



Scott DuBois: 21st century guitar

Scott DuBois is a performer from the Chicago and New York area that has played and recorded for 8 or 9 years with top jazzmen like Chris Potter, Bob Mintzer, Donny McCaslin or Dave Liebman ("**Monsoon**", Soul Note, 2004).

He's a Manhattan School of Music Graduate who has been acclaimed by specialized critics from All About Jazz, Guitar World Magazine or Guitar News Weekly for his personal style and original compositions.

DuBois' work can be defined as progressive Jazz with influences from World Music whose performance is not beyond feeling. His music contains a high improvisation dose where all the members of the band interact achieving results full of fluency, harmony and beauty.

Our main character recorded his first release "**Monsoon**" in 2002 and was published by Soul Note label in 2004. This recording is also the best reason for this interview.

Since then he's been playing at several clubs in the NY area like 55 Bar, Knitting Factory, Cornelia Street Cafe or K'av'eh'az among many others, until his greatest chance came across his path in November 2002 when he could play his compositions at prestigious Carnegie Hall.

Ladies and gentlemen: **Scott DuBois**, 21st Century guitar.

Interview by **Enrique Farelo**, **Sergio Cabanillas** and **José Francisco “Pachi” Tapiz** for Tomajazz.com, March 2005. Edited and translated by **Sergio Cabanillas**.



Scott DuBois

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Enrique – When did you begin to feel interested in music and why?

Scott – As far back as I can remember. I grew up listening to a variety music played in the house by other family members with very different tastes.

Enrique – Why did you choose guitar instead of any other instrument?

Scott – I started out with piano, then went to alto sax, and finally found guitar. I guess I just fell in love on the musical instrument trail.

Enrique – Main influences since the beginning until now?

Scott – I started improvising on guitar because of BB King. But over the past 16 – 17 years of playing I would say guitarists such as Jack Wilkins, Tal Farlow, Jimmy Raney, Johnny Smith have been influential. I also enjoy more modern players such as John McGlaughlin, Pat Martino, and Pat Metheny. I’m much more influenced by other instrumentalists

such as Ornette Coleman, John Coltrane, Wayne Shorter, Steve Lacy, Thelonious Monk, Andrew Hill, Eric Dolphy, among others. I enjoy their overall concept of improvisation, composition, and group playing. Studying with Dave Liebman for two years had a huge influence. Compositionally and to some extent in my improvisation, I have a lot of influences in the 20th Century Classical world as well as music from the Far East, too many to name.

Enrique – Who are your favourite musicians in Jazz and also out of Jazz?

Scott – There are a lot. In jazz Dave Liebman is definitely one of them. I would say John Coltrane probably had the strongest influence on me in jazz. Ornette Coleman, Paul Bley, Miles Davis, Wayne Shorter, your fellow countryman Paco de Lucia were all big influences. I enjoy Dave Holland's and Dave Douglas' music a lot. All the Daves. I also love Amnesiac and Kid A from Radiohead, two forward-thinking albums from the "popular music" world with an excellent compositional concept. There are many other artists in and out of jazz; but I won't take up all of your time. I like diverse selections from a lot of different people.

Enrique – Which musical works have specially impressed you, and what kind of music do you usually listen to?

Scott – I have very eclectic musical tastes. There are many different pieces and recordings that I could name: Andrew Hill's Point of Departure, Miles Davis' Sketches of Spain, John Coltrane's Live in Antibes, Charles Ives' The Unanswered Question. In my music collection you will find John Coltrane, Andrew Hill, Bill Evans, Dave Douglas, Charlie Parker, Lennie Tristano next to Charles Ives, Bartok, Ligeti, next to Nikil Banerjee, next to RadioHead.

Enrique – Why did you choose Dave Liebman for your first recording as a leader instead of any other musician of similar

international level?

Scott – Dave is one of the only improvising musicians who plays with such intensity and fire, whether it be loud, soft, ballad, lots of notes, few notes, etc. He can capture any sound from the saxophone, is always listening, and knows how to leave space and interact with a group in his improvisation. I guess that I am always looking for intensity.



*monsoon – Scott
Dubois Quintet
Soul Note 121409-2.
2004*

Enrique – Tell us about the musicians in “Monsoon”.

Scott – We’ve been a group since 2000 and with Mark Ferber since 2001. It seems to be a combination that really works. Loren Stillman and Jason Rigby really complement each other as the saxophone front line and Mark Ferber and Thomas Morgan have really developed a strong connection after playing together for these past four or five years. Loren has his own trio and has records out on a few different labels. Jason, Thomas, and Mark are playing with a lot of different groups and are touring Europe often as sidemen.

Enrique – How did it all begin with such a prestigious label as Soul Note, was it intentional to begin your career with them?

