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The Hot Club of Baltimore



PHOTO COURTESY OF MICHAEL JOSEPH HARRIS

...Michael Joseph Harris, whom many will know through his band Bossalingo...

Baltimore Discovers the Spirit of Django

A cold start to February’s Monday night Gypsy Jazz Jam didn’t prevent Baltimore’s Djangophiles from flocking to Liam Flynn’s Ale House, an atmospheric, welcoming, bare-bones pub on W. North Avenue, Baltimore. For nearly a year, under the leadership of guitarist Michael Joseph Harris, whom many will know through his band Bossalingo, the Monday night jam has been picking up accolades and winning over fans. *City Paper* recently declared the jam to be Best Monday Night in Baltimore.

Musicians from as far away as Philadelphia and Frederick have been attending to explore and perform the spirited blend of Parisian musette and New Orleans jazz created by Belgian guitarist Django Reinhardt and his Hot Club in the 1930s. His Gypsy jazz provides the soundtrack to our imagining of 1930s-40’s Paris and has been enjoying a worldwide resurgence for some twenty years among both musicians and listeners.

Harris and his core musicians Sami Arefin (guitar), Nora Leighton (guitar), and Ed Hrybyk (bass), members of the band UltraFaux, turn up most weeks. There’s no predicting who else might play as the jam is organic and democratic, offering a warm invitation to musicians of all levels to share their love of the style and enrich the Django community. Guitarists Tom Mitchell, Joe Friedman and clarinetist Seth Kibel are among the musicians who have previ-

ously sat in. On this particular night a blend of accordion, violin, harmonica and four guitars kicked off the jam.

Swinging into action in the middle of the room, seated in the round and soloing in rotation, the musicians started with the jazz standard “Coquette.” Harris’s opening solo embellished the song with the arpeggios and flourishes that typify the Django style. Arefin’s guitar picked up the theme, building the rhythmic energy with a more chordal solo before handing off to the liquid Wes Montgomery-style runs of Jim Tisdall. Ed Kaitz (harmonica), Art Cohen (accordion) and Lloyd Lachow (violin) added to the Parisian atmosphere with their accomplished playing throughout the evening.

Over a twenty-five-year career Reinhardt recorded some thousand sides of original compositions and jazz interpretations. So Harris has plenty of material to choose from and included such Hot Club classics as “Swing 42,” “Nuages,” and a fantastically swinging “Avalon,” on which he displayed a dizzying virtuosity in his single-note lines. He was also quick to pick up on other suggestions, including an improvised “Summertime,” after overhearing the melody on accordion and fiddle.

As the evening heated up, musicians came and went, and the circle expanded to a dozen instruments, including bass, mandolin, dobro, flute and horns. While some musicians were content to work

(continued on page 2)

The Baltimore Jazz Alliance is a 501(c)(3) tax exempt organization.

The Baltimore Jazz Alliance (BJA) is a grass-roots organization of jazz aficionados, musicians and venues dedicated to enhancing and promoting jazz in Baltimore and the surrounding areas. New members sharing this passion are always welcome as the BJA continues its efforts to build a stronger and better networked jazz scene. Together we can help this music thrive in the region and reward listeners and musicians alike.

BJA Priorities

- To develop new audiences for jazz
- To strengthen communication within the jazz community
- To improve media relations on behalf of the jazz community
- To bring greater visibility to the entire array of jazz offerings in the Baltimore region
- To provide greater access to performance opportunities for Baltimore-area jazz musicians

Visit www.baltimorejazz.com for information about our accomplishments and future goals.

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(continued from front page)

The Hot Club of Baltimore



L to R: Jim Tisdall (electric guitar)
Sami Arefin (guitar)
Michael Joseph Harris (guitar)
Nora Leighton (guitar)
Tomasz Smok (guitar)
Art Cohen (accordion)
Foreground: Ed Kaitz (harmonica)

PHOTO CREDIT: KEN AVIS

...under the leadership of guitarist Michael Joseph Harris...the Monday night jam has been picking up accolades and winning over fans.

through the changes and explore new tunes, there were also stunning contributions, notably the bravura cascading solo by saxophonist Daniel Wallace and the tasteful melodic inventions of Brad Gunson on trombone.

The Ale House soon resembled a bistro as the audience grew. A table of beaming women from France and Quebec listened and chatted. Before the end of the night they would find themselves in an impromptu and impressive dance display with the sharply dressed Mark Luce, a Monday night regular, supporter, and bon vivant, who provided a delicious potluck dish to fuel the event.

Drop by Liam Flynn's Ale House for the Monday night Django Jam, whether you're a musician, a music lover or simply curious. It's a delight to hear such great music played so well and in such a relaxed, spontaneous and generous

way. We sometimes forget that jazz was first and foremost a people's music meant for dancing and socializing. One evening at the jam demonstrates why jazz has been so irresistible to listeners all over the world. Give yourself a treat, and bring your bagpipes if you must!

