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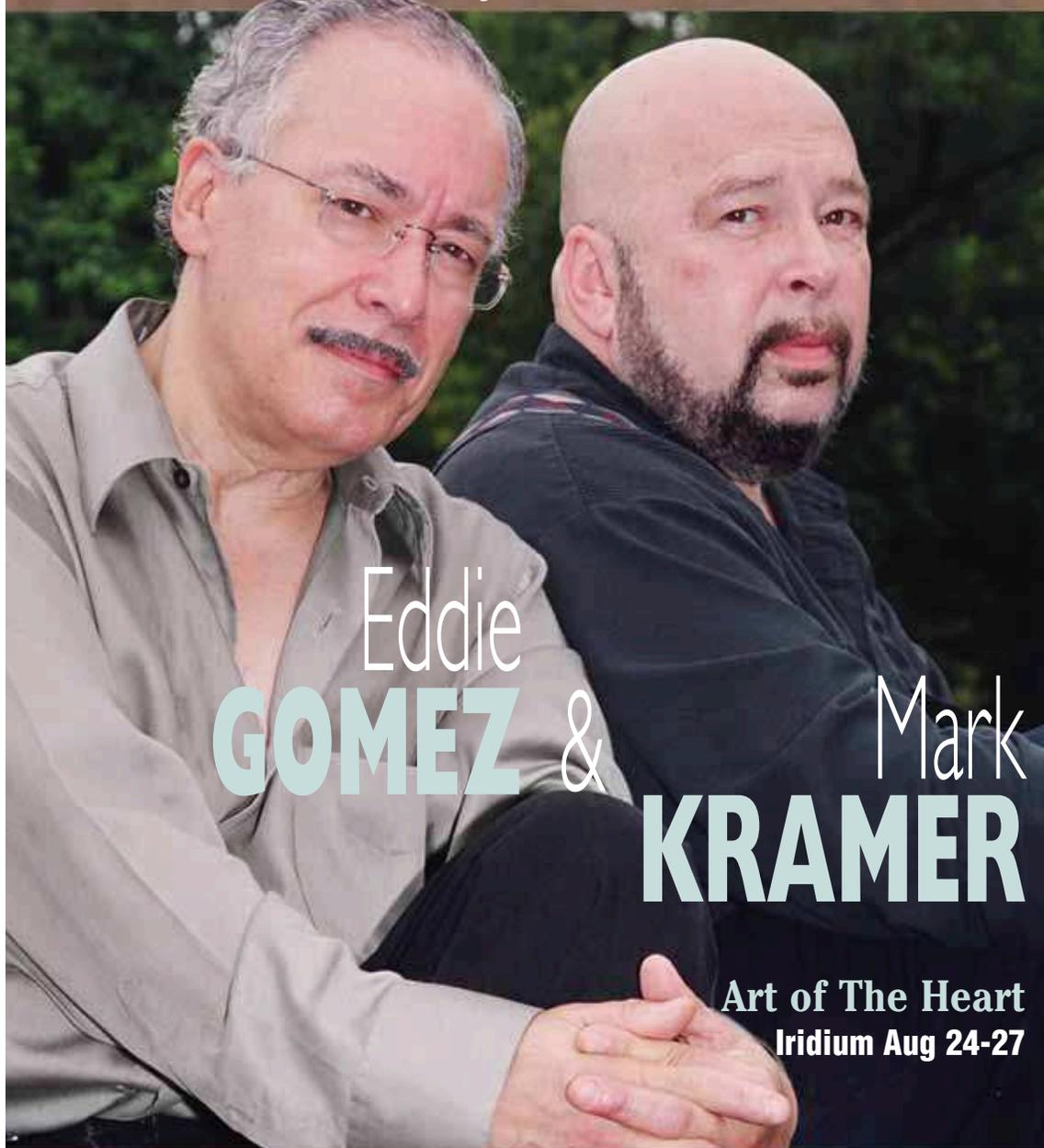
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Joe Giglio & Paul Bollenback
Live at 107 West
June 30, 2006

By Dan Adler

Friday nights with Joe Giglio at “107 West” (www.107west.com) have become a word-of-mouth tradition among NY-area jazz guitar fans over the past few years. Located at 107th Street and Broadway in Manhattan, this cozy neighborhood eatery specializes in reasonably priced Cajun cuisine, delicious deserts and a well-stocked bar. Although not everyone comes here to listen to the music on Fridays, there is always a dedicated group of fans who know that nothing can beat seeing your favorite artists from a few feet away, while enjoying some great food and wine with no cover charge or time limit. As Giglio likes to write in his weekly email announcements: “It’s the best jazz hang in town.”

