kinds of understandings have you discovered about people and or cultures in

(Continued on page 32)
Duduka DaFonseca

(Continued from page 30)

your travels and performances recently?

DF: I have learned that no matter where you play music is a universal language and chances are that you always going to touch someone. Also that no matter what, always play the music that you came prepared to play. Believe in it and just do it, always try to stick to your original plan... People feel and appreciate it when you are truthful to your music.

JI: Talk about what you’ve learned about leadership from one or more of the jazz artists with/for whom you have worked.

DF: I have learned a lot from different leaders in different ways, but they all share a very important common point, they hired you because they trust your musicality and they encourage you to pour your heart out when you play their music. That itself it is a fantastic learning process.

JI: What have you discovered about the business side of the music as a result of your associations recording for various labels, dealing with managers and venue decision makers?

DF: Dealing with managers and venue decision makers is another ball game. First of all you have to be lucky to have a good manager that likes and respect your music and is willing to help you. Dealing with venue decision makers is also a matter of find someone who wants to help your music to get heard. I have had good experiences with some, in New York Todd Barkan is definitely someone that has been helping me promote my music.

JI: Regarding my solo albums, I produced them myself, but was always open for the valuable suggestions of the musicians that played on them.

DF: We have been playing together for over twenty five years, and I believe that Trio Da Paz has a very original sound, which in my opinion is one of the most, if not the most valuable quality in music. Trio Da Paz is now in the process of recording another album, just the Trio. We always have a ball when we hit. We know each other so well, I believe that we have a telepathic vibe going on at times.

JI: Are there words of wisdom or guiding ideas - about life, business and or music - which provide foundations for your creative pursuits?

DF: Believe in what you do, and be persistent, very persistent.

...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.”

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**JI:** Could you talk about the role interactivity plays in your concept.

**JI:** Interactivity or interaction is to me the essence of this music. It’s the spirit that struck me in the very beginning of my playing career. Or, I would say it was even further before that. It goes back to my childhood—listening to jazz, listening to recordings my mom made, listening to records my mom would play around the house. That was more a feeling of a bunch of spirits getting together—just feeling that spirit of something that wasn’t so rehearsed. When I started playing, and improvising, that feeling continued on—as a spirit that moved me to want to play. The first time I improvised in the combo at school, I felt this feeling of complete and total fear, combined with absolute bliss of inspiration, and the opportunity for me to express myself.

**JI:** How old were you when you first started playing in that combo, and what kind of skills did you have at that point?

**JI:** I had basic trumpet skills. I had maybe a couple of octaves to work with. It was a sound that I didn’t like. I had a knowledge of piano—of tunes, of melodies, from hearing my mom play standards, and sitting at the piano and playing a little bit. I had had some piano lessons. So with those limited skills, I was able to kind of put the sound I was hearing in my head. I just started to fish around for ideas. Clark Terry calls it fishing for fingers—which means you know you’re just searching. You’re closing your eyes and hoping that you’ll land on a note that has something to do with the music. That was my first searching process. I was fourteen years old. I had just gone into grade eight. We had this fantastic band teacher who was intent on getting everyone soloing—and he did. He managed to get girls and guys soloing. He didn’t really care if they got upset, or started screaming and yelling, or got embarrassed. He really thought that it was important that the students had a chance to express themselves, in an idiom that was unknown territory. Not everyone in the school band program went on to be a musician. A lot of the people did. A lot of the people in the area that I grew up went on to be professional musicians and improvising musicians.

**JI:** Some musicians have indicated that interactivity isn’t always important—whether they’re playing free or whatever it is. I have difficulty imagining playing with other people and not having interactivity. Then you’re just using them as a platform for your own pleasure, or whatever you want to call it. Why have them there in the first place, if there’s not going to be some sort of dialogue—however abstract, or whatever form that might take. Ultimately, if you’re playing with other people, you’re also likely to be listening.

**JI:** Absolutely. I think that’s a great observation and a great question—if it’s a question. For me, that’s more to do with the mentality of being soloist versus the mentality of being an integrated player—being in a preferable situation. I’m reacting off of everything. Hopefully, I’m reacting for the audience and using the room sound, my own sound in relation to the system, the system, what it’s giving me back. Way deeper than that, I am reacting to every little nuance that goes on within my band. I feel that I can only express myself when I’m playing with players who are willing to be in that state. The way that I get off when I’m playing—nd it really is about getting off—is that I play with people who want to be part of the whole framing of my playing. They don’t see me as just some one that they can play time behind and that’s going to be good enough. Hopefully, we’re playing together because we want to get each other off and go where we don’t know the music is going to go—into the land of mystery. Then, of course, we need the skills, and the vocabulary to get musical thoughts and musical stories out of that experience.

