

Andy Sheppard Biography

Established for over twenty five years as a successful composer and performer, saxophonist Andy Sheppard is one of a very few British musicians to have made a significant impact on the international jazz scene, playing and writing for settings from solo to big band and chamber orchestra. Sheppard has composed over 350 works that incorporate a strong and characteristic sense of lyricism alongside a very personal use of rhythms from Asia, Africa and South America. Recent years have also seen a growing fascination with new music technologies and the grooves of club culture and his work in this area carries a heady mix of ambient electronic soundscapes, fragments of spoken word and sampled urban sounds.

Sheppard has been invited to compose for large and small ensembles in the areas of jazz and contemporary classical music. His big band writing includes work with the renowned UMO Orchestra (Finland), the Bergen Big Band (Norway) – initially for a joint commission from Cheltenham and Vossa Festivals - Voice of the North and Jambone (UK). He wrote music for a collaboration with the classical saxophonist John Harle, and composed *View from the Pyramids*, a concerto for saxophone and piano for the Bournemouth Sinfonietta, which premiered at the 1998 Salisbury Festival with Joanna MacGregor as piano soloist.

Other significant commissions include a solo performance piece for saxophone and electronics from the Maison de la Culture in Amiens which subsequently turned into his *Nocturnal Tourist* CD; *Nothing moved but the wind* – a work for the Kintamarni Saxophone Quartet; *Strange Episode* - a piece for tape, oboe and percussion for New Noise; the multi-disciplinary *Cityscapes* – a collaboration with Joanna MacGregor et al for the City of London Festival, *Glossolalia* a choral work with saxophone, guitar and percussion soloists commissioned by Bigger Sky and the Norfolk & Norwich Festival with a premiere in the Norwich Cathedral and a new big band and vocal work for the northern youth big band Jambone with youth choir, which premiered at the Gateshead International Festival in 2012.

Curiously, Sheppard has been commissioned to write music to commemorate two feats of UK engineering. The first was a collaboration with renowned Northumbrian piper Kathryn Tickell to celebrate the opening of the Gateshead Millennium Bridge. This landmark commission resulted in *Music for a New Crossing*, written for the Northern Sinfonia, pipes and saxophones, with the premiere played live on the spectacular setting of the bridge itself. The second saw Andy commissioned by Brunel 200 to write a piece to mark the 200th anniversary of the birth of Isambard Kingdom Brunel, the engineer of the Clifton Suspension Bridge in Bristol. For this work, entitled *The Living Bridge*, Andy composed a fanfare using prepared electronics incorporating the sounds of the bridge and utilising the talents of 200 local saxophonists in homage to his early work with French performance artists Urban Sax.

This latter work subsequently formed the basis of *Andy Sheppard's Saxophone Massive* – a series of large-scale celebratory performances performed in the UK and abroad by saxophone choirs made up of players of all ages and abilities that can be tailored to suit indoor or outdoor performance venues. *Saxophone Massive* has played all over Europe and as part of BT River of Music, the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad programme supported by the National Lottery and Paul Hamlyn Foundation, in July 2012 there was a special version of *Andy Sheppard's Saxophone Massive* at Somerset House in London.

Sheppard has also written music for theatre (Bristol Theatre Royal's production of Arthur Miller's play, *The Man Who Had All the Luck* which ran at the Young Vic); dance (his trio Inclassifiable devised the music for the award winning dance piece *Modern Living*, choreographed by Jonathan Lunn); radio and TV. His TV credits include original music commissioned by BBC's Omnibus, for ice dancers Torvill and Dean; the Oscar-nominated Channel 4 film, *Syrup* directed by Paul Unwin; a documentary on the life of 18th century black violinist Joseph Emidy and a highly acclaimed score for the BBC2 Arena documentary series about Peter Sellers.

Sheppard has been described as a serial collaborator, playing, recording and developing new music with artists as varied as Brazilian percussionist Nana Vasconcelos, Indian violinist L. Shankar, English folk musician Kathryn Tickell, contemporary classical composer-performers John Harle and Joanna MacGregor, singer songwriter John Martyn and a myriad of leading jazz figures – including the rare hat-trick of three of the seminal composers in contemporary jazz – Carla Bley, George Russell and the late Gil Evans.

Sheppard's current performing priority is Trio Libero, with French bassist Michel Benita and UK drummer Sebastian Rochford. Their debut album, *Trio Libero*, released on prestigious European label ECM will be followed by an extensive tour of Europe in 2012 and 2013.

Press quotes:

'Sheppard is always a compelling voice...', Time Out

'Romanticism, carefully managed anarchy and accessibility subtle, elegant jazz...' Guardian

'refined a mix of free-jazz bellicosity, elegant linear lyricism and a concern for delicate nuance that has made his playing more expressive now than at any time in his career.' Guardian

'Sheppard's wholly distinctive saxophone playing, which combines considerable subtlety with immediate accessibility, has never sounded better.' The Times

For the recording project, *Trio Libero* (ECM, 2012):

*'This is an album of stately elegance and beauty....A truly gorgeous piece of music-making. ****'* (Jazzwise)

For the recording project, *Movements in Colour* (ECM 2009):

'One of ECM's most eminently accessible records, Movements in Colour demonstrates the beauty of simplicity, the appeal of modesty. It's deceptively difficult to create music that speaks on a broad, elemental level, and with Movements in Colour Sheppard has succeeded in creating an album of unassuming richness in texture, colour and melodic depth.' All About Jazz

For the critically acclaimed recording project, *Learning to Wave*:

'Learning to Wave features all the qualities for which Sheppard is renowned - evocative melody, virtuoso improvisation and irresistible rhythm tracks combined with powerful resonance's of Asian, African and Indian music...', Ronnie Scott's Magazine

For more information:

www.andysheppard.co.uk

www.serious.org.uk

www.ecmrecords.com

Discography:

Trio Libero (ECM, 2012)

Movements in Colour (ECM, 2009)

On the Edge of a Perfect Moment, with Rita Marcotulli (Le Chant du Monde, 2007)

Deep River, with Joanna MacGregor (SoundCircus, 2006)

PS, with John Parricelli (Provocateur, 2003)

Nocturnal Tourist (Provocateur, 2002)

Music for a New Crossing, with Kathryn Tickell (Provocateur, 2001)

Dancing Man & Woman (Provocateur, 2000)

Learning To Wave (Provocateur, 1998)

Moving Image (Verve/Polygram, 1996)

Inclassifiable (Label Bleu, 1995)

Delivery Suite (Blue Note International/EMI, 1994)

Rhythm Method (Blue Note International/EMI, 1993)

In Co-Motion (Antilles/Island, 1991)

Soft on the Inside (Antilles/Island, 1990)

Introductions in the Dark (Antilles/Island, 1989)

Andy Sheppard (Antilles/Island, 1988)