

Five-Spot JAZZ Every Night

OCTOBER

01 David Amram

02 Senya RK

03 Bernard Linnette

04 Ed Neumeister

06 Peyton Griffin

07 Tomas Janzon

08 Akemi Yamada

09 Mitch Frohman

10 Teri Roiger

11 Charlie Apicella

13 Sam Margolis

14 Janice Friedman

15 Yaniv Taubenhouse

16 Don Sakulprasertying

17 Sivan Arbel

18 Champion Fulton

20 Silvan Joray

21 Max Bessesen

22 Kay Kostopoulos

23 John Koozin

24 Hyeonseon Baek

25 Eloise Carter

27 Samir Boehringer

28 Trevor Robertson

29 Sam Keedy

30 Suchitra Sebastian

31 Arianna Neikrug

EVERY MONDAY w/ Jam Session

Allison Lee · Daniel Song

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FIVE SPOT JAZZ

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On opening night (Sep. 9) of his four-day residency at The Stone, pianist-composer **Matt Mitchell** could’ve taken many different routes. He chose free improvisation and chose his ensemble-mates wisely: Anna Webber (flute), Erica Dicker (violin), Sara Schoenbeck (bassoon) and Yuhan Su (vibraphone). Then he let them make the rest of the choices. His opening gambit was a low-low, left-hand bass note with a high spread interval in the right, the resultant sound suggestive rather than prescriptive. What ensued was almost an hour of ad-hoc collaboration. Su’s brassy, metallic timbre was often the loudest voice, balanced by the generous gaping spaces she left in the wake of her most strenuous exertions. Dicker was in a percussive frame of mind, employing plucks, whacks, sliding microtonal double-stops and diverse extended techniques to maintain a propulsive tinkling and twittering backdrop. Webber didn’t modify her sound too much—except for a short bout of gobbling and growling—but her flute seemed to be everywhere and nowhere at once. Schoenbeck, when she wasn’t trading bass chores with Mitchell’s plunging left hand, provided the melodic heart of the extended improvisation. Her extemporized themes, rendered in a beautiful, mellow tone, sounded like compositions: singable through-lines that anchored the densely layered soundscape. Although Mitchell’s name topped the billing, and he was privileged to cue the beginning and ending of the music, elsewhere his role remained very much that of an equal contributor to a collective brainstorming session. And what a storm it was! — **Tom Greenland**



Anna Webber, Erica Dicker, Sara Schoenbeck, Yuhan Su @The Stone

Arturo O’Farrill’s Afro Latin Jazz Orchestra, established in 2001 as a continuation of his late father Chico’s Afro-Cuban Jazz Orchestra, currently holds a Tuesday-night residency at The Pocket. The Times Square basement venue was full of friends, fans and family on the first day of September, when O’Farrill & Co. hit the downbeat loudly and proudly with a rousing arrangement of “Havana Blues”, a catchy cha-cha composed by his father and propelled by a rhythm team comprised of Raúl Reyes (bass), Keisel Jiménez (congas), Carlos Maldonado (cowbell, bongos) and Vince Cherico (drums). Even louder and prouder were soloists Iván Renta (tenor) and Seneca Black (trumpet), both possessed of *muy macho* tones that easily cut through the orchestra. “Aláfia” contained tricky rhythmic figures in 5/4 time, based on Brazilian Candomblé traditions. O’Farrill introduced his four-part *Afro Latin Jazz Suite* with a powerful piano soliloquy before launching into a series of movements based on driving 16th notes, 12/8 rhythms, a slow bolero and finally a fiery montuno, his son Zack cameoing on drumkit and Sunhyun Yoo (alto) soloing with quiet charisma. “En La Oscuridad”, another bolero, showcased Renta in a mellower mood, O’Farrill encouraging him with quicksilver raillery and a potent cadenza. After the convoluted machinations of “Mercado En Domingo”, O’Farrill paused to introduce the band before he himself was presented (by yours truly) with the Jazz Journalists Association’s “Large Ensemble of the Year” award. The ensemble then celebrated its well-deserved win with a stirring rendition of “Tico Tico”. (TG)

