

## Andy LaVerne



### Press Kit Bio

Jazz pianist, composer, and arranger Andy LaVerne, born Dec. 4, 1947, in Brooklyn, NY, studied at The High School of Music & Art, Ithaca College, Juilliard, Berklee, the New England Conservatory, and took private lessons from pianists Jaki Byard, Richie Beirach, Don Freidman, and jazz piano icon Bill Evans. The list of musicians with whom Andy has worked reads like a Who's Who in jazz: Frank Sinatra, Stan Getz, Woody Herman, Dizzy Gillespie, Chick Corea, Lionel Hampton, Michael Brecker, Elvin Jones, Miroslav Vitous, Lee Konitz, Gerry Mulligan, Sonny Stitt, Benny Golson, Eddie Gomez, Mel Lewis, Mel Torme, Dave Samuels, John Abercrombie, & numerous others. A prolific recording artist, his projects as a leader number 50+, among them is a quartet recording featuring trumpeter Randy Brecker, bassist George Mraz, and drummer Al Foster, Four Miles (Polygram), which reached the top ten on the Gavin Jazz Chart.

LaVerne's latest CD's are, Epiphany (ClaveBop), a collection of his newest compositions, and Intuition (SteepleChase), a duo with saxophonist Jerry Bergonzi. Andy is also a prominent jazz educator, having released a series of instructional videos, Guide to Modern Jazz Piano, Vols. 1 & 2, and Jazz Piano Standards (Homespun Tapes), featuring the Yamaha Disklavier, as well as the video, In Concert (Homespun), with John Abercrombie. He is the author of Handbook of Chord Substitutions, Tons of Runs (Ekay), The Music Of Andy LaVerne (SteepleChase Publications), and Bill Evans Compositions 19 Solo Piano Arrangements (Hal Leonard). Countdown To Giant Steps (Aebersold Jazz) is a two CD play-along with companion book, of which LaVerne served as player/producer & writer. Tunes You Thought You Knew (Aebersold Jazz) is a LaVerne play-a-long CD/book set. Secret of the Andes, a new Aebersold playalong is a collection of Andy LaVerne compositions.

Andy is a frequent contributor (since 1986) to Keyboard Magazine, and Piano Today Magazine. His articles have also appeared in Down Beat, Jazz Improv, Piano Quartely, Piano Stylist, Jazz and Keyboard Workshop, and JazzOne

Andy is the recipient of five Jazz Fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, and winner of the 2000 John Lennon Songwriting contest for his tune Shania. He has appeared at concerts, festivals, and clubs throughout the world, and has also given clinics and Master classes at universities, colleges, and conservatories around the world. Recently he has toured and recorded with legendary singer/songwriter Neil Sedaka. LaVerne is professor of Jazz Piano at The Hartt School - The University of Hartford, and is on the faculty of the Aebersold Summer Jazz Workshops.

## Reviews

### Keyboard Magazine

As if to underscore the fact that we at Keyboard are all about the music, Andy LaVerne has released a new CD. Andy's disc, entitled *Epiphany*, is his second release on the Clavebop label. The disc offers a new take on the organ trio: In addition to Andy on piano and Danny Gottlieb on drums, organist Gary Versace rounds out the lineup. Andy's article on Gary appeared on our July issue, and if you read it, you'll recognize Gary's unique B-3 approach instantly. Andy penned all the tunes, which are as adventurous as they are fun to listen to. The combination of these three virtuosos of the piano, B-3, and drums and the freedom and structure of Andy's compositions is absolutely engaging.

### Jazz Times

CONRAD HERWIG/ANDY LAVERNE - *Shades of Light* (SteepleChase)

For *Shades of Light* (SteepleChase) the duo of trombonist Conrad Herwig and pianist Andy LaVerne chose some great tunes by great writers-the likes of Corea, Coltrane, Jobim, Ellington and Brubeck... Best collaboration: Joe Henderson's "Black Narcissus," where LaVerne opens up following a mysterious and impressionistic intro and enhances Herwig's consistently silken tone. Most interesting track: Brubeck's "In Your Own Sweet Way," where the challenging changes bring out the most creative moments by both as they trade eights, then fours.

