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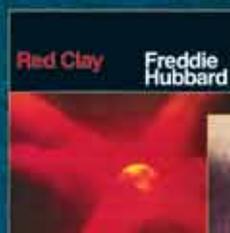
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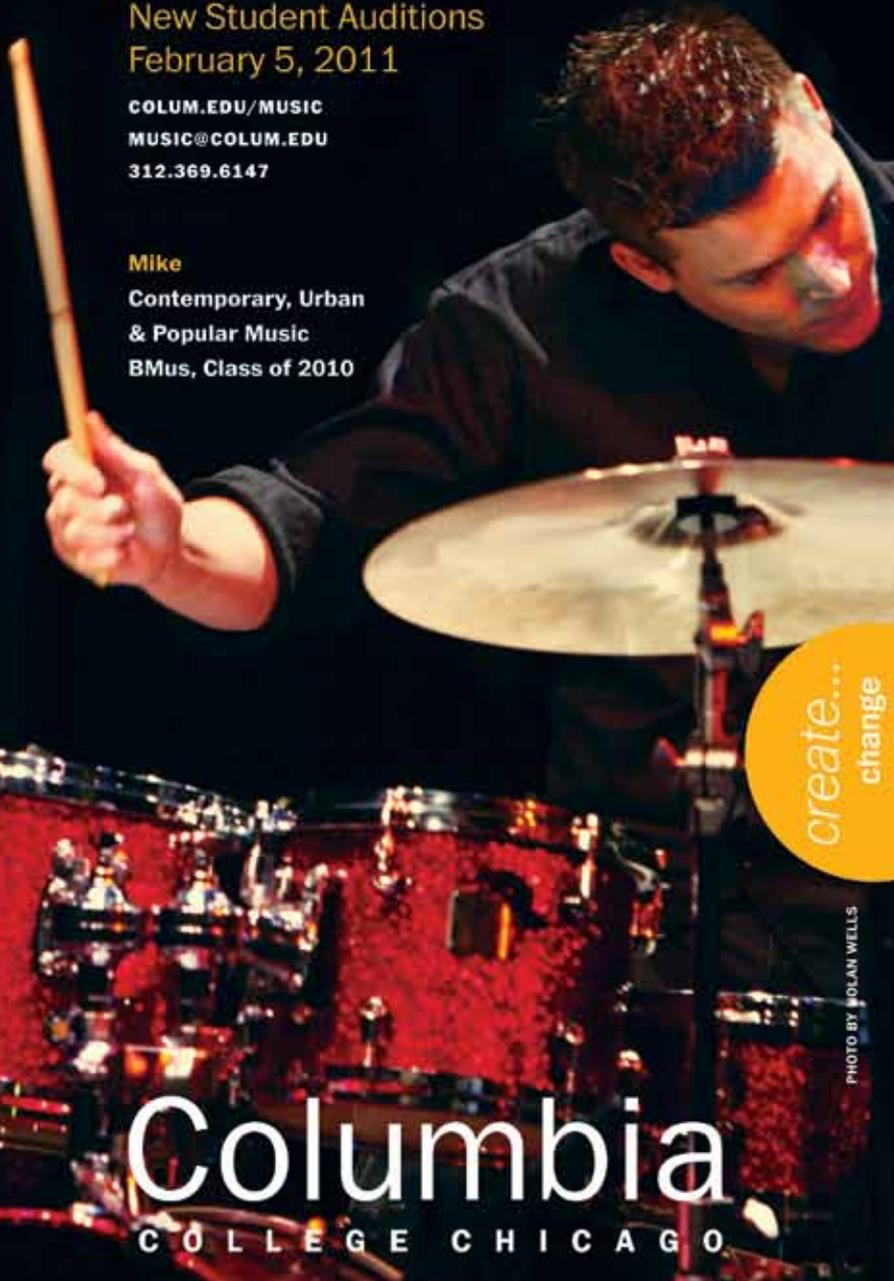
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Rhythm Of The Moment

BY KEN MICALLEF

Motian is one of the most prolific and imaginative drummer/leaders in jazz today. He never leaves Manhattan and doesn't have to. Musicians who want to play and record with him journey to New York, where Motian holds court at the Village Vanguard, Cornelia Street Café, the Jazz Standard, Birdland and the Blue Note. But regardless of the gig, Motian never really changes. Some see him as the ultimate swinger, others as an anarchist bent on meeting his once throwaway comment to "destroy jazz."



Cover photography by Jimmy Katz. Special thanks to The Village Vanguard in New York City for letting DownBeat shoot on location.

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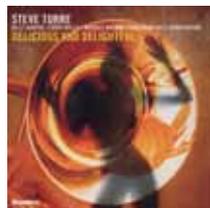
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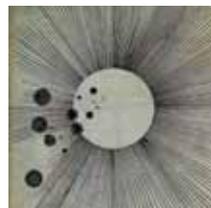
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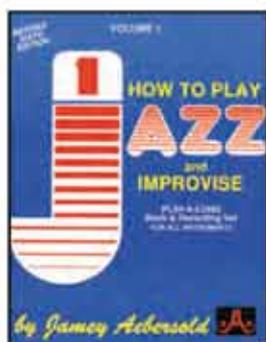
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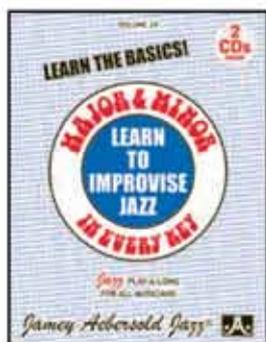
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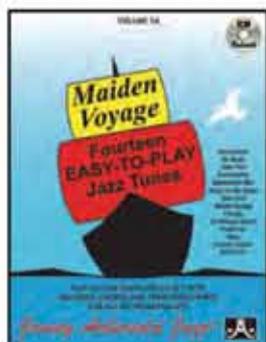
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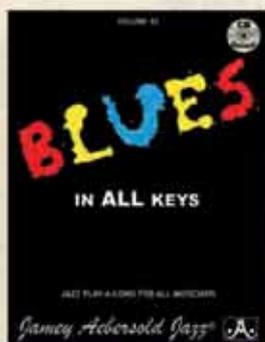
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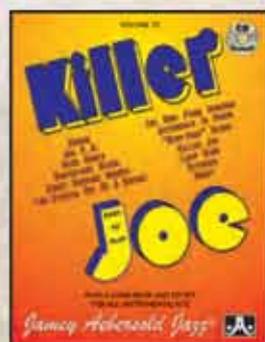
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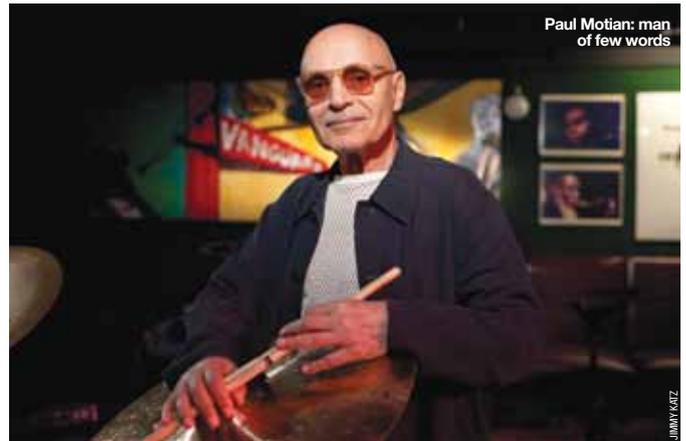
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First Take | BY ED ENRIGHT



Paul Motian: man of few words

Time Well Spent

Information flows so fast these days, it’s hard to find the time to delve deeply into the things we find interesting—a CD that merits repeat listens, an uninterrupted live set at a jazz festival, a well-researched article about one of our favorite artists. The quick pace of modern living doesn’t allow us to focus our attention on many of the treasures that exist below the surface or beyond the immediate horizon. Time is worth more now than ever; for many, it is regarded as a luxury, and if you’re gonna spend it, you want to make sure it’s a sound investment.

If there was a theme to emerge from this issue (aside from our traditional November celebration of drums and drummers), it would be the generous amount of time our writers have taken and the distance they’ve gone to flesh out their articles. Their thorough research and lengthy conversations with multiple sources have ultimately helped to paint a clearer, more engaging picture of their subjects. I’m especially proud of our contributors this month for digging in, arranging tons of information in a meaningful way and living with the story, so to speak, before finishing their work.

A prime example is Ken Micallef’s cover story on Paul Motian, a man of few words whose friends and colleagues have enough to say about him to fill a book. Thanks to Micallef’s followthrough, an article that started as a single interview evolved into a colorful, detailed character profile of the drummer everyone loves to love, for personal reasons as much as musical.

In addition to his all-inclusive and well-planned conference call with members of The Bad Plus, writer Dan Ouellette drew material for this month’s feature from previous interviews dating back several years, not to mention his extensive running knowledge of the trio’s recorded output over the past decade. Knowledge plus time equals perspective, and Ouellette delivers it in ample portions.

Jazz critic John Ephland was already following the ever-growing oeuvre of Dave Douglas and his many ensembles when the two of us began working together as journalists in the mid-1990s. His profile of Douglas reveals more than just a jazz musician, but a complete artist, a conceptualist who has thought long and hard about what he hopes to accomplish through his work.

Contributor Dave Helland is always good for a strong piece based on a central idea or question. This month, he pursued his piece on the legacy of jazz legend Art Blakey (the musician, the bandleader and the man) with admirable persistence, tracking down numerous former band members for interviews and retrieving his own memories of seeing The Jazz Messengers perform more than 20 years ago.

I’m thankful to each of our writers this month for offering me, and our readers, their most precious resource: time spent probing streams of information for priceless nuggets of insight.

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Ray's The Finest

For your finest 2010 feature, I nominate the Ray Charles masterpiece (October).

DENNIS HENDLEY
MILWAUKEE, WIS.

Tops Trombonist

I would like to thank DownBeat's critics for voting me number one on the Critics Poll (August) and the lovely plaque that says it. To all the trombonists and everybody involved in and supporting the music, you have my sincere appreciation, and let us all continue this great effort into the future.

ROSWELL RUDD
NEW YORK

Frankie Trumbauer's Place

I strongly congratulate the Veterans Committee for the outstanding job they have been doing in voting long-overdue jazz legends into the DownBeat Hall of Fame ("Critics Poll," August). I would like to point out one musician whose credentials may not be known—saxophonist Frankie Trumbauer. Lester Young has said that among his idols, he preferred Trumbauer because he told a story. Budd Johnson had said that everybody knew Trumbauer was the baddest cat playing. Franz Jackson told me that he can still play Trumbauer's solo on "Singing The Blues." I doubt there is another white musician who can claim that kind of influence on black musicians.

JIMMIE JONES
BETTENDORF, IOWA

Blind Fun At JEN

I can't thank DownBeat enough for this exceptional exposure ("Student Music Guide," October). I truly enjoyed meeting publisher Frank Alkyer and doing a live Blindfold Test at the Jazz Education Network conference in St. Louis. It was fun.

RUFUS REID
TEANECK, N.J.

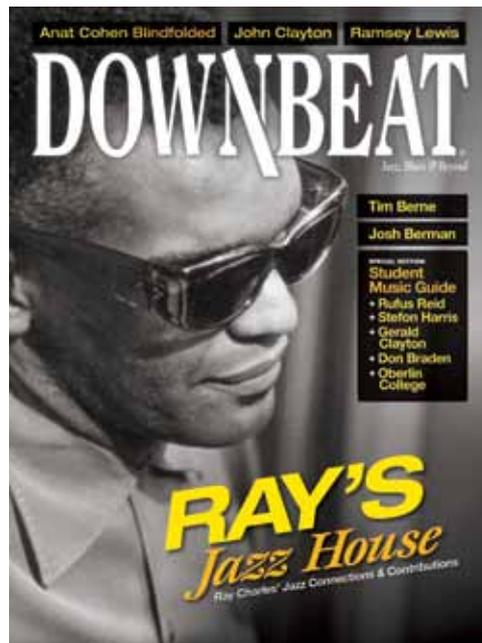
Drum Hits

John McDonough provided great historical summaries of Veterans Committee Hall of Famers Baby Dodds, Chick Webb and Philly Joe Jones ("Critics Poll," August). Give the drummer some—for a sense of history and taste.

JIM CRAWFORD
CARLSBAD, CALIF.

Breathtaking Fred Anderson

DownBeat's article on Fred Anderson captured him well (October). Fred is going to live on because so many musicians and devoted followers believed in him. Fred practiced every day that he could. The last time I spoke to him on the phone,



probably six months before he passed away, he said: "Lyn, I am playing the best I have ever played." That kinda' took my breath away.

LYN HORTON
WORTHINGTON, MASS.

Brown's First 'Spring'

In Jimi Durso's transcription of Clifford Brown's solo on "Joy Spring" ("Woodshed," September), he states that the original recording of the song was by the Max Roach-Clifford Brown Quintet for Pacific Jazz Records. In fact, the first recording of the song was by Clifford Brown in a septet of various Los Angeles musicians for Pacific Jazz Records on July 12, 1954. The more famous quintet recording with Roach was recorded a month later (Aug. 6) for EmArcy Records. Most people have long forgotten the first, and much-less-known, version of the song which has no correlation to the musical value of the recording.

TOMMY HARDING
TP.HARDING@SHAW.CA

Corrections

- The University of West Florida is located in Pensacola, not Jacksonville ("Education Guide," October).
- The title of the film that Ola Kvernberg scored should have been cited as *The Experiment* ("European Scene," October).
- Chris Sheridan should have been listed as voting in the 58th Annual Critics Poll.

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Beat

Freedom Found

Friends, colleagues say Abbey Lincoln lived her words

“I had never screamed before in my life,” Abbey Lincoln once told the Smithsonian, looking back on her experience recording *We Insist! Max Roach’s Freedom Now Suite* (Candid) in 1960. Yet her screaming and loving delivery on that record earned her the early reputation of being a culture-bearer for that tumultuous era.

Afterwards, she never needed to scream to get a message across again. When the world lost Lincoln, at 80, on Aug. 14, her poetry, music and honesty still conveyed a message of empowerment. She had forged her own path, writing some of the most evocative lyrics of our time. And her “succinct, raw, in-your-face” delivery, as Dianne Reeves characterizes it, continues to thrive.

Freedom Now marked a transformative period in Lincoln’s life. Having completed stints as a nightclub singer and actress in *The Girl Can’t Help It*, with a few records under her belt, the singer (who changed her name from Anna Marie Woodbridge) found herself falling into an image she’d later incinerate—along with the sexy red dress she’d worn in the film.

“She was a very beautiful, young girl making her musical debut,” recalled Sonny Rollins, who played on her 1957 album *That’s Him* (Riverside). But he admits that at the time, he thought of her as “an ingenue.” What he didn’t realize was that in the late ’50s, she was already clawing out from under that title.

“My life was really becoming oppressive,” Lincoln said of that period, in an interview compiled by the National Endowment for the Arts after she was named a Jazz Master in 2003. “I



was trying to be seen as a serious performer. And there were many people making snide, ugly comments.”

Lincoln went on to join Max Roach, whom she married in 1962, on a more than a dozen recordings throughout the 1960s. But *Straight Ahead* (Candid) in 1961 was her last as a leader for a decade. Though she’d certainly earned that “serious” artist rep by the end of ’60s, she took a brief sabbatical from music following her split with Roach. Lincoln acted in the films *Nothing But A Man* in 1964 and *For Love Of Ivy* four years later. She returned to music in 1973 with her first album of original music, *People In Me* (Polygram), which in some ways marked the start

of a new and lasting era of her artistry.

“She didn’t rest on *Freedom Now*,” said Terence Blanchard. “She was constantly moving forward, constantly pushing the envelope to find new things.”

Whether she was recording with Hank Jones, Charlie Haden and Stan Getz, Archie Shepp or paying tribute to key influence Billie Holiday, Lincoln’s limber phrasing, direct lyricism and fierce emotion continually proved her acumen not only as an artist, but as a storyteller, too.

“She used her artistic voice to really paint colors and make you see things within,” said Reeves. “It would rip you apart. It could be something soft and then she could slap you in the face.”

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That kind of range is evident on 1991's *The World Is Falling Down* (Verve). Lincoln's lyrics for Haden's "First Song" tell an innocent story of preternatural love. A few tracks later, "I've Got Thunder (And It Rings)" takes issue with the notion that a woman can't be both feminine and opinionated.

"Once you see an injustice it stays with you the rest of your life," said Haden, whose friendship with Lincoln deepened over a long period of shared social circles and albums. "During President Reagan's tenure and under Bush Sr., she was disgusted. She was a very deep person who had reverence for the preciousness of life."

Reeves once tried to produce a concert that would acknowledge Lincoln's vast contributions to music. "She shut it down," Reeves recalled with a laugh. "Abbey said, 'Tributes are for people who are not here, and I'm not dead.' I respect that. She was really just someone who lived her truth, and that takes a lot of guts."

Lincoln's remarkable self-awareness and her ability to "be vulnerable enough on the band-

stand to experience what's deep in your heart and your soul," as Blanchard put it, is also part of her legacy. "When you talked to her, the person you spoke to was the person you saw onstage."

If anyone understood that about Abbey Lincoln, it was Chicago singer Maggie Brown, whose father, Oscar Brown Jr., wrote the *Freedom Now* lyrics. When she was still a child, Brown knew Lincoln through her family, and she became an important mentor. Brown later recorded two duets on Lincoln's *Wholly Earth* (Polygram) in 1999, and was tapped to perform Lincoln's music at this year's Chicago Jazz Festival on Sept 4.

"Abbey created herself, musically," Brown says. "She blossomed into this strong writer who could compose the inspirations she was sent that speak to us all with that soul-stirring emotion."

Before Lincoln died in Manhattan in August, Brown visited her nursing home, where they revisited their old duet habit. "She was a lot weaker," Brown remembers, "but she was still singing."
—Jennifer Odell

Marsalis' International Collaboration Archived for Virtual Global Audience

Wynton Marsalis downplayed the notion that the 2009-'10 premieres of his not-quite-finished versions of a pair of commissioned symphonic opuses by the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra—"Blues Symphony" last November with the Atlanta Philharmonic and "Swing Symphony" on June 10 with the Berlin Philharmonic—represents any sort of anomalous spike within the context of his total corpus. Even though, as Marsalis noted, deadline obligations forced him to compress the process of composing them from a projected three years of work into one.

The June premiere of six of the seven movements of Marsalis' "Swing Symphony" was viewable with a broadband connection and is available on the Berlin Philharmonic's "Digital Concert Hall" archive (dch.berliner-philharmoniker.de). Edited to provide visual references to Marsalis' sonic combinations, and capturing the interplay between the section members while keeping the overall picture firmly in view, the film provides a palpable sense of how the orchestras coalesced in performing Marsalis' symphony.

"The idea was to do not the normal thing, where the jazz band plays and then the orchestra does something stiff—or long notes—in between," director Simon Rattle said in an interview that's also available as a podcast. "Something where we are really two orchestras, like a concerto for two orchestras—a conversation."

For this to work, both emphasized, it was essential to reach consensus on time and meter.

"What Wynton would call freedom exists



within an incredibly tight rhythmic discipline," Rattle said. An orchestral percussionist in his youth, he analogized the orchestra to "a big, invertebrate animal" forced "to find a way to be free and make our shapes" within Marsalis' guidelines.

Self-mandated to "celebrate all of the great achievements of jazz music in the 20th century from a jazz musician's perspective," Marsalis addressed iconic songs from the timeline—reharmonizing "Body And Soul" as well as the Duke Ellington, George Gershwin, Charles Mingus and Dizzy Gillespie songbooks. He distributed the motifs democratically (as always, he held the fourth trumpet chair), scoring virtuosic interplay between the JALC woodwinds and brass and the Berlin Philharmonic flutes, oboes, bassoons, horns, violins, cellos, contrabasses and percussion.
—Ted Panken

Dana Leong (right) with Project Bandaloop dancer



Musical Suspense: Trombonist/cellist Dana Leong was commissioned to compose a new piece, "IdEgo," for the San Francisco-based Project Bandaloop dance company. Their late-September and early October performances at the Orange County Performing Arts Center in Costa Mesa, Calif., included Leong playing while suspended from a rope.

Details: danaleong.com

Miami Jazz: Florida's Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts of Miami-Dade County has collaborated with jazz producer Larry Rosen for its Jazz Roots 2010-2011 season. Concerts include Poncho Sanchez and Tiempo Libre on Dec. 3, Keith Jarrett on Jan. 21 and Marcus Miller's tribute to Miles Davis' *Tutu* on Feb. 25. Details: arshtcenter.org

Yellowjackets Sign: The Yellowjackets signed with Mack Avenue Records. The group's debut for the label is set for release in 2011 and will celebrate its 30th anniversary with a guest appearance by the group's co-founder, guitarist Robben Ford.

Details: mackavenue.com

SFJAZZ Collected: SFJAZZ Collective has released the three-CD set *Live 2010*, which documents its recent tour and features the group's arrangements of Horace Silver compositions and works by the ensemble's members. It is available only online.

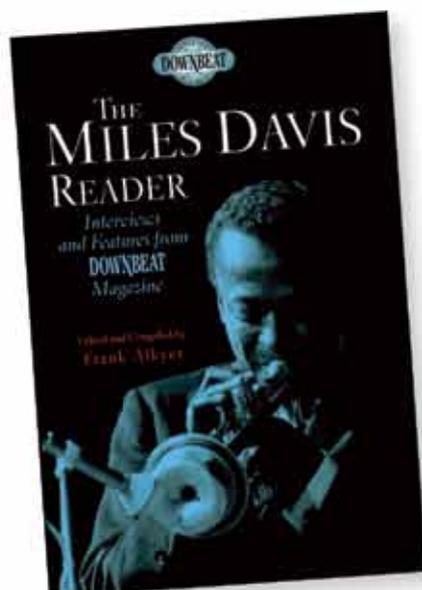
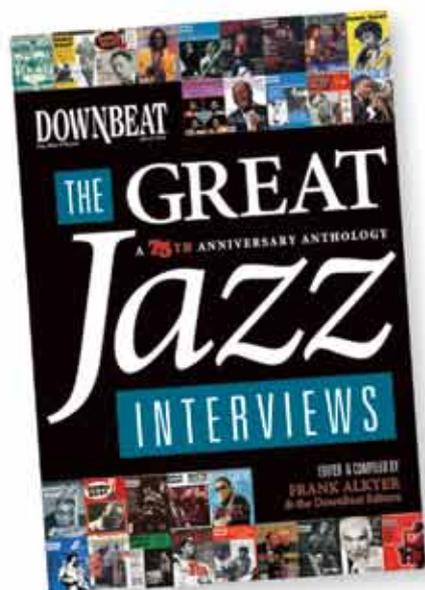
Details: sfjazz.org

Pérez Honored: Danilo Pérez has been awarded the 2010 ASICOM International Award by the Ibero-American Association of Communication (ASICOM) and the University of Oviedo (Principality of Asturias).

Details: daniloperez.com

Burton's Recruits: Gary Burton has recruited guitarist Julian Lage, bassist Scott Colley and drummer Antonio Sanchez for his new quartet. The group debuted at the Red Sea Jazz Festival in Eilat, Israel, in August, and the vibraphonist intends to bring them into the studio to record for Concord and tour in 2011. Details: garyburton.com

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Reedist Willem Breuker An Iconoclastic Cultural Champion

The quirky, iconoclastic Dutch reedist, composer and bandleader Willem Breuker died July 23 in Amsterdam following a prolonged illness. He was 65.

Along with pianist Misha Mengelberg and drummer Han Bennink, Breuker was a key figure in establishing a humorous strain of jazz that has long characterized improvised music in the Netherlands. By the late '60s those musicians had joined forces as the Instant Composers Pool. Although American-style jazz was a key component of their music, the Dutch crew refused pure reverence for the tradition, combining it with classical music, marches and popular themes.

While Breuker was an early collaborator with key improvisers from across Northern Europe—including German reedist Peter Brötzmann, English saxophonist Evan Parker and German pianist Alex von Schlippenbach—his own projects retained a strong connection to Dutch culture, whether writing music for Amsterdam's ubiquitous barrel organs or colliding circus music with Bartok and Weimar cabaret traditions. His long-running mini big band the Willem Breuker Kollektief was his primary outlet as a composer and reedist, although throughout his

career he wrote music for the theater, composed classical pieces and collaborated in other looser contexts. He was also largely responsible for directing generous Dutch arts subsidies to jazz artists and improvisers.

poser Louis Andriessen, drafting musicians for de Volharding, an orchestra combining jazz and classical ideas. In a post-mortem open letter, Andriessen wrote, "Willem, I fear that you have no idea how strongly you have influenced me. The bass clarinet solos in the early '60s, with a hundred times more intelligence and virtuosity in the use of extended techniques than the complete oeuvre of Iannis Xenakis. But the most important thing for a composer is your mastery in choosing the right notes while improvising: unreliable and

disturbing."

Saxophonist Alex Coke was a member of the Kollektief between 1990–2000 and says that he found the experience ever-changing.

"I loved the tours where we would perform the same pieces night after night," Coke said. "I thought it would become boring, but Willem had the ability to change an entire melodic contour by breathing in different places or accenting different notes. He really did write for the sound of an individual."

—Peter Margasak



career he wrote music for the theater, composed classical pieces and collaborated in other looser contexts. He was also largely responsible for directing generous Dutch arts subsidies to jazz artists and improvisers.

The Kollektief, which began its excursions to the United States in 1977, was wildly funny on stage, peppering its performances with set gags that relied as much on physical humor as musical jokes. The band's music was heavily composed and drew more from European music than jazz, although its improvised sections were clearly inspired by music from America. Brötzmann was not a fan of the band, but he retained a strong friendship with him.

"Willem was a master of using very popular melodies and transforming them into something else and showing a very social connection to his people," Brötzmann said. "We had really good times together. Until the end he was a great player."

In the early '70s he began working with com-

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Tony Bennett Praises Herman Leonard's Artistry, Friendship

“Herman Leonard is my favorite artist,” Tony Bennett said as we were looking at Leonard’s photographs only a few days after Leonard’s death at 87 on Aug. 14. They were friends for more than 50 years, and Leonard’s photos hang all around Bennett’s studio and apartment in New York.

“He was a jazz artist with a camera,” Bennett said. “Most photographers, they’ll take 15 or 20 pictures, then pick out the best picture. He didn’t do that. He worked like a jazz artist. His mind was so quick. He’d just take the camera and click. The lighting would be right. The composition was right there just with one click. He did that with all these jazz artists.”

In one frame are two photographs of Duke Ellington. One is a photo of Ellington’s shoes and a cup of tea reflected in a mirror. In the way Leonard developed the image, the photo looks painterly. “It’s a photograph, but he turned it into a kind of negative,” Bennett said.

“He was assigned to photograph me when I first started at Columbia,” remembered Bennett. Across the title page of Bennett’s memoir, *The Good Life*, is Leonard’s photo of Bennett at the beginning of his career. Sitting on the floor. Leaning against the wall of a recording studio. “This is my favorite photo of me. It’s dreamy. You can hear the music.”

When we looked at Leonard’s iconic portrait of a young Dexter Gordon, his tenor sax across his knee, looking up as cigarette smoke billows from his lips, I observed that photography, like jazz, is an art of the moment. No two solos of Gordon are alike. No two puffs of smoke alike. “In Los Angeles, Herman came backstage to see me,” remembered Bennett. “Someone asked him, ‘What’s the difference between the 1950s and the way you photograph now?’ And he said, ‘There’s not enough smoke.’”

Smoke often highlights a Leonard jazz photo, a visual leitmotif like one of Claude Monet’s haystacks. Frank Sinatra sings in a whirl of smoke and light in a Leonard photo to the left of Bennett’s television. “His back is turned, with a cigarette up in the air, singing to Princess Grace,” Bennett said. “You can’t see Sinatra’s face. He’s like a shadow in the corona of a spotlight. But you know at once, from the swagger of the singer, who it is. That’s the best photograph ever taken of Sinatra.”

One of Bennett’s own paintings is inspired by

Tony Bennett, New York City, 1950



a Leonard picture of Charlie Parker playing. Floating around the image of Parker are strings of colorful dots. “I’m trying to get Aboriginal pointillism, like lots of notes,” he said.

Leonard’s photos are also displayed on one wall of Bill Clinton’s Harlem office. The former president came to the photographer’s rescue after Katrina.

“Herman called me up when Katrina hit,” Bennett said. “His negatives were on the top floor of his building in New Orleans, and the water was going up. The National Guard wouldn’t let anyone in that area. He called me and said, ‘I don’t know what I’m going to do. I’m going to lose all my negatives, all the years of work.’ So, I called President Clinton and told him the problem. He got it done.”

Leonard called Bennett once more, just before his passing. “Herman’s secretary told me I was the

last person he spoke to.”

Herman’s story was like a helluva movie,” Bennett continued. “He knew what he wanted to do, and he did it. He loved New Orleans, so he painted—he photographed New Orleans. He was a true artist. He went toward what he loved. He understood jazz, and he took the greatest photographs anyone ever took of Erroll Garner, Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong. I’ve never met anyone more spontaneous. He makes it look so effortless. It’s like a Charlie Parker solo. Or a Count Basie beat. His timing was impeccable.” —Michael Bourne

HERMAN LEONARD’S PHOTOGRAPHS HAVE BEEN COLLECTED IN THE BOOKS *JAZZ, GIANTS AND JOURNEYS: THE PHOTOGRAPHY OF HERMAN LEONARD* (SCALA) AND IN THE RECENTLY RELEASED *JAZZ* (BLOOMSBURY). LEONARD’S WORK IS ALSO AVAILABLE THROUGH HIS WEB SITE, HERMANLEONARD.COM

Pulitzer Prize Board Broadens Jazz Outreach

Six years ago, the board of the Pulitzer Prize for American Music changed the definition of its rules, and the make-up of its judges, to encourage more jazz composers to enter its competition for composition. As Sig Gissler, administrator of the Pulitzer Prizes said, “The prize honored great music, but the rules were too narrowly structured for the modern age.” Among the changes, a written score was no

longer required to accompany a recorded composition, and the jury pool was changed to bring in more musicians from different backgrounds.

But while jazz composers have received the award in years since—notably Ornette Coleman in 2007—the Pulitzer administrators are still working to get the word out among jazz writers of the changes. Gissler said that of

the 160 submissions last year, eight were jazz entries. Their renewed outreach efforts include soliciting entries from more musical organizations (like Jazzmobile) and small labels (like Pi) to its Web site, pulitzer.org.

“While we’re not favoring jazz, we’re trying to get it better represented among the overall pieces submitted and let excellence prevail,” Gissler said. —Aaron Cohen

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Norway's 50th Molde Jazz Festival Highlights Global Talent

The weather did not cooperate at Molde Jazz, for its 50th edition July 19–24. The event's largest stage, an outdoor venue in the park adjacent to the Romsdal Museum, was awash for most of its marquee concerts—including sets by Sonny Rollins, Herbie Hancock and Jeff Beck—significantly limiting attendance as steady rains poured down on the pretty coastal town. Luckily, most of the concerts occurred at smaller indoor spaces where the forward-looking programming of current fest director Jan Ole Otnæs provides the real creative juice with a focus on boundary-pushing artists from Norway, across Europe and the United States.

Transnational projects provided some of the best music and further eroded the notion that any sort of continental musical hierarchy exists. Hairy Bones, a pipe-clearing quartet led by German saxophonist Peter Brötzmann, Norwegian drummer Paal Nilssen-Love, Italian electric bassist Massimo Pupillo and Japanese trumpeter Toshinori Kondo, served up a wildly dynamic set of roaring free improvisation at Kulturhuset. Pupillo, despite his proclivity for improvisation, comes from the rock band Zu, and he's demonstrated impressive growth and sharpened his role in the group. In earlier years, he seemed to be passively following, but now he's trusting his gut. His chorded lines provided the group with an almost orchestral backbone, giving greater leeway for the storming lines of Brötzmann and Kondo—who frequently enhances his biting, brassy tone with electronics. Nilssen-Love's howitzer-force drumming is a true force of nature, giving Hairy Bones its awesome sense of propulsion and depth, but he also provided space. The quartet cannot be engaged lightly, but its demanding music was rich in dividends for the willing listener, with a stunning mix of power, volume, texture, interaction and motion.



Stian Westerhus (left) and Sidsel Endresen

One of the greatest treats of attending Norwegian jazz festivals is getting to hear groundbreaking musicians from the country itself, especially as they present new or recent work. Guitarist Stian Westerhus emerged as the one-to-watch this year. He performed in a trio led by artist-in-residence Nils-Petter Molar, but more exciting was the show by his long-running instrumental trio called Puma. In the past the improvising group reflected a rather unhealthy obsessions with fellow Norwegian improvisers Super Silent, but its Forum Kelda performance found the group breaking free, playing compositions, albeit loose ones, from its fine new album *Half Nelson Courtship* (Rune Gramophone). Deep grooves—lurching, rocking, stuttering—crafted by drummer Grad Nilssen grounded the viscerally loud textures and colors Westerhus produced with the aid of a dozen pedals, while keyboardist Øystein Moen alternated by thick,

coruscating riffs and otherworldly ambient drift. The set was enhanced or marred, depending on one's perspective, by a creative, aggressive lighting, which made Puma seem like mad scientists hatching a sinister plot in some far-away cellar, but the power of the music was never threatened by the display. Westerhus returned to the same stage a few nights later for a much different performance with vocalist Sidsel Endresen, a one-time jazz-folk singer with a strong Joni Mitchell jones who's remade herself into one of the most original vocalists on the planet by turning spoken language into clipped, fiercely rhythmic sound cells. At times the guitarist's grandiosity seemed certain to overwhelm her voice, but manipulating his pedals as if he was a tap dancer, Westerhus crafted a strong complement marked by constant shape-shifting, alternating densities and changing colors.

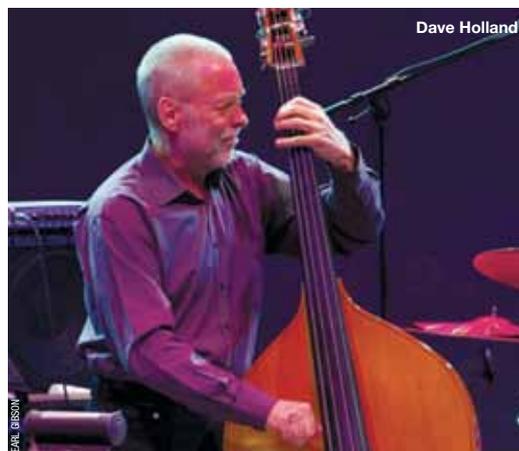
—Peter Margasak

Hollywood Bowl Stages Big Band Blowout

Big band jazz, that great American cultural entity deserving wider recognition, has a friend in the Hollywood Bowl. The Bowl's dense and diverse summertime program has frequently included such large ensembles, reaching a high point when the Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra had a residency at the Bowl. These days, the Bowl tends to host one multiple big-band blowout each season. On July 28 the old school sounds of the Count Basie Orchestra met the more contemporary-minded adventures of the Dave Holland Big Band and a relatively new voice on the big band scene, Dave Douglas' Big Band (with arrangements by big band handyman Jim McNeely).

