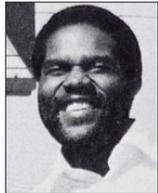
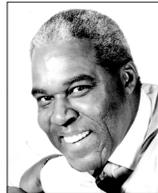


Michael Carvin

by Anders Griffen



'70s



'00s

Michael Carvin is excited. The drummer just turned 67 and he says, "I actually feel like playing again. I haven't really felt like performing in the last

10 years." Over the last decade, he has spent a lot of time on the golf course, explaining, "I had to air myself out after being in clubs since I was 14." He's remained engaged as an educator all of this time. "I love the drums so much that my goal is to [teach] as many great drummers on the face of this Earth as possible because that will ensure me that the music will always be played on the highest level."

Carvin was born in Houston, Texas on Dec. 12th, 1944. His father, drummer Henry Carvin, had been on the road with Louis Armstrong. Michael naturally gravitated toward music and the drums, but he was in a house full of drums that he wasn't allowed to play. "There were two reasons he didn't let me play the drums. First of all, if I sat on the throne, my little feet wouldn't have reached the pedals, so I would have been frustrated. Secondly, I probably wouldn't be playing today at 67 because I would have been a banger. I wouldn't have studied the drums. How can a kid be allowed to play a whole set of drums, unsupervised, and then say, ok, now I'm gonna teach you how to play the drums, here's a practice pad and a book. 'No! What are you nuts?! You play that! I'm gonna play the drums!'" But he would picture himself playing the drum set. "I would sit on the floor in front of my father's bass drum and I would dream." When the young Carvin won the first of five rudimental competitions he realized that his father had been teaching him how to focus, practice and be successful.

At the age of 14, Carvin got his first gig, playing at a private club, working six nights a week with Carl Campbell in a trio that performed the Nat King Cole book. He worked that job all through high school, saved his money and upon graduation moved to California. "I ended up staying out there from 1963 to '73, with two years at Motown in Detroit and two years in Vietnam." By the mid to late '60s, Carvin had a group called "The Tool Company" with Eddie Khan on bass and Charles Mallory on guitar. Their first gig was opening for Richard Pryor at The Troubadour and around 1967 they opened for Bill Cosby when he had

his "Fat Albert" routine. The group then went to Detroit to audition for Harvey Fuqua, who had sung with the doo-wop group the Moonglows before eventually becoming head of Artist Development for Motown Records. They ended up working there, living in a rhythm section house, from 1968-69. "We worked 9 to 5 just laying' grooves. 'Ok guys, this is the tempo, this is the kind of feeling, these are the changes', until that pocket lay, then they would record it. We might play one groove all day, take a lunch break, come back and play that groove, or we might work on the bridge. Every now and then Smokey [Robinson] would come in and lay something down." When Eddie Khan got the call to contract the ensemble for *The Barbara McNair Show*, they went back to Los Angeles.

Hampton Hawes had a tour in the summer of 1971 and Donald Bailey recommended Carvin to take his place behind the drums. With Henry Franklin on bass, they were in Europe that summer. "When we came back to LA, I saw it completely differently. I needed to think. I needed to practice." He sold his car and moved to San Francisco. His new residence just happened to be right around the corner from The Both/And Club, or the "B.A." as they called it. That's where Carvin first met Jackie McLean, among others, and they ended up kindling an inspired musical relationship, part of which is captured on albums like *Antiquity* and *New York Calling*. But it was Freddie Hubbard that first brought Carvin to New York. Hubbard had just done *Red Clay* and he was huge. They did a week at the Village Vanguard before embarking on Europe. The recent *Jazz Icons* series 5 video release includes Freddie Hubbard live in France from 1973 and features this band with Carvin, Kent Brinkley (bass), George Cables (piano) and Junior Cook (saxophone).

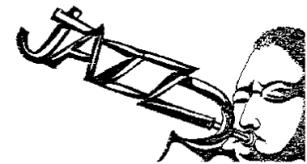
"Dreams come true," Carvin says. "One of my dreams when I was older in life, was to have a gig that paid a lot of money, traveled the entire world and that worked all the time. When that dream came true with Dizzy Gillespie, I would have never thought, first of all, that it would happen and second, that I would walk away from it." In the early '80s, after three years, Carvin left to spend more time with his daughter.

