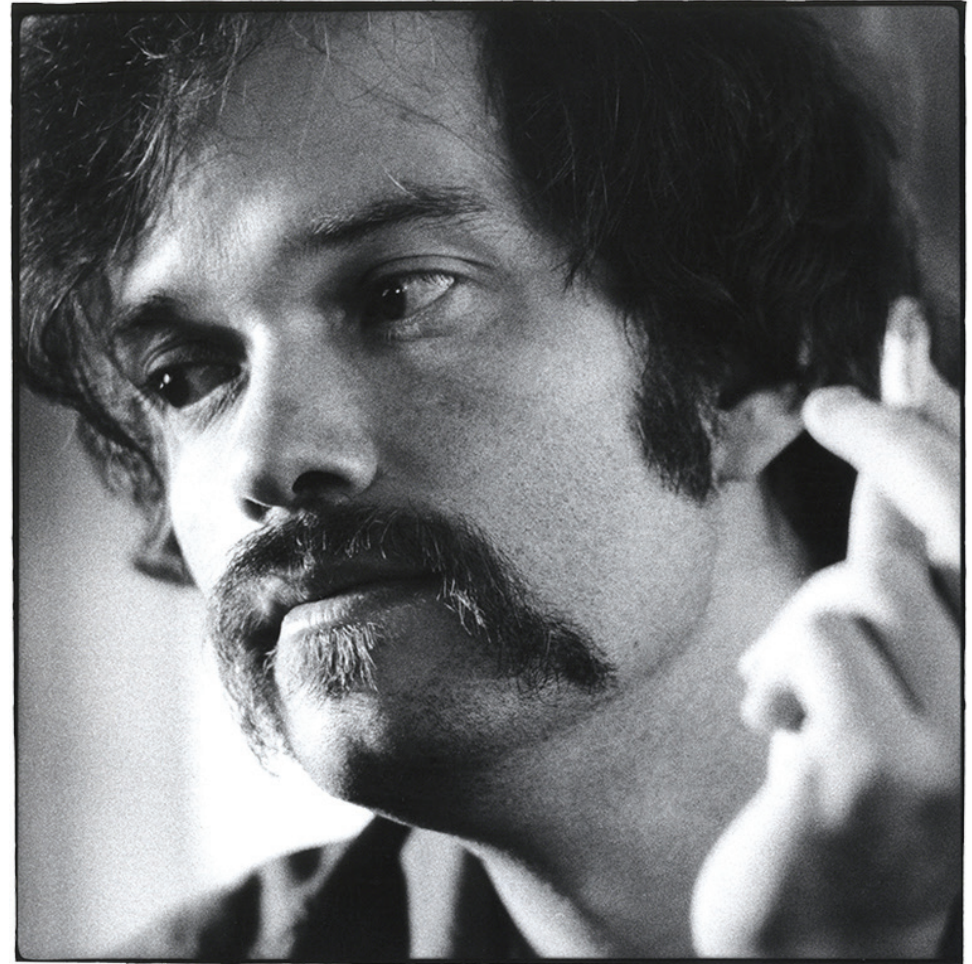




**John Abercrombie: Timeless**  
A Tribute To His Life And Music



March 26<sup>th</sup>, 2018  
Roulette  
Brooklyn, NY

**Tonight's concert is dedicated to the memory of John Abercrombie and to his extraordinary fellow musicians, friends, colleagues, students, family and caregivers.**

Lisa Abercrombie would like to thank all those who cared so fiercely for John while he was ill.

**Special Thanks To:**

Marc Copland and all of the featured artists this evening

Sarah Humphries

Danny Melnick

Darlene Chan

Gary Lefkowitz

Manfred Eicher

Claudia Engelhart

Tina Pelikan

Leonard Lichter

Rita Fishman

Jill Abram

Laura Lefkowitz

Steve Salerno

Lou Soloway

Pete Malinverni

Harris Flug

Arno Oehri

Martin Geyer

Nate Chinen

Fanny Chiari Gotschall

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John Abercrombie was a complete musician, a great improviser, great guitarist and great composer. He was a shining example of musical integrity but maybe as importantly, I've never met a nicer person. I met John in 1974. He was already established and I was a rookie. He treated me as an equal when he didn't have to and made me feel at home in the big city when I was new. I have valued his friendship for the 44 years since. The world won't feel the same without him. I don't.

