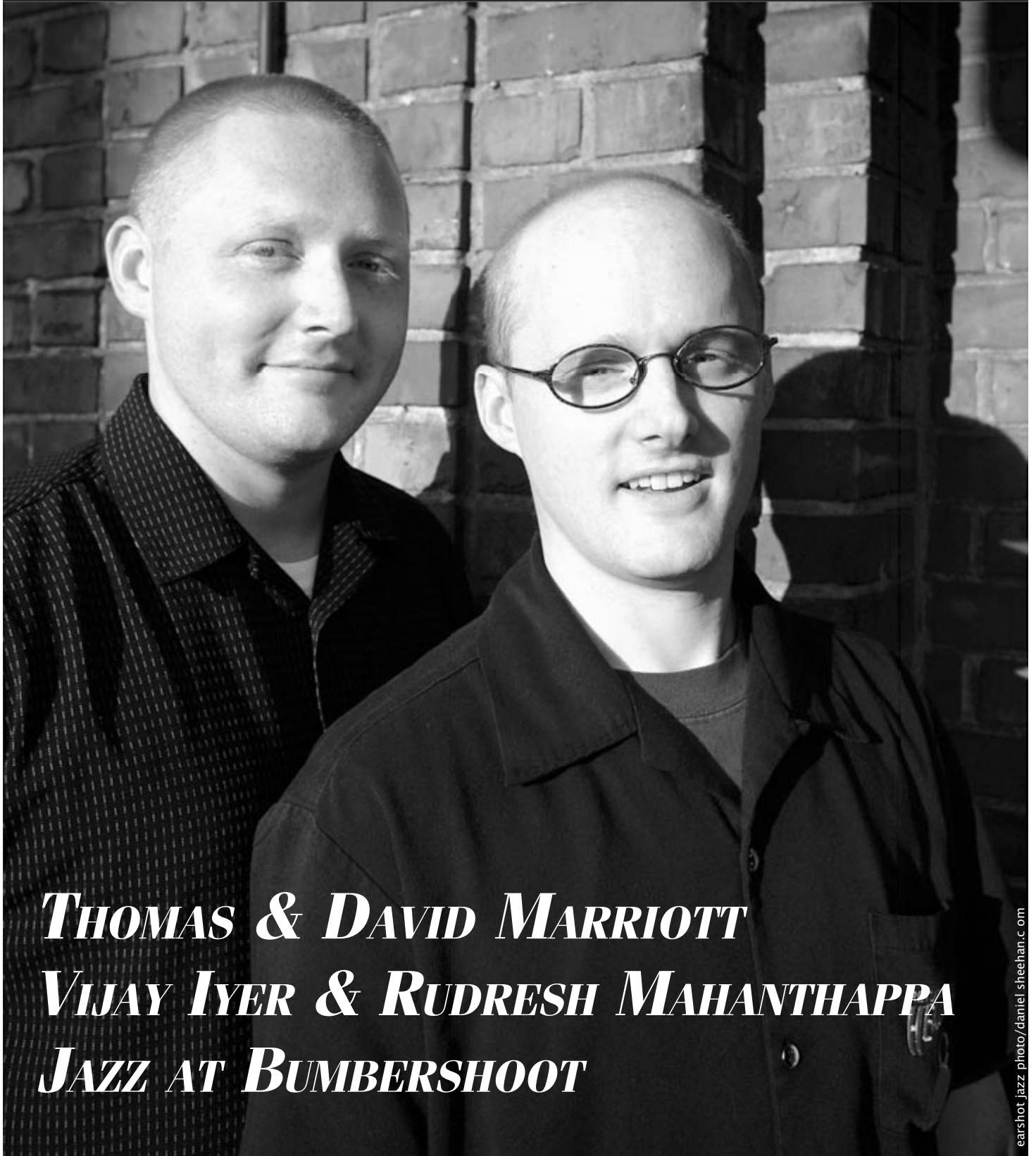


*A Mirror  
and Focus  
for the Jazz  
Community*

September 2004 Vol. 20, No. 8  
Seattle, Washington

# EARSHOT JAZZ



***THOMAS & DAVID MARRIOTT  
VIJAY IYER & RUDRESH MAHANTHAPPA  
JAZZ AT BUMBERSHOOT***

# Where are the Marriotts?

BY TODD MATTHEWS

A little less than a decade ago, jazz fans checking the local performance calendar were sure to see the Marriott brothers listed. The Seattle duo was among the busiest local musicians on the scene, and northwest jazz audiences were eagerly showing support. *Earshot Jazz* magazine readers voted “Best Emerging Group of 1997” the Marriott Jazz Quintet — co-led by trumpeter Thomas Marriott and trombonist David Marriott. Also that year, the quintet released its first album, *Open Season*, which included Thomas on trumpet, David on trombone, Robert Davis on tenor saxophone, Joe Doria on piano, Geoff Harper on bass, and John Wicks on drums. The album received kudos from KPLU, Seattle’s leading jazz radio station.

In 1998, *Earshot Jazz* readers voted Thomas the “Best Emerging Artist.”

