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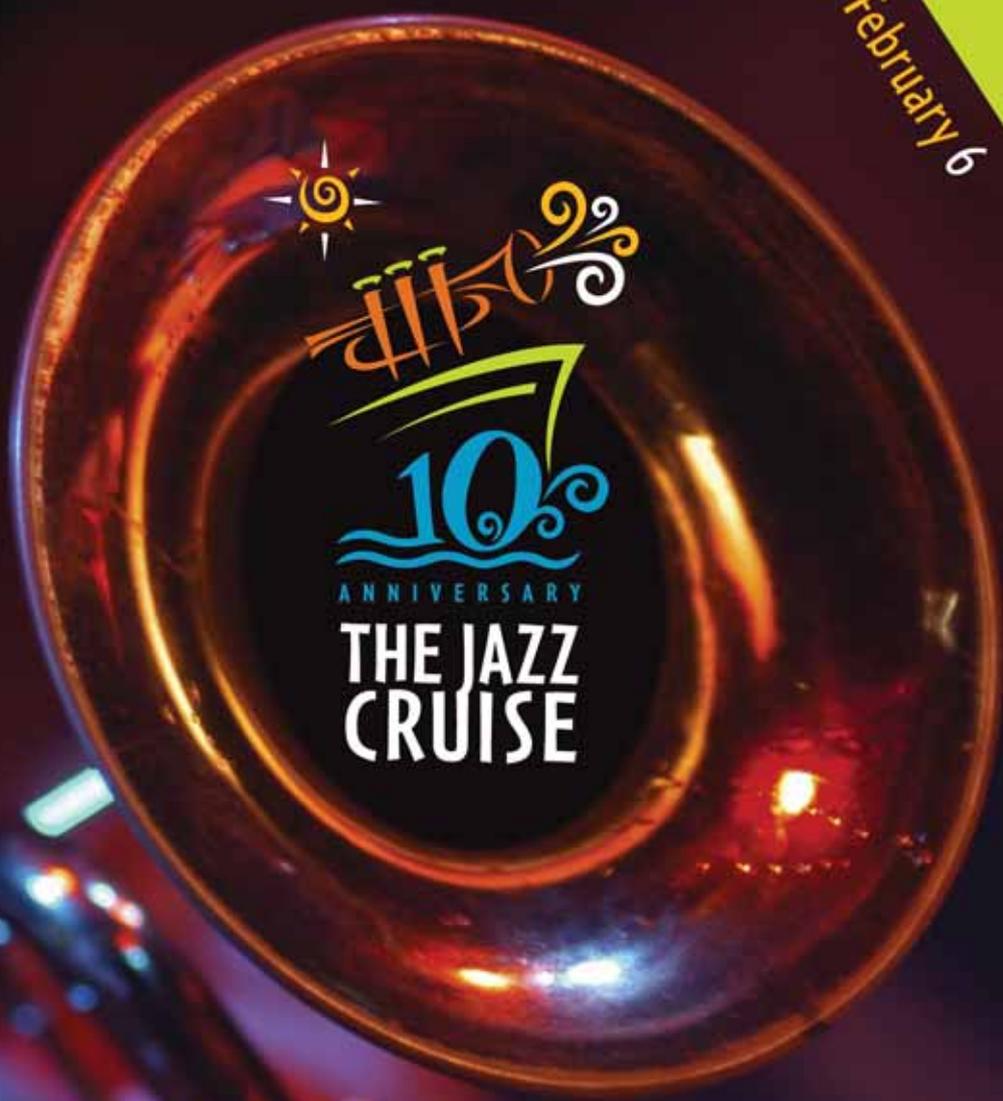
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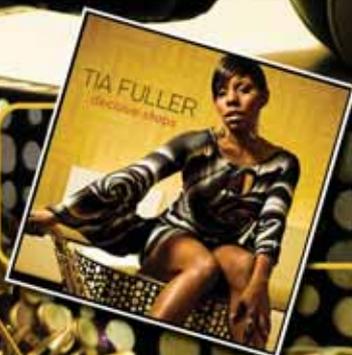
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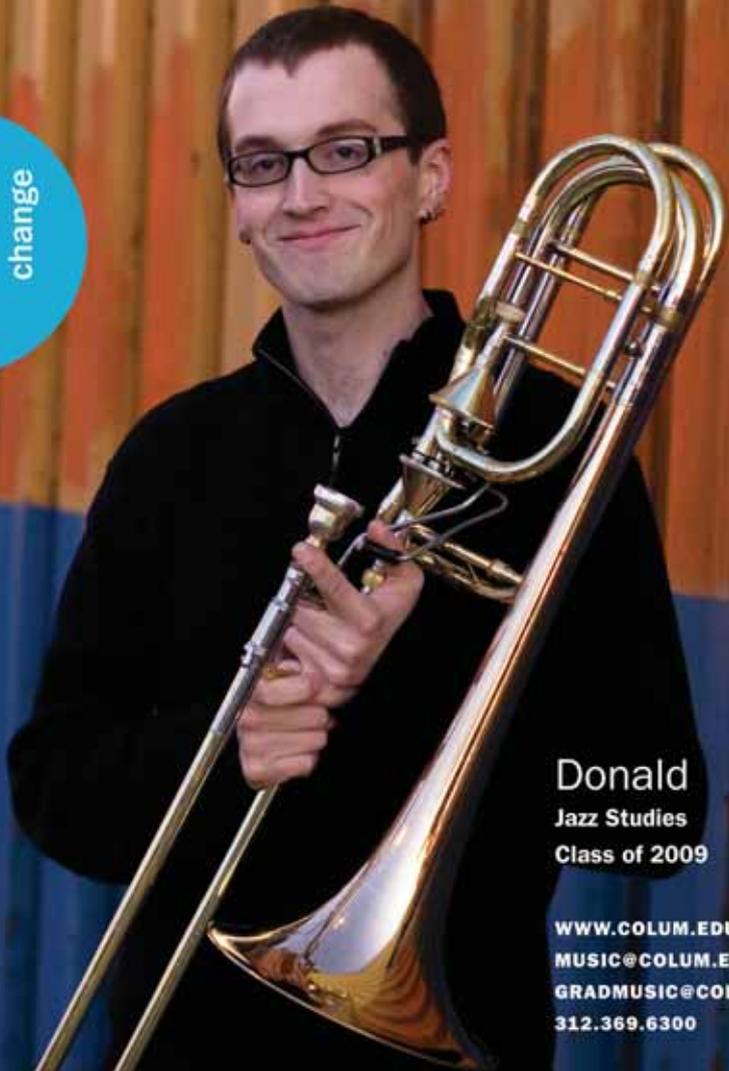
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April 2010

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Jamey Aebersold
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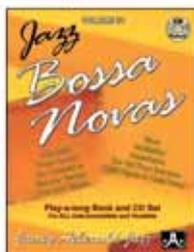
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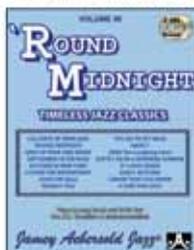
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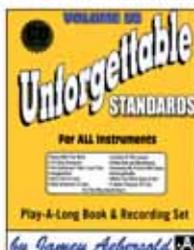


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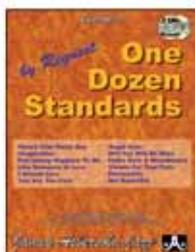
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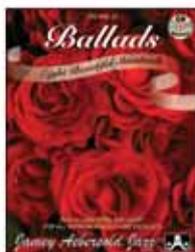
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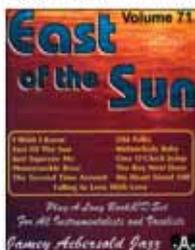


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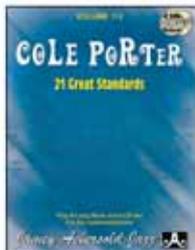
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26 **Christian Scott** *Shows His Teeth* | By Jennifer Odell

Christian Scott's appreciation for the ability of music to tell stories and to make social commentary is rare. The trumpeter's company, like his music, has a comfortable intensity to it—an easy warmth that wins you over even when he's on a mission to change your mind about something. Though gracious and polite, Scott presents his point of view with the same confident authority he puts into his live shows. And even when what he says rubs folks the wrong way, his honest expression comes with a grain of erudite salt.

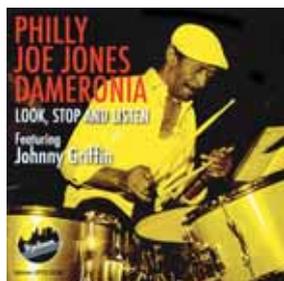
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Organic Orchestration

This issue of DownBeat, featuring Christian Scott on the cover, came together over a period of several months. In fact, it was a full year ago that we originally planned to give Scott top billing in the magazine, only to be pre-empted by the death of Freddie Hubbard. But being bumped from his cover spot turned out to be not such an unfortunate thing for Scott, whose highly anticipated CD *Yesterday You Said Tomorrow*, the most important of his young career, hasn’t been ready for commercial release until now, anyway.

During his interview with writer Jennifer Odell, Scott emphasizes his fondness for the sounds and social vibes of the 1960s and explains how that mindset inspired and shaped the 10-song collection, recorded at the renowned Van Gelder Studio in Englewood Cliffs, N.J., and engineered by Rudy Van Gelder—the man largely responsible for the emergence of the legendary “Blue Note sound,” which has graced hundreds of jazz albums dating back to the 1960s. Among those are several landmark sides recorded by none other than Hubbard himself.

Research for our feature story on Kurt Rosenwinkel began late last summer, when the guitarist was just beginning the recording sessions that eventually led to the release of his new CD, *Standards Trio: Reflections*. As Rosenwinkel told writer Ted Panken, the resulting ballads-driven album emerged over the course of the sessions and developed gradually over time, only to reveal itself in the later stages of editing, after all the dozens of takes were completed.

The organic way these artists’ recording projects and writers’ feature articles unfold and take shape over time reminds me of the way a composer or orchestrator crafts a musical chart. Which brings us to Frank-John Hadley’s article “My Favorite Big Band Album,” an ambitious piece that required months and months of reporting as Hadley polled nearly 200 musicians around the world about their top five picks within the genre. With so much material, we had a tough time deciding where to draw the line (at the top 25 albums) and which of the insightful quotes to use or discard. There was no way we could print all the responses we received in the space allowed, so I’ll take this opportunity to add some background on the results published on pages 40–45.

Hadley reports that a Duke Ellington record appeared on 75 percent of respondents’ lists—47 different recordings, including a few compilations. Count Basie was the second most popular choice, with 98 picks going to 30 albums. Sun Ra would have placed if there had been any sort of agreement over what one record of his most persuasively explored the cosmos—11 albums were chosen. Just a short drop from the top-25 tier were Basie’s *The Original Decca Recordings*, Miles Davis & Gil Evans’ *Sketches Of Spain*, George Russell’s *New York, N.Y.*, Stan Kenton’s *City Of Glass* and—a surprise—Bill Potts’ *The Jazz Soul Of Porgy & Bess*.

We hope you find this issue of DownBeat to read and play out like a great big band arrangement, one that has evolved in proper time, where every detail falls into place and forms a bigger picture complete with information, perspective and a certain intangible edge we like to call “swing.”

DB



Christian Scott

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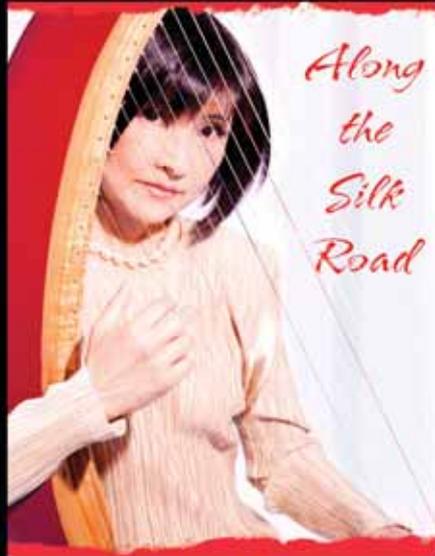
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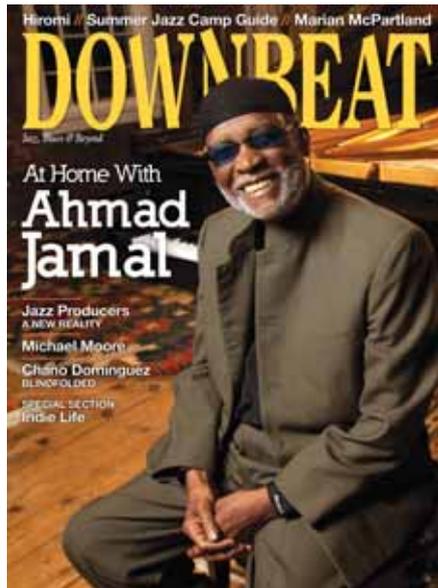
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Chords & Discords



Jamal's Constellation

A five star rating for your March issue's cover, feature and photos. And 100 stars for pianist Ahmad Jamal!

Dennis Hendley
Milwaukee, Wis.

Offensive Language

I was surprised by Eldar Djangirov's offensive language in DownBeat's "The Question Is..." section (March). His use of the word "retarded" to describe something negative regarding a jazz video game is just plain juvenile. This sort of language should be completely removed from our vocabulary as a descriptive for things that are sub-par. It is akin to using the "n-word." As jazz musicians, we're supposed to be hipper than that, and be sensitive to different abilities, races and cultures. "Boy genius" is a good descriptive for Eldar. Emphasis on the "boy."

Bennett Olson
bennettolson@wi.rr.com

Pure Duke

As one who has listened deeply to George Duke, I gained insight into his harmonic vocabulary when I recently heard Bela Bartok's "Second Concerto For Piano." The second movement (Adagio) is pure Duke! It would have been great to hear his reaction to this piece in February's Blindfold Test.

Doug Parham
Lancaster, Calif.

Don't Slight The South

John Ephland's review of Steve Hobbs' *Vibes, Straight Up* ("Reviews," March) contains several oversights. Primarily, it slights the very spirit of the album: songs from or about the

Southern United States. Thankfully, the entire quartet captures that spirit eloquently.

Dean Arnold
arnie60@hotmail.com

Descriptive Praise

I love how DownBeat not only has a way to appreciate the music through words but also to get in-depth with the analyses through the transcription page. Keep it coming!

Irina Makarenko
danielmandrychenko@yahoo.com

Shallow Appraisal

I was disappointed in your "Best CDs of the 2000s" issue (January). A bare list of past 4.5- and 5-star ratings without current critical appraisal is not worth taking seriously.

Paul Chastain
cathpaul@bellsouth.net

Burrell, Grimes Shine

Eric Fine's review describing the Memorial Tribute to Rashied Ali in Philadelphia shows no awareness of how improvised music works ("Caught," March). That Fine would characterize Dave Burrell's piano work as "undistinguished" and question Henry Grimes' violin technique is a measure of Fine's lack of sensitivity, making me wonder if he had any idea of the scope of Ali's influence in the first place.

Lyn Horton
Worthington, Mass.

Keep Trad Alive!

After I read through the October 2009 issue, I came back to Michael Bourne's intro to "Why Jazz Endures" and his reference to Louis Armstrong's solo intro to "West End Blues." Steven Bernstein's comment that "jazz is everywhere now" is the reason I'm writing.

There are still musicians, vocalists and listeners who are devoted followers of traditional jazz. There are jazz festivals all over promoting that kind of music. The music of Louis Armstrong, Jelly Roll Morton and Bessie Smith is not dead. There are jazz programs that teach people to play that kind of music. It is my hope that you will, in the future, devote more space to trad jazz.

Leon Friedman
mfried3248@cox.net

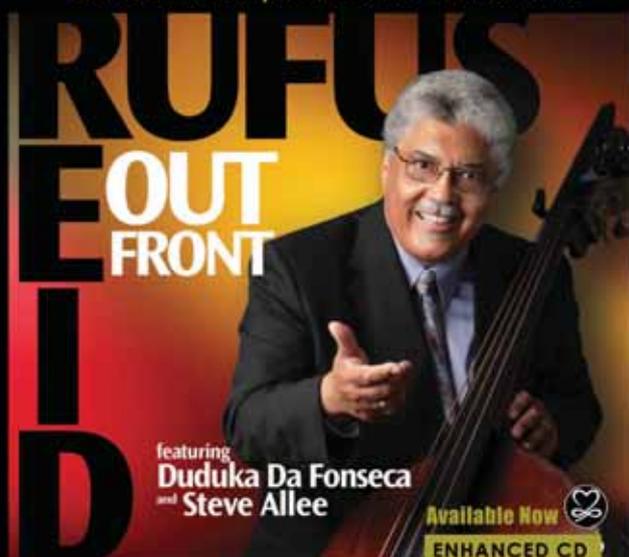
Corrections

Pianist Bill O'Connell was misidentified in the review of Hobbs' CD *Vibes, Straight Up*. Violinist Joe Kennedy Jr. was misidentified in the feature on Ahmad Jamal (March). DownBeat regrets the errors.

Have a chord or discord? E-mail us at editor@downbeat.com.

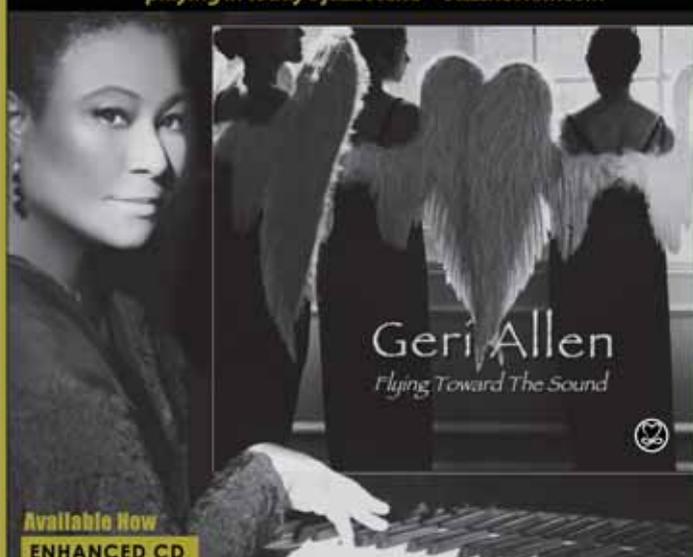
new from motéma music

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Legendary bassist Rufus Reid unveils the uncanny chemistry of his fabulous new trio, which features iconic Brazilian drummer Duduka Da Fonseca (Trio Da Paz, Herbie Mann, John Zorn, Jobim) and pianist/composer Steve Allee (Buddy Rich, John Clayton, Randy Brecker). Together they've created an exuberant, intense and compelling set, including several selections that showcase Reid's emerging status as a composer of note.

"Gerri Allen is one of the most adept, graceful jazz pianists playing in today's jazz scene" – *JazzReview.com*



At last! A solo piano recording from multi-award-winning pianist Gerri Allen. Inspired by Cecil Taylor, McCoy Tyner and Herbie Hancock, Allen's concert-length solo opus took shape during her Guggenheim Fellowship for Music Composition in 2008-09. Commentary by noted author Farah Jasmine Griffith and art films by famed photographer Carrie Mae Weems beautifully illuminate Allen's meditative jazz masterpiece.

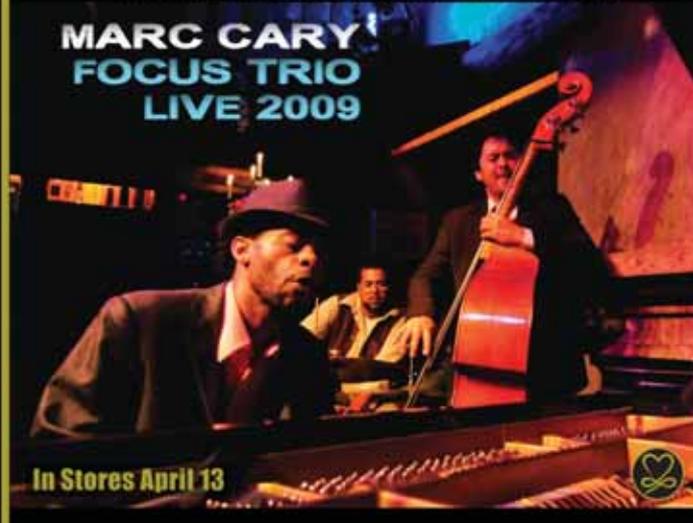


"His piano style hints of Horace Silver and Sonny Clark, with a sprinkle of Jaki Byard's zany wit." – *DOWNBEAT*



Lagos Blues is a rare gift to the jazz world, documenting for the first time the pure joy of be-bop, gospel, and blues influenced pianist/composer Antonio Ciacca's powerful long-term musical relationship with sax legend Steve Grossman. Grossman, who rose to fame in the 1970s through incendiary and groundbreaking sessions with Miles Davis, joins Ciacca's deft ensemble (Stacy Dillard, Kengo Nakamura & Ulysses Owens) to swing with impeccable style on this historic disc.

Profiled in *DOWNBEAT* as one of the "most multidimensional players of keyboards today"

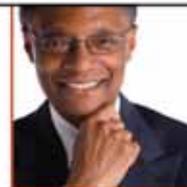


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Game Changer

Saxophonist Ted Nash's disc marks new direction for the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra

Saxophonist Ted Nash performing with the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra

FRANK SEHARTJAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER

At the beginning of March, the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra (JLCO) set out on a tour much like any other—a 21-concert, 19-city sojourn that launched in Washington, D.C., and would take the group across the United States. But this event signified an important transition in the Jazz at Lincoln Center business model.

For the first time since *Big Train*, from 1999, JLCO was backing a new CD, *Portraits In Seven Shades*, a kaleidoscopic suite by saxophonist Ted Nash, on its eponymous signature label, also brand-new, to be distributed in both physical and digital form through the Orchard, a publicly traded mega-aggregator of independent labels that holds close to 14,000 jazz titles. Not inconsequentially, *Portraits* is the first-ever JLCO release devoted to original music by a band member not named Wynton Marsalis (*Don't Be Afraid* [Palmetto], from 2003, comprises Ronald Westray's arrangements of Charles Mingus repertoire).

"The band is an institution, and to be viable, the institution has to grow," Marsalis said. "I was one of the founders, so at first it was based on me. As we've refined the sound and concept, we've incorporated more people into our voice."

Partly due to this policy, the orchestra's identity is less dependent on the presence of its most celebrated figure, who positions himself not facing the band, but in the trumpet line. To wit, JLCO didn't skip a beat on the several occasions between 2004 and 2006 when a recurring lip inflammation sent Marsalis to the sidelines, and it has sold out several Rose Theater concerts—most recently a Carlos Henriquez-led homage to Dizzy Gillespie and Tito Puente—in which he did not participate.

During a 2005 tour of Mexico, Marsalis commissioned Nash—whose prior contributions to the band book included charts on such repertoire as "My Favorite Things," "Tico,

Tico," Wayne Shorter's "Fe-Fi-Fo-Fum," and Ornette Coleman's "Kaleidoscope" and "Una Muy Bonita"—to compose a "big form piece" around a theme of his choosing. Nash decided to base each chart on his response to a different painting from the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, with which JLCO has fostered a reciprocal relationship. Allowed to absorb MOMA's holdings on various off-hours visits, Nash eventually winnowed down to works by Claude Monet, Salvador Dali, Henri Matisse, Pablo Picasso, Vincent Van Gogh, Marc Chagall and Jackson Pollock.

In imparting to each movement its own flavor, Nash wields a vivid palette of orchestral and rhythmic color. On "Monet," a lilting, impressionistic work in 3/4, he juxtaposes higher-pitched instruments with the bass, extracting beautiful colors from the trumpets by deft use of various mutes. Violin and accordion infuse "Chagall" with a klezmer feeling,

Riffs



Wild Wertico: Drummer Paul Wertico is now hosting a radio show, “Paul Wertico’s Wild World of Jazz,” on Chicago radio station 87.7FM, WLFM. Although a smooth-jazz station, Wertico’s show will include traditional and other formats. **Details:** wlfm877.com

Bolden Tribute: Composer Dave Lisik has created a 10-movement orchestral work celebrating the life of Buddy Bolden. The recording, *Coming Through Slaughter* (Galloping Cow), features Tim Hagans, Donny McCaslin and Luis Bonilla. **Details:** gallopingcowmusic.com

Clayton Moves: Pianist Gerald Clayton’s CD, *Two-Shade*, which had been available through ArtistShare, has been re-released through EmArcy. **Details:** umusic.com

Brother Ray Returns: Ray Charles’ 1960s and ’70s jazz albums have been reissued as a two-disc compilation, *Genius + Soul = Jazz* (Concord). The collection includes the 1961 album of the same name, as well as the followups, *My Kind Of Jazz*, *Jazz Number II* and *My Kind Of Jazz Part 3*. **Details:** concordmusicgroup.com

Adult Trad Camp: The first annual New Orleans Traditional Jazz Camp For Adults will be held Aug. 1–6 in the city’s Bourbon Orleans Hotel. Along with lectures and lessons, the camp will include a birthday celebration for Louis Armstrong at Preservation Hall. Faculty includes trumpeter Connie Jones and vocalist Banu Gibson. **Details:** neworleanstradjazzcamp.com

RIP, Dankworth. British saxophonist Sir John Dankworth died on Feb. 6. He was 82. Dankworth, who worked with Nat King Cole, Oscar Peterson and Ella Fitzgerald, also composed the scores for numerous British films and television shows. His wife, and performing partner, singer Cleo Laine, survives him.

while he opens “Picasso” with a distillation of a Spanish progression, sandwiching a long section in which Nash transfuses Cubist aesthetics into notes and tones by deploying McCoy Tyner-esque fourths as “an integral component of the thematic material, the harmony and the voicings.”

On “Pollock,” Nash emulated the abstract expressionist’s paint-splattering techniques by conjuring piano fragments and coalescing them into a line that evokes a jagged Herbie Nichols theme, while giving the blowing section an open Ornette Coleman-like quality with background passages composed of unassigned note-heads. He conjures the melted clocks and parched mise en scene of Salvador Dali’s “The Persistence of Memory” with a 13/8 groove, melodic tonalities that evoke what he calls “a lost creature searching,” and simultaneous improvised solos on trumpet and alto on which the lines flow one into the other.

Like Marsalis, Nash, now 50, blossomed early, a “young lion” before the term became marketing vernacular. The son of eminent Los Angeles studio trombonist Dick Nash and the namesake nephew of studio woodwind player Ted Nash, he moved to New York at 18, after spending much of his teens working for Lionel Hampton, Quincy Jones, Don Ellis and Louis Bellson. Before signing up with the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra, as it was known until 2007, Nash accumulated a resume marked by consequential stints with the Mel Lewis Orchestra, Toshiko Akiyoshi, Gerry Mulligan, the Carnegie Hall Big Band and various configurations of the New York’s Jazz Composers’ Collective. On *Portraits*, Nash draws vocabulary from all these experiences, not neglecting the predilections of each JLCO member when they improvise and play ensemble.

“JLCO has a distinctive quality, not necessarily in the older styles of music that we’ve received the greatest exposure for playing, but in the stuff we’re writing now and play in New York or on the road,” Nash said. “With Mel, we’d swing on Thad Jones and Bob Brookmeyer, and then open up the solos so it became a kind of quartet. Here the solos are less extended, and seem more to address the music; everyone is committed to making a statement from beginning to end of a piece. The ensemble becomes almost its own voice—not the clean style of the ‘New Testament’ Basie band, but more like Ellington’s approach, with different timbres, different individuals.

“There’s a soulful feeling, a support system I’ve never felt before, like a quest for truth,” Nash continued. “We cover more ground than any band I’ve been with, too—Wynton’s opuses like *All Rise* and *Congo Square*, stuff that’s completely free and out there, stuff that’s the very beginning of jazz.”

Perhaps the sprawling, impossible-to-pinpoint scope of JLCO’s repertoire is a reason why it has not translated its enviable worldwide

visibility and Marsalis’ enormous prestige into strong unit sales on prior recording projects. The institution hopes to ameliorate this situation in their partnership with the Orchard by using its international digital network—it services 700 stores and has representatives in 25 countries—to effectively target their buyers. With *Portraits*, this entailed securing placements on such usual-suspect store pages as iTunes, eTunes, Amazon and bn.com, as well as international outlets like Fnac and Virgin. Furthermore, in the weeks leading up to the release, Nash did considerable promotional activity, while the Orchard conducted outreach and contests via social media—email lists, Facebook, Twitter, the Jazz at Lincoln Center and MOMA subscriber bases.

“Everything in the digital world works the same way,” said Richard Gottehrer, the Orchard’s co-founder and chief creative officer, who knew the ancien regime as a songwriter (“My Boyfriend’s Back”), producer (“Hang On Sloopy”), label-owner (Sire) and talent manager (Blondie, The Go-Gos, Joan Armatrading). “You try to engage the fans, and the fans become the vehicle for spreading the word as opposed to radio.”

“We’re classic long-tail territory,” said Adrian Ellis, JLC’s executive director. “Jazz is niche music, and clearly, the wider the distribution of your catalog, the greater chance that your fans around the world can find it.”

Although the label’s primary purpose is to exploit its massive archive, comprising every JLC concert over the past two decades, JLC intends to make full use of its on-site studio and recording facilities to document new work going forward in a timely manner. Ellis estimates four to five releases each year; the format decisions will be key to perceived sales potential.

Neither Ellis nor Ken Druker, JLC’s director of intellectual property, were prepared to state what the next releases would be.

“We’re working through the rights issues, the mixing and mastering,” Ellis said. “The Orchard appears to offer an easy, cost-effective distribution route for getting things out at an appropriate pace.”

What is clear is that Jazz at Lincoln Center is in the digital marketplace for keeps.

“I believe in the ultimate integration of all aspects of what you do,” said Marsalis, whose own separate deal with the Orchard stipulates that they will co-produce as well as distribute his projects. “We’re a non-profit, and we create nothing but content all the time. We have an opportunity to use that content to expand our audience, to turn people around the world on to jazz, and raise money. Our dream was to have a space—I call it a ‘cloud’—where there’s radio, video and digital content, which can be streamed, downloaded, or purchased. The money we make can go directly back into providing some type of public service.”

—Ted Panken

Germany's Jazzahead Builds On International Networks

Although Germany's Jazzahead started back in 2006, two years before bankruptcy shuttered the International Association of Jazz Educators conference, this organization now stands poised as one of the largest jazz business meetings on the planet. Though smaller than the IAJE event and lacking the emphasis on jazz education, this year's installment of Jazzahead, to be held in Bremen April 22–25 in the city's Congress Centrum, has become an increasingly valuable platform for jazz professionals of all stripes to meet face-to-face. There's a large exhibition hall, conferences and symposiums, and a mini festival with more than 40 short concerts, with a clear focus on young European musicians (program information is listed on jazzahead.de).

The event is the brainchild of Peter Schulze, a veteran of German radio and a respected festi-

these people we only have spoken to on the phone," said Per-Kristian Rekdal, of the Oslo booking agency Mussikprofil. "It is often easier to be open and honest when you first have met people, and then we can speak more freely and relaxed next time."

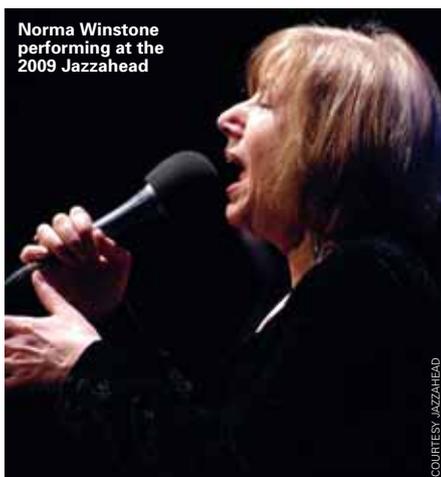
Huib van Riel, who programs Amsterdam's prestigious Bimhuis, concurs: "Meeting many professionals face-to-face was valuable and productive. I had a number of first time meetings,

both with relatively new contacts and some I've worked with for many years."

Last year's event attracted about 5,000 attendees from more than 30 countries, up from 3,000 in 2006.

"We do not want to expand it too much," Schulze said. "You have to control your program. And you hardly hear any mainstream music here, which is what so many festivals are all about."

—Peter Margasak



val organizer, and Hans Peter Schneider, director of Messe Bremen, the city's trade organization. Schulze had been lobbying to create a German Jazz Meeting, an idea inspired by the Dutch Jazz Meeting as a showcase for jazz talent from the Netherlands, but it came to life as something bigger.

"The basic idea of Jazzahead is that we should put jazz at the center," Schulze said. "These kinds of exhibitions, like Womex, Midem, or Popkomm—they all had jazz at a certain time, but it kind of faded out after a couple of editions. We wanted to put jazz in the center to see what we can do from inside."

In order to open up potential audiences, Schulze has also presented some tangential symposiums that borrow ideas from jazz, despite being worlds apart.

"This past year we had a medical symposium with 150 doctors on the neurological perception of improvisation—how it relates to neurological processes," he said. "They don't relate to jazz at all, but they become a part of it."

Still, networking remains a primary focus.

"For us booking agents living high up in the mountains of Norway, it's good that there is a conference where we can attend and meet all

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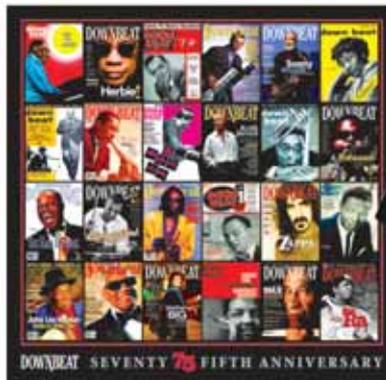
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EUROPEAN SCENE

By Peter Margasak

Jazz's roots in Europe are strong. This column looks at the musicians, labels, venues, institutions and events moving the scene forward "across the pond." For questions, comments and news about European jazz, e-mail europescene@downbeat.com.

