

Eric Nemeyer's **Jazz Inside**™

The Mind, Body & Spirit of Jazz In New York & Way Beyond

WWW.JAZZINSIDEMAGAZINE.COM

MARCH 2011

Guitar Lovers Celebration

George Benson • Kenny Burrell
Pat Metheny • Pat Martino
Mike Stern • Kevin Eubanks
Dan Adler • Jonathan Kreisberg
Chuck Anderson • Bob Devos
Tomas Janzon • Michelle Nestor

Plenty of CD Reviews

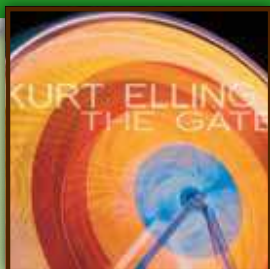
Ira Gitler's Apple Chorus

**Comprehensive Directory of
NY Club, Concert & Event Listings**

KURT ELLING

The Jazz Music Dashboard — Smart Listening Experiences

www.ConcordMusicGroup.com



www.DanAdler.com



www.JazzFluteWeinstein.com



www.Motema.com



Like Us



facebook.com/JazzInsideMedia

Follow Us



twitter.com/JazzInsideMag

Watch Us



youtube.com/JazzInsideMedia

Dan Adler

By Eric Nemeyer

"...playing jazz is one of the most emotionally and intellectually demanding activities a human being can ever perform. The level of preparation and concentration required to play a great jazz solo is no less than required, for example, to give a graduate-level lecture in physics. In both cases, you have to know the material through and through so that it's automatic, and at every step you have to apply your creativity and rational thinking to present each idea clearly and make it flow from the previous idea."

JI: You were lucky to have a teacher, early in your life in Israel, who taught you about the beauty of physics, math, art, philosophy, connecting the dots as to how they are all related. Could you share some of those understandings with us?

DA: Indeed, my physics teacher in high-school in Tel Aviv was Dr. Mario Livio, a renowned astrophysicist and author of best-selling popular science books. As he introduced us to concepts of symmetry in physics, like Newton's third law of action and reaction, he also taught us about symmetry in art (as in Escher's work), in music (as in Bach's Cannons, 20th century music, etc.), in mathematics (group theory) and how they all relate. This led me to further reading and exploration on my own. I swallowed books like "Godel, Escher, Bach", which also introduced me to concepts in computer science (eventually, my main profession), as well as logical positivism, philosophy of science, and many theoretical aspects of music. The boundaries between disciplines blurred in my mind to the point where I view all intellectual and emotional activities as equally engaging. I believe that playing jazz is one of the most emotionally and intellectually demanding activities a human being can ever perform. The level of preparation and concentration required to play a great jazz solo is no less than required, for example, to give a graduate-level lecture in physics. In both cases, you have to know the material through and through so that it's automatic, and at every step you have to apply your creativity and rational thinking to present each idea clearly and make it flow from the previous idea. Of course, in jazz improvisation there is no "right answer", but it still has to sound "right" within a set of stylistic parameters.

JI: Talk about the development of your new organ trio recording featuring Joey DeFrancesco and the association that developed?

DA: As a teenager in Tel Aviv in 1974, the first live organ trio concert I ever saw happened to be Jimmy Smith with Ray Crawford and Donald Dean. The recording of that concert was issued as *Jimmy Smith Live in Israel*, and later reissued under a different name. I re-

member that experience as being magical, and I always knew I would someday record an album in this format. Joey DeFrancesco was my number one choice simply because he has always been one of my idols. He is one of my favorite soloists on any instrument. I could listen to his solo on "On The Street Where You Live" a million more times and never get tired of it. I was both thrilled and terrified when he agreed enthusiastically to do the recording. I met Joey and Byron Landham at the recording studio, and they immediately melted all my fears away. They were both warm, encouraging and full of compliments, and within a few hours we had laid down all the tracks, mostly in first takes. It was a real "old fashioned" session. I had charts, but I mostly just played them my arrangement ideas once and then we just counted it off. I was a bit concerned about an Israeli ballad that I had chosen, but Joey loved it immediately and played so beautifully on it that it's one of my favorite tracks on the album. It was great hanging out with him and Byron, listening to the tracks and discussing ideas about music. It was a wonderful experience, and one that I hope to repeat again soon. I am very proud of this album, and I believe it includes some of Joey's best work. It's also thrilling to see what a great response the album has gotten, especially since it was self-produced. It was in the top 40 jazz radio chart for several months, and has received dozens of great reviews.

