

“Amendola’s music is consistently engaging, both emotionally and intellectually, the product of a fertile and inventive musical imagination.”  
The Los Angeles Times

“Amendola, who played with Hunter in T.J. Kirk back in the early ’90s, is the perfect partner for the guitarist, complementing his chilled funk with fat propulsion and deft melodic accents and counterpoint that never leave the listener noticing that only two folks are making the noise.” Peter Margasak, *emusic*

“Amendola has complete mastery of every piece of his drumset and the ability to create a plethora of sounds using sticks, brushes, mallets, and even his hands.” Steven Raphael, *Modern Drummer*

“If Scott Amendola didn't exist, the San Francisco music scene would have to invent him.” Derk Richardson, *San Francisco Bay Guardian*

“...drummer/signal-treater Scott Amendola is both a tyrant of heavy rhythm and an electric-haired antenna for outworldly messages (not a standard combination).” Greg Burk, *LA Weekly*

For Scott Amendola, the drum kit isn’t so much an instrument as a musical portal. As an ambitious composer, savvy bandleader and capaciously creative foil for some of the world’s most inventive musicians, Amendola applies his rhythmic virtuosity to a vast array of settings. His closest musical associates include guitarists Jeff Parker, Nels Cline, Charlie Hunter and Henry Kaiser, Hammond B-3 organist Wil Blades, ROVA saxophonist Larry Ochs, and Tin Hat clarinetist Ben Goldberg, players who have each forged a singular path within and beyond the realm of jazz.

While rooted in the San Francisco Bay Area scene, Amendola has woven a dense and far-reaching web of bandstand relationships that tie him to influential artists in jazz, blues, rock and new music. A potent creative catalyst, the Berkeley-based drummer became the nexus for a disparate community of musicians stretching from Los Angeles and Seattle to Chicago and New York. Whatever the context, Amendola possesses a gift for twisting musical genres in unexpected directions.

He’s spent the past five years stripping his music down to essentials with longtime creative collaborator Charlie Hunter in a tough and sinewy duo.

While touring incessantly they've released two acclaimed albums: 2012's recession-inspired *Not Getting Behind is the New Getting Ahead* and 2013's *Pucker* (which showcases Amendola's melodically inspired tunes). More recently, they've forged a new path for disseminating their music while maintaining the programmatic potential of the album format, releasing four 5-track EPs, each focusing on the music of a particular artist or act. From the standards of Ellington and Cole Porter to the country hits of Hank Williams and seminal new wave tunes of The Cars, Amendola and Hunter transform everything they encounter with their groovecentric sensibility.

"What I like is that it really fits right into what we've been doing all along, simple music with a lot of space," Hunter says. "Scott's not burdened by trying to be jazzy. He's a drummer who's really listening to everything with big ears."

No project better displays Amendola's big ears and musical ambitions than "Fade To Orange" a piece commissioned as part of the Oakland East Bay Symphony's Irvine Foundation-funded New Visions/New Vistas initiative. The roiling work premiered to critical acclaim at Oakland's Paramount Theater on April 15, 2011. Determined to refine and document the piece, Amendola conducted a successful PledgeMusic crowd-funding campaign and recorded "Fade To Orange" at Berkeley's storied Fantasy Studios with his original collaborators—the instrumental trio Nels Cline Singers with Wilco guitarist Cline and powerhouse bassist Trevor Dunn—and the great Magik\*Magik Orchestra. *Fade to Orange* is was released on CD and Vinyl on Amendola's label Sazi Records in the fall of 2015.

"The idea was really the Singers meet the Symphony," Amendola says. "I wanted Trevor's electric bass for that big contrast with the orchestra, and I conceived of the piece as a concerto for guitar. It was an amazing experience to premiere 'Fade to Orange' at the Paramount, but it was bittersweet after all that work. Like, that's it? I wanted to see what else we could do with it."

It took several years of planning, rewriting and orchestrating, but Amendola ended up assembling a dream team in the studio. Working with Minna Choi's Magik\*Magik Orchestra conducted by Cheche Alara, he augmented the 12-piece string section with all-star winds featuring

clarinet master Ben Goldberg, ROVA saxophonist Steve Adams on flute, Santana trombonist Jeff Cressman, veteran trumpeter Rich Armstrong, and versatile French hornist Heidi Trefethen. Percussion legend William Winant provides an array of textures and grooves on marimba, glockenspiel, timpani, concert bass drum, and tubular bells. The album also includes four distilled, wildly imaginative remixes of “Fade to Orange” by Cibo Matto’s Yuka Honda, Mocean Worker, Beautiful Bells, and Deerhoof’s John Dieterich and Teetotum’s Drake Hardin.

While Cline’s first commitment is to Wilco, the band’s long stretches of inactivity means the guitarist can some times perform as a member of the Scott Amendola Band with Jenny Scheinman, John Shifflett and Jeff Parker. Amendola continues to tour and record with the volatile instrumental trio Nels Cline Singers. The band’s latest album, 2014’s critically hailed, genre-obliterating *Macroscope* (Mack Avenue) features special guests Cyro Baptista, Josh Jones, Zeena Parkins and Yuka Honda.

