

A portrait of Joshua Redman, a bald man with a light complexion, wearing a dark suit jacket over a light-colored shirt. He is looking slightly to the right of the camera with a neutral expression. The background is a blurred indoor setting with a wooden door frame.

JOSHUA REDMAN

"Mr. Redman is a supremely affable and flowing improviser, at times a borderline brilliant one, working in a glow of clarity."
The New York Times

"Redman is adventurous without all the squeals and squawks of other players, adept at writing both lyrically and rhythmically, and knows when the twain should part, creating an episode of engaging storytelling on one tune, circling the head of the tune with just four or five notes immediately after."
Variety

"At his best, Joshua Redman seems a class apart for technique, invention and artistry. This US maestro has contemporary saxophone covered. He can do screams, honks and circular-breathing arpeggios with the best of them. . ."
Evening Standard

One of the most acclaimed and charismatic jazz artists to have emerged in the decade of the 1990s, award-winning saxophonist Joshua Redman has toured and/or recorded with distinguished musicians such as his father, the late saxophonist Dewey Redman, bassists Charlie Haden and Christian McBride; pianists Chick Corea, McCoy Tyner and Brad Mehldau; guitarist Pat Metheny; and drummers Roy Haynes, Jack DeJohnette, Elvin Jones, Paul Motian, Billy Higgins and Brian Blade.

Redman was born in Berkeley, California, and is the son of legendary saxophonist Dewey Redman and dancer Renee Shedroff and an alumnus of the jazz studies program at Berkeley High School. After graduating from Harvard College, Redman was accepted by Yale Law School in 1991, but postponed his entrance for one year to satisfy a growing desire to pursue music. Four months later, Redman's decision was confirmed when he was named the winner of the Thelonious Monk International Saxophone Competition by a panel of judges comprised of Jimmy Heath, Branford Marsalis, Jackie McLean, Frank Wess and the late Benny Carter.

He has recorded over ten albums (on Warner Brothers and most recently Nonesuch) as a leader, including the 2007 Grammy-nominated *Back East*, the 2005 Grammy-nominated *Momentum*, and he has garnered top honors in critics and readers polls of DownBeat, Jazz Times, The Village Voice and Rolling Stone. From 2000-2006 Redman was the Artistic Director of the nonprofit, San Francisco based jazz presenting organization SFJAZZ, as well as a member of the SFJAZZ Collective, an ensemble distinguished both by the creativity of its members and a unique primary emphasis on composition. On his last album, *Back East*, Redman paid tribute to Sonny Rollins' 1957 album *Way Out West*, teaming up with musicians including Brian Blade, Christian McBride, Al Jackson, Joe Lovano, and his late father. On his 2009 Nonesuch release, Redman explores the art of the acoustic trio working with musicians Larry Grenadier, Brian Blade, Ruben Rogers, and Gregory Hutchinson.



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A Single Jazz Band, by Way of Two Trios



By [NATE CHINEN](#)

Published: January 21, 2009

[Joshua Redman](#) walked onstage at the Highline Ballroom on Tuesday, tenor saxophone in hand, and flashed a smile. “Sure does feel like a different world, doesn’t it?” he said simply, a moment before starting his opening tune. The afterglow of a presidential inauguration, and this one in particular, hardly required more acknowledgment than that.

The opener was “Identity Thief,” from Mr. Redman’s superb new album, “Compass” (Nonesuch), and it set a distinctly exploratory tone. Its slow, snakelike melody involved just saxophone, bass and drums. And at first Mr. Redman dug in with the bassist Larry Grenadier and the drummer Brian Blade, both stationed to his right. Then, with the next phrase, the center shifted, and suddenly he was playing with the bassist Reuben Rogers and the drummer Gregory Hutchinson, to his left. This cross-fade repeated, back and forth and back again, before the two sides converged on a groove.

Mr. Redman could hardly have come up with a more instructive curtain raiser for the group he calls his Double Trio, which also appears on “Compass.” Tuesday’s concert, the first half of a two-night run, was its first public appearance; so far there aren’t many more on the calendar. “It’s hard enough to get one of these guys on the phone,” Mr. Redman quipped from the stage by way of explanation, “let alone all four of them in a room.”

Why two bassists? Why two drummers? The answer, for a bandleader as exacting as Mr. Redman, probably has more to do with flexibility than with density. After the opener, he featured his full cohort only a few more times: on a briskly roiling “Time of the Barracudas,” by Gil Evans; in a pensive meditation on [Beethoven](#)’s “Moonlight” sonata; and on the encore, a loping original called “Another Blues.”

In each case there were contrasts to consider — between, say, the washy sonorities of Mr. Blade’s cymbals and the clattering brightness of Mr. Hutchinson’s — but the bigger point was a spirit of looseness within the churn. In the same way that double exposure can produce a blurred photographic image, Mr. Redman uses the Double Trio to soften his own hard-lined clarity. In the process he’s making some of the best music of his career.

His meticulousness still expressed itself, partly in the structure of the show, which took on various configurations. As on the album, Mr. Redman worked often in a straightforward trio, wringing exuberant results out of a buoyant theme like “Far Away” (with Mr. Blade and Mr. Grenadier) or a feverish workout like “Insomnomaniac” (with Mr. Hutchinson and Mr. Rogers). But there were also some arresting moments of overlap, when both bassists soloed in tandem or the two drummers traded shots across the stage.

Through it all Mr. Redman worked fast and fluid, never exhausting his options. On a coyly boppish tune called “Hutchhiker’s Guide,” he unfurled lines with loquacious ease, in the [Sonny Rollins](#) vein. He prefaced his next song with a row of hard, multiphonic squawks,

sounding like a truck horn. Later, playing soprano saxophone on an elegiac “Ghost,” he fluttered and flurried, embroidering the theme. At almost every turn he seemed intensely focused but unpressured and completely in command.

