

Unlimited Local & Long Distance Calling | **\$9.95 /MO** for the first 3 months of service

CLICK HERE
Vonage

Search

Cars | Jobs | Real Estate | Apartments | MORE | LOGIN or REGISTER

Home > Entertainment > Music

HOME DELIVERY

ADVERTISE WITH US



CHICAGO WEATHER

TRAFFIC/COMMUTE

BREAKING NEWS

LOCAL NEWS

NATION/WORLD

SPORTS

BUSINESS

POLITICS/ELECTIONS

REPORTS & DATA

DEATHS

OPINIONS

COLUMNISTS

BLOGS

ENTERTAINMENT

TRAVEL

RECESSION GUIDE

LIVING

LIGHTER SIDE

VIDEO/PHOTOS

SHOPPING

CARS

JOBS

REAL ESTATE

APARTMENTS

MORE CLASSIFIEDS

TV LISTINGS

MOVIE TIMES

NEWSLETTER/ALERTS

NEWS TOOLS

CONTACT US

ABOUT US

JAZZ REVIEW

Pianist Vijay Iyer: Visionary musician defies expectations

By Howard Reich | Tribune critic
March 23, 2009

Each generation produces a few jazz pianists who stand apart from their peers.

Today, visionary artists such as Danilo Perez, Jason Moran, Marcus Roberts and Gonzalo Rubalcaba ignore contemporary musical expectations. Instead, each creates a world of sound according to his own rules, blithely defying conventions that lesser pianists venerate.

To this list must be added Vijay Iyer, who has given Chicago memorable performances in past seasons but asserted himself as pianist more eloquently than ever over the weekend. Making his debut as headliner at the Jazz Showcase Friday night, Iyer led a trio, a format that by definition places immense responsibility for the progress of the music on a pianist's shoulders. Iyer met the challenge, and then some.

To observe that Iyer ignored the post-bebop orthodoxies of modern-day pianism would be a major understatement. Every phrase, every keyboard gesture represented an unexpected musical development. Big block chords suddenly gave way to pianissimo trills; abrupt silences preceded gnarly tone clusters; fast-running lines gathered sonic force, then dissipated into the ether. The sheer range of keyboard ideas Iyer drew upon challenged listeners to keep pace with him.

Moreover, his distinctive approach to rhythm—the pianist often accelerating or decelerating mid-phrase—further shattered the listener's sense of equilibrium.

So why did this far-flung musical syntax make sense? For starters, Iyer was playing mostly original music, self-styled compositions that built on the innovations of keyboard radicals from [Ahmad Jamal](#) to Cecil Taylor to Andrew Hill. So from the very conception of this music, Iyer bypassed traditional ideas of chord progression, melodic development and rhythmic pulse. Instead, he has forged a language based on startling musical contrasts, expressionistic turns of phrase and, above all, a keen sensitivity to tone. With Iyer, it's not the tune or the beat that count, but, rather, the substance of sound itself.

Because Iyer commands the technique of a virtuoso and the

touch of a natural-born colorist, he can say more with timbre and tone than most can with a well-turned melody.

For this engagement, the pianist was joined by the nimble drummer Marcus Gilmore and the bassist Thomas Morgan, who followed the twists and turns in the music-making with remarkable poise, considering the challenges.

Digg

submit

Find a concert

(e.g. "House of Blues" or "Rolling Stones")

Search powered by metromix

TaxACT taxact.com

Start your **FREE** IRS return now!

- ▶ Prepare **FREE**
- ▶ Print **FREE**
- ▶ E-file **FREE**

START NOW!

Ads by Google

Jazz Piano
Want To Learn The Piano? Don't Be Scammed. Read 5-Star Ratings First
www.SmartGuyReviews.com/piano

Suck at Piano?
Our piano teachers review the top self-study piano courses and videos
www.musiciansinfo.org/piano

Music Notes Online
Streaming Internet Radio All Day. Music Notes and More.
SpotDiscover.com

One-week unique Jazz Camp
small intimate & intense experience all ages, all instruments and vocal
www.CampJazz.org

Great New Jazz Guitar CD
Dan Adler w/Grant Stewart on Tenor "early Joe Pass w/Sonny Rollins..."
danadler.com

Environment.

