

Manhattan-based, Canadian born jazz pianist **Jon Ballantyne** has released 9 albums, won 2 Juno awards (most recently in 2007 for “Avenue Standard”) and received 3 Juno nominations as a leader. In 2007-2008, following recent tours of Europe, Israel, Canada and the US with his acclaimed 4tet, Jon has embarked on a series of solo piano performances to continue his explorations into uncharted musical territory.

Jon’s early interest in studying and performing music ultimately led to his collaborations musically (onstage and/or recording) with musicians such as **Joe Henderson, Paul Bley, Dewey Redman, Billy Hart, Roy Haynes, Drew Gress, Dave Liebman** and **Phil Dwyer**. Over the past several years, he’s jammed at jazz festivals or private sessions with players like Joe Lovano, Mark Turner, Bill Carrothers, Seamus Blake and Donny McAslin.

In his formative years, Jon played gigs with **Pepper Adams, Woody Herman’s Thundering Herd, Terry Clarke, Neil Swainson** and **Jerry Fuller**.

And before that, Jon studied, and in many cases, played, with greats like Cecil Taylor, Ed Blackwell, Kenny Wheeler, Don Thompson, Karl Berger, Elvin Jones, Barry Harris, Joanne Brackeen, Emily Remler and Lee Konitz, to name a few.

Over the years, Jon’s music has been described by writers and critics as: highly original, lyrical, far-out, earthy, abstract, bebop-based, free, swinging, encyclopedic, deep, individualistic, and other adjectives not always synonymous with one another. An example of his musically diverse career is from an approximately two year period in the early 1990’s when Jon performed in completely spontaneous piano duo recordings and concerts with fellow pianist and Canadian Paul Bley, and was also found to be blowing out the doors of more than a few jazz clubs playing raucously swinging, modern jazz with the late, great American saxophonist Joe Henderson.

Whether he’s performing his original compositions (which can be knotty and dense, or sometimes quiet, spacey and melodic), two-handed virtuosic atonal improvisations, or reworking the standard jazz repertoire, Jon’s openness, originality and inborn creativity always inform his playing, much to the delight of his listeners.

Saskatchewan born, New York-based jazz pianist **Jon Ballantyne** started playing piano at a very early age, and began formal study at the age of six. His father is also a pianist and both parents' jazz enthusiasts; therefore Jon was hearing the recordings of greats such as Lenny Breau, Oscar Peterson, Miles Davis, Bill Evans and Duke Ellington from the beginning of his life.

After the early years of absorbing his father's blues-based approach to piano, classical piano studies, and a stint in a garage rock band as a young teenager, Jon realized his passion and decided to more thoroughly investigate the art form of jazz. This quest led to his winning of a scholarship to attend first Mohawk College in Hamilton, Ontario, followed by classes at the University of Saskatchewan, and finally another scholarship to attend North Texas State University. As an honours student at NTSU, Jon was asked to and did play with in small group formats with visiting artists such as Elvin Jones, Ron Carter, Michael Brecker, Joe Henderson, Emily Remler and Nat Adderley. Jon hit it off particularly well with Joe Henderson and would, just three years later, reunite with Henderson to record in Montreal (with the rhythm section made up of fellow Canadians Jerry Fuller and Neil Swainson) what has become a Canadian jazz classic—"Sky Dance" (Justin Time) which won a Juno award in 1990.

In the mid-eighties, Jon attended jazz workshops at the Banff Center of the Arts in Alberta, Canada; studying and playing with Kenny Wheeler, Don Thompson, Phil Nimmons, Dave Holland, Dave Liebman, Ed Blackwell, Lee Konitz, Cecil Taylor, John Abercrombie, Karl Berger, and Steve Coleman. Fellow students in Banff included Mike Murley, Perry White, Hugh Fraser and Michael Blake, to name a few. At this time, he also studied in NYC with Barry Harris, Kenny Barron, Hal Galper and JoAnn Brackeen.

This period of intensive study naturally led to a performance career, and Jon often shared (and shares) the stage or recording studio with some of the world's finest musicians, including, as mentioned previously, **Joe Henderson**, as well as **Roy Haynes, Paul Bley, Dewey Redman, Don Thompson, Dave Liebman, Billy Hart, Gene Jackson, Ben Street, Mick Goodrick, Scott Colley, Reid Anderson, Craig Handy, George Garzone, Ed Bickert, Phil Dwyer, Yannick Rieu, Pepper Adams, Kevin Dean, Mike Allen, Terry Clarke, P.J. Perry, Andre White, Drew Gress, Charles Fambrough, Rich Perry, Benny Wallace, Ray Drummond, Ben Perowsky, The Mingus Big Band, Woody Herman's Thundering Herd, Clark Terry, Al Cohn, Red Mitchell, Jimmy Guiffre, Shorty Rodgers, Buddy DeFranco and Joe Lovano**. Traveling often, Jon has performed in eight European countries, the UK, Japan, most provinces and major jazz festivals in Canada, and more than 40 states in the USA.

As a six-year resident of Park Slope, Brooklyn in the 90's, Jon also played countless jam sessions in his studio apartment with young musicians, most of them neighbors, such as **Seamus Blake, Mark Turner, Owen Howard, Donny McAslin, Bill Carrothers, Hugh Sicotte, John McKenna, Dave Pietro, Tony Scherr, Johanness Viedenmueller and Matt Wilson**.

