

# Jed Levy Reviews



Evans Explorations  
By Elliott Simon

Explorations (Riverside, 1961) is one of two landmark studio recordings from the Bill Evans trio that, through chordal voicings, a classically-based style and egalitarian instrumental interplay, moved the jazz piano trio toward impressionism and away from a rhythmic approach. It still sounds amazingly contemporary and the task that tenor saxophonist Jed Levy has set for himself in his explorations of a piece of the Evans digest using his tenor trio is a daunting one. Levy succeeds remarkably well through his own impressionistic gentle touch, Francois Moutin's up-in-the-mix yet perceptively sensitive bass and the drumming of Evans grad Eliot Zigmund.

While a non-traditional bop-ish treatment of the classic "Blue in Green" starts things off and a swinging interpretation of the standard "I'm Getting Sentimental Over You" closes things out, this trio thrives when it is painting with broader sonic brush strokes. This is witnessed on a touching depiction of "Laurie" and a melodiously moving "Re: Person I Knew." Moutin and Levy are a superb pairing on these tunes and remain true to this music with neither overpowering nor assertive one-upmanship. They blend harmoniously, as in the wonderfully open "Interplay" that serves as an unfettered forum for improvisation and opportune time for Levy to switch to flute. Likewise, the arco bass/tenor doubling that opens "Twelve Tone Tune" captures that beautiful dreamy quality that helped define the Evans trio. These qualities are also apparent on "Very Early" and "Time Remembered," the latter's spaciousness benefiting from Levy's tenor and flute playing. "Jazz Samba," given a fairly fiery treatment courtesy of Zigmund and Moutin's rhythm, and "The Dolphin," portrayed in a traditional breezy manner that again has Moutin sharing center stage, round things out and are representative of Evans' Latin stylings. This is a unique depiction of Evans' songbook.

## The New York Times

By THE NEW YORK TIMES  
Published: July 27, 2007

JED LEVY QUARTET (Wednesday) Mr. Levy, a saxophonist working convincingly in the jazz mainstream, leads a group with Mark Soskin on piano, Ugonna Okegwo on bass and Billy Drummond on drums. At 8 and 9:45 p.m., Kitano Hotel, 66 Park Avenue, at 38th Street, Manhattan, (212) 885-7119, kitano.com; no cover. (Chinen)

### From the Montreal Mirror

Jed Levy  
Mood Ellington (Steeplechase)  
Tenorman Levy comes up with one of the greatest Ellington CDs in recent memory, including compositions like "Neo Hip Hot Cool Kiddies Community" from Duke's suite "The River?" and "Circle of Fourths," inspired by the Bard. It's also a great introduction to pianist Bill Mays ... 10/10 (Len Dobbin)

On an Up and Coming Album...  
SwingStreets New York  
by Paul Blair

One of the great pleasures of living in the midst of the New York jazz scene is the chance to discover the excellence of largely unheralded players - even those who've been working around town for a decade or two. Saxophonist Jed Levy, born in 1958 and New Jersey-raised, is just such a guy. Although I recall hearing him on records in the mid-Eighties - and then seeing him sitting in at the Knickerbocker in Greenwich Village some months later - it's only lately dawned on me what a superb all-round musician this man is.

Although Levy's arsenal includes a half dozen reed instruments - the better to handle various studio and theater assignments coming his way - he's chosen to focus his primary attention on tenor. Mind you, since his 1979 arrival in New York, following a period of study at Berklee in Boston, Jed hasn't been all that short of work. He's played with a whole passel of organists (Jack McDuff, Groove Holmes, Shirley Scott and Don Patterson, to name just four), filled chairs in

From [Bagatellen.com](http://Bagatellen.com)  
Jed Levy - Evans Explorations  
By [derek taylor](#) · October 21, 2008 ·  
[commentellen](#)

Half a century of hindsight has applied an erosive effect to the pianoless trio's proving-ground luster. Rollins hit an immediate home run with his epochal Vanguard stand, but these days professional saxophonists take to the instrumentation like ducks to water. As such, Jed Levy's ability to improvise inventively in the absence of conventional chordal accompaniment isn't likely to raise any eyebrows or coax any wide smiles, at least initially. Where the format still carries cachet is in how a leader chooses to personalize the relative freedom.

Levy has a long history collaborating with keyboardists on record, dating back to formative sideman work as a member of Jaki Byard's Apollo Stompers. He puts spin on the session by centering attention on tunes that fall within the orbit of Bill Evans, while simultaneously dropping the pianist/composer's instrument from the equation. Drummer Eliot Zigmund has a direct connection to the Evans ensemble lineage having served a four year stint in the late-70s. Bassist Francois Moutin fingers his lightly amplified strings in an adroit active style reminiscent of another Evans alum, Eddie Gomez. Solo space for both men proves plentiful as the set runs the songbook spectrum from well known line drives like the opening "Blue in Green" to left field pop flies like "Re: Person I Knew".

Levy's smooth phrasing often mirrors Evans' genteel keyboard touch and there's a Getzian glide to his constructions on the two samba numbers. Another pair of pieces serves as features for his feather-toned flute. Zigmund and Moutin keep the interplay vibrant and proactive without resorting to obvious aggression. As with celebrated label mates Rich Perry and Ari Ambrose, Levy's technical skills are hardly assailable. About the only areas of minor complaint are the occasions where wishful thinking for more grit and spark in the leader's spooling lines arise. Sometimes there's just a bit too much spit shine on the improvisations. Then again, that choice of controlled delivery and demeanor once again jibes with the storied mien of the dedicatee.

Don Patterson, to name just four); filled chairs in the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra and the Chico O'Farrill Afro-Cuban Jazz Orchestra; gigged with the likes of Tom Harrell, Jack Walrath, Junior Mance and Curtis Fuller; cooperated on musical projects with bassist Ron McClure and Headhunters drummer Mike Clark; appeared at festivals and clubs in Europe and Japan, as well as at most of the major Manhattan jazz venues; and recorded as a sideman with Jaki Byard (an early mentor), guitarist Peter Leitch, trombonist Steve Davis, trumpeter Eddie Henderson and pianist Don Friedman.

In addition, there are four fine CDs in print under Jed's own name, all on the Steeplechase label. For the most recent of these, called Mood Ellington, the saxophonist chose trumpeter Walrath as his frontline partner and recruited an ultra-tight, super-inventive rhythm section: Bill Mays on piano, Martin Wind as bassist and Jeff Brillinger playing drums. Better yet, he settled on a repertoire of ducal tunes that have rarely been covered by other artists - enchantments like "Ad Lib on Nippon" and "Circle of Fourths."

The Levy CD I'm most excited about, though, is one you can't have heard yet because it hasn't even been issued. Two weeks ago, I was present at a Levy recording session in a Lower East Side studio during which a quartet - this time including pianist George Colligan, bassist Ugonna Okegwo and drummer Billy Drummond - worked their way expertly through nine tunes in under five hours. One was "How Am I To Know?" Another was based on the first movement of a Hindemith clarinet concerto. The remaining seven were Levy originals - each a little gem of a piece, harmonically rich and rhythmically varied. Frankly, I've often found it hard to maintain interest all the way through any album that's nothing but tenor-plus-rhythm, track after another. This time, though, the combination of clever tunes plus fluid, imaginative and swinging tenor playing reminds me of the pleasure I've always found in Hank Mobley albums.

Steeplechase honcho Nils Winther, who produced this session as one of several during his annual New York visit, seemed as delighted with the proceedings as I was. In fact, he had little to do but sit in the control room and smile. The quartet had already mastered the material at two prior rehearsals. You can hear the results some months from now, on a future Steeplechase release.



## Gateway

By Budd Kapman

Some players seem to enjoy the adventure of not knowing with whom they are going to play with next, while others would rather develop the interpersonal communication that can only come with time. Since jazz is, at its core, an improvisational art, playing in the moment is the ideal, with different kinds of music requiring different musical reflexes.

Jed Levy, as demonstrated on the most attractive Gateway, lives in the mainstream world, but one that is filled with unexpected twists and turns while bringing together musicians who had never played together as a quartet. However, the interpersonal chemistry which one might think would be lacking is more than balanced by the extremely high level of musicianship present at the session.

What is clear from the music is that these players really listen to each other and are so quick of musical thought that they have more than enough time to negotiate the detours in the road while reacting to what is happening around them.

Levy's tunes cannot be called adventurous, but neither are they totally predictable. Odd phrase lengths abound, as do changes in meter, but they never sound overtly shocking for their own sake. In the notes, Levy actually speaks of his compositions as representing the natural outcome of what he is hearing at the moment and not any artificial constructs.

As the tunes of Gateway each flow by, the record's pacing moves from the up tunes through ballads and back. Jazz that has that warm comfort level, which comes from recognizable structures, exists simultaneously with the excitement of players who are so facile that they can play around within Levy's music.

This facility comes at a price however, since everyone makes it sound so easy. Someone who looks to jazz for the shock of the new or who wants to listen in the moment as the players play in that moment will not find it here.

But, then again, that is not what Gateway is about, which is simply to present good music and to play it honestly and directly.

# allmusic

Review - Evans Explorations  
by Ken Dryden

Jed Levy is a veteran of the Manhattan jazz scene, having recorded with the late [Jaki Byard's Apollo Stompers](#), [Don Friedman](#), and [Peter Leitch](#), in addition to leading his own sessions, most of which have been issued by the Danish label Steeplechase. On this 2007 studio date, the lyrical tenor saxophonist explores ten songs written or recorded by the late pianist [Bill Evans](#), recruiting former [Evans](#) drummer [Eliot Zigmund](#) and bassist [François Moutin](#). Levy is very conscious of the use of space and the interaction of [Evans](#)' trios, though by omitting a piano, the saxophonist gives himself a lot more freedom. Right out of the gate, he kicks off with a very breezy take of the usually Impressionistic "Blue in Green," sailing over his pulsing rhythm section. Levy takes a bit more of a traditional approach to the perky waltz "Very Early," showcasing both sidemen with [Zigmund](#)'s crisp brushwork keeping things light. The trio navigates [Evans](#)' challenging "Twelve Tone Tune" with ease, while the deliberate setting of "RE: Person I Knew" features the group's most intimate playing of the date. Levy switches to flute for two pieces, including the haunting ballad "Time Remembered" (in which he also overdubs tenor) and the intricate "Interplay," both of which are masterful. Highly recommended!

