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Fusion Jazz — November 16, 2011 6:59 am

## Kidd Jordan – *On Fire* (2011)

Posted by [S. Victor Aaron](#)

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An astonishing thing to witness when viewing [Fred Anderson's live performance on DVD, 21st Century Chase](#), was the sight of a guy celebrating his 80th birthday splaying notes from his saxophone with abandon, power and purpose. And then, when he finished his solo, witnessing a dude only six years his junior doing the same. Both of those old cats were putting nearly every young cat to shame. Unhappily, the senior "old cat" is no longer with us, but his younger partner, Kidd Jordan, is still schooling the younger generations of would-be Coltranes.

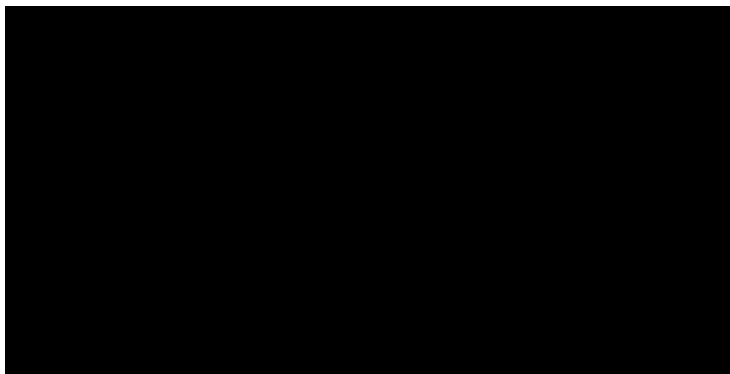
Kidd Jordan was born in Crowley, Louisiana, and spent more than forty years teaching music at the New Orleans campus of Southern University. According to Wikipedia, he has performed with a very impressive list of music luminaries such as [Ray Charles](#), [Stevie Wonder](#), Aretha Franklin, [William Parker](#), Alvin Fielder, Archie Shepp, [Ornette Coleman](#), Ellis Marsalis,

[Cannonball Adderley](#), [Ed Blackwell](#), and Cecil Taylor. One of his students, a trombone player by the name of Charles Joseph, went on to co-found The Dirty Dozen Brass Band.

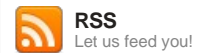
All of the time Jordan has spent as an educator and sideman has left him little time for leading his own records, of which there's only a couple, and a couple more co-led. But last month, he made a precious addition to his scant discography with the release of *On Fire*.

The *On Fire* sessions present that vintage Kidd Jordan tenor sax: inclined toward the mid-to-high register of the horn, some Albert Ayler-ish wide vibrato here and there and echoes of old school RnB everywhere. Moreover, Jordan understands the straight, short line between primal jazz and advanced jazz. All the great avanteers do.

Helping him on this album are two major figures in the whack jazz scene themselves: percussion and vibes specialist Warren Smith and [bass boss Harrison Bankhead](#), who played with Jordan in Anderson's band. This lineup practically gives away the plot of the record, which is unrestrained, improvised music played at its highest level, and that's just what these three play.



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As usual, Smith imposes such a huge presence on a record led by someone else, playing with controlled intensity and leveraging all the sounds at his disposal to drive a song in the direction suggested by Jordan. His fiery chase with Jordan on "Officer, That Big Knife Cuts My Sax Reeds" recalls Rashied Ali and John Coltrane's *Interstellar Space* fierce interactions, contrasted by his sensitive but crisp brushwork on "The Evil Eye." Smith wrings out the most unusual timbres from the vibes on "We Are All Indebted To Each Other," but will alternately tap out some pretty sounds from it, taking cues from Jordan.

Bankhead likewise uses all the tools at his disposal to supplement and carry out Jordan's vision. There are a few moments, as toward the end of "The Evil Eye" where his dexterity is a match for the more celebrated bassists like **Dave Holland** and William Parker. He can subtly set moods, such as a thin layer of gloom seeping in "Officer," by the mere scraping of his bow. And out of nowhere, he finds an irresistible groove like the one that emerges near the beginning of "We Are All Indebted To Each Other." The humorously titled "Harrison Carries Out The Coffin" is mainly his song, driving the tune with a probing pulse and tossing out ideas for the other two to chew on.

Nonetheless, this is Jordan's date, and his many decades of learning, teaching and playing alongside the best in and out of jazz all comes together on this record. There is nothing trite, hackneyed or aimless about his playing, and to employ an overused expression, he lets it all hang out. Kidd Jordan may have stopped teaching at Southern University a few years ago, but he hadn't stopped teaching. He and his two veteran teaching assistants are conducting a clinic on advanced, improvisational jazz with *On Fire*.

*On Fire* was released last October 11, by Engine Studios.

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Tags: 2010s Engine Studios Fred Anderson Harrison Bankhead Kidd Jordan Louisiana new release Warren Smith

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S. Victor Aaron is a CPA and mid-level data analyst for a Fortune 10 company at day, music opinion-maker at night. His musical musings are strewn out across the interwebs on jazz.com, AllAboutJazz.com, a football discussion board and some inchoate customer reviews of records from the late 1990's on Amazon under a pseudonym that will never be revealed. The Music Critic Formally Known As "Pico," Victor's incoherency in tastes probably makes him the world's only person to equally enthuse over Peter Brötzmann and Gino Vannelli.

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**Das:** I'm curious to find out whether any of these commenters actually listened t

**Sam:** Actually it'd be a lot harder to come up with 5 songs in which the Eagles D



**Mort Weiss:** James Mooney is the legendary creator, owner and chief engineer of the orig



**James Mooney:** I've been so fortunate to have recorded some of the best jazz players in th

**Mark Saleski:** starting with rock critic, most certainly. then there's troll at a rock cri

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