

# What I'm Listening To: Kris Allen, saxophonist and LJC Teaching Artist

Lately many of my music choices are project based; I'll be checking out the music of a bandleader in preparation for an upcoming gig, or to research for a class that I am teaching. I spend over 10 hours in the car most weeks, so this is prime time for listening! When there are no pressing needs, I will often let the ipod shuffle through my collection and I'll often be reminded of forgotten gems. Here are a bunch of great recordings that have recently commanded my attention one way or another. I know I'll keep coming back to these sides year after year!

## 1. Mario Pavone-Street Songs (upcoming release May 6, 2014 on Playscape)

I really love this brand new (not yet released!) disc from fellow LJC faculty member Mario Pavone, and featuring many other favorites from the Litchfield family! It's not just the unique instrumentation (Adam Matlock on accordion and Carl Testa adding a second bass on some selections) that makes this one unique. I think that this new setting brought out a slightly different side of Mario's musicality, hard to put into words but possibly "introspective" or "spooky" (as Kevin Whitehead put it in the liner notes). Beautiful any way you slice it.

## 2. Kenny Garrett-" Seeds from the Underground" -Mack Avenue, 2012

This February, I saw Kenny playing a program of his own compositions arranged by the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra. It was an unforgettable evening, and the highlight for me was his beautiful ballad tribute to his hometown, simply titled " Detroit." I bought the complete album as soon as I could, and have been repeatedly kicking myself for allowing holes to develop in my collection of the recorded works of the real Kenny G!

## 3. Charlie Parker – Bird and Fats One Night At Birdland 1950

At the moment I'm teaching a class on Parker at Williams College, where I've been an Artist-in-Residence since September. Although many scholars consider the 1950's to be a disappointing time for Parkers creative output, I have to respectfully disagree and declare this record to be my favorite Bird on record. Bud Powell, Fats Navarro, Curley Russell and a young Art Blakey make the ideal supporting cast, and you can hear Parker stretching out and exploring. In this record I hear the seeds of things to come, of Coltrane and Ornette Coleman. You'll never hear a horn swing so hard on uptempos anywhere.

## 4. The Complete Bud Powell on Verve-

Speaking of bebop, this box set could be the text for a decade of classes. You hear Bud play mostly in solo and trio format here, and spelling out bebop language in it's purest most beautiful, dramatic, and otherworldly form, IMHO!

## 5. Billy Childs- "Autumn in Moving Pictures"

Billy is someone who I was not even aware of until my Williams colleague Andy Jaffe loaned me this recording. I've never heard such a seamless integration of strings and classical woodwinds with jazz forms; I was knocked out by Child's arranging and composing. I will also always be a fan of anything at all featuring Brian Blade on drums.

#### 6. Toninho Horta- “ Durango Kid”

Horta is a truly “beyond category” musician, as a vocalist, guitarist and composer. I had the opportunity to play many of these compositions for Horta himself through a project arranged by my good friend Rogerio Boccato. This was one of those times when I started listening to something for a particular purpose and just never stopped!

#### 7. Stephen Riley- “ El Gaucho” Steeplechase Records

Stephen is a true “ talent deserving wider recognition” on the tenor saxophone. He has a unique tone, wispy and almost hollow, (in a good way!) and he employs it to wonderful affect. I especially love to hear him play standards; the ease and fluency with which he plays changes is inspiring and his knack for creative song quotations cracks me up.

#### 8. Disney’s “Frozen” – Deluxe Edition Soundtrack

Ok, I have to keep it real. Although I’m in charge of the music in the car, at home my 6-year old daughter Rory is generally playing DJ. That means lots and lots of Frozen! I have to admit, these are some really fine songs, and while I don’t get into “Let it Go” as much as Rory and her friends, I often find myself whistling “ First Time in Forever.”

# Litchfield Jazz Camp

**Kris Allen, Saxophone Faculty, Litchfield Jazz Camp**

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