Benedikt Jahnel

Press kit · Piano and composition

A balanced combination of minimal music, complex rhythms, singing melodic lines and multi-layered harmonies characterises Benedikt Jahnel’s playing.



Photo: Gregor Bukalis

Short biography

Benedikt Jahnel (born 1980) is a pianist and composer based in Berlin. With his trio he released the albums *Equilibrium* (2012) and *The Invariant* (2017) on ECM; the new album *Amenable* is released on embab on 27 November 2026. He also plays in the bands Cyminology and Max.bab. Tours have taken him to almost 50 countries, including the Montreal Jazz Festival, JazzBaltica and Carnegie Hall New York. Benedikt Jahnel is also professor of applied stochastics at TU Braunschweig.

Biography

Benedikt Jahnel is one of the distinctive pianists and composers of European modern jazz. For more than two decades he has followed his own path with an unmistakable musical signature, between lyrical melody, complex rhythms, multi-layered harmonies and a great openness to form and structure.

At the centre of his work for many years has been the Benedikt Jahnel Trio, today with Marc Muellbauer (bass) and Owen Howard (drums). He and Owen Howard share an exceptionally long collaboration that goes back to Jahnel’s years in New York. The trio albums *Equilibrium* (2012) and *The Invariant* (2017) were released on ECM Records and celebrated by the international press for their combination of emotional immediacy, formal clarity and improvisational freedom. The new album *Amenable* is released on embab in November 2026.

Jahnel’s compositions are marked by a special balance of construction and intuition. His music can unfold highly complex rhythmic and harmonic structures without losing its lyrical power. Clear forms, surprising developments and a keen sense of sound and atmosphere combine into music that is as carefully thought out as it is immediately moving.

Besides his trio, Benedikt Jahnel is a member of the international band Cyminology and of Max.bab, a band he founded as a teenager. Tours have taken him to almost 50 countries; he has performed at the Montreal Jazz Festival, JazzBaltica, Carnegie Hall New York and numerous international festivals. Musicians he has worked with include Phil Woods, Charlie Mariano, David Friedman, Wolfgang Muthspiel, Dave Liebman, John Abercrombie, Clarence Penn, Dan Weiss and Manfred Eicher.

His musical training began with classical piano lessons. He soon discovered jazz and improvisation, played in the Bavarian and the German National Youth Jazz Orchestras, and studied jazz piano at the Berlin University of the Arts with Hubert Nuß and David Friedman and at City College of New York with, among others, John Patitucci, Garry Dial, Clarence Penn, Kenny Werner and Jean-Michel Pilc.

A second great passion is mathematics. Alongside his musical career he studied mathematics, earned a doctorate in mathematical physics and completed his habilitation in stochastics. Today he is professor of applied stochastics at Technische Universität Braunschweig and leads a research group at the Weierstrass Institute in Berlin. In both worlds he is fascinated by the relationship between structure and freedom, between large forms and the smallest details. Benedikt Jahnel lives and works in Berlin.

Selected discography

2026	Benedikt Jahnel Trio	*Amenable*	embab
2025	Max.bab	*Human Intent (Live)*	embab
2018	Max.bab	*Wild Pitch*	embab
2018	Matzeit / Jahnel / Sieverts	*Both Sides*	JazzHausMusik
2017	Benedikt Jahnel Trio	*The Invariant*	ECM 2523
2015	Cyminology	*Phoenix*	ECM
2013	Max.bab	*Laws of Motion*	embab
2012	Benedikt Jahnel Trio	*Equilibrium*	ECM 2251
2011	Cyminology	*Saburi*	ECM
2010	Max.bab	*Inner Orbit*	ACT
2008	Cyminology	*As Ney*	ECM
2008	Ehwald & Jahnel Doublequartet	*Music for String Quartet and Jazz Quartet*	konnex
2008	Benedikt Jahnel Trio	*Modular Concepts*	material records

Selected awards and scholarships

– 2011 Creole Jazz Award, national competition (with Cyminology)
– 2006 Brunswick Award for Composition, New York
– 2005–2007 DAAD scholarship for New York
– 2013 and 2014 scholarships of Initiative Musik
– 2003 Jazz Award Tübingen, 2002 “Jugend jazzt” Germany (with Max.bab)

Press

“Benedikt is an energetic young musician with excellent time and interesting ideas … I was pleased to hear his new compositions.”
John Taylor

“This guy is swinging …” – “… great flow”
Richie Beirach

“Jahnel has a rich classical tone that is intimate and deep. Pastoral beauty.”
George W. Harris, Jazz Weekly (USA), March 2017

„Musik voller Raffinesse. Unsentimental, klug, umsichtig und extrem klar strukturiert, und dabei ist er ein ebenso großartiger wie empfindsamer Impressionist.“
K. Seebald, Münchner Merkur, Oktober 2008

„Jahnels Musik ist sehr intelligent angelegt – wäre aber nur halb soviel wert, wenn er gedankliche Leistungen nicht auch mit beseeltem Melos, mit Lyrischem und bedingungsloser Schönheit kompensieren würde.“
S. Pakzad, Jazzthing, April 2018

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