

Hejira ~ celebrating Joni Mitchell

“The UK’s best and most convincing take on Joni Mitchell” ~ **The Guardian**

Hejira is a formidable, highly successful 7-piece touring band, set up in 2023 to celebrate the ‘greatest songs’ of **Joni Mitchell**. In particular, the band performs bandleader Pete Oxley’s arrangements of the masterpiece works that Mitchell recorded from ‘**Court & Spark**’ to ‘**Wild Things Run Fast**’; expect to hear such classics as ‘**Amelia**’, ‘**Help Me**’, ‘**Hejira**’, ‘**Song For Sharon**’, ‘**Don’t Interrupt the Sorrow**’, ‘**Free Man In Paris**’, ‘**Coyote**’ ‘**Hissing of Summer Lawns**’ etc..

The band has produced 10 high-quality videos for Youtube, amassing many more than 1,500,000 views and garnering thousands of glowing comments.

They have, in their short history, played more than 140 shows in the UK and Ireland, including headline features at **The EFG London Jazz Festival**; **Musicport World-Music Festival**; **Brecon Jazz Festival**; **Mosely Folk Festival**; **Lincoln Jazz Festival**; **Scarborough Jazz Festival**; **Oxford Festival of the Arts**; **Salisbury International Arts Festival**; **Buxton International Festival**.

They have just embarked on their first tour of the USA., the anchor shows being a headline fixture at the **40th Syracuse Jazz Festival** (NY) and a show at the world-famous **Iridium** club in NYC. They performed 9 concerts in the north-east across 5 states, between the 7th and 17th July, 2026. Founder and director of the Syracuse Jazz Festival, **Frank Malfitano**, wrote of the band, following their show:

"Hejira is an extraordinary ensemble of jazz virtuosos hailing from the UK, and without hesitation one of the finest groups we've ever presented in our festival's 40-year history. Their musical homage to Joni Mitchell is stunningly beautiful and a wonderfully-executed project for the ages that magically recreates the artistry and excellence one of the finest groups in the history of American jazz. While the group displays enormous respect for the collective work of Joni, Jaco, Michael, Lyle, Pat and Don, Hejira brings their own unique talents to Joni's unparalleled compositions and in my estimation they go the Shadows & Light band one better. In reflecting back on their incredible performance at Jazz Fest this past weekend, it has been such an incredible honor to have them on the Syracuse International Jazz Fest stage. Our only hope is that we haven't seen the last of them and that they'll return soon."

Hejira’s 2024 album, ‘**Live @ the Cockpit**’ has received much critical acclaim; for example:

“Hattie Whitehead’s voice is spine-shiveringly like Mitchell’s, and just as full of delicacy, emotion and intelligence.... They are a formidably tight unit, imparting a practised smoothness to the performances. The recording is of optimal quality for a live album too” ~ Jazzwise,

August 2024

or this:

*“...buy this album, and if you get the chance, see them live in concert – just remember to book early. **This is most definitely an album of the year for me**” ~ **Jazz Views**, July 2024*

World-renowned musicologist and critic, **Ted Gioia** recently included Hejira in his list, ‘My Favourite Videos on YouTube’.

Musician and drummer extraordinaire (of Yes, King Crimson, Genesis etc.) **Bill Bruford**, wrote of the band:

“If you’re looking for a great evening with the music of Joni Mitchell, Hejira is a top-drawer band... Run, don’t walk, for tickets.”

UK’s No. 1 guitar supremo, **John Etheridge** (of Soft Machine, Stephane Grappelli, Andy Summers etc.) wrote:

“I was mesmerized by this interpretation of the great music of the legendary Joni Mitchell with the sensational vocals of Hattie Whitehead and illustrious band led by Pete Oxley”

The band comprises:

Hattie Whitehead ~ vocals & guitars
Ollie Weston ~ tenor & soprano saxophones, bass clarinet
Chris Eldred ~ keyboards
Pete Oxley ~ guitar
Dave Jones ~ fretted & fretless basses
Rick Finlay ~ drums
Marc Cecil ~ percussion

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Hejira will be touring extensively throughout the UK in 2026 and 2027, following on from their debut tour of the North-East of the USA, performing a selection of what the band feels are Mitchell’s most major works. The selected songs are beautiful, exciting and, as always with Joni, totally touching in the poignancy of the lyrics.

As it will be the 50th anniversary of Joni Mitchell’s stunning album, ‘Hejira’ (released on the 21st November 1976), we feel that there couldn’t be a better time for celebrating the major works of, arguably, the greatest singer-songwriter of the 20th century.

