



## Take Five With Gwilym Simcock

By [AAJ Staff](#)

### Meet Gwilym Simcock:

I started the piano at the age of three, and since then all I've ever wanted to do is make music. My father taught me from a very early age, and then I attended the junior department of Trinity College of Music in London and then Chetham's School of Music for 9 years. During that time studying as a classical musician I was introduced to Jazz and became instantly hooked after hearing some [Keith Jarrett](#) and [Pat Metheny](#), and ever since then the area of music involving both jazz and classical music has been what really interests me. I went to the Royal Academy of Music and gained a jazz degree there and I'm now very fortunate to tour around the UK and the world making music with my best friends.

### Instrument(s):

Piano, French Horn.

### Teachers and/or influences?

[Steve Berry](#), [Les Chisnall](#), Nick Weldon, Nikki Isles, [John Taylor](#), [Geoffrey Keezer](#).

### I knew I wanted to be a musician when...

I started hitting a piano at the age of three.

### Your sound and approach to music:

I am a huge lover of the emotional power of harmony, and that is at the very centre of what my musical direction is about, and as I get older having a strong melodic thrust to the music becomes more and more important to me. Basically tugging at the listeners' emotions is what is important to me about music, whether it makes you laugh, cry, dance... Music should never come from a purely academic root.

### Your teaching approach:

I'm a great believer in focusing on the boring technical work in practice time, so that when you're on stage nothing hinders the process of creating music in your head and physically letting it out through your fingers. Also never forgetting that *listening* is the most important element of our music, no matter what stage we are at, along the learning curve.

### Your dream band:

Well I'm very fortunate to work with some truly amazing musicians in the groups that I'm in. Outside of that there are so many people that it would be great to play with one day. I guess Metheny and [John Scofield](#) would be great fun for starters. I once had the chance to tour (on French Horn) with [Michael Brecker](#). Unfortunately the dates didn't work out, and I'll always regret not having the opportunity to meet and work with him.

### Road story: Your best or worst experience:

Cutting a finger whilst playing percussively inside a very expensive piano (with my eyes shut) and bleeding all over the sound board before I noticed. The biggest experience I've ever had of that horrible feeling you get in your stomach when you've done something wrong.

### Favorite venue:

The Royal Albert Hall in London (where I performed in the BBC Proms in 2008) and the KoIn Philharmonie are both staggering buildings to play in. I also have toured several times around various Cathedrals, Abbeys and other sacred spaces with the group Acoustic Triangle, and they are always really special and inspiring places to make music.

### Your favorite recording in your discography and why?

Aside from my own albums that I'm very proud of, and album called *Heartluggage*, by the fantastic saxophonist [Klaus Gesing](#). I'd never met him before the session, or the bassist [Yuri Goloubev](#) (who has become a musical brother to me and plays in my trio) and, with the wonderful [Asaf Sirkis](#) on drums, it was a wonderful combination of guys to play with and in an amazing studio in Italy. A great privilege to be part of the album.

### The first Jazz album I bought was:

I can't remember. The first jazz I heard was on a cassette made for me by Steve Berry, the great English bassist and educator. The first tracks were "Questar," off *My Song*, by Jarrett, and "Phase Dance" and "Straight on Red," off *Travels*, by Pat Metheny. Those pieces were so amazingly inspiring and set me off on the road towards becoming a jazz musician.

### What do you think is the most important thing you are contributing musically?

I guess all that any of us are trying to do is find our own voice and focus in on that. For me the area of music that involves jazz and classical is where it's at for me, and all I can do is to try and write and perform music that I feel will hopefully engage and move people who hear it. I feel that music should primarily be emotionally powerful and that is something that is always at the very root of the music I make.

### Did you know...

I'm a very big Stoke City supporter and season ticket holder.

### CDs you are listening to now:

I've been very busy these last few months recording and mixing new music, so I try to get away from jazz for my recreational listening. Any [Steely Dan](#), Earth Wind and Fire, anything funky will do the trick. On the classical side I'm very much into the music of Henri Dutilleux, especially his larger orchestral works

**Desert Island picks:**

[Jaco Pastorius](#), *Word of Mouth*;  
Keith Jarrett, *My Song*;  
Pat Metheny, *Travels*;  
[Julian Arguelles](#), *Phaedrus*;  
[Iain Ballamy](#), *All Men Amen*.

**How would you describe the state of jazz today?**

I think jazz is in great shape today, in terms of the fact that there are so many young people out there getting involved in it. There is always a shortage of places to play as the number of musicians grow so addressing this is of paramount importance.

**What are some of the essential requirements to keep jazz alive and growing?**

I think that we have to be careful sometimes to make sure that what we do is for the benefit of the audience and not just for ourselves, as it is very difficult to entice new people into the music sometimes, especially when it is non vocal-led. Sometimes the word "jazz" can be our worst enemy, as it covers far too diverse a spectrum of music. All we can do individually I guess is tell our own stories and make sure we do that in as open and engaging way possible.

**What is in the near future?**

Well my double album, *Blues Vignette*, has just been released in the States, and I recently recorded a new solo CD for ACT which comes out in January, so I'll be travelling around the world making music both with my trio, with Yuri Goloubev on bass and James Maddren on drums, and solo. Also I'm involved with many different collaborations with different artists--musical and otherwise--so have a look at my website for all the details of what's going on.

**By Day:**

My day job is doing my accounts, sending emails, all the fun stuff. I also write a lot of music, sometimes for larger classical ensembles so that always takes up huge chunks of time. I do try and play football for a few different teams whenever possible so that's always a welcome relief. Oh, and sometimes I try to practice.

**If I weren't a jazz musician, I would be a:**

Footballer!

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