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April 23, 2012

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COLUMNISTS

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Winnipeg Free Press - PRINT EDITION

Presslaff in labour before Rebirth of the Cool

By: **Chris Smith**
 Posted: 1:00 AM | Comments: 0 (including replies)

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SUPPLIED PHOTO Presslaff will lead a nine-piece band in his Rebirth of the Cool project.

The Birth of the Cool recording is a classic in jazz, on many levels.

The music, recorded in 1949-50 and not released until 1957, was, as the title says, the formation of the cool jazz sound after the heat of bebop; it was the first pairing of trumpeter Miles Davis and the great arranger Gil Evans, who would collaborate on many other projects; and it involved unusual instrumentation -- trumpet, alto sax, baritone sax, trombone, french horn, tuba, piano, bass and drums -- and arranging for jazz.

Live recordings from the Royal Roost were included with the original studio session on the 1998 release Complete Birth of the Cool.

Now, Winnipeg trombonist and composer Jeff Presslaff is spearheading a Complete Rebirth of the Cool project, a re-creation, if you will, of the creative impetus for the original.

Presslaff will lead a nonet, Friday, May 4, 8 p.m., at the Park Theatre as part of Jazz Winnipeg's concert series (\$12 advance/\$15 door).

"The (Birth of the Cool) music has been one of my favourites since I was a teen. It's in my top 10, for sure," Presslaff says. "I always thought it was a great loss to music history because nothing came of it. No one picked up the gauntlet.

"In recent years, the scores have become available so that music has been recreated (but) no one has written new music for that instrumentation. That ensemble would have become one of Miles' great ensembles. It's one of the great unfinished projects of jazz history."

Besides himself, Presslaff's Rebirth project includes composers Will Bonness, Jonathan Stevens, Chuck McClelland, Ken Gold, Dean McNeill, Keith Price and Danielle Baert. The band is made up of Winnipeggers Presslaff (trombone), Irene Sas (French horn), Gold (baritone sax), Steve Oberheuer (tuba), Bonness (piano) and Gilles Fournier (bass); Brandonites Greg Gatien (alto sax) and Eric Platz (drums); and trumpeter McNeill from Saskatoon.

"The assignment was to write something inspired by the original, but that takes into account all the music since they did it," Presslaff says. "The 12 new pieces are recognizably jazz pieces, but almost all use more evolved harmonic vocabulary -- such as tango and Latin -- things they weren't doing back then. But we kept the idea of an ensemble with a lot of counterpoint, lush textures.

"I didn't want to write a whole new repertoire myself," he said. "I wanted to create the creative condition of the original -- the instrumentation, number of composers. I think I've accomplished that."

The Rebirth project will perform at the Saskatchewan Jazz Festival in Saskatoon in June, and the night after that Presslaff will front a septet playing his music as the opener for the Wayne Shorter

POLL

What did you do for Earth Day?

I went to one of the many Earth Day activities around town.

I did a clean-up in my neighbourhood.

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1. You've got a Target? We're in
2. Long and winding road
3. Ask your ex to turn down her volume
4. Another fine snow job from 'open' government
5. Retracing historic Mandan Trail
6. Principal keeps old-school tie
7. Hunger Games satisfies on many levels
8. Becoming a Canadian citizen a proud day for my buddy, Joe
9. Did that slap not tell you something?
10. Jets, and their fans, will be back

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" My son is in the Winnipeg Boys Choir BY CHOICE. He loves it and even those we told him he needed to cut down on his activities, there was no way he was going to let this go. I suggested it again for next year, and the answer was no. You will see many of these children go on to incredible careers in a wide range of areas, including music (all kinds). We need more boys to stand up and do what they love to do. Finding one's voice and feeling free to express it is an amazing thing. By the way, a lot of them also play hockey, soccer, etc. The directors are amazing, and I encourage parents to check this out! "
 Posted by: [Concerned about this](#)

Quartet.

Tomorrow night, Presslaff, Bonness, Fournier, Platz and Gatien will perform at Mardi Jazz at Centre culturel franco-manitobain, 8:30 p.m., in what the trombonist calls "a little cool quintet, just to get loose."

Saxophonist Jimmy Greene is leaving town in July, so you'll want to catch him play before he goes.

The University of Manitoba jazz professor has taken the job as director of jazz studies at Western Connecticut State University, in his home state and near New York City.

Next Monday, Greene will be in the band when the Curtis Nowosad Quintet -- Derrick Gardner on trumpet, Steve Kirby on bass, Will Bonness on piano and Nowosad on drums -- performs at Aqua Books, 8 p.m. (\$10/\$5 students).

"We'll be playing some of the music that we're going to be recording in late June for my album. Some originals, as well as arrangements of songs by Bob Marley, Pink Floyd, Michael Jackson, Blackstar, Joni Mitchell, and Tupac," Nowosad says.

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Republished from the Winnipeg Free Press print edition April 23, 2012 D5

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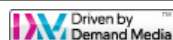
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