

Press Release – Author’s credit to Eugene Uman, Vermont Jazz Center, 802 254 9088, eugene@vtjazz.org

Short Summary

Today’s date: 1/31/22

Who: Joel Ross “Good Vibes:” Joel Ross, vibraphone; Godwin Louis, alto saxophone; Jeremy Corren, piano; Kanoa Mendenhall, bass; Jeremy Dutton, drums.

What: Young jazz masters perform music that demonstrates how the jazz language has evolved using the rhythms and vocabulary of today’s generation

When: Saturday, February 19th, 2022 at 8:00 PM

Where: The Vermont Jazz Center, 72 Cotton Mill Hill, #222, Brattleboro, VT 05301

Tickets available: online at www.vtjazz.org, by email at ginger@vtjazz.org, and by phone 802 254 9088 x1.

Rising Star, Blue Note Vibraphonist Joel Ross to Perform at the Vermont Jazz Center on Saturday, February 19th

The Vermont Jazz Center presents Downbeat Rising Star Award-winning vibraphonist Joel Ross on Saturday, February 19th at 8:00 PM. Don Was, president of Blue Note records) claims that “Joel is not only one of the preeminent instrumentalists of this era, but he is one of the greatest musical visionaries of his generation.” The concert will be held in front of a reduced-capacity, live audience and will also be live streamed on the Jazz Center’s website (www.vtjazz.org) and Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/VermontJazzCenter/live/>). Ross will be performing with his working quintet called Good Vibes. The group includes Godwin Louis on alto saxophone, Jeremy Corren on piano, Kanoa Mendenhall on upright bass and Jeremy Dutton on drums. This is Ross’ touring and recording ensemble (with Louis replacing Immanuel Wilkins on alto) and is featured on Ross’ two highly respected Blue Note releases: *KingMaker* and *Where are You*.

For listeners familiar with the impact of the vibes in bebop and swing, Ross’ dynamic sound recalls jazz legends Red Norvo, Lionel Hampton, Bobby Hutcherson, Milt Jackson and Gary Burton. His approach is steeped in the tradition. In fact, he uses an old-school, two mallet technique similar to Milt Jackson rather than the four-mallet technique used by most contemporary vibes players. He does this because he prefers the clarity of sound he is able to achieve. Ross has evolved to become one of the most visible jazz musicians of his generation, joining forces with such titans as Ambrose Akinmusire, James Francies, Jason Palmer, Mckaya McCraven, Marquis Hill, Jonathan Blake, Walter Smith and Matt Stevens. His respect for the past combined with his transcendent ability to enter the “zone” of becoming one with the music have given him a unique voice that is simultaneously modern and timeless. JazzTimes Magazine claims “Not since Stefon Harris’ arrival 20 years ago has the jazz world heard a young vibraphonist intent on exploring so many dimensions.”

In an interview with JAZZIZ Magazine, Ross stated that the vibraphonist he was first drawn to was Milt Jackson (best known for his work with the Modern Jazz Quartet). But he was also “listening consistently to Monk, Miles and Trane for years, taking in everything these artists

were doing – not only the type of music they were playing, how also how they were leading their bands.” In a conversation with Capitol Bop, Ross discussed their tremendous impact on his development and how Miles Davis in particular influenced his yearning to work with and compose for a steady band: “I enjoy it most when we are all communicating and playing with each other and trying to achieve that highest form of listening and responding.... I definitely do focus on the band thing, from studying Miles’ quintets — especially the second great quintet, which is my favorite group. Particularly, I spent two or three years listening to *Live at the Plugged Nickel* almost every day, just studying the group interplay, how Miles would direct the band from what he played or didn’t play. I’m just really big on that type of group interaction and trying to communicate without words.”

