

PERRY BEEKMAN

JAZZ VOCALIST & GUITARIST

“To me, Jazz is not about chords, scales or technique. It’s about a feeling – a feeling that connects me to a deeply satisfying sense of my own humanity.”

Every fine jazz artist realizes, at some point in his life, that jazz is a path to self-discovery and transcendence. For guitarist/vocalist Perry Beekman, that epiphany happened four years into his guitar studies at the age of 15 when he heard the recordings of the immortal jazz guitarist Charlie Christian. Prior to that defining moment, Beekman had been inspired by another legendary guitarist, Rev. Gary Davis. Studying with the Davis-taught Woody Mann, Perry reveled in the combination of ragtime, blues and gospel that the Reverend preached. Another profound breakthrough occurred for the young Brooklyn-born guitarist when Perry heard the classic recordings of Billie Holiday accompanied by the tenor saxophone titan Lester Young.

He began studying Jazz in earnest that same year with the eminent guitar teacher Joe Monk (no relation to the pianist), who began to instruct Perry in the key elements of jazz guitar playing - melodic improvisation, comping, and chord melody playing. Joe’s arrangements were masterpieces, full of creative chord substitutions and contrapuntal movement, instilling in Perry a lifelong love of chord melody playing. Beekman continued to pursue his musical education with jazz masters, including studies with guitar legends Sal Salvador, Remo Palmier, and Tal Farlow, as well as with other notables like Gene Bertoncini, Joe Puma and Bernard Addison (the Mills Brothers’ guitarist in the ‘30s).

The innovative and iconoclastic pianist/composer Lenny Tristano made a major impact on Perry through a highly intensive 6 month course of study. In his early 30s, Perry undertook an intensive study of classical guitar with the Segovia-taught virtuoso Virginia Luque. Although he no longer performs classical guitar music, the attention that it demands to tone, phrasing and expression continues to influence his work. Perry also studied voice with the acclaimed Jeanette LoVetri, and received his certification as a teacher of her Somatic Voicework™ method from the Vocal Pedagogy Institute at Shenandoah University.

Beekman’s public performing career began at the age of 14 opening for the Clancy Brothers at the famous Long Island club My Father’s Place. Perry regularly performed during his years as a student at Bard College where he studied Music and Philosophy. After college he played at countless private and corporate functions where the music was not the primary focus of attention, always heeding the lessons of his masters to create the most vibrant musical backdrop possible. Perry learned how to suffuse a room with the spirit of jazz, and how to get people to smile and tap their feet.

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His career hit its stride in the late 1980s, bringing him to a variety of upscale clubs, concert halls and festivals, including the Palm Court at the Plaza Hotel, the Mark and Intercontinental Hotels, the River to River Festival, the prominent Maverick Concert Hall series and George Wein's JVC Jazz Festival. Recently, Perry was featured at a performance of the Northern Dutchess Symphony Orchestra, singing and playing classics from the Great American Songbook. For a number of years Perry performed original music with his quartet, Riff-Raff, at Detour and the Savoy Lounge in New York City.

Beekman began singing at his performances about 10 years ago when he moved from New York City to Woodstock, NY, making him one of the very few jazz guitarist/vocalists. He developed a contemporary version of the Nat King Cole trio, with vocals, guitar, piano and bass. He also performs with a trio including bass and drums, sometimes adding a multi-reedman for a quartet, as well as performing in duo format with bass. The musical repertoire focuses upon the Great American Songbook. His debut CD, *So In Love - Perry Beekman Sings and Plays Cole Porter*, was released in May of 2013, and he is currently working on a follow-up focusing on the music of Rogers and Hart. His long-term recording plans include annual forays into the works of the Songbook composers and an ambitious project that will explore the journey of love.

Perry also teaches privately, taking great satisfaction in helping non-jazz guitarists or vocalists develop their understanding of music through jazz expression. Taking the educational process quite seriously Perry is looking to expand his teaching through residencies and master classes in conjunction with his expanding touring schedule.

With over 30 years of serious commitment to the art form, and with the inspiration of his personal teachers and his profound influences - vocalists Billie Holiday, Nat 'King' Cole, Frank Sinatra, Chet Baker, Johnny Hartman, Mel Torme; and guitarists Charlie Christian, Barney Kessel, Johnny Smith, George Van Eps, Grant Green, Jimmy Raney, Kenny Burrell and Hank Garland - Perry Beekman is reveling in doing what he loves best.

"I have an unbridled passion for singing and playing the timeless classics of Jazz. Nothing gives me greater pleasure than sharing that passion with others."