

BRIAN BLADE & THE FELLOWSHIP BAND

FRI, FEB 20, 2015 • 8PM

CPA10 ARTIST



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Jon Cowherd, piano
Chris Thomas, bass
Brian Blade, drums

Myron Walden, alto saxophone/bass clarinet
Melvin Butler, soprano and tenor saxophone

Program to be announced from the stage.

BIOGRAPHY

BRIAN BLADE & THE FELLOWSHIP BAND

Landmarks, the fourth recording by Brian Blade & The Fellowship Band, marks their return to Blue Note Records, released in cooperation with the Shreveport, Louisiana-based label, MidCity Records. Brian chose to record seven of the ten compositions in his hometown of Shreveport at Blade Studios, which was opened in 2011 by Brian's older brother, drummer and producer Brady Blade, Jr. Shreveport is an inland port city situated 40 miles south of Arkansas, 20 miles east of Texas, and 100 miles north of the Gulf Coast, and its location makes it a sonic catchment basin for various Afrodiasporic strains – gospel, rhythm and blues, the blues as such and various iterations of jazz – and vernacular folk idioms that developed indigenously in the surrounding territories.

As on each prior Fellowship Band release, Blade and pianist Jon Cowherd refract these impressions into their own musical poetry, with an ear to the individualistic styles of Myron Walden (alto saxophone, bass clarinet), Melvin Butler (soprano and tenor saxophone) and Chris Thomas (bass). For the recording of *Landmarks*, Marvin Sewell and Jeff Parker are on guitars. Excepting

the guitarists, The Fellowship Band has remained a unit since their eponymous 1998 debut and its 2000 followup, *Perceptual*, both on Blue Note. You can hear it in the cohesion and exploratory spirit of their collective and individual interpretations, orchestrated and propelled by the leader's in-the-moment beats and textures.

Blade has previously referenced formative Shreveport experiences in compositions like "Red River Revel" and "Stoner Hill." But his recent homecoming seems to have engendered a new burst of creativity.

Blade is as comfortable composing wordsongs and propelling and entexturing the flow for masters of that art like Joni Mitchell, Daniel Lanois, Emmylou Harris and Bob Dylan, as personalizing the complex codes of jazz drumming with the likes of Kenny Garrett, Ellis Marsalis, Joshua Redman, Bill Frisell, Chick Corea, Herbie Hancock, and, for the last 13 years, Wayne Shorter's extraordinary quartet.

JUSTIN LONGORIA on BRIAN BLADE



Brian Blade is a world renowned jazz drummer who has played with the likes of Wayne Shorter, Josh Redman, Bob Dylan, and Iron and Wine to name a few. In the fall of 2010, during UNC's annual Jazz Festival, Blade attended an open rehearsal with the UNC big band. As I sat at the drums, Blade gave me some instruction on how I could rhythmically inspire the band on a Wayne Shorter composition; which had special significance because of his long tenure with the composer. We all strained to hear his advice, as Brian is a pretty soft spoken guy. Then

out of nowhere he shouted, "like this... zzz...BOW!" Everyone in the room jumped. At the time I was elated just to be receiving one-on-one instruction from a guy who's playing I idolized, but looking back now, I am able glean something much deeper.

I recently read an interview with Brian where he talks about his attitude of service toward the music. "Serving the music," is a phrase that I heard quite often in my education, and as I read Brian's interview, I was reminded of that day back in the fall of 2010. Here was this quiet,

reserved man, probably exhausted from traveling, but when the music called for something that may have seemed uncharacteristic of him, he jovially obliged.

I imagine that for Brian and the Fellowship, being on tour is not so different from us getting up in the morning, having our coffee and heading off to work. To me, what allows them to be so great in their work is their unyielding desire to serve, their willingness to be a vessel for their passion. It's this remarkable level of commitment that we can take away from this performance. If we aim to be servants of our passion – of our vocation or our relationships – the decision to give our best becomes much easier; almost involuntary.

Keep an eye out for the zzz... BOW moments of this performance; those moments where someone in the band takes a chance in the service of the music. I hope you too will find inspiration in their music that reminds us all to act in service of our own personal passions.

Justin Longoria is a 2012 alumnus of UNC-Chapel Hill. 