Holland and Douglas are rightfully renowned as modern jazz musicians who strike a mostly inspired balance between envelope-pushing experimentalism and extensions of tradition. To hear that balance in action in the large, flexible palette of a well-stocked big band ups the ante of intrigue.

Douglas has said that McNeely “cajoled him into doing a big band,” and the resulting album project, *A Single Sky*, was the source of his Bowl song list. A sense of bracing musical freshness filled the Bowl with the opening strains of



Dave Holland

Douglas' "The Presidents," on through the steamy, heady closing tune "Blockbuster." On that climactic finale, noted Los Angeleno Bob Sheppard stirred his tenor sax into the band's collective improvisation towards the end—not a typical sound heard in this venue, bless its tasty mess.

Holland continues to hone one of the more thrilling new big bands on the scene, and it was great to hear his work before nearly 7,000 listeners at the Bowl. His set ranged from his expando chart on an old quintet tune, "The Razor's Edge," to the metrically challenging maze of "Last Minute Man" and the funkily outfitted "How's Never?" on which tenor saxophonist Chris Potter's commanding solo was one of the night's finest.

Two memorable pieces cut a swath between invention and deep jazz tradition. Douglas' "The

Persistence Of Memory" pays tribute to the great lyrical trumpeter Booker Little, with fittingly cool and bittersweet airs and a suitably reflective trumpet solo from Douglas. Holland's "Blues For C.M." (also originally on the 1987 quintet album *Razor's Edge*) nods in the direction of one of Holland's heroes, Charles Mingus—with a memorable solo by vibist Steve Nelson.

Pleasurable though it was to hear the headliner Count Basie band, the fact that its emphasis is on classics of old limits the band's sense of vitality, especially when compared to more forward-leaning outfits led by Douglas and Holland bands. Still, warm nostalgia can wash over you during such great charts as "Shiny Stockings," Neil Hefti's hypnotic slow-mo jewel "Li'l Darlin'" and "April In Paris."
—Josef Woodard



Roy Hargrove

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Jazz À Juan Festival Turns A Half-Century

Jazz À Juan celebrated its 50th anniversary in July on the French Riviera in Antibes/Juan-les-Pins.

Bassist Avishai Cohen—who gained experience with such leaders as Brad Mehldau, Roy Hargrove, Herbie Hancock and Paquito D'Rivera—is a powerful player with a well-rounded arco sound and deft pizzicato. His sextet has a Middle-Eastern flavor, with a percussionist in addition to a drummer and a guitarist who made use of the oud on two numbers. One Asian/Latin number with a John Coltrane-inspired chant included some dextrous piano from Shai Maestro. The set mixed widely varied elements, particularly in its rhythmic aspects.

Rhythm was also paramount in tenor saxophonist Joshua Redman's double trio set. Over a background of two bassists (Reuben Rogers and Matt Penman) and two drummers (Bill Stewart and Greg Hutchinson) the leader rode in on his original "Identity Thief" with an intensity that modulated harmonically through hard-bursting phrases. Then, switching to soprano sax, he unfurled his "Ghost" over an ostinato. The minor-key flavor on the bridge underlined the exotica.

Redman's "Hutchhiker's Guide," a Sonny Rollins-influenced line, proceeded at a lively pace; "Insomniac," begun with a long, unaccompanied tenor solo, morphed into busy, choppy phrases and terse stop-and-go patterns. Theloniou Monk's "Ugly Beauty" found Redman lithe and waltzing. Then he was airborne and cruising, sent by Rogers and Stewart on his own "Far Away."

Hargrove's quintet was tough, tight and together. Bassist Ameen Saleem's ballad "Tamisha" was marked by his fine, thoughtful solo. On "Montuno," drummer Motez Coleman really had the pots on, and saxophonist Justin Robinson hasn't lost the passion he's shown since the late '80s. The leader himself was in great form, whether flugelting tenderly on Kurt Weill's "Speak Low" or tearing it up on trumpet during Cedar Walton's "I'm Not So Sure." When the audience demanded an encore, the quintet burned through Sam Cooke's "Bring It On Home To Me."

The next night Keith Jarrett's trio was impeccable. He floored the French audience when he magically interpolated the last phrases of "Frère Jacques" into "Once Upon A Time." —Ira Gitler

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Willie Jones III ▶▶ *Root Force*

In the early '90s, when Willie Jones III was still living in Los Angeles, his mentor, Billy Higgins, imparted a piece of sage advice. "Billy told me not to wait for somebody to decide you're ready to be a leader," Jones recalled. This is why in 2000, two years into an eight-year run with Roy Hargrove, he decided to self-produce a CD that would "express how I like to hear music."

"It was just practical," Jones said. "No one was responding to my demos, and my only record with Roy was a strings date [*Moment To Moment*]. I thought, 'OK, one project.' I wasn't thinking about having a record label."

The drummer spoke over lunch near his Brooklyn home a few weeks after a two-night hit at Smoke to celebrate his self-released fourth leader album, *The Next Phase* (WJ3 Records). Jones was also packing for 10 days in Italy with guitarist Peter Bernstein, to be directly followed by three successive weeks in New York—one at the Village Vanguard with his bandmember pianist Eric Reed's trio, and two at Dizzy's Club Coca-Cola with a pair of Cedar Walton-led units.

"The common ground among these musicians is that they love to play a style that some call hardbop or straightahead, which I call real jazz," said Jones, who became Hank Jones' drummer of choice in 2007 and held the position until the pianist died this year. "That means rhythmically swinging, with the groove basis on the ride cymbal. Change the rhythmic base, it's a different style. I've felt like this since I was a kid, and that's how I'll always think."

"A lot of musicians concentrate on putting European classical or Cuban influences into jazz," Jones continued. "Now, I'll record a straight-eighth tune or a tune in seven, and I can work in clave. But if you totally emphasize those aspects and aren't swinging anymore..." Jones paused judiciously. "Well, you can debate what's swinging and what's not. But to me, the music has gone too far away from the root."

"Willie has a West Coast swagger in his swing, with a looseness that isn't lackadaisical and an edge that isn't overwhelming," said Reed, whose second WJ3 release comes out in February 2011. He connected with Jones in Los Angeles 25 years ago, on a gospel gig with Jones' preacher uncle. "He can tell you when so-and-so stopped playing brushes or started to play the cymbal without the bell," Reed continued. "But there's nothing academic about Willie on the bandstand. He leaves the textbook at home and plays music."

For influences, Jones cites Philly Joe Jones, Higgins and Max Roach as soloists, Roy Haynes for left-hand comping on the snare, Tony Williams for ride cymbal feel, as well as Jeff Watts, Lewis



Nash, Kenny Washington and Greg Hutchinson. "You take a little bit of something from everybody," he said. "When I solo, whatever I play, I don't want the musicians to have to count to come back in. As long as you can recognize the song form, I go from there."

The namesake son of a working jazz pianist who took him to matinee gigs from age 5, Jones absorbed the sound he loves from such Los Angeles luminaries as Teddy Edwards, Oscar Brashear, George Bohannon, Hampton Hawes and Larance Marable. He got "serious about practicing" at 14, studied with Albert "Tootie" Heath and James Newton at Cal Arts, worked locally with Edwards and Billy Childs, and attended Thursday night jam sessions run by Higgins at his performance space, the World Stage.

"I'd watch Billy practice there at midnight, which is the best drum lesson you can get," Jones said. Higgins urged his protege to move to New York, an aspiration fueled by repeated listening to

Hargrove's early '90s quintet—"a bunch of young guys playing music the way I like to hear it"—at Catalina's.

Jones prepared and positioned himself to relocate, first with Black Note, which made an early splash—albums for Sony and Impulse, opening for Wynton Marsalis on a European tour—and spent several years playing around California before disbanding. He saved up while touring several years with Arturo Sandoval, and made the move in 1997. "To reach your full potential, you have to play with musicians who are better than you," Jones said.

Thirteen years later, well-established as a top-call musician, Jones is looking to grow and sustain his WJ3 imprint.

"I'd like to be a small, boutique label with maybe six or seven artists that records the type of jazz that I like—period," Jones said. "I see myself evolving as a leader, but I'll always play as a sideman—I like other people's music." —*Ted Panken*



Allison Miller ▶ *Sonic Boom*

It might seem like a survival skill in retrospect, but drummer Allison Miller's sponge-like love of all things musical could only mean she was destined to play it all. For drummers, in particular, liking "all kinds of music" can translate into more gigs. In Miller's case, that range has included working behind such leaders as Ani DiFranco, Natalie Merchant, The Indigo Girls and Brandi Carlisle.

Miller's work with those pop acts is ongoing, but it's her jazz output that offers the best view of her passion. Miller has been active in a dizzying array of bands, including the sextet Shakers & Bakers and the quartet Hipmotism, both of which provide interesting contrasts to her own band, heard on her second album as leader, *Boom Tic Boom* (Foxhaven). Essentially a trio outing featuring pianist Myra Melford and bassist Todd Sickafoose, with violinist Jenny Scheinman showing up on one track, the album sports Miller's mix of originals with two covers by Hoagy Carmichael and Mary Lou Williams.

"Basically, I lead one and only one band: Boom Tic Boom," Miller said. "Everything else is either a collaborative project or a band that I am hired to play in."

One example is Honey Ear Trio, which she calls "a collaborative project I have with Rene Hart on bass and Erik Lawrence on various reeds." The band recently finished working on its debut, *Steampunk Serenade*, due out in early 2011. Miller said, "It's all original music, and a lot of it has elements of free improvisation, expanding time. Rene has this whole rig where his acoustic bass sound goes through a laptop producing electronically processed sound, like distortion with street noise, while still preserving his authentic upright bass tone on a separate track."

Miller adds that she's recording a new Boom

Tic Boom CD, and that in December the band will be doing a West Coast tour to complement their East Coast tour earlier in the year. Performing with Boom Tic Boom, Miller said, "I often like to start shows with a solo; part of it is to get that out of the way. It's also because if I'm feeling jittery, I calm myself down and it gives everyone else a chance to feel comfortable on stage."

In addition to honing her formidable drum skills, Miller spends a fair amount of time writing. "When I write my music, the last thing I think about is drums," she said.

Miller's been playing piano since she was 7 (three years before drumming) growing up in suburban Washington D.C. She went on to study with Walter Salb and graduated from the University of West Virginia before gigging with Sheila Jordan, Kenny Barron, Marty Ehrlich and Dr. Lonnie Smith.

"When I compose for my band I go with a strong melody," Miller said. "It's so important. When I take drum solos, I need a melody to base my solos on, even when I'm playing free. I've always been attracted to melody; growing up, my solos would be based on the melody of the song, like with Thelonious Monk's 'Bemsha Swing.' Eventually I'd break away but still be singing the melody in my head. That's because my mom taught me piano first. She wanted me to have a well-rounded education. If you can't sing it you can't play it. From an early age, my favorite soloists were so melodic."

Along with the new Arched Ear Trio album and winter tour of Boom Tic Boom, Miller looks ahead to other ongoing work. "I'm finishing up this year touring with Brandi, recording on the road and getting ready to release her next album." For Miller, drumming remains a multi-dimensional affair.

—John Ephland

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Michael Formanek ▶▶ *Collaborative Lumberjack*

As a sideman for a constellation of jazz luminaries while still in his 20s, bassist Michael Formanek metamorphosed from a raw musician—his early nickname “Lumberjack” related to his rough treatment of his instrument’s strings—to one whose playing reflected control and consistency. But as a composer and bandleader, he embraces a different esthetic and allows co-conspirators the opportunity to express their musical personalities. That approach is evident on *The Rub And Spare Change* (ECM), Formanek’s debut on the label and his first group recording in 13 years, where rambunctious improvisation and unbridled interplay rule the day.

“What I learned from many of the musicians I worked with was how to rein things in and make concise musical statements that have a certain beauty,” Formanek said. “I don’t want to control the musicians. I’d rather create extended, open-ended compositions that allow lots of room for others to contribute and actually finish the music.”

The Rub And Spare Change grew out of an August 2008 New York City club date with the same quartet that appears on the disc: alto saxophonist and longtime collaborator Tim Berne, pianist Craig Taborn and drummer Gerald Cleaver. The group fired up Formanek’s creative instinct, which he’d put mostly on hold while serving as a full-time faculty member in the jazz program at the Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University. The sharp, declarative melodies of the album grew out of what Formanek perceived would suit the band members, and at first the project sounds as if the saxophonist or pianist is leading the show. With most of the titles on the album clocking in around nine minutes (“Tonal Suite” runs longer than 17 minutes), both Berne and Taborn have plenty of room for embarkations.

“With these musicians, all you have to give them is a little bit of info—a small part of DNA for a song or just a seed of an idea—and they will carry it through in real time,” Formanek said. “Because it’s so collaborative, I made a conscious decision as a composer to fight the impulse that defines how to get from A to B.”

Formanek came out of the gate as a leader with his esthetic fully developed in 1990 when he released *Wide Open Spaces*, a quintet date with Greg Osby on saxophones, violinist Mark Feldman, Wayne Krantz on guitar along with



drummer Jeff Hirshfield. Many of the songs are just two or three minutes long—small and cinema-sized impressions that he started writing after working on Franco Ambrosetti’s *Movies and Movies, Too* in the 1980s.

The bassist can’t say whether he was channeling Bay Area saxophonist John Handy’s seminal mid-1960s quintet (with Michael White on violin and Jerry Hahn on guitar) in terms of the Wide Open Spaces frontline, but it would make sense. Born in San Francisco, the bassist grew up in nearby Pacifica, Calif., listening to his father’s early jazz discs and playing electric bass in middle school because “there were already too many guys playing guitar.” By his teens, Formanek was hanging out at the Bach Dancing and Dynamite Society, a fabled jazz soiree in Miramar, where a pickup band featuring bassist Ron McClure jammed away one Sunday afternoon, and a long bass solo set him on his calling.

“The music scene in San Francisco in the post-Woodstock 1970s was so eclectic, with groups like Santana, Tower of Power and Sly and the Family Stone proving that you could really do whatever you want with your music with the proper respect and knowledge included,” Formanek said.

In Baltimore, Formanek helps lead an ensemble called Cautious Optimism with a cast of young musicians, and with the release of *The Rub And Spare Change* he’s not going to wait so long before venturing back into the studio. He’s working his schedule to be able to tour with his new quartet and is already writing for the next CD. “I’ve only scratched the surface with this band,” he said, “and I’d like to take them to some different places musically.” —Thomas Staudter

Karen Lovely ▶▶ *Low Register Warmth*

Even before Koko Taylor's passing, the number of outstanding female blues singers was alarmingly small. Things are looking up, though, due to the emergence of Karen Lovely. She placed second in the 2010 International Blues Challenge in Memphis and saw her debut album, *Lucky Girl* (Pretty Pear), jump to #1 on XM satellite radio's B.B. King's Bluesville program. With her energetic vocals and a studio band's expert musicianship matched to superior material and production, Lovely's newest album, *Still The Rain* (Pretty Pear), stands out just as much.

Lovely also subverts the stereotype typically pinned on blues mamas. "I love belting it out," she said while at home in southern Oregon. "But I'm finding I have much more to offer as a vocalist by exploring more subtle nuances and using my lower register—and, really, how many times can you hit people over the head with powerhousing? I have Dennis Walker and Alan Mirikitani to thank for seeing that potential in me and helping me to develop it."

Walker, a three-time Grammy winner for his service to Robert Cray and B.B. King, produced

the album and co-wrote almost all of the songs with Mirikitani.

"Karen is a huge talent," he said. "She came so prepared to the studio and sang every tracking vocal like it was for absolute real—and it was. Al and I wrote 35 or 40 songs before we got the ones she liked, and they fit her like a glove."

Lovely returned the praise: "Dennis is a master at establishing mood both musically and lyrically. You can hear the floorboards creak and the radiators hiss in his lyrics."

For his producing, Lovely called Walker "a reductionist, a distiller, a minimalist" and added that "he leaves space in order to draw the listener in [so] what's not there is as important as what is." Walker emphasized that "it's all about the vocal" and going with first or second takes that "catch the fire, the newness, the enthusiasm in the players."

A native of coastal Massachusetts, Lovely first sang the blues—along with jazz, folk and pop—professionally in 1987, when she resided in London. After moving to the Pacific Northwest, she worked outside music for many years. Why'd she start singing again? "It was a combination of



things: a devastating major life change and a realization that it was now or never. Every day that went by without me doing the thing I loved was another day lost. So I joined a choir and started doing a once-a-month singer showcase. Then I started sitting in with a blues band every Monday night and developed a following. The club owner offered me my own night, and that was it."

—Frank-John Hadley

Take a fresh look at the Pulitzer Prize for Music.

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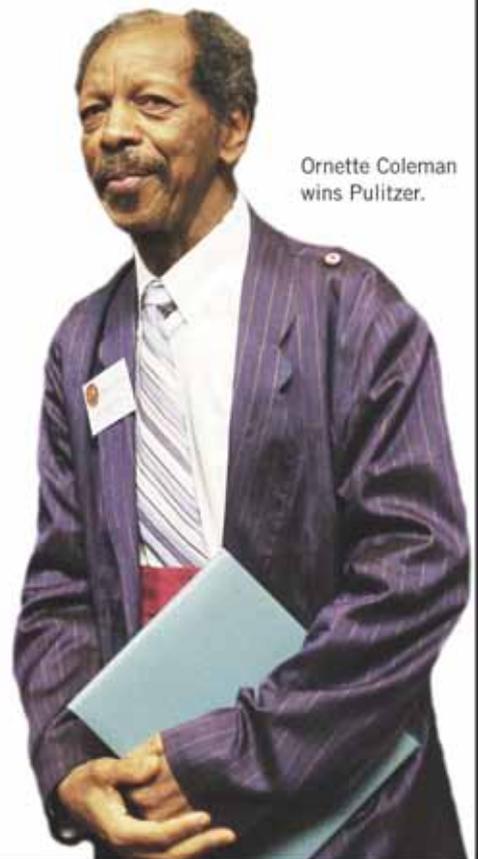
The Pulitzer Prize Board has broadened its Music Prize and is inviting entries that reflect the full range of high-quality American music—including jazz and other nonclassical pieces that meet the test of musical excellence.

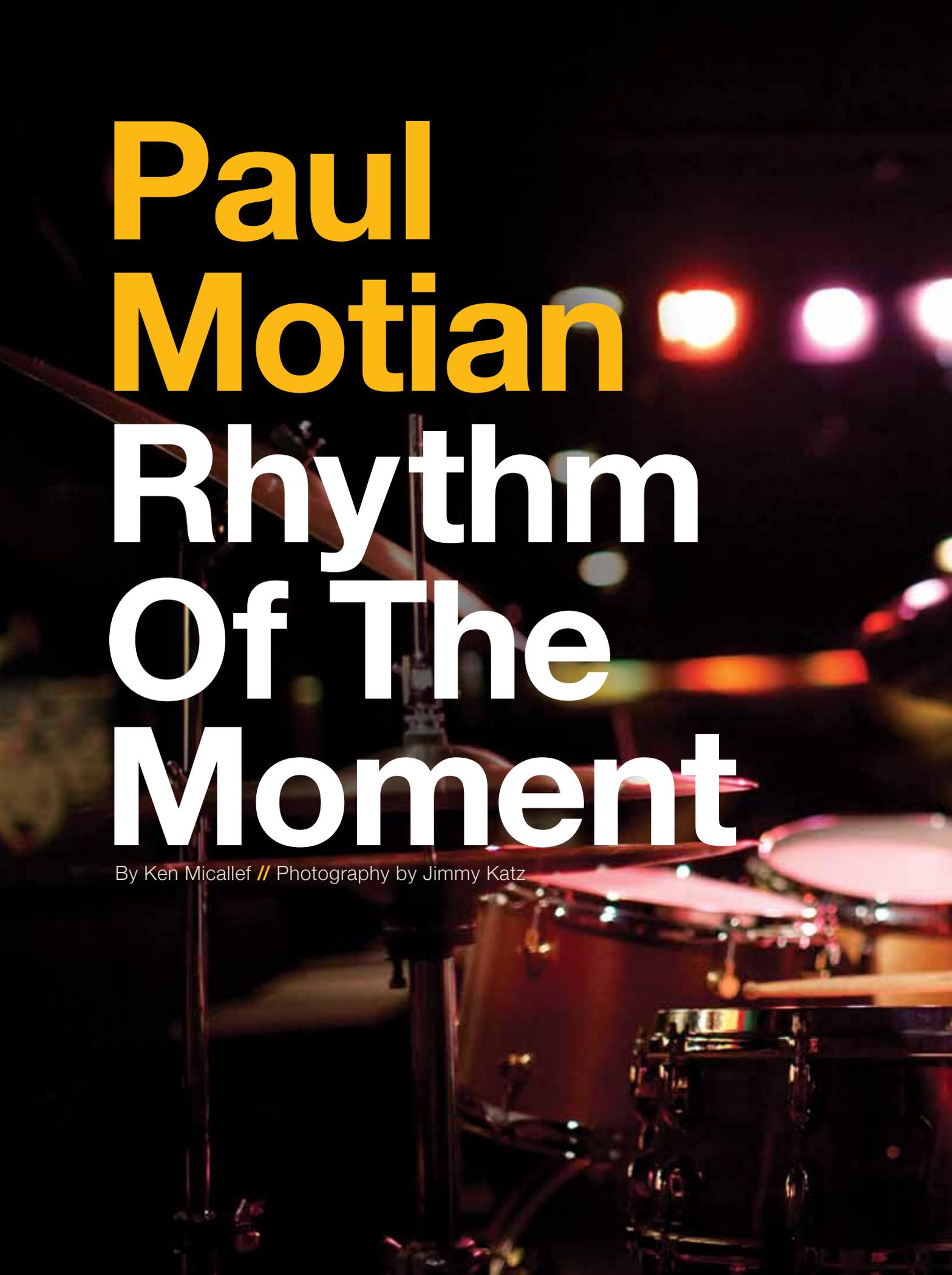
Among the most notable changes: Public release of a recording in the United States is accepted as the equivalent of a premier performance of a work. While submission of a score is encouraged, it is not required—thus providing greater leeway for improvised music.

Under the new rules, jazz composer Ornette Coleman won the 2007 Prize for his recording *Sound Grammar*. Special Citations have also been awarded posthumously to Thelonious Monk and John Coltrane.

The eligibility period for the 2011 Prize is the calendar year. Entries must be postmarked by December 31, 2010. For details, go to our Web site www.pulitzer.org, click on "How to Enter," or call 212-854-3841.

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Paul Motian Rhythm Of The Moment

By Ken Micallef // Photography by Jimmy Katz



Paul Motian recalls the time he played a burlesque club on New York's 52nd Street in the mid-1950s. "This stripper would come up to me and stick her tits in my face and say, 'When I do this grind, you hit that tom-tom!'" he says. "One of them asked me to get her some weed, so I did. She let me hang out in their dressing room. They're all naked and I'm hanging out with them! It was great! But I got fired after a couple weeks. The owner said, 'You can't play here. You don't look like a burlesque drummer. You're not bald.' You had to be bald. I wasn't bald."

Motian wasn't bald in the '50s. He had a wiry, wavy stack of jet-black hair. Today his skull shines, his chrome-dome as much a personal signature as his enduringly fresh drumming, which can recall the history and summon the future of jazz in a single cymbal stroke. At the burlesque club (Leon & Eddie's? Dave's Blue Room? Club Samoa?), Motian was performing with Dave Schildkraut, who played alto sax on *Solar* with Miles Davis. This was before Motian played with Bill Evans, before Thelonious Monk, before Keith Jarrett, Coleman Hawkins, Zoot Sims, Herbie Nichols, Lennie Tristano, Paul Bley, Trio 2000 + 1, Bill Frisell and Joe Lovano, and the Electric Bebop Band, before the thousands of gigs and records that confirmed Motian as one of the most consistently inventive drummers and bandleaders in all of jazz.

Ask Motian how he got from there to here, however, and he'll just laugh, blurting out, "I dunno, man!" while thumbing through a recently purchased Jimmy McHugh Songbook at ECM Records in Manhattan. Motian stays in the moment, and is not one to easily reminisce. Though over a good meal with friends he might spill a few choice beans.

In 1963 Motian was a member of Evans' trio with bassist Scott LaFaro. The trio was wildly popular, its innovative group conception clearly pointing the way forward. But Motian was already growing bored, so he quit, practically in the middle of a West Coast gig. A few months later, he was playing in a group led by bassist Gary Peacock—adventurous music light-years away from Evans' introspective sounds.

"In those days, music was changing," Motian says over dinner with guitarist Bill Frisell an hour before their 9 p.m. set at the Village Vanguard with Joe Lovano. "In the early '60s, more free shit was going on. I got tired of Bill Evans. His music wasn't going anywhere. I was

playing with him in California, and I quit. I felt like I was playing a commercial club date in a hotel. I was playing brushes all the time; I was told, 'Just play softer, play softer,' until I felt like I wasn't even playing anymore. I was starting to listen to Paul Bley. So I quit Bill, and paid my own way back to New York. Bill said, 'Please, Paul, please.' If someone did that to me I would kill him!"

"I got back to New York and this gig came up in the Village on MacDougal Street," Motian continues. "It was Gary Peacock's gig: Paul Bley on piano, Albert Ayler and John Gilmore on saxophones. We made two dollars each a night, five dollars on Friday, but the music was incredible."

When Motian began writing his own music, Bley's influence (which also affected Jarrett, Motian's longest employer after Evans) would eventually impact his compositions, resulting in his 1972 debut LP, *Conception Vessel*. Thelonious Monk was another major influence, both compositionally and rhythmically. Motian played one week with Monk, but the experience left its mark.

"I came off a set with Monk—we were playing a week in Boston in 1960," he recalls. "I said to Monk, 'I think I might have rushed the tempo on that tune, I'm sorry.' Monk said, 'Well, if I slap you upside your head you won't rush it.' I said, 'Yes, sir!' And he was twice my size! I don't think he meant it, but he could have. I loved playing with Monk, though I was scared to death at the time. There was never a rehearsal, never anything said about what we were going to play. Now, I am more familiar with his music. But back then I just hoped I could keep the time and not screw it up. One time Monk stood up and started pacing the bandstand. He turned and looked at me and shouted, 'Drums!' So I had to play, right? I learned a lot, man."

Fifty years later, Motian is one of the most

prolific and imaginative drummer/leaders in jazz: Now he's the one giving the lessons. He never leaves Manhattan and doesn't have to. Musicians including Chick Corea, Jason Moran, Mark Turner, Rebecca Martin, Greg Osby, Enrico Rava, Brad Mehldau, Chris Cheek and Chris Potter to Enrico Pieranunzi, Anat Fort and Fred Hersch want to play and record with him, so they journey to New York, where Motian holds court at the Village Vanguard, Cornelia Street Café, the Jazz Standard, Birdland and the Blue Note. Motian's voluminous recorded output practically grows by the month. Winter & Winter recently released *On Broadway, Vol. 5* (with Trio 2000 + Two). ECM followed with *Lost In A Dream* (with Potter and Moran). And there's more on the way, including a trio recording with Thomas Morgan and Masabami Kikuchi, and a live Birdland set with Charlie Haden, Lee Konitz and Mehldau. But regardless of the gig, Motian never really changes. Some see him as the ultimate swinger, others as an anarchist bent on meeting his once throwaway comment to "destroy jazz."

During Motian's annual two-week stint at the Village Vanguard this August, audiences enjoyed a double bill: tenor saxophonists Mark Turner and Tony Malaby with Bill Frisell in week one, and Motian's longstanding trio of Lovano and Frisell in week two. With the quartet, Motian was the swing commander, recalling his brilliant work on Evans' 1956 record *New Jazz Conceptions*, or his sublime straightahead work with Jarrett on 1994's *At The Deer Head Inn*, or any number of recordings. But week two was a jarring smack to the senses, Motian playing rhythmic juggernaut to Lovano and Frisell's beautiful, web-like tapestries. Motian revels in the unexpected, like smacking snare-drum accents on the ballads, "Good Morning Heartache" and "This Nearly Was Mine," or driving

off-kilter, tilt-a-whirl figures on Charlie Parker's "Chi Chi," Monk's "Eronel" or Motian's own "Yallah" or "Jack Of Clubs." Sometimes, Motian hammered his ride cymbal with no intention of sustaining a pulse; rather, it became a noisy sound effect. Snare-drum and ride-cymbal crosstalk was broken up, agitated, prodding. Exchanging of drum fours might consist of sparse tom thwacks, rim-shots resonating, coupled to light bass drum bombs. Zutty Singleton meets a festive 10-year-old.

Motian's Canopus drum set sound was equally dualistic in nature, ranging from the deep tom thuds of Baby Dodds to the crackling snare pops of Max Roach. Literal pulse could be nonexistent, replaced by Motian's rhythm of the second, bar by bar, every moment different, every bar up for grabs. The history of jazz is in Motian's drumming, and something else, something indefinable.

"I don't look at the drums like the drums," Motian says. "I look at it like music, like melody, and listening. I heard somebody recently talking about classical musicians and how their time is different from a jazz musician. Well, I think I have it both ways. When I'm playing, often there is no 4/4 time beat, right? But I'm listening to the music, man. I'm complementing the music and playing with the music like a conductor conducts a symphony orchestra. I don't play *boom-boom-bap*, man. It's spread out, and it's spacey. But it doesn't work all the time. I've played like that on some recordings and listened back, and it didn't work. I don't take it for granted that it's going to work all the time, the way I play."

Jack DeJohnette is a fan.

"When I heard Paul on those Riverside records with Bill Evans, he had this canny way of sounding like he didn't know how to play the instrument," DeJohnette says. "He played kind of bebopish in some of the licks, but even when he did that he sounded like Paul Motian. He had his own thing. Later, I heard him with Bill Evans at the Village Gate; he took a solo that was so amazingly funny I was in hysterics. I was on the floor laughing, just the way he played. It was so outlandish. And it was so un-drumistic. But so musical, the way he hit the instrument with abandon. Again, it sounded like somebody who didn't know how to play the drums, but it made sense. That expanded even more when he played with Keith [Jarrett], because Keith allowed him more of that expanse. Paul's like a painter. He's a sound sculptor."

Drummer Jim Black is another fan.

"Paul can leave silence for beats or bars at a time, and when his sound reappears it's right in the pocket, creating a rhythmic melody across the drum set," adds Black. "He has an amazing way of playing time behind a rubato melody, as well as playing free over the most standard of songs. And when Paul hits hard on the drums, he gets all these extra colors from hitting the

rims along with the drum heads on each stroke, creating a massive ringing sustain spiked with his articulated ideas."

Motian's drumming is an extension of what he played on Jarrett's 1970s recordings, *Survivor's Suite*, *Fort Yahwuh*, *Bop-Be* and *The Mourning Of A Star*, then already churning the surface and altering common perceptions of jazz time-keeping. He swings straight as required, but when Jarrett stretches, Motian (who included a battery of percussion in his 1970s drum set)

plays combustible, time-propelling free motion, his rhythms scattering, morphing, becoming fully elastic before eventually resolving.

"What I'm doing in music," Motian tries to explain, "I hate to use the term 'free,' but that's what I mean. What I'm doing has to *fit* with what the other musicians are doing or what I'm hearing. If it doesn't fit and if it's not integrated, it's bullshit. I've heard drummers say, 'What Paul is doing is easy, anyone can do that.' Bullshit. I could play totally free, but if it doesn't fit with

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what else is happening, that's bullshit."

Motian's concept came to perfect fruition with Lovano and Frisell. The trio's repertoire now includes more than 50 songs: original material, Monk and Motian's beloved show tunes. Their shared history is one of the longest running in jazz, their hookup revelatory and remarkable.

"Paul's compositions are so poetic and lyrical, and they all have a song form and a song attitude," Lovano relates. "They're not just lines, then you go off on them. Each piece has its own inner form to explore. We treat each piece as a song, even the freer things. Within one form, one time through a chorus, it could move quick or it could hold on to certain moments and be longer, but if you follow through within the forms, there is a lot of room to explore the different areas of the tune. We've really developed this approach as a trio."

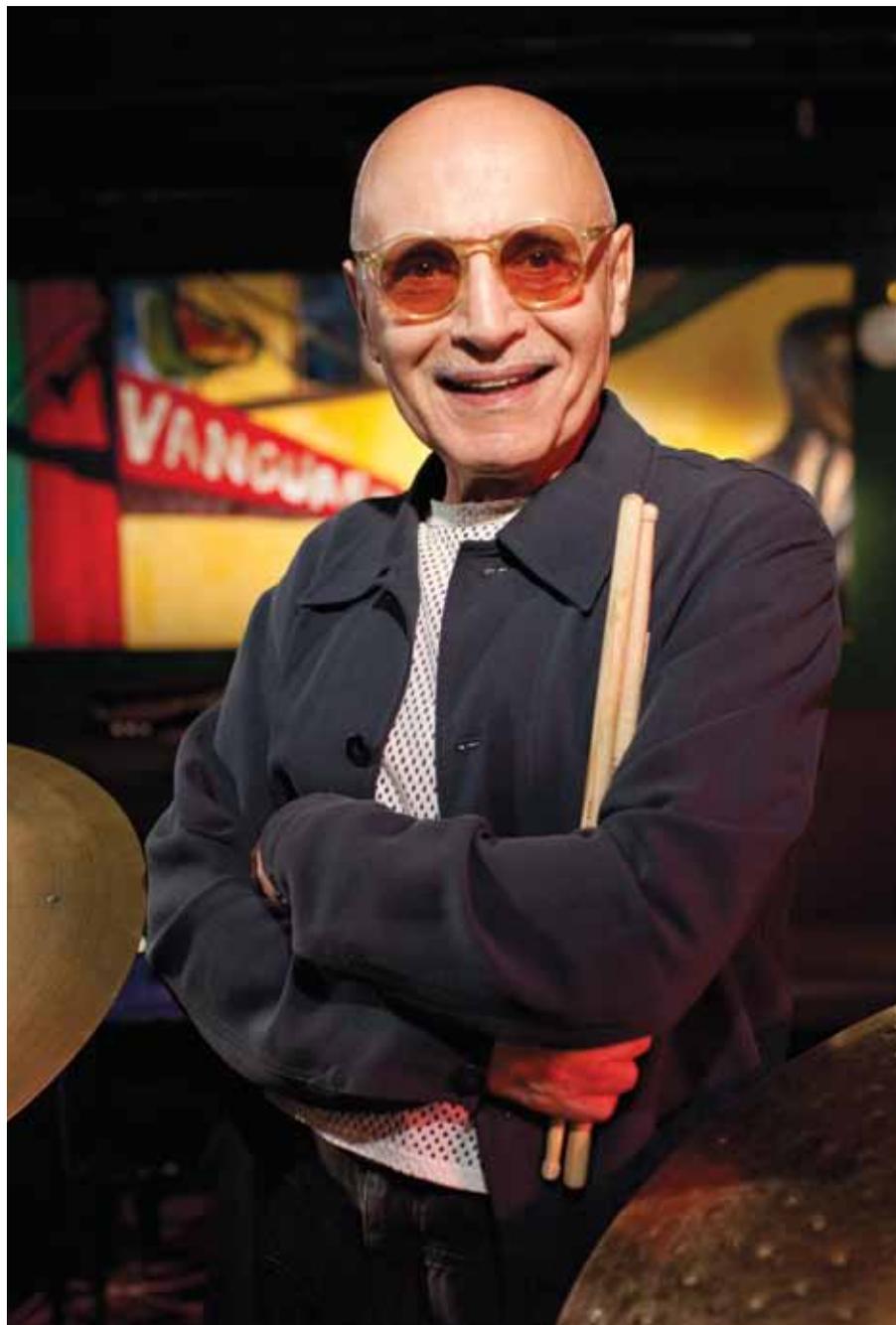
The trio's time has always been elastic and virtually up for grabs. At the Vanguard, Motian often seemed to be in his own world, while Lovano and Frisell hugged the ground a bit more tightly.

