



# JASON MORAN

## Press Quotes

"A devoted disciple of Thelonious Monk's approach to jazz piano, Moran also has his mighty fingers in the '60s avant-garde, pop and contemporary visual arts." —**TIME**

"Jason Moran's new album lands with an accumulated weight, both intrinsic and external...The intrinsic part is what matters. It's what nudges *Ten* toward a spirit of greatness." —**The New York Times**

"A startlingly gifted pianist with a relentless thirst for experimentation, Moran returns to a trio format and the results are devastatingly sharp...*Ten* is an unpredictable, imaginative ride." —**Los Angeles Times**

"It's been more than a decade since Jason Moran appeared out of nowhere and upended the notion that no one in jazz could do anything new on the piano...In 10 short years, he managed to issue several albums that are already considered classics and keep together a trio that is one of today's finest. That trio is behind *Ten*, Moran's outstanding new disc. It contains the best of what he does: smart writing, propulsive rhythms, and improvisations that suggest mile-a-minute thinking and a sense that Moran constantly pushes himself to find the freshest phrase...so brilliant it would blind you if you could see sound." —**Boston Globe**

"As a pianist, Moran is a distinctive stylist; he combines free improvisation, early jazz techniques and undercurrents of other contemporary music with more mainstream expressions. As a composer and arranger, Moran is an avid conceptualist, apt to deconstruct a jazz standard or assemble new tunes inspired by modern visual art or found sounds." —**NPR**

"No finer piano trio currently stalks the earth. Historically and intellectually resourceful but also sparkingly intuitive, inventive, spontaneous...unassailably brilliant." —**DownBeat**

"Jazz's greatest young conceptualist...Jason Moran pierces the bubble around jazz by reconnecting it not only to popular culture but also to the sounds of daily life." —**JazzTimes**

"Moran, bassist Tarus Mateen and drummer Nasheet Waits have created a jazz CD for modern times. Fortunately, the group can not only deal with information, but create a program with enough melody and variety to be as enjoyable as it is educational." —**JamBands.com**

"When you encounter the Bandwagon, on record or (especially) at a place like the Vanguard, the conceptual aspects of Moran's work tend to lurk in the background. The foreground is all about the lyrical but brightly ragged interplay of the band, which plays as if everything is at stake. All. The. Time." —**Nate Chinen**

"What makes edgy pianist Moran stand out from his jazz peers is simple: He doesn't sound like anyone else...dig the relentless rhythms, the near-spooky groupthink and thunder-and-lightning piano playing." —**Boston Herald**

"...the three have become arguably the most important band in jazz, translating their rare stability into a muscular, flexible cohesion that has swallowed up jazz's past as easily as it has digested hip-hop, rock and art music. The evidence is on this remarkable new recording...It all begins with Moran, who is a superb technical pianist and an even better conceptualist." —**Washington Post**

"Jason Moran is a jazz musician who has one foot in the past, one in the future and a career grounded in the present. From the past, Moran has built on the tradition of Thelonious Monk and other jazz greats. For the future, Moran looks to a new crop of musicians, teaching the next group of performers. In the present, there is his new album, *TEN*. Moran shares where he has been and why 'knowing when to shut up is extremely important.'" —**CNN**

"One of the most original and conceptually brilliant jazz artists of his generation...Never in Moran's 10 years as a leader has there been doubt that he's a visionary, destined to be counted among the greats...*Ten* is the most immediately pleasurable album of his career..." —**Washington City Paper**

"It's a treat for a player to be both a modernist and highly accessible. Pianist Jason Moran accomplishes both...Moran remains an intoxicator at heart." —**Philadelphia Inquirer**

"Moran stands squarely in the jazz tradition, yet sounds utterly unique." —**San Jose Mercury News**