JI: What words of encouragement, support, quotation, or fragment of wisdom have you received from a mentor or associate that provided inspiration or guidance in your life?

DA: For me, inspiration is all about family. My parents spent their teenage years in Siberia, escaping from the Nazis who invaded their native Poland. They became homeless, hungry and sick, but they each survived by staying together with their respective families. They had to start over in Israel, with missed years of education, in an unfamiliar land with no knowledge of the language or culture. They both went on to earn Ph.D. degrees, and reach the top of their chosen professions. That always serves to remind me not to make excuses for not accomplishing my goals. The other great inspirations for me are my wife and 3 daughters. They are supportive and understanding and always encourage me to pursue my next



goal. For my first album, *All Things Familiar*, I wrote songs for each of my girls, and it turned out to be a double blessing. They each learned to identify their song and compared it to the others. They enjoy coming to my gigs to hear their songs and that personal connection has drawn them closer to the music.

JI: As a teenager growing up in Israel, with an interest in guitar, you began to study, and went to hear more experienced players on what would have been a more limited community than the New York scene in which you now participate. What were the advantages and challenges in maintaining your inspiration and gaining the guidance you needed to develop in Israel?

DA: The recent bestseller, *Startup Nation*, attempts to analyze the un-proportionally large number of Israeli successes in science, high-tech and business, but as you know, the jazz scene in New York is also flooded with a huge number of great Israeli players. This was not the case two decades ago. The jazz community in Israel was small and consisted mostly of players who came from Europe and Russia. I was lucky enough to stumble upon the one guitar teacher who had studied in NY with Jim Hall and Chuck Wayne, and he had a huge record collection that immediately captured my interest. Most players of my generation ended up going to Berklee and other schools in the US, and then went back to Israel to form the excellent educational system that exists there now. Although I never got a degree in music I had excellent private teachers for ear training, improvisation, harmony and counterpoint, and I did a lot of learning and transcribing on my own. Two books that really helped me with jazz guitar were *Joe Pass Guitar Style*, which I still refer to as "the bible", and a book by Peter Sprague which really laid out a logical foundation for modern jazz guitar. When I came to live in New York, I was finally able to study with all my idols, and the most influential of them has been Jack Wilkins.

Continued on Page 32

www.danadler.com

Coben Continued from Page 12

which takes you to Penn Station or the other way – out toward Montauk Point. Our housing is modern – five years old. Each room has its own air conditioning unit and private bathrooms, internet, cable TV.

JJ: What inspired your creation of this graduate degree program in music that is designed for summer access?

JC: One thing is that for teachers who do not want to hang around for an extended period of time during the summer, this is a convenient program. With a one-week intensified course, they can accomplish their work and get in and get out – and achieve their results and goals. If someone wanted to do a

three week course, I would enroll you in a morning class and an afternoon class. That means that in a three week period, you can only take two courses. By having a series of one-week classes, you can take three courses in the same three weeks. So you can take nine credits of work instead of six credits of work. With the one week courses, you're able to focus and concentrate on one topic.

JJ: Talk about the faculty.

JC: The faculty consists of the regular college faculty and instructors from the TIME Program – Technological Institute of Music Education. TIME is a certification program. They go into music notation using the midi labs. They go into sequenc-

ing and developing the curriculum taught in. They educate music educators on how to use electronic music. There are different levels – 1a, 1b, 2a, 2b. 2b for example goes into Sibelius and digital media – and how different forms of music notation can be adopted and used in music education. There are 16 students in a class.

We are doing that to keep the numbers reasonable for personalized attention. We have an electronic music composition – recording original compositions. There are a lot of music technology courses available, taught by experts in their respective fields. Faculty members in general, for the Graduate Program, are working professionals – Dean Karahalas, Peter Rogine, Tony Romano for example, and others. ■

Adler Continued from Page 41

JJ: You have an incredibly deep and diverse background in computers and electronics - in the development of chips and some key software - which lead to work with leading Wall Street companies involving hedge funds. We know that mathematics and music are integrally entwined. How has your involvement in those aforementioned areas provided inspiration and understanding and or challenges to/for your musical development and creative pursuits?

