



A RISING STAR: A young Roy Hargrove, backstage at the Equitable Center, New York City, at a rehearsal for a JVC Jazz Festival Concert, "Be-Bop: 40 and Younger," June 27, 1991. Photo by Mitchell Seidel.

Trumpet Star Roy Hargrove Dies at 49

Discovered by Wynton Marsalis while still in his teens, Roy Hargrove bridged the gaps between hard bop, R&B and hip-hop. He earned Grammys for Best Jazz Instrumental Album in 2003 for *Directions in Music: Live at Massey Hall*, featuring Herbie Hancock and Michael Brecker, and for Best Latin Jazz Performance in 1997 for *Habana*, a contemporary Afro-Cuban jazz project recorded in Havana with a melting pot band that included Chucho Valdes.

He also struggled with substance abuse, pleading guilty to cocaine possession in Manhattan Criminal Court in 2014. But friends say he'd made positive strides since then. "Whatever it was for a lot of years, it was radically, drastically curtailed over the last year or two," said his longtime manager, Larry Clothier. "He was playing great; he really had himself back together. This last run we did in Europe, it was as good as I heard him play in the last 10 years." He died of cardiac arrest at Mt. Sinai Hospital in New York City on Nov. 2 after being admitted for reasons related to kidney disease, just a day before he was scheduled to open the TD Bank James Moody Jazz Festival at Bethany Baptist Church in Newark. Trumpeter Jon Faddis performed at the Bethany Vespers in his place. Sanford Josephson's obituary is on page 8.

Big Band in the Sky

By Sanford Josephson

■ Roy Hargrove, 49, trumpeter, October 16, 1969, Waco, Texas – November 2, 2018, New York City. In 1991, the 21-year-old Hargrove appeared in concert at Carnegie Hall with legendary tenor saxophonist Sonny Rollins, who had played in the 1950s with Hargrove’s idol, trumpeter Clifford Brown. That performance, according to *The Washington Post*’s Matt Schudel (November 3, 2018), “gave Mr. Hargrove instant credibility among musicians.” *The New York Times*’ Peter Watrous described him as “an extraordinary trumpet player...one of jazz’s finest improvisers, and he’s only getting better.”

In a Facebook post after Hargrove’s death, Rollins recalled that night. “Having been fortunate to play with super, super trumpet stars of the day,” he wrote, “I found it inconceivable that this new kid on the block could be in that class, could be that good. He is, and will always be.”

Growing up in Dallas, Hargrove attended the Booker T. Washington High School for the Performing and Visual Arts, a school also attended by singer-songwriters Erykah Badu and Norah Jones. While Hargrove was a student there, Wynton Marsalis visited to conduct a clinic. After hearing Hargrove, Marsalis arranged for him to have private lessons. Soon after that, Hargrove was appearing with veteran jazz artists and, after graduating from high school, attended Berklee College of Music before moving to New York.

Marsalis, also on Facebook, remembered that 1986 clinic in Dallas. “He was a 16-year-old phenom, playing lead trumpet parts with incredible accuracy and also improvising original solos with gleaming nuggets of melody swimming in harmonic sophistication with generous helpings of down home blues and soul...The first time I heard him it was clear he was an absolute natural with phenomenal ears, a great memory and tremendous dexterity on our instrument.”

Hargrove’s first album, *Diamond in the Rough*, was released in 1990 on RCA’s Novus label. In a May 20, 1990, article, “Young Gifted and Cool,” *The New York Times Magazine*’s Tom Piazza reported on how young musicians were discovering the jazz tradition. “Among the newcomers,” he wrote, “the one name that everyone mentions is Roy Hargrove. His playing incorporates a wide, rich sound, something like that of the great Clifford Brown. Barely out of his teens, Hargrove is a mixture of shyness and cockiness, boyish enthusiasm and high seriousness.”

He also went on the road with a band called Jazz Futures, a peer group of young up-and-coming musicians that included alto saxophonist Antonio Hart and bassist Christian McBride. In a



Photo by Jalylah Burrell

Facebook tribute, McBride said: “I have no words over the loss of my dear brother of 31 years. We played a lot of sessions together, traveled a lot of miles together, laughed a lot together, bickered on occasion — and I wouldn’t change our relationship for anything in the world. Bless you.”

