

"Boston-based guitarist Jim Robitaille led a band drawn from the Monk Institute students in an impressive performance of his award winning "Arthur C," a composition dedicated to Arthur C. Clarke. As winner of the Thelonious Monk International Jazz Composers Competition, Robitaille received a \$10,000 grant. Like a cross between "Naima" and a Joe Henderson tune, Robitaille's tune indeed sounded like something jazz players would opt to play, as opposed to some of the more idiosyncratic winners in years past."

- **JazzTimes**

"With catchy melodies, sophisticated arrangements, and a guitarist with the skills to bring it all together, the Jim Robitaille Group's debut To Music is familiar but also has its own identity."

- **Jazz Improv Magazine**

"What Robitaille has done with To Music is release a remarkable album of modern post-bop. Robitaille is obviously his own man. Pianist Matt Richard is a strong soloist and even better accompanist, with shades of Richie Beirach. Bassist Dave Zinno and drummer Chris Poudrier anchor things and generate a sense of intensity without overplaying. A front runner for debut of the year."

- **jazzviews.UK**

"To Music will be a pleasant surprise to those guitarists searching for a new influence beyond, say, Metheny, Abercrombie, and Scofield—and as musicians is this not part of our mission? Those names come to mind occasionally when encountering Robitaille's lightly muted guitar tone and his original, sometimes dreamy sometimes punchy compositions. You might purchase this CD because the name Dave Liebman guarantees some modicum of quality, but you'll keep it handy because of Robitaille's compelling playing."

- **Muzik Etc/Drums Etc magazine**

"To Music, the new CD release by The Jim Robitaille Group, is a masterful encountering, of virtuosic performances. His sometimes structured, sometimes improvisational technique dominates throughout, and is the clear focal point of this jazz offering.

Like with all styles of music, to know greatness is to hear greatness. Like the watercolor painted on the CD's cover by artist John Thornton, the musical landscapes painted by Jim Robitaille throughout To Music are as equally breathtaking, and certainly no less grand."

- Motif magazine

"Just about every new jazz guitarist who comes down the road cites Wes Montgomery as an influence. For once, on Jim Robitaille's To Music, you can hear it in the fluid grace, the slight bite in the tone. But the set isn't retro in any way; To Music has an unmistakable modern sound based on the guitarist's strikingly well-crafted songs and forward-looking arrangements.

Of the nine songs offered here, no less than three are award-winners (from the Thelonious Monk International Jazz Composers Competition and the Great American Song Contests): "Arthur C," "Miro," and "Lost and Found." And apparently those people giving out the awards know a great tune when they hear one. Without exception, every song on the disc brims with very satisfying depth, based (among other things) on intriguing leading chord progressions.

The band, a quintet featuring piano and sax (tenor and soprano) in front of a bass/drum rhythm section and alongside Robitaille's guitar, drifts between a tight groove mode and a freer flexible flow as well as anybody out there.

To Music is a highly polished, well-crafted set that benefits greatly from Robitaille's arranging skills, especially his weave of guitar/piano. It's got to be on the short list of debuts of the year. "

- All About Jazz

"Guitarist-composer-arranger Jim Robitaille has assembled a talented group with whom to record. All these tunes are cutting-edge hip arrangements".

- Escambia Sun Press, Pensacola

"Guitarist Jim Robitaille's guitar artistry should—at the very least—appeal to fans of Pat Metheny and Kurt Rosenwinkel. Featuring sax hero Dave Liebman, the quintet perpetuates a breezy vibe, coupled with a quietly ferocious temperament. The guitarist's melodically tinged compositions provide a solid underpinning. Hence, this album should rank as one of the unanticipated delights of 2004."

- All About Jazz

"Jim Robitaille makes an impressive recording debut with an album named after a Reiner Maria Rilke's poem. A none but random album title selection, considering the exceptional sensitiveness of his compositions and the way he moves on the mainstream routes."

- The Daily Ipirotikos Agon and the Apopsy, Greece

*"Jim Robitaille has piled up so many awards in such a short amount of time recently that it's a wonder that his name isn't better known beyond New England where his education took place and where his career took root. After all, talent like Jacky Terrasson, Joey DeFrancesco and Seamus Blake have moved into jazz careers after placing in the Thelonious Monk competition. Robitaille won first place in the Great American Song Contest for his composition, "Miro," and "Arthur C" placed in the Thelonious Monk International Jazz Composers Competition. Just as intriguing as Robitaille's writing, though, is his playing, ever in control of his own material and with confident and engaging effect on *To Music*. What's more, he is joined by superb musicians who dig into the material with equal determination and fluidity. Dave Liebman, in particular, adds a distinctive voice to the recording, mostly on soprano sax, that, like all the others on *To Music*, merges into, in the end, a single voice attaining the music of Robitaille's imagination.*

