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Wynton Marsalis, musician

BY JACKIE COOPERMAN, PUBLISHED ON 03/30/2010

Wynton Marsalis, artistic director of Jazz at Lincoln Center and Pulitzer Prize-winning composer, spends half the year touring with the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra. "I'm more comfortable on the road than at home," says the energetic trumpeter. That may change in 2004 when Lincoln Center opens its \$128 million jazz hall at Columbus Circle. Until then, Marsalis, 41, keeps traveling, playing annually in Marciac (the 1,200-person Gascon town which built a statue to him in 1997) and points further afield. His latest album, *All Rise*, ranges from fugue to fiddler's reel, but Marsalis says he's not aiming for "a 'world-music' type of mélange. I only try to hear that they are the same."

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WHAT TURNS ME ON

- The incredible collection of Matisse in the Hermitage in St. Petersburg.
- In Madrid, the Prado's collections of Velázquez and Goya.

TOTALLY COOL

- Tango clubs like the Café Tortoni in Buenos Aires.
- Watching top martial-arts masters do an exhibition in the middle of the gardens surrounding Tokyo's Imperial Palace.

BEST ALL-NIGHTER IN A HOTEL

The last time I was at the Hotel Vier Jahreszeiten in Hamburg, I was up all night finishing a composition. The staff kept bringing food to my room until they finally said, "You know, there's a piano downstairs." So I went downstairs, played for them, and they cooked me a meal. At six in the morning, I finished and sent the final page to New York.

ON THE ROAD

I'm usually on a bus with the band doing crazy stuff: I read poetry, and William Butler Yeats is my favorite poet. I read books, sing a song, play my horn. I generally act the fool.

I CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT

My little Sony speakers and CD player. I can't listen to music on headphones.

IN MY TUBA CASE, I ALWAYS CARRY

- A letter that I was given years ago in Brazil, from a guy who had come from a small town and had traveled a long way to hear us play. It was so touching and poignant that I kept it until it was in tatters.
- A picture of a young musician in Holland and his note: "Mr. Marsalis, I like your music. I have two of your recordings. I tell my mother all the time that I'm going to play better than you one day."

RESTAURANT I LOVE

During the jazz festival in Vitoria, Spain, we always go to El Portalón. They have great shrimp and paella. It's a beautiful place with unbelievable service. Once, there was a wedding reception next to our room. We were singing, the wine was flowing, and cigars were pulled out. One or two people from the wedding came in and started dancing. Then the bride and groom and nearly the whole wedding party came in and started dancing. I played the piano and everyone started singing.

WHAT I'M READING NOW

Picasso's Mask and *Man's Fate* by André Malraux; also William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*, which I've read many times.

DIRTY LITTLE SECRET

My hotel room must have a good iron. I iron my clothes myself, and I don't travel with one. I don't need room service; I just need an iron.

WHAT I'VE LEARNED

- When you have the opportunity to meet people, you can't be shy. I'm not really a "glamour" person, but some people are really interesting: Writer Umberto Eco, for example, is very nice—down to earth and soulful.
- I never take pictures. I'm a big believer in living the moment.

- The ultimate achievement is not to eat in restaurants, but to be invited to a meal in someone's home.

MY NEXT TRIP

I haven't been to Africa, and there are lots of places there I'd like to go, like Ghana, the Ivory Coast, and South Africa.

I DON'T LEAVE HOME WITHOUT

- A music notebook. Over the years I've filled up 90-some notebooks during my travels.
- A stone from my great uncle, who was a stonecutter for New Orleans cemeteries. On it he wrote "don't be discourage"—not "discouraged"—"discourage." He was a country man.

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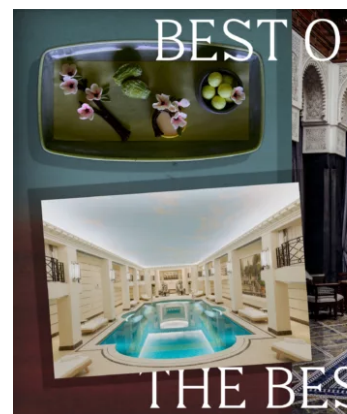
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