



**JOE SYRIAN  
MOTOR CITY  
JAZZ OCTET  
SECRET  
MESSAGE**

# G

ive your radio dial a gentle spin and see where it leads. Chances are it lands on some style of popular music, and if you're lucky, an artist or band whose muse goes beyond the manicured riffs, melodic hooks or sub-bass ear candy jammed into today's airways. While the pull of popularity has always been enticing, some composers follow a higher calling by using their ingenuity and passion to create timeless music that's eventually enshrined into our collective cultural consciousness.

From the 1920's to 1940's Jazz claimed this unique domain, adding reams of pages into the American songbook while establishing remarkable milestones that inspired how popular music was experienced throughout the world. As this prolific period faded, popular groups like Tower of Power, Earth Wind and Fire, the Beatles and Joni Mitchell flirted with Jazz by incorporating advanced harmonics, sophisticated rhythms and open frameworks into their musical lexicons. And Jazz flirted back with inventive arrangements of classic pop tunes that exquisitely balanced their familiarity against imaginative interpretations common within improvisational music. Radio dials spun wild and we all reaped the rewards.

But rewards like these come with a certain degree of risk. For those seeking to hybridizing pop with Jazz (or Jazz with pop), there's always the risk of alienating audiences who prefer to isolate these genres. Enter Joe Syrian, veteran drummer and leader of the Motor City Octet. An emissary of superb taste with a trained ear for shaping enticing musical narratives, Syrian understands how to balance the accessible nature of pop with the adventurous musical mindset of his ensemble. When asked to describe this process, Syrian astutely recognizes that "popular music resonates with people and works for many audiences. We just take that and mold it to our unique framework."