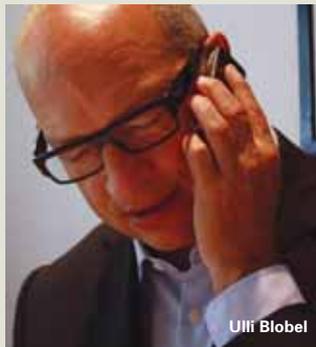
Longtime Jazz Impresario Captures Berlin's Musical Evolutions

German impresario Ulli Blobel has long been an important, sometimes controversial, figure in European jazz—concert promoter, artist manager, booking agent, label owner, record shop proprietor and distributor—stretching back four decades. He started booking jazz concerts in 1969 in his hometown of Peitz, south of Berlin, in what was then East Germany. Occasional concerts grew into Jazzwerkstatt (Jazz Workshop) Peitz, which began in 1979. It's the biggest festival in Germany outside of Berlin's annual event. Blobel was presenting between six and eight concerts annually in addition to the workshop, bringing in artists from throughout the continent.

"Everything was not always in agreement with the official cultural politics of the Communist dictatorship, and sometimes it led to problems, sometimes not," he said.

In 1984, Blobel moved on. In an unusual situation, the government allowed him to move to Wuppertal, in West Germany.

"The Jazzwerkstatt Peitz was forbidden by the Communist



government," Blobel said. "Our outdoor festival was, for their eyes, too big. It had developed into a festival with 3,000 visitors."

Blobel worked extensively with heavies like Peter Brötzmann and Peter Kowald, and began ITM Records—the source of his controversy. Many artists have accused him of releasing music without proper agreements—notably, Anthony Braxton—but as he told writer Francesco Martinelli for the Web zine Point of Departure a couple of years ago, subsequent court cases exonerated him. And it's his current work that's indisputably valuable.

After spending most of the

last two decades working in record distribution, he returned to a more direct involvement, with Jazzwerkstatt Berlin-Brandenburg. He started the organization in 2007 and since then he produces around 120 concerts each year along with three festivals—including the acclaimed European Jazz Jamboree. More recently he opened the Jazzwerkstatt + Klassik record store, which includes a cafe that presents concerts. But to American listeners his most valuable service has been the Jazzwerkstatt label, which has quickly become a crucial documenter of Berlin's thriving contemporary scene (although the label has also released superb archival work from Blobel's Peitz days).

The main thrust is on younger musicians, from staunch avant-gardists to more mainstream players, but there is a focus on veterans (Rolf Kühn, Ulrich Gumpert and Alexander von Schlippenbach) intersecting with their artistic heirs. He's also put out fine recordings by plenty of non-Germans including David Murray, Max Roach and Urs

Leimgruber. Judging from label releases by bass clarinetist Rudi Mahall, alto saxophonist Silke Eberhard and reedist Daniel Erdmann, Berlin's scene is stronger than ever.

"I fall back on the old casts and also inspire new things," Blobel said. "But I am also listening to what the musicians recommend to me. I don't go into the studio with them, but all of the projects are discussed in advance. The artists are then free in their development."

Fifteen new titles on CD and DVD are already planned for the first half of 2010. While Blobel acknowledges that in the current economy the label relies on private money and public funding to survive, he remains wide-eyed about the future, even gearing up to launch two more labels. Klassikwerkstatt/phil.harmonie focuses on chamber music with players from the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra. Morgenland will release Jewish and Eastern European styles. He's also writing a book that should detail his early difficulties presenting jazz behind the Iron Curtain. **DB**

Clark Terry Snags Lifetime Achievement Grammy

The week leading up to the 52nd annual Grammy Awards show unleashed a flurry of activity in Los Angeles at the end of January. One special gathering took place at the Wilshire Ebell Theatre the night before the formal Grammy show, as trumpeter Clark Terry was among the recipients of the Recording Academy's 2010 Lifetime Achievement Awards (that group also included blues legend David "Honeyboy" Edwards).

Recording Academy President and CEO Neil Portnoy praised the honorees for their "outstanding

accomplishments and passion for their craft." He went on to add that the recipients have created a legacy "that has positively affected multiple generations."

Bandleader Gerald Wilson has known St. Louis native Terry since the two were stationed at the Great Lakes Naval Station during World War II, before Terry's star rose in the Duke Ellington and Count Basie orchestras.

"Clark should have got that award years ago," Wilson said. "When I met him, I'd never heard such a complete trumpeter player.



He knew all the chord progressions and the scales, could read and execute anything, and his solos were just great."

"The award was a complete surprise," Terry said from his

home in Pinebluff, Ark. "It makes me feel good about playing jazz all my life. Something about the St. Louis trumpet players always made you feel good about life."

—Kirk Silsbee

Pérez Masterfully Plays, Organizes Panama Jazz Festival

At some point during the seventh annual Panama Jazz Festival, it became clear that Danilo Pérez's primary instrument was Panama itself, and he played it like a master. Invariably clad in the blue vest indicating his status as a UNICEF goodwill ambassador, Pérez—a tireless lobbyist for the cause of music as a tool for social change—seemed to be everywhere in his native Panama City during the event (which ran Jan. 11–16). He carried that message from the stage of the ornate Teatro Nacional to a meeting with the president of the Panamanian Congress to the Panama Canal, where he pressed the button that opened the gates of the Pacific-side locks at a private ceremony.

Pérez shared that latter distinction with Roger Brown, president of Berklee College of Music, who announced the formation of the Berklee Global Jazz Institute (BGJI), a program headed by Pérez that teaches students with a multi-cultural scope.

At a gala concert at the Teatro Nacional, the torch was passed in dramatic fashion from the BGJI faculty to its students. After opening with a spirited “Star Eyes,” an all-star quintet composed of the new program’s instructors (Pérez, Joe Lovano, John Patitucci, Terri Lyne Carrington and Jamey Haddad) followed up with Thelonious Monk’s “Rhythm-A-Ning,” only to be gradually replaced by BGJI students, who took over for the rest of the evening.

For a debut on such a grand stage, the two ensembles formed by the 14 young instrumentalists strode with fairly steady legs. Standouts included saxophonist Hailey Niswanger from Portland, Ore., who wielded a steely soprano on her own composition, “Balance,” and Japanese-Austrian guitarist Kenji Herbert, who exuded a relaxed confidence at the head of the first group.

Though the evening was the official public kick-off for both the festival and the BGJI, both had already been underway for almost three days as a series of clinics at the Panama Canal Authority’s Centro de Capacitaciones de Ascanio Arosemena. On the first day alone, Niswanger and fellow BGJI saxophonist Jesse Scheinin had guided a dozen local reedists through a rudimentary blues, while Patitucci engaged a roomful of



Danilo Pérez

TODDI NORRUM

base aspirants on both acoustic and electric axes, invoking a pedigree of influences from Paul Chambers to James Jamerson.

Patitucci was a constant presence throughout the festival. Music from the bassist’s latest CD, *Remembrance*, made up the bulk of the set at the Teatro Anayansi that began as a trio with Lovano and Carrington but wound up as a quintet with Pérez and Haddad. The set closed with an exuberant run through a new Pérez piece entitled “Panama Galactico,” all the more remarkable for being penned just that afternoon.

Earlier that evening, pianist Ellis Marsalis’ trio set was an amiable stroll through the New Orleans patriarch’s usual fare, drawing heavily from his recent tribute to Monk, whose influence was also felt on a sharply angular “Sweet Georgia Brown.” Son Jason brought intriguing hip-hop inflections to the table, particularly via the jittery groove he applied to Monk’s “Teo.”

After an exhausting 90-minute set by Minnesota-born flamenco guitarist Jonathan Pascual that amounted to little more than a fireworks display of virtuosity both musical and physical (the hefty dancer Jose Molina), it was announced that Dee Dee Bridgewater was unable to make her scheduled appearance. The audience’s collective sigh of disappointment was soon hushed by last-minute replacement Lizz Wright’s a cappella “I Loves You, Porgy,” showcasing the dusky melancholy of her voice. Festival honoree Sonny White, Billie Holiday’s Panama-born accompanist, was honored not with his most notable composition, “Strange Fruit,” but with a warm duet of “Embraceable You” performed by Wright and Pérez.

—Shaun Brady

Winter JazzFest Offers Retort to Genre’s Premature Obituary

Wall Street Journal drama critic Terry Teachout’s words from this past summer hovered over New York’s Bleecker Street on two early January nights, as the sixth annual Winter JazzFest occupied five venues in the West Village.

To stir reaction, more than one artist referred to Teachout’s mid-August assertion that young people aren’t listening to jazz. The crowds—estimated at 3,700 for the 55 acts—were predominantly young and boisterous, cheering loudly for short sets by favorites like Vijay Iyer and Darcy James Argue, and filling the clubs to capacity both nights. Indeed, the festival’s lineup seemed like an in-your-face retort to anyone who thinks that jazz doesn’t transcend generations, with fresh voices like guitarist Mary Halvorson, singer Gretchen Parlato, trumpeter Ambrose Akinmusire and bassist Linda Oh prominently featured.

Playing to an elbow-to-elbow audience at Le Poisson Rouge, Argue’s 18-

piece Secret Society spanned generations of big band orchestration, mixing aggressively rising brass with Sebastian Noelle’s razor-edged guitar, and backing age-old trumpet and reed solo spots with off-center ostinatos or strident backbeats. The band’s sandpaper textures and ability to raise the volume without resorting to high-note clichés place it firmly in a contemporary setting.

Likewise, Iyer and his bandmates Stephan Crump and Marcus Gilmore have updated the sound of the piano trio without losing the critical balance that marked the threesomes of forerunners from Bill Evans to Keith Jarrett. Answering the expectations of the capacity audience, Iyer pulled off a live premiere of MIA’s “Galang”—the jittery, attention-grabbing highlight of his album *Historicity*—despite his stated concern that playing it might result in a repetitive-strain injury. Gilmore, who delivers enough of a wallop to make “Galang” sound like something off The Bad Plus’ playlist, can also churn sinuously, chopping and stirring time in imaginative ways.

Several blocks north, at Zinc Bar, saxophonist



Darcy James Argue's Secret Society

JACK VARTOGIAN/FERROWPHOTOS

Do you Dream in color?

Jaleel Shaw was carving sinuous lines, fueled by his rhythm section of bassist Ben Williams and drummer Johnathan Blake, and abetted by Aaron Goldberg on Fender Rhodes. Back on Bleecker, at the venerable Kenny's Castaways, Halvorson's trio was doing very different things with tempo: swirling storms of hard-strummed chaos, revving up time signatures and leaving them dangling over octave-shifted chords.

Saxophonist Rudresh Mahanthappa—still sweating from his appearance uptown with drummer Jack DeJohnette—provided an exciting set change after Halvorson. With Dan Weiss on minimal drum kit and tablas, and Rez Abassi on guitar, the Indo-Pak Coalition created a seamless synthesis of bebop and South Asian music. The contrast between Mahanthappa's tart alto and Abassi's rounded tone was particularly acute, and Weiss' adroit switches between rhythmic elements created a breathless urgency.

At Sullivan Hall—the least conducive of the venues—Parlato worked the other end of the energy scale, delivering a languid set that seldom rose above an intimate whisper. —James Hale



Chris Chew (left), Robert Randolph and Luther Dickinson

SHIRA YUDKOFF

Reunited Word Emphasizes Tumult Over Groove

The Word's take on gospel bears a closer resemblance to secular pop music than to anything devotional. Thunderous downbeats provide an underpinning for meandering guitar solos that typify a jam-band tribe gathering. The group, which debuted in 2001 with its lone self-titled album release and last toured in 2007, reunited for five dates beginning Dec. 30 at Philadelphia's Theatre of Living Arts.

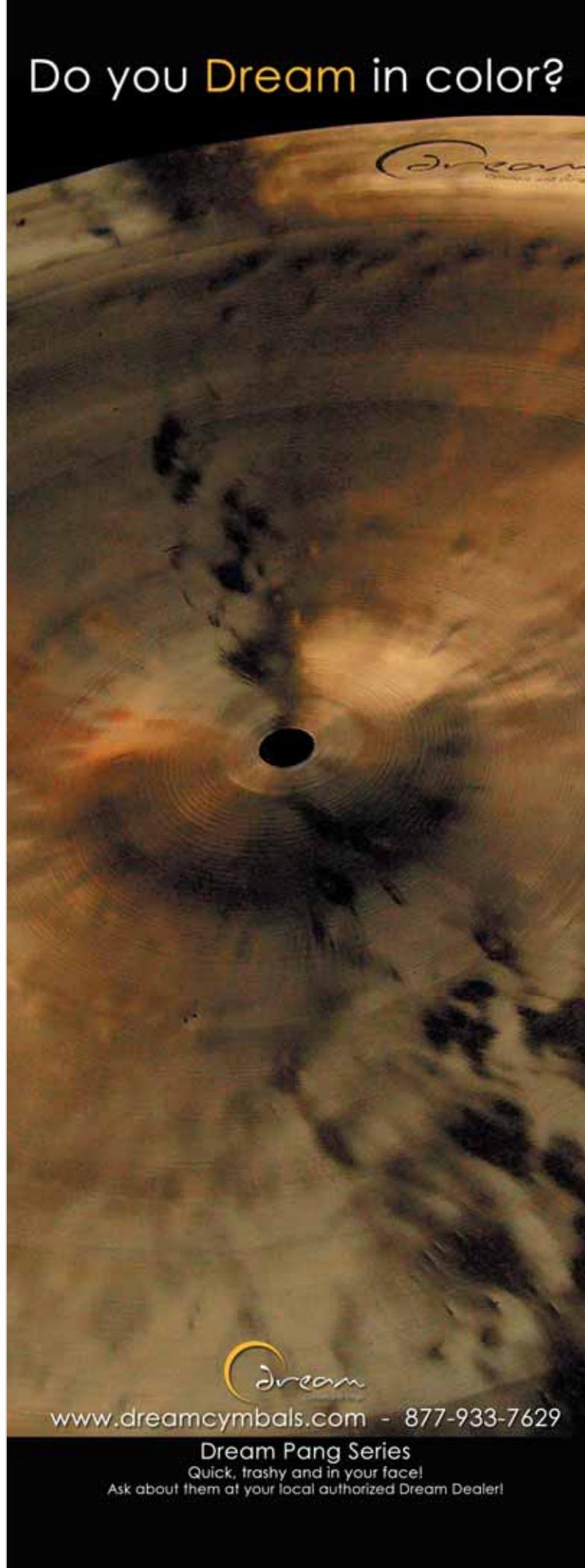
The band's lineup has remained intact. It features the North Mississippi Allstars with two high-profile guests: organ player John Medeski and pedal steel guitarist Robert Randolph.

Much of the repertoire performed during the three-hour concert was similar, but never vapid. The gospel songs functioned as a starting point. Only a few featured vocals; the spotlight stayed on the pairing of Randolph and Allstars guitarist Luther Dickinson. Medeski played only a supporting role.

The Word began the first set with "Stevie." After establishing the groove, the group evoked Gov't Mule and possibly Little Feat. "Trimmed" was lean and suggested a range of blues styles: straightforward country blues at the beginning, the barbed-wire electricity of R.L. Burnside and Junior Kimbrough by the end.

From this point on the instrumentals bled into one another, making it difficult to distinguish one from the next. Some evoked Woody Guthrie, or even a hybrid of Guthrie and James Brown. The formula remained evident even during Randolph's vocal turn on "Glory, Glory." However, the song's spiritual intent was lost in a hailstorm of guitars.

Yet with "Wings," which ended the second set, the band reached beyond this horizon. Dickinson's guitar incorporated modal harmony, creating a trance-like effect as it embarked upon a prolonged crescendo. In the meantime, Randolph manned Cody Dickinson's drum kit as Cody, in turn, donned an amplified washboard. Luther Dickinson then replaced Randolph on drums, and Cody Dickinson traded the washboard for some shakers; the brothers later pounded the drum kit in tandem. —Eric Fine



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Danny Grissett Leader's Languages

Pianist Danny Grissett has called his performance of the Joe Zawinul songbook “a great study.” After playing the repertoire at New York’s Jazz Standard as part of Steve Wilson’s quintet last December, Grissett reflected on one particularly telling moment: After a bravura interpretation of “From Vienna With Love,” a classically flavored ballad, rendered with imaginative voicings and an endless stream of melody, he switched to the Fender Rhodes for “Directions,” sustaining the smoky flow with imaginative textures and strongly articulated rhythmic comp.

“It was challenging to draw from all the periods of Zawinul’s life,” Grissett said. “He wasn’t playing all these styles at one time. His musical thinking changed, as did his life experiences, and the people he worked with and who were influencing him. In the bands I play with—let’s say Tom Harrell—the music is current, what Tom is writing now. Another challenge is that Joe played synth on tunes like ‘A Remark You Made,’ and the sound of the Rhodes is completely different. I’ve written some electric things, which hopefully I’ll have a chance to record. But I’ve written so many things acoustically that are more current.”

Best known to the jazz public as a first-call sideman (Harrell’s steady pianist since 2005, he also performs with Jeremy Pelt, Wilson, David Weiss’ New York Jazz Composers Octet and Vanessa Rubin), Grissett presents a large slice of his acoustic repertoire on three recent Criss-Cross albums. On *Promise* and *Encounter*, he reveals himself as an emerging master of the piano trio with bassist Vicente Archer and drummer Kendrick Scott. Possessing abundant technique, he parses it judiciously throughout, triangulating strategies drawn from Mulgrew Miller, Herbie Hancock and Sonny Clark to tell cogent stories that carry his own harmonic and rhythmic signature. On *Form*, a late 2008 production, he augments that trio with trumpeter Ambrose Akinmusire, saxophonist Seamus Blake and trombonist Steve Davis.

Each territory that Grissett navigated on the Zawinul project correlates to a component of his own personal history. Jazz is not his first language—raised in the South Central area of Los Angeles, Grissett began classical lessons at 5 years old. He remained on that track through high school and into college at California State University, Dominguez Hills. Flutist James Newton put him in touch with Los Angeles pianist Kei Akagi, who gave Grissett a handful of lessons, which he piggybacked into intense



JACK VARTOOGIAN/FRONTROWPHOTOS

analysis of iconic recordings by his sonic mentors. As he completed the first year of a two-year masters program at Cal Arts, he attended the Thelonious Monk Institute (1999–2001), commuting an hour every day to fulfill both obligations. Meanwhile, Grissett was assimilating real-world information on freelance jobs with such California hardcore jazz mentors as drummer Billy Higgins, tenor saxophonist Ralph Moore and trombonist Phil Ranelin. He also had a long-term weekend gig with bassist John Heard and drummer Roy McCurdy.

“I was working at least five times a week pretty steadily,” Grissett said. “Hip-hop and r&b gigs with Rhodes and synth, and a lot of solo piano at private parties. About nine months into the gig with John and Roy, they told me, ‘You’ve got to get out of here and go to New York.’ I knew I’d grow a lot faster and have more opportunities to play original music. I saved a nice chunk of money that would last me four five months—it was always in mind that if things got really hard, I could return.”

Within weeks of his 2003 arrival, Grissett was working steadily with Vincent Herring,

with whom he recorded twice. By early 2004 he was Nicholas Payton’s keyboardist.

“I grew through seeing how flexible his approach was, like a fresh start every night,” Grissett said. “It made me learn the level of concentration it takes to play this music at a consistently high level.”

Grissett continues to flourish in Harrell’s more structured environment.

“Tom doesn’t dictate how we’re going to play, but he writes piano parts, so he usually has something he wants to hear—or some starting point to build on,” Grissett said. “The content is so strong that the notes on the page guide the music; the harmony forces me to play different melodic contours in approaching my own music and standards.”

Ensnared in Brooklyn’s Clinton Hill section and a recent father, Grissett anticipates remaining an East Coaster. “Artistically speaking, I feel comfortable,” he said. “I always feel like I’m a bit behind my peers, but less so now. I want to pool my resources and make something happen as a leader. It’s about time, already.”

—Ted Panken

Dana Hall Illuminating Space

When Dana Hall talks about global connections or musical nuances, his words convey a quiet authority. The drummer's background—which embraced equally intense levels of science and technology alongside music and scholarship—has provided him with a unique perspective on those large and small concepts. And Hall's recent CD debut as a quintet leader, *Into The Light* (Origin), shows how he blends those disparate ideas.

Today, Hall is mainly known for directing the Chicago Jazz Ensemble, playing prominent sideman gigs and teaching at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. But when he first arrived in the Midwest from Philadelphia in the late '80s, it was to study aerospace engineering and percussion at Iowa State University. Hall went on to help design propulsion systems and aircraft for Boeing, later to give up this potentially lucrative career for a riskier life in jazz, but he stresses the internal affinities.

"A certain interest in the minutia comes from studying engineering, which is helpful when you're performing music," Hall said. "Because you're thinking peripherally—in a circular fashion, rather than just what you're playing or another soloist is playing. And I'm interested in creating formulas to come up with something new and interesting, whether it's a flight mechanics problem or a new harmonic progression."

Hall kept that mindset when he left Seattle-based Boeing for New York in 1991 to complete his music degree at William Paterson University. But he also knew that skills, rather than theories, would open doors on the jazz scene. His abilities became clear as he worked with prominent leaders representing a range of generations: from Betty Carter and Ray Charles to Roy Hargrove and Joshua Redman. Although he found these experiences invaluable, Hall felt that a move to Chicago in 1994 would be key to developing his own personality.

"In New York, I could walk down a path and not know where I wanted to go," Hall said. "Be a swinger or on the downtown scene? Down this particular path and play like Milford Graves? Or play like Billy Higgins? Or play like Dana Hall? Moving to Chicago afforded me the opportunity to have that growth."

Chicago's musical community sped up the evolution.



JACOB HANDE

"The first time Von Freeman counted off a fast tempo, no one ever asked me to play that fast before," Hall said. "But I knew he had my back and there was this love, and I never had that in New York."

Numerous opportunities followed—musical and educational. Hall is currently working on his Ph.D. in ethnomusicology at the University of Chicago, where his dissertation is on Philadelphia soul music of the '70s.

"The entire idea of diaspora is central to my thinking about my own music and my own work as a scholar," Hall said. "It's exciting that there's a connection to the music you hear in Senegal to the music that you'd hear in Panama, New York, Chicago or Philadelphia. There are rhythmic and harmonic elements that fuse them together. The more I look at the late Teddy Pendergrass or Otis Redding, I get a sense that it's connected to John Coltrane or Fela Kuti."

In particular, Hall points to combinations of complexity and simplicity throughout African music and in Harold Melvin & The Blue Notes. He's after the same ideals on his compositions, like "The Path To Love" from *Into The Light*.

"There's a singability on the surface, but below the surface there's something going on that has more depth. This sweet and sour, salt and pepper, yin and yang is something I'm trying to illuminate."
—Aaron Cohen



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Players

Luis Bonilla Angst-Free Brass

Luis Bonilla, who boasts a broad range of credits with established bands, has turned his attention to becoming a bandleader in his own right. The trombonist has assembled a group of his peers for the recent album *I Talking Now* (Planet Arts), and he has already booked studio time for a sequel.

“It’s complete commitment to my own groups from this point on,” Bonilla said. “I was extremely busy freelancing and playing with a lot of different people, and I just can’t spread myself so thin now.”

I Talking Now (Planet Arts) features Bonilla’s working quintet of pianist Arturo O’Farrill, drummer John Riley, bassist Andy McKee and tenor saxophonist Ivan Renta. The album grew out of associations with musicians in the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra, O’Farrill’s Afro-Latin Jazz Orchestra and various Charles Mingus tribute bands. Bonilla’s career encompasses Latin music and free-jazz, but the new release focuses mostly on hard-bop while showcasing the leader’s big, brassy tone and store of ideas as a soloist.

“For the way I like to present music, the intent is to be as accessible as it is challenging to not only the musicians themselves, but [also for] the listener,” Bonilla said. “It’s really unapologetic—just constant risk-taking. Just five confident voices with the sole intent of really playing together and really trying to get a big band sound from a small group setting.”

Bonilla freely admits to eclectic tastes extending well beyond jazz, not to mention his chosen instrument. He refers to Led Zeppelin as his favorite band, and also expresses a penchant for everything from Brazilian music to American funk bands.

“It’s not that I’m speaking different languages—it’s the same language, just different dialects,” he said. “If we limit ourselves to one kind of music, then we may be shortchanging ourselves. I always was taught and encouraged to create my own scene and create my own voice. The fact that I’m so versatile makes it even better because I carry a little bit of each of those influences, whether they’re rock, funk, jazz, soul, salsa or Brazilian.”

Saxophonist Donny McCaslin admires Bonilla’s technique, especially how he applies it.



SURESH SINGARATHAM

“He’s a very natural player; you never feel him laboring on the instrument,” said McCaslin, who has known Bonilla since high school. “He’s got so much talent that there are many things that are going to be possible for him.”

Bonilla attended California State University, Los Angeles, and gained experience in salsa bands and big bands (including Gerald Wilson and Pancho Sanchez) during the latter half of the ’80s. He moved to New York in 1991, where he earned a graduate degree at Manhattan School of Music. He attracted attention while performing with Lester Bowie’s Brass Fantasy, and by the late 1990s had become a first-call sideman with the likes of McCoy Tyner, Willie Colón, Astrud Gilberto, Toshiko Akiyoshi and Dave Douglas.

Bonilla teaches at Temple University, Manhattan School of Music and Queens College. His first two albums, *Pasos Gigantes* (1998) and *¡Escucha!* (2000), focus on more traditional Latin jazz repertoire. In 2007 he released *Terminal Clarity* (2007), a live recording that combines Latin music with free-jazz. The group, Trombonilla, has performed sporadically since the late 1990s with a host of musicians.

Bonilla’s quintet, *I Talking Now*, features a set lineup, a first for Bonilla.

“The true benefit of using musicians who are this experienced and who are my peers is they understand my music and they understand my intent,” Bonilla said. “It puts me at ease, which greatly benefits the music because I’m no longer distracted by unnecessary drama.” —Eric Fine

Steve Colson Self-Sufficient Gifts

Even though pianist Steve Colson has yet to become a household name after more than 30 years in jazz, the title of his latest disc, *The Untarnished Dream* (Silver Sphinx), speaks volumes. The name comes from one of the song's lyrics about life itself as a gift.

"A lot of time we can get too wrapped up in the commercial aspect of music and life," Colson said. "We don't really stop and appreciate life and being able to share with others."

Colson has been sharing his musical gifts with a wide cast of musicians, thanks, in part, to his long involvement with the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM). For his new disc, Colson called bassist Reggie Workman and Andrew Cyrille to play along with his singing wife, Iqua Colson. Casting a balance between post-modern bebop and free-jazz, Colson recasts songs that were originally composed for larger ensembles. He says that when he writes, he often hears elaborate harmonies and contrapuntal melodies that call for different voices. "In terms of thinking of the content, I try to get the most bang for the buck," he said.

The AACM also taught Colson self-sufficiency, a quality that comes through nearly every aspect of *The Untarnished Dream*, from

the disc artwork that the pianist created to his ownership of the label (along with his wife).

"The AACM taught us that you have to pursue your own vision even if you have to fight an uphill battle," Colson said.

Colson was familiar with uphill battles, though, before joining the AACM in 1972. When he arrived in Chicago from East Orange, N.J., in 1967, he attended Northwestern University to study classical piano during a time when the institution was deciding to allow more black students on its campus. The school didn't have a program for jazz when he arrived.

"You couldn't practice jazz at Northwestern," Colson laughed. "If someone heard me playing jazz in the practice room, they would bang on the door."

Still, he met some kindred spirits, most notably Chico Freeman, with whom he formed a jazz band that played at various local events. It was with Freeman in 1968 that he first discovered the AACM through a poster advertising a Fred Anderson concert.

Colson and Freeman explored more AACM concerts and eventually joined. At the same time, Northwestern started a jazz program. Colson remembers trying out: the director asked him to play a song and improvise but it



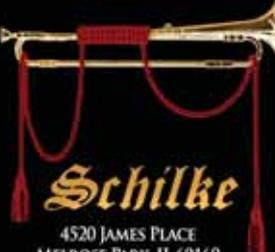
SHARON SULLIVAN RUBIN

couldn't be a blues. Colson played Bobby Timmons' "Dat Dare" and was disqualified because the teacher said to not play the blues.

"But it wasn't a blues tune—it's bluesy," Colson said. "This guy didn't know the difference between a blues and a popular song structure. One of the guys who did get in the band would call me and ask how to play the piano changes on the charts that they had."

Which is something else he can laugh about now. —John Murph

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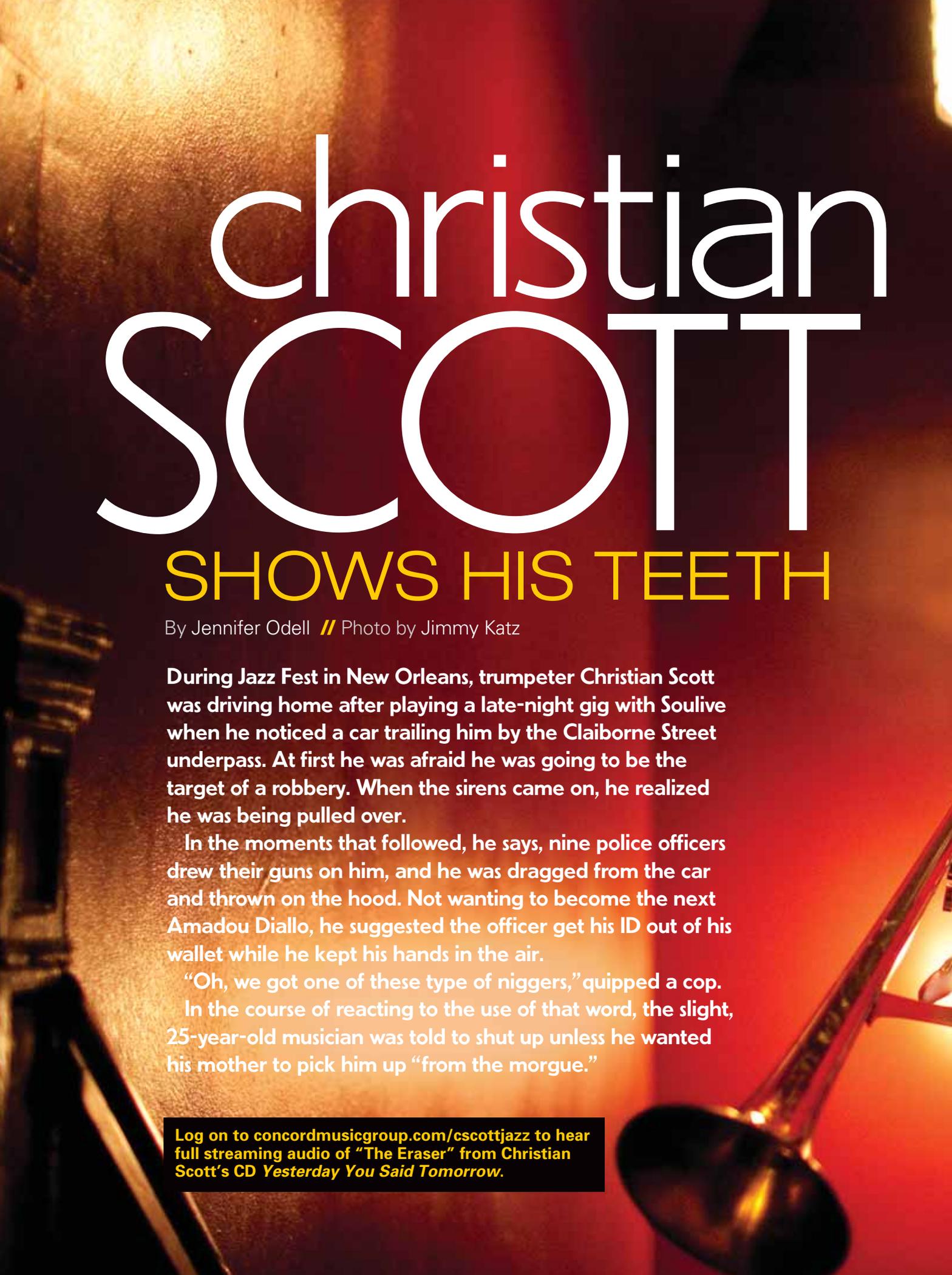
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christian SCOTT

SHOWS HIS TEETH

By Jennifer Odell // Photo by Jimmy Katz

During Jazz Fest in New Orleans, trumpeter Christian Scott was driving home after playing a late-night gig with Soulive when he noticed a car trailing him by the Claiborne Street underpass. At first he was afraid he was going to be the target of a robbery. When the sirens came on, he realized he was being pulled over.

In the moments that followed, he says, nine police officers drew their guns on him, and he was dragged from the car and thrown on the hood. Not wanting to become the next Amadou Diallo, he suggested the officer get his ID out of his wallet while he kept his hands in the air.

“Oh, we got one of these type of niggers,” quipped a cop.

In the course of reacting to the use of that word, the slight, 25-year-old musician was told to shut up unless he wanted his mother to pick him up “from the morgue.”

Log on to concordmusicgroup.com/cscottjazz to hear full streaming audio of “The Eraser” from Christian Scott’s CD *Yesterday You Said Tomorrow*.



Two years later, Scott is fighting back—and he's using music to do it.

"It stands for Ku Klux Police Department," he said, explaining "K.K.P.D.," the title of the first track on his new album, *Yesterday You Said Tomorrow*.

The disc is Scott's third album for Concord and maybe the first one on which he lives up to that ineffable "potential" his critics have pined for since his 2005 debut, *Rewind That*. That album polarized audiences, earning him a Grammy nomination on the one hand, and on the other, reviews like the New York Times' accusation that his "toothless fusion ... never coalesces into a worthy showcase for his considerable talent."

Five years later, Scott's music is anything but toothless—a point affirmed last summer when he won the Rising Star–Trumpet category of DownBeat's International Critics Poll, well before *Yesterday You Said Tomorrow* was released.

"K.K.P.D." is somewhat of a benchmark for what he's done with the entire album, which is to use music the way Keith Haring used graffiti—as a soapbox.

He puts it a different way, of course.

"The impetus behind the [album] was to illuminate the fact that the same dilemmas that dominated the social and musical landscape of the '60s have not been eradicated, only refined,"

he said from a London hotel room in November, summarizing a statement he was writing about the album for his team at Concord.

"The record seeks to change this dynamic by re-engaging these newly refined, pre-existing problems in our social structure in the same ways that our predecessors did."

With an opening track about racial profiling and discrimination, a mid-point tune about Proposition 8 and a closing aria about the legacy of Roe vs. Wade, Scott, 27, meets the challenge he set for himself and then some.

His meticulously executed musical choices give the whole album an almost operatic quality, as dramatic tension unfolds between guitar and drums or piano and bass, while Scott's unnervingly controlled trumpet sounds an alarm that either polarizes or lulls the other parts into a comforting common ground.