## JazzTimes

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2006

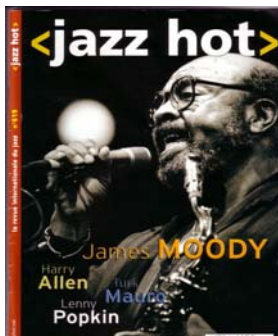
[Jed Levy Quintet](#) [Mood Ellington](#)

By [David Franklin](#)

Tenorist/flutist Jed Levy's Mood Ellington can be both admired and enjoyed for its imaginative reworkings of some lesser-known Duke Ellington compositions, all performed with skill and affection by a stellar quintet. The only well-known tune among them is "Mood Indigo," and it receives an appealing reharmonization. The rest of the well-balanced program consists of relatively unfamiliar pieces such as "Action in Alexandria," "Circle of Fourths" and "Dancers in Love."

Although pianist Bill Mays does occasionally inject a few Dukeisms, such as the brief stride passages in "New World A-Comin'" and a few Duke-like runs in other spots, but for the most

part the improvisations are the kind soloists would play in more conventional contexts-- though are all of the first order. Levy possesses an attractive tone and overall approach more like those of Joe Henderson or Joe Lovano than of many of his Coltrane-oriented contemporaries, and trumpeter Jack Walrath projects a personal style nearly devoid of cliches. Drummer Jeff Brillinger and bassist Martin Wind play their roles expertly.



<Jazz Hot> Jed LEVY

(Jazz Hot 619)

By Jean Szlamowicz

Born August 12th 1958 in Bryn Mawr (Penn), Jed Levy has been a very discreet but nonetheless interesting saxophonist. He has played in many different contexts and his playing draws as much on the music of Joe Henderson as that of Ben Webster or Warne Marsh. A very rich musical biography features collaborations with Jaki Byard, Jack McDuff, Don Patterson, Cedar Walton, Tom Harrell, Peter Leitch, Arturo O'Farrill, John Hicks, Ron McClure, Billy Hart, Rufus Reid... Tempted by abstract modernism as well as hard-core tradition, he displays a fluent sensitivity and comes out as a somewhat elusive but consistently attractive personality with a real musical purpose.

**Jazz Hot : What was your family like? Jed Levy :** My father was in the air force so we moved around a lot and we lived in Austin, Texas, Washington D.C. and eventually Martinsville (NJ), so I'm basically a New-Yorker. Neither of my parents are in music but both my brother and I are professional musicians, Todd is the principal clarinetist with the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra. My folks were very good at exposing us to a lot of different kinds of music. My mother was an artist and it kind of helped. I had some Jewish Saturday school but it didn't last very long because my family were not religious at all. I didn't even get as far as bar-mitsva! (laughs)

**How did you discover jazz? Who were your first influences? At the time I was coming up in New**



All that jazz

New York City saxophonist Jed Levy teams up with Asheville jazz musicians for May 19 concert at Performing Arts Center in Waynesville

By Michael Beadle

New York City has long enjoyed a reputation as a melting pot of music -- especially when it comes to the jazz scene.

In the last decade or so, Western North Carolina has been building on that same theme, mixing its rich old-time and lively bluegrass traditions along with an emerging Latino and South American sound and a

Jensen. Brillanger, meanwhile, has performed with Levy on four albums, including Mood Ellington and Round and Round.

Gerhardt, who first met Levy back in the early '90s and has recorded albums with him, continues to be impressed with Levy's range of versatility, his work as a sideman, and now his leadership as a composer and band leader.

"He's played with everybody," Gerhardt said.

Levy has played alongside top-notch names across the musical spectrum from the Cab Calloway orchestra to the Temptations and Four Tops to Chico O'Farill's Afro Cuban Orchestra. In addition to performing as a tenor and soprano saxophonist and flute player, he also composes. Since graduating in 1980 from the New England Conservatory, Levy has been playing in quartets, orchestras and various groups throughout the country as well as festivals in New York City, Chicago, Montreal, Ottawa, and overseas in France and Portugal. A fixture in the New York City jazz scene for nearly three decades, Levy has also taught music at the prestigious Berklee College of Music and Columbia University.

As a SteepleChase recording artist, Levy has been featured on five albums where he's been the band leader -- most recently with Gateway -- as well as more than a dozen other albums where he's been a sideman or band member.

Expect to hear a lot of Jed Levy music compositions for the Waynesville concert, Gerhardt said. When it comes to working with Levy, you know you're dealing with a consummate creative professional.

"Jed has a very clear vision as a leader and as a composer," Gerhardt added.

Jazz allows a performer to start with a framework and improvise, Gerhardt explained, and that sense of surprise, the understanding that no song is ever played the same way twice, is the thrill he looks for in music. It's not about showing off technical abilities. It's about giving in to the music.

"Take the music to new places," Gerhardt says, calling to mind a jazz mantra.

And while it's great to perform in front of a packed house of jazz aficionados, Gerhardt says it can be more fun to play in front of a crowd of people who don't necessarily know

Jersey, it was not an easy thing to do although they had a kind of stage band that I started in 5th grade. But this was the mid-70's and there wasn't much jazz around, the root music I mean.

Eventually I think I just discovered Miles Davis and I got to listen to everybody that played with him, Cannonball Adderley, Coltrane, Bill Evans... I had some private lessons, I played guitar because I was listening to rock and roll. Then I started to get serious, working gigs when I was 13. One person that was very influential was Paul Jeffrey. I met him at a clinic and started taking lessons with him. Then I went to New England Conservatory and my second big influence was Jaki Byard. I started playing with him every week in a club and I made my first records with him for Soul Note and a Japanese label. Jaki Byard is old and new at the same time. His music led me to Ellington's music and to older styles. I discovered it was possible to play in the tradition, or in many traditions and still play with your own voice. He could play like anybody but he had his own vocabulary. It was great to be around such a complete genius.

What was it like at the New England Conservatory? We were being exposed to many different things at the conservatory. There was the International Composers' Meeting were all this new music was promoted. It wasn't jazz, it was European concert music or whatever you want to call it but I got to hear a lot of that. George Russell was there, Jimmy Giuffre, Miroslav Vitous I got to play with. And there was Joe Allard, a very famous classical teacher-he was not a jazz musician but he influenced a lot of people as far as the mechanics of the saxophone is concerned. He taught Eric Dolphy, Mike Brecker, Eddie Daniels... even Coltrane came a couple of times to his studio with Dolphy. The fundamentals of music are all the same. To play jazz, one has to look at things in a compositional way, in a theoretical way and also in a more soulful way, blues way. But you have to know your instrument-it's like an artist's palette so the more colors you can put on your palette the more detailed you can be in your painting. That's what I learnt at the conservatory. It's just a means to an end. And the end for me should be really to tell a story, that's what I strive for. Saxophone is an instrument where great technical advances have been made but it shouldn't be the paragon that one displays as a saxophone player. I think I've grown up enough to realize that concept.

Who are your reference points? I think I've listened to everybody-I have hundreds of thousands of records. My favourites change from period to period. Right now I listen to a lot of Ben Webster, Lucky Thompson, Frank Strozier, Paul Gonsalvez, Coleman Hawkins... I don't sit there



what jazz is.

"They don't have as many preconceived notions of what it should sound like," Gerhardt said.

The pianist learned that first-hand while playing mountain villages in Spain years ago.

No stranger to Western North Carolina, Jed Levy and his band toured the region back in 2003 when the Asheville-based Jazz Composers Forum set up performances and workshops at Appalachian State University, UNC-Charlotte, UNC-Asheville and Claxton Elementary School in Asheville.

This time around, Levy and his band aren't doing workshops, but they are playing venues in Boone, Blowing Rock, Charlotte, Winston-Salem and Asheville. The Waynesville gig will be the Levy Quartet's last date on the North Carolina tour.

### [Bob's Top 25 New Releases | Jazz With Bob Parlocha](#)

March 20, 2003

- 1 JED LEVY ROUND & ROUND  
STEEPLECHASE
- 2 STEVE TURRE ONE 4 J TELARC
- 3 JESSE DAVIS THE SETUP ALLTRIBE
- 4 FRED HERSCH LIVE/VILLAGE  
VANGUARD PALMETTO
- 5 ROBERT JOSPE TIME TO PLAY INNER  
RHY
- 6 JACKY TERRASSON SMILE  
BLUENOTE
- 7 MARSALIS FAMILY A JAZZ  
CELEBRATION ROUNDER
- 8 GREEN/MALONE JAZZ AT THE BISTRO

and try to learn every note, I just let it wash into me and absorb the feeling of their music. I was lucky that I got to play contexts where those sounds were usable. In a lot of the music today, you don't get to play that. But you should check out everything, from Ben Webster to Chostakovitch's string quartets.

Have you always tried to develop as a leader? I've always written music. Although business-wise, recognition-wise and even self-confidence wise, I wasn't thinking «I need to be a leader». But writing music and seeing what the result was when played by good musicians led me to front bands. After Jaki Byard, I moved to New York and I worked with Jack McDuff, I was on the road with him for a while. That led to other organ gigs, I spent a year with Don Patterson who was one of the most wonderful musicians I've ever played with, he was a beautiful cat, John Swana was in the band. I played a lot with Lonnie Smith during that period. I played a lot with Jack Walrath, Mike Clark, Josh Roseman, Paul Jackson-I wrote some music for the new Headhunters records.

Tell us more about the spirit of the organ combos... It was great. With Jack McDuff, it was all about playing the blues-understanding and feeling the blues. Don's approach was wider and looser, it was more like a bebop band. We had a vibe right away, even before we played together. He made me feel so comfortable and welcome on the bandstand. He would do anything he could to make you sound your best. for anybody who's seriously interested in jazz organ, he's really at the top of the list. Lonnie Smith was really taking things elsewhere with multiple keyboards and it was gorgeous.

What's your personal approach as a leader? I'm trying to internalize everything that I've had the opportunity to play and be around and allow to ferment in me then what comes out comes out. On Round and Round, there's certainly an Afro-Cuban influence, Brazilian because I've been playing with those guys. It's certainly in the tradition but also with a feeling that it's in real time and it's about what's happening right now.

