

DOWNBEAT

Jazz, Blues & Beyond

THE 800

COOLEST

THINGS IN JAZZ TODAY

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THE 80 COOLEST THINGS IN JAZZ TODAY



To celebrate DownBeat's 80th anniversary, we want to look at the present and future, not the past. So we proudly present "The 80 Coolest Things in Jazz Today." It's a glorious list of 80 people, places and things that illustrate why jazz is such a vibrant art form in 2014. Note that the items on this list are numbered, but not ranked. We hope this list generates conversations (and passionate debates) about the state of jazz today. We begin our list by paying respect to 10 living masters.

64. THE MONK INSTITUTE

The Thelonious Monk International Jazz Competition is recognized as being one of the most prestigious events of its kind, helping to launch the careers of Joshua Redman, Ambrose Akinmusire, Aaron Parks, Tierney Sutton, Marcus Roberts, Gretchen Parlato and many more. As a participant in 2008, I witnessed the incredible amount of work that goes on behind the competition firsthand, but there is a lot more to the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz than just this annual gala. Its primary mission is *education*. The institute, based in Washington, D.C., continually reaches out to students and fans through its various programs in venues and classrooms around the globe.

At the collegiate level, the institute offers a fully funded master's degree through UCLA for several handpicked students. Graduate and in-demand pianist Helen Sung learned an immense amount during her tenure there. "I can't think of another program where you would get such personalized attention, focused experiences and access to the best teachers," she said. Her class did a worldwide State Department-sponsored tour with Wayne Shorter, and because of connections she made there, she has performed with Clark Terry, T.S. Monk and Ron Carter.

The institute also sponsors 11 performing arts high school jazz programs around the country, sending prominent artists to lead master classes and guide constantly evolving jazz pedagogy. Its innovative Peer-to-Peer program focuses on



Monk Institute Chairman Herbie Hancock looks on as Kris Bowers, winner of the 2011 Thelonious Monk International Jazz Piano Competition, plays at a concert celebrating the institute's 25th anniversary at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C.

STEVE HUNINGER/THELONIOUS MONK INSTITUTE OF JAZZ

gifted high school musicians, pairing them with such artists as Antonio Hart and Bobby Watson to present *informances* and "360 degree" teaching and learning. "Combos comprising some of the most advanced, artistic and creative teenage musicians in the country go on national tours with acclaimed jazz artists, learning from them while they, in turn, teach their peers in high schools across the nation," said Dr. J.B. Dyas, the institute's vice president for education and curriculum development.

To extend its outreach, the institute has created the online resource jazzinamerica.org. Here, a highly organized, animated and educational look

at both the history of jazz and how it can be connected to economic, social and political contexts in America can be found. The institute is also the leading coordinator for International Jazz Day. Through its relationship with UNESCO, for which Herbie Hancock—the institute's chairman—serves as International Goodwill Ambassador, nearly a billion people in 196 countries worldwide are reached through educational programs, live performances and media coverage.

This year's Thelonious Monk Competition focuses on the trumpet and will take place on Nov. 8–9 in Los Angeles. Applications are due Sept. 5 and are available at monkinstitute.org. —*Jon Irabagon*