If you look at the photos section of Joe Giglio’s website (www.joegiglio.com), you will see the vast array of jazz guitar legends that have played duets here with Giglio over the past few years. Famous local players like Jack Wilkins, Howard Alden, Carl Barry, Joe Cohn, John Hart, Peter Bernstein, Randy Johnston, Joe Beck and many others appear here regularly with Giglio, as well as some notable out-of-towners like Bucky Pizzarelli, Joe Diorio, Frank Potenza, John Stowell and others who make sure to let Giglio know when they plan to be in town on a Friday. But, it’s not always just guitar duos. Giglio has recently recorded an album with violinist Rob Thomas and bass legend Ron McClure, and they have both appeared here with Giglio in trios and duos.

A veteran of the New York jazz scene, Giglio is a formidable player who can adapt to any context. He has superb technique that allows him to play exciting and interesting solos to match the caliber of his guests; he always seems to have interesting and surprising chord solo arrangements for any standard tune, and his comping is always harmonically rich and varied. You can hear excerpts of his critically acclaimed CD’s and extensive live recordings on his website.

On this particular evening, I was lucky enough to catch Giglio playing duets with the great Paul Bollenback who was back in his home base in New York in between his busy travel schedule (www.paulbollenback.com). Bollenback will also be appearing at “Smoke” with the band from his latest CD on July 7-8). Having spent years playing with great modern players like Gary Thomas and Joey DeFrancesco, Bollenback is known for his musicality, awesome technique and choice of contemporary material. However, this evening was all about playing standards in a traditional setting.

Giglio and Bollenback chose the tunes on the spot and then decided within seconds how

they were going to perform them. Giglio suggested Bird’s “Big Foot” as a blues, which they did in a combination of unison and octaves, while Bollenback suggested “Days of Wine and Roses” with a modulation up a minor third (as Bill Evans had done it on “Affinity”), but he took it even further, suggesting modulating up a minor third two more times to get back to the original key. Giglio demonstrated that he was up for the challenge, soloing fiercely over the modulating sections, and then he countered with an idea to play “I Can’t Get Started” as alternating solo guitar sections, where they each played a beautifully constructed unaccompanied chord solo section before getting into tempo at the bridge. The duo’s version of “Alice in Wonderland” started as waltz and went through some excellent interplay as Bollenback and Giglio changed the tempo to two and then back to three. The guitar enthusiasts in the audience were thrilled—clapping for solos and exchanging comments with the duo in between tunes. It was truly an informal and very comfortable setting for all involved. As the evening progressed, Giglio announced a surprise guest and handed his guitar to Howard Alden. Alden, who usually plays a 7-string guitar, had no problem adjusting to Giglio’s custom-built 6-string Forshage guitar, and he played two tunes with Bollenback. “Like Someone in Love” was taken at a medium tempo and provided some beautifully melodic soloing by both, whereas the up-tempo “Stablemates” that followed was a tour-de-force for both players. Both Bollenback and Alden took amazing solos that kept weaving melodies through the complex chord changes as if they didn’t exist.

There followed some excellent duets of Alden with Giglio, with Alden playing an entire solo in artificial harmonics (in the style of Tal Farlow) and Giglio playing some fantastic chord solos. Finally, it was Bollenback and Giglio back together again, this time taking “Body and Soul” as a slow Bossa nova, with Giglio surprising everyone with some tasty rock and blues licks that blended in beautifully.

The duo closed the evening with a super-fast version of “Donna Lee” which they did in unison before launching into blistering solos. Bollenback’s exciting solo reminded everyone why John McLaughlin chose to give such a glowing endorsement to his first album, and Giglio followed suit with a great solo of his own, demonstrating once again why so many of the world’s top guitarists enjoy playing duets with him. If you are a jazz guitar fan, you owe it to yourself to check out Giglio’s fine playing and the unique setting he has created to preserve the tradition of jazz guitar duets.

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RAGTIME TO SWINGTIME
Vince Giordano & The Nighthawks
JVC Jazz Festival, Kaye Playhouse
June 21, 2006

By Michael Steinman

This concert *could* have been a dry exercise in musical archaeology—and yet it wasn’t. Although it began with the earliest self-proclaimed “jazz” performances from 1917 and the most recent repertoire was more than seventy years old, the music was positively frisky. Even the makeup of the crowd was encouraging: the younger members, some born too late to have seen Benny Goodman, even on television, gave me hope that this music would still have a following in years to come.

