

medeski, martin & wood

by Krister Tidics
The Memorial Union Terrace, August 1996

"Hey, watch out for a second, man." - I jumped over another road-hippie and pulled myself up next to the railing, leaning over the back of the stage, just behind the drum set. At least 2 or 3 thousand curious Phish fans on their way to Alpine Valley had shown up on this marvelous evening, trampling through in Volkswagens and crowding the parking lots. Nobody wants to miss a free show, especially if it's outside, on the Memorial Union Terrace. I guess word was out at the Phish show in Red Rocks (Colorado), just days ago. The Terrace has never seen this many long-hairs. Now I don't even bother trying to get around front.



Nice set, Billy.



Billy Martin, the drummer for Medeski, Martin and Wood, seemed a bit startled that I knew his name. I tucked my feet under the railing and leaned over a little further to shake his hand, he said "thank you." He was wearing a bone and ivory choker, and a light linen shirt, he was blonde and tan and quite friendly. I imagined him right off the boat from Senegal, like he just bought his pair of caixixi before the gig at the market in Dakar. I looked past him.

--Hey John, can I ask you a question?

I leaned along the back of the stage, and caught his gaze as he was making his way back behind his rig, to pack up.

--Sure.

--I just bought a Hohner D6, like you have, and I was wondering if you've ever had to service it? and if so, where?

Was I asking too many questions?

I smiled.



John Medeski might have remembered when he and I met, at the ill-fated Club de Wash (the one that burnt down, here in Madison), a little over half a year ago. I snuck backstage after their show (I was a regular), and found out that they had all met, at the New England Conservatory, studying under Bob Moses. They spoke of Bob Moses as a father and mentor and had apparently flourished beneath his wing. Thus was born Medeski, Martin and Wood -- out of the "post-Miles Davis" Northeast jazz circuit of Boston and New York.

They were as friendly then as they were now, only I don't think John Medeski remembered me, or the questions I was asking. I asked him about his Hammond B-3, last time.



--Yeah, I get it done in New York, mostly. And I know this guy in Atlanta. Numerous Complaints, it's called.

He waited for my next question. I was trying to explain why I'd heard that name before. It was at Otis's in Chicago, a little joint where I had opened for Agents of Good Roots, another band with a Rhodes player. I had asked Andy, their keyboard player where he got his Rhodes fixed, and he said the same place, Numerous Complaints.

--Do you know that band, Agents of Good Roots?

John Medeski smiled.

--I'm the guy who gave him that number.

Medeski, Martin & Wood is a true jazz trio in the way that they do SO VERY MUCH with relatively little. Their arrangements are amazing, as they throw melodies around violently... Medeski plays the clav with his palm more than his fingers and I swear he punches chords with his elbows in almost every song. He is a true sound sculptor and the loudest, toughest, meanest player you'll ever be lucky enough to hear. As a keyboardist, John Medeski is the most relevant fresh player alive today, in my book. He's giving jazz back to the electric piano and the clavinet, back to the B3.



John Medeski Plays: Fall of 95 -

A Rhodes electric piano

A Hohner D6 clavinet

A Hammond B3 with Leslie cabinet (although he used to play a KORG BX-3)

A Wurlitzer 140 electric piano

Summer of 96 -

A Hohner D6 Clavinet and a Hohner Pianet

A Yamaha CS-01

A Hammond B3 with Leslie cabinet

A Wurlitzer 140 electric piano