# DOWNBEAT

July 2010

## Jason Moran & The Bandwagon *Ten*

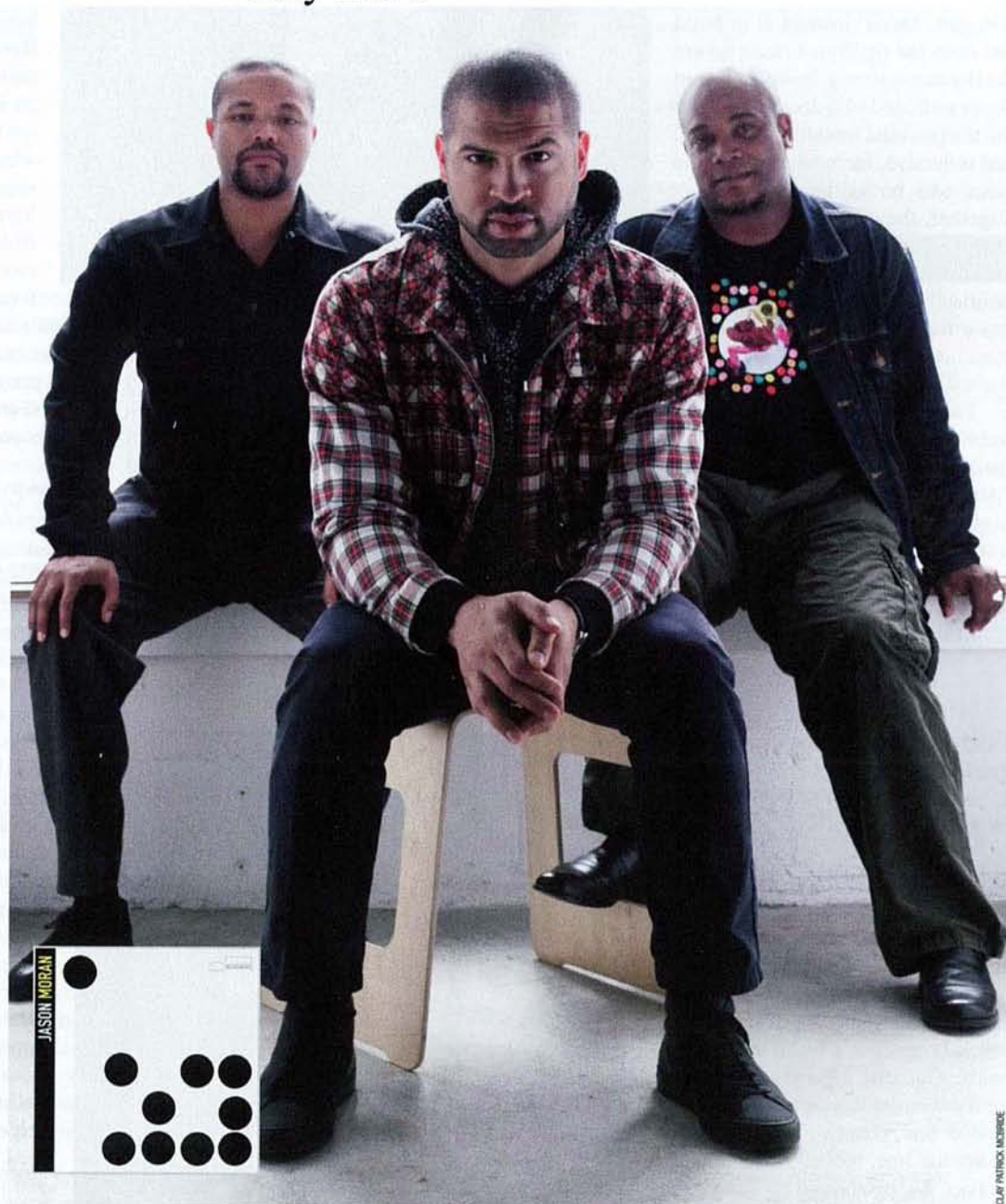
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★★★★

What's so compelling about Jason Moran is that he welcomes information from outside his orbit, whether he quite knows what to do with it at first or not. That information has included everything from recorded telephone conversations to snippets of "other" musics—classical, world, vintage jazz, hip hop, etc.

Moran revels in connecting disparate material. On the fetching opener, "Blue Blocks" (part of a gospel suite), he starts with a nicely dragged triplet feel, conjuring solace of church, then leaps from the pew into a wild double-time excursion. Did he catch the spirit? Maybe. On Leonard Bernstein's "Big Stuff," the pianist begins in dapper period mode, then grabs a controlling motif and shakes it like a bulldog with a bone, darting all over the keyboard, accelerating almost out of control. Though this new musical territory has little to do with innocence of the original, somehow his obsession with its lyricism makes it cohere.

