
Profile

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JACK DEJOHNETTE
profile

In a career that spans five decades and includes collaborations with some of the most iconic figures in modern jazz, NEA and Grammy winner Jack DeJohnette has established an unchallenged reputation as one of the greatest drummers in the history of the genre. The list of creative associations throughout his career is lengthy and diverse: John Coltrane, Miles Davis, Ornette Coleman, Sonny Rollins, Thelonious Monk, Bill Evans, Stan Getz, Keith Jarrett, Chet Baker, George Benson, Stanley Turrentine, Herbie Hancock, Dave Holland, Joe Henderson, Freddy Hubbard, Betty Carter and so many more. Along the way, he has developed a versatility that allows room for hard bop, R&B, world music, avant-garde, and just about every other style to emerge in the past half-century.

Born in Chicago in 1942, DeJohnette grew up in a family where music and music appreciation was a high priority. Beginning at age four, he studied classical piano privately and later at the Chicago Conservatory of Music. He added the drums to his repertoire when he joined his high school concert band at age 14.

“As a child, I listened to all kinds of music and I never put them into categories,” he recalls. “I had formal lessons on piano and listened to opera, country and western music, rhythm and blues, swing, jazz, whatever. To me, it was all music and all great. I’ve kept that integrated feeling about music, all types of music, and just carried it with me. I’ve maintained that belief and feeling in spite of the ongoing trend to try and compartmentalize people and music.”

By the mid-1960s, DeJohnette had entered the Chicago jazz scene – not just as a leader of his own fledgling groups but also as a sideman on both piano and drums. He experimented with rhythm, melody and harmony as part of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians during the group’s early days, and later drummed alongside Rashied Ali in the John Coltrane Quintet. He garnered international recognition during his tenure with the Charles Lloyd Quartet, one of the first jazz groups to receive crossover attention.

In 1968, DeJohnette joined Miles Davis's group just prior to the recording of *Bitches Brew*, an album that triggered a seismic shift in jazz and permanently changed the direction of the music. Miles later wrote in his autobiography: "Jack DeJohnette gave me a deep groove that I just loved to play over." DeJohnette stayed with Davis for three years, making important contributions to prominent Davis recordings like *Live-Evil* and *A Tribute to Jack Johnson* (both in 1971) and *On the Corner* (1972).

During this same period, DeJohnette also recorded his first albums as a leader, beginning with *The DeJohnette Complex* in 1968 on Milestone. He followed up with *Have You Heard* in 1970, then switched to Prestige, where he released *Sorcery* in 1974 and *Cosmic Chicken* in 1975.

The mid 1970s were marked by a series of short-lived groups and projects – many of them leaning toward the experimental side of jazz, including The Gateway Trio (featuring Dave Holland and John Abercrombie), Directions (with Abercrombie and saxophonist Alex Foster), and New Directions (Abercrombie, with Eddie Gomez on bass). Special Edition – which helped launch the careers of little known musicians like David Murray, Arthur Blythe, Chico Freeman, John Purcell and Rufus Reid – remained active into the 1990s, although the project was frequently interrupted by DeJohnette's various other collaborative ventures, especially recordings and tours with Keith Jarrett.

DeJohnette has worked extensively with Jarrett as part of a longstanding trio with Gary Peacock. The threesome will celebrate its 30th anniversary in 2013.

Another of DeJohnette's high-profile projects in the early 1990s was a touring quartet consisting of himself, Holland, Herbie Hancock and Pat Metheny. In 1992, the group released *Music for a Fifth World*, an album inspired by Native American culture that also included appearances by Vernon Reid and John Scofield. Given the diversity of players and styles that he had embraced by this point, DeJohnette was already describing his music in the „90s as “multidimensional.”