"When the trio began," says drummer Bill Stewart, "they played very few tunes that were in strict time. I remember seeing them in the late '80s, and they didn't play many songs you could snap your fingers to. As the years have gone on, they've played more in time. Or sometimes they play in more than one time at once. Like Paul will be playing one tempo, and Bill will be sort of implying another tempo. Paul is really listening and open and alert, and doesn't bring the same bag of tricks every time. He's an open book. He doesn't have any preconception about what's going to happen on the gig. His playing has an irreverent joy about it. His playing just cracks me up sometimes; it makes me laugh."

"I can hear what I play without playing it," Motian adds. "Space. Space. Paul Bley said he loved playing with me because I didn't pound shit on top of the ride cymbal. A big part of it is listening, man. I could lay out for four bars and I still hear the time. That's what I mean about playing but not playing."

When not playing drums, or jogging in Central Park (every morning, 5 a.m.), Motian is composing, usually on the old Everett upright given to him by Jarrett (who supposedly wants it back). Motian's spacious, open-form tunes have a distinct logic. Though he loves show tunes (he's been searching for a version of "The Trolley Song" that includes the bridge), his compositions couldn't be further from Broadway.

"I read once that Stravinsky would play 10 notes on the piano using all his fingers, then take away one note at a time until he got the sound he wanted," Motian says. "I've done that. Am I in the same boat as Stravinsky? No fucking way, man! Monk did that, too, played



with the bottom and top note of the chord. Didn't play anything in between. That's how I usually find my stuff. If it sounds OK, I will try to improve on it until I get a song. Some of them might be only eight bars long, some of them might be a regular AABA form, some might be just a melody. Sometimes it will be a one-chord change that people will play on."

"It's clear that he knows how to play piano," Jason Moran says. "When I'm playing Paul's pieces, they fall under the piano hands pretty easily. I'm always astonished how his bass note and melody note relate. It's kind of magical. If it's just simple you can fill in with what you want or you can keep it open with the harmony. It's like two fingers working very

well together. That is the most important relationship in any song, how the melody relates to the bass note. Just those two lines. And most of Paul's songs work in a very simple way; they don't have a lot of harmony. Their ingenuity is formed around that relationship between the bass and melody note.

"And Paul is a master of the no-rehearsal technique," Moran laughs. "That way you don't let your anxiety get the best of you. 'Oh man, I practiced this for six hours and tonight is my chance to get it right. Ah, I fucked it up.' With Paul, you can look at the page and be thinking of options while you're playing. And Paul really distributes a lot of texture and sound in a way that no other drummer does.

We were talking about Max Roach during a break at the Vanguard, and when we came back to play the second set you heard that he was referencing all this Max Roach during the set. He uses his language creatively. He doesn't use it like, 'OK, this is the stereotype of the language.' He doesn't take that approach at all. He's masterful."

It Should Have Happened A Long Time Ago. I Have The Room Above Her. Holiday For Strings. Though some of Motian's album titles—including his latest, *Lost In A Dream*—sound nostalgic, he's certainly not lost in time, nor lost in yesterday's dreams. Motian lives in the moment. Still, even he can't help but be amazed at what he's done, who he's played with, his hundreds of recordings and decades of performance with the greatest names in jazz.

"I remember when Gary Peacock and I were playing with Bill Evans. We were trying to get Bill to do the stuff that Keith ended up doing, but Bill wouldn't go for it. Another time I remember hanging out with Bill at his apartment at 84th off Central Park West and listening to him play the piano. Bill could play anything. He could sight-read anything. The hardest music, whatever it was. I remember listening to him playing Bach. One night we were playing at the Vanguard, and I said, 'Bill, why don't you play solo before we play as a trio? Why don't you play one of those Bach things as a solo?' but he wouldn't do it."

Motian recalls his years playing the Village Vanguard with Jarrett and Evans, usually on a double bill that included comedians and folk singers, everyone from Lenny Bruce and The Clancy Brothers to Stiller and Meara. Motian played with Jarrett at Slugs on Feb. 19, 1972, the night after trumpeter Lee Morgan was gunned down by his common-law wife.

"There was a weird vibe in there that night," Motian says. "The day after Lee Morgan got killed. And that was the first time we played with Dewey Redman, too."

Motian played three-month runs with Lennie Tristano and Evans at the Half Note (now a machine shop across from the Jazz Gallery on Hudson Street). Eddie Costa, Zoot Sims and Al Cohn were regulars.

"We started around 9 or 10 and played until 3 or 4 in the morning," he remembers. "But even with that I don't remember feeling tired at the end of the night."

Pulling out his aging gig diary, a crumpled notebook where he recorded basic gig details like artist, venue and fee, Motian seems to remember everything.

"I played Café Bohemia with Gil Melle, Tommy Potter, Herbie Nichols with Teddy Kotick. I played with George Wallington at the Composer's Room, which was on 58th Street off Sixth Avenue, a trio room. I was going to Manhattan School of Music at the same time

(where he studied orchestral snare drum and timpani). I got busy with George and quit the school! Then I played there with Bill Evans, I'm talking 1955 to '56.

"And we played Hickory House on 52nd Street between Sixth and Seventh, that was another three-month gig. Once with Bill Evans, another time with Joe Castro, another time with Martial Solal when he first came to New York."

Motian sits erect on ECM's couch, looking straight ahead through his ubiquitous black sun-

glasses, like he never looks back. He picks up his Jimmy McHugh Songbook, appears restless and heads for the door. But not before answering a final question. His answer?

"Listen to the music. Play what you hear, and if you don't hear it, then forget about it. Maintain the time inside yourself. You don't have to play it. If it's inside you, it's already there. You don't have to play it all the time. It's in you, man. It's in your body. It's in your head. It's all over the place, man. You can't miss it."

DB

The advertisement for L.A. Sax Company features two saxophones against a yellow background. On the left is a tenor saxophone labeled 'WARRIOR' and on the right is a soprano saxophone labeled 'DIAMOND SPIRAL'. The slogan 'IT'S ONE BADAAX.' is written in large, white, spaced-out letters across the middle. At the top, the L.A. Sax Company logo is displayed. At the bottom, the text reads 'PACSETTING . ADVENTUROUS . CUTTING EDGE . ENTICING.' followed by 'THE PURSUIT OF MUSICAL EXCELLENCE LIVES IN THE NEW BIG LIP SERIES - PART OF THE EXTENSIVE L.A. SAX LINE. FOR MORE OF THE LEGENDARY L.A. SAX STORY, VISIT WWW.LASAX.COM.' The Music & Factory Direct logo is at the bottom right, along with the text 'AVAILABLE FROM MUSIC & FACTORY DIRECT.COM 888-368-7770'.

The Bad Plus Committed To A Concept

By Dan Ouellette

In the early days of the Bad Plus, a requirement for getting an interview with the band hinged on corraling all three members in a room together, a stalwart message that the unorthodox acoustic piano trio was a collective disinclined to settle for the opinions of one member to stand for all three. And underscoring their commitment as a trio, they emphasized that no one in the group could ever be replaced like the interchangeable parts of most jazz bands today.

So it comes as a surprise when meeting up in late August with the Bad Plus, celebrating its 10th anniversary and ramping up to the release of its new album, *Never Stop*, that the rules have changed, albeit slightly. Two members, bassist Reid Anderson and pianist Ethan Iverson, are available in person in New York at their publicist's Wall Street office suite, while drummer Dave King is a click away—conferenced in via telephone from what sounds to be his palatial estate in Minnesota.

The East Coast time was set for 10:30. We prop a copy of the Bad Plus' new CD cover next to the phone so that King has a visual presence and begin our conversation with what at first listen sounds like a groggy voice on the other end. Just get up? Need coffee?

Then King's booming, exuberant voice bursts out loud and clear. "Oh, no, I've been up since 6 and running my property with my guns," he says. "I get up every morning, go for a brisk shuttle run, do deep knee bends and some jumping jacks. This morning my son and I went out back with our smoking pipes and our Wellies and shot quail. So I'm ready to go."

Anderson and Iverson both laugh heartily. "Actually, I just got up 12 minutes ago," says King with perfect comic timing.

Even though he's hundreds of miles away, King is in harmony with his two pals in articulately talking about the band's longevity, its creativity and,

despite having proved itself jazz-worthy countless times over the years, the ongoing controversy over its distinctive style. A meld of bash and beauty—in pockets romantic and raucous, mellow and madcap, bold and bumptious, free and locked-in—Bad Plus music may have initially shocked jazz aficionados, but it has also opened ears, especially with younger listeners who appreciate the songbooks of Ozzy Osbourne, Kurt Cobain and Jon Anderson.

Are we indeed witnessing another potent chapter of the never-ending evolution of jazz at hard work and passionate play, or is the band symbolic of jazz being derailed from its essence?

Anderson remembers well one of the first major jazz magazine articles on the band where a critic opened his castigation with the line: "I come not to praise Bad Plus, but to bury them."

King also recalls the rub. "I felt like Mussolini," he says. "Hey, I'm just a dude who plays the drums, not a cannibal. Whooh!" He laughs again.

"To be controversial in jazz means that we're in good company historically with artists like Ornette [Coleman] and Trane [John Coltrane]," pipes in Anderson. "What we do is certainly not for everyone. We respect that. If someone doesn't like us or get us, that's an absolutely legitimate response. But we have a right to leave our mark on jazz and to play music that is personal and meaningful to us." He adds, with a smile, "We've been playing around the world for 10 years, and I'm sure we'll continue to win over hearts and minds."

Iverson calmly weighs in, particularly in reference to the trio's breakthrough hit CD (by jazz standards), 2003's crunch-to-swing *These Are The Vistas* on Columbia, which was produced by popster Tchad Blake and recorded at Peter Gabriel's Real World studio in England. "What's always bothered me the most is that people implicate we were the brainchild of a huge record



company,” says Iverson, “or that somehow corporate dollars opened the door for us or that a bunch of record industry people sat around in an executive room and came up with the idea for our group, the way they do with the next big ‘boy band.’”

Long before the Columbia deal—set into motion by then-A&R chief Yves Beauvais after he witnessed Bad Plus slay the crowd at, of all places, the New York bastion of classic jazz, the Village Vanguard—Iverson says the group was in full command of its vision and execution. “People may not like the Bad Plus, but blame that on us, not on a record company or some gimmicky game plan,” he says. “The three of us have always done exactly what we wanted. We’ve always chosen the repertoire and the album art.”

However, those gibes didn’t deter the Bad Plus from developing its own internal language teeming with shreds of lyricism and atypical jolts of improvisation. The music elicited polar extremes of opinion. While they got their healthy share of praise (from critic Gary Giddins to guitarist Bill Frisell, who called the trio “the real deal”), detractors called them posers, three white guys in their 30s with Midwestern roots who are rockers pretending to play jazz. One jazz musician slammed them publicly, labeling their music “utterly pretentious” and pointing to the band itself as evidence that “the downfall of civilized humanity is upon us.” Another listened to the band on record and live, and pronounced, “I know music, and these guys don’t have it.”

Back then when first encountering the disparaging feedback, each Bad Plus member just shrugged. “Hey, we’re three harmless guys,” Iverson said around the time *Vistas*’ sales had just topped 60,000. “But I told Dave and Reid a year-and-a-half ago that if we had a successful album there’d be a backlash. When it happened, at first it took me time to digest it. Now, I feel it’s an honor. We’ve always tried to be ourselves. Yet somehow we’ve created a furor.”

“I was once a jazz purist myself,” Anderson said. “But I was in denial then about what I liked and really wanted to listen to. There was a gap in my life about what I felt I should play and what I actually put in my CD player. Since we like jazz and rock music, it’s not healthy to build walls. We’re passionate about music, period.”

“We made a record that sounded different from all the other piano trio dates,” said King. “I’d totally understand if we made an album that sounded like everyone else’s, with standards and an accepted jazz rhythm. But we’re proud of the fact that we made something that was new and unique. I believe that’s why so many people dug it. Could all the fans we’ve made and all the critics we’ve impressed have horseshit taste?”

As for the attacks on his bombastic-to-whimsical style, King, an avant rumble-and-roll drummer who doesn’t abide by the standard *ching-ching-ching-a-ling* jazz rhythm (except on occasion), said, “We’re the first to do that? That’s laughable. Does anyone listen to Jason Moran’s records? Hey, I hear Bjork and break-dance classics there, and I love it.”

A big fan of the Bad Plus experience, Moran reciprocates the admiration. “What’s with the uproar?” he says. “A lot of people from our generation are ready to consider Nirvana and rap in our music. It’s all viable. We’re good enough musicians to hear the possibilities with our groups. You have to invite in new people. Despite what jazz had traditionally represented, there’s no apology for bringing contemporary society into it.”

“We’re not just for music-school types who feel you have to have a sharp-five chord in every chorus. Great jazz was never about that. It was a fan-based music.”

—ETHAN IVERSON

While the Bad Plus officially formed as a band in 2000, the threesome—Anderson and King from Minnesota, Iverson from Wisconsin—first rubbed shoulders on the bandstand a decade prior. The seeds for the band were planted when Anderson and King played together in junior high, exploring music by such progressive art-rock bands as Yes and Rush and fusion artists like Allan Holdsworth and Chick Corea’s Return to Forever. Meanwhile, Iverson was steeped in classical, swing and ragtime music.

In 1990, shortly before King was to strike out for the indie rock scene in Los Angeles, Anderson invited him to his house to meet up with Iverson, with whom he had been playing some avant-jazz gigs. The musicians clicked, but the timing was off. King was heading to the West Coast, Iverson was one foot out the door to New York (soon to become the music director for maverick choreographer Mark Morris’ dance company) and Anderson was set to attend Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia.

After King retreated to Minneapolis, in 1995 Iverson called him to play on a couple of dates he had there. Meanwhile Anderson and Iverson had reunited in New York and were playing frequently in each other’s bands.

Five years later, King organized three nights of shows in Minneapolis so the three could finally work together. They rehearsed some standards and

a few of Iverson’s tunes from a trio he had in New York. But Anderson and King wanted to open the set up by introducing some rock covers. “That’s when we discovered that Ethan had no knowledge of pop music and had never even heard of some serious bands,” said King during a conversation early in the Bad Plus splash.

“To this day I still don’t have a pop music collection,” said Iverson with a laugh. “I don’t listen to pop at home. I never have.”

Bassist and drummer quizzed their pianist on different artists and songs. He had never heard of any of them. Finally, King recalled, “I’ll name the most obvious song of our generation: Nirvana’s ‘Smells Like Teen Spirit.’ Ethan’s response? He’d never heard of it.”

Once Iverson listened to the tune, he liked it enough to work up an arrangement. The band practiced it and other new standards in the same place they had first met 10 years earlier—the Anderson household’s living room. The dates in Minneapolis proved to be a success, and that led to the group recording its eponymous debut album for the Fresh Sounds label, which sparked immediate interest. The crowds began to come.

As for the name, today in looking back on the decision, the three agree that it was easy. “I made it up,” says King. “We knew we had to have a name, so I just starting playing with words like pop art to come up with something that people would remember. I typed this in an e-mail to Reid and Ethan. They liked it right away, and we never looked back.”

“We felt it was important to have a group identity,” says Anderson. “We didn’t want our names in the band name.”

“There’s something poetically powerful about the Bad Plus,” adds Iverson, who, when asked in what way, says, “I’m not going to go into detail because I think those things should be elusive and mysterious. But I can say as advice to young musicians, it’s helpful to have a band name beginning with a letter early in the alphabet. That way you’ll be listed in a festival lineup toward the top.”

King laughs again and says, “That’s all part of our evil plan.”

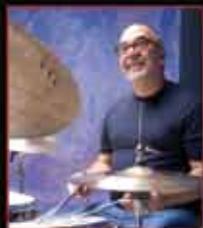
The Bad Plus’ ominous assault on the jazz world began with *Vistas*, which broke the rules of an acoustic piano trio as rock rhythms trumped swing, angular deconstructions of pop songs replaced predictable standards and avant dissonance married the melodic.

The follow-up was the renegade *Give*, which featured band originals as well as unorthodox covers, from Ornette Coleman’s “Street Woman” to Black Sabbath’s “Iron Man.” On the latter, after a classical piano opening, the drums swish then drive into rock-’em/sock-’em mode, the bass lines go heavy-handed and the piano accentuates the low-end darkness with bass-note pounding. More of the same uncalculated sonics came on the trio’s thunder-and-grace *Suspicious Activity?* which featured trio originals with the exception of the rambunctious and whimsical “Chariots Of Fire” cover.

After its three Columbia discs, the Bad Plus



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signed with Heads Up International. Its immensely likeable 2007 label debut, *Prog*, featured the trio again dishing up a gourmet 10-course meal of the sublime (a gorgeous take on Tears for Fears' "Everybody Wants To Rule The World"), the rowdy (a wild ride through the original "Physical Cities") and the eclectic (Iverson's "Mint"). That CD was followed by a curveball: an all-covers vocal album with guest singer Wendy Lewis, *For All I Care*, which featured a brilliant rendering of Yes' "Long Distance Runaround."

The Yes 1972 classic *Fragile* has been a mainstay in Iverson's album library, right? He slyly

smiles. Obviously not, but when his bandmates brought the track to his attention, his ears were opened. "I really got into that song," he says. As for audience reaction, he adds, "Fans of that music love it. And, incidentally, that's what the Bad Plus is all about and what we want: speaking to real fans of *our* music. We're not just for music-school types who feel you have to have a sharp-five chord in every chorus. Great jazz was never about that. It was a fan-based music, not for a music-school, musician-centric world."

As a *For All I Care* companion, the Bad Plus decided to create *Never Stop*, which features all

band compositions and no covers—a first for the group. "In our minds, we always thought we'd follow the covers album with an original collection to balance the scales," says King. "In fact, we have a backlog of originals that we play live."

"We get attention for our covers, but really they only represent a quarter of our repertoire," says Iverson. "In fact, our real fans call out for the originals when we play live. People who don't know us as well do call for the covers."

"These days everyone does covers," says Anderson. "But the fact that we do them differently struck a chord. It's wonderful that people associate that with us, but we never set out intentionally to do that."

"It was all about the three of us messing around with rock tunes," says King. "We never had a plan that this was going to be how we'd win people over. In fact, we were as surprised as anyone with all the attention. Maybe we made a connection because it was almost as if we were playing these songs with rock 'n' roll in mind. We weren't trying to take a song like 'Smells Like Teen Spirit' and put a jazz harmony over it to legitimize it on some level. We played it where the original intent is still intact, which I believe is why it resonates with younger people. And we're honoring the rock music, bands and composers that we love."

As for the originals, each member composes individually and delivers the music to the rest of the band. Independently, they put their touches on a tune then together make arrangement decisions—mostly on the spot—to shape the song into the Bad Plus lexicon. In most instances, since the band is hyperaware of its own sound, the tune develops quickly and collaboratively. Case in point: Anderson's "Never Stop," which came to Iverson and King intact. "It was all there," says Iverson. "We worked out its sound through trial and error in rehearsals, but it was simple, basically dealing with things like, should there be four beats of drums here or four bars? We don't argue."

"There's not a lot of wrestling," Anderson concurs.

But King cautions: "Every now and then we do have to break out the brass knuckles and go into the backyard." They all laugh.

Most of the *Never Stop* tunes were road tested, with the exception of King's "Super America," which the band learned the day it was recorded. Each member contributed one tune for the experiment in spontaneity; only King's made the final cut. "We decided to do something different," says Iverson. "Actually, Dave can play that whole piece on the piano better than I can. I wanted him to record it because it was so hard for me to learn."

Another tune that came to full completion in the studio was Iverson's blues-infused "Bill Hickman At Home," his vision of the inner life of the famous Hollywood stuntman who starred anonymously as the driver in such action films as *Bullitt* and *The French Connection*. Once in the studio, Iverson opted to play an old out-of-tune upright parked there instead of the imported Steinway to give the number a honky-tonk twang.

In recording *Never Stop*, the Bad Plus once

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again set up at Pachyderm in rural Minnesota, where Nirvana, P.J. Harvey, the Jayhawks and Soul Asylum recorded in the '90s. In fact, the band points out, the Bad Plus has recorded in England and Minnesota, but never in New York. Recording in Minnesota actually affords the band members time for visiting family still living there.

The Minnesota connection plays a big role in the Bad Plus identity. The band may boast a faithful New York fan base and command an international following, but it's Midwest to the core. "There's so much that connects us to the Midwest musically," says Iverson.

Anderson adds, "I believe that's why we have such a unique sound. It's deeply rooted in our history of growing up there, of having our feet in different musical worlds and that being OK."

Jason Moran concurs: "They have a perspective on American music that intersects with them being from the north Midwest. In their music, I hear a certain kind of honesty and admiration."

The Bad Plus still enjoys a core partisanship in their region, with a large audience in Minneapolis. In essence, the band has built its career from having home-court advantage in two settings. That's encouraging in the big picture of jazz, says Iverson: "I think it's the future for jazz bands to develop a base in their own cities. I don't see how people are going to be able to come to live in New York anymore. It's so expensive and so fragmented. So that gives a city like Minneapolis the opportunity to develop a vibrant jazz and improvised music scene. That's the way it should be. That's the way it was at the beginning of this music."

King agrees that a healthy local scene breeds more musical activity that can support touring groups with an eager audience. Not having that is "part of the reason why the old touring circuits died out," he says. As the only father in the band (he has two young children), he adds, "Plus, I don't see how you can live in New York, play improvised music and raise a family. I can't see how anyone call pull that off."

In regards to the band's longevity, the group members stress that the Bad Plus wins out over every other gig. While all three are active outside the band—King with Happy People, the Trucking Company, Craig Taborn's Junk Magic, Buffalo Collision; Iverson also with Taborn's band and Buffalo as well as the Billy Hart Quartet and occasional gigs with Lee Konitz; Anderson with his own electronic music projects—it comes down to the place where they all feel the most musically rewarded.

That's the way it's been from the beginning, says Anderson. "In the early days, even if one of us were offered a tour, we'd turn it down in favor of doing a Bad Plus show," he says. "Since then we've been committed to the band concept even if we've had to make other sacrifices."

While young bands are emulating the Bad Plus style, Iverson hopes they have more of an influence on sticking it out together. "Making that ensemble commitment is so important, refusing to play if one of the members is unavailable," he

says. "My sense is that the jazz scene has a ways to go on that tip."

Ditto the opinion for Konitz, who recently enlisted Iverson and Anderson for his shows at the Iridium in New York. "What I appreciate is how the Bad Plus has been able to stay together, sell themselves as a band and be accepted for it," the alto saxophonist says. "That to me is a major accomplishment." Konitz has checked out the trio twice in New York clubs and is impressed, except he critiques King's drumming as a bit "too melodramatic." Still, he says, "They deserve a good write-up," then adds with a laugh, "If they ever

wanted to add a Jewish alto saxophonist, the group could be called the Bad Plus Good."

That's not likely to happen any time soon as the trio launches into its next major project: creating their commissioned take on Igor Stravinsky's classical masterpiece *Rite Of Spring*, which will premiere at Duke University in March.

Why Stravinsky? "We needed a whole new demographic to piss off," quips King, who adds that he has to end the call at the urging of his young son, who is wondering why his dad has been talking for so long. He signs off, saying, "I've gotta go make some quail sandwiches." **DB**

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DAVE DOUGLAS

Music With A View

by John Ephland

He just wanted to be a regular jazz guy. For Dave Douglas, though, fate would have none of it. In fact, the acclaimed trumpeter/composer/conceptualist's bio finds him having formed and re-formed groups over time to reflect his persistently ongoing and shifting musical and artistic needs. Hardly the work of a sideman, one only has to pay attention to the visual impact of most of the CDs he's been putting out under his own name since the mid-'90s to get some idea that Douglas hasn't just been working on his chops.

"It's interesting that you note the visual connections in my work," Douglas says, seemingly surprised by the reference. "I don't want to make it sound like I'm some big art buff or something. You know that I grew up wanting to be a Jazz Messenger. I grew up playing tunes. Things kind of took a turn when I started writing my own music. But, essentially, I still feel like a simple musician. I'm into writing melodies and playing them in ways that are fun and challenging."

That may be. Except that this "simple" musician's notions of "writing melodies and playing them" have tended to get him mixed up in a variety of different and very interesting esthetic collaborations. Like he says, "Things kind of took a turn when I started writing my own music." A recent example was the formation of his eclectic, electric Keystone band, which provided yet another turn. Their album of the same name, from 2005, also included a DVD of movies from the early 20th century cinematic comic Fatty Arbuckle. Similar to Bill Frisell's music for Buster Keaton films, Douglas composed music for Keystone to accompany some Arbuckle classics in this two-disc set. Keystone's followup, *Moonshine*, while not including a DVD, continued to be inspired by Arbuckle's work.

And now comes *Spark Of Being*, a multimedia project that includes three CDs of music from Douglas that's based on another collaboration, this time with experimental filmmaker Bill Morrison. Unlike the Arbuckle project, however, *Spark Of Being* is a bona fide collaboration between two living artists, Douglas and Morrison, along with Douglas' Keystone band, which features tenor saxophonist Marcus Strickland, Adam Benjamin on Fender Rhodes, Brad Jones on Ampeg baby bass, drummer Gene Lake and DJ Olive on turntables and laptop (Douglas also uses a laptop here and there). Available as three separate CDs or as a box set (all from Greenleaf Music), *Spark Of Being* is the combination of three distinctive and mature works: *Soundtrack* (the actual soundtrack to the film), *Expand* (with seven new works that further develop beyond the soundtrack) and *Burst* (with more music that continues to explore and interpret the themes of the film). A DVD will be released separately.

For Douglas, the evolution of his interests in other media were sparked by that attention to presentation. "I got involved in design because of the CD packaging," he says. "Distinctive designs like the ones made by Steve Byram, for example, say a lot about the music [e.g., Douglas' *Keystone*, *Mountain Passages* and *Live At The Jazz Standard* releases]. Then it was a natural step into other collaborations, like with dance or film. In my opinion, jazz and improvised music belong in



Dave Douglas (right) with filmmaker and collaborator Bill Morrison

the same artistic world as those forms."

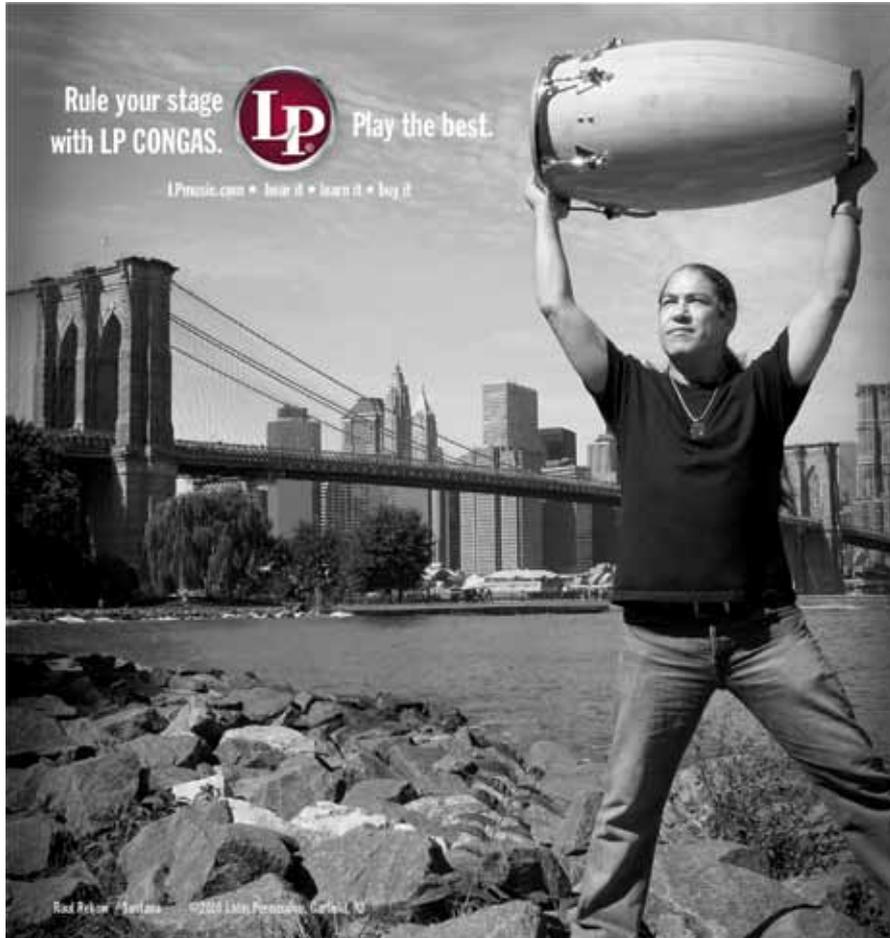
And, you could say, it was "a natural step" which led to the back-and-forth magic that Douglas and Morrison create with *Spark Of Being*. The world premiere was performed at Stanford University in April as part of a multi-stage residency. Essentially, the production combines a reinterpretation of the *Frankenstein* story, with Morrison providing new, archival and distressed footage, complete with Douglas' original score. Of that story, Douglas says, "The most remarkable thing for me in rereading [Mary] Shelley's *Frankenstein* is that the monster is not, as usually

depicted, an imbecilic, stumbling zombie. When the creature first opens his mouth, he goes on at length in flowing Romantic speech, with fully formed emotions and well-reasoned arguments. I laughed out loud. Much of the music here is written with sympathy for the Creature."

By way of contrast, the work on *Moonshine*, while also provoking laughter, involved a different creative process: "Most of the titles for pieces in the *Moonshine* book came from old silent films that I had watched and laughed at," Douglas states. "They are funny films, but also the ambiances of the films are so special. I wrote the tunes inspired by what was happening on screen. 'Moonshine' was the one track that I set to work with the existing fragments of the Keaton/Arbuckle adventure film."

As for the current project, Douglas states elsewhere, "*Spark Of Being* began its life as a meditation on humanity and technology." The music itself explores and interprets the themes of the film, and was created in new ways. "*Spark Of Being* worked very differently," he notes. "It was almost a completely new process. First of all, it's not a comedy. Secondly, I had access to the living filmmaker, Bill Morrison. We spent a lot of time talking about different ways the collaboration could work. Bill is a big music lover—I first met him at the Village Vanguard years ago. While there is a behind-the-scenes narrative at work in *Spark*, the visual element functions a lot more like the music, flowing intuitively and telling the story in a more poetic way."

Conceived with the Keystone players in mind, *Spark Of Being*'s initial impetus came from Douglas' collaboration with images, many of them seen as simple motifs. And it was a bonus that he and Morrison started working on it at the same time, many times passing material between them. "No matter how complex the music gets," says Douglas, "there should always be a basis in simple ideas. I don't mind if the music gets way out in the realm of ideas, but for me it has to still have both feet on the ground. While this recording may get into some crazy places, all the themes are built from a few basic motifs. I like it when there remains a connection to simplicity, a



direct line to the soul.”

Technically, all three CDs of *Spark Of Being* were created in a five-day frenzy of recording both with the film and without at the Center for Computer Research in Music and Acoustics at Stanford University. Multiple versions of each piece were recorded in an attempt to get better matches, some of them not making it beyond the experimental phase. The musical process that the band Keystone engaged in—full of tight, interactive movements and fiery, unpredictable outbursts—was the result of having that week in one room. Those lightning-fast musical conversations were buttressed with the added element of musique concrete and electronic sound manipulation. As Douglas states in notes about the session, this addition became “an extended part of that palette, making this electric band play with the interactivity and subtlety expected of acoustic groups. *Spark Of Being*, the session, put all the pieces in place so that we could really play that game at the highest level.”

Along the way, Douglas enjoyed the opportunity over long periods to work with DJ Olive and Adam Benjamin to get that added electronic benefit for *Spark Of Being*. Much of the work involved finding sounds, tweaking them to make sure they fit with the overall musical expression. Benjamin’s work with GarageBand and Olive’s with Ableton Live software apps, incidentally, ended up being a learning curve for Douglas himself, as he applied his own laptop dimensions to the music. This helped them all when it came time to improvise with the rest of the band in “this entirely new sonic environment.”

Addressing the concern about too much music, Douglas states, “I wouldn’t have released three CDs if I didn’t feel all the music stood up by itself. When there are multiple versions of a tune, you’ll quickly hear that they are radically different in approach.” He goes on to add, “I like to work with improvisers in unusual ways. In the same way you might ask a saxophone player to play a solo on the chords to ‘Donna Lee,’ you can ask an electronic musician to use various strategies and forms in their work. So a lot of the approaches stem from considering the pieces from different angles. That kind of mixture creates a richness and a tension that I like. I want the listener to wonder where the tune ended and where the improvisation began. Or maybe, to say it better, that there would really be no difference between what is written and what is not written.”