In retelling the story of his near-arrest in New Orleans, Scott says he constructed personas for each of the parts on "K.K.P.D." Matt Stevens' guitar alludes to a strain of country music popular decades ago in Tennessee, where the Klan was founded. In the song's intro, a country-tinged melody brushes up somewhat disruptively against Jamire Williams' West African drum rhythms before the lull of Scott's horn trains your ears to disregard the earlier musical conflict.

This is all delivered with the hauntingly

deep tone that initially caught critics' attention back in 2005.

"I wanted to create a palette that referenced the '60s' depth and conviction and context and subject matter and sound," he said. "But in a way that illuminated the fact that my generation of musicians have had the opportunity to study the contributions of our predecessors, thus making our decision-making process musically different.

"That dynamic was then coupled with superimposition of textures from our era, so that textures from my generation were sort of married with the ones from the past.

"And then the last part, which is probably of paramount importance, was that I wanted it to be recorded as if it was in the '60s."

As Scott reads from the beginnings of a prepared statement over the phone, a quote from an interview that took place some 18 months earlier—when he'd been shooting equally high as far as the ambition of his thoughts about the new music—comes to mind. "If I can get this [album] to be what I want it to be," he'd said, "I feel like it can change the scope of everything that's happening."

Whether the album will affect the direction of new music in general remains to be seen. But what stood out back in 2008 as he chatted informally at a Thai restaurant near his Brooklyn



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apartment is even more apparent now. Scott's appreciation for the ability of music to tell stories and to make social commentary is rare, and the way in which he follows through on those ideas is unique.

Scott's company, like his music, has a comfortable intensity to it—an easy warmth that wins you over even when he's on a mission to change your mind about something.

Though gracious and polite, Scott presents his point of view with the same confident authority he puts into his live shows. And even when what he says rubs folks the wrong way,

his honest expression comes with a grain of erudite salt.

Take his position that the neo-classicist movement has such an overbearing presence in jazz education and contemporary music that young players are discouraged from trying to move past it. Yes, that means he thinks it's time to find a new, post-Wynton Marsalis era.

But his new album is at its core a contemporary riff on bebop and post-bop. And so was Marsalis' self-titled 1981 release.

"He's very diligent in trying to learn and do new things," said McCoy Tyner, who featured

Scott as a special guest on the road in 2008. "He's considerate of the tradition of the music and what happened before and moving ahead to what's happening in the future."

Tyner's right. The second track on *Yesterday You Said Tomorrow* is a cover of Radiohead's "The Eraser," but its washed production—courtesy of Rudy van Gelder—gives it a sepia-toned sound that matches the gritty quality of the otherwise all-original album.

"I know he's made some comments about certain things," Tyner says. "He's opinionated, but he has a right to have his own opinion. I give him credit for that. It's reflected in his playing."

Tyner and Scott met in 2006, when the young trumpeter was tapped for Tyner's *The Story Of Impulse*. Tyner heard something in Scott's sound that reminded him of "what cats were doing in the '60s," as Scott tells it.

Scott began bouncing ideas off Tyner, while Tyner shared with him new ways of thinking about harmonics. Scott was already preparing to record the material on *Yesterday You Said Tomorrow* back then, and knew he wanted an analog aesthetic—in Scott's words, "visceral, dirty type of recording"—that would meld harmonic tension with some of the post-rock concepts that appeared on his 2007 release *Anthem*. The time he spent with the pianist seemed to turn on a few lightbulbs on his creative path to the new release.

"I like that spirit he has, his dedication to music; he's really in love with what he's doing," Tyner says. "He knows the traditions that exist in this music."

Indeed, Scott came up steeped in a world of musical traditions. After his mother, Cara Harrison, heard her grade school-aged son correctly identify the sound of a coin dropping to the floor of their New Orleans home as "F-sharp," she says she knew he was bound for a future in music, like so many others in her family.

It wasn't long before most of Scott's mornings started out with a wake-up call from his grandfather, Big Chief Donald Harrison Sr., directing him to report to the kitchen table with his trumpet to perform "Bag's Groove" and other tunes. If he missed a note, his grandfather, a folk singer and an important cultural force in the Mardi Gras Indian community, would sing the bar to Scott, who would play it back until he got it right. The next morning, the ritual would repeat.

The name Harrison is one of music royalty in New Orleans. Scott's mother has been a singer all her life. His maternal grandmother played piano and clarinet. His uncle is the acclaimed saxophonist Donald Harrison Jr. And his aunt Cherice Harrison-Nelson runs the Mardi Gras Indian Hall of Fame, a cultural center devoted to one of the most unique and influential elements of the city's heritage.

Soon after he got his start in music, Scott began gigging regularly with Donald Harrison

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Jr. He attended NOCCA, New Orleans' celebrated performing arts school, and went on to graduate from Berklee's six-year double degree program in just two years.

Despite his background and strong ties to the Crescent City, Scott, who now lives in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, is honing a musical identity that transcends region. A student of musical history and New Orleans culture, he is focused nonetheless on making something new.

While on tour with his uncle as a young teenager, Scott learned how to use warm air to create a fuzzy, Ben Webster-like tone. That idea fell dormant until one of his teachers, Clyde Kerr, echoed similar advice. Finally, one day (his birthday, Scott remembers), he sat in the practice room at school trying to hear what tone he was going for. "I started thinking about trying to make the horn sound like my mom's voice," he says. "And that did it. Boom."

"He means my singing voice," says his mother.

The result is a tone that breathes warmth and emotion. His improvisation seems to bask in the tangle of what's in his heart, while full compositions are often based on events of the past, whether historic or from his own life.

The apocalyptically dark "Anthem" tackled the aftermath of hurricanes Katrina and Rita in his 9th Ward neighborhood.

When Scott performed "Died In Love"—which he wrote in memory of a friend he lost to gun violence as a child—onstage at Newport in 2008, he was moved to tears. Afterward, a handful of reporters questioned his professionalism for having cried.

"If I can't be vulnerable in front of listeners, then this is not for me," he said later.

Such strong emotions likely have something to do with Scott's affection for branching outside of the jazz tradition: He has recorded with Prince and performed with Mos Def and Jill Scott.

DJ Logic first saw Scott perform in New Orleans and was immediately taken by his open-minded approach to music, and his ability to reflect a love of jazz, hip-hop and music from other parts of the world in his writing. Logic invited Scott to sign onto the Global Noize project he was recording with keyboardist Jason Miles. The turntablist was moved by the trumpeter's emotive sound and the deep feeling that came through in his performances on two tracks. "I could hear that in his playing," Logic recalled. "You could close your eyes and hear something. He would take me on a journey, and I could just follow it."

Director Mitch Glazer is hoping Scott's playing has the same effect on audiences for *Passion Play*, a new film starring Mickey Rourke as a hard-scramble trumpeter who falls in love with a winged woman (Megan Fox) as he tries to dodge a gangster (Bill Murray).

Scott, who also appears in the film and on the soundtrack, has been enlisted to teach Rourke to

appear to be playing the trumpet.

In the last few years, Scott's music has also been tapped for the films *Leatherheads*, starring George Clooney, and the indie blockbuster *Rachel Getting Married*.

But Scott hardly seems star-stuck by these opportunities. He's prone to staying up most of the night working, which may be one reason for the effervescent honesty that tends to flow from him. He's decidedly more interested in the group dynamics of his band—which includes Williams on drums, guitarist Matt Stevens, bassist Kristopher Funn and Milton Fletcher on piano—

than he is in the gigs with movie stars.

Scott almost seems to relish his glimpses into the dark side of human nature, whether on a personal or political level, and that may be because it incites his creative impulses in such a focused way.

After all, his mother says she always encouraged her children to use art to rise above hardship.

"My mother taught me if you see an injustice, you speak up," Cara Harrison said. "You're never supposed to lie down in the face of adversity. It's about how you overcome it." **DB**



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KURT ROSENWINKEL MAKING MAGIC

By Ted Panken

Late one afternoon last September, Kurt Rosenwinkel sat on a sofa in his New York hotel suite, D'Angelico guitar by his side, his feet surrounded by various electronic boxes, guitar strings and sheet music. Clad in a pullover sweater, black jeans and blue worker's cap, Rosenwinkel was awaiting a phone call from his stepfather, who he hoped could state a correct jacket size to give the wardrobe department of *The Jimmy Fallon Show*. The guitarist was preparing for an appearance the following evening with the show's house band in response to a request from bandleader Ahmir "Questlove" Thompson, his classmate and jamming partner at Philadelphia's High School for Creative and Performing Arts during the mid-1980s. Thompson had spontaneously offered the invitation the night before after hearing the first set of Rosenwinkel's weeklong run at the Village Vanguard in support of his new CD release, *Standards Trio: Reflections* (Womusic).

Something about the moment made it impossible to avoid the kind of question the 39-year-old guitarist might face on a show like Fallon's. Which is to say, how does Rosenwinkel deal with the quasi guitar-god stature he commands among post-Generation X jazz devotees, who regard him as a kind of bridge between such Baby Boomer icons as Pat Metheny, John Scofield and Bill Frisell and increasingly visible just-thirties like Mike Moreno and Lage Lund?

Rosenwinkel responded with an anecdote. A few weeks earlier, off the road after a summer of touring, he went to a bar in Berlin, where he teaches guitar and improvisation as a tenured professor at the Jazz Institut, and was engaging in convivial discussion with a fellow patron. At a certain point, his new acquaintance said, "Yeah, so what's your name?"

"Kurt."

"What's your last name?"

"Kurt Rosenwinkel."

"Get out of here! Don't bullshit me!"

"I said, 'Well, I am.' He was like, 'No way. Kurt Rosenwinkel doesn't talk like that!'"

Rosenwinkel laughed. "I don't know how I was talking. I had to show him my credit card, just to shut him up, because he was a pain in the ass."

"People acknowledge me, and it's cool," he continued, directly addressing the matter. "When I first started to hear guitarists I'd influenced, I felt bad inside. I said to myself, 'If this is what people think I sound like, then I'd better practice—if I'm influencing people, I'd better at least be better.' It motivates me, because I see it as a responsibility, in a way. Not a big responsibility. I'm just doing what I'm doing."

What Rosenwinkel has done on *Reflections*, on which he navigates eight ballads culled from various nooks and crannies of jazz and the Great American Songbook, is a point of departure from his musical production of recent years, documented on such widely pored-over albums as *The Remedy* (ArtistShare) and such prior Verve releases as *Deep Song*, *Heartcore*, *The Next Step* and *The Enemies Of Energy*. On these ensemble offerings, comprising predominantly Rosenwinkel's original music, the guitarist sculpts a pan-stylistic world of his own, deploying grooves and lines drawn from rock and urban vernaculars and a distinctive harmonic language informed by the canons of classical music and hardcore jazz. He elaborates his vision with ecstatic, cathartic solos, sculpting the raw materials with high melodic sensibility, executing them with immaculate chops and individualizing them with an instantly recognizable tone defined by his ability to weave both electronic effects and his signifying voice seamlessly into the flow.

During the week at the Vanguard, spurred by

bassist Eric Revis' melodic, resonant lines and drummer Rodney Green's crisply stroked, dynamics-attentive swing patterns, Rosenwinkel followed and expanded the template of *Reflections*. The previous evening, he began the second set with "Backup," a smoldering, medium-groove inner-city blues that debuted on the 1964 Larry Young recording *Inta Somethin'!* There followed a rubato-to-brisk reading of Thelonious Monk's "Reflections" and a tour de force treatment of "Invitation" on which Rosenwinkel stated the melody over a crisp 5/4 vamp before launching into an ascendent declamation. Despite the furious tempo, he allowed each note to ring out clearly, executing multiple, independent lines, phrased unpredictably, as though he and Green were conducting an ongoing rhythmic chess match.

On a rubato intro to "More Than You Know," Rosenwinkel exploited his ravishing tone, allowing the silence to speak, then stated the melody with a Spanish feel. He initiated an improvised dialogue with Revis before morphing into a double-time solo notable for an abundant stream of melodic variation within the line. His solo on John Lewis' bebop-era "Milestones" was surging and idiomatic, while on "When Sunny Gets Blue" he followed another long, abstract intro with a soulful, cut-to-the-chase declamation. He ended the set with Charlie Parker's "Chasin' The Bird," again transforming his guitar into a de facto lap keyboard on which to carve out the contrapuntal phrases necessary to render the song.

In point of fact, over the three-day recording session in Brooklyn Studio last June that resulted in *Reflections*, Rosenwinkel had played similarly diverse repertoire, arriving at the ballads format in the manner of a film director creating a final cut in the editing room.

"It was a big surprise to realize that we had



made a ballad record," he said. "We recorded 20 or 25 songs, about 70 takes. I listened to it all and selected songs I thought were good, with the idea of making a normal standards record where you have a couple of ballads, a couple of mediums and some fast, higher energy things. But as I started to mix, I felt the ballads were the music I wanted to listen to over time. I thought that they had something magical about them, and the other performances, although they were good, weren't necessary to put out. I don't want to put out music that doesn't have magic. And I think that I'm a good judge of whether it has that or not."

After the aforementioned set, Revis opined that for Rosenwinkel to play such repertoire was a sort of reality check for his fan base, which responds more to the esoteric trappings of his tonal personality than to his foundational grounding in the tropes of hardcore jazz. In short, even though he lives abroad, Rosenwinkel, a New York resident from 1992 until 2003, continues to regard himself a New York musician, one "exposed to the history of bebop and modern jazz that I've really only found in New York."

"My music is very otherworldly at times and comes from places that don't have anything to do with the explicit jazz tradition," he said. "But that's just *that* music being true to itself, as every music should be. When I'm playing bebop, which I love, it works because of certain things, the walking bassline and swinging drums played by a drummer who has the wisdom that comes from understanding what Max Roach, Philly Joe Jones and Art Taylor were doing."

He recalled "learning what jazz was" as an underage Philadelphia teenager sitting in at such clubs as the Blue Note and Slim Cooper's Lounge, "where everything was swinging, and the whole audience was dancing, and everybody's feeling really good. That's what I want to draw from when I'm playing swing-based music. Or any music, really—whether I'm playing rock or jazz, the essential ingredient is that it's real, that it reaches out and grabs you, that it hits you where it hurts."

In this regard, Rosenwinkel references as core inspirations Bud Powell ("when I hear him play, I feel the almost tragic beauty of his genius struggling to come out; the soulfulness of his line is almost painful, like he's playing for his life every time") and the obscure Powell acolyte Frank Hewitt, who spent much of the '90s hunkered down at Smalls, three blocks down the street from the Vanguard, mentoring Rosenwinkel and a host of other now-prominent former Smalls habitués.

"People often think of the tradition as some static thing that you can either do or not do," Rosenwinkel said. "But I listened to Frank Hewitt every night, playing bebop in the spirit with which it was played in the '40s and the '50s, reinventing the harmony as it's happening, like a living, magical world where any-

thing is possible. I play piano, and I can understand what people are playing when I watch them. But I watched Frank Hewitt's fingers as he played, and he would play things that I just did not understand. I felt that the secret was not some theoretical thing that he knew and I didn't. I thought it was a secret of soul, a secret of music that doesn't come from theoretical knowledge, but from magical knowledge, magical thought, magical understanding. That's where the life of bebop intersects with my life of playing music and being alive, feeling like it's part of my world, too.

"I experience music in esoteric terms—in terms of energy, and how energy flows either to create harmony or dissonance, or positivity or negativity. As a magical being, I recognize that when I'm performing I can have an energetic effect on the space that I'm in. Sometimes when I go up on stage, I imagine the room being only composed of pluses and minuses. No people, no instruments, no sound system, no lights. Only positives and negatives in the space, and I have the power to change negatives to positives through playing music."

This sounds analogous to ritualistic notions of music-making, in which masters of the idiom develop techniques to perform the function. As Rosenwinkel puts it, "Technique is to get better at those esoteric things—to be able to be a magical being, to manifest energy, manifest the vibrations that you want to put out to express yourself."

Ask Rosenwinkel about his formative influences, and he'll mention Kevin Eubanks, Pat Metheny, John Scofield, Bill Frisell, Tal Farlow and rockers Alex Lifeson and Jimmy Page. But his first-among-equals role model seems to be seven-string guitarist George Van Eps, whom he cites, along with the "Lute Suites" of Bach, as his source for creating multiple independent lines. "The possibilities that Bach's music contains for the left hand are astounding—how it's possible to play a fugue with three lines going in different directions at the same time, all contained within the finger mechanics of the left hand. George Van Eps was also dealing with moving lines inside of chords and cadences within a voice through left-hand finger mechanics. What he and Bud Powell have in common is a thorough and deep knowledge of the way that harmony connects in terms of the inner voices."

Toward this end, Rosenwinkel has made it his custom to gear up with a discreetly fastened clip-on mic that allows him to deploy his voice as a component of his sound. "If I want to bring out a note of a chord after I play it, I can feed it with the voice," he said. "When I started to record during the '90s, I was unhappy with the result of the sound—something was always missing. Then it dawned on me that the voice was part of the sound. While I played, I'd be singing to the sound coming out of the amplifier—I'd intercept it, alter it and make it right.

"If I'm feeling comfortable with my voice, then I can play melodically. But there's an

internal voice as well. In my musical conception, I have realized that physicality is the underlying principle of rhythm, mental focus is the underlying principle of harmony, and the voice—the internal resonance of the voice—is the underlying principle of melody."

It was time for Rosenwinkel to prepare for the evening's gig, but before winding up, perhaps spurred by his impending reunion with Thompson, he reminisced about his teen years in Philadelphia.

"In high school, Ahmir and I would go into a room and jam out, and then extend that and improvise in this [Frank] Zappa-esque way," he recalled. "The idea of improvisation as a pure concept—not even limited to making notes, but just improvising in general—was such an inspiration for me. My mother took me to performances all the time, including one by the Ganelin Trio, a Russian avant-garde group, which had a wonderful effect on me. And WRTI, the great radio station, played amazing music—late Trane and Sun Ra, really dark shit—that opened my mind."

It was again observed that Rosenwinkel and his generational cohort are no longer young, developing musicians, but have themselves evolved into original thinkers.

"Generation X, that's us," he said with a laugh. "Nobody thought we would end up doing anything. I think everyone I know who's my age shared a certain seriousness about the work ethic of what goes into being able to play jazz music. We had a lot of conversations about the generation that followed us, where it seemed a lot of players felt a sense of entitlement—that they could just come to New York and think that if they could play a decent solo, they should automatically be successful as jazz musicians. If that didn't happen, they'd become jaded and put off, and even rebel and stop practicing, or change idioms and become rock players. But I think the generation after that, which includes people like Aaron Parks, Lage Lund, Will Vincent and Lionel Loueke, have the right attitude."

Such crusty, old-school comments notwithstanding, Rosenwinkel seems, for the moment, to have satisfied his aspiration to make a trio statement. "There's so much to do," he said. "I don't want to wait two years between each record. I have too much music that's going to pass by if it's not recorded." He cites a forthcoming release of a big band presentation of his music, an "ethereal" solo-guitars-with-voice project, and a pair of in-progress projects with Black Crowes-Oasis producer Paul Stacy, one addressing Brazilian-flavored music, the other "working on songs I've written with lyrics that I sing."

But these projects are for the future. Summing up the here and now, Rosenwinkel concluded: "Playing on the bandstand with Eric and Rodney has made me grow and fortified my musicality. I'm in the best place possible." **DB**

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BY JOHN MURPH

ROBERT GLASPER IS CHANNELING THELONIOUS MONK SERIOUSLY NOW.

Not musically, necessarily, but visually. As we sit on the dingy furniture inside Soda Bar, a popular Brooklyn dive, Glasper's attire—chocolate corduroy blazer, baggy denim jeans, vintage T-shirt and charcoal driver cap—suits the black boho chic of the Prospect Heights neighborhood. Still, it's difficult to ignore the striking resemblance between 32-year-old Glasper, who's steadily advancing to becoming one of the more recognizable pianists and composers of his generation, and Monk, the iconic modernist of the bebop era.

Perhaps it's the way that the cap frames Glasper's strong, mocha-hued face and scruffy beard that recalls Monk. Or it could be Glasper's large, knowing eyes, wide Cheshire cat smile and brawny physique. "You're not the only person who says that, dude," Glasper laughs, abruptly taking a break from the plate of buffalo wings that he's demolishing. He goes on to explain that even the family members of his girlfriend, who happens to be Monk's great niece, make similar comments. "They even say that our mannerisms are the same."

Had he not become a formidable jazz musician, Glasper could nail a successful career as comedian. In conversation, he's not so much prone to telling knock-knock jokes as he is to enlivening discussions with hysterical asides, reflections and observations. Take, for instance, his thoughts on why he's such a rhythmic pianist. "Just being black," he snaps, with a huge guffaw. "Granted, there are exceptions where some black people don't have rhythm. But the overall consensus is I'm born with it. I didn't practice rhythm. I just know it. When I was in church, Sister Smith was playing the tambourine, killing that shit. That's just some embedded stuff; she didn't have study or practice it."

For all of Glasper's rhythmic agility, though, melody reigns supreme throughout his music. It's an influence from growing up in Houston with his late, gospel-singing and church piano-playing mother, Kim Yvette Glasper, to whom he dedicated his first Blue Note disc, *Canvas* (2005), and whom he saluted on "Tribute" from *In My Element* (2007). "I love melody," he says. "Most of my songs start out as melodies. Then I run to the piano and try to figure out the chords underneath them."

On this chilly, rainy afternoon, Glasper is taking a late lunch break from rehearsing with Maxwell at a studio just spitting distance away. Maxwell, an acclaimed modern soul crooner who has embarked on a major comeback with the release of *BLACKSummers' Night* (Columbia), his first disc in eight years, recruited the pianist after several of Glasper's band members—including drummer Chris Dave and bassist Derrick Hodge—recorded with Maxwell on the disc and later joined the touring band.

"He knows so many people whom I've come in contact over the years," Maxwell says of Glasper. "He's a tour-de-force."



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Since arriving to New York from Houston in 1999—first to attend Manhattan’s New School of Music, then quickly securing gigs with Christian McBride, Terence Blanchard, Mark Whitfield and Russell Malone—Glasper has built a slightly under-the-radar reputation for not only solidifying the bridges between jazz and r&b and hip-hop, but also as a remarkable talent scout. From working with musicians such as Q-Tip, Mos Def, Ali Shaheed Muhammad, Bilal, Meshell Ndegeocello and J Dilla, Glasper has become an A-listener among the r&b and hip-hop cognoscenti. “I’ve always been like that,” Glasper insists. “I’ve never been just a jazz nerd. I’ve always had my hands in different kinds of shit.”

Even while growing up as an only child immersed in gospel, Glasper was attuned to different music. He started pecking at the piano when he was 12 at Houston’s East Wing Baptist Church, which he describes as a small storefront operation near a laundromat. “It might, at the most, have had 15 members on a good Sunday,” he jokes. Oscar Peterson was Glasper’s first jazz hero, after listening to his mother play a Peterson and Ella Fitzgerald recording around the house. By the time he reached 11th grade, he advanced greatly, performing in the grand Brentwood Baptist Church, which had up to 10,000 members. At the same time, he attended Houston’s High School of the Performing and Visual Arts, following in the footsteps of Jason Moran, who graduated in 1991. “Jason left this big legacy,” Glasper recalls. “I was the next guy—especially a black guy—to play piano and jazz and be good.”

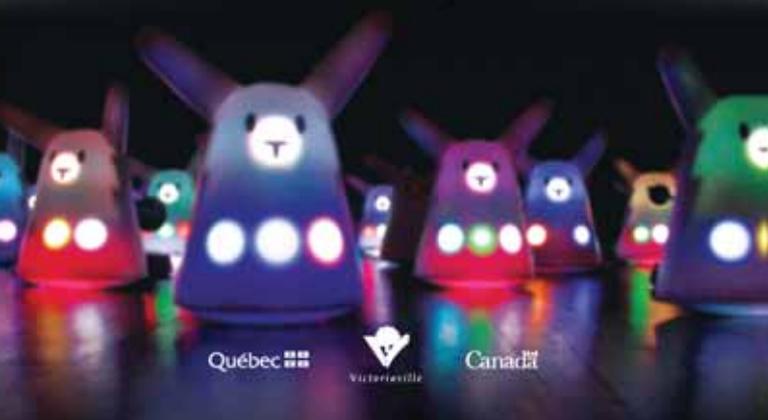
That said, Glasper’s music avoids the pitfalls of pastiche. He employs his gospel, hip-hop, r&b, pop and electronica touchstones more discreetly than others, opting for an organic sensibility that rhythmically can suggest the late hip-hop producer J Dilla, the impressionistic improvisations of Herbie Hancock and the orchestral approach of Erroll Garner. Sometimes, Glasper can become to the piano what Ahmir “Questlove” Thompson of the Roots is to the drums: He can emulate the technological sounds of hip-hop productions organically. He has an uncanny way of sounding like a sampled loop with all the repetitive nuances, much like Thompson can replicate the sound of a drum machine.

Several years ago, Glasper proclaimed that he would be the first to bridge the worlds of jazz and hip-hop successfully. Given that in the last two decades musicians such as Herbie Hancock, Roy Hargrove, Q-Tip, Guru, Soweto Kinch, Soulive, Madlib and a host of others have taken on similar challenges with varying degrees of success, Glasper’s swaggering statement makes for a tall order. “There’s always a key element that is missing, either in hip-hop or the jazz stuff,” Glasper argues. “It’s never a 100 percent [for] each of them. It’s always 100 percent this and 75 percent that. You seldom find guys who are genuinely 100 percent everything.”

When it comes to defining what distinguishes musicians *playing at* hip-hop and those who can actually play it, Glasper cites “the feeling.”

“You can tell when a drummer really plays hip-hop or not,” he says. “It’s the phrasing; it’s the beat; it’s the feel. There’s a feel that’s always there, especially when you get into J Dilla. Dilla is the hardest kind of hip-hop to play. When you play some old-school stuff, everything is kind of on the beat, pretty much like a metronome,” he explains, as he pounds out the static “boom, bap, boom-bap” beat from Afrika Bambaataa’s seminal hip-hop classic “Planet Rock” on the table. “But when you get into stuff where the bass is laid-back, the snare is early [in the groove] and the bass drum is late, and the piano player is in the middle, that’s a feel thing.” He uses hand gestures to illustrate Dilla’s keen spatial awareness and rhythmic ingenuity. “A lot of people try to play hip-hop and it comes out sounding like funk. Just because you put a backbeat to it doesn’t make it hip-hop.”

Glasper often compares his formative years in Houston, where he was often the lonely musical mutt between jazz and gospel camps, to his early years in Gotham City, where he initially found it difficult to discover kindred spirits who could easily play jazz and hip-hop. “Now you have jazzheads who are influenced by hip-hop. And that’s great, but you can tell who’s just jumping on the band-



wagon and trying to do it because it's hip," he says. "There are some hip-hop people who try to mix it up with jazz, but a lot of [the music] comes out corny."

"Then I found these cats and we just ended up linking up together," Glasper continues, referring to Dave, Hodge, bassist Vicente Archer, drummer Damion Reid and saxophonist/vocoder player Casey Benjamin—all of whom have played with Glasper's acoustic trio and his electric ensemble, The Robert Glasper Experiment.

Last year's *Double-Booked*, Glasper's third Blue Note disc, is his first official release documenting the Experiment band. Still, he dedicated the disc's first half to the trio with Archer and Dave because he didn't want to depart dramatically from his previous discs. "I like to do stuff in good timing," he says. "I know hardly any other records that did an acoustic thing and an electric thing the way that I'm doing it."

Indeed, the Grammy-nominated *Double-Booked* exhibits a seamless aesthetic instead of an acoustic (jazz) and electric (hip-hop) dynamic. Listening to how Glasper's tumbling melody falls gracefully across the 7/4 metered groove and behind the beat on the acoustic "Downtime" is like discovering some lost Dilla track. In fact, Glasper references Dilla even more subversively on an inventive reading of Monk's "Think Of One," on which he quotes Ahmad Jamal's "Swahililand," from which, in turn, Dilla borrowed the chord progression when producing De La Soul's 1996 hip-hop joint "Stakes Is High."

Glasper retains the improvisational spark and vigorous dialog endemic of modern jazz on the Experiment half, best illustrated on the dazzling makeover of Hancock's "Butterfly," which bounces with an improvised rhythm informed by a Dilla track. The frisky, Latin-tinged "Festival" finds Glasper engaging in his most invigorating playing on the disc as he switches back and forth between acoustic piano and Fender Rhodes without overdubs.

Glasper says that when he's with the trio, the setting forces him to become the lead voice throughout the set. But with the Experiment, he's afforded more opportunity to nestle inside the groove. "I love just sitting there and not soloing," he says. "That's why I can play hip-hop, because I don't mind not soloing. Jazz cats generally like to play a lot. I can sit and play three chords all day long and not be mad because I love the groove."

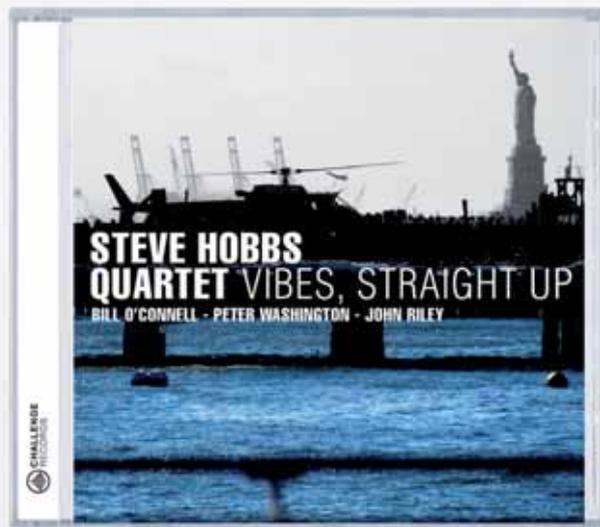
With the Experiment, Glasper often shares the lead voice with Benjamin, who helps bring an electric flavor to the proceedings through his engaging use of the vocoder. "The vocoder was around before [rapper] T-Pain, so it's really a history lesson," he says. "I'm not going to lie: I know some of T-Pain's melodies. Some of his melodies are actually good. The content of his songs is another thing, but I'm not mad at everything he does."

Glasper formed the first edition of the Experiment in 2003. The members were interchangeable, but eventually Glasper found regulars such as Dave, Hodge and Benjamin. "There's a collective approach," Hodge explains. "We don't even have playlists. Songs may float into the next."

Hodge not only praises Glasper as a strong bandleader and pianist but also as a composer. "He's honest," Hodge enthuses. "He's not trying to emulate someone else. I know that sounds cliché, but he's one of those musicians who isn't trying to regurgitate the past. He's not only one of the biggest supporters of jazz, but for the New York music scene, period. He's one of the guys who you'll always see sitting in the back of a club, supporting an artist and many of his heroes. But when you hear Robert's music, you hear that honesty. Sometimes it's hard for people to do that after checking out so much of other people's music."

"I always try to be myself in everything I do," Glasper reflects. "I think that's where my individuality comes from. You have to learn the differences between all kinds of music. Learn the differences and be able to play differences, then let it all influence you. I don't ignore any part of what I heard growing up or anything else that's a part of me. I just stay open. When you let music lead you, you go to places that you've probably never thought of. Music is way smarter than us." **DB**

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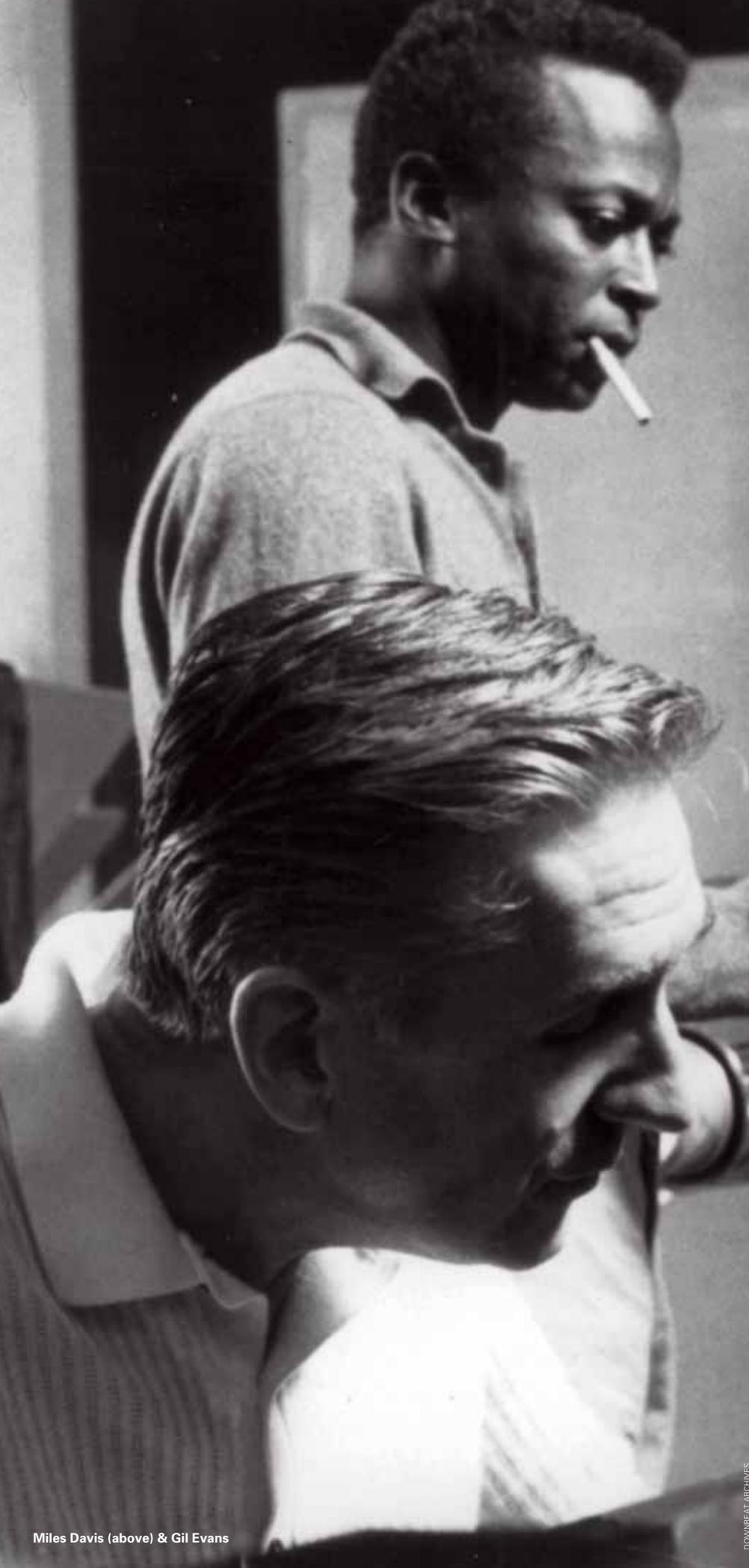
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'My Favorite Big Band Album'

25 Essential Recordings

By Frank-John Hadley

Cornet player and composer Taylor Ho Bynum, who leads the little big band Positive Catastrophe in New York, was candid in his response to a question about what big band jazz albums he valued the most. "It's so hard to nail down just five favorites since there's so much spectacular stuff out there." All the same, he handed over his list, with perceptive remarks about each pick. So did trumpeter Scotty Barnhart, first commenting, "These five are the ones that really define what a big band is all about for me and are amongst my all-time favorites." Multi-instrumentalist Scott Robinson said, "It's hard to name 'absolute favorites,' so let's call these 'some special favorites.'" Also succeeding in the Herculean task was a battalion of musicians, arrangers, composers, educators and film scorers from around the world, of all ages and of various jazz dispositions, almost 200 strong.

