

Joshua Redman: Still Dreaming

Start time: 7.30pm

Set times:

19.30pm Duncan Eagles Trio

8pm interval

8.20pm Joshua Redman

All times are approximate and subject to change

Kevin Le Gendre speaks to Joshua Redman about jazz, his creative process and his father's legacy ahead of his performance.

'New bottle, old wine' is a poetic image for a fundamental principle in jazz. It refers to the process of reinterpreting, reviving and rebooting songs of the past with the energy and ideas of the present. When saxophonist-composer Joshua Redman decided to perform the music of the legendary ensemble Old and New Dreams he was upholding this culture, but there was also a compellingly personal subtext to the project. The quartet, active between the late 70s and late 80s, was jointly led by his father, saxophonist Dewey, trumpeter Don Cherry, double bassist Charlie Haden and drummer Ed Blackwell. All of the above played with Ornette Coleman, a visionary who ushered in daring new approaches to composition and improvisation.

Redman, who actually played with Dewey, as well as Haden and other Coleman alumni, Billy Higgins and Pat Metheny, in the early 90s, was moved to launch his Old and New Dreams project four years ago following Haden's death. 'There was a memorial [for him] in January 2015 at Town Hall in New York that I was a part of,' Redman explains. 'I found myself, immediately after, listening to his music and a lot of music my father was a part of. That music got in my ears again, and it was really deep and powerful. I had the idea shortly after of putting a band together that would play Old and New Dreams's music and somehow take it as a point of inspiration.'

A consistently strong presence on the American jazz scene for the past 25 years, Redman, whose impressive discography includes both quartet and orchestral works such as 1994's *Moodswing* and 2013's *Walking Shadows*, has worked with a number of excellent musicians – he had specific players in mind: drummer Brian Blade, double bassist Scott Colley, a former Haden protégé, and cornet player Ron Miles all signed up for the gig. The quartet made a warmly received debut in 2015 and then took that momentum into the studio. Their 2017 album, *Still Dreaming*, was an engrossing invocation of the spirit of both Old and New Dreams and Ornette Coleman through a series of original songs that skilfully straddle avant-garde and populist sensibilities.

'We play a lot of Ornette's music and Don [Cherry]'s music and my dad's music, but I chose more of our originals and less of the Old New Dreams book,' Redman says of the compositions that are featured on *Still Dreaming*. And the songs we did take were the more well-known pieces. The thing about Old New Dreams's music, and I think the same could be said of Ornette's music... the songs themselves are very complex, but they're not complex in terms of the pre-written material.'

'They're like these little chants. One of the things that I've always loved about Old and New Dreams is that they can play so freely and abstractedly and also very raw and angular. But they do it in a way that's so melodic and also rooted and grounded. There's a folk music quality, like it's somehow folk and free at the same time.'

True to that ethos the music has a hearty rhythmic bounce and warm, singing themes that then fan out into more complex, often criss-crossing narratives. Old And New Dreams and Coleman were known for ecstatic live gigs, and Redman's band has understood that the exchange of ideas among the players on stage is at a premium.

Blade and Colley make for a wonderfully flexible rhythmic backbone while Redman and Miles, who is best known as a longstanding collaborator of guitar great Bill Frisell, display an enviable chemistry.

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Redman, who has drawn on many tenor and soprano saxophone models to forge a personal identity that is often characterized by lengthy, crisp, darting lines, makes no secret of the significant impact that the cornet, rather than the more commonly used trumpet, has had on the ensemble sound.

‘To me there’s just a maybe little more melancholy and vulnerability in that [the cornet],’ he argues. ‘So maybe there’s something about the timbre of the saxophone and cornet that kinds aids that... like two human voices conversing with each other. Ron’s completely in the moment, he doesn’t force anything. In that way he balances me. I’d like to think that at my best I’m that kind of player too, but I can also rush things and force things. So we converse, and we also act as good foils for each other.’

This kind of interaction was a vital part of the heavenly music made by Redman senior, Cherry, Haden and Blackwell. Redman junior, Miles, Colley and Blade have kept their old and new dreams alive by creating a courageous imaginary reverie of their own.

Performers

Joshua Redman saxophone

Ron Miles trumpet

Scott Coley bass

Brian Blade drums

+ support from **Duncan Eagles Trio**

Duncan Eagles saxophone

Max Luthert double bass

Dave Hamblett drums

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