

carlton holmes



Carlton Holmes is a pianist of exceptional talent, musicality, and creativity. His sensitivity and inventiveness has allowed him to be one of the most sought after musicians in the New York area. An increasing number of students seek him out because of his knowledge and experience.

Born in Michigan, raised in Seattle, Washington, and Albuquerque, New Mexico, Carlton's musical training began at the age of eight. After studying trumpet, then drums, Carlton picked up piano at age eleven. By the age of fifteen, Carlton was playing professionally. He also won several best soloist awards in the All State jazz band competitions during his youth.

Carlton Holmes' career in New York began after he completed his Masters degree at the Manhattan School of Music. He found himself playing diversified gigs, and soon became known as one of the 'Young Lions', playing with drum great Charli Persip for six years and beginning what is now a fifteen year relationship with Master drummer Michael Carvin. Along with extensive studio work Carlton also composed and performed for a number of film and television productions as well as Broadway.

In addition to leading his own bands, Carlton's performing and recording credit includes work with Lionel Hampton, Freddie Hubbard, Kenny Garrett, Branford Marsalis, Max Roach, Stevie Wonder, Diane Reeves, Regina Belle, Donald Bryd, Terumasa Hino, and many others. Carlton continues to play and record with drum sensation Cindy Blackman, saxophone great Carlos Garnett and guitarist Ronny Jordan.

Carlton is also an active educator of piano, music theory and keyboards for all levels of students. He maintains correspondence with students from around the world.

www.carltonholmes.com

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selected discography

MICHAEL CARVIN:

Marsalis Music Honors
Michael Carvin
Rounder Records, 2006

Each One Teach One
Highnote Records, 1992

CARLOS GARNETT:

Moon Shadow
Highnote Records, 2001

Under Nubian Skies
Highnote Records, 1999

Fuego en Mi Alma
Highnote Records, 1997

Resurgence
Muse Records, 1996

CINDY BLACKMAN:

Someday...
Highnote Records, 2001

Works on Canvas
Highnote Records, 1999

Multiplicity (video)
Rittor Music, 1998

CECILIA SMITH:

Dark Triumph
CEA Music Company, 2006

PAUL ABLER:

Fearless
Abler Records, 2005

DION PARSON:

People Music
Tahmun Records, 2004

DEBORAH LIPPMANN:

Nightingale
NJ Records, 2004

TEREASA VINSON:

Opportunity Please Knock
Amplified Records, 2004

DAN FAULK:

Songbook Vol. 1
Ugli Fruit Productions 2003

LEON DORSEY:

Song of Songs
Umoja Productions, 1999

THE BILL KIRCHNER NONET:

Live in Concert
Challenge Records, 1999

TERUMASA HINO:

Off The Coast
Sweet Basil Records, 1995

CAROLA GREY:

Age of Illusions
Jazzline Records, 1994

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selected press

"...most memorable musical experience? It was with a piano player, Carlton Holmes... We went through different motions, different moods and different movements. That was one of the best musical experiences I've ever had..."

Cindy Blackman

"Carlton Holmes continually weaves a soulful web of enchantment including some funky down-home playing."

Butch Berman

"...the inventive, tasty, fluent Holmes..."

Harvey Pekar, JAZZIZ Magazine

"Carlton and I play like one person. He uses space...but he also has something to say. I even love the way he walks, because it tells you that, whatever the situation, it's cool."

Michael Carvin

"There is a buoyancy in the piano playing of Carlton Holmes, a lightness of step, a sense of intuition and flow that draws a listener in..."

Zan Stewart, The Star Ledger

"I caught the early set of pianist Carlton Holmes' gig last night ...Holmes, who is one of those musicians who somehow has flown under the radar, is a terrific player playing with a lot of confidence and authority."

Chris Astoria

www.carltonholmes.com



PHOTOS BY YAN HUANG/THE STAR-LEDGER

Carlton Holmes practices at his home in Queens, N.Y. The young pianist studied classical music before turning to jazz when he was 15.

