



33rd Edition - FESTIVAL INTERNATIONAL DE JAZZ DE MONTRÉAL - Michel Bonin Picks™

PICK # 6 Adrian Vedady with pianist Marc Copland

Wednesday 4 July, 18 h (at L'Astral)

UPDATED JULY 4, 8h16 pm. Indeed, I found **Copland** in great form. Out of a generous number of tunes over two sets, some stood out for me. They featured what I would dare to summarize as the most compelling lyrical piano trio improv at the Festival International de Jazz de Montreal in 2012, including of a **Ron Carter's** composition (NUMBER 81) and a couple of great standards (such as GREENSLEAVES), with solos also by **Vedady** and his drummer (both revelations for non-local jazz fans visiting Montreal). The pianist, an American says the official FIJM program, spoke little, but in just enough French, impeccable like his finger work, to make me think **Marc** is indeed French by ancestry (based on 'reliable sources') which would explain his poetic demure. Under what I can only guess is **Copland's** guidance in recent months, the trio also delivered a cross section of mid to late 20th century material, at least those MY dreams are made of, reaching well beyond the **Bill Evans'** trio style some have summarily labelled **Copland**.

Of all the great shows being offered, the one I most look forward to and would not want to miss is **Marc Copland**. Pundits often have qualified the American (I thought he is a Frenchman) as the greatest improviser alive on the keyboard and perhaps on any other 'mainstream' instruments (well maybe not!) His fans around the world don't need to be reminded that he is one of those rare piano greats who used to play saxophone as an accomplished jazz man, a common proof that changing instrument half-way a long career can pay off for both an artist and his audience. At 64 years old, Copland has had a more prolific appearance on disk so far in this century than any other jazz player appearing in this 33rd edition of the FIJM. But I could be wrong **Monsieur Ménard!** ⁽¹⁾ We have come to admire his own style, not **Bill Evans**, not **Chick Corea**, not **Keith Jarrett** either, but something different or perhaps a combination of all those three piano legends. **Copland** is already famous having played with jazz's most originals of his generation. Let us hope his host at the concert **Adrian Vedady**, a popular double bassist on the Montreal jazz scene with his trio, are up to the challenge and meet **Copland's** level.

PICK # 7 Pianist Colin Vallon

Wednesday 4 July, 21 h (at L'Astral)

UPDATED 5 JULY, 5h pm. Do not be put off first by **Vallon** standing up for most of the first 15 minutes of his set picking piano strings. If you leave early, this pizzicato (rarely seen on a jazz festival stage) would have given the impression that one should stick to CD recorded versions of this French experimental jazz group. In fact, string piano is not what defines **Vallon**. He is a most dedicated craftsman, a minimalist interpret including of the compositions of his group's bassist who plays on a much larger range and scale than the pianist himself. **Vallon** insists to stick to the same octaves for some very long minutes (not unlike **Phillip Glass**, **Steve Reich** et al). Not for everyone but those who like a jazz piano trio version of serialism leading to postminimalism when the blue notes are added beside the dissonant ones like in this case.

At 32, **Colin Vallon** is the youngest European piano player invited for this edition of the FIJM with already an international reputation in the making outside Europe. With his spectacular technique, let us hope he reproduces as a soloist this time a mood created by 'Le Paradis Perdu' from his 2006 album 'Ailleurs'. For European musicians bridging a career in North America like **Vallon** born in Lausanne Switzerland, Montréal with the largest French-speaking population of any city outside France, a unique mix of anglo-latin cultures and a world-class jazz festival, is a natural beach-head for the influence of the Gallic styles in America.

PICK # 8 Todd Gustavsen in solo performance

Friday 6 July, 18 h (at Gesù, Centre de créativité)

The gods of jazz criticism, in this case, the eurocentric but well-respected *Penguin Guide*, just a few years ago had qualified **Tord Gustavsen's** a 'seriously underrated (trio)'. In the case of this 42-year old Norwegian, the programmers at the 33rd Edition of the FIJM feature him on four consecutive nights for a second time this decade under the *Invitation Series*. That seems to be a record of all times at the festival, at least for a world-class pianist. Please **Monsieur Ménard**, correct me if I am wrong! ⁽¹⁾ Looking forward to hear **Gustavsen** in a rare solo performance. Whereas on July 5, his trio performs with **Hakon Kornstad** and **Jarlie Vespestad**. Then for those lucky ones still around on the final night of the festival (July 7), let me recommend his unusual duo with a collaborator, the vocalist **Solveig Stettahjell**. There will be 'spiritual airs' in case the American 'mass choir' performing on July 4 has not quenched the festival goers' taste for jazz in the more traditional, less secular mode of **Irreverend James and the Critical Mass Choir** (see Pick # 5).

⁽¹⁾ André Ménard is the co-founder of the festival with Alain Simard. To this day, both continue to be most involved in its programming.