



JOEL ROSS

Vibraphonist | Blue Note Artist

Full-length bio

“Ross’ playing erupts through the layers of lush arrangements like consistent currents of electricity, high-powered and full of luminous energy” — DownBeat

For the past several years, Joel Ross has been refining an expression that’s true to his sound and his generation. In 2019, the vibraphonist-composer released his anticipated Blue Note debut *KingMaker* to eruptive critical acclaim. He’s topped the DownBeat Critics Poll Rising Star category for vibraphone and in 2017, he became one of the youngest artists to receive a coveted Residency Commission from The Jazz Gallery. With the release of *Who Are You?* (Blue Note, 2020), Ross shares the culmination of a year-long exercise in experimenting and risk-taking on and off the bandstand.

“The bright future stretching before Ross has as much to do with that emotional expression as anything that happens between his mallets and those metal bars” — NPR

Inspired by mentor Stefon Harris’ empathetic, whole-self approach to articulation, Ross has adopted an entire ethos dependent on truthful, ongoing communication. Honesty persists throughout his sets. And with each release, he reaffirms a commitment to authentic discourse, particularly among the members of his band *Good Vibes*: Jeremy Corren, Immanuel Wilkins, Kanoa Mendenhall and Jeremy Dutton.

A steadfast improviser, Ross saturates live sets with a lyrical intuition that’s equally grounded in melody and phrasing. He plays the moment. Rather than impose energies on the music, he allows moods to set, linger and transform. In recent years, he’s engaged established artists of similarly tenacious voices, including Makaya McCraven (*Universal Beings*, 2018), Maria Grand, Kassa Overall, Nicole Mitchell, Gerald Clayton, Melissa Aldana (*Visions*, 2019), Walter Smith III (*In Common*, 2018), Georgia Anne Muldrow, Jure Pukl (*Broken Circles*, 2019), Rajna Swaminathan, Wynton Marsalis & the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra and Marquis Hill (*Modern Flows Vol. 2*, 2018), who penned liner notes for *Who Are You?*



“Ross finds and uses his ultra-musical voice in an intricate, tender, soul-full — and Black church induced — set. We clearly hear his generous vision: a compositional mixing of classical, late modern, current ‘jazz,’ Black church — and a distinctive sense of the Chicago sound.”

— Marquis Hill

Playing thoroughly in the broad, resonating tradition of Black music, Ross draws inspiration for his layered expression from vital, intersecting scenes of his native Chicago. Imbibing nuanced traditions from improvised music hubs to the church, he embraced a range of gestural possibilities he’d begin refining in New York. After graduating from University of the Pacific in Stockton, California, Ross pursued a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Jazz Studies from The New School in downtown Manhattan.

Now based in Brooklyn, he regularly performs across the country and around the world. As a leader, he’s appeared at such storied venues and iconic events as Smalls Jazz Club, Umbria Jazz Festival, The Jazz Gallery, Winter Jazz Fest, Newport Jazz Festival, Dizzy’s Club, BRIC Jazz Festival, The Blue Whale, North Sea Jazz Festival, The Brubeck Institute and Kuumbwa Jazz Festival, among others. A highly sought collaborator, he’s performed at Jazz at Lincoln Center, The Village Vanguard, SF Jazz, Duc des Lombards, Ronnie Scotts, Jazz Standard, Red Sea Jazz Festival, Yoshi’s Oakland and California Jazz Conservatory.

“It’s clear that Ross is just getting started”

— Pitchfork

Folkloric resonance incubates Ross’ artistry. Improvising melodies or composing at the piano, he leaves space for a theme to emerge and evolve, always inviting creative response. Nimble, virtuosic lines approximate speech. He often transitions among the roles of storyteller, protagonist and supporting character. His sophomore release for Blue Note *Who Are You?* features *Good Vibes* at their most synchronous.

“Joel is not only one of the preeminent instrumentalists of this era, but he is one of the greatest musical visionaries of his generation. When you listen to his records you can hear the future of Jazz. He’s also a brilliant leader — when he performs with other musicians he brings out the best in their playing. He’s one of those artists whose impact will be felt for decades to come.”

— Don Was, President, Blue Note Records

Short Bio:

“Ross’ playing erupts through the layers of lush arrangements like consistent currents of electricity, high-powered and full of luminous energy” — DownBeat

Joel Ross is refining an expression that’s true to his sound and his generation. The vibraphonist-composer regularly tops DownBeat Critics Poll and in 2017, he became one of the



youngest artists to receive a coveted Residency Commission from The Jazz Gallery. Following critically-acclaimed debut *KingMaker* (Blue Note, 2019), Ross issues sophomore release *Who Are You?* (Blue Note, 2020), the culmination of a year-long exercise in risk-taking alongside members of his band *Good Vibes*: Jeremy Corren, Immanuel Wilkins, Kanoa Mendenhall and Jeremy Dutton.

With each release, Ross reaffirms a commitment to authentic discourse. He saturates live sets with a lyrical intuition that's equally grounded in melody and phrasing. Collaborative work includes associations with Makaya McCraven (*Universal Beings*, 2018), Maria Grand, Kassa Overall, Nicole Mitchell, Gerald Clayton, Melissa Aldana (*Visions*, 2019), Walter Smith III (*In Common*, 2018), Wynton Marsalis & the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra and Marquis Hill. Ross draws inspiration for his layered expression from vital music scenes of his native Chicago. Now based in Brooklyn, he's pursuing a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Jazz Studies from The New School in downtown Manhattan. As a leader, he's appeared at such storied venues and iconic events as Smalls Jazz Club, Umbria Jazz Festival, The Jazz Gallery, Winter Jazz Fest, Newport Jazz Festival, Dizzy's Club, BRIC Jazz Festival, The Blue Whale, North Sea Jazz Festival, The Brubeck Institute and Kuumbwa Jazz Festival, among others.

"Joel is not only one of the preeminent instrumentalists of this era, but he is one of the greatest musical visionaries of his generation." — Don Was, President, Blue Note Records

Micro bio

Vibraphone master and songwriter Joel Ross has adopted an entire ethos dependent on truthful, ongoing communication. A Blue Note artist of critically acclaimed releases *KingMaker* (2019) and *Who Are You?* (2020), he regularly tops the *DownBeat* Critics Poll for his work in the broad lineage of Black music that pulls from jazz, hip hop, church and Chicago improvised music. Now based in Brooklyn, Ross has collaborated with Makaya McCraven, Maria Grand, Kassa Overall, Nicole Mitchell, Gerald Clayton, Melissa Aldana, Walter Smith III, Wynton Marsalis and Marquis Hill, and performed as a leader at Smalls Jazz Club, Umbria Jazz Festival, Winter Jazz Fest, Newport Jazz Festival, Dizzy's Club, The Blue Whale, North Sea Jazz Festival and The Brubeck Institute.

CONTACT

Chris Mees
O: (914) 968.2925
C: 646.397.8705
E: chris@bnatural.nyc
W: bnatural.nyc