-Harvey Siders

ANDY LAVERNE AND JOHN ABERCROMBIE - *Where We Were* (Double-Time)

Pianist Andy LaVerne and guitarist Abercrombie have been performing duos since their student days in Boston during the late 1960s. Here, we catch the latest installment of their ongoing adventures. Recorded live at the Seelbach in Louisville, LaVerne and Abercrombie thread neon strands through tapestries which pulsate and glow.

Looming in the background are the long shadows of Bill Evans and Jim Hall, another piano-guitar tandem that had something distinct to say. Indeed, the soaring arcs let loose by LaVerne and Abercrombie evoke the kind of edgy ethereality that Evans and Hall, along with Miles Davis, helped establish as jazz-worthy. The music dances uninhibitedly in deep space.

Another plus lies in the duo's distinct sonic profile. Like Hall, or Evans, or Davis, or Getz or Coltrane, Abercrombie and LaVerne possess signature sounds that in tandem are simply exquisite. Did I mention their capacity to invent? That, too, is amazing. Here, standards such as "Softly as in a Morning Sunrise" alternate with bracing originals like LaVerne's "Soulstice" and Abercrombie's

-Chuck Berg

ANDY LAVERNE TRIO - *Bud's Beautiful* (SteepleChase)

Recorded in March of 1996, this session apparently pre-dates the release of Chick Corea's all-star tribute record to Bud Powell, the great seminal bebop pianist. Though Andy

Laverne may owe less to Bud's pointillistic attack than Corea, he clearly has a deep appreciation for the master's approach to form and improvisation, and a knack for finding an inspired way through Bud's complex conceptions. Laverne here brings together his own set of all-stars-Peter Washington on bass and Billy Hart on drums add light and substance to any session-on a set of a dozen tunes, all from Powell's pen save Laverne's lovely title tribute. The tunes range from familiar to [undeservedly!] obscure, while avoiding such known quantities as "Parisian Thoroughfare." Laverne's medleys add more than a dash of intrigue to the mix: "Bouncing with Bud," for example, merges delightfully with "Bud's Bubble." Great music, great trio, great concept.

-Bill Bennett

#### ANDY LAVERNE - *Four Miles* (Triloka)

Tributes to Miles Davis abound. This is one of the best-perhaps the best, a date marked by sensitivity, poise and maturity. The players are LaVerne, piano; Randy Brecker, trumpet and fluegelhorn; George Mraz, bass; Al Foster, drums. The program consists of tunes associated with Miles or his sidemen.

The quartet starts with "When You Wish Upon a Star," a ballad. LaVerne clothes Brecker's fluegelhorn in rhapsodic chords and then solos economically and lyrically. "Summertime" begins with the piano playing Gil Evans' scalar background line from the famous Miles Ahead album as the Harmon muted trumpet evokes Miles. "Evokes" is an operative word throughout this album; Brecker is not an imitator.

Nor is LaVerne, although the touch of his teacher, Bill Evans, surfaces frequently in his playing.

LaVerne's arrangements include reharmonization (evident on "When You Wish...", "Round Midnight" and others) and structural extensions ("All Blues"), devices that give the date a unity beyond a jam session. It is clear that the musicians are playing thematically, too. You definitely need to check this album out.

