



Joe Chambers Still at the Top of His Game—Musically

By Gwendolyn Black

When you talk about jazz music many names and places come to mind. The cultural trendsetters who helped to transform jazz music beyond its roots and into a global phenomenal art form. Among the who's who in the world of jazz music multi-instrumentalist Joe Chambers, whose talents extend to drums, piano, vibraphones, marimba, and composer, has historically seen it all and played through it all. A career that spans from the post Be-bop era of the 1960's down through the Avant-garde movement and beyond, Joe Chambers has been the top choice for many recording sessions and tours.

He has recorded over 500 albums and CDs both as a sideman and a leader. He has played and recorded with jazz greats such as Miles Davis, McCoy Tyner, Chick Corea, Sonny Rollins, Charlie Mingus and Dizzy Gillespie among many others. Many of his compositions can be heard on

albums such as *Mirrors* that was first released on Freddie Hubbard's *Breaking Point* and Bobby Hutcherson's *Stick Up*.

Born in Chester, PA in 1942, Joe Chambers credits his influences to journey into the world of music from his upbringing in Philadelphia, where there is a long tradition of music. "We had a musical family. I was playing on pots and pans when I was real young, maybe about four or five. There was a piano in the house so I used to pluck on it. We all played instruments and danced to many popular tunes. In the 1950's there was a lot of activity and musicians playing and coming up at that time" adds Chambers.

While just in his teens, Chambers began to play professionally and his first major gig was when he did a tour with the R&B artist Bobby Charles who had a hit song *Tossin' & Turnin'*.

After gigging around the Washington, DC area, in 1963 he moved to New York City where he



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played with such greats as alto saxophonist Eric Dolphy, trumpeter Freddie Hubbard, and pianist Andrew Hill. In the mid 60’s he began to play and record with “progressive” musicians on the Blue Note label such as vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson, with whom he had a long standing musical association, saxophonists Joe Henderson, Wayne Shorter, Sam Rivers, and pianist Herbie Hancock.

In the 1970’s his association with legendary master drummer Max Roach led to his involvement as an original member of Roach’s group M’Boom where he first began to play the marimba—a wooden instrument that is derived from the African marimba. Throughout the 70’s and 80’s the group embarked on a successful tour throughout Europe and subsequently the release of many recordings on Inner City Blues, Columbia Records, and Soul Note to name a few.

Aside from his music, Joe Chambers has a passion for jazz history and culture. He has taught at the New School in New York City in the Jazz and Contemporary Music Program. In 2008, he was hired to be the first Thomas S. Kenan

Distinguished Professor of Jazz at the University of North Carolina in Wilmington, where he is still teaching and reaching today’s generation of musicians.

After recording for many years on a number of albums along with the release of his own albums including his first entitled *Almoravid* in 1973 on Muse Records, the release of *Mirrors* in 1998 is his first as a leader on the Blue Note Label. His *Joe Chambers Moving Pictures Orchestra* live recorded from Dizzy’s Coca-Cola Club in New York City, released on Savant Records in 2012, was nominated for a Grammy in 2013. Chambers also contributed to the soundtracks for several Spike Lee films, including “Mo’ Better Blues.”

Today, Chambers has just completed his 12th recording for Blue Note Records entitled *Samba De Maracato* which is due out on February 12th 2021. The album includes pianist Brad Merritt, bassist Steve Haines, and singer Stephanie Jordan. For further information about upcoming performances and where to purchase the CD, please visit www.josephchambers.com.

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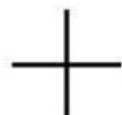
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