The evening was dominated by Vince Giordano’s Nighthawks, a stylish tent devoted to evocative recreations of hot dance music taken from recordings and original orchestrations, with its gifted soloists given space for improvised solos. Especially notable were reedman Dan Levinson, fluent but concise; Dan Block, always fervent; and trumpeter Jon-Erik Kellso, forceful and pungent. Giordano shuttled back and forth between bass sax, aluminum string bass, and tuba without missing a beat at even the fastest tempos. “Railroad Man,” “Bashful Baby”, and “Two Tickets to Georgia” all paid homage to bandleader Ben Pollack, and the lovely “Smoke Rings” and “Blue Prelude,” remembered clarinetist Clarence Hutchenrider and the Casa Loma Orchestra. It was particularly fine to hear the Nighthawks in the Kaye Playhouse, where their un-amplified sound was never distorted or obscured.

But as electrifying as the Nighthawks were, they were overshadowed by three songs early in the program by Dan Levinson’s Roof Garden Jass Band, which recreated the Original Dixieland Jazz Band, the Frisco Jazz Band, and Ted Lewis. This quintet featured Kellso, Levinson, David Sager, Peter Yarin, and Kevin Dorn (who was seated behind an antique set complete with a bucolic landscape ornamenting the bass drum). The RGJB, leisurely and hot, especially on a gliding “Livery Stable Blues,” offered music that few have ever heard so clearly. All of the tunes were entirely idiomatic but still swinging.

Violinist Andy Stein’s Blue Five honored less well-known 1930s recordings by Joe Venuti, the highlights being a sweet “Nothin’ But Notes”, a goofy, uninhibited “I Want to Ring Bells”; young pianist Bryan Wright gave pensive readings of Bix Beiderbecke’s “Flashes” and “In the Dark.” Since jazz and pop of the period relied heavily on singers, the concert also offered turns at the microphone from Stein, a perky Nancy Anderson (channeling a Broadway flapper), Marion Cowings, Sager (paying tribute to Jack Teagarden), and Giordano—the last two taking the prize for casual, affecting singing.

In addition to fine, brief commentaries by

Giordano and Levinson, Rich Conaty, the host of WFUV's "The Big Broadcast" was the host. His vaudevillian radio personality, complete with misfiring jokes, amused his listeners. Authentic jazz of this vintage is often hard to find amidst more commercialized versions, but it was vividly alive, if only for two hours, on East 68th Street.

Nancy Kelly Joshua Breakstone

Live at the Long Island Jazz Festival
Rockville Centre, NY
June 15, 2006

By Dimitry Ekshtut

How does one breathe new life into a song sung innumerable times over? Those melodies most familiar to the ear are fragile creatures with which the most delicate care must be taken. It is the warhorses of the jazz repertoire that demand the utmost of an artist's interpretative prowess. Stick too close to others' handling of a melody and risk compromising your individual voice, yet stray too far and its intrinsic beauty, mismanaged, dissipates. A compromise must be made between convention and invention, contribution and deference. When a vocalist strikes this balance just so, the melody leaps out and fastens itself to our hearts, minds, and imaginations. This is music set free of the trappings of twelve notes, a music which speaks with the eloquence of a Shakespeare and the force of a Hemingway. Such sounds do not emit from all, or even many, vocalists. But when they do, as was the case for Nancy Kelly, the result is pure magic.

Kelly's seasoned voice lent a gentle, familiar air to a succession of songs memorable for their great melodies and inspired lyrics. Focusing on swing tunes and ballads, she soared through "I Wish You Love" and simmered on "You'd Be So Nice To Come Home To." Both featured the keyboard artistry of Sarah Jane Cion, whose ebullient Rhodes-inspired solos bounced to and fro from the keys, bubbling with delight.

On "But Not for Me," this provoked a fascinating scat reply from Kelly, complete with horn-like inflections that explored the fine gradations

of her voice. Bassist Earl Sauls, heretofore content with providing a foundation while maintaining low visibility, stepped out from behind the band to lay down a rhythmic solo full of variety. Sauls demonstrated his remarkable yet inconspicuous contribution on "I'll Get Along," unearthing rich, protracted bass notes to serve as a low counterpoint that made Kelly's vocals all the more poignant. Steve Johns, a versatile and highly capable drummer, lent a great sense of swing and scintillating brush-work to the music. Trading fours on "Honeysuckle Rose," Johns demonstrated a penchant for tasteful phrases that attracted attention at no expense to Kelly.

The teamwork was evident throughout as each musician bolstered the others' efforts. No one was the better for this fruitful collaboration than Kelly herself. With charisma exuding from her voice, she swung away on "I've Got the World on a String," singing with the sheer pleasure of one newly cognizant to the wonders of their own voice.

