

the guardian

MUSIC
BLOG

Take Five: John Fordham's month in jazz – September

In this fifth of a series of monthly columns, John Fordham picks out his musical milestones from recent weeks. Tell us in the comments section below if there's things we've missed, plus what you'd like to see John covering in next month's edition



World beater ... Django Bates. Photograph: Sarah Lee for the Guardian

1) Django bates confirmation/F-ire Collective festival in October

I can't recall an occasion when I've previously given a second successive five stars to the same artist, but it happened this month when I reviewed pianist Django Bates's new album, [Confirmation](#), following the big cheer I gave him with the same trio and a closely related repertoire in 2010 for [Beloved Bird](#). Both sessions celebrated the London-raised pianist's childhood hero, bebop genius Charlie Parker. After three decades of concentrating on original music with unique bands like Loose Tubes and Delightful Precipice, Bates finally felt ready to add something of his own to some of the most influential works in [jazz](#).

Does this mean I think Bates is better than [Sonny Rollins](#), or Wayne Shorter, or Maria Schneider, or Brad Mehldau, or many other great jazz creators whose output I didn't give five stars to twice running in recent years? Not exactly, and probably the most useful conclusion to draw is that a star system is a pretty blunt instrument for detailing what you like or don't like about an artist. But thinking back on what felt like an impulse choice at the time, I'm sure I was awarding Django Bates maximum points for several virtues combined. First, the imaginative audacity and technical command of his piano-

playing on those discs, which seemed to have hit a new roll after he passed half a century on the planet. But second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth – and the list could go on – for his independence, passion, wit, commitment, ensemble empathy and absolute faith in jazz's crucial place (as both a language and an attitude) in the evolution of contemporary music.

Bates has been a model for creative players wanting to put their own shows on the road. London's [F-ire Collective](#), home to Seb Rochford, Kit Downes and many other inventive UK performers, runs its annual festival at the city's PizzaExpress Jazz Club in October – and its existence came directly from F-ire founder Barak Schmool's experiences in Bates's Delightful Precipice in the 1990s. Several other new-music collectives around the UK have sprung up in its wake. Bates and an early F-ire recruit, guitarist David Okumu, [fascinatingly discussed the issues involved in the Guardian in 2005](#).

And here's the man himself with Danish drummer Peter Bruun (and fellow Dane Petter Eldh on bass but out of the single-angle shot) live at Jazzdor in Strasbourg last year, playing Parker's My Little Suede Shoes.

[Reading this on mobile? Click here to watch video](#)

2) Yuri Honing at PizzaExpress

Yuri Honing, the 47-year-old Dutch saxophonist, last played in London almost exactly 13 years ago, and his [return visit this September](#) made the long wait hard to fathom. Honing included Abba's Waterloo ("the Swedish national anthem") in his set back then – though as a dark and Coltrane-esque tenor-sax lament – and he still likes that approach, with Bowie's Bring Me the Disco King and Goldfrapp's Paper Bag on his new album, [True](#). With the addition of young Dutch pianist Wolfert Brederode – to whom I profusely apologise for doggedly referring to in print as Wilfred – the group shifted on the recording to a more spacious and impressionistic approach. But recordings are recordings and live is live – very different things in jazz – and this fine band, including inventive long-time Honing drummer Joost Lijbaart, often played in a dynamically upfront, high-energy manner during the gig.

Honing's resourcefulness and unpredictability have been nurtured by very diverse playing experiences on the experimental Dutch jazz scene over the years, from free-improv to fusion. And in the latter mode, he can rock out with the best of them – as his Wired Paradise electric band often showed in the noughties. Here it is in 2007, with the excellent guitarist Frank Möbus.

[Reading this on mobile? Click here to watch video](#)

3) Edition Records festival

Edition Records might be a cottage-industry operation run out of a house in Cardiff, but there was a time 40 years ago when ECM Records was at much the same stage in Munich, and Edition reveals similar sixth sense for emerging innovators. Pianist-founder Dave Stapleton provided the impetus by being an exciting bandleader himself, and the label now presents such distinctly different contemporary piano trios as Tom Cawley's Curios, Matthew Bourne in Bourne/Davis/Kane and UK legend John Taylor's Meadow with Tord Gustavsen saxist Tore Brunborg and Food's Thomas Strønen, alongside other new groups of various shapes and sizes. Edition staged a mini-festival at London's Kings Place in mid-September, with its world-class young sax discovery from Norway [Marius Neset](#) among the front-runners.