**JI:** I was just listening to Wayne Dyer talk about the power of intention, and how living in the mystery of life is more important than living in what we already know. He talks about how we all come from this microscopic dot. It’s fascinating because he says if we turn up the microscope it does not tell you where you came from. Yes the dot came from your parents blissful union as he mentioned. But observation of the dot still doesn’t tell you where you came from. That is, ultimately there’s a soul that comes through the dot, that’s not about the physical thing.

**JI:** Right. Perfect. The soul coming through the dot is the real gift of being an improviser. That gift is the privilege of being a musician who gets to go to places. You get to play music with people who are willing to just open up themselves, and go into the unknown territory—whether its over a one-chord vamp, or its over “Grand Steps.” It’s not really so much about even the tune I’m playing anymore. It’s about how much we are going to make out of that tune together—from the minute we begin playing to the last breadth of the gig. Where are we going to get that music go? Again, that’s why the audience is so important. You can almost feel it—a force coming at you, in a positive or negative way. They are coming from a space where they’re open to anything. You don’t want to come into the gig with a set idea of how jazz sounds, and not be willing to go to the next place with it. That goes back to my early days of listening to music. I got caught up by the spirit of someone like Clark Terry—with his sound and his voice. I thought this guy has got to be crazy. He’s got to be hilarious. He can’t be just an upright guy in a suit, who just plays a certain way on every gig. There’s no way! I was right. As I got to know Clark over the years, I am constantly blown away with what an open spirit he is. That freedom in his playing defies category. It’s just great music from a great person.

**JI:** Well, I think if we’re going to grow as artists, we always want to be expanding our horizons. The moment you are stagnant you are dead. Unlike sports figures, many of whom peak (or earn lots of money to motivate an exit from sports) at 35 or 40, jazz musicians are really pursuing lifelong growth. It is all that life experience and understanding that we can infuse into our playing which is really amazing to me. I think it keeps you young.

**JI:** Absolutely. Look at these guys. Look at Roy Haynes. He’s 80 [something]. He’s just a kid. The important element to me in the music is to always remember to go for it—whether I’m writing or playing—that childlike state. I’ve been doing all these interviews with myself and essays for my website. I’ve been doing the ArtistShare thing. It has been really fun to just sort of think about what it was that turned me on in music. A lot of it is the same today. When I travel around the world, people ask me “what do you do for a living...what’s your job?” I say, well, I don’t really have a job. I just play. I’m like a kid. I put these things in this box, and I go from place to place, and I play. The traveling is a bit of work sometimes. So is the preparation and the business side, the management, doing everything on my own. That’s the work because it takes away from the playing. To find the balance in my life right now is also a big goal of mine. I want to find that balance where I’m constantly able to just take off and play.

**JI:** It’s hard. Most everyone is in the same situation. You want to practice and you want to play—but you also want to get paid at the end of the job.

**JI:** There’s also, overhead—you know, living in New York—especially if you’re doing self-pro-
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**JI:** You mention just a moment ago, that Roy Haynes and Clark are youthful in their eighties. You mentioned that you’re always thinking like a kid. One of my favorite quotes is by Ashley Montague who said, “don’t grow old in your adult qualities, but in your childlike qualities.” So that way you’re always young.

**IJ:** I want your book list Eric. Do you have a book list?

**JI:** Yeah, I do.

**IJ:** Can you put it in the magazine one day, I’d like to read it.

**JI:** I don’t have it here, but about fifteen to twenty years ago I started writing in these travel size journals—you know, those little agenda or date books. I began writing quotes that I like that I would see in books, books like *The Path of Least Resistance*, which is one of my favorite books. I couldn’t even begin getting into at first. Then, a light bulb went on. It made sense and began to come together—and I plowed through the book. There are others. Could you discuss your beginnings on trumpet.

**IJ:** I’m left handed. Trying to play the trumpet was very difficult thing for me because you play with the right hand. If I would go back to the beginning and not worry about that, I would “A” say it. I’m playing the trumpet left handed. Or, B I would not worry about the fact that I’m having to do this intensely, very intricate skill using a hand with which I have no coordination. I can’t throw a ball, I can hardly pick up a bottle of water without spilling it with my right hand.

**IJ:** That’s interesting that you play with your left hand. Some successful people take weaknesses and turn them into unique skills or selling points. Take Monk’s sound. Had he and Miles Davis been forced to go through the educational process that exists today, their technique, and unique sounds would have been sanitized.

**IJ:** Oh, it could have robbed them. In a way, mine was a very fortunate sort of handicap. I guess it’s a handicap. But for me, playing with my right hand was a struggle. The trumpet instructor said you played with your right hand and that’s it. It created a lot of stress in my life. I had three major injuries in my life. Those came as a result of the tension that came from playing with all that stress—forcing coordination to take place. Thankfully that situation taught me to do things outside of music that helped. I studied Chi Wong. I studied Yoga. I started exercising. I have to do all these physical and kind of spiritual exercises to keep things flowing and not injure myself. In addition to that though, the thing that was really cool was I couldn’t learn licks. I couldn’t remember them. My mind couldn’t memorize finger patterns that could lock me in. So I was actually forced to go for more of an original thought.