For percussionist Kahil El'Zabar, whose Chicago bands include the Infinity Orchestra, the personal selection process inspired awe. "As I reflect on the legacy of the big bands, I find myself truly humbled by the sheer elegance and pageantry of these magnificent ensembles." Lew Soloff narrowed the meaning of the word magnificent: "Ellington is just it, period!"

Tony Bennett told DownBeat, "I would like to quote my brother Louis Bellson on his favorite big bands: 'Count Basie's music is the soul of the earth, and Duke Ellington's is the impression of the universe.' I agree with him." Sonny Rollins favored an unspecified collection of Buddy Johnson singles—"Johnson was so important but is often overlooked." What came first to Maria Schneider's mind? "Claude Thornhill's *The Real Birth Of The Cool*, featuring Gil Evans' arrangements, is one of the most startling [albums] I've ever encountered."

The 25 albums featured here are the ones that appeared on the most lists. These favorites, with *Porgy And Bess* in first place by a wide margin, topped 225 other albums that received at least one mention.

1 Miles Davis

Porgy And Bess

(Columbia, rec. 1958)

"Somehow all the different elements here—Gershwin's blues-inflected songs, Gil Evans' writing, the band's performance, and the sound and feeling of Miles' trumpet and flugelhorn—when all put together make it seem greater than the sum of its parts." —Peter Hand

"Gil Evans was a true impressionist. He used the instruments in a way that no other arranger ever had. On *Porgy And Bess*, his innovative arrangements retain the essence of Gershwin's original opera, but the resulting music is a true three-way collaboration between Gershwin, Evans and Davis. Gil called Miles one of the greatest 'singers,' and that couldn't be truer throughout this recording." —Renee Rosnes

"Evans takes Gershwin's music and makes it his own. It is the definitive of the composer working in service of the jazz soloist in a colorful and inspiring way." —Vince Mendoza

"This is a great statement on dynamics and acoustic interaction. The brass and ensemble are at a rare, high level, and it is instructive to listen to in terms of the way it was engineered. Miles' effect on the session was powerful, subtle, clear to hear." —Josh Roseman

"As delicious as it all is, it's 'Oh Bess, Where's My Bess' that I played over and over again."

—Mike Gibbs

"The ensemble on this recording might not be thought of technically as a 'big band' in the strictest sense. But considering the presence of a standard brass section in the ensemble, and with the sounds of various woodwinds commonly heard in modern big bands today, it still feels to my ears to generally be within the genre. Though I love all the recordings Miles and Gil did together, this one seems to move me the most." —Pete McGuinness

2 Thad Jones & Mel Lewis

Live At The Village Vanguard

(Solid State, 1967)

"The effect of Thad's music and

personality is still with us. His importance as a composer has been marginalized, but his expression and absolute craftsmanship will, in the long run, carry the day. I think Thad Jones could be considered our late-20th century Ellington."

—Mike Patterson

"The whole album is incredible. But to this Midwestern boy, the live version of 'A-That's Freedom' made New York City seem like a wonderful place, so within a few years I packed up and went East. Thad's three choruses of tutti are probably the greatest of his many hair-raising short choruses."

—Jim McNeely

"This band was the pinnacle of small band meets big band, with colorful writing and lots of musical conversation. This was one band where, as a saxophonist, it didn't matter to me if I soloed or not. It was inspiring to sit in the band and be part of the music." —Bob Mintzer

"Thad and Mel's band swings like crazy on this recording, especially during Thad's iconic treatment of 'Rhythm' changes on 'Little Pixie II.' Mel's drumming is swinging, sublime and perfect." —Peter Erskine

"Thad's writing remains the standard of excellence for melodic and harmonic sophistication. Thad was a fountain of creativity and he took a lot of chances, for which we are all rewarded." —Michael Weiss

"This band has such a unique swing feel, energy and harmonic language. Their condensed close voicing and distinguished phrasing are so special and recognizable. It's great to hear that Basie kind of swing tradition in their music while evolving it and taking it another step further." —Eyal Vilner

"I heard this band for the first time on this album and never in my wildest dreams ever thought I would actually play in it, let alone 28 years. For me, this is the band's quintessential live recording and an authentic depiction of how the orchestra sounds at the Village Vanguard, which is in my opinion still the best place to hear the band." —Gary Smulyan



3 Thad Jones & Mel Lewis

Consummation

(Solid State, 1970)

"Thad's arrangements really have a sound of their own—he was a master of sound, knowing the optimum combination of instruments—and Mel's feel and touch really brought life to them. Nothing feels like filler. Masterful."

—Terri Lyne Carrington

"Virtually all of these charts became staples in the big band tradition, and with good reason. Thad's writing was fresh and innovative, and the performances by his band were enthusiastic yet controlled, honed by all those Monday nights at the Village Vanguard. I'm especially fond of the fluid saxophone work, textured background lines, occasional full band unisons, attention to subtleties and the fact that the charts always swing even when they're complex." —Gary Urwin

"I could sing to you every single note of this record right now if I had to."

—Gordon Goodwin

"'A Child Is Born' is one of Thad's genius creations." —Billy Harper

4 Miles Davis

Miles Ahead (Columbia, 1957)

"What strikes me so deeply about this record is the coming together of two such distinct voices to create a whole new sound for the time. Gil Evans understood Miles' sound, time and space; and Miles knew how to respond. It wasn't just Gil writing backgrounds for Miles, it

was a real interplay within that time and space." —Ralph Lalama

"I love all the Davis-Evans collaborations but will single this one out as I lived with it more than the others due to Miles' incredible lyricism." —Donny McCaslin

"[Here's] the blossoming of the cool approach to playing and writing by its two masters." —David Berger

"For me, it was one of the most important albums as far as large ensembles and big bands. All the tunes, the way Miles played throughout, had such a beautiful and incredible lead trumpet player without being a screamer. Just that whole concept of lead trumpet—the way you express a melody within a large ensemble, keeping it intimate." —Joe Lovano

"This is my favorite of the Gil Evans/Miles Davis collaborations. Every time I listen to it, it's like the first, it feels so fresh. Gil opens the color palette for everyone to follow, and Miles' playing is so pure and honest." —Mike Holober

5 Count Basie

The Complete Atomic Mr. Basie (Roulette, 1957)

"Incredible tension exists on this album, between the looseness of the band's conception and the tautness of the ensemble work, a seeming contradiction that all the very best bands seemed to generate." —Russ Little

"I heard this band, playing Neal

Hefti arrangements, night after night when I worked as a cigarette girl at Birdland. I still remember every note.” —*Carla Bley*

“The grammar of big band jazz. The absolute perfection.” —*Mathias Rügge*

“Basie is Mr. Swing. Each sideman is a star all on his own, whether it be Joe Newman, ‘Lockjaw’ Davis or just the top sound in the sax section that tells you it’s Marshall Royal.”

—*John Burnette*

6 Duke Ellington

... And His Mother Called Him Bill (RCA 1967)

“This is special not only for the great Strayhorn compositions but also for the fact that it was recorded three months after Strayhorn’s death, and you can hear mourning for the loss of a great friend in the performances.”

—*Bob Nieske*

“It is so swinging and alive that I feel like I am in the studio with them every time I hear it. Shut your eyes and you can see the floor tiles of the studio and smell the coffee brewing in the studio lounge.”

—*Matt Wilson*

“It’s Johnny Hodges’ last recording, and he seems to be playing his own eulogy as well as Strayhorn’s—amazing!”

—*Roy Nathanson*

“I loved the band sound, and realized later that part of my developing a conception as a vocalist with a high register came from hearing trumpeters like Cootie Williams and Cat Anderson.”

—*Judi Silvano*

“The way Johnny Hodges played, whew! Johnny would play a melody like a lead voice but so expressive within a band. It made you feel like he was playing with just a rhythm section. Those kinds of things really taught me a lot about how to fit in with a larger ensemble and try to get an intimacy within it.”

—*Joe Lovano*

7 Count Basie

Chairman Of The Board

(Roulette, 1958)

“This record just makes me happy. The writers are great: Frank Foster, Thad Jones, Frank Wess and Ernie Wilkins. The band swings so hard, the dynamic contrasts are amazing, and then, of course, there is Sonny Payne’s drumming.”

—*Dave Rivello*



Count Basie (left) & Duke Ellington

“It just doesn’t get groovier than the shout chorus to ‘Blues In Hoss’ Flat.”

—*Jeremy Pelt*

“Phenomenal swing and attitude is the order of the day for this consummate album. Marshall Royal, Snooky Young and Sonny Payne set such strong examples for how the music will sound and be interpreted.”

—*Jim Ketch*

“I first heard this album when I was 12 or 13, and it just knocked me out. It reminded me of the Martin Luther King Choir at Ebenezer Baptist Church where I grew up.”

—*Scotty Barnhart*

“‘Blues In Hoss’ Flat’ grabbed me. The band was swinging so hard, I had to get up and dance around. I feel the same way about *The Complete Atomic Mr. Basie*.”

—*Jeff Hamilton*

8 Duke Ellington

Ellington At Newport

(Columbia, 1956)

“Few recordings can still send chills up my spine after listening to them for 30 years, but when those low clarinets come in after Paul Gonsalves’ solo on ‘Diminuendo And Crescendo In Blue,’ I still get goosebumps. By the time the last chorus is played and Cat Anderson is screaming over the top, I’m gone. And I like the first side even more.”

—*Gary Smulyan*

“The groove of the entire performance floors me. The cats are playing so hard and clean! The Maestro is truly at the helm, and Paul Gonsalves ... wow!”

—*Kahil El’Zabar*

“I love a near-riot breaking out at an outdoor big band gig. I love to feel the steam pressure build up from the top of the set all the way to its freak-out pinnacle to its all-too-necessary encore-forced denouement.”

—*Kurt Elling*

“A jewel. The band expresses the whole mode and mood of the world at that time. Music tells a story.”

—*Marcus Belgrave*

“The biggest reason I love this CD is the feel and energy that was captured—and it still sounds so spirited today. What happened was magical, and Sam Woodyard and Jimmy Woode were totally locked and had such a special sound together over the five or so years they played together with Ellington. This recording embodies a high level of emotional exchange between the players and the audience, with some great composing captured as well.”

—*Terri Lyne Carrington*

“Paul Gonsalves on ‘Diminuendo’ is astonishing. My high school band went to Europe in the summer of my freshman year and, unfortunately for me, once we got to Europe I had to have my appendix removed. I missed most of the tour but sat in that hospital bed listening to that track over and over again. I remember feeling the energy of the band and of the audience on the recording and just loving how good it all was.”

—*Donny McCaslin*

9 Duke Ellington

The Far East Suite (Bluebird, 1966)

“This swings hard and smooth, displays all the beautiful melodies

and textures of early Ellington and has a very contemporary feel due to the younger rhythm section players and the hi-fi recording.”

—*Russ Gershon*

“Ellington is in a more reflective and introverted mood here, and I love it. The piano is a bit more prominent than on most of his recordings. The music is so varied emotionally, dynamically, harmonically and in timbre that listening to the whole album is a very exciting voyage through human feelings.”

—*Pedro Giraudo*

“This has some of the highest level of writing for big band one could hope to attain, and Jimmy Hamilton’s clarinet playing never ceases to inspire me.”

—*Ken Peplowski*

“I chose this record because of its completeness, mood and compositional approach. Although there were two compositions pulled from other material—Billy Strayhorn’s ‘Isfahan’ and Duke Ellington’s ‘Ad-Lib On Nippon’—this is a perfect example of how jazz composition can capture the beauty and essence of other cultures without losing its singular American character rooted in the blues.”

—*Marcus Shelby*

“‘The Suite’ contains moments of truly superb orchestration, and the band’s performance—especially the interplay between bassist John Lamb and drummer Rufus Jones—was simply breathtaking and totally committed to Duke’s vision.”

—*Russ Little*

10 Duke Ellington

Never No Lament—The Blanton-Webster Band

(RCA, 1940–42)

“A peak for Duke, with Ben Webster, Jimmy Blanton, Barney Bigard, Juan Tizol; not to mention that Billy Strayhorn was writing for the band. Required listening.”

—*Paul Carlton*

“Ellington’s most productive period and maybe the greatest big band ever.”

—*David Berger*

“Some people call this the Webster-Blanton band, but I call it the Cootie-Rex band. Every piece is a 3-minute magical journey into sound, melody,

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harmony and improvisation. This opened my ears into the world of Ellington and the infinite possibilities of combining musicians and musical elements, from the drive of 'The Flaming Sword' to the mystery of 'Sepia Panorama.'" —*Steven Bernstein*

"This album is sweet, soulful and incredibly sophisticated for its time. Along with the genius arranging and compositional prowess of Ellington and Strayhorn, there is a beautiful and characteristic soloist everywhere you turn. Yet despite the virtuosity and compositional sophistication, there is a remarkably charming and relaxed feel to the entire album." —*Jacarn Manricks*

11 Duke Ellington *Such Sweet Thunder*

(Columbia/Legacy, 1956-'57)
"The greatest lesson that composers/bandleaders can take from Ellington is in writing to the strengths and personalities of your musicians. Nowhere is that more evident than on this recording, which brilliantly takes its inspiration from a non-musical source, the writings of William Shakespeare." —*Gregg Bendian*

"This is one of the greatest long-form jazz compositions. ... Johnny Hodges gets to blow a Strayhorn ballad, 'The Star-Crossed Lovers,' Ray Nance and Clark Terry have a feature and Britt Woodman plays the shit out of his trombone." —*Andy Farber*

"This album is a beautiful example of the way Ellington wrote to his players' strengths, which is something I've always tried to do." —*Hazel Leach*

12 Frank Sinatra & Count Basie *Sinatra At The Sands*

(Reprise, 1966)
"Arranged and conducted by Quincy Jones. Well, what can I tell ya? Ol' Blue Eyes and the Count together equals swing at its best, doesn't it?" —*Paquito D'Rivera*

"Pure unadulterated swing!" —*Dave Liebman*

"A perfect mix of precision, grit and grace. When my band plays Basie half as well as Basie, I am a happy man." —*Bob Sands*

"This is required listening for any big band aficionado, or anybody with a pulse for that matter. The Basie band, conducted by Quincy Jones, comes out swinging ferociously from beat one (driven by the great Sonny Payne on drums), and Frank responds with one of the most inspired vocal performances I've ever heard." —*Alan Ferber*

13 Kenny Wheeler *Music For Large & Small Ensembles* (ECM, 1990)

"What strikes me most about this album is Wheeler's sense of melody and its paramount status in his writing. There are long, beautiful, flowing melodies that dance above the orchestration and pull the listeners through the pieces. They are at once unpredictable and familiar, even comforting at times. Combine this with his use of the amazing Norma Winstone within the ensemble textures, and the results are quite haunting." —*David Schumacher*

"Color and unique harmonic style, anyone? This record definitely drips of both. Each chart carries Kenny's voice so clearly, yet manages to maintain variety while still being part of a large suite." —*J.C. Sanford*

"My all-time favorite: 'The Sweet Time Suite.' Music that opens your ears and heart right away. A unique sound concept." —*Christine Fuchs*

14 Dizzy Gillespie *The Complete RCA Victor Recordings* (RCA, 1937-'49)

"Probably my all-time favorite big band for a number of reasons: the energy, super-innovative, exciting, edgy, fun, weird, swinging hard. And this band sounds like New York City, like car horns, skyscrapers, nightlife. That's why I've always felt especially connected to this music." —*Jason Lindner*

"The translation of the revolutionary musical language of bebop from small group to jazz orchestra [1946-'49] was brilliantly achieved by Gillespie and these great composers and arrangers. This is the big band liberated from all commercial and artistic/high art constraints. And it worked—through the unique personality and great musicianship of Dizzy." —*Mike Westbrook*



15 Thad Jones & Mel Lewis *Central Park North*

(Solid State, 1969)
"I played 'Groove Merchant' and 'Big Dipper' every day for a year. Playing to Mel Lewis finally got me into a band at Indiana University in 1971." —*Jeff Hamilton*

"Thad Jones' brilliant writing and playing, Mel Lewis' nonpareil drumming and the way soloists were encouraged made playing with and hearing the band live a very special pleasure." —*Mike Nock*

"To this day, there isn't one of Thad's charts that doesn't sound modern and contemporary. The sax soli on 'Groove Merchant' is just amazing. 'Big Dipper' is a very interesting piece because it showed how Thad transitioned from Basie's band to doing his own thing. Unreal." —*John Allmark*

16 Maria Schneider *Evanesence* (enja, 1992)

"Another step forward in the evolution of big bands. Maria's music is all about orchestral textures and colors (something she got from Ellington and Evans). She also continues the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis example of seamlessly integrating the solos with the written material. Her compositions are beautiful and finely crafted while still retaining the spontaneity and excitement of big band jazz." —*David Springfield*

"I love everything Maria has written since this first album, but because this was the first, it was new, exciting, and incredibly beautiful. The flowing modal harmonies, the way solo improvisations are

integrated into the arrangement, the brilliantly colored voicings ..." —*Hazel Leach*

"Maria's first album, and you can feel the energy of the band wanting to be a part of what this important new voice in jazz arranging was doing at the time. Harmonies that are complex but work—she knows where the edge is, which appeals a lot to me." —*Gary Urwin*

17 Woody Herman *Woody Herman 1963*

(Philips, 1962)
"My preference is for big bands with small group sensibilities as well as the expected power of a large ensemble. Woody loved to hear his guys blow as long as they wanted to. Sal Nistico is outstanding on this." —*Joe LaBarbera*

"'The Swingiest Big Band Ever,' when Sal Nistico was in the band and they played 'Sister Sadie' and Sal took the extended solos. He was a legendary name I knew growing up in Cleveland. I found myself in Sal's chair 10 years later. That was one of the first heavy challenges for me." —*Joe Lovano*

"Having worked with Woody Herman for seven years and eventually becoming his chief arranger and musical director, I became familiar with every possible edition of the band and its library. Over the years, I heard accounts from many players about all the Herds, but it was the 1963 band that became the stuff of legends. That band was just plain scary. It had all the swing and excitement of the early Herds, but was now drawing upon hard-bop vocabulary both in its charts and with its soloists." —*John Fedchock*

18 Gil Evans *The Individualism Of Gil Evans* (Verve, 1963-'64)

"Some people consider me a pretty good composer/arranger. When I start to believe them, I put on 'Barbara Song.' To this day I am reduced to tears. It's a humbling experience." —Jim McNeely

"This recording stands alone as an unique combination of organization and mystery, swing music and abstraction, and it features Maynard Ferguson's star tenor player, Wayne Shorter." —Steven Bernstein

"When I first heard this record, it changed my life. Gil's sound is so personal. It seems almost like when you listen to it, you are peering into his mind. The dark, rich textures that he weaves are very enthralling." —Dave Rivello

"Here is a great example of small band meets big band, with Elvin Jones and Wayne Shorter expounding over the lush writing of Gil Evans. Gil had the distinct ability to stay out of the way of the musical interaction and inspire the players with amazing orchestration." —Bob Mintzer

19 Duke Ellington & Count Basie *First Time! Count Meets The Duke*

(Columbia, 1961)

"I love listening to both bands swinging hard on 'Wild Man Blues.' Damn!" —Jeremy Pelt

"Both orchestras at their peak and ridiculously swingin' while playing each other's compositions and together. The solo space is shared,

and the precision of the arrangements is simply superb. It also shows you that ego is never present in the greatest artist collaboration." —Scotty Barnhart

20 Maria Schneider *Concert In The Garden*

(ArtistShare, 2004)

"The wispy title track introduces Gary Versace's accordion and Luciana Souza's voice as distinctly new colors in Maria's palette, and the dance suite 'Three Romances' rides the wave of a reinvigorated rhythmic vocabulary. But nothing quite prepares you for the 18-minute flamenco-inspired epic 'Buleria, Solea y Rumba,' which has at its heart a devastating slow burn from Donny McCaslin." —Darcy James Argue

"When [Schneider] adds instruments such as the accordion and voice, it basically screams out her name. She has made those colors her own. Her writing is so imaginative with many layers of sounds and unique voicings. Even as dense as the music gets, it never gets cerebral." —Grace Kelly

21 Don Ellis

Electric Bath (Columbia, 1967)

"This was a totally new concept at the time that took the sound of the big band and made my head spin. The music was eclectic and odd-metered, but it was at the same time very musical." —Dave Siebels

"Don was the ultimate hipster and futurist. This album gives you a good idea what the crew of the Starship Enterprise listens to." —Bobby Sanabria

22 Count Basie *Breakfast Dance & Barbecue*

(Roulette, 1959)

"This live recording at the Disc Jockeys of American convention in Miami features the Basie Band at the height of their power. It was recorded in the wee hours of the morning and the band is clearly having a ball." —Gary Smulyan

"This band had been on the bus and the bandstand for months on end, arguing and laughing, eating and drinking together, and this music achieves a tightness and unity that no band these days could hope for." —Carla Bley

"Among the many highlights on this album is Thad Jones' composition 'Counter Block'—you can hear the genesis of the band he shared with Mel Lewis a few years later. It's fascinating to listen to Sonny Payne play this." —Peter Erskine

23 Count Basie

April In Paris (Verve, 1956)

"I grew up with this one long before I had any inclinations to big band compositions. No fancy justifications here, this one just rocks." —Tyler Gilmore

"The soloists—Frank Foster, Frank Wess, Thad Jones, Joe Newman, Harry Coker—are amazing, and the charts—Foster, Jones, Ernie Wilkins—are masterpieces of swing." —Brent Wallarab

"With Basie's inimitable fills, Freddie Green's driving rhythm guitar and brilliant soloists like Thad Jones, Joe Newman and Frank Wess, this album has to be one of the hardest-swinging big band recordings ever made. If I had to choose a favorite track, it would be Frank Foster's classic 'Shiny Stockings.'" —Renee Rosnes

24 Duke Ellington *The Great Paris Concert*

(Atlantic, 1963)

"This is one of the best representations of everything Duke (and Strayhorn) were noted for: an unerring sense of showmanship combined with style, taste and swing, fantastic soloists with unique styles, and a fascinating way of presenting the audience with both the hits and the more difficult works without alienating anyone." —Ken Peplowski

"The quintessential road band swings and sings during this incredible concert. The writing is still modern to today's ears and predicts sounds we still have not heard." —Tim Hagans

25 Charles Mingus *Let My Children Hear Music*

(Columbia, 1971)

"Mingus himself referred to this recording as the best in his life. Certainly, this album held me with intrigue upon my first listening. Every part of this treasure is absolutely remarkable. The writing, soloing and expression presented in

this album is so commanding and rich that it creates a category of its own." —Harry Skoler

"This is a great album with some truly imaginative arranging by Mingus and Sy Johnson. My favorite track is 'I Of Hurricane Sue,' which comprises a brilliantly creative set of chord changes. 'The Chill Of Death' is every bit as beautiful as it is utterly frightening." —Ed Palermo

"Can't say I am a big band cat, but for me a very touching record is *Let My Children Hear Music*. There is a poignancy and depth that is rare." —Dave Liebman

DownBeat thanks all of the 'My Favorite Big Band Album' participants:

Eddie Allen, John Allmark, Darcy James Argue, Scotty Barnhart, Django Bates, Marcus Belgrave, Gregg Bendian, Tony Bennett, Gene Bensen, David Berger, Chuck Bergeron, Steven Bernstein, Terry Blaine, Ran Blake, Carla Bley, Luis Bonilla, Janice Borla, Carmen Bradford, John Burnett, Taylor Ho Bynum, Paul Carlon, Terri Lyne Carrington, Allan Chase, Terry Clarke, Mike Clinco, Eddie Daniels, Jami Dauber, Pierre Dorge, Paquito D'Rivera, Paul Dunmall, Bill Easley, Kurt Elling, Kahil El' Zabar, Peter Erskine, Laika Fatien, John Fedchoc, Andy Farber, Alan Ferber, Henry Ferrini, Ricky Ford, Rodger Fox, Christina Fuchs, Michael Garrick, Giacomo Gates, Russ Gershon, Mike Gibbs, Tyler Gilmore, Pedro Giraudo, Gordon Goodwin, Drew Gress, George Gruntz, Barry Guy, Brian Haas, Tim Hagans, Jeff Hamilton, Peter Hand, Billy Harper, Brian Haas, Thomas Heberer, Carlos Henriquez, Conrad Hervig, Jim Hobbs, John Hollenbeck, Mike Holober, Greg Hopkins, Wayne Horvitz, Susi Hyldgaard, Sunny Jain, Christine Jensen, Chris Jentsch, Howard Johnson, Phillip Johnston, Darrel Katz, Grace Kelly, Juliet Kelly, Jim Ketch, Jim Knapp, Bob Koester, Hilary Kole, Joe LaBarbera, Ralph Lalama, Bob Lark, Hazel Leach, Oded Lev-Ari, Dave Liebman, Jason Lindner, Russ Little, Chuck Loeb, Frank London, Joe Lovano, Dennis Mackrel, Jacam Manricks, Mark Masters, Donny McCaslin, Kate McGarry, Pete McGuinness, Dave McMurdo, Jim McNeely, Vince Mendoza, Bob Mintzer, Big James Montgomery, Roy Nathanson, Hankus Netsky, Bob Nieske, Paal Nilssen-Love, Mike Nock, Billy Novick, Arturo O'Farrill, Don Olivet, Chuck Owen, Ed Palermo, Evan Parker, Ed Partyka, Joanna Pascale, Greg Pasenko, Mike Patterson, Jeremy Pelt, Ken Peplowski, Charli Persip, Charles Pillow, John Pizzarelli, Dave Post, Chuck Redd, Kim Richmond, Dave Rivello, Scott Robinson, Sonny Rollins, Josh Roseman, Renee Rosnes, Mathias Rüegg, John Rutherford, Felipe Salles, Massimo Sammi, Bobby Sanabria, Bob Sands, JC Sanford, Horst-Michael Schaffer, Ken Schaphorst, Maria Schneider, Gunther Schuller, David Schumacher, Marcus Shelby, Dave Siebels, Chris Siebert, Judi Silvano, Harry Skoler, Lavay Smith, Gary Smulyan, Lew Soloff, David Springfield, Marvin Stamm, Mike Stewart, Dennis Taylor, Charles Tolliver, Colin Towns, Gary Urwin, Frank Vaganée, Mike Vax, Eyal Vilner, Erica von Kleist, Brent Wallarab, Michael Weiss, Mike & Kate Westbrook, Jiggs Whigham, Matthew White, Scott Whitfield, Jim Widner, Matt Wilson. **DB**



Maria Schneider

BALLADEERING

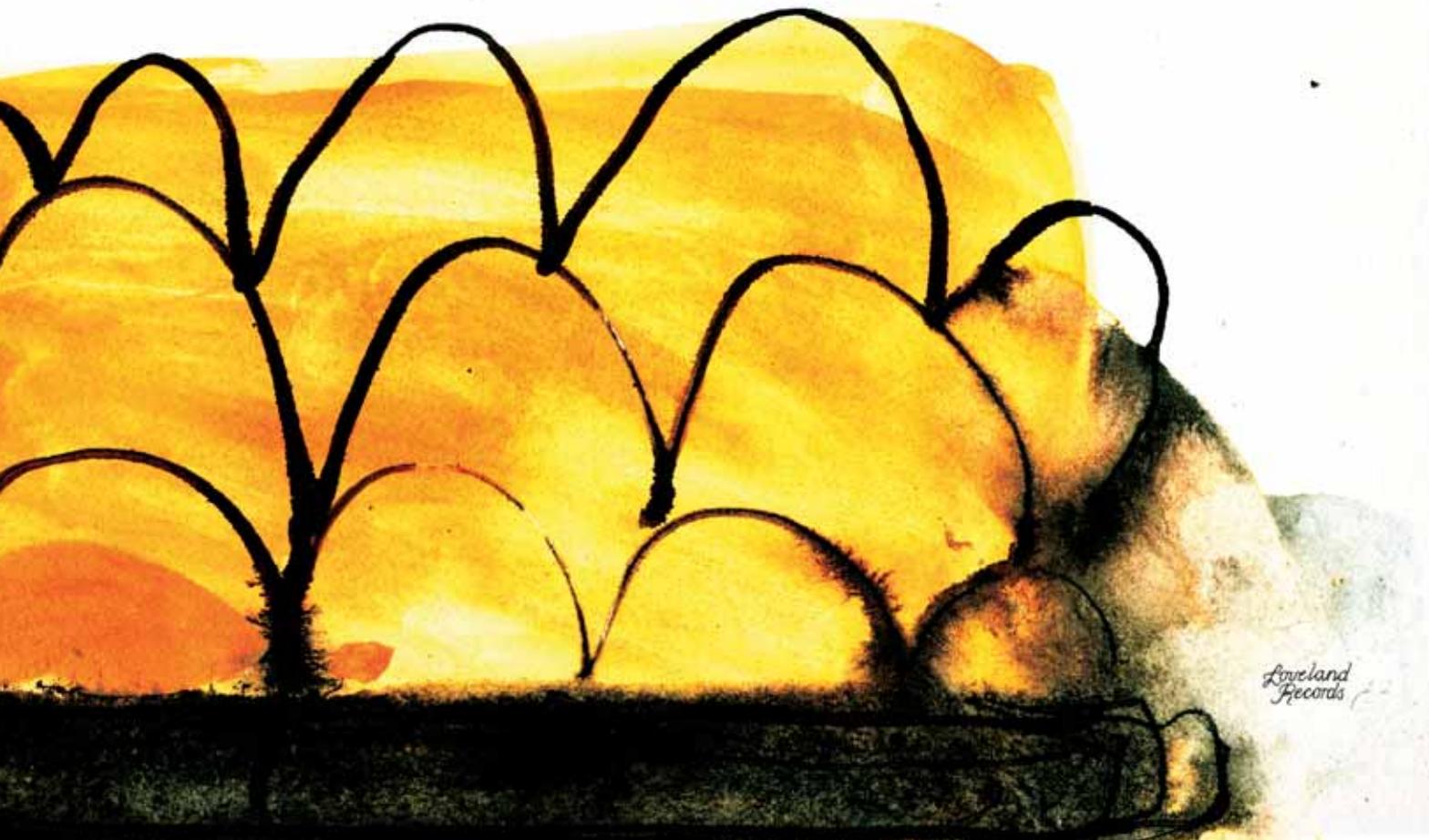
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Reviews

Masterpiece ★★★★★ Excellent ★★★★ Good ★★★ Fair ★★ Poor ★

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MICHAEL WILSON

Mose Allison

The Way Of The World

ANTI- 87059

★★★★

A new generation may hear Mose Allison's first studio album in a dozen years (he recorded live in London for Blue Note in 2000) and find in his genial earthiness and down-home barroom lope reminders of, say, Randy Newman. It's a fair comparison and certainly captures a general sense of his wry, sometimes mordant musical manner. But it's a little backwards. At 82, Allison is more properly the man behind Newman, and many others. After his emergence in the late '50s as a straight jazz pianist behind Stan Getz, Al Cohn, and on his own in a few Prestige LPs with only the occasional vocal, he evolved into the great folk essayist and singer he's been for most of the last half century.

No one will be disappointed in the subversive mix of irony and cracker-barrel attitude he's pulled together here, except perhaps for its brevity. An authentic Mississippi-bred bluesi-

ness plays against a deceptively oblique and down-to-earth intelligence, reminding us that a deep Southern drawl isn't always synonymous with back-country, tea-bagger primitivism. The irony is not necessarily in the material itself. When Allison sings "Let's give God a vacation" in "Modest Proposal," he means exactly what he says. It's that one normally doesn't hear such sentiments posed in such a good-ol'-boy vernacular. It's a smart alliance of opposing sensibilities that strengthens the appeal to reason. Also, Allison's weathered voice infuses it all with the added credibility of experience.

Seven of the tunes are Allison's own, simple and rife with his accustomed, rather passive fatalism ("Ask Me Nice") and other assorted mockeries—the *faux* forgiveness, for example, of "I Know You Didn't Mean It" ("I know you didn't mean it when you slit my throat"). His homage to his own brain also has a certain over-the-shoulder charm ("a cool little cluster"). Daughter Amy serves her father's worldview nicely with her own dissertation on the deceptiveness of masks ("Everybody Thinks You're An Angel"). And Allison wears Loudon

Wainwright's "I'm Alright" as if it were his own. The only song that doesn't quite seem to fit the sardonic environment is "Once In A While," a 1937 pop tune introduced by Tommy Dorsey. Maybe he just liked it.

Allison's piano playing is traditional in tone, thumping discreetly in self-accompaniment and occasionally taking over in long serpentine lines with percussive markers ("Some Right, Some Wrong," "My Brain"). "Crush" is the lone instrumental, a straight-ahead exercise in propulsion taken at two tempos. Walter Smith's tenor solos add an welcome extra voice, fattening the trio format. After a decade of silence, it's a treat to have Allison back in action and in form, even if for only a modest, LP-style 35 minutes.

