

MARIAN McPARTLAND  
*TWILIGHT WORLD*

On March 11, 2008, Concord Records will release *Twilight World*, by jazz legend Marian McPartland. Twenty-one albums in 29 years at one label is a feat unto itself – when combined with 29 years at the helm of *Marian McPartland's Piano Jazz*, the longest running cultural program on NPR, you are marking an extraordinary achievement in jazz history. This auspicious date precedes by nine days the 90<sup>th</sup> birthday of the incomparable pianist and award-winning radio host, whose legacy of achievement and advocacy on behalf of up-and-coming artists has long established her as an invaluable figure in modern culture.

Recorded with her longtime associates, bassist Gary Mazaroppi and drummer Glen Davis, *Twilight World* is a supreme addition to a catalog already rich with historically and musically significant recordings.

Mixing familiar standards and original material, *Twilight World* exemplifies the classic values of interpretive performance, in which McPartland demonstrates the elusive art of serving the song through improvisation with her unique combination of feeling, invention, and experience. Pianist and frequent *Piano Jazz* guest Bill Charlap has said that, “MM is a harmonic genius. Her singular musical voice encompasses the past, present and future of jazz.” Her facile touch is present throughout this sumptuous ballad-centric program.

Marian’s story as a jazz icon dates back more than six decades, when the English-born pianist began playing in USO shows during World War II where she met her husband-to-be, renowned cornetist Jimmy McPartland who brought her to America and introduced her to jazz audiences. Since 1952, when she launched her eight-year residency at the Hickory House in New York, she has been one of the most beloved and admired figures in jazz, whose style draws from the best work of her forebears as well as those who followed in her creative footsteps. As an educator and talent scout through her work on NPR as well as with Eastman College of Music and clinics worldwide, Marian has long been one of the primary jazz ambassadors for generations of budding musicians and enthusiastic fans of the music.

From her first recordings as a leader in 1951 through *Twilight World*, McPartland has earned the respect of peers, critics, and fans, a reputation she has enhanced not only through concert appearances around the world but also through her celebrated radio series. After nearly 30 years on the air, *Marian McPartland's Piano Jazz* is NPR’s longest-running cultural program as well as an invaluable vehicle for introducing great music and its practitioners to millions of listeners.

McPartland’s spirit of service to her colleagues and to the music they love is evident throughout *Twilight World*. The songs were selected by all three members of the trio, based on their commitment to excellence in composition as well as performance. “I’ve always chosen

tunes that have great melodies rather than those that have only ‘blowing changes,’” McPartland explains. “I’ve always wanted to play what I’ve called ‘real tunes,’ especially when I’m working with musicians like Gary and Glen. They’re very intuitive. They know all the tunes. And besides that, they’re both great guys. We have a lot of fun when we’re playing together.”

The communication shared by the trio is evident whether they’re exploring free moments in Ornette Coleman’s “Turnaround,” finding new perspectives on Bill Evans’ “Blue in Green,” or painting an elegant picture with some of McPartland’s own compositions, including “Twilight World,” “Stranger in a Dream,” and “In the Days of Our Love.” But a more personal side emerges on two tracks that the pianist elects to play on her own: “Alfie” and “Blackberry Winter.”

“I love ‘Alfie,’ both the tune and the original movie,” McPartland says. “Burt Bacharach is a friend of mine, so I wanted to play at least one of his tunes, and this one I’ve always liked a lot.” Long a cohort and a favorite interpreter of some of the greatest tunesmiths of our time, Marian returns the favor by keeping their compositions alive and in the public’s ear where they belong. From her vast store of great melodies, she pulled some of her favorites for the new CD and makes them her own. “‘Blackberry Winter’ is one of the last tunes that Alec Wilder wrote (in 1976, with Loonis McGlohon). I just love that piece.”

A winner of multiple honors and accolades, including the Peabody, Grammy Trustees, ASCAP Deems Taylor, and *Down Beat* Lifetime Achievement Awards, designated an “American Jazz Master” by the National Education Association and a member of the National Radio Hall of Fame, McPartland will observe her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday during a week-long engagement at Dizzy’s Club Coca-Cola in the luxurious confines of Jazz @ Lincoln Center in New York City, at which an all-star lineup of friends and colleagues will sit in with the group and join the festivities.

Additionally, NPR continues to air new episodes of *Marian McPartland’s Piano Jazz*, nearing the 700<sup>th</sup> installment of the show. While most of the programs are culled from studio sessions produced by Shari Hutchinson of SCETV, Marian and the production crew make a yearly pilgrimage to the Tanglewood Jazz Festival where she records a live *Piano Jazz* each Labor Day weekend. She’ll welcome a star-studded line-up at this year’s concert for another celebratory broadcast.

Even with “business as usual” continuing, *Twilight World* stands out as another milestone in McPartland’s legendary and ongoing career. “I’m so happy to have done this album,” she says. “It’s nice to have something you’re this happy with at this stage of life.”

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