

## The New York Second: Music at Night (and Other Stories)

### JAZZISM

Pianist and composer Harald Walkate is attracting international attention with the atmospheric, melodic record *Music at Night (and Other Stories)*, made with his septet *The New York Second*.

It is the third album of the jazz group that he established in 2015. *Music at Night (and Other Stories)* was inspired by the book of the same title by the British author Aldous Huxley. Walkate co-produced the album with Teus Nobel.

Text: Marie-Claire Melzer Photo: Stijn Kuiper

Modesty is a virtue, but it can also be overdone. During the Amsterdam release party of *Music at Night (and Other Stories)* by The New York Second, band leader Harald Walkate continues to praise the other musicians, and everyone else who contributed to the CD. Until trumpeter Teus Nobel grabs the microphone to say: “Harald, just admit it, you just wrote some damn good pieces!”

*Music at Night (and Other Stories)* is Harald Walkate's third CD with The New York Second. The album is getting rave reviews worldwide. The album also earned the group a performance at (Dutch television show) *Vrije Geluiden*, and a place in the popular Spotify playlist Late Night Jazz.

#### *Fantastic horn section*

The New York Second, that since its earliest origin as quartet has evolved into a septet and – besides Walkate on piano and Teus Nobel on trumpet and flugelhorn – is made up of Mark Alban Lotz on flute, Jesse Schilderink on tenor saxophone (replaced by Tom Beek during the release party), Vincent Veneman on trombone, Max Sergeant on drums and Thomas Pol on double bass. (Marijn van de Ven played bass during the release party). Walkate's strong compositions and sophisticated arrangements, which leave a lot of room for the fantastic horn section, make the septet sound like a big band. An important trump card is the combination of the thoughtful playing of Harald Walkate with the lyrical trumpet of Teus Nobel.

#### *Turning a blind eye*

How did the collaboration come about? Harald Walkate: “We were asked to perform at the Zeeland Jazz Festival in 2018 on the condition that we invite a local jazz musician as featured soloist. It took some searching, but eventually we found a trumpeter from Zeeland. Two weeks before the performance, however, he called to say unfortunately he had to cancel, but gave us the number of another trumpet player. That turned out to be Teus Nobel, admittedly not from Zeeland, but because of the short time frame the festival turned a blind eye,” says Walkate, laughing. “There was an immediate click between Teus and me, both musically and personally. At the time, Teus was considering giving up his permanent job with the Royal Netherlands Air Force Orchestra to pursue a solo career in jazz. I encouraged him in that decision, and I was also able to help him in this process. And Teus helped me as co-producer of this record. In addition, he introduced me to Jos Pommer, the leader of the Royal Air Force Orchestra, who helped put the finishing touches on the arrangements.”

#### *Double life*

Band leader Harald Walkate leads what might be termed a double life: during the week he is advisor in the field of sustainable finance, and during weekends he is a jazz musician. Walkate: “I have been

working in the financial sector for years, and I was increasingly confronted with sustainability issues. That eventually ended up being my specialty. I worked at Aegon, and for a French company in Paris. Recently I started my own advisory business. People often say that the financial sector should be educated on sustainability issues, such as climate change for example, but you can also turn it around: people and institutions dealing with these sustainability issues should learn more about the financial world.”

“Aldous Huxley considered music to be the  
art form that can best express the inexpressible”

### *Characters*

In writing the pieces for *Music at Night*, Walkate was inspired by Aldous Huxley's book of the same title. In this 1931 collection of essays, the British author sheds light on the connection between literature and music. Walkate: “What struck me is that Huxley regarded music as the art form that can best express the inexpressible. Incidentally, he was not a jazz lover. This is despite his friendship with Stravinsky, who tried to convert him, but in vain.” He laughs. “Huxley inspired me in a different way too. I started to delve into the literary techniques for telling a story and applied them to composing. A story has a certain structure: an introduction of the setting and characters, then the actions unfold, which come to a climax, after which a moment of rest follows, and finally a conclusion. With this in mind I wrote my compositions, always thinking of certain characters. I travel a lot for my work, and often the characters are based on real people I met during those trips, from a larger-than-life figure from Boston who had an amazing story about just about every building we passed, often involving his own ancestors (*The Bostonian*), to an African-African taxi driver in the Florida Keys, who sees the island environment where he grew up, raised his family and hopes to be buried, being destroyed by climate change (*The Keys Ain't the Keys No More*).

### *New factoid*

*Music at Night* is a lesser-known work by Aldous Huxley. Googling yields an ultra-short page with some brief information. Recently, a new factoid has been added: “the book has served as the inspiration for the eponymous *Music at Night (and Other Stories)* by *The New York Second jazz septet*”.