—John McDonough

The Way Of The World: My Brain; I Know You Didn't Mean It; Everybody Thinks You're An Angel; Let It Come Down; Modest Proposal; Crush; Some Right, Some Wrong; The Way Of The World; Ask Me Nice; Once In A While; I'm Alright; The New Situation. (35:12)

Personnel: Walter Smith, tenor saxophone; Mose Allison, piano, vocals; Greg Leisz, Anthony Wilson, guitar, mandolin; David Piltch, bass; Jay Bellerose, drums; Amy Allison (12), vocal.

» Ordering info: anti.com

Jamie Cullum

The Pursuit

VERVE FORECAST 1698

★★★

He nudges James Blunt off of gigs, jams with Spinal Tap and does a better job on Rihanna tunes than the “Umbrella” sorceress herself—all while forwarding nifty ideas like using Thelonious Monk’s “Epistrophy” theme as a baseline riff for a gaudy yet winsome “Just One Of Those Things.” No doubt about it, Jamie Cullum is adept at the balancing act he’s placed in the center of his career. Sliding between Tin Pan Alley material and feisty soft-pop originals, he does a decent job at placating a couple different demographics. That’s important in a “new economy” that finds jazz labels dumping improvisers and pushing singer-songwriters.

Actually, on his first album in four-and-a-half years, Cullum pretty much says au revoir to the jazz side of the equation. Sure, there are some bouncy rhythms and agile vocal maneuvers, but like Norah Jones fully embracing modern pop on last year’s *The Fall*, Cullum lets a mere handful of jazzy elements—inflection, attitude—through the door of *The Pursuit*. No complaint there; I’ve always had a little time for the somewhat shallow fun of the 29-year-old Brit’s fluff. Now that Billy Joel is writing classical



scores, Cullum slides right into a persona the Piano Man once held tight: amiable keybs peacock with a big pile of hooks in his pocket.

The Pursuit is by turns impressive and lackluster. Cullum has a knack for turning ordinary tunes into epics, and the five minutes of “Mixtape,” which finds him seducing an acquaintance via other people’s music (“from Morrissey to John Coltrane”) while a Steve Reich motif gets a disco ride, can be both fetching and tedious. Better is his romp through Rihanna’s “Don’t Stop The Music,” where a truly exhilarating sense of dynamics is established. The relatively hushed “I Think, I Love”

is his attempt at recrafting a yesteryear chestnut, and it’s a bit too meager to be memorable (Harold Arlen he ain’t). But the infectiousness of “I’m All Over It” is obvious—an Elton John homage that Ben Folds or Keene would be proud to call their own.

Me, I think I’ll cross my fingers that Cullum never fully banishes the classics from his book. He sounds too compelling on the *Sweeney Todd* ballad and the Cole Porter rave-up. Hope that new demographic has big ears. They might just learn something. —Jim Macnie

The Pursuit: Just One Of Those Things; I’m All Over It; Wheels; If I Ruled The World; You And Me Are Gone; Don’t Stop The Music; Love Ain’t Gonna Let You Down; Mixtape; I Think, I Love; We Run Things; Now While I’m Around; Music Is Through. (54:12)

Personnel: Jamie Cullum, piano, vocals, organ (2, 5, 7, 8), Fender Rhodes (10), celeste (8), hurdy gurdy (11), bass (3), guitar (4), arrangements (4, 6), horn arrangement (10); Greg Wells, guitar (4, 7, 12), organ (2, 7), bass (2, 7, 8), drums (2, 3, 7, 10, 12); The Count Basie Orchestra arranged by Frank Foster (10); John Benson, guitar (10); Paul Buckmaster, string arrangements (8, 9, 10); Matt Chamberlain, drums (5, 8, 11); Ben Cullum, bass (12), programming and vocals (10); Karl “K Gee” Gordon, drum and bass programming (10); Gary Grant, trumpets (7); Jerry Hey, trumpets (7, 8, 10); Dan Higgins, saxophones (7, 8, 10); Tim Lefebvre, bass (1); Chris Mann, backing vocals (2); Marc McLean, drums (1); Charisa Nielsen, backing vocals (2); Bill Reichenbach, trombone (7); Tom Richards, bass clarinet, flute (10); Sebastian Steinberg, bass (4, 5, 11); Martin Terefe, Wurlitzer (6); Brad Webb, drums (6); Natalie Williams, backing vocals (10).

» Ordering info: umusic.com

Plunge

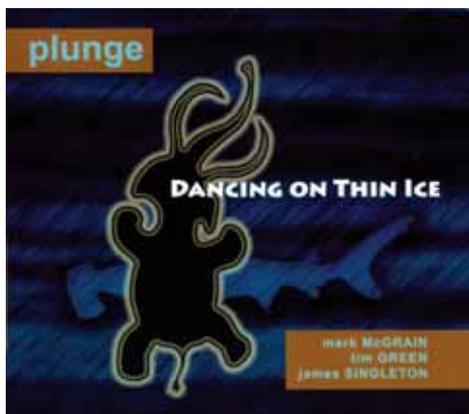
Dancing On Thin Ice

IMMERSION RECORDS IRM09-05

★★★★

The innovative trio Plunge apparently subscribes to the altogether attractive idea that avant-garde music need not be abrasive, iconoclastic or frenzied. In fact, it can be swinging, listener-friendly and—heaven forefend!—beautiful. Such a deal. The last time this trombone-led group dove in, it was a low-leaning quartet with bass, tuba and drums. This time, trombonist Mark McGrain teams up with saxophone and bass, a trio configuration that recalls, in its spare sound and judicious use of space, the Jimmy Giuffre Trio with Jim Hall and Bob Brookmeyer—though in Plunge’s case, the driving force is percolating New Orleans brass band music, not West Coast cool. I liked the first album (*Falling With Grace*) and I like this one even better, in part because, without drums, the marching pulse is subtly implied instead of spelled out.

For only three instrumentalists, Plunge covers a lot of sonic territory. Funky saxophonist Tim Green plays tenor, bari and soprano, bassist James Singleton bows and plucks, and McGrain feeds his bone through various electronic devices, as well as playing all over the horn, from the basement to the attic, including vocalized multiphonics. The tunes boast conceptual variety, as well, from textural explorations and



movie-suspense atmospherics to angular post-bop and raucous rock. Many of the tunes are memorable (how often can you say that about a jazz album these days?), solos are to the point and players interact intelligently with one another, using understated dynamics.

I especially enjoyed the lightly dancing opening track, “Friday Night At The Top.” Green’s piping tenor sound and graceful glances into the altissimo and McGrain’s mix of wheezy highs, didgeridoo throbs and tasteful electronic distortions are highlights. Though not overbearing, the electronically generated played-foghorn sound of the driving “One Man’s Machine” sounds like something out of heavy metal, leavened with a sort of baby goo-gooing effect topping McGrain’s live trombone. “Opium” showcases a gamboling tenor solo and swings with a cheer-

ful, happy flow, while also suggesting the secret, dreamy place its name might take you to.

On the title track, McGrain inserts an ironic quote from “Fascinatin’ Rhythm,” an appropriate commentary on this oddly angular, swinging melody—doubly so when the trio sets aside a regular pulse during their solos. “Missing Mozambique,” a gorgeous slow waltz that suggests the feeling of a hymn, features another spectacular trombone solo full of sparkling bursts. “The Praise Singer” carries on the African mood with soaring, outdoor, anthemic elation.

I’m not sure why the band inserted a 58-second interlude between these two tunes, but it easily could have been omitted. Other than that, the only minor complaint I’d make is that Green’s soprano sax sound (on “Orion Rising”) is a bit scrawny, though his baritone on “Life Of A Cipher” is sweet and lovely. I love the way he and McGrain bob and weave on the final track, “Skickin’ Away.”

It takes a great deal of poise and confidence to make music this deft and new. What a pleasure to have an innovative album one also wants to rush out and play for friends. —Paul de Barros

Dancing On Thin Ice: Friday Night At The Top; Life Of A Cipher; Orion Rising; Luminata No. 257; One Man’s Machine; Opium; Dancing On Thin Ice; Missing Mozambique; Jugs March In; The Praise Singer; Skickin’ Away. (51:49)

Personnel: Mark McGrain, trombone, electronics; Tim Green, tenor saxophone, baritone saxophone, soprano saxophone; James Singleton, bass.

» Ordering info: plunge.com

The HOT Box



Steve Lacy/Mal Waldron

Let's Call This ... Esteem

SILTA 0901

★★★★½

First things first: Go buy this disc, if you still can. It's been reissued in a numbered, limited edition of 999, and they won't last long. The music is strong enough to justify the as-yet rare reissuance on CD from original issue on CD (first released on George Haslman's SLAM records back in 1993, the year it was recorded). No idea why the Italian label Silta is making such a small batch, but that makes getting it soon that much more imperative.

Lacy and Waldron worked together very often, made wonderful records frequently, commencing with the pianist's role on Lacy's 1958 Prestige LP *Reflections* and stretching through various Waldron-led bands in the '70s up to a couple of trios with bassist Jean-Jacques Avenel in 2002. Their first duo recording was in 1971, and it was in that perfectly reduced setting that they made the majority of their recordings.

What made this pairing so ideal was a shared aesthetic sensibility, a profound love of mystery and, of course, a deep understanding of Thelonious Monk. The dark, enigmatic character of Waldron's piano is a neat foil for Lacy's systematic, intellectually rigorous soprano. Here they approach familiar material: Thelonious Monk's "Monk's Dream," "Evidence," "Epistrophe," as well as Ellington gems "In A Sentimental Mood" and "Johnny Come Lately," Lacy's "Blues For Aida" and Waldron's "Snake Out." The latter, a 14-minute opus, offers much of what makes the twosome so special, a particularly searing saxophone solo urged on by Waldron's probing, dramatic, richly chromatic and persistently churning piano. Waldron's askew funk piece "What It Is" (incorrectly listed as "What Is It") finds him hitting the pedal tone, building fantastic tension as only he could. —*John Corbett*

Let's Call This ... Esteem: Introduction And Let's Call This; Monk's Dream; In A Sentimental Mood; Snake Out; Blues For Aida; Johnny Come Lately; What It Is; Evidence; Epistrophe; Esteem. (78:14)

Personnel: Steve Lacy, soprano saxophone; Mal Waldron, piano.

» Ordering info: siltarecords.it

CDs	CRITICS »	John McDonough	John Corbett	Jim Macnie	Paul de Barros
Mose Allison <i>The Way Of The World</i>		★★★★	★★★★½	★★★★½	★★★★
Jamie Cullum <i>The Pursuit</i>		★★★★	★	★★★★	★★★★
Plunge <i>Dancing On Thin Ice</i>		★★★★	★★★★½	★★★★	★★★★
Steve Lacy/Mal Waldron <i>Let's Call This ... Esteem</i>		★★★★½	★★★★½	★★★★	★★★★½

Critics' Comments

Mose Allison, *The Way Of The World*

Some good new songs ("Modest Proposal," "Ask Me Nice") from the master of wry, though some of them could use another verse or two. Great backup band, and the sometimes garrulous Mose mostly behaves himself on piano. When he sings "Once In A While," he makes you stand up and listen. —*Paul de Barros*

Not trying to be anything else, this is a straight-up solid Mose Allison record. That's a good thing in my book—he's a master of cool message delivery, George Carlin as jazz singer, the observing hepcat dizzied by a world akimbo. —*John Corbett*

Time has corrupted that sleek voice a bit, but this affair puts all the classic Allison elements in a row. From idiosyncratic vernacular (how many jazz songs mention "neurons"?) to offhand rhythmic motifs (the blues don't get much jauntier than Mose), it works just like his classic stuff does; sweet, sharp and seductive. —*Jim Macnie*

Jamie Cullum, *The Pursuit*

With his poised, finger-snapping swagger and classy voice, Cullum's Darrin-esque talents are made for the kind of terrific penmanship Frank Foster offers him on "One Of Those Things." Alas, it's a mirage, followed by a series of overmixed, pop-oriented non-sequiturs. —*John McDonough*

Uneven album with some tastelessly overproduced tracks, but Cullum gets extra points for having forged a distinctive, youthful style that projects plausible emotions and doesn't just retro-mimic Sinatra and company. The upbeat drive of "You And Me Are Gone" is a good example. —*Paul de Barros*

Each time I listen to *The Pursuit*, I find it more distasteful. From the faux Rat Pack opener to the terrible lyrics of "Mixtape" and "Wheels" to the cloying contemporary Billy Joel/Sting upbeatness. It doesn't know what it wants to be, but each of its possible identities is worse than the last. —*John Corbett*

Steve Lacy/Mal Waldron, *Let's Call This ... Esteem*

An excellent dialog between two charter avant-garders in maturity. Anchored in Duke Ellington and Thelonious Monk much of the way, Lacy's lonely lyricism is astringent and unsentimental without being harsh. Nowhere lonelier than on "Aida," which is so atomized it almost evaporates. Otherwise, a crackling and fully engaged partnership. —*John McDonough*

At first I thought it was a tad stiff, but then I recalled how Waldron's left hand and Lacy's linear quacking always did have an odd symmetry. Their rapport isn't in question, however—each knows where the baton has to be handed off—and the good fortune of having this once ultra-rare title back in availability land is sweet. —*Jim Macnie*

I always thought Herbie Hancock and Wayne Shorter could have benefited by listening to these guys, just to hear how high the bar had already been set for a truly thoughtful, improvised piano/soprano duo. In this good but not stunning 1993 live set from England, the pair shines on Monk's "Let's Call This," "Evidence," which sounds downright romantic, and Waldron's dervishy "Snake Out." —*Paul de Barros*

Plunge, *Dancing On Thin Ice*

McGrain, Green and Singleton make good use of the unusual format, two horns temperamentally and tonally matched, bassist capable of pushing. The tunes have interest aplenty, but it would be nice to leave the tonality behind a bit more and venture out into the open terrain the compositions imply. —*John Corbett*

The more I listened, the more found it to be wan. The playing is a bit measured and the dynamics a bit staid. Then all of a sudden the kaleidoscope turned and I began hearing it as chamber music—texturally daring, rhythmically dapper chamber music. Under that awning the ensemble's earthiness was impressive, unmitigable. Wonder how others hear it? —*Jim Macnie*

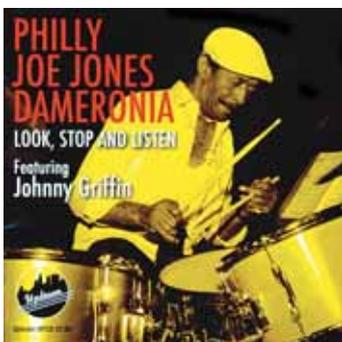
Tenor and trombone create a scrupulously pristine musical pastel, reminiscent of Stan Getz and J.J. Johnson, perhaps, but with a far more risky and adventurous agenda. In both harmony and counterpoint, the music moves inside a structured sense of miniature ensemble, all nicely motorized by Singleton's bass. But the electronics of "Machine" are ugly and boring. —*John McDonough*

Philly Joe Jones
Dameronia
Look, Stop And Listen

UPTOWN 27.59
★★★★½

One reason the early 1980s was a very fertile period for repertory projects was that the ensembles were often led and manned by colleagues of the celebrated composer, musicians who were legends in their own right. That was the case with *Dameronia*, initiated by Philly Joe Jones, the drummer on three of Tadd Dameron's most enduring albums. While Jones provided inspired leadership and made deft personnel choices (including Cecil Payne, who played on Dameron's early benchmark, 1949's *Cool Boppin'*), his best decision was having Don Sickler recover Dameron's lost charts from recordings.

Dameron did two things as a composer/arranger with singular grace: He could make a six-horn ensemble sound twice as big, and his horn parts were so well blended that it is often treacherously difficult to sort them out on recordings. Sickler's painstaking efforts paid off handsomely on all three *Dameronia* albums, *Look, Stop And Listen* being the second. Even with great soloists like guest artist Johnny Griffin (who played on Dameron's last album) lighting up the proceedings, the charts are the thing with Dameron, and Sickler's transcriptions



retained their sleekness and shimmer. Jones was wise to emphasize Dameron's lesser-known compositions; of the seven recorded on this '83 date, only the yearning ballad "If You Could See Me Now," featuring a stellar Griffin turn, is among his most widely played pieces. This lot gives an even-handed representation of the devices that gave Dameron's charts their charm—the chiming piano chords that punctuate the gliding horns on "Focus"; the flute flourishes of the title tune—and unusual structural elements like the lengthy solo piano interlude that commences just seconds into "Dial B For Beauty" (rendered sensitively by Walter Davis Jr.) and the modulation of mood between the introduction and main theme of "Our Delight" (which features muscular banter between Jones and Charles Davis, heard on tenor throughout the album). Dameron's fastidiousness in avoiding the generic also benefits soloists; with players such as Virgil Jones, Benny Powell and Frank Wess to call upon, the set is brimming with smart, rousing solos.

—Bill Shoemaker

Look, Stop And Listen: Look, Stop And Listen; If You Could See Me Now; Choose Now; Focus; Killer Joe; Dial B For Beauty; Our Delight; Theme Of No Repeat; If You Could See Me Now (1st take); Look, Stop And Listen (1st take). (55:17)

Personnel: Philly Joe Jones, drums; Johnny Griffin, tenor saxophone (1, 2, 5, 8, 9, 10); Don Sickler, trumpet, tenor saxophone (2, 9); Virgil Jones, trumpet; Benny Powell, trombone; Frank Wess, also saxophone, flute; Charles Davis, tenor saxophone, flute; Cecil Payne, baritone sax; Walter Davis Jr., piano; Larry Ridley, bass.

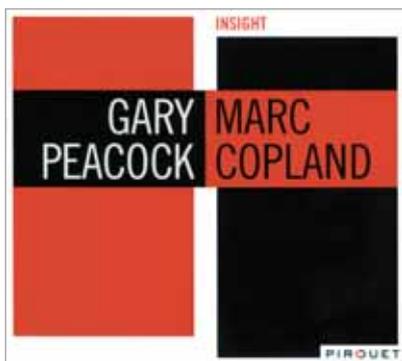
» Ordering info: uptownrecords.net

Gary Peacock/Marc Copland

Insight
PIROUET 3041
★★★★½

This aptly titled duo recording revels in the graceful intuition and empathy bassist Gary Peacock and pianist Marc Copland share with one another.

Insight is an exquisitely tender and sensitive piece of work, where feather-stroke give-and-take elevates the proceedings to a genuine ensemble effort. There's a good reason the bassist has worked so long in Keith Jarrett's vaunted trio; with weightless facility he provides the necessary harmonic anchor, but at the same time he engages in rich dialogue. It proves to also be a simpatico match for Copland, whose rigorous hybrid of post-Bill Evans lyricism and harmonically detailed impressionism has become one of the more unique, if subtle, sounds in jazz.

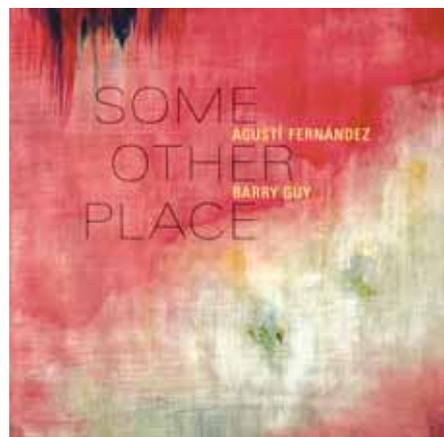


While Peacock firmly traces the indelible opening lines from Miles Davis' classic "All Blues" and draws the attention with a frenetic bob-and-weave line on the evocative "Rush Hour," the improvisational content is woven so deeply into the performances—not coming in strings of solos, but as fluid knots and melodic ornaments—that parsing which is which is as useless as isolating the contributions of either musician. Together they've created a dazzling harmonic tapestry, quietly veiling simmering invention with a gorgeously meditative, almost placid veneer. But dig deep and there's nothing docile about this music at all. —Peter Margasak

Insight: All Blues; The Wanderer; Blue In Green; Rush Hour; River's Run; Matterhorn; The Pond; Goes Out Comes In; Late Night; Cavatina; In Your Own Sweet Way; Benediction; Sweet And Lovely. (58:26)

Personnel: Gary Peacock, bass; Marc Copland, piano.

» Ordering info: pirouetrecords.com



Agustí Fernández/Barry Guy

Some Other Place
MAYA 902
★★★★

It's little wonder the Catalan pianist Agustí Fernández and English bassist Barry Guy have been steady collaborators over five years or so. While they're both rigorous improvisers with stunning facility for extended technique, they're also devoted to classical music, from the bassist's deep engagement with baroque material and more contemporary composers to the pianist's studies at Darmstadt with Iannis Xenakis and Carles Santos.

On their first duo album those twin sensibilities mesh beautifully, more in sensibility and structural logic than stylistic reference. Guy's astonishing tonal control, for instance, almost makes his instrument sound like a harp in the opening seconds of his "Annalisa," one of the album's broodingly lyric highlights, dispensing with idiomatic purity. Halfway through that piece the pair surge abruptly into a passage of violent percussiveness, with Guy throttling his instrument and Fernández pounding out splat-tery, kaleidoscopic clusters.

In a way, those two sonic extremities are revisited throughout the album, although not always in a single piece. The brief but explosive kinetic energy of "Rosette," for example, is followed by the meditative, slowly unfolding beauty of "Blueshift (for M.H.)," and it's to the duo's credit that they can make such radical shifts sound utterly natural, as a kind of organic process of acceleration and deceleration where haunted melody and abrasive texture feel intimately connected. Despite the muscular technical rigor routinely on display here, the real heart of *Some Other Place* is emotional, hitting the listener with a dazzling range of sensations.

—Peter Margasak

Some Other Place: Annalisa; Barnard's Loop; How To Go Into A Room You Are Already In; Rosette; Blueshift (for M.H.); Boomerang Nebula; Crab Nebula; Some Other Place; Dark Energy; The Helix. (54:17)

Personnel: Agustí Fernández, piano; Barry Guy, bass.

» Ordering info: maya-recordings.com

Mat Marucci & Doug Webb Trio

Change-Up
 CADENCE 1211
 ★★★½

Mat Marucci & Doug Webb Trio

Partners In Crime
 CIMP 356
 ★★★½



Saxophonist Doug Webb and drummer Mat Marucci team up with, alternately, bassists Ken Filiano and Joe Dolister, for some high-powered playing on *Change-Up* and *Partners In Crime*. Both are live recordings, *Change-Up* taking place at the Spirit Room in Rossie, N.Y., back in 2006, *Partners In Crime* at Savanna's Lounge in Sacramento two years earlier.

The spirit of these sessions point to ventures taken by both John Coltrane and Elvin Jones individually, Coltrane with his late-'50s trio sides for Atlantic where he concentrated on the blues and his then-newfound love the soprano saxophone, and Jones when he fronted a band in 1972 that featured two saxophonists. What linked these explorations was the lack of a chordal instrument, as is the case with these Webb/Marucci recordings.

Change-Up is made up of 10 songs, eight of which were written by Marucci, the other two a trio composition ("Spirit Room") and Johnny Green's standard "Body And Soul." In fact, "Body And Soul" (played straight down the middle) ends the program even as it flips its cards in the direction of Coltrane's spirit. As trio music, the songs are long enough and the writing interesting enough to keep the improvising listener engaged. "The Gamemaster" introduces all three members with solos of their own with this up-tempo romp. The subtler side of the group (Webb remaining on soprano) comes across with the gently swinging blues "Waltz For Therese," a song that is full and open, Webb's solo building chorus by chorus with more speed and emotion, Marucci and Filiano following his every step. On tenor, Webb's muscular approach to the somewhat more abstract blues "Riff For Rusch" avoids overpowering his bandmates, Marucci in particular matching Webb with his own surefire punctuations.

As with *Change-Up*, *Partners In Crime* is loose, the kind of jazz gig you'd be lucky to hear at your local club or bar. The title track kicks things off just like *Change-Up* with an utempo blues, this time with Webb playing tenor, Webb and Marucci dueting at points for dramatic affect. A couple of turned-upside-down standards add a dash of humor and pluck to the date as the leaders upend with "All The Things You Could Have Been" and "Lunar" (a reworking of Miles Davis' "Solar"), Webb on tenor sounding more like Warne Marsh than Coltrane on the former, more Trane-ish on the latter, both played at easy-going paces. "Slow Cookin'" comes about as close to *Coltrane Plays The Blues* as these two discs get, the title telling you what's in store, Webb slowly singing on soprano, the band getting a little funky halfway through.

These sides are recommended for the crowd that likes to dig in and listen to players blow, jam and stretch out, with an emphasis on Webb's horn playing; it's music that creates the illusion of something more in smaller packages.

—John Epland

Change-Up: The Gamemaster; Waltz For Therese; Riff For Rusch; Change-Up; Hard Times; Alex-Dee; Festival; Spirit Room; Upstate Connection; Body And Soul. (56:43)

Personnel: Mat Marrucci, drums; Doug Webb, saxophones; Ken Filiano, bass.

» Ordering info: cimprecords.com

Partners In Crime: Partners In Crime; All The Things You Could Have Been; Slow Cookin'; Have You Met Miss Jones?; Stanley Hills Drive; I Love You; Lunar; Alone Together; Blues Outside. (63:49)

Personnel: Mat Marrucci, drums; Doug Webb, saxophones; Joe Dolister, bass.

» Ordering info: cadencejazzrecords.com

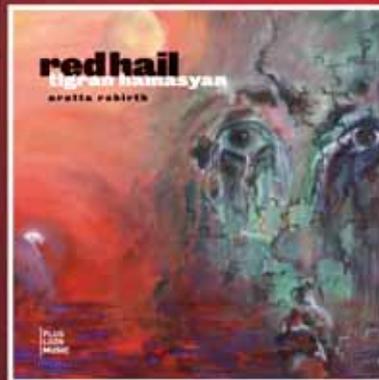
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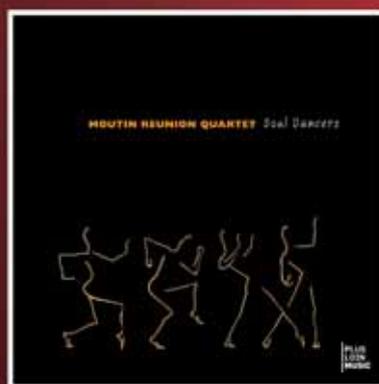
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Sonore

Call Before You Dig

OKKA DISK 12083

★★★½

Call Before You Dig puts paid to any notion that Peter Brötzmann might mellow as he comes to the end of his sixties. This half studio, half concert set comprises two-and-one-quarter hours of mainly improvised reed trios. It demands plenty of stamina from the listener, but nothing like what it required of its makers, who recorded it in just two days near the end of a two week-long European tour. Brötzmann's confederates in *Sonore* are Mats Gustafsson and Ken Vandermark, each of whom has made the transition from being a disciple shaped by Brötzmann's example of artistic doggedness and sonic extremity to a recurrent collaborator.

Collectively their aesthetic might be characterized as "nothing but the strong stuff"; much of this music is delivered at a roar, and even in its quietest moments it is stark and stern. At lower volume it takes on a dark blue caste, as tragic as a mourner's spontaneous song at a friend's wake. But that is also where the music is most tuneful, with melodies as simple and sturdy as oaken furniture.



Elsewhere, especially on the concert disc, the trio goes full blast, with each player sustaining bruising blasts that sound like they are intended to reduce the walls to powder. But the most extreme moments come when clarinets and flutophone (a flute fitted with an alto saxophone mouthpiece) join in a writhing tangle of top-regis-

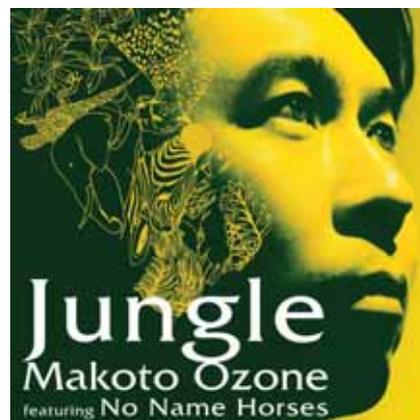
ter forays that seem to expand exponentially as the difference tones created by closely pitched tones become one with the sounded notes. *Sonore's* music may sound brutal, but it couldn't exist without each player's highly sophisticated understanding of the elemental forces at his command.

—Bill Meyer

Call Before You Dig: Disc 1: The Cliff; Mountains Of Love; Shake_Horn; Unrecognized Reflections; Charged By The Pound; Mailbox For An Attic; Call Before You Dig (74:19). Disc 2: The Ravens Cry At Dawn; Better A Bird Than A Cow; Human Fact; Iranic; A Letter From The Past; The Bitter The Better; The Longer The Lieber; Birds Of The Underworld; Waiting For The Dancing Bear; A Dyed String; Hellpig; Zipper Backwards; Dark Cloud Blues; Blue Stone; Hardline Drawing; Rat Bag; Hard To Believe But Good To Know (58:35).

Personnel: Peter Brötzmann, alto/tenor/bass saxophones, taragato, clarinet; Ken Vandermark, tenor/baritone saxophones, B-flat and bass clarinets; Mats Gustafsson, tenor/baritone saxophones, flutophone.

» Ordering info: okkadisk.com



Makoto Ozone

Jungle

VERVE 01691

★★★½

After 30 years and 24 albums of typically pleasant, extremely well performed and smartly conceived piano jazz, Japan's Makoto Ozone has recorded the greatest album of his career, and it's anything but pleasant.

Jungle, featuring an energetic big band that goes under the name No Name Horses, is an in-your-face, Latin-drenched monster. Ozone's 15-piece all-Japanese big band (save percussionist Pernel Saturnino) plays with the energy of a college ensemble, but with the professionalism, power and soloist creativity of seasoned veterans. Every track is slightly this side of forward, tempo-wise, resulting in an exhilarating 63-minute CD that never lets up. Already a massive hit in Japan, *Jungle's* nine tracks cover samba, mambo, rumba and montuno, and it all swings.

Ozone, trombonist Eijiro Nakagawa, trumpeter Eric Mayashiro and tenor saxophonist Toshio Miki contribute the compositions, which are thoroughly contemporary without relying on modern clichés. There are no funk interludes or annoying attempts at vocal recognition, just taut, relevant performances. Granted, there is nothing here approaching the more adventurous big band productions of some New York-based ensembles, and the music is all fairly "inside," but that never detracts from its enjoyment. You know what you are paying for upfront, and there are no disappointments. Highlights include Ozone's thunderous solo on "La Verdad Con Los Caballos," Saturnino's fiery percussion throughout and the ensemble sections in "Jungle," "No Siesta" and "Safari."

—Ken Micallef

Jungle: Jungle; Coconuts Meeting; No Siesta; Cave Walk; Safari; B&B; Moon Flower; La Verdad Con Los Caballos; Oasis. (63:53)

Personnel: Eric Miyashiro, Mitsukuni Kohata, Sho Okumura, Yoshiro Okazaki, trumpets/flugelhorns; Eijiro Nakagawa, Yuzo Kataoka, trombones; Junko Yamashiro, bass trombone; Kazuhiko Kondo, alto and soprano saxophone, flute, piccolo; Atsushi Ikeda, alto saxophone, flute; Toshio Miki, Masanori Okazaki, tenor saxophones; Yoshiro Iwamochi, bari saxophone; Kengo Nakamura, bass; Shinnosuke Takahashi, drums; Pernel Saturnino, percussion.

» Ordering info: ververecords.com

Jeremy Pelt

Men Of Honor

HIGHNOTE 7203

★★★½

Jeremy Pelt certainly has what it takes to become a major star — whatever that amounts to in these commercially downturned days. His heroic, wide-body attack and lyrical fluency on trumpet have drawn him comparisons to the likes of Freddie Hubbard, Clifford Brown and Lee Morgan. But as the 33-year-old California native demonstrates on *Men Of Honor*, he is after something deeper and more sustainable than stardom, achieving power through what he holds back as much as what he pushes forward.

Pelt's dynamic working quintet, boasting an ideally matched frontline partner in tenor saxophonist J.D. Allen and a lock-solid rhythm section in pianist Danny Grissett, bassist Dwayne Burno and drummer Gerald Cleaver, resides with knowing intimacy in postbop style. Listening to *Men Of Honor*, their second album together, you may feel like you're sinking into a favorite chair in Rudy Van Gelder's living room. There is no absence of bold strokes, but



the solos are smartly contained, the soloists intuitively connected, the better to draw cohesive meaning from the themes.

There are times when you wish the songs would push against the format more in the manner of Pelt's wide open "Danny Mack," which Grissett animates with jabbing lines and dark pulsing patterns punctuated by high accents. You may

wish that Allen flashed more of the gritty abandon he does on his terrific trio recordings. But whether engaging in the jaunty urgency of Burno's fetching "Backroad" or the luminous warmth of Cleaver's "From A Life Of The Same Name," Pelt and his honorable cohorts are in command. The music deepens with repeated listenings, making you appreciate the risks that are being taken, however subtle they may be.

—Lloyd Sachs

Men Of Honor: Backroad; Milo Hayward; Brooklyn Bound; Danny Mack; From A Life Of The Same Name; Illusion; Us/Them; Without You. (45:59)

Personnel: Jeremy Pelt, trumpet and flugelhorn; J.D. Allen, tenor saxophone; Danny Grissett, piano; Dwayne Burno, bass; Gerald Cleaver, drums.

» Ordering info: jazzdepot.com

Blue Soaring

The stakes were high, given the audacious name chosen by Switzerland's Kind Of Blue Records when it launched in 2006, but the label has established itself for the quality of its studio recordings and the range of artists it presents.

That devotion to superior sound is evident on *Essence* (Kind Of Blue 10018; 53:23) ★★★★★ a sparkling-sounding 2006 outing by Brazilian guitarist Marco Pereira. Accompanied by bassist Natallino Neto and deft percussionist Marcio Bahia for eight of the 10 performances, Pereira adds Paul McCandless for four tracks—featuring a different horn for each. Of these, the highlight is Zé do Norte's "Mulher Rendeira," which McCandless enlivens with a soaring oboe part, while on Nelson Cavaquinho's bossa "Luz Negra" the reed player adds the rough texture of his bass clarinet to Pereira's sleek lines. Pereira's arrangements are filled with drama and movement, most evident on a flowing suite of three Baden Powell songs that concludes with a hard-driving take on "Deixa." The guitarist and Bahia also lock into uplifting dialogue on "Xôdo da Baiana," which contrasts well against a multi-tracked solo interpretation of Jobim's "Eu Te Amo."

