

beats & pieces big band

SHORT BIOG

Led by composer and conductor **Ben Cottrell**, Beats & Pieces Big Band see themselves as a band that happens to be big, rather than your average 'big band'. They're an extremely tightknit bunch, meeting as students in Manchester and growing up and developing musically individually and collectively within the city's exciting scene. First playing together as Beats & Pieces in 2008, today these fourteen musicians know each other inside out socially and musically, and this familiarity is part of what sets them aside from a lot of other big bands today.

The music is an expression of the band's members and their varied musical backgrounds and activities, all brought together in Ben Cottrell's inspired writing. His compositions reflect the diversity of music that people of their generation have grown up surrounded by, and as such are influenced as much by Michael Jackson, Björk or Radiohead as they are Duke Ellington, Gil Evans or Loose Tubes.

The band's debut album **Big Ideas** was released in March 2012 on **Efpi Records**, a small Manchester-based label also run by Ben. Since then, Beats & Pieces have performed in Ireland, Germany, France and Norway; received airplay on BBC Radio 2, Radio 3 and 6music; and received awards for Best UK Newcomer at the 2013 Jazz FM Awards and Ensemble of the Year at the 2014 Parliamentary Jazz Awards. Eagerly awaited second album **All In** was released in June 2015, again on Efpi Records, and announced the band to an even wider audience whilst cementing their reputation as one of the most original and vibrant ensembles of its type.

LONG BIOG

With high profile national and international awards to their name (Ensemble of the Year at UK Parliamentary Jazz Awards 2014, Best UK Newcomer at the 2013 Jazz FM Awards & European Young Artists' Jazz Award at 2011 Burghausen International Jazz Festival, Germany) and consistent audience and critical acclaim for their performances across the UK and Europe, the Beats & Pieces Big Band have firmly established themselves as one of the country's foremost young jazz groups. Led by composer and conductor Ben Cottrell, their music draws on a wide range of influences from Ellington to Loose Tubes to Radiohead to redefine the role of the big band for a new generation.

Since their very first gig at the Manchester Jazz Festival in 2008, the band has performed across the UK to consistent audience and critical acclaim. In March 2011, Beats & Pieces were named as the winners of the European Young Artists' Jazz Award, part of the Burghausen International Jazz Festival in Germany and one of the continent's largest awards for emerging jazz musicians. Winning the competition ahead of 4 other finalists from across Europe led to a gala concert supporting Chick Corea and Gary Burton, broadcast on German TV and radio. The band have since performed across Europe with highlights including gigs at the Olympia in Paris for radio station TSF Jazz; 12 Points! Festival in Dublin; and a showcase at the Jazzahead! conference in Bremen (generously supported by the PRS for Music Foundation's British Music Abroad scheme).

In 2012 Beats & Pieces were awarded a prestigious Emerging Excellence Award by the Musicians' Benevolent Fund to enable them to undertake a residency period at Dartington Hall in Devon, rehearsing and workshopping material for their next album recording due to take place in 2013. Bandleader Ben Cottrell was also the only musician to be awarded funding by Arts Council England and the British Council's joint Artists' International Development Fund in July 2012. This funding has allowed Beats & Pieces musicians to work closely with the Norwegian big band Ensemble Denada, led by composer Helge Sunde, ahead of a collaborative project which debuted at the London Jazz Festival in November 2012, and was repeated at the Oslo Jazz Festival in August 2013 as part of Fiona Talkington's Conexions series of events.

The band's debut album 'Big Ideas' was released in March 2012 on Efpire Records, an independent label co-founded by three of the original band members which has since grown into an umbrella organisation representing a growing roster of emerging musicians based across the UK and Scandinavia. This album release followed a (now-deleted) EP in December 2009 and a limited edition DVD of a live performance at Manchester's legendary Band on the Wall venue in October 2011, both also released by Efpire. The 'Big Ideas' release was marked with a major UK tour, with the hometown show at Manchester's RNCM Theatre recorded by the BBC for broadcast on Jazz on 3, and the London gig at a sold-out Ronnie Scott's receiving glowing 5 star reviews in both The Guardian and The Telegraph.