On May 25, 2026, Walter Theodore “Sonny” Rollins, the last man standing from the iconic “A Great Day in Harlem” photograph, passed into glory. He would have been 96 on Sep. 7. In a three-plus hours long tribute befitting a colossus, the Cathedral of St. John the Divine hosted *Saxophone Colossus: A Celebration of the Life and Music of Sonny Rollins* (Sep. 19), presented by the Jazz Foundation of America in partnership with the Rollins family. It was fittingly monumental, packed with video tributes and footage of Rollins (a highlight: a young Sonny playing “It Don’t Mean a Thing...” at super speed), plus guest speakers and live music. A welcome by SiriusXM’s Mark Ruffin led quickly to a 12-piece ensemble (fronted by Joe Lovano) playing “Alfie’s Theme”. “Oleo”, “Tenor Madness”, “Freedom Suite”, “The Bridge”, “East Broadway Rundown” and “I’m an Old Cowhand” and more, featured small groups led by the likes of saxophonists Camille Thurman, Javon Jackson, Gary Bartz, Chris Potter, Eric Wyatt and George Braith on his unique, custom-made Braithophone. The last piece, a medley of “Global Warming”, “Don’t Stop the Carnival” and “St. Thomas”, with a full complement of musicians (17+, too many to cite here), including pianist Monty Alexander, was a sublimely joyous calypso outro. In this convocation of musicians, jazz dignitaries (such as Archie Shepp in the audience), friends, family and fans, the great cathedral served as the perfect testament to a man of humanity, humility, immense spiritual connection and talent “beyond category.” — **Marilyn Lester**



Joe Lovano @Cathedral of St. John The Divine

In a newly-renovated FiDi tenement, drummer Joe Strasser and his pal Mark Quinn have opened the spanking new club, One Flight Up, which is just that—and it’s a perfect spot for jamming. On a Tuesday (Sep. 8), vocalist-pianist **Alexis Cole** inaugurated her weekly Vocal Jam session, and this first was swingin’ with expectant energy and party vibes. The long, narrow room, dominated by a bar, opens to an intimate street-facing space with a casual speakeasy feel. The jam starts at 10 pm and ends when the vocalists who’ve signed up each have had their turn—’round about midnight or so. There’s plenty of seating for everyone, but the easy feel of the session means people come and go throughout. Cole, a genial, high-energy vocal coach and educator, knows her territory well. She operates jazzvoice.com and co-runs the annual Virginia Beach Vocal Jazz Summit. She kicked off the evening at the piano with “Night and Day” and then threw the jam open, from pros Marianne Solivan, Andrea Wolper, Mary Foster Conklin and Susan Mack, to many who are ones to watch. Musicians also have a place to stretch out, and included A-list pianist Matt Baker, up-and-coming bassist Joe Michaels and stalwart guitarist Mark Capon. Interestingly, some singers came from faraway places (Argentina and Tokyo), only a handful were male, and the material chosen was drawn uniformly from solid Great American Songbook standards. With its relaxed, collegial atmosphere, reasonable cover and drink pricing, Cole’s Tuesday Vocal Jam is bound to be among the hottest gigs in town. (ML)

A rare Monday show at Downtown Music Gallery (Sep. 7) featured Philadelphia-based free improv legend **Jack Wright** (alto, soprano) alongside some rising stars of the NYC avant garde. Now in his mid-80s, but showing no signs of slowing down, Wright proved that his non-linear style of improvising, more Dada than expressionist, fits right in with bandmates six decades his junior. For the first of two unbroken sets, the saxophonist joined T.J. Borden (cello) and James Paul Nadien (drums) in a trio focused on small gestures throughout. Though all three players spent more time on each texture as the set progressed, this development took the form of repeating brief phrases rather than any broadening into longer tones. Borden and Nadien complemented Wright’s slap-tongued stabs and zany multiphonics with their own playful, extended techniques, but the group sound was all counterpoint: three independent voices, blurring distinctions of fore-, middle- and background. The second lineup saw Wright in a duo with Chuck Roth, a guitarist with an equally unique improvising language. This set was a bit more rhythmic than the first (though never explicitly “in time”), with the players matching each other’s restless energy, notably toward the end. Wright played alto at the start and end of each set, switching to soprano in the middle. His vocabulary on the two saxophones was subtly different, often contrasting percussive attacks on alto, with breathy, guttural articulation on soprano—the latter particularly effective in the duo against Roth’s knob-twiddling dynamic contrasts. — **Elijah Shiffer**