You could call *Something Sentimental* (Kind Of Blue 10032; 58:52) ★★★ a concept recording, but it's a concept that comes from the heart. It was inspired by a memorial concert that Adam Nussbaum, Dave Liebman, John Abercrombie and Jay Anderson played in 2007 to celebrate the life of Nussbaum's mother, who had died that spring. The concept was to play songs that Muriel Nussbaum enjoyed during her 83 years. They are songs you might hear any cocktail bar band play, but that is Liebman and Abercrombie in the front line and a great rhythm team, after all, so "Poinciana" ripples with coiled energy and the solos by Liebman and Abercrombie go places that cocktail bar musicians fear to tread. On "I Hear A Rhapsody," Abercrombie spins a complex skein of notes over a meandering bass pattern by Anderson and increasingly assertive



Marco Pereira:
Brazilian drama

KIND OF BLUE

accompaniment by Nussbaum. Again and again, the quartet finds ways to go deeper into these familiar tunes. Which is not to say that everything works; some may find Liebman's wooden flute on "Besame Mucho" annoyingly nasal and thin, for example. But this is the type of project where musicians make personal statements without commercial considerations, and there's no faulting that.

One of the challenges of interpreting the music of John Coltrane is replicating the thrust and lift that Trane's horn added to the estimable power of his quartet's rhythm section. Without a stentorian wind instrument, the challenge grows, but the quintet that Bobby Hutcherson leads on *Wise One* (Kind Of Blue 10034; 53:58) ★★★★★ manages to get over with shimmering sustained notes and tart guitar from Anthony Wilson. The balance between Hutcherson, Wilson and pianist Joe Gilman is particularly good—carrying over from the seven compositions by or associated with Coltrane to two mellower standards. There's balance, too, between drummer Eddie Marshall's pair of mallets and Hutcherson's four—thunder on the one hand and silvery rain on the other—on the opening title piece and a taut, dramatic version of "Spiritual," the most successful of the Coltrane covers. Seen through the lens of album pacing—so outdated to some in this Shuffle Age—one could make a case that making bookends of "Wise One" and "Spiritual" would've made for a better construction. As it is, the band lopes out on relatively jaunty takes of "Out Of This World" and "Dear Lord," just a slight letdown from the pinnacle the band reaches on "Spiritual."

DB

Ordering info: kindofbluerecords.com



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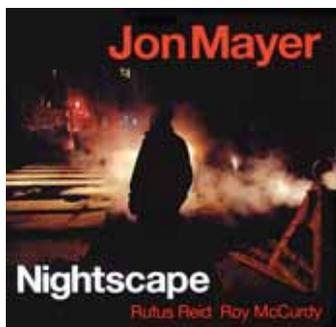
MARC MOMMAAS

Jon Mayer
Nightscape
 RESERVOIR MUSIC 197
 ★★½

Nothing satisfies like a well-executed musical performance ... except, maybe, a night out for dinner. Of course, it's one thing to celebrate a special occasion at some top-of-the-line establishment. Think of these events as the gustatory equivalent of, say, catching a young Miles Davis at Newport in 1958. More often, we'll settle for comfort and familiarity. A neighborhood cafe, maybe even part of a restaurant chain, a burger instead of *boeuf bourguignon*—that's good, too, and usually it's enough to send us home with a smile.

That is what *Nightscape* brings to mind. Throughout this outing, Mayer, Rufus Reid and Roy McCurdy dish up several satisfying courses of post-bop performance, with taste and style. Each is an outstanding team player, with Mayer assuming the prominence that traditionally devolves to the pianist but plenty of room for his colleagues to step out both in accompaniment and solo moments, including Reid's marvelously fluid lines on "Once I Loved."

The ingredients balance well: When Mayer takes his right-hand line a little outside on his tune "Blues Junction," Reid and McCurdy fall back into a straighter groove, a little less free and interactive than they might be during the head or recapitulation. When he plays a brief ascending series of chords during "Rapture," it takes the bass and drums only one iteration



before they track his triplet rhythm together; later in the same piece, they do it again as Mayer plays a descending line, in effect book-ending that segment of his solo.

This, of course, is how small groups are supposed to play, with everyone listening and locking in on the spur of the moment. But more is required to turn a satisfactory perfor-

mance into a *pièce de résistance*, and that extra something is missing here. Part of the problem becomes apparent when Mayer blows through a long series of choruses; the more he digs into Horace Silver's "Room 608," the more apparent his hesitations become, with unevenness even in repetition of a simple 16th-note figure, a few fudged notes during attempts at faster passages and a feeling that he's playing behind the beat not as a phrasing decision but because that's what he can manage. These same issues persist even at a mellower clip, as on "Dancing In The Dark," not to the point of losing the groove but never driving it to a higher level, either.

In harmonically denser settings, though, and in his introspective interpretation of Fred Lacey's "Theme For Ernie," Mayer's insightful maturity is easier to savor. And taken as a whole, *Nightscape* does deliver a pleasing if not gourmet experience. —Robert L. Doerschuk

Nightscape: The Touch Of Your Lips; Blues Junction; Day By Day; Nightscape; Rapture; Room 608; Dancing In The Dark; Bohemia After Dark; Theme For Ernie; Once I Loved; So In Love. (59:06)

Personnel: Jon Mayer, piano; Rufus Reid, bass; Roy McCurdy, drums.

» Ordering info: reservoirmusic.com



Christian Wallumrød Ensemble

Fabula Suite Lugano
 ECM 2118 2711269
 ★★★★★

The Norwegian pianist and composer Christian Wallumrød has long explored unexpected and self-devised intersections of improvisation, Scandinavian folk and classical music, and with this latest salvo his creations have never sounded more bewitching and elusive. Between the wonderfully peculiar instrumentation of this sextet—which reflects those three discreet musical worlds, and now features the superb young trumpeter Eivind Lønning ably filling the big shoes of Arve Henriksen—and malleable arrangements that brilliantly use deeply varied timbral combinations, the luminescent sound of the group is practically enough to dazzle the ears for hours. But Wallumrød's slippery compositional style ultimately gives the group its real depth.

His familiarity with and his ensemble's facility for various traditions prevents *Fabula Suite Lugano* from sounding like a series of glib mash-ups. From "Quote Funebre" which nicks terse, isolated melodic cells from compositions by Morton Feldman and Olivier Messiaen to sculpt a meticulously pitched minimalist delicacy, or the two versions of "Jumpa," where an improvised melodic phrase created in rehearsal is built into a piece suggesting a Swedish folk dance played by a baroque ensemble, the pieces work because the various traditions are all treated with respect, even when they're deliciously subverted.

A number of short improvisations—solos by percussionist Per Oddvar Johansen and the pianist, and duets by Lønning and fiddler Gjermund Larsen and cellist Tanja Orning and harpist Giovanna Pessi—fit neatly within the track sequencing, further complementing the experiments with scale undertaken in pieces like "Solemn Mosquitoes" and "Pling," where vivid contrasts in density add a subtle layer of drama.

—Peter Margasak

Fabula Suite Lugano: Solemn Mosquitos; Pling; Drum; Jumpa; Dancing Deputies; Quote Funebre; Scariatti Sonata; Snake; Knit; Duo; I Had A Mother Who Could Swim; Blop; The Gloom And The Best Man; Jumpa #2; Valse Dolcissima; Glissando; Mosquito Curtain Call; Solo. (65:10)

Personnel: Christian Wallumrød, piano, harmonium, toy piano; Eivind Lønning, trumpet; Gjermund Larsen, violin, hardanger fiddle, viola; Tanja Orning, cello; Giovanna Pessi, baroque harp; Per Oddvar Johansen, drums, percussion, glockenspiel.

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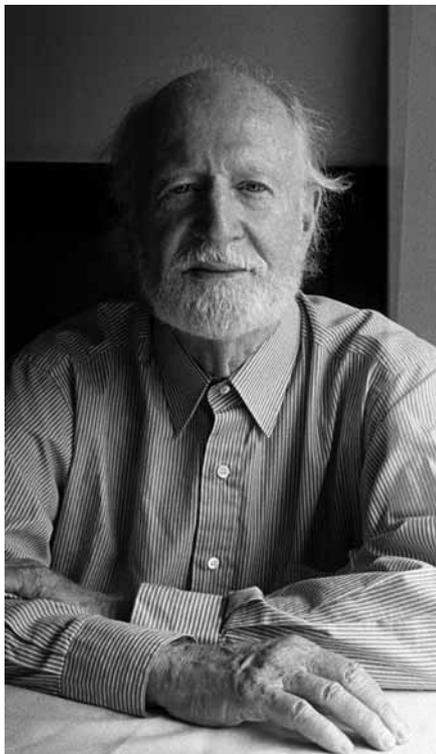
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BLUES

by Frank-John Hadley

Far North By Midwest

JT Lauritsen & The Buckshot

Hunters: Live (Hunters 00309; 69:52) ★★★ Bayou? Fjord?

They're all the same to Norwegian musician Lauritsen; his first concert album is a good advertisement for his brand of roots music with its blues bias. The bandleader has an appealing singing voice, much improved over six albums, and he displays self-possession when playing his diatonic accordion. Likewise, keyboardist Iver Olav Erstad and the other Hunters seem familiar with the lie of the American Southland, enthusiastically performing a solid bunch of original songs and covers (Jimmy Reed, Earl King, Dwight Yoakum). Guest harmonica man Billy Gibbons is from Memphis.

Ordering info: jtlauritsen.com

Dave Keyes: *Roots In The Blues* (Keyes-

land 1007; 49:42) ★★★½ Always dependable as a pianist and organ player, Keyes surprises on his third album for the range and richness of his singing and for his ability to draw out the best from his sidemen (among them, guitarists Larry Campbell, drummer Frank Pagano). These New Yorkers sock home Keyes' hybrid-tunes of blues, rock and soul, as well as lively covers of Marie Knight's "Didn't It Rain" and Ray Charles-identified "Angels Keep Watching Over Me." Enjoyable all the way.

Ordering info: davekeyes.com

RJ Spangler's Blue Four: *The Bill Heid*

Sessions (Eastlawn 019; 46:11) ★★★½

Harking back to their time together in '80s Detroit clubs, Grade A pianist Heid and steady drummer Spangler with a string bassist and saxophonist size up, in a Michigan studio, some of their favorite songs from heroes like Jimmy Witherspoon and Lieber & Stoller. Blues, jazz—the music's both, and it's plenty good. Heid sings capably, with character. He's not the Mose Allison clone some detractors suggest he is. To hear the man's B-3, go to his albums on the Doodlin' label.

Ordering info: www.eastlawnrecords.com

David Maxwell & Louisiana Red: *You Got*

To Move (Vizztone/BlueMax 002; 46:48) ★★

Thirty years of friendship between the Europe-based bluesman, who has historic ties to John Lee Hooker's Detroit, and Bostonian Maxwell bring a certain intimacy



Bill Heid: In character

WUBIN

to this recent studio pairing. But singer-guitarist Red's no longer so limber and stout, at age 75, and Maxwell's keyboard phrasing often sounds mannered and glib. Highlight: Red discusses his colleague Homesick James and the art of bending strings.

Ordering info: vizztone.com

Roy Powers: *Firing Line* (Blues Destiny

1067; 25:46) ★★ Powers came of age on the

'70s Southern chitlin' circuit and has been unleashing sprays of trilled ostinatos in Florida clubs since the mid-1980s. An adequate singer, he offers an album of blues-rock with zydeco and country garnishes that affords modest pleasure while posing the question why his prowess on piano takes a backseat to generic, overblown blues-rock guitar. Given the right producer, Powers has a good album in him.

Ordering info: bluedestinyrecords.com

Various Artists, *Boogie Woogie Kings*

(Delmark 804; 53:11) ★★★ Vinyl archaeologist

Bob Koester has uncovered 19 sides from the Euphonic Sounds label (most dating to 1939, some later) featuring a half dozen boogie-and-blues piano pharaohs. There are brief looks at Albert Ammons, Meade Lux Lewis and Pete Johnson—just five tracks among them—while the erratic Clarence Lofton pounds or caresses the ivories on six others. Imagine Henry Brown doing "Deep Morgan" and two more on a riverboat or in a roadhouse, and relish the devilish excitement that informs Speckled Red's raggedy procession of ideas on four artifacts, including "Dirty Dozens." Multi-handed, mind-blowing preaching: Ammons, Lewis and Johnson's "Boogie Woogie Prayer." **DB**

Ordering info: delmark.com

Oscar Feldman

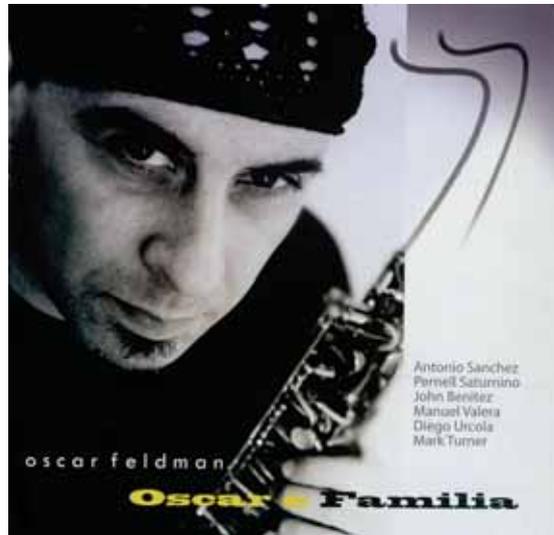
Oscar e Familia

SUNNYSIDE

★★★½

With five of the 10 songs on *Oscar e Familia* played as dedications, saxist Oscar Feldman might as well have listed the others as same. His crack band is rife with attitude and knows this music inside and out, playing a mix of all things Latin jazz with elements of funk, fusion and swing to spice things up.

Perhaps tipping his hand, Feldman kicks things off with a zesty spin in dedication to (one must assume) his wife with “Mrs. Tangoholic,” “The Improvisers” following it up in a similar spirit (dedicated to Hermeto Pascoal). These are songs that blend Latin jazz with horn charts and the light grease of electric piano (the tango plays an inverted role on the opener, the 7/4 beat on the latter keeping things a tad off-kilter). Playing alto, Feldman leads the charge with featured players Manuel Valera (on piano and Fender Rhodes throughout), bassist John Benitez and drummer Antonio Sanchez the basic fulcrum. His jazz



chops are truly on display with another of his dedications, this one to fellow altoist Lee Konitz with “So Tenderlee,” played at a medium-tempo swing pace. Sharing solo turns with tenorist Mark Turner, Feldman shows that he knows and loves to swing.

Along the way, Feldman adds percussion and a string quartet, perhaps the most poignant dedication being the one he writes for his father, “Coco Da Bahia,” which starts out slow and full of feeling only to lead into a spirited

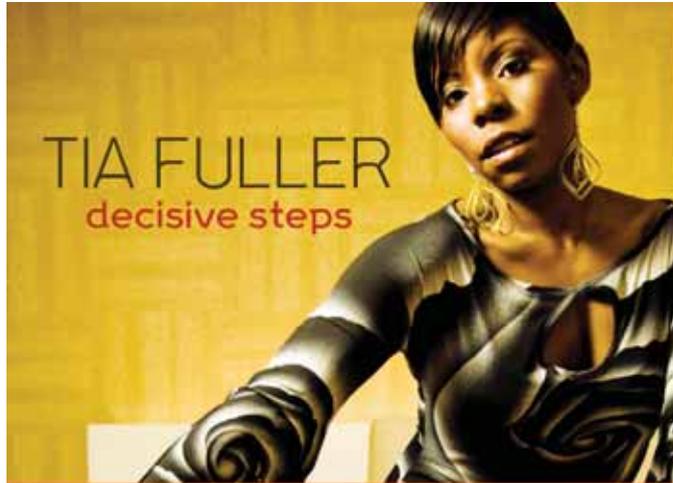
Latin samba, Feldman’s horn likewise full of feeling, strangely reminiscent of Lee Konitz. Feldman’s use of the strings has them sounding both subdued and orchestral, the recording giving them almost equal billing sonic-wise, Valera’s turn on piano both slightly funky and eloquent. This is pretty music with an edge.

While most of the program is written by Feldman, three are written by others, namely Astor Piazzolla’s “Triunfal,” Wayne Shorter’s “Children Of The Night” and Guillermo Klein’s “El Minotauro” (Feldman co-composed the gentle closer “Peace To Find” with Klein). If you want to hear original takes on these three significant composer/players, check out Feldman’s passionate approaches to their music. “Triunfal” is clothed in a jazzy tango wardrobe, while “Children Of The Night” and “El Minotauro” are full of personality as well as Latin spunk. —John Ephland

Oscar e Familia: Mrs. Tangoholic; The Improvisers; So Tenderlee; Oscar e Familia; Coco Da Bahia; New Tango; Triunfal; El Minotauro; Children Of The Night; Peace To Find. (64:06)

Personnel: Oscar Feldman, alto and soprano saxophones; Diego Urcola, trumpet (1), trombone (2); Manuel Valera, piano, Fender Rhodes; John Benitez, bass; Antonio Sanchez, drums; Pernell Saturnino, congas, cajon; Mark Turner, tenor saxophone (3); Xavier Perez, tenor and baritone saxophone (4); Pablo Aslan, bass (4, 7, 8); Cuartetango String Quartet (5, 6); Octavio Brunetti, piano (7); Tito Castro, bandoneon (7); Luis Alberto Spinetta, vocal (10).

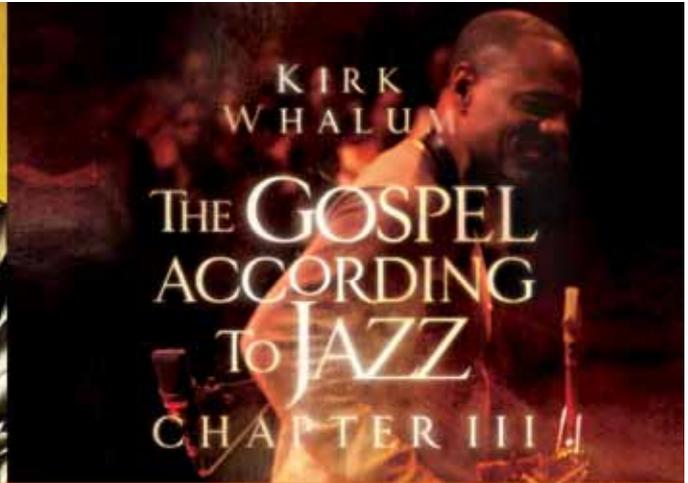
» Ordering info: oscarfeldman.com.ar



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Han Bennink Trio

Parken

ILK 156

★★★★

Although he's been a creative force in jazz and improvised music for more than five decades, *Parken*, technically, marks the first group recording led by the singular Dutch drummer Han Bennink. I say technically because Bennink doesn't really alter his modus operandi here any more than he does on the countless other recordings he's played on.

As usual, he plays with jazz fundamentals like putty, warping his for the tradition in service of spontaneous inspiration. Joined by two excellent young musicians—Belgian clarinetist Joachim Badenhorst and Danish pianist Simon Toldam—Bennink flips between crisp, infectious swing and explosive chaos; sometimes fluidly, sometimes jarringly.

While such transitions are gripping and unpredictable, what the drummer does in each sphere is just as compelling, riding his cymbal to produce the most basic pleasure in jazz to loudly cavorting over his kit like a jungle gym. His partners here clearly share his aesthetic predilections, so the leaps from knotty dissonance to buoyant lyricism in Toldam's "Music For Camping" to the terse, screaming jerkiness of "Myckewelk" arrived in unified ebbs and flows. Like so much of the best Dutch jazz, this trio lovingly reveals its affection for the tradition while simultaneously rejecting any subservience to it.

—Peter Margasak

Parken: Music For Camping; Flemische March; Lady Of The Lavender Mist; Myckewelk; Isfahan; Reedeater; Fleurette Africaine; After The March; Parken. (48:43)

Personnel: Han Bennink, drums; Joachim Badenhorst, bass clarinet, clarinet; Simon Toldam, piano.

» Ordering info: ilkmusic.com



Greg Reitan

Antibes

SUNNYSIDE 1238

★★★½

A cursory glance at the selections on *Antibes* reveals that pianist Greg Reitan is involved in the music of Bill Evans, and not in a casual way. A superficial listen imparts the sense of a stylistic bond between the two. But spend serious time with this collection and you'll hear an important emerging pianist dealing not only with legacy and homage, but with identity and ownership as well.

Reitan's low-level dynamics, lyricism and probing treatments are legitimate bonds with Evans. But the run-and-gun right hand excursions on "Time Remembers" and the out-of-tempo interludes and punching percussiveness on Reitan's own "September" are all his own.

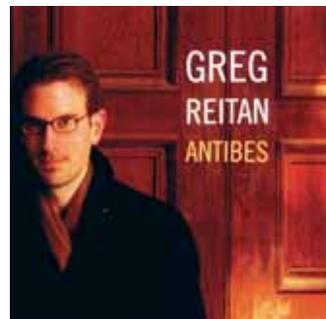
Reitan has an ease and natural quality to his playing, no matter the tempo or the pitch of the trio interaction. The phrasing and design of his theme and variations on the lazy "For Heaven's Sake" brings to mind unforced breathing. The floating time quality of Wayne Shorter's "Fall"—with Reitan's liquid movement and jewel-like grace notes—is the work of both a thinker and a conjurer.

—Kirk Silsbee

Antibes: Antibes; For Heaven's Sake; Waltz For Meredith; One Step Ahead; Fall; Time Remembers One Time Once; Sympathy; September; Re: Person I Knew; Late Summer Variations; Salinas; In The Wee Small Hours Of The Morning. (60:01)

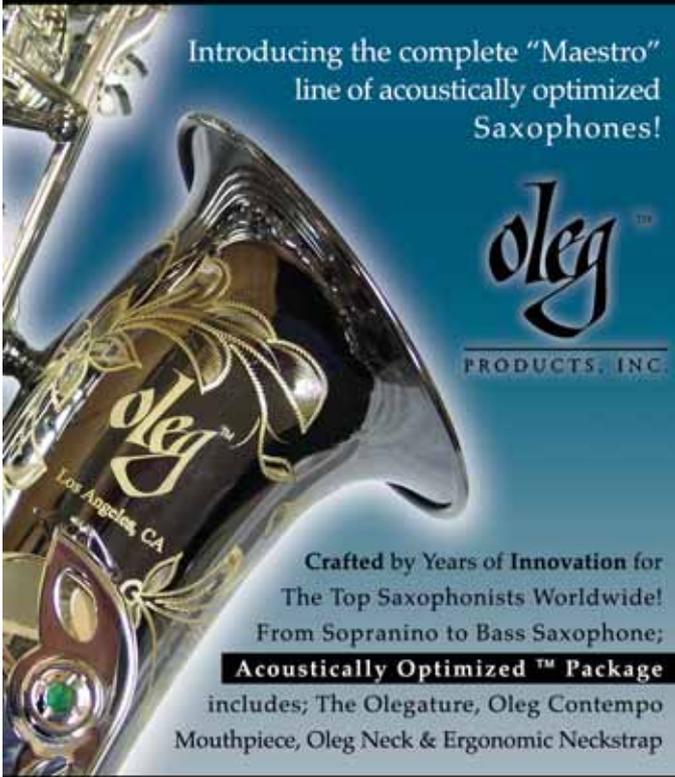
Personnel: Greg Reitan, piano; Jack Daro, bass; Dean Koba, drums.

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Wadada Leo Smith

Spiritual Dimensions

CUNEIFORM RUNE 290/291

★★★½

Trumpeter/composer Wadada Leo Smith and the two aggregations he fields here juggle the impulse of the moment with self-restraint to varying degrees. This double album contains some beautiful ensemble conclaves but also some overly long meditations. The two-drummer Golden Quintet knows how to stick and move. The three-guitar Organic band, while allowing great solo freedom, can bog down in repetition.

Smith shows a marked distillation in his playing and the frameworks he chooses. He plays in short bursts and phrases, made of brilliant tones, startling sounds, pungent runs and lyrical asides. He's a minimalist who doesn't waste anything, preferring to let the ensemble define the form. He waits for just the right moment to call the assembly to order, accent or incite. These are rhythm- and tonal center-oriented pieces, rather than chordal forms.

The Organic band is long on electronic effects and playing times, short on programmatic variety. This outfit's "South Central" is a slow ride through a funk funhouse. The heavily pedaled guitars of Nels Cline, Michael Gregory and Brandon Ross pop in and out of the landscape, alternating fright with mirth. "Angela Davis" is a cavalcade of sound but wears out its welcome at nearly 20 minutes.

—Kirk Silsbee

Spiritual Dimensions: CD 1: Al-Shadhili's Litany Of The Sea; Sunrise; Pacifica; Umar At The Dome Of The Rock, parts 1 & 2; Crossing Sirat; South Central L.A. Kulture. (54:21) CD 2: South Central L.A. Kulture; Angela Davis; Organic; Joy: Spiritual Fire: Joy. (63:36)

Personnel: CD 1: Wadada Leo Smith, trumpet; Vijay Iyer, piano, synthesizer; John Lindberg, bass; Pheeroan AkLaff, Don Moye, drums. CD 2: Wadada Leo Smith, trumpet; Michael Gregory, electric guitar; Nels Cline, six- and 12-string electric guitars; Lamar Smith, electric guitar (1, 4); Okkyung Lee, cello; Skuli Sverrisson, electric bass; John Lindberg, bass; Pheeroan AkLaff, drums

» Ordering info: cuneiformrecords.com

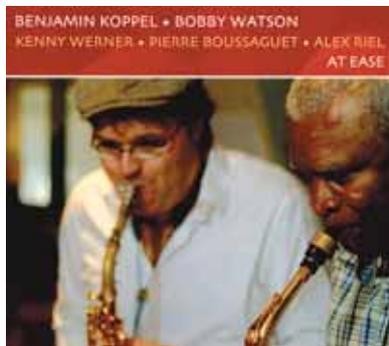


Benjamin Koppel/Bobby Watson

At Ease
COWBELL MUSIC 49
★★★½

Benjamin Koppel/Kenny Werner

Walden
COWBELL MUSIC 51
★★★★



This brace of releases from Danish saxist Benjamin Koppel showcases his sharpshooting bebop side (*At Ease*) and a less angular, chaste lyricism (*Walden*).

The sparring vehicle “Groovin’ Altos,” which kicks off *At Ease*, is heralded by Boussaguet’s headnod-inducing bass and a klaxon intro from Kenny Werner. Former Jazz Messenger Bobby Watson is an old hand at generating excitement, but Koppel knows the game plan and matches the American lick for lick—so well, in fact, that is often difficult to tell them apart (absence of liner info on solo order doesn’t help). In the last of the eights the two altos exchange before cutting to fours, Koppel plays a high-register phrase out of Bunky Green’s bag. Unconscious extracts of “Flight Of The Bumble Bee” from Werner push each E-flat horn to outdo the other before a dropout into Alex Riel’s solo, quarter notes marked by bass drum. The hard swing spills into the overlong chill of the title track (maybe that’s the point) before the Adderley Brothers-styled head of “At Large.” The Europeans reveal their deep respect for American mainstream jazz. Riel was resident drummer at Copenhagen’s Montmartre in the ’60s and has a wealth of experience fielding this kind of encounter.

The altos tail each other with fluttering phrases, and we realize how much they have in common amidst the melancholic empathy of “Con Alma” (not the Dizzy version). But it’s the burners that this is hung on, and “At Stake” sees the horns unspooling grandstanding lines such that, together with the hall-like reverb, it’s hard to believe this is a studio date. Listen for Werner’s uncanny responses here—he can anticipate what the saxes will play—offering humorously dissonant, simultaneous commentary. Koppel’s balladeering on “Mother’s Song,” which shares the gravitas of Mal Waldron’s “Soul Eyes,” suggests David Sanborn as an early influence.

The straightforward virtuosity of his playing in places might not win over Koppel with more progressive listeners, but there are moments of sheer beauty on the Thoreau-inspired conceptual disc *Walden*. The Scandinavian saxophone tradition of rich, piping dynamics pioneered by Jan Garbarek is evident in the pains Koppel takes with breath control and his upward scoops at note-ends. Werner is a brilliant accompanist and paints rich details of his own over Koppel’s compositions while offering concurrent support to the Dane’s impassioned exhortations. “Rumors From An Aeolian Harp,” sung by Koppel’s pitch-steady soprano, is quite exquisite, and the compositions inspire a communion open to natural occurrences; even when meandering occurs, such as on “Life In The Woods,” there’s conceptual relevance. “The Poet’s Delay” is lovely, and fans of Kenny G wouldn’t be offended by “Paradise (To Be) Regained,” until Werner starts burrowing for ideas, Koppel flashes triple-time chops and the two take a foray through remote keys, evoking Thoreau’s thoughtful peregrinations in the forest around his legendary sanctuary.

—Michael Jackson

At Ease: Groovin’ Altos; At Ease; At Large; Con Alma; At Stake; Mother’s Song; Alto Stratos. (63:27)
Personnel: Benjamin Koppel, Bobby Watson, alto saxophones; Kenny Werner, piano; Pierre Boussaguet, bass; Alex Riel, drums.

Walden: Walden; Rumors From An Aeolian Harp; Cows In Emerson’s Pasture; Where I Lived And What I Lived For; Life Without Principle; Life In The Woods; The Poet’s Delay; Paradise (To Be) Regained; Walden (In Early Winter). (58:16)

Personnel: Benjamin Koppel, soprano and alto saxophones; Kenny Werner, piano.

» Ordering info: cowbellmusic.dk

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Haiti Lives

Music was the first responder.

The earliest credible information I received out of Haiti in the hours after the earthquake was a series of tweets from Port-au-Prince band-leader Richard Morse. "Much singing and praying in large numbers," he texted. Then came the sad spectacle of mainstream media floundering

to interpret the tragedy in the absence of any knowledge of Haiti's history and culture, to say nothing of the near-total absence of an identifiably Haitian music style in the grim, doggedly earnest "Hope For Haiti" telethon. Haitian music history became more knowable recently with the release of *Alan Lomax In Haiti (Harte Recordings 103; 10 CDs; ★★★★★)*.

This massive set is beyond entertainment. These never-before-available recordings are the beginning of Haitian music history. To make them, folklorists Alan and Elizabeth Lomax lugged 155 pounds of gear on a boat to Haiti in 1936. They stayed from Christmas to Easter, documenting seasonal celebrations (at a time when vodou was in theory banned, by Haitian law), setting up recording sessions, even getting married there. Alan Lomax also shot dance footage with a silent film camera.

Pre-revolutionary 18th century Haiti (known as Saint-Domingue) had the densest concentration of Africans ever assembled on a piece of ground up to that point. At the time of Boukman's uprising in 1791, two-thirds of the half a million slaves in the rich plantation colony had been born in Africa. Urbanites, farmers from the forest, professional soldiers, ritual experts—people from disparate African cultural regions were compressed together in labor camps, then exploded as a concomitant part of the French Revolution. Haiti was the country that rose up and killed slavery, singing as it did so. With the full power of Africa flowing through it, the Haitian uprising became one of the generative explosions of popular music in the hemisphere, dispersing an original cultural synthesis that was complex, specific and highly artistic.

Unfortunately, the sound of the aluminum discs Lomax recorded was so horrible that they were pretty much unlistenable until the age of digital cleanup. So zero stars for the audio, but five stars that it exists at all and five more for Steve Rosenthal's painstaking restoration work. This isn't



HARTE RECORDINGS

exactly fun listening; it's grating when the harshly tuned rustic voices distort, and since much of the music is repetitive, that can be jarring at length. But this is more than fun, and discoveries lurk.

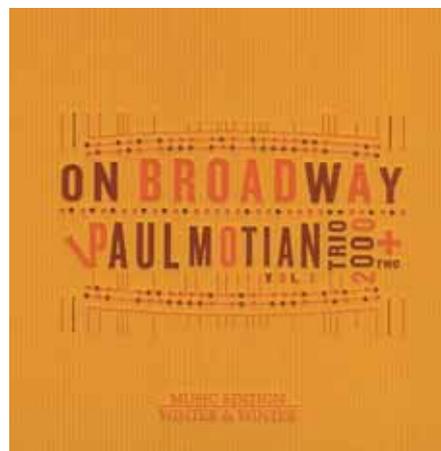
Adding significant value to the package is an 85-page book with Gage Averill's detailed notes, which constitute a truly impressive scholarly achievement and do much to make the music comprehensible. Hard-to-hear song texts are rendered the right way, in full Kreyol/English bilingual form. After listening to all 10 discs' worth of music on headphones, Averill's book became an indispensable organizing aid. A handsome book of Lomax's notes and field drawings further augment the package's value.

The wide range of Haitian music that Lomax documented is arrayed into 10 thematic discs that include Haitian jazz bands of the '30s, Cuban-influenced troubadours, Mardi Gras music, French romance (since disappeared), colonial contredanse and bawdy work songs. Needless to say, there is also the energy of vodou, whether in duet songs of the Rada branch with ason (rattle) and klòch (a small, sweet bell) or with the spirit heating up as Kongo/Petwo drummers push the envelope in drumtongue, still exhorting the spirits that more than two centuries ago spoke in flames.

There is ample continuity between these voices of more than 70 years ago and the present day. Thank God (Bondye, if you're Haitian) they were made, and thank Anna Lomax Wood for her determination to make her father's scholarship come to fruition. It's newly available primary source material that has heretofore been inaccessible, even to scholars, and is now instantly essential.

Donations to help send material aid to young Cuban-trained Haitian physicians on the front lines in public hospitals and clinics alongside the Cuban medical team in Haiti can be made at medicc.org/ns/. **DB**

Ordering info: harterecordings.com



Paul Motian Trio 2000 +Two

On Broadway, Vol. 5

WINTER & WINTER 910 148

★★★★★

The musicians have changed on the handful of *On Broadway* releases Paul Motian has recorded since 1988, but the music has largely stayed the same. Anyone working with the master drummer and improviser can't help but be drawn into his lazy, hazy orbit.

As Motian massages the kit—cymbals playing irregular, at times humorous beats, his drums similarly dancing and darting (and occasionally dumping) in truly unique fashion—the musicians must conform to his flagrant non-conformity. Here, it's flow with the flow, or be damned. Vol. 5 of the series focuses on classic ballad material from Sammy Fain, Frank Loesser, Lionel Hampton and others, though you would never know that purely by listening. The melodies are sometimes unrecognizable, but it doesn't matter. This is the unfettered spirit of loose limbed, if abstract bop: timeless, rambunctious, adventurous and in the moment. Motian's musicians play gorgeously, especially pianist Masabumi Kikuchi on "Something I Dreamed Last Night," and saxophonist Loren Stillman on "Just A Gigolo," but your ear always returns to the unusual, playful drumming that glues it all together.