For all the tour details, please visit: www.hejira.co.uk

Personnel

Hattie Whitehead: vocals and guitars

The band is fronted by the extraordinarily talented Hattie Whitehead, who not only sings masterfully with Joni's pitch-accuracy, poise, and dignity, but she also plays guitar much with the mannerisms of Mitchell (incorporating various open tunings - which lend an instant authenticity to the colour of the songs). Hattie grew up surrounded by music and musicians - her father is the outstanding saxophonist, Tim Whitehead - and has a career as a singer/songwriter outside of this band. In 2016, she won the 'Emerging Talent' competition at the world-famous Glastonbury Festival. Her original songs have been listened to hundreds of thousands of times on various streaming platforms.

Pete Oxley: guitar

Pete grew up in a family of classical musicians, fell for jazz in his late teens, went on to study jazz at the Leeds College of Music, then moved to Paris in his mid twenties. It was there that he began gigging intensively and developing his career as a guitarist, composer and bandleader. He has produced 16 albums of critically acclaimed original music (including 7 with the Swiss guitar virtuoso, Nicolas Meier) and is one of only a handful of British composers to have their works included in the 'European Real Book' (Sher Publications). The Oxley-Meier Guitar Project continues to record and tour extensively throughout the UK and Europe.

Ollie Weston: saxophones

Since graduating from Leeds College of Music, Ollie has had a diverse career which has included education, session work and live performance. In the former of these, Ollie teaches at the Guildhall (London) and has major tutorial books published by Schott Music under the heading, 'Exploring Jazz'. In the latter, Ollie has toured all over the world with such outfits as Amy Winehouse, Tim Minchin, Bonobo and the Nelson Riddle Orchestra. He has also worked extensively in the West End, performing in Chicago, Dream Girls and in two critically acclaimed seasons at Shakespeare's Globe Theatre.

Chris Eldred: piano and keyboards

Chris first came to prominence while playing in the National Youth Jazz Orchestra (NYJO), from 2008 to 2014. In the midst of that period, he was winner of the 2011 Yamaha Scholarship Award for Outstanding Jazz Musicians and graduated in the same year from Trinity College of Music with first class honours. With NYJO, he performed many high-profile gigs (such as at the Albert Hall Proms) and came to the attention of such established masters as Mark Lockheart,

Jean Toussaint and Salena Jones, with whom he subsequently worked. He is now a regular performer at Ronnie Scott's and is one of London's most in-demand pianists.

Dave Jones: electric basses

Dave is one of the most brilliant bass players - on both electric and acoustic basses that the UK has produced! His deep musicianship has led him to work with, amongst others, John Etheridge, Bill Bruford, the BBC Big Band, Jacqui Dankworth, Willard White and Scott Hamilton. He is bandleader, arranger and composer of the 'Dave Jones Nonet', comprising the *creme de la creme* of UK jazz musicians. Dave is continually active in jazz education leading many courses at Richmond Jazz School where he also previously led the faculty and he is also regularly invited to teach on a number of international jazz summer schools.

Rick Finlay: drums

Rick's career has seen him being perpetually occupied, dividing his time between London's West End, education and performing as a jazz musician. In the former, Rick held the drum chair at Blood Brothers for twenty years and also played for The Little Shop of Horrors and Chess Time. As a freelancer, Rick has performed on many prestigious TV shows, including Parkinson, Ant & Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway and The Late Show. Rick has, for several years, been hosting the 'Just East Jazz Club' in North London, where he has accompanied most of the UK's jazz glitterati!

Marc Cecil: percussion

Marc Cecil is a musician whose career has seen him work in myriad styles, performing at all sorts of premier venues, such as The Royal Opera House, Wembley Arena, The 02, Glastonbury Festival, The Jazz Cafe - Camden and Ronnie Scott's. He was a member of "King Salsa", the UK's premier 12 piece salsa band for 17 years. His extensive theatre work includes seasons with: Blood Brothers (west end), Billy Elliot (west end), Saturday Night Fever (west end), Footloose (tour), Streisand The Story (tour), The Chicago Blues Brothers (tour), Million Dollar Quartet (west end) and The Carpenter's Story (tour).

In the jazz arena, Marc has worked with a 'who's who' of top UK musicians, including: Jason Rebello, Neil Angilly, Nigel Price, Art Themen, Jim Mullen, Picante, Jacqui Hicks, Noel McCalla, Liane Carol, Lily Dior, Geoff Gascoyne, Laurence Cottle, Alan Barns, Henry Lowther, and the Derek Nash Quartet.

Marc's extraordinary drive, groove and use of sonic colours is an essential element of the whole Hejira soundscape