As an educator, Jon has conducted master classes at the **Sibelius** Academy in Helsinki, and at many universities in Canada and the USA. Over the years, he has played several mini-concerts and conducted workshops at elementary and high schools in Saskatoon, the city in which he grew up and manages to visit at least twice a year.

In the 21st Century, Jon has been very active leading a Manhattan-based and critically acclaimed quartet featuring bassist **Boris Kozlov**, drummer **Jeff Hirshfield** and saxophonist/bass clarinetist **Douglas Yates**. A 2005 recording session in New York produced a release entitled "Jon Ballantyne 4tets+Dewey Redman". Here, the quartet performs a program of Ballantyne originals, joined by the late great Dewey Redman on tenor and alto saxophones. The recorded result is highly spirited, cutting-edge acoustic jazz.

The Ottawa Citizen declared in a review of the Ballantyne 4tet's performance at the Ottawa Jazz Festival in 2005 that "Ballantyne is definitely onto something original and worthy of greater attention". Besides the 2005 tour of all major cities in Canada, the quartet has toured Sweden, Germany, Italy, Israel, and the Northeastern US.

With nine albums as a leader (2 Juno Awards, 3 Juno nominations), Ballantyne's most recent releases are solo piano recordings. "Avenue Standard" (r.a.w., 2007 Juno Award) is an album of mostly jazz standards; "Ever Since Now" (r.a.w.) is an album comprised of all-Ballantyne (but one) compositions.

...It is a formidable task, and possibly the ultimate test of a piano player's skills, to hold an audience playing solo piano for an extended time. Ballantyne does this. He adds so many twists and turns, has so many technical and musical resources in his palate that at no time does this CD fail to keep your attention.

Medicine Hat Journal

...Ballantyne is definitely onto something original and worthy of greater attention.

The Ottawa Citizen

...Ballantyne's technique is an arsenal that can handle anything – octaves, chords, tremolos, quicksilver passages, whatever. But, he also has a lyrical tone which, combined with his technical gift, turned every piece he touched into a remarkable gem.

...The best concert of the day, for my money, was pianist Jon Ballantyne's at the Memorial Art Gallery. As a pianist, he has everything: a lyrical tone, a commanding technique and, most importantly, a vivid musical imagination. Indeed, his best pieces could have easily been mistaken for long-lost masterpieces by Milhaud or Ravel. Bring this guy back...

Democrat and Chronicle
(Rochester, NY)

...Ballantyne's set was not complacent, or aimed at providing an easy-going experience for the audience-it made its own set of demands, challenging the listener to accept a broader interpretation of contemporary post bop that ultimately paid big dividends.

All About Jazz.com

... A MUCH APPRECIATED CONCERT IN THE Museum of Modern Art was performed by the duo of Swedish saxophonist Krister Andersson and New York pianist Jon Ballantyne: the climax of the festival, at least one of them.

SmeJuornalen, (Malardalen, Sweden)

...Ballantyne delivered a memorable performance at Theatre Gesu (Montreal Jazz Festival) in a trio with bassist Drew Gress and drummer Gene Jackson. It was an opportunity to appreciate Ballantyne's unusual compositions and out-of-the-way voicings on piano.

The Montreal Gazette

...Merely as fine a young, modern pianist as you're likely to encounter this decade...

The Toronto Star (1998)

...All of the releases reviewed here offer something worthwhile, although most of them are predictable in their general lack of adventurousness. Of them, only Jon Ballantyne's Sky Dance and Chiasson and Wayne's Point Counterpoint are most likely to be listened seriously ten years from now.

Coda Magazine

... There has been a disproportionate number of pianists among Canada's jazz exports in recent years. The country that gave the world Oscar Peterson and Paul Bley back in the 1950's has sent a half-dozen interesting younger players New York's way of late...No one in that group is more interesting, no one fresher, than Jon Ballantyne, who worked a few years ago with tenor saxophone star Joe Henderson but has otherwise pursued a career under his own name. As well he might: He's far too self-directed a jazz musician to swing to any drummer but his own.

...The music was tremendously exiting and, in terms of its individuality, a step or two beyond anything Ballantyne's contemporaries have played on the Senator's grand piano.

The Globe and Mail

...Jon Ballantyne brought exceptional virtuosity to bear on the 88's at the Library Theatre.

The Edmonton Journal

...Progressions that had an Eastern flavor would overlap with sounds that brought to mind vintage New Orleans pianist and the embracing melodies of standards would give way to jarring explorations that were suddenly reeled into another sphere.

The Edmonton Sun

...The pianist's style is almost the opposite of the Oscar Peterson school of playing, leaving lots of space between notes rather than obliged to fill them in with technique, of which he has plenty.

The Windsor Star

...Ballantyne was as good as it gets on piano, with solos on Monk's Ask Me now and Ellington's Take the Coltrane that will rattle around the memory bank for quite a while. ...It was an encyclopedic performance, drawing liberally from every period of jazz history and weaving those elements into a resolutely modern, bristlingly individualistic statement

The Montreal Gazette