How do you account for jazz being sidetracked from its own circuit? It has to do with the people who run the festivals. They're trying to keep people interested-these are large audiences who might relate to other styles than jazz. But pop acts in the 60's that were so influenced by jazz no longer can sell the numbers that a pop act is supposed to require today and they don't belong in a jazz festival. I like that things are eclectic. It's always hard to say that this is jazz or not. For instance, I wouldn't say that Dr. John is jazz

19 VARIOUS JAM SESSIONS 4  
STEEPLECHASE  
20 BABATUNDE LEA SOUL POOLS  
MOTEMA  
21 PETE MALINVERNI AUTUMN IN NY  
RESERVOIR  
22 TERRY GIBBS FROM ME TO YOU...  
MACK AVE  
23 MIKE DIRUBBO HUMAN SPIRIT  
CRISSCROSS  
24 FLORA PURIM SPEAK NO EVIL  
NARADA  
25 CONRAD HERWIG LAND OF SHADOW  
CRISSCROSS

with **The Star-Ledger**

Levy leads quartet at Cornerstone  
by Zan Stewart, Star-Ledger Staff  
Wednesday September 26, 2007, 6:40 PM  
ANGELA JIMENEZ/FOR THE STAR-LEDGER

Saxophonist and flutist Jed Levy is an A-1 reed artist, as he's aptly demonstrated with bands led by harmonica player-vibist Hendrik Meurkens and bassist Ron McClure, and as a leader.

Levy -- whose latest solid CD is "Gateway" (Steeplechase), which boasts many top-rate originals -- enjoys both the jazz mainstream, and its more open edges, giving his work a welcome breadth. Levy joins three other front-rank players -- pianist Tomoko Ohno, bassist Bill Crow and drummer Nick Scheuble -- when he appears Friday, 7:30 to 11:30 p.m., at the Cornerstone Cafe & Bistro

although I like his music and it comes from the same cauldron as jazz. But also I think that many people who play in the mainstream style have not taken the time to build a personal music in a lot of cases. They are wonderful musicians, their craft is fantastic but maybe the audience already has Freddie Hubbard's records. Try and understand what I'm saying-it's a very complicated issue for musicians, promoters and for the audience. Everybody should dig deep in themselves and look for a personal presentation- whatever they're coming up with an people will like it or not.

What's good music like for you? I like music that has a feeling, that makes my body feel good, that's a personal statement, that I can tell is a sincere statement. When I hear someone like Arthur Blythe- I don't aspire to playing like that but I love listening to him because it's real art. It's pure. It's him. The same goes for Ben Webster- when he plays a melody, that's all you need to hear. Nobody has said it more eloquently than he has. It comes from his heart. Forget it, it erases everything, it's so profound!

# The Penguin Guide to Jazz on CD

Richard Cook and Brian Morton

*Seventh edition*

## **Jed Levy** (born 1958)

TENOR SAXOPHONE

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*Studied at New England Conservatory, then played with the Jaki Byard and Don Patterson groups. Now works in and around the New York City area.*

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### **\*\*\*(\*) Sleight Of Hand**

Steeplechase SCCD 31383 *Levy; George Colligan (p); Ron McClure (b); Gerry Gibbs (d). 11/95.*

### **\*\*\*(\*) Round And Round**

Steeplechase SCCD 31529 *Levy; Bill Gerhardt (p); Mike McGurk (b); Jeff Brillinger (d). 3/02.*

Very impressive and about as inventive a departure from the standard tenor-and-rhythm conventions as one can hope for. Levy's broad-shouldered tone and confident delivery give him the kind of full-on swing one associates with an earlier generation, but he's soaked in bebop and hard-bop practice. The superfast title-track and the closer, a recasting of the 'Cherokee' chords, show off his chops without just showing off. 'Three And

Me' is an ingenious use of 3/4 and it's the setting for a quite extraordinary solo by Colligan, who takes the McCoy Tyner method to its limit here. Colligan is as imposing as Levy himself, with his playing on 'Nice And Easy' (a clever choice of standard) as humorous as it is inventive. McClure is his usual tower of strength and Gibbs is marvellously fluent and powerful. This is a great band and they change setting and pace throughout with no loss of interest: there's a bit of a dead spot in the middle with the long and uneventful 'Desert Church', but otherwise it's a first-class session.

The belated follow-up is just as good. The rhythm section aren't as well-known but they do just fine; the tunes are another largely familiar group (he even has another go at 'Cherokee'). Jed's playing, though, is again tremendous. He powers through themes and solos in a way which ought to seem bland, in terms of the steely confidence of the execution, yet it's nothing but full-throated enjoyment. The sort of record which empowers the jazz-repertoire tradition without troubling to make any statements at all.



# CD Reviews

## The Editor's Choice

### Jed Levy

#### **Round And Round**

STEEPLECHASE SCCD 31529

Round And Round; Subtle Rebuttal;  
Holiday; People Time; Hillside; Cherokee;  
These Are My Dreams; Buck's County Blues;  
Projectile.

Jed Levy (ts); Bill Gerhardt (p); Mike  
McGuirk (b); Jeff Brillinger (d). 3/02.

The first thing to notice about this fine album is what a lot of sax playing you get for your money. Jed Levy's tenor is unstoppable: the music flows out of the horn in torrents. The second thing that strikes you is, what a great band this is and why haven't I heard these people before. They've been hiding their lights under a bushel.

Jed Levy is one of those dependable sidemen who for no good reason has stayed out of the limelight. An apostle of the late Jaki Byard, he has played alongside Cedar Walton, Tom Harrell and Jack McDuff among others. The rest of the band have kept similarly stellar company. Pianist Bill Gerhardt, who possesses a strong and steely comping style, has recorded with Billy Higgins and George Mraz, among others. Bassist Mike McGuirk has worked with John Abercrombie and Eddie Henderson. Drummer Jeff Brillinger, who is a sharp and snappy 'cymbalist', has worked with Zoot Sims and Horace Silver, to name a few.

All that experience shows in the way the guys pick their way lithely through this medium/fast-tempo set. Levy simply lopes along, his reworking of the well-worn standard "Cherokee" flashing by, bright and shiny in the key of G-flat. Passing the baton to Gerhardt, the tune takes on a more impressionistic hue. The point at which the brakes are applied and Levy coasts the number home is a delight. On the original "Buck's County Blues" he demonstrates how to sustain and

resolve breezy improvisation without eventually resorting to blaring and honking.

And of course Levy can play a ballad. Benny Carter's "People Time" is a dreamy, Getz-like exploration (which is appropriate as it was Getz who introduced the number to a wider audience).

If Levy ever makes it to the UK, I want to hear about it.

GARRY BOOTH



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<jazz hot>

# <jazz hot>

n°619

la revue internationale du jazz

James **MOODY**

Harry  
**Allen**

Turk  
**Mauro**

Lenny  
**Popkin**

L 19019 - 619 - F: 5,50 €



vers d'une chanson, ou même pour dissimuler leur manière de survivre aux autres. Pour ma part, j'essaie toujours de creuser ces chansons pour trouver le message correspondant à cette période de l'histoire. Dans les années 60 et 70, il y avait un message. Parfois, un simple mot comme « train » portait ce message. Si vous regardez les chansons afro-américaines, ce mot apparaît pour livrer un message : celui que nous arrivons, que nous continuons de progresser.

**M.D.M. :** Une partie de notre travail consiste à faire comprendre aux jeunes l'origine des musiques qu'ils écoutent. Nous sommes ici comme descendants d'Africains mais beaucoup de jeunes ne sont pas connectés à cette réalité. Nous sommes là pour leur dire : « Vos arrière-arrière-grands-parents étaient des esclaves, mais essayez d'imaginer comme ils ont dû être forts pour que vous soyez ici maintenant ». Notre travail en tant que chanteurs et être humains est de rappeler ces origines et le travail de destruction de mémoire qui a été entrepris.

**R.B. :** Avant de mourir à l'âge de 87 ans, ma grand-mère a vu une fois ce groupe. Alors, elle s'est levée et a effectué une danse qu'elle tenait de sa grand-mère qui ressentait de la honte d'avoir été esclave quand elle était enfant. Et ma grand-mère avait eu honte de son aïeule. Mais quand elle nous a vus, elle a dansé et a commencé à nous parler d'elle. Ma mère a dû s'asseoir. Elle ne nous en avait jamais parlé.

**M.D.M. :** Ces secrets se transforment en fierté.

Quant au percussionniste du groupe Simon Enrici Montserrat, il a préféré illustrer concrètement l'interconnexion des musiques en improvisant une démonstration des similitudes entre différents rythmes du monde. Les autres membres l'ont rapidement rejoint, comme lors des concerts, en utilisant le plus vieil instrument de musique : le corps humain.

*Frank Steiger*

1. Deux institutions pour les recherches relatives à l'histoire et à la culture afro-américaines.
2. La culture gullah est partagée par les habitants noirs de petites îles au large de la Georgie et de la Caroline du Sud. Les descendants d'esclaves s'y sont retrouvés « isolés », ce qui a eu pour conséquence une plus grande préservation des coutumes héritées de l'Afrique de l'Ouest que sur le continent.
3. Grand succès de Marvin Gaye en 1966, composé par Norman Whitfield et Barrett Strong.

Remerciements à Mme Paola Eicher de l'association Amdathtra

### < Sélection discographique >

- 1985. Linda Tillery, *Secrets*, Tuizer Music
- 1995. Linda Tillery, *Good Time*, Tuizer Music
- 1997. Linda Tillery & the Cultural Heritage Choir, *Front Porch Music*, Hearthbeat
- 2001. Linda Tillery & the Cultural Heritage Choir, *Say Yo' Business*, Hearthbeat

**Contact :** [www.culturalheritagechoir.com](http://www.culturalheritagechoir.com)

## Jed Levy

**Né le 12 août 1958 à Bryn Mawr, près de Philadelphie, Jed Levy est un saxophoniste discret à la musique**

**protéiforme, puisant autant dans la musique de Joe Henderson, Ben Webster ou Warne Marsh. Sa biographie**

**musicale très riche l'a fait croiser Jaki Byard, Jack McDuff, Don Patterson, Cedar Walton, Tom Harrell, Peter Leitch, Arturo O'Farrill, John Hicks, Ron McClure, Billy Hart, Rufus Reid... Entre modernisme et tradition, sa sensibilité sincère en fait une personnalité pas toujours facile à cerner mais qui reste attachante en raison de sa détermination artistique. Il vient de publier chez SteepleChase un nouvel album, *Mood Ellington*, consacré à des compositions peu connues d'Ellington, avec notamment la complicité de Bill Mays et Jack Walrath.**

rencontre

### Jazz Hot : Comment était votre famille ?

**Jed Levy :** Mon père était dans l'armée de l'air et nous nous déplaçons souvent si bien que j'ai vécu à Austin (Texas), Washington D.C. et surtout Martinsville (NJ). Je suis donc finalement surtout un New-Yorkais. Mes parents ne sont pas dans la musique mais ils nous ont permis d'en entendre beaucoup et mon frère Todd est aussi musicien professionnel, il est clarinettiste soliste pour le Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra. Ma mère était artiste et cela nous a aidés. J'ai aussi suivi l'école juive du samedi mais ma famille n'était pas du tout religieuse et je ne suis même pas arrivé jusqu'à la barmitsva ! (rires)

### Comment avez-vous découvert le jazz ?

Dans les années soixante-dix, il n'y avait pas beaucoup de vrai jazz dans le New Jersey mais j'ai commencé le sax au collège et la guitare en autodidacte parce que j'écoutais du rock. J'ai découvert Miles Davis, ce qui m'a amené à écouter Coltrane, Cannonball, Bill Evans... J'ai pris des cours privés et puis je m'y suis mis sérieusement vers 13 ans ; je commençais à jouer à droite à gauche. Ma première vraie influence a été Paul Jeffrey avec qui j'ai pris des cours. Ensuite je suis allé au New England Conservatory où j'ai étudié avec Jaki Byard. Je jouais avec lui toutes les semaines en club et j'ai fait mes premiers disques avec lui pour Soul Note et un label japonais. Jaki Byard est un ancien et un moderne en même temps : c'est sa musique qui m'a amené à Ellington et à des choses plus anciennes. J'ai découvert grâce à lui ce que c'était que d'être dans la tradition – et même dans plusieurs traditions – mais avec sa propre approche. Il pouvait jouer dans le style de n'importe qui mais il avait aussi son propre vocabulaire. Fréquenter un tel génie a été une expérience inoubliable.

