

Benni Chawes Biography

Born in Denmark into a musical family Benni Chawes was surrounded by music from a very early age. His grandmother played the classical piano, his grandfather the mandolin, and Benni's mother attended The Royal Danish Academy of Music. Benni Chawes went on studying music and graduated in 1995 with a Magna Cum Laude Degree in piano performance at Berklee College of Music in Boston. After graduating Chawes' professional career started to take off however not as a piano player but as a HumanBass. A concept he developed himself just for the fun of it during his piano studies at Berklee. Using his voice to push the boundaries of musician-as-instrument in his solo effort, he demonstrated his virtuosity with vocal instrumental sounds. Chawes had soon developed the technique to sing like the instruments: bass, drums, percussion, synth, guitar etc. -- all produced with his voice. Including mixing different instrumental sounds into the course of a tune to perform thrilling vocal bass and percussion combinations. In 1993 he received the award "Outstanding Musicianship" by International Association of Jazz Educators.

In 1996 Chawes joined the acclaimed American a cappella jazz group, Vox One. Chawes is featured on their fourth, award winning release, Chameleon (PAC Records) in 1998. The album was highly praised by the press and fellow musician colleagues. "There are not many vocal jazz groups that catch my ear but one that certainly has is Vox One. Benni Chawes' bass singing, vocal arrangements and overall musicianship has been indispensable to their wonderful sound!" (Cedric Dent, Take6.) The album won three Contemporary A Cappella Recording Awards: "Artist of the Year; Best Jazz Album; Best Jazz Song" and was a "Bestseller, No. 1" (in Primarily A Cappella music catalog.)

Chawes vocal bass singing was compared to the playing of Larry Graham, Jaco Pastorius, and the bass players of Tower of Power, and Earth, Wind and Fire. And after parting with Vox One in 1998 he worked with the American pop/rock a cappella group FOCS for three extensive months where he also performed with Aaron Neville and Boston Symphony Orchestra at Boston Symphony Hall. The concert was aired by WCVB-TV to millions of viewers US nation wide also featuring talk show host Conan O'Brien. It was then time to form his very own jazz trio with critically acclaimed musicians: pianoplayer Laszlo Gardony and drummer Bob Moses with Benni himself on the bass -- vocally. The HumanBass trio played mostly Chawes' music. And where ever they performed the audience were amazed by the concept and Chawes' virtuosity and the perfection of his invention. The Norwegian newspaper Østlandsposten wrote: "Not only bass-sound of highest quality but also percussion solos and rhythmic magic of such magnitude it left everyone wondering whether it was all an illusion." In Germany JazzThing, wrote: "Chawes sets new standard for jazz singing" and the Danish newspapers wrote: "...it is fascinating what Benni Chawes can do with his voice...brutally funky" (Politiken) and "Absolutely capable of impressing" (Berlingske Tidende.)

Chawes moved back to Denmark in 1999 after living in the US for more than 6 years. Back in Denmark he was still doing HumanBass with Danish stellar artists such as Thomas Clausen, Erann D. D., Thomas Blachman, and Jan Glæsel, but changed later musical direction from performing jazz to perform hip hop with local rap stars Al Agami, Miss Mukupa, MASS, and MC Clemens. Benni Chawes did a lot of HumanBass performances and workshops in Denmark, Norway and Germany (in Germany with pianist Jasper van't Hof) and has appeared on a number of national radio and television shows in Europe, Canada and the US and is featured on a total of 12 albums.

In 2002 Benni Chawes stopped more or less his HumanBass project to pursue songwriting. And searching for simplicity he changed his music from being complexed jazz composed music that he has been writing for many years to write songs with some jazzy elements but composed and produced in a popish way presenting his music to a wider audience. A major change from being a "human instrument" "playing" instrumental music to be the lead singer in a band communicating to his audiences with lyrics.

The music is intimate and unplugged crooner jazz that brings a warm feel-good atmosphere to any setting. The catchy songs and pleasant grooves open up the road to a rare live experience, inviting the audience to embrace the vibe. With his warm crooner voice, Benni Chawes and his unplugged band sends your thoughts drifting to contemplative conversation and stolen kisses.

At live concerts Chawes' audiences also get a taste of his HumanBass past where they are fascinated by his complete mastering of the technique to produce the sounds of various instruments with his lips - a

sure showstopper - and on a number of his songs, these "special effects" blend in with his singing and the instruments of the band to a great and pleasant surprise to the audiences.

reviews / awards

"thanks to his superb velvet voice (...) Benni Chawes charms his audience."
jazzman magazine (France)

"chawes sets new standard for jazz singing."
JazzThing (germany)

"very successful. absolutely capable of impressing."
berlingske tidende (denmark)

"...it is fascinating what Benni Chawes can do with his voice."
politiken (denmark)

"totally impressed."
derry news (usa)

"a packed house won over by Benni"
contemporary a cappella society of america

"magic of such magnitude it left everyone wondering whether it was all an illusion."
østlandsposten (norway)

"you made my night"
ray charles

"it's hard to believe that this is just a duo." [chawes using his vocal-instrumental sound in a duo setting]
music woche (germany)

awards:

"outstanding musicianship"
international association of jazz educators (iaje)

"artist of the year" [with vox one]
contemporary a cappella recording awards (usa)

"best jazz album" [with vox one]
contemporary a cappella recording awards (usa)

"best jazz song" [with vox one]
contemporary a cappella recording awards (usa)