Guitarist Joshua Breakstone took over for the second set, retaining Johns and Sauls but leaving Cion in favor of Vinnie Ruggieri. This guitar-led quartet, more bebop-oriented than Kelly's, embarked on a set consisting of tunes familiar and forgotten, revitalized by Breakstone's playing. Ethyl Waters' "Cabin in the Sky" swung hard thanks to Johns and an aggressive, punchy solo sound from Breakstone. The guitarist, a fluent conversationalist in the language of bebop, dispensed a variety of phrases that would have been right at home in the forties and fifties.

"That's All" once again showcased Johns' finesse with the brushes, giving the music a gentle yet persistent swing. Here Breakstone's lines displayed an originality of invention that hinted at a capacity for more than just the traditional bebop phraseology. Replying to his polyrhythmic thrusts, the band latched on to Breakstone's energy and engaged in deeper communication than had previously been evident.

There was an interesting story behind Mal Waldron's "Soul Eyes." Breakstone, a favorite in the jazz circles of Japan, discussed how the Japanese view of all-time standards differed from that expressed back home. The three big standards in Japan, Breakstone explained, are "You'd Be So Nice To Come Home To," "Autumn Leaves," and Waldron's "Left Alone." American audiences are surely familiar with the first two - they are essential components of the jazz repertoire here and elsewhere. Yet "Left Alone" is mostly unheard of in the States. Bemusedly, Breakstone announced that he would not play "Left Alone," but another Waldron tune. His rendition of "Soul Eyes" harkened back to the flourishing decades when bebop reigned supreme, though with a Latin flavor that would have been uncharacteristic at the time. For his solo, Breakstone conceived captivating, plaintive melodies delivered by way of a biting tone heaving on vibrato yet light on legato.

Breakstone introduced "Where or When?" with a pleasant chord melody. The band altered dynamics nicely to accommodate the subtly shifting moods of Breakstone's phrases. Johns' ride cymbal and Sauls' attack on the upright were locked together in a perfect embrace, pro-

viding a great pocket for Breakstone to dig into his syncopated lines. Rogeri took a solo that revealed finely-honed improvisational skill as Breakstone's set drew to a close.

It was back to Kelly's soulful voice for the third set. Cole Porter's "I Concentrate on You" proved a refreshing change of pace as the rhythm section imbued the tune with a lively samba vibe. Sauls added colorful and inventive bass playing while Cion distilled the essence of the song in her solo. A storyteller both in and out of a tune, Kelly kept the audience's attention between songs with witty banter and offhand stories, creating a personal interlude to the music.

Kelly's unique phrasing made for a dynamic rendition of "Come Rain or Come Shine." Her voice dripped sweetness as she settled into the melody's caress. From silky smooth to a soulful rasp, she molded Billy Joel's "New York State of Mind" into a beautiful jazz ballad accompanied by Cion's sympathetic voicings. Kelly's love for this tune was evident from the sincerity of her voice to the eloquence with which she sang. Sauls contributed a heartfelt, intelligently-wrought solo with a sense of melody at its core. An up-tempo "Jeanine" put the spotlight on Cion's grooving organ-playing as the rhythm section steamed along beneath. Her earthy solo was recapitulated on the drums by Johns, who seemed able to catch any rhythms Cion threw his way.

Breakstone joined Kelly and her band for the finale, a charming rendition of "There Will Never Be Another You." The tune was a fitting description of the mutual admiration evident between the two, who are long-time friends and musical compatriots. They were giggly as little children playing together in a sandbox, the years melting off to expose only a shared devotion to the song and each other. It is such moments, so few and precious, that make one appreciate the mystique of this music we call jazz.

Hendrik Meurkens

Cornelia Street Café
June 14, 2006

PERSONNEL: Hendrik Meurkens (Harmonica); Helio Alves (Piano); Gustavo Amarante (Electric Bass); Adriano Santos (Drums);

By Dan Adler

New York Jazz lovers know that Cornelia Street Café (www.corneliastreetcafe.com) is one of those venues where you are likely to find world-class players stretching the envelope every night of the week, and June 14th was no exception. On the schedule, was an evening of duets by Hendrik Meurkens on Harmonica and Brazilian Pianist Helio Alves, but as my friends and I walked down the stairs to enter this basement-turned-jazz-club a few minutes into the first set, the additional sound of bass and drums made it clear that we are in for a special treat. These were the sounds of the Hendrik Meurkens Samba Jazz Quartet which has been making music together for over a year (www.hendrikmeurkens.com) and has recorded a live album at Cecil's Jazz Club in NJ last De-

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The first tune, "Mountain Drive" is also the first tune on Meurkens latest CD "Amazon River" which also features Helio Alves on Piano alongside the legendary Dori Caymmi, Paquito D'Rivera and Oscar Castro-Neves. Meurkens' instrumental virtuosity as well as the depth of his understanding of Brazilian music was immediately striking. His timing and execution are perfect and his solos are like mini-compositions in themselves, full of melodic and harmonic surprises that always resolve themselves logically.

