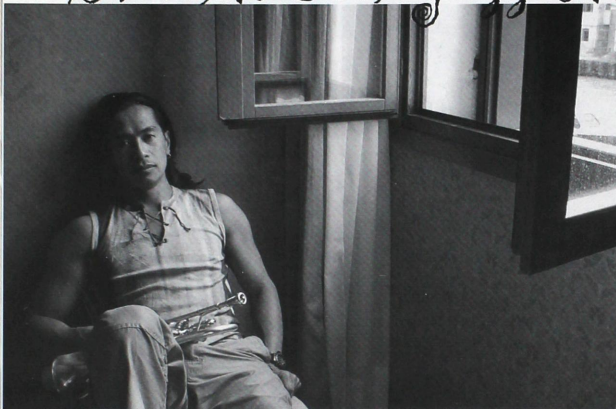


Smooth Cool Jazz That's Magic



Forty three year old composer and horn player Vince Mai has lived on the North Shore for over 15 years. A PMIA award winning composer, Mai leads MAI-BAND, an all-star group of some of Canada's top musicians. He makes smooth cool jazz. Recent CD's are "Subtle" and "For All We Know". (Readers can listen to snippets of these CD's at Mai's website at <http://www.mai-music.com/>.) Mai is an active performer on the local scene. Recent appearances with MAI-BAND include a concert at the Vancouver East Cultural Center (recorded by the CBC) and a performance at North Vancouver's Civic Plaza during the Jazz Festival. Other recent projects include the film score on Canadian director Carl Bessai's latest feature film "Emile", and "A Tribe of One", a documentary by director Eunhee Cha for which Mai also provided the score.

I met Vince Mai in a coffee shop. He is soft spoken, articulate, and easy to talk to. It was a pleasure to sit across the table from Mai as he talked about music as it felt to him - a man to whom music is not a mystery. He's a trumpeter for love and fun, but the piano forms the foundation of his art. Mai's fingers struck chords on an imaginary keyboard to illustrate various fingerings as he talked about how they produce similar sounds with

different emotional meanings or "colours." We talk about how timing in a film score affects the emotional content of the action - the score can create feelings that vary from suspense to security. The audience can be led to anticipate an action, or to have a delayed reaction to it, for example. Mai is very aware of the emotion that various kinds of musical sensation stimulate in the listener.

Music is an art, and like all art, it seems like magic to the uninitiated. One listens to a track on "Subtle" and it seems as complete and natural as a smooth stone in a brook. This is not background music. Try working to this and you find yourself staring into space - work forgotten - you're all ears. How could anyone possibly set out to "create" such a thing? Those who are not musical use vague words like 'talent' to describe what's needed for creation. Yet for the creator, the same piece of music is a work of synthesis - a putting together of parts for reasons, a playing with elements. Talking with Mai about his music is enlightening, because one gains a sense of the elements that the creator of music works with.

Music is not a simple pleasure for a man like Vince Mai. Rather, it is a rich, multidimensional pleasure. We talked about the various levels of creativity involved. Music is technical - the whole thing is

grounded on physical mastery of instruments, from trumpet to piano to computer composing tools. There is great satisfaction, for anyone who has mastered a physical art, in using that art to its fullest. Music is very social - jazz bands are teams that work together to move an audience - the jazz musician is interacting with people on many levels, as the music is being made. It takes a lively mind.

For commercial projects, Mai is a kind of musical designer - able to assemble musical elements to satisfy the detailed requirements of a client. Mai also composes his own music, following his own muse. All artists are familiar with the contrast between commissioned and self motivated work. Many artists find it very difficult to do both - that the very attitude of responsiveness to a client inhibits the wellsprings needed for personal creativity. This sure doesn't seem to be a problem for Mai - he is prolific on many fronts at once.

It is obvious that Mai loves his work; all of it. Yet, it is also clear that it is performance; playing before a live audience, that really turns him on. His eyes light up and he becomes animated when he talks about playing when the band is hot. Even for Vince Mai, a hot band is magic.