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## Monterey Jazz Festival Offers Bounty of Youthful Talent

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Youth has never been wasted or neglected at the Monterey Jazz Festival—a result, no doubt, of its year-round education program, its prestigious Next Generation Big Band program and its policy of booking up-and-coming artists. For the 2016 edition (marking the fest's 59th year), there was an undeniably strong accent on emerging, creatively restless and abundantly gifted young artists.

This trend was evident partly thanks to the predilection of the festival's featured artist, Quincy Jones, still making and facilitating musical riches at age 83. Jones, who was paid a fertile tribute Sept. 13 on the festival's Arena stage, has lately been discovering, managing and generally encouraging notable young jazz musicians.

Q's "kids" had a field day in Monterey this year, chief among them Joey Alexander, the stunning and already well-established 13-year-old Indonesia-born pianist. Validating the wisdom of the veteran producer's instincts, Alexander's trio set drew a larger crowd to the Garden Stage than I have ever seen in my decades as a Monterey-goer.

Others in Jones' camp: the Cuban pianist Alfredo Rodriguez (who sat in with the Jones tribute and led his own trio on the Garden Stage), and bedazzling British multitasker/multi-instrumentalist/one-man-band Jacob Collier, whose gymnastic and virtuosic performance closed out the festival on the main stage on Sept. 18.



Jacob Collier performs at the Monterey Jazz Festival in Mo

Collier, all of 22 years old, qualifies as that *rara avis* on the jazz scene—the budding jazz star who made his way into the spotlight via YouTube (specifically with a video of his wild, intricate arrangement of Steve Wonder’s “Don’t You Worry ‘Bout A Thing”). That song inevitably opened his Monterey set, which also included Collier-ized re-workings of “Fascinatin’ Rhythm” and Michael Jackson’s “PYT.”

Aided by instrument-builders and video artists presenting the vision of the artist as a series of clones, Collier hopped from drums to keyboard to bass to guitar, interspersing short, hot solo snippets on grand piano. With his “What, me worry?” attitude, the hyper-driven Collier stretched the viewer’s imagination—and incredulity.

There remains, however, the question of whether his looping, wizardly act comes at the expense of musician interplay and reverence for “the moment,” so critical to what we know and love about jazz. Or is there a new paradigm coming down the jazz pike, with ultra-proficient young players finding ways of doing it all themselves? Time and taste will tell.

Elsewhere, the Sept. 16 set at the Night Club venue belonged to the soulful young drummer and vocalist Jamison Ross, 28. Leading a quintet, Ross, whose debut album *Jamison* came out on Concord in 2015, has an easy grasp of a room and a live situation. In Monterey, he exuded magnetism from his “front man” perch behind his drum kit, with gospel warmth and post-Crusaders tunefulness on an instrumental featuring a stellar guitar solo by Rick Lollar.

Occupying another bright corner of the younger, fast-rising jazz contingent, flutist-vocalist Elena Pinderhughes, barely in her 20s, won over an attentive crowd at the Garden Stage with her intelligently wrought, r&b-tinged jazz conjuring—co-created with her talented keyboardist older brother Samora—and her fluid flute mastery.

The flutist—who has played in trumpeter Christian Scott’s band, as well as with Stefon Harris, Kenny Barron and other worldly jazz settings—is a native of

the Bay Area, and a graduate of Berkeley High School. (Other alumni include Joshua Redman and Ambrose Akinmusire, on whose last album Pinderhughes played.)

At Monterey, Pinderhughes was a valuable player in Terri Lyne Carrington's Mosaic Project set on the Arena stage, and returned to showcase her own inventive touch as writer, singer, soloist and three-dimensional musical sensation, of a sort not seen since another precious youngster, Esperanza Spalding, hit the scene.

The cliché is true, reconfirmed in Monterey: Young musicians are not only the future of jazz, but a vital part of the music's present.

**(Note:** *To read a review of the 2016 Detroit Jazz Festival, click [here](#).*)

—Josef Woodard