

Marsha Heydt to play at Chestertown Jazz Festival

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CHESTERTOWN — The Chestertown Jazz Festival is back for a second year in Wilmer Park.

The festival was on hiatus for several years after an initial run in the 1990s. Now, under the guidance of Mel Rapelyea, it's back – and last year's installment showed that the audience is as eager as ever for the music. One of the talents on display this year, Saturday, Sept. 7, will be Marsha Heydt, whose alto sax stylings have been heard on two CDs with her band, Project of Love. Heydt also makes frequent live performances in New York City and in jazz festivals around the nation.

Originally from Allentown, Pa., Heydt studied a number of instruments while growing up, including piano, flute, clarinet, voice and guitar. She played in church, in school bands and orchestras and with local rock bands. But when she saw legendary jazz alto sax man Phil Woods perform, she knew that was the instrument she really wanted to master.

She earned her undergraduate degree in music at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia, studying classical saxophone with David Bilger. Her formal training continued with a master's degree in music education at the Aaron Copland School of Music. She also studied privately with a long string of renowned players. She has been a New York resident since 1992, after a brief foray to Los Angeles.

Her music shows stylistic roots in Latin, funk, jazz and rock. She has performed with Grover Washington, Bill Watrous, Bob Mintzer, Randy Brecker, John Stubblefield, George Gee and his "Make Believe

Ballroom Orchestra," and with Paul Schaefer in a guest appearance on the David Letterman Show. That was when, like many musicians waiting for a break, she was working at the Sam Ash music store in Manhattan.

Her debut CD, "One Night," included compositions by Joe Zawinul, Thelonious Monk, Henry Mancini and Hoagy Carmichael – along with four originals by Heydt. The title tune was written on the roof of her Long Island City



Marsha Heydt

MARSHA HEYDT

Quotes

All Music Guide Review Jonathan Widran, All Music Guide

The joy of jazz and indie record making lies in the artist's ability to do it all, to explore numerous styles without fear of reprisal from corporate entities more concerned with commercialism than art. Veteran New York saxophonist Marsha Heydt's colorful résumé boasts gigs over the years with Randy Brecker, Grover Washington, Jr., Bob Mintzer, and Bill Watrous, in addition to an appearance on the most prestigious Big Apple gig of all, the David Letterman Show.

Her eclectic debut perfectly displays this range of traditional, contemporary, and Latin jazz, but in a more personal way, via a mix of bright originals and cool covers; yes, you've heard "Mercy Mercy Mercy" a million times, but Heydt still makes it a bubbly, old-school, soul-jazz good time. She is all over the map, but the travelogue is a blast, even if she saves her most adventurous groove for last on the South African flavored "Afrikaan." Her danceable, salsified opener lives up to its name "Good Feelin'," boasting some playful duet action with trumpeter Todd Schwartz over the hypnotic piano of Norman Pors. And just when you think it's a Latin jazz date, Heydt picks up her lovely flute and breezes through a tropical version of "Green Dolphin Street," and then digs deep into bluesy territory on a moody run through "You Don't Know What Love Is."

The rest of the set is equally unpredictable and engaging, from her pop-influenced originals "One Night" and the dreamy vocal "I Want You to Know" (sung by Carla Cook), to a romp through Henry Mancini's "Days of Wine and Roses" and a classically tinged take on Alex North's haunting "Spartacus Love Theme." Purists who think Heydt is a bit too poppy can enjoy the saxophonist's trad jazz chops galore on a swinging roll through Thelonious Monk's "Well U Needn't."

CD Review: www.ejazznews.com By: Edward Blanco

A woodwind expert who plays the reeds with a touch of class, Marsha Heydt delivers an electrifying performance on her first outing as leader with "One Night." An album containing a mix of originals and standards that after one listen will leave you wanting more. A multi-instrumentalist, Heydt plays the alto, soprano and the flute through out the thirteen tracks. The music stretches beyond straight ahead jazz and includes slices of Latin jazz, funk and a bit of jazz-rock promising diversity that will please everybody's musical taste.

The lady surrounds herself with an excellent cast that is probably another reason why this disc plays so well. The personnel includes Todd Schwartz (trumpet and flugelhorn), Norman Pors (piano), Sheryl Bailey (guitar), Marc Schmied (bass), Vito Lesczak (drums), Marlon Simon (percussion) and Carla Cook providing the vocals on the beautiful Heydt original "I Want You To Know," featuring the leader on soprano (which she later expands on an instrumental rendition on track 12). Also included here is a three-piece string section appearing on three tracks.

There are two excellent Latin jazz numbers that provide a measure of spice to this recording and they are the opener "Good Feelin'" and the bossa-shaded rendition of Henry Mancini's classic "Days of Wine and Roses." Heydt plays the alto on the first and the flute on the later.

