

JOEL NEWTON



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"Joel has produced a completely contemporary and invigorating collection of original music...." *JAZZREVIEW.COM*

Biography



Joel Newton is a New York City-based guitarist, composer and bandleader exploring the interplay among jazz, rock, classical, avant-garde, and other musical traditions. Moving to the city in 1993 at age 25, Joel began a busy career as a leader and sideman, earning him a secure place as a contributor to the City's ever-changing, cutting-edge "downtown" scene. His music reflects his broad-based background in its hybridized stylistic variety.

All About Jazz describes Joel's music as "a new angle on jazz-rock... with intergalactic travels... irony and contrast aplenty... and introspective quietude interspersed with explosive energy" and ranks him "on a par with seminal players like Bill Frisell and Ben Monder." The Joel Newton Situation, described by the *Village Voice* as "a sort of Medeski, Martin, and Mahavishnu," made a name for itself at New York City's Knitting Factory in the late 90's with a long-running residency, delving deep into the outer reaches of sound and groove exploration. Since then, Joel has worked with many of New York's jazz luminaries, such as Dave Binney, Donny McCaslin, Christian Howes, Matt Shulman, Shane Endsley, Fay Victor, D.D. Jackson, Ben Stivers, Adam Klipple, and Dan Weiss. He has toured the States and Canada extensively with his own groups and others'.

Growing up on Long Island, Joel began folk and classical guitar lessons at age 7, then shifted gears in high school and started emulating the standard rock icons of the 70's and 80's. After hearing Jeff Beck and Pat Metheny, Joel began a slow trajectory toward jazz, which strengthened through independent ensemble experience at Dartmouth College (where he was pre-med and decided last-minute not to attend medical school), and culminated in 3 years at William Paterson College studying Jazz Performance. Since then, Joel has been returning to his rock, blues, classical, folk, and fusion roots and mixing them all up with jazz and avant-garde every way he can.

Joel has also been a part of a host of pop/singer-songwriter projects and has done extensive studio work with producer Harvey Goldberg (sound producer for *Late Night with David Letterman*). He has worked creatively with small theater productions, including performing in and contributing to the score of the musical "Mankynde," which debuted at the 2005 NYC Fringe Festival.

Joel is currently gigging in NYC and beyond to promote his latest CD, "Crying and Laughing," and he just returned from a 3-week tour of the Southern and Midwestern U.S. that he co-lead with violinist Christian Howes. He has recorded two CD's with the Joel Newton Situation ("ONE" in 2000 and "Crying and Laughing" in 2006). Both releases were the culmination of years of steady performing with the respective lineups and exemplify Joel's dedication to the development of a band sound as a vehicle for composition and distinctive group improvisation.

Joel is currently working on a collaborative recording with Christian Howes, to be released in Spring 2007.

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Praise for Joel Newton

"...striking skills...Newton performs on a par with seminal players like Bill Frisell and Ben Monder."

Mark Turner, **All About Jazz**

"Newton's your man whether you prefer your jazz-guitar virtuosi rough or smooth. The tunes range from funk to totally fucked-up (in the best sense), and the rest of the band—Matt Shulman (trumpet), Toshi Someya (bass), and Eric Halvorson (drums)—are corkers as well."

Village Voice

"Improv-and prog-rock nuts no less than jazzbos should get a sharp shock of recognition from this double-guitar quartet, a sort of Medeski, Martin and Mahavishnu thing that cuts loose from tight heads to travel the spaceways."

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"...an adventurous guitarist with chops to spare...Joel has produced a well executed collection of original music that falls onto a musical continuum begun 25 years ago while remaining completely contemporary and invigorating."

Jazzreview.com

"...a new angle on jazz-rock...intergalactic travels...irony and contrast aplenty... introspective quietude interspersed [with] explosive energy...Newton explores new sounds and textures."

Nils Jacobson, **All About Jazz**

3 1/2 stars: "While also establishing sonorous melodies atop Toshi Someya's Jaco-like, pumping electric bass lines and rendering melodious passages with violinist Christian Howes, Newton enhances his line of attack with layered underpinnings and a variegated assortment of wittily designed compositions."

Down Beat magazine

"Could JNS be the first great jazz-fusion band of the 21st century? In a word, yeah. ... Free thinking and forward looking, JNS is guided by a passionate spirit of improvisation, which has informed the best instrumental music throughout history."

Buffalo News

"Newton assumes the characteristics of a cat as he energetically plies the strings with liveliness and agility. [He is] able to build a spark into a full-fledged fire with his zingy solos...and spurts of psychedelic coloring."

Cadence Magazine

"This two-guitar [quartet] forsakes their free-funk starting place rather quickly. They've got places to go and vistas to see. But at points along the way, they always choogle back to square one. In some books that's called focus."

Village Voice, Mar. 1999

"Unique group conception, great writing and playing, and deep groove!"

DD Jackson, pianist

"I drove 10 hours in a snow storm to play with them and I'd do it again in a heartbeat. Energetic, sensual, thought-provoking stuff. *SEE THIS BAND!*"

Christian Howes, violinist

"Newton's conception is both broad and deep...One is an exceptionally focused debut that seems to just hint at where [he] might go next."

