

>> MUSIC FEATURE

Music — MUSIC FEATURE: Major Dapp

Let Andy Milne put positive energy into your universe.



“When you give someone some dapp,” Andy Milne explains, “you’re giving them recognition and acknowledgement. That comes from the ’60s. I wanted to fold it into an idea of putting positive energy into the universe, so you can visualize positive energy coming back to you. It’s the golden rule, in a sense.”

Jazz, funk, fusion and hip-hop are some of the labels used to describe Dapp Theory, a most unconventional quintet. Milne, the keyboardist, composer and conceptualist-in-chief, formed the group in the late ’90s to develop his musical ideas while conveying a social message.

Originally from Toronto, Milne, 40, became a factor on the New York scene while living in Brooklyn. But city life wore thin, and roughly two years ago he relocated to Shohola, Pa. “Moving to the country was always my goal,” Milne says, though he still teaches in New York and tours fairly regularly.

At the Painted Bride Milne and co. will play selections from the first two Dapp Theory releases (*New Age of Aquarius* and *Y’all Just Don’t Know*), as well as the forthcoming *Layers of Chance*. Their music—in a vague and much-abused word—is funky. But rather than repetitive backbeats, Dapp Theory deal in intersecting odd meters that yield a tightly coiled rhythmic tension.

Milne, on piano and electric keys, combines dissonant harmony with an ethereal melodic sense, often engaging alto/soprano saxophonist Loren Stillman in passages of finely wrought counterpoint. John Moon, the group’s “percussive poet,” interjects freestyle rapping of a quasi-mystical sort.

In the ’90s Milne was a member of Steve Coleman’s Five Elements and the M-Base Collective, post-jazz groups that produced major innovations in rhythm and improvisation. Dapp Theory is part of the M-Base legacy even as it forges a separate path.

“Steve’s music tends to be more abstract,” offers Milne. “I think I’m doing more composing—I’m more conscious of the projected outcome. But now the band is moving almost in a more jazz direction, whereas before we were really sticking to arrangements.”

What’s changing the music? Changed personnel, for one thing. Two of Milne’s former New School students, Chris Tordini and Kenny Grohowski, recently joined Dapp Theory on bass and drums,

respectively. “I can write stuff and have people technically play it, but that’s very boring for me,” says Milne. “I need cats who can internalize the music and hint at other sounds, other forms. Chris plays electric and acoustic bass, so that allows us to do different things. Kenny has a background in orchestral percussion, and he’s Puerto Rican so he has a real strong connection to that music. He’s a serious rock musician too.”

Stillman, as the lead melodic voice, stepped into a role long filled by harmonica player Gregoire Maret, who’s now a member of the Pat Metheny Group. Milne and Maret just released the duo CD *Scenarios*, which builds on the rapport they developed in Dapp Theory.

“We didn’t want to let that sound fade into history,” Milne says. “Our duo thing used to be the quiet storm inside a Dapp Theory show. We’d play one or two songs that featured that relationship. On *Scenarios* we give that its own life. It’s less about compositions and more about textures, all aspects of sound.”

Milne also has a new solo piano CD titled *Dreams and False Alarms* after a lyric in Joni Mitchell’s “Amelia.” “I’m the second youngest of 10 children, and maybe because of that, thinking of the common good of the group was always really important to me,” Milne says. “But solo piano is a testing ground, and I knew at some point I’d have to do something like this.”

In addition to his own works, Milne plays adaptations of songs by fellow Canadians Joni Mitchell and Neil Young, as well as Bob Dylan, Bob Marley and the Police. “I didn’t want to make a standards record,” Milne submits, “but I wanted to play music people are familiar with. I saw Joni and the others as important figures inside their own traditions, and I tried to find a way to grapple with that.”

With Herbie Hancock’s *River: The Joni Letters* and Nonesuch’s all-star package *A Tribute to Joni Mitchell* on the market, the time seems right for Milne’s entry—although Dapp Theory were covering “Free Man in Paris” back in 1998. For Milne, music can never be a matter of chasing trends or forcing the artistic process.

“Things are revealed to you when they need to be revealed,” he muses. “And if you’re too aware of them, you lose the ability to embrace your subconscious creative self.”

Andy Milne & Dapp Theory

Sat., Oct. 6, 8pm. \$12.50-\$25. Painted Bride Art Center, 230 Vine St. 215.925.9914.

www.paintedbride.org