Using complex compositional devices, the ease with which the quintet brings to the tunes belies their otherwise difficult nature for performance. "Hypnotic Nights," for example, creates a 6/8 foundation for which pianist Matt Richard and bassist Dave Zinno create an alternative feel by playing "Mission Impossible"-like lines under Robitaille's and Liebman's fluid melodic exposition. The waltz "Miro," though slower, paints a portrait of hues of varying intensity and richness as Robitaille uses dynamics for subtle and superb effect, even single notes swelling into a bell-curve-like shapes as the entire chorus builds unsuspectingly in a slow climb before the falloff into relative quietude. Just as fulfilling through the complexity of simplicity is Robitaille's leisurely acoustic guitar performance of "Adagio," derived from his classical music studies and made successful by his warmth of timbre and the carefully chosen half notes of Zinno's bass in support of the theme before taking a solo of his own.

Then, perhaps paying tribute to John Scofield's influence, Robitaille sets up his

own jazz jam on "West End Strut," full of sassiness and wailing and winding lines seemingly disconnected from the meter—but not really. "Arthur C" emerges as an engaging ballad of medium tempo, certainly a showcase for Liebman as he maximizes the potential of the composition along the lines of "Naima," consisting as it does of descending modulations before settling into the root chord.

To Music is full of equally glittering gems awaiting discovery from the beauty of Robitaille's creations as uncovered by his quintet. It's a CD that can be replayed without a loss of interest as new facets come to light that weren't apparent at the first listen."

- Jazz Review

QUOTES ON TO MUSIC

"Jim's work on this recording demonstrates once again why he is so respected by his peers. He always plays musically and straight from the heart. He is a true musician."

Charlie Banacos

"Jim and the group organized the material in such a way that we could relax and get into it easily. Also, the melodies are memorable and soulful. I enjoyed this recording alot."

David Liebman

"Freshness and inventiveness are two words that come to mind when listening to Jim Robitaille's album "To Music." Jim Robitaille is a guitarist/composer with an album reaching beyond just the guitar. It's really worth checking out, you owe it to music."

Guitarist, Anatholi Bulkin

By Katelyn Gendron

Staff Writer for The Reminder

WESTFIELD The internationally critically acclaimed jazz guitarist Jim Robitaille will be stopping in Western Massachusetts this month to play a free concert with his group the Jim Robitaille Trio.

The Westfield Athenaeum will be sponsoring the concert on June 27, at 7 p.m. at the Rand Art Museum. The concert is supported by a grant that Robitaille received from the Westfield Arts Council in conjunction with the Massachusetts Cultural Council.

"I always like to go and play in Western Massachusetts," Robitaille said. "I like to bring the music to new audiences and play outside of my region."

Not only is Robitaille excited to play this concert in Western Massachusetts but Chris Lopes, upright bass guitar for the Jim Robitaille Trio is also enthused about the upcoming performance.

"Jazz in a lot of ways is an urban phenomenon and people think that they have to go to a big city to hear this music," Lopes said. "But what I cherish is going to play in a more rural community and bringing the music to them."

The third and final member of the trio, Chris Poudrier who plays the drums, is also pleased to have the opportunity to come back and play in Westfield where he attended his first year of college. Poudrier attended Westfield State College his freshman year and later went on to the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

"I love the area and I can't wait to perform in Westfield," said Poudrier.

According to Robitaille and Lopes the interaction between the musicians during the performance is also a phenomenon within itself as each player brings their own individual sound and improvisation to the concert.

"We show up without much of an agenda because the way we play our tunes is improvisational," Robitaille said. "But we can pretty much play anything together collectively. It's like a three-way conversation."

When asked about the smooth combination of their collective rhythms as a trio group Lopes said, "I think that the interplay between our personalities goes pretty deep. Especially at a time when communication between people gets lost because there is so much technology blocking human interaction today."

However human interaction does not seem to be a problem for any member of this trio as they are all fulltime musicians that supplement their income with professorships in Massachusetts, rather than the other way around, according to Robitaille. Lopes is a professor at University of Massachusetts Dartmouth and

teaches at the Music School of the Rhode Island Philharmonic.

Robitaille has also been teaching at UMass Dartmouth for three years. He teaches applied jazz guitar and has been seriously studying music since he was 12 years old.

