

acoustique composée de Justin Robinson (as), Gerald Clayton (p), Danton Boller (b), Montez Coleman (dm). Dans la lignée des formations hard bop des années 50 et 60, le Roy Hargrove Quintet s'est exprimé dans une langue straight-ahead minutieusement et intelligible, un idiome d'essence purement afro-américaine. Grâce à un challenge constant et organique, le groupe a gardé, tout au long du concert, un niveau exceptionnel de tension émotive. Le leader, lui, a montré une fois de plus sa belle maîtrise du phrasé, sa sonorité naturellement timbrée, les effets d'articulation, de piston et son sens du blues. Le 5 juillet, la dernière soirée du festival débutait avec Craig Adams (p, voc) entouré des puissantes et soulful Voices of New Orleans. Pianiste,

organiste, chef de chœur, chanteur, issu de la famille de Fats Domino (la ressemblance physique est impressionnante), Craig Adams a mis littéralement le feu au Palais des Congrès avec son gospel louisianais. Dans le rapport couplet-refrain entre chanteur et choristes, la musique s'est progressivement libérée atteignant son paroxysme à la fin du spectacle grâce à une lente mais inexorable ascension vers l'apex. Emporté par le rythme et l'émotion, le public de Strasbourg a goûté un petit peu à la transe et à l'extase qui se dégageait de ces invocations musicales.

La fin du festival a été assurée par Ayo. Née en Allemagne d'un père allemand et d'une mère bulgare, elle a grandi dans une communauté gitane. Vivant actuellement entre Paris et New York, Ayo est une jeune femme

nomade dont la musique et les textes reflètent ses perpétuels vagabondages et son background cosmopolite. La pop d'Ayo, métissée de folk, de soul et de reggae est plaisante, elle s'inscrit dans la persistance du revival folk-soul acoustique initié par le phénomène Norah Jones.

Andrea Marcelli

## Catane, Sicile (Italie)

Etnafest, 5-8 juillet

Catania ne jouit pas chez nous de la notoriété de sa grande sœur sicilienne Palerme, mais elle possède pourtant un condensé de sicilianité, notamment en raison de la présence à quelques kilomètres du toit volcanique de l'Europe, l'Etna, dont la cime impose sa présence menaçante

et pourtant vénérée. Comme le remarque le savant directeur artistique de l'EtnaFest, Gianni Morelenbaum Gualberto, on prend ici la mesure de ce qu'est le fatum à travers une histoire émaillée de coulées volcaniques, tremblements de terre, et parce que cette île est au centre de la Méditerranée, le lieu de passage d'invasions les plus diverses des Grecs, Romains, Arabes aux Normands, Français, Souabes, etc., sans oublier l'histoire récente autour du phénomène mafieux qui vient ajouter à ce tragique né dans une antiquité majestueuse comme en attestent de beaux restes gréco-romains. Même l'unité italienne, initiée par Garibaldi à partir de cette île, n'a pas réussi encore à amarrer pleinement le monde sicilien au continent. Les mentalités restent déchirées entre

## Montréal International Montreal Jazz Festival, June 28-July 8

As a whole, the 28<sup>th</sup> annual Montreal Jazz Festival could be said to be more of the same, with few chances taken or new ground broken. But, in the case of this model festival, that statement is not a criticism so much as a confirmation that the «formula» in Montreal works beautifully. There is no need for repair or modifying.

In a way, this operation could be the ideal paradigm of how to run a jazz festival, and should be studied and copied by other newcomers. Of course, it helps if the hosting city is a beautiful destination spot and if its civic forces are willing to close down several key city blocks for ten days, where «normal» life is blissfully interrupted by free music programming on several outdoor stages. It helps, also, when there are several fine indoor venues within walking distance, where the serious musical menu unfolds.

And it helps, as well, when the directors – Andre Menard and Alain Simard – insist on high quality music and a diverse definition of what constitutes jazz (but stop short of programming shameless commercial or shallow music). Considering all of these things, the 2007 Montreal Jazz was about as good any, and better than some.

In the stronger first half of the festival, the clear highlight was Wayne Shorter's compelling set, with both his quartet and the wind quintet known as the Imani Winds. For this listener, it was the finest Shorter concert I have witnessed in twenty-plus years of avid Wayne-spotting. Despite his status as an acknowledged jazz legend and genius composer and sax stylist, Shorter's bands have often failed to capture his elusive brilliance. They have often been either too fussily neurotic or ramblingly loose, including his current quartet with pianist Danilo Perez, bassist John Patitucci and the remarkable drummer Brian Blade.

In Montreal, though, everything worked: Shorter was more active and open-spirited in his playing, and his ingenuity and poetry as a composer came through in his piece for the Imani, «Terra Incognita», and on later «chamber jazz» pieces for his quartet and

the winds. On these, Shorter sat down with the wind players and seemed to savor the task of being part of the ensemble. It all seemed heaven-sent, and a context suitably more novel than a standard big band or orchestra setting. Let's hope he follows the muse's trail in this direction.

