



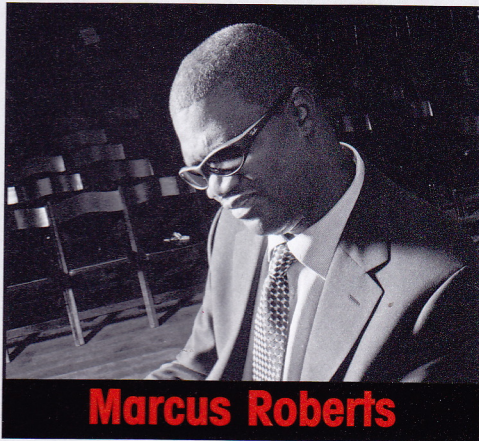
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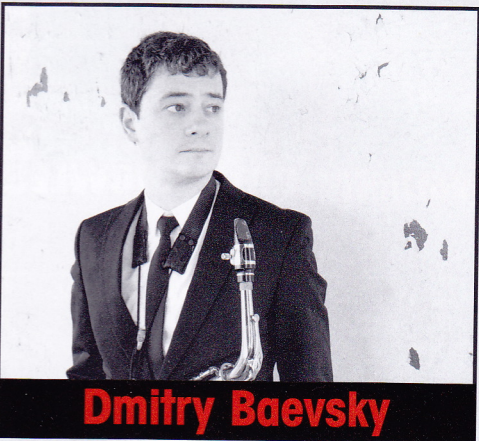
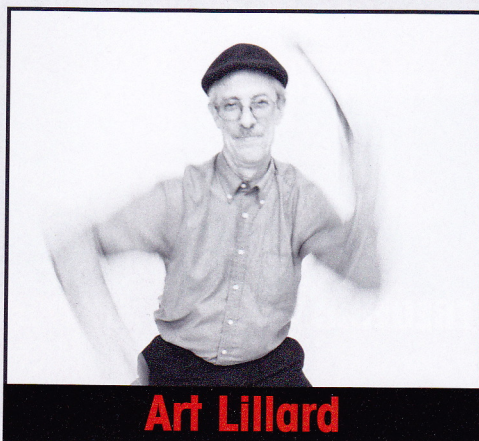


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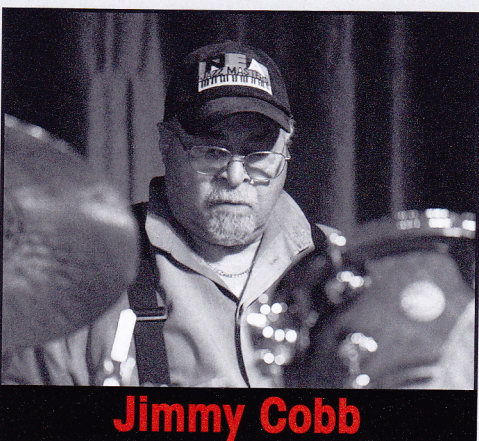
Dizzy's Club Coca Cola Page 10



Iridium Page 10



Smalls Jazz Club Page 21



Smoke Jazz & Supper Club Page 25

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# DMITRY BAEVSKY

From Russia with Alto

By Seton Hawkins

**L**ISTEN TO A FEW NOTES ON ANY Dmitry Baevsky recording and you immediately will hear his distinct musical voice: a gorgeously dark and warm alto tone that at times almost sounds like a tenor. Having moved to New York City from his native Russia nearly two decades ago, Baevsky has since carved out a niche as an inspired straight-ahead alto virtuoso, one whose musical résumé boasts an impressive set of collaborations and whose solo outings include a series of critically beloved albums and a highly regarded quartet.

Born into a music-loving family—his great-grandfather was a famous ethnomusicologist—Baevsky began piano lessons at an early age before taking up saxophone as a teen. "I started playing in St. Petersburg when I was about 14," Baevsky recalls. "The early things I liked were Duke Ellington and Charlie Parker. Since I played alto, it was hard to avoid Parker's influence, obviously." However, the environment proved difficult to match Baevsky's aspirations in the music. "We're talking about the late 80s and early 90s," he explains. "The music was available, but it's not like now and so I really had to research and travel to find tapes and get as much information as I could."

The dearth of information, paired with limited touring to Russia by American and European jazz artists, proved particularly challenging for the young artist. Eventually, Baevsky determined that reaching his artistic potential meant surrounding himself with the best musicians he could find, thus prompting a move to the United States.

"First I attended a two-week jazz program at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst called Jazz in July," he recalls. "That's how I initially came here. Eventually, my tape got to the New School people, who liked my playing enough to give me a scholarship. There's no way I could have afforded it otherwise! I stayed at the New School until my graduation in 1999."

At the New School, Baevsky began branching out, quickly becoming an active member of New York's jazz scene. Some impressive opportunities arose, notably a recording date with Cedar Walton and Jimmy Cobb. "To be surrounded by these two guys, it just doesn't get any better!" he said. That led to Baevsky's debut record, *Introducing Dmitry Baevsky*. Slowly but

surely, Baevsky also began to form a remarkable band. Finding a particular simpatico with pianist Jeb Patton, bassist David Wong and drummer Joe Strasser, Baevsky formed this ensemble about five years ago and has worked frequently in this format ever since.

The saxophonist has also been active as a recording artist, releasing four albums as a leader to date, primarily for Sharp Nine Records. His most recent, the 2012 effort *The Composers*, is particularly excellent, showcasing remarkable interplay between Baevsky and his collaborators including David Hazeltine and Peter Bernstein.

Baevsky has not sat still as an artist and the new year already offers a number of opportunities to hear his music in different combos. While he has focused heavily on his quartet work in recent years, this February Baevsky will offer a fresh perspective as he releases *Over and Out*—his fifth record as a leader—this time fronting a pianoless trio featuring Wong and Strasser.

"This album is something I've wanted to record for a while," Baevsky explains. "I've played in this format a lot, particularly on smaller gigs and it's very exciting to do if it goes well. If everything clicks and the people are playing at a high level, then you can experiment even further out. It feels very good to do it and it forces me to play my saxophone differently than I do when I play with a piano."

Additionally, January will find Baevsky performing in a quintet at Smalls, augmenting his group with trumpeter Joe Magnarelli. "I have a concert in England with Joe in February, and I thought it would be a good opportunity to work with him ahead of time," he notes. "I've had the Smalls date on my calendar for a while, so I called Magnarelli to see if he could do it and he was free. He's one of my favorites, so I'm very excited about this gig."

**Dmitry Baevsky's Quintet performs at Smalls Jazz Club on Jan. 2.**