Helio Alves, a native of Sao Paulo Brazil and one of the best known Brazilian/Jazz players around, followed suit with a great solo which fused Brazilian and Jazz influences with a keen sense of harmonic and rhythmic freedom. Alves has performed and recorded with Claudio Roditi, Paquito D'Rivera, Gato Barbieri, Airtio Moreira, Flora Purim, John Patitucci, Al Foster, Leny Andrade, Rosa Passos, The Caribbean Jazz Project, Joyce, Oscar Castro Neves, Yo-Yo Ma, Joe Henderson and others.

Meurkens' association with Brazilian music is very deep. In the 80's he lived in Rio for a number of years and since then he has recorded over 15 highly acclaimed albums of Brazilian Jazz. He is well known for introducing audiences to lesser known forms of Brazilian music such as Chorinhos, and in this performance he delighted the audience with three originals of this style: "Menina Na Janela" from the same album, "Choro Da Neve" and "Choro N. 8".

In between songs, Meurkens spoke to the audience about the other musicians and told amusing anecdotes about his process of composition. According to his story, Meurkens travels from his home in New Jersey to visit relatives in his native country of Germany with his family and a small Casio keyboard, and that's where he writes most of his compositions. He spoke about the process of refining each composition, searching for the next chord or phrase, being guided only by the intuition of knowing when it's "right". The audience enjoyed his stories and it helped the make the connection between the music and the people on stage. Great musicians always make it seem so easy and effortless, and it's nice to be reminded that there are months and years of painstaking efforts involved in making it seem so natural and flowing.

This quartet was exceptionally tight. Bassist Gustavo Amarante and drummer Adriano Santos, both New-Yorkers originally born in Brazil, provided an excellent rhythmic and harmonic foundation for Alves and Meurkens to build their solos upon. As I was looking around the audience, everyone was moving their body to the beat and most people had a joyous smile on their face. There is something universally appealing about great Brazilian music, which, in contrast to other forms of popular music, seems able to maintain its rhythmic and harmonic sophistication.

Besides Meurkens' own originals, the quartet played a lesser-known Jobim tune called "Voçe Vai Ver", a tune by Joao Donato called "A Rá" (which you can see on video at the quartet link above), and they closed the evening with a medley of "Someday My Prince Will Come"

and Toots Thielemans' famous "Bluesette" with a 2 beat feel rather than a waltz.

The comparison of Hendrik Meurkens with Toots Thielemans is inevitable, especially since Thielemans has also recorded with all the great Brazilian artists. But it goes beyond the surface of just the sound of the harmonica. Following in Thielemans footsteps, Meurkens continues to evolve a language of linear improvisation through complex chord changes which is very melodic and compositional and attempts to stay away from obvious licks and predefined patterns. This combination of infectious Brazilian rhythms with highly sophisticated harmony and beautifully melodic compositions and improvisations are a winning combination that appeals to the most demanding audience as well as the casual listener.

The Hendrik Meurkens Samba Jazz Quartet will be performing at Zinc Bar in NY, August 1-3, where Meurkens will also be playing his second instrument, vibes, as well as Harmonica.

Jason Rigby

Cornelia Street Café
June 19, 2006

By Steve Jankowski

Upbeat, contemporary, busy, that's what you can expect at the Cornelia Street Café, which will be celebrating its 30th anniversary in Greenwich Village next year. In both the upstairs restaurant and the downstairs jazz club/poetry studio/theatrical stage, business was quite brisk for a Monday night in June. (By the way, try the spinach and pear salad. Trust me.)

Jazz was on the menu downstairs, in an environment best described as a 50 by 16 foot, brick-encased rectangle. Mirrors in window-like frames on one wall and in gilt edged borders on the other helped make this enclosure safe for claustrophobics. Without denigrating its current, welcoming character, one can easily imagine the room in a more permissive century, when the haze of burning cigarettes mixed with the smell of alcohol to create a considerably unhealthy but classic environment for jazz addicts.

Jason Rigby, group leader and reed virtuoso, would fit well here anytime. His fat, rich tone, especially on tenor, did not require a Shure mike jammed down the bell. We heard him just fine, au naturel. He and his group, featuring Mike Holober on piano, Cameron Brown on bass, and Mark Ferber on drums took the free way this evening. Free as in meaning they didn't improvise around standard tunes with standard structures, or spend a lot of time even in the diatonic world. The evening was put together to celebrate Jason's new album *Translucent*, a word that ultimately proved to be an accurate description of the overall experience of the 9 pm set.