– **John Scofield**

I met John Abercrombie for the first time in 1970 when I was on tour in Europe with Stu Martin and Barre Phillips. We stopped off at a studio in Stuttgart to say 'hi' to Dave Holland and Jack DeJohnette who were recording there with John and in the process of making an album for ECM as I recall. When we arrived, recording was at a standstill due to a problem caused by a faulty tube in John's amp. Fortunately we had a couple of spares in our van – so we turned out to be very welcome guests! I was lucky enough to get the chance to play with John on several occasions after that first meeting and it was always a joy to make music with him. Blessed with a wonderful sense of humour he made it all seem easy, but his relaxed approach concealed an intensity that would always be present in his music. He will be sadly missed.

– **John Surman**

This gathering of John's friends, colleagues and fans is to be a tribute to his existence and all the joy he brought to us. He will always remain very much alive to me, as I frequently pay visits to all the memories of the music and with that we shared in our long friendship. John's indelible presence is always accessible whether playing one of his songs or retelling a story of something he said or did during our many tours together. I can't help but think he would find this get-together of some of his old friends a trifle amusing and ironic. He was shy and not an attention seeker, even with his wonderful comedic gift. So, even though this tribute would probably make him feel slightly awkward, we salute our great and unforgettable friend and artist.

– **Ralph Towner**

## **Featured Artists:**

**Joey Baron** (drums)

**Randy Brecker** (trumpet)

**Nels Cline** (guitar)

**Marc Copland** (piano)

**Jack DeJohnette** (drums)

**Eliane Elias** (piano)

**Peter Erskine** (drums)

**Mark Feldman** (violin)

**Bill Frisell** (guitar)

**Drew Gress** (double bass)

**Marc Johnson** (double bass)

**Dave Liebman** (saxophones)

**Joe Lovano** (saxophones)

**Thomas Morgan** (double bass)

**Adam Nussbaum** (drums)

**John Scofield** (guitar)

This dream lineup of John's dear friends and close collaborators will join forces in various combinations tonight to pay tribute to the beloved guitarist's life and music, underscoring his legacy and influences.

John was more than a uniquely gifted jazz guitarist. His compositions remain highly creative vehicles for jazz improvisation, as will be amply demonstrated this evening.

One of the most influential guitarists to earn initial renown in the mid-1970s, John Abercrombie continued to make exceptional music as he grew and explored, ever-honing his approach across the decades. As NPR declared, he was "an intrepid and deeply lyrical guitarist who made a formative contribution to jazz-rock before refining a judicious, poetic iteration of post-bop." Like his breakthrough LP as a leader –the aptly titled *Timeless* of 1975 –John's final album, *Up and Coming*, was released by ECM Records, in January 2017. In between came dozens of albums primarily for ECM as a leader, co-leader and key sideman, an evergreen body of work that helped define the label and will continue to confirm his stature as an innovative, individual artist who inspired his great colleagues as well as multiple generations of guitarists.

Along with his career as a performer, composer and recording artist, John was also a teacher, lecturer and mentor at Purchase College of the State University of New York. All proceeds from this special tribute concert will go to establishing the John Abercrombie Jazz Scholarship Fund.





### **About the John Abercrombie Jazz Scholarship Fund (JAJSF)**

John Abercrombie made our lives a musical feast of unforgettable live performances, compositions, recordings and conversations about music. As a tribute to his incomparable musical sensibilities, his relentless explorations, and his devotion to sharing his skills and his craft, his friends, fans and family have established a charitable trust in his name.

In honor of the legendary jazz guitarist, composer and adjunct professor of music, the John Abercrombie Jazz Scholarship Fund (JAJSF) enables talented and determined jazz musicians to pursue their creative and career goals with essential tuition support. For those of us who knew him well, he enriched our lives with his music, his easy presence and his humor. As a legend, he developed his own musical language and authored a complete catalogue of musical compositions that are performed by jazz ensembles throughout the world.

Gifts to the John Abercrombie Jazz Scholarship Fund Charitable Trust endowment will provide tuition assistance to students based on need and merit.

