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www.turacomusic.com

TOM HARRISON: A BIOGRAPHY



For alto saxophonist/composer Tom Harrison, the art of jazz is far more than mastery of the instrument, fluency in the repertoire and respect for the tradition. For Tom, the real undertaking is to connect with that which inspired the immortals of jazz, and to cultivate it within his own work.

"While the masters represent an extraordinary level of accomplishment, the inspiration they provide me is the pursuit not just of their greatness but of the essence of that greatness. This is what fuels my passion."

More than drawing inspiration from those giants, Tom is also making a serious commitment to jazz expression through his collaborations with living artists who are strongly connected to the heritage of jazz. He thus continues his conservatoire education on the bandstand, following the grandest traditions of the music.

While studying for his master's degree at Trinity, Tom released his acclaimed debut album DAGDA on Lyte Records, showcasing Tom's striking compositional skills and featuring Irish tenor sax star Michael Buckley. Securing sponsorship from Arts Council England and Jazz Services, Tom set up a 22 date tour featuring a number of guest tenor saxophonists, one of whom was the Jazz Messenger Jean Toussaint, whose strong support of Tom's music laid the foundation for a close relationship that exists to this day.

Impressed with both Tom's musicianship and business acumen, Jean asked Tom to represent him; their business relationship was the spark that formed Turaco Music, creative arts agency, through which Tom represents a number of respected artists.



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"The turaco is a status symbol of Zulu royalty. A bird of immense diversity; each species distinguishes itself by its unique and brilliant plumage, a fitting metaphor for the vision and quality of the artists we represent."

In addition to Turaco's work with Toussaint - including a 14-date tour of the UK in 2014 and the development of 2015's hugely successful Roots & Herbs, a 15-date festival tour celebrating the 25th anniversary of the death of Art Blakey - Turaco also represents pianist/composer Robert Mitchell. Tom was instrumental in setting up Mitchell's landmark 2014 London Jazz Festival premiere of his evening-length Invocation for Robert's ensemble Panacea, the Bournemouth Symphony Chorus and Goldsmiths Big String at Queen Elizabeth Hall. Other affiliated artists include the multi-faceted David Lyttle and trombonist Dennis Rollins. Further information and future plans can be found at www.turacomusic.com

Tom's music lies at the core of his activities with Turaco. Not only does the company represent Tom's three musical projects, but these combine the talents of those he works with and represents. All three projects display Tom's dual purpose of enlightening audiences to the artistry of profound masters while learning from elders and performing alongside them in his ensembles.

"My first album featured my own compositions but my reverence for this music has set me on a continuing journey to find and consolidate my own voice. In my projects I am working tirelessly towards that goal."

The Tom Harrison Quintet featuring Quentin Collins focuses upon the music directly composed by or in some way associated with extraordinary contributors to the great jazz legacy, but too often overlooked or taken for granted. The focus of this group is now upon the brilliant alto saxophonist/flautist/composer Sonny Fortune. Joining the altoist and trumpeter are Robert Mitchell, Conor Chaplin on bass and Dave Hamblett on drums. The group's debut performances at 2015's Derry and London Jazz Festivals were enormously well-received by both critics and loudly enthusiastic audiences.



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The Tom Harrison Quartet with Cleveland Watkiss focuses upon both classic and more obscure music by Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn. The group's UK tour in February 2016 was supported by a major grant from Arts Council England. Two of the dates were recorded live, with a view to being released as Tom's second album projected for the Fall of 2016. Bassist Daniel Casimir joins Tom and Watkiss, as well as David Lyttle on drums and Robert Mitchell on piano.

The third group is the cooperative ensemble Tom Harrison / David Lyttle / John Goldsby with the brilliant world-renowned bassist joining Tom and David for a tour of Ireland in April and Germany in October 2016. All three men will be contributing to the repertoire.

Tom has an impressive array of credentials for someone only four years into his career. In addition to six UK tours as a leader - the most recent featuring the Leeds College's Head of Jazz Studies, Jamil Sharif - in 2014, Tom toured as a sideman throughout Ireland with the formidable trumpet star Terrell Stafford. Around that same time, Tom was commissioned by Birmingham Jazz to compose Harrison's Film Music Project. The highly-praised premiere, featuring Robert Mitchell, was the beginning of their musical relationship. That same year Tom was a featured guest soloist alongside the powerful and iconic American rap artist Talib Kweli on a track from David Lyttle's MOBO-nominated album Faces.

Born in Wales, Tom's family moved to Sheffield when he was 7, providing him with full exposure to the arts. Tom was particularly inspired by his grandfather, a very talented pianist and organist whose beautiful interpretations of Bach, Debussy, Faure and Chopin made a powerful impact on him. Shortly after the move to Sheffield he became a chorister at Sheffield Cathedral where he learned about musical discipline. Taking up the oboe at 8, he continued a traditional course of study with it until he was 18. But at 12, captivated by the music of Led Zeppelin and Jimi Hendrix among others, he taught himself guitar and drums and began jamming with other aspiring young musicians, unknowingly at the time forming a foundation for the pursuit of jazz.

Hendrix opened the way to Miles Davis, Cannonball Adderley, Ornette Coleman, John Coltrane and Charlie Parker. At 18, he dropped the oboe and took up the saxophone. His other influences include Lester Young, Joe Henderson, Ben Webster, Johnny Hodges, Joe Lovano and Sonny Fortune, a recent discovery that shows the openness to continue to learn and grow through exposure. The world of



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education remains important to Tom who credits his teachers at Trinity, particularly Martin Speake, Julian Siegel and Mark Lockheart, for much of his understanding of the music. In addition to teaching privately, Tom also teaches 6-13 year olds in a prominent London school. Since 2013 he has also led masterclasses: most recently at Leeds College in connection with the Sonny Fortune project.

"I want to be able to reach people, to communicate the essence of jazz at its most profound: the joyfulness and abandon of dancing music, the soul of the blues, the transcendent energy and spirituality of the avant-garde. I want to communicate these things with such freshness and originality that it will seem as if they had never existed before."

For more information visit www.tomharrisonsax.com

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