

Marko Djordjevic

Yugoslav Folk & Fusion

Marko Djordjevic brought the crowd to life at the JohnnyraBB NAMM concert/party last summer in Nashville. The Yugoslavian-born player won over the drum enthusiasts with his mix of impressive chops, quick thinking, and sheer joy of playing. It was clear to all in attendance that this guy is going to be a drumming star.

Djordjevic began studying with Miroslav Karlovic at an institute for adult learning in Belgrade at the age of twelve. He was also influenced by some of the older students there, who, surprisingly, were into some of the same artists that students in the West are. "The first solo I ever learned was Steve Gadd's 'Nite Sprite,' from Chick Corea's *Leprechaun* record," Marko says. "They also got me into the Mahavishnu Orchestra and Return To Forever. I was soaking up all of that stuff and trying to catch up to them."

An American drummer performing in Belgrade, David Moss, pointed Djordjevic towards the Berklee School of Music. Once he finished his studies in Belgrade, Marko decided to audition for the famed US music school. The young drummer so impressed the Berklee top brass that they gave him a full scholarship.

At Berklee, Djordjevic started Sveti, an instrumental group that blends Eastern European folk melodies and rhythms with hard-edged funk and fusion rhythms. They recorded their first CD in 1995, and the group has continued with a somewhat shifting lineup. "The latest incarnation is special," Djordjevic says. "The musicians playing in Sveti right now are not only young and enthusiastic, they're also seasoned because of all of the great work they've done."

Last summer Djordjevic toured Europe with Jonah Smith and recorded the second Sveti CD, this one featuring rising-star bassist Matt Garrison. "This music best represents me as a musician and performer," Marko admits, "especially the concept of taking my Yugoslav roots of traditional music and using them as a basis for composition and drumming. I think that's the mystery ingredient in my playing." Djordjevic has also been busy lately recording with Chris McDermott, Bree Sharp, Billy Voss, Amit Heri, and others, and he teaches at the Long Island Drum School.

"My interests are wide and varied," Marko says. "It's working out that I'll get called to play a hard-rock gig and a free-jazz gig in the same week, which I love. There's so much to be thankful for, especially when it comes to two things in my life—music and people. That's what it all revolves around."

Robin Tolleson

