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Emmet Cohen at New Morning in Paris

8 July 2025

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9 July 2025(https://ukjazznews.com/2025/07/09/)



L-R: Emmet Cohen, Patrick Bartley, Philip Norris, Joe Farnsworth. Photo credit Rachel Coombes

The dreary months of lockdown bore fruit for many musicians, pushing them to seek innovative means of engaging with their followers– and often finding a new, online global audience while so doing. Pianist **Emmet Cohen** is one such performer: his weekly Youtube series "Live from Emmet's Place" (billed by the Guardian as "the most exclusive jazz concert in New York") amassed hundreds of thousands of new listeners around the world. He has since been heralded by many as a jazz 'ambassador'. One of his regular, and most popular, collaborators for these intimate gigs is the alto saxophonist **Patrick Bartley**, who joined Cohen and his trio (**Philip Norris** on bass, **Joe Farnsworth** on drums) at Paris's New Morning jazz club.

Cohen has made a name for himself as one of the finest straight-ahead players of his generation (he is only thirty five), his vigorous stride shaped by years of immersion in the sound worlds of Art Tatum and James P. Johnson. Watching the way in which he teases out the richest of textures and harmonies, treating the piano almost as a sentient being responsive to his own touch, is a memorable experience. He has found a match in Bartley, who delivered blisteringly fast improvisations with intuitive sense of musical fun.The synergy between all four on stage was remarkable, each player deftly giving way to another as part of a fluid and natural musical conversation.

The nattily dressed Farnsworth served some explosive solos. Highlights of the set included Cohen's crisp, articulated arrangement of "My Little Suede Shoes", which gave Bartley the chance to exploit the full timbral range of the sax. Cohen experimented at various points with dampening the piano strings to give a more percussive tone – it was a good touch. Their version of "Tangerine" also had a distinctive punchiness to it, while the jaunty "After You've Gone" rollicked along at pace. Throughout the set, beloved standards ("Tea for Two", "It Don't Mean a Thing") were woven in as cheeky musical reference points, and the evening was rounded off with Cohen in his element, with a ragtime smorgasbord.

The performance brimmed with exuberance and technical wizardry. The musicians' encyclopaedic knowledge of the jazz greats, filtered through equally ingenious musical imaginations, brought familiar classics into unfamiliar and exciting new territory.

UKJN's previous review coverage of Emmet Cohen (https://ukjazznews.com/?s=%22emmet+cohen%22)

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