\*JAJSF Tax Exemption status is currently pending government approval. Please consult your tax advisor for additional information regarding contributions to the John Abercrombie Jazz Scholarship Fund.

and lyricism in a one of a kind way, influencing guitarists worldwide. As well, John was my first favorite “comping” choice on guitar, meaning laying down the harmony for another soloist to play over. As well, acknowledgment must be made of Lisa Abercrombie’s devotion and support through the years, especially during John’s prolonged illness. RIP my brother!! – **Dave Liebman**

Some of the most beautiful poetic moments of music in my lifetime were shaping melodies with the masterful artistry of John Abercrombie. His free-flowing approach and constant development of ideas was personal and expressive within whatever kind of music we were exploring... John’s sound, touch and rhythm was captivating. He had a way of being in the rhythm section and the front line simultaneously, which would fuel everyone’s ideas in the band.. John set the pace on the scene since his first emergence and his contribution will forever be timeless... He was also one of the funniest, loving people you could know. John, Lisa, Judi and I had some great times together that will live on for us always. Viva la John Abercrombie!!!

– **Joe Lovano**

When John Abercrombie joined the faculty of Purchase Jazz Studies in 2000, he changed everything, becoming one of its cornerstones while lending immediate credibility to the program. John was as kind and generous a person and teacher as he was a brilliant and influential musician – which is saying something. More than once, I passed small groups in our hallways consisting of John and several students, all ears as he gifted them with something – a small memory, a compositional viewpoint, a thought on life – always in the gently off-handed and humble way he did most everything. One of his composition students had this to say, “John is the most influential figure and mentor for me, with his uniquely unorthodox approach to jazz. I’m not even a guitarist, but he is a true inspiration to me, especially as a composer – his influence is one of the reasons that I’ve become a classical contemporary composer. I loved his composition class, the best ever for me.” John Abercrombie leaves a large gap in the Purchase family that loved him deeply. He will be truly missed. – **Pete Malinverni (Head of Jazz Studies, Purchase College Conservatory of Music)**

It’s very difficult for me to put this together. There are so many thoughts that I find hard to put into words. I still have to remind myself every day that I can’t call him on the phone. I never imagined, as a 15-year-old listening to the first Dreams record, that John would become a profound presence in my life. We all know what a great musician he was, One of the true poets in music. But I’m really going to miss him as my friend. We had many wonderful adventures for almost 40 years. He had a great sense of humor. I want to share a quote of his. When asked what it’s like being a musician on the road he said “You’re overfed, under slept and stiff.... In all the wrong places” I’m forever grateful for what he brought to us all. His music will live on as an inspiration forever. I know he’s being welcomed by all of our heroes in heaven.

– **Adam Nussbaum**

I was so fortunate to work with John in his quartet for over 10 years. Such a great musician and kind person and one of the funniest people I ever met. I miss him a lot.

– **Mark Feldman**

John Abercrombie. It's so difficult to talk about this stuff. Words never seem to do justice. John has had (continues to have) such an enormous impact on me. I can't imagine what I'd sound like if I'd not heard him. First with Chico Hamilton, Dreams, Billy Cobham. And then ...in the early 70s at a time when I was struggling to find my own way he showed me a direction. New Directions. Opening doors and firing up my imagination. Gateway. I was so lucky to hear him in real time ...as his own music was unfolding ...On record... and so many times live ...His extraordinary relationship with Jack DeJohnette. Wow. I heard him so many times with Jack. And... Lookout Farm, Enrico Rava, Ralph Towner and his own bands. He helped show me the way. Encouraged me. Beautiful, kind, humble, generous... and what a sense of humor. I am blessed to have known him. Timeless. Yes. Thank you John. – **Bill Frisell**

John always kept it pure. The joy he radiated in musical conversation with his friends was ever there; sure as the next sunrise, John was always up for playing. It's what he was born to do. Playing with him was, and is, a reminder of just how effortless and organic music making can be, and of how beautiful it is to allow one's soul to sing out. Naturally. – **Drew Gress**