In 2004, DeJohnette recorded and toured with two Grammy nominated projects – Out of Towners, with Jarrett and Peacock (aka the Standards Trio); and Ivey Divey, which featured Don Byron and Jason Moran. He continued to work with Jarrett and Peacock in 2005, but also launched numerous additional ventures that same year, the first of which was the Latin Project – a combo that consisted of percussionists Giovanni Hidalgo and Luisito Quintero, reedman Don Byron, pianist Edsel Gomez, and bassist Jerome Harris. Other projects in 2005 included The Jack DeJohnette Quartet, featuring Danilo Perez, John Patitucci and Harris; and the Beyond Trio, a group that celebrated the music of drummer Tony Williams, featuring John Scofield and Larry Goldings.

And if that weren't enough to make for a busy year, 2005 also marked the launch of DeJohnette's own imprint, Golden Beams Productions. His first two projects on the new label were *Music from the Hearts of the Masters*, a duet recording with Gambian kora player Foday Musa Suso, and a relaxation and meditation album entitled *Music in the Key of Om*, featuring DeJohnette on synthesizer and resonating bells. The latter recording was nominated for a Grammy in the Best New Age Album category. He closed 2005 with the release of *Hybrids*, a seamless weave of African jazz, reggae and dance music that featured Foday Musa Suso and an international cast representing musical styles from around the world.

Two live recordings emerged in 2006: *The Elephant Sleeps But Still Remembers* (Golden Beams), which captured his first musical encounter with guitarist Bill Frisell at the Earshot Festival in Seattle in 2001; and *Saudades* (ECM), a 2004 London concert celebrating the music of Tony Williams. DeJohnette and Frisell reunited in the fall of 2006 – along with multi-instrumentalist Jerome Harris and mix master Ben Surman – for a tour to promote *The Elephant Sleeps*.

DeJohnette continued to explore African music in 2007 via the Intercontinental project, a partnership with South African singer Sibongile Khumalo that included a successful European tour and culminated in a performance at the Capetown Jazz Festival in South Africa. Other projects in 2007 included studio gigs and tour dates with Bruce Hornsby, Christian McBride, Herbie Hancock, Wayne Shorter and Ron Carter. DeJohnette also appeared on Michael Brecker's posthumously released final album, *Pilgrimage*.

Extensive touring continued in 2008, along with the recording of a trio album with Patitucci and Perez during a snow storm near DeJohnette's home in upstate New York. The sessions resulted in *Music We Are*, released in April 2009 with a bonus DVD that provided a rare look at the trio's friendship, their creative relationship and their approach to the recording process.

DeJohnette's *Peace Time* won a Grammy in 2009 for Best New Age Album. The album consists of an hour-long, continuous piece of music that eMusic described as “flights of flute, soft hand drumming, and the gently percolating chime of cymbal play, moving the piece along a river of meditative delight.” But the 2009 Grammy is just one many awards that DeJohnette has received over the years, beginning in 1979

with the French Grand Prix Disc and Charles Cros awards. He has figured prominently into readers polls and critics polls conducted by *Downbeat* and *JazzTimes* over the past two decades. He was awarded an honorary doctorate of music from Berklee College of Music in Boston in 1991, and was inducted into the Percussive Arts Society's Hall of Fame in 2010.

In 2011, he was chosen to perform at the Kennedy Center in tribute to his longtime friend and musical inspiration, Sonny Rollins. Marking his 70s birthday in 2012, he received a National Endowment for the Arts Jazz Master Fellowship – the highest U.S. honor for jazz musicians – in recognition of his extraordinary life achievements, contributions to advancing the jazz art form, and for serving as a mentor for a new generation of aspiring young jazz

musicians. The year-long birthday celebration included performances at the Monterey and Newport Jazz festivals, a tour of Europe with The Jack DeJohnette Group (a quintet he formed in 2010) and several concerts with Chick Corea and Stanley Clarke.

Despite all the awards and accolades, though, DeJohnette continues to make the creative process his highest priority. His latest projects include his long standing trio DeJohnette – Coltrane & Garrison. Hudson with John Scofield, John Medeski and Larry Grenadier.