### Comment était le New England Conservatory ?

Nous avions accès à des genres musicaux très différents. L'International Composers' Meeting se réunissait là-bas souvent. C'était une nouvelle musique, assurément pas du jazz, de la musique de concert européenne, ou appelez ça comme vous voudrez. Il y avait George Russell, Jimmy Giuffre, Miroslav Vitous avec lequel j'ai pu jouer à l'époque. Et aussi Joe Allard, un professeur de saxophone classique très connu. Ce n'était pas un musicien de jazz mais il a influencé beaucoup de gens pour ce qui est de la maîtrise de l'instrument : il a eu pour élèves Eric Dolphy, Mike Brecker, Eddie Daniels... et même Coltrane est venu le voir deux trois fois en accompagnant Dolphy. Quelle que soit la musique, les fondamentaux sont les mêmes. Pour jouer du jazz, il faut une approche de compositeur, une approche théorique et aussi une approche soulful, proche du blues. Mais il faut bien connaître son instrument. C'est comme la palette d'un peintre : plus on a de couleurs, plus on a de possibilités pour ce que l'on veut exprimer. C'est ce que j'ai appris au conservatoire. La technique n'est que le moyen en vue d'une fin. Ce que je recherche, c'est de raconter une histoire. Le saxophone a connu des évolutions techniques importantes mais ce n'est pas ce que votre jeu doit refléter. Je crois avoir développé une maturité suffisante pour le comprendre et arriver à le réaliser.

### Qui sont vos points de référence musicaux ?

Je crois que j'ai écouté tout le monde – j'ai des milliers de disques – mais mes préférences changent sans cesse. En ce moment, j'écoute énormément de Ben Webster, Lucky Thompson, Frank Strozier, Paul Gonsalvez, Coleman Hawkins... Je ne reste pas là à apprendre chaque note qu'ils jouent, j'essaie plutôt de me laisser pénétrer par le feeling de leur musique. J'ai eu la chance comme sideman de pouvoir jouer dans des contextes où cette musique était utilisable, ce qui n'est pas toujours





le cas dans la musique d'aujourd'hui. Reste qu'il faut écouter de tout, de Ben Webster aux quatuors de Chostakovitch.

**Avez-vous toujours joué en leader ?**

J'ai toujours composé et même si du point de vue du métier et de la reconnaissance, je n'ai pas été connu pour cela – et même du point de vue de la confiance en soi, je ne me disais pas « il faut absolument que je sois leader ». Mais j'ai toujours aimé composer et entendre ce que ça donnait joué par de bons musiciens. Après Jaki Byard, je me suis installé à New York et j'ai joué avec Jack McDuff, j'ai pas mal tourné avec lui. Cela m'a amené à jouer dans d'autres groupes d'organistes et j'ai passé un an dans le groupe de Don Patterson qui reste l'un des musiciens les plus incroyables que j'ai fréquentés. En plus c'était un type adorable. Il y avait John Swana dans le groupe. J'ai aussi joué beaucoup avec Lonnie Smith durant cette période et aussi Jack Walrath, Mike Clark, Josh Roseman, Paul Jackson – du coup j'ai écrit quelques morceaux pour le nouvel album des Headhunters.

**Les groupes avec orgue vous plaisaient particulièrement...**

C'était génial ! Avec Jack McDuff, c'était le blues. Il fallait comprendre le blues en profondeur, de l'intérieur. Avec Don, la musique était plus variée, plus souple, c'était plus bebop. Nous nous sommes entendus immédiatement,

avant même de jouer ensemble. Il me rendait les choses faciles, je me sentais bienvenu quand je jouais, j'étais très à l'aise avec lui. Il faisait tout pour vous mettre en valeur. Même s'il n'est pas très connu, quiconque s'intéresse sérieusement aux organistes de jazz le place en tête des grands organistes. Lonnie Smith apportait autre chose, avec des claviers de partout, et sa musique était merveilleuse.

**Quelle est votre musique en leader ?**

J'essaie d'intégrer toutes les musiques que j'ai pu jouer et connaître. Je les laisse fermenter en moi et je vois ce que ça donne quand ça sort... Sur *Round and Round*, il y a indéniablement une influence afro-cubaine et brésilienne parce que j'ai joué cette musique. Je veux rester dans la tradition mais de manière contemporaine, en phase avec aujourd'hui.

**Qu'en est-il du jazz aujourd'hui : il semble disparaître de son propre circuit...**

C'est dû aux gens qui dirigent les festivals et les labels. Ils veulent intéresser le public avec des nouveautés incessantes. Ils visent un public très large qui ne s'intéresse pas qu'au jazz. La variété des années soixante qui était influencé par le jazz ne peut pas se vendre au niveau que l'on attend aujourd'hui de la variété. Et il me semble que certaines musiques ne devraient pas se trouver dans les festivals de jazz. Pourtant j'aime bien l'éclectisme. C'est toujours difficile de

dire ce qui est du jazz et ce qui n'en est pas. Par exemple, je ne dirais pas que Dr. John soit du jazz même si j'aime bien ce qu'il fait et que sa musique a les mêmes racines que le jazz. Je crois aussi que beaucoup de gens qui jouent du jazz classique ne se sont pas donné la peine de se construire un style personnel. Ce sont de super musiciens qui jouent très bien mais peut-être que le public possède déjà les disques de Freddie Hubbard et attend autre chose... J'espère que vous comprenez ce que je veux dire ? C'est un problème très compliqué pour les musiciens, les gens du métier et pour le public. Chacun devrait y réfléchir et chercher à produire quelque chose de vraiment personnel ; quel que soit le résultat, après c'est au public d'apprécier.

**Quelle est la musique que vous aimez ?**

J'aime la musique qui a du feeling, qui me fait quelque chose corporellement, qui est personnelle et sincère. Quand j'entends un Arthur Blythe, même si ça n'est pas le style que je pratique, j'adore ce qu'il fait parce qu'il a une vraie démarche artistique. Sa musique lui ressemble, elle est d'une pureté totale. Pareil pour Ben Webster : il n'a qu'à jouer une mélodie et c'est parfait. Personne ne possède son éloquence, tout vient de son cœur... et ça efface tout le reste, c'est d'une telle profondeur !

Jean Szlamowicz

< Sélection discographique >

**Leader**

- ❑ 1987. *Good People*, Reservoir 105
- ❑ 1995. *Sleight of Hand*, SteepleChase 31383
- ❑ 2002. *Round and Round*, SteepleChase 31529
- ❑ 2004. *Mood Ellington*, SteepleChase 31579 (à paraître)

**Sideman**

- ❑ 1984. Jaki Byard & Apollo Stompers, *Phantasies*, Soul Note 121075-2
- ❑ 1986. Jaki Byard & Apollo Stompers, *Phantasies II*, Soul Note 121175-2
- ❑ 1988. Chris McNulty, *Waltz for Debbie*, Discovery 968
- ❑ 1988-89. Peter Leitch, *Portraits and Dedications*, Criss Cross 1039
- ❑ 1992. Peter Leitch, *From Another Perspective*, Concord Jazz 4480
- ❑ 1993. Chris McNulty, *Time for Love*, Amosaya 4545
- ❑ 1995. Peter Leitch, *Colours & Dimensions*, Reservoir 140

- ❑ 1995. Yvonne Roome, *Jazzmine*, Original Cast Record 9507
- ❑ 1996. Steve Davis, *Songs We Know*, DMP 3005
- ❑ 1998. Joe Lovano-Jaki Byard, *Music of Rahsaan Roland Kirk, Haunted Melodies*, Metropolitan 1114
- ❑ 1999. Jaki Byard & Apollo Stompers, *My Mother's Eyes*, M&I 30037
- ❑ 2000. Don Friedman, *My Foolish Heart*, SteepleChase 31534
- ❑ 2000. Mike Clark, *Actual Proof*, PGI 1121
- ❑ 2001. Mike Clark, *Conjunction*, Buckyball 8
- ❑ 2001. Ron McClure, *Matchpoint*, SteepleChase 31517
- ❑ 2002. Don Friedman, *My Foolish Heart*, SteepleChase 31534
- ❑ 2002. Ron McClure Quartet, *Age of Peace*, SteepleChase 31544
- ❑ 2003. *The Jim Seeley/Arturo O'Farrill Quintet*, Zoho Music 200501
- ❑ 2004. Peter Leitch, *Autobiography*, Reservoir 179

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## ON THE TOWN

### Levy's 'Hand': Subtle Touch

**"S**LEIGHT OF HAND," the latest recording by the New York-based saxophonist Jed Levy, quickly lives up to its billing. In fact, no sooner does the quartet session begin than Levy is playing tricks on our ears, executing subtle changes of key on the album's invigorating title track.

The same level of finesse Levy exhibits as a composer also helps distinguish his playing. He extracts a full, clear tone from his tenor, phrases melodies fluidly and improvises, on original pieces as well

as standards, with an appealing blend of logic and invention. For all its surprises and twists, his music never sounds forced or gimmicky.

The Frank Sinatra hit "Nice and Easy" inspires a fresh yet suitably cool reading, but the album derives most of its charm and energy from Levy's thoughtfully constructed, mood-shifting compositions and Jaki Byard's evocative blues, "Bird's Mother." A splendid example of Levy's handiwork is "Indigenous," a spirited update on the swing classic "Cherokee" and its bop cousin, "Ko Ko."