The road was fun with John. His sense of humor amused and entertained all of us who were around him. The first time I met him was at the Village Vanguard when I was playing with Bill Evans. At the break, John came up to me and said, "That was really great. I didn't know where one was the whole set." Playing bass in John Abercrombie's trio in the early eighties was a pivotal moment for me. Musically, I felt a direct connection with John and owing to his open conception; I experienced an incredible expansion as a creative musician in the trio with Peter Erskine and later in the quartet with Mark Feldman and Joey Baron. The road is where a band really develops and the touring was greatly facilitated by a regular recording cycle through John's longstanding collaboration with Manfred Eicher at ECM Records. John's catalogue on ECM truly documents the various stages of his career and the albums I made there with John are among the works of which I am most proud. I loved playing in every ensemble that John put together and always looked forward to every performance, knowing that we would have the opportunity to explore music together and create something new.

– **Marc Johnson**

I am not 100% sure how and when John and I met but it was sometime in the early '70s because he is on my first three recordings as a leader on ECM and A&M done in those years. Somehow we played together pretty often over the years. When one speaks about John as a person, the words used to describe him are "gentle".... "gracious"...."funny" ...all in that vein. His musical skills were natural, combining fire

## Remembering John Abercrombie

since meeting John in the mid 70's when I subbed for his then drummer Peter Donald, I had the good fortune to discover the many great things about him first hand. The most striking and inspiring quality, which to me is at the core of his artistry, is that he always checked his ego at the front door AND treated everyone on the bandstand as a true equal. He could easily put a room full of people at ease by simply respecting them. Be it a club, concert hall, classroom teaching situation, or just hanging out with people. John's humorous side was legendary. His beautiful playing and heartfelt compositions embodied the essence of the truly great musicians that came before him. I miss my friend. – **Joey Baron**

John was a wonderful and brilliant jazz guitar player and composer, what we call in the jazz fraternity a great cat, he was very shy and self-deprecating on the outside and seriously complex inside, looking a bit like a benevolent Benedictine monk in his later years he was anything but!! He was sweet and kind and not a diva at all, but he also had a dark side, and a real fire inside him, musically he was mostly influenced by his 2 great heroes, Jim Hall and Wes Montgomery, he was not exactly conservative but he had excellent taste and his music was unashamedly beautiful and romantic, he also had a much harder side being an electric guitar player, he loved the big screaming burn and felt right at home in that jazz rock volume and style, his brilliant deceptively simple tunes held great riches things that look average and normal on the paper would come alive in performance and break your heart or kick your ass all over the stage. He was fortunately left behind a wonderful legacy in his many recordings, but he is terribly missed and it's always too soon to say goodbye to a person like John, So goodbye John, we loved you and we still love you and your music, see you on the other side – **Richie Beirach, Germany 2018**

Hard to write in words something about John Abercrombie since he was all music and ethereal sound but he had such a calming voice too when he spoke to you, and could make you feel so relaxed and comfortable in his presence. Always self-effacing too, just like his playing he spoke lyrically with never an afterthought or extra pile of words...

And how can one explain his sense of humor other than to say he could take that calming voice and make it sound like Julia Childs cooking a soufflé or a Munchkin singing "Follow the Yellow Brick Road"! I often thought about his fans, who only knew him as the serious ECM looking jazz artist/composer and how shocked they would be if they saw this side of him! The music spoke for itself, completely original, lyrical, full of space, introverted and in one or two words: just lovely. That fits John the man too, a lovely human being who always will be missed.

– **Randy Brecker**

Looking at the astounding lineup of musicians performing as part of this tribute concert to the great John Abercrombie is humbling in the extreme as I am really just a guy who, as a young man maybe 19 years old, was deeply inspired and influenced by John and, well, also by everyone who is playing tonight whose artistic trajectories intersected with John's world. I was just a listener/fan/wannabe. It was Ralph Towner - one of my biggest inspirations in music as well - who insisted back in 1976 that I pay closer attention to what John was doing, and thank you Ralph - I have never been the same. Certainly John was one of those people to whom I looked in those early "jazz/rock" days for great guitar playing, for singular and diverse modes of expression. But as time went on, his playing only got deeper, subtler, more nuanced. And I must add that it is not only John's playing that influenced me. It was also his composing. I find that this often happens with many great players; their composing gets overlooked or underrated. After tonight, it may be clearer to those who did not follow John Abercrombie's work closely that his composing possesses hauntingly beautiful melodic and harmonic content along with some wry humor and even whimsy at times. It is the stuff of greatness. Thank you, John, for changing how I hear and feel these last 40+ years, and for continuing to guide me

