

Carolyn McClair Public Relations

Press Release

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PIANOS IN THE FOREGROUND at George Wein's JAZZ FESTIVAL 55 in NEWPORT, AUGUST 7 - 9

Jazz writer Eugene Holley offers his take on pianists at Jazz Festival 55.

NEWPORT, RI -- In his book, **Jazz Piano: A History**, the esteemed pianist/educator/historian Dr. Billy Taylor stated that the whole history of jazz has been played on that all-encompassing instrument. Indeed, from the post-Reconstruction/syncopated strains of ragtime to the outer melodic, harmonic and rhythmic limits of the avant-garde, the pianist who puts his/her hands on the 88 keys not only enters into a dialogue with the music's prolific past, its profound present, and its formidable future; the pianist also crosses boundaries of genre, place and time to create a truly compelling and comprehensive artistic statement of profound inventions and dimensions.



If one wants to take a sonic census of jazz today, the pianists performing in George Wein's **Jazz Festival 55** (August 7 - 9 in Newport) offer a diverse, delightful and dancing account of the state of swing at the change of the century. And if one can make a presidential proclamation ... the state of our swing is strong! Among the pianists to take the stage are **Dave Brubeck**, **Cedar Walton**, **Michel Camilo**, **Hiromi**, **Vijay Iyer**, **Alfredo Rodriguez** as well as a host of others including **Ethan Iverson** of The Bad Plus, **Joey Calderazzo** of Branford Marsalis-Joey Calderazzo Duo, **Robert Rodriguez** of The Rodriguez Brothers, **James Weidman** of UsFive, **Jason Lindner** with Claudia Acuña and **George Colligan** with Christian McBride..

At 88, **Dave Brubeck**, the multiple Grammy-winner whose pioneering and peerless excursions into odd-meters, polytonality and cross-cultural projects foreshadowed what we now call world music, represents swing in its most durable form. The man who gave us jazz classics, from "Take Five," and "Blue Rondo a la Turk," to "In Your Own Sweet Way," and "The Duke," with his pioneering classic quartet (alto saxophonist Paul Desmond, bassist Eugene Wright and drummer Joe Morello) comes to the stage with his latest and equally formidable group - drummer **Randy Jones**, bassist **Michael Moore** and **Bobby Militello** on alto saxophone and flute - in a scintillating program of new compositions, as well as selections from his best-selling **Time Out** LP, which celebrates its 50th anniversary this year. In the hands of this timeless master, the old becomes the new. Brubeck was a tireless promoter of peace, democracy, and jazz all over the world, from Russia to South America, and from Africa to Japan. Brubeck performs at Jazz Festival 55 on Sunday.

Brubeck has been a tireless promoter of peace, democracy, and jazz all over the world, from Russia to South America, and from Africa to Asia. The Dallas-born, Denver-reared piano king **Cedar Walton** was a member of jazz's best diplomats Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers from 1961 to 1964, with a variety of bandmates and future stars that included the late Freddie Hubbard, saxophonist Wayne Shorter, and trombonist Curtis Fuller.

Blessed with a poetic and profound pianism that is sublimely lyrical as it is deeply swinging, Walton is a composer whose compositions "Bolivia," "Mosaic" and "Fantasy in D," recorded as "Ugetsu" on a Jazz Messengers LP of the same name in 1963, have become jazz standards. Along with his work with Sonny Criss, Abbey Lincoln, and Lee Morgan, Walton has recorded over 60 recordings as a leader, including **Eastern Rebellion, Vol. 1-IV, The Trio, Vol. 1-III, Soundscape, The Latin Tinge, and Seasoned Wood**. At this festival Walton brings his deep-in-the-blues drenched piano lines supported by an impeccable all-star aggregation featuring the turbo-charged tenor saxophonist/flutist **Lew Tabackin** (half of the legendary big band he co-lead with his wife Toshiko Akiyoshi), and Jazz Messenger alumnus, trombonist **Curtis Fuller**. You can be sure that the music from this group will be in-the-pocket, from the first note to the last. Walton performs at Jazz Festival 55 on Saturday.

