

# Chick Corea

Russ Davis: Welcome to Episode 2 of Music Magic with Chick Corea. You're listening to the song "Royalty" from the new CD The Vigil on Stretch/Concord Records. That song is dedicated to jazz legend Roy Haynes, who just happens to be the grandfather of Marcus Gilmore, Chick's drummer for the new CD and band of the same name, The Vigil. In this podcast episode, Chick has a chat with Marcus about the making of the recording and taking the band on the road.

Later on, we'll tell you musicians about a very special online, live and interactive Chick Corea Music Workshop coming March 2014. You can learn all about that now by visiting our website, at [ChickCoreaWorkshops.com](http://ChickCoreaWorkshops.com). Now, enjoy a conversation between Chick Corea and Marcus Gilmore. Take it away Chick!

Chick Corea: Hi, this is Chick and I'm back here in, let's call it The Vigil Broadcast or The Vigil Radio Show. And for today's chat I'd like to present to you my favorite young drummer, Marcus Gilmore, who's been playing with the band since the beginning. He's been recording and we've been touring all year. I first met Marcus when, I believe, he was 12 years old, because he's the grandson of my dear friend and mentor Roy Haynes, the Great Roy Haynes. Well, you're going to hear Marcus and his view of what we've been doing. Okay, and here's a conversation Marcus and I had in Tokyo recently.

I'm Chick, this is this voice. Check. Check. And this is Marcus – Marcus Gilmore. Basically, we're promoting this webinar that we're going to do and giving people a look into what Vigil is all about, what the band is, and I want to get your opinion and your take on it. We made this record, the Vigil record. There's only been one record so far. And because there wasn't time to go out and tour and work the music in and then do the recording, we did it sort of by email to get everyone to listen to the stuff that I put down and then came prepared to the studio. We can talk about that for a little bit. That was interesting for me because – it was interesting for all of us. No one knew what was going to happen. What was your take on what went on the record?

Marcus Gilmore: Yeah, it was very interesting because it was the first time we all played together. It was also the first time we played that music. So it was a lot of firsts.

CC: Yeah, that's true. Just prior to that we had a slip-in that week, that we did at the Blue Note with Stanley and Ravi. You were there and I was there and Charles was there.

MG: We did play "Planet Chia" there.

CC: Yeah, that's right, we did play "Planet Chia."

MG: But uh, "Galaxy," "Legacy," "Outside of Space," all the other pieces we hadn't played. So it was exciting, 'cause it was all new and it was all fresh.

CC: Pick one out and tell us how it went down in the studio.

MG: Okay, "Galaxy." That was my first time playing "Galaxy." I heard the demos and I read the music but it was my first time playing it. It's always different when you're actually playing it for the first time. I thought about it a lot, I listened to the demos but I was trying to figure out what kind of groove or what kind of approach to have. I remember asking you "So what do you think about this?" You're like "Yeah, okay, let's start there. See what happens, see how it feels." Okay, cool. We ran it through, and it's interesting because everyone had a different approach to learning the music. I remember Tim was kind of far from everyone, right?

CC: He was across the hall in another room. And you were in a glass area.

MG: Yeah, but it was great 'cause I could still see everybody, except for Tim. So that was cool. I couldn't see Pernell though.

CC: No, Pernell was in another room, and Tim was in the room off to the left and Pernell was the room down the ways.

MG: But it was great, because I could see you, and Hadrien and Charles, which was really important for me. And I do remember Hadrien learning everything, because Hadrien basically learned everything by ear. Which I thought was pretty cool.

CC: He's amazing that way. He came in and delivered for sure. Not being able to read music, but no one seemed to mind.

MG: Yeah, but he made up for it with everything, with all the talent. That was exciting. It was really cool.

CC: Was that the first tune that we recorded?

MG: I don't remember what we recorded. I don't think it was that, because that was a really involved piece. I feel like we may have done "Chia," or something like that before, but I don't remember what was first.

CC: Yeah, I can't remember either. There were only seven tunes that made it on, because they ended up being kind of long.

MG: Is that including the one from the Blue Note?

CC: I think so, yeah. Well there was an added track, "Hot House," that we put on from the Blue Note. But, yeah, "Pledge" went on from The Blue Note. That was very nice. When we play The Blue Note coming up in a week actually, I'm going to invite Ravi to come and see if he'll sit down with us. Ravi Coltrane.

MG: That was a great week, too. But a crazy week, because that was the hurricane, the blizzard and the election all that same week.

CC: And the electricity went out!

MG: Yeah, the electricity was out 'til the day of the gig.

CC: Certain sections of New York, people were struggling. There were no real disasters.

