

SAM KIRMAYER

Long Bio

Sam Kirmayer is a guitarist and composer who plays straight-ahead jazz with “fearlessness and momentum” – Katie Malloch (CBC Jazz Beat & Tonic). One of CBC Music’s picks for the “35 Best Canadian Jazz Musicians Under 35”, he has performed with some of Canada’s finest musicians including André White, Joel Miller, Mike Rud and Kevin Dean, who has praised him for his “excellence, honesty and power of emotion.”

Born and raised in Montreal, Sam began playing guitar in garage rock bands and by the age of 12, was performing regularly around the city. Sam’s uncle, a jazz drummer and his father, an avid jazz fan, turned him on to the music of Coltrane and Monk but it wasn’t until he started studying music at Vanier College in 2009 that he considered the guitar’s potential as a jazz instrument. After discovering the music of Wes Montgomery, Sam quit the rock band he was playing in and devoted himself to the study of the jazz tradition.

After finishing the music program at Vanier College where he received the Oliver Jones Jazz Scholarship (awarded to one graduating student each year), Kirmayer enrolled in the Jazz Performance program at McGill University’s Schulich School of Music. While at McGill, he had the opportunity to study with Canadian jazz luminaries like Kevin Dean, André White and was awarded the David Moyses Guitar Scholarship. He graduated in 2016 on the Dean’s Honour List and was recognized for Outstanding Achievement in Jazz Guitar.

Shortly after graduating, Sam received funding through Quebec’s Young Volunteers Program and FACTOR’s Artist Development Program to record his debut album, *Opening Statement* (Chromatic Audio, 2017). The album, which features New York based pianist Sean Fyfe and Montreal stalwarts bassist Mike De Masi and drummer Dave Laing, was released to good reviews including 4 stars from *All About Jazz*, who called the album “strong-minded, well-spoken and worth relishing many more times than once.” In her liner notes, Katie Malloch noted that “Sam’s dexterity, his love for the richness of jazz and his sheer joy at making music are all over this, his first CD ... it’s a great introduction to Sam’s solid sense of swing ... get ready to groove!”

Opening Statement went on to receive the 2017 “Julian Award of Excellence for Emerging Canadian Jazz Musicians” from Simon Fraser University’s CJSF 90.1FM. Following up on this win, Sam took his quartet on a tour of Western Canada in the spring of 2018.

Kirmayer’s sophomore album, *High and Low*, recorded in 2017 with the help of a grant from the Canada Council for the Arts, is set for a fall 2018 release on Cellar Live. Featuring acclaimed New York based organist Ben Paterson, with Dave Laing returning on drums, *High and Low* “casts his warm tone and lyrical focus in a different setting...a shining example of jazz erudition and maturity that outstrip his years” – Peter Hum, *Ottawa Citizen Jazz Critic* (from liner notes).

In the meantime, Sam maintains an active performance schedule with frequent appearances throughout Quebec and Ontario as both a leader and sideman and several residencies in Montreal. He is also the founder and host of a weekly jam session in his neighbourhood, Saint-Henri (birthplace of Oscar Peterson). The session has now been running for over two years and has become a celebrated addition to the city’s jazz scene.