

MICHAEL WEISS

Pianist Michael Weiss has been described by the *New Yorker* as “one of the most dependable pianists on the scene.” Best known for his fifteen year association with saxophonist, Johnny Griffin, he has established a formidable reputation working with a host of jazz luminaries such as Art Farmer, Jimmy Heath, Frank Wess, Benny Golson, Lou Donaldson, Slide Hampton, George Coleman, Charles McPherson, the Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra and Wynton Marsalis.

Weiss’ role as bandleader began receiving attention with regular appearances at New York’s legendary piano room, Bradley’s. The *New York Times* noted that Weiss “focuses the intensity of a tune as well as any pianist in mainstream jazz.” After winning second prize in the 1989 Thelonious Monk Institute International Piano Competition, Weiss was a featured guest on CBS’ *Nightwatch*. Other radio and television appearances followed with NPR’s *Piano Jazz with Marian McPartland*, *Jazzset*, *Making the Music*, *Jazz Piano Christmas Special*, and PBS’ *Live from Lincoln Center*.

With four recordings as a leader, Weiss has garnered considerable praise from the press: *Stereo Review* gave his debut album, *Presenting Michael Weiss (Criss Cross)*, a “Best of the Month” feature. With the release of Weiss’ second recording, *Power Station (DIW)*, *JazzTimes* acknowledged that Weiss “writes with thought-provoking originality.... His originals sound as if they were standards of the genre,” and selected the recording as one of the top five releases of 1997. According to *Jazz Journal*, *Milestones (SteepleChase)* contains “splendid music on every track...piano playing of the highest order.”

Weiss’ writing was further validated upon receiving grand prize in the 2000 BMI/Monk Institute Composers Competition. His 2003 release, *Soul Journey (Sintra)* features a collection of all original compositions for septet including the award winning “El Camino.” The *Detroit Free Press* noted that “the songs simply smoke.”

The Michael Weiss Group, established in 1996 as a performing outlet for the development of Weiss’ extended compositions, has headlined at the Detroit International Jazz Festival, the Smithsonian Institution, Stanford Jazz Festival and the Blue Note. In 2002, Weiss was awarded Chamber Music America’s New Works: Creation and Presentation grant to compose a new extended work for his septet.

Weiss maintains a longstanding commitment to jazz education, presenting jazz workshops and master classes in universities, secondary schools and primary schools. In addition to serving on the faculty at Hartt School of Music and Queens College, he has participated in Carnegie Hall’s JazzEd and Jazz at Lincoln Center’s programs and presented master classes at the Juilliard School, Sibelius Academy in Helsinki, Indiana University, and the International Association of Jazz Educators Conference, to name a few.

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Reviews of SOUL JOURNEY

“Weiss is able to mesh simple, airy phrasing and intricate melodies to create a rich, full-bodied, expressive jazz statement. His timeless playing reflects - but does not pander to - a rich history of legendary pianists. Weiss' playing is warm and earthy and, as a result, "Soul Journey" is downright terrific. You do not have to be a jazz fan to appreciate this exceptional disc.” – **Boston Herald**

“...considerable talent as a writer and arranger. Weiss has a rich palette of composing devices at his command, and his ebullient piano constantly buoys this recording. – **Downbeat**

“Weiss gives us, in his fourth album, perfectly constructed music, well thought out from beginning to end. Nine originals span a wide aesthetic spectrum, while rooted in the great tradition of postbop and latin jazz. They show a maturity of writing, superbly executed by the musicians, as well as a perfect osmosis between the different styles that coexist in jazz. Firmly in control of this roaring machine, Michael Weiss imposes himself, discreetly but effectively, as one of the most interesting pianists in the mainstream. Here, complexity and swing get along. A delight.” – **Jazz Hot**

“*Soul Journey* shows contemporary writers and players can play, for lack of a better term, mainstream jazz that’s forceful, distinctive and exciting. The music on *Soul Journey* has warmth, integrity and above all, originality.” – **JazzTimes**

“This is refreshing music...a five-star recording.” – **Portland Skanner**

“For a fresh, imaginative listening experience, please take a listen to *Soul Journey*. Each of the nine selections is unusual and entertaining. *The Cheshire Cat* is one of the most joyful and original jazz compositions to come along in years.” – **Jazzreview.com**

“Polished arrangements combined with shipshape soloing is the modus operandi behind *Soul Journey*.” – **New Music Box**

“It’s not often that you find jazz compositions of the caliber that Michael Weiss offers up on *Soul Journey*. This is a very special jazz recording that goes far beyond your typical mainstream fare. Michael Weiss is a vital talent with something important to say...and you’d do well to listen.” – **All About Jazz**

“Leading a superb band, the harmonically daring, lyrical pianist offers a series of brilliantly conceived, masterfully drawn, sonic canvases. It’s a fine band and some wise conceptions pulled beyond brilliant technique by daring improvisations and the music’s deeply sewn swing. It’s yet another current mainstream jazz masterwork. Highly recommended.” – **Victoria Times Colonist**