The incredible lightness of Carlton

JAZZ

Carlton Holmes

When: 8 p.m.-12:30 a.m. Thursday

Where: Smoke Jazz Club and Lounge, 2751 Broadway at 106th Street, New York.

How much: No music charge, \$15 minimum. Call (212) 864-6662 or visit www.smokejazz.com.

What else: Holmes plays with Michael Carvin's quartet Aug. 4-5, 6:30 and 8:45 p.m., at Shanghai Jazz, 24 Main St., Madison; no music charge; \$20-\$30 minimum at tables, \$10 at bar. (973) 822-2899; www.shanghaijazz.com.

BY ZAN STEWART
STAR-LEDGER STAFF

There is a buoyancy in the piano playing of Carlton Holmes, a lightness of step, a sense of intuition and flow that draws a listener in.

Whether it's working with John Farnsworth's sextet at Smoke in New York or with Michael Carvin's quartet at Cecil's in West Orange or on the latter's new CD — "Marsalis Music Salutes Michael Carvin" (Rounder) — the less-than-marquee-status yet decidedly gifted Holmes moves the

sound in an engaging manner. A native of Lansing, Mich., who was raised in Albuquerque, N.M., Holmes, 40, performs Thursday with his trio at Smoke, then joins Carvin's quartet Aug. 4-5 at Shanghai Jazz in Madison. He said his piano concept is based on being relaxed and letting the music he hears come out, with the goal of drawing listeners in.

"The idea is to let go, be utterly honest, execute how I feel at the moment," Holmes said from his home in Queens. "Music, at a high level, is beyond emotion. There's a kind of spirituality, universality, about it, which is why people respond. So I'm trying to pull people in, have them (metaphorically) on the stage, inside what we're doing."

Holmes started classical piano studies about age 10, and discovered jazz at 15. He names such masters as McCoy Tyner, Herbie Hancock, Thelonious Monk, Red Garland, and Keith Jarrett among his inspirations. At Smoke, he'll appear in a new trio with established colleagues: bassist

Brad Jones and drummer Donald Edwards.

The pianist and Jones have been playing for more than a decade, primarily with saxophonist Carlos Garnett. Holmes relishes the bassist's flexibility. "Whatever I do, wherever I go, he'll adjust accordingly," said Holmes, who has also recorded with Garnett, drummer Cindy Blackman and many others, though not yet as a leader. "So it's very free when we play, though not free music."

Holmes met Edwards working with guitarist Mark Whitfield in 2003. "Donald has a unique view of rhythm that ranges from past to present, from swing and before to hip-hop," he said.

Thursday, Holmes originals will be spotlighted. One might be "Eternal Justice," a modern-minded number that sways between a swing feel and an insistent straight-eighth note groove. Or perhaps "Waltz for Gina," which has been recorded several times — including by Carvin on his 1992 Muse CD, "Each One

Teach One" — or "My Isha." "I wrote that in Istanbul in 1991, when I was playing a 20-week, six-night-a-week gig with Michael (Carvin)," Holmes recalled. "It's 20 bars long, and each chorus ends with a four-bar drum break."

Holmes wants to record with the trio. "I'm excited about it," he said. "I'm starting to hear a sound I haven't heard before."

Playing with Carvin is also top-rate in Holmes' mind. "We're going in the same direction, trying to achieve a kind of honesty with the music," he said. "As simple as it sounds, there's not a lot of people doing that."

Holmes said he admires Carvin for what he feels is "the space between the notes." "It feels vast to me, this space, even when the music moves quickly," he said.

The concept of space is another powerful aspect of Holmes' artistry.

When he moved to New York in 1986, after graduating from the University of Tulsa in Oklahoma, he said he had to "dig down deep."

"It took a long time to get that New York touch, which is to me a kind of relaxed quickness of execution, a space between the notes," he said. "You might hear that in my playing."



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