

Jazz guitar legend on rare visit

By

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Arts Correspondent

SAXOPHONIST Julian Argüelles last visited Inverness in 2006 with his Edinburgh-based trio, but his return visit early next month will also feature one of the great names of contemporary American jazz, guitarist John Abercrombie.

The guitarist's many recordings on the Munich-based ECM Records have made his work familiar to jazz fans everywhere, but his visits to Scotland have been very rare. That makes an already fascinating collaboration all the more appealing to anyone with an interest in modern jazz.

Argüelles is originally from Birmingham, but has been resident in East Lothian since moving there to join his partner, singer Cathie Rae, five years ago.

This tour is part of the Scottish Arts Council's Tune Up programme and will also feature another two highly regarded American musicians, bass player Michael Formanek and drummer Tom Rainey.

It is a prospect that the saxophonist is anticipating with relish.

"My main aim for the tour is to make some great music that the audiences will really enjoy," he said.

"I don't want them to listen passively — I want them to feel something quite strong.

"I've played with John before in other settings, but I've never worked with him on my own stuff, so it's very exciting to have him involved. He's from a slightly different generation than me and I grew up listening to him right from the time I first began to get interested in jazz as a teenager. He's an amazing player and a bit of a hero of mine, so it will be a pleasure to play with him."

Abercrombie has also played with Formanek and Rainey in

the past. The saxophonist admits that he was drawn to the fact that the guitarist is such a distinctive player.

"John is an original, he sounds like no one else and is instantly recognisable," Argüelles insisted.

"That's the thing that appeals to me most about any musician I work with. It's not matter of a particular style. What I look for primarily is a musician who has his or her own voice.

"I was also aware that John is an 'open' sort of player, and so are Tom and Michael. I think they all feel comfortable playing in different vibes, whether it be complicated harmonic stuff, free improvisation, grooves, or pretty much anything in fact.

"I like these different colours in music — I don't think of it as an eclectic approach, just colourful. People sometimes wonder how to categorise my music, but what I do is based on jazz tradition. I grew up on John Coltrane and Sonny Rollins, so what I do comes from a place that everyone is quite familiar with."

The saxophonist has been spending time in New York ahead of the tour in early May working on new material for the quartet to play. He plans to adapt some of the trio's existing material to accommodate the guitarist's input, but has also been developing some new material for the tour.

"I've written some new music with John in mind and I still have a few extra things I'm hoping to write before we get under way. Because of all the wonderful recordings he's made over the years I know his 'sound' pretty well, and I've tried to write stuff that he will feel comfortable playing.

"It's been going well so far — we rehearsed a bit at John's house in upstate New York and it was a lot of fun."

● **The Julian Argüelles Trio with John Abercrombie play at the OneTouch Theatre in Eden Court on Wednesday 6th May.**