Jack Wright @Downtown Music Gallery

Guitarist **Brandon Seabrook** celebrated the release of his album *Utility Modern* at Public Records (Sep. 9) in Gowanus, Brooklyn, performing with the same star-studded lineup heard on the recording: Bill Frisell (guitar), Rashaan Carter (electric bass) and Marcus Gilmore (drums). The opening solo set by **Zeena Parkins** (harp, electronics, percussion)—like Seabrook and his bandmates, a master improviser who defies all considerations of genre—conjured an alien world of shimmery noise and drones. With a whammy bar and ribbon controller, she brought a rare, singing quality to the harp. Seabrook’s quartet then followed, playing most of the repertoire from the new album. His compositions for this group are often metrical and patterned, but hold enough breathing space for all players to turn the grids into tasteful grooves, often with well-placed pauses in intros and interludes. On many pieces, Frisell had the first solo, with the leader improvising over a different form at the end. All these elements came together in “Tapestry and Document”. A very still opening theme led to a beautifully deep duo improv from Frisell and Gilmore, followed by some twisty stop-time, with Seabrook bending and breaking the framework of his written material. “The Guitar Is a Weather Event, Even” showcased the two guitarists trading fours, contrasting Frisell’s eloquent phrases with the leader’s more frenetic attack. Carter and Gilmore were featured on “Star-Crossed Phantasms”, with the latter’s solo juxtaposed against a dramatic buildup from minimalist two-guitar chords to a swirling, full-band conclusion. (ES)

The second night of **John Patitucci’s** Village Vanguard weeklong residency (Sept. 2) unfolded as a conversation with the lineage that helped make his trio with saxophonist Chris Potter and drummer Brian Blade possible. Opening with Charlie Parker’s “Visa”, Patitucci started alone, his bass sensuous and melodic, before settling into a line. Potter’s tenor then roamed while Patitucci and Blade locked together contrapuntally—slinky, volatile, hugely pleasurable. The leader switched to six-string electric for “Thoughts and Dreams” and “Spirit Fall”, the title track from the group’s 2025 release. His delayed notes in the former fell like dripping embers; in the latter he fretted chords and bass lines at once, bringing a Wes Montgomery-like warmth that Blade repeatedly disrupted with huge, off-center accents. The drummer had that rare quality of seeming both grounded and airborne, his pocket deep enough to absorb rhythmic fracture. Back on acoustic, Patitucci’s “Think Fast” turned an East Flatbush stickball memory into joyful street chaos, Blade’s pulse bounding underneath. The lineage sharpened with Wayne Shorter’s “House of Jade”, introduced by Patitucci as a song by a “second father.” Potter’s soprano kept lifting away from the melody and returning, while the bassist’s solo took a turn on the melody as lead voice. They closed with Sonny Rollins’ “Freedom Suite”, returning the pianoless trio to one of its defining rooms. Potter moved back to tenor while his bandmates traded fours, turning homage into friction. The point was not to reenact a tradition but to show how much freedom still lives inside it. — **Ariella Stok**



John Patitucci @Village Vanguard

At the community-minded Record Shop in Red Hook, Brooklyn (Sep. 1), the amenities included different types of free vegan jerky of mysterious provenance: one good, one bad, a kind of jerky roulette. The music followed a similar principle of surprise, with a bill that expanded into five configurations. **Kevin Murray**, drummer and co-founder of the pinball museum next door, opened alone on snare drum. His set was monastic but hardly serene. He pressed the drum head while striking it, karate-chopped it, scraped circles with a stick and sent one stick flying—then deliberately sent another after it, converting accident into form. At one point the lights flickered, as if his concentrated intensity had reached the wiring. **Vid Linger** followed with noise guitar, pausing his set to reject one pedal setting as “too Mark Morgan.” Then **Teté Leguía’s** bowed electric bass skittered against **James McKain’s** baritone saxophone blurts in a duo that returned for a 45-second blowout. The night’s longest and richest set belonged to **Sandy Ewen** with Gian Pérez and Nic Rose. Ewen worked her guitar with rods, screws, a sawtooth blade and other bits of metal arranged like surgical instruments, producing scrapes, detonations and unstable magnetic hums. Pérez made his guitar throb bassward; Rose eventually moved from upright piano to two toy pianos, whose chiming opened an unexpected register. Their scurrying interference briefly settled into something almost delicate. The closing quartet—Leguía, McKain, Murray and Rose—returned Murray’s snare to the fray, less inward now, but newly social, another noise among noises. (AS)