James Hale, Downbeat contributor, from ONE liner notes

August 2006

Joel Newton Situation
Celebrates its new release, *CRYING AND LAUGHING*

Produced by Joel Newton, Associate Producer: D.D. Jackson

"...striking skills...[Newton] performs on a par with seminal players like Bill Frisell and Ben Monder."

--All About Jazz

The Joel Newton Situation made a name for itself during long Knitting Factory Tap Bar runs in the late 90's (see press below). JNS's current incarnation takes its foundation of groove and sound exploration and adds an adventurous dose of group-improvisation. A strong sense of melody and structure, both improvised and in song, balances out the freer aspects of the music.

Joining guitarist **Joel Newton** are keyboardist **Ben Stivers** (Groove Collective, Avi Bortnik, Rez Abbasi), bassist **Toshi Someya** (Bryan Vargas, Christian Howes), and drummer **Eric Halvorson** (Dave Stryker, Bruce Barth). In addition to leading JNS, Joel has lead, co-lead, and performed as a sideman in groups with Christian Howes, Donny McCaslin, Dave Binney, DD Jackson, Adam Klipple, Matt Shulman JT Lewis, and many others. The four JNS members have worked steadily together in the band over a 4-year period and thus bring to the music a group familiarity that helps make it cohesive, organic, and deeply personal. We hope you enjoy *Crying and Laughing*.

PRESS FOR JOEL NEWTON SITUATION and JNS's debut recording, ONE

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REVIEW

Joel Newton Situation
Crying And Laughing
Self-released
2006

By Mark F. Turner, in *All About Jazz*

(reviewed in tandem with another artist's CD)

These two releases are good examples of groups that are shedding the stereotypical techno-wizardry image of guitar-based fusion bands. Sure, there's instrumental virtuosity, but there's also something for listeners who want more than that.

The Joel Newton Situation combines tripped-out rock and detailed jazz composition on their sophomore release *Crying And Laughing*. The recording documents the New York-based quartet over a three year period during which it settled into a solid unit. The music makes use of free composition, balanced interaction and the striking skills of guitarist Joel Newton, who performs on a par with seminal players like Bill Frisell and Ben Monder.

Newton's captivating guitar riff on "Little Devil" is clean, elaborate and melodic, mixed with angular chords and free notes. On "Octopus Pants" he uses multilayered patterns and galactic space sounds, and smooth volume effects on the soothing "New Day" (a tune further elevated by atmospheric B3-like organ tones from Ben Stivers).

But it is the group's collective strength that makes the recording work. "Quintisms" flows like a robot on steroids with a disjointed funk pattern and blistering solos where each member settles into the groove supported by a Jaco Pastorius-like bass line by Toshi Someya. The almost twelve minute improvisational ride "Esopus" is filled with strange instrumental effects and spotlights an extended solo by drummer Eric Halvorson. The aptly titled "Homeward" is surreal and calmly concludes this atmospheric recording.

Tracks: Little Devil; Octopus Pants; New Day; In The Wind; Quintisms; Feeding Time; Esopus; Crying And Laughing; Homeward.

Personnel: Joel Newton: guitar; Ben Stivers: keyboards; Toshi Someya: bass; Eric Halvorson: drums.

REVIEW

Joel Newton Situation

ONE

Self-released

2000

By Nils Jacobson, in *All About Jazz*

Oddly enough, the great star and shining light of the Joel Newton Situation is (you guessed it) guitarist Joel Newton. Not to imply that the other three members of this quartet fail to generate interest in their own right, but Newton's guitar wizardry and effects dominate *One*. The guitarist's technical prowess, attention to tone, and zig-zagging solos spark much of the action on this disc. With the guitar synth at his disposal, Newton reaches out to new sounds and textures.

The compositions on *One*, all originals, explore the common ground between jazz, funk, blues, and rock. Rather than comfortably settling into a groove and then milking it for all it's worth, they jump from style to style and forge connections in the least obvious places. Periods of introspective quietude lie interspersed between moments of explosive energy. Deliberate themes erupt into frenetic solos, offering irony and contrast aplenty. The interactions which pique the greatest interest include some refreshingly imaginative counterpoint with drummer Chris Michael and regular bump-and-grind funk with bassist Toshi Someya. While the clichés of fusion rear their familiar heads every now and then, most of this disc offers a new angle on jazz-rock. And at times one has the feel that three-quarters of the Situation simply exist to serve as a launching pad for the guitarist's intergalactic travels. But compositional leaps disrupt these head-nodding episodes without fail, and the band moves elsewhere. Coherently.

Track Listing: Tech 2; Lunch in the Park; Vickie's Dream; Quintisms; Long Valley; Snoobin'; Tech Joel; This Way, That Way; Putney; Last One.

Personnel: Joel Newton, guitar; Lars Aakesson: guitar; Toshi Someya: fretless electric bass; Chris Michael: drums and percussion.