

THE FRINGE
Garzone · Lockwood · Gullotti

40 YEARS ON THE FRINGE

THE FRINGE 40TH ANNIVERSARY CONCERT
LIVE AT THE BOSTON CONSERVATORY, MAY 12TH, 2012



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The Fringe has turned 40, and it's been a long time since avant-garde crusaders George Garzone, Bob Gullotti and John Lockwood have played straight tunes. "I'm a little dizzy", George Garzone proclaimed to the audience at The Boston Conservatory Theater, with closed eyes and a hand to his forehead. The 62-year old saxophonist had just finished a furious first set with The Fringe, and perhaps a novice would have taken it at face value. After all, this was a 40th anniversary concert – an emotional event – and as usual the music had cut to the bone. Maybe it had been a bit much for him?

However, this was an audience of Fringe aficionados and fans, and as Garzone spoke, knowing chuckles spread through the venue. Maybe some had already guessed what was to come. The second set began with a story of the Neanderthal man arriving to an unknown place. Soon drummer Gullotti was playing an up-tempo beat, bassist John Lockwood left a lovely kora-sounding solo to pursue fast counterpointal runs, while Garzone fired off clusters of 16th and 32nd notes. Neanderthal?

The reference is obvious, because The Fringe has always stayed by the basic and primitive forces that drive their music - the inner Neanderthal. Although each an eminent master on his chosen instrument, and despite the abstraction of the kind of jazz they play – no "melodies", no funky grooves, and no chord changes and steady beats – they always go for the music that comes from the heart and gut. Which may explain why they have been able to attract new generations Monday after Monday, year after year. And they don't only play to an audience of their students, but also to fellow instructors – likewise masters of their instruments, and for whom The Fringe is an ideal, and naturally for all the other fans and music lovers as well.

The band began with three Berklee students determined to master the rudiments of straight jazz, while also fascinated by avant-garde. Bassist Richard Appleman was a co-founder, and for ten years they held court at Michael's Pub on Gainsborough Street in Boston. When Appleman's family life and his commitments as leader of Berklee's bass department pulled him in other directions, Lockwood took over in 1985, and they continued to play every Monday, first at The Willow in Somerville, later at The Lizard Lounge and then at The Lily Pad.

In the beginning, The Fringe wrote tunes and played a small selection of covers. But after a while the tunes disappeared. The band felt like keeping themselves – and the music – close to the fringe. Despite their spontaneous approach, the music was surprisingly easy to listen to. Scales and harmonic changes could be sensed in Garzone's runs, Gullotti's pulse was well articulated, and Lockwood's beautiful sound and clean intonation was true. The sum of these parts was an indefinable storm of sound much larger than each individual musician.

These days – as it has been said of Ornette Coleman – the band doesn't improvise over tunes or changes, but over itself. Or – as Garzone explained

to Downbeat in an anniversary interview – they focus on the "rhythm of the moment". Which is probably why they continue to surprise and inspire after 40 years. And they still set standards for all jazz – not just avant-garde – and for what music is and can be. Together these three mature musicians are living proof that you don't necessarily stop developing after 50. Perhaps they develop more consciously, but can anyone listening to The Fringe say that they don't develop?

And they still play every Monday at The Lily Pad in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

George Garzone is considered by his colleagues to be one of the greatest players in jazz, and anyone who has heard him will agree. His wild, inventive and emotional playing and superb technique makes him one of a kind. He is no Coltrane epigone, but has freed himself from Coltrane and the other heroes of his youth. He has been an instructor virtually since his own graduation in the early '70s from Boston's Berklee School of Music (from the same class as Joe Lovano and Kenny Werner), which is why one of the most intense and personal tenor saxophone voices in modern jazz has been heard much less often than those with whom he ranks: i.e. Joe Lovano and Michael Brecker.

John Lockwood has toured and recorded with Gary Burton, Eddie Harris, Johnny Hartman, Joe Henderson, Freddie Hubbard, Dave Liebman, Joe Maneri, Makoto Ozone, Joe Pass, Danilo Perez, Pharoah Sanders, Clark Terry, Kenny Werner, Pat Metheny, Dizzy Gillespie, Woody Shaw, Toots Thielemans, Stan Getz, Art Farmer, and many others. He says that he learned to play on stage. "People called me when they needed a bass player – and looking back, I shouldn't have accepted some of those jobs. They yelled and screamed at me – and that's how I learned. When I teach, I do the same thing. And I play all the time. You learn by being out there – you have to sweat, you have to be scared, and you don't learn by playing with people who aren't as good as you. I always wound up in situations where everyone else was better!"

Bob Gullotti has played professionally since the age of 15. He was accepted at Berklee at 17 and smitten with the jazz bug. His amazing technique and creative playing has made him a popular sideman on tour and recordings with among others Eddie Henderson, Gary Bartz, Eddie Gomez, Tom Harrell, Mose Allison, J.J. Johnson, Joe Lovano, John Patitucci and Miroslav Vitous, but also with the rock band Phish. He is a modest man, and states that in these recession times you can survive as a musician if you have a professional approach and a good attitude. "If you're stubborn, you can live just as well of music as a lot of other things. And if you get famous – great! In this business success is living and surviving. I have made my living playing my instrument, and that makes my happy and proud. Having The Fringe as a base for 40 years is a gift."

*Take Off / Let's Discuss This / Funky Stroll / I Loved You Yesterday / Don't Look Now - But!!! / This Is It / Looking Back / 6.51
Rumble Tumble / Watch Out People / Little Feet / 40 Years & Counting.*

George Garzone (tenor & soprano sax), John Lockwood (bass), Bob Gullotti (drums).

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