

Joey Alexander: Countdown review – 13-year-old prodigy has an old jazz soul

By John Fordham / November 10, 2016

Joey Alexander, the Herbie Hancock-inspired 13-year-old [piano prodigy from Bali](#), taught himself by listening to jazz albums with his dad, and made his recording debut aged 11. He plays the opening night of the [London jazz festival this Friday](#), and his classic jazz enthusiasms are reflected in this album's tracklist, which includes the John Coltrane title tune, Thelonious Monk's Criss Cross, Billy Strayhorn's Chelsea Bridge, and Hancock's Maiden Voyage (with the formidable [Chris Potter](#) guesting on soprano sax), as well as three generic but well-crafted originals.

Alexander handles the fast bass-walking title track ([Larry Grenadier](#) is the A-list bassist) with a sleek and silky aplomb and a precociously free imagination in the unaccompanied section, and Maiden Voyage is a strikingly radical reappraisal built around nimble call-and-response between him and Potter. The young star is similarly imaginative in his reworking of Criss Cross, without losing Monk's bumpy rhythmic sense, and Chelsea Bridge is thoughtfully paced and full of glowing, casually scattered embroidery. The genre may be conventional, but this is the performance of an old soul, not just a quick-fingered one.

<https://www.theguardian.com/music/2016/nov/10/joey-alexander-countdown-review-old-jazz-soul-aged-14>