It was in the New World that a myriad of African-born musical genres were born, and it was in the Caribbean that these far-flung genres flourished and co-mingled. The Santo Domingo-born pianist/composer/educator **Michel Camilo**, one of George Wein's most successful discoveries, has made a two decades-plus career at combining those influences with his impossible keyboard wizardry that is at home on a bebop tune, a *bata* drum ritual, a symphony orchestra, and Dominican *merengue/pambiche* rhythms. He studied at his homeland's National Conservatory, played with the National Symphony Orchestra as a teenager, moved to New York in 1979, and studied at Mannes and Julliard School of Music. After his Carnegie Hall debut in 1985, Camilo worked and recorded with Dizzy Gillespie, Paquito D'Rivera, George Benson, Tito Puente, Herbie Hancock, Tomatito, Mongo Santamaria, Joe Lovano, Arturo Sandoval, the Carnegie Hall Jazz Band, Cachao, Danish Radio Big Band, Jon Faddis, George Wein, Chucho Valdes, Gloria Estefan, Celia Cruz, Tania Maria, Dave Valentin, Jaco Pastorius, Airtó & Flora Purim, Stanley Turrentine, Giovanni Hidalgo, Toots Thielemans, Patato, Michael Brecker, Randy Brecker, Eddie Palmieri, Hiromi and Esperanza Spalding. He's released over 20 recordings in solo, duo, trio, small, large and orchestral ensembles including **Why Not?, Caribe, Triangulo, Once More Once, Spirit of the Moment** and **Live at the Blue Note**. His soundtracks include **Too Much**, and he was prominently featured in the 2000 Latin jazz documentary, **Calle 54**. With his happy, easy-going demeanor contrasted by his complete mastery of the modern keyboard, Michel Camilo proves that Mr. Wein's track record as a talent scout is just as impressive as his impresario abilities. Camilo performs at Jazz Festival 55 on Sunday.

When Cedar Walton was with the Messengers, they were very popular in Japan, and the syncopated science they dropped there continues to flower today. It is The Land of the Rising Sun that gave us the petite, but powerful dynamo of a jazz pianist named **Hiromi Uehara**. A thirty-ish Berklee graduate and discovery/protégé of the great Ahmad Jamal, Hiromi fashioned a finessed and furious pianism that combines Chick Corea's crisp lines and Oscar Peterson's superhuman technique. In a few short years, Hiromi's soul has catapulted her releases **Another Mind, Brain, Spiral, Time Control, and Beyond Category** with her superfusion ensemble **Sonicbloom**: bassist, **Tony Grey, Dave "Fuze" Fiuczynski** on guitar, and drummer **Martin Valihora**. Even at this young age Hiromi can go from Gershwin-nesque flourishes to a take-no-prisoners take on the likes of Jeff Beck - with equal taste and devotion that owes nothing to cliché and everything to inspiration and invention. Her limitless talent gives legitimacy to the phrase "catch a rising star." Hiromi performs at Jazz Festival 55 on Saturday.

Speaking of stars, the Indian/American pianist/composer/author/educator **Vijay Iyer** is a star about to go supernova! In the decade-and-a half that he's been on the scene, he's performed and recorded with an impressive roster of stars, from Steve Coleman and John Zorn, to poet Amiri Baraka and dead prez, and has a number of astonishing CDs as a leader and co leader. His keyboard style is a Mephistophelean mix of Thelonious Monk's angularity, Cecil Taylor's force and Andrew Hill's genius, with a comprehensive compositional mind that expounds and expands on jazz, world and Indian music. That *masala* mix is evident on his CD's **Memorophilia, Architextures, Panoptic Modes, Blood**

Sutra, In What Language?, Reimagining, Raw Materials, Still Lifewith Commentator, Door, and Tragicomic. A true polymath in the science, arts, and humanities, the 1971-born Iyer earned a B.S. in Mathematics and Physics from Yale, and a Masters in Physics and an Interdisciplinary Ph.D. in Technology and the Arts from the University of California at Berkeley in 1998. He has been a faculty member at New York University, and the School for Improvisational Music, and the New School University and his writings have been published in respected journals, and anthologies. Iyer performs at Jazz Festival 55 on Saturday.

The young, Cuban-born **Alfredo Rodriguez** is a new discovery with a different story. Born in Cuba in 1985, he started on drums, and began piano lessons at the age of seven at Havana's Manuel Saumell Elementary Classical Music Conservatory. His teachers didn't think he was talented enough, but he pursued his musical passion and at the age of 14, he was the school's prize pianist and the student chosen to play at graduation - he graduated first in his class, with the highest marks the conservatory's history. He made a living on the island as a producer and musical director, writing for a number of television shows. But he was virtually unknown outside of Cuba. That changed in 2006, when he was accepted to play at the prestigious Montreux Jazz Festival in Switzerland. His audition tape caught the ear of Quincy Jones, who was astonished by the young musician's mature musicality. Jones contacted Rodriguez, but was unsuccessful at getting him to come to the States. Three years later, the young pianist defected to the United States from Mexico. Now, on U.S. soil, Rodriguez's major debut occurred recently at the Playboy Jazz Festival, where his unique and still-evolving amalgam of Bill Evans, Bud Powell, Herbie Hancock, and Thelonious Monk, blew everybody away. There is no doubt that the audience that encounters him at Jazz Festival 55 on Sunday will also be awed by this new star in the heavens of jazz pianism.