Jed Levy's finesse makes "Sleight of Hand" a welcome trick.

Adding to the album's pleasures are the alert and sometimes inspired contributions made by Levy's bandmates: bassist Ron McClure, drummer Gerry Gibbs and, in particular, pianist George Colligan.

— Mike Joyce

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**JED LEVY** — "Sleight of Hand" (SteepleChase). The Jed Levy Quartet appears Friday and Saturday at the Nest in the Willard Hotel. ♦ To hear a free Sound Bite from this album, call Post-Haste at 202/334-9000 and press 8127. (Prince William residents, call 690-4110.)

# JAZZ

## Levy's decade of commitment

By CURT YESKE  
Special to The Times

**T**he legacy of the jazz professional too often is one of great artistic accomplishment accompanied by personal heartbreak and frustration. History says the pursuit of a full-time jazz career is not for the faint of heart or those unfamiliar with the price of persistence.

But Jed Levy, who will play at Joe's Mill Hill Saloon in Trenton tomorrow night, is not among the struggling wannabees. The 36-year-old saxophonist, with two new recordings and gigs with some of the top names, is among the accomplished in current crop of jazz-makers.

However, Levy prefers to be thought of as an artist who is still expanding his musical horizons. Despite his success in New York and beyond, he continuously labors toward a higher level in jazz.

"The business end of jazz is a progressive thing," said Levy from his home in Queens. "It's a matter of staying out there. I've done that, and as a result, every year it (opportunity) gets better and better for me and I get better at my music.

"TEN YEARS of hard work in New York City is starting to pay off. I have a lot of optimism, and the thing that keeps me in that mode is my (musical) growth and improvement. If I didn't have those, I might not have an optimistic view."

Levy first came to Trenton more than 10 years ago with a classmate from the New England Conservatory of music who lived here. In performances back then at Joe's, Levy's playing and attitude won him many



Jed Levy performs tomorrow at Joe's Mill Hill Saloon in Trenton.

friends who have had the pleasure of tracking his career.

They will soon be able to hear his new album on the Steeplechase label.

"We did it a few weeks ago," said Levy. "It's about three quarters original music and some standards."

The musicians sharing the project with Levy were bassist Ron McClure, pianist George Colligan and drummer Jerry Gibbs.

"WHAT I basically did was select a repertory that was suitable for a special group of musicians who will bring out what they have that is special to offer to

the music. I picked the tunes and the musicians responded to it."

Ironically, Levy for some time had been wanting to do a CD that was solely his concept and not influenced by the guidelines of a commercial studio.

"Two weeks before the Steeplechase recording, we did a self-produced album. It was a band that worked together and I had a strong rapport with them," said Levy. The musicians on that CD were Marvin "Smitty" Smith, a premier drummer; bassist Essiet Essiet, who will be with Levy tomorrow night; and Geoff Keezer, one of the bright new faces in jazz, on piano.

In early December, Levy will perform at Visiones in New York with the Joe Locke band.

"On Saturday night we'll be doing the trio format. It allows me to enjoy exploring the music without someone else playing the chord changes. It allows me to search out another kind of feeling in the structure of a song"

### Also Suggested

■ **Rich Sbarro** — A former lead trumpet for the 1970s jazz-rock band Cut-Glass, Sbarro leads a group at 5 p.m. today at the Tremont Lounge, 332 E. State St., Trenton. Call (609) 392-9600.



## JAZZ

# The promise of sax man Jed Levy

By Jack Lloyd  
*Inquirer Staff Writer*

Tenor saxophonist Jed Levy is not quite a household name, not even among jazz fans. But that could change in the near future. Critics have begun regarding him as a budding John Coltrane or Ben Webster, so the time has come to take this 32-year-old New Yorker seriously.

Levy will appear with the Mark Kramer Trio tonight and tomorrow at Ye Olde Temperance House in Newtown, where he was spotlighted a couple of months ago with trumpeter Tom Harrel, generating an enthusiastic response from the audience.

The saxophonist is no newcomer to jazz. He has recorded and toured with many of the top names in the field, but it wasn't until the recent release of his first album as a leader, *Good People* (Reservoir Records), that the attention began building.

"An exciting player whose modern approach is governed by a need to make every note a positive statement," noted *Jazz Journal International*. "This is a developing Coltrane or Ben Webster in the making. This tenor man brings a blossoming eloquence of thinking and feeling."

Time will tell if Levy lives up to expectations, but he certainly appears to be on the right track.

*Jed Levy with the Mark Kramer Trio tonight and Saturday at Ye Olde Temperance House, 5-11 S. State St., Newtown. Sets begin at 9 p.m. Phone: 860-0474.*



*Levy will perform tonight and tomorrow in Newtown.*

# College Music JOURNAL

7/22/96

## **JED LEVY QUARTET** *Sleight Of Hand*

SteepleChase, c/o Allegro, 14134 NE Airport Way, Portland, OR 97230

Nearly a decade separates reedman Levy's debut as a leader, 1977's *Good People* (Reservoir), from his follow-up, and that's unfortunate, because he's a supple soloist and a superb writer of orchestrated small-group sounds. This import from Denmark aligns the New York-based tenorist with the expressive, quick-study cast of bassist Ron McClure (who also records for SteepleChase), pianist George Colligan and drummer Gerry Gibbs. Quick study is right, for this session came about on short notice and was cut in 3 1/2 hours. As such, Levy chose from his stockpile of originals several tunes allowing his mates "to jump right in and blow," he informs CMJ. Two of these originals, the title track and "Three For Me," are eminently airplay-worthy, especially the former, which boasts a direct, singable melody with unusual modulations. The Levy originals "Zinno" (a slow samba named after the Manhattan jazz club) and "Desert Church" (an allusion to Duke Ellington's sacred music, employing a Moorish scale) are equally expressive numbers. For his interpretive covers, the medium-toned Levy chose "Bird's Mother" by Jaki Byard, a B-flat blues the pianist recorded in the early '60s with Eric Dolphy, and "Did I Remember?," a standard from the '20s newly attired with reharmonizations akin to Coltrane's "Giant Steps." That Levy hasn't recorded much in the past decade is no slight on his talents, only on the ears of the industry poobahs. As a matter of fact, label bosses should give a listen to a self-produced quartet date (with pianist Geoff Keezer, bassist Essiet Okon Essiet and drummer Marvin "Smitty" Smith), a bristling examination of advanced but tuneful form, that the tenorist is shopping around.

*Gene Kalbacher is editor and publisher of Hot House, the monthly jazz night-life guide for the New York metropolitan area. Send all press releases, CD, cassette and LP product for consideration to: 18 Whippoorwill Lane, Rockaway Twp., NJ 07866.*

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**JED LEVY**  
THE MEANING OF MELODY



## JED LEVY

### THE MEANING OF MELODY



**O**N-STAGE AND OFF-, IT'S QUICKLY apparent that there's more to Jed Levy than meets the eye and, more to the point, the ear.

A stocky 37-year-old of medium height, the bearded, bespectacled saxophonist favors sports jackets that accentuate his professorial look. In conversation, this native of Bridgewater, New Jersey, who now lives in Flushing, Queens, with his wife and daughter, is animated and articulate. He'll discourse on technical matters—chord changes, pedal points, odd meters—with the precision of a musicologist, then modulate into more earthy subjects. He's academic one moment, jocular the next, as the situation dictates. There's nothing insincere or shallow about him; it's simply that he reveals himself in stages, seeming introverted at times, extroverted at others, but always himself. One might say, of both his person and his passion (namely, modern jazz), that Levy has hidden depths.

A regular on the Big Apple jazz scene since he was graduated from the New England Conservatory in 1980, tenorist Levy (who also plays soprano and flute) has been highly visible the past few years. In addition to gigging as a sideman with pianist Don Friedman, guitarist Peter Leitch (on whose *Colours & Dimensions* CD he plays) and vibist Gust Tsilis (for three years of Sunday nights at Visiones), Levy has been increasingly busy with his own foursome. The quartet he brings to Visiones July 17-20 features his pianist of choice, the estimable John Hicks, with bassist Dwayne Dolphin and drummer Terry Clarke.

Levy's timing is propitious, because his second

album as a leader, *Sleight of Hand*, has just been issued on SteepleChase, and he's also shopping around another heady quartet session. Possessed of a firm, medium tone akin to that of Hank Mobley or Stan Getz, Levy achieves an immediate rapport on the CD with pianist George Colligan, bassist Ron McClure (who introduced Levy to Nils Winther of SteepleChase) and drummer Gerry Gibbs.

"My overall concept when I present myself as a leader—going back as far as my 1987 recording debut for Reservoir, *Good People*—is not only to blow good solos, but to use as wide a range as possible in terms of composition, orchestration and timbre," he explains. "I want to give the listener as much as I possibly can in terms of programming and variety of colors, feels and rhythmic environments."

Levy's "number-one influence on all levels," he readily relates, is Duke Ellington: "I'm not trying to re-create any of his music, but the depth and amount of color he produced was amazing. By 1930, Duke probably provided the guideways to everything we consider innovative and contemporary in jazz today." As for band-presentation, Levy credits Tom Harrell and Bobby Watson & Horizon with "giving the audience *everything* a good group has to offer." ("Beyond the Blue," a Levy original from the unreleased quartet date with pianist Geoff Keezer, bassist Essiet Okon Essiet and drummer Marvin "Smitty" Smith, is dedicated to Watson's group.)

Unlike many composers who write mostly on-demand, when a project looms, Levy writes "all the time, when the muse strikes me," he says. Then, when a gig or recording comes up, he draws from his stockpile pieces that "fit the character" of the occasion and the players involved. For *Sleight of Hand*, Levy picked six originals that "were fairly easy to jump in and blow on." In fact, however, the deceptively complex nature of the tunes belies Levy's statement about the CD, which was arranged on short notice and cut in just 3½ hours.

The title track, for instance, boasts a simple, singable melody with unusual harmonic underpinnings. Similarly, on "Did I Remember?," a '20s standard played in two keys with "Giant Steps"-like reharmonizations, the listener isn't hearing what he thinks he's hearing. "But I don't want people to hear the mechanics of it," he emphasizes. "I don't think of it as mechanics—I just *hear* it." Levy's "Desert Church" takes it impetus, in the first part, from a moorish scale he heard on a Tunisian flute piece, and, in the second, from Ellington's sacred music. All in all, though, *Sleight of Hand's* net effect on the listener—much like the feeling on the other quartet date, which examines more advanced forms—is indeed palatable. For Levy, who expects to record two quintet CDs in the future (one with Hicks and vibist Joe Locke; the other, with trumpeter Jack Walrath, extracted from Ellington's longer works), melody is paramount. "When I write," he reveals, "everything is around the melody, essentially. If a melody is strong enough, you can go just about anywhere."