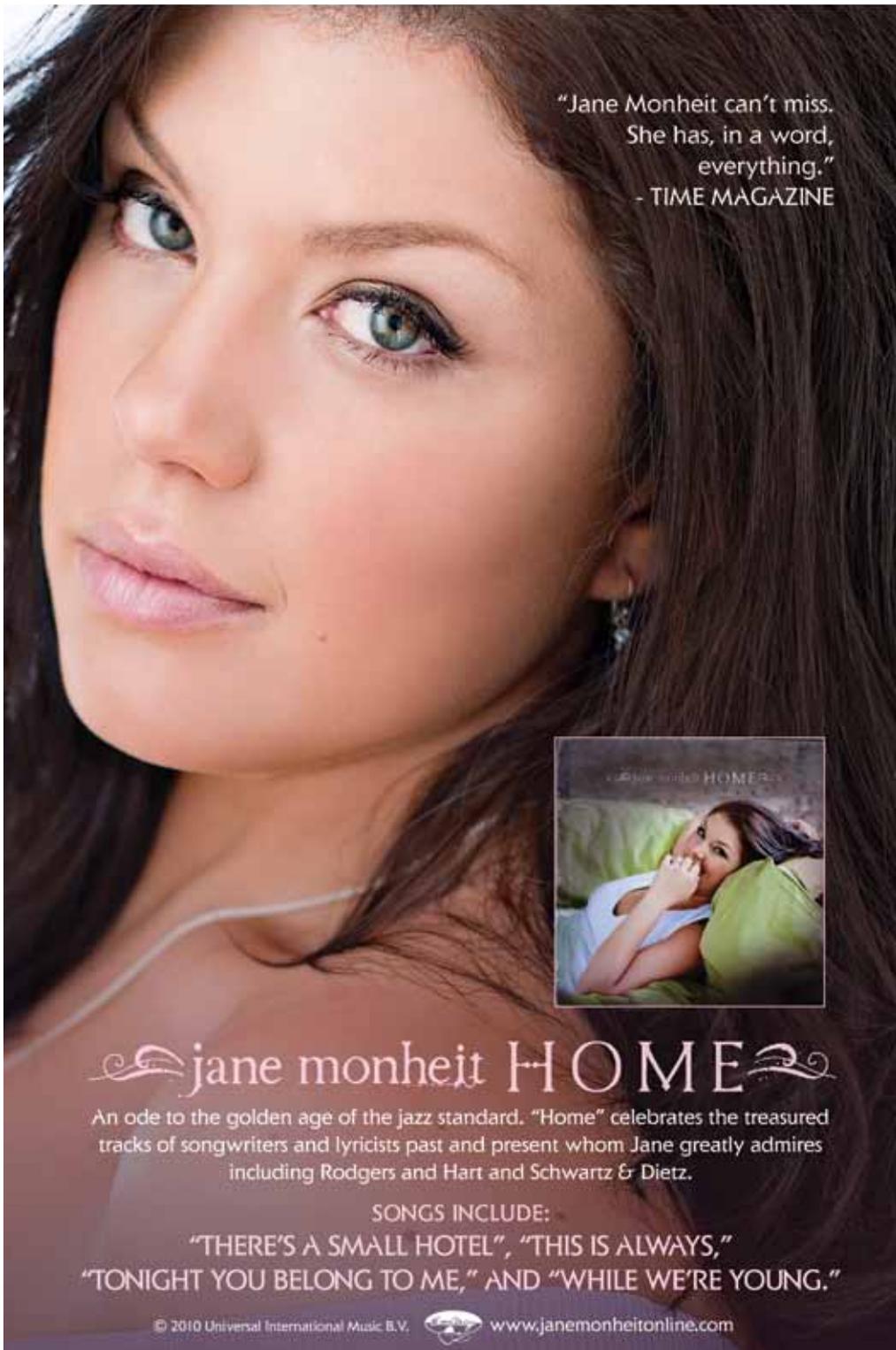
A story about Dave Douglas today must discuss his label, Greenleaf Music, and how it relates to this series of recordings. Asked how the relationship between Greenleaf’s policy of streaming their catalog and this project with video will bear fruit, if at all, Douglas says, “Greenleaf modified its listening policy earlier this year and is now offering full catalog streaming to our subscribers only. There’s even a subscription level for folks who just want to stream the catalog. This allowed us to include all of Greenleaf’s digital releases, including multi-night sets from

our live series.”

And, in case anyone’s wondering what’s next for the always developing Dave Douglas, Keystone will be supporting *Spark Of Being* (performing with and without the film) in the United States and Europe this fall and next year, and he’ll be back in Europe with his Brass Ecstasy band in the spring. Douglas will continue to develop his other new projects, including his big band work on the heels of the album *A Single Sky* with Jim McNeely and the Frankfurt Radio Bigband and his Trio Sentiero, which premiered at I Suoni delle Dolomiti in the Italian Alps this past summer.

But it is *Spark Of Being* that preoccupies Douglas nowadays. As he says in his notes to *Expand*: “Science now pervades every aspect of human activity. Music and the arts are no exception.” Indeed, Dave Douglas seems determined to make sure believers in science and lovers of the arts, specifically music, note that one of the most fundamental and eternal questions about existence the author Mary Shelley faced (and we all face) is, “What does it mean to be human?” *Spark Of Being* is about the story of Frankenstein’s monster, but it may also be about all of us as well.

DB



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ART BLAKEY

A LEADER'S LONG LEGACY LIVES ON

By Dave Helland

The first set of the first night of the Jazz Messengers' weeklong engagement at Chicago's old Jazz Showcase on Rush Street, Art Blakey is positioning the components of his drum kit: moving the hi-hat an inch this way, making sure the bass-drum pedal is securely in place, that the snare is at the proper angle, moving the hi-hat back a quarter-inch, while a young Bobby Watson blows a cappella on "Chelsea Bridge." Finished fiddling and fussing, suddenly Blakey comes in forcefully but subtly. Like a basketball that hadn't been fully inflated, Watson's playing now has a crisp bounce that wasn't there before.

"That's all deliberate," explains the alto saxophonist, recalling his former boss's way with an ensemble. "As he's doing all that fumbling around, he's still listening, he's waiting. Whatever he's trying to do, he's going to have it done because he's pretty much decided by the way things are going, I'm going to catch him on the bridge, or I'll catch him at the second chorus. He knows he's got a chorus to fuck around with the cymbals."

Blakey shaped the music from his vantage point behind his kit. Not content with just the sound of sticks or brushes on drum heads and cymbals, he would change the pitch of a drum with one stick or an elbow or hit the rims and sides, illuminate a rainbow in each cymbal and release the full range of dynamics from subtle to intense at the flick of a wrist. His timekeeping could be minimal when backing Thelonious Monk or metronomic behind a young Messenger who had lost his way.

"Art played with you; he never ignored you," explains bassist Charles Fambrough, "whether you were making it or not. That's what I loved about him: You could be in trouble and Art would come to your assistance and show you what to do."

"Sometimes the guy playing the drums behind you can be busy and make a lot of noise, but if he's good it could be inspiring. A good example would be Art Blakey as opposed to Gene Krupa's way of backing you up," explains clarinetist Buddy DeFranco, who hired Blakey for the rhythm section of his Four Tet but admits that as Blakey's fame grew people got the idea that DeFranco had been hired by Blakey. "Art was playing for you—he was also trying to energize you, which he did well."

"He had this ability of putting electricity behind you," says trumpeter Don Sickler, who was never actually a Messenger but did play in Blakey's big band.

"Art was able to take a small band and play with the intensity and power as if it were a big band," says drummer Winard Harper. "With his use of dynamics, Art definitely had a knack for bringing things out, even

exaggerating them, and making them work."

Born in Pittsburgh on Oct. 11, 1919, Blakey was orphaned as an infant. In his teens he worked as a mill hand and led a band; was husband and father; lost the piano chair of his band to Erroll Garner at the insistence of a thug exposing the snub-nose .38 in his waistband; was taken under the wing of Monk; and spent years in Billy Eckstine's band, which was an incubator of bebop, home to Dizzy, Bird, Miles et al.

The legendary Art Blakey begins in February 1954 at Birdland. Blakey's introduction of the band—Horace Silver, Clifford Brown, Lou Donaldson (respectively, nine, 10 and seven years younger than the drummer)—as heard on the classic live Blue Note record outlines his career for the next 35 years: "I'm gonna stay with the youngsters. When these get too old, I'm gonna get some younger ones: keeps the mind active."

Blakey and Silver led a couple more precursors to the Messengers before parting ways in 1956, giving way to the first of many bands billed as "Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers." True to his word, he picked youngsters. Blakey was older than Benny Golson by nine years; Lee Morgan, 18 years; Bobby Timmons, 16 years. Blakey was older than Wayne Shorter by 13 years; Freddie Hubbard, 18 years; Curtis Fuller, 15 years. Blakey was older than James Williams by 31 years; Watson, 33 years; Bill Pierce, 28 years. Older than Wynton Marsalis by 42 years; Benny Green, 43 years; Kevin Eubanks, 35 years.

The drummer passed 20 years ago, on Oct. 16, 1990, less than a week after his 71st birthday. The cause was lung cancer.

One night at a club in Long Beach, on stage between sets, tenor saxophonist Javon Jackson was advised to work on his long tones. "I had a pretty big sound, but he was Art Blakey," recalls Jackson. "He played with Gene Ammons—relative to that, everybody has a small sound."

Blakey denied playing the role of teacher, telling writer Kevin Whitehead in his last DownBeat cover story (December 1988) that it was he who learned from the youngsters in his band, that the best advice he could offer was there was no excuse for being late.

But the Messengers of the '70s and '80s would disagree. There was a curriculum composed of jokes, stories and clichés. That the punishment should fit the crime meant that a solo should reflect the tune one was playing. Not putting all of one's eggs in one basket meant construct your solo, make it go someplace, build to a climax.

Blakey also taught by example, which Watson found particularly useful when he was leading a big band of his own: "The first thing, delegate authority," Watson said. "If someone has talent, let them bring it to the table. Second, trust the musicians."

But Blakey could also be direct. Trumpeter Valery Ponomarev was told not to switch ballads for his feature, the point being that "you can't just play a ballad once or twice and really know enough to bring the best out of it," he said. "You have to play it many times till it becomes second nature."

Pianist Green was told to get beyond Art Tatum. "He would say it and kind of smile," explains Green, who thought at first Blakey was teasing him. "What he was telling me was you can come out from under the influence of another musician; you can work toward developing yourself."

And then when he felt they were ready, Blakey graduated them. "Other bandleaders tried to hold onto their star sidemen," explains producer Michael Cuscuna, who compiled both the three-disc *The History Of Art Blakey And The Jazz Messengers* (Blue Note) and *The Blue Note Recordings Of Art Blakey's 1960 Jazz Messengers* (Mosaic). "Art would push people to go out on their own so they could nurture their own sidemen, to keep the business going. He was always very conscious of the business." Or, as Blakey told every Messenger, "This isn't the Post Office."

Blakey was more than just a strong leader; he was an inspiration to generations of jazz bandleaders who heeded his wise advice and who continue to follow his deliberate example to this day.

"The Messengers were our heroes from the time of Clifford Brown and Lou Donaldson. We followed that band and learned those songs because you hoped one day you would be playing with them," explains Fuller, the group's first trombonist, who was a Messenger in the early '60s. "Everybody who went through that band became leaders. In our time, he was actually grooming us to go to another level."

Two decades later, Green "felt from the first time I heard them that that

was the place I wanted to be. It was very clear to me exactly what Bu was doing in terms of nurturing their talents, helping them to blossom and mature as composers, to become bandleaders themselves," he said.

What made Blakey a great leader and great teacher of leaders? A collection of negatives typified his leadership style. He didn't tell people what to play, only what not to do. He didn't tolerate stars; The Messengers was the star, and Blakey neither liked the attitude that frequently comes with stardom nor could his business model afford it.

Blakey didn't carry out the most visible signs of leadership on the bandstand but turned them over to the young members of the band. In this way Blakey was teaching "just about all the elements of being a leader, the kind of responsibilities you have to keep in mind: how to call a good set, how to be entertaining but not be a clown, how to introduce the music, how to make the audience comfortable, to present members of band and how to run a pretty tight band," says Pierce, currently chairman of the Berklee College of Music's wind department, who formerly taught the school's Jazz Messengers Ensemble. "It was learning by observing, but he definitely used to break it down for us. He considered it one of his missions, to teach us how to be bandleaders."

Branford Marsalis is one who has successfully applied these lessons for more than two decades. "I think he identified the players who had better leadership qualities. He allowed them to thrive in a forum that valued the individual and the right of individuals to express themselves," says Marsalis. "In terms of being a leader, I give guys a lot of freedom—a lot of people don't understand how it works and a lot say it doesn't work, but for me, that's the only time I'm remotely interested. I think Art was a lot like that."

When was the last time you heard the audience at a jazz concert hum along with a classic composition? That was the reaction of a capacity crowd of several hundred predominately black and middle-aged fans to "Moanin'," as performed by a band featuring drummer Winard Harper,

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pianist Robert Irving III and trumpeter Corey Wilkes at a recent tribute to the Jazz Messengers produced by the Jazz Institute of Chicago.

That reaction Harper is accustomed to. "People love the Messengers no matter where we go. 'Moanin' has been a staple my book for 10 or 15 years," explains the drummer.

Blakey left a written legacy, but he didn't compose it. On the scores of albums Blakey played on—with or without the Messengers—there is no song credited to his name. Yet he inspired a style built on the blues and gospel base exemplified by tunes penned by his original partner, Horace Silver.

"At that time beboppers were playing very hip. They thought to play real funky blues was too commercial, too square. They wanted to play hip, slick blues, the bebop version of the blues," recalls Silver, who credits Blakey with giving him the opportunity to shine as a composer.

"Art liked the musicians to understand the heritage and play the music of the guys who came before them, but he also encouraged them to bring in new material themselves," explains Sickler, founder of 2nd Floor Music, which lists scores of tunes from the Messenger book among its 3,400-plus published titles. "Guys like [Hank] Mobley and Walter Davis [Jr.]: Blakey recorded so much of their music because it's written for Blakey, it's got Art Blakey's name written all over it." Sickler rearranged much of the Messenger book for additional horns and found compatible repertoire like J.J. Johnson's "Kelo" or Sonny Clark's "Cool Struttin'" for the band to perform. Much of it was released on live dates from European festivals; Blakey was "constantly wheelin' and dealin'," according to Sickler.

"Definitely when Art Blakey passed he left a great void," says pianist Mulgrew Miller. "This man almost single-handedly energized the scene in the '80s. It started before Wynton, but because of his success—which was definitely due to his exposure as a Messenger—scores of young musicians came up hoping to play with Art and the Messengers.

"All the guys who had bands, especially for long periods of time—Art, Betty Carter was another one—provided us with work as a way to better learn

our craft: something organized, a chance every night to learn how to make it work on the bandstand. Art was like a good coach."

Another part of the legacy that will be heard for generations is not only in the scores of musicians who came through the Messengers but the students who continue to enroll in Messengers-styled ensembles at colleges and music schools around the country, including Berklee, Philadelphia's University of the Arts and Princeton University. Trumpeter Charles Tolliver leads the one at the New School in New York.

"When I got started, all the drum-led bands were still alive and well: Art Blakey, Max Roach and others," says Tolliver, who was a Messenger in the mid-'60s with John Gilmore and John Hicks. "They were vessels through which we all came and really got involved in this thing big-time. You can hear all those underpinnings and foundation in [the New School's Messengers ensemble]. If you're going to have jazz education, a Jazz Messengers course should be part of the curriculum of every jazz institution." Graduates of Tolliver's course include the brothers Strickland (saxophonist Marcus and drummer E.J.), pianist Robert Glasper and drummer Ali Jackson. "In the case of drummers, achieving the ability to properly use the groundbreaking ensemble and solo-accompaniment drum technique created by Art Blakey is so essential in becoming a meaningful contributor to the art form."

But the remaining part of the Blakey legacy is found in hundreds of thousands of people who heard the Messengers, whose appreciation of jazz was molded by listening to Blakey.

"People really loved Art Blakey," observes Pierce, who thinks Blakey increased the audience base for jazz. "People knew that if they went to see Art, they would have good time. It would not be overly intellectual; you won't be hit over the head. I think if you weren't even a jazz fan, if you want to see Art you would enjoy it. I don't think you can give anybody a higher compliment than that."

Certainly not to Blakey, who believed that music washes away the dust of everyday life. **DB**

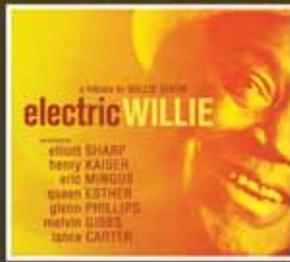
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REVIEWS

Vijay Iyer *Solo*

ACT 9497

★★★★★

Much of the acclaim Vijay Iyer has earned in the past few years has been tied to the rhythmic concept of his remarkable bands. His drummers are paramount participants, charging the action and goading the pianist to deeper levels of engagement. So there's a bit of daring behind his notion of hitting the studio alone. Here's a guy who has made great investments in the power of interplay—a recital could be wan in comparison. But *Solo* tells another story. By trusting in the act of disclosure, in this case offering his audience another side of his artistry, he has come up with a disc both vital and revealing.

Iyer's keyboard approach has occasionally seemed to be a stream of jabs limned by grace and judiciousness. It's an intriguing blend, if occasionally steely. Lately, however, a new sense of glide has bubbled up. Phrases are beveled, and passages flow in a much more unfettered manner. *Solo* makes the most of such refinements, offering tunefulness in both material and approach. Like its predecessor *Historicity*, it also slants towards the sentiment of repertory. "Damn That Dream" is included because the pianist was wooed by his hero Andrew Hill's version of the standard. Steve Coleman's "Games" reverberates as a salute to an old mentor. A double dip of Ellingtonia exists because Ellington's fierce and feathery ways are pretty much inescapable by all. To a one they're convincers, letting us hear a somewhat idiosyncratic pianist essay more recognizable pieces than the originals he's made his mark on. They woo by featuring a more common form of beauty; his "Fleurette Africaine" is a marvel of lyricism that yields to its source, and Michael Jackson's "Human Nature" is not only a bittersweet valentine, but also the warm handshake that greets you at the door.

These time-tested melodies are balanced by the pianist's own, comparatively abstruse, compositions. The middle of the program is given over to four works that, when combined as they are, have a fantasia feel. The rumbles of "Prelude" morph into jumbles of "Autoscopy" as echoes of Anthony Davis' *Lady Of The Mirrors* drift by; "Patterns" and "Desiring" present taut contours of pulse and rumination. Their flow is a victory; even the barbed sections seem dreamy, and as they're developed, it becomes clear that dynamics and momentum are defining traits of Iyer's esthetic. *Solo* is a demonstration of breadth, no doubt. But it's also proof that the kind of creative tension his trio produces has little trouble being paralleled by his own two hands.

—Jim Macnie

Solo: Human Nature; Epitaphy; Damn That Dream; Black And Tan Fantasy; Prelude; Heartpiece; Autoscopy; Patterns; Desiring; Games; Fleurette Africaine; One For Blount. (57:04)

Personnel: Vijay Iyer, piano.

Ordering info: actmusic.com



Vijay Iyer

MIAMI POST

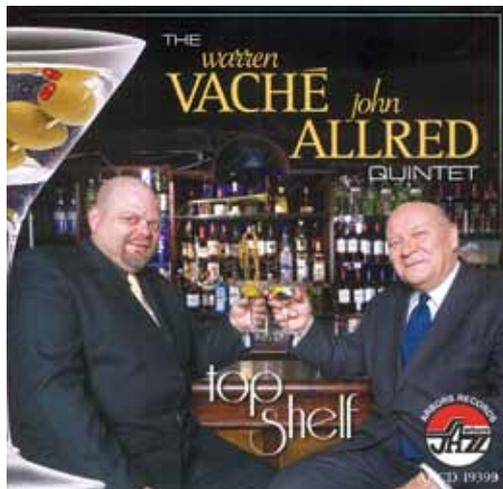
**Warren Vaché/
John Allred Quintet
Top Shelf**

ARBORS 19399
★★★★

Warren Vaché appeared on our radar 35 years ago, a time as far away now as *he* was *then* from the music that seemed to inspire much of his work. His swing-era sensibilities hovered around 1940 and stood in starkly reactionary contrast to the fashions of fusion, soul-funk and ECM-style austerity everyone was talking and arguing about circa 1975.

The lesson is time warps all perceptions. Charles Mingus and Ornette Coleman are now part of the preservation hall of repertoire alongside Fletcher Henderson and Gil Evans. As the once sharp contrasts between old and new have softened and dissolved, the music that Vaché and John Allred brew here seems far less imprinted with any conspicuous stigma of swing-era atavism than those once-trendy Headhunters and Weather Report LPs that sounded so *a la mode* in the '70s. In the perspective of time this music feels as close to a Blue Mitchell Blue Note as a Rex Stewart Bluebird.

The second Vaché-Allred teaming on Arbors tilts a bit more toward contemporary bebop standards than before, taking on several lesser-played titles by Thelonious Monk, Cannonball Adderley,



Bud Powell and Clifford Brown. Bassist Nicki Parrott's "Aussieology" is the one original, a fluid 32-bar bebop line. And has anybody done "Top Shelf" since Blue Mitchell in 1959? The band follows where the material leads, from a bluesy funkiness on "Spontaneous Combustion" to an unexpectedly evocative overture of cacophony on "Parisian Thoroughfare." Vaché recorded "Sweet Pumpkin" and two others in England a decade ago, but with a different group.

Whatever the material, Vaché has always struck me a musician who considers his notes with as much precision as a writer chooses his words. Although I've never found in his playing

a "sound" as clearly patentable as that of, say, Ruby Braff, to whom he was often compared in his early years, he speaks in fluid strings of petite musical thoughts laid out in a slightly staccato strut that combine to give his playing a confident and orderly civility that camouflages its private sense of risk. If you rate your music on an index of irony, iconoclasm or insurrection, you won't find that here. For those who respond to proven pros on top of their sport, though, this covers all bases. Allred also adds welcome weight to the front line and proves a cohesive partner, especially on in the soft instrumental conversations of "East Of The Sun."

Speaking of which, the liner notes promise a Vaché vocal here. But unless Warren has experienced a sudden drop in his testosterone numbers, I hear instead (and mercifully) a lovely, luminous and unidentified female voice—presumably one belonging to Nicki Parrott, who somehow doesn't get credit for her extra work. Also, at the risk of betraying a certain male penchant, I can't help noting that Parrott is the *other* lady bassist-singer around these days whose beauty matches her musicianship. Perhaps she's not getting the attention she deserves there, too.

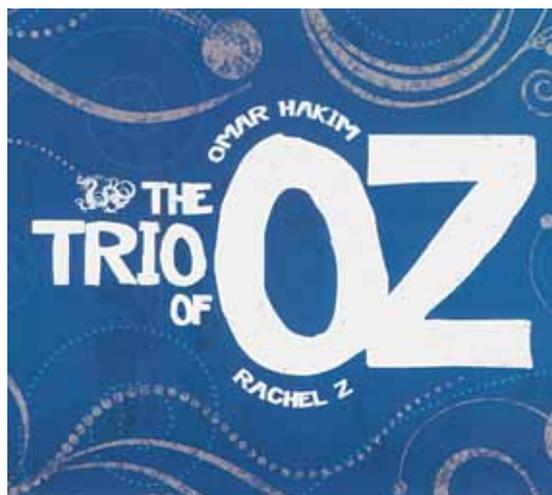
—John McDonough

Top Shelf: Top Shelf; Sweet Pumpkin; Aussieology; Ba-lue Bolivar Ba-lues; Moonlight In Vermont; Tiny Capers; The Best Thing For You; Spontaneous Combustion; By Myself; My Romance; Whisper Not; East Of The Sun (And West Of The Moon); A Parisian Thoroughfare. (72:32)
Personnel: Warren Vaché, cornet; John Allred, trombone; Tardo Hammer, piano; Nicki Parrott, bass; Leroy Williams, drums.
Ordering info: arborsrecords.com

**The Trio Of Oz
The Trio Of Oz**

OZMOSIS RECORDS 001
★★½

I sure like the concept of this album—doing jazz trio versions of an eclectic selection of romantic love songs originally sung by rock groups, from old favorites like The Police to more recent heroes like Death Cab for Cutie and Coldplay. Jazz sorely needs new repertoire, particularly songs young people recognize. But with a couple of exceptions, the execution here leaves me cold. Or just bored. The whole idea of doing a song as jazz is to *improve* on it, not just invoke it. The reason we love John Coltrane playing "My Favorite Things" or Bill Evans playing "My Romance" is that their versions are value-added. For the most part, Rachel Z merely decorates songs with grace notes or fast, smart scales, often increasing the tempo as a substitute for transforming the content. Part of the challenge, surely, is that the originals—usually simple lines that don't have much melodic interest to start with—derive a lot of their power from the volume, heft and texture of rock instrumentation itself, not to mention the range of their vocal sounds. Playing a simple rock line like



Alice in Chains' "Angry Chair" as a single-note piano melody just sounds, well, silly.

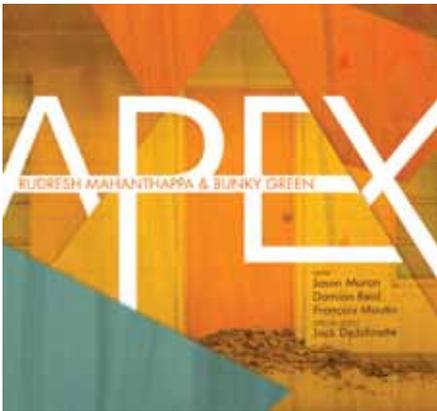
The other problem is that Rachel Z doesn't seem to have a piano trio here so much as a piano accompanied by an extremely creative drummer. Bassist Maev Royce is barely audible on several tracks (is she even playing?), but when she is, there is only one track—Morrissey's sappily crooned "There Is A Light"—on which this group actually sounds like an interactive jazz trio. That's in stark contrast to, say, The Bad Plus, which long ago perfected a strategy for playing interactive trio jazz with a rock outlook. Due credit to Royce,

however, for her lovely arco work on New Order's "Bizarre Love Triangle," a good melody and a song that gets new meaning from the trio's take on it. Royce pulls out her bow to good effect on Swedish folk/rock group Dungen's "Det Tar Tid" and Coldplay's "Lost," as well.

As a pianist, Rachel Z falls on uneasy ground that feels somewhere between Vince Guaraldi and McCoy Tyner. She certainly knows her way around the keyboard and can beef up a chord with polytonality when she feels like it. But her idea of making a melody more interesting too often centers on adding a few grace notes or banging out octaves. Her soloing, while able, is more decorative than structural. I wish there were more tracks like "Lost," which the trio genuinely transforms, moving from a mysteriously light feel reminiscent of EST into an intense excursion of metric diversity, then ritards to a misty arco. I also like that the trio does Death Cab's haunting "I Will Possess Your Heart," but, again, this song's obsessive power is elusive when you've only got an acoustic piano and drums. On this one and Stone Temple Pilots' "Sour Girl," Omar Hakim's fluttering inventions almost make the ride worth it.

But not quite. —Paul de Barros

The Trio Of Oz: Angry Chair; Sour Girl; Det Tar Tid; I Will Possess Your Heart; Lost; When You Were Young; In Your Room; Bizarre Love Triangle; There Is A Light; King Of Pain. (58:58)
Personnel: Rachel Z, piano; Omar Hakim, drums; Maev Royce, bass.
Ordering info: thetriofoz.com



Rudresh Mahanthappa/ Bunky Green

Apex

PI RECORDINGS 35

★★★★★

The affinity that M-Base stars Greg Osby and Steve Coleman have for living legend Bunky Green is well noted. But the musical connection that Green and fellow alto saxophonist Rudresh Mahanthappa enjoy is perhaps even closer, judging by this excellent joint venture.

Green has come out of academic hibernation in the last 20 years, which is fortunate because he's got a lot to offer. On "Little Girl I'll Miss You," one of five Green originals, he's on his own without Mahanthappa, and in the spotlight his individual voice rings out—melodically probing, harmonically insinuating, a little sweet and sour but not sentimental. Together, the two horns tandem loosely, not in Blue Angel formation, lending pieces like Mahanthappa's Indian-oriented "Summit" an earthy patina. Mahanthappa's sound is smoother, tighter, always having reminded me a touch of Arthur Blythe; he's Green's equal in terms of sheer invention. His five pieces involve plenty of unison lines; "Playing With Stones," which features him without Green, finds the saxophonist and pianist Jason Moran dovetailing in both improvised and composed passages.

On Green's openly structured "Who?" the two saxophonists dart and dash, the spectacular rhythm team hugging every hairy curve. Moran is characteristically brilliant, suggestive and supportive, then contrary at just the right moment. François Moutin, who's worked extensively with Mahanthappa, sounds terrific with either Damion Reid or Jack DeJohnette, the latter of whom was a late addition to the session, having been a fan of Green's since they were both in Chicago in the 1960s. It has some elements of that era, sudden eruptions and morphing forms, but *Apex* is really without historical markers, a great intergenerational conference call.

—John Corbett

Apex: Welcome; Summit; Soft; Playing With Stones; Lamenting; Eastern Echoes; Little Girl I'll Miss You; Who?; Rainer And Theresia; The Journey. (77:55)

Personnel: Rudresh Mahanthappa, Bunky Green, alto saxophones; Jason Moran, piano; François Moutin, bass; Jack DeJohnette (1, 2, 9, 10), Damion Reid (3–8), drums.

Ordering info: pirecordings.com

The Hot Box

	John McDonough	John Corbett	Jim Macnie	Paul de Barros
Vijay Iyer <i>Solo</i>	★★★★½	★★★★½	★★★★	★★★★½
Warren Vaché/ John Allred Quintet <i>Top Shelf</i>	★★★★	★★★	★★	★★★★
Trio Of Oz <i>Trio Of Oz</i>	★★½	★★½	★★½	★★½
Rudresh Mahanthappa/ Bunky Green <i>Apex</i>	★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★

Critics' Comments ▶

Vijay Iyer, *Solo*

Saturated with serious, often brooding intensions, Iyer's hectic, pulsing lyricism drops like a commandment, pumped with dense chords of imperial majesty ("One For Blount"), frantic flights of nervous anxiety ("Autoscopy") and lots of percussive vamps. "Black And Tan" is an oasis of trim grace. —John McDonough

Definitive solo statement from one of the new greats. Everything is imbued with thought and spirit, from the gorgeous pop cover (contrast with the Trio Of Oz approach) to Iyer's fascinating originals. Motoric counterpoint, tensile dynamics, vertical and horizontal imaginations simultaneously explored. —John Corbett

Trying a little tenderness, Iyer steps into a more lyrical and less analytical batter's box than usual, taking sweet swings on "Darn That Dream" and "Black And Tan Fantasy." "Autoscopy" is more familiar Iyer territory, like bebop remembered through a glass darkly, and "Fleurette Africaine" moves with an infectious pulse. A few tracks don't measure up, but Iyer has a high standard to live up to: his own past work. —Paul de Barros

Warren Vaché/John Allred Quintet, *Top Shelf*

A wrinkle in time. The implicit argument here, that bop is OK, is directed at folks so encased in a hermetic trad cocoon that history doesn't budge. Notwithstanding that outmoded debate, the music is bright and buoyant, though generally lacking the urgency that makes bebop and hard-bop tick. —John Corbett

God bless the Arbors label for keeping unpretentious, swinging jazz alive. On this album, a couple of guys associated with the old "mainstream" style of trad/swing move on to bop like they were born playing it. Vaché's cornet sound is warm and burnished, his lines seamless, like Clifford Brown or—more to the point of his stated influences—Blue Mitchell. Allred gambols along like a latter-day Jack Teagarden. —Paul de Barros

Pretty, but snoozy. The infectious swing doesn't stop the rhythms from becoming predictable, and the program sets itself up to be a mere string of solos that live and die by the sparks or lyricism they generate during any given passage. There's more of the latter than the former, and nothing's wrong with that. But the music's pronounced gentility costs itself some cred. These guys need an arranger. —Jim Macnie

Trio Of Oz, *Trio Of Oz*

They're coordinated, no doubt. But there's never a sense that they're digging into the tunes, and the pianist especially feels like she's skating on the surface. Hakim's a smidge too busy with his maneuvers as well. He may shoot off several sparks, but when the CD concludes, you feel weary from all that agitation. —Jim Macnie

A child of post-McCoy Tyner fusion, Z drills into the next logical target, the netherworld niche of contemporary alt rock and pop, a la Bad Plus. Those unconservant may feel out to sea among all the waves of arpeggios, concerto-size breakers and strong percussive undertow, which grows boring. —John McDonough

What if the Bad Plus took its pop/rock covers too seriously? There's some real musical hustle here, Hakim is explosive (though the perky little splashes grow wearying after a while), good fit with Maeve, and Z is engaging as a soloist. But most of these tunes don't hold their own without being completely retooled. —John Corbett

Rudresh Mahanthappa/Bunky Green, *Apex*

Who knew sax man Bunky Green was an early inspiration to Indo-bopper Rudresh Mahanthappa? But now the secret's out. As Green moved from Bird to Coltrane and Mahanthappa applied a burly growl and Indian strategies to Dolphy, the two met in a wonderful new land all their own. —Paul de Barros

I caught a NYC gig they did before hitting the studio, and it was full tilt. But the record is even more killing, aided by the kind of focus that's needed when determining how to design a program for repeated listens. There's a strong dynamic in the way the intergenerational altos do business. —Jim Macnie

Their granite-hard sounds coalesce with surprising comfort on "Soft," while conceptually they finish each other's sentences, even when babbling wildly in free but sour tongues. Well anchored in structure, but much harsh listening. —John McDonough

Federico Britos

Voyage

SUNNYSIDE 1240

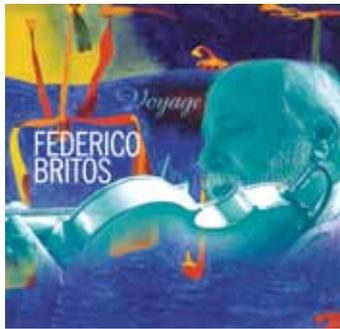
★★★★½

Before his 2004 duo album with Bebo Valdés (*We Could Make Such Beautiful Music Together*), Federico Britos was known mostly to Latin music insiders, for whom he was a sideman of choice. Not anymore.

A Miami-based, Uruguayan-born violinist who began playing jazz in Montevideo and spent most of the '60s in Cuba, Britos is superficially in the Grappellate court. But he's more grounded in rhythm; he's a *Latin* jazz violinist, coming from danzon and tango, with different bowing and a different worldview.

Recorded in seven different studios with six different bass players, *Voyage* is unified by Britos' unusually full-throated tone and confident style. "Vivian," the opener, is something of a sequencing miscalculation in that it's atypical of what follows, cushioned as it is with a velvety, faux-'50s-movie string octet arrangement by Argentinian composer Carlos Franzetti. But resist the fear that Loretta Young might pop out; it's a lovely bolero. Composed by Britos, it's balanced by the bass and drums of Eddie Gómez and Ignacio Berroa, a rhythm section I'd like to hear at greater length.

Britos converses musically with as prestigious an array of partners as any soloist could want, from all over a big map. There's a double-time "After You've Gone" with Kenny Barron, "Moonglow" and a zippy "Avalon" with Bucky



Pizzarelli, Rafael Hernández's essential standard "Capullito de Alelf" with Giovanni Hidalgo, duos with Michel Camilo and Tomatito, and a shout-out to Paganini. "A Las Cuatro De La Mañana (At Four In The Morning)" was apparently the last track recorded by Israel "Cachao" López,

who died in March 2008, eight months after he sounded plenty strong on this date. One of the transforming geniuses of Cuban music and arguably the most influential bassist of the 20th century, Cachao was a tremendously communicative player; as with all of Britos' collaborators, the musical connection is real.