Another soft and beautiful number employing the string section here is "Green Dolphin Street," where the lady again takes on the flute in stylish fashion. The title track features the lady on a mean alto on a very cool melody almost smooth in texture until Simon's percussions and Bailey's guitar kick in turning it into one of the best scores.

Accompanied for the last time by the string section, Heydt turns it on with nice phrases on the soprano on "Blue Too." As for the most outstanding tune here is concerned I would definitely cast my vote for

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"Spartacus Love Theme," where pianist Pors and Erika Friedlander on the cello combine with the leader's forays on the flute producing a slightly Brazilian flavored charmer.

This is one excellent session of beautiful jazz music that will please just about everybody. An impressive and memorable debut for Marsha Heydt.

Cadence

New York-based woodwind player Marsha Heydt on a thirteen-song program that focuses on standards and originals in mixed thematic settings. Heydt is a fine technical player on a variety of reeds, including alto saxophone, flute, and soprano saxophone, with a soloing style that favors the melodic framework as a focal point.

A smooth Latin approach is employed on several numbers, such as the opener, "Good Feelin'," a flute/strings feature, "Green Dolphin Street," and Mancini's "Days Of Wine And Roses." Heydt's front line partner on five cuts is trumpeter Todd Schwartz, who is particularly strong on Monk's "Well, You Needn't." For Heydt, Grover Washington, Jr. is an obvious influence on her sound and there is no better example of this muse than on "Mercy, Mercy, Mercy," as well as the funk of "You Don't Know What Love Is." A few guests also appear to embellish the proceedings, including vocalist Carla Cook on the Heydt original, "I Want You To Know," as well as guitarist Sheryl Bailey, who does her best Wes Montgomery impersonation on "One Night."

Perhaps the strongest and most puzzling surprise given the vibe of the program is the appearance of Downtown great, cellist Erik Friedlander. Friedlander adds his accomplished word on six tracks, most notably for his lovely, yet brief duet with Heydt on "Love Theme From Spartacus," and his stirring pizzicato work on the South African smoothness on "Akrikaan." Frankly, it is just plain odd to hear Friedlander in this setting, but he manages to prove his enormous talent on each outing. As for Heydt and the music contained herein, this is commercial music in the vein of Heydt's Contemporary Jazz heroes, with lots of Latin infusions and smooth lines with very little in the way of straight Jazz content.

CD Review: jazzweekly.com By Bruce Bernardini

A variety of styles of music makes the CD definitely worth listening to. This is very true with Marsha Heydt's CD entitled One Night. The CD starts out with Heydt's own composition Good Feeling. Which shows her groove of a Latin beat. Dueling on both flute and sax, Marsha demonstrates excellent tones on the song Green Dolphin St. The song One Night, track 4 is my favorite tune. It does have that Grover Washington sound that she describes in her linear notes. Very 70's. Her solos on this are melodic yet tasteful. Nice groove on Joe Zawinul's Mercy, Mercy, Mercy. The drummer and bass player play very together without having a lot of added features.

I enjoyed very much the pick of different meters and the types of music, going from Latin, to traditional, to a nice funky blues feel. She has a wonderful rich soulful tone. Her band and she seem to compliment each other very well. She is in a league of her own. Heydt's bio was quite impressive. Playing with artists such as Randy Brecker and even in a guest appearance with Paul Schaefer's band on the David Letterman show.

This whole CD is very laid back. This is a perfect CD for Sunday, by the pool or even listening in your favorite easy chair. You could say its smooth jazz at its finest. Again you will be delighted with the selection her music. It is mixed very well, with a slow tune then a fast then another slow. Her ballads have wonderful soothing strings. Heydt plays deep from her heart. She even plays a great rendition of Georgia on my Mind. The instrumental original tune that is called I Want to Know. Has again great melody, good passing chords with great solos. I give this 3 out of 5 on my Jazz-o-meter.

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apartment building, which gives her a view of Manhattan across the East River. Her second CD, “Diggin’ the Day,” is all originals.

In addition to her musical career, Heydt is the author of a children’s book, “Fred and Her Lilly Pad Band.” It is, in some ways, an outgrowth of her experience teaching young children, some from very poor sections of New York City.

Other jazz festival attractions include keyboard master Cyrus Chesnut, Kent County’s own jazz vocal star Sue Matthews, and a quartet from the University of Maryland led by percussionist Logan Seith, who made a big impression as an apprentice at last year’s National Music Festival. The 100 Voice Choir will open the day of music.

Also, festival attendees can again enjoy the annual “Art in the Park” exhibition, which will be held in an adjacent area of Wilmer Park. There is no charge for the art show, which features artworks and crafts from creators all over the East Coast as well as local favorites.

Advance tickets for the Chestertown Jazz Festival are available at the Garfield Center box office on High Street. Adult tickets are \$20 if purchased before Sept. 7. On the day of the festival, adult tickets are available onsite for \$25. Student tickets are \$10; admission is free for children under 12.