

# John Esposito – Pianist/Composer

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John is described as "...one of the strongest jazz pianists on the planet, an under recognized giant" by Bruce Lee Gallanter - Downtown Music Gallery

Michael G. Nastos in the All Music Guide describes John Esposito as playing "...lucid, forward thinking, rhythmically propelling ideas...he succeeds on many real and important levels in creating some of the finest new modern

jazz you may hear in the post Wynton Marsalis era...A bold conception and execution to be sure....from a brilliant player who deserves wider attention."

John Szwed in the Village Voice describes John's playing as having, "the lustrous clarity of a gamelan band using repetition so brilliantly that crystalline forms accrue from it."

John Esposito is an American pianist/composer/drummer/producer who works on a wide array of creative music projects. His technical skills and the range of his artistic palette extend across the stylistic boundaries of the Stride Piano, Swing, Bebop, Modal and Free Music movements. He has performed and recorded with artists including Nick Brignola, Dave Douglas, Dave Holland, Carter Jefferson, Franklin Kiermyer, Joe Lovano, J.R. Monterose, David "Fathead" Newman, Eric Person, Arthur Rhames, Sam Rivers, Roswell Rudd, Pharaoh Sanders and John Stubblefield.

John is the owner/executive producer of Sunjump Records. He has created music for theater, dance, film, TV commercials, and multimedia performance art. He is a music faculty member and Artist-In-Residence at Bard College and resides in New York State's Hudson Valley.

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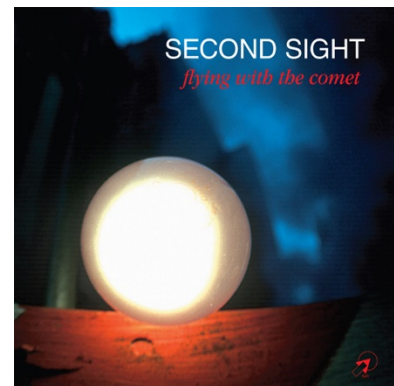
After attending SUNY Albany John worked as house pianist at the Gemini Jazz cafe for several years leading his own group with guest soloists including Nick Brignola and John Stubblefield and spent a year working in saxophonist J.R. Monterose's band.

He moved to New York City in 1980 and met the phenomenal, young saxophonist/pianist/guitarist Arthur Rhames while playing on guitarist Steve Geraci's Beat City label record date *Aliqae Song* with John Stubblefield and Rashied Ali. John worked in the Arthur Rhames Quartet for the next five years.

In 1985, John formed *Second Sight* – a quintet with trumpeter Dave Douglas, saxophonist Jeff Marx, and drummer Jeff Siegel. They recorded *Flying With The Comet* in 1986, an album of John's original compositions released on John's independent label Sunjump Records followed by *Tiger Tracks* (1987). This five year period marked the beginning of John's work as a producer and in addition to Second Sight's music, Sunjump released a Jose Chalas record, *Living On Avenue F* and Marc Wagon's, *Shadowlines*.

Throughout the eighties John also worked with saxophonists Carter Jefferson, John Stubblefield, J.R. Monterose, Hugh Brodie, Greg Abate, Nick Brignola, Bobby Johnson Jr; Roswell Rudd, Beaver Harris, and many others.

In 1987 John moved to Woodstock, NY and in 1989 formed the FM Artists Coalition with saxophonist Erica Lindsay and bassist Anthony Cox. The group lasted three years beginning with a series of monthly house concerts, continuing with two years of co-productions with the Woodstock Guild in the Kleinert/James Gallery, culminating in August 1992 in a three day Jazz, Poetry and Visual Arts Festival at the Byrdcliff Barn. John produced 25 concerts for the FM Coalition and the 160 artists presented included Karl Berger, Tim Berne, Cindy Blackman, Baikida Carol, Dave Douglas Tiny Bell Trio, Marilyn Crispell, Santi DeBriano, Jack DeJohnette, Dave Holland, Howard Johnson, and Wadada Leo Smith.



From 1990-92 John played regularly with the Glen Richmond trio at Fat Tuesday NYC, and solo piano at the Village Corner, Bradley's, NYC and the United Nations Building.

Beginning in 1993 John began working with the groups of Franklin Kiermyer and Eric Person as pianist and arranger. He recorded four albums with Kiermyer : *In The House Of My Fathers* (1993 Konnex) with Dave Douglas and John Stubblefield ; the critically acclaimed *Solomon's Daughter* (1994 Evidence) with tenor saxophonist Pharoah Sanders and bassist Drew Gress; *Kairos* (1996 Evidence) with the saxophonists Sam Rivers, Eric Person, Michael Stuart; and *Sanctification* (1999 Sunship) with saxophonist Michael Stuart and bassist Fima Ephron.