Redman fans flames of jazz fire at Berklee

By Bob Young - Saturday, January 24, 2009



A jazz wunderkind during his undergrad days at Harvard, Joshua Redman hasn't taken the easy road to stardom. He cleared a unique path for himself, and now at 39, ranks with the top saxophonists in the world.

Redman tested his mettle by mixing it up with such heavies as Pat Metheny and Christian McBride. He ignored conventional jazz wisdom and recorded albums that weren't in lock step with what was hip. And he managed to step out of the shadow of his undersung, but hugely respected saxophonist father, Dewey Redman.

Thursday in front of a crowded house at Berklee Performance Center, Redman showed he's still taking the road less traveled.

With a revolving cast of four of the best rhythm section players in the business - drummers Brian Blade and Greg Hutchinson, and bassists Larry Grenadier and Reuben Rogers - and with all four joining him at times, Redman navigated a constantly changing rhythmscape with the serene intensity that has marked his career.

He set the tone immediately on "Identity Thief" by slicing over, above and through the thick swirls churned up by his four band mates. Wielding his muscular tenor sax much of the night, Redman played almost all originals, primarily from his new CD, "Compass." His soprano sax infused two stunning ballads with a mood-altering ethereal shimmer.

But the album, good as it is, doesn't capture the energy of Redman with this group. He let more air and space into the proceedings when he downsized to various trio configurations, but his frequent forays to outer edges would have had Ornette Coleman, Archie Shepp and his father smiling wide.

Redman served as the ignition for a fire that grew hotter as the night progressed. The hottest moments - jaw-dropping exchanges between Blade and Hutchinson, Grenadier and Rogers and even all four - were as musical as they were inspired.

This quintet was clearly having a blast, egging each other on, shouting at a fierce exchange, laughing at a cymbal burst. Intense? For sure. And fun to witness, too.

Redman doubles up with poise and power

By Steve Greenlee, Globe Staff | January 26, 2009

Two years ago, the Harvard-educated saxophonist Joshua Redman stripped his band down to a trio, Sonny Rollins-style, and produced his finest album, "Back East." Perhaps operating under the assumption that a double trio would be twice as good, Redman has just issued a sequel, "Compass," which employs two basses and two drummers.

One might think that a saxophonist playing with two bassists and two drummers would result in chaos and noise. One would be incorrect. Redman, still several days shy of his 40th birthday, brought his double trio to Berklee Performance Center and put on the show of his life. Redman has always been an entertaining musician, but Thursday he played more confidently and powerfully than ever.

The five musicians didn't play together the whole night; they often broke into various incarnations of a sax-bass-drums trio. But when all five did play at the same time, it made for a wild symbiosis. They started on an energy high on "Identity Thief," with the two rhythm sections - drummer Brian Blade/bassist Larry Grenadier and drummer Gregory Hutchinson/bassist Reuben Rogers - taking turns establishing the groove. Soon the two bassists were dueling - in a friendly manner more than a cutting contest - and then the drummers returned. But play in unison they did not, and never did. One would anchor the rhythm, and the other would augment with texture and accents.

Redman, for his part, fueled them all with insistent, dramatic solos and seat-shaking two-note phrases. His is a physical style; he punctuated notes both high and low with leg kicks and body bends. Occasionally he vocalized a "mm-hmm" or "ahhh" between notes, as though he'd just discovered a passage he particularly enjoyed.

The musicians were subtler when only three shared the stage. Redman bent the pitch of several notes back and forth during an unaccompanied section that bridged "Hutchhiker's Guide" and "Insomnomaniac." His solo began to grow rowdy, and suddenly - bam! - Redman stomped his foot, signaling Hutchinson and Rogers to enter. When they did, they churned out a dynamic 4/4 rhythm that managed to feel odd-metered.

The full double trio, though, was the star of the show. The five men closed the set by blasting through a cover of the Miles Davis/Gil Evans tune "The Time of the Barracudas" (the only song that didn't come from "Compass"). For all the power and fury, however, the evening's surprise was the encore. "We're gonna play a little 19th-century tune," Redman announced, and led the double trio through his own delicate arrangement of Beethoven's "Moonlight Sonata." What confidence it must have taken not only to turn that piece into jazz but to close a show with it.

Triple trio, anyone?

A double dose of bass and drums

Joshua Redman does sonic experimentation with his unusual trio

By Andrew Gilbert, Globe Correspondent | January 18, 2009

BERKELEY, Calif. - For jazz musicians, time is of the essence.

Great players weave their personal sense of pulse into every phrase, crafting a signature sound with syncopation as much as with timbre and texture. But space can also play a critical role in the way a musician shapes his or her music.

Joshua Redman's new album "Compass" (Nonesuch) captures his unusual Double Trio band carefully navigating a series of compositions which unfold palpably in three dimensions. Featuring bassists Larry Grenadier and Reuben Rogers and drummers Gregory Hutchinson and Brian Blade, the ensemble is a fascinating sonic experiment in which Redman's saxophone is flanked on each side by bass and drums.

"The setup in the studio created this mirroring effect, and we were very conscious of playing with that," says Redman, 39, who makes a rare appearance with the Double Trio on Thursday at the Berklee Performance Center.

"The Double Trio opened up all these other possibilities, a richer way to explore composition and improvisation," Redman says during a conversation near his home here. "There's this symmetry with saxophone in the center, and on several pieces there was this call and response happening spatially. Just in terms of texture and dynamics, the range that can be explored is so much greater, from sparsity to density."

Looking trim from a regular jogging regimen and streamlined with a freshly shaved scalp, Redman carries himself with restless energy. He talks in extended riffs, working out his ideas as he speaks, testing a hypothesis, then doubling back to revise it when he's followed a train of thought to a different destination.