The Gypsy Jazz Jam takes place every Monday night starting at 8pm at Liam Flynn's Ale House, 22 W. North Avenue, Baltimore. No cover.

Michael Joseph Harris and Sami Arefin also perform Wednesday nights at WC Harlan's at 400 West 23rd Street.

UltraFaux is currently running a Kickstarter campaign to fund a CD of original compositions in the style of Django Reinhardt; for details, visit <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/656170063/ultrafauxs-original-gypsy-jazz-recording-session-a>

— KEN AVIS

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Night Songs: The Music of Film Noir

“Smoky night clubs, rain-slicked streets, world-weary detectives, and dangerous dames.” Those are the images conjured up by movies in the film-noir tradition, according to the program notes for “Night Songs,” presented by Mark Osteen and his Cold Spring Jazz Quartet at Germano’s Cabaret on January 24th. Osteen, professor of English at Loyola University and author of *Nightmare Alley: Film Noir and the American Dream*, brought together his scholarly interests and his avocation as a jazz musician for this multi-media program of jazz tunes from film noir of the 1940s and ‘50s—complete with a screen and projector to show clips from the films, accompanied by Osteen’s lively narration.

Film noir’s stories are based on the hard-boiled school of crime fiction that arose in the United States during the Great Depression. Characters are worldly, cynical, and of ambiguous morality. Urban settings—Los Angeles, San Francisco, New York, and Chicago, in particular—predominate, and scenes often take place in shadowy bars, lounges, and nightclubs.

Given the dark themes of existential isolation, anxiety, futility, and violence common in film noir, one might imagine that it was a dreary evening at Germano’s. But the mood was instead one of amused nostalgia, and there were no dull moments among the showing of film segments, the explanatory comments, and the band’s renditions of the tunes.

As Osteen noted, only rarely were these tunes newly composed for the films; instead, they were drawn from the repertoire of the Great American Songbook. The beguiling lilt of a swing tune would evoke a sophisticated milieu. Slow, elegiac orchestral ballads would convey the hopelessness of a forbidden relationship. The sultry moan of a jazz saxophone would echo the erotic undertones of a tête-à-tête between a jaded detective and an alluring but untrustworthy femme fatale—but mostly in the later films.

Osteen’s narration rambled through a good deal of intriguing trivia. For example, Cole Porter said that “Laura,” written for the 1944 film of the same name, was the song he most wished he had written. David Raksin is said to have composed the piece the week that his wife left him. An alternate tune that had been considered for the film was “Sophisticated Lady.” The band played both tunes, and the audience agreed that “Laura” was the right choice. The lyrics of “Body and Soul” (from from the eponymous 1947 film) were written by three different people, and the song was banned from the radio for nearly a year after its debut in 1930, because the lyrics were considered too racy. “Stella by Starlight” also had lyrics composed after it was first heard in the 1944 film *The Uninvited*. In the film, star Ray Milland creates this wistful ballad on the piano for the starry-eyed young Stella, the object of his affections.



PHOTO COURTESY OF MARK OSTEEN

L to R: Anthony Villa, Greg Mack, Gary Kerner and Mark Osteen

Other tunes included “I’ll Remember April” (from the 1944 film *Phantom Lady*); “I Hear a Rhapsody,” from the 1952 film *Clash by Night*; and “Harlem Nocturne,” by Earl Hagen, who wrote a number of tunes for noir films and noirish television detective dramas such as *Mod Squad*. The band also paid homage to actress and film director Ida Lupino by showing a clip of her world-weary, gravelly-voiced rendition of “One for My Baby” (from the 1948 film *Road House*) and then playing the 1964 Carla Bley composition, “Ida Lupino.” The program wrapped up with the themes from television detective shows of the 1950s that were heavily indebted to film noir: *Mr. Lucky* and *Peter Gunn*.

Although the band gave certain songs a different feel from how they were heard in the films, they never failed to capture the essence of the genre. Even the jaunty swing classic “Tangerine” (heard in the background of the 1944 murder thriller *Double Indemnity*) expresses the cynicism of the genre, as the lyrics describe a self-absorbed femme fatale. Osteen’s vocals and saxophone perfectly conveyed the worldliness and sophistication, with many impressive embellishments and some fresh and engaging treatment of the melodies, and with solid back-up from the band. Anthony Villa on piano and Gary Kerner on bass each played some notable solos, and Greg Mack created several smart and spicy moments on the drums. All in all, it was a memorable and enjoyable evening.

— LIZ FIXSEN

An Interview with Donny McCaslin



For its fourth concert of the 2013-14 season, the Baltimore Chamber Jazz Society will present the Donny McCaslin Group on Sunday, March 9th, at 5 pm at Towson University's Fine Arts Center. (See page five for concert details).

