

Mourad Benhammou

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Mourad Benhammou - Bio

Mourad Benhammou was born in Paris in 1969. He discovered the drums at 15 and became a self-taught drummer. Since 1992 he has been a staple sideman in various clubs in Paris, honing his craft with many prestigious musicians— René Urtreger, François Chassagnite, Michel Grailler, Jimmy Slide, Paul Bollenback, and Sunny Murray stand out as mentors who enabled him to bring to the people the multifarious facets of his spectacular drumming.



In 1996, Mourad Benhammou joined the Alain Jean-Marie Tribute to Monk Trio with Jean Bardy. He created his own band a year later, the Interplanetary Music Orchestra, a nine-piece orchestra featuring Steve Potts and Alex Tassel. Drawing its inspiration from the music of Sun Ra, the band toured and recorded Mourad Benhammou's first as a leader, *The Interplanetary Music Orchestra Suite* (1998).

In 1999, Mourad joined the David El Malek quartet with Baptiste Trotignon, then the Raphaël Imbert Nonet, a band paying homage to Duke Ellington's *Sacred Music*. Since the 1990's, he has become one of the premier drummers in Paris, the mainstay of various bands such as the Pierre Christophe Trio, the Fabien Mary Quartet, the Hugo Lippi Trio and David Sauzay Quintet.

He has been in demand as a sideman in France and abroad for many musicians such as Peter King, Mino Cinelu, Ted Curson, Joe Lee Wilson, Christian Escoudé, Bobby Porcelli, Bobby Few, Barry Harris, James Spaulding, Frank Morgan, David Murray, Ricky Ford or Doug Raney. A jazz scholar, an expert on the history of drumming as well as a dedicated collector, Mourad Benhammou has been interviewing legendary American drummers since 2004. With a keen interest in bebop drummers, he has conducted interviews in New York with Louis Hayes, Grassella Oliphant and Walter Perkins, who became one of his mentors.

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Walter Perkins was to be the starting point of Mourad's new project, the Jazz Workers, a quintet with Fabien Mary on trumpet, David Sauzay on saxophone, Pierre Christophe on piano, Fabien Marcoz on bass and Mourad Benhammou as leader and drummer.

In February 2009, he released Perk's Snare, the first volume recorded by the Jazz Workers and a glorious tribute to Walter Perkins who left us in 2005. This album features the great hard-bop compositions from the MJT+3 songbook as well as originals.

Mourad Benhammou has played in all the major jazz festivals and alongside legendary American musicians but also with up and coming new musicians. He has managed to bring together top-drawer efficiency with a personal sense of swing and musicality. Because he has been in close contact with historical musicians who have defined the canons of bebop and hard-bop, Mourad feels he has a mission and a duty as a torch-bearer. He considers being a musician is also about transmitting the memory of the music, its technique and style as well as the principles of oral tradition, everything that makes it not just notes but an art of living.

Pauline Guedj Translated by Jean Szlamowicz