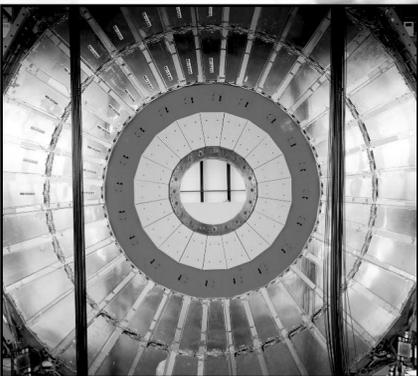


# NELS CLINE



AAJ-NY Musician of the Year 2010



INITIATE by the Nels Cline Singers  
Best New Release 2010 - Honorable Mention



DIRTY BABY by Nels Cline

COWARD		Draw Breath
New Monastery		The Giant Pin
Instrumentals		The Inking

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There are just a few pianists with the stature and sheer musical resources to carry off a full week of solo piano at the Village Vanguard. **Fred Hersch** is one of them and he set the precedent in 2006. Martial Solal and Cecil Taylor have followed suit with week-long solo showcases of their own. By the time Hersch played the final set of his triumphant return engagement (Dec. 5th), he was extremely limber and fully at ease, summoning a huge yet rounded and intimate sound from the grand piano dominating the stage. "In the Wee Small Hours of the Morning" was his opener, a radiant ballad framed by unsettled left-hand tremolos at the beginning and end of the take. Rarely a flashy player, Hersch tends to keep his considerable chops in reserve to suit the music. But here, after 11 previous sets, he was flying. His articulation on the dark but fast 6/4 of "Echoes" was hair-raising. His midtempo swing on "Lee's Dream" (based on "You Stepped Out of a Dream") was bristling and full of surprise. His lyricism on "Doce de Coco" was without peer. His encore, Sonny Rollins' "Doxy", followed a route similar to "You're My Everything" from Hersch's latest trio album *Whirl* - all improvisation until the very last round, when the melody finally emerged. Thelonious Monk's "Work" also found Hersch deep in swing and discovery, landing like a gymnast after a set of risky moves. If this was work, he wasn't letting it show. A live recording is due from Palmetto in March 2011.

- David R. Adler



Fred Hersch @ Village Vanguard

**Keith Rowe** has spent the last few decades taking the guitar as far away from its guitariness as he can. But in the last few years, at least since his Four Gentlemen of the Guitar project, it seems he has been bringing it back to, oh, 'guitaricity', let's call it. In part this has been the result of working with other deeply abstract guitarists, such as **Oren Ambarchi** and Christian Fennesz, who both retain a little more of the electric six-string sound than usually emanates from Rowe's tabletop setup. In a breathtaking trio with Ambarchi and Canadian electronicist **crys cole** at Littlefield Dec. 4th, it was the accidental sounds of guitars and HVAC units that punctuated the quiet purr of their three tables of gear. The only orthodox sounds coming from the two guitars (and more likely Ambarchi's) were what, in other forms, would be heard as mistakes: a brushed strum or fingertips moving against the strings. Otherwise the guitars were speaking foreign tongues as cole, with her array of effects, added to the layers of hushed hums and disembodied buzzes. The venue's heating fan made the group into an inadvertent quartet, adding blocks of white noise throughout, which was a distraction only if it was allowed to be. Problematic, perhaps, but still in the industrial couture of the dark room, the fan (often louder than the players) had a way of reinforcing the delicacy of the sounds being produced, an effect rather like a wall made with glass bricks and clouds.

