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Singer Tamar Korn and Jerron "Blindboy" Paxton joined Terry Waldo's Gotham City Band on stage at The Players Club in NYC on May 3. Photo by Lynn Redmile.

New York's Hot Jazz Festival

Old Tunes, Young Turks

A sold-out crowd that included such music world luminaries as George Wein and Gary Giddins and 130-plus top tier musicians filled a 19th century Gramercy Park mansion on May 3 for a 14-hour marathon of traditional and swing era jazz at the 3rd annual New York Hot Jazz Festival. *Jersey Jazz's* Lynn Redmile was there to take in the scene and you can read her report and see more photos beginning on page 26.

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See Page 13

3rd Annual Hot Jazz Festival Sizzles In New York

Story and photos by Lynn Redmile

It was everything jazz should be — wild, hot (in more ways than one!), and exhilarating. I arrived at noon and, by the time I left at 12:45 AM, I had watched sixteen bands, ten solo pianists, and the start of an amazing jam session. Euphorically exhausted, I'm still marveling at how far this event has come in only two years, thanks to the efforts of Director Michael "Misha" Katsobashvili, with co-producers Bria Skonberg and Patrick Soluri.

As with last year, the third edition of the New York Hot Jazz Festival was held at the beautiful Player's, a private social club in New York City's Gramercy Park neighborhood. With two stages on two levels, a Steinway Lounge showcasing piano soloists, and the lower level featuring screenings of hot jazz films, fans could choose to move to different rooms between song/set breaks. Completely sold out, with over a thousand fans and musicians attending, and with many of the musicians under thirty, it's clear to see that hot jazz is in no danger of dying out.

My first stop was the Steinway Lounge, for the keyboard talents of Rob Reich. His primary instrument is accordion, but his early start and many years of piano studies shines through! After a couple of pieces, I crossed the lobby to the ballroom, where Terry Waldo's Gotham City Band was performing, comprising Dan Levinson (clarinet), Bria Skonberg (trumpet), John Gill (banjo), Jim Fryer (trombone), Brian Nalepka (bass) and Rob Garcia (drums). Terry opened with "Maple Leaf Rag" followed by Fats Waller's "Everything's Alright By Me" with guests Jerron "Blind Boy" Paxton (banjo and vocals) and Tamar Korn (vocals). Their rendition of "Sugar Blues" was particularly sweet. Upstairs in the Library, Nikki

Parrot's trio performed, with Nikki (bass), Vinny Raniolo (guitar) and Warren Vaché (cornet). "You'd Be So Nice To Come Home To" was beautifully done, as was "Stardust." Rebecca Kilgore, in town from Portland Oregon (thanks to Arbors Records), was enjoying their performance when Nikki invited her to duet on "When I Grow Too Old To Dream" — superb!

In the Steinway Lounge, I caught Mark Shane playing the beautiful "Guess Who's In Town" by Ethel Waters

and James P. Johnson, a pioneer of the stride style of piano playing.

In the Ballroom, the EarRegulars took the stage, with Jon-Erik Kellso (Puje trumpet), Matt Munisteri (guitar), Pat O'Leary (bass) and Scott Robinson (reeds). After "Back in Your Own Backyard," they presented an original, "Out of the Gate," which is on their new album. Warren Vaché joined

them for "On The Alamo." In the Steinway Lounge, Terry Waldo was tearing it up, to the joy of everyone listening. And upstairs in the Library, a group of "youngsters" was ably demonstrating they have what it takes. Rhythm Future Quartet, led by violinist Jason Anick, featured Finnish lead guitarist Olli Soikkeli, Vinny Raniolo (guitar) and Greg Loughman (bass). Each virtuosos, their Django-inspired gypsy jazz was exquisitely and passionately performed, with each artist clearly enjoying the music as much as their delighted audience. Catch them on tour!

Dan Levinson's Bix Millennium All-Stars took to the Ballroom stage, with Dan on reeds, Jon-Erik Kellso (Puje trumpet), Charlie Caranicas (cornet), Brian Nalepka (bass), Mark Shane (piano) and Kevin Dorn (drums). "Big Boy" was followed by "Davenport Blues" — such a treat. Jon Weber gave the Steinway a fabulous workout, selecting random keys for his stride pieces by blindly plucking a piano string, and Margi Gianquinto's vocals were a lovely addition. Gypsy jazz guitarist Stéphane Wrembel's band took to the Library stage, with Tim Clements (guitar), David Gastine (guitar and vocals), Sebastien Chaumont of Nice (saxophone), Kells Nollenberger (bass) and David Langlois (washboard). Their beautiful performance of Django Reinhardt's "Nuages" was somehow followed by "Country Roads" which the audience joined in singing. As Will Friedwald said, "It's still country music, just a different country!"



Vocalist Hilary Gardner performed with Evan Christopher's Clarinet Road.

Andy Farber's After Midnight Orchestra had their turn in the Ballroom, with Andy (sax), Kurt Bacher (sax), Jay Brandford (sax), Mark Gross (sax), Dan Block (sax), Bill Easley (sax), Robert Edwards (trombone), Wayne Goodman (trombone), Art Baron (trombone), James Chirillo (guitar), James Zollar (trumpet), Alphonso Horne (trumpet), Greg Gisbert (trumpet), Bruce Harris (trumpet), Adam Birnbaum (piano), Jennifer Vincent (bass), Alvester Garnett (drums) and Rebecca Kilgore (vocals). A jam-packed stage! "The Bombers," Andy's composition, was exciting, and Rebecca's exquisite voice delighted everyone. Back in the Steinway Lounge, Bill Charlap had an enthusiastic audience, and upstairs Mona's Hot Four kept the Library swinging, with Dennis Lichtman (clarinet), Rob Reich (accordion), Dalton Ridenhour (piano), Nick Russo (guitar/banjo), Jared Engel (bass), and Martina DaSilva and Kate Davis on vocals. Martina's haunting "I've Got It Bad and That Ain't Good," and their rendition of "If I Had You" were simply wonderful.