-Owen Cordle

#### ANDY LAVERNE - *Another World, Another Time* (SteepleChase)

Pianist Andy LaVerne, in his younger days in 1977, recorded an album for Steeplechase entitled *Another World*. The fresh-faced LaVerne, then a member of Stan Getz's band, penned a colorful group of pieces for that album, that were impressive for their impressionistic modernity. Now, more than twenty years later, producer Nils Winther reconvened the same musicians to record the same pieces again. The plan isn't a gimmick; the artists are able to deliver a fresh and revealing perspective. This project is an intriguing concept that other artists and producers might consider trying. The one catch here is that the original album was a trio, but trumpeter Tim Hagans is added, along with the returning Mike Richmond and Billy Hart. However, the slight change in the instrumentation also adds a different nuance. In its more minimalist attention to intellectual detail and coloristic writing, as opposed to rhythmic drive, the music is typical of one branch of late '70s developments. Revisited, the music stands up today and reveals that many of these directions have been

incorporated in the contemporary palette. On this recording, the artists bring a mature approach that further reveals how this type of music has been assimilated into jazz.

-Sid Gribetz

ANDY LAVERNE/DAVE SAMUELS - *Between Earth and Mars* (SteepleChase)

There's no doubting Andy LaVerne's technical skill on the piano and his impressive credentials, which include fusion, big band, straightahead and some impressive solo works. Vibist Dave Samuels, who distinguished himself with Spyro Gyra, and bassist Jay Anderson.

There's no doubting the improvisational skills throughout the nine works. There are moments: Samuels' "Tri-Tones" and Gary Peacock's "B.E." build slowly to satisfying conclusions, and LaVerne's title song is propelled by Samuels' pounding strokes. LaVerne takes a chance here by fronting a piano-vibes-bass trio.

-Brian Soergel

JOHN ABERCROMBIE/ANDY LAVERNE - *Timeline* (SteepleChase)

Although John Abercrombie has done his fair share of experimentation over the years, at the heart of his work is a musicality-as evident throughout *Timeline* that has led him to work with many of the finest musicians in contemporary jazz, including Michael Brecker, Jack DeJohnette and the late Michel Petrucciani.

On *Timeline*, pianist Andy LaVerne joins Abercrombie for a musical celebration of the influential, historic collaborations between Jim Hall and Bill Evans, who laid to rest notions that the harmonic properties of the guitar and piano were incompatible. Many of the tunes may be the same as those played by Hall and Evans; however, don't get the idea that this is somehow a re-creation; Abercrombie and LaVerne bring their own values and sensibilities to bear throughout the set. One element that Abercrombie and LaVerne share with Hall and Evans, however, is their conversational rapport, something that is particularly evident on tunes like "My Funny Valentine" (check out how Abercrombie updates Hall's role by playing walking bass lines behind LaVerne at one point) and the beautiful reading of "Darn That Dream," where guitar and piano seamlessly meld voices. Departing a bit from the Hall/ Evans theme, LaVerne brings three original compositions to the table, including the lightly swinging "Inner Voice" and "Adagio," which closes the program on a lyrical note.

-Jim Ferguson

ANDY LAVERNE - *Know More* (SteepleChase)

The trio provides a haven for many of the music's creativity addicts, among whom we are sure to find Andy LaVerne. His latest work, *Know More* (SteepleChase SCCD 31493; 66:36), is by turns thoughtful, thunderous, sly, touching. LaVerne wrings all one can out of this trio, which includes bassist Jay Anderson and, once again, the nonpareil Billy Hart on drums. LaVerne finds his own way through the changes, whether he's put them together, as with the title track, or borrowed from the likes of "Stella by Starlight," as he does for his "Fire Wire." "Sudden Wealth Syndrome" is a powerful, Traneish work, with yet another wonderfully articulate Hart solo. "Where and When" is a particularly poignant ballad, with LaVerne's liquid phrasing bringing it home. "Waltz King" is a fine example of trioism with its fickle time signatures and teasing ambiguities.

-Bill Bennett

## **Down Beat**

Shades Of Light - *Steeplechase* 31520

With Andy Laverne's mannerly, precision piano, Herwig hews staunchly to fine melodies and makes his horn sing. The two offer textbook versions of the bebop songbook, touching neglected classics with aplomb and joy.

