

# A losing season?

U-M faces its first since '67 B1

# One-two punch of jazz greats

Lovano joins Moran D

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# ANN ARBOR NEWS

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# ENTERTAINMENT

## Orchestral sax

Joe Lovano paints a broader canvas in 'Symphonica'

BY KEVIN RANSOM  
News Special Writer

**N**o one could ever accuse saxophone virtuoso Joe Lovano of lacking in musical ambition.

He's always exploring new contexts for his jazz vision - restlessly seeking new musical directions, regularly casting his expressive sax in a new trio, quartet or nonet setting, seemingly from one album to the next.

So, his fans should have been prepared for the broader canvas Lovano uses on his latest album, "Symphonica." The disc showcases Lovano's soulful sax playing in the context of an orchestra - more specifically, the WDR Big Band and Orchestra of Cologne, Germany.

Plus, it's mostly a live album, which means there is no room for error and no retakes - no mean feat when you're orchestrating a few dozen musicians. On that front, praise goes to Michael Abene, the orchestra's musical director who arranged and conducted the orchestra here.

All of the compositions performed on "Symphonica" are Lovano originals except one - Charles Mingus's swooning "Duke Ellington's Sound of Love."

"Originally, that was just supposed to be a live performance," said Lovano, who comes to the Michigan Theater on Friday on a double bill with the composer/improvisational pianist Jason Moran for a show presented by the University Musical Society. "We didn't have any plans to release it, but once we all heard it, we fell in love with it and decided to release it. So the performance benefits from not feeling the pressure that it was going to be a recording."

Several of Lovano's compositions on "Symphonica" are tunes he had written and/or recorded for previous projects, rearranged by Abene. For example, the sultry ballad "Emperor Jones" is a tune he'd recorded for "Landmarks," his first Blue Note album, in 1990. And the uplifting "Eternal Joy" first showed up on the 1998 "Trio

Fascination" album he cut with jazz heavyweights Elvin Jones (drums) and Dave Holland (bass).

The UMS show will showcase Lovano's sax in the context of his new, two-drummer Us Five Quintet, as well as duets with Moran.

"This incarnation provides a lot of opportunities for spontaneous orchestrations to occur," said Lovano during a phone interview from a tour stop in Manila. "Every time I put a new ensemble together, I try to realize more of who I am as a player - the music is a summation of at the moment of

where I have been, musically."

Lovano, a Cleveland native, attended the Berklee School of Music, and over the years he has done stints/collaborations with such jazz heroes as Woody Herman, Mel Lewis, Bob Brookmeyer, Carla Bley, Charlie Haden and Gunther Schuller. He's married to jazz singer Judi Silvano - a personal union that has also yielded some sublime musical collaborations.

But back to his current quintet.

"Working with the two-drummer concept, with them having distinct personalities and styles, really helps us create a lot of tapestries and colors within the quintet format," said Lovano.

"I try to shape each piece of music based on the combination of musicians I'm working with at the moment, and based on all of their influences. I feel like we're essentially creating a dialogue inside of the music, that we're all listening to each other, which allows us to create a tapestry of totally free sounds."

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Joe Lovano,  
right, with  
Jason Moran.



### PREVIEW

**Joe Lovano  
"Us Five"  
Quintet, with  
Jason Moran**

**What:** Straight-ahead jazz meets serious fun.

**Where:** Michigan Theater, 603 E. Liberty St.

**When:** 8 p.m. Friday.

**How much:** \$18 - \$44.

**Details:** Tickets available at the University Musical Society Ticket Office in the Michigan League, (734) 764-2538, and online at www.ums.org.