

Nashville Scene

Jason Crane, popular *Jazz Session* host, makes his first Nashville stop Sunday

by RON WYNN

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Since 2007, broadcaster, poet and musician Jason Crane has interviewed some 380 luminaries for his popular online program *The Jazz Session*. But Crane has now truly taken his show on the road. The "Jazz or Bust" tour began the first of June, when Crane left Brooklyn, and it continues indefinitely. The tour makes a Nashville stop 4 p.m. Sunday with Crane doing a poetry reading at the Nashville Jazz Workshop. He'll also be interviewing several Nashville players, among them Evan Cobb and Jeff Coffin, during his four-day visit for future editions of *The Jazz Session*.

"It's my first trip to Nashville, so I'm very excited about coming to a city with such a reputation for great musicians," Crane said Thursday in a phone interview. "I certainly want to see some local jazz and blues performances, and hear some of the really good country players while I'm here." Nashville is the seventh stop on the tour, which Crane launched due to rather non-musical reasons.

"I had always thought about doing this type of thing, then I got a notice I had to move out of my apartment in a few weeks," Crane said. "So I decided, hey, if you're going to be homeless, why not be homeless on the road and get the chance to talk with great musicians as well?" He raised \$1,200 for the tour online in a week and purchased two Greyhound bus passes. He also booked more than two dozen interviews in cities and towns from New York to New Orleans.

He's already visited Delaware, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Maryland and Virginia. After Nashville, he'll head to Knoxville. From there, Crane's schedule includes stops in North Carolina, Georgia, Florida and Alabama before the first portion concludes in New Orleans. Later he'll visit the Southwest and West Coast. Eventually he'll also venture into Canada, then return to the Midwest. Crane cites a West Virginia interlude as his most memorable thus far.

"I got to visit the home of a minimalist composer who's also a builder and very much into the environment and natural resources," Crane said. "I'm sitting there drinking homemade beer and watching him play washtub bass. I don't think that's something I would see in Brooklyn. I also got to hear an excellent musician in Virginia, John D'earth. I'm discovering there are world-class players everywhere, many of them living and working in places you wouldn't expect.

"I'm getting to see the country and discover top talent, and that's not an experience that carries a price tag."

Crane's background in broadcasting dates back to the early '90s. At one point he ran a jazz station in upstate New York. *The Jazz Session* has gotten raves from *Jazz Times* magazine and NPR, and Crane says the show's been downloaded more than 2 million times. He's kept all 380 episodes available for anyone to access at thejazzsession.com.

His first poetry collection, *Unexpected Sunlight*, was published by the independent New York Foothills Publishing in 2010. He's also contributed to such publications as *Blue Collar Review*, *Poets for Living Waters* and *Meat For Tea*.

"I wanted to see if there was something that paid less than a jazz saxophonist or jazz broadcasting, so I decided on poetry," Crane jokes. "But there's a long tradition of interaction between these two communities, and you've got people like Jack Kerouac and Amiri Baraka who've been very involved in jazz. I guess I enjoy being part of both worlds."

Still, it's his informative and intense twice-weekly conversations on *The Jazz Session* that fuel the tour and Crane's work.

"I've had people say to me what's the big deal about interviewing jazz musicians," Crane concludes. "They put their pants on everyday just like everyone else. I tell them yes, that's true, and when they finish they have more amazing things to say about music and creativity than anybody around. I always get excited when it's time to do an interview. When I no longer get excited about it, then that's when I'll stop doing the show."

Jason Crane will read his poetry 4 p.m. Sunday at the Nashville Jazz Workshop, 1319 Adams St.



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