– **Nels Cline**

John Abercrombie is gone, and this music we all love, which was enriched by his presence, will be all the poorer for his absence. John played like he lived his life. He played what he felt and said what he felt; but he readily remained quiet if revealing his thoughts would hurt the feelings of others. His dry humor kept everyone around him in stitches, but only as he felt circumstances warranted it. He played the same way: no torrent of notes from this guitarist, he spun them out gradually; as he felt circumstances warranted them. Like him, his tunes didn't overtly call attention to themselves; but upon repeated playing, they revealed themselves to be what the best tunes are: vehicles for musical growth. The more you play an Abercrombie tune, the more it gives back. In an era when it is all too flip to call someone one's brother, I can say that in this case, in this music we all love, I have lost mine. Rest in Peace, John.

– **Marc Copland**

Besides being one of the great creative masters on the guitar, John was one of the warmest, funniest and generous people that I knew. Musically he was fearless and always rose to the occasion. His sense of humor was great and always came out in his music as well as his alter ego as a stand-up comedian. John and I spent many years playing and traveling together, he was an important part of my beginnings as a bandleader. We used to joust together in music, we would try and throw each other off and would come up with surprising results, some great, some funny and some not. It was always an adventure playing with John. Together we formed the cooperative trio Gateway with Dave Holland, it was one of the most enjoyable groups around interplay that I have been in. The three of us had a special rapport together that still remains with me. Through good and bad times, John kept his humor and empathy. his love

for Lisa was very touching. One of our last conversations ended with, "I would never be a member of a club that would have me as member". I love John very much and he will always be in my heart. – **Jack DeJohnette**

Johnny Guitar. When we first played together in the early 60s, John's phrasing and time instantly felt familiar and logical to me. Up till then, I don't think I had played with anyone who I felt so at home with. What ensued were several years of working the gigs in Boston, most of which were sublime and some, of course, ridiculous. But a lifelong friendship was born. I moved to L.A. in the early 70s and John went to NYC. After several bi-coastal years, we formed Abercrombie Quartet. John and Lisa were married in a hilariously debauched wedding, thankfully, before Facebook existed and I happily served as Best Man. My spirit has been forever enriched in major and minor ways by my friendship with this gentle, funny and supremely talented man. And, truly being my brother from another mother, John's absence leaves an emptiness in me that will never be filled. – **Peter Donald**

My first memories of John start back in 1985 when we first played together for a week at Fat Tuesdays. In that band, there was no bass player so I played piano and bass on the keyboard. Randy and Michael Brecker were on horns. We rehearsed a bit before that week and I soon came to appreciate his unique and personal approach to music and improvisation. It was more fun to play the keyboard bass behind him than the piano because I liked hearing him travel freely. I feel John was rooted in the jazz tradition but always-forward thinking and developed a unique sound and conception. We saw each other here and there and I did come out to hear him a few times through the years. The last time we performed together was at a concert in October of 2015, at Le Chatelet Theater in Paris. I am certain that John's music will continue to inspire and influence musicians for years to come. – **Eliane Elias**

John was the most interesting and compelling musician I've known, and one of the funniest too. Early morning departures were always more bearable when John would offer an observation like: "You know, there's nothing like a good cup of coffee in the morning — and this is nothing like a good cup of coffee." "Manfred" Eicher became "My Man, Fred." "I'll be right back" became "I'll be white black." And so on. But his music making was serious and uncompromising. One time, when the trio with Marc Johnson and myself finished its first set of a week-long stint at Joe Segal's Jazz Showcase in Chicago, Joe got up to announce the coming attractions, punctuated with a "Be sure to come back next week to hear some REAL music." John really had it out with Joe after that in the lobby. All was made well when we agreed to include at least one Charlie Parker tune during each set. One thing's for sure: no one could play a ballad like John. I'll always miss his smile, but his music and tenderness live on.

– **Peter Erskine**