Gigs included Sweet Basil, NYC with Joe Lovano, Eric Person and Drew Gress; tours of the US including the San Francisco Jazz Festival at Yoshi's in Oakland, California; the Panasonic Jazz Festival at the Knitting Factory, NYC; Lincoln Center, NYC; a ten concert tour of Canadian Jazz Festivals including Montreal, Quebec, Toronto, Edmonton and Vancouver. John also played on four albums with Eric Person's Meta Four beginning in 1996 with Eric's *More Tales to Tell* (Soulnote) with Dave Holland and Gene Jackson.

Gigs included NYC club appearances at the Blue Note, the Knitting Factory, and Visiones; tours of Jazz festivals and clubs including the Montreal Jazz Festival; Fresno

CA Billy Higgins Festival; Savannah Jazz Festival; Texaco Jazz Festival, NYC; Newport/Friehoffer Jazz Festival Saratoga Springs, NY; Detroit Ford/Montreux Festival; Newport Jazz Festival, NYC ; and the Bell/Atlantic Festival, NYC. Media performances included NPR broadcast of the Detroit Montreux concert on Branford Marsalis' Jazz Set.

John appeared on three more Eric Person CDs: *Extra Pressure* (2000) ; *Live At Big Sur* (2003); and *Reflections* (2006) with Dave Douglas and Kenny Davis. John toured with Eric Person's Meta Four in performances at the Guimaraes Jazz Festival, Portugal; the Blue Note, NYC; Big Sur Jazz Festival; Blues Alley, Washington, D.C.; Savannah Jazz Festival, GA; Jazz Factory, Louisville, KY; the Brooklyn Academy of Music; dozens of clubs and concerts and workshops at twenty colleges across the US. Featured media performances include a Knitting Factory concert and interview on BET Jazz and webcasts from the Bluenote and the Knitting Factory.

In 2002 John renewed his collaboration with saxophonist Jeff Marx on two CDs: *The Great Unknown* (Naugual) and *Treading Air...Breathing Fire* (Soluna). John continued his work with Jeff Marx contributing four compositions to Jeff Marx/Jeff Siegel CD *Dreamstuff* (2005 Ayler Records) and playing piano and writing compositions for Esposito/Marx/Siegel *Inyo* (Sunjump 2009).



In 2006 John revitalized Sunjump Records which had been inactive since 1988 releasing John Esposito *Down Blue Marlin Road*, a deconstruction/reconstruction of some of Jazz's most over-played standards. The second was a quintet date of nine Esposito originals, *The Blue People*. He followed this in 2008 with John Esposito *A Book Of Five Rings* ; Sangeeta Michael Berardi *Earthship*; and re-released Second Sight *Flying With The Comet*, on CD with three bonus tracks.

In 2009 John produced three releases: Steve Geraci's *Aliqae Song*, an archival recording of that first meeting with Arthur Rhames in 1980; the previously mentioned *Inyo* ; and Mitch Kessler's *Erratica*.

During this period John began experimenting with music/video duet improvisations with video artist/photographer Laura Steele, culminating in a concert at University of Chapel Hill, NC. In April 2009 John presented a multimedia concert with Laura Steele at Bard College, Annandale-On-Hudson, NY which combined through-composed and freely improvised music with Steele's real time video mixing using prerecorded images and live video feeds projected on four walls. Audience seating was configured in various geometric shapes throughout the space. The septet was divided into three segments placed in different parts of the hall.

John produced two Sunjump Records releases in 2010: flutist Jayna Nelson's *Bloom Of Creation*; and *Orisha*, his second trio CD with nine new originals.

2011 brought the release of Mitch Kessler's *Der Erlkonig*. Other recording projects in 2011 include the Esposito/Marx/Siegel trio CD *Tahrir* (release date March 2012) and the mixing/mastering of Sangeeta Michael Berardi's *Calling Coltrane* (release date January 2012).

2011 brought the release of Mitch Kessler's *Der Erlkonig* released on Sunjump Records 2012. John acted as pianist/composer and recording session producer for the record date shown in Burrill Crohn's documentary film on life and work of musician/poet/painter Sangeeta Michael Berardi *Playing With Parkinson's*.

2012 started with a tour of European Tour Germany & Austria with Esposito/ Marx/Siegel. John acted as pianist/composer and recording session producer for the record date shown in Burrill Crohn's documentary film on life and work of musician/poet/painter Sangeeta Michael Berardi *Playing With Parkinson's*.

2013 brought the double CD release *The Mr P Sessions* by Sangeeta Michael Berardi. Footage of this record date is featured in the film *Playing With Parkinson's* by the noted Jazz documentary film maker Burrill Crohn. This documentary film of Berardi's life's work as a painter/poet/musician premiered October 26, 2013 at the Woodstock Guild's Kleinert/James gallery in Woodstock, NY.