Fred Bouchard

## **allaboutjazz.com**

*Between Earth & Mars* - Andy LaVerne & Dave Samuels | SteepleChase Records

Track Listing: Retrospect, Gardenia, On Green Dolphin Street, Tenderly, Blue in Green, Tri-Tones, Maiden Voyage, Between Earth & Mars, B.E. (68:30)

Personnel: Andy LaVerne- piano, Dave Samuels- vibes, Jay Anderson- bass

Pianist Andy LaVerne possesses talent that should be commensurate with a much broader public awareness. One of sax legend Stan Getz's favorite accompanists, LaVerne has built a sizable catalog for SteepleChase over the past two decades- some 18 strong- with *Between Earth & Mars* serving as a reunion with vibist Dave Samuels. Also thrown into the mix is bassist Jay Anderson, who completes this rather atypical trio.

Far away from his visibility as a past member of the popular group Spyro Gyra, Samuels contributes a singular performance that reminds us that he is indeed one of the finest practitioners of his craft. LaVerne strives in this type of configuration as his style is strongly rooted in a deep sense of lyricism and an advanced harmonic knowledge. Anderson does enough to keep things buoyantly afloat to the point that a drummer just isn't missed.

The piano and vibes combination is a real winner- of course Gary Burton and Chick Corea taught us that long ago- and LaVerne and Samuels have developed attractive arrangements that make the most of a smart mix of contemporary standards and originals. "Blue In Green" is especially arresting in this new form, taken a bit faster than the original (check out another fine duo performance of this one by Burton and Ralph Towner). The title cut, a LaVerne tune, is also a highpoint, sporting an intense solo from Samuels. It may have taken almost a decade for LaVerne and Samuels to create a follow-up to *Fountainhead* but it was well worth the wait.

~ Chris Hovan

John Abercrombie/Andy LaVerne "*Timeline*", SteepleChase SCCD 31538 \*\*\*

For more than 10 years now (remember albums like "Natural Living" or "Now it can be Played"), John Abercrombie and Andy LaVerne have contributed and enriched the tradition of the guitar-piano duet having become a sort of musical conversation being simultaneously free and intimate. Thanks to all this experience they can now dare a risk-taking which transforms their complicity in the instant moment into classicism. The repertory which they are interpreting here is a perfect mix: "All Across the City" from Jim Hall and "Turn Out the Stars" from Bill Evans in homage to the duets of "Intermodulation", three beautiful themes from Andy LaVerne and a package of never becoming out-fashioned standards on

which the respective qualities of the two musicians make wonder: Abercrombie develops long and very dense phrases - but always very readable - from a melodic-harmonic point of view on themes which are particularly suitable such as "You go to my head" or "I'm getting sentimental over you". Andy LaVerne provides him essential support and allows himself convincing solos which makes the rhythmical contribution of Evans profitable. But over all, it's the extremely sharpened harmonic sense that the two musicians show, the fineness of their inflexions (augmented or diminished chords, suspended harmonies) of which have been perpetually taken advantage of to enrich their personal speech and to support the sense of their dialog. This is an exemplary harmony (which reveals to be at the same time an outstanding demonstration of equilibrium and musical quality while listening).  
Stéphane Carini, Jazzman n°94, September 2003

Epiphany  
By E.J. Iannelli

When considering these two discs by pianist Andy LaVerne, it's easy to think that he has some kind of obsession with the revelatory experience. That may be so. But the similarity between the titles seems to be more coincidental than anything else. The first comes from the unusual inspiration to form a piano/organ (not one or the other, but both) trio, the second from a "slip of the tongue by a friend" that upon reflection took on additional meaning.

LaVerne has honed his chops over the years as a sideman to the big names—Sinatra, Getz, Woody Herman, Diz and Chick Corea are just a few of them—and as a bandleader as well, with dozens of records under his own name on the Concord and SteepleChase labels, among many others. Technique and expressivity, the yin and yang of music-making, are therefore here in abundance. His further abilities as a composer on both Epiphany and Process of Illumination, his second and third albums as leader for the Florida-based label ClaveBop, are manifest. Of the twenty-two songs to fill out this pair of albums, not one is a standard.