DA: Well, the main challenge is time. Having a demanding full-time career and a family requires me to set aside time every evening and weekend for practice, writing new material as well as promotion of my CD's and gigs. I try to be very focused some of the time, but I also view music as my reward for everything else that I do, so I don't try to go overboard. It has taken me many more years to get to a high level than it would if I were doing it full-time, and I am painfully aware of that, but I am also grateful that I have found a balance in my life and a recognizable musical sound and style. I am happy to develop myself incrementally within that space. I think that every artist needs to have many unrelated interests for inspiration. It has become way too easy to waste time these days. A little bit of Facebook and Google can eat up your whole evening, and if you add some reality TV and random YouTube browsing you can easily eat up the rest of your time. I try to actively control what I consume. I try to eat right, exercise, pick and choose which books to read, which films to watch and what music to listen to. I also try to make it out to as many live gigs as I can. Nothing beats the experience of live jazz in NYC.

JJ: Talk about your association, experiences and observations about saxophonist Steve Grossman, whom you met when he came to Israel.

DA: Steve Grossman came to Israel in the 80's and spent a year or two there. I had known of him from Elvin Jones' famous *Lighthouse* album where he played with Dave Liebman. That one album pretty much encapsulated the entire post-Coltrane vocabulary that I and all my friends were trying to learn at the time. The big shock was that one day he showed up at a gig I was playing, and he sounded nothing like he did on that album. By then, he had almost completely abandoned that style, and was playing straight ahead bebop with a sound that was somewhere between Sonny Rollins and Dexter Gordon. Seeing him play chorus after chorus of inventive bebop lines from close up was an experience I will never forget, and it completely restored my faith in bebop as an endless vehicle of creativity rather than a stylistic dead-end. I took some lessons with him, which consisted mostly of writing out choruses of improvisation away from the instrument. That was a very painful process for me in the beginning, as I realized how much I relied on the instrument rather than the purity of the music. He would take one glance and tell me what worked and what didn't, and gradually I learned to play what my musical mind dictated, and I realized that I can upgrade what my mind dictates by transcribing other people's solos. Seeing Steve last year at the Jazz Standard was a wonderful experience - he still plays as great as ever and has remained faithful to his bebop style.

JJ: What are your thoughts on the following perspective of philosopher Eric Hoffer and how it relates to the world of jazz on the creative and business sides? "In a world of change, the learners shall inherit the earth, while the learned shall find themselves perfectly suited for a world that no longer exists."

DA: Well, obviously we are in a state of flux all

around us. Everything is changing rapidly. Technologies are changing, the music business is changing, economies are changing, world political systems are changing and our environment is changing. Musical styles are also changing. Within the microcosm of jazz, and especially in New York, a new style of music and a new standard of musicianship are emerging. It is important to identify all of that and then try to decide how you want to adapt. It's also important to be realistic about your expectations and your goals. The economics of jazz in New York today just don't make any sense. People are expected to be super-human musicians and play for almost no money, and there is no income from CD sales. You are left with a handful of musicians who can tour for a living and most others end up teaching. Nothing wrong with that, as long as you understand the tradeoffs, especially as you grow older. People who want "The American Dream" have to make a different set of choices.

JJ: Could you share your ideas on what John Wooden said: "Be more concerned with your character than your reputation, because your character is what you really are, while your reputation is merely what others think you are."

DA: I think most jazz players who consider themselves artists feel an internal need to play - a need to excel, a need to master their instrument and the music, and a need to express something individualistic and authentic. I think the discipline and dedication emerge out of that, and not from a desire to be recognized. Of course, the reality is that in order to keep being heard and to keep developing you have to also be recognized by others, and so you have to do whatever it takes to build your reputation and recognition as well. It's a delicate balance and certainly not as cut and dry as in that quote. ■

Janzon Continued from Page 42

TJ: I know, you have to watch it. Ego will always come in your way. If you have self awareness you can handle it, but it can always trip you. Humility is a good word for the right approach. My experiences in the jazz community has always shown me that this music is coming from a spiritual approach. That is how you connect, it goes through your heart.

JJ: What are your thoughts on the following perspective of philosopher Eric Hoffer and how it relates to the world of jazz on the creative and business sides? "In a world of change, the learners shall inherit the earth, while the learned shall find themselves perfectly suited for a world that no longer exists."

TJ: Funny, I was just reading something by Hazrat Inayat Khan where he talks about the greatness in being a pupil. Yes, learning and finding out is what makes life interesting. There is always a ingredient of this in the great jazz solos we listen back to.

JJ: Could you share your ideas on what John Wooden

Continued on Page 33