When listening to recordings of Good Vibes, one senses a constant flow, a natural stream of energy where the ideas connect, ebb and build organically. Ross is a virtuosic leader, setting the tone, writing the compositions, developing the arrangements and leading by example. He is also a drummer by training, who is constantly pushing his musicians to explore less-common rhythmical phrases and forms. The quintet format provides him with a powerful vehicle to express his ideas using a broad pallet. As a unit, the band approaches Ross’ compositions, which are strongly melodic, with respect, tenderness and intensity. Their attention to dynamics is especially remarkable. The quintet plays a wide range of sonic and emotional qualities, breathing together and embodying the care that Ross has imbued into the arrangements. The varied rhythmical complexity and intensity takes the listener on journeys that are sometimes tranquil and meditative and other times intentionally unsettling. Ross’ compositionally balanced arrangements juxtapose intensity and serenity with great care. As a listener, one senses Ross’ commitment to providing the listener with an opportunity to take a sonic journey that is nurturing yet energetic. He encourages the soloists to drive the bus during their forays, and he eagerly goes along for the ride as a conversant supporter. Ross’ melodies, which are often consonant, are paired with touches of harmonic dissonances that provide rich color and excitement. When we listen closely, we hear that this music conveys spiritual depth and yearning. Reviewing Ross’ most recent recording, *Who are You?*, for the New York Times, Giovanni Russonello identified the source of that spirit: “The years Mr. Ross spent in childhood learning drums at church laid an important foundation. ‘It tends to be what I’m reaching for,’ [Ross] said, ‘to put the audience into that space of reaching up, worship and praise.’”

Ross will be performing selections from his two highly acclaimed Blue Note albums, *KingMaker*, a musical tribute to his family, and *Who are You*, an album that is split into two narrative halves. Downbeat Magazine gave *KingMaker* a 4-star review, noting that “Ross’ playing erupts through the layers of lush arrangements like consistent currents of electricity, high-powered and full of luminous energy. These bright bursts of solos and melodic lines surprise, excite and stretch...” Reviewing *Who Are You*, Glide Magazine states: “Ross’s music is highly imaginative and represents a major step forward for an artist whose future seems limitless already.”

Godwin Louis will be playing alto saxophone for this tour. Louis, who is of Haitian descent, is a student of world culture. He has performed in Haiti, Mali, Senegal, Togo, France, Spain, United Kingdom, Italy, China, Russia, Azerbaijan, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Venezuela, Colombia, South Korea, Thailand, Indonesia and Australia. He is a graduate of Berklee College of Music

(where he now teaches), and the Thelonious Monk Institute for Jazz Performance. Louis has performed with Herbie Hancock, Clark Terry, Ron Carter, Al Foster, Jack DeJohnette, Jimmy Heath, Billy Preston, Patti Labelle, Toni Braxton, Babyface, Madonna, Gloria Estefan, Barry Harris, Howard Shore, David Baker, Mulatu Astatke, Mahmoud Ahmed, Wynton Marsalis, Terence Blanchard and many others. He has received awards from the Jerome Foundation Emerging Artist Foundation and the Jazz Gallery's New Works Commission. He has released one album double as a leader and has appeared as a sideman on recordings with Terri Lyne Carrington, Victor Gould, Herlin Riley, Either Orchestra and many others.

Pianist and composer Jeremy Corren performs regularly in NYC at the Blue Note, Smalls, and the Jazz Gallery. He has appeared at the Newport and Chicago Jazz Festivals and toured Japan, China, the Netherlands and Italy. Corren currently plays in the bands of Or Bareket, Immanuel Wilkins, Jeremy Dutton and Tatiana Eva-Marie.

Kanoa Mendenhall is a Japanese-born, New York City-based acoustic and electric bassist. After completing high school, Mendenhall moved from Japan to New York City to begin her studies at Columbia University and the Juilliard School. She studied bass with Ben Wolfe and participated in studio classes taught by Ron Carter at Juilliard for two years. Mendenhall has performed across the U.S., Europe, and Canada with Joel Ross and María Grand's trio. She has performed at North Sea Jazz Festival, Umbria Jazz Festival, SFJAZZ Center, Blue Note NY, Monterey Jazz Festival, and was part of the house band of the 2020 NEA Jazz Masters Ceremony led by Terri Lyne Carrington. She has performed with musicians such as Dayna Stephens, Aaron Parks, Marquis Hill, John Ellis, Shai Maestro, and Mike Moreno.