“...the songs simply smoke.” – **Detroit Free Press**

“The most striking aspect of this disc, apart from the skill of the individual players, is the writing, which integrates the solos and ensembles so that each piece comes across as a composition rather than just a quick statement followed by a series of solos. All in all, this is an excellent and very satisfying outing, both in its ensemble and solo work. It’s especially good to hear the music presented with such thought and care for the overall effect.” – **Schenectady Gazette**

“This kind of balance between innovation and accessibility is unusual in jazz, and it makes for an extremely interesting and enjoyable listening experience. It is hard to imagine any serious jazz lover not being captivated by this album. Highly recommended.” – **All Music Guide**

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REVIEWS

BMI Music World – Fall, 2000: “one of the most fluent and flexible pianists of his generation”

All About Jazz – October, 1999: “a multi-talented player capable of undertaking any style or genre”

Downbeat – October, 1999: “consistently picks choice notes for his percolating solos”

JazzTimes – July/August, 1999: “an excellent pianist who plays with elegance and precision. He has a deft touch and swinging rhythmic sense, with the right dollop of funk and soul.”

Jazz Journal – July 1999: “has the technical skills to meet the most demanding musical situations”

Village Voice - May 19, 1999: “He’s a designer: Years of resourceful comping behind Johnny Griffin often revealed who governed the flow of ideas on the stand. Whether soloing or writing, the pianist’s heart is usually available for comment.”

New York Times – May 14, 1999: “has the charging, heavily rhythmic side of bebop playing under his fingers, and he can focus the intensity in a tune as well as any pianist in mainstream jazz.”

Fanfare – Nov/Dec 1998: “*Power Station* contains some of the best jazz I’ve heard of late. Weiss’ consummate command of the piano shines throughout the album.”

Washington Post – May 29, 1998 “Weiss’s compositions take on different shapes, great complexity and fresh perspectives...elegantly designed and full of unexpected harmonic twists....fluid improvisations and multifaceted designs.”

Chicago Reader – April 24, 1998: “Rather than reveling in the idiom’s urgency, he steps back to make greater use of the colors and reflect upon the poetry lurking within bop’s distinctive language.”

Chicago Tribune – April 19, 1998: “In his newest release as a leader, Weiss reaffirms his status as one of the most dynamic young pianists in jazz.. Weiss leads a quartet brimming over with confidence and optimism.”

The New Yorker – October 13, 1997: “one of the most dependable bebop pianists on the scene”

Chicago Tribune - May 21, 1995: "Weiss surely has the technique and erudition to eventually move over from sideman to headliner status. Weiss is a nimble and inventive keyboard artist who couldn't play an inelegant note if he wanted to. Even at full tilt, his sound is sleek, his lines lucid, his textures virtually transparent...his characteristically crystalline sound, seamless right-hand lines and meticulously contoured phrases."

Chicago Reader - April 28, 1995: “Weiss has a strong, clean technique that serves his mastery of bebop phrasing and dynamics, and a complete command of the idiom’s conventions and idiosyncrasies. Pay attention and you’ll start to hear the separate, subtle, and sometimes spectacular virtues of Weiss’ playing.

Chicago Tribune - April 23, 1992: "considerable intensity and sophistication...an unpredictability and searching nature."

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Chicago Reader - May 4, 1990: "has never failed to impress, exhibiting a powerful technique... spectacular...expansive...graceful melodist...imaginative orchestrator ...combines the wonder of spontaneity with a workmanlike acknowledgment of his materials: art and craft in delightful balance."

Chicago Tribune - May 2, 1990: "one of the best young jazz pianists in the business. He has an energy and irrepressible inventiveness. Though pitches often fly quickly, Weiss' melodic lines are more smooth than jagged, his textures delicately shimmering rather than big and brassy. For connoisseurs who wish to pay close attention, Weiss offers a wealth of ideas. Whether Weiss was taking a solo or playing rhythm for the quintet, he produced propulsive, harmonically intriguing music."

Jazz Times - May, 1990: "a thoroughly nourishing musical experience. Michael Weiss has a great feel for the classic bop style without trying to impersonate Bud or Monk"

JazzTimes – October, 1987: "If you thought you had to go to reissues for the real thing, check this record out [*Presenting Michael Weiss*]. It will make you feel good."

Jazz Journal International - March, 1987: "highly articulate with smoothly flowing invention and swing."

Tower Records Pulse - June, 1987: "a major new bop piano voice"

Chicago Tribune - April 20, 1994: "pianist Michael Weiss ranks among the five or ten best young pianists in jazz."

Minneapolis City Pages - April 14, 1993: "one of New York City's finest pianists"

Chicago Sun Times - April 25, 1991: "Weiss has developed from a sharp and impressive bebop player to a wide-ranging pianist of understated elegance. There are no wasted notes or gestures in his playing, an approach that adds considerable power and emotion to those moments when he reaches for something extra."

Atlanta Journal-Constitution – July 6, 1990: "an exciting technically brilliant, yet sensitive pianist"

Chicago Tribune - April 19, 1989: "among younger heirs of the Bud Powell tradition, he is among the best."

Coda - December 1988: "A highlight was the exciting piano work of Michael Weiss, a young man who is making fresh statements within the music's traditions."