Another satisfying and genre-crossing project was Wynton Marsalis's «Congo Square», an evening-long piece for his Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra and the West African musical fabric of Yacub Addy and Oadadaa! The natural linguistic cross-talk of the two groups made points, on both sociological and musical terms.

Another looming jazz name on the roster was Keith Jarrett, bringing his «Standards» trio back, on the brink of the group's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The news on this summer's festival circuit is that Jarrett seems to be «on the brink» in other ways, as well. At the end of the Montreal concert, he flew into a cussing rage over flash photography. But this was nothing compared to his foul-mouthed and foul-spirited tirade in Perugia a week later, at the Umbria Jazz Festival a week later. His bad behavior there got him banned from the festival for good.

He will be back to Montreal, however, and for a good reason: the artist is troubled, and even possibly sadistic, but his art divine. Jarrett was again in fine form in Montreal, getting to that magical place he can on ballads – i.e. «I Thought About You» and «All the Sad Young Men» – and impressing deeply on «Django» and «Straight, No Chaser». Speaking of that Monk classic, it was being played only an hour earlier in a smaller theater in the Place des Arts complex, but in a more nervous and hyperactive version led by Mike Stern. Drummer Billy Cobham and Montrealer bassist Alain Caron joined the fray, in one of five different concerts in the festival's annual «Invitational» series. Last year, one of the subjects was guitar wizard Bireli Lagrene. This year, the spotlight was on Mike Stern and, in the festival's second half, on bassist Richard Bona.

Stern is certainly a great player, and he

boasts that rare quality of a unique, identifiable voice on the guitar. Still, the concerts didn't always achieve symbiosis with the rotating roster of players. Stern's straighter and rock-tinge style didn't quite mesh with the ever-exploratory and wry piano trio The Bad Plus, for instance. The next night, billed as «A Miles Davis Tribute: Four Generations of Miles», suffered from generational and stylistic gaps between Stern – who played in one of Miles' later electric bands – and alumni from Miles' earlier acoustic bands, saxist George Coleman, drummer Jimmy Cobb, and bassist Buster Williams.

But in the right company, Stern soared. Patitucci and Perez – half of Shorter's band – showed up one night, in a glorious blend. On the last and best night of Stern's residency, Bona, Weckl, and guest trumpeter Roy Hargrove were in the house, and Stern was right at home in the band featured on his latest record.

Other Shorter-esque ripples moved across town at the festival, as when Blade appeared in a band he often plays with at home in New York City, led by the wondrous and still-underdog alto sax hero David Binney. Binney is a remarkable, fluid player and writer, with edge and flow in his style, and his late-night set at the Gesu-centre de creativite was a surprise delight at this festival. Blade himself was all graceful fire, even more fueled with Tony Williams-like energy than with Shorter, and the stellar work of bassist Scott Colley and the remarkable keyboardist Craig Taborn made for new jazz of the highest and freshest order.

Taborn himself was also on this stage two nights earlier, in the band led by guitarist David Torn, with alto saxist Tim Berne and drummer Tom Rainey—certainly one of the best living drummers too few people know about. Torn's all-improvised atmospheric set was one of several concerts this year by artists on the ECM label (Jarrett officially counts as one, although he operates in a world and an echelon of his own).

From the ECM roster of pianists, we heard the newcomer Anta Fort, whose style is formidable and energetic if still a bit derivative ('70s era Jarrett comes to mind). Italian Ste-

fano Bollani has been on the scene for years, but his recent ECM solo album was the basis of a late night solo concert, replete with virtuosity, a fluent touch, and, naturally, comedy bits. Less virtuosic than the other two, but with a sound and a vibe all his own, Norwegian pianist Tord Gustavsen

incited a wild response from his crowd, despite the generally introspective textures and moods of his work. ECM artist Anouar Brehem, the understated oud master, paid a rare visit to North America, as did Nik Bartsch's Ronin, a kind of progressive ambient jazz-rock band. Like another former ECM artist, Nils Petter Molvaer, Bartsch makes heady, moody groove music. Another pleasant Scandinavian surprise in the festival's «Jazz Contemporain» series was the Swedish band Yun Kan 5, a quintet with a loose and rolling energy and an ability to swerve from «straight» to «out», without flinching.

On a sad note in the Montreal Festival annals, the long-cherished mid-sized club venue, the Spectrum, was to close after this festival. The wrecking ball would put an end to the place, to make way for a large commercial building. The site of many memorable shows over the years—including 2007 shows by the Dave Holland Quintet, the Cowboy Junkies and Allan Holdsworth—will be missed. The Spectrum is dead, long live the Spectrum.

Yes, it is only a building, and another similarly-sized substitute will be found or built. But long-term aficionados of this festival are bound to get a bit sentimental over such a change, especially in a festival where consistency is king.

Josef Woodard



Wayne Shorter  
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