

Questions pour Roy Hargrove

Question: You were interested ever since you were young in great Jazz musicians such as Clifford Brown (to whom Benny Golson is going to pay tribute during this festival) Fats Navarro, Lee Morgan, Freddie Hubbard who represent the creators of the trumpet and Jazz. You have also followed for some time the courses at the "Berklee School".

Do you think that Jazz can keep its essence with an academic teaching?

Response: From the time I first took up the trumpet, I have always had a great admiration for such iconic trumpet masters as Clifford Brown, Fats Navarro, Lee Morgan, Freddie Hubbard and Dizzy Gillespie and it was in 1987, when I was 19, that I met the man who really inspired me to develop my trumpet skills – Wynton Marsalis. He came to the Booker T. Washington School for the Visual and Performing Arts in Dallas, Texas, where I was studying, to conduct a clinic and he seemed to be quite impressed by my playing..

He arranged special studies for me and also recommended me to my manager-producer, Larry Clothier. After I graduated from high school in June 1988, I spent the summer working in Europe and had the opportunity to play with Clifford Jordan, Jerome Richardson and Tete Montoliu, among others.

In the Fall of 1988, I entered the Berklee Music School on several scholarships, including one from the magazine *Down Beat*, which had named me best jazz soloist of the year.

I moved to New York in 1990 and enrolled at the New School University's Jazz and Contemporary Music program. Thanks to Larry Clothier, I also had the chance to work as a sideman with Bobby Watson, Ricky Ford, Carl Allen and Don Sickler's Superblue Band.

I think academic teaching is extremely important in terms of mastering instrumental technique and reading ability, but to be a jazz musician, you have to combine it with a natural aptitude for improvisation, swing and real jazz feeling.

Question: You are part of a new generation of musicians and hence you have always granted a great deal of importance to the history of Jazz. Besides, you collaborated with great names Jazz: Jimmy Smith and Shirley Horn, who, unfortunately, left us last year.

Will you tell us about your collaboration with these great musical legends?

Response: There is no better way for an aspiring jazz musician to learn his craft than to have the privilege of playing with such jazz giants as Jimmy Smith and Shirley Horn. And I have also been lucky enough to have had the opportunity to work with Gary Bartz, Joe Henderson, Stanley Turrentine, Johnny Griffin, Oscar Peterson, Herbie Hancock, Dave Brubeck and Ray Brown. With this music, you are learning all the time and, from this sort of distinguished musical company, you draw a great deal of inspiration.

Question: The musicians you chose in your musical projects have always had a history with the past. We notice that in this quintet and the previous bands you were always concerned with tributes to the past and to continue carrying the flag.

Will you explain us your state of mind?

Response: The answer is very simple – while we must always be looking to the future and ways of taking jazz ahead, we cannot ignore our great debt to the legendary musicians of the past. They continue to be our inspiration and their music lives on with great vitality. There is absolutely no merit in just seeking to produce music that is simply different. It is not enough to the music to be merely new – it has to have heart and character and integrity, and the perfect blend is to incorporate the vital elements of the great jazz tradition, which has been built up over more than a century, with innovative and adventurous contemporary ideas.

Question: The world of Jazz today has changed a lot. Besides, to be recognized it is necessary to be surrounded with a powerful marketing machinery in spite of the artist's talent. How did you succeed in imposing to the general public your personality while being faithful to your values?

Response: As is the case with all creative activity, public awareness of what you do is indispensable and, for this reason, it is vital to have a good promotion and marketing operation in place. As always, there are anomalies in the jazz world and it sometimes happens that, while brilliant, up-and-coming musicians are overlooked, other musicians, who are not nearly so talented, benefit from big promotion and publicity campaigns. But, in the end, ability will tell and the unremarkable musicians who are over-promoted are soon forgotten. Another important element, of course, is the music press, which has many writers who are not swayed by record company hype but make their own decisions – and I must say, I have benefited very much from jazz critics and reviewers who have written very favourable reviews of my concerts and recordings.

I think that the informed jazz public recognizes integrity in an artist. I don't seek to shape my music to meet people's predilections. I play what I am. I'm true to myself and I hope the public enjoy what I do – which, I am happy to say, they seem, largely, to do!

Question: How do you define jazz music ?

Response: People have been trying to define jazz music for more than a hundred years. As Louis Armstrong once famously said, "If you have to ask what jazz is, you'll never know."

I like to think that my trumpet could answer that question more eloquently than I could!