“The first time I heard Scott I was really blown away,” Cline says. “There aren’t too many drummers on the West Coast who had his wide ranging ability. Scott’s got some funk in him, a looser, sexy thing going on, and the flexibility to play free and different styles. He plays behind singer/songwriters and he rocks too.”

Amendola also performs widely with his other duo, the orchestral Amendola vs. Blades featuring Hammond B-3 ace Wil Blades. While they’ve honed a wide array of material, the project initially centered on their thrilling investigation of Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn’s “Far East Suite.” They plan to record a live album at Duende in Oakland in June 2015.

No musician has collaborated with Amendola in a wider array of settings than clarinetist Ben Goldberg. They recently released *Short-Sighted Dream Colossus*, a consistently combustible trio session with Deerhoof guitarist John Dieterich. It was through Goldberg’s earthy project *Go Home* that Amendola and Charlie Hunter rededicated themselves to a steady working relationship. They had played together briefly back in 2003 for a reunion of Grammy-nominated avant funk ‘n’ jazz combo T.J. Kirk (the guitar-centric quartet that also featured John Schott and Will Bernard). But *Go Home*, which was built on Amendola and Hunter’s potent rhythm section tandem, led to a series of duo gigs around Europe and the US.

“It’s always s been amazing whenever we play, but it keeps growing, getting more intuitive,” Amendola says. “What Charlie does is so uncanny. He didn’t set out to create something out of some kind of marketing tool. Ultimately it’s what he heard. When you watch him play, it’s like a brain tease. It’s hard to understand what he’s doing, but when you close your eyes, it’s so beautiful and deep and compelling.”

Amendola established his reputation as a bandleader in 1999 with the release of the acclaimed album *Scott Amendola Band* featuring the unusual instrumentation of Eric Crystal on saxophones, Todd Sickafoose on acoustic bass, Jenny Scheinman on violin, Dave Mac Nab on electric guitar. By the time the quintet returned to the studio in 2003, Cline had replaced Mac Nab, contributing to the quintet’s combustible chemistry on the Cryptogramophone album *Cry*.

Cline was also a crucial contributor on Amendola’s 2005 Cryptogramophone album *Believe*, which also features Jeff Parker, Jenny Scheinman and John Shifflett. He created his own label, Sazi Records, for his next release, 2010’s exquisite *Lift*, a trio session with Parker and Shifflett dedicated to his gossamer, bluesy ballads and ethereal soundscapes, with an occasional foray into surf rock deconstruction.

As a sideman, Amendola has performed and recorded with a vast, stylistically varied roster of artists, including Bill Frisell, John Zorn, Mike Patton, Mondo Cane, Cibo Matto, Wadada Leo Smith, Madeleine Peyroux, Joan Osborne, Rodney Crowell, John Scofield, Jacky Terrasson, Shweta Jhaveri, Phil Lesh, Sex Mob, Kelly Joe Phelps, Larry Klein, Bruce Cockburn, Darryl Johnson, Dave Liebman, Carla Bozulich, Robin Holcomb, Wayne Horvitz, Johnny Griffin, Viktor Krauss, Julian Priester, Sonny Simmons, ROVA Saxophone Quartet, Pat Martino, Jim Campilongo, Bobby Black, Larry Goldings, Paul McCandless, Rebecca Pidgeon, and the Joe Goode Dance Group.

Born and raised in the New Jersey suburb of Tenafly, just a stone’s throw from New York City, Amendola displayed an aptitude for rhythm almost from the moment he could walk. His grandfather, Tony Gottuso, was a highly respected guitarist who performed with jazz luminaries such as Ella Fitzgerald, Louis Armstrong, Frank Sinatra, and Nat “King” Cole. A member of the original Tonight Show Band under Steve Allen, he offered

plenty of support when Amendola began to get interested in jazz.

“We used to play together a lot when I was a teenager,” Amendola says. “It had a huge impact on me to play with someone who was around when a lot of the standards that musicians like Miles Davis, John Coltrane, and Keith Jarrett play were written.”

His passion for music only deepened during his four years at Boston’s Berklee College of Music, where it wasn’t unusual for him to practice for 12 hours a day. Drawing inspiration from fellow students such as Jorge Rossi, Jim Black, Danilo Perez, Chris Cheek, and Mark Turner, and studying with the likes of Joe Hunt and Tommy Campbell, Amendola decided he had to find his own voice rather than modeling himself after established drummers.

After graduating in 1992, he decided to move to San Francisco, where he quickly hooked up with Charlie Hunter. They went on to play together in the three-guitar-and-drums combo T.J. Kirk, which earned a Grammy nomination for its eponymous 1996 debut album. Their musical is one of the strongest threads running through Amendola’s career.

“Ever since I played with my grandfather I’ve just really loved the guitar and I wanted to meet a young guitar player who was doing something different,” Amendola says. “And you can’t get more different than what Charlie’s doing.”

While many of the Northern California players Amendola has forged deep ties with have moved to New York, the drummer feels he’s found the perfect environment in the San Francisco Bay Area. With creative relationships spreading out across the country, and the world, he’s never more than one degree away from a powerful musical hook-up.