"Gangsterism Over 10 Years," the meatiest piece on the album, starts out obsessing over a single note, as the trio explores, with aggressive ferocity, an Americana-ish theme they've worked with for years. Moran's penchant for obsession shows up again on two versions of "Study No. 6," by the great composer of player piano rolls, Conlon Nancarrow. First time out, Moran creates a droll mental space, equal parts caprice and anxiety, with this simple, up-one-scale-down-another exercise. On the second version, he puts his foot to the pedal, letting the series ring together, creating a feeling of wistful distance. That wistfulness reappears on "Pas de Deux—Lines Ballet," which recalls



the sonorous gravity of the opening of a Beethoven sonata. Equally lyrical, surprisingly so, is "Feedback Pt. 2," part of a piece Moran composed for the Monterey Jazz Festival. The composition superimposes dreamy piano over reprocessed bits of Jimi Hendrix's feedback from his famous 1967 Monterey Pop performance.

My favorite track is Moran's nod to one of his biggest influences, Jaki

Byard, on the late pianist's "To Bob Vatel Of Paris." As did Byard, Moran drags vintage piano styles into the present, then rumbles to the brink of free improv.

The album ends with a snatch of Moran's young children vying for attention as he plays and a "ghost track" written by, of all people, blackface entertainer Bert Williams. Its big vaudeville finish reaffirms

that Moran is open to everything, ready to load it on his "bandwagon" and gambol into the unknown.

—Paul de Barros

**Ten:** Blue Blocks; RFK In The Land Of Apartheid; Feedback Pt. 2; Crepuscule With Nellie; Study No. 6; Pas De Deux—Lines Ballet; Study No. 6; Gangsterism Over 10 Years; Big Stuff; Play To Live; The Subtle One; To Bob Vatel Of Paris; Old Babies; Nobody. (64:28)

**Personnel:** Jason Moran, piano; Tarus Mateen, bass; Nasheet Waits, drums; Jonas and Malcolm Moran, vocals (13).

**Ordering info:** [bluenote.com](http://bluenote.com)

# DOWNBEAT

July 2010

## The Hot Box

	John McDonough	John Corbett	Jim Macrae	Paul de Barros
Jason Moran & The Bandwagon <i>Ten</i>	★★★★	★★★★½	★★★★	★★★★
Kenny Davis <i>Kenny Davis</i>	★★½	★★½	★★★	★★★
Bobby McFerrin <i>VOCAbuLarieS</i>	★★½	★★	★★★	★★★
Fabrizio Sotti <i>Inner Dance</i>	★★½	★★	★★	★★½

### Critics' Comments ▶

#### Jason Moran & The Bandwagon, *Ten*

His Bandwagon music has been thoughtful from the get-go, but there have been moments when it wasn't as playful as it could be. Here, in a much-touted "concept-free" outing, is a nexus of the two approaches. A wise trio working a book that sounds effervescent even when it's pondering big questions. Love the Byard piece. —Jim Macrae

Part retrospective perhaps but all in the moment, these performances swell and shrink according to their own thermal laws, from atomized lyrical whispers to dense, swirling whirlpools and percussive shouts, e.g. "Bob Vatel." For no special reason, a wonderful "Nobody" is hidden behind a wanton fragment of paternal pride called "Old Babies." —John McDonough

No finer piano trio currently stalks the earth. Historically and intellectually resourceful ( nods to Conlon Nancarrow and Bert Williams feel as natural as the Jaki Byard tune) but also sparkingly intuitive, inventive, spontaneous, even when tinkering with something they've been working on for a decade ("Gangsterism Over 10 Years"). Unassailably brilliant. —John Corbett



## TheGrio's 100: Jason Moran, the future of jazz

February 4, 2010

If Johann Sebastian Bach and [Thelonius Monk](#) were both alive today, they would probably be impressed by the musical ingenuity of Jason Moran. This jazz pianist has been making waves since his debut 1999 album [Soundtrack to Human Motion](#), which is a mix of avant-garde jazz, hip-hop and spoken word.

Moran, a Texas native, started to receive classical piano lessons at the age of six from his late mother, an amateur cellist. However, when he was 14 years old, he had the pleasure of listening to Thelonius Monk's *The Composer*, and realized his true musical passion.

"For me, it was hearing the piano as I had never heard it," Moran said of Monk in a [2007 Smithsonian Magazine interview](#). "There was a clarity and direction, and in hindsight, I'd say it reminded me of what you'd hear in a hip-hop song -- it's very roguish and attractive. I just listened to that record over and over again."

Twenty years and six studio recordings later, fellow musicians and leagues of fans have labeled Moran the future of jazz. He has not only worked with some of the greats in the music industry, but he has also branched out into other avenues in the art world, including recent collaborations with artists Kara Walker and Glenn Ligon.