- Kurt Gottschalk



Keith Rowe, crys cole and Oren Ambarchi @ Littlefield

Having won the 2010 Thelonious Monk Competition, vocalist **Cécile McLorin Salvant** was first to appear in the Tribeca Performing Arts Center's annual "Monk In Motion" finalists' showcase (Dec. 4th). The Miami-born, French-American Salvant has a thing for choice old repertoire - the Bessie Smith vehicles "You've Got to Give Me Some" and "Take It Right Back", Valaida Snow's minor-key burner "You Bring Out the Savage in Me" - and she's capable of rendering these in a vintage '30s style. But set against pianist Dan Nimmer's tight Red Garland-esque solos and the boppish groove of bassist John Webber and drummer Pete Van Nostrand, Salvant's singing took on a modern glow. Her banter was minimal and stiff - give her some years and her stage presence will surely improve. But the singing was playful and charismatic on "Love for Sale", "I Only Have Eyes for You", "If I Only Had a Brain", "Laugh Clown Laugh" and a number of more obscure items, such as Benny Carter's ballad "Love, You're Not the One for Me". Her pitch was unerring in all registers and her clever dynamics - from frail pianissimos to exaggerated fortes on smartly chosen vowels - had the effect of drawing listeners into every lyric. In a nod to the great James Moody, she closed with a soulful "Moody's Mood for Love", exuding a personal connection to the material and to the history of jazz itself. Moody was badly ailing that very moment and he passed less than a week later.

(DA)

**Muhai Richard Abrams** has made a career of not resting on his laurels. As cofounder and spiritual father of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians, Abrams has spent close to 50 years lobbying for innovative approaches within jazz traditions. Even still, the music he presented for an Interpretations birthday tribute at Roulette Dec. 2nd (Abrams turned 80 in September) could hardly have been predicted. He began the concert with a series of resounding gong crashes, then moved to a decidedly metallic, celestial synthesizer. Adam Rudolph joined in with soft congas, then Tom Hamilton on second synth, all very quietly. Synthesizer experiments have long been a subplot to Abrams' work, but it's not something he's often presented live. The piece built slowly, Abrams playing more pianistic, Rudolph's percussion growing more rhythmic, Hamilton eventually falling off into a wavering white noise, before the leader turned to the grand piano and Rudolph picked up a shakuhachi. The second set for the standing-room-only night was closer to expectations, an acoustic group with longtime collaborators Marty Ehrlich (bass clarinet) and Brad Jones (bass), Jay Clayton singing lyrics of spiritual consciousness. More conventionally instrumentally, the second half was still markedly subdued, a direction Abrams' playing has gone in recent years. But overall, the evening was a fine celebration of an artist who continues to look forward.

(KG)

Cutting contests are a time-tested tradition known to spur participants to competitive heights, so pairing guitar heroes **John Scofield** and **Robben Ford** on the Blue Note stage Dec. 12th made good artistic sense, that and the fact that they both played with Miles Davis and have a deep way with the blues. Ford's style, like his vintage guitars (he switched off between an Epiphone, a Gibson SG and a Telecaster), is rootsy, turbocharged yet delicately nuanced, his bell tone and driving riffs creating a horn-like effect; in the midst of a solo he is liable to get fired up like a gospel preacher and deliver scorching, jaw-dropping testimony. Scofield, sporting a well-worn pink Stratocaster, was more cosmic, exploring the 'strat-ospheric' limits of harmony and melody even as he kept it earthbound with tasty string-bends and in-the-pocket chording. They opened with Scofield's "North Agnus" in a funky swing feel; covered Robert Johnson's "Travelin' Riverside Blues" with Ford singing to Scofield's thumb-strummed rhythms; delivered ripping lines and wailing bends on the classic "Good Morning Little School Girl" and tastily harmonized a slow original blues, phrasing together with the laid-back empathy of a Count Basie horn section. "Chumley" followed, then a nice arrangement of Ray Charles' "Busted", capped by "Loving Cup" with Ford back on vocals. Who won the cutting contest? That's like comparing a delicious apple to a delicious orange. They both did.

