

# JazzTimes

## Abraham, Inc. featuring David Krakauer, Fred Wesley and Socalled, with C-Rayz Walz

Venue/ Apollo Theater  
Location: New York , NY USA  
Date(s): May 3, 2008  
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Photo of Fred Wesley by Jill E. Williams



On the anniversary of James Brown's birthday, it seemed fitting that one of JB's most valued sidemen from the late '60s, his former musical director and trombonist Fred Wesley (pictured), would be doin' it to death at the legendary Apollo Theater. But on "Hava Nagila"? Oy!

This endlessly surprising yet highly successful hybrid of klezmer, funk and hip-hop had the enthusiastic crowd—young and old, Jews and gentiles, whites and blacks—dancing ecstatically in the aisles like it was a Jewish wedding. Wesley brought the funk while virtuoso clarinetist David Krakauer delivered the passionate intensity and deep Jewish soul that ties him to the lineage of klezmer clarinet kings like Naftule Brandwein and Dave Tarras. Montreal-based multi-instrumentalist and visionary beat architect Josh Dolgin, aka Socalled, provided a bridge between the klezmer and hip-hop worlds with his audacious Hebraic rapping while the Bronx-bred emcee C-Rayz Walz brought street cred to this unlikeliest of collaborations with his remarkable freestyling facility and stark urban imagery.

Krakauer, who since the mid '90s has led renegade Klezmer Madness!, another experimental hybrid band that cleverly blends Eastern European Jewish music with avant-garde improvisation and surf-rock guitar styles, describes the adventurous Abraham, Inc. project as "a band where Jews make 'phat beats' and play funky lines while African-Americans play music from *Yidl' Mitn' Fidl'* and sing Hebraic chants, interacting with the highest level of mutual respect and understanding for each other's musicality, humanity, intelligence and rich cultural background."

They did precisely that on the spirited opener, "Baleboosteh" (a Yiddish term meaning "the woman of the house"), which seamlessly blended funk rhythms, Eastern lines and Socalled's call-and-response rap with C-Rayz. Their slamming, syncopated recreation of "Hava Nagila" was dubbed "The H Tune" while Wesley resurrected one of his classic James Brown funk horn arrangements on "Push," in which trumpeter Curtis Taylor slipped in a quote from P-Funk's "Flashlight" during his solo.

C-Rayz strolled the front of the stage on a funky rendition of Socalled's buoyant klezmer number "Oyfn Hoif" and was later showcased on a powerfully moving rap about life in the 'hood, accompanied only by Socalled on upright piano playing Richard Rodgers' stirring "Slaughter on Tenth Avenue." Krakauer, the homerun hitter of this crew, unleashed his jaw-dropping chops on the hypnotic "Table Pounding," named for a Hassidic ritual involving much wine and the slamming of fists. At the peak of his soaring solo, Krakauer's whole body quaked with visceral intensity, as if he were trying to leap into the air. And he wailed with

unrestrained passion on the hauntingly beautiful "Ms NC" (named for his wife) and the rousing klezmer throwdown "Moskowitz and Loops of It," which had Socalled switching to accordion. Wesley hit on a familiar theme with his downhome storytelling about his Southern family reunion on "Breakin' Bread" while Socalled got the audience involved in his politically tinged rap "The Good Old Days." And for a rousing finale, Wesley led the crowd on the chorus of his funky, JB-inspired "House Party."

The stars of this show—Wesley, Krakauer, Socalled and C-Rayz—were ably supported by a stellar band featuring Jerome Harris on electric bass, Sheryl Bailey and Allen Watsky on guitars, Brandon Wright on tenor sax and Michael Sarin on drums. Following this world premiere of Abraham, Inc., they're taking this funky show on the road. Watch for an upcoming recording and live DVD recorded at this Apollo gig.