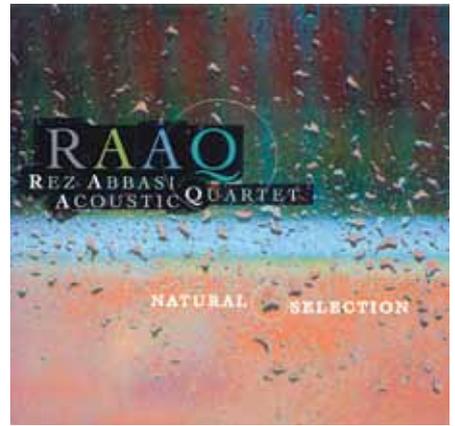
Another departed Cuban musician, less well-known, lights up the final cut. With an arrangement by Germán Piferrer, the former director of the Orquesta Cubana de Música Moderna who died in January 2009, Britos' "Micro Suite Cubana" is a guaguanco that serves as a platform for Giovanni Hidalgo's discursive hands. After five minutes it fades out mysteriously *in medias rumba*, like a life interrupted.

—Ned Sublette

Voyage: Vivian; After You've Gone; Vivian Flavia De Las Mercedes; Moonglow; Tomatito & Federico; Capullito De Alelf; Las Vegas Station; Luvia De Colores; Avalon; A Las Cuatro De la Manana; Okey Paganini; Oriente; Micro Suite Cubana. (68:21)

Personnel: Federico Britos, violin, arrangements; Carlos Franzetti, Felix Gomez, piano, arrangements; Kenny Barron, Michel Camilo, Antonio Adolfo, piano; Eddie Gomez, Phil Flanigan, Jon Burr, Gaby Vivas, Israel "Cachao" Lopez, bass; Eddy "Guagua" Rivera, baby bass; Ignacio Berroa, Francisco Mela, Eric Bogart, Carlomagno Araya, drums; James Chirilo, Jorge Garcia, Tomatito, Bucky Pizzarelli, guitar; Edwin Bonilla, Rafael Solano, percussion; Giovanni Hidalgo, congas, chekere; German Piferrer, arrangements.

Ordering info: sunnysiderecords.com



Rez Abbasi Acoustic Quartet

Natural Selection

SUNNYSIDE 1264

★★★★

One of the highlights of the recent documentary *Soul Power*, a record of the 1974 music festival in Zaire meant to accompany the legendary Foreman-Ali fight, comes unexpectedly in one of its quietest moments. In the midst of highly charged funk and r&b numbers, Bill Withers takes the stage with only an acoustic guitar, delivering an utterly captivating, piercingly raw version of his ballad "Hope She'll Be Happier."

Rez Abbasi captures some of those same qualities of understated intensity on the solo rendition of Withers' biggest hit, "Ain't No Sunshine," that closes his latest CD.

Turning from his usual electric axe to focus on acoustic guitar for the first time, Abbasi refuses to forego power just because he's not plugged in. There are undoubtedly moments of quiet beauty throughout the album (the resonant "When Light Falls" and Keith Jarrett's "Personal Mountains" are particularly lovely), but tunes like "Pakistani Minor" and "Punjab" share a searching complexity with his more amplified work.

In his unusual quartet—with vibraphonist Bill Ware, bassist Stephan Crump and drummer Eric McPherson—Abbasi emphasizes the silken textures that the acoustic provides, lending the project a certain elegant eccentricity. The twinning of Ware and the leader on the unpredictable melodies of pieces like "Bees" and "Pakistani Minor" calls to mind Frank Zappa's quirky mid-'70s ensemble with Ruth Underwood and George Duke.

The quartet shares an air of progressive folksiness with Crump's own Rosetta Trio, which similarly cushions its headier intricacies within a welcoming intimacy. The opening take on Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan's "Lament" transforms the late Qawwali master's transcendent flights into something that would feel at home before a campfire without sacrificing depth.

—Shaun Brady

Natural Selection: Lament; Pakistani Minor; Personal Mountains; Up On The Hill; When Light Falls; Bees; Blu Vindaloo; New Aesthetic; Punjab; Ain't No Sunshine. (54:44)

Personnel: Rez Abbasi, acoustic guitars; Bill Ware, vibraphone; Stephan Crump, bass; Eric McPherson, drums.

Ordering info: sunnysiderecords.com

Steve Coleman

and Five Elements

Harvesting Semblances And Affinities

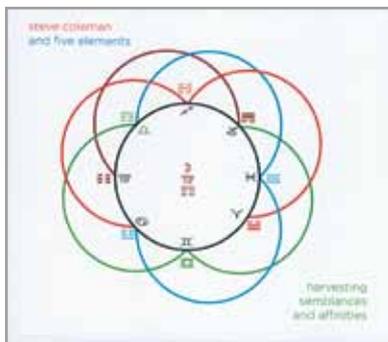
PI 33

★★★★

Steve Coleman has always had a knack for invigorating minds and behinds in equal measure, and *Harvesting Semblances And Affinities*

points toward his desire to take the intellectual quotient up a notch into a quasi-spiritual realm. He's interested in conveying the energy that exists in certain moments in time, and does so by keeping the members of his sextet in constant motion.

On "Clouds"—one of two pieces informed by the work of Majorcan philosopher Raymond Llull—the inspiration is the movement of clouds, as expressed in the shifting statements by trombonist Tim Albright, vocalist Jen Shyu and trumpeter Jonathan Finlayson. Both "Clouds" and the following "060706-2319 (Middle Of Water)" have Spanish tinges, expressed through the languid voicings and dance-like pairings and blending of instruments, although the latter piece also intro-



duces a slippery rhythm and energetic vocal riff during its closing four minutes.

Like much of his previous work, Coleman's writing features dense motivic cells, and the relationship between them is what gives his music a somewhat trance-like feel.

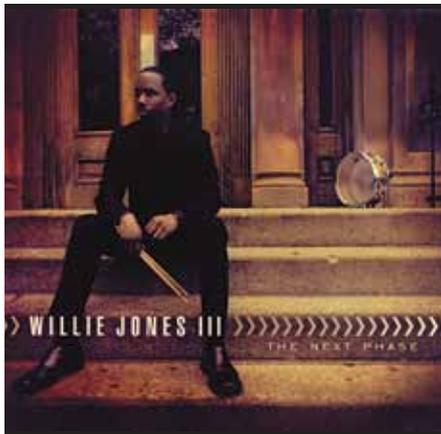
Although they are felt as much as heard, drummer Tyshawn Sorey and bassist Thomas Morgan play a huge role in tying these units together and making the whole structure flow. Occasionally, as toward the conclusion of "Attila 02 (Dawning Ritual)"—a group piece that sounds like a more orderly Ornette Coleman—the drums and bass step forward as a duet, but more frequently they roil, stutter and tumble together below the surface.

—James Hale

Harvesting Semblances And Affinities: Attila 02 (Dawning Ritual); Beba; Clouds; 060706-2319 (Middle Of Water); Flos Ut Rosa Floruit; Attila 04 (Closing Ritual); Vernal Equinox 040320-0149 (Initiation). (52:57)

Personnel: Steve Coleman, alto saxophone; Jonathan Finlayson, trumpet; Tim Albright, trombone; Jen Shyu, vocals; Thomas Morgan, bass; Tyshawn Sorey, drums; Marcus Gilmore, drums (5); Ramón García Pérez, percussion (5).

Ordering info: pirecordings.com



Willie Jones III
The Next Phase

WJ3 1008
★★★

For his fourth album as a leader, drummer Willie Jones III assembled a fine band that includes rising vibes star Warren Wolf, tenor saxophonist Greg Tardy and pianist Eric Reed. The album's soloists are adept at building logical and musical solos rather than relying on canned licks, especially on the burning opener "The Thorn," which absolutely kills. Switching between a brisk up-tempo swing and Afro-Cubanish feel, it features solos by Tardy, Wolf, trombonist Steve Davis, Reed and Jones, whose drumming is crisp, clean and tasteful throughout the song and the album. As is the case for all his solos, Wolf is all over his axe here, creating excitement. On this cut he inserts chromatic arpeggiated runs into his fleet bebop lines, dialing up plenty of tension. Reed's use of melody as the point of departure for his solos is creative, compelling, and adds interest to tracks like "The Thorn" and "Family." *The Next Phase* provides several hard-bop fireworks, but it's hindered at times by static periods and an overuse of certain mid-song stylistic changes. Several tunes, such as "Changing The Game," "Family" and "Another Time," often change grooves and feels, which can provide a nice contrast, but it also loses its effect when overdone.

The Next Phase also contains two vocal numbers. Claudia Acuña's wordless vocals on the longish head to "Melancholy Mind" are pretty, but when she repeats them after Davis' lyrical solo and accompanies Reed with similar figures, they wear thin. The tune lacks forward motion and is too drawn out. On "Until It's Time For You To Go," Renee Neufville offers a soulful and melancholy performance that's buffeted by Tardy's tender tenor obbligato lines.

—Chris Robinson

The Next Phase: The Thorn; Changing The Game; Melancholy Mind; Family; Kosen Rufu; Another Time; Until It's Time For You To Go; Up The Middle. (54:12)
Personnel: Willie Jones III, drums; Eric Reed, piano; Dezron Douglas, bass; Warren Wolf, vibes; Greg Tardy, tenor saxophone (1, 2, 4, 7, 8); Steve Davis, trombone (1, 2, 3, 4, 8); Claudia Acuña, vocals (3); Renee Neufville, vocals (7).
Ordering info: williejones3.com

Carnival Of Drums

Variety is the name of the game on Mike Clark's *Carnival Of Soul* (Owl Studios 00136; 59:20 ★★★½). Loosely based on the organ trio model, the album also encompasses appearances by singer Delbert McClinton, guitarist Rez Abbasi, trumpeter Tim Ouimette and—for an outrageous tribute to Big Sid Catlett—drummer Lenny White. With his signature resonant kick drum and mastery of deceptive beats, Clark sounds like he's playing host to an epic jam session: guests come and go, but he's a constant force, channeling the flow and keeping the mood upbeat.

Ordering info: owlstudios.com

While most musicians use their debut recordings as personal showcases, Tomas Fujiwara's first outing as leader—*Actionspeak* (482 Music 1071; 48:30 ★★★★★)—is exceedingly democratic. Fronting his modernist quintet The Hook Up, which includes guitarist Mary Halvorson, trumpeter Jonathan Finlayson, saxophonist Brian Settles and bassist Danton Boller, Fujiwara unveils seven original compositions that sound carefully crafted. Boller plays a key role in moving the action forward, leaving Fujiwara free to add color, often subtly.

Ordering info: 482music.com

There's a telling moment about seven minutes into a romping version of Bob Dylan's "Watching The River Flow" when Steve Gadd illustrates why many musicians regard him as the best pop music drummer of his generation: Like a wide receiver beating a cornerback on a deep route, he shifts from riding the beat to a jaw-dropping tom-heavy riff in a heartbeat. Featuring organist Joey DeFrancesco, baritone saxophonist Ronnie Cuber and guitarist Paul Bollenbeck, *Live At Voce* (self-released; 72:14 ★★★½) is a virtual catalog of slick drum moves perfected over a long career, and with a raucous take of Buddy Miles' "Them Changes" in the middle of the set, a reminder that drummers sometimes refuse to meld into the background. Note: this release is only available via iTunes download.

Ordering info: drstevegadd.com

A journeyman performer and drum clinician from Western Canada, Tyler Hornby is a fluid player with a light touch and a penchant for writing wistful mid-tempo songs. *A Road To Remember* (Chronograph 025; 64:15 ★★★) includes confident playing—particularly from trumpeter Bob Tildesley and guitarist Aaron Young—but doesn't contain much to make it stand out from the crowded field of post-bop quintets. All the references to Miles Davis, Brad Mehldau and Wynton Marsalis sound professional, but there's little that is left to chance. Sometimes there's something to be said for not playing it safe.

Ordering info: chronographrecords.com

Spurred by a knock against drummers'



Owen Howard:
witty imagination

compositional abilities, Owen Howard takes a swing through 10 great drummer-penned songs, adding one of his own for good measure. From Chick Webb to Peter Erskine, the material is compelling, especially Jack DeJohnette's great "Zoot Suite". Howard's septet attacks it all with wit and verve. *Drum Lore* (Brooklyn Jazz Underground 017; 64:45 ★★★★★) allows Howard to illustrate how contemporary percussionists require a firm grasp of history as much as trumpeters or saxophonists. His willingness to interpret Denzil Best, Paul Motian and Ed Blackwell, and determine how to adapt their approaches to his own style, is evidence of a fertile imagination.

Ordering info: bjurecords.com

Straight out of Art Blakey and Jeff Watts, Chris Massey loves a propulsive beat and knows how to sustain tension behind romping sax and trumpet solos. Massey mixes solid originals with Joe Henderson's "Inner Urge" and Chick Corea's waltz-like "Windows," and the short, seven-song set flows smoothly. Unfortunately, the sound quality on *Vibranium* (self-released; 45:49 ★★★) doesn't do Massey or his quintet mates any favors. His drums lack depth, Evgeny Lebedev's piano sounds harsh and the horns might as well be in another room.

Ordering info: chrismasseyjazz.com

Chip White's second two-CD set of musical and spoken-word dedications to jazz masters cruises like a fine car—powered by first-line players like Wycliffe Gordon, Mulgrew Miller and Steve Nelson. White exudes confidence and swings with abandon through nine originals. The poetry on *More Dedications* (Dark Colors 103; 63:27/13:42 ★★★★★) relies on doggerel phrasing, but is as heartfelt as the music.

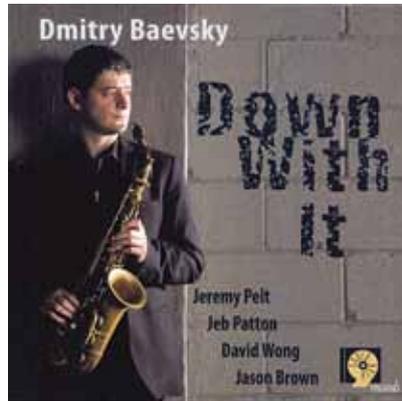
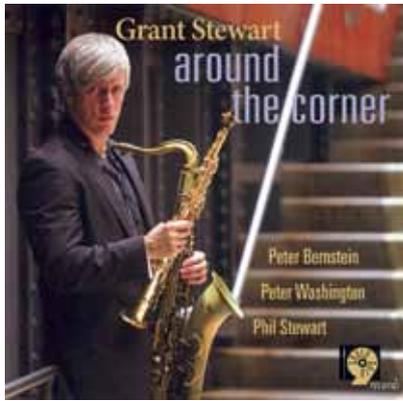
Ordering info: chipwhitejazz.com

Grant Stewart
Around The Corner

SHARP NINE 1046
★★½

Dmitry Baevsky
Down With It

SHARP NINE 1045
★★★



Grant Stewart and Dmitry Baevsky are two saxophonists who've been on the scene, plying their trade, for several years. Their new solo albums for Sharp Nine feature fairly conservative and safe straight-ahead takes, and while Stewart and Baevsky are excellent technicians and improvisers, at times they betray their influences, almost to the point of being derivative.

On *Around The Corner* tenorman Stewart is joined by guitarist Peter Bernstein, bassist Peter Washington and drummer Phil Stewart. Save for the medium-up take of "Get Happy," most of the tunes, such as Duke Ellington's "Blue Rose" and Barry Harris' "Around The Corner," are rarely recorded. Stewart, who recently added soprano to his arsenal, has an old-school approach to tenor that emphasizes a full sound and swinging lines that weave through the changes. On "Get Happy" he mixes old Lester Young licks with

bebop phrases, showing his knowledge, absorption and ability to recall the tradition, all in the service of his style. Stewart sometimes gets too close to Dexter Gordon's sound and approach, especially on the Gil Fuller/Dizzy Gillespie ballad "I Waited For You." His tone, articulation and use of the horn's lower and mid-register are straight-up Dexter, although he plays more notes than Gordon in his solo. His playing is pretty, but he threatens to lose his identity via his proximity to Gordon. Bernstein picks his spots when comping, and his solos generally consist of melodic single-note lines that often have block-chord gestures mixed in.

Altoist Dmitry Baevsky hails from St. Petersburg, Russia, by way of New York's The New School. On *Down With It* Baevsky, who has fin-

gers galore and uses them to spin out long complex lines, tears through nine cuts with his regular rhythm section of pianist Jeb Patton, bassist David Wong and drummer Jason Brown. Baevsky's approach is a bit more aggressive and bluesy than Stewart's, and he displays his ability to handle scorchers on Bud Powell's "Down With It." He masterfully takes elements from Thelonious Monk's "We See" and uses them as a point of departure to create a solo that says much. But at times Baevsky digs a little too deep into his Cannonball Adderley bag by way of his sweet, yet hefty, subtle sound and phrasing. Trumpeter Jerney Pelt joins the group on four tracks and is a welcome addition. The resulting quintet swings its tail off and is reminiscent of the Adderley brothers' groups. —Chris Robinson

Around The Corner: Get Happy; The Scene Is Clean; I Waited For You; That's My Girl; Blue Rose; Maybe September; Around The Corner; Something's Gotta Give. (51:58)
Personnel: Grant Stewart, tenor saxophone, soprano saxophone (2, 6); Peter Bernstein, guitar; Peter Washington, bass; Phil Stewart, drums.

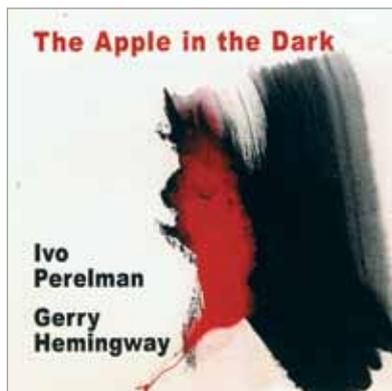
Down With It: Down With It; Mount Harissa; We See; LaRue; Shabazz; Last Night When We Were Young; Decision; Webb City; I'll String Along With You. (59:29)
Personnel: Dmitry Baevsky, alto saxophone; Jeremy Pelt, trumpet (4, 5, 7, 8); Jeb Patton, piano; David Wong, bass; Jason Brown, drums.
Ordering info: sharpnine.com

**Ivo Perelman/
Gerry Hemingway**
The Apple In The Dark

LEO 569
★★★½

**Ivo Perelman/
Daniel Levin/
Torbjörn Zetterberg**
Soulstorm

CLEAN FEED 184
★★★½



Born in Brazil and based in New York, Ivo Perelman established himself with high-energy assertions of free-jazz verities. But 21 years after his debut recording he seems more interested in finding new sources of light than holding up the fire music torch one more time. And if that means that neither of these records shapes up as a perfectly formed statement, both are involving and often quite thrilling expressions of a restless, creative spirit.

Perelman has put it on record that he's a Coltrane man, so it's to his credit that *The Apple In The Dark*, a duo with drummer Gerry Hemingway, sounds nothing like *Interstellar Space*. The most obvious difference comes from Perelman's decision to play piano on half the tracks. Occa-

sionally he seems so entranced with the line he's tracing with the keyboard that he neglects to make it cohere into something communicative, but on "The Path" his shapes take clear form, highlighted with strategic precision by Hemingway's spare and telling strokes. And while the title "Sinful" augurs something highly indulgent, the track is notable for the relaxed and thoughtful interplay between Perelman's short-gruff phrases and the drummer's light, nimble snare work.

Soulstorm is the product of an act of faith. Perelman agreed to tour Portugal and make a record with two musicians, New York cellist Daniel Levin and Swedish double bassist Torbjörn Zetterberg, who did not know him, and whose work he did not know. It paid off. While the col-

lective improvisations on this double album are as freewheeling as anything Perelman's done, there are only a couple moments squirreled away on the second disc where they sound like the work of strangers feeling each other out. Levin weighs in with dramatic bowed melodies and elaborate pizzicato elaborations that draw utterances of unusually restrained tragedy from the usually extroverted saxophonist. Zetterberg drives the music

forward so vigorously that the absent drummer is never missed, and he also draws Perelman into far more bluesy territory than he usually frequents. Two CDs of such concentrated music is a bit much to take in one listening, but taken a disc at a time this is bracing stuff.

—Bill Meyer

The Apple In The Dark: The Apple In The Dark; Lisspector; A Maca No Escuro; Sinful; Vicious Circle; The Path; Green Settings; Wrestling; Indulgences; Lisboa. (63:39)
Personnel: Ivo Perelman, tenor saxophone, piano; Gerry Hemingway, drums.
Ordering info: leorecords.com

Soulstorm: Disc 1: Soulstorm; Footsteps; Pig Latin; The Body; Day By Day; Explanation (61:49); Disc 2: Plaza Maua; Dry Point Of Horses; A Manifesto Of The City; The Way Of The Cross; In Search Of Dignity (68:26).
Personnel: Ivo Perelman, tenor saxophone; Daniel Levin, cello; Torbjörn Zetterberg, bass.
Ordering info: cleanfeed-records.com

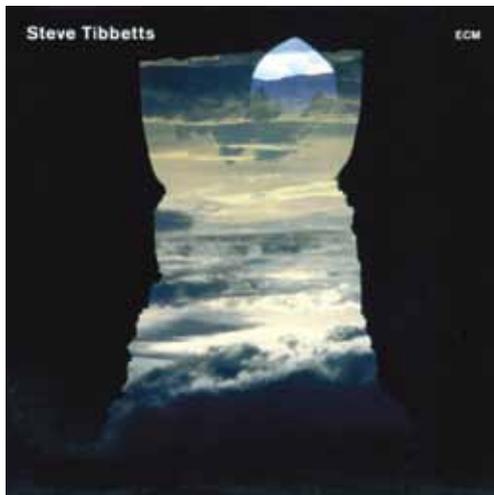
Steve Tibbetts
Natural Causes

ECM 1951

★★★★★

For those familiar with Steve Tibbetts' work since the 1980s, *Natural Causes* may be cause for celebration. It's been eight years since his last release (the more electric *A Man About A Horse*), and this one finds the guitarist in familiar territory with familiar company. With few exceptions, it's that more haunting, almost lyrical side to Tibbetts that emerges with the more acoustic *Natural Causes*, his slightly whiney but always singing way with his strings, his selective use of effects and that spacious ECM sound (subdued given that it was recorded in hometown St. Paul, Minn.) are all here. Even the titles, except for "Lament" and "Threnody," are reflective of if not exotic locales at least of Tibbetts' journeys to the Asian continent.

Familiar company for Tibbetts, and for Tibbetts fans, comes in the person of Marc Anderson, longtime collaborator/percussionist, and perhaps the one closest to Tibbetts' musical core. Heard on every one of Tibbetts' albums going back to 1981's *Northern Song*, Anderson joins him here in their first "duet" since then. He is, in a sense, Tibbetts' alter ego, knowing just when to add a certain instrument from his bag of tricks,



adapting and working with the prolific composer, steel drums and gongs the most prominent.

As for the music, none of these songs stands out in the sense of exuding vibrant, melodic energy or an unforgettable arrangement leading to some kind of climax. Instead, with a couple variations into more lively territory with the searching "Chandogra," instrumentally crowded "Ishvaravana" and the forward-moving, string-heavy "Gulezian," *Natural Causes* plays like a "typical" Tibbetts album, like one extended song or medley (what seem like fragments occur throughout), each tune laced together by

Tibbetts' distinctive knack for getting the most out of his strings. Hear the dreamy, somewhat tentative "Attahasa," where the songwriting and playing never suggest a way forward, simply another turn in the bend, not unlike a path up the side of an unfamiliar mountain. Anderson's bells, pans and subtle colorations blend with Tibbetts' overdubbed "voices" to give the effect of one voice. Likewise with the longest piece here, "Padre-yagi," where pauses suggest a new song but become just that, only pauses, the music a kind of snapshot of the whole album. In fact, to call these selections "songs" may not be an accurate description.

A bonus to *Natural Causes* is to hear Tibbetts adding piano and playing kalimba and bouzouki. And, using his now-fretless 12-string as a trigger to his MIDI interface, the album is filled with samples of various gongs and other metal-key instruments, gamelans and jublangs among them. Needless to say, this is dense music, multi-layered, worked over and through for snippets and stretches of inspired playing. To call *Natural Causes* exotic would be to deny the labor of love that went into making it. You might say Steve Tibbetts has, in a sense, redefined the word "natural" for all to hear.

—John Ephland

Natural Causes: Sitavana; Padre-yaga; Attahasa; Chandogra; Sangchen Rolpa; Lakshmvana; Manikarnika; Ishvaravana; Gulezian; Kili-ki Drok; Kulaczokpa; Lament; Threnody. (44:09)
Personnel: Steve Tibbetts, guitars, piano, kalimba, bouzouki; Marc Anderson, percussion, steel drums, gongs.
Ordering info: ecmrecords.com

Guitarist **Kevin Eubanks** marks the end of his 18 year tenure as the Tonight Show's bandleader with an Insanely good new recording: *Zen Food*. Truly a burning affair proves no moss grew under his feet (or fingers) - watch for him on tour soon!

KEVIN EUBANKS

ZEN FOOD

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MackAvenue.com/KevinEubanks
KevinEubanks.com

AVAILABLE AT
amazon.com

Available on
iTunes

**Tomas Fujiwara/
Taylor Ho Bynum**
Stepwise

NOT TWO 828
★★★★

Drummer Tomas Fujiwara and cornetist Taylor Ho Bynum have a long, shared history dating back to their high school years two decades ago, and on *Stepwise*, their second duo outing, they vibrantly demonstrate how they've grown together. They continue to work together in numerous ensembles, including Positive Catastrophe, Thirteenth Assembly and Bynum's trio and sextet, and while their rapport and deep-seated understanding is readily apparent in all of those contexts, there's something especially intimate here; *Stepwise* offers a genuine conversation that ripples with a sense of pleasure they enjoy in one another's company.

Each player brought in a pair of tunes for the occasion, but most of the pieces were freely improvised; in both cases there's a clear sense of freedom as well as a strong compositional feel even on the most rugged sections. Bynum is one his generation's most daring and skilled



horn men, so when he uncorks high-velocity flurries and tart smears on a piece like "Keys No Address," stoked brilliantly by the drummer's rangy sense of swing, his most outre extrapolations maintain a rich melodic structure that verges on pure sonic sculpture. In an era

when free-jazz drumming tends to equate unbridled power with brilliance, Fujiwara exercises impressive restraint; he swings like mad and crafts fragile melodic lines with his kit, unleashing his power judiciously. Yet the real pleasure here is the often-conversational tone, from the corkscrew melody-and-tuneful drums of "Comfort" to the smoldering muted cornet and roiling beats in "Weather Conditions May Vary." There's nothing conceptual or elaborate about *Stepwise*; instead two musical partners twist their comfort zones to push and prod one another in exquisite dialogue. —Peter Margasak

Stepwise: 3D; Keys No Address; Stepwise; Two Abbeys; Comfort; Weather Conditions May Vary; Iris; Splits; Detritus; B.C. (43:30)
Personnel: Tomas Fujiwara, drums; Taylor Ho Bynum, cornet.
Ordering info: nottwo.com

Sid Selvidge
I Should Be Blue

ARCHER RECORDS 31935
★★★★½

The late producer/musician Jim Dickinson used to talk about the atmosphere in Memphis, and how the air was thicker or heavier, and somehow this murky milieu actually seeped into the music recorded down there. Veteran singer/guitarist Sid Selvidge played alongside Dickinson in a group called Mudboy and the Neutrons, and I'm sure he'd agree.

Selvidge's latest solo CD—produced by Don Dixon and recorded on magnetic tape—is a collection of deceptive depth. Selvidge is a Mississippi-born Memphis resident who has a fascinating singing voice that blends countrified folk, blues and jazz. In timbre, it's similar to that of Memphis songwriter Dan Penn, only more gentle and malleable, and a couple shades prettier. Opening with Tom T. Hall's chestnut "That's How I Got To Memphis," Selvidge exudes a quiet confidence. As a performer, he mixes solid original material with gems written by soul-folk geniuses like Tim Hardin and Fred Neil.

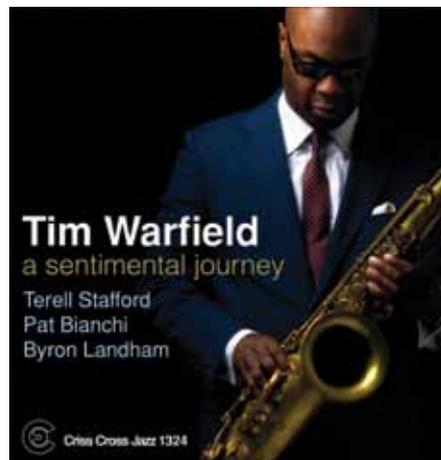
Concentrating mostly on acoustic guitar, Selvidge cedes some electric guitar duties to his son, Steve—who is also a member of The Hold Steady. Dixon plays several instruments, especially the bass, and singer/songwriter Amy Speace appears on four tunes. Selvidge's own vocal gifts are most apparent on two folk classics from yesteryear. His loping version of Donovan's



"Catch The Wind" (with Speace) is affecting, but his yearning rendition of Neil's contemplative ode "The Dolphins" is most evocative. Closing coyly with Duke Ellington's "Do Nothin' Till You Hear From Me," Selvidge's quiet vocal power is even more apparent. —Mitch Myers

I Should Be Blue: That's How I Got to Memphis, Don't Make Promises (You Can't Keep), Catch The Wind, Dimestore Angel, I'll Be Here In The Morning, Lucky That Way, Fine Hotel, The Dolphins; A Blonde Headed Girl (In A Convertible Automobile); Two; You're Gonna Look Just Like A Monkey (When You Get Old); Do Nothin' Till You Hear From Me. (37:55)

Personnel: Sid Selvidge: vocals, acoustic guitar (1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 9), electric guitar (6, 12), baritone guitar (10); Don Dixon: bass (1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 9, 10, 11), piano (2, 8, 10), baritone guitar (3), background vocals (4, 9), acoustic guitar (8, 9), water glasses (8), organ (10); Steve Selvidge: electric guitar (2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11), acoustic guitar (8); Paul Taylor: drums (2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12), washtub bass (4); Amy Speace: vocals (3, 4, 5, 10); Al Gamble: organ (5, 7, 9, 11); Sam Shoup: upright bass (6, 12), piano (6); Deborah Swiney; shaker (7); Susan Marshall: backing vocals (7, 9); Reba Russell; backing vocals (7, 9), Amy LeVere; upright bass (8).
Ordering info: archer-records.com



Tim Warfield
A Sentimental Journey

CRISS CROSS 1324
★★★★½

A Sentimental Journey is saxophonist Tim Warfield's sixth album as a leader for Criss Cross. Influenced by those players Warfield calls the "romantic tenors" (like Lester Young and Ben Webster), his big, brawny sound is full of blues inflection and soul. His tone recalls Houston Person's: round, full, with just enough edge and bite. Both Warfield and trumpeter Terell Stafford, who is on five of the album's eight cuts, dance around the beat like the best blues musicians, sometimes ahead, sometimes behind, never right on it.

"Sentimental Journey," which opens the record, tells you what this album is about: strong, passionate and soulful blowing over a set of familiar tunes that are given enough wrinkles to make them fresh to those who've heard them many times over. Warfield gives the title track a lazy 6/4 treatment and adds bars in 4 and 3 to the form. "My Man," on which Stafford lays out, begins with a march feel with Warfield stating the melody on soprano before settling into a forward-moving medium swing.

Warfield subs 6/4 for 4/4 time at the ends of the uptempo "A" sections of "Crazy Rhythm." This clever yet minor change gives the listener who knows the tune's form a pleasant surprise. The ballads "Speak Low" and "In A Sentimental Mood" are given quiet, tender readings, and "Here's That Rainy Day" features Warfield on soprano and Stafford on flugel over a relaxed quasi-bossa. Organist Pat Bianchi's tone and swells are at times similar to Sam Yahel's; other times his thick voicings evoke the church, especially on "Golden Earrings." Bianchi and drummer Byron Landham swing hard and follow the soloist's every move: Dig how they go right with Warfield when he scrambles the time at the end of his solo on "Crazy Rhythm." —Chris Robinson

A Sentimental Journey: Sentimental Journey; I'll Be Seeing You; My Man; Crazy Rhythm; Speak Low; In A Sentimental Mood; Golden Earrings; Here's That Rainy Day. (59:53)

Personnel: Tim Warfield, tenor saxophone; soprano saxophone (3, 8); Terell Stafford, trumpet, (1, 2, 4, 5), flugelhorn (8); Pat Bianchi, Hammond B3; Byron Landham, drums.
Ordering info: crisscrossjazz.com

Louisiana Rebound

Mitch Woods: *Gumbo Blues* (Club 88 Records 8808; 32:31 ★★★½)

Though a native New Yorker and long based in San Francisco, Woods exhibits the knowing spirit of someone who'd grown up listening to New Orleans r&b greats on the radio while living smack dab in the middle of the bayous and canals of the Atchafalaya Basin. Supported by first-call young New Orleans sidemen and Herb Hardesty, who's proven his expertise on r&b saxophone time and time again over the course of six decades with Fats Domino, the singing pianist upholds the musical values of his heroes; revivals of "Big Mamou" and 11 more true classics yank listeners into the rollicking fun.

Ordering info: mitchwoods.com

Jeffery Broussard: *Keeping The Tradition Alive!* (Maison De Soul 1087; 61:27 ★★★½) The impurities around the edges of the cayenne-hot zydeco stomped out by singer-fiddler-accordionist

Broussard and his Creole Cowboys are an essential part of the music's appeal to dance floor revelers. Always mindful of zydeco king Clifton Chenier, the Cowboys wring conviction out of everything they touch, whether it's the bluesy complaint "I Lost My Woman" or Boozoo Chavis' braying "Johnny Billy Goat." Rallying cry: "Oh yeah, baby!"

Ordering info: floydsrecordshop.com

Buckwheat Zydeco: *Buckwheat Zydeco's Bayou Boogie* (Music For Little People 524468; 57:19 ★★★½) Singer and accordionist "Buckwheat" Dural, behind a Grammy and many years of touring, has brought zydeco to mainstream America, and it's a safe bet his new party album for kids and young-at-heart adults will get noticed in a big way. His joyous sounds offset—to some degree, anyway—the bad news out of south Louisiana. Lil' Buck Sinegal's a darn good blues guitarist. Guests include Maria Muldaur.

Ordering info: musicforlittlepeople.com

Ann Savoy: *Black Coffee* (Memphis International 0025; 43:55 ★★★½) Cajun music may be dearest to Savoy's heart, but close are Hot Club swing jazz, Bessie Smith, Peggy Lee and 1930s jazz singers Lee Wiley and Mildred Bailey. With excellent, unruffled support from Balfa Toujours fiddler Kevin Wimmer, jazz guitarist Tom Mitchell and a rhythm section, she's right at home singing in English or French old favorites like "My Funny Valentine," "If It Ain't



Jeffery Broussard: Creole triple threat

COURTESY JEFFERY BROUSSARD

Love" and Smith's "You've Been A Good Ole Wagon." Too pretty and tender: "Embraceable You," a vocal duet with Mitchell.

