

## DON BYRON PLAYS THE MUSIC OF MICKEY KATZ



**Don Byron** - clarinet, MC / **JD Parran** – woodwinds / **Charles Lewis** – trumpet  
**Alan Ferber** – trombone / **Jessie Montgomery** – violin / **Daniel Kelly** – piano  
**Kenny Davis** – bass / **Ben Wittman** – drums / **Jack Falk** - vocals

To celebrate his 50<sup>th</sup> birthday in 2008, Don Byron reformed the groundbreaking and virtuosic klezmer ensemble that recorded his eponymous 1993 Nonesuch album and spearheaded a klezmer revival in the 1990s. Dedicated to the music of the great Mickey Katz, clarinetist, humorist, and bandleader in the 1940s and 50s, the 9-piece band features some of New York's best musicians and longtime Byron collaborators.

“There's a strong connection between Don Byron's humor and his profound musical curiosity, two qualities that distinguish him from his more conservative contemporaries. Both are much to the fore in this faithful tribute to Mickey Katz, who brought virtuosity and comedy to the klezmer tradition, with Spike Jones in the '40s and later on his own. Byron's involvement in klezmer dates back to his student years in the early 1980s when he joined Boston's Klezmer Conservatory Band. Forging links between black and Jewish outsider traditions, he is as attracted by Katz's love of pastiche and parody as he is by the klezmer clarinet tradition, including Katz's takes on cowboy, Russian, and Hawaiian music.” (amazon.com)

“No one recognized the manic possibilities of klezmer more than clarinetist Mickey Katz, whose 1945-1947 tenure with Spike Jones spawned a comedy band that launched such funny travesties as the Yiddish cowpoke ditty "Haim Afen Range" or the Jewish-Hawaiian "Mechaye War Chant." Katz used humor to expand the musical boundaries of klezmer, thrusting it into the laps of World War II mainstream America at a time when Yiddish was identified as a victim's language and most Jewish music looked backward in time because the post-Holocaust present was intolerable. Playing Katz's songs demands prodigious chops, hence the attraction of Katz to moleculesplitting clarinetist Don Byron, who demonstrates nerve presenting Katz the monologist as the equal of Katz the composer. In sum, convoluted, kaleidoscopic silliness topped with Byron's usual dazzling self.” (Bob Tarte, All Music Guide)

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