2014 John produced a concert by Sangeeta and his band at the Saugerties Jazz Factory. John also co-produced a concert/installation at Second Ward, Hudson, NY with Laura Steele which combined through-composed and freely improvised music for his A Book Of Five Rings octet with Steele's real time video mixing using pre-recorded images and live video feeds through fourteen monitors with scrolling images projected onto banks of white surfaced windows and walls.



He released Sangeeta Michael Berardi *The Mr P Sessions* 2015 Sunjump Records; John worked as pianist/composer on Eric Person's upcoming release on Distinction Records. He was a guest artist speaker at the Woodstock Film Festival premier of *Playing With Parkinson's*. Another 2015 Sunjump Records release was Bob Murad's *The Observer*.

2015 - He released Sangeeta Michael Berardi - *The Mr P Sessions* on Sunjump Records; John worked as pianist/composer on Eric Person's upcoming release on Distinction Records.

He was a guest artist speaker at the Woodstock Film Festival premier of *Playing With Parkinson's*. Sunjump Records released Bob Murad's *The Observer*.

2016 - John was pianist/composer/producer 17 of songs for John Esposito Quintet CD *Lyra*, released 2018 Sunjump Records;

2017 - John worked as producer for Sangeeta Michael Berardi's CD *Music Is Love: The Manhattan Sessions*, released 2018 Sunjump Records;



2020 - Pianist/composer/producer of 6 songs for Second Sight CD *Tiger Tracks*, released 2020 Sunjump Records; as producer on Sangeeta Michael Berardi's CD *Divine Song*, released 2020 Sunjump Records.

2021-2024

Pianist/composer/producer 9 compositions John Esposito Sextet: *Laura* 2023 Sunjump Records; pianist/composer/producer 10 compositions John Esposito Trio: *Blues For Outlaw Hearts* 2024 Sunjump Records; pianist/drummer/composer/producer 9 compositions John Esposito & A Book Of Five Rings: *Vulcan* 2024 Sunjump Records; pianist/composer/producer 3 compositions Jeff Marx: *Treading Air...Breathing Fire* 2024 Sunjump Records; pianist & producer Arthur Rhames: *How Great You Are* 2024 Sunjump Records.

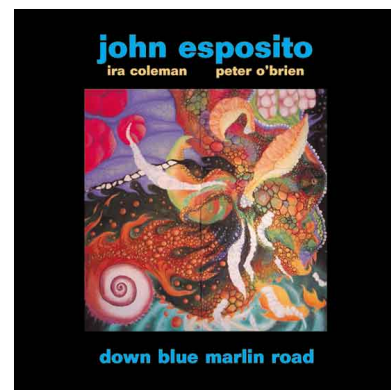
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## John Esposito Trio: *Down Blue Marlin Road*

"... A virtuoso feat of recomposition as well as performance... jazz purified to the essence."  
Kyle Gann - Village Voice

"Esposito and his trio has taken the jazz cover a step beyond, creating something unique and personal in the process, and seem to be having fun doing it.....The interplay is effortless, and satisfyingly dynamic." M.R. Smith - Roll

"a virtuosity seldom heard in players interpreting jazz standards. A bold conception and execution to be sure.....this recording is hopefully one of many to come from a brilliant player who deserves wider attention."  
(Critic's Rating 3 1/2 stars) Michael G. Nastos, All Music Guide



"both familiar and foreign at the same time....this release is a real pleasure, and one I'll keep going back to." Stuart Kremsky - Cadence



## John Esposito Trio: *Orisha*

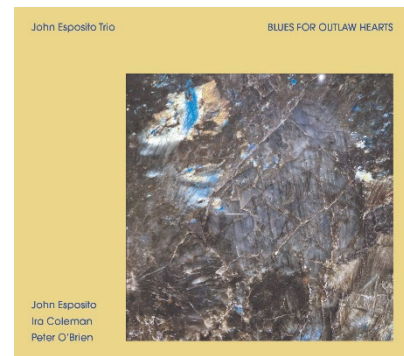
“..a wonderful collection of originals...that are joyous and jumpin'....the trio move through uptempo and midtempo without hesitation. It's a lovely introspective listen that is emotionally effective.... a stellar collection of high spirited originals....rolled up into just over an hour of marvelous listening.” - Vern JazzWrap

“.... a superior example of modernistic swing, Esposito making melodic fills shimmer in the midst of a sweeping hurricane of rhythm....mixes rollicking stride piano with ethereal impressionism....Its restless energy refuses to reside into the background and the dramatic ebb and flow of the music speaks of three artists for whom art is created in the here-and-now.....this Eastern philosophy of yin and yang that is translated beautifully into a work of art that is as progressive as it is nostalgic and as aggressive as it is tender.”  
Jakob Baekgaard [allaboutjazz.com](http://allaboutjazz.com)