**The Jed Levy Quartet plays Visiones July 17-20.**



# JAZZ JOURNAL

International

## JED LEVY

### GOOD PEOPLE

*Just In Time; Red Lipstick; Good People (21.18) — The Zealots; Daydream; Jenkuja (21.56)*

Jed Levy (ts); Peter Leitch (g); Peter Madsen (p); Rufus Reid (b); Billy Hart (d). Englewood Cliffs, NJ, May 23/24, 1987.

### (Reservoir RSR 105)

This is Levy's first outing as leader and it's a record date that has long been overdue on this hearing. He has spent some eight years honing his axe with leading jazz luminaries including membership of Jaki Byard's Apollo Stompers. Levy's tone is lucid, and positively devoid of any histrionics so prevalent in many of his contemporaries, and his choice of material, two standards and four originals, is ideally suited to the controlled emotion of his playing.

A brisk, but not stampeded *Just In Time* is a good opener to highlight the man's tight succinct phrasing. He leaps from the theme with a flurry of intelligent notes fluently delivered and accented by his burnished tone. It's his ultra smooth but firm technique that makes this album so good. The title track, *Good People*, a Levy original, is an interesting structure allowing Leitch, who takes the first break, room to explore with some inventive lines before Levy casually drifts in picking up the thread and making some compressed, almost smug, statements. Madsen sums up with his loose-fingered keyboard work which he uses to good effect throughout the session.

This track is typical of Levy's compositional qualities and his ability to create interesting themes to improvise on. *Jenkuja* closes the album; a relaxed purposeful ramble featuring casual subdued guitar and a brooding but stimulating tenor solo from the main man, but not before Madsen takes his most effusive break on the album. There is tight sympathetic support by Reid and Hart who obviously felt much empathy for the music as evidenced in their playing.

Altogether an exciting debut from a player whose modern approach is governed by the need to make every note a positive statement.

**David Lands**

NOVEMBER 1988

Volume 41 No.11

BLINDFOLD TEST: Reggie Workman

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## TENOR TROVE

by Frank-John Hadley

**JED LEVY:** *GOOD PEOPLE* (Reservoir 105) ★★★½

**Jed Levy's** *Good People* is a hot debut album. Levy, a New Yorker who has worked alongside Jack Walrath, Don Patterson, and Jack McDuff, projects a strong sound and evidences awareness of various tenor heroes without stamping himself with the copycat label. The 30-ish tenorman brings blossoming eloquence of thinking and feeling to four original songs, *Just In Time*, and Ellington and Strayhorn's ballad *Daydream*. Only *Jenkuja*, which lasts more than 11 minutes, disappoints due to marginally tedious soloing by bassist Rufus Reid (an acquaintance) and guitarist Peter Leitch (a frequent musical cohort and friend), tiresome statements by Levy, and enough-already divagations by pianist Peter Madsen (a second cohort/friend). Levy's "good people" are better everywhere else; drummer Billy Hart (another acquaintance/good person and, like Reid, a seasoned player) stays alert throughout the album.





## JAZZ

Lois  
Moody

Jed Levy  
Good People  
(Reservoir RSR 105)

This is the debut album as leader for tenor saxophonist Jed Levy. His credits as a sideman include some impressive associations — Jaki Byard, Jack Walrath and Jack McDuff. In this quintet session, Levy is joined by Canadian guitarist Peter Leitch (now an entrenched New Yorker) and the piano, bass and drums team of Peter Madsen, Rufus Reid and Billy Hart. They bring out the truth of the album title.

The half-dozen pieces are all good vehicles for showing the scope of Levy's interests and the consistency with which seeks the right sound and the right feeling.

His own compositions are the backbone of the collection. The line and pacing of *Red Lipstick* are lyrical and dreamy. The title piece is modal and looser in movement. In *The Zealots*, the influences are both blues-based bop and the melodic concepts of Middle-Eastern music. His final piece, *Jenkuja*, is another interesting study in form and where it leads the improvising soloists. Each player gets room to stretch here, making it one of the album's best tracks.

*Just In Time* is taken as a tearaway bop exercise. The Billy Strayhorn classic, *Daydream*, is a gem of gentle melancholy, which Levy handles with great heart.

This is a good beginning for Levy as a leader. May he always be so fortunate with his playing companions.

# TRENTON JAZZ FESTIVAL



**Jed Levy Quartet**  
**Tony Maldonado Orchestra**  
**Denis DiBlasio Quartet**  
**Jason "Malletman" Taylor**  
**Tim Warfield Quintet**  
**Philadelphia Legends of Jazz**

**Saturday, September 17**  
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 From 1 'til 10:30pm

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 Mayor, City of Trenton  
 Honorary Chair, Trenton Jazz Festival

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Trentonian Photo/CRAIG OROSZ



**Jed Levy heads up a quartet of musicians as the first act at the Trenton Jazz Festival.**

## JAZZ FESTIVAL

There's an obvious dead-on intensity about tenor saxophonist Jed Levy. He too began on alto sax before the artistry of Cannonball Adderley seduced him. "At 13, I had the luck to chance on an album of Adderley's greatest hits," says Levy. "Soon, I was hearing tenor sax sounds clear and strong in my mind. I couldn't wait to take them as far as humanly possible."

While attending New England Conservatory of Music, Levy became a student of pianist Jaki Byard. After graduating in 1980, Levy played in Byard's ensembles. "Jaki's been my greatest influence," Levy asserts. "He showed me how to respect the tradition without imitating it on the bandstand. You've got to let your own personality color the music."

AUGUST 1988

U.S. \$1.90

# JazzTimes

## BRIEF ENCOUNTERS

By W. ROYAL STOKES

• *Good People (Reservoir)* is an auspicious debut album (as leader) of tenorist **Jed Levy**, whose resume lists Jaki Byard's Apollo Stompers and Medium Rare Big Band. He is joined here on his own tunes and Billy Strayhorn's *Daydream* by **Peter Leitch**, guitar, pianist **Peter Madsen**, **Rufus Reid**, and **Billy Hart**.

## CASH BOX

### JAZZ FEATURE PICKS

GOOD PEOPLE - Jed Levy - Reservoir  
RSR 105 - Producer: Mark Feldman

Steady-going, big-voiced tenorman who knows his hard bops.

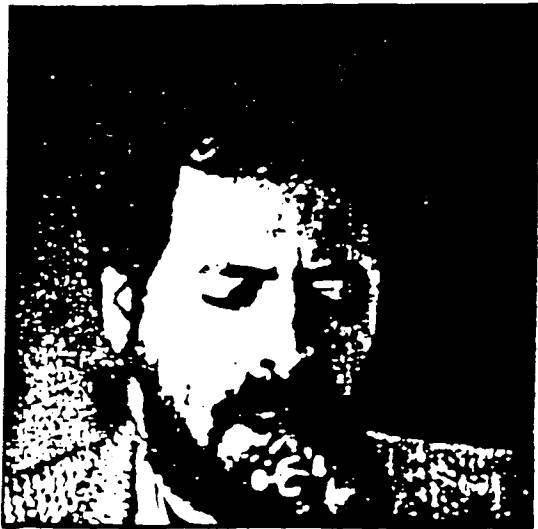
Lee Jeske |

# HOT HOUSE

JAZZ  
NIGHTLIFE  
GUIDE

Vol. 7 No. 8 AUGUST 1988

## SPOTLIGHT



### 'RESERVOIR MUSIC LIVE' SWEET BASIL/AUG. 31

Tenorman Jed Levy (pictured) and pianist Rob Schneiderman, Reservoir Records' youngbloods, bring their new recordings to life when they hit Basil's stage. Levy, a Rollins-inspired soloist with a very promising holistic compositional approach, will be backed by a quartet that features three of the players on his *Good People* album. Schneiderman, a nimble bopster with a lyrical flair, will bring along the extroverted trombonist Slide Hampton. Starting time is 4 p.m. GK.

CUGNAC  
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**VILLAGE**  
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**FESTIVAL**  
AUGUST 26 - SEPTEMBER 5  
PRODUCED BY HORST LEPOLT AND MEL LITOFF  
CO-SPONSOR CITY GUIDE MAGAZINE

# New Moon JAZZ

BRATTLEBORO — New York saxophonist Jed Levy returns with Jeff Brillinger on drums and Dave Shapiro on bass to the Vermont Jazz Center's monthly New Moon Jazz series Sunday beginning at 8 p.m. at the Mole's Eye Cafe. The trio will be complemented by jazz center artistic director Attila Zoller on the guitar.

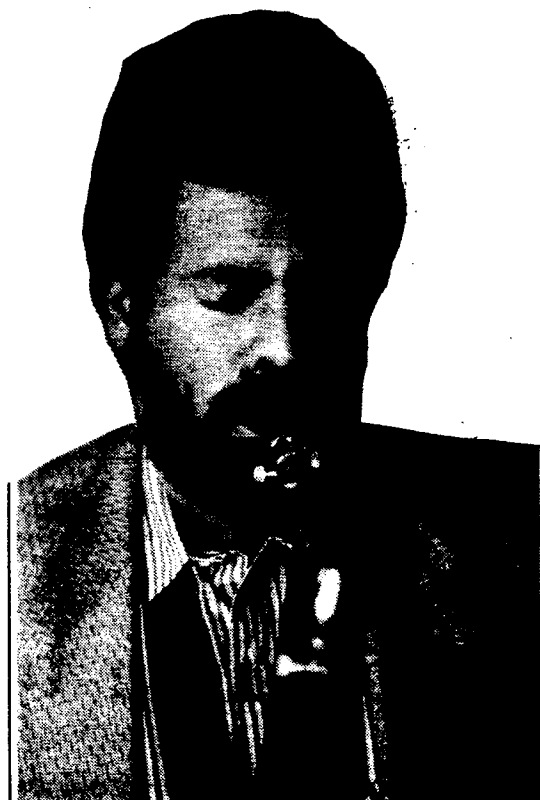
**He leads his own groups in the city and works regularly with such artists as Jaki Byard, Don Patterson and Jack McDuff.**

Levy was featured saxophonist for one of the jazz center's summer workshop galas in August. He leads his own groups in the city and works regularly with such artists as Jaki Byard, Don Patterson and Jack McDuff. He has performed also with Cedar Walton, Tom Harrell and Curtis Fuller; appears internationally as a featured soloist and at various festivals; and

recorded with Byard, Peter Leitch, and the Jack Walrath Quintet, among others.