Carvin has always followed his instincts when he has recognized the time for change. He took his time in San Francisco to prepare for New York; he left the road to be with his family and having "aired out" on the golf course, he is prepared for the fertile period that lies ahead. "Now I have a good band and we're gonna start moving around." ❖

For more information, visit michaelcarvin.com. Carvin is at Lenox Lounge Mar. 30th. See Calendar.

Recommended Listening:

- Hampton Hawes - *At Café Montmartre* (Arista-Black Lion, 1971)
- Jackie McLean/Michael Carvin - *Antiquity* (SteepleChase, 1974)
- Michael Carvin - *The Camel* (SteepleChase, 1975)
- Michael Carvin - *Between Me and You* (Muse, 1989)
- Michael Carvin - *Drum Concerto at Dawn* (Mapleshade, 1995)
- Michael Carvin - *Lost and Found Project 2065* (Mr. Buddy, 2010)



World Class Jazz
At Affordable Prices!
Jazz Tuesdays In The
John Birks Gillespie Auditorium

March 6
Ted Curson & Friends

March 13
Russ Kasso Orchestra
w/ Catherine Dupuis

March 27
Mike Longo's
NY State of the Art Jazz
Ensemble w/ Ira Hawkins

New York Baha'i Center
53 E. 11th Street
(between University Place and Broadway)
Shows: 8:00 & 9:30 PM
Gen Adm: \$15 Students \$10
212-222-5159
bahainyc.org/nyc-bahai-center/jazz-night

LEST WE FORGET

Big Sid Catlett (1910-51)

by Clifford Allen

Listening to drummer and bandleader Sidney "Big Sid" Catlett and his quartet on the 1944 recording of "Just a Riff" with the quartet of saxophonist Ben Webster, pianist Marlowe Morris and bassist John Simmons, what's striking is the directness and no-frills nature of their playing, especially in Webster and Catlett. There's dynamism in Catlett's swing, his brushwork weighty yet particulate, deft and muscular pushed up against the velvety wail of Webster's tenor. Catlett was a very open minded drummer whose approach worked within a variety of settings, enough that he found himself working and recording with Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker by the latter half of the '40s, lending bombs and a rugged push to their quintet's earliest recordings.

Born in Evansville, Indiana on Jan. 17th, 1910, Catlett started his studies on piano and switched to drums while a youngster in Chicago. A studied admirer of Zutty Singleton and Baby Dodds, Catlett was just 18 years old when he started working with clarinetist Darnell Howard, followed by a stint with pianist Sammy Stewart. In 1930, Catlett moved to New York and quickly became an in-demand sideman, working with Benny Carter, Elmer Snowden, Don Redman, Fletcher Henderson and McKinney's Cotton Pickers, though perhaps his most notable stint at the time was with Louis Armstrong (he worked with the trumpeter in an all-star orchestra from 1938-42). Perhaps the definitive version of "Salt Peanuts" (May 11, 1945) was the result of Catlett's insistent energy, allowing Al Haig, Curley Russell, Parker and Gillespie to dot and crackle across the tune's three minutes and change.

Catlett's pared-down, seemingly effortless swing was a far cry from drummer-showman contemporaries and helped knit together the rhythm section - one can

hear quite easily how locked in he and John Simmons are on the aforementioned "Just a Riff". His work with Roy Eldridge, Chu Berry, Lester Young, Don Byas and Carter may have, in some sense, paved the way for what would become a penchant for transitional and early bebop sides, since most of the named musicians played with one foot in the "new thing".

The drummer's busy schedule rarely seemed to let up - by the latter half of the decade he was recording as a small-group leader and backed up singers Billie Holiday and Sarah Vaughan, even joining the Ellington band for a short period. A bout with pneumonia forced Catlett to quit touring and he returned to Chicago, working as the house drummer for the Jazz Ltd. club. Sadly, his health never really recovered and Catlett died of a heart attack on Mar. 25th, 1951 while performing at Chicago's Opera House. Very few drummers traversed the eras of ragtime/Dixieland, Swing and bebop, but Catlett is one who was broad-minded and creative enough to do so. ❖