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# Music

## Feldman shares his stash

Jazz Renaissance man brings his show to Augusta — somewhere, Miles smiles | Andy Stokes

Mitchell Feldman’s Summerville home resembles most of the other well-kept houses that overlook the rest of Augusta. There’s a Sardinian flag flying out front (a souvenir from Feldman’s time on the Mediterranean island) but it’s not until you see the inside of the house that his real obsession comes into view.

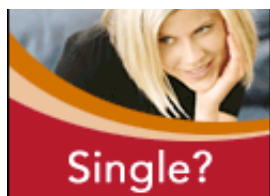
In the dining room rests a large, tin sign advertising “Jazz Feeds,” an Athens-based company that made chicken feed under the auspice that it might turn your barnyard into an all-out jam session. Moving into the back room of the house, you see where Feldman’s life as a jazz Renaissance man is now conducted.

On one side of the room, there’s a wall of CDs, entire discographies of performers Feldman refers to as “the gods” — Monk, Mingus, Miles, Coltrane, Bird — mortared with scores of discs by those whose jazz innovations haven’t been quite as geologic. On another wall, there’s a group of framed posters for “jazz orgies,” decades-ago radio sessions that would focus on one artist for days without break.

Opposite this wall is the office for Mitchell Feldman Associates (MFA), a busy desk where Feldman stays up late and gets up early conducting the business of promoting current jazz artists and labels — getting them on mainstream and college radio, getting them in the press. Tacked on the wall just behind his computer monitor is a Nietzsche quote that seems to sum up the room, as well as his life: “Without music, life would be a mistake.”

## Straight, no chaser (or smooth jazz)

Feldman is strong evidence that jazz aficionados tend to take their obsessions much more seriously than most other music fans. This Saturday at midnight, he’ll be taking that obsession public before a



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Georgia audience when he debuts “Jazz Without Borders.” The three-hour program will be a sampling of his current jazz tastes, which at any given moment could dip into the bebop and free jazz eras (the aforementioned gods and their contemporaries, like Bud Powell and Coleman Hawkins), ’70s era jazz-rock fusion (electric Miles, Mahavishnu Orchestra, Weather Report), younger jazz musicians of present day (Joshua Redman, Brad Mehldau) and the Bonnaroo set (John Scofield, Medeski Martin and Wood, Soulive). It seems that anything from the last half-century is fair game — well, almost.

“Except no smooth jazz,” Feldman states firmly. “I mean, Kenny G is a genius. He’s a good player. He’s a phenomenal businessman. He’s set for life. His kids are set for life. But his music is fuzak. For me, music is not really in the background.”

Feldman also states that vocal jazz, especially the current stuff, will be heard at a minimum on his show. Both vocal and smooth jazz rarely lead the listener to other forms, and opening the listener up to jazz’s interconnectivity one of the prime reasons Feldman will be doing the show.

“I’m hoping to catch people from my generation whose tastes did grow over time and are open to new forms of music,” says Feldman. “One of the reasons I’ll be playing The Bad Plus or I’ll be playing Soulive or Medeski Martin and Wood is because I want to be able to draw in people who like those bands, just like I discovered Charlie Parker by listening to electric Miles and Weather Report.”

### **Between the notes**

Just down from the framed picture personally autographed by Miles Davis from the time in 1981 when Feldman got to hang with the late trumpeter, there is another quote that has incredible relevance to Feldman’s life: “The real music is between the notes,” by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.

Feldman may not have musical credits on any of the albums he owns, but he’s been between the notes, in one way or another, since the mid-’70s.

After graduating from the University of Pennsylvania with a degree in cultural anthropology, he finished grad school at the University of Georgia’s Grady College of Journalism. He had a well-defined sense of purpose. His thesis paper, which he still has a copy of, was “Impressions at Newport: A Content Analysis of the Coverage of an American Jazz Festival in Six Publications Between 1954 and 1978.”

While in Athens, Feldman broke considerable ground for the town’s music scene. He booked the Art Ensemble of Chicago at the Georgia

Theatre in the group's first Southern jaunt, then crossed genres to book what was, to the best of his knowledge, the first gig for which the B-52's were ever paid.

"They were a bunch of art students that got together for somebody's birthday party," says Feldman, who was managing Tyrone's, an Athens bar. "Monday night was open, so I gave them the door."

After working in Athens' print media (The Athens Observer, which later became the Flagpole) and radio (WUOG), Feldman went an hour north and worked as a journalist in Atlanta until 1985. He spent the rest of the '80s in Germany, covering the scene from a journalistic viewpoint while running the CMP jazz record label.

Feldman got into publicizing jazz over the next seven years, after he moved from Germany to New York City. Following that stint, it was back to Europe, this time Italy (that's where the Sardinian flag came from), covering jazz for Down Beat again. In 2004, he made the move to Denver, where he hosted "Friday Night Jazz" on KUVO (the country's No. 1 major market jazz station), among other gigs.

Simply stated, he's been everywhere, man. And all this experience translates directly into a passion that seems to be just as charged today as it was decades ago.

Now, in addition to the constant promoting of artists and labels through MFA, the countless hours spent listening to new artists — and revisiting the classics — Feldman has the "Jazz Without Borders" show, just one more outlet to devote to that passion.

"I think you would find that your average jazz disc jockey is just as passionate as I am," says Feldman. "It just comes down to taste. A lot of people just program what they fell in love with in their late teens and early '20s when they were first turned on to music. If I did that, all you'd be hearing would be Return to Forever and Mahavishnu Orchestra and Weather Report, which I love — but I've moved on, and the music's moved on."

*Jazz Without Borders, hosted and produced by Mitchell Feldman, debuts throughout Georgia this Saturday at midnight and continues until 3 a.m. on WAGC, 90.7 FM in the Augusta area.*

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