The first piece, "Proximo," from one of Jason's earlier album, had a bossa nova feel, which created a nice backdrop for Mike Holober's living and breathing, four-legged Rhodes. (A sound that still defies true-to-life replication in the digital world. The recognizably sub-

tle-yet-edgy tone of this keyboard formed an effective aural counterpoint to Jason's sax, which took us through the full range of the instrument, playing top to bottom, touching every octave, building variations upon variations with a high energy approach that would ultimately prove to be an essential part of his style.

With "Turquoise Turkish" you get some colors you won't find in the jumbo box of Crayola crayons. Mark Ferber started off with aggressive rolling toms, setting the stage for Jason and Mike who deliver a thematic statement consisting of rapid 16th note phrases played in unison. Jason's solo work started with an expertly controlled trill in the upper register of the tenor, eventually leading to a series of descending chromatic phrases played with passion and a great deal of agility. This arrangement featured a clever interlude with Mike's bubbly sounding Rhodes trading innuendos with Jason's sax. Everyone exited with a reprise of the main theme, poked and prodded along by some hard and loud fills and hits from drummer Ferber.

With "Green is Greener", Jason used soprano sax to establish a melancholy tonal palette, substantially different in feel from what he'd played thus far. With Mike using the upper register of the Rhodes to create the sound of a celesta and bassist Cameron assuming the role of the heavy, Jason was provided with a translucent (there's that word again) backdrop for his story. He is clearly comfortable on the soprano, and he created one of his most structurally inventive statements of the evening, rising and falling in both expressions and intensity, creating a joyous and memorable experience before returning to the quiet sadness and reflection heard at the beginning of "Green". Mike Cameron also contributes with an appropriately sensitive and cleverly nuanced solo contributing to the hazy, see-through quality of the piece.

The next selection, at this point sans title, may well remain sans title since it defies being characterized by either color words or conventional language. Toms and bass drum took over the room with whip cracks on snare and bursts of raw, percussive energy on rims and cymbal. Jason then took the lead with phrase after phrase of intense, passionate and seemingly disconnected phrases, each containing disconcerting dissonance as the most dominant element. Mike Holober's block chords underneath supported Jason's darkest, most personal commentary yet, a torrent of expression that may well be his best work of the evening precisely because it felt so emotionally specific.

As with many of Jason's choices this evening, the final one, "Southampton U.K." began with cut-through percussion cruising on the synopated side of the street, bringing a shuffling rhythmic figure accented by sharp accents on cymbals. Here, he chose bass clarinet to introduce the theme, and it was a nice choice. (Every time I hear this rarely used instrument I am reminded how deep and distinctive it sounds, kind of like a clarinet on steroids.) "Southampton" was certainly the most arranged piece the group played in this set, featuring breaks with sudden stops and starts that were either planned or remarkably prescient. We've come to expect fresh-

ness from Jason, and he didn't disappoint, giving us fractured lines and unexpected turns of phrase. Mike Holober kept the faith as well, with blocks of tightly voiced changes luring us to a Southampton you won't find anywhere on Long Island.

A very responsive and supportive audience helped keep the energy flowing throughout the set. In retrospect, there's really only one question for listeners: do you enjoy free playing with limited structure and no comforting familiarity, a style where the listening value rests primarily on the skills of the musicians? Point is, if you prefer recognizable tunes divided into, 8, 12, or 16 bars, Jason and friends may not be for you. On the other hand, if you revel in freedom, or would like to be more aware of what it means in a musical sense, I wholeheartedly recommend turning to Jason Rigby.

Jack Wilkins

Le Madeleine
June 26, 2006

By Dan Adler

If you are ever in the mood to hear some great solo jazz guitar on a Sunday or Monday evening in Manhattan, just head over to Le Madeleine on the corner of 9th Ave and 43rd street (www.lemadeleine.com). There is no cover charge, and you can just get a drink or dessert at the bar, or enjoy their reasonably priced Bistro menu. Most weeks, you will get to hear the great Gene Bertoncini playing his unique style of jazz on a classical guitar. Once in a while, when Bertoncini is traveling, he calls upon another great player to fill in for him such as Paul Meyers, or in this case, Jack Wilkins.