In 1999, *Earshot Jazz* readers again pointed to the Marriotts, this time voting the quintet the “Best Northwest Acoustic Band.” Also that year, David recorded an album as leader (the seven-track *Septology*), which included David on trombone, Mark Taylor on saxophone, Robert Davis on saxophone/clarinet, Hansen on piano, Harper on bass, and Wikan on drums (Thomas appeared on trumpet for one track).

And in 2000, the quintet released its second album, *High Country*, which included Thomas on trumpet, David on trombone, John Hansen on piano, Geoff Harper on bass, Jon Wikan on drums, and Jay Thomas on soprano saxophone.

The Marriotts had established enviable careers in the Pacific Northwest. They were playing nearly every night, and working with the area’s top jazz musicians. Their quartet performed at the DuMaurier Jazz Festival in Vancouver, B.C., the Centrum Port Townsend Jazz Festival, Portland, Oregon’s first annual Jazz Festival, the Earshot Jazz Festival, Bumbershoot, and the Seattle Art Museum’s Art of Jazz series.

In spring 2000, however, the Marriott name was dropped from the jazz calendars. The brothers moved to New York City.

When the Marriott Quintet appeared on the jazz calendar last month, surely it must have been a mistake? Fortunately for jazz fans, it was not an error. The Marriotts had returned (Thomas permanently — he moved back to Seattle last June; David tem-

porarily — he still lives in New York), and jazz audiences took notice. Their booking at Tula’s last month was the first in a series of homecoming-like performances that included Seattle’s Volunteer Park and a restaurant in the Ballard neighborhood. The Tula’s performance was sold-out. The Marriotts’ hard-swinging, high-energy style was in top form. The evening’s two sets included tunes by Woody Shaw (“Sweet Love of Mine”) and Dave Brubeck (“In Your Own Sweet Way”), in addition to original compositions (“Individuation,” written by Thomas, who performed the tune on flugelhorn, was a stand-out). The group included one of Seattle’s hottest rhythm sections — Geoff Harper on bass and Byron Vannoy on drums — with Tim Collins, the vibraphone player from New York.

Two days after the performance, over coffee at a neighborhood café with the Marriott brothers, Thomas is raving about his return to the Northwest. “[Seattle] is awesome,” he exclaims. “I was driving up to the gig in Volunteer Park yesterday, and there was an artist on the overpass, painting. The mountains were out. It was killer. Why would you want to leave this?”

## ROOTS IN SEATTLE

The brothers have always had strong jazz ties to the city. Their father was a local jazz DJ. Thomas and David attended Washington middle school and Garfield high school (Thomas graduated in 1994, David

graduated in 1992). They participated in Garfield’s jazz program during its early stages. “The big band program at Garfield was somewhat acclaimed, but not nearly the way that it would become in the subsequent years,” says David. “Literally, from my sophomore year until the time I graduated was sort of the first long dynasty of wins. We didn’t lose a single festival in those couple of years.”

It was an amazing feat, considering that the program had yet to receive the attention or resources that it does today. “They didn’t have private funding like they do now,” Thomas adds. “When I was a freshman, my mom was one of the instrumental people in starting the jazz band fundraising thing. [Our band] raised enough money for the whole band to go to Europe and then have spending money, too.” Their classmates then included some local notables today: Dave Kinerck, Aaron Burrell, and Seth Alexander.

“I feel proud to have contributed to the success of that band at that time,” says David. “[Everybody in that band] helped create some interest in the program. We had something special. To this day, I’ve played in big bands where they don’t nearly feel as fun as it felt to play in that band then.”

After high school, Thomas and David attended the University of Washington and earned Bachelor’s Degrees from the Music Department. They settled into Seattle’s jazz scene, and began recording and performing at aggressive pace. With a number of albums

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and awards behind them, why did the Marriotts leave Seattle?

For David, the decision centered on college. He was looking at East Coast schools for continuing education. He was accepted to the Manhattan School of Music, and moved to New York City in 2000. For Thomas, he was looking to New York City as an opportunity to work with veteran musicians, improve as a performer, and take advantage of some opportunities that could only be had in New York.

David received a call to substitute in the New Jazz Composers Octet with Freddie Hubbard, Joe Chambers and Billy Drummond. Thomas received a call to play with the Brian Lynch Big Band, the Tito Puente Orchestra, and the Chico O'Farrill Orchestra. Both brothers remember heading down to the meatpacking district on a Sunday afternoon, paying a five-dollar cover charge, and listening to Jeff 'Tain' Watts, Joe Locke, and Mark Egan.

"That doesn't exist anywhere except [New York City]," says David. "That's the whole thing about living there: you get exposed to tons of everything."

Moving to New York was also a sobering experience for Thomas and David. They experienced just how difficult it is to make a living as a jazz musician in New York City.

*Thomas Marriott will perform with vibraphonist Joe Locke on October 30 and 31, as part of the Earshot Jazz Festival's run at Tula's Jazz Club.*

*In late August, Thomas Marriott joined the Earshot Jazz board of directors. —Ed.*

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