

## Jazz Police - The Don Byron New Gospel Quintet Returns to the Jazz Standard, July 12-15

Don Byron

In the spring of 2009, a four-night debut at Jazz Standard officially launched The Don Byron New Gospel Quintet. Now three years to the band has released their latest CD *Love, Peace, and Soul* (Savoy Jazz), a celebration of the joyful, house-rocking side of the African-American gospel tradition. Carla Cook, who began her singing career in a Detroit Methodist Church, is one of three recent additions to the Quintet; the other two are the ex-Sonny Rollins bassist Jerome Harris, and the great pianist and arranger Nat Adderley Jr., whose career résumé includes decades of stage and studio work with Aretha Franklin, Herbie Mann, Luther Vandross, and many more. Pheeroan akLaff on drums fills out the quintet. The Don Byron New Gospel Quintet returns to the Jazz Standard on Thursday, July 12th through Sunday, July 15th.



“In the past few years I have listened more intensively to black religious music than ever before. Examining the specific blues styles peculiar to country, R&B, and rock led me to thorough studies of the blues based religious music of White and Black Southern Gospel. I am combining my own compositions with traditional Gospel pieces in a way I have not attempted before. This project coincides with a growth in my own faith and is for me a religious expression.” –Don Byron

Don Byron

Bronx, New York-born Don Byron is a singular voice in an astounding range of musical contexts, exploring widely divergent traditions while continually striving for what he calls "a sound above genre." As clarinetist, saxophonist, composer, arranger, and social critic, he redefines every genre of music he plays, be it classical, salsa, hip-hop, funk, klezmer, or any jazz style from swing and bop to cutting-edge downtown improvisation.



Since the early 1990s, he has been consistently voted best clarinetist by critics and readers alike in leading international music journals and is acclaimed as much for his restless creativity as for his unsurpassed virtuosity as a player. He has presented a multitude of projects at major music festivals around the world, most recently in Vienna, San Francisco, Hong Kong, London, New Zealand, and New York, including a run on Broadway.

From 2000-05, Byron was Artist-in-Residence at New York's Symphony Space, where he curated the "Contrasting Brilliance" series. In performances with his Symphony Space Adventurers Orchestra, he arranged and performed music by artists as diverse as Igor Stravinsky, Raymond Scott, Sly Stone, Henry Mancini, the Sugar Hill Gang, Herb Alpert, and Earth Wind & Fire. His countless collaborations with other musicians, in concert and on over seventy recordings, range from the Duke Ellington Orchestra to Daniel Barenboim to Salif Keita.

Byron's discography as bandleader comprises eleven albums for Blue Note and Nonesuch Records. His most recent CD's are Ivey-Divey, which was voted Record of the Year 2004 by Jazz Times Magazine and nominated for a Grammy Award, and A Ballad for Many, an album of his compositions performed by the Bang On A Can All-Stars (Cantaloupe Music, June 2006). Do the Boomerang, his interpretations of the music of saxophonist, singer, and soul/R&B legend Junior (Blue Note Records, October 2006) feature Byron almost exclusively on tenor saxophone.

He has composed and arranged music for films, dance, chamber ensembles, and for his own groups. His film soundtracks include the acclaimed documentary "Strange Fruit" (about the history of the anti-lynching song made famous by Billie Holiday) and "Red-Tailed Angels" (about the "Tuskegee Airmen.") Among his chamber works are commissioned compositions for the Kronos Quartet, the Ethel string quartet, the Bang On A Can All-Stars and for the Bang On A Can members Robert Black and Lisa Moore. He has written dozens of compositions in many different configurations for his own ensembles, from duets to a suite of big band pieces commissioned by the Monterey Jazz Festival.

Don Byron's work as a composer reflects the diversity of his influences and inspirations, ranging from Igor Stravinsky to Raymond Scott, from Duke Ellington to James Brown, and from Henry Mancini to Eddie Palmieri. He draws his inspiration for themes and titles from his exploration of the subjects that matter to him most – the technicalities of ethnicity in the Americas and the rest of the world: assimilation, genocide, segregation, prejudice, privilege, poverty, oppression, and the hoarding and sharing of power. His music has always been about these topics, the things that make the world work or not work for so many of us.

Don Byron is also a gifted teacher, who has led residencies at the University of California San Diego, the University of Nevada Reno, Harvard University, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), and Columbia University. From 2005-2009, he was a Visiting Associate Professor at The State University of New York (Albany) where he taught theory, saxophone, improvisation, and composition. In 2007/08, he also taught at MIT as a Martin Luther King Visiting Professor. In 2007, he was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship and a United States Artists Prudential Fellowship. He was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize for composition for his "7 Etudes for Piano" in 2009. As the recipient for "The Samuel Baber Rome Prize for Composition," he just concluded a one-year residency at the American Academy in Rome where he began work on the score for his first opera.

The Jazz Standard is located at 116 East 27th Street (btw. Park and Lex.) 212-576-2232 [www.jazzstandard.net](http://www.jazzstandard.net).



