

An Incredible Faculty

By Michael B. Friedman

What a night! The jazz faculty of the Peabody Institute performed at Keystone Korner on May 7 and demonstrated that they are among the best of the best.

The night was a celebration of the growth of the jazz department from seven students to 70 students and to its becoming a world-class place for jazz education since Sean Jones's arrival seven years ago.

Nasar Abaday, a drum instructor, wondered during his comments why Jones had come to Baltimore. Jones responded, "I believe in this community." It is, he said "the real America—as shown by the diversity of the performers—black, white, Latino, women, and men." He added, "The sound is what will save us. It creates unity and shows that we are stronger together."

The music during this night of celebration featured stunning performances by professionals at the top of their game. Headed by Sean Jones, one of the world's best trumpet players, they included (in alphabetical order): Nasar Abadey (drums), Tedd Baker (reeds), Alex Brown (piano), Kris Funn (bass), Tim Green (alto sax), Richard Johnson (piano), Allison Miller (drums), Javier Nero (trombone), Marvin Sewell (guitar), Fran Vielma (percussion), Charenee Wade (vocals), and Warren Wolf (vibes).

The music was as diverse as the performers. Much of it was original, starting with Tedd Baker's "Mr. Harris," a rousing piece with a powerful rhythm driven by Fran Vielma's percussion and Allison Miller's supportive drumming. It also included a lively musical conversation between Baker and Jones, just one of many such improvised conversations over the course of the night.

I wish I had space to comment on each of the tunes played on this special night. They included "There Will Never Be Another You," tightly arranged by Javier Nero; "Tribal Dance," by Warren Wolf; "Once Forgotten," featuring Richard Johnson; "Wolfpack," by Allison Miller; "Common Grounds," a compelling Latin piece by Fran Vielma; and "Eternal Surrender," by Abadey in memory of his father. Charenee Wade changed the pace of the evening with "Suzanne" as a sweet tribute to Roberta Flack, and a tune called "Soft Power," in the spirit, she said, of both Ethel Ennis and Miles Davis. The first set ended with "Baltimore Collective by Alex Brown," which included a cheerful bass solo by Kris Funn, who had been providing solid back up throughout the evening.

A great, great evening, and the really good news is that they will do this again next year. Don't miss it.

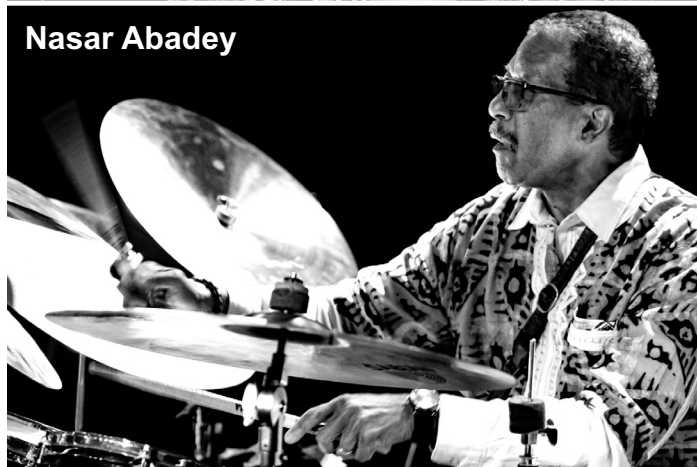
Michael Friedman is a retired social worker and social advocate who is also a semi-professional jazz pianist and photographer; his photographs of jazz artists are on permanent display at Keystone Korner in Baltimore. He writes occasionally for the Baltimore Jazz Alliance newsletter. www.michaelbfriedman.com



Javier Nero



Charenee Wade

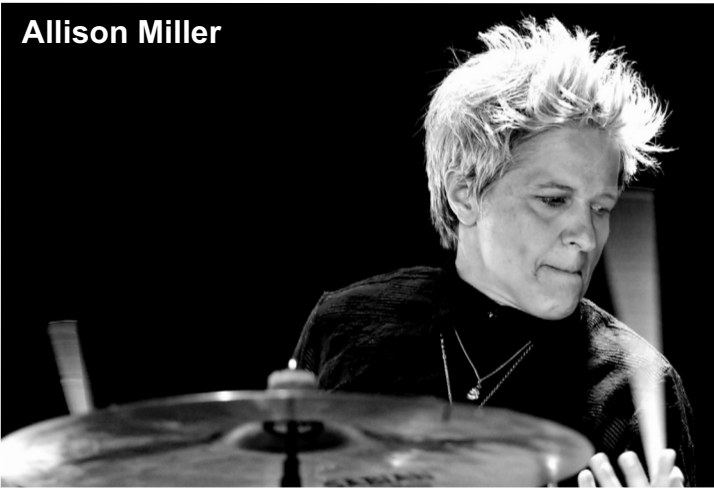


Nasar Abadey



Fran Vielma

Allison Miller



Kris Funn



Alex Brown



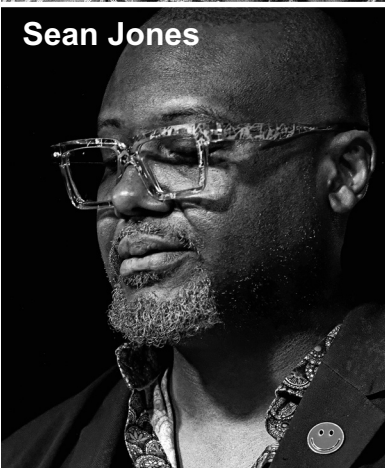
Warren Wolf



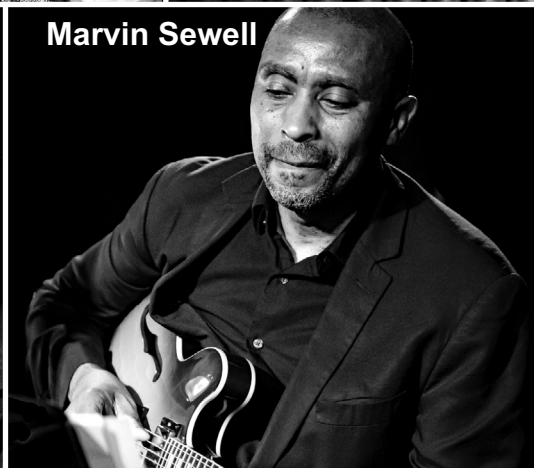
Tim Green



Sean Jones



Marvin Sewell



Tedd Baker



Photographs by Michael B. Friedman

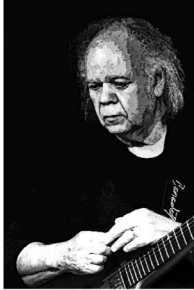
JAZZ IN BALTIMORE
DIGITAL SKETCHES BY MICHAEL FRIEDMAN



Obasi Akoto



Andrea Brachfeld



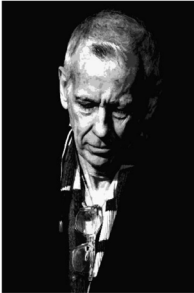
Carl Fillipiak



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Todd Barkan



Joe Locke



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