

This is Chris

Grammy winner Philadelphia bassist Christian McBride has made the cover of the international jazz journal of record, *Jazz Times*, in conjunction with the upcoming release of his new CD for the Mack Avenue Jazz label, *People Music*. This superb outing, the first featuring the bassists' Inside Straight Group since 2009, will be released on May 14. One of McBride's teachers and mentors, Lee Smith—who just happens to be McBride's dad—is also busy as ever, and will be one of those accompanying singer Barbara Montgomery for one of the final Jazz Bridge events of the season, May 2 at the Collingswood Community Center.



Christian McBride.

Will Big Bands Ever Come Back? They Never Left!

In the jazz world these days, leading a big band—be it for a month, week or night—is one of those things considered to be next to impossible. However he does it, area drummer Phil Giordano has managed to lead a swinging, 16-piece strong ensemble here, there and elsewhere on and off for close to three decades. Though he's been off the radar for a bit, Giordano and the boys are on the comeback trail via recent engagements at La Stanza Restaurant, 2001 West Oregon Avenue, in the heart of South Philadelphia. On May 7, the Phil Giordano Jazz Orchestra will be backing another world class, Philadelphia-based jazz performer, singer Joanna Pascale, at La Stanza. For those of a certain age who have never heard a real, live, big jazz band in person, there is but one piece of advice for you: go. It is, in its way, a wall of sound unlike anything ever heard, and Phil Giordano's crew, comprised of this area's finest jazz soloists and ensemble players, continue to, as they say, "lay it down." For more information on this must-see concert, contact La Stanza at 215-271-0801.

"Booking" Jazz

Maria Judge's wonderful work about her uncle, the late and legendary drummer, Jake Hanna, *The Rhythm and Wit of a Swinging Jazz Drummer*, is one of the funniest and most touching books about jazz to come along since Bill Crow's *Jazz Anecdotes*. Ms. Judge has let us know that the work, a Meredith Music publication, is now available in a Kindle edition from Amazon.com and other appropriate outlets. Musically, Jake Hanna stood for what can only be described as "the integrity of swing." And relating to his legendary humor and wit, let the following story speak for itself: Hanna was once the drummer in the house band of the *Merv Griffin Show*, and Mervin's guest one day was Shirley Bassey, best known for her overwrought rendition of *Goldfinger*, theme for the 1965 James Bond film. Ms. Bassey, quite full of herself at the time, treated musicians as no more than hired lackeys, Jake Hanna included. At an afternoon rehearsal, she was quite specific in what she demanded from the percussion chair, saying, "Drummer! Just follow me and swing like mad." Jake, bless his soul, replied, "Missy...I can either swing, or follow you. I can't do both."

Bassey walked out and Hanna was fired. His parting words? "I was going to quit anyway. I couldn't stand playing bad music with great players."

"The Jazz Scene" recently received a note from, believe it or not, Serbia. The communication was from drummer Dusan Milenkovic, who has just written an extraordinary new book, *The Magnificent 7*, drum solo transcriptions of, as Dusan calls them, "drummers of our time," including Brian Blade, Bill Stewart, Antonio Sanchez, and others. This valuable work, the first of its kind, is available from DusanMilenkovic.com.

One could call Scott Yanow the "McDonald's of Jazz Journalism," in that he has "served" thousands of players with his ten, all-inclusive books about jazz trumpeters, swing players, boppers, singers, recordings, films, et al. Yanow is a tireless, dedicated researcher, and his works have proved to be a significant addition to jazz scholarship. His latest work, *The Great Jazz Guitarists: The Ultimate Guide* (Backbeat/Hal Leonard) is no exception. The book gives biographical info, CD choices and other pertinent data on hundreds of players, past and present. Of interest to those within ICON's area of readership, are legends that include Eddie Lang, Billy Bean, Pat Martino, Thornel Schwartz, Jimmy Bruno, Steve Giordano, Monette Sudler and likely some others we've missed. Scott's entry on Django Reinhardt is particularly incisive. Until

now, the legend of the gypsy jazz guitar has rarely been given his due as a modern player and as an electric guitarist. To order, go to Halleonard.com.

Take the Coltrane

Norman Gadson was the owner of the Strawberry Mansion home where legendary saxophonist John Coltrane lived from 1952 to 1958. Gadson purchased the home from Trane's cousin Mary in 2004, and had big plans for it, including rehabbing it and opening it as a jazz venue. Gadson died in 2007, but his widow, Lenora Early—official owner and founder of what is called the "John Coltrane House"—is trying to follow through with her late husband's wishes. She is renovating the house, and has hooked up with an organization called the "Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia." This group is said to be putting together a panel of experts to mull over suggestions for the future of the house. They had best work quickly. Though the home is a National Historic Landmark, and also on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places, the building is in terrible shape.

Jazz in a Jam

The ubiquitous, always-on-the-scene writing machine named A.D. Amorosi, has informed that two jazz jam sessions have "gone south." Those would be Time Café's "Back in Time Sessions" headed by pianist Luke Carlos O'Reilly, and Tavern on Broad's Sunday jams run by guitarist Greg Davis. Why? One reason, perhaps, is that no one in the city and beyond knew that such sessions existed. Times, business and life has changed for those in the jazz community, and those without self-promotion skills need to learn them quickly. The success of any gig, jazz or otherwise, involves a variety of factors and, ideally, all need to be in alignment. If one of those elements is out of alignment or otherwise not attended to, the plug, such as it is, will be pulled.

For instance, what you now hold in your hands is the only—repeat, *only*—regularly published column solely devoted to regional jazz. At last count, ICON has 70,000-plus readers who are ready, willing and able to spend their hard-earned money on hearing live jazz. That means you. So the big question is, why aren't you a part of this column? Following through with this is easy: Contact us directly at DrumAlive@aol.com.

In line with this diatribe, a venue called "Kennett," located at 848 South 2nd Street, is advertising a jazz brunch every Saturday and every other Sunday from 11 a.m. It would be nice to know who is playing.

Pianistic Kicks with Chick

It could be said with some accuracy that Chick Corea is the most influential pianist to come along in the jazz world since Bill Evans. He has opened and explored—and continues to open and explore—new vistas and frontiers as a acoustic soloist, fusionist, and small group leader. There is likely no one of a certain age playing any type of keyboard today who has not been influenced by Chick Corea. It is a particular joy to hear him as a soloist, in that he has the rare ability to convey virtually the entire tradition of jazz, and its future, on the piano. Audiences and his many fans will have the rare opportunity to hear this master in solo, May 22, at Musikfest Café within ArtsQuest Center at SteelStacks in Bethlehem, PA. Making this stint even more special is that fact that there's not a bad seat in the house at the Café. No seats are further than 60 feet away from the stage. To purchase tickets online, visit ArtsQuest.org.



Chick Corea.

Ready for Freddy

Having Nat "King" Cole for an older brother must have been both a blessing and a curse, but pianist/singer Freddy Cole has followed his own musical path for more than six decades. Sure, there's some pianistic and vocal resemblance to Nat—how can there not be?—but this conservatory-trained artist is pretty much his own man. Cole is making a rare area appearance this month, on May 4, at Chris' Jazz Café.

And on May 18, look for a return visit from Philadelphia's very own All-Star Jazz Quartet. For information on all of Chris' attractions, log on to ChrisJazzCafe.com. For advance tickets to this special show, visit Seatengine.com/Event/1914. ■