MG: Oh no, there were some real disasters. Some people got flooded. A lot of people got flooded out of their places. It was pretty bad for certain people in the coastal regions, like in Brooklyn. I know a lot of people that lost a lot of stuff.

CC: We didn't know that we were going to be able to play the gig at all cause the lights were out at The Blue Note until that day. 'Til the day of the first gig.

MG: Yeah, that was deep. We were all rehearsing all week, thinking "I hope we can all make up for this by playing some gigs!" Luckily, we got around to playing the gigs. Every night, somehow, we made it through the hurricane and the snow. And the election.

CC: And the election.

[Both laugh.]

MG: That was crazy. Never ended. Yeah, it was really cool we got that piece on the album.

CC: That was the first time we played "Pledge."

MG: Oh, that particular one was the first time?

CC: That particular rendition was the first time we performed it. We rehearsed a little, but that was the first time we performed. Then we played it two or three other times during the week.

MG: Yeah, that was definitely one of the highlights, I thought, of the sets.

CC: Yeah, so we're on our third bass player now.

MG: We are, we are.

CC: Hadrien came in and delivered real hard on the first part of the band. Then Christian came in for the summer with a whole other kind of vibe.

MG: It's kind of like United Nations [laughs]. 'Cause every bass player comes from a different place, coming with a very unique experience. Because Hadrien has where he's coming from, and then Christian is a very different thing. And Carlitos is playing now, he's bringing something else too. Each time is a different band.

CC: It really is. Hadrien is a young, French guy. Plays the electric bass. Christian. Everyone knows Christian McBride. Philadelphia. Christian came in playing both upright and electric. He put some of his funk element in there which was real nice. And his Ray Brown stuff.

MG: Yep, Bootsy, Ray Brown.

CC: And now we have Carlitos. Carlitos Del Puerto. He's from Havana. So we have a latin contingent strong in the band now. But Carlitos can do a lot of different things. He's done a lot of different music, it seems.

MG: Yeah it seems like he's checked out a lot, absolutely.

CC: But yeah, it's kind of international. So about the record, what else is there to say? I remember "Legacy."

MG: That was nice!

CC: Do you remember how that went down? What's your take on how that went down?

MG: I didn't even realize we were recording. We just started playing, right?

CC: Well, I'm asking you! I'll tell you what I remember.

MG: What happened exactly? I remember we went over it a little bit at one point in the main room, where we were all playing together, just to go over it. And then we went to our respective areas, got in the headphones, got the cans on. I guess I counted it off with the sticks or something like that.

CC: I asked you to. I said "Count it off!" So you chose the tempo.

MG: Yea! Then we went into it. It was a journey. I don't know how long it was but we just played. People came in, and went out, and phased back in, and phased out. That was actually, probably out of all of them, the most spontaneous for sure, I'd say. I mean, in terms of just, the least amount of thoroughly-composed music and the most amount of improvisation. Collective improvisation from everyone. It was unique in that sense.

CC: It was a jam. And if you remember, the lead sheet had two or three different sections in it. And all we played was that one line.

MG: We kept going in and out of that line, right?

CC: We had that bass line – but the initial bass line, that's why everyone should get the song book. By the way, there's a song book with all the lead sheets. When the webinar comes out, those who have the song book will be able to follow along with what we're talking about. 'Cause we're going to go a little bit more in depth on checking out each song and answering people's questions, if they have any questions about how we did, what it's all about, what the song's all about. The "Legacy" lead sheet was 3 or 4 different sections, but the bass line is what we started out with. You and Hadrien started out with the bass line. [Hums the bass line.] Like that. And then there was that one unison line that me, Tim and Charles played. [Hums the unison line.] That one. That was all we needed to go on. We threw it down. But I remember the moment – when we do a recording, when I'm in the studio and we're trying to record something – I find it really uncomfortable to switch hats. I don't do it real easily, it takes me a minute. Like if I'm playing, and someone says let's listen to it back – wow, I go into a whole other thing, 'cause when I have to listen to it back, you have to think something about it. You have to listen to it and go, "Well ..." I guess you don't have to think something about it.

MG: Yea, I don't. Sometimes I try not to. But I don't know, sometimes, when I listen back, I just say, "Whoa, that was it." I try not to do too much post-production, I guess, on my part. I try not to change, even if there's something I don't like. It was part of it. I'll just leave it. Let it be what it was, or what it is. But it's also not my album.

CC: That's what I mean. That's what the proper – I think that's the correct musician viewpoint. It's the correct viewpoint. You threw it down, that's it. But at some point when you're making the album, somebody has to make the decision, are you going to use it? Which take? Are you going to do it again?

MG: Yeah, that's all the stuff I don't have to really worry about.