Hargrove won two Grammy Awards: in 1997 for his Verve album, *Habana*; and in 2002 for *Directions in Music: Live at Massey Hall*, a Verve recording that teamed him with pianist Herbie Hancock and tenor saxophonist Michael Brecker. *Habana*, wrote *The Post*’s Schudel, “brought Cuban and American musicians together for a hypnotic style of Cuban-flavored jazz.”

Schudel pointed out that Hargrove was “always restless and never content to stay in one musical groove. Mr. Hargrove branched out to other styles without forsaking his roots in jazz. Elements of rhythm and blues, soul, gospel, and hip-

hop were soon reflected in his performances.” Among those “non-jazz” musicians Hargrove recorded or appeared with were hip-hop artist Common and neo-soul singers Badu and D’Angelo. In 2003, he formed a band called RH Factor, which featured appearances by Badu and D’Angelo as well as rappers Q-Tip and Meshell Ndegeocello.

In an interview on the allaboutjazz.com website, Hargrove said, “My goal with RH Factor has always been to try to erase the lines between the mainstream and the underground — straight ahead and hip-hop/R&B. You have musicians who know all the theory and harmony. Then you have the musicians who have a direct line to the masses and what they like to hear. If you can combine the two, it can be something innovative as well.”

In addition to RH Factor, Hargrove headed two other bands at the time of his death — a 21-piece big band and an acoustic quintet. The cause of his death was cardiac arrest, but he had suffered from a kidney disease and had been on dialysis for 13 years. He also grappled at times with substance abuse and pleaded guilty to cocaine possession in 2014.

Recently, Hargrove was a late-night fixture at Small’s and Mezzrow in Greenwich Village. Spike Wilner, pianist and owner of both clubs, remembered Hargrove in the November 4th edition of his online newsletter. “I was fortunate to be able to call him a friend,” he wrote, “and to have had the chance to play with him. Over the last few months, we played gigs at Mezzrow unannounced. My ‘dream team’ trumpet frontline — Roy Hargrove and Joe Magnarelli playing after hours to a delighted crowd.”

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Sanford Josephson is the author of *Jazz Notes: Interviews Across the Generations and Jeru’s Journey: The Life and Music of Gerry Mulligan*. He’s written about jazz musicians in a variety of publications.

BIG BAND IN THE SKY

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Hargrove is survived by his wife, singer and producer Aida Brandes; a daughter, Kamala Hargrove, from a previous relationship; his mother, Jacklyn Hargrove; and his brother, Brian Hargrove.

■ **Cornelius “Sonny” Fortune, 79, saxophonist-flutist, May 19, 1939, Philadelphia – October 25, 2018, New York City.** In the early 1960s, Fortune heard John Coltrane’s Atlantic album, *My Favorite Things*. At that moment, Coltrane became his major influence, but that inspiration never prevented him from having his own musical style.

“Because Fortune emerged in the wake of John Coltrane’s death in 1967,” wrote National Public Radio’s Nate Chinen (October 27, 2018), “his music has often been framed as an extension of that legacy. He accepted this more as a gift than a burden, also working in the early ’70s with Coltrane’s former pianist, McCoy Tyner, and in the Coltrane Legacy Band, which featured Tyner and [drummer Elvin] Jones with bassist Reggie Workman... But unlike some other avowed Coltrane disciples, Fortune never lost his own voice to imitation.” Agreeing with that assessment, *JazzTimes*’ Michael J. West (October 30, 2018) pointed out that Fortune “was part of a post-Coltrane wave of jazz saxophonists but steadfastly developed his own sound while exploring the new language Trane had established on the instrument.”

The New York Times’ John S. Wilson, in 1975, portrayed Fortune as a saxophonist “who draws out the full tonal qualities of his instruments in much the same way that Duke Ellington’s great baritone saxophonist, Harry Carney, did. Richness and completeness of tone are combined with great facility in almost everything he plays.”