- Tom Greenland

Following his month-long commissioned residency at the Jazz Gallery in November, **Ambrose Akinmusire** unveiled the fruits of his labor with performances of a series of new compositions performed there by his quartet of pianist Sam Harris, bassist Harish Raghavan and drummer Justin Brown. The culmination of an eventful year that found the award-winning trumpeter touring with the SFJAZZ Collective and capturing a coveted contract with Blue Note Records, Akinmusire expressed his gratitude for the commission, which afforded him the opportunity to settle in to write and rehearse the new music that clearly documented his formidable abilities as a composer. While much attention has been paid to his considerable skill as an idiosyncratic instrumentalist with a distinctive voice and prodigious technique since his taking of first prize in the 2007 Thelonious Monk Institute Trumpet Competition, it is really as a composer that Akinmusire stands out among the artists of his generation. Premiering new works, many of which had not yet been titled, in his first set at the Gallery (Dec. 3rd) he exhibited the same sense of restraint and dramatic use of space in his writing that has long characterized his playing, making the most of the pared-down instrumentation of the trumpet quartet, pieces often opening with a single player setting a mood that would be dynamically expanded to orchestral grandeur, each flowing into the next with subtlety and suite-like beauty.

- Russ Musto



Robben Ford/John Scofield Band @ Blue Note



Ambrose Akinmusire @ Jazz Gallery

Latin jazz legend **Eddie Palmieri** brought his octet to the 92nd Street Y Dec. 5th for a sit-down concert of stand-up music. The frontline of Brian Lynch (trumpet), Louis Fouché (alto sax) and Ronnie Cuber (baritone sax) was backed by a ferocious rhythm section including Luques Curtis (bass), José Claussell (timbales), Vincent Rivero (congas) and Orlando Vega (bongos/cowbell), marrying first-rate improvisations to propulsive percussion. Palmieri opened alone, hunched over the Steinway grand in a snug suite, ruminating over a medley of "Y Not?" (dedicated to the venue), "Doña Tere" and "Iraida" (for his wife), singing along unconsciously in a muffled baritone. The band hit with "Chocolate Ice Cream", a slow, ice-breaking cha-cha, then cranked up to full flame on "Pecadillo", followed by "Tema Para Reneé" and "Palmas". The soloists seemed to get better as the night aged: Lynch was immediately impressive for his effortless high chops and fluent ideas, often finishing his solos with a trademark 'swallowing' of the mic with his horn bell; Cuber dug deep into his soul 'bag' and Palmieri masterfully played over, under and around the pulse. At one point the leader half-jokingly invited the audience to dance in the aisles (Was he remembering the Palladium Ballroom of the '50s?), but a fan ruefully informed him the ushers wouldn't allow it. Despite the fire regulations, the second set was equally hot, with a muy caliente conga solo from Rivero and an incendiary encore. (TG)

The **Rodriguez Brothers** celebrated the release of their new CD *Part I Mood Swing* at Zinc Bar (Dec. 2nd) with an exciting set that epitomized the spirit of the hip West Village venue and the New Dimensions in Latin Jazz series it hosts in conjunction with Sauter Pianos, provider of the long-awaited grand piano that now occupies a prominent place on the stage upon which many of the finest artists of the genre regularly fire up the room. Although trumpeter and pianist Mike and Bob Rodriguez are well known for their sideman work with various jazz and Latin greats, it is in the context of their co-led quartet that the true extent of their talents comes to the fore. The result of a lifetime of playing together, the brothers' ability to complement each other's voices stands squarely at the center of the sound of the group that includes Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra bassist Carlos Henriquez and versatile drummer Clarence Penn, whose cowbell and clave block-augmented trap kit spiced up the grooves of the band with an AfroCuban flavor. With each of the co-leaders contributing compositions to the repertoire, the band made the most of the individual talents of the small group's members to produce a full, powerful sound. Robert's opening "The Closer" took astute harmonic advantage of his brother's huge tone to make up for the absence of another horn while Mike's "Peacemaker" utilized his sibling's acute rhythmic sensibility to create a multihued canvas over which to improvise. (RM)

## WHAT'S NEWS

The winners of the **2010 Latin Grammys** have been named. Winner of Best Latin Jazz Album is *Sambolero* - João Donato Trio (Dubas Música-Universal Music/Acre Musical). Winner of Best Instrumental Album is *A Time for Love* - Arturo Sandoval (Concord Jazz). For more information, visit [latin Grammy.com](http://latin Grammy.com).