"I never really thought about music in spatial terms before," Redman says. "We work with harmony, rhythm, melody, and texture, but on 'Compass' these voices are particular points in space. I didn't hear something specific beforehand, but I had a sense of what that sort of instrumentation might feel like, having the same instruments with their voices juxtaposed."

Redman's Boston concert with the Double Trio will be only the group's third public performance, following a two-night stand in New York City. Given that his bandmates are four of jazz's most highly sought after sidemen, it's not an ensemble destined for an active touring schedule.

"We've never played live in a double trio before, and I really don't know what it's going to be like," Redman says. "These are some of my favorite musicians in the world, and we've got a lot of experience playing together. But just getting one of these guys into a room is tough enough, so there was a very short window of time where this was possible. Even if everyone was available, would you want to do three months? We'll find out."

It was while attending Harvard in the late 1980s that Redman first started playing in bass and drums settings, one of the most demanding formats for a horn player. He wasn't consciously seeking out gigs without a chordal

ON THE RECORD

Joshua Redman's new course

The saxophonist calls his two bassists-two drummers album 'definitely an exercise in letting go.'

By [Chris Barton](#) [January 11, 2009](#) in print edition F-12

A marquee name on the contemporary jazz scene since winning the Thelonious Monk Institute's Jazz Saxophone Competition in 1991, Joshua Redman has played electric, acoustic, rock, funk and just about every musical style fit for a celebrated jazz saxophonist. But before his new album, "Compass," due out this week, Redman had never performed in an acoustic "double-trio" setting, an unconventional, rhythm-heavy configuration where a soloist is backed by two drummers and two bassists.

Redman kept hearing a voice in his head propelling him to give the formation a try, but he wasn't optimistic.

"No joke, when we went into the recording session I thought there was a high probability that none of the double-trio tunes would make the record," said Redman, who called upon frequent collaborators Brian Blade, Larry Grenadier, Reuben Rogers and Gregory Hutchinson for the album. "I thought we wouldn't even end up playing any tunes because it would be so raucous and crazy."

Instead nearly half of the record sprang out of the double-trio format, and they're the album's most striking pieces. Framed by such a complicated web of sound and rhythm, Redman's playing – always tasteful and technically beautiful – sounds daring and freshly recharged on tracks such as "Just Like You" and "Little Ditty."

Even outside of the new configuration, "Compass" finds Redman and his band stretching out with flashes of unpredictability and raw emotion. Those traits rose out of Redman opening himself up to a greater emphasis on free playing or improvisation, unmarried to a rhythmic or harmonic structure.

"One thing that doing this record taught me was in a weird way I realized I often have a little bit more of an agenda going into a recording project than I think I have," Redman admitted. "And because I had no experience playing in this format ... whatever vision there might have been, it just couldn't exist. There was no vision. It was definitely an exercise in letting go on a lot of different levels."

Another product of the double-trio format was a reworking of Beethoven's "Moonlight" Sonata, the album's brooding centerpiece. Full of dark spaces and sorrow, the song was nearly left off the album in part out of Redman's concern for what listeners might read into his choice to interpret such a classical standard but also what his understated interpretation might say about him.

"There's a lot of aspects to my performance that in the past I would've been like, 'Absolutely not, there's no way this is going on the record. This doesn't show me as a saxophonist in a strong, confident way,'" Redman admits. "But I think it's for precisely those reasons that I felt it was appropriate. There's a certain fragility and vulnerability that comes through... ."

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March 22, 2008**MUSIC REVIEW**

No Longer a Phenom but Unquestionably a Force

By NATE CHINEN

Fifteen years ago the saxophonist [Joshua Redman](#) released “Wish,” his second album on the Warner Brothers label, solidifying his stature as one of the brightest young stars in mainstream jazz. A number of things have changed since — Warner no longer has a jazz department, and it’s harder to say just what “mainstream jazz” entails — but not the basic facts of his prominence or his talent. As he closes in on 40, Mr. Redman resembles something like a frank, assiduous fulfillment of the promise held out by his younger self.

Mr. Redman has been working at the Village Vanguard this week with a powerfully alert bassist, Reuben Rogers, and a sharp, supple drummer, Brian Blade. At one point in the first of two sold-out sets on Thursday night, they dusted off an original from “Wish,” the lightly floating waltz “Soul Dance.” Mr. Redman played the song’s melody on soprano saxophone instead of tenor, and then annotated its form with a series of quick arabesques. He sounded like someone with his eyes trained on the horizon.

That’s the same vantage he suggests throughout “Back East” (Nonesuch), his most recent album, which was among the best jazz releases of 2007. At its core it’s a trio record, with a few different rhythm sections. (Mr. Blade and Mr. Rogers both appear on it, but not together.) And it nudges Mr. Redman into a position of stark exposure, as the latest tenor player to lead a trio after the example set by [Sonny Rollins](#) just over 50 years ago.

On Thursday Mr. Redman’s flexible rapport with the trio undergirded several more recent compositions. “Reuben’s Rounds,” explicitly a showcase for Mr. Rogers, also involved some quicksilver tenor work. “Identity Thief” began with a rubato line, assigned in octaves to bass and tenor saxophone, before swerving into a groove. And “Two Track Mind” employed dartlike syncopations of the sort that flattered the whole band.

Mr. Redman’s silvery improvisational style can give the impression of skimming the surface rather than digging in: all those fluid eighth-note streaks and rangy altissimo runs can feel too facile after a while, regardless of the effort behind them. So it was a treat to hear him grappling, at the start of the set, with “The Surrey With the Fringe on Top” and “East of the Sun (and West of the Moon),” the same two tracks that open “Back East.”

“Surrey,” long associated with Mr. Rollins, frothed up to a fever pitch: at one point Mr. Blade sent a stick sailing into the audience. But on “East of the Sun,” Mr. Redman overrode a frisky 7/8 groove with touches of old-fashioned tenor gallantry. It made for a nice contrast, as well as a smart acknowledgment of his stylistic inheritance.