Motian invents then gets away with things that no other drummer would attempt, much less pull off. It's not that he makes his pitter-patter, Marcel Duchamp-like rhythms simply work; he's got nothing to lose and, more importantly, nothing to prove. Motian's drumming is ego-free, childlike and the very essence of swing, melody and rhythm. He's irresistible.

—Ken Micallef

On Broadway, Vol. 5: Morrock, Something I Dreamed Last Night, Just A Gigolo, I See Your Face Before Me, A Lovely Way To Spend An Evening, Midnight Sun, Sue Me. (56:18)

Personnel: Paul Motian, drums; Thomas Morgan, bass; Loren Stillman, Michael Attias, saxophones; Masabumi Kikuchi, piano.

» Ordering info: winterandwinter.com

Mike Longo Trio

Sting Like A Bee

CONSOLIDATED ARTISTS PRODUCTIONS 1018

★★

Three masters at work, each schooled fully in his art and none driven by any lingering need to prove himself: That pretty much wraps up *Sting Like A Bee*, not to mention a good number of piano/bass/drums trio albums by artists comparable to these in stature.

Digging a little deeper, this means that the trio format is well suited to allowing musicians to stretch; whether that means to challenge themselves or to enjoy a leisurely idyll is up to the participants. *Sting Like A Bee* fits into the latter category, with loosely arranged tunes breezing along the roadmap of head, blowing choruses, some drum fours (which Nash plays crisply and caps with a brisk, brief solo "Daahoud"), reprise and finish. There are closing cadences so embedded into the canon that their familiarity substitutes effectively for the absent thrill of the unexpected, from the bluesy walk-up at the end of "Checked Bags" to the lick, slightly botched, that wraps "Love For Sale."

Which brings to mind perhaps the one challenge that all who want to credibly follow this



approach have to honor: When playing standards, effort should be made to cast the tune in an even slightly different light than usual. "Love For Sale" is one such track in this set: Right at the top, it sashays into a swiveling, seductive funk, switching to a complementary swing on the bridges, which perfectly suit the theme of the tune. Similarly, "Speak Low" is presented as an intimate ballad, nicely harmonized and buoyed by Cranshaw's and Nash's discreet, spacious support. Beyond their agreement on this feel, the only sign of preconceived arrangement here is a set of descending triplets, played together by all three participants, which leads from each second ending into the next

verse. And that's it: Players this seasoned and skilled can trust their instincts to deliver the goods once the tape rolls.

Sometimes, in fact, that works better than building on a more ambitious foundation. Inspired by Longo's study with Oscar Peterson, "Westside Story Medley" actually features some of the album's best blowing, especially in the driving treatment of the first section, "Tonight." But slamming on the brakes and veering suddenly to a rubato, solo piano rumination on "Maria" subverts that energy, and when Longo slips into the waltz "I Feel Pretty" those several seconds of "Maria," in turn, become superfluous. It might have been better to just pick any one of the Bernstein pieces and live with them for a while. Far more satisfying, and unexpectedly so, is Longo's solo exploration of Dizzy Gillespie's "Kush," which closes *Sting Like A Bee* as a dramatic reminder of how profound an interpreter and penetrating an improviser he is when he chooses to be.

—Robert L. Doerschuk

Sting Like A Bee: Speak No Evil; Love For Sale; Daahoud; Tell Me A Bedtime Story; Someone To Love; Westside Story Medley; Dance Cadaverous; Morning; Speak Low; Bird Seed; Checked Bags; Kush. (72:53)

Personnel: Mike Longo, piano; Bob Cranshaw, bass; Lewis Nash, drums.

» Ordering info: jazzbeat.com

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Intimate Ella

Ella Fitzgerald played to millions in big outdoor venues like the Hollywood Bowl during her last four decades, and if you ever caught her there or some place similar you get bragging rights that your “saw” the great Ella in person. But you couldn’t really know her unless you encountered her in her natural habitat. That’s the thing about *Ella Fitzgerald: Twelve Nights In Hollywood* (Verve Select B0012920; 60:23/53:22/75:19/62:30 ★★★★★), a four-CD compression of about 30 shows producer Norman Granz and engineer Val Valentin taped in May 1961 and June 1962 in a small club on Sunset Boulevard called the Crescendo. It was a snug chamber in which carpets, drapes, tablecloths and a low ceiling trapped the sound and made it touchable. The audience-to-performer ratio was a close and cozy 200-to-1, more or less—practically a lap dance by stadium standards. Hard to believe that this was how the biggest stars in show business still worked then: playing to audiences a few hundred at a time, two or three times a night. The patter of the applause is eager and intimate; the 75 songs, the cream of the American songbook, which she, Buddy Bregman and Nelson Riddle had recently raised to the pedestal of high art. Collections like this—the kind that make such quality look so damn easy—are why the best jazz remains the most rarified and elite of American cultural experiences.

Perhaps the small audiences explain the collegial, almost careless atmosphere, as if the scale of intimacy put so little at stake. Part of the charm of any live recording is its unexpectedness, something Granz was perhaps the first to recognize when he recorded the first JATP concerts in 1944. There are marvelous moments here so sui generis they seem plucked from a private party. After the first sentence of the verse to “I’ve Got A Crush On You,” Fitzgerald interrupts herself, as if missing a remark from someone in the audience—“huh”—then goes on. Or when she happens to spot Carl Reiner and Mack David at a table and favors them with an impromptu, half-improvised lyric to David’s own “Candy.” Occasional quips feel in the moment, not like boilerplate. “Can I have a sexy light,” she asks before one bal-

Ella Fitzgerald:
impromptu
mastery

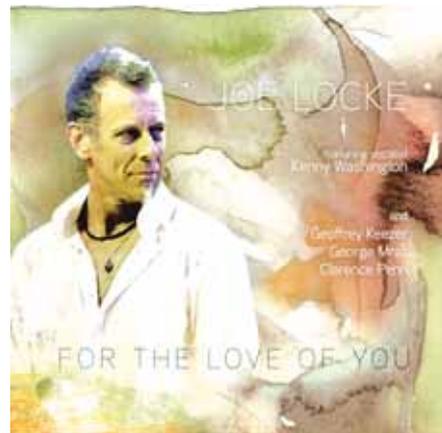


DOWNBEAT ARCHIVES

lad. “Doesn’t help. But anyway...” Some references have grown obscure with time. “Hi-ho Steverino,” which she injects into “Alamo,” was a familiar catchphrase out of “The Steve Allen Show.” The tacky cha-cha beat of “Driving Me Crazy” and pop-rock rhythm of “Blue Moon” are intended as acerbic asides to the contemporary kiddie-kitsch of fleeting fads. But Fitzgerald is utterly immutable—her instincts beyond the reach of time, her vocal powers scaling the heavens.

Music director and pianist Lou Levy carried a thesaurus of musical references in his head and drops them shrewdly into unexpected places. You’ll hear Artie Shaw’s “Nightmare” setting up “Accentuate The Positive.” And he interpolates Dizzy Gillespie’s “Bebop” riff as a kind of intro/refrain into a much-too-short “I Found A New Baby,” which hungers to be opened up with a few scat choruses. It also makes one wonder why this is her only recorded performance of this classic jam session staple. The same is true of “The Lady’s In Love,” “My Kind Of Boy/Girl” and, incredibly, “It Had To Be You,” which she sings to columnist Walter Winchell, sitting ringside. Together, this set is likely to become one of Fitzgerald’s defining collections. **DB**

Ordering info: vervemusicgroup.com



Joe Locke

For The Love Of You

E1E 2046

★★★★½

Vibist Joe Locke does a nice job of mixing the variety of music up with *For The Love Of You*. A kind of project that started with his interest in Henry Mancini’s music back in 1994 expanded into a varied repertoire that’s been played out specifically at Dizzy’s Club Coca-Cola (at Jazz at Lincoln Center) in New York City. *For The Love Of You* is a satisfying collection of tunes that blend standards with originals in an original way.

For starters, there’s the inclusion of singer Kenny Washington (not the drummer), who blew Locke away when he first heard him. Now, as a member of his band, Washington adds depth to the sounds of certain songs heard on *For The Love Of You*, including the opener, a sweet rendition of Mancini’s bittersweet “Two For The Road.” But it gets better with novel arrangements that smack of attitude, as with the band’s sharpshooter approach to the standard “Old Devil Moon.” Reinvigorating that song’s gusto with more gusto, Locke opens the barn door with talents Geoff Keezer on piano, bassist George Mraz and drummer Clarence Penn. The only sad part of this story is that Locke doesn’t let Keezer fly akin to former boss Benny Golson, instead keeping him more as a secret weapon through songs that reflect the eclectic flavors of this release such as Neil Young’s “Birds,” Ennio Morricone’s “Cinema Paradiso” and Locke’s own “I Miss New York.”

For The Love Of You is a great introduction into how to lead a band from the vibes, everyone swinging and singing with a mix of originals and standards, all inspired, it seems, from the pen of Henry Mancini. —John Epland

For The Love Of You: Two For The Road; Old Devil Moon; For The Love Of You; Verrazano Moon; I Miss New York (When I Been Gone Too Long); Birds; The Shadow Of Your Smile; Cinema Paradiso; Pure Imagination; Bright Side Up. (59:01)

Personnel: Joe Locke, vibes; Geoffrey Keezer, piano; George Mraz, bass; Clarence Penn, drums; Kenny Washington, vocals.

» Ordering info: joelocke.com



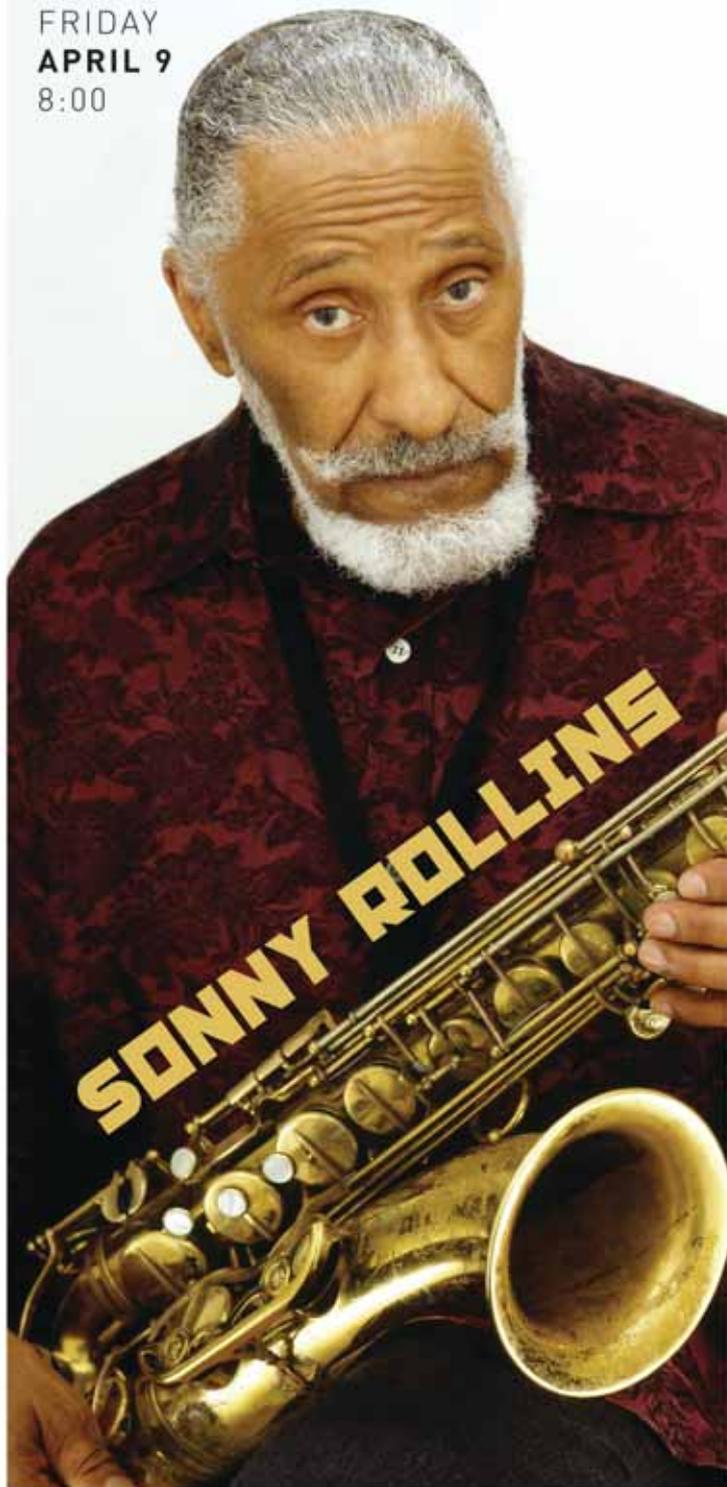
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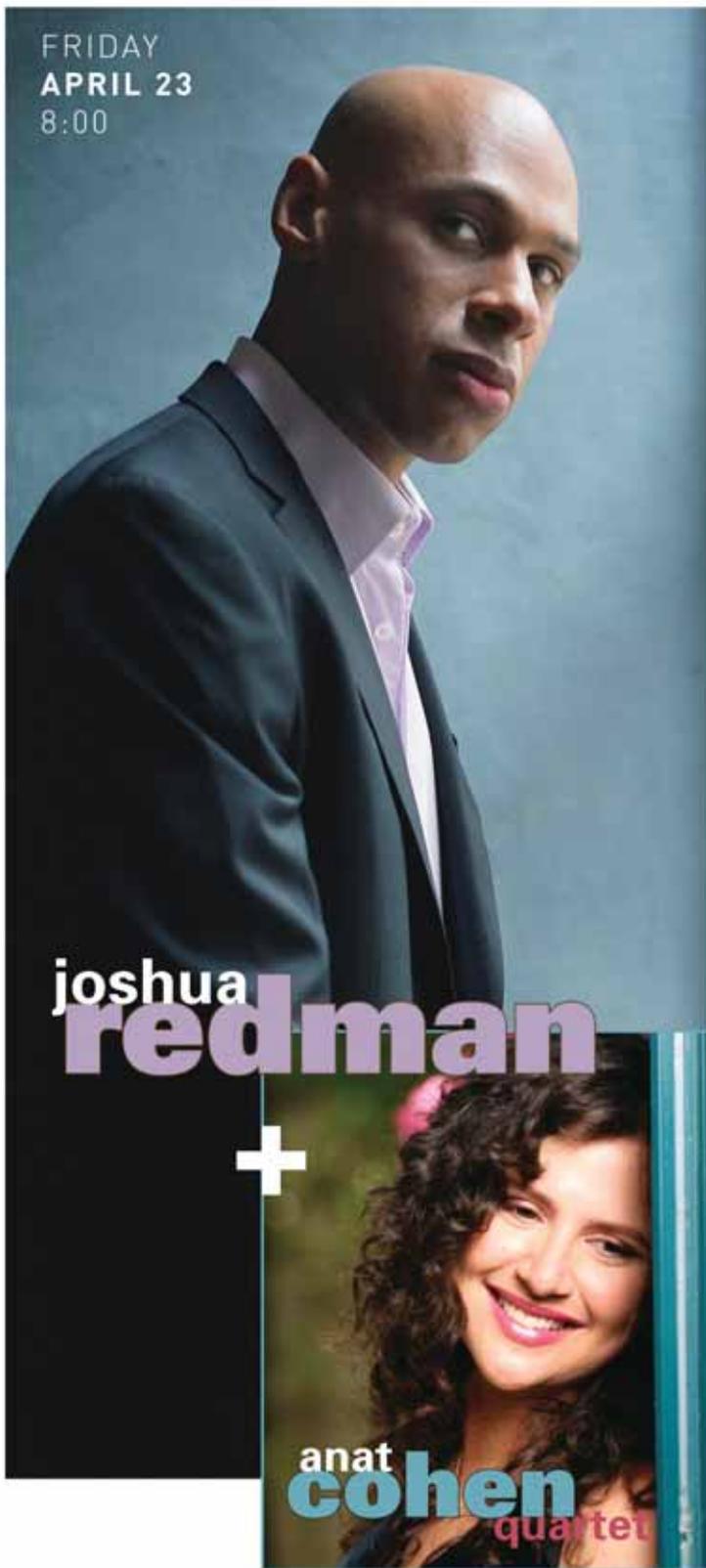
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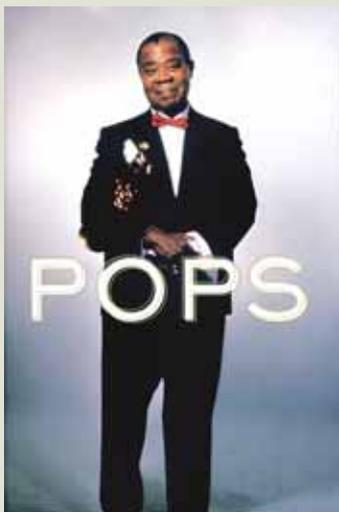
**CHICAGO
SUN-TIMES**

New Biography Balances Armstrong's Musical Brilliance, Historical Detractors

Terry Teachout's *Pops: A Life Of Louis Armstrong* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt) tracks Armstrong's rise from the slums in New Orleans, to innumerable bookings at mob-controlled clubs and segregated hotels, to the bright lights of Broadway and Hollywood. For many, such a journey would more than adequately fill a book; in Armstrong's case it merely covers the first half of his life. His story has been well chronicled in biographies such as Robert Goffin's *Horn Of Plenty* and Gary Giddins' *Satchmo*, not to mention Armstrong's memoir *Satchmo: My Life In New Orleans*.

So why another book about Armstrong?

Pops looks closely at Armstrong apart from his music. The trumpet player and singer was the



first black crossover artist of note, and the first virtuoso to perform popular music rather than classical. He also personified a cultural diaspora originating in the American South that changed the perceptions of not just music, but also race, sex, language and sports. Yet Armstrong's bittersweet legacy serves as a reminder of the narrow divide separating groundbreaking achievement from hokum.

"We must take [Armstrong], like all great artists, as he was, and it is no sacrifice to do so, for even when he was at his most trivial, seriousness kept breaking in," writes Teachout, drama critic at *The Wall Street Journal*. True to this statement, he allows Armstrong's pandering to stand alongside his genius: his refusal to alter solos once they became familiar, his many cameos in mediocre films and his endless grinning and clowning.

Armstrong paid dearly for this, particularly later in life when Dizzy Gillespie, Miles Davis, Gunther Schuller and James Baldwin would take umbrage with his music and manner. The first slight occurred early on: John Hammond excluded Armstrong from the 1938 concert "From Spirituals To Swing" at Carnegie Hall, a landmark showcase for jazz and other black music that had remained noncompromised

by commercial demands. Even though were it not for Armstrong, Teachout argues, there would have been no audience for jazz at concert halls, much less Carnegie Hall.

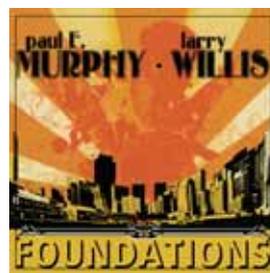
Still, Armstrong was an easy target. For all his brilliance he remained stagnant for long segments of his career. This was conspicuous during World War II, when swing bands returned jazz to a place of prominence. Armstrong, however, stuck with dance bands—and second-rate ones at that—and also an unchallenging repertoire whose tired songs he likened to "good ol' good ones."

Teachout attributes some of the blame to Armstrong's manager, Joe Glaser, who had ties to organized crime in Chicago. Armstrong signed over his career to Glaser in return for a steady salary and assurances that mobsters would no longer threaten his life over contracts he allegedly had broken. Armstrong endured some hardship in the early 1940s, his marriage to his fourth wife, Lucille, notwithstanding. Years of continuous gigging and poor embouchure technique had taken their toll on his chops, resulting in a succession of split lips. It forced Armstrong to rein in his flamboyant use of the trumpet's upper register that had long served as a calling card.

After World War II ended and big bands had fallen out of favor, a sea change had begun for Armstrong. A promoter's decision to book the trumpeter at New York's Town Hall in 1947 marked his first small-group concert of consequence in two decades and heralded Armstrong's rebirth as a combo leader (albeit one who eschewed bebop).

The rest of the biography is just as compelling. Aside from the occasional over-analysis of Armstrong's solos, the candid narrative stays on course, rife with fascinating anecdotes and historical data; the generous space doled out to Armstrong's critics provides an effective counterweight. **DB**

Ordering info: hmhbooks.com



**Paul F. Murphy/
Larry Willis**

Foundations
MURPHY RECORDS
★★★★

Following up on the experi-

ment they undertook with *The Powers Of Two*, Murphy and Willis build a complex structure on *Foundations* through their pairing of piano and drums and the application of their formidable musicianship to the process of invention through total improvisation.

Each of these tracks starts from scratch. Absent predetermined themes or chords, the foundation alluded to in the title most likely alludes to the process of conjuring something from nothing. But this is a little misleading, since there is always something there, in the moment of their performance. In the opening track, it's the single tonic note that Murphy rapidly repeats to begin the process. There's something thrilling in the decision by Willis to respond not on his kit but by switching to a bongo drum, on which he echoes the velocity and staccato of the piano motif. With this gesture, the two musicians suggest they are interacting fully, listening intently and opening themselves to any and every type of possibility.

Almost all of *Foundations* is non-metrical yet highly rhythmic, with an almost constant rushing momentum interrupted occasionally by reflection or just catching one's breath. The most obvious analog to Murphy's approach would be Cecil Taylor, with his muscular, dense texturing and displays of sheer energy. But Murphy is also somewhat less abstract; fragments of possible song structures pop up amidst his heavily pedaled rumblings.

Willis not only tracks these tidal shifts, he also contributes mightily to their direction. "Khafre" starts with a delicate cymbal pattern, sounding at first like a wash of rain but quickly intensifying as the impact of the sticks grows more pronounced and then expands to include an urgent throb of snare and kick. It's Murphy who does the answering this time, with sprightly smears and jabs that soon root in quartal harmonies similar to those of McCoy Tyner, though played with less sustain and framed by ample space to allow commentary from the drums.

At other times, Murphy and Willis work together with a quirky, almost comic synchronicity. "Preeter" starts with a three-note statement from the piano; the drums answer with a single *thwack*, like a punchline following the straight man's setup. —Robert L. Doerschuk

Foundations: Foundations; Epigraph; Khafre; Preeter; Morel, M-LB; Paeon; Dance Pointe; East Turn Alt; Composite Drive; June Jump; Equinox. (67:43)

Personnel: Paul F. Murphy, piano; Larry Willis, drums, percussion.

» Ordering info: pfmjazz.com



Curtis Brothers Quartet

Blood • Spirit • Land • Water • Freedom
 CURTIS BROTHERS MUSIC LLC/TRUTH REVOLUTION RECORDS
 ★★★★★

I like these guys and concur with the passionately intense essay printed in the CD gatefold supporting the lofty title to this collection of (primarily) originals, successfully blending classical, Latin and bebop influences.

The eponymous brothers are Zaccai, a resourceful, accurate and inquisitive pianist, and Luques, who is steeped in the art of laconic Latin bass playing having worked with Eddie Palmieri and Jerry Gonzalez. The core group is unusual in that it uses drums and percussion, rather than guitar or horns, but the disc is not short on guests, including the unusual voice of Giovanni Almonte, who comes across as an androgynous marriage of Johnny Mathis and Al Jarreau on “Thoughts Not My Own,” which, during a brief rap section, bemoans peer pressure or general oppression in the Latin ghetto.

On the opener, a cascading line early in Zaccai’s solo sounds like a phrase from a West African kora, but the pianist backs up his talent for filigree fingerwork (evident on the gorgeous melody “Maria Cervantes”) with rock-hard montunas behind congas, bata drums and Luques pendulum bass. “Yuba Citrico,” written by conguero Reinaldo de Jesus, recalls grooves favored by bassist Avishai Cohen; Mark Whitfield features on the smooth “Solutions,” and there is nice soprano from lesser-known Frank Kozyra on “Song To Break The Spell,” which features a Pat Metheny-like vocal choir.

Award-winning as Zaccai’s compositions are (he’s picked up several ASCAP gongs), and not discounting a pastoral ballad from Luques, interestingly titled “Alkalinity,” the Latin treatments of Bud Powell’s “Bouncing With Bud” and Chopin’s “Op 25 No. 2” stand out.

—Michael Jackson

Blood-Spirit-Land-Wate-Freedom: Curtis Anew; Thoughts Not My Own; Twisted Histories; Yuba Citrico;Taino Revenge; Bouncing with Bud; Memories in Ether; The Spoiler; Op.25 No.2; Take That Seat; Maria Servantes; Alkalinity; Solutions; Song to Break The Spell; El Calderon. (68:89)

Personnel: Zaccai Curtis, piano; Luques Curtis, bass; Reinaldo DeJesus, congas; Richie Barshay, drums; Michael Dease, trombone (1, 10); Frank Kozyra, soprano sax (1, 10, 14); Mark Whitfield, guitar (7); Camilo Molina Gaetan, bata (10); Giovanni Almonte, vocal (2); Julie Acosta, vocal (10); Jee Youn Hong, cello (5); Sung Hee Choi, viola (5).

» Ordering info: truthrevolutionrecords.com

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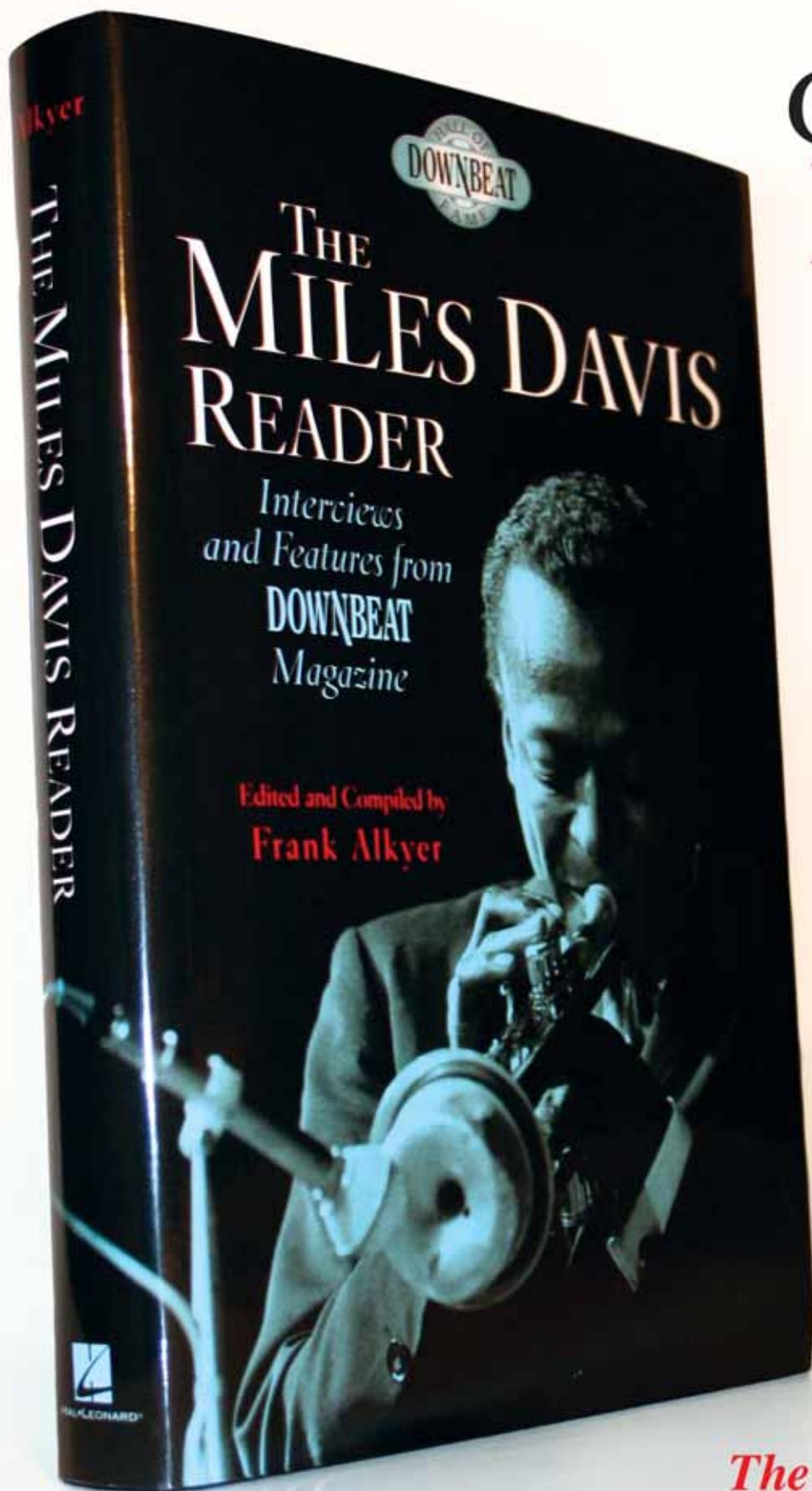
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Ben Goldberg

Speech Communication

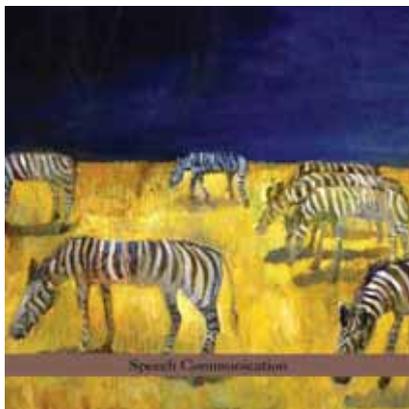
TZADIK 8146

★★★★

Go Home

BAG 001

★★★★



Over the last two decades the Bay Area's Ben Goldberg has had few rivals as one of the most vibrant, flexible, and inventive clarinetists in jazz and improvised music. From his membership in the pan-stylistic collective Tin Hat to rigorous sideman work with pianist Myra Melford or guitarist Nels Cline, he's able to adapt his playing perfectly to each given context without surrendering his personality as a tough sonic explorer.

On *Speech Communication* he revisits the instrumental format of the band where he first made his mark, New Klezmer Trio. He's joined by old bandmate Kenny Wollesen on drums and the trusty Greg Cohen on bass (replacing original bassist Dan Seamans), and together they embrace that wonderful old sound, building mostly improvised performances from scant

written themes that draw loosely from the melodic shapes, mood and harmony of old Jewish music.

It's in this setting where Goldberg really pushes the sonic envelope of the clarinet, unleashing penetrating long tones, high velocity trills and hypnotic circular riffs, while consistently maintaining control of the unwieldy

instrument and weaving such abstractions into lyric, touching solos. The adept rhythm section alternates between unobtrusive grooves and coloristic probing without distracting from Goldberg's extended solos, even when he unleashes the cumbersome sound of the contra-alto clarinet.

For the album *Go Home* Goldberg reached back even further, writing a blues-imbued set of tunes heavy on rhythm and elegant simplicity—qualities that first engaged the clarinetist with jazz years back. With drummer Scott Amendola and seven-string guitarist Charlie Hunter (who've worked together in numerous contexts in the past) both laying down fat grooves and

constructing lithe armatures, Goldberg and trumpeter Ron Miles shape beautiful, sometimes pensive melodies out front, much of them marked by ebullient contrapuntal generosity.

As gritty as things get—on "Wazee" Hunter seems to be channeling Albert King—the band can also play it subtle, as on the sorrowful "Lace," where amid the quietly churning emotion Miles taps into some unpitched growls that recall Axel Dörner, a nice contrast to his deeply tuneful, sanguine improvisations. While Goldberg's remarkable control and compositional logic have always shaped even his most extreme playing, the music on *Go Home* represents some of his most accessible and joyful work, but like everything he undertakes there's an unabashed undercurrent of deep consideration.

—Peter Margasak

Speech Communication: Language Behavior; Habituary; Amr; Head And Tails; Avodyah; Song #1; Papermaker; Drops Off; Palindromic; Snow Note; Epilogue—Bongoloid Lens. (59:06)

Personnel: Ben Goldberg, clarinet; Greg Cohen, bass; Kenny Wollesen, drums.

» **Ordering info:** tzadik.com

Go Home: TGO; Wazee; Lace; Root And Branch; Head And Tails; Ethan's Song; Inevitable; Isosceles; Reparation; Papermaker. (72:19)

Personnel: Ben Goldberg: clarinet; Charlie Hunter: seven-string guitar; Scott Amendola: drums; Ron Miles: cornet, G trumpet.

» **Ordering info:** bengoldberg.net

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PRO AUDIO

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Movek MyMix

send and two-band EQ on each track. It has built-in mics and XLR inputs with phantom power, as well as a built-in kickstand for placing the recorder where you want it. The DP-008 records to MicroSD media. **More info:** tascam.com

Unlimited Sound

Korg's Sound on Sound Unlimited Track Recorder deserves props for concept alone: a pint-sized recorder with a built-in stereo mic that allows for an infinite number of overdubs and alternate takes. This doesn't even take into account its 16-bit, 44.1 kHz audio; built-in tuners; 50 internal rhythm patterns; and sound stretch function, which lets users alter the playback speed without affecting the pitch. And users can dump their tracks down into a computer-based DAW system for further editing, mixdown and playback. **MSRP:** \$400. **More info:** korg.com



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Ride That Wave

Waves' new Vocal Rider plug-in eliminates the problem of having to overcompress a vocal to get it to sit right in a mix. Users set the target range of the vocal level in relation to the rest of the mix; Vocal Rider then compensates for all deviations from the target, raising or lowering the volume instantly without coloring the vocal with compression or limiting. It also includes a Spill control to differentiate the vocal from background instrumentation and noise for better tracking and performance. **MSRP:** Native, \$400; TDM, \$800. **More info:** waves.com



Waves Vocal Rider

Handheld Audio-Video

Alesis has jumped into the new hand-held video recorder product category with the VideoTrack. It creates Web-ready video ideal for YouTube and Facebook. It comes with a high-quality stereo condenser microphone set and advanced DSP image-processing technology. The VideoTrack records to standard SD and SDHC cards, and it connects via USB to Macs or PCs. **More info:** alesis.com

Preamp Power

With the new PowerPre, Radial offers a 500-series mic preamp that's sensitive to the needs of different applications. The front-panel voicing switch delivers three unique personalities. The Breath setting flattens vocals and instruments requiring extra detail; the Punch setting helps fatten up sounds; and the Normal setting delivers natural sound without hype. **MSRP:** \$500. **More info:** radialeng.com



Novation Launchpad

USB Blues

The Yeti microphone from Blue has been sighted in the rapidly growing USB mic category. In addition to its otherworldly design, this addition to Blue's new consumer line is THX-certified. The USB mic offers Blue's premium condenser capsules in a proprietary triple-capsule array for high-quality, versatile audio recording capability. **More info:** bluemic.com

Tiny 8-Tracker

Tascam gave new meaning to "Portastudio" with the DP-008, a tiny eight-track recorder that can record up to two tracks at a time. Featuring 24-bit, 96 kHz audio, the unit's built-in effects include reverb

Prepare For Liftoff

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BAND & ORCHESTRA

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More info: ricoreeds.com

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More info: eastmanmusiccompany.com

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More info: jupitermusic.com

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More info: yamaha.com

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More info: pmauriatmusic.com



Upright Bass Pickup

David Gage and Ned Steinberger have worked together to build a clip-on version of the Realist pickup for acoustic bass. Called the SoundClip, the pickup clamps easily on the bridge of any string bass and features an on-board volume knob so players can adjust output on the spot.