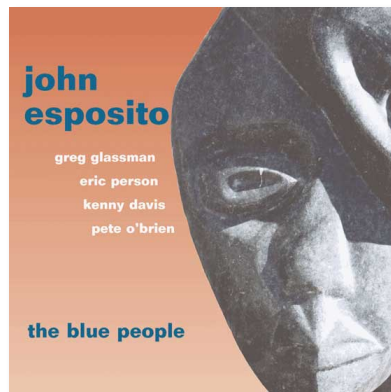
## John Esposito Trio: *Blues For Outlaw Hearts*

“Its restless energy refuses to reside into the background and the dramatic ebb and flow of the music speaks of three artists for whom art is created in the here-and-now.” Jakob Baekgaard [allaboutjazz.com](http://allaboutjazz.com)



[John's YouTube Video Site](#)

## John Esposito Quintet : *The Blue People*



[The Blue People CD](#)

“ These nine tracks, all Esposito originals, play like a history of jazz, recalling the brilliance of some of the genre’s greatest groups.” DJ Wavy Davy - Roll

“ The future and the past coalesced into a moment of improvisation.....Esposito's compositions maintain an originality which rises out of both intellectual and emotional knowledge of Jazz and its history. It's blue music played inside out. ” Jakob Baekgaard - allaboutjazz.com

“ .....offering lucid, forward thinking, rhythmically propelling ideas, and display(ing) the right mix of moxy and taste.....He succeeds on many real and important levels in creating

some of the finest new modern jazz you may hear in the post-Wynton Marsalis era.”

- Michael G. Nastos, All Music Guide

“...the egoless, ecstatic approach to small group Jazz...with great depth of feeling and boundless rhythmic energy.” Stuart Kremsky – Cadence

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## John Esposito: *Lyra*



[John Esposito: Lyra](#)

“New recordings of 17 compositions composed in the 80’s while I was working with the great multi-instrumentalist Arthur Rhames. They reflect my thoughts on the work required to survive being on the bandstand with Arthur.

That working relationship also got me thinking about things like the relationship between form and content, making melodies with harmonic clarity, playing with rhythmic drive, extended solos with emotional intensity and reinterpreting the Blues.

During the first half of the decade I composed extensively, experimenting in my own way with what I had learned. I worked with the tensions between symmetry and asymmetry, explored

chord sequences and their emotional meaning, and devised new relationships between the melodies and the chords.

I moved on to writing for other projects but these pieces have always remained in the back of my mind. “



## John Esposito Sextet: *Laura*

“...all the ingredients of great jazz, in a classic Blue Note sort of way: they swing hard, the melodies are both effervescent, memorable & even soulful, the arrangements are slyly crafty and all solos are inspired.”

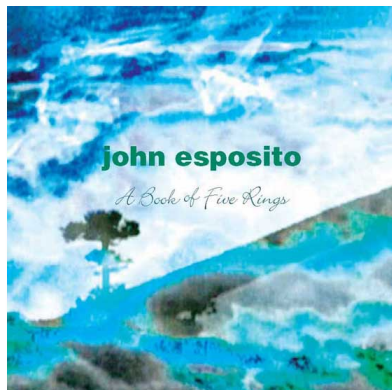
Bruce Lee Gallanter, Downtown Music Gallery



Chris Posin  
Eric Person  
Phil Allen  
John Esposito  
Ira Coleman  
Peter O'Brien



## John Esposito: *A Book Of Five Rings*



[A Book of Five Rings](#)

"What is most striking is the support and interplay of the rhythm team, especially John's dynamic piano. On "Smitty", it is John's McCoy-like piano that is most astonishing and powerful, pushing the band higher and higher...The freer moments here are especially inspired and feature some fine soprano and bass clarinet swirling around one another intensely. The final piece, "...And His Spirit Ascended/Trane's Church" is an uplifting, epic-length, spiritual work which I find to be completely enchanting." Bruce Lee Gallanter - Downtown Music Gallery

"Two Worlds" is a lengthy suite-like performance that alternates accordingly between sections of delicate interplay and cacophonous improvisation. The finale, another suite, "...and His Spirit Ascended/Trane's Church" builds slowly from a flute led meditation to a full out late period Coltrane ecstatic blowout. It's quite impressive and the musicians never lose focus during the near half our long dramatic improvisation. It unfolds like a ceremony and as such is quite an accomplishment." Tim Niland - Jazz and Blues Blogspot

## John Esposito & A Book Of Five Rings: *Vulcan*



"... the music has an ethereal quality, free-ish and floating yet still focused and somehow tight... the thoughtful ensemble writing... stands out throughout... consistently fascinating and engaging. Another gem from John Esposito and his great Sunjump label all-stars."

Bruce Lee Gallanter, DMG

[Link to Sunjump YouTube videos](#)

[Multimedia Performance Link](#)

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**Contact/Booking:**

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[Sunjump Records](#)