Joshua Redman continues through Sunday at the Village Vanguard, 178 Seventh Avenue South, at 11th

instrument as much as picking up work wherever he could find it, which often meant playing in joints without a piano, or with a budget that could only accommodate three musicians.

In recent years, Redman has played in stripped-down combos out of desire rather than necessity. "Compass" flows from his 2007 Nonesuch album "Back East," a tremendously satisfying project on which he used three different bass and drums configurations (augmented on several tracks by other horns).

Loosely inspired by Sonny Rollins's seminal 1957 bass and drums trio album "Way Out West," "Back East" marked a new phase in Redman's career. On both tenor and soprano sax he thrived in the music's wide-open harmonic spaces, playing beautifully compressed lines with concentrated lyrical intensity. He composed the pieces for "Compass" during a four-day burst early on his initial tour for "Back East."

"This music was born out of that intensive trio experience," Redman says. "I had this idea of trying some things with a double trio. We decided to take a day in the studio and it ended up feeling like we found something really interesting, something worth putting on the album."

Doubling up bassists or drummers isn't unprecedented. Rogers notes that he has long been inspired by the way John Coltrane deployed Art Davis and Reggie Workman on the classic 1961 Atlantic album "Olé Coltrane." But the instrumentation is mostly associated with stratospheric free jazz players like the late saxophonist Glenn Spearman, who made several raucous double trio albums (though he also twinned the horn chair).

"There's a tendency in situations like this, you want your voice to be heard," says Rogers, who has toured widely in recent years with tenor sax master Charles Lloyd. "You can easily overplay. Just by yourself as a bassist, you have to be really selective with your choice of notes and timbre or things can get muddy. To have another bassist in the mix, it can get even more chaotic. But our ears were wide open, and we played as tasteful as possible. As Charles Lloyd likes to say, it takes a certain elasticity."

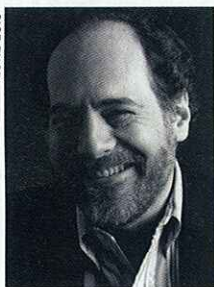
The Double Trio displays a supple touch on the opening track of "Compass," a beautifully calibrated free improvisation called "Uncharted." And the band doesn't shy away from churning crescendos, building to a furious trap set duet on "Identity Theft." But the group's dynamic range tends more toward a whisper than a scream, which makes each earned outpouring that much more effective.

"For all of us it was very important that this didn't turn into a blowing free for all," Redman says. "In a certain sense that's the default. You put a bunch of musicians in a room, and the temptation is to go all out. In any small group setting, there are already all these different lines of communication, and two of the same instruments can make that conversation even more intense.

"Particularly with drummers, it's easy to embrace the wall of sound," he adds. "But at times I had to actually encourage people to play more. Everyone listened first and played second."

Goin' Down South

LUKE LOIS



Sometimes you have to leave home to find yourself most at home. My recent trip to Brazil, culminating with the sixth annual Festival Tudo é Jazz in Ouro Preto (Sept. 13-16), provided a too brief but intense immersion in the marvels of Brazilian jazz, yet, in truth, the most unforgettable set was provided by homeboy Joshua Redman, leading a trio through selections from his *Back East* repertory. That album, released in April, is one of Redman's best, and last summer he gave a bold account of it at Town Hall as part of the JVC Jazz Festival. Yet his performance at Ouro Preto was on another level—the kind

you live for because it not only exceeds but upends expectations.

My experience with Redman, in the 16 years since he won the Thelonious Monk competition, has been somewhat binary: occasions when he gives himself up to electrifying improvisations and interchanges with the members of his band; and occasions when he is so absorbed in his fastidious arrangements that he seems boxed by them. With the first notes of "The Surrey With the Fringe on Top," the air in the main auditorium, Salão Diamantina, crackled: This would be an instance of the former, an inspired blowout, and two contributing factors were instantly evident.

First: The hall's sound is exceptionally vivid and was even more so with Redman's sound man designing the amplification. In New York concert halls, we are almost inured to muddy sonics that give up the main facts of pitch and timbre with little of the nuance. Redman has worked too hard to master details of sound in every register on both tenor and soprano saxophone to lose them in echoes and overtones. On "Indian Song," he produced an ethereal yet firmly edged tone on tenor, simultaneously of the air and earth; on "Angel Eyes," he focused on the high and high-middle registers, etching two-note chords and above-the-scale squalls with offhanded accuracy; on "Zarafah," his soprano swirled into near-Hebraic davening; on "Back East," he unleashed a raucous knees-up tirade, neither Rollins nor Coltrane, but firmly in the mighty tradition that seems to exist chiefly to prove that jazz is brimming with a dynamism it hasn't begun to exhaust.

Second: Gregory Hutchinson. Which is not to say that bassist Matt Penman wasn't an equilateral member of the triangle—he was precise, attentive, forceful. But Hutchinson, perhaps the great drummer of his generation, entered the fray with a muscularity that accommodated the arrangements while suggesting his impatience to move beyond them. Hutchinson's counterintuitive provocations, turning rhythms around and clamping down on ballads, set up a chemistry that Redman basked in—this was only their third performance together on a tour that the trio's usual drummer, Eric Harland, could not make. Yet the passion never undermined the lucidity, the always-involving clarity. Redman, shaking his head at one point, told the audience it might be the altitude, then said he wished that he could spend the rest of his life in Ouro Preto, "or at least a couple more hours."

