*JazzNights (91)*

This event marks bassist Dean Johnson’s fifth appearance (25, 29, 70, 89, and now 91) at *JazzNights*, and his first as leader. As befits a “first-call” musician, he has played all over the world from Kyrgystan to Japan as both sideman and leader. Those of you who heard any of those earlier appearances know what we will hear and see next December: virtuosity coupled with a relentless swinging beat, and remarkable sensitivity. Dean Johnson’s musical sensibility was molded by a ten-year association with Gerry Mulligan, and I think it is especially telling that he has accompanied an all-star list of brilliant singers: Sheila Jordan, Carol Sloan, Jackie and Roy, Kendra Shank, Mark Murphy, Helen Merrill, Ernestine Anderson among them. Those folks only sing with the best.

Here is one of my many comments from a 2016 gig at the old Stone:

 “DJ so good! Complex, slurs, chords – just excellent.”

In December Johnson brings another brilliant singer, Paul Jost, who becomes – after 16 years of concerts, our first male singer. He’s a phenomenon, a poly-instrumentalist (piano, drums), as well as a composer and teacher. He has become widely recognized as quite probably our next great male voice:

 "Seemingly unfettered by technical limitations, Ridl can move from an evocative sonic telling of a scene from his North Dakota childhood to a ferocious romp in an unconventional meter that would daunt all but the most adventurous of Jazz pianists.

Cadence

*“*He nearly single-handedly reclaims the male voice as a valid and critically important jazz instrument*.”*

Buster Maxwell

 *“*Once in a great while an artist comes along whose talent and vision allow all that we knew to be viewed through a new facet. Paul is such an arti*st.”*

Michael Barbiero

Pianist Jim Ridl (*JazzNights* 47) comes from that hotbed of jazz talent, North Dakota. After college at the University of Colorado, Denver, he eventually made his way East in 1990, and has been a fixture on the scene ever since, performing with the likes of James Moody, Randy Brecker, Clark Terry, and Billy Hart as well as leading his own groups. He is a pianist of great virtuosity, and is completely at home in the modern idiom. At the same time, he’s not only aware of the rich history of this art form, he’s at home there, too.

"...[Ridl is] an innovative force in jazz, a pianist of the highest caliber, a creative composer and improviser, and one of those rare musicians who stretches the art form even as he honors the established traditions."

Victor Schermer, All About Jazz

I was turned on to Jim Ridl by the always-reliable Mark Reboul, who told me that I had to catch Jim’s quartet at the Kitano one March a few years ago. I did, and Mark was completely right – it was one of the best nights of the year. Ridl and Terell Stafford were in great form, and the rhythm section, anchored by John Benitez, was as good as they get. My notes on the evening are almost embarrassingly over the top (well, no one gets to see them). We can anticipate a great afternoon.

Drummer Tim Horner (*JazzNights* 58) is one of New York’s most in-demand drummers, combining technical skill with a great feel for the emotional content of the music. He, too, has played with the best, and has travelled and represented the US all over the world. I heard him just the other night at Kitano, accompanying Ted Rosenthal and Noriko Ueda.