He also just completed a multimedia presentation paying homage to his role model Thelonius Monk. Like Monk, Moran's inventiveness will leave a mark on music for a new generation of fans and future jazz musicians. When asked in a [recent interview](#) about all the musicians who have inspired his career, he said it was all about mutual respect for the craft.

"You have to really look up to the mentors that you have and really trust yourself that you're gonna learn and grow as they learn and grow," he said. "Once you learn and grow together, then, hopefully, you will be in a fruitful position to be a successful musician."

## The New York Times

### JASON MORAN

“*Ten*” (Blue Note)

[Jason Moran’s new album](#) lands with an accumulated weight, both intrinsic and external. The external part has to do with his stature as a jazz pianist of rare institutional approval: a recipient of commissions and fellowships, a collaborator of choreographers and visual artists, a mixed-media conceptualist. The intrinsic part has to do with the decade-long experience of his trio, the Bandwagon, and his attendant growth as a bandleader.

The intrinsic part is what matters. It’s what nudges “*Ten*” toward a spirit of greatness. This is a product of sturdy intelligence and untroubled confidence driven by the inseparable commitment of Mr. Moran and his fellow Bandwagoners, the drummer Nasheet Waits and the bassist Tarus Mateen. Their rapport, distinctive from the start, now suggests a model of lithe collectivism. Mr. Moran’s piano forms the core of the group, but its sound is inconceivable without the thumbprints of Mr. Mateen, with his nimble, nubby bass guitar style, and Mr. Waits, with his earthy mutable approach to rhythm.

And the songs on “*Ten*,” the covers especially, have been fixtures of the trio’s repertory long enough to be fully metabolized. There’s a smartly reinvented player-piano piece by Conlon Nancarrow (“*Study No. 6*,” in two versions) and songs by the jazz pianists Jaki Byard (“*To Bob Vatel of Paris*”), [Thelonious Monk](#) (“*Crepuscle With Nellie*”) and Andrew Hill (“*Play to Live*,” written with Mr. Moran). “*Nobody*,” a hidden track, was the theme for Bert Williams, the minstrel star. “*Big Stuff*,” a bluesy stroll, was composed by [Leonard Bernstein](#) for the [Jerome Robbins](#) ballet “*Fancy Free*” and recorded by [Billie Holiday](#).

Mr. Moran has a ballet theme of his own here: “*Pas de Deux — Lines Ballet*,” a sternly gleaming ballad for solo piano. He also has pieces commissioned by an art museum and a jazz festival, and one conceived as the soundtrack to a documentary film. Each feels shaped by the practices of the trio rather than imposed from the outside, with a style governed by the full sweep of jazz tradition, and by hip-hop, blues and gospel besides.

In that sense, “*Gangsterism Over 10 Years*,” which appears near the album’s midpoint, may be its most appropriate talisman. Since the start of his solo career, Mr. Moran has been reworking this “*Gangsterism*” theme on each successive album, coming up with new idiomatic angles while staying true to the thing. Each version is a status report, but this one, with its retrospective title, doubles as a statement of principle. **NATE CHINEN**

# The Boston Globe

## Jason Moran, 'Ten'

By: STEVE GREENLEE  
June 7, 2010

It's been more than a decade since Jason Moran appeared out of nowhere and upended the notion that no one in jazz could do anything new on the piano. From the opening moments of his first album, "Soundtrack to Human Motion," Moran announced himself as not just a musician but an *artiste*. He arrived with a fully developed style, one that suggested the compositional genius of Andrew Hill, the ragged rhythmic approach of Thelonious Monk, and the melodic intuitiveness of Herbie Hancock (and others). In 10 short years, he managed to issue several albums that are already considered classics and keep together a trio that is one of today's finest. That trio — Bandwagon, with bassist Tarus Mateen and drummer Nasheet Waits — is behind "Ten," Moran's outstanding new disc. It contains the best of what he does: smart writing, propulsive rhythms, and improvisations that suggest mile-a-minute thinking and a sense that Moran constantly pushes himself to find the freshest phrase. There is an astounding right-hand run toward the end of "Blue Blocks" that is so brilliant it would blind you if you could see sound. Even more miraculous: his dramatic, modernistic twist on Monk's "Crepuscule With Nellie" and his wry take on "Study No. 6," a piece by Conlon Nancarrow. (Out June 22)



By: Patrick Jarenwattananon  
June 13, 2010

If you follow modern jazz, you already know why this statement is exciting: Jason Moran and the Bandwagon are releasing a new album.

