

# Joshua Redman launches city jazz fest

## IAS, WICN team up for Mass Jazz Festival

By Chet Williamson

Saxophonist Joshua Redman is a reluctant young lion. Though he roars with all the fury and ferociousness of the tenor titans who climbed the mountain before him, Redman would rather respect the past than be lifted up in comparison.



Chet

next great hope or the torch

bearer I'd be intimidated, but I don't see myself as that," he said, speaking by phone from his home in New York. "All I am is a young musician who is serious about the music."

Dubbed the "crown prince" of the tenor saxophone by *Downbeat* magazine in 1994, Redman is as serious as your life about jazz. In fact, he was born into the music. His father is Dewey Redman, an often-overlooked great saxophonist who is best known for his work with Ornette Coleman and Keith Jarrett.

Young Redman is also a serious student. Always has been. Born in 1969 in Berkeley, Calif., he was valedictorian at his high school graduation. In 1991 he graduated from Harvard and was scheduled to attend Yale Law School when he declined in order to pursue a career in music.

"I played in the Harvard Jazz Band for a couple of years," he said, remembering his days in the hub. "Rather than going back home, during the summers, I would go across the river, from Cambridge to Boston and hang out with musicians who

went to Berklee College of Music and New England Conservatory."

A major decision to follow the jazz life came when Redman won first prize in the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz Saxophone Competition. The recognition rippled through the jazz community. The following year he won best new artist in *Jazz Time's* readers poll. In 1993, *Down Beat* critics poll voted him the No. 1 tenor saxophonist deserving wider recognition. In 1994 *Down Beat* readers poll crowned him "jazz musician of the year" and his release *Wish* won jazz album of the year.

Redman has arrived and conquered. Along the way he's performed and/or recorded with a variety of artists from Milt Jackson, Elvin Jones and Roy Haynes to B.B. King, Big Daddy Kane and Chaka Kahn.

Now the newly organized Mass Jazz Festival brings Joshua Redman and his quartet to Worcester at 8 p.m. on Saturday, Nov. 4, at Mechanics Hall.

The Mass Jazz Festival is the collaboration of two local cultural organizations, the International Artist Series (IAS) and radio station WICN, 90.5 FM. The series continues with Joey DeFrancesco and Ernestine Anderson on Feb. 9 and Milt Jackson on March 15.

According to Charles Breckling, executive director of IAS, the new festival will also focus on community and educational outreach through a series of jazz performances and workshops in the region which will feature musicians throughout the area.

"The time has come for central New England to stage a really top-notch jazz festival," said Steve Charbonneau, jazz



Joshua Redman

coordinator for WICN. "All of us at WICN and IAS are thrilled that such superb musicians are coming to Mechanics Hall, which has been recognized as one of the finest concert halls in the country."

Redman will also give a workshop Saturday afternoon (time TBA) at WPI's Alden Hall. Admission is \$6 to the general public. Call 831-5749 for more information.

Redman is touring in support of his latest two-CD release *Spirit of the Moment*, recorded live at New York City's legendary Village Vanguard. Backed by his quartet of pianist Peter Martin, bassist Christopher Thomas and drummer Brian Blade, Redman easily proves why he is so

highly touted. In a challenging program of ten original compositions and four standards, he maps out the entire creative lineage of the saxophone. The link clasps together Coleman Hawkins' intelligent articulations, Lester Young's melodicism, Dexter Gordon's bop extensions, Sonny Rollins' athleticism, Coltrane's upper structure explorations and spiritualism and the oblique romanticism of his dad. The chain completes itself with Redman.

"I've been very influenced by that tradition but with all my influences, I've never really sat down and tried to emulate them," Redman said. "I've really just listened to the music and been influenced by the spirit of the music."~