"My immediate family wasn't musical," Robitaille said. "I really started to get into the guitar when I was 12 and then I knew that's what I wanted to be doing. You don't usually ask yourself twice."

Poudrier is also a professor at UMass Dartmouth, in addition to teaching at Berklee College during Percussion Festival Week.

When they have not been teaching this group of musicians has been performing on and off together in various collaborations for over 10 years, Robitaille stated.

"We've developed a really good relationship with one another because we've come up together and matured," Poudrier said. "We've got hours and hours of practice time and gigs together. Our concerts are not thrown together like most concerts these days," he added.

Robitaille went on to add that he is always impressed at how well the music has been accepted by audiences.

"I am always surprised by the audiences with how well they receive the music because jazz is considered a minority kind of music," Robitaille said. "And I've played in a lot of small art museums with small audiences and it's great."

For Robitaille the primary objective in any concert is to get people interested in the type of improvised jazz that his groups is playing, especially if members of the audience have never heard jazz before.

"Even though the music that we are playing is coming out of the jazz tradition we do a lot of our own compositions and we like to include a lot of world influences," Robitaille said. "The main thing is that they are interested in improvisational music."

- The Reminder Online

Wailing City Blog

Jim Robitaille

To many area musicians Jim Robitaille is the premier guitar talent in the New Bedford area. But it didn't just happen. "There's no magic to it," Robitaille points out. "Success is a combination of talent and stubbornness. It's about making the time." "I've always had an instinctive and emotional attachment to music," he says. "I've spent an amazing amount of time studying and practicing. For many years I played for six to 12 hours a day. I knew early on that music is what I've wanted to do."

Upon graduating from New Bedford High in 1978, Robitaille told his parents that he would take the next year off to practice his guitar. "I didn't want something to fall back on because if I did have something I'd probably fall back on it," he says. "It was gut instinct. If you have to think about it twice, don't do it."

Robitaille's early influences were blues rockers such as Jeff Beck, Eric Clapton, and Duane Allman. But as he entered high school his attention was captivated by European improvisational music. Eventually he began studying classical and jazz forms, and was spending hours playing improvisationally to the radio.

Robitaille points out that his greatest musical influences have been people who didn't play guitar – such as John Coltrane, Miles Davis, and Dave Liebman.

"I've always loved improv music," Robitaille says. "It's very open and liberating. The musicians in that style are usually better. I find it more gratifying. There's more possibilities. "I love getting lost in the music, I've always loved the way it makes me feel."

Jimi Beauregard is a drummer who has played with Robitaille in the Dancing Dogs for eight years. "The songs Jim writes are very percussive," he says. "His music lends itself to a lot of fun percussion. Most of our songs that have drum breaks are his songs."

In his mid-teens Robitaille began composing his own instrumental pieces, but at the same time he was playing in rock and R&B bands. As he made more contacts he had the opportunity to meet more people and play with more people. Eventually he got away from the world of rock, focusing mainly on jazz and classical. In the early 80's he began writing music for the Jim Robitaille Group, a revolving group of jazz musicians that fluctuates from a trio to a quintet. They still perform today.

He is also part of the jazz quartet, Trine, with sax player Rick Britto, drummer

Chris Poudrier, and bassist Chris Lopes. The group currently has two records in the works that should be released this summer on-line. Robitaille is also a member of The Dancing Dogs, and the Marcus Monteiro Quartet, and performs

in a duo with Matt Richard. He is also a frequent freelance performer throughout New England and New York.

"I enjoy being a sideman as much as leading my own groups," he says. "I love the chance to sit in with new people and meet new people."

"Jim's interests run deeper than music," says Tom Short who is a singer and multi-instrumentalist with the Dancing Dogs. "He's well versed in many subjects. He's someone you can talk to for hours about things like politics, the arts, and movies. He's also very active as a skier and a cyclist."

Robitaille has been teaching guitar in the area for two decades – Twenty years both privately and at the Symphony Shop, 15 years at Tabor Academy and 3 years at UMass Dartmouth. Robitaille's advice to new guitarists: "Use both sides of your brain. You can play as much improv as you want, but you should also learn how to read music, learn music theory, as well as technique.

"Get a good teacher and learn how to teach yourself. Don't just learn how to play, learn how to practice. No matter how talented you are you still have to put in the time."

You can catch Robitaille in action Sunday, June 17th at the Music at the Library Concert Series at the Osterville Public Library; July 12th at the Rotch Jones Duff House in New Bedford; and August 10th at the Provincetown Jazz Festival at the Town Hall. He can be enjoyed Tuesday evenings with the Marcus Monteiro Quartet at the Bridge Street Station in Fairhaven.