

# Vijay Iyer performs for the Toronto crowd

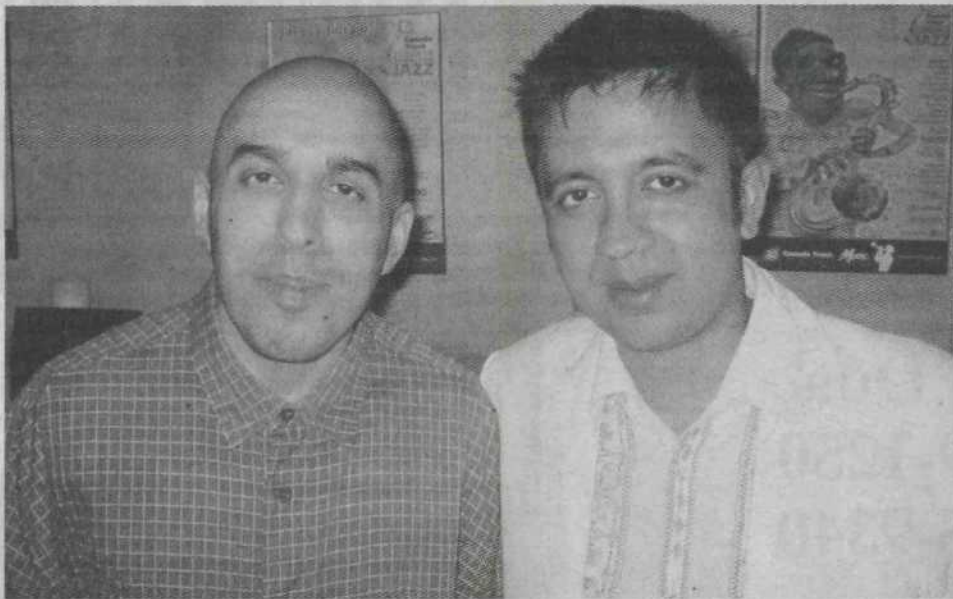
RENU MEHTA

Toronto

HE came, he played and he conquered. Torontonians came out in large numbers to enjoy the performance given by Vijay Iyer as part of the city's popular jazz festival held in downtown Toronto from June 22 to July 1.

Hailed as one of the most important jazz pianists of his generation and arguably one of most prominent North American musicians of South Asian heritage, Iyer was born to Indian immigrants in upstate New York. He began violin lessons at the age of three and began picking out melodies on his sister's piano at age six. A self-taught pianist and composer, Iyer's choice for a professional musical career came after earning a Masters degree in physics at the age of 22 and yet he managed to earn an interdisciplinary PhD in music and cognitive science at U.C. Berkeley in 1998.

Beginning his Canadian tour in Calgary on June 23, Iyer journeyed at summer jazz festivals across the country and performed in Winnipeg,



Vijay Iyer (right) with Raoul Juneja. Chathuri Perera

Vancouver, Victoria and finally in Toronto on June 30 receiving rave reviews wherever he performed. "His music is amazing," said a jazz enthusiast at the Toronto festival, calling Iyer's music expressive and structurally sophisticated.

Iyer draws his compositions from African, Asian and European musical lineages to create original music in the American creative tradition. He has 10 albums to his credit including a debut CD described as one of the best albums of 1996. Three acclaimed CDs have been released as part of his current multi-album deal with the legendary Savoy Jazz record label.

As part of the international music community, he has performed at festivals and concerts across Europe, Asia and Australia. Iyer's participation in the North American music scene has included critically acclaimed performances that he has given at places ranging from The Kennedy Center in Washington to Carnegie Hall in his home in New York.

Besides lecturing and publishing on a range of topics including cognitive science, improvisation and performance studies, the celebrated jazz artist has also collaborated on a variety of hip-hop and spoken word themed projects with renowned artists Dead Prez and Mike Ladd among others.

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