Scott – I was very happy and fortunate to be able to record for Soul Note. I have always been a big fan of their catalogue with musicians such as Steve Lacy, Paul Bley, Cecil Taylor, Dave Douglas, etc and was very pleased to hear that I could be part of the label. They really seem to care about the music more than how well an artist is known or how much an artist sells. That is a very rare thing these days: people who produce and market music just for the quality.

Enrique – Do you have any kind of ritual when composing? Do dreams or the unconscious have something to do with this process?

Scott – Composition is a weird thing. I can be on the subway here in NYC, eating Indian food, or staring at the wall and an idea just sort of floats into my head. I then build upon that initial idea and see where it goes. Sometimes I can be playing the piano or guitar and just hear certain ideas that spark other ideas. Very mysterious.

Enrique – How long do you spend playing daily?

Scott – It depends on the day but anywhere from 2 hours – 8 hours. It depends on if I have rehearsals and gigs as to how much is just practicing. I try to practice at least 1 – 3 hours per day but I usually end up playing (with rehearsals, sessions and performances) about 7 or 8 hours per day.



Loren Stillman
© Will Gamble



Scott Dubois
© David Chen



Mark Ferber
© David Chen



Jason Rigby
© Colleen Chrzanowski



Thomas Morgan
© David Chen

Monsoon's musicians

Enrique – So you define your music as Progressive Jazz... would you include synth guitar in your sets?

Scott – It's hard to classify music with labelled categories. I would define my music as modern or progressive jazz for the lack of better terms. As far as synth guitar, nothing is ruled out at this point.

Enrique – Facing a close future, how do you think musicians will promote their work if CD's finally disappeared – as it's being told – which ways do you think that will be used?

Scott – Good question. Somehow I think that fans of creative music like to have some sort of product in hand for the collect-ability of it so I'm not sure if all music will only become a computer file. Perhaps. I think that the whole MP3 Player/Ipod phenomenon can be a good thing for jazz and

improvised music. Jazz players have for the most part never made that much money from their CDs and this is more exposure. If people can carry around their entire CD collection in a little box, maybe they would take the time to listen to other things besides the one CD they grab before work or a trip. I think the ones who should be worried are the big record companies and pop stars. The world has too many of those.

Enrique – What do you know about Spanish Jazz? Has Dave Liebman told you about the Spanish jazzmen he has played with?

Scott – I want to know more. Liebman has talked about playing with a lot of wonderful European jazz musicians. He's over in Europe often. I would like to bring my group over to Spain and I hope to meet and work with other Spanish jazz musicians.

Enrique – Who do you dream of playing with?

Scott – Hmmm, there are a lot of people. I would love to keep working with Dave Liebman. Andrew Hill, Dave Douglas, Dave Holland, Brian Blade are a few more people with whom I would love to work. It would be wonderful to work with Wayne Shorter.

Enrique – How do you think Jazz will develop in the future, or, in other words, how do you see the future of Jazz?

Scott – Judging on what's happening around me in New York, I'm pretty optimistic. There are so many great players and composers here. I think the music will continue to challenge the player and listener rhythmically and harmonically and keep seeking influences from outside sources.



David Liebman

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Pachi – How do you feel American Jazz scene for a musical proposal like yours?

Scott – Well, we have had a good response here. There are a lot of different schools of thought with the jazz scene in the US. You have a certain group that only wants to play and only believes in jazz before 1948. You also have players that only want to play free jazz and nothing else. And then you have people like me. I love all types of jazz and music from many different periods. There are really different scenes here. Did I answer your question?

Sergio – Are you aware of the movements and development of European Jazz? What's your opinion when compared to the current situation of mainstream American Jazz?

Scott – I know a lot about and play with a lot of the players from Europe that are in New York and therefore hear a lot about the European scene. Evidently there are a lot of great developments now with some great younger European players and of course you have great older players who have been playing since the days of Django Reinhardt. I was in Paris in 2000 and got to check out Henri Texier's group. I enjoyed it very much. Europe has always been more supportive of the arts than America. I also think Europeans are more open-minded in a lot of ways for new and different ideas in jazz and improvised music.

Pachi – Could you tell us about not very well known musicians

that we should know? Suggest some interesting names among the “unknown” ones.

Scott – There are really too many to name! New York has a great scene of young players playing a lot of original compositions in the jazz and improvised music genre. Donny McCaslin and Ralph Alessi are great but I wouldn't call them “unknown”. I am playing with a great young drummer named Ted Poor. You'll definitely hear more about him in the next few years. I'm also playing with a great young sax player from Canada named Peter Van Huffel. I think we are going to record this year so you'll hear a lot more about him in the next year or two.

Sergio. What are your future plans (recording projects, collaborations with other groups, tours)?

Scott – I plan on going into the studio to record a second CD for my group sometime this spring or summer. I'm doing a week tour of Canada with the Peter Van Huffel Quintet this April, and have other performances in New York City and different jazz festivals in the US and Canada with my group and other groups. You can see listings by checking my website at <http://www.scottdubois.com>. I hope to also bring my group over to Europe sometime in the next year or so.

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