

LISTEN UP!



Brett Sroka
trombone, computer

Brett Sroka began playing trombone at age 10. He received his BA from the Manhattan School of Music in 1997, studying with trombonists Britt Woodman and Steve Turre and undertaking his own compositional studies by dissecting dozens of Duke Ellington scores and transcribing his favorite recordings. Sroka was awarded a composition grant from the New York Department of Cultural Affairs in 2002 and released his debut CD *Hearsay* (Fresh Sound-New Talent) that same year, which featured Jason Moran (piano), Eric Harland (drums), John Sullivan (bass), Aaron Stewart (sax) and Avishai Cohen (trumpet).

TEACHERS: Jeff Leonard at Lexington High School and my first trombone teacher Tom Everett from Harvard University. Their love of music was infectious and they helped me grow as a person too. Steve Turre, briefly - a great trombonist and a brutal teacher, he really forced me to face my weaknesses as a trombonist and I was better for it (but he wasn't gentle about it.) Dave Taylor, one of the greatest trombone players around who has an unorthodox approach to teaching, found unique ways to nurture my musicianship and I grew in all aspects of technique.

INFLUENCES: Duke Ellington. I really learned economy of orchestration, development and management of ideas from him and I was really inspired by his inclusive approach to music. Coltrane made some of the most powerful music I've ever heard. As with most musicians I know, we all aspire to attain that level of depth. And Radiohead. The album *Kid A* blew me away on first listen and was the first example I heard of what I might call anatomical music, the unusual combination of traditional and electronic, played and programmed, inspiring me to form the group Ergo.

CURRENT PROJECTS: In 2003 I formed Ergo - my primary outlet as a performer and composer these days - with drummer Damion Reid, later replaced by Shawn Baltazor, and pianist Carl Maguire. Moving further and further towards an electro-acoustically organic sound we made our debut recording in 2005 (*Quality Anatomical Music Since 2005*). And there's Atiquis - an intricate, groovy collaboration with guitarist Sebastian Krueger, saxist Matt Silberman, bassist Gabe Fonorow and drummer Shawn Baltazor.

BY DAY: Carpenter/woodworker, loafer.

I KNEW I WANTED TO BE A MUSICIAN WHEN... I heard "Bird Of Paradise" by Charlie Parker. I had never heard anything like it, it was so beautiful. I remember the feeling vividly. I was probably 14 or 15.

DREAM BAND: I'd love to collaborate with Christian Fennesz or Jonny Greenwood or Helge Sten or the Necks.

DID YOU KNOW?

In high school I was an avid skateboarder and spent all my time skating around Boston with future pros like Matt Pailes, Robbie Gangemi and Jamal Williams.

FOLLOW UP WITH:

www.ergoisaband.com
brett@brettsroka.com

Ergo is at Knitting Factory Oct. 27th. See calendar.



Fred Kennedy
drums

Originally from Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, drummer and sound designer, Kennedy now makes his home in New York City. He has performed with with many artists, including David Krakauer, Tim Hagans, Ben Monder, Bobby Shew, Gary Campbell, Mike Orta, Sheryl Bailey, Joe LoCascio, Lynn Seaton, Dan Haerle, Philip Glass and Iva Bitova. He has worked extensively collaborating with theatre and dance artists and has also written, recorded and edited numerous scores for video.

TEACHERS: Ed Soph taught me a lot about playing, but even more about thinking. He taught me how to teach myself. There were a couple of great guys from back in Nova Scotia: Roger Strange and Bob Gaudreau. Roger's enthusiasm for music hooked me at an early age. He just LOVED music and he was extremely encouraging. Bob was the first person to show me fundamentals. He helped make the leap to being a serious player. I should really include John Riley, too. John understands the trials of being a player in New York and he gave me some much needed tips for maintaining a positive outlook. My time here so far divides quite easily into pre-John Riley lesson and post-John Riley lesson. Thanks John!

INFLUENCES: I listened to a lot of '60s rock and progressive stuff as a kid. So at first I was hooked on John Bonham, Keith Moon, Mitch Mitchell, Ginger Baker, etc. - basically all the rock drummers who were improvisers. Later I got really into Jack DeJohnette. I really dug his ability to be so emotionally expressive on the drums. And later it was Roy Haynes, Ed Soph, Joey Baron, Bill Stewart. Now the drummers I listen to are Jim Black, John Hollenbeck and Kenny Wollesen.

CURRENT PROJECTS: My main projects these days are the SuiteUnraveling, a jazz-indie rock quintet led by guitarist-composer Lily Maase; The Gray Code, an electro-acoustic and free jazz trio, utilizing guitar, woodwinds, drums, computers and gyroscopes; and Randal, a quartet in the ECM (for lack of a better word) vein that functions more traditionally.

BY DAY: These days, I sometimes pick up work as a freelance copy editor for books and magazines. I recently worked on the collected interviews of Bob Dylan for Wenner Books, *Rolling Stone* magazine's book division.

I KNEW I WANTED TO BE A MUSICIAN WHEN... ...it was too late! I never thought about it. I worked as an actor, visual artist, whatever. It was only as an adult, when I had to force myself to actually have some direction, that I became truly serious about it. I always loved music, but I was a total daydreamer.

DREAM BAND: Well, I'm a huge fan of Bill Frisell and I love Drew Gress, too. I think playing trio with those guys would be a blast.

DID YOU KNOW?

I was bitten by an extremely poisonous spider once. No cool superpowers to report, however...

FOLLOW UP WITH:

www.fredkennedy.org

Kennedy is at Cornelia Street Café Oct. 8th with the SuiteUnraveling and Oct 19th with Deadra Hart. See calendar.

Each month, AAJ-NY spotlights two musicians that we think you ought to know about.
To suggest someone who deserves a listen, email some information to ldgreene@allaboutjazz.com

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