Ordering info: memphisinternational.com

Anders Osborne: *American Patchwork* (Alligator 4936; 44:11 ★★★) Osborne was among those displaced from their homes when the levees failed. The highlight of his first studio album since the disaster is "Darkness At The Bottom," a molten-hot blues-rock catharsis throbbing mercilessly under the weight of the pain he loads into his voice and guitar. A few of the other original songs, but not ultra-tuneful "Meet Me In New Mexico," seem exaggerated in style and feeling.

Ordering info: alligator.com

Tony Joe White: *The Shine* (Swamp 8572202; 52:47 ★★) *That On The Road Look "Live"* (Rhino 524698; 66:44 ★★★) On the freshly recorded *Shine*, White's baritone creeps like spilt molasses over words to original songs that scrimp on melody and generally lack musical interest. Try to stay awake and locate patches of pathos in his vocals. The formerly unreleased "Live" LP, recorded who knows where in 1971, is livelier than *Shine* with the country boy and his band parlaying a brand of swampy blues plus country and rock. Ray Charles swiped his ballad "Rainy Night In Georgia" and made it his own, but "Polk Salad Annie" and 10 more bear White's informal imprint.

DB

Ordering info: tonyjoewhite.com; rhinohandmade.com



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Live recordings provide the listener a glimpse of what a musician can truly deliver. Pianist Helen Sung brings it on her new live recording *Going Express* on Sunnyside Records. Presented live at the highly regarded Jazz Standard club in New York City, Sung plunges into a challenging set of original tunes and standards assisted by a sterling cast of musicians, including saxophonist Seamus Blake, bassist Lonnie Plaxico, and drummer Eric Harland.

HELEN SUNG ★ LONNIE PLAXICO
SEAMUS BLAKE ★ ERIC HARLAND



QUEST FOR FREEDOM
SSC 1266 In Stores Now

Partnerships in music are very special things. Pianist Richie Beirach and saxophonist Dave Liebman have been connected through music for nearly four decades, most notably as members of the jazz collective Quest. On the new Sunnyside CD *Quest For Freedom*, Richie Beirach and Dave Liebman forge a new partnership with the inimitable arranger Jim McNeely and the marvelous Hr Big Band of the Frankfurt Radio in a breathtaking and powerful musical journey.

BEIRACH ★ LIEBMAN ★ MCNEELY
FRANKFURT RADIO BIGBAND



www.sunnysiderecords.com

Hamid Drake & Bindu
Reggaeology
 ROGUE ART 0021
 ★★★★★

Hamid Drake's brilliance, flexibility and power as a drummer have been long established through his work with a wide variety of strong and demanding leaders—Fred Anderson, Peter Brötzmann, David Murray—but in recent years he's also emerged as a cagey, thoughtful and original bandleader, a guy who can match his technical genius with compelling stylistic concepts. *Reggaeology* is the third album billed to his group Bindu, and like its gripping predecessors, it features a new lineup and completely different musical focus. As the album title makes plain, Drake and company use the slinking, hypnotic rhythms of reggae to situate typically interrogatory improvisation and adept group interplay, but this is no glib musical mash-up.

Before becoming one of improvised music's most in-demand percussionists, Drake was active in Chicago's reggae scene, and he repeatedly demonstrates his ease with and mastery of numerous different rhythms—from the one-drop groove to the sophisticated tribal feel of Nyabinghy percus-



sion. The elegant trombones of Jeff Albert and Jeb Bishop summon the spirit of Rico Rodriguez, albeit with flashes of extended technique and stunning agility, accenting individual melodic invention with a nonchalant incorporation of the heavy syncopation around them. Their brassy singing is complemented by the kinetic beat-boxing and low-key vocalizing of Napoleon Maddox, who creates his own lyrics as well as borrowing from Lex Hixon's spiritual writings.

For much of the album guitarist Jeff Parker lays down free-ranging rhythmic patterns, never resorting to lazy vamps, and when he lays it open, as on "Kali's Children No Cry," his acid-flecked tone approaches the coruscating sound of Sonny Sharrock. On several tracks bassist Josh Abrams switches to the Moroccan guimbri, tapping into the Middle Eastern sonorities that are equally important to Drake, a masterful frame drum player, yet despite the wide list of ingredients the leader ties it all together for a rich, accessible experience that suggests he's got plenty more to share.

—Peter Margasak

Reggaeology: Kali's Children No Cry; Hymn of Solidarity; Kali Dub; The Taste of Radha's Love; Togetherness; Meeting And Parting; Take Us Home. (68:30)
Personnel: Hamid Drake, drums, tabla, frame drum, vocals; Napoleon Maddox, vocals, beat box; Jeff Parker, guitar; Jeff Albert, trombone, Hammond organ; Jeb Bishop, trombone; Josh Abrams, bass, guimbri.
Ordering info: roguart.com

Jacob Anderskov
Agnostic Revelations
 ILK 163
 ★★★★★

Over the last decade or so, pianist Jacob Anderskov has emerged as one of the most exciting and original voices in a new, deeply modern strain of Danish jazz, embracing new forms rather than practicing old-school bebop. He leads several excellent groups, including Anderskov Accident as well as a trio with countrymen, but on this knockout quartet outing he travelled to New York to work with this deeply sensitive, selfless ensemble. The album opener "Warren Street Setup" was freely improvised, and it's a testament to the composer's vision and the resourcefulness of the musicians that that performance feels so much of a piece with the rest of the album.

The music is somber and impressively measured, and drummer Gerald Cleaver arrives at something of the secret weapon by holding together performances that verge disintegration

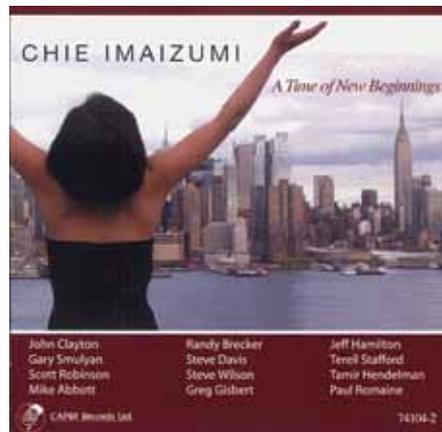


time and time again. With the exception of "Pintox For Varese," which builds up a roiling head of steam, the pieces crawl with an elusive elegance, as the players stretch and compress the tunes with a rigorous rubato sense, delivering strongly interactive contributions that move as a lumbering yet graceful whole. Anderskov's structures emphasize group momentum, with each player improvising extensively, pushing, crying and singing

in restrained, tightly controlled motion, but the overall effect is remarkably cohesive. Close listening yields generous dividends, and repeated plays highlight the composerly feel each participant brings to the proceedings—especially Anderskov, who sacrifices ego in order to shape and direct each piece with ghostly chords and weeping, dragging lines. The record maintains a very specific sound, but within that sonic world there are exquisite riches.

—Peter Margasak

Agnostic Revelations: Warren Street Setup; Be Flat & Stay Flat; Pintox For Varese; Blue In The Face; Diamonds Are For Unreal People; Solstice 2009; Neuf; Dream Arch. (59:11)
Personnel: Chris Speed, saxophone, clarinet; Jacob Anderskov, piano; Michael Formanek, bass; Gerald Cleaver, drums.
Ordering info: ilkmusic.com



Chie Imaizumi
A Time Of New Beginnings
 CAPRI 74104
 ★★★★★½

The young Japanese-born Chie Imaizumi is a composer/orchestrator who accentuates the positive and eliminates the negative. Her themes are sunny and inspirational, her tempos are upbeat and her arrangements are fairly conventional (seldom are reeds and brass voiced together). Titles like "My Heartfelt Gratitude" and "Many Happy Days Ahead" reinforce the optimism. Her eclectic writing doesn't yet show a clearly defined identity, through the different motifs and styles. Just when you peg her as one kind of stylist, she'll surprise the dickens out of you. The last cut closes with a backbeat swing chorus (the only such passage on the album), and that has a Latin tag!

Her impressive band cherry-picks some of the best jazz players from Los Angeles and New York. Imaizumi lets her musicians show who they are as soloists: Scott Robinson switches from soprano to tenor on the stutter-step "Fun & Stupid"; Tamir Hendelman's lyrical piano on "Gratitude" and "New Beginnings"; soaring brass ensembles on "Information Overload" frame Randy Brecker's bopping flugel and trumpet; Gary Smulyan's subterranean baritone on "Happy Days."

"Fear Of The Unknown" interrupts the tonal sunshine with a minor-chord dirge, imprinted by John Clayton's melancholy contrabass work—both arco and pizzicato. But the real wild card is "Run For Your Life," a freilich that turns into a careening trumpet workout for Greg Gilbert and Terrell Stafford (Jewish wedding bands seldom show this kind of ensemble polish). "Today" is a sprightly chamber waltz, and the baroque "Happy Days Ahead" shows the most layered brass-and-reeds writing on the album. —Kirk Silsbee

A Time Of New Beginnings: My Heartfelt Gratitude; Information Overload; Fear Of The Unknown; A Time For New Beginnings; Run For Your Life; Today; Sharing The Freedom; Many Happy Days Ahead; Fun & Stupid Song. (60:58)
Personnel: Chie Imaizumi, composer/orchestrator; Randy Brecker (2), Greg Gilbert, Terrell Stafford, trumpet and flugelhorn; Steve Davis, trombone; Steve Wilson, soprano and alto saxophones, flute; Scott Robinson, clarinet, soprano, soprano, tenor saxophones; flute; Gary Smulyan, bass clarinet, baritone saxophone; Mike Abbott, guitar; Tamir Hendelman, piano; John Clayton, bass; Jeff Hamilton (1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9), Paul Romaine (2, 7, 9), drums.
Ordering info: caprirecords.com

Steve Davis
Images

POST-TONE 8066
★★★★

Curtis Fuller
I Will Tell Her

CAPRI 74100
★★★★

Steve Turre
Delicious And Delightful

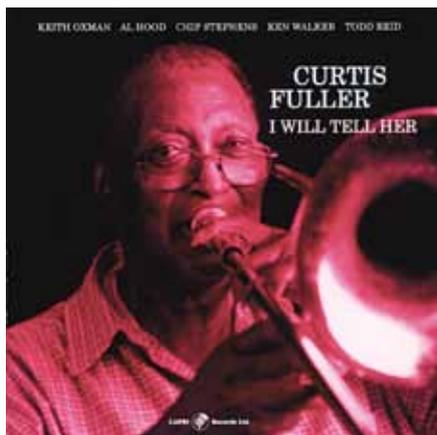
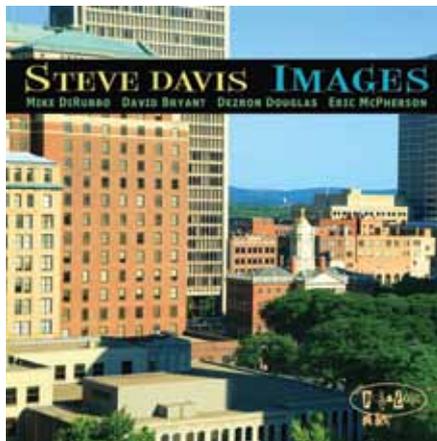
HIGHNOTE 7210
★★★★

These three releases, while maybe not the alpha and omega of contemporary jazz trombone, nonetheless give stellar examples of a sense of the instrument's standing in mainstream jazz. Davis thoughtfully balances modernism, lyricism and drive—as a writer and a player. A crack young outfit that would have held its own at the Café Bohemia in 1958 buoys hard-bop veteran Fuller. Turre is the brash brawler who holds nothing back in the quest for self-expression. Side by side they give three distinct flavors of soloist/bandleader for the instrument.

The Davis set is a suite of originals, written for friends and notables connected with Hartford. The late alto dynamo Jackie McLean (feted on “J Mac’s Way”) is identified as a mentor, so Davis has a little hard-bop in him as well. The sleek ensemble heads (trumpet, trombone, alto) are brainy without being knotty, and the band operates at a high-middle dynamic. Davis is generally a mid-register player whose ballad work on “Rose Garden” emerges as his most personal statement. The band is quite cohesive, thanks in no small part to the rhythm section (pianist David Bryant’s spidery gallops bring to mind Sonny Clark, and drummer Eric McPherson is incisive throughout). Mike DiRubio’s off-on-the-wrong-foot alto sax on “Mode For Miantonomoh” intrigues, as does guest Kris Jensen’s preaching tenor sax on “Club 808.” That bust-out impulse could have surfaced a little more all the way around.

The Fuller band takes no prisoners on this set of studio and live tracks. The style of jazz it plays may be 50 years old, but these youngbloods surrounding Curtis are deadly serious about this music. It’s also a well-rehearsed unit, though the performances positively sizzle. Fuller struggles somewhat to keep up on the flag-wavers. His tone can get muddy and he stays within a proscribed set of mid-register notes. Still, Fuller’s ballads (two versions of the title cut and “I Want To Talk About You”) are tender, revelatory and best show his sound off. It’s gratifying to hear flugelhornist Al Hood swaddle Fuller in obligatos and then turn in his own solo that runs from soulful to puckish at Denver’s Dazzle lounge. The times expand and the playing is even more ferocious on the live material, enhancing an already excellent collection.

There’s nothing subtle about Turre’s approach, which is loose and flowing. Not surpris-



ingly, it’s the most rhythmically varied of the releases, featuring funk variants (“Dance Of The Gazelles,” “Sunála Nobála” and “Delicious And Delightful”) and, yes, even some hard-bop: the quick and tricky “Blackfoot” and the gospeltinged “Collard Greens.” Tenor great Billy Harper is an asset to the former, burning brightly on the breathtakingly bright tempo. Drummer Dion Parson can play loosey-goosey on the funk stuff but lasers in this bopper. Russell Malone’s guitar adds gutbucket feeling to the latter, while Larry Willis’ piano lyrically sets up a wavy conch interlude (including a “One O’clock Jump” riff passage). Turre’s sunburst trombone sound blossoms on the rhythm ballad “Speak To Me Of Love” and a lovely “Tenderly.” —Kirk Silsbee

Images: Nato; The Modernist; Twain’s World; J Mac’s Way; Mode For Miantonomoh; Rose Garden; Tune For Calhoun; Park Street; Kenney’s; Club 880. (54:15)

Personnel: Steve Davis, trombone; Mike DiRubio, alto saxophone; Josh Evans, trumpet, flugelhorn; Kris Jensen, tenor saxophone (10); David Bryant, piano; Dezron Douglas, bass; Eric McPherson, drums.

Ordering info: posi-tone.com

I Will Tell Her: Disc 1: Time Off; Sagittarius; Minor’s Holiday; I Will Tell Her; Maze; The Court; Alamode; The Clan. 53:38
Disc 2: Tenor Madness; The Court; I Will Tell Her; Maze; I Want To Talk About You; Minor’s Holiday. 65:05

Personnel: Curtis Fuller, trombone; Keith Oxman, tenor saxophone; Chip Stephens, piano; Ken Walker, bass; Todd Reid, drums.

Ordering info: caprirecords.com

Delicious and Delightful: Light Within; Duke Rays; Speak To Me Of Love; Speak To Me Of Truth; Dance Of The Gazelles; Delicious And Delightful; Tenderly; Sunála Nobála; Blackfoot; Ray’s Collard Greens. (52:50)

Personnel: Steve Turre, trombone, shells; Billy Harper, tenor saxophone; Larry Willis, piano; Russell Malone, guitar (5, 9); Corcoran Holt, bass; Pedro Martinez, bata and djembe drums (4); Dion Parson, drums.

Ordering info: jazzdepot.com

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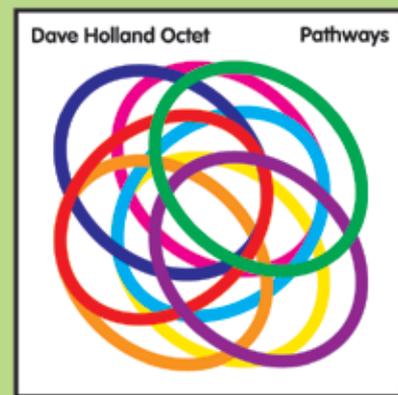
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Heavenly Voices

Trust Tony Heilbut, put your faith in one of gospel's great natural resources. If you're to read only one book about African-American sacred music, make it his *The Gospel Sound: Good News And Bad Times*. It's still a compelling read four decades after publication. As a record producer, Heilbut has offered up a bunch of valuable albums, among them collections of historic religious music like *Kings Of The Gospel Highway* (Shanachie) and *The Gospel Sound Of Spirit Feel* (Spirit Feel, his own label). They're treasurable either as introductions to gospel or as reaffirmations for committed fans of the music. Heilbut's newest compilation, *How Sweet It Was: The Sights And Sounds Of Gospel's Golden Age* (Shanachie 6901; CD 76:00/DVD 70:00; ★★☆☆) may be his crowning achievement, with 26 songs (nine never issued before) primarily from the 1940s and '50s, and 26 song performances filmed in the early 1960s. Also part of the set: his 32-page booklet with detailed notes about the famous or forgotten

who surrendered to His will through falsetto wails, multi-register exhortations and deep-voiced liturgies. Gospel is forever epitomized by the high miracle of Mahalia Jackson's contralto, which excitingly sanctifies the formerly unreleased "These Are They" and a medley (although she's not on the DVD). Marion Williams blazes to the spiritual core of material with her faith and shows even more inventiveness than Jackson; she lights up both discs. Lesser mortals knocking spiritedly on heaven's door are Clara Ward, Ira Tucker and the Dixie Hummingbirds, the Soul Stirrers, Clarence Fountain & The Five Blind Boys of Alabama, Brother Joe May, the little-known but sensational Consolers, over-represented Sister Rosetta Tharpe and almost three dozen more. Some testifiers reveal a conflict between soul and flesh, using blues song forms and tones. There's much to treasure here, but expect a transgression or two, like Dorothy Love Coates' shrieking. The exciting b&w film clips match faces to the lung power.

Ordering info: shanachie.com

Mahalia Jackson is in magnificent voice on the two-disc DVD *A Gospel Calling: Mahalia Jackson Sings* (Infinity 2207; 3:36:00; ★★☆☆½), performing 58 spirituals on her network television show in 1961. Exchanging the pews and pulpits for an austere decorated television studio stage, she has a dignified presence that must



Marion Williams: inventive and blazing

SHANACHIE RECORDS

have wowed the large white audience that championed her at the time. Accompanied mostly by a keyboardist, Jackson's in keeping with black Baptist church worship rather than that of fundamentalists, and the set is recommended to her enthusiasts.

Ordering info: infinity-entertainmentgroup.com

The CD debut of Pastor T. L. Barrett & The Youth For Christ Choir's *Like A Ship (Without A Sail)* (Light in The Attic 056; 36:21; ★★☆☆), originally on vinyl in 1971, merits a few hearty hallelujahs. On a merger of the sacred and secular, the Chicago-based vocalists look heavenward with their "joyful noise" as the r&b musicians, including guitarist Philip Upchurch and bassist Richard Evans, are content to stay in the material world without submission to the Creator. Also available as an LP reissue, with a bonus 45.

Ordering info: lightintheattic.net

Reverend Jasper Williams Jr. leads the Salem Bible Church Mass Choir at his church in Atlanta on *Landmark (Church Door 0824; CD 77:33/DVD 107:11; ★★☆☆½)*. At this exciting gala, he's "going back to the old-time way" of the gospel he experienced as a young minister in Memphis in the '50s. The uplifting effect of all the passionate singing is dampened only when the gospel-cum-blues band shifts into glossy, empty pop-r&b. The DVD has three more songs than the audio disc.

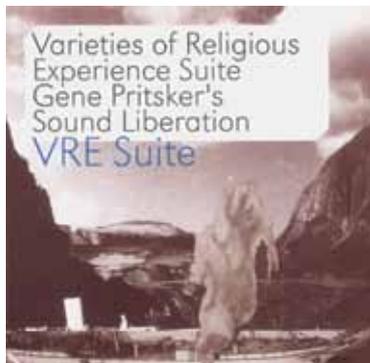
Ordering info: churchdoorrecords.com

DB

**Gene Pritsker's
Sound Liberation
Varieties Of
Religious
Experience Suite**

INNOVA 235

★★★★★



For fans of theology, the title to this program might raise some eyebrows. The classic 1902 tome by philosopher William James apparently serves as inspired fodder for guitarist/conceptualist/composer Gene Pritsker. The results may have you seeing visions, or maybe just scratching your head.

Billing themselves as an eclectic hip-hop/chamber/jazz/rock ensemble committed to “ending the segregation of sound vibration,” Pritsker’s Sound Liberation is a quintet of cello, two electric guitars, bass and drums. And the *Varieties Of Religious Experience Suite* finds Pritsker the composer creating a suite from his opera of the same name. Listeners may hear strains of jazz, contemporary classical music, minimalism and even hip-hop and African rhythms. Woven into the music is a fair amount of improvisation as well. (Pritsker may be familiar because of his work with Joe Zawinul and the Absolute Ensemble.)

Given James’ aversion to religious faith, it

should come as no surprise that the *VRE Suite* is hardly a piece of religious music in the conventional sense. Driven by both Pritsker and fellow guitarist Greg Baker, the music has a light, playful feel to it, by and large. There is a fair amount of interplay with cellist David Gotay and bassist Mat Fieldes, who serve as an alternate

string section behind and around the guitarists. “William James’ Introduction” immediately sets the stage with faint echoes of, say, some of Ornette Coleman’s electric music with Prime Time. “Consciousness Of A Presence” continues the polyphonic feel, the Sound Liberation band both earthy with electric guitar peals and lighter than air with its implied but not really stated bottom end. “Presence” presents more of a groove as cello, bass and guitar all pluck away against the backdrop of drummer Joe Abba’s peppy snare work. The music is filled with repeated patterns, as if loops were employed, suggesting something more mechanical than spiritual. “Everything Else Might Be A Dream” breaks things up a bit, offering more for the various instrumentalists to step forward amidst a more arranged and less groove-oriented piece. Another tonally and harmoni-

cally ambiguous song, “Dream,” is filled with unexpected twists and turns, both foreground and background moving in and out.

“The Less Real Of The Two” continues to add dimension to the music, the string-like nature of this band becoming more readily apparent as all four “plectrists” get into the act on various arranged levels, with and without rhythmic accompaniment. With arco eventually coming from both cello and bass, “Two” starts to feel more religious and less like fanciful avant pop music. That’s until some edgy electric guitar moves in only to leave, being replaced again by what is now a jumpy series of pluckers and bowers. Listening to this track with headphones gives new meaning to the song’s title. “Closer To Me Than My Own Breath” is perhaps the most explicitly funky tune here, the form of the song suggesting (for once) direction with its more obvious progression, and Pritsker’s best bet for radio play here. (If nothing else, you gotta love the title.) Speaking of titles, “Tolstoy” may have you imagining the famed Russian novelist at play in the woods around his estate, spinning whirling dervishes as he time-travels between centuries.

—John Ephland

Varieties Of Religious Experience Suite: William James’ Introduction; Consciousness Of A Presence; Everything Else Might Be A Dream; The Less Real Of The Two; Closer To Me Than My Own Breath; William James’ Genuine Perceptions Of Truth; Tolstoy; William James’ Conclusion. (64:25)
Personnel: Gene Pritsker, guitar; Greg Baker, guitar; David Gotay, cello; Mat Fieldes, bass; Joe Abba, drums.
Ordering info: innova.mu

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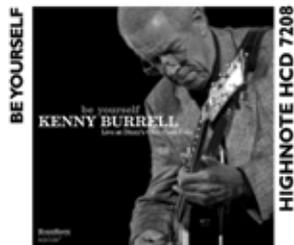
JOEY DeFRANCESCO’s current exploration of the music of Michael Jackson is the latest installment in jazz’s long history of using pop music as a vehicle for improvisation. Joey’s monster chops and imaginative arrangements make this a most exciting jazz release.



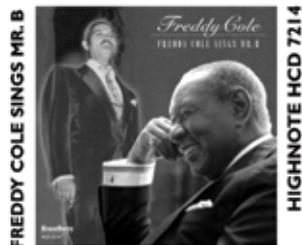
Passionate singers with sensitivity like Carmen and sass like Dinah aren’t exactly thick on the ground which is why **MARY STALLINGS’** return to the studios is a cause for rejoicing. With arrangements by pianist Eric Reed, this is more than a release, it is an event.



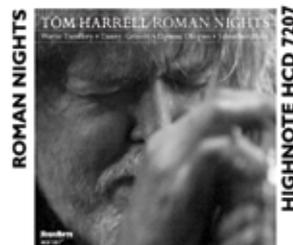
STEVE TURRE, five-time DownBeat poll winner, is joined by tenor sax great Billy Harper and piano giant Larry Willis, with whom Steve had worked in the band of Woody Shaw. The mostly original tunes are immediately endearing and the solos are super-charged with wild inspiration.



KENNY BURRELL is a player of extremely wide range and versatility. The diversity and elegance of Burrell’s playing is evident throughout this exceptionally fine performance, the latest in HighNote’s on-going series captured live at Dizzy’s Club Coca-Cola, Jazz at Lincoln Center.



FREDDY COLE often cites the great Billy Eckstine as a major influence on his style and performing the repertoire of the older singer on this wonderful CD has inspired him to some of his best work. This recording finds tenor sax great Houston Person with Freddy’s regular band.



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Don Heckman of the Los Angeles Times has praised **DENISE DONATELLI’s** “dark, enchanting voice, intuitive ability to tell a musical story and ineffable rhythmic drive...she is a singer jazz musicians love to love.” Her insightful delivery and great band makes this a total delight. Musical direction by Geoffrey Keezer.

Manu Katché *Third Round*

ECM 2156

★★★

The oddly titled soft-rock tune “Swing Piece” is a novel way to begin an album of jazz. Permeated as it is by the smooth-jazz feel of saxophonist Tore Brunborg on tenor, it may be the weakest selection on a record that slowly builds interest as the songs become more involved, the musicians more interactive in their playing and leader/drummer Manu Katché’s compositions more developed. That pop feel continues with the sing-songy, occasionally funky “Keep On Trippin’,” this time the music opening up more as pianist Jason Rebello and guitarist Jason Young become more of a presence. And, along with vocals and trumpet by Kami Lyle on selected tracks, Katché’s third outing with ECM also includes 25-year collaborator/bass guitarist Pino Palladino once again helping to provide the essential pulse and feel for the band.

And while “Swing Piece” may be a novel way to start any album, for Katché, the spirit and ambiance of the song seems consistent with his work overall, at least on record. *Third Round* maintains a soft melancholy on through to the next song, “Senses,” once again framed around Brunborg’s tenor sax. That’s until the tenor becomes a soprano on the playful waltz “Being Ben,” Katché more upfront with his sticks on this bona fide swinger. “Une Larme Dans Ton



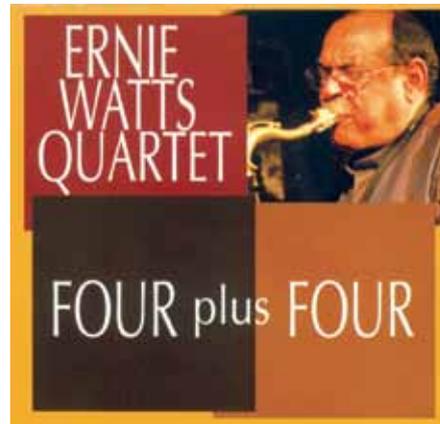
Sourire” and “Springtime Dancing” capture a dream-like quality through varied arrangements and mesmerizing melodic lines. One wishes the groove that briefly emerges (thanks to Palladino’s understated, extremely funky basslines) in “Springtime” would last, but, like a dream, it’s gone before you know it. Other musical quips that sug-

gest more but remain modest include “Out Take Number 9” and “Urban Shadow.” Some of that thematic pop feel returns with “Shine And Blue,” Brunborg back on tenor, and Rebello now sitting down to his Fender Rhodes when he isn’t doubling on piano. It’s a song that, along with the saxist and keyboardist sharing unison lines, finds Katché the drummer all over his cymbals and popping his skins unobtrusively on this light yet funky number.

“Stay With You” is the closest thing to gospel on the album, the contrasting, delicate, almost lusty singing of Kami Lyle complemented by her vocalized trumpet playing. By this point in the album, it becomes apparent that *Third Round* is mood music through and through: no rough edges, nothing to jar you, only heartfelt expression that might suggest a haven in a so-called heartless world.

—John Ephland

Third Round: Swing Piece; Keep On Trippin’; Senses; Being Ben; Une Larme Dans Ton Sourire; Springtime Dancing; Out Take Number 9; Shine And Blue; Stay With You; Flower Skin; Urban Shadow. (44:38)
Personnel: Manu Katché, drums; Tore Brunborg, soprano, tenor saxophones; Jason Rebello, piano, Fender Rhodes; Pino Palladino, bass; Jacob Young, guitars (2, 6, 10, 11); Kami Lyle, vocal (9), trumpet (9, 10).
Ordering info: ecmrecords.com



Ernie Watts Quartet *Four Plus Four*

FLYING DOLPHIN RECORDS 1007

★★★

Ernie Watts has had a prolific under-the-radar career (despite stints with Buddy Rich, Cannonball Adderley and Charlie Haden) since he became active as a studio musician at the end of the ’60s. He’s done a heavy slice of film music, and the discipline of such tailor-made work has made him versatile and supremely confident but less quantifiable in the jazz pantheon.

Watts’ latest release, *Four Plus Four*, features the saxophonist leading two different working quartets—one based in the United States, the other in Europe.

The whitewater note torrents of his “Tributary” suggest the flow of a mighty river rather than auxiliary channels, as Watts’ tenor navigates fiendishly convoluted, exploratory lines with relentless thrust, his canoe periodically airborne.

Pianist Christof Saenger’s “Crossings” is played on eggshells, and the pianist has an almost classical touch. Bassist Rudi Engel grabs a plucky solo mirroring the articulation of U.S. bassist Bruce Lett. Watts invests more in his waltz-time “A Quiet Corner” with a preachy solo in which he’s inspired to repeat phrases between barreling runs. The dirge-like “Through My Window” is highly unusual, combining the transatlantic rhythm sections in one piece through studio wizardry (the rhythm sections have never met). The European quartet begins, then midway through, the Los Angeles team (including a duplicate, shadowboxing Watts) enter and overdund their counterparts, creating an edifying whirlpool of mallets and cymbals and moire piano lines.

Things wax smooth on “Wings Of The Dreamer” notwithstanding forthright bass from Lett, before Watts sashays into the poignantly pessimistic “The Ballad Of The Sad Young Men,” illuminated by a lovely, honest solo from pianist Dave Witham.

—Michael Jackson

Four Plus Four: Tributary; Crossings; A Quiet Corner; Through My Window; Wings Of The Dreamer; The Ballad Of The Sad Young Men; Find The Way. (58:47)
Personnel: Ernie Watts, tenor saxophone; Christof Saenger (1–4), David Whitham (4–7), piano; Rudi Engel (1–4), Bruce Lett (4–7), bass; Heinrich Koebberling (1–4), Bob Leatherbarrow (4–7), drums.
Ordering info: erniewatts.com

Margret *Com Vocé*

SUNNYSIDE 1241

★★★

Whether she’s interpreting Antonio Jobim, Pat Metheny or Chris Isaack, newcomer Margret Grebowicz’s unpolished, raw vocals have a disarming way of stripping a song down to its bare essentials, an approach that teases a uniquely terse beauty out of her music.

Her band soars through nine soft-natured tracks here, and the ones that aren’t strict bossa nova tunes flirt with the bossa structure so much that a listener could almost mistake some of her English lyrics for Portuguese. In fact, her Portuguese is suited so comfortably to her singing that after the understated, emotionally cautious Rufus Wainwright opener, Caetano Veloso’s “Saudosismo” feels breezy and carefree, as if the self-conscious girl who sang “Peach Trees” on the opening track had suddenly thrown a tire over one of the branches and started to swing. Her masterful performance is further complemented



by tenor player Stan Killian’s controlled energy, which falls into a low and sexy stride with her, and Tim Collins’ vibes fill in the increasingly wide spaces left behind the pair.

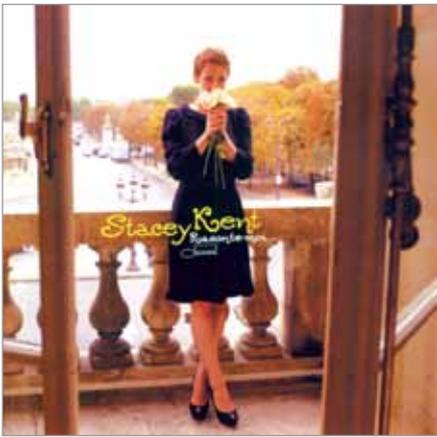
Other highlights include Ben Monder’s contributions on the Isaack hit “Wicked Game” and Metheny’s “Farmer’s Trust.” Monder’s signature angular-meets-ethereal sound

is intrinsically well-suited to Margret’s gossamer vocals and her tendency to see-saw from bossa chanteuse to rock-centric intellectual and back again. The effect is a satisfyingly rounded vocal persona.

The album turns south near the end, where “Into Shade” doesn’t quite succeed in its attempt to veer from the comfort zones Margret established on the rest of the disc.

—Jennifer Odell

Com Vocé: Peach Trees; Saudosismo; Call Me; Wicked Game; By On Byl Tu (Farmer’s Trust); O Trem Azul; E Preciso Dizer Adeus/ All That’s Left Is To Say Goodbye; Into Shade; Half the Way (If I Could). (47:26)
Personnel: Margret Grebowicz, vocals; Stan Killian, tenor sax; Matvei Sigalov, acoustic guitar; Ben Monder, electric guitar; Viviane Arnoux, accordion; Tim Collins, vibes; Scott Colley, bass; Antonio Sanchez, drums; Luisito Quintero, percussion.
Ordering info: sunnysiderecords.com



Stacey Kent
Raconte-moi...

BLUE NOTE/EMI 5099962682305
★★★★½

Stacey Kent's acute interest in French culture is not new. She has previously tackled some tunes by Serge Gainsbourg, a jazz lover whose absence here would have otherwise been conspicuous. With *Raconte-moi...*, the American singer decided to dedicate a full opus to French chanson, and her tribute is impressively large in scope. Kent covers icons Barbara and Henri Salvador, '70s and '80s hit-maker Michel Jonasz, new stars Benjamin Biolay and Keren Ann, and more obscure up-and-coming songwriters who contribute new songs to this project. Her set also includes French versions of Jobim's "Agua De Março" and the Hammerstein/Rodgers standard "It Might Be As Well Be Spring" originally sung by Jean Sablon and Georges Moustaki, respectively.

The supporting band led by husband/saxophonist/arranger Jim Tomlinson is unobtrusive and tasteful. There is not the slightest attempt at turning those songs into springboards for jazz improvisations. In fact, the connection to jazz is tenuous. Ann has also been on the Blue Note roster—a coincidence?—for a few years, and Jonasz is another declared jazz fan.

With such endeavors, it is often difficult to avoid comparisons. In this case, Kent manages to make the material her own through a consistent approach. Her rendition of Jonasz's "Les Vacances Au Bord De La Mer" might even suggest that a re-evaluation of the original should be in order, and her interpretation of Barbara's "Mal De Vivre" is probably the album's tour-de-force.