The nominees for the **2010 Grammys** have been announced, to be awarded in February. Relevant categories (starting at #44, just after Best New Age Album) are Best Contemporary Jazz Album: *The Stanley Clarke Band* - The Stanley Clarke Band (Heads Up International); *Never Can Say Goodbye* - Joey DeFrancesco (HighNote); *Now Is The Time* - Jeff Lorber Fusion (Heads Up International); *To The One* - John McLaughlin (Abstract Logix) and *Backatown* - Trombone Shorty (Verve Forecast). Best Jazz Vocal Album: *Eleanora Fagan (1915-1959)*: *To Billie With Love From Dee Dee* - Dee Dee Bridgewater (Emarcy); *Freddy Cole Sings Mr. B* - Freddy Cole (HighNote); *When Lights Are Low* - Denise Donatelli (Savant Records); *Ages* - Lorraine Feather (Jazzed Media) and *Water* - Gregory Porter (Motéma Music). Best Improvised Jazz Solo: Alan Broadbent; Herbie Hancock; Keith Jarrett; Hank Jones and Wynton Marsalis. Best Jazz Instrumental Album: *Positootly!* - John Beasley (Resonance); *The New Song And Dance* - Clayton Brothers (ArtistShare); *Historicity* - Vijay Iyer Trio (ACT Music); *Moody 4B* - James Moody (IPO Recordings) and *Providencia* - Danilo Pérez (Mack Avenue). Best Large Jazz Ensemble Album: *Infernal Machines* - Darcy James Argue's Secret Society (New Amsterdam); *Autumn: In Moving Pictures Jazz - Chamber Music Vol. 2* - Billy Childs Ensemble Featuring The Ying String Quartet (ArtistShare); *Pathways* - Dave Holland Octet (Dare2); *54* - Metropole Orkest, John Scofield & Vince Mendoza (Emarcy-Universal); *Mingus Big Band Live At Jazz Standard* - Mingus Big Band (Jazz Workshop, Inc.). Best Latin Jazz Album: *Tango Grill* - Pablo Aslan (ZOHO); *Second Chance* - Hector Martignon (ZOHO); *Psychedelic Blues* - Poncho Sanchez (Concord Picante); *Chucho's Steps* - Chucho Valdés and The Afro-Cuban Messengers (Four Quarters Entertainment) and *¡Bien Bien!* - Wayne Wallace. Best Latin Jazz Quintet (Patois Records). Best Instrumental Composition: "Aurora" - Patrick Williams; "Battle Circle" - Gerald Clayton; "Box Of Cannoli" - Tim Hagans; "Fourth Stream...La Banda" - Bill Cunliffe and "The Path Among The Trees" - Billy Childs. Best Instrumental Arrangement: Vince Mendoza; Patrick Williams; Gil Goldstein; Ted Nash and Frank Macchia. Best Liner Notes: Ashley Kahn. For more information, visit [grammy.com](http://grammy.com).

Bassist **Esperanza Spalding** has been chosen to host *Find The Beat*, a progressive new television show on PBS stations. The program intends to join Spalding with a group, a band or solo musician to explore the roots of their music. For more information, visit [pbs.org](http://pbs.org).

The **Brussels Jazz Orchestra** has announced the deadline for its sixth annual International Jazz Composition Contest in 2011. Composers under the age of 41 are invited to submit their composition for big band to the Orchestra by Mar. 15th in order to compete for the €3,000 prize. For more information, visit [brusselsjazzorchestra.com](http://brusselsjazzorchestra.com).

Submit news to [info@allaboutjazz-newyork.com](mailto:info@allaboutjazz-newyork.com)