There was much more from the North American contingent, which doubled as representatives of Israeli and Canadian jazz, including superb sets by Aaron Goldberg's trio and the Omer Avital Quintet and a more languid but pleasing one by the Ingrid Jensen Quartet. Madeleine Peyroux and Wallace Roney fared less well, the former channeling Norah Jones (not as good a fit for her as Billie and Peggy), the latter paying a raucous homage to Joe Zawinul. One of the qualities that makes the Ouro Preto festival so absorbing, besides the magically preserved 18th-century environment (a pastel community built on steep hills that make San Francisco feel like the plains, it is located in Minas Gerais, between

São Paulo and Belo Horizonte) is the determination of founder-director Maria Alice Martins and co-curator Ivan Monteiro to combine music from the United States, Europe and Brazil.

The Brazilian groups were fascinating, especially Casa Forte, a quartet led by the flutist and saxophonist (alto and soprano) Mauro Senise, playing music by the singer and composer Edu Lobo. His album of Lobo's songs, one of the year's outstanding releases, is difficult to find here, but worth the effort. Senise is a gifted improviser—his well-tuned soprano and beaming flute and piccolo combine, in the Brazilian manner, glittery virtuosity, rhythmic intensity and easy lyricism. No less impressive were solo turns by bassist Ivan Conti and pianist Itamar Assiere, and the arrangements (by Gilson Peranzetta) of such memorable pieces as the ballad "Canção do Amanhecer" and the quasi-blues "A História de Lily Braun." One of the more anticipated events was the reunion by pianist João Donato and altoist Bud Shank, which had moments of beauty but felt inhibited as Shank, at 81, began to show signs of fatigue and Donato restrained his own stirring beat. But it was also a chance to hear two fabled Brazilian rhythm players, bassist Luiz Alves and the remarkable drummer Robertinho Silva, a master of the brushes who is even more understated with sticks.

My visit coincided with the publication of *Música Nas Veias*, the much-awaited memoir by the music historian, producer and radio personality Zuza Homem de Mello, who with his wife Ercília Lobo, were my hosts in and around São Paulo. While he signed hundreds of books one evening, I visited the magnificent Mozarteum Brasileiro, a train terminal converted into a state-of-the-art concert hall through a complex system of buffers. Gilbert Varga conducted the Basque Symphony Orchestra in a program that included the highly rhythmic Orreaga - Suite Basca by the neglected Aita Madina; Brahms' Double Concerto, featuring violinist Lorenz Nasturica and cellist Asier Polo; and a brazenly immoderate embrace of Tchaikovsky's Pathétique.

In Campisa, a couple of hours from São Paulo, Zuza took me to hear a similarly eclectic program by the 20-piece orchestra Zérró, led by the indefatigable bassist Zérró Santos (check him out on YouTube). The band combines original music, Brazilian classics and jazz classics ("Naima," "Take the 'A' Train," "Mercy Mercy Mercy") in a stream-of-consciousness collage: That is, the band doesn't only go from one tune to another—it also interpolates one tune *within* another, depending on the whim of the leader, who, constantly on the move, changes the material as willfully as he does soloists, many of whom are young local players of much promise. Yet another eclectic big band closed the festivities at Ouro Preto: Maria Schneider, working with a Brazilian rhythm section and clearly psyched by the rehearsals. But I had to miss her performance in order to return to New York for Sonny Rollins' 50th-anniversary concert at Carnegie Hall. I'll have more to say about that glorious evening when the record comes out. **JT**

Joshua Redman still feels 'childlike sense of play' with his music

By Ed Symkus

GateHouse News Service

Posted Apr 18, 2008 @ 04:41 PM

When saxophonist Joshua Redman returns to his stamping grounds to be honored with the 2008 Harvard Arts Medal on May 1, there will be plenty of memories rushing back to him.

By the time he graduated summa cum laude from Harvard University in 1991, Redman, the son of saxophonist Dewey Redman, had performed as a soloist in the school's big band and every variety of small jazz combo imaginable. He also appeared on a number of stages in the area.

"I played at Ryles and did a few gigs at the Willow," Redman says from his home in Berkeley, Calif. "I did a lot of playing at small restaurants, and I even did some weddings and a bar mitzvah."

A modest start for Redman, 39, who's currently a Nonesuch recording artist, with 11 albums as a leader to his credit.

Then there was the night about a decade ago when he was back in town, headlining at the Regattabar in Harvard Square and, unknown to him, was being appreciated from the back of the room by Rolling Stones Keith Richards and Charlie Watts, who stopped by on a night off from touring.

"About a year later, I got a call from someone who represented the Stones," he says, "asking if I'd like to come play with the band. I ended up on the 'Bridges to Babylon' tour, playing 'Waiting on a Friend,' which Sonny Rollins recorded with them. I guess Sonny wasn't available, so they thought of me."

But the prestigious Harvard Arts Medal doesn't go to someone just because they've played with a popular rock band. Redman is joining ranks that include Jack Lemmon, John Updike, Peter Sellers and Yo-Yo Ma.

Redman, usually limiting himself to tenor and soprano saxophones these days, has traveled a long musical road leading to his Harvard award.

"My mom took me to the Center for World Music in Berkeley, where I took some South Indian drumming classes and Indonesian gamelan classes when I was 4 or 5," he remembers.

"But that was just me beating on the drums," he adds, laughing. "I took some recorder lessons at 6 or 7, and taught myself to play a few guitar chords when I was 7 or so. I started playing clarinet when I was 9, then switched to sax about a year later."

Yet it wasn't just all of those lessons that got him to fall in love with music. Raised by his mother, the dancer Renee Shedroff, he got what he calls, "music education through exposure. She loved all of the performing arts, but music and dance in particular. I grew up with a lot of music in the house. It started out mostly with her favorite music, which ranged from Coltrane to an Indian shenai player to Indonesian gamelan music to Persian music to Mozart to Bach to the Beatles."

So he was already hooked when the lessons got going.

"At the time I wasn't necessarily thinking I was going to be a musician," he says. "Certainly not a professional musician, but I did feel a connection to the saxophone."