It's in your hands. Do good.

Connect with ways to support and contribute to hundreds of local causes at chicagotribune.com/dogood

Chicago Tribune

Yet even if Iyer had been playing alone, the journey would have been captivating.

hreich@tribune.com

[E-mail](#) [Share](#) [Print](#) [Reprint](#)

Related topic galleries: [Ahmad Jamal](#), [Music](#)

[All topics](#)

Get the Tribune delivered at home and save 25% off the newsstand price.

Copyright © 2009, Chicago Tribune

Ads by Google

Music Notes Online

Streaming Internet Radio All Day. Music Notes and More.
SpotDiscover.com

Compilation Jazz Music

1000's of Products Discount Prices Save Money Shopping Online Today.
www.smarter.com/Compilation_Jazz

Jazz Pianist

Looking for Jazz Pianist? Find exactly what you want today.
Yahoo.com

BlackPeopleMeet.com

Browse 1000s Pictures & Profiles of Beautiful Black Singles Now!
www.BlackPeopleMeet.com

Jazz Piano CDs

Try our new website! Great selection and service
www.hbdirect.com

Public records search

Divorce cases, arrests, evictions, license suspensions, tax liens



Popular stories

MOST VIEWED

MOST E-MAILED

HOT TOPICS

1. Bruce Willis marries; Harrison Ford, Calista Flockhart are engaged
2. Actor Bruce Willis weds model in private Caribbean ceremony
3. Tony-winning actress Natasha Richardson buried near her home in NY's Hudson Valley
4. Epidural hematoma
5. One of Oprah Winfrey's puppies succumbs to virus

[more most viewed](#)




CHICAGO top jobs

- Faculty Position
THE DEPARTMENT OF CHEMISTRY
- Computers
Programmers
MULTIVISION
- Sales
Engineer/Outside
Sales
PLASTIC INJECTION MOLDER
- Entry-Level
Engineers
Engineering Co
- Nursing Supervisors
LTC Facility
- [View all Top Jobs](#)
- Search Chicago jobs
- All Chicago jobs
Post resume
Post a job
- powered by
careerbuilder

Name

Comments

Type the numbers you see in the image on the right:



Please note by clicking on "Post Comment" you acknowledge that you have read the [Terms of Service](#) and the comment you are posting is in compliance with such terms. **Be polite.** Inappropriate posts may be removed by the moderator. [Send us your feedback](#) .

[Related News from the Web](#)

Powered by Topix.net

Chicago Tribune on Digg

[Upcoming](#) [Popular](#)

- 67 [Top Ten Peeps Dioramas: Peepzilla, Peeponardo DaVinci & More](#)
- 19 [Sylvia Plath's son, Nicholas Hughes, commits suicide in AK](#)
- 8 [Gay rights battle puts strain on parties -- chicagotribune.c](#)

See more of chicagotribune.com on 

PARTNERS: | [Triblocal](#) | [metromix.com](#) | [Chicago Magazine](#) | [ViveloHoy Chicago](#) | [RedEye](#) | [CLTV](#) | [WGN-TV](#) | [WGN-AM](#) | [Zap2it](#)

[amNY](#) | [Baltimore Sun](#) | [Daily Press](#) | [Hartford Courant](#) | [LA Times](#) | [Newsday](#) | [Orlando Sentinel](#) | [Sun-Sentinel](#) | [The Morning Call](#) | [The Virginia Gazette](#)

[Jobs](#) | [Autos](#) | [Homes](#) | [Apartments](#) | [Grocery Coupons](#) | [FSBO](#) | [Open Houses](#) | [Houses for Rent](#) | [Home Auctions](#)

SITE POLICIES: | [Terms of service](#) | [Privacy](#)

435 N. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL 60611