Guitarist Jack Wilkins (www.jackwilkins.com) has been a part of the New York jazz scene for more than four decades. His flawless technique and imaginative chordal approach have inspired collaborations with Charles Mingus, Michael and Randy Brecker, Stan Getz, Phil Woods, Chet Baker, Jimmy Raney, Bob Brookmeyer, Buddy Rich, and some of the greatest singers like Sarah Vaughan, Mel Torme, Ray Charles, Tony Bennett, Manhattan Transfer, and others. In the liner notes of his 1978 album *The Bob Brookmeyer Small Band: Live at Sandy's*, Brookmeyer calls Wilkins "the most imaginative guitarist to have emerged since Jim Hall," and continues to say: "Jack is a musician who has all the tools to do anything he wants. And he can sound any number of different ways."

Hearing Jack Wilkins play solo guitar in such an intimate setting is an unforgettable experience. Playing his custom-built Benedetto archtop electric guitar through a small AER amplifier, Wilkins' guitar sound was warm and inviting, appealing both to the most oblivious diners, and to those of us who came especially to enjoy the music. There were quite a few prominent musicians in the audience all listening intently, including Sue Mingus, the widow of the great Charles Mingus (with whom Wilkins recorded two albums), guitarists Carl Barry and



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MATT CHERTKOFF ORGAN GROOVES

Mondays in August 8 PM
3rd, 17th CECIL'S BIG BAND
LED BY JOE ELEFANTE

Monday August 7 & 21 8 PM
ELLINGTON LEGACY BAND

Tuesdays in August 9 PM
JAZZ JAM SESSION
HOSTED BY BRUCE WILLIAMS

Wednesday August 2, 9, 23 & 30 8 PM
NEW MUSIC NIGHT

Thursdays in August 9 PM
LATIN JAZZ & SALSA DANCING
WITH DAVE BRAHAM TRIO

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**SUMMER AT
CORNELIA STREET CAFE**

**FESTIVAL of
FESTIVALS**

LOW BRASS

- Aug 1, 8:30PM Marcus Rojas
Aug 2, 8:30PM Josh Roseman Group
Aug 3, 8:30PM Jacob Garchik Trio
Aug 4, 9&10:30PM Joe Fidler Trio
Aug 5, 9&10:30PM Bob Stewart Trio featuring
Billy Hart

COMPOSERS COLLABORATIVE

- Aug 8, 8:30PM Jody Hedhage and Mageret
Lancaster
Aug 9, 8:30PM THE GOLD STANDARD by
Ed Schmidt, composed and per-
formed by Jed Distler
Aug 10, 8:30PM THE GOLD STANDARD
Aug 11, 9:00PM First Avenue and Maya
Aug 12, 9:00PM THE GOLD STANDARD

VESSELS OF SONG

Curated by Jay Vilnai

- Aug 15, 8:30PM Judith Berkson
Aug 16, 8:30PM Romanshka
Aug 17, 8:30PM Andy Statman
Aug 18, 9&10:30PM Matt Darriau and the
Paradox Trio
Aug 19, 9&10:30PM Aaron Alexander's Midrash
Mish Mosh

BRAZILIAN

- Aug 22, 7:00PM Ligaçãu
Aug 22, 9:00PM Felipe Salles' homage to
Hermeto Pascoal
Aug 23, 7:00PM Dende
Aug 23, 9:00PM Leonardo Cioglia
Aug 24, 7:00PM Eliane
Aug 24, 9:00PM Clarice Assad
Aug 15, 9&10:30PM Cliff Korman Ensemble
Aug 16, 7:00PM Suzy Schwartz's Brazil Jazz
Aug 16, 9&10:30PM Dave Pietro & Banda Brazil

FLUTES

- Aug 29, 8:30PM Denominators
Aug 30, 10:00PM Yael Asher and Junk 'KAT'
Aug 31, 7:00PM Pjuma Ensemble
Aug 31, 9:00PM Jeremy Steig

SUNDAYS IN AUGUST: DUOS

- Aug 6, 8:30PM Marc Mommaas/
Tony Moreno
Aug 13, 8:30PM Liz Magnes/Hill Greene
Aug 20, 7&8:30PM TBA
Aug 27, 7:00PM Kate McGarry/Havie S
Aug 27, 8:30PM Tony Malaby/Marcus Rojas

MONDAY IN AUGUST: WORLD

- Aug 7, 8:30PM David Amram & Co
Aug 14, 8:30PM Natalie Michan
Aug 21, 8:30PM TBA
Aug 28, 8:30 Harel Shachal and Anistar

September 1&2 John Hollenbeck's Claudia
9&10:30PM Quintet

CORNELIA STREET CAFE

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James Chirillo, bassists Dylan Taylor and Jon Burr (who played on Wilkins' famous *You Can't Live Without It* album, available on Wilkins' website as part of the *Merge* reissue).