Beats & Pieces' eagerly anticipated second album 'All In' was recorded in January 2014 at Peter Gabriel's Real World Studios in Wiltshire, and released on Efpire Records in June 2015 to an overwhelming reception. Two incredible album launch gigs followed in July to packed out houses at the Soup Kitchen in Manchester and Ronnie Scott's in London (also recorded by Jazz on 3).

Beats & Pieces' founder and musical director, Ben Cottrell, is in high demand as an orchestral arranger, and has worked with artists including Laura Mvula, Esperanza Spalding, Goldie and Everything Everything, and world renowned orchestras such as the BBC Symphony Orchestra, Metropole Orkest (Netherlands) and The Heritage Orchestra.

www.beatsnpieces.net
www.efpirerecords.com

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'ALL IN' PRESS COVERAGE

"Fast becoming one of the foundations of the current UK jazz scene, Beats & Pieces make fun, grooving, high-impact music Mancunian style... continuing the great tradition of UK big bands" - **Jez Nelson, BBC Jazz on 3 (September 2015)**

"Lots of players have tried mixing rock brawn with jazz brain, few as convincingly as this young big band from Manchester... The Mercury Prize shortlist must surely await – 4 stars" **John Bungey, The Times (June 6 2015)**

"[All In] shows that the young band's collectively grooving energy - and the gifted Cottrell's composing - have moved up a few notches further from 2012's aptly named Big Ideas – 4 stars" **John Fordham, The Guardian (June 5 2015)**

"This uproariously individual yet tightly disciplined outfit is the most original big band to appear in the UK since Loose Tubes" **The Daily Telegraph (July 4 2015)**

"A return... to the idea that contemporary jazz for big band can still generate the kind of direct impact more associated with rock and pop music, but without undermining its essential craft and sophistication... Highly recommended – 4 stars" **Selwyn Harris, Jazzwise (June 2015)**

"[All In] retains [Beats & Pieces'] energy and enthusiasm but also adds a growing compositional and arranging maturity... The playing is excellent throughout and the band sound is well captured... As a long term supporter of the band it's good to see them back – 4 stars" **Ian Mann, The Jazz Mann (June 11 2015)**

PRESS COVERAGE FOR LIVE SHOWS

"Beats & Pieces shows a sophisticated awareness of large-scale jazz (from Ellington, Mingus and Gil Evans to such innovative Europeans as Mike Gibbs and Colin Towns) [and] possesses the collective vision to turn familiar big-band devices, such as hard-riffing trumpet parts and repeating ostinato hooks, into completely fresh melodies – 5 stars" **John Fordham, The Guardian (February 23 2012)**

"What really marked this gig as something special was its sheer generosity. The ideas and moods came thick and fast, each one so brilliantly vivid that you wanted it to go on, even while enjoying the leap to something new. This band's achievement is already astonishing, but they'll surely go further – 5 stars" **Ivan Hewett, The Telegraph (February 21 2012)**

"Few bands play work of this complexity with such passionate conviction. Movers and shakers such as [Colin] Towns, Matthew Herbert, Darcy James Argue and [Ben] Cottrell demonstrate that large ensembles remain a vital force in contemporary jazz – 4 stars" **John L Walters, The Guardian (August 4 2011)**

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UK PERFORMANCE HIGHLIGHTS

Ronnie Scott's, London
Soup Kitchen, Manchester
The Sage, Gateshead
Kings Place, London
Colston Hall, Bristol
Brecon Jazz Festival
Manchester Jazz Festival
Scarborough Jazz Festival
Lancaster Jazz Festival
London Jazz Festival
Canary Wharf Jazz Festival
Bath International Music Festival
Hay Festival
Royal Northern College of Music, Manchester
Turner Sims, Southampton

EU PERFORMANCE HIGHLIGHTS

B-flat, Berlin (DE)
Jazztage, Görlitz (DE)
Unterföhring Jazz Weekend, Munich (DE)
Oslo Jazz Festival (NO)
Jazzahead! Bremen (DE)
12 Points! Dublin (IE)
Olympia Hall, Paris (FR)
Duc des Lombards, Paris (FR)
Burghausen International Jazz Festival (DE)

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