Brillinger moved to New York after graduating from Berklee College of Music in 1969. His two-plus decades of free lancing include touring and recording as drummer with jazz legends Chet Baker, Stan Getz, Horace Silver and Woody Herman, among others. Most recently he has been working with Andy Laverne and Jed Levy in various Big Apple jazz venues.

Shapiro toured as bassist with Chet Baker and has performed with Woody Herman, Lee Konitz, Anita O'Day, and Howard McGee, among others. He was a longtime member of the house band at Eddie Condon's club in New York and has recorded five albums since 1984 with the Metropolitan Opera (sic) House for the VSOP label. Now a resident of Towns-



JED LEVY

hend, he is supervisor for Adult Basic Education in Windham County.

A suggested donation of \$5 at the door will benefit the jazz center and its summer workshop scholarship fund. The Vermont Jazz Center's 1992-93 season is supported in part by a grant from the Vermont Council on the Arts.

JAZZ/POP NOTES

# Shore jazz-blues fest kicking off in Sea Bright

By GEORGE KANZLER

**Native returns**

• Tenor saxophonist Jed Levy, a native of Bridgewater, returns home today to tell students in three schools in the Bridgewater-Raritan regional school district about his life as a jazz musician, a life that has included stints with soul-jazz organists Don Paterson and Jack MacDuff and Jackie Byard's big band, The Apollo Stompers.

Tonight, Levy will be giving a concert at Bridgewater-Raritan High

School East, Maywood Drive, Martinsville, at 8 p.m. Joining him will be pianist Peter Madsen, bassist Cecil McBee and drummer Jeff Williams.

✓ ✓ ✓



Jed Levy appears at Bridgewater-Raritan High School East, Martinsville, tonight



Mercer Ellington leads the Ellington orchestra at Gullivers next week

**The joy of sax set for B-R East June 1**

Bridgewater native and tenor saxophonist Jed Levy will appear in concert for one night, Thursday, June 1, at the Bridgewater-Raritan High School East auditorium at 8 p.m. Levy has played in various festivals including the Kool Jazz Festival, Wolf Trap International, and the JVC Jazz Festival.

Prior to the concert, Levy will hold workshops for students throughout the day, at Hillside Middle School from 9-10 a.m., East High School from 10:50-11:50 a.m., West High School from 12:50-1:50 p.m., and Eisenhower Middle School from 2:30-3:30 p.m.

Also appearing with Levy that night will be pianist Peter Madsen, bass player Cecil McBee, and drummer Jeff William. Tickets cost \$5 and advance tickets are available by mailing a check, made out to Bridgewater-Raritan Fine Arts, to High School East, P.O. Box 301, Martinsville, NJ 08836.

Somerset Messenger  
**Gazette**  
 Thursday, June 1

Music

**TENOR SAXOPHONIST JED LEVY**, a Bridgewater native, will perform at Bridgewater-Raritan High School East. Levy and his three-man band will play jazz favorites starting at 8 p.m. in the school auditorium. Tickets are \$5. For advanced tickets, make check payable to: Bridgewater-Raritan Fine Arts and mail along with stamped, self-addressed envelope to High School East, P.O. Box 301, Martinsville, N.J. 08836. For more information, 563-1888.



# Bridgewater native hits the right notes

By ALICE GALLAGHER  
Home News staff writer

Bridgewater native Jed Levy began playing the saxophone at age 10 and has managed to make a comfortable living at it since about age 15.

Now, the 30-year-old New York resident has released an album, and he expects the future to be even brighter.

"So far I've been lucky and it seems to be getting better and better," Levy said in a telephone interview.

The album, by the Jed Levy Quartet, is titled "Good People." It is available on Reservoir Records. Levy explained that the quartet was formed about two years ago, but that individual members (except him) frequently change, which is common in jazz groups.

Levy became interested in the saxophone while attending fifth grade in the Bridgewater-Rantant school system.

"I liked the way the instrument sounded and looked," he said. "Once I heard what could be done on the saxophone, then I was hooked."

Levy, along with his quartet, returned to Bridgewater last month for a benefit concert for the band at his alma mater, Bridgewater-Rantant High School East.

After his graduation in 1976, Levy



Daniel C. Hulshizer/The Home News

Jed Levy of Bridgewater, who took up the saxophone at age 10, has released an album of jazz music titled "Good People."

studied saxophone at the New England Conservatory of Music of Boston and earned a bachelor's degree. He then worked professionally in Boston for about a year and moved to New York City in 1981.

Some of the musicians he has play-

ed with include piano player Jaki Byard and organist Jack McDuff.

In addition to the saxophone, Levy also dabbles in piano, flute and guitar. He had played in local rock 'n' roll bands during his younger years.

Now, Levy performs on the New

York scene and tours frequently. His travels have taken him across the United States, as well as to Canada and Mexico.

Levy noted that his only brother, Todd, who is three years younger than him, is also a musician. Levy said the brother's parents are baffled — they don't know where the musical interest came from. Dad is a dentist and mom is an artist; they still reside in Bridgewater.

"It must be something in the water in Bridgewater," Levy said. "There really seems to be no good explanation for it."

Todd Levy plays classical clarinet for the New World Symphony in Florida.

As for future goals, Jed Levy's are modest.

"I want to keep playing this kind of music and keep recording as much as I can," Levy said, "and I'd like to continue making a decent living."

He conceded there are some sacrifices to being a working musician — such as the lack of a "three-car family garage" — but the rewards outweigh them.

"There are very few people who get to do what they like and make a living at it," Levy said. "It's all worth it when I get up on the stage."

Thursday, September 1, 1988/THE COURIER-NEWS

## Making music in N.Y.

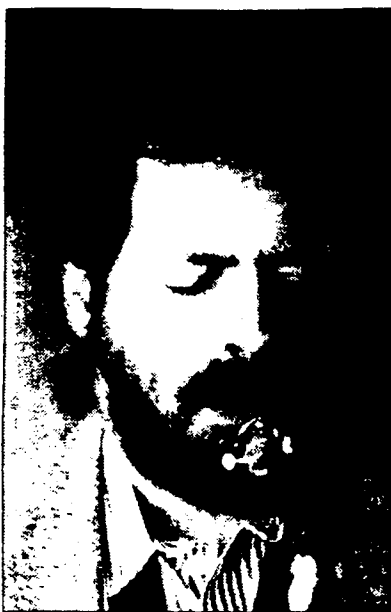
Bridgewater native Jed Levy leads a quartet into Birdland, a new Upper West Side jazz club at Broadway and 105th Street, New York City tonight from 9 p.m. to 1 a.m.

Reedman Levy recently was featured on a Reservoir recording, "Good People." His quartet includes Peter Madsen on piano, John Riley on drums and Dean Johnson on bass.

# Rising sax star returns to alma mater in clinics, concert

A rising tenor sax star, Jed Levy, returns to his alma mater, Bridgewater-Raritan High School East, for a concert at 8 p.m. on June 1, following a day of clinics with students at four local schools.

Levy, a 1976 graduate of B-R East



**JED LEVY**  
... rising star

## JAZZ BEAT

Tek Talmont

and now living in Jamaica, N.Y., recently was home visiting his parents, and while at the Bridgewater Post Office, ran into the school's fine arts chairman, Rick Coulter, sporting an "Arts '89" button advertising the recent "Sight and Sound" festival.

As the two discussed Levy's school days, when no such festivals were held, they hit on the idea of Levy returning to recount his experiences as a professional jazz musician and give a concert.

The schedule calls for clinics at Hillside School at 9 a.m., B-R East at 10:50 a.m., B-R West at 12:50 p.m. and Eisenhower School at 2:20 p.m., topped by the concert that evening. Tickets, at \$5, will be available at the door and in advance by mail. Write to: Gary Myer, B-R East Fine Arts Department, Box 301, Martinsville 08836.

Levy's group will include pianist Peter Madsen, featured on his first album, "Good People." The bassist will be Cecil McBee with Jeff Williams on drums.

A different quartet, with guitarist

Peter Leitch, drummer Eliot Zigmund and bassist Harvey Swartz, can be heard tomorrow at the Cornerstone, in Metuchen.

Levy is a graduate of the New England Conservatory in Boston. He lists pianist Jaki Byard as one of his chief influences. In developing his own sound on tenor, Levy said he has "listened" to numerous greats, including Wayne Shorter and Ellingtonians such as Paul Gonsalvez and Ben Webster, and of course, Charlie Parker.

□

## B-R East jazz benefit tonight

BRIDGEWATER — The Jed Levy Quartet — a jazz group featuring a former township resident — will perform a benefit concert at 8 o'clock tonight to raise money for the Bridgewater-Raritan High School East band.

Levy, 30, is a saxophonist who lives in New York City and tours internationally. He is a 1976 graduate of B-R East and is revisiting his alma mater to encourage musical and artistic expression among students.

"I think young people's involve-

ment with music is a very positive thing," said Levy. "There seems to be a renewed interest in the arts in Bridgewater and I'm trying to lend my support and do what I can do encourage it."

The quartet has cut an album entitled "Good People" released on Reservoir Records, Levy said.

Other group members are Peter Madsen on piano, Cecil McBee on bass, and Jeff Williams on drums.

Tickets for the benefit are \$5 and may be purchased at the door.

# Blue Note

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with

JAMES WILLIAMS

MARVIN "SMITTY" SMITH

CECIL MCBEE

PETER LEITCH



### MONDAY, JAN. 1, 1990

3 SHOWS 9&11 P.M. & 1 A.M.

# Saxophonist plays New York's Visiones as a consolation prize

Bridgewater native Jed Levy leads a quartet into New York's Visiones tonight. The tenor saxophonist's first album as a leader, "Good People," is getting plenty of air play. Not bad for what Levy considers consolation prizes.

Until a few weeks ago, Levy had been scheduled to join some other East Coast musicians for an extended tour of Japan next month, under a State Department goodwill program called "American Train."

Levy said several agencies were bidding for sponsoring what he said would be "a traveling trade show." He said the successful firm underbid the agency he was associated with "by eliminating all of the music."

Levy said he had been looking forward to the trip because the "Japanese respond so well to American music."

Instead, he's able to accept bookings in the United States. At Visiones, 125 MacDougal St., he'll be joined by Peter Madsen, his pianist on the record, as well as bassist Dean Johnson and drummer John Riley. First set tonight is at 9:30 p.m.

"It was very gratifying that the owner at Visiones encouraged us to play exclusively my compositions if we wanted," said Levy. Four of them are featured on his album on the Reservoir label.

Levy, who now lives in Corona, N.Y., but whose family resides on Hillcrest Road, Bridgewater, said he started playing the saxophone when he was 9 because he "liked the sound."

