

Merkin Concert Hall

Thursday, January 19, 2012 at 7:30 pm

Kaufman Center
presents

The 2012 New York Guitar Festival®

John Schaefer, *host*

David Spelman and A.J. Benson, *curators*

Silent Films/Live Guitars

HOWARD FISHMAN

Buster Keaton's *The Frozen North* (1922, 17 minutes)

Intermission

CALIFONE

Buster Keaton's *Go West* (1925, 69 minutes)

TIM RUTILI, JIM BECKER,
BEN MASSARELLA and JOE ADAMIK

About the Artists

Howard Fishman began his career on the streets of New Orleans and in the subways of NYC, experiences that still resonate in his "disarmingly un-showbizzy" concerts (*Backstage*). A pioneer of the Brooklyn music scene, Fishman "brings a feeling to a room that is reunion-like. Everyone there is part of a community...it can't be helped." (*11211 Magazine*).

A testament to his wide-ranging appeal, Fishman has appeared on bills with such diverse artists as Odetta, Yo-Yo Ma, Maceo Parker, Robyn Hitchcock, Taj Mahal and Allen Holdsworth. He is a frequent NPR guest, making feature-length appearances on *Fresh Air*, *World Cafe*, *Leonard Lopate* and *Word of Mouth*, and has recently been featured as a headlining performer in the American Songbook at Lincoln Center, The Steppenwolf Theatre and at Duke Performances in North Carolina.

Fishman's travels and omnivorous curiosity inform his constantly-expanding repertoire of special projects, from his original oratorio *we are destroyed*, about The Donner Party, to his multi-media travelogue *No Further Instructions*, to his New Orleans-inspired Biting Fish Brass Band. His tenth CD, *Moon Country*, was released in October.

Howard Fishman is a storyteller, a seeker, a cultural anthropologist, and "an important force in creative music" (allmusic.com).

In an underground music landscape where 140 characters equals “journalism” and lone MP3s propel bands to momentary internet stardom, bands are here today and gone tomorrow. **Califone** is a band that defies this blueprint. The band is at the peak of its powers on *All My Friends Are Funeral Singers*, its sixth song based album. The long-awaited follow-up to 2006’s acclaimed *Roots and Crowns*, the album is a strong collection of songs. The subtlety and detail of Califone’s previous work is present here — the atmospheres are carefully nuanced, the percussion is both rattling and melodic, the melodies are rich and soulful, interspersed throughout softly strummed folk and electrified blues. *All My Friends Are Funeral Singers* is a collage of sounds, expertly formed into fully realized pop songs.

This pop exploration runs through the album, but it’s not at the expense of Califone’s vast musical vocabulary. The band’s multi-instrumentalists (Joe Adamik, Jim Becker, Ben Massarella, Tim Rutili) and several notable guests utilize an orchestra’s worth of instruments on the album, from the more typical (guitar, bass, piano), to the unusual (optigan, prepared piano, stylophone). Throw in more strings (fiddle, mandolin, banjo, baritone ukulele, cello), percussion (mbira, marimba, steel drum, thumb piano), some horns (bass clarinet, clarinet, French horn) and a whole mess of other oddities (ring modulators, loops, “effects,” synth bass, electronics) and the careful production and mixing of longtime collaborator Brian Deck, and you’ve got the perfect ingredients for Califone’s finest and most ambitious album to date.

Califone’s music has often been described as cinematic, and the band has been known to contribute live improvised soundtracks to silent films. Many of these performances have been released on Califone albums *Deceleration One* and *Deceleration Two*. Primary songwriter and vocalist Tim Rutili’s artistic endeavors stretch beyond music and include the creation of surreal short documentaries, music videos and experimental films.

John Schaefer (host) is the host of WNYC’s innovative music/talk show *Soundcheck*, which features live performances and interviews with a variety of guests. Schaefer has also hosted and produced WNYC’s radio series *New Sounds* since 1982 (“The No. 1 radio show for the Global Village” – *Billboard*) and the *New Sounds Live* concert series since 1986. Schaefer has written extensively about music, including the book *New Sounds: A Listener’s Guide to New Music* (Harper & Row, NY, 1987; Virgin Books, London, 1990); the *Cambridge Companion to Singing: World Music* (Cambridge University Press, U.K., 2000); and the TV program *Bravo Profile: Bobby McFerrin* (Bravo Television, 2003). He has also written about horse racing (*Bloodlines: A Horse Racing Anthology*, Vintage, NY 2006) and is a regular panelist on the BBC’s soccer-based program *Sports World*.

David Spelman’s (curator) career as an artistic director for international festivals and film music supervisor has embraced jazz, rock, classical, avant garde, and world music, as well as spoken-word poetry and the visual arts. Educated at the Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University and New England Conservatory of Music, he worked for Jay K. Hoffman, one of the country’s leading classical music publicists, before founding his own production company in the early 1990s. In 1999 he launched the first New York Guitar Festival, now a biennial event that presents the world’s finest guitarists in innovative, cross-genre and multi-media presentations. Following on the success of the New York Guitar Festival, he’s been invited to curate major festivals at the Krannert Center for the Performing Arts at the University of Illinois, Amsterdam’s Concertgebouw, Australia’s Adelaide Festival Centre, Toronto’s Luminato Festival, as well as Carnegie Hall and other Manhattan venues. His projects have attracted worldwide press coverage, and drawn the support of funders as diverse as Apple Computer, The National Endowment for the Arts and the government of South Australia. Please visit www.newyorkguitarfestival.org.

A.J. Benson’s (curator) earliest musical memories are of puzzling over his parents’ Mamas & Papas, Dave Brubeck, Trini Lopez and Herb Alpert LPs as a kid. He’s spent the last fourteen years in a number of executive and consulting capacities at Arista Records, RCA Music Group, Virgin Records America and Cherry Lane Music, overseeing various aspects of projects for Patti Smith, Ben Harper, OutKast, Barry Manilow, Whitney Houston, Foo Fighters, Dave Matthews, several American Idols, many other notables and more you’ve never heard of. In addition to serving as General Manager and Board Director of the New York Guitar Festival since 2005, he is currently managing recording projects at Island Def Jam Music Group, where he’s worked with The Roots, Johnny Cash’s estate, The Bravery, Duffy, Melissa Etheridge, Justin Bieber, and Ron Isley, among others. He also co-produced the capacity-crowd “American Beauty” and “Big River” Projects at the Winter Garden (the latter for the 2008 River To River Festival).

Ben Model (film advisor) is one of the USA's leading silent film accompanists, and has been playing piano and organ for silents at the Museum of Modern Art in New York for the past 27 years. Ben co-curated MoMA's annual *Cruel and Unusual Comedy* series and their Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle retrospective (2006), and also curated Shout Factory's new *Ernie Kovacs Collection* DVD box set (2011). A five-time recipient of the Meet The Composer grant, Ben is a regular accompanist at classic film festivals around the U.S. and in Norway, and performs at universities, museums and historic theaters. He is the producer and co-founder of *The Silent Clowns* Film Series, now in its 15th season in NYC. Ben's recorded scores can be heard on numerous DVD releases from Kino Video and on TCM. His composed ensemble scores for films by Chaplin, Keaton and Lloyd are performed around the U.S. every year by orchestras and concert bands.