The mood is dreamy and melancholy, but Kent has enough pizzazz to avoid the pitfalls of what could have been an overly reflective exercise. Her impeccable French deserves kudos, and the few imperfections end up adding some not undesirable vulnerability. —Alain Drouot

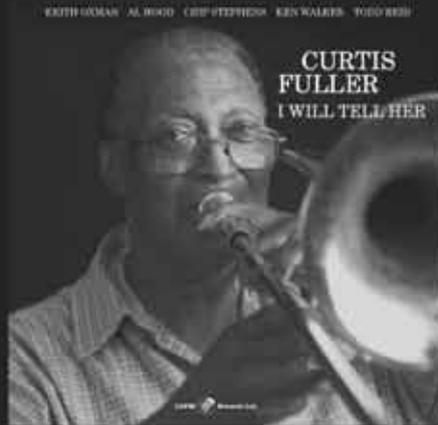
Raconte-moi...: Les Eaux De Mars; Jardin D'Hiver; Raconte-moi; L'estang; La Vénus Du Mélo; Au Coin Du Monde; C'est Le Printemps; Sait-on Jamais?; Les Vacances Au Bord De La Mer; Mi Amor; Le Mal De Vivre; Désuets. (47:29)

Personnel: Stacey Kent, vocals, whistling; Jim Tomlinson, soprano, tenor and baritone saxophone, clarinet, sansula; Graham Harvey, piano, Rhodes; John Parricelli, guitars; Jeremy Brown, bass; Matt Skelton, drums, percussion.

Ordering info: staceykent.com

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Historical | BY BILL MEYER

Disciples and Visionaries

When Ornette Coleman took himself out of the race for a spell in the mid-'60s, a second wave of free-jazz musicians eagerly picked up the baton. Archie Shepp's New York Contemporary Five wore his influence proudly. Two of the six tunes on *The New York Contemporary Five* (Delmark 409 41:13 ★★★), a 1963 gig in Copenhagen that was originally released on Sonet, are Coleman's, and another is by his greatest foil—Don Cherry rips out ragged, salty cornet lines that twine sympathetically with Shepp's coarse tenor saxophone barks. Laconic Danish alto saxophonist John Tchicai provides an apposite counterweight to their sandpaper attack, and the rhythm section of J.C. Moses and Don Moore swings with loose-limbed abandon. While everyone in the front line made stronger music elsewhere, this holds up as more than mere historical documentation.

Ordering info: delmark.com

Tchicai also played with the New York Art Quartet, whose self-titled LP for ESP is a monument of free-jazz radicalism. The quartet that Tchicai trombonist Roswell Rudd brought to Denmark in 1965 isn't as challenging, but just as exciting. They negotiate the twisty tunes on this set of recently unearthed tapes entitled *Old Stuff* (Cuneiform Records Rune 300 70:43, ★★★) with even greater panache, spicing their solos with a dash of ribald humor. But local bassist Finn von Eyben and exiled South African drummer Louis Moholo's more time-based rhythms give the music a less-fractured feel.

Ordering info: cuneiformrecords.com

Although some of Coleman's stop-start pacing and pungent bluesiness echoed in Sonny Simmons' playing on *Staying On The Watch* (ESP 1030 44:22, ★★★) from 1966, the Oakland, Calif., alto saxophonist and trumpeter Barbara Donald never quite shed bebop's maps. Pianist John Hicks, apparently under the spell of McCoy Tyner, pulls the music in a more John Coltrane-inspired direction on the grandly energetic "City Of David," stoking a fire that makes bassist Teddy Smith and drummer Marvin Pattillo simply steam. The ESP catalog has been reissued relentlessly. This latest iteration doesn't add any new tracks, nor does its mastering job entirely banish the recording's in-the-red glare. But fire music was not conceived for audiophiles, and this album remains a scorcher.

Ordering info: espdisk.com

When drummer John Stevens first convened the Spontaneous Music Ensemble in London in 1967, the group tried Coleman-inspired free-jazz on for size, but soon developed a more collectively oriented dynamic.



Sonny Simmons:
Ornette-inspired blues

But when Coleman's other trumpet player Bobby Bradford came to town in 1971, where else could they start? *Bobby Bradford With John Stevens And The Spontaneous Music Ensemble* (Nessa NCD-17/18 44:05/42:09 ★★★½) captures a rare and important meeting between American and British improvisational approaches. Bradford's fantastic opener "His Majesty Louis," which features saxophonist Trevor Watts' adroit maneuverings around Bob Norden's rubbery trombone lines, gives a history lesson that leads from the dawn of jazz up to Coleman's sing-song lyricism. Vocalist Julie Tippetts' presence may be a deal-breaker for those who struggle with free vocalizing, but it must be said that her control and imagination on her chosen instrument are every bit as masterful as Bradford and Stevens.

Ordering info: nessarecords.com

Sun Ra's *Nothing Is* has also bulked up to double-disc dimensions in its newest version, *College Tour Volume One: The Complete Nothing Is ...* (ESP 4060 79:55/76:58 ★★★). Originally a 39-minute-long LP, it now runs two-and-a-quarter hours, and while more is not always more, in this case the extras provide a more complete portrayal of the stylistic reach of Ra's Arkestra. In 1966, when this music was recorded during a short tour of upstate New York colleges, Ra's albums tended to represent cosmic chaos with masses of polyrhythmic percussion, blowtorch horn solos, space chants and foundation-powdering electric keyboards. But on the strength of this set, they were also capable of delivering coherent and even lyrical performances of intricately charted tunes like "State Street" and "Velvet," which Ra had composed a decade earlier. **DB**

Ordering info: espdisk.com



**Pinetop Perkins/
Willie "Big Eyes" Smith
Joined At The Hip**

TELARC 31850

★★★

Joined At The Hip is a nice little surprise. Willie Smith, 74, and Pinetop Perkins, nearing his centennial, evidence their natural communion with Chicago blues as entertainingly as they have at any time since walking out on employer Muddy Waters in 1980 to form the Legendary Blues Band. No longer on drums, Smith plays harmonica and sings decently as Perkins presides over the ivories quite well despite chronological age limits on energy and technique.

For material, the fused Chang & Eng of blues rely on new songs from Smith and not so threadbare classics; lucky for us, they don't try to extract life from moribund repertory. Squarely in the blues tradition, song topics like manhood, gambling and love mislaid are predictable but they're addressed with fresh enthusiasm. Indeed, the two elders and their ace sidemen push songs along with musical and emotional momentum, not lingering on cliches, not struggling to reconcile tropes with an earnest sense of conviction. Frank Krakowski's swinging guitar solo in John Lee "Sonny Boy" Williamson's "Cut That Out" is as effective as Perkins' feature spot. On Smith's "Walkin' Down The Highway," stirring guitar contributions from John Primer are of a piece with the harmonica squalls and the piano punctuations. Everywhere else, too, on this 13-track album, there are honest presentations of feeling, nothing done for show. Whenever Smith does falter a bit, the other musicians (including his talented son Kenny on drums) are right there to pick him up, brush him off and keep him going. The same for Perkins when he, ahem, sings "Grindin' Man," his can-you-believe-it? bedroom boast.

—Frank-John Hadley

Joined At The Hip: Grown Up To Be A Man; Cut That Out; Take Your Eyes Off My Woman; Walkin' Down The Highway; Gambling Blues; I Would Like To Have A Girl Like You; Take My Hand, Precious Lord; You'd Better Slow Down; Minor Blues; I Feel So Good; Lord, Lord; Grindin' Man; Eyesight To The Blind. (58:31)
Personnel: Pinetop Perkins, vocals, piano; Willie "Big Eyes" Smith, vocals, harmonica; John Primer, guitar; "Little Frank" Krakowski, guitar; Bob Stroger, bass guitar; Kenny Smith, drums.
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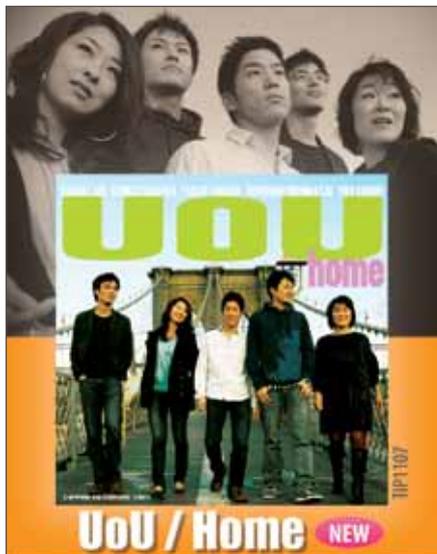
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Stan Kenton
This Is An Orchestra

TANTARA 1125
 ★★★★★

The Stan Kenton Alumni Band
Have Band Will Travel

SUMMIT 535
 ★★★★★

Fame came to Stan Kenton just in time as the whole big band genre began its collapse. This is why his music reflected an almost frantic search for a new sound, another unexpected vein of originality, one more big surprise that might jump-start a faltering format. This is why Kenton's name still marks a major part of jazz's passage from tradition to modernity, from entertainment to art music.

This Is An Orchestra, a two-CD companion to a book of the same name from the University of North Texas Press, covers a 25-year span in the Kenton band's life. The music begins in 1948 with the "progressive" orchestra that gave Kenton his last major hit, "Peanut Vendor," and continues into the early 1970s as he was pioneering the early outposts of jazz education. Tantara, whose sole mission is the Kenton legacy, has taken care to avoid any previously issued performances.

In the fall of 1947, after a six-month hiatus during which the band business seemed to be flatlining, Kenton decided to administer shock treatment. His "progressive jazz" made the Kenton brand synonymous with the most traumatizing frontiers of modernism among the general jazz audience. Much of that historical ambiance is caught on the 1948 DownBeat awards broadcast here in which Kenton rakes in the plaques. The performances showcase his winning stars—June Christy, Eddie Safranski, Shelly Manne and arranger Pete Rugolo, whose shadowy "Impressionism" sounds like a noirish film score in search of a soundtrack. But it's the blaring brass of "Peanut Vendor" that was the most imitated and ultimately parodied element of Kenton's progressivism at its most strident.

The music moves on next to a 1956 California concert that is musically, if not historically, far more interesting. Bill Holman is now the principal arranger (with Gerry Mulligan and Bill Russo also contributing) and both the band and the soloists swing hard, untied from any poses of European modernity and free to speak in the tongues of bebop. Drummer Mel Lewis steers beautifully from the drum chair with none of the ponderousness often attributed to Kenton. Much of the West Coast jazz scene came from various Kenton bands of the '50s, among them here Carl Fontana, Lennie Niehaus, Bill Perkins and Curtis Counce. Niehaus is constantly invigorating on alto, as are Perkins ("Out Of Nowhere") and Spencer Sinatra on tenor.

Disc two collects six live and studio sessions



from 1961 to 1973, with early glimpses of Don Menza, Marvin Stamm, Gabe Baltazar and Peter Erskine. Kenton went into the '60s with much of his Stravinskyish flair intact, though the music here presents a mix of the dance book, original charts and some "bigger" pieces. "Prologue: West Side Story" and "Maria" give arranger Johnny Richards license to mix tempos and dynamics in intriguing ways, while the 1973 performances include several fresh, punchy originals of the period in the brassy Kenton style.

The Kenton band has been gone for more than 30 years, but *Have Band Will Travel* rounds up about 10 veterans whose service goes back to 1957, while a half-dozen younger ringers present no burden. All are eager to play the old book.

But alas, the old book is not what this remarkably fine band delivers. For an orchestra that presents itself as custodian of the Kenton legacy, two thirds of its material is essentially guesswork—how would that legacy have evolved today? The question is, why settle for the Kenton "spirit" when the real thing is at hand? Perhaps he would be doing a chart like "Joint Tenancy" if he had a couple trumpets as lean and crisp as Don Rader and Steve Huffsteter. But with so much of the vast book in a limbo, one is a little disappointed that that this isn't the band to bring it to life. We do get a nicely reconfigured "Intermission Riff," and "Swing House" reminds us what treasures Gerry Mulligan left behind. Perhaps leader Mike Max doesn't wish to preside over a museum of memories. —John McDonough

This Is An Orchestra: Disc 1: Theme & Introduction; Lover; June Christy Award; Lonely Woman; Pete Rugolo Award; Impressionism; Eddie Safranski Award; Safranski; Shelly Manne Award; Artistry In Percussion; Stan Kenton Award; The Peanut Vendor; Theme & Sign-Off; A Theme Of Four Values; Young Blood; Intermission Riff; Cherokee; Take The "A" Train; Polka Dots And Moonbeams; Fearless Finlay; I'm Glad There Is You; Kingfish; Out Of Nowhere; Lighthouse (78:24). Disc 2: Gone With The Wind; Intermission Riff; Sophisticated Lady; Lullaby Of Birdland; It's A Big Wide Wonderful World; Give Me A Song With A Beautiful Melody; Prologue-West Side Story; Maria; Malaguena; What Are You Doing The Rest Of Your Life; No Harmful Side Effects; Of Space And Time; For Better Or For Worse; Street Of Dreams; Malaga; Artistry In Rhythm (76:21). **Personnel:** Stan Kenton and orchestras.

Ordering info: tantaraproductions.com

Have Band Will Travel: The New Intermission Riff; Softly As I Leave You; El Viento Caliente; Long Ago & Far Away; Artemis & Apollo; Five & Dime; This Could Be The Start Of Something Big; Our Garden; Swing House; Tonight; Joint Tenancy; Invitation; The Shadow Of Your Smile; Crescent City Stomp. (70:24)

Personnel: Mike Vax and orchestra.
Ordering info: summitrecords.com



Halfway through *Transitions*, Ted Pease's airy yet weighty centerpieces raise the bar, tweak us to reflect on magic, mystery and majesty. Something pairs cup-muted trumpets over strutting street-beat, as staccato lines weave Bartok-like over a swirl of solo moods—Smith eloquent, Ray ebullient, Govoni rampant. The march segues to the seductive, tidal “Spring Rounds”: Those trumpets twine around Smith’s creamy alto in a sexy *Rite Of Spring* bolero. Solos unfold organically from Ray, Smith’s enchanted alto in a mesmerizing cosmic dance, when, at the gnashing climax, solo bass startlingly echoes the Rite’s

eerie dawn-call.

—Fred Bouchard

Hair Of The Dog: Minors; Woman Trouble; Blue Mosque Blues; Hair Of The Dog; Kotzen Beim Steuerberater; Time; Better Not; Let It Go Ro; Groove Bag. (75:52)

Personnel: Flip Philipp, vibes; Ed Partyka, bass trombone, tuba; Robert Bachner, trombone, euphonium; Martin Eberle, trumpet, flugelhorn; Jure Pukl, tenor and soprano saxophones; Wolfgang Schiftner, alto saxophone, bass clarinet, flute; Fabian Rucker, baritone saxophone, bass clarinet; Oliver Kent, piano; Robert Jukic, bass; Christian Salfelner, drums.
Ordering info: ats-records.com

Transitions: Meta Mambo; Interlude 1; Transition; Interlude 2; Without A Paddle; Interlude 3; Empty Room, Bare Walls; Interlude 4; And Now For Something Completely Different; Spring Rounds (Variations on a theme by Igor Stravinsky); Interlude 5; Komla's Saudade; Interlude 6; Bats; Interlude 7; Triple Play. (71:34)

Personnel: Daniel Ian Smith, soprano, alto and baritone saxophones, flute; Dino Govoni, tenor saxophone, flute; Ken Cervenka, Walter Platt, trumpet, flugelhorn; Tim Ray, piano; Keala Kaumehiwa, bass; Steve Langone, drums, cymbals; Ernesto Diaz, congas, percussion.
Ordering info: danieliansmith.com

The New World Jazz Composers Octet

Transitions

BIG & PHAT JAZZ PRODUCTIONS 1021
★★★★½

Flip Philipp & Ed Partyka Dectet

Hair Of The Dog

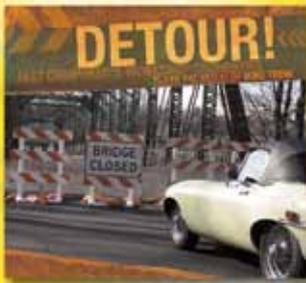
ATS RECORDS 0694
★★★★

These writers' bands from Berlin and Boston balance humor (dry or zany) with serious chops, rollicking camaraderie with crackerjack virtuosity, chamber jazz textures with broad post-bop. Both emphasize composition over solos, touch classical inspirations and materials, and mine now-universal cultural motifs: waltzes, oompah, boogaloo, street samba. The Berliners get a leg up on humor, arresting textures (leaders play vibes and tuba) and a brilliant palette; the octet, mainly Berklee College faculty, blends in composers (Mexico, NEC) and freelance players.

The dectet writes unsigned billets-doux to Sun Ra (jumping “Mirrors”), Henry Mancini (“Woman Trouble” goes “Mr. Lucky” with vibes tremolo and gutbucket ’bone), Paul Horn/Emil Richards on the odd-meter waltz “Better Not” and Milt Jackson, whose lines pastiche the shout chorus of an amiable boogaloo. Blue Middle Eastern licks line a Topkapi cop-chase into bazaar alleys and echo in bass clarinet muezzin-calls. On “Hair Of The Dog,” a tight poodle-do of tuba-laced brass in Zappa curlers, Jure Pukl’s tenor rises from a subdued lilt on vibes/brass cushions to bone-rattling screeches over barreling rhythm.

The octet demonstrates a highly charged Latin bent featuring traps and conga on mambo, bolero, boogaloo, ballad. Ensembles unfold with relaxed confidence and solos with polished conviction. Tim Ray’s every piano statement—from tossed-off interludes to well-framed solos—smacks of aware genius. Ken Cervenka’s candid brass work burnishes bolero and ballad. Daniel Ian Smith’s alto and bari declaim telling choruses; Dino Govoni’s tenor sparkles. Improvised solo interludes conceptually space and mirror the tracks: Smith’s raw skitterings and Ray’s furtive curlicues presage and pique a bouncy Matthew Nicholl samba; Steve Langone’s traps and Ernesto Diaz’s congas rally with Smith for puckish whimsy.

Michael Treni




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— Owen Cordle

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Stanton Moore *Groove Alchemy*

TELARC 31890

★★★

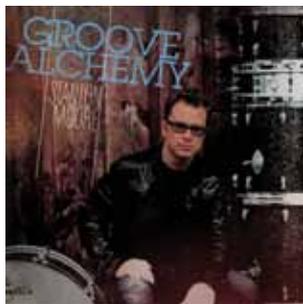
New Orleans-based drummer/leader Stanton Moore exemplifies today's Crescent City scene. Or does he?

The Metairie, La.-born Moore has collaborated with musicians across multiple genres, recorded five solos albums, and seven more with the genre-shifting band Galactic, which he also cofounded. Moore's got the funky beat formula known to set jam band aficionados aflame: a heavy-as-lead groove, gorgeously fat drum sound, a deep grasp of New Orleans rhythms and a versatile skill set that matches any situation. But as head-shaking and booty-busting as *Groove Alchemy* generally sounds, it's also pretty standard stuff. Everything's in the pocket, and Moore's assembled trio stomps hard.

Groove Alchemy is typical, if very well-executed, New Orleans funk, complete with weedly-weedly fuzz guitar solos ("Pot Licker"), second-line marches (the really quite acceptable "Root Cellar"), Meters-lifting show-downs ("Neeps And Tatties") and a blues shuffle for good measure ("Up To Here"). Moore unleashes an especially mad cowbell rhythm on "Knocker," and his cohorts Will Bernard and Robert Walter create some interesting combos of their own elsewhere (as in the weird monster mash of "Cleanse This House" and the eerie "House Of The Rising Sun" alluding "Aletta"). Preservation Hall this ain't. But why should New Orleans music stick to formula?

—Ken Micallef

Groove Alchemy: Squash Blossom; Pie-Eyed Manc; Pot Licker; Root Cellar; Keep On Gwine; Neeps And Tatties; Up To Here; Knocker; Shiftless; Cleanse This House; Aletta; He Stopped Loving Her Today. (54:22)
Personnel: Stanton Moore, drums; Robert Walter, Hammond B-3 organ, piano; Will Bernard, guitar.
Ordering info: telarc.com



Moutin Reunion Quartet *Soul Dancers*

PLUS LOIN MUSIC 4525

★★★½

In the course of recording three albums with its current lineup, the Parisian powerhouse of brothers Francois and Louis Moutin's Reunion Quartet has quickly established itself as one of the most creative new bands of the decade. Pairing a profoundly virtuosic rhythm section with a series of lyrical compositions that highlight the brothers' seeming fascinations with neo-bop and Weather Report-era fusion, the quartet's latest effort only advances its status.

Deft time-shifts and the thoughtful admiration of musical heroes mark more than a few of the album's nine, electric keyboard-heavy tracks. "Blessed And Cursed" pays homage to Jaco Pastorius with enigmatic keyboard waves of atmosphere setting the stage for a lone, methodically punctuated cymbal crash. As the first bass strains give way to Rick Margitza's thoughtful, almost brooding tenor performance, the mood shifts, as if to recall one of Pastorius' infamous swings from low to high and back. Next, "Mr. N.R.," another tribute tune, recognizes the contributions of spoken word artist Norman Riley. And the most unique track on the album comes in the form of a bass-and-drums medley of Thelonious Monk tunes, perfect for illustrating the legend's percussive approach to melody.

—Jennifer Odell

Soul Dancers: Sold Answers; Depths Light; Momentum; Monk's Medley; Mr. N.R.; Blessed And Cursed; Clinton Parkview; Forgotten Feelings; Quiet Force. (49:05)
Personnel: Francois Moutin, bass; Louis Moutin, drums; Pierre de Bethmann, piano, keyboards, vocals; Rick Margitza, tenor saxophone.
Ordering info: plusloin.net



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**Metropole Orkest/
John Scofield/
Vince Mendoza**
54

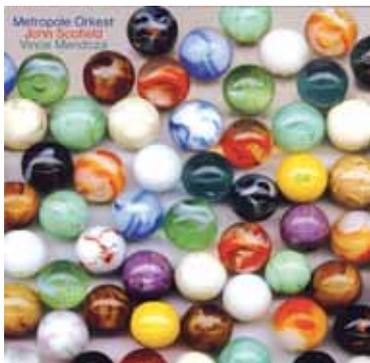
EMARCY 0602527144504
★★★

54 is not a pure John Scofield album, perhaps not a true jazz album. Its glossily symphonic strings and occasionally glitzy arrangements rely on the wide-ranging, Netherlands-based Metropole Orkest's film-score functionality more than its jazz prowess. However, they perform Scofield's material, conducted by Vince Mendoza, with refined taste and acute attention to detail.

The 54-member Metropole Orkest displays sensitivity throughout 54 to the guitarist's omnipresent blues feeling joined to a simmering pulse (the Orkest's drummer recalling Peter Erskine) that keeps the music popping. When the Orkest's strings glide too slickly or a cinematic orchestral swell recalls John Williams, Sco nails it back to earth with one of his scrape-and-squeal guitar signatures.

One wonders why Scofield didn't record with a U.S. big band, or perhaps the harder-swinging WDR Big Band out of Cologne. Still, 54 finds Scofield on fresh terrain. Bolder numbers include the Latin cooker "Carlos"; "Polo Towers," with Sco on scrunch overload plying a ragged blues riff; "Twang," a full-tilt boogie of second-line rhythms; and "Peculiar," its curlicue melody and blasting Scofield solo (doubled!) expressed via a Lalo Schiffrin-styled, "Mannix"-worthy arrangement. —Ken Micallef

54: Carlos; Jung Parade; Polo Towers; Honest I Do; Twang; Imaginary Time; Peculiar; Say We Did; Out Of The City. (64:25)
Personnel: John Scofield, guitar; Vince Mendoza, conductor, arranger; Florian Röss, Jim McNeely, arrangers; Metropole Orkest, rhythm ensemble, brass, strings.
Ordering info: emarcy.com



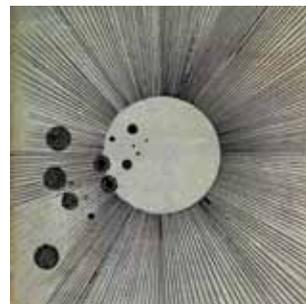
**Flying Lotus
Cosmogramma**

WARP 195
★★★★

It's not every artist that tries to map the dimensions of the universe (the literal function of a cosmogram), so let's consider this sprawling electronica essay a unique item. Lotus, aka Steve Ellison, has been tilting towards such eloquence for a few years now. His 1983 and Los Angeles discs sketched out a synth 'n' sample realm that put a personal spin on dub-step drama while alluding to the rings around Saturn and the traffic snarls on the 405. This new disc compounds all the surrealism that laced its predecessors, coming through like an unholy blend of Cluster, Spring Heel Jack and Christian Marclay. Consider it the latest edition of Cali psychedelia.

Jazz fans are taking note because the music's orchestral girth delivers a thrill that parallels free-jazz's expressionism. There's no cacophony here—though he finds uses for dissonance, Lotus likes his dreamscapes to be a tad more tempered—but the labyrinth of textures and rhythmic implosions delivers a steady stream of peaks. The pastoral segments allude to the shimmering work of Ellison's aunt, Alice Coltrane (as well as Pharoah Sanders' "Astral Traveling"), and cousin Ravi Coltrane injects some narcotic tenor sax on "German Haircut" and "Arkestry." But don't expect a star turn. Ultimately his horn is just another part of the pastiche, like Thom Yorke's recitations and the samples of Lotus' late mother's hospital respirator. He deems this headphone opus—certainly one of 2010's "beyond" discs—a space opera. Consider the pod bay doors open. —Jim Macnie

Cosmogramma: Clock Catcher; Pickled; Nose Art; Intro/A Cosmic Drama; Zodiac Shit; Computer Face/Pure Being; ...And The World Laughs With You; Arkestry; Mmmhmm; Do The Astral Plane; Satelliiiiiteee; German Haircut; Recoiled; Dance Of The Pseudo Nymph; Drips/Auntie's Harp; Table Tennis; Galaxy In Janaki.
Personnel: Flying Lotus; Thundercat, vocals (9); bass (4, 5, 7, 9, 11, 14, 17); Thom Yorke, vocals (7); Laura Darlington, vocals (16); Ravi Coltrane, saxophone (8, 12); Rebecca Raif, harp (1, 4, 5, 8, 12, 13, 15, 17); Miguel Atwood Ferguson, strings (4, 5, 10, 15, 17); Todd Simon, trumpet (10); Brian Martinec, guitar (16).
Ordering info: warp.net



**Albert Rivera
Inner Peace**

TURNAROUND RECORDS 1003
★★½

Saxophonist Albert Rivera doesn't hide his affection for the 1960s. The compositions on Rivera's second album, Inner Peace, recall those of McCoy Tyner, Wayne Shorter and Jimmy Heath. Rivera relies heavily on modal scales; the harmony is spare and there are few walking bass lines.

In spite of Rivera's acute sense of melody and attractive tone on tenor and soprano, Inner Peace misses its mark. The bulk of the album features Rivera leading the rhythm section of pianist Zaccai Curtis, bassist Luques Curtis and drummer Nathan Jolley, with either Jean Caze or Nick Roseboro on trumpet. "Inner Peace," "Excalibur" and especially "While You Were Gone" are strong, and the solos are solid—but, for the most part, nothing more. Rivera and company would have benefitted from having a few more chord changes to work with.

The album opens with an organ combo spotlighting guitarist Mark Whitfield on "It Always Comes Back To This," a bluesy line in the hard-bop vein. The group is good, but once again the solos lack sizzle. Next time around, Rivera should consider more varied repertoire. Finding traction on this largely modal terrain is no easy task, especially for young musicians. —Eric Fine

Inner Peace: It Always Comes Back To This; Inner Peace; Excalibur; Keeping A Balance; A Cry Of A Child; While You Were Gone; Remembrance (9/11 Tribute); From All Angles; The First Time We Said Hello. (65:38)
Personnel: Albert Rivera, tenor, soprano saxophones; Jean Caze, trumpet (1, 2, 6, 8, 9); Mark Whitfield, guitar (1, 8); Beck Burger, Hammond B3 organ (1, 8); John Iannuzzi, drums (1, 8); Zaccai Curtis, piano (2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9); Luques Curtis, bass (2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9); Nathan Jolley, drums (2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9); Nick Roseboro, trumpet (3, 4, 7).
Ordering info: turnaroundrecords.com



**Dave Wilson Quartet
Spiral**

SUMMIT 544
★★★½

With a crack band in pianist Phil Markowitz, bassist Tony Marino and Adam Nussbaum on drums, saxophonist Dave Wilson knows how to pick them and the music. Actually, most of these 11 tunes are Wilson's, with a few of the covers suggesting eclecticism: Toninho Horta's "Francisca" and the Grateful Dead classic "Friend Of The Devil."

Eclectic because, as far as jazz albums go, Spiral is pretty standard, straightahead fare, sparked by Wilson's edgy yet loose tenor playing along with vivid comping and soloing by Markowitz, solid support from Marino and sensitive yet fiery playing from the always reliable Nussbaum. The title track is an uptempo swinger with a catchy melody hinged on two chords and great playing all around. Wilson's "Movin' On," to take another example, is a good spot to hear the saxophonist's lyrical yet burly tone on this medium-slow swinger, Markowitz's piano adding its own lyrical sheen while Marino and Nussbaum channel their respective Jimmy Garrison and Elvin Jones vibes. Wilson's "Like GS 2" (the title is a reference to Scott LaFaro's "Gloria's Step," the song a reworking) is a light trio excursion, featuring the leader's Warne Marsh-like playing with Marino getting some room to solo against Nussbaum's tasty brushwork. This swinger indicates a band comfort level both wide and deep. —John Ephland

Spiral: Spiral; Elm; Ocean Blue; Friend Of The Devil; Summer Breezes; My Own Prison; Movin' On; Like GS 2; Remembering; Francisca; (You're The) Biggest Part Of Me. (61:43)
Personnel: Dave Wilson, tenor and soprano saxophone; Phil Markowitz, piano; Tony Marino, bass; Adam Nussbaum, drums.
Ordering info: summitrecords.com



Weston's Cross-Cultural Life

In 2001, Randy Weston stepped into a club in Kyoto, Japan, and felt the presence of Africa. Weston, an ethnomusical hobbyist, had spent his entire life learning about African music and integrating it into his aesthetic, but he never expected to identify with the Japanese audience on a spiritual level. The pianist's oeuvre has explored his African ancestry; that evening, he learned that the same sacred principles can resonate across different nations.

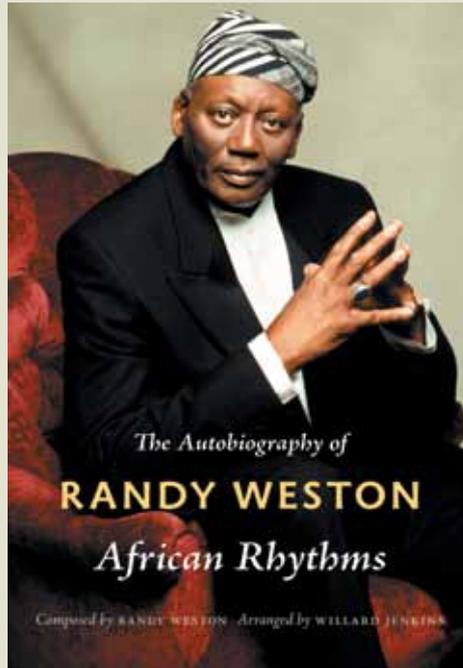
African Rhythms: The Autobiography Of Randy Weston (Duke University Press) is a tour of African spirituality. The book details the Brooklyn-born Weston's early connection with African culture and his quest to infuse his compositions with a sense of place and history. Weston, now in his 80s, writes music wedded to both the American jazz tradition and his ancestors' musical vernacular.

While Weston is credited as the composer of *African Rhythms*, Willard Jenkins is listed as the arranger, stringing together hours upon hours of interviews into a structurally sound and engaging narrative. Anecdotes from major figures in the pianist's life along with letters by admirers enhance these interviews, but most of the book's 300 pages are led by the good-natured Weston's conversations. This story-by-transcript model takes a bit of getting used to, but makes the work ultimately more personal.

The interviews have been edited and smoothed out to achieve a novelistic flow. According to Jenkins, Weston added detail to the material and clarification in some parts, but he also edited candid remarks out of the manuscript. The result is a book rich in detail about the professional aspects of Weston's life, but glosses over points that may be embarrassing or uncomfortable.

Weston spends most of the book revisiting details over which followers of his music would salivate. He thoroughly explores his artistic relationship with the arranger Melba Liston, devotes an entire chapter to the personalities of his current band and explicates his discography, focusing on 1960's *Uhuru Africa*, 1972's *Blue Moses* and other African-influenced material. But while *African Rhythms* is a musician's autobiography and famous historical figures leap out of the page—including cameos by a benevolent Charlie Parker and a garrulous Muhammad Ali—the book is much more about the pianist's quest to find physical and spiritual tranquility.

From an early age, Weston's taskmaster father, who was of Caribbean descent, in-



stilled in him a cultural pride. He spent weekends with his churchgoing mother, who was raised in the South. Church and cultural pride soon mixed with jazz. Many prominent musicians lived in his neighborhood, and Weston spent his youth hanging out at the houses of Max Roach, Ray Abrams and Duke Jordan. Musicians were heroes to him, not only for their talents, he writes, but because "their music was something for which we could claim ownership."

Once the professional floodgates opened and Weston achieved prominence as a musician, he parlayed that notoriety into tours of Africa sponsored by the state department. He fell in love with the continent and moved to Morocco in the late 1960s, eventually settling in Tangier. A disdain of more contemporary jazz fueled the relocation as much as his desire to be in Africa. Weston disliked the avant garde and cool jazz movements, both of which he deemed a rejection of black culture. "There's a certain romance, a certain love in our music, a certain emotion despite all the adversity we've faced," he writes. "That's what I wasn't hearing in the music anymore."

As he grew older, Weston's frank attitude, and his wearing traditional garb, alienated critics and listeners and may have even opened him up to overt racism. But Weston didn't let these issues sway him from his goal. Weston has dedicated his life to spreading African music throughout the world and forging a bond with his identity as an African American musician. *African Rhythms* ably recounts his sometimes arduous journey to becoming a true cross-cultural ambassador. **DB**

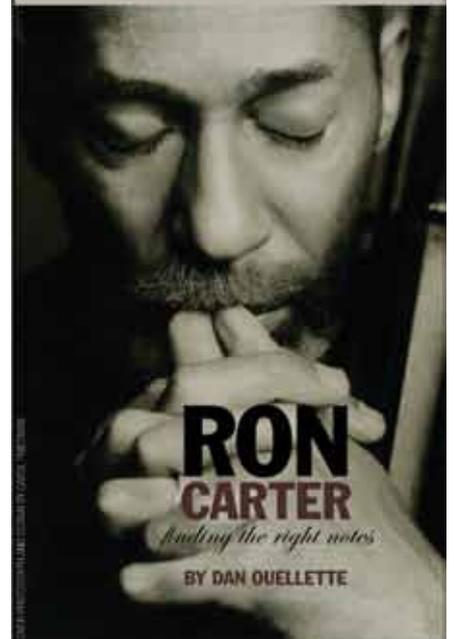
Ordering info: dukeupress.edu

Written by Dan Ouellette, *Ron Carter: Finding the Right Notes* has received international praise. *All About Jazz—New York* noted that "Carter's history is jazz's history, making this book a must for all jazz fans," while saxophonist Benny Golson heralds the book as "a treasure." Jazz journalist Gary Giddins says, "Every musical artist as candid and thoughtful as Ron Carter should have a writer as empathic and efficient as Dan Ouellette to help him tell his story." Nominated by Jazz Journalism Association's Jazz Awards for best book, *Finding the Right Notes* is in its second printing and now also available as a Kindle e-book through Amazon.com.

