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Mentors a great gift to sax player; Tara Davidson learned from masters like Murley, Braid

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Byline: Roger Levesque

Column: Roger Levesque

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Decades ago, it was common for one generation of jazz artists to serve as mentors to the next generation. That practice is much rarer today, but a few individuals are still lucky enough to benefit from this valuable experience.

Toronto saxophonist **Tara Davidson** counts herself as one of those players. Her original mentor was her dad, a music teacher, trumpeter and jazz fan who took the family out to see the jazz greats as far away as Carnegie Hall.

It was also her father who suggested she try woodwinds, and who arranged for her to take saxophone lessons from Mike Murley in her mid-teens.

"I remember telling my parents I wanted to be the female Mike Murley," laughs Davidson, "because he was so talented and such a nice person."

A few years later, Murley was one of her instructors at the University of Toronto, around the time she asked pianist David Braid for some lessons. Today, Murley and Braid are among Canada's top jazz player-composers and Juno winners. Davidson is focused on furthering her own musical identity, but she's friends with her two mentors and even co-leads a band with them, DMBQ (Davidson-Murley-Braid-Quintet).

All that experience comes into play when she leads her first western tour with her own quartet, hitting the Yardbird stage tonight with a repertoire of all-original material. Davidson says her composing leans towards groove-oriented tunes, but she went beyond that in her new second album *Code Breaking*.

"I really tried to put together some variety, a tango, blues, some swing. But I like the way our bassist hits a groove and I love playing over that."

Either way, it's impressive stuff for a twentysomething bandleader, who has a surprisingly mature grasp of the music.

Davidson leads keyboardist Jamie Reynolds, bassist Jon Maharaj, and drummer Ernesto Cervini to the Yardbird Suite (10203 86th Ave.) at 9 tonight. Tickets are \$16 for members, \$20 for guests, from Ticketmaster or at the door.