CC: I'll tell you what, 'cause you're getting ready to make your first record. My cheap advice is, you have to figure that out. Because if you don't, and you want to maintain that viewpoint of, "I just threw it down and it's what it is," and you want to make

a record, but someone else has to make that decision, and you have to assign the task – or the hat – to someone other than yourself, and then they'll do it the way they'll do it. You'll either like it or you won't when it finally comes out. My own personal way of operating through the years – I like to make the producer's hat, and make the decision of which take, and what I want it to sound like. But doing it in the same session as making the music is what is tricky.

MG: Especially back to back.

CC: Back to back. You play, then you say, "Let's listen to that," so it's hard for me to not have the producer hat on, and to evaluate, and someone has to decide, "Should we do another take, or leave it? Is that it?" Or maybe someone decided that when we first went in: "We throw it down, and that's it! No matter what comes out."

MG: No matter what comes out.

CC: You could do that, too. You could do a lot of wide range. But anyway, my experience to "Legacy" was, we actually went through days – we were in there for five days – we actually went through days, doing stuff and recording and doing the next thing and so forth, we weren't listening too much. If you recall.

MG: We made a lot of music in that amount of time.

CC: Yeah, and then toward the end, might have been the last day, we had made "Legacy" earlier, and then told Bernie throw it on. "Let's listen to 'Legacy.'"

MG: I do remember when I finally heard it, I was like "Oh wow! So, that's what it sounds like?!"

CC: Is that what you thought? Well what did you think?

MG: I didn't know what it was going to sound like. You know, recording can be so weird like that, 'cause you have the headphones on and you can't tell what the whole thing sounds like. And then, of course, like you said, by then we had done so much other music in between. "I guess I remember playing this, but I didn't realize this is what it was." It sounded really cool, it was like "Wow!"

CC: So did you like it when you heard it back?

MG: I did! I did! But at the same time I was just like, "Wow, I didn't realize."

CC: Well, it blew me away when I heard it, because I might have been the least relaxed guy at the session, 'cause I had written all this music and had all these thoughts about it, and then there we are and I want to make this record, put this new band together. We've got gigs coming up for next year, all that kind of stuff. So I was like, "Let's just throw it down." I was trying to get into the attitude of, "Let's just throw it down," but it was hard!

MG: It's hard to get there! I can imagine.

CC: You guys were pretty, "Let's just throw it down." So that helped. Everyone's pretty loose. So all those other tunes that had some complexities to it – "Planet Chia," "Galaxy" is a long suite, "Portals" has a lot of different sections.

MG: Yeah “Portals” has a lot of different sections.

CC: And some phrases and phrasing were tricky. We had all this stuff to do to get all that music down, and I was beginning to feel like it wasn't loose enough. Because as a composer, I wanted to make sure certain notes get played correctly. But then as a performer and a player, I wanted to make sure things felt good. So that was what I was going through. So when I heard “Legacy,” I thought “Ahhhh.”

MG: A breath of fresh air.

CC: A breath of fresh air, yeah. 'Cause we just threw it down, so that was an immediate decision to put that on.

MG: Yeah it's the only track like that on the whole album.

CC: Well, “Pledge” was pretty much a throw down too. And sections within music started to get loose on the rest of the tunes.

MG: Well yeah, but then of course, a lot of it happened after the session. Since we've been on the road so much this year, especially changing the ensemble. And also the percussionist too, of course, because Pernell is playing on there.

CC: Pernell is playing on the first record. Talk about your take on when Luisito came into the band, 'cause if you remember we did the first couple of gigs with no percussionist.

MG: Right, on the tour in the UK, right?

CC: Yeah, even on the recording, Pernell didn't come in till the third day or so. He's not on every track and it was initially my questioning about whether there should be a percussionist in the band, 'cause I already knew your playing a little bit, and the way it felt playing together, and thought “Gee, I don't want to lose that looseness and openness we got in the drums,” but I want to groove, and a lot of percussion, so that's where I was at. So that's why we played a couple of gigs in Europe, and then Luisito came for –

MG: In Italy, at the Blue Note.

CC: For just a couple of gigs. The Milan Blue Note. I liked it, and then we tried it again at – Luisito came at Yoshi's. And so tell me your take on all that, 'cause to me I got a lot of thought on it, and it's very interesting to see what goes on between you and Luisito.