You'll be pardoned for raising an eyebrow at the idea of a piano/organ trio like the one found on Epiphany. The arrangement seems destined to generate a lot of level crossfire, more or less canceling one another out. Yet in practice the two keyboard instruments are surprisingly complimentary and not at all competitive. Gary Versace maximizes the juicy punch of the organ, contrasting the sharper tinkle and shine of LaVerne on piano. "Creature Comforts," one of the album's many highlights, is also one of the best examples of how the two make excellent use of the similarities and differences of their respective instruments. Acting together, the cushiony and fluid notes of the organ buoy its clearer cousin. Acting in opposition, they threaten to envelop and sink it. This works just as well as on the slower ballads like "Tear Drop" as on the more spirited numbers like "This Just In."

On "Antipathy," Versace murmurs the bassline while LaVerne floats freely overhead with the melody; then LaVerne bows out, leaving Versace and drummer Danny Gottlieb alone to develop a groove out of rounded growls and broken whispers. It's a veritable party when all three reunite. The overall effect is more remarkable than I was initially prepared to give this

peculiar trio combination credit for. May it inspire others to do the same—though this will undoubtedly be a tough act to follow.

### Process of Illumination

By E.J. Iannelli

Process of Illumination, recorded over two years ago, features a more traditional lineup than Epiphany but there is also a more deliberate method behind it. As the title track illustrates, LaVerne is concerned with the dynamics of jazz and individual development, namely the natural evolution from simplicity toward greater complexity. “Process of Illumination” is at its core a basic tune, though it gets dressed up and embellished slightly as it progresses along its ten-minute run. As if baby-stepping the listener through another stage of development, the following track, “Good Luck with Your Music,” sounds as zingy and straightforward as a swinging showtune, but LaVerne begins to break it apart and subject it to slight tempo changes and chromatic fireworks. Gottlieb (appearing again) and bassist Mark Neuenschwander are more than willing to help him in this exercise. Lest he go unmentioned, tenor saxophonist Gary Campell plays with cool intensity throughout the two-day session.

Both of these noteworthy discs are just the latest in a long line of CDs to cross my desk with running times in excess of the 70-minute mark. I have mixed feeling about this. On the one hand it's wonderful to get so much music for one's money; on the other it tends to seem like a surfeit. Particularly where LaVerne is concerned in terms of intricacy and scope, it's almost necessary to divide each disc into two parts in order to get the most out of it. This, of course, shouldn't discourage anyone from checking out this pair of albums, not to mention other ClaveBop offerings. The label has released some strong records of late.

## **MASTER CLASSES WITH JOHN ABERCROMBIE AND ANDY LAVERNE**

A Master Class with pianist Andy LaVerne and guitarist John Abercrombie is an educational, entertaining, and inspiring event. LaVerne and Abercrombie, longtime musical collaborators and friends, first met in 1968 in Boston while both were students at the Berklee College, and got their inspiration from Bill Evans and Jim Hall. Well schooled in the theory of jazz, both have been playing, teaching, and giving Masterclasses for students and audiences in Colleges and Universities worldwide for many years.

A typical LaVerne/Abercrombie Master Class usually begins with the duo playing a selection from one of their recent recordings. From there, a discussion based on various elements of the music follows. Topics discussed might include: chord/scale usage, voicings, creating lines and melodies, comping, time feel and articulation, composition, harmony, attitude and business, as well as musical conceptions. Depending on the students present, Andy and John might take pianists and guitarists separately, for more detailed work. They might also have students play, and critique them, or play with some students as well.



The Master Class will generally end with some more spirited playing from LaVerne and Abercrombie, to demonstrate further the concepts covered earlier. This is truly an "Edutainment" event, not to be missed!