During his third year at Berklee College of Music, McCaslin began four years of touring with Gary Burton. He has also played with Gil Evans, Danilo Perez, John Medeski, Uri Caine and Dave Douglas. In the early '90s McCaslin replaced Michael Brecker in Steps Ahead, and since 1998 he has made ten albums as a leader. A noted composer, McCaslin received a New Work grant from Chamber Music America in 2007.

Bob Jacobson interviewed McCaslin in December, as he was about to fly to Boston for a concert at New England Conservatory.

BJ: Next week you're leaving for Japan. Can you tell us more about that?

DM: I'll be playing four nights at the Blue Note in Tokyo with Maria Schneider's Jazz Orchestra. I played there with her last year. It was her first time in Japan as a bandleader. The audience was clapping after the intros to songs and crying. It's fun, not traditional. She's very influenced by Bob Brookmeyer and Gil Evans. There's lots of Americana in her writing, like the music of Aaron Copland. The orchestra has amazing soloists. Besides taking solos myself, I just really enjoy hearing others in the band.

BJ: What are your feelings about being voted onto the tenor and soprano sax lists of DownBeat's readers' and critics' polls?

DM: Well, I have a bigger news item. I was nominated for a Grammy for Best Instrumental Jazz Solo, for the song "Stadium Jazz" on my newest record. (About the *DownBeat* polls) I remember glancing at it. I'm honored to be recognized by both readers and critics, and to be placed among others I'm inspired by and who I really respect.

BJ: Who will be in the rhythm section you're bringing March 9th?
DM: It'll be Kevin Hayes on piano, Scott Colley on bass and Johnathan Blake, the violinist's son, from Philadelphia, on drums, so it'll be really fun. I'm thrilled to be bringing this group of great players. They all interact well and really listen to each other.

BJ: Do you know what your program will be at this point?

DM: We'll be doing some of my acoustic stuff, especially from my album *Declaration*, and some things I'm writing now for this group. I'm looking for Great American Songbook tunes, more than usual, some mellower, ballad-y material. Maybe some Monk or Andrew Hill. I have a deep love for Duke Ellington, Dexter Gordon, Lester Young and Stan Getz, among others, so I'll be using this concert to explore that side of my musical DNA.

BJ: I know you've played here before. Are there any impressions you'd like to share of Baltimore?

DM: Yeah, I've played at An Die Musik with Alan Blackman, and almost twenty years ago at Blues Alley when it was in Baltimore, and did a week there with Gary Burton. I love it. It's beautiful. The audience is very attentive and rootsy, with a sense of the blues that really resonates with me.



On January 9th, BJA's Jazz for Kids band performed at Ridge Ruxton, a public school for disabled students in Towson. Following the concert, the kids were encouraged to play the instruments and try scatting.

From left: Bob Jacobson (sax), George Spicka (keyboard), Rhonda Robinson (flute and vocal), Phil Ravita (bass) and Robert Shahid (drums)

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The Baltimore Chamber Jazz Society is a non profit organization and is supported by a grant from the Maryland State Arts Council, an agency dedicated to cultivating a vibrant cultural community where the arts thrive.

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Warren Wolf, Christian McBride and Friends



PHOTO CREDIT: BASEMINT

L to R: Alex Brown, Warren Wolf, Christian McBride, Billy Williams

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On January 5th at An die Musik, vibraphonist Warren Wolf played two sold-out sets with a quartet of heavy-duty jazz jedi including bassist Christian McBride, drummer Billy Williams, and pianist Alex Brown. D.C. vocalist Akua Allrich sang two numbers with the band, and as a surprise, Cyrus Chestnut, who was in the audience, was invited up to the stage to sit in on piano for a couple of tunes, to the great delight of the crowd.

Baltimore jazz fans are fortunate to have a number of native sons (and daughters) who have become big names in the world of jazz. Wolf, a multi-instrumentalist best known for his work on vibes, is one of them, as is Chestnut. Young Brown hails from Columbia, Maryland, although he is now based mainly in New York City. While all the band members have prodigious reputations of their own, they have frequently performed together. In fact, Allrich, Brown, and Williams just last November performed with Wolf on tour in Doha, Qatar.

So it is no surprise that the band members grooved together effortlessly and seamlessly, sparkling with energy and joie de vivre. Wolf and McBride especially dazzled the attendees with their virtuosity: audience members audibly gasped at the blurring velocity of Wolf's mallets on the vibes, and in my own row of seats, I heard periodic exclamations of admiration during McBride's fluid and spirited solos. Brown and Williams did their share to impress; I especially noted Brown's attentive and sophisticated comping behind McBride's solos.