More info: realistacoustic.com

Synthetic Signature

Légère Reeds has come out with Signature series synthetic reeds for tenor saxophone. Made of a polymer compound with a fine microtexture that mimics the properties of high-end moist cane, the reeds respond quickly and maintain their consistency over a long period of time.

More info: legere.com

Rubber-and-Metal Mouthpiece

Bari Woodwind Supplies now offers a Hybrid saxophone mouthpiece that combines properties of metal and hard rubber for a comfortable feel and versatile sound. Suitable for jazz and studio players, the Hybrid provides excellent intonation and projection and is available in two finishes: hand-polished high-gloss and vintage matte.

More info: bariwoodwind.com

DRUMS & PERCUSSION

Convertible Drum Set

It looks, sounds and feels like an acoustic drum kit, but Pearl's e-Pro Live is much more. Featuring the r.e.d. box drum module, the e-Pro can be converted into an electronic drum set with 100 high-definition sounds and kits, along with space for 100 user-created kits. And Pearl's Tru-Trac electronic heads feature dual zones that reproduce the intricacies of playing an acoustic drum. Its e-Classic high-end electronic cymbals are made with real brass.

More info: pearldrums.com

Global Percussion

Remo's new Global Frame Drums and Tambourines are manufactured using the company's synthetic Skyndeeep graphic film drumheads and Acousticon drum shell technologies. Supported by Remo artists, the new collection includes Irish Bodhráns, several Pandeiros, various sizes of tar frame drums, a riq, a tamburiq and a Persian daf drum. MSRP: \$89-\$259.

More info: remo.com

2 Tones In 1

LP's new percussion combo gives players an extra hand by delivering two tones in one instrument. A fusion of a tambourine and wood block sound, the Percusso can easily toggle between tones or be played simultaneously in perfect sync. The new instrument pulls off wood block and tambourine combinations with split-second precision. More info: lpmusic.com

Sparkling Shell Pack

Gretsch's Catalina Club Jazz shell pack is now available with a copper sparkle finish. Reminiscent of champagne sparkle, copper sparkle offers a unique look with a vintage twist. The pack features mahogany shells with 30-degree bearing edges and natural interiors for a classic sound. Other features include 1.6 mm flanged hoops, a mini GTS tom suspension system, a Gretsch ball-socket single tom mount with 12.7 mm tom arm, wood bass drum hoops with matching inlays and coated single-ply Gretsch/Evans batter heads. A 14- by 18-inch bass drum, 8- by 12-inch rack tom, 14- by 14-inch floor tom and 5- by 14- inch snare are included. MSRP: \$990. More info: gretschdrums.com



Gretsch
Catalina
Club Jazz
Shell Pack

Graphic Details

Evans' "Inked by Evans" program gives drummers the power to customize their bass drumheads with color graphics. Players can go with the company's existing graphics, including Alchemy Gothic, Lethal Threat, Al McWhite, Woodstock art and multiple gallery designs, or upload their own graphics and text.

More info: daddario.com

Tighten Up

The Falcon drum pedal from Mapex is the company's newest entry in the drum accessory market. The Falcon's standout feature is its smaller footprint. Its easy-to-reach, resistance-free Talon clamp adjustment can be tightened with one hand from a seated position, making setup easy in tight spaces. More info: mapexdrums.com

Responsive Crash

The sound of the Vault Artisan Crash from Sabian has been enhanced through several subtle design changes to produce a richer, fuller and faster response. The cymbal features traditional high-density hand hammering and provides a dark, complex tone that can fit into most setups. More info: sabian.com

Ride-Alongs

The new Zildjian 22-inch K Constantinople thin ride provides a dark pitch and tons of wash. An additional series of over-hammered marks on top of the traditional K Constantinople hammering yields a slightly drier sound with excellent stick definition for marking time. Zildjian's 20-inch K light flat ride is a thin-weight cymbal with extreme stick definition and a palatable level of wash. Zildjian also added the 22-inch K Constantinople Bounce ride—designed in conjunction with trapsman Kenny Washington—to its line of high-end jazz ride cymbals.

More info: zildjian.com

Shakeup & Shakedown

The Toca Jingle-Shake combines a tambourine and shaker in one easy-to-hold package. Shake it up and down, and it sounds like a tambourine. Shake it from side to side, and it sounds like a shaker. The shaker container can be removed from the tambourine frame, enabling the two components to be played separately.

More info: tocapercussion.com

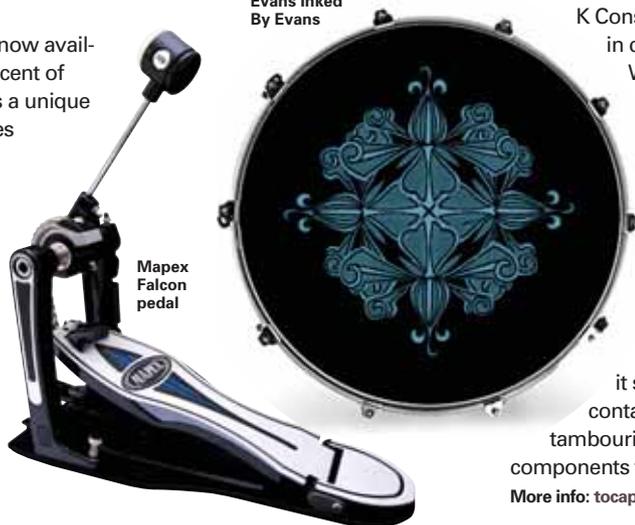
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PIANO/KEYBOARD

More Nord

The Nord Piano Library has been expanded with the addition of three uprights, one grand and two electric vintage pianos. The Black Upright is a Petrof 132 upright piano with hammers voiced for a soft tone. On the Romantic Upright XLR, touch and tone are harmonized perfectly from the powerful bass notes up to the sparkling treble register. The action and keyboard on the Queen Upright XLR are adjusted to ensure an ideal touch and the best possible transfer of power with a maximum degree of control. The Grand Lady XLR is a carefully voiced Steinway Model D that has been selected for its special tonal characteristics. The Bright Tines XL and Sparkle Top XL feature vintage elec-



Nord Piano

tronic piano sounds. Nord Piano Library sounds can be used in the company's performance-oriented keyboards, includ-

ing the Nord Stage, Nord Stage EX, Nord Electro 3 and the all-new Nord Piano. **More info:** nordkeyboards.com

Tone & Projection

All three pianos in Yamaha's CF series—the 9-foot CFX full concert grand, 6-foot 3-inch CF4 and 7-foot CF6—offer expressiveness and singing legato tone combined with unprecedented power and tonal projection. The instruments were evaluated during top-secret meetings with artists in New York, Paris and Tokyo. **More info:** yamaha.com



Roland HP307 SuperNatural piano

Beyond Natural

Roland's HP-Series SuperNatural pianos feature a new sound engine that unites the company's V-Piano technology and 88-

key stereo multisampling technology. This results in seamless sound transition from note to note across the keyboard, as well as decaying sounds that linger and fade naturally without looping. Plus, the natural touch of the PHA III (HP-307) and PHA II (HP-305 and HP-302) keyboards come from the use of hammer mechanisms that accurately reproduce the touch of an acoustic grand. **More info:** rolandus.com

Sample Power

Utilizing new sample Flash technology, the Kurzweil PC3K lets user samples remain intact after a power cycle, with zero load time upon powering back on. The PC3K can load .WAV files and Kurzweil .K files from the K2000, K2500, K2500 and K2600 keyboards. Players can now combine the PC3K's Dynamic V.A.S.T. synthesis engine with the immense library of K series samples generated by users and developers for more than 15 years. **More info:** kurzweilmusicsystems.com

Improved Piano Library

Ivory II is the new custom engine for Synthogy's line of virtual pianos, which now include expanded sample sets to provide performers with more expressive detail. New piano-related features have been added to the Ivory II engine, including sympathetic string resonance, half pedaling, lid position, pedal noise and tuning tables. Additional features like timbre shifting, parametric EQ and Synth Layer control offer sound sculpting capabilities for custom piano programming. **More info:** ilio.com



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GUITARS

Polyphonic Tuner

TC Electronic's PolyTune polyphonic guitar tuner shows users which strings are out of tune with a single strum. The unit features a chromatic tuner that boasts plus or minus 0.5 cent accuracy. And MonoPoly, a new TC technology, recognizes whether the guitarist has played one or more strings and switches between the polyphonic and chromatic tuner on the fly. The bright LED display with ambient light sensor offers visibility in any lighting situation. MSRP: \$149.

More info: tcelectronic.com

Body-Builders

Taylor is giving consumers the power to customize SolidBody guitars. All Classic, Standard and Custom SolidBodys can be built with your choice of pickup configurations and colors. You also have the option of adding a Taylor-designed tremolo. Each SolidBody features a five-way pickup switch and Taylor's T-Lock single-bolt neck. MSRP: Classic starts at \$1,748; Standard starts at \$2,398; Custom starts at \$3,098.

More info: taylorguitars.com

French Guitar Range

Lâg Guitars, a France-based company, showed Tramontane acoustic and acoustic-electric models. The entry-level Stage Range redefine bang-for-your-buck with their smooth playability and sound. The higher-end Master Range guitars are appointed with fine details and select woods. All instruments feature a detailed rosette design with the Occitan cross. MSRP: \$280-\$2,100. More info: lagguitars.co.uk

Bass-ic Ukulele

Riding the growing ukulele craze, the Kala U-Bass produces a rich sound that is similar to an upright bass but in a compact size that's fun and easy to play. It's 20 inches long and features polyurethane strings and 16 frets. Made to be amplified, the U-Bass is also a suitable addition to any unplugged jam session.

More info: kalaukulele.com



Fender 50th Anniversary Jazz Bass

Ampeg Heritage

Custom Voicings

Artoli Designs' Voice capo lets guitarists change the open voicing of their instruments without retuning. It fits over the first four frets of a guitar, letting you create custom chords while freeing your fingering hand to accentuate over the chords. Voice fits all standard sized acoustic guitar necks and all guitar necks between 1.65 and 1.8 inches.

More info: voicecapo.com

Gearhouse

IK Multimedia's AmpliTube 3 is a virtual gear warehouse for guitarists. It features models from both vintage collections and modern workhorses, including 51 stomp boxes and effects; 31 amplifier, pre-amp and power sections; 46 speaker cabinet models; 15 stage and studio mics; and 17 post-amp rack effects. AmpliTube 3's open architecture also lets users add more packages as needed, including AmpliTube Fender. Plus, special attention has been put into reproducing a player's dynamics and feel.

More info: ikmultimedia.com

Jazz Bass at 50

Fender's 50th Anniversary Jazz Bass brings design elements from several important periods in the model's history together in one instrument. In addition to the slim neck, offset waist and midrange growl the Jazz Bass is known for, the anniversary model includes a '60s-era nitrocellulose finish in Candy Apple Red, headstock logo, chrome pickup/bridge cover, "C" neck shape and white Pearlloid block fingerboard inlays. It also features a '70s-era bridge pickup placement and bass-side thumb rest, as well as modern tuning machines, a high-mass vintage-style bridge and Posiflex neck support rods.

More info: fender.com

Ultimate Gig Axe

The Fender Acoustasonic Tele is the ultimate gigging guitar for players who need an acoustic and electric in one package. Featuring a chambered body and rosewood bridge, the Acoustasonic Tele uses Fishman's Aura technology to give it four different, convincing acoustic guitar sounds.

Switch to the Twisted Tele neck pickup, and you get a punchy electric.

More info: fender.com



Taylor customizable SolidBody guitars



Voice Capo

American Heritage

Responding to consumer demand, Ampeg designed and assembled its new Heritage series heads and cabinets in the United States. The line, which includes the Heritage SVT-CL, SVT-810E and SVT-410HLF, delivers premium upgrades,

including high-end tubes and custom U.S.-made drivers.

The enclosures are built using 15 mm plywood. MSRP:

\$1,249.99–\$3,299.99. **More info:** ampeg.com

American English

A marriage of the Sweet 16 Combo and the Dallas Amp in a 30-watt version, the PRS 30 Combo offers an English sound with an American twist. The combo features a quartet of EL84 tubes with a control layout similar to PRS’s Dallas model. Other features include reverb, bright switch and a special master volume that is dialed out of the circuit as the amp’s volume approaches the max setting.

More info: prsguitars.com



PRS 30 Combos

DB Reporting by Aaron Cohen, Ed Enright, Jenny Domine, Katie Kailus and Zach Phillips.

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Invention, Design, Technique In 2 Bars

Pianist Danny Grissett's beautiful tone, expressive lyricism and exquisite time seem to stem from a musicianship that is made up of equal parts intellect and intuition (see "Players," page 22). I find gems of inventiveness and design at all levels of his playing, and a few bars of a Grissett solo can keep a music analyst like me occupied for a long time.

Accordingly, this article's analysis will look at but *two measures* of a passage that begins at the 4 minute, 56 second point on Grissett's "Waltz For Billy" (hear the passage at thinking-music.ca/grissett, and the tune itself at tinyurl.com/grissett). Although the passage sounds utterly effortless and blows by in an instant, it is brimming with invention, design and technique. Figure 1a illustrates it, as performed by Grissett (piano), Vicente Archer (bass) and Kendrick Scott (drums, omitted from this transcription).

The melody is a highly elaborated three-stage sequence in which arpeggiated triads, each a major third above the other, form the basis of the design. Figure 1b shows how it appears when stripped of all rhythmic and melodic embellishment: The melody's three-stage, sequential structure is clearly visible, as are the arpeggiated triads of which it consists: $A\flat m$, Cm and $E(F\flat)$. Grissett elegantly integrates these as chord extensions within the $IV-II-V$ ($A\flat m/add2-Fm11-B\flat7b9b5$) progression. We see that while the melody moves in ascending major thirds, the harmony does not, making this a purely *melodic* sequence.

We also see that the sequential stages naturally articulate the melody in groups of two beats each, rather than the accompaniment's three-beat meter. Grissett has placed his sequence within a polymetric framework: The two-bar melodic phrase is really one bar (of $3/2$) that sounds against the accompaniment's $3/4$ (fig. 1c). This juxtaposition creates an entirely new and rich musical dimension; it imparts a special magic to the solo, while creating new relationships on all levels.

Meanwhile, Archer's bass and Grissett's chord voicings (second bar) employ rhythms that, while clearly in $3/4$, are also suggestive of yet another polymeter: $6/8$ against $3/4$. While their swing eighths don't align perfectly with $6/8$, their rhythms are close enough to suggest it (fig. 2a). While $3/4$ and $6/8$ have a three-against-two relationship ($3/4$'s three beats to $6/8$'s two), $6/8$ creates a more intricate three-against-four relationship with the melody's $3/2$ (fig. 2b). The resulting triple polymeter is very rich.

This sophisticated design is where Grissett

Figure 1

a) the passage:

b) melodic structure:

c) melodic meter:

Figure 2

polymeter:

a) $3/4$ vs $6/8$: Accompaniment is in $3/4$, but its rhythms suggest $6/8$:

b) $3/2$ vs $6/8$: Accompaniment's $6/8$ creates '3-against-4' relationship with melody's $3/2$:

c) Triplets Within Triplets

begins. Let's now look at the techniques he uses to develop his basic melodic content, elevating it from the commonplace to the exquisite (fig. 3):

1) Grissett pulls the entire first stage of his sequence back by a third of a beat so that it begins just before the downbeat. But rather than play its first note as a pick-up, he articu-

lates the figure as though it had never been shifted. The result is not a redefining of each note's role (something that would have weakened his melodic sequence), but rather the creation of a metric conflict that generates momentum, engages our attention and provides the rhythmic geometry necessary for the phrase ending that Grissett has in mind.

Figure 3

melodic development:

2) Grissett gives this note (E \flat) double the duration it usually receives within the motive. This shifts everything forward by a third of a beat, and thus cancels the phase shift. The effect is brilliant: First, it places the subsequent note (G, the first note of “stage 2”) squarely on the beat, which—being beat two of the melody’s 3/2—provides enough of that metric design to allow its perception. Second, the return-to-phase itself creates an asymmetry that, like a sudden video edit, accelerates our forward movement. Last, the lengthened E \flat has more rhythmic weight, which reveals that it is also the last note of a hidden quarter-note triplet rhythm (fig. 2c). The quarter-note triplet drives us powerfully forward to the beginning of stage 2; in fact, it acts as the pickup to stage 2.

3) Grissett heightens the acceleration to

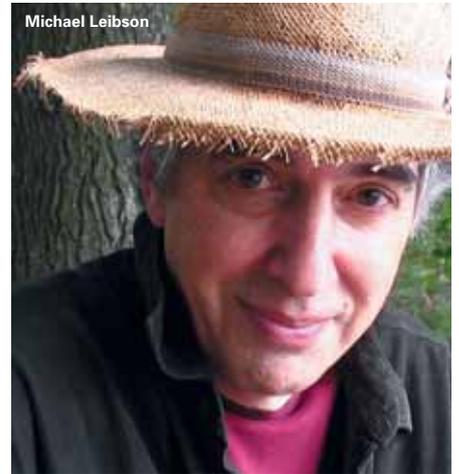
phrase climax by using a 3/4–6/8 hemiola to move to shorter beats and faster time values.

4) He adds two notes to the pickup, which lengthens stage 2 by 25 percent, and makes us wait for that climax, at C \flat —the highest pitch of the phrase, and the beginning of stage 3.

5) He applies diminution to the motive and closes the cadence with additional notes.

Through these “local” techniques—phase shift, quarter-note triplets and 3/4–6/8 hemiola—Grissett really performs a series of rapidly changing time signatures and tempi, and he does it fluidly, with coherence and rhythmic meaning. Musical time is perhaps jazz’s most esoteric dimension, and Grissett has clearly mastered it.

This passage contains as much creative invention in terms of pitch as it does of time — a topic that we’ll have to leave for another



occasion. However, as I’m a music teacher, I’ll end this Woodshed session with both a hint and an assignment: Grissett employs a particular scale-type in a most sophisticated way—can you spot it? (Email your discoveries to michael@thinkingmusic.ca.) **DB**

Michael Leibson is a composer, music analyst and music educator who specializes in jazz and classical harmony. For more analyses (including more on Grissett), bio and information on studying with Leibson, please visit thinkingmusic.ca and thinkingmusic.ca/students.

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SOLO
by Matt Shevitz

Wayne Shorter's Less-Is-More Solo On 'E.S.P.'

The year 1964 was significant in jazz history, as John Coltrane's *A Love Supreme*, Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers' *Free For All* and Eric Dolphy's *Out To Lunch*—each a milestone achievement—were all recorded. It was also the year that Miles Davis completed the formation of what was to be known as his classic 1960s quintet by adding saxophonist Wayne Shorter.

No mere newcomer to the jazz scene, Shorter had just finished playing with Blakey's group and had made important recordings as a leader on Blue Note. While his playing style at the time was often aggressive and technical, Shorter was (and still is) a master of utilizing musical space. This less-is-more approach (often associated with Davis) is vital to every jazz musician, and developing it is a never-ending project. The trick is not simply playing fewer notes, but knowing which notes to play and *not* to play.

Davis' first studio album with this group, *E.S.P.*, was recorded in January 1965. On the album's uptempo title track, Shorter takes two choruses and uses a variety of techniques ranging from the conventional to the more sophisticated. It should be noted that the letter markings that occur every eight measures are to help the reader and are not meant as a reflection of the song's form. At the beginning of the solo, Shorter uses A# Aeolian mode, an unusual choice for an F#7alt chord because it emphasizes an E# when the chord contains an E-natural. Given the fast tempo and rhythm of this phrase, though, the E# is heard for only a fraction of a second, minimizing the harmonic clash. When the F#7alt chord occurs later in the chorus, Shorter uses either the chromatic or the whole-tone scale.

In the second chorus (which starts at letter "E"), Shorter uses some conventional approaches. For instance, over the Em9 four measures before letter "G," he plays a descending scalar pattern starting on the fifth of the chord. Later he uses motivic development, first in the second bar after letter "G" and then in the first few measures after letter "H."

What is important to take into consideration

for the entire solo is not just the level of sophistication of Shorter's harmonic choices, but how he plays them. In the second and third measures after letter "E," Shorter's harmonic choice is not very sophisticated, but it is very effective at emphasizing the importance of phrasing and the



Wayne Shorter

FRANCIS WOLFF/IMOSAC IMAGES

value of a less-is-more approach. There are phrases that show Shorter's harmonic depths, but what makes this solo worthy of study is how he executes each idea in a manner that sounds fresh and new.

Too often, jazz education focuses on harmony, leading the student to try to avoid more basic harmonic approaches. While an in-depth knowledge of harmony is important to improvisation, musicians need to be open to playing melodies regardless of how advanced the harmonic approach may be. To paraphrase the old adage: it's not just *what* you say, but *how* you say it. **DB**

Matt Shevitz is a saxophonist and educator based in Chicago. He teaches at Harold Washington College, where he is also the Music Program Coordinator. Shevitz completed his doctoral degree in May 2009 at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. For more information on Matt go to mattshevitz.com.

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CHORUS 1

A F#TAL7 QMA7

F#TAL7 FMA7(b11) **B** E7 FMA7

F#TAL7 QMA7 FMA7 EMIN9 A7 AMIN7 A#MA7

C F#TAL7 QMA7

F#TAL7 FMA7(b11)

D E7 FMA7 F#TAL7 QMA7 FMA7

Eb9(b11) AMIN7 EbMIN7 Ab7

QMA7 **E** CHORUS E F#TAL7 ESP. QMA7

F#TAL7 FMA7(b11) **F** E7

FMA7 F#TAL7 QMA7 FMA7 EMIN9 A7

AMIN7 A#MA7 **G** F#TAL7 QMA7

F#TAL7 FMA7(b11)

H E7 FMA7 F#TAL7 QMA7 FMA7 Eb9(b11)

AMIN7 EbMIN7 Ab7 QMA7

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Jazz On Campus

Eastman School Establishes Niewood Scholarship

After saxophonist Gerry Niewood died in an airplane crash last winter, his wife, Gurly, began to look for ways to honor his memory.

She began consultations with Bob Sneider, who played guitar alongside Niewood in Chuck Mangione's Band from 1994 to 1997 and who is now the instructor of jazz guitar at Eastman School of Music in Rochester, N.Y., and chair of the Eastman community music school jazz studies department. Both Gurly and Gerry Niewood graduated from the school. An initial wave of generosity from the Glen Ridge Congregational Church in New Jersey led Gurly Niewood and Sneider to establish a scholarship fund in Niewood's memory at Eastman. Gurly explained that scholarship money had enabled Niewood as well as his two children to attend college, and that now the family "had a chance to create a scholarship where a young musician can start down the path to realize their own dreams," she said.

After discussions with Eastman's development office and the jazz studies department, the Gerry Niewood Memorial Scholarship fund was established to provide support for a deserving undergraduate student pursuing a major in jazz studies and performance at the Eastman School of Music. With a goal of raising \$50,000 as an endowment, the jazz studies department began looking for ways to kick-start the campaign.

They hit upon the idea of presenting a concert of Niewood's music, arranged by his colleagues for the Eastman Jazz Ensemble and the Eastman New Jazz Ensemble. Both ensembles had a shared concert date already on the books (Oct. 14) and turned it over to the scholarship-raising efforts. The date also coincided with the first week of celebrations in the newly redesigned and acoustically refined Eastman Theatre.

More than \$40,500 was raised at the concert. Eastman music dean Douglas Lowry said the scholarship would ensure that "generations of promising jazz musicians will have the same opportunity Gerry had."

"I'm hoping this is the seed that will plant things with people close to Gerry," said jazz



Adam Niewood (left), Kay Niewood and Gurly Niewood

GERRY SZYMANSKI

department chair and pianist Harold Danko. "We're just starting to see what we can do with it."

The memorial concert idea was expanded to include an afternoon panel discussion where many of Niewood's school friends and professional associates reminisced about his contribution to the establishment of the Eastman jazz program. Panelists included Chuck Mangione, Niewood's childhood friend from Rochester and director of the first official Eastman Jazz Big Band; Gap Mangione, a mainstay of the Rochester jazz scene; saxophonists Rick Lawn and Pat LaBarbera; and trumpeter Lew Soloff and Sneider. Niewood was the jazz ensemble's first lead alto saxophonist as well as an active participant in numerous unofficial on-campus sessions that helped jazz gain a foothold in the traditional conservatory environment. The participants acknowledged Niewood's work ethic and musical marksmanship.

"I never heard him play a 'bad' note, let alone a wrong note," Danko said.

The concert began with a backdrop of slide projections of Niewood playing sax and alto flute or mugging for the camera; it closed with an empty stage and a recording of Niewood playing flute and soprano sax on his tunes "Essence" and "Prelude To A Vision."

The program featured original Niewood compositions that had never been played in public. Arranger Rich DeRosa selected 10 songs that formed the basis of a suite titled, "Treasures From The Attic"—a reference to his private space at his home in New Jersey, where he would often practice for 14 hours straight.

—Peter Rothbart

School Notes



George Colligan

Colligan's Canada: Pianist George Colligan has joined the faculty of the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg. **Details:** umanitoba.ca

Percussive Anniversary: The 20th annual Day of Percussion at Concordia College in Moorhead, Minn., will be held on April 17. Along with the school's jazz ensemble and marimba choir, guests will include xylophone player Bob Becker.

Details: concordiacollege.edu

Texas Tribute: The Booker T. Washington High School for the Performing and Visual Arts' jazz combo has released *Tribute*, a memorial album for student James Kings Jr., who was killed in 2008. Along with the student band (under Bart Marantz's direction), Carl Allen and Jeff "Tain" Watts make guest appearances.

Details: btwhspts.org/jazz.htm

Blues Talk: Dominican University in Oak Park, Ill., has opened registration for its Blues and the Spirit symposium, which will be held on June 9 and 10 to coincide with the centennial of Howlin' Wolf's birth. Panelists will also speak about the connections among American musical roots.

Details: dom.edu/blues

Schneider Guests: Maria Schneider will join William Paterson University's jazz orchestra to serve as guest conductor for its April 23 concert at Shea Center. Her longtime collaborator and Paterson faculty member, saxophonist Rich Perry, will also perform. Schneider will also premiere a new work with the Kronos Quartet at Duke University on April 10.

Details: wpunj.edu; dukeu.edu

Howard Sings: The Howard University jazz choir, Afro Blue (under Connaitre Miller's direction), appears on violinist John Blake Jr.'s new disc, *Motherless Child* (ARC).

Details: johnblakejr.com

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E.J. Strickland

"Asante (For The Tribes Of Ghana)" (from *In This Day*, StrickMusik, 2009) Strickland, drums; Marcus Strickland, tenor saxophone; Jaleel Shaw, alto saxophone; Luis Perdomo, piano; Hans Glawischnig, bass.

It's nice to hear a 6/8 pattern really light. Luis Perdomo? It is Luis, but not his record? David Sánchez? Miguel Zenón? Then I can't recognize it. The drumming and percussion support the tune, which is a vamp, kind of tender. I like it, but it sounds like an excuse to improvise—there's a specific idea of what the horns do against the pattern, but no real "B" section or sophisticated compositional elements. And there's a lot of improvising, nice trading by the horns. 3½ stars.

Yaron Herman

"Isobel" (from *Muse*, Sunnyside, 2009) Herman, piano; Matt Brewer, bass; Gerald Cleaver, drums.

Very groovy, the drummer and the bassist, who has a great sound. Is it Jason Moran on piano? Jean-Michel Pilc? Whoever it is, the pianist is very together: It's a very rhythmic line, and the trio is locked in. The bass drum is tuned with the skin loose. I can't think of anyone who plays this style that [uses] this kind of bass drum. The drummer sounded great, very supportive of the tune. 4 stars.

Arturo Stable

"Call" (from *Call*, Origen, 2009) Stable, percussion; Francisco Mela, drums; Javier Vercher, tenor saxophone; Aruán Ortiz, piano; Edward Perez, bass.

It's a blues form on top of a bata rhythm. It sounds like a Coltrane tune, with a 7/4 pattern on top of the 6/8 bass line. I like the tension of contradiction that comes from this loose sound with the drummer on top of the batas, and free adventures in the soloing—but not in the tune—over the steady rhythm. David Sánchez comes to mind, but it doesn't sound like David. 3½ stars.

Dave Douglas

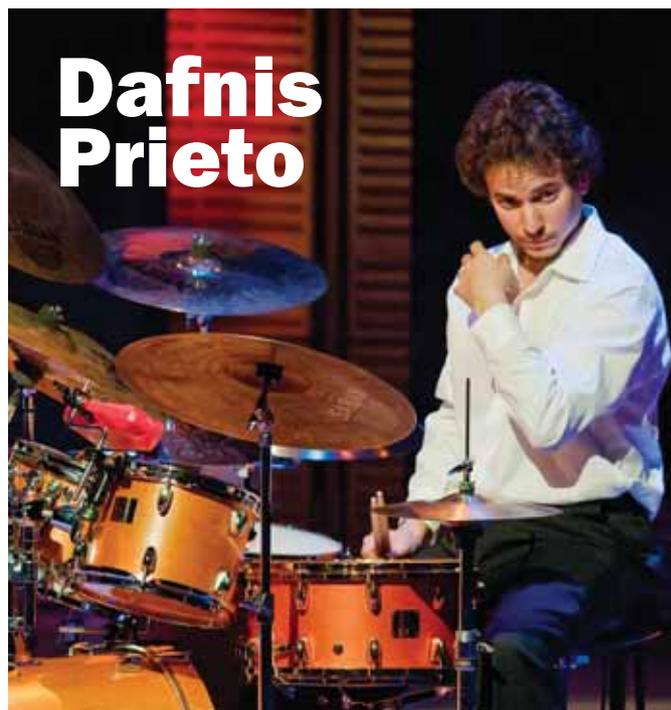
"Bowie" (from *Spirit Moves*, Greenleaf, 2009) Douglas, trumpet; Luis Bonilla, trombone; Vincent Chancey, French horn; Marcus Rojas, tuba; Nasheet Waits, drums.

That's Dave Douglas' brass and drumset thing. So Nasheet is playing drums. Nasheet always looks for polyrhythmic possibilities, playing two sounds simultaneously, like the bass drum and the snare drum. It's very compositional. Everything was arranged until the trombone solo comes in over the swing. The experimental thing with the tuba reminds me of working with Henry Threadgill. It sounds very European, connected to the music you see in the parks in Europe, like open parade music. 4 stars.

The Monterey Quartet

"Treachery" (from *The Monterey Quartet: Live At The 2007 Monterey Jazz Festival*, Concord, 2009) Eric Harland, drums; Dave Holland, bass; Gonzalo Rubalcaba, piano; Chris Potter, tenor saxophone.

That's Chris Potter, and it's the band with Dave Holland, Gonzalo and Eric Harland. Eric is one of my favorite young drummers. I like how he uses different textures and techniques to interact with what is happening in the moment. He can play very open or very straight. I like Gonzalo here, but lately I always want more from him, more digging in on an emotional level. Chris Potter is expressing himself here, putting it out. Obviously, Gonzalo plays great piano, but lately I think his playing deals more with conceptualized things and ideas. I miss the old Gonzalo sometimes. 4½ stars.



JACK VARTOGIAN/FROTHPHOTOS

Horacio "El Negro" Hernandez

"Free Latin" (from *Italuba*, Pimienta, 2004) Hernandez, drums, composer; Ivan Bridon Napoles, keyboards; Daniel Martínez Izquierdo, bass; Amik Guerra, trumpet. El Negro. He uses big drums, and the drum sounds big! Sounds like a Cuban band. The tune itself reminds me of the sound of jazz in Cuba in the late '80s, an influence from Chick Corea, Gonzalo [Rubalcaba]'s thing of using the keyboards, having the same pulse but incorporating different things with the bass and the drums in different places than the melody line, and sometimes joining them together. 4 stars.

John Escreet

"Somewhere Between Dreaming And Sleeping" (from *Consequences*, Posi-Tone, 2008) Escreet, piano; David Binney, alto saxophone; Ambrose Akinmusire, trumpet; Matt Brewer, bass; Tyshawn Sorey, drums.

I love the drummer. Very sensitive, very swinging. Sounds like Jeff "Tain" Watts. It's not? This drummer has that powerful, aggressive sound like Tain. I liked how the piece unfolded, the different sections, and the surprise factor. The beginning reminded me of Muhal Richard Abrams. I don't know if the drummer is Tyshawn or Marcus Gilmore, but I think it's one of them. They are very different, but certain music makes you feel more aggressive, and then it becomes confusing to identify who it is by the sound. It's Tyshawn? 4½ stars.

Vijay Iyer

"Smoke Stack" (from *Historicity*, ACT, 2009) Iyer, piano; Stephan Crump, bass; Marcus Gilmore, drums.

Very Monk-influenced playing. The three musicians work beautifully together. It's hard to tell whether it's Vijay or Jason Moran—they sometimes occupy a mutual place. But I think the drummer is Marcus Gilmore, which means it's Vijay's record. The tune is very involved, and the drummer really has to be on top of it to make it happen—Marcus is very supportive. I really like his drumming, and I liked the piece. 4 stars. **DB**

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