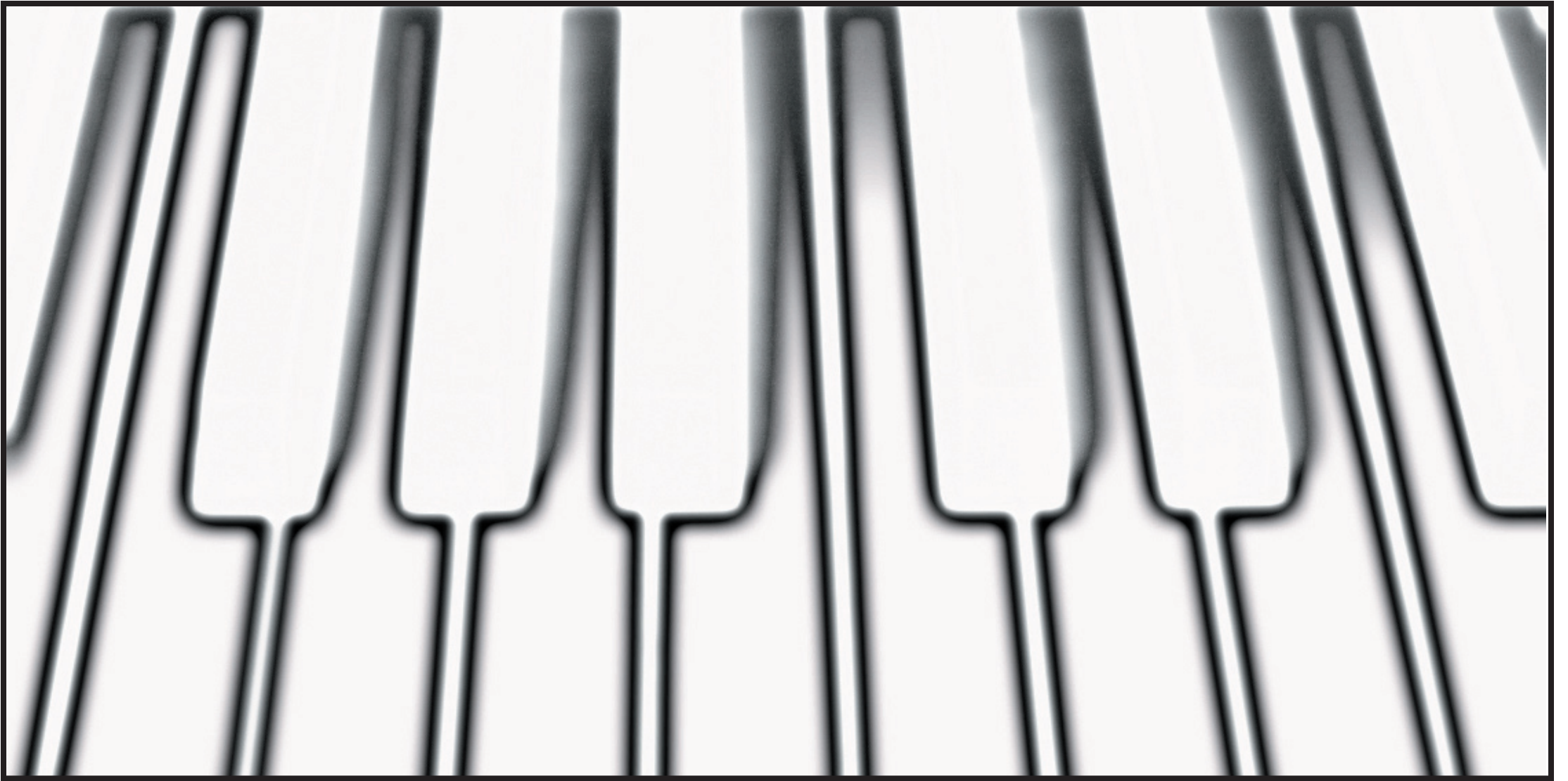


## melding music



Graphic by Brian Carlo

Jazz pianist Brad Mehldau is a master of creative change. The Secret Artists Series brings him to Brendle Recital Hall 8 p.m., Jan. 23.

By Brian Carlo  
*Life* Editor

Half a century ago, young people listened to jazz as the cutting edge of popular music. The Beatles were just kids. Radiohead wasn't even a gleam in their mothers' eyes. Now, the situation's reversed. The Beatles are the anointed fathers of rock and roll, Radiohead are the new kings of cool and jazz is hardly considered pop music on a college campus.

It's a bit strange, then, that some of

Brad Mehldau's most famous pieces are covers – "Blackbird" and "Paranoid Android" – although not too strange, considering the history of improvisation and innovation found in jazz.

Mehldau's sound is complex and even heavy, a testament to one of his biggest influences, legendary pianist and originator of modal jazz, Bill Evans. In covering the Beatles and Radiohead, Mehldau does more than just mimic the original songs (which he does masterfully, by the way), but

he deconstructs their very core and brings them to a different place.

Along the way, he doesn't meander, as some pianists tend to do when covering contemporary music – he forges ahead. He is no lounge pianist.

In the end, Mehldau does the two things in his covers that a great jazz pianist must do – respect the original piece and give it its due *and* simultaneously craft a new piece of art that can rival it.

In both pieces, Mehldau meets these goals, and then some. It's rare to find

an artist who can make you question whether the Beatles and Radiohead might have something to learn from them in covering their music. Mehldau is that artist.

It comes to no surprise, then, that Mehldau and the world renowned, Grammy-nominated Brad Mehldau Trio have been at the top of the jazz world for the past couple years.

Lauded in both the music press and the national media, *Time* magazine said in 1999 that "Mehldau achieves an almost spiritual resonance, chords

echoing like amens."

Mehldau has also performed on the soundtracks for the films *Eyes Wide Shut*, *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil* and *Unfaithful*. Rest assured, though, his music is hardly typified by the jarringly simple and relatively annoying (you know, that dramatic, single key plunking?) soundtrack from *Eyes Wide Shut*. In fact, it's anything but pared down, and if you could make one criticism of Mehldau's music, it would be that he sometimes tries to do too much.



Photo Courtesy of Warner Brothers

The Brad Mehldau Trio has received praise worldwide for their far-reaching music. They perform as part of the Secret Artists Series Jan. 23.