Yet even in high school, when he was wrapped up in the school's jazz band, playing at festival and competitions, and joining an after-school combo, he wasn't totally committed.

"I didn't take my saxophone home and practice," he admits. "Music was always something I felt very strongly and powerfully about, but it wasn't something that I was focused on or disciplined with what I saw as a primary life pursuit or a career."

He's still not sure about what happened, what made him focus on music. But he knows that it was after Harvard, when he moved to New York for a year to "take some time off before going to Yale Law School" which, obviously, didn't happen.

"Within the first nine months of being in New York, I found myself with opportunities to play with some of the greatest musicians around, of all ages and levels — my father, Charlie Haden, Pat Metheny, Paul Motian, Jack DeJohnette and great musicians of my generation like Brad Mehldau, Christian McBride, Brian Blade," he says. "It was a series of great experiences, one after the other. I found myself in the right places at the right times, and found that for whatever reason, I was getting the opportunity to play with these great musicians. It was the easiest decision I ever made. No offense to Yale Law School, but it just felt too good."

Now, after 15 years as a pro, Redman finds himself doing a little looking back. He feels he's become more serious about the music he's writing and playing, that he's a little more patient and "a little less blustery," he says with a laugh.

"It's still fun," he says. "For me, music has always, in a certain sense, been play. It's never been work. I didn't obsess about it or agonize over it. So I think I always had this childlike sense of play with music, and I think that served me well. Now I try to practice, I try to deal with all my musical deficiencies and become a better musician. But one of the things I have to work at now is preserving that attitude of nonwork — at preserving that attitude of play and fun."

Another challenge, one that he welcomes, is that he's also now a father, but he still has to spend a lot of time on the road.

"Trying to find that ever-elusive balance in life, between work and play and between music and family, between being a dad and a partner and being a professional and an artist, is tough," he says candidly. "Right now, as a jazz musician, I make my living away from home. My being gone from home allows us to have a home. As your child gets older, he's more aware of you being gone. And I'm more aware of everything I'm missing, but I also feel incredibly fortunate to have this wonderful family and to be able to do what I love to do."

In the middle of this busy life, he got a voice mail message from someone claiming to be the actor John Lithgow, another Harvard graduate, who originally proposed the idea of the Harvard Arts Medal.

"It sounded like a practical joke," Redman recalls. "The message was, 'This is John Lithgow. I have some very exciting news for you. Here's my number. Give me a call back.' I thought, 'OK, which one of the cats is messin' with me; who's pulling my leg?' But then I thought, 'I have some friends who pull pranks, but who would use John Lithgow?' So I called him back, and he told me I had be chosen. It's a huge honor."

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Earning His Spurs: Joshua Redman finds himself in Sonny Rollins's Oklahoma!, OK!

By Francis Davis

The Village Voice 07.17.2007

Whatever your opinion of the movers and shakers of '60s and '70s free jazz, you can't say they didn't pass on good genes. Start with Ravi Coltrane, Nas (the son of cornetist Olu Dara), and Deval Patrick (governor of Massachusetts and the offspring of a Sun Ra saxophonist). Charnett Moffett, Neneh and Eagle Eye Cherry, and Josh and Petra Haden are all progeny of Ornette Coleman's original inner circle—not to mention Ornette's own flesh and blood, Denardo.

Also from Coleman's extended clan, there's the late Dewey Redman's son, Joshua, also a tenor saxophonist, he began attracting premature attention on the joint strength of his lineage and the Pat Metheny-driven *Wish* around 1993, when he was still in his early twenties and sorting through his influences. That era's other poster boy for a youth movement that never materialized was James Carter, whose work since then has been maddeningly inconsistent, if occasionally thrilling. Redman's has been dependable but uninspired—enough to make you pine for inconsistent.

Jump to Town Hall last month, where Redman began his set (the first half of a JVC Festival saxophone doubleheader with Branford Marsalis) by introducing "The Surrey with the Fringe on Top" from *Oklahoma!*—also the opening number on his new *Back East*—as "a song from a Rodgers and Hammerstein musical set in a mythical place far, far away." No joke at the expense of a state backward enough to elect global-warming denier James Inhofe to three Senate terms is too gratuitous for me, so I laughed out loud with everyone else. But the real wit was in Redman's halving and doubling of the tempo, his foghorn plunges and falsetto leaps, and the way he followed stuttered phrases with ones so flowing they practically crooned—all of which, combined with the wide-open spaces he left for Reuben Rogers's bass and Eric Harland's sticks and brushes, made it unnecessary for him to add that the giddy-up for this "Surrey" was Sonny Rollins's 1957 interpretation. Double-consciousness in action, Rollins at the same age stood inside and outside the unlikely ditties he dragged into jazz, seconding the idealized sentiments expressed in their unheard lyrics even while exposing them to harsh reality by dint of an implied sarcasm. Not having come of age with those songs, Redman couldn't possibly feel the same affection for them. But he doesn't need to, because his dialogue is with Rollins.

Featuring cameos by Dewey Redman (his last recording) and fellow saxophonists Joe Lovano and Chris Cheek, but mostly letting Joshua stroll over bass and drums (Rogers and Harland, Christian McBride and Brian Blade, or Larry Grenadier and Ali Jackson), *Back East* shrewdly focuses that dialogue on one Rollins LP in particular. An artifact from an era when there were only two accepted schools of modern jazz, East Coast hard and West Coast cool (with smack being all they had in common), 1957's *Way Out West* played on the irony of a New York deity touching down in L.A. by turning Rollins loose on faux boots-and-saddles favorites like "Wagon Wheels" and "I'm an Old Cowhand," and showing him posed on the cover amid the sagebrush, wearing a holster and a 10-gallon hat.