Wilkins seemed to have an endless supply of stunning arrangements to a wide variety of standards. "You Go To My Head" got a rubato treatment with lots of harmonic twists and pianistic inner-voice movements, while an up-tempo "I Remember You" was a springboard for a wonderful single-line solo and some walking bass and comping in the Joe Pass tradition. Although Wilkins' solo style is truly innovative and unique, he is well aware of everything that came before him. He teaches a popular course on jazz guitar history, and is one of the few guitarists around today who has actually shared the bandstand with the likes of Jimmy Raney, Tal Farlow, Chuck Wayne and Barney Kessel and once in a while he will pay tribute to one of them by using one of their signature licks or chord sequences—all of which blend into an organic musical statement that is all his own.

The evening also included some beautiful ballad arrangements. "Polkadots and Moonbeams," "My One and Only Love" and "These Foolish Things" kept modulating and changing moods and colors as Wilkins moved from arranged sections to improvisations and back, always keeping things fresh and exciting. "When Sunny Gets Blue" got a Bossa Nova treatment where Wilkins kept the bass line going throughout while improvising chords and melodies on top. There were some great swinging tunes like Ellington's "I Got It Bad," "Taking a Chance On Love" and Gershwin's "Our Love is Here To Stay" that had the audience tapping their feet and looking over from time to time in disbelief that Wilkins was producing all of this music on his own. A great round of applause came at the end of each song with the audience clearly showing their appreciation, while the musicians in the audience exchanged looks of amazement at the level of technique, musicality and artistry that Jack Wilkins has attained.

A pleasant surprise came at the end of the evening, when Wilkins invited guest guitarist James Chirillo to sit in with him for a couple of duets. They tore into "How Deep is the Ocean" exhibiting some awesome technique and some great interplay. In this setting, Wilkins got to show off his more contemporary side as an exciting soloist and one of the first guitarists in the 70's and 80's to earn the respect of modern players like Michael and Randy Brecker, Jack DeJohnette and Eddie Gomez, all of whom played on his albums.

At this point the audience had mostly finished eating their dinners, and were all listening intently, so by the time Wilkins and Chirillo closed the evening off with a version of "Samba De Orfeo" it felt more like a jazz club than a restaurant—with the audience clapping for solos, laughing at musical jokes and taking in the great musical experience.

Jason Robert Brown

Live at Birdland Jazz

June 2006

By Kay Prins

On June 12, in the dimly lit Birdland Jazz Club, something was different from usual: in a club whose walls are usually witnesses to hushed conversations about Charlie Parker and the merits of fusion versus straight ahead, there was talk of the recent Tony awards and directing summer stock theatre. On this particular evening, Birdland exchanged its usual clientele of hardcore jazz fans for a group of musical theater fans who squeezed into the bar, hoping for a chance to listen to the acclaimed playwright/composer Jason Robert Brown.

Flanked on either side of his piano by guitarist Gary Singer and bassist Randy Landau, and joined for a few numbers by vocalist Melissa Errico, Brown played a mix of old hits, future successes and recent releases by his band, the Caucasian Rhythm Kings, from their new record *Wearing Someone Else's Clothes*. Brown is truly a performer whose background in theater shows in his bearing upon the stage, even in a concert setting. He was at once conversational and highly stylized, intimate with the audience and playing a role behind the fourth wall.

The appeal of Brown's music lies in the sheer impossibility of it: it's a mix of Broadway show tunes and a sort of jazzy pop music, given life by a flurry of complex notes and chord structures. Brown himself admitted during the performance that "[he] will never play one note where 36 will do." And 36 usually *do*. For example, musical director often quail at the daunting task of playing the fugue that opens his off-Broadway hit *The Last Five Years*. Because of the complexity of the music, it has a hauntingly beautiful quality. Many of the songs from *Wearing Someone Else's Clothes* bear a certain resemblance to the pieces Brown has written for the theater, but they still retain a quality of uniqueness that allow them to stand alone. Singer's solos were, as Brown promised, "on fire," and, when combined with Brown's own experimentation on the piano, they smoked, creating an atmosphere of urgency and welcome tension.

Brown's choice of numbers to perform promised a series of crowd pleasers, from his well-known selections from *The Last Five Years*, *Songs for a New World* and *Parade* to his best songs from *Wearing Someone Else's Clothes* and two new songs from musicals that will debut in the next year. Perhaps the best part about the performance was the way Brown responded to and built up the enthusiasm of the audience, most of whom know the music just as well as—if not better than—Jason Robert Brown himself! The Caucasian Rhythm Kings and Melissa Errico, led by the charismatic and talented Jason Robert Brown were a truly special act to make its way to Birdland Jazz; It is highly recommended that those looking for a unique and beautiful musical style try to catch Brown in

(Continued on page 13)