The program included a few of Wolf's originals: "Gang-Gang," written for his wife and appearing on Christian McBride's album, *Inside Straight* (also the name of the band in which Wolf is a member), and "Wolfgang," appearing on Wolf's 2013 album of the same name. The ever-enchanting Allrich gave a pitch-perfect and richly

emotional rendition of the Billy Strayhorn standard "Lush Life," which has to be one of the most depressing jazz songs ever written. She infused the song with beauty while glossing over none of its darkness. In the second set, she sang "The Masquerade is Over." Both songs are featured on her own albums.

The rest of the tunes were standards, such as Freddie Hubbard's "Theme for Kareem," Bud Powell's "Bouncing with Bud," Dizzy Gillespie's "Bebop," and Duke Ellington's "It Don't Mean a Thing." This seems to be Wolf's favorite terrain in the realm of jazz. Although his extensive background in classical music periodically emerges in his tunes and improvisations, Wolf, as Nate Chinen writes in a 2013 *New York Times* review, "has both feet planted on a bedrock of midcentury modern jazz." Ben Ratliff, in a 2011 *NYT* review, notes that Wolf "plays music that doesn't argue with the most popular and usable parts of jazz's past."

Wolf will soon debut a new jazz-fusion band that features vocals. As he embarks on this new endeavor, I hope that he will continue to explore new terrain, perhaps giving an ear to other local giants such as Alan Blackman, who has been creating exciting jazz interpretations of both classical and pop pieces. With his breathtaking technical mastery, any new directions that Wolf takes will be eagerly followed by his Baltimore admirers—and in the world beyond.

— LIZ FIXSEN

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[http://www.kickstarter.com/projects/jonathanbevers/tell-me-more-
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Those wishing to apply for membership in the band, should contact Anthony Villa at avilla@loyola.edu.

The life blood of the band is new music by Baltimore musicians. Composers and arrangers are enthusiastically encouraged to email pdfs and mp3s of the big band chart(s) to Villa for consideration for this year's concerts. The earlier, the better!

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member notes

Membership development

Committee members Trish Hennessey, Liz Fixsen and Ian Rashkin have teamed up to develop and coordinate BJA membership and involvement.

Congratulations

Congratulations to Ben Redwine, who received his Doctor of Musical Arts degree in January from Catholic University, with a minor in Latin American music history.

If you have news you would like share with our readers, please send to the editor at: jazzpalette@gmail.com

member discounts

An die Musik offers 10% discount for BJA members for music purchases at the An die Musik record store.

Chamber Jazz Society of Baltimore is now offering BJA Members a \$2 discount off the general admission price. Just indicate your affiliation when ordering tickets.

Eubie Live! at the Eubie Blake Cultural Center at 847 N. Howard Street offers a discount to BJA members on rentals of its performance and events spaces.

Jazzway 6004 offers BJA Members a \$5 discount on performances at their venue.



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* **NOTE:** As these events may be subject to change, it's always a good idea to **CALL AHEAD** for **CONFIRMATION**.

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New Haven Lounge – Sunday night jam sessions hosted by The Tom Reyes Trio. 1552 Havenwood Road. 4-8 pm. 410-366-7416

MONDAYS

Liam Flynn's Ale House – Monday night jam sessions hosted by Hot Club of Baltimore, mostly Django Reinhardt music, 1930s-40s and standards. 22 W. North Avenue. 8-midnight. Call Michael Harris for more information at 443-884-2123.

TUESDAYS

Trade Winds Restaurant at Best Western Plus – Tuesday night Jazz musicians welcome to sit in at straight-ahead jam sessions. 5625 O'Donnell Street. 6-9 pm. 410-633-9500

Randallstown CC – Open Jazz Jam Sessions/Book and Poetry Readings every Tuesday at 5:30-8 pm. Hosted by Derrick Amin. 3505 Resource Drive, Randallstown. Musicians and vocalists are welcome. Sponsored by BJA. 410-887-0698

WEDNESDAYS

Phaze 10 – Wednesday night jam sessions at Phaze 10 hosted by April Sampe and The Next Level Band. 885 N. Howard Street. 8-midnight. 410-462-2010

49 West Café – FIRST and THIRD Wednesdays. "Starr's Jazz Jam" at 49 West Street, Annapolis. Hosted by John Starr and house band. Musicians and singers very welcome! Delicious and reasonably priced food and drink available! \$10 cover. 7-10 pm. Reservations 410-626-9796

THURSDAYS

The Place Lounge – "Tho' Down Thursdays" jam sessions hosted by Jesse L. Powers, Jr. 315 W. Franklin Street. Musicians and vocalists are welcome. 7-10 pm. 410-547-2722

If you know of local jam sessions, please share the information with our readers by emailing the details to the editor at: jazzpalette@gmail.com

If any of the jazz jam sessions listed are discontinued please inform the editor at: jazzpalette@gmail.com

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runs

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"Static" by Diane Spencer