Along with putting the song from *Oklahoma!* where it belonged conceptually—Rollins actually recorded it in New York later that same year, for the LP *Newk's Time*—Redman compounds the irony by following it with "East of the Sun," a song associated with Stan Getz, the prince of cool and a West Coaster stylistically if not always geographically. *Back East's* gentle tweaking continues with Redman gradually bringing the rest of the world into it via Wayne Shorter's "Indian Song" (probably based on a snatch of pow-wow kitsch the movie-buff composer remembered from an obscure B-western, and here a tenor smoke-out with Lovano), Coltrane's "India" (going first, the elder Redman turns it into a harmelodic Texas stomp), and originals whose rhythmic patterns and titles ("Zarafah," "Manta 5," "Indonesia") evoke the Middle East without falling back on modes. "Cowhand" is more abstract than Rollins's version, and "Wagon Wheels" much darker and more austere, even on soprano.

Variety

Joshua Redman

(Catalina Bar & Grill; 250 seats; \$25 top)

By PHIL GALLO

Presented inhouse. Opened and reviewed June 12, 2007. Closes June 17.

Band: Joshua Redman, Reuben Rogers, Eric Harland.

Joshua Redman is offering a nod -- and that's pretty much all it is -- to Sonny Rollins' pianoless trio that recorded "Way Out West" 50 years ago, employing a similar setup, sharing two tunes with the Rollins effort and using his own compositions as the foundations for invigorating and precise improvisations. Opening set at Catalina for Redman and one of the three rhythm sections that appear on his brilliant "Back East" (Nonesuch) was a thriller, a master class in communication and execution.

Evening opened with Rodgers & Hammerstein's "The Surrey With the Fringe on Top," and Redman executed the theme with some cute stops and starts before trotting into bebop territory. Redman structured his solo, however, to go hand in hand with the song's gleeful spirit and hopefulness, a tack he took later on with "I'm an Old Cowhand," which segued into a dense and lulling reading of Charles Mingus' "Goodbye Pork Pie Hat." He drew on Middle Eastern tones and the soprano sax's human voice-like characteristics on his most linear composition, "Zarafah"; elsewhere, he pushed himself and his band into whirlwinds and torrents that were as natural as the tender moments.

Redman arrived in a blaze of glory in 1992, and at the old Catalina's on Cahuenga, Redman lived up to the hype. This is a wildly different undertaking -- as have been his larger ensemble outings with the SF Jazz Collective -- but Redman possesses that rare ability to simultaneously work two rails: One connects him with the other musicians, the other connects the group with the audience. It's not that he plays without precedent -- conjure the imaginary album "Coltrane Plays Getz" for something of a picture -- but his playing is following a path that he, and he alone, has set.

Redman is adventurous without all the squeals and squawks of other players, adept at writing both lyrically and rhythmically, and he knows when the twain should part, creating an episode of engaging storytelling on one tune, circling the head of the tune with just four or five notes immediately after.

Drummer Eric Harland takes charge of this unit with some stunning stick work that alternates between supporting Redman's excursions and adding a blare of rambunctiousness to partner with the saxophonist's flurries. Redman, at times, pushes his sax into the piano's role, but

Stop-Time and Symmetry, Punch Lines and Pathos

By [BEN RATLIFF](#)

Published: June 22, 2007

Branford Marsalis and Joshua Redman are in good places. By the end of their JVC Jazz Festival concert on Wednesday at Town Hall — Mr. Redman's trio went first, Mr. Marsalis's quartet second — they had put the crowd into happy exhaustion. It had been pummeled with hard stuff, engaged by delicate stuff, and there had been remarkably little glibness going around.

Mr. Redman is thorough as a presenter of his own work, and his music, either by instrumentation or by composition, can be overdetermined. There's often a dutiful concept in the way, whether it's suite form or stretchy funk or pop repertory. Right now he's doing either the simplest or the hardest option, which is a saxophone-bass-drums trio, his song choices scaled back to standards and a few of his own sketches. He's also coming to terms with a fairly serious and longstanding Sonny Rollins obsession, yet it doesn't limit him; it frees him, somehow. With Reuben Rogers on bass and Eric Harland on drums — as they are on some of his new trio-based record, "Back East" (Nonesuch) — we were hearing him do what he does best, without the shiny distractions.

Mr. Redman is a supremely affable and flowing improviser, at times a borderline brilliant one, working in a glow of clarity. As he obeys the authority of his tempos and his phrase patterns — and sometimes those are advanced ones, constantly altering groups of 16th notes through moving harmony — there's a balanced, Bach-like, symmetrical feeling to it all.

This trio supports his obvious interest in tight structure; Mr. Harland fit compressed little essays on rhythm into the stop-time breaks of "Surrey With the Fringe on Top." And the members of the group also got their hands dirty, accessing the language of free jazz in Mr. Redman's "Back East" and "Zarafah." Yet without a piano, and with Mr. Redman's ability to shut down any piece of music before grandiosity set in, the music had a clear, diaphanous feeling.

If Mr. Redman's set was a drawing made of light, Mr. Marsalis's was a heavy oak bookshelf. Seven years now with the same lineup this is a band feeling its permanence. There was the loud, odd-meter drumming of Jeff (Tain) Watts; Eric Revis's rigorous bass playing (like William Parker or Charles Mingus, he went at it percussively, scrabbling the strings, whumping out chords); Joey Calderazzo's obsessively tunneling improvised piano lines, sometimes restricted to the bass clef; and Mr. Marsalis's flexibility, concision and abruptness on tenor and soprano saxophones.

The subtleties of group interaction — for instance, Mr. Calderazzo's intuitive ability to flood the spaces left open by Mr. Marsalis — came hidden in inherently dramatic music. There was heavy gestural humor in Mr. Watts's "Vodville" and the band's japing reorganization of Thelonious Monk's "Rhythm-a-Ning"; and heavy pathos in the ballads "Hope" and "Fate," as well as the cathartic bass solo "And Then He Was Gone."