Drummer Jeremy Dutton performs with Ambrose Akinmusire, Camila Mesa, Gerald Clayton, Vijay Iyer, Taylor Eigsti, Jacky Terrasson, Mike Moreno, James Francies, Benito Gonzalez, Keyon Harold, Maria Grand, Matt Stevens, Andre Hayward, Philip Dizack, Matt Penman, Stefon Harris, Bobby Watson, Allan Hampton, Dayna Stephens, and many others. He can be heard on recordings with James Francies, Maria Grand, Joel Ross, and others.

The music that Joel Ross and Good Vibes will be bringing to the Vermont Jazz Center is steeped in the history of jazz, but it is also inclusive, welcoming and immersed in the music of today's younger generation. It is its own, unique creation, a beautiful synergy that combines familiar language with new information. Ross' music seamlessly gathers all these facets into a unifying construct through its heartbeat-like attention to rhythm. The music might sound effortless, but it is not simple.

On February 19th, listeners at the Jazz Center will embark on a journey that unfolds like theater, experiencing compositions that build and evolve into remarkable forms. Like the magic of Miles Davis' second great quintet, this musical voyage will be enhanced by the tightness of the group's ensemble work and the musicians' vibrant, telepathic interactions. Come to the Jazz Center on February 19th and enjoy Good Vibes' unique, new sounds; hear for yourself why Nate Chinen of the New York Times claims that "[Ross is a] bright young vibraphonist on his own rocket-like trajectory..."

The VJC is honored to host this young assemblage of master musicians and is grateful to two dear friends of the VJC's Educational Programs for sponsoring the artist's fees for this concert. These friends are individuals who have again and again selflessly given to the VJC's mission and benefited the community at large in numerous ways. Publicity is underwritten by The Commons and The Brattleboro Reformer. The VJC is also grateful to the Vermont Arts Council, the Vermont Humanities Council and New England Foundation of the Arts for their support and increased efforts to stabilize the existence of arts organizations during the pandemic.

Admission to the in-person event is offered on a sliding fee scale from \$20 to \$40 per person and will be capped at 120 attendees. The online streaming of this concert will be offered free of charge but donations are welcomed and just a click away. Please give generously and support live music. Access to the on-line event can be found online at www.vtjazz.org and at <https://www.facebook.com/VermontJazzCenter/live/>. Handicapped access is available by emailing ginger@vtjazz.org.

Tickets for Joel Ross: Good Vibes at the Vermont Jazz Center are \$20+ general admission, for students with I.D. (contact VJC about educational group discounts); available online at www.vtjazz.org, by email at ginger@vtjazz.org, or by calling the Vermont Jazz Center ticket line at 802-254-9088, ext. 1. Handicapped access is available by calling the VJC at 802 254 9088.

VIDEO:

Video from *Who are You*, "Gato's Gift:" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2zKpHB5JgzM>

YouTube album, *Who are You*:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VDPEZI8WRcA&list=PLEz_mLoNZMeSBamdWgLG91vGrsDGQPkR9

Video from *KingMaker*, "Yana" <https://vimeo.com/337333953>

Live at Smalls <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=itpzZMfoVtM>

From new Blue Note Album, *Ill Relations* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qM06CnMtF64>

With Makaya McCraven <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z6BDBUfKLxg>

As a precocious 16 year old (duo with pianist Eric Reed – 'Round Midnight)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ppv7Kvv15gE>

With Makaya McCraven, playing a solo on the song Makaya wrote for him, "Young Genius:"

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=4&v=Z6BDBUfKLxg&feature=emb_logo