On the face of it, this engaging assemblage of keyboard talent highlights the fertile soil that jazz music is growing out of in the early 21st Century - and with good reason. The seeds for planting and presenting the best and brightest on that instrument at a jazz festival were first planted 55 years ago by a talented and ambitious Boston pianist named **George Wein!**

The full Jazz Festival 55 line-up includes:

FRIDAY, AUGUST 7 ~ 8:00 pm

International Tennis Hall of Fame, 194 Bellevue Avenue

Etta James and The Roots Band; Howard Alden/Anat Cohen Quartet

SATURDAY, AUGUST 8 ~ 11:30 am - 7:00 pm

Fort Adams State Park, Harrison Avenue

Mos Def; Branford Marsalis Quartet; Joshua Redman Double Trio; Esperanza Spalding; Cedar Walton All-Stars with Lew Tabackin & Curtis Fuller; Hiromi's SonicBloom; Vandermark 5; Jane Monheit; Christian McBride; Vijay Iyer Trio; Marsalis Music Presents Miguel Zenón Quartet, North Carolina Central Big Band, Branford Marsalis-Joey Calderazzo Duo, Claudia Acuña

SUNDAY, AUGUST 9 ~ 11:30 am - 7:00 pm

Fort Adams State Park, Harrison Avenue

Tony Bennett; Dave Brubeck Quartet; Roy Haynes Fountain of Youth Band; Michel Camilo; Joe Lovano UsFive; The Bad Plus with Wendy Lewis; James Carter Organ Trio; Conversations with Christian McBride; Steven Bernstein's Millennial Territory Orchestra; Brian Blade & The Fellowship Band; Rudresh Mahanthappa's Indo-Pak Coalition; Rashied

Ali-Charles Gayle-William Parker's "By Any Means"; Alfredo Rodriguez; The Rodriguez Brothers, Roy Guzman**TICKETS & OTHER INFORMATION**

Tickets are on sale now for **George Wein's Jazz Festival 55** on-line at www.jazzfestival55.com, by phone at (800) 514-3849 and by mail. General admission tickets (single-day passes only) also can be purchased in person at the Visitor's Center at the Newport County Convention & Visitor's Bureau located at 23 America's Cup Avenue in Newport. General Admission seating is first-come/first-served on the lawn. Patrons may bring blankets and low-backed beach chairs. **General Admission: Adult:** \$69.00 in advance, \$75.00 on festival weekend, if available. **Children 3-15:** \$15.00 each day at all times; under 3, free. **Adult Two-Day Passes:** A limited number of two-day passes good for admission Saturday and Sunday will be available for \$125.00 while they last. There will be a **Reserved Seating** section on one side of the grass in front of the main stage. There is no child's price for reserved seating sections. No coolers are allowed in reserved seating sections. **Gold Circle:** \$100.00; **Reserved:** \$85.00. **Parking:** On site festival parking: \$12.00 per vehicle in advance; \$15.00 on festival weekend.

Service Charges: Per ticket service charges apply to all tickets purchased on-line or by phone and there is an additional per order charge for phone orders. There is a \$4.00 handling charge per order for tickets ordered by mail.

In Rhode Island: General Admission tickets (single-day passes only) can be purchased in person at the Visitor's Center at the Newport County Convention Center & Visitor's Bureau at 23 America's Cup Ave. No service charges apply. Visit www.gonewport.com for ticket office hours and general information. **Festival Office:** Tickets can now be purchased in person at the Festival office, located at 770 Aquidneck Avenue in Middletown, RI. Office hours in June are Tuesdays and Thursdays from Noon - 4:00 PM. Cash and credit cards accepted. For general information, craft vendor information or to leave a message for festival staff, call the festival hotline at (401) 848-5055.

By Mail: To order tickets by mail, send a note specifying the number of tickets you wish to order for each event and include a phone number where you can be reached. Include your address and credit card information (with expiration date and CVC Code from back of card), check or money order plus \$4.00 *per order* for postage and handling to: George Wein's Jazz Festival 55, PO BOX 3865, Newport, RI 02840.

For more information, log on to www.jazzfestival55.com.

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