Fortune attended Philadelphia’s Granoff School of Music and moved to New York in 1967, working in bands led by Elvin Jones and saxophonist Frank Foster. In 1968, he joined Mongo Santamaria’s band before moving briefly to Los Angeles. When he returned to New York, he began playing with Tyner and stayed with him until,

embarking on a solo career, he recorded his first album as a leader, *Long Before Our Mothers Cried* on the Strata-East label. He replaced Dave Liebman in Miles Davis’ new fusion band and was part of the Davis Columbia album, *Get Up With It*, also appearing on three more albums with Davis.

During the ’70s, Fortune recorded two albums on the Horizon label — *Awakening* in 1975 and *Waves of Dreams* in 1976. He then recorded two albums for Atlantic that adopted elements of disco and funk — *Serengeti Minstrel* in 1977 and *Infinity Is* in 1978. *Serengeti Minstrel*, according to *JazzTimes*’ West, “drew from Davis’ interest in funk rhythms and electronic textures, Santamaria’s soulful edge and dense Latin percussion, and Coltrane’s propulsive, often atonal and unbridled blowing, as well as his history in modal music and hard bop.”

Fortune rejoined Elvin Jones in the mid-’80s and made several albums on the Blue Note label in the ’90s including a 1994 tribute to Thelonius Monk called *Four in One*. His most recent release was a live album called *Last Night at Sweet Rhythm* (Sound Reason: 2009), a tribute to the Village jazz club known originally as Sweet Basil. Chuck Koton, reviewing the album for allaboutjazz.com, wrote that Fortune’s “inspired performance not only reveals a multi-talented artist still at the top of his game more than four decades after his recording debut, but also bids an appropriate adieu to a night club that will be sorely missed on the New York jazz scene.”

James Browne, who was the club’s co-manager and music director, recalled, on Facebook, “the duets with Rashied Ali, the quartets with Steve Johns, Michael Cochran, and Calvin Hill. Oh my goodness, what artistry!” Guitarist Charlie Apicella worked with Fortune recently and, on Facebook, remembered, “The visits to his house for rehearsals, the time together in the studio and on stage, and the long car trips together... an experience I will never forget. I thank him for the time he spent sharing his gift with me and my music, and I am truly grateful for every moment I have spent with him as a fan, an audience member, and a bandmate.”

Fortune’s last gig was in mid-July of this

year at the Smoke Jazz and Supper Club in New York. Said his booking agent, Reggie Marshall: “You know how they say an athlete leaves it all on the field? Well, Sonny left it all on the bandstand, right up until the end.” Cause of death was complications from a stroke. No information was available regarding survivors.

■ **Gerald Antonio (Jerry) Gonzalez, 69, trumpeter, percussionist, June 5, 1949, New York City – October 1, 2018, Madrid.**

“An irreverent group of mavericks who explore the multicultural frontiers of urban jazz and Latin music.” That’s how the *Los Angeles Times*’ Bill Kohlhaase described Fort Apache, a band formed by Gonzalez and his brother, Andy, in 1980. Kohlhaase’s article, published in September 1996, was a preview of the band’s appearance at the Ash Grove on the Santa Monica Pier. “The group,” he continued, “has pioneered a form of music that transcends the accepted Latin jazz category, exploring a variety of musical rhythms and influences... Tunes spontaneously move through African, rumba, and driving, straight-ahead jazz rhythms, while soloists improvise with the fire of the bebop and hard-bop progenitors.”

Gonzalez, who died of smoke inhalation from a fire in his home, began playing trumpet in junior high school, attended the High School of Music and Art in Manhattan and the New York College of Music. He played with Dizzy Gillespie and pianist Eddie Palmieri while still in his early 20s. His greatest skill, according to *The New York Times*’ Neil Genzlinger (October 1, 2018) “was weaving together musical styles and influences from Cuba, Puerto Rico, Africa, and more to create his own music.” That was embodied in the music of the Fort Apache band. In a 1995 article, *The New York Times* pointed out the difference between Fort Apache and most Latin jazz bands. “Where much of Latin jazz features a jazz musician soloing over a Latin rhythm section,” the article said, “the Fort Apache band has instead brought a jazz flexibility to the Latin rhythm section. A tune may start out swinging, with the feel of the drummer Art Blakey, then move into a Cuban guaguanco, then take on a shuffle feel, then return to swing.”

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