MG: Yeah, so the first tour we had the rehearsals before those gigs at Ronnie Scott's, and that was just with the quintet. And those first two gigs were a quintet as well, when we got to Milan. Then we had the sextet, and it was a whole different vibe, not only because there was percussion playing on the same pieces that Pernell played on, but he was playing on most of the stuff, and also he was right next to me, so sonically there was a completely different balance for me, as well. Because I was used to hearing certain things at a certain place, but even then I wasn't really that used to anything, 'cause the band was pretty new. So there was a point of reference. But it wasn't like we had been doing things a certain way for a long time, because everything was still pretty fresh. But yeah, it opened up a whole different thing, especially at that time, we weren't doing some of the pieces that we are doing now. But we were doing pieces like “Hot House” and “Galaxy” and –

CC: “Portals.”

MG: Yeah, “Portals,” so it was almost as if it were made with that in mind, you know? And the other thing, there were additions

to what we already had been doing. It was pretty interesting. It was all new, and it took everything in a different direction. But it also filled in a lot. Luisito is a very musical guy, so it's not the overbearing guy who wants to play everything all the time, so that's one thing that is really great about him. He's not just a percussionist, he's Luisito! Yeah, it was pretty fun! Then, we had him again on the West Coast tour at Yoshi's. We went to Yoshi's, we did a few one-off gigs, and we also did Jazz Alley in Seattle – that's where we finished off. That was nice. Then we started getting into all kinds of things. The endings to certain pieces – like, we were doing like “500 Miles,” and stuff like that. Remember when we were doing that? We were doing – during the period at the end, we were doing drums and percussions.

CC: Oh, yeah, yeah. We should do that some more.

MG: Yeah, we haven't done that in a while actually.

CC: I love those sections. I don't know, you're in it with Luisito I see what you're saying. I'm over at the other side of the stage and I'm watching and listening. I don't like when we try to put any of the music into boxes. I'm working with music, and when a musician says, “Why don't we make it more Latin, or Classical, or more ... Let's play a bumba here, and dumba here, or clumba there.” I never thought that way. So I was experiencing pleasure at the fact that you guys were playing these rhythms. I don't know what you were talking to one another about, but you were playing these rhythms without having to get formal about it. Your experiences musically come from one place, and Luisito comes from another place, and it crosses in New York. Everything crosses in New York.

MG: Everything crosses in New York, yeah that's true. [Both laugh.]

CC: But anyway, I think it's an interesting mix that's going on, for sure. Well, there you go, I think we covered some nice stuff. Anything you'd like to say to people who are not here who might be here listening.

MG: All those people that just aren't here right now [laughs].

CC: Marcus Gilmore on drums.

MG: This is going to be around probably forever, I don't know so, people will be hearing this for years to come. Just want to say “Hello.”

CC: “Hello,” there you go. What more can you say? “Hello.”

Russ Davis: I certainly hope you have enjoyed Episode 2 of Music Magic with Chick Corea, Chick's conversation with the young master drummer Marcus Gilmore. And you're listening to the song “Royalty,” dedicated to Marcus Gilmore's grandfather Roy Haynes, the legendary drummer. It's from the new Chick Corea CD on Stretch/Concord Records The Vigil, available on iTunes and Amazon.

This is Russ Davis from Voice of America and MoJa Radio, and we hope you will join us for the next episode of Music Magic with Chick Corea. Before I tell you about that, let me invite you to leave a five-star review on iTunes, where you accessed this podcast, and you'll let the rest of the world know how much you enjoyed Music Magic with Chick Corea.

Now, if you're a musician and you would like to have an up-close and personal relationship with Chick Corea in a very special webinar, you should get on the mailing list to be part of the upcoming Chick Corea Workshop. The way to do that is to go to this website: [ChickCoreaWorkshops.com](http://ChickCoreaWorkshops.com). You'll not only have a chance to get on the waiting list for this must-attend online Chick Corea music workshop, but you can also view a great, free video of a Chick Corea music workshop that features music with John Patitucci and Antonio Sanchez, and get some thoughts from some other students about what they think about Chick's

workshops.

Now, on Episode 3 of Music Magic with Chick Corea, Chick sits down with the young bassist who joined The Vigil for their live performances, the terrific young bass player Carlitos Del Puerto. You'll hear Chick and Carlitos talk about bringing music to life on stage. Don't forget, you musicians, sign up for the Chick Corea webinar coming up in March 2014 by going to the website [ChickCoreaWorkshops.com](http://ChickCoreaWorkshops.com), and join us for Episode 3 of Music Magic with Chick Corea.

## About Music Magic

In conversations with his musical collaborators and friends, Chick reveals insights into his music universe. From the tour buses and airports to the recording studios and backstage. You'll get a behind-the-scenes look at the details of the creative process from the legends of jazz. For more information check out [www.ChickCorea.com](http://www.ChickCorea.com). "These podcasts introduce a topic that's very exciting to me: giving a helping hand to other musicians." —Chick