If you're wondering why your jazz-loving friend is so giddy right now, this record is a good place to start. See, Jason Moran is a jazz pianist whose interests go way beyond jazz as it's commonly understood. There are pieces here inspired by the quilters of Gee's Bend, Ala., Robert F. Kennedy's 1966 trip to South Africa, Jimi Hendrix's breakout performance at the 1967 Monterey Pop Festival, a Leonard Bernstein ballet, an original ballet, parenting twin toddlers, a composer who wrote pieces too difficult for humans to physically play and an African-American blackface minstrel of the early 1900s ("Nobody," the hidden track after "Old Babies" concludes). Moran loves one of the earliest forms of jazz, stride piano, and one of the most post-modern forms, free jazz -- and really everything in between. And in all this, he also reinterprets the music of three other jazz piano nonconformists: Thelonious Monk, Andrew Hill and Jaki Byard.

At 35, Moran has been working with his Bandwagon trio for 10 years now -- hence the record's title, Ten -- and together, they play anything but jazz as usual. You get three incredible virtuosos in Moran, electric bassist Tarus Mateen and drummer Nasheet Waits, who've built the kind of rapport you only get in 10 years of playing together as a unit. They're the kind of virtuosos who choose to be different: the kind who know music inside-out, so they turn it outside-in. It's mighty impressive, and original to boot.

Most of all, this music makes sonic sense. It reads like a laundry list of crazy ideas, but it sounds like something that can be immediately perceived as both familiar and new. Give it a first listen, and maybe a second or third, and tell us what you think in the comments below. Ten will stream here in its entirety until its release on June 22.

## The Tale of the Rich Jazz Pianist

*If Jason Moran won't sell out for a \$500,000 MacArthur grant, he never will.*

by [Seth Colter Walls](#)

October 21, 2010



Jason Moran is wise in a couple of ways. There's the brilliant-musician thing, what with his being equally adept at interpreting Thelonious Monk and Afrika Bambaataa. But then he also knows that Americans don't listen to much [jazz](#) piano today—never mind Bambaataa's early hip-hop. So Moran realizes his being named a MacArthur grant "genius" isn't necessarily going to make you sit up and pay attention to him if you hadn't already. He likens the problem of jazz to that of the three-star restaurant wanting to expand its client base. "But only a certain type of person goes

there," he says. "Affluent, apparently, with a wide palate, and someone who wants to experiment with 'What is food? What can food be?'" So then they wind up serving the same person over and over again."

That doesn't trouble Moran just for jazz's sake; part of him is asking whether he himself has been compromised. The final, hidden track on his excellent new record, [Ten](#), is, pointedly, a vaudeville number made popular by Bert Williams, an African-American entertainer from the turn of the 20th century who performed in blackface. "As far as America and the global culture has come, there are some things that always reduce you to a minstrel, like being asked to come play for money," Moran says. "Or like being shown in through the back entrance of a theater. Some artists don't think about it, but it's a part of my psyche that I'm trying to deal with." So how does getting \$500,000 from the MacArthur crowd play into that frame of mind? For now, Moran believes this is a less troublesome kind of transaction, since the grant comes with no strings attached. "But I could be very naive," he says. "Check back with me in a couple years and see whether it's f--ked up my minstrelsy."

The smart money says he won't turn into a sellout. The projects Moran is thinking about next (in various stages of completion) are of a piece with the work that won him the MacArthur. To begin, he's taking an existing song cycle about the quilts of Gee's Bend, Ala., directly to the place that inspired him. "I want something really low tech: just setting up some amps and a piano and some microphones, and playing next to this house where they sell their quilts. I don't get a chance to do that very often." Moran says he'd like to pair up with one of his favorite contemporary MCs (a list that includes Ghostface Killah and Jay Electronica), though not in a situation where he's given a beat and merely asked to solo over it. Like his onetime teacher Jaki Byard—the pianist in some of Charles Mingus's greatest bands—Moran wants to dip into other forms, but not to the point where he's compromising his essential jazz feeling. That balance is in evidence on [Ten](#), especially on a Jimi Hendrix-sampling piece called "Feedback, Pt. 2." Showing off DJ-style smarts about how to develop sound fragments into a full theme, the beats Moran and his bandmates push in front of Hendrix's feedback are never mashup-by-rote; each moment is alive with improvisation. Like its maker, this pop-wise jazz essay is several kinds of smart—an achievement even a half-million dollars will have a tough time changing.