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Meridian Maple drums from Mapex combine great sound, quality and attention to detail at a mid-level price range. High-end features abound on these kits, including thick 2.3mm triple-flanged powerhoops, redesigned tom-isolation mounts, spring-loaded feet on the floor-tom legs for extra resonance, cushioned and recessed bass-drum claws, and an all-maple seven-ply shell. The hand-sanded, eight-coat, high-gloss maple lacquer finish is exquisite. Each Meridian drum set is equipped with Mapex 700 series hardware.

My four-piece review kit included an 18- by 14-inch bass drum, 12- by 8-inch tom, 14- by 14-inch floor tom and a 5.5- by 14-inch snare drum. Factory heads seemed a bit out of character for a bebop-size kit, but Remo Coated Ambassador heads were the solution, and they absolutely sang. Tuning was a breeze, with the drums displaying a wide range for the small sizes. The bass drum has surprising low end, yet when tuned higher it has great tone. Toms were tuned to a medium-high “bop” range, and they sounded beautiful without choking. The snare drum was powerful yet crisp and sensitive. Cross-sticking and rimshots sounded excellent. My

only gripe: The snare drum strainer was difficult to disengage, making quick on/off snare changes a hassle.

On gigs, the visually striking Mapex Meridian Maple drums demonstrated a widely versatile range, suitable for whatever the music called for. Whether playing softly and delicately or whipped up into a roar, they were right there with me. Higher-volume Latin jazz was no problem, as the drums have plenty of punch and projection when called upon. Soloing was a joy on these drums. The sound was uniform, providing a great base for expressing my musical ideas.

Mapex Meridian Maple drums have a lot going for them. Extra features and attention to detail make them a standout in the ultra-competitive mid-level market. There are many sizes and configurations available, so these drums are going to be able to handle any musical situation you can throw at them. The Meridians prove that you can have a high-quality set of drums with high-end features for not a lot of money.

—Ryan Bennett

Ordering info: mapexdrums.com

The Loar LH-600, LH-700 Archtops *Recreating American Classics*

When The Music Link launched its Recording King Division, the company had a clear goal in mind: to design and build affordable acoustic instruments that pay tribute to some of the world's most revered pre-war-era flattop guitars and banjos. With the introduction of The Loar division, the company has added archtop guitars and mandolins to its quest, resurrecting the historic 1920s designs of acoustic engineer Loyd Loar. Based on Loar's original L-5 model, The Loar has introduced two hand-carved 16-inch guitars, the LH-600 and LH-700. Both are quite impressive and offer quality and tone far beyond their low price tags.

Although borrowing from the masters is by no means a new concept among luthiers, The Loar is unique in its ability to offer its guitars at such affordable price points. According to Ashley Atz, PR and artist relations manager, "We are dedicated to recreating niche markets and offering people a historic instrument at a great value."

In order to produce a faithful representation, the company carefully studied the original Loar-era archtop guitars, which were first introduced by the Gibson Co. in 1922.

These instruments are built in China, but not in factories that produce instruments for several companies. The Loar guitars are built in limited quantities in an exclusive workshop under extremely tight quality control. Like the originals, each guitar is hand-crafted from solid tonewoods by luthiers who began as violin-makers with years of experience in carving tops.

Both the LH-600 and LH-700 models fea-

ture the same basic design, which is faithful to the original L5 built by Loyd Loar. The tops are constructed of solid select spruce with solid maple sides and backs with V-profile necks crafted from mahogany. The fingerboards are ebony with a bone nut. True to Loyd's vision, the guitars have a 16-inch lower bout, 11.5-inch upper bout and a scale length of 24.75 inches. The finish on the guitars is hand-buffed nitro-cellulose lacquer, once again remaining true to the original vintage instruments. The overall workmanship on these instruments is amazing considering their low cost.

Having played many vintage L-5s, I was quite familiar with the feel and sound of the original guitars. Obviously these instruments cannot replicate the tone of an 85-year-old instrument, but I was impressed with how they did capture the overall vibe of the originals, producing the loud, clear, dry, punchy sound that made those guitars legends. Although impressed with both models, I found that the LH-700 sounded better, with a little more volume and warmth compared to the 600 model. This is actually not surprising, since in addition to a few cosmetic enhancements, the LH-700 also features AAA maple and spruce as compared to the standard grade on the 600.

The Loar has done an incredible job with these guitars, which offer a unique value. At a MSRP of \$1,199.99 for the LH-600 and \$1,599.99 for the LH-700 (hardshell case included), these are truly "the working man's pre-war instruments."

—Keith Baumann

Ordering info: theloar.com



LH-600

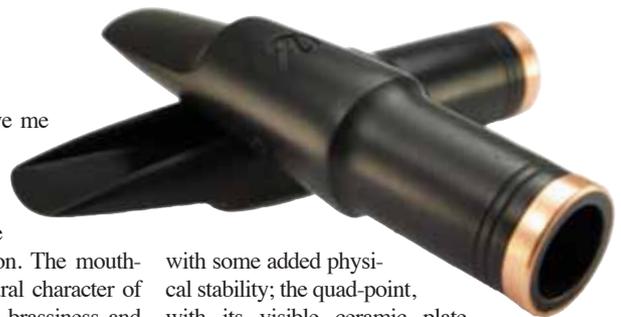
Drake Ceramic Chamber Mouthpieces *Maximize Your Sax*

Drake Mouthpieces has re-engineered the materials used to make its saxophone and clarinet mouthpiece lines (and clarinet barrels), which combine ceramic particles and vintage resin in a unique design to enhance density. According to owner Aaron Drake, it's an improvement on a 20-year-old family recipe based in the science of ceramic acoustics.

I play-tested two baritone sax mouthpieces from Drake's Ceramic Chamber line, the Contemporary I and Contemporary II (available for soprano, alto, tenor and bari) and immediately noticed an improvement in my sound quality. According to Drake, the ceramic chamber has the effect of producing a strong core fundamental tone color that you don't normally get with hard rubber or metal mouthpieces. The Contemporary

I and Contemporary II both gave me a sense of better control over the air column and helped me achieve an effortless vibrato that sounded great on solos and at the bottom of a big-band sax section. The mouthpieces also brought out the natural character of the horn itself, giving me more brassiness and less of the undesirable reed/mouthpiece buzz often associated with baritone tone. Overall, I preferred the Contemporary II, which has a lower baffle than the Contemporary I and produced a darker tone.

I also checked out two of Drake's new slide-on ligatures, the Vintage Resin Double Rail and the Quad Point Ceramic Resonance Plate. The double-rail model felt more like a traditional lig



with some added physical stability; the quad-point, with its visible ceramic plate touching the reed in four places, added tonal depth and responded a little more rapidly.

All Drake mouthpieces are handmade in Plainfield, N.J., and come with a lifetime replacement warranty. Also, check out the company's Hybrid and Custom mouthpiece lines, known for their durability, projection and rock-solid intonation.

—Ed Enright

Ordering info: drakemouthpieces.com

{1} DRUMMING ON DVD

Alfred Publishing has added DVD companions to two of its percussion books. *Afro-Cuban Big Band Play-Along* gives drummers and percussionists an opportunity to play contemporary Afro-Cuban music in a big band setting. Playing tunes from the Afro-Bop Alliance, drummer Joe McCarthy focuses on three predominant groove categories: mambo, cha-cha-cha and 6/8 Afro-Cuban. On *The How To Of Udu*, author Brian Melick covers a variety of drums and techniques such as developing fundamental pitches and creating multiple melodic tones. A number of improvisational performances are included in the lessons.

More info: alfred.com

{2} SILVER-CENTERED CABLES

Zaolla Silverline has released The Artist 500 guitar cable, which combines sonic transparency with durability. Designed around a solid silver center conductor, the cable features an enamel-coated, stranded-copper ancillary conductor in a hybrid configuration. The plugs on the cable combine the design of G&H Industries' Show Saver plug with a silver core. The Artist 500 comes in lengths ranging from 3–30 feet, with 6- and 12-inch pedal patch cables.

More info: zaolla.com

{3} DIGITAL WIRELESS SYSTEMS

The new XD-series of digital wireless microphone systems from Line 6 includes two handheld cardioid mic systems (XD-V30 and XD-V70) and two belt-pack systems (XD-V30L and XD-V70L). All four digital wireless systems broadcast in the 2.4 GHz band, which avoids interference from high-powered sources and allows for license-free use worldwide. The XD-V30 and XD-V30L feature six channels and a 100-foot range. The XD-V70 and XD-V70L have 12 channels, a 300-foot range and 1/2U rack receivers with built-in antenna distribution system.

More info: line6.com



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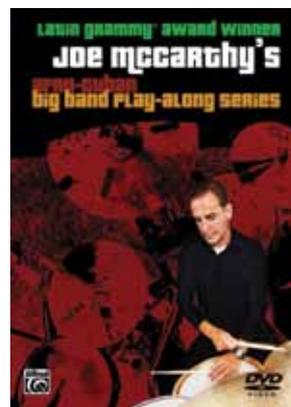


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{4} NEW ROOMIE

The new version of the Room-Mate reverb pedal from T-Rex Engineering offers the same tube-like warmth as the original and features enhancements based on user feedback, such as a revamped spring mode. When the decay is set low in spring mode, Room-Mate emulates a short-spring reverb. A decay knob has also been added, which lets users adjust the length of the reverb trail in all four modes. A new hi-cut knob trims the high notes on the tail of the reverb for a smoother sound. And a gain knob makes it possible to use the Room-Mate in an effects loop without overloading the pedal's input stage.

More info: musicquip.com

{5} SLAP UPDATE

LP has launched a new version of its Vibra-Slap II that yields an exotic, more penetrating sound. Played in conventional fashion, the improved Vibra-Slap II emits stronger tones and heightened sustain due to its hardwood chamber. Its distinct "ratchet" rattle is perfect for creating a dramatic effect during gigs or setting a haunting mood on TV and movie soundtracks.

More info: lpmusic.com

{6} PORTABLE PEDAL POWER

Sanyo has come up with a new way for musicians to power their effects pedals, multi-effect devices and mobile recorders. Pedal Juice, a 9V DC rechargeable lithium-ion battery device, is designed to meet the needs of both professional and entry-level musicians. One Pedal Juice battery can provide up to 50 hours of continuous, stable power for a single analog pedal or up to 20 hours of continuous power to three digital pedals. Because the unit's eneloop battery eliminates the need for AC power, the output voltage is more stable for longer periods of time without the possibility of AC ground looping noise. The battery can be recharged hundreds of times.

More info: us.sanyo.com

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Don't Be A 'Jerk' — Play The Comping Game

The knee jerk is a common diagnostic tool used in medicine, that reflex tested by the doctor tapping just below the knee, which causes the lower leg to suddenly jerk forward. This has become such a common procedure that it has given rise to the adjective “knee-jerk,” as in a knee-jerk reaction. Knee-jerk in this figurative sense means “readily predictable to the point of being automatic.” It often carries a negative connotation and conveys an overly hasty, impulsive, irrational response based on a preset idea.

This concept could easily be applied to the musician who reacts automatically or even without thinking when playing in an ensemble setting, more specifically a drummer who comps or otherwise embellishes the act of timekeeping with rhythmic choices that are not so carefully chosen as much as played out of habit. Muscle habit is deadly to the creative enterprise, yet so easy to put into play time and time again. And the drummers who do this are the same ones who complain or admit that they've reached a creative wall.

I've encountered this in my own playing, and I see and hear it in the playing of my students at University of Southern California and wherever I travel. I decided to combat this malady with a bit of creative fun/play: Welcome to “The Comping Game.”

Rules Of The Game

The rules of The Comping Game are simple but very important to follow:

- The ride cymbal may not change from its ride pattern (see Example #1).
- The hi-hat may not change from sounding on beats 2 and 4 as played by the foot (see Example #2).
- Dynamics must be varied.
- Tempos must be varied.
- Song choices must also change.
- A “sameness”-detector algorithm should be activated in your brain—the goal is to compose and be creative.
- Each Level of Play (levels 1–10) has its own rules that must be adhered to. Here is a complete list of the sequential note-choice menu:

Level 1 – one snare, one kick.

Level 2 – two snare, one kick.

Level 3 – one snare, two kick.

Level 4 – two snare, two kick.

Level 5 – three snare, one kick.

Level 6 – one snare, three kick.

Level 7 – three snare, two kick.

Level 8 – two snare, three kick.

Level 9 – three snare, three kick.

Level 10 – play what you'd like to hear!

Example 1 & 2

Example 1 & 2 shows two rhythmic patterns in 4/4 time. Example #1 consists of a series of eighth notes with accents, grouped into triplets. Example #2 is a similar pattern with accents on the eighth notes.

Example 3

Example 3 is a multi-measure exercise in 4/4 time. The piano part is written in treble clef and includes a melodic line with triplets. The drum part is written in bass clef and includes a snare and kick pattern. Annotations include "sing this melodic rhythm" and "play on snare + kick while playing time".

Example 4

Example 4 is a multi-measure exercise in 4/4 time, similar to Example 3. It shows piano and drum parts with a melodic line and a snare/kick pattern.



Playing The Game

The purpose of the game is to *follow the rules* and to use dynamics, space and your ears: to be musical.

OK, let's play: Level #1. The snare drum may be played *one hit* and may *not* be played again until the bass drum is played for *one hit*, and then the snare drum may be played again for

one hit, etc. Don't simply alternate like an automaton—that defeats the purpose of the game.

Try this first with a 12-bar blues, for example, "Billie's Bounce." Looking at the top-line melodic rhythm of the tune, check out an example of some simple comping that follows the rules of the game (see Example #3).

Once you have successfully completed Level #1, move on to Level #2: two snare hits, followed by one bass drum hit, etc. (see Example #4).

Play these note choices as isolated events, and then try them as combos. Soon, you will discover new combinations and even new licks as you navigate these improvisational game waters.

Remember to vary the tempos, song forms and, most of all, *dynamics* when playing these new combinations. In addition to the 12-bar blues form, play The Comping Game on such song forms as "Oleo" ("Rhythm" changes) and "All The Things You Are"—the extended forms will change the pacing of your rhythms and note choices. Obviously, a slow tempo will bring out different results than a medium tune or an up-tempo tune. Also keep in mind the value of breathing and inserting space into the musical proceedings, whatever the tempo. The printed examples are

as dense as you'd want to get with the game. I encourage the use of space between the notes—often, the more space, the better. Drummers do not need to doggie-paddle their way throughout a solo accompaniment, or a tune, or a whole set, or a night, or their entire careers.

The pedantic nature of the rules has a payoff, just like any good rules to any good game. Ingenuity and skill result in a winning combination when playing a game; we don't want to leave success up to the whims of Lady Luck alone. Seriously, this bit of creative play forces the musical drummer to become *specific* in his or her choices when it comes to improvising on the drumset in a timekeeping role. What a gift we all have—to compose as we play!

I hope that the reader's knee-jerk response to this article will be to go practice ... and have fun playing The Comping Game. **DB**

PETER ERSKINE APPEARS ON MORE THAN 500 ALBUMS, HAS TWO GRAMMY AWARDS PLUS AN HONORARY DOCTORATE AND HAS WON NUMEROUS POLLS. HE PRODUCES RECORDINGS FOR FUZZY MUSIC (FUZZYMUSIC.COM), THE LATEST BEING *STANDARDS 2, MOVIE MUSIC*. ERSKINE IS PROFESSOR OF PRACTICE, JAZZ STUDIES AND DIRECTOR OF DRUMSET STUDIES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA.

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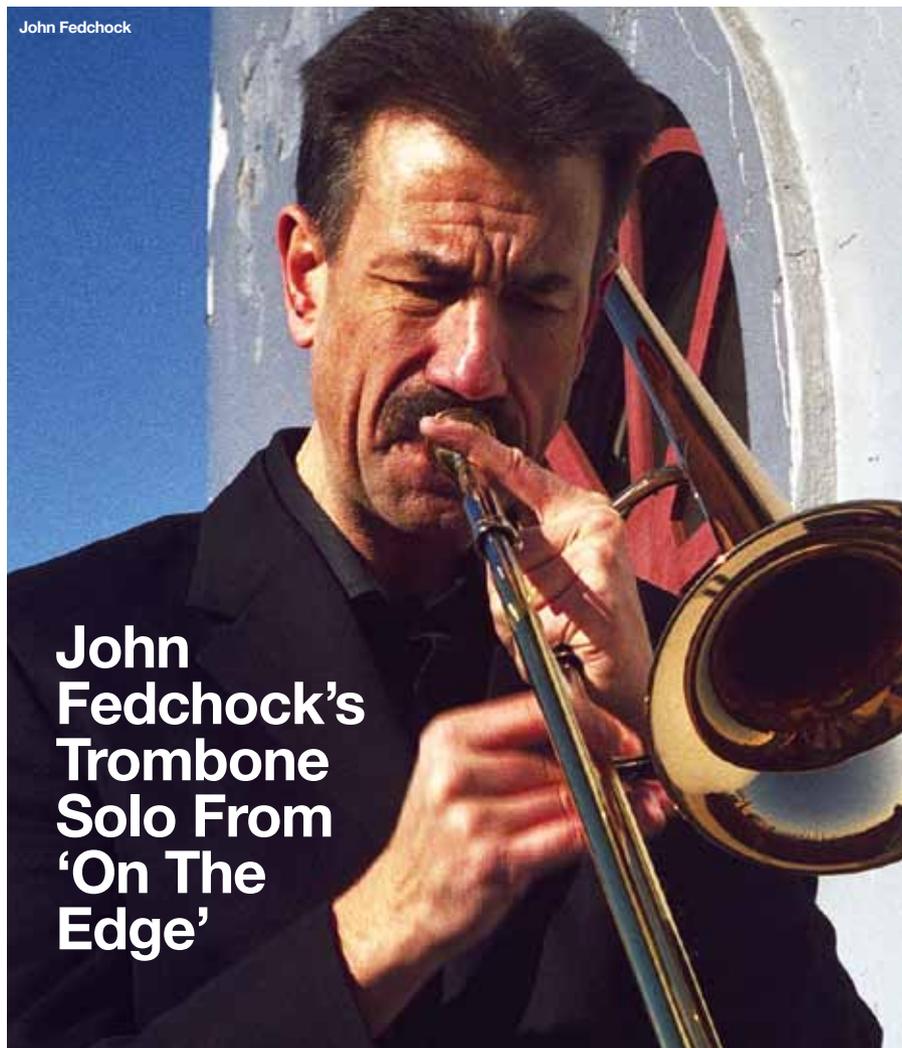
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John Fedchock



John Fedchock's Trombone Solo From 'On The Edge'

Trombonist John Fedchock's solo from "On The Edge," from his New York Big Band's 1998 album of the same name (Reservoir), clearly portrays the bebop language as well as modern rhythmic and harmonic ideas. Until the last four measures, this blues solo is accompanied by the drummer only, as Fedchock shows his ability to establish and alter harmony without piano or bass accompaniment.

There are ideas of sequence found throughout the solo. For example, in measures 10 and 11 Fedchock treats the implied C13(♭9, #11) harmony both as a sequence that combines a half-step/chromatic idea with unusually wide intervals and as a unique citing of the diminished scale. He also starts and ends his solo with blues-oriented licks that give his solo symmetry and melodic stability and display a nod to earlier stylistic roots.

Fedchock's solo has a strong bebop slant: He quotes the melody of his own tune (measure 6), uses surrounding notes (measures 5, 6, 7 and 14), implies major 7th harmony over a dominant chord (measures 7, 17 and 18) and arpeggiates

chords (measures 8, 9 and 12).

Along with classic bebop vocabulary, Fedchock introduces some of his own harmonic ideas, which are displayed through voice-leading, the use of upper extensions and implied chord alteration. In measures 4 and 19, Fedchock voice-leads in an uncommon way. The resolution of the A♭ to E at measures 4 and 5 is the sound of a #9 resolving to a #11. In standard practice, the resolution of an upper extension is usually to a strong note in the resolving chord; however, Fedchock resolves one upper extension to another here. This, in turn, acts as part of a series of surrounding tones, finally resolving to the "expected" F on the third beat of measure 5. Another example of his voice-leading can be found at measures 19 and 20, where he leaves the F7 chord on the third (A) and goes to B♭, which is the ♭9 of an Am7(♭5) chord. The interval of a♭9 presents a planned dissonance that gives the line its distinct sound.

Fedchock also plays with the harmony by anticipating and delaying harmonic resolutions. For example, in measure 7, the first note he plays is

A_b. The note that follows the A_b is the planned resolution, G. However, the resolution has been delayed from the expected first beat to the unexpected second beat. In measure 8, Fedchok illustrates an example of anticipating harmonic change. On the fourth beat of measure 8, he plays an F that he ties over to the next measure. The F doesn't act as a #9 of the D7 chord, but rather as an anticipation of the upcoming Gm7 chord. This anticipation is powerful because the third of one chord is moving to the seventh of another. This type of voice-leading is traditional and defines the harmony in the absence of piano and bass accompaniment.

Fedchok's most intriguing musical quality—his use of upper extensions and altered harmonics—sets him apart from other players. Examples of upper extensions, chromaticism or altered harmony occur in 22 out of the 24 measures presented here. For instance, rather than outline a standard B_b7 harmony in measures 2 and 14, he chooses to play material that defines B_b7sus7, establishing a more modal sound and grounding the key center. To change the sound of the F7 from that of a tonic to an altered dominant, he combines the notes of the tritone major pen-

tatonic scale with, in the first chorus, chromatic passing tones, and, in the second chorus, notes from the altered scale. This creates tension that resolves once the IV chord of B_b7 arrives in measures 5 and 17. The symmetry of these two opening choruses isn't coincidental, but planned. The implied modal quality of the IV chord also adds to the alteration of the standard blues harmony (a suspended chord rather than a dominant) and creates anticipation for his upcoming altered line.

While conveying these complex musical ideas without piano or bass might seem a difficult task, it is a prominent feature in Fedchok's repertoire, which draws from strong bebop roots combined with unique concepts of melody and harmony. **DB**

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Jazz Courses, Students Bloom Across Downstate Illinois College Campuses

Amid the cornfields of central Illinois, there are the beginnings of a campus-based jazz renaissance. A small but determined crop of career musicians have quietly spearheaded a budding jazz scene here, but that was not the case in 1997, when Todd Kelly arrived to teach at Bradley University in Peoria, Ill.

“There was one [big] band, and the combo was student-run,” Kelly said. “There was no off-campus presence at all; people outside of the university didn’t even know the director’s name.”

Kelly had seen this before. He describes his native Montana as a “jazz wasteland.” But Kelly, who received his bachelor’s degree at the University of North Colorado before getting his doctorate from Ball State, welcomed the challenge of changing things on campus.

In his first year, Kelly took over the jazz combo, created an annual tribute concert and convinced the university to bring in a guest artist to play with the jazz ensemble each year. Four years later, student interest had grown so much he created a second jazz band.

“I got tired of turning away 15 or 20 good players every year,” he said.

Membership in the jazz program has increased over the past decade, and new students inquire about the program every semester. However, Kelly’s crowning achievement is the Bradley University Jazz Festival. Every February, more than 20 high school jazz bands come from around the region to receive instruction from a panel of jazz educators.

The centerpiece of the festival is a nationally renowned guest artist (or artists) who give a master class and play an evening concert with the Bradley Jazz Ensemble. Over the last three years, Bradley has hosted Wayne Bergeron, Michael Davis and the Jeff Hamilton Trio.

“The directors who come love it because it’s educational, not competitive,” Kelly said.

Today, Bradley has two jazz big bands and a jazz combo, as well as a two-semester jazz improvisation class. The off-campus presence Kelly

desired has come into being as well—the jazz ensemble travels to jazz festivals and concerts in Elmhurst, Galesburg and Decatur, Ill., every spring. In July 2009, the ensemble embarked on its third European tour, highlighted by concerts at the Umbria Jazz Festival in Italy. Still, he believes there is more to do. “I want to create a jazz studies major at Bradley,” he said. “There’s also no instructors in saxophone or drumming, and we need that. There’s always got to be a next level.”

Down the road at Knox College in Galesburg, Dave Hoffman is taking students to that “next level” every day. Hoffman served as the lead trumpet and flugelhorn player in the Ray Charles Orchestra for 13 years before returning to Illinois on a permanent basis. From 2005 to 2006, he was a visiting professor of music at Knox and directed the Knox College Jazz Ensemble.

Today, Hoffman directs one of the eight jazz combos at Knox. Combined with the larger jazz ensemble, Hoffman estimates there are 60 to 70 students currently playing jazz at Knox. Aside from hosting the Rootabaga Jam Jazz Festival every March, there is the fall Jazz-A-Thon where bands play for eight straight hours. Every Thursday night, the college’s top combo hosts a four-hour jam session at McGillacuddy’s restaurant in downtown Galesburg.

Another musician, Tom Marko, has led the jazz program at Illinois State University for the last eight years. As many as 55 students play in the ongoing two big bands and two combos and take part in the school’s jazz improv class and jazz/rock music theory class.

Hoffman, who plays Friday nights at Peoria’s Panache restaurant, said, “There is no problem finding good musicians, but you kind of have to stimulate your own thing.”

“There are a lot of talented musicians, but you have to know where to look,” said saxophonist Bridget Bourke, a member of the Bradley Jazz Ensemble, who gigs with Hoffman at Panache. “There’s good music in Peoria, but you’ve got to find it.”

—Chris Stanley

Juilliard Jazz @ 10: New York’s Juilliard Jazz has begun a concert series to celebrate its 10th anniversary. The department’s artistic director, drummer Carl Allen, has formed the new Juilliard Jazz Quintet, which performed on Sept. 21. Future concerts include the Juilliard Jazz Orchestra performing with alumni at a 10-year celebration on March 31. **Details:** juilliard.edu

Savannah Swing: Auditions are open to attend the Swing Central Jazz competition and workshop at the Savannah Jazz Festival March 30–April 1. The Georgia event will provide more than 240 students from 12 high schools across the United States with opportunities to receive instruction from, directly interact with, and publicly perform with jazz educators and professionals. Swing Central clinicians include Marcus Roberts, Wycliffe Gordon and John Clayton. **Details:** savannahmusicfestival.org

String Scholar: Violinist Alex Hargreaves has received the Jimmy Lyons Scholarship to study at Boston’s Berklee College of Music. **Details:** berklee.edu

Intensive Drums: Keith Hall held his fourth annual summer drum intensive at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo, Mich., June 20–25. The 30 drummers who attended also received a copy of his new book, *Jazz Drums Now! Volume 1*.

Details: keithhallmusic.com

Coltrane Studies: Northeastern University professor and saxophonist Leonard Brown has edited *John Coltrane And Black America’s Quest For Freedom* (Oxford University Press), a collection of scholarly essays. **Details:** oup.com

New Profs: Jazz accordionist Ted Reichman has joined the New England Conservatory faculty. Drummer Quincy Davis has been appointed assistant professor at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg.

Details: necmusic.edu; umanitoba.ca

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Lenny White

“Music is how you break silence, so when you make a statement, it better be good,” said Lenny White during his Blindfold Test. Throughout the proceedings, the drum master—who recently reaffirmed his stature as a high-chops fusion drummer on *Anomaly* (Abstract Logix)—revealed strong opinions on all things drum-centric.

Roy Haynes

“The Best Thing For You” (from *Love Letters*, Sony, 2002) Haynes, drums; Joshua Redman, tenor saxophone; Kenny Barron, piano; Christian McBride, bass.

This is Roy Haynes. He’s the living history of jazz. He’s played with everybody, done everything, and he’s one of my six heroes—the others are Philly Joe [Jones], Max [Roach], Elvin [Jones], Art Blakey and Tony [Williams]. Each drummer I named transcends the instrument; their approach to music is unique, and they use the drums to interpret the music. 9 stars. Here’s a true story with Roy Haynes that helped shape my musical life. He had a group called the Hip Ensemble, and the last tune he’d play on the set was “Lift Every Voice And Sing.” At the end, he’d go, *bah-dah-doo-dah, brrmmm*, and he’d play a drum cadenza. He was playing at Slugs’, and he knew I was there, and said *bah-dah-doo-dah, brrmmm*, stopped, and called me up on the stage, and had me play the drum cadenza.

John Ellis & Double Wide

“Puppet Mischief” (from *Puppet Mischief*, Obliq Sound, 2010) John Ellis, tenor saxophone; Jason Marsalis, drums; Brian Coogan, organ; Matt Perrine, sousaphone.

Is it Dave Holland’s band? No? That’s very interesting, because of the tuba, and they negotiate their way seamlessly through 7/4. The drummer is doing an admirable job playing within the music. He’s not getting in the way. I haven’t a clue. A lot of younger guys are technically proficient, but there’s no particular emphasis on an identifiable sound, whether the choice of cymbals, or how they tune their drums, so I can immediately think, “I know who that is.” 3 stars.

Kendrick Scott

“Short Story” (from *Reverence*, Criss Cross, 2009) Scott, drums; Mike Moreno, guitar; Walter Smith, tenor saxophone; Gerald Clayton, piano; Derrick Hodge, bass.

Is it Tain [Jeff Watts]? No? He’s killing. I like the organic sound. My only problem is this: What drives the music is the ride cymbal, but a lot of guys now play more drums than cymbal, so I don’t get a sense of the real hard drive. It worked when they were playing in open 7, but when they started to swing over the changes it was a little weird. From that standpoint, I’d like to hear some hard swinging. 5 stars.

Dafnis Prieto

“Si O Si” (from *Si O Si Quartet*, Dafnison, 2009) Prieto, drums, composer; Peter Apfelbaum, tenor saxophone; Manuel Valera, piano; Charles Flores, bass.

You’re giving me all these weird time changes. I like this, though. Is it the drummer’s composition? It’s killer. It shows that drummers can be musicians, too. Jack DeJohnette? No? Who is it? Dafnis Prieto? Nice. The composition is very musical. It says something when someone who is not from the United States comes here and adapts their culture to jazz. He’s not trying to play jazz; he’s playing jazz within his culture, which is cool. 6 stars.



Tineke Postma

“The Eye Of The Mind” (from *The Traveller*, EtceteraNOW, 2009) Postma, saxophone; Geri Allen, Fender Rhodes; Scott Colley, bass; Terri Lyne Carrington, drums. Great-sounding recording. Whoever this is has been influenced by Jack [DeJohnette]. Unless this is Jack. No? Oh, Terri Lyne Carrington. You haven’t played anything yet that was a true sense of swing from the perspective of all of those guys I named, who—maybe with the exception of Philly Joe and Buhaina—took the music from a straightahead swing situation, amped on it, and made it into something else, to what we have right now. I’ve heard great representations of what the music is today, or where it’s going, but with this exception of Terri Lynne, I can’t pinpoint the influences of these drummers. 4 stars.

Cindy Blackman

“Vashkar” (from *Another Lifetime*, 4Q, 2010) Blackman, drums; Mike Stern, electric guitar; Doug Carn, organ; Benny Rietveld, electric bass.

This is Cindy Blackman. This is her Tony [Williams] record. I love what Cindy’s playing, but the recording is weird. No clarity. Cindy knows how to tune the drums, she has a great choice of drums, she’s playing some great stuff, but it sounds muddled. It sounds like drums—the snare drums and the bass drum in the mix—and guitar. You’ve got to be able to hear the drums. That’s Mike Stern on guitar and Doug Carn on organ. The guitar is way too loud. I’ve been reluctant to do a tribute album for Tony. His playing comes out so much in me, so I didn’t think I had to do that. Now, I’m not saying that Cindy shouldn’t have. But I’ve managed to be able to trace through him and find what I need to find. 4 stars.

Paul Motian

“Abacus” (from *Lost In A Dream*, ECM, 2010) Motian, drums; Chris Potter, tenor saxophone; Jason Moran, piano.

Ringin’ snare drum. See how far back the bass drum is from the snare drum. These engineers and producers try to make jazz records sound like pop records. Jazz music is ambient music, like classical music. You need to hear the air around the instruments, and then you hear it in direct proximity. You don’t hear a first violin louder than the viola. The drum kit is a section; you should always hear the whole kit, not the snare drum louder than something else. Is this a younger guy? (*No*.) I didn’t think so. It’s Paul Motian, but it sounded like Roy Haynes, from some of the things he did. I liked it. 3 stars.

DB

THE “BLINDFOLD TEST” IS A LISTENING TEST THAT CHALLENGES THE FEATURED ARTIST TO DISCUSS AND IDENTIFY THE MUSIC AND MUSICIANS WHO PERFORMED ON SELECTED RECORDINGS. THE ARTIST IS THEN ASKED TO RATE EACH TUNE USING A 5-STAR SYSTEM. NO INFORMATION IS GIVEN TO THE ARTIST PRIOR TO THE TEST.



KENNY WASHINGTON

K

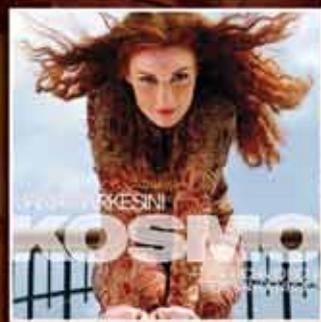
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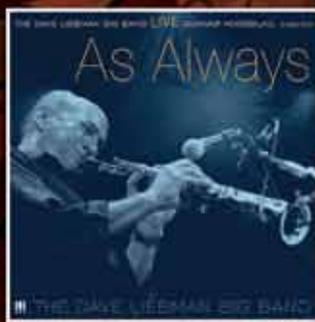


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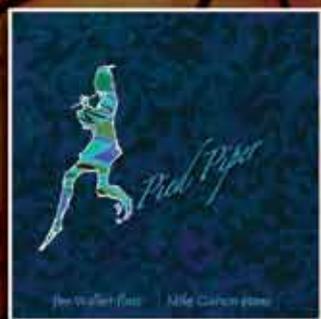


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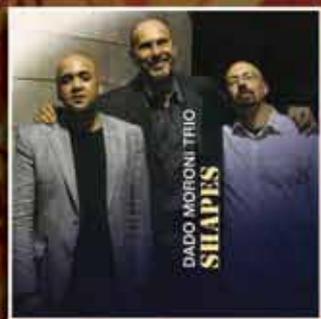


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