**JI:** You have to look at that as a good thing though. I used to look at all these “challenges” and “setbacks” as problems when I was starting. We’ve all experienced political power-plays, and egos and unfair criticism, and not getting jobs we wanted. You know, setbacks are painful at the moment. Then you grow. I now look at those problems as the very guiding posts that enabled me to stay on the path and get to where I have currently traveled, and accomplish certain things. It’s the impedited stream that sings.

**IJ:** Exactly

**JI:** I just read *The Four Agreements*. The author talks about how you can save yourself a lot of unnecessary suffering if you don’t care what people think or do.

**IJ:** I better write that one down. Cause you know we’re always working on ourselves here. Major self help.

**JI:** I think so. It’s a good thing really. If people want to remain stagnant and forever be locked in to their current level of understanding, that’s easy. On the other hand, Oliver Wendell Holmes said, “the mind once expanded to a larger dimension never retreats to its original size.”

**IJ:** I think that its about fear too. It’s a very scary thing too to move on from yourself and go into the unknown.

**JI:** But that’s what you’re talking about in the music—where you go on stage, or you’re at a session, or playing and trying new things. Of course, it’s easier to try things, and easier to grow when you’re surrounded by people who you like and who you trust. It gives you a little bit of a safety net.

**IJ:** Absolutely. You just have to go for it.

**JI:** Could you talk about you’re the kinds of process you go through when you are composing.

**IJ:** Well, my process unfortunately gets controlled by how busy I am, and how much I am on tour. My favorite process is when I have at least have a couple of weeks off, and I’m at home, and the business is out of the way. I can just completely let go of everything I have to worry about—as far as bills and taxes and things like that. I just sit at the piano and play melodies to the chords and record into my ipod. Or, I pick up my trumpet and do the same thing—while I’m practicing some music, or warming up on something. As soon as I feel an idea start to flow I record it in there. I try to find some logical relationships within those ideas. Then I start developing it in as many ways as possible. I took a couple of lessons with Kenny Werner. They really opened my mind up to the possibilities of just taking two different lines, writing one in treble clef and one in bass clef. And starting finding relationships between those lines. Or, taking one note in the bass line and one in the treble, and then looking at the interval, and coming up with every possible chord that relates to that. It’s really fun how you just start to find any relationship, and you start to create different pathways from those changes. Rhythms definitely inspire me. I was in Peru, twice. The Peruvian music—not the ambient flute music, but the African-influenced Peruvian music, the Creole they call it—has really got under my skin, with those twelve eight subdivisions. I’ve been sort of translating some of that music into more odd meter feelings as well. I’m keeping the lyrical feeling of the rhythms, and kind of expanding on them. Another thing is that arranging helps me a lot to come up with tunes. Often times I’ll arrange a tune, I’ll just get obsessed with some part of the tune and start to arrange it. Then I’ll realize later on, that it is so much more my tune than the tune it was. So I’ll just take that part and start coming up with a piece. There’s actually a tune on my record that started out as k.d. Lang tune. I deviated so far from it that I just changed the melody—just rewrote the melody. It’s like, that’s mine now. Part of the reason has to do with licensing and paying royalties. My song is so far from that tune, why should I pay to use this song when its not even that song anymore. When I’m talking about composing to students, I tell them to use every possible idea that you have to write with that could ever exist. I’ve done stuff with my husband. He’ll write half the tune and I’ll write the other half. It’s really fun because then it blows your ear off because his section is just the next section. Then he’ll add something after that. I’d like to get into that because it’s really a lot of fun. When we were dating, we were writing things together. Once he just faxed me a melody—no rhythms. I just took the melody and wrote some chord changes out of it. Then, he sent me the “A” section for a tune and I just wrote the bridge. That was it and the tune was done. I usually have a three way process for composing. One, is I play something on the trumpet then I write it down on some staff paper. Then I sit down at a piano, and mess around with that. Then I play again—maybe playing the piano with my left hand and then the melody with my right—to see how it sounds. Then maybe I record just a bass line with some of the chords. Then I might come up with another melody. Finally I’ll move to the computer because my writing is so messy. Then when I listen back, usually on the computer, and I see the music, that’s the final editing process. I’ll print it out. Then I’ll go back to the piano, or go back to the trumpet. It’s kind of this circular motion, of using whatever tools I have available to finish the tune. Or just to work on an idea. I definitely feel like a composer in process. I feel like a beginner in so many ways. I was playing so much, and not really writing as much as I wish I had. I think a lot of it had to do with my own obsession with wanting to be technically proficient on every level on my own instrument. Maybe I was obsessing a little too much with just playing the trumpet. But one of the things, I find that’s difficult is keeping that balance between the trumpet and writing. And it’s going to be a constant game to do that in my mind.

*Continued in the next issue of Jazz Inside Magazine*
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