



Williamsburg pianist Andrew Shapiro celebrates the release of his new album, "Numbers, Colors and People," which has been eight years in the making

# Andrew Shapiro: 88 keys and a million musical directions

By Meredith Deliso

For the past five years, Andrew Shapiro has been crafting his Philip Glass-esque compositions playing on a grand piano in a downtown Manhattan McDonald's.

Playing for four hours almost every Sunday gave Shapiro a lot of material, and the Williamsburg composer celebrates the release of a new album of those songs, "Numbers, Colors and People," on March 24 with a double bill at (Le) Poisson Rouge in Manhattan.

The show is at one of the more established music venues for the pianist, who usually finds himself playing at art galleries in Williamsburg, Bushwick and Chelsea, as well as lounges in Park Slope, and, of course, the McDonald's (located on Broadway near Liberty Street), when not composing music for film, television and dance.

In his personal compositions, Shapiro takes much inspiration from Philip Glass, the contemporary art music composer, whom Shapiro had the opportunity to intern for upon graduating from the Oberlin Conservatory of Music.

"When I saw Philip Glass and what he was doing, it seemed to be a real synthesis of the

two things, of popular and classical styles," says Shapiro, who personally doesn't want to choose between the two genres but unite them, making for layered yet accessible work.

Since 2000, Shapiro has been working on songs for the all-piano "Numbers, Colors and People," so named because each of the meditative, impressionistic songs fall into one of the three categories. There are the numbers songs, like "L.H. Etude #1," one of the first songs that Shapiro wrote, before moving on to writing tributes for friends and acquaintances, such as "Gosia," named after his neighbor on a train leaving from Warsaw, and "Katz," commissioned for a friend's 40th birthday, and then colors. "Mint Green," which closes the album, is the musician's favorite number for its "mutt"-like qualities.

"It's minimal, melodic, poppy – it's kind of a mutt," says Shapiro, who took a pop approach in the mastering of the album, leading to a lush, full sound that's very clean and pure. "My music is like a mutt in a sense. It's classical, but definitely influenced by pop. You can appreciate it at many different levels; it can be as complicated, interesting or chill as a listener will want it to be."

For the cover art, Shapiro recruited friend and Bushwick-based printmaker and artist Glen Bladrigue.

"He definitely brought a high-art sensibility to the packaging," says Shapiro of the mint green (just like the song) vine-like cover. "It was created fresh for the project."

To celebrate the release of his album, Shapiro will be pulling from "Numbers, Colors and People" at (Le) Poisson Rouge this month. He'll be joined on the bill by the producer of the album, and Philip Glass musical director, Michael Riesman, who will be playing selections from "Philip Glass Soundtracks" in the first set and performing Philip Glass' score to the 1931 film "Dracula."

"I just feel so fortunate to have had the chance to work with him," says Shapiro. "I couldn't think of anyone who would be better to do this."

Beyond the show, Shapiro looks to get another album of solo piano work out, as well as more poppy, electronic work featuring his own lyrics.

"I also started to work with a drum machine, which is an unbelievably huge scary artistic risk to me," says the musician, as he further

branches out from his classical background.

One of the more popular songs from his current album, "Quiet Kissing," may also be used in a movie starring TV's "My Boys" actress Jordana Spiro, who came upon the album and wants to use the single in an upcoming film she's in.

And, of course, there's the McDonald's gig, the playground that allowed Shapiro to work and find the definitive versions of his original material.

"I'm there for the foreseeable future," says the musician, "every Sunday from 12–4."

Andrew Shapiro celebrates the release of his album, "Numbers, Colors and People," on March 24 at (Le) Poisson Rouge (158 Bleecker St.), with a double bill at 7 p.m. and 9:30 p.m. Both shows are \$15. Shapiro will also be joined by Michael Riesman playing selections from "Philip Glass Soundtracks" in the first set and performing Philip Glass' score to the 1931 film "Dracula" in the second set. For more information, go to [www.lepoissonrouge.com](http://www.lepoissonrouge.com) or call 212-505-FISH.

For more on the musician, go to [andrewshapiro.com](http://andrewshapiro.com). His album is available on iTunes.