Inspired trio sound

By Beth Peerless

Article Last Updated: 06/07/2007 01:51:28 AM PDT

The Joshua Redman Trio played to a full house at the Kuumbwa Jazz Center's early show Monday.

The Berkeley-born and raised saxophonist is in the early stages of a tour to support the recent Nonesuch Records release "Back East," his 11th recording as a leader.

With him were bassist Reuben Rogers and drummer Eric Harland. The esteemed small ensemble worked together as equals, giving the audience its all with a set consisting primarily of songs from the new album.

It's fairly rare to have a saxophonist play in a trio setting, as it is fraught with danger due to the openness of the arrangements.

Without a piano or guitar to provide chordal harmonic structure, the melodic linear quality of the saxophone has a lot of space to fill.

The trio was up to the challenge, and the audience enjoyed the interesting conversational style, punctuated by sharp angular transitions and varied dynamics.

While Redman is the marquee name on the group, each artist had ample time in the spotlight.

At times it seemed that Harland was the bandleader because of his prominence in the mix, yet without his varied and musical approach to the drums, I doubt the performance would have held up as well as it did.

Redman and Harland played off each other ferociously, especially on the album's title track "Back East," where they took the music to a fever pitch with clearly enunciated ideas.

Bassist Rogers showed a lot of class as usual on the bandstand, able to maintain a strong, supportive role while the other two blazed, and then step up and solo with articulate and inventive ideas.

Several of the songs featured solo saxophone lead-ins, with Redman interchanging his usual tenor playing with the soprano saxophone on his composition "Zarafah."

Its Eastern-sounding motifs were lifted by the expressive slow rhythms Harland provided. He accented the intro with shimmering percussive bells that gave the song a mystic quality.

Redman's beautifully expressive rendering of the minor blues pop song "Angel Eyes" captured some of the smoky, thick warm tones of, say, Dexter Gordon, or maybe Sonny Rollins, who, as it turns out, is admittedly Redman's biggest influence.

It was evident not only for this song, but for the concept of the album and the trio setting.

The 1957 Rollins trio recording "Way Out West" fired up Redman's imagination, and inspired him to revisit not only the group dynamic, but to rework some of the songs from that recording.

The Washington Post

Washington, DC

MUSIC

December 10, 2005

By Mike Joyce

Saxophonist Joshua Redman's Elastic Band proved even more flexible than usual at Blues Alley on Thursday night by accommodating a request for a pop standard. About the only tune in the band's jazz-funk repertoire that even remotely qualifies as such is Led Zeppelin's "The Crunge." But after confessing he felt "like Ebenezer Scrooge" for initially disappointing the fan, Redman graciously unfurled a soulful tenor sax rendering of "What's New?"

Bracketing that performance was the kind of power-charged, rhythmically crackling music that most listeners came to hear. When "The Crunge" popped up during the opening set, for example, the combination of drummer Jeff Ballard's splintered funk beats, guitarist Mike Moreno's riffing, extended chords and Redman's honking shouts emphasized the song's James Brown-to-Zep connection. When the focus shifted to Sam Yahel, beginning with "Shut Your Mouth" and "Put It in Your Pocket," the keyboardist deftly conjured a wide variety of soul-jazz organ and Fender Rhodes fusion grooves, in addition to underpinning nearly all the tunes with slippery bass lines.

Though Redman briefly played soprano sax, his robust turns on tenor triggered the evening's highlights, including a richly atmospheric take on Sheryl Crow's "Riverwide." The electronic effects used by Redman and Yahel throughout the set were almost always imaginatively deployed, producing colorful textures and whimsical touches. With two sets to perform, the band never built up the kind of momentum it has generated in concerts at larger venues. But judging by the final ovation, no one was complaining. The engagement runs through tomorrow.

San Francisco Chronicle

San Francisco, CA

A band's supreme challenge: Coltrane

MARCH 19, 2005

By David Rubien

Last year, in its debut as the SFJazz Festival Spring Season's flagship band, the SFJazz Collective took on the music of Ornette Coleman. This year, the group's tackling John Coltrane.

Talk about ambition.

And if that weren't enough, the octet has the gumption to put its own compositions alongside Coltrane's.

Wednesday night the Collective opened its seasonlong national tour at the Napa Opera House, tuning up for tonight's gig at the Masonic Center in San Francisco. The music started off a bit stiffly, but by the second set the group was roaring with the kind of chemistry that could truly be deemed collective.

Tenor saxophonist Joshua Redman is reputedly the leader, but he's too nice of a guy for that. Anyway, how does a 36-year-old tell Bobby Hutcherson what to do? Hutcherson is the 64-year-old "elder statesman" of the group and one of the greatest vibraphonists in all of jazz. But he didn't get that way by having a huge ego, so he fits right in.

The apparent lack of egos in the Collective might be cause for concern -- sometimes somebody's got to be the boss -- but talent and commitment, plus tight arrangements by Gil Goldstein, pulled the group through Wednesday.

It doesn't hurt that the Collective has an incredible drummer, Eric Harland. Last year's drummer, Brian Blade, is one of the best in the business, so when he departed there were concerns. Harland may not be as painterly as Blade, but he's more groove-oriented, combining the polyrhythmic chops of Coltrane's drummer Elvin Jones with the breezy pulse of Tony Williams -- an explosive combination.

Harland's not a bad composer, either; he really drove the show home with "Development," a number wrapped in the bright melodic colors of African high-life music. It was a logical follow-up to Coltrane's "Africa," which Harland and Hutcherson on marimba levitated in a percussive frenzy.

The Collective plays sophisticated post-bop, harmonically dense music that came to fruition in the '60s on dozens of records issued on Blue Note and other labels. Coltrane was a master of the form, and it's a good thing the Collective is studying him because however thick with chordal foliage his harmonic garden grew, he knew how to cut a path through it with melody.