



B.B. King

**Reds, Whites and Blues:** Guitar icon B.B. King has released a line of signature wines. King's Signature Collection, which has been sourced from Spain, pays tribute to his all-star "Guitar Legends" concert series in Seville in 1991. The wines first debuted in Memphis and Nashville, Tenn., and will be available throughout the United States and in King's namesake clubs.

**Digging Driggs:** A photo archive assembled by Columbia Records producer and writer Frank Driggs has been donated to Jazz at Lincoln Center. Driggs, who died in September 2011, left behind eight filing cabinets in his Greenwich Village home containing more than 78,000 photographs, including 1,545 images of Duke Ellington, 1,083 shots of Louis Armstrong and 692 pictures of Benny Goodman.



UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova (left) with Wayne Shorter and Herbie Hancock during the International Jazz Day opening ceremony in Istanbul, Turkey

# Jazzahead! Grows to Global Proportions

**THE NORTHERN GERMAN CITY OF BREMEN** was once known as the home of Beck's beer and the site of a historic 1973 Keith Jarrett live recording. Now, it's internationally known in jazz circles as the home base of jazzahead!, which took place April 25–28 at the Messe Conference Centre. The self-described "TradeShowCaseFestival," founded in 2006 by artistic directors Peter Schulze and Ulrich Beckerhoff, celebrated eight years of jazz advocacy this year.

"We can proudly say that Bremen is now part of the map of jazz," said Hans Peter Schneider, managing director of the Messe Conference Centre.

Jazzahead! has been growing by the year; what began as an attempt to promote German jazz talent has gone global. Schulze, the former artistic director of the Berlin Jazz Festival, explained that while there have been jazz conventions in Europe previously, the distinction with jazzahead! is its international eye.

"Our observation is that, in times of digital communication, meeting face-to-face

fosters a different energy among all participants," he said. "We feel the strong need of people to connect."

The event was initially a showcase of talent and a symposium on various topics. Since its inception, jazzahead! has grown from 90 exhibitors and 800 industry professionals to nearly 600 exhibitors and 2,500 professionals, including more than 200 festival directors.

"We observed that at other music conventions, jazz always was an initial part [of the event], but over the years a vanishing one," Schulze said. "From the beginning, we wanted to go another way. We put jazz in the center and try to take it from there."

Dozens of 30-minute showcase sets by emerging and bookable artists, broken up into "Israeli Night," "German Jazz Expo," "European Jazz Meeting" and "Overseas Night," also kept the musical pace pulsing. This year's national showcase focused on Israel, following past emphases on Spain and Turkey.

Israeli facilitator and Red Sea Jazz Festival director Dubi Lenz posed the musical question of the week: "What is Israeli jazz?"

"It is like slow cooking," Lenz said. "We are an immigrant nation with 80 different nationalities. Each musician brings their own spices and ingredients to the stew, and jazz audiences are open-minded to what results."

The selection of Israeli showcase artists ranged from vocalist Ilana Eliya, who channeled her Kurdish heritage, to the Yemeni stylings of Ensemble Yaman, the captivating duo Malox and soprano saxophonist Daniel Zamir. For a special off-campus Israeli concert, bassist Avishai Cohen's trio held forth at the delightful '20s vintage concert hall Der Glocke (where Jarrett's famed concert was held).

Among other highlights at the Conference Center venues and the nearby Kulturzentrum Schlachthof (a hip, radically reformed slaughterhouse) were Albanian-born folk-meets-jazz singer Elina Duni and two contemporary-minded piano trios: the introspective Norwegian Helge Lien Trio and the witty De Beren Gieren from Belgium. The irrepressible, swing-infused veteran drummer Han Bennink received the jazzahead!-Škoda-award.

Another fine, buzz-making performance was the refreshing and assured Toronto-based singer Chloe Charles; rumors of a star-in-the-making quickly made the rounds at the convention. The next afternoon, co-director Beckerhoff mentioned that Charles immediately got offers for festival gigs and other engagements after her set. "That's what is great about this format of showcases," he said. "Artists can get immediate results."

Through jazzahead!, Bremen's musical culture is on an upward trajectory. —Josef Woodard



JENS SCHLENNER