

[Ottawa Citizen](#)

Today is Monday December 29, 2008

[Good news and bad news \(including a show review\)](#)

By [phum](#) 11-15-2008 [Thriving on a riff](#)

Good news: saxophonist Mark Turner's surgery reportedly went well. The latest from pianist Aaron Parks, who has kept heartsick jazz fans up to date about Turner's tragic accident (he severely cut two fingers last week with a power saw) is [here](#). My favourite sentence in the report is "He has a good chance of an eventual full recovery."

Bad news: As reported in Saturday's *Citizen* by my prolific colleague Doug Fischer, City of Ottawa staff recommend that the Ottawa International Jazz Festival's \$110,000 grant for 2009 be cut. (Not that the jazzfest was singled out -- staff are recommending that all festivals lose their municipal funding.) As Doug relates [here](#), the events regard the municipal grants as the foundation for their larger fundraising, the initial money that allows them to lever support from other levels of government and sponsors. Some in the arts community fear that if the municipal funding is removed, the leverage will be gone and some funding set-ups will come crashing down like houses of cards. However, it ain't over till it's over. The proposed cuts must be approved by council during the budget process in December. For those who want to dissent and are also Facebookers, this [group](#) has been created.

Good news: Doug and I unwound after a busy Friday by catching pianist Chris Donnelly's solo show at Cafe Paradiso. Donnelly more than lived up to our high expectations. Just 25, Donnelly has developed a compelling personal voice, fusing and extending influences from all over -- Bill Evans, Bud Powell, Egberto Gismonti, Charlie Parker, John Adams, Steve Reich, Doug Riley, and the Russian jazz-informed composer Nikolai Kapustin (whom I had never heard of until Donnelly hipped me to him, and who I must definitely check out). Donnelly was constantly virtuosic, but his technical skills were always in the service of his striking imagination and musicality. He plays dazzling music without setting out to dazzle. Tune after tune knocked me out -- his versions of Evans' *Very Early* and *Your Story*, his thoroughly composed and slightly demented *Donna Lee (Variations)*, his *Metamorphosis* compositions inspired by M.C. Escher, as engrossing as the artist's magical creations. Clearest in my memory was Donnelly's tender version of tunes from *Cinderella*. He seemed to strip the songs down to the prettiest possible chords, and he sang the melody quietly in unison as he phrased it beautifully at the piano -- a testament to his inner lyricism.

Bad news: While Paradiso was packed in anticipation of Donnelly hitting the stage, few of Ottawa jazz musicians were there to be inspired. I don't get it. Brian Browne was there, but other Ottawa-area pianists were no-shows. Catching a musician of Donnelly's calibre up close is a must -- a revelation of what a musician can do done and a reminder about why we do it. I went just after 12:30 a.m. and had to practice for an hour because of what I heard.

Good news: Paradiso owner Alex Demianenko told me he would like to bring Donnelly back in 2009.

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