WHAT’S NEWS

Last month, at Julien’s Auctions’ Jazz Legends sale, the original artwork of **Dave Brubeck’s** 1959 *Time Out* album on Columbia Records (directly from the Estate of Dave Brubeck and signed by artist S. Neil Fujita) sold for \$576K! The sale set a new auction record for original album cover artwork previously held by David Bowie’s *Alladin Sane*, and prior to that, Led Zeppelin’s self-titled debut album. Fujita was hired by Columbia Records in 1954 and led the label’s design department, creating nearly 50 album covers during his career, including for releases by Brubeck, Miles Davis and Charles Mingus. His iconic *Time Out* cover art is a mid-century modern abstract geometric design rendered in watercolor, gouache and mixed media on board. For more info visit davebrubeck.com.

Eleven semi-finalists for the 2026 **Herbie Hancock Institute’s** International Jazz Vocals Competition have been announced. The internationally-represented group of vocalists includes Anouk Chémia (Paris, France), Lucy-Anne Daniels (Leeds, UK), Courteney Hooper (Adelaide, Australia), Kristin Lash (Bratislava, Slovakia), Zhenxuan “Jimmy” Lin (Guangzhou, China) and Malou Oheix (Nantes, France) in addition to Americans Joie Bianco (Staten Island, New York), Kate Kortum (Houston, TX), Georgia Heers (Greenville, SC), Ashley Pezzotti (Miami, FL) and Tawanda Suessbrich-Joaquim (Las Cruces, NM). Judges include Dee Dee Bridgewater, Patti Austin, Roberta Gambarini, Gretchen Parlato and Gregory Porter. In addition to the notoriety, the top-three selected vocalists will be awarded \$100K, \$25K and \$10K, for highest honors down, respectively. The competition takes place at Fondation Louis Vuitton in Paris (Oct. 10-11). After winners are announced, an all-star gala concert will include music director John Beasley with Hancock, Ambrose Akinmusire, Monty Alexander, Terri Lyne Carrington, Nils Landgren, John Patitucci, Danilo Pérez, Tineke Postma and Till Brönner. For more info and to view livestream visit hancockinstitute.org.

More good news for jazz vocalists (and jazz vocal fans): two new jam sessions have recently sprouted in the Big Apple: **Jazzcultural’s** Vocal Jam in the Café, hosted by Noa Chait, is held on Sundays (2 pm); at **One Flight Up** Alexis Cole hosts a Vocal Jam Session (co-presented by JazzVoice.com and Virginia Beach Vocal Jazz Summit) on Tuesdays (10 pm). For more info visit jazzcultural.com and oneflightupjazz.com.

The seventh annual **Jazz Congress** conference returns to NYC (Jan. 13-14, 2027) at Jazz at Lincoln Center. As with each year, attendees include presenters, artists, managers, agents, publicists, journalists, radio programmers and other jazz professionals. Among the series of workshops, panels, networking opportunities and performances, early highlights recently revealed include a percussionist panel led by JALC Artistic Excellence Award recipient Weedie Braimah, plus a closing concert by the all-star Jazz Legacy Fellowship recipients (for many in attendance at last January’s Jazz Legacy Fellowship concert, it still proves to be one of 2026’s most memorable live shows). Special early-bird registration for discounted single-day and two-day passes go through Nov. 17 (attention students: be sure to ask for student discounts!). To register and for more info visit jazzcongress.org.

“The Universal Language of Jazz: America’s Pioneer Artform Across Disciplines” will feature Lincoln Center Visionary Artist and Jazz at Lincoln Center Artistic Director **Wynton Marsalis**, along with Peter Gelb, General Manager of The Metropolitan Opera. The free event (Oct. 27) will take place at The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. Co-presented by Lincoln Center, The Metropolitan Opera and The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, the panel will be discussing the influence, collaborations and cultural legacy of jazz across genres. For more info visit lincolncenter.org.

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