He recalled that when he was in the fifth grade at Martinsville School, a teacher "wrote charts for us and I guess we played our first gigs at birthday parties and the like."

But he expressed disappointment that in the mid-1970s, Bridgewater-Raritan High School East didn't have a jazz band, "not even a stage band."

After his graduation in 1980 from the New England Conservatory in Boston, Levy appeared with several groups, notably the Jaki Byard Apollo Stompers with whom he recorded in 1984. He described the eclectic pianist as "a true genius" who was as great an influence as the varied horn stylists to whom he "listened," Sonny Rollins, Wayne Shorter, Stan Getz, and Ben Webster.

## JAZZ BEAT

Tek Talmont

He also appeared with the Peter Leitch Quartet. The guitarist joins him on the front line of his "Good People" recording, which features pianist Madsen, drummer Billy Hart and bassist Rufus Reid.

July Styne's "Just in Time" opens the album on an upbeat, with everyone stretching out. The only other standard is Billy Strayhorn's ballad, "Daydream," featuring the rarely recorded verse done as a duo by Levy and Leitch.

Levy's compositions cover a wide range, including a waltz entitled "Red Lipstick," some unusual structures in the title tune and "Jenkuja," a phonetic spelling of the Polish word for "thank you" and dedicated to his wife Krystyna, whom he married three weeks prior to the recording session in May of 1987. "The Zealots" is a blues which incorporates some Middle Eastern themes.

While his trip to Japan went by the boards, Levy is looking forward to his next recording session in September, with Japanese bassist Kiyota Fujiwara and with Kenny Garrett as a second sax. "We've been friends since I performed with his group in 1985, and he had loaned me his dictionary in anticipation of the trip," Levy said.

Levy said Fujiwara has written "some unusual music ... some of it based on Italian operas ... it should be a lot of fun."



Saxophonist Jed Levy performs in New York City tonight.



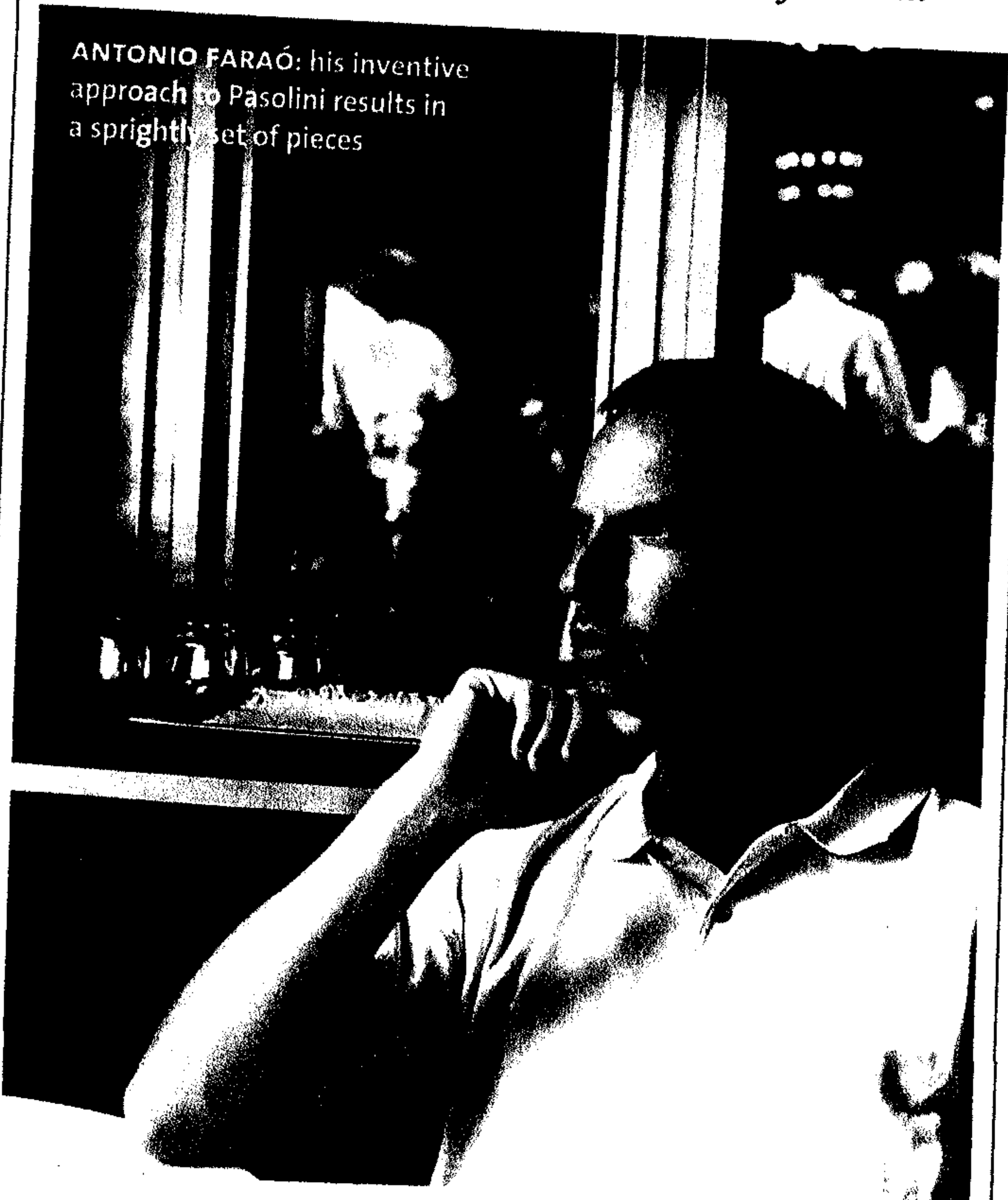
# JAZZ

Listen out for two piano trios – **ENRICO PIERANUNZI** mixes standards with originals, and pianist **ANTONIO FARAÓ** tunes into Pasolini; plus Geoffrey Smith on sax-player **CANNONBALL ADDERLEY**

JAZZ CHOICE

## The reel Antonio Faraó

**ROGER THOMAS** welcomes a trio disc inspired by Pasolini



**ANTONIO FARAÓ:** his inventive approach to Pasolini results in a sprightly set of pieces



### ANTONIO FARAÓ

#### Takes on Pasolini

Antonio Faraó (piano), Miroslav Vitous (bass), Daniel Humair (drums)  
Cam Jazz CAMJ 7779-2 52:24 mins... £ £ £

Unreservedly recommended. The premise is of this disc is simple enough, in that Faraó is a Pasolini fan and here presents a set of compositions inspired by his films, but there's some very fine music concealed behind this potentially throwaway concept. One clue lies in the company Faraó

keeps; Vitous and Humair not only have justifiably formidable reputations as masters of their respective instruments, but both are supremely inventive. Faraó is clearly a kindred spirit, and this combination of talents allows the group to take what in lesser hands could have been just another horribly nondescript piano trio recording and turn it into a sprightly set that's full of gently subversive melodies, playful interaction and elegant but never overstated structures. Don't be fooled by the SACD-type case; this is a standard CD, excellent though the sound quality is. *Roger Thomas*

**PERFORMANCE** ★★★★★  
**SOUND** ★★★★★  
• BBC Music Direct £12.99 inc. p&p



### ENRICO PIERANUNZI

#### Live In Paris

Enrico Pieranunzi (piano), Hein Van der Geyn (bass), Andre 'Dédé' Ceccarelli (drums)  
Challenge CHR 70126 (dist. by Ace)  
113:03 mins (2 discs)..... £ £ £

Pieranunzi is a prolific recording artist, but this generous offering of two hours of trio music, recorded in the Parisian club Le Duc Des Lombards in 2001, catches him on a creative high. While he has the aristocratic touch which seems to hallmark a generation of European pianists, he is more outgoing and songful than most, and the melodious feel of his writing – 'One Lone Star', for example – is very personal to him. Van der Geyn and Ceccarelli aren't the subtlest team he's worked with, but they introduce an almost funky feel – the warm-up tune 'Ouverthree' evolves so compellingly across nine minutes that it's almost disappointing when it winds down before switching into a lovely 'Body And Soul'. The two sets mix standards and originals seamlessly; and if the sound isn't as good as it might be, with the bass often recessed, the music is strong enough to overcome such shortcomings. *Richard Cook*

**PERFORMANCE** ★★★★★  
**SOUND** ★★★  
• BBC Music Direct £15.99 inc. p&p



### JED LEVY

#### Mood Ellington

Jed Levy (sax, flute), Jack Walrath (trumpet), Bill Mays (piano), Martin Wind (bass), Jeff Brillinger (drums)  
Steeplechase SCCD 31579  
(dist. by Discovery) 70:53 mins... £ £ £

A connoisseur's repertory record. A stalwart of the New York scene, Levy has chosen 11 Duke Ellington themes and cast them in small-group

arrangements which elaborate on both the lyrical beauty and the merriment in the master's writing. He's also chosen rarities from Ellington's vast book: 'The Neo-Hip-Hot Cool-Kiddies Community' and 'Action In Alexandria'. Only 'Mood Indigo' could be cited as a warhorse, and even here he reworks one of the composer's own variations on the theme rather than the basic melody. The music's ready appeal is enhanced by a brilliant quintet: Levy offers one of the richest tenor sounds in contemporary jazz, Walrath adds a quirky sensibility, and the superlative Bill Mays adds ingenuities to the Ellington role. *Richard Cook*

**PERFORMANCE** ★★★★★  
**SOUND** ★★★★★  
• BBC Music Direct £13.99 inc. p&p



### SWING SWINDLERS

#### Five-Fifteen: A Tribute to the BBC Dance Orchestra

Mart Sander, Kelli Uustani, Mariliina von Vexküll (vocals); Bel-Etage Swing Swindlers  
Divine Art 25034 76:00 mins..... £ £ £

This disc is by no means perfect. Many of these tunes became jazz standards, but the Estonian band's behind-the-beat approach isn't appropriate given the rat-tat-tat precision demanded by the dance music of the period, while the vocalists exaggerate the lightness and cut-glass diction traditionally associated with such material. The latter results in a sense of comedic parody at odds with an otherwise sincere approach to the genre, losing them a star or two for performance.

All is forgiven, however, given the sheer delight of hearing numbers like 'Keep Young and Beautiful' and 'You're Getting To Be a Habit With Me' presented with contemporary expertise and recording technology. Great fun, then, despite the above grumbles. *Roger Thomas*

**PERFORMANCE** ★★★  
**SOUND** ★★★★★  
• BBC Music Direct £13.99 inc. p&p