As the afternoon session wound down, and the mansion emptied out to prepare for the evening program, I couldn't help but think how lucky we are to have this music in our lives.

Jerron "BlindBoy" Paxton kicked off the evening festivities in the Steinway Lounge, followed by Dalton Ridenhour "striding"

fabulously, and clarinetist Evan Christopher's Clarinet Road took over the Ballroom. In town from New Orleans, Evan was joined by James Chirillo (guitar), Ehud Asherie (piano), Neal Caine (bass) and Hilary Gardner (vocals). Following Tommy Ladnier's "Mojo Blues," Hilary sang a rare Duke Ellington piece, "Azalea," which seemed made for her. I loved "China Boy." On the Library stage, Riley Mulherker's and Alphonso Horne's Gotham Kings wowed the crowd with indefatigable energy — especially that of tap dancer Michela Marino Lerman. With Riley and Alphonso on trumpets, Patrick Bartley (clarinet), Jeffery Miller (trombone), Chris Pattishall (piano), Ibanda Ruhumbika (tuba) and Sammy Miller (drums), they kicked it up a notch when Michael Mwenso joined on vocals, coaxing out "Squeeze Me" and transitioning almost seamlessly into "Truckin'."

The Ballroom was the stage for trumpeter/vocalist Bria Skonberg & Her Jazz Compatriots, comprising Adrian Cunningham (reeds), Dalton Ridenhour (piano), Sean Cronin (bass) and Darrian Douglas (drums). "Cornet Chop Suey" set the mood, and Bria's vocals on Valaida Snow's "High Hat, Trumpet & Rhythm" elevated it. Upstairs, the Library stage held banjoist Eddy Davis's New Orleans Jazz Band, with Simon Wettenhall (trumpet), Conal Fowkes (piano), Debbie Kennedy (bass) and John Gill (drums). Chris Pattishall



"When I Grow Too Old To Dream" — Nicki Parrott is joined by Rebecca Kilgore for a vocal duet in The Players Club Library.



The EarRegulars – Pat O'Leary, Jon-Erik Kellso, Matt Munisteri and Scott Robinson, with special guest (2nd from left) Warren Vaché.



Rhythm Future Quartet with hot gypsy jazz: Jason Anick, Olli Soikkeli, Vinny Raniolo and Greg Loughman.

continued on page 28

HOT JAZZ FESTIVAL

continued from page 27

held court in the Steinway Lounge — a treat to hear “Alligator Crawl” and the dancers loved him too.

Wycliffe Gordon & Friends, with Adrian Cunningham (reeds), Ehud Asherie (piano), Jennifer Vincent (bass), Alvin Atkinson Jr. (drums) owned the Ballroom stage with “Honeysuckle Rose,” and when Brianna Thomas joined on vocals with “Mood Indigo,” everyone wanted more. Conal Fowkes had a surprise treat for us in the Steinway Lounge, inviting his friend actor Danny Aiello to croon a couple of songs for us. And in the Library, The Grand Street Stompers, led by Gordon Au (trumpet) and comprising Dennis Lichtman (clarinet), Jim Fryer (trombone), Nick Russo (guitar/banjo), Andrew Hall (bass) and Kevin Dorn (drums) entertained with well-known and original compositions. Crowd favorites Molly Ryan and Tamar Korn were in fine form with “Blue Skies.”

Ehud Asherie closed out the Steinway Lounge session, and Glenn Crytzer’s Savoy Seven was the final Library act, performing standards and some of Glenn’s own compositions. With Glenn on guitar/vocals, he was joined by Dan Levinson (sax), Dennis Lichtman (clarinet), Gordon Au (trumpet), Jesse Gelber (piano), Andrew Hall (bass) and Kevin Dorn (drums). Still-energetic fans crowded the Ballroom for the Hot Sardines with brand new mom “Miz Elizabeth” Bougerol on vocals/washboard, Evan Palazzo (piano), Jason Prover (trumpet), Nick Myers (reeds), Mike Sailors (cornet), Evan Crane (bass), Alex Raderman (drums) and “Fast Eddy” Francisco on taps. Festival favorites (they’ve appeared each year), their unique take on well-loved standards honors the inspiration of artists before them, and brings a new audience to this thing called jazz.

David Ostwald (tuba) and cohorts Gordon Au and Dalton Ridenhour started the Hot Jazz Jam Session, and were soon joined by Jason Prover, Mike Sailors, Alex Raderman, “Blindboy” Paxton, Margi Gianquinto and Tamar Korn, to the delight of dancers and jazz fans. I wish I could’ve stayed to the end of that!

Don’t miss the next one!
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at www.nyhotjazzfest.com.



James Chirillo, Neal Caine and Evan Christopher.



Photos by Lynn Redmile

Hot Sardines – “Fast Eddy” Francisco on taps, with Evan Palazzo and “Miz Elizabeth” Bougerol.



Django-styled Gypsy jazz with David Gastine, Kells Nollenberger, Stéphane Wrembel and Tim Clements.

