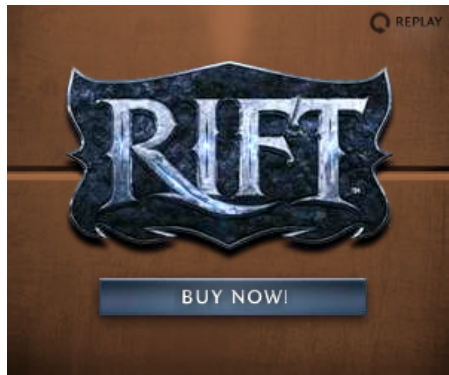




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## From bebop to latin jazz, and back

Lynch brings energy, variety to foursome

April 01, 2011 | By Andrew Gilbert, Globe Correspondent

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### EDDIE PALMIERI/ BRIAN LYNCH QUARTET

At: Scullers, Friday and Saturday night, 8 and 10 p.m. Tickets: \$30. 617-562-4111, [www.ticketweb.com](http://www.ticketweb.com).

Brian Lynch's latest album, "Unsung Heroes," is a project exploring compositions by overlooked jazz trumpet masters, players who developed powerfully individual voices but are mostly forgotten today. That's not a fate he's likely to share.



At 54, Lynch has attained rarified status as an improviser as deeply versed in Afro-Caribbean idioms as straight-ahead jazz. As the last horn player to hold down the storied trumpet chair in Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers, and a longtime sparring partner with alto saxophonist Phil Woods, Lynch blows with all the fire, funk, and finesse that makes hard bop such a swaggering pleasure. And from his formative experience accompanying beloved salsaero Héctor Lavoe and his key role in the evolution of Latin music legend Eddie Palmieri from dance bandleader to Latin jazz maestro, Lynch has walked two paths simultaneously.

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"I think in clave even when I'm playing bebop eighth notes, and I think in bebop when I'm playing a montuno," says Lynch, who opens a two-night Scullers run on Friday with the quartet he leads with Palmieri. "It's never a jump to go from one to another." Both men are also featured in the April 9 Sanders Theatre concert celebrating the Harvard Jazz Band's 40th anniversary.

Lynch joined Palmieri's salsa orchestra in 1987, and they have forged an enduring relationship that has paid steep creative dividends. Deeply influenced by Thelonious Monk and McCoy Tyner, Palmieri jumped at the opportunity when the prestige label Nonesuch approached him about changing formats and recording a Latin jazz session in the mid-'90s.

Lynch brought his former Jazz Messengers bandmate Donald Harrison into Palmieri's new octet, joining trombonist Conrad Herwig in the era's most potent frontline. The band released a series of classic recordings, including the 1994 Nonesuch debut "Palmas," and 1995's "Arete" and 1996's "Vortex" (both on RMM Records).

Long revered as a composer of dauntingly intricate compositions, Palmieri increasingly encouraged Lynch to contribute charts to the band, showcasing his work on the Concord Picante albums "La Perfecta II" and "Ritmo Caliente." But their relationship attained new visibility with Lynch's album "Simpatico" (ArtistShare), the 2007 Best Latin Jazz Album



Grammy Award winner that surrounded Palmieri with a cross section of players who share the trumpeter's culturally ambidextrous sensibility, such as pianist Edsel Gomez, Cuban drum star Dafnis Prieto, and bassist Ruben Rodriguez.

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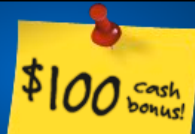
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(Page 2 of 2)

“Brian is one of the greatest trumpet players I’ve ever heard,” says Palmieri, 74. “He’s a great bandstand buddy, and a great catalyst for me. I really played dance music my whole career, and he made it possible for me to cross into the Latin jazz category. Since then we’ve had an incredible relationship.”

While the Palmieri-Lynch quartet plays some of the “Simpatico” material, the band has developed its own powerful synergy, with all four players contributing tunes. The group is anchored by Russian-born bassist Boris Koslov, best known for his work with the Mingus Big Band, Dynasty and Orchestra, and powered by Prieto, a prolific bandleader and composer who shares deep interlocking ties with Lynch. Since meeting at the Stanford Jazz Workshop in 1988, they have performed on each other’s albums and hired each other on numerous gigs.

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“Brian is a master of the instrument, and he goes in and out from these two styles very fluidly, though we think of it all as one,” Prieto says. “With him coming from bop, playing with Art Blakey, and going and playing salsa with Héctor Lavoe, and then connecting with Eddie Palmieri, it makes him a musician of a very wide range of ideas.”

Raised in Milwaukee, Lynch started gigging in his teens with resident masters such as pianist-vibraphonist Buddy Montgomery and organist Melvin Rhyne. At the same time, he earned a degree from the Wisconsin Conservatory of Music. While never studying jazz formally, he gained an invaluable bandstand education.


“They didn’t write anything down,” Lynch says. “You had to learn it by rote, and figure out the changes and the melody. It was great old-school training at the same time I was going to music school. Buddy used a lot of percussion and his music is very amendable to Latin influences.”

Over the years, Lynch has continued to develop and refine an encompassing concept called Spheres of Influence, an ongoing project featuring like-minded artists exploring jazz as part of a pan-American continuum. But he keeps a foot firmly planted in the straight ahead world, too. As a leader he has focused on projects such as “Unsung Heroes,” and as a sideman he continues to write and arrange for Phil Woods.

“I think you can still play with originality and freshness within established forms,” Lynch says. “It’s so important that guys like Phil and Charles McPherson keep on representing that classic style of improvisation. Bebop is still the music of the future.”

Bebop has certainly stood the test of time, a trial that Lynch looks likely to pass with flying


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