

Musicians Resonate Through George Klabin's Label and Intimate Recitals

George Klabin is a big-picture kind of guy. His label, Resonance Records, is one arm of his Rising Jazz Stars Foundation, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Like its parent company, Resonance presents new artists to the jazz public: violinist Christian Howes, Romanian pianist Marian Petrescu, flutist Lori Bell, singers Angela Hagenbach and Greta Matassa, Swedish guitarist Andreas Öberg and pianist/composer/arranger Tamir Hendleman among them. The roster is hedged with household names like pianist/arranger Bill Cunliffe, pianist John Beasley, Brazilian flugelhornist Claudio Roditi and Italian pianist Dado Moroni.

Southern California has many ongoing jazz salons, but Klabin's Rising Jazz Stars recitals—held in a converted Beverly Hills building—are recorded professionally and taped with state-of-the-art video equipment. "There are two areas I've excelled at—working with unique creative virtuosos and helping them get their best work in front of the public," Klabin said.

He added, "My feeling is that the mainstream jazz of the 1960s and the '70s was the apex of jazz. The greatest practitioners in that era had the best melodic, harmonic and rhythmic content. My artists are all working off of those traditions in one way or another."

Klabin also began releasing unknown material by past masters. The initial release was Freddie Hubbard's *Pinnacle: Live & Unreleased From Keystone Korner*. "I'm only issuing music that has never seen the light of day," he said. "That ranks with the artist's best work. I'll be putting out a Bill Evans album and the first new Wes Montgomery album since his passing in 1968."

In college, Klabin hosted a jazz show on WKCR at Columbia University, his alma mater. "I started with earphones, six microphones and a two-track tape recorder," he recalled. "I had to get it right." He worked as an engineer at a studio owned by erstwhile French horn player Don Elliott on New York's West Side. "Don Schlitten produced for Prestige there," Klabin noted. "I recorded Dexter Gordon, Pucho and the Latin Soul Brothers—about eight albums."

In 1969 Klabin bought a half-interest in a small studio, where the son of business partner and violinist Harry Lookofsky had recorded. They called it Sound Ideas. In 1973, Klabin and Lookofsky moved into the former Capitol Records Studio on West 46th Street, first occupying the upstairs studio complex and then, in 1975, the 3,000-square-foot main studio, which was rebuilt with a 24-track mixing board. "We were one of the few New York studios that could accommodate a symphony orchestra," he recalled.



At Sound Ideas, Klabin first recorded incidental music for "The Archies" TV show. It was the disco era and the hit "A Fifth Of Beethoven" was a Sound Ideas product, as were five James Brown albums for Polygram and the early Denon digital jazz recordings. Klabin recorded many Roulette jazz releases, as well as Blue Note, CBS and many other labels. He closed the studio in 1981 and spent 22 years away from music in a professional capacity.

He moved west, producing concerts at The Vic in Santa Monica. The Beverly Hills recitals followed. Since 2008, there have been 28 Resonance releases. In 2010, Cunliffe won a Grammy for best arrangement on *Resonance Big Band Plays Tribute To Oscar Peterson*, and Roditi's *Brazilliance X4* was nominated for a Latin Grammy. In 2011, Beasley's *Positooty!* received a Grammy nomination for best jazz instrumental CD.

Resonance artist Hendelman, a sought-after pianist and orchestrator, sees how Klabin's skills figure into his work: "Part of the producer's job is to know when it's time to go for one more take and when it's time to move on. George has great ears, and he gives the artist space to make the creative choices to make the album that the artist wants. It's refreshing and inspiring to have someone like George, whose mission is to support the music and deliver it in its most realized form to the audience's ear."

Bell appreciates Resonance's full-service nature. "He puts a lot of production value into the recordings," she said. "He's really hands-on. He likes to be in control, but he really does listen to us. If you've seen the videos of the concert that Tamir and I did on the Resonance website, you see that the production values are first-rate."

—Kirk Silsbee



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