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Breaking Free Of The System

BY TED PANKEN

Though the feeling they generate is best described as “free,” alto saxophonists Bunky Green and Rudresh Mahanthappa both work within strongly conceptualized structures that leave them plenty of space to soar. A seemingly odd pairing on the surface, the two share a common passion and stimulate each other to extremely high levels of creativity, as heard on their latest CD project as coleaders, *Apex*.



Omar Sosa

Cover photography by Jimmy Katz

MASSIMO MANTOVANI

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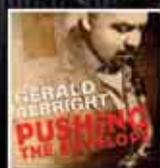
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Rudresh's Mission

About 15 years ago, I went to Chicago's Green Mill jazz club for a different sort of gig. The event was a CD-release party that a group of master's degree candidates at Chicago's Columbia College's arts, entertainment and media management program organized to celebrate a release on their own label, AEMMP Records. While indie record labels had a better chance for success—actually, survival—in the mid-'90s than they do today, this was still a quixotic venture coming from a group of students. AEMMP was even more idealistic in that their signing was a young, and uncompromising, jazz alto saxophonist named Rudresh Mahanthappa.

Needless to say, Mahanthappa has come a long way since the release of his debut disc, *Yatra*. But even back then, his assertive tone and unique way of combining jazz with South Asian music revealed that he had an original vision and determination that would take him far in any art. He's also always had a deep respect for the traditions he chose to investigate, and that includes the work of jazz elder Bunky Green, who shares Ted Panken's cover story with Mahanthappa for this issue.

In talking with Mahanthappa this past week about when I met him at the Green Mill in 1996, he said that the career he's built for himself was always the dream, but, of course, it's never guaranteed. He also is thankful for the opportunity that the upstart label gave him. Having a disc in hand was a valuable calling card when he moved to New York the following year and began encountering the heavier hitters in the media (this was an era before downloads, or e-mailed mp3s). All of which reaffirms that the dreams of a group of Midwestern students should never be taken lightly.

The reason why AEMMP signed Mahanthappa, and held its party at the Green Mill, was because of one particular student, Michael Orlove, who was handling the label's a&r. Then—and now—Orlove has kept his ear toward finding sounds from around the city and around the planet that Chicagoans need to hear. Orlove is currently senior program director for the city's department of cultural affairs. He's been the driving force for the city's stellar world music festival, as well as excellent free events year-round at the Chicago Cultural Center. The Green Mill and the Chicago Cultural Center are included in this issue's venue guide: this club and civic institution show that it takes a combination of smart entrepreneurs, public programs and educational efforts—often, working together—to build a lasting audience for such artists as Mahanthappa.

This issue also includes a memorial tribute to the wonderful saxophonist/flutist James Moody, who died on Dec. 9. Along with his beautiful melodic feel and warm sense of humor, he and his wife, Linda, were tireless advocates for jazz education. For information on how to donate to the James Moody Scholarship Fund, go to his website, jamesmoody.com. **DB**



Rudresh Mahanthappa, circa mid-1990s



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Making McLaughlin's Day

I just got home yesterday evening after six weeks in the United States, and the DownBeat Readers Poll award had arrived yesterday morning! Good timing! I just wanted to thank you and the staff at DownBeat for providing musicians and music lovers with such a great magazine over the years. I've been reading DownBeat since the mid-'60s and to win an award from DownBeat has special significance to me. The plaque will occupy a special place in my home.

JOHN MCLAUGHLIN
MONACO

Stop Thieves!

Thanks very much for the article on Internet piracy of music publications ("Thief!," January 2011). I would like to make it clear that Sher Music Co. is still very much in the business of selling our world-class jazz fake books. My statement that "We are out of the fake book business" referred to the great difficulty in justifying the production of new fake books when we know they will be scanned and distributed free of charge all over the Internet. My hope is that people reading your article will be made aware of the serious negative consequences of illegally downloading books and refrain from this unethical practice.

CHUCK SHER
SHER MUSIC COMPANY

Clean Language, Please

I must agree with Kevin McIntosh's letter ("Chords," January) concerning cursing in your interviews. I host a jam session for students once a month, and encourage kids to take copies of your magazine (which DownBeat very graciously provides). I often think about a parent's reaction if they ever pick up the magazine and read something like that. Surely the language can be edited or bleeped. As a subscriber since 1977, I know you used to do that. What changed? Students get enough of that kind of "education" in their daily lives. Better to have them focus on the music.

MIKE EBEN
READING, PA.

Jamal Deserves Honor

It's amazing that DownBeat readers almost voted master pianist/trio trailblazer Ahmad Jamal (#2) into the Hall of Fame themselves, instead of the DownBeat critics, who, to their embar-

John McLaughlin



rassment, have left this undone for decades. Jamal waits, while Herbie Hancock, Chick Corea and Keith Jarrett, all employees of Miles Davis, went in ahead of the man who influenced him (and that's no disrespect to their individual talents). Let's hope the Veterans Committee won't have to do it. I wonder just how many of Davis' pianists were told, "Play like Ahmad Jamal."

RON SEEGAR
EL PASO, TEXAS

Erskine Nails It

Peter Erskine's "Woodshed" (November) is right on the money. I am 75 and have been around the drum scene for 60 years. Not only does his article apply to the ride cymbal, but it can also be adapted to brush works and drum solo patterns. I recommend it to young drummers who are trying to get the clutter out of their playing and play in a way that moves the tune forward.

JIM MURPHY
ORMOND BEACH, FLA.

Correction

- The title of Ernie Krivda's disc in "Best CDs of 2010" (January) was incorrect. It should have been written as *November Man* (CIMP).

DOWNBEAT REGRETS THE ERROR.

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Moody's Mood For Life

Friends, colleagues celebrate James Moody's magical personality

Saxophonist/flutist James Moody died on Dec. 9, of pancreatic cancer, at 85 near his home in San Diego, Calif. His career stretched back across nearly 65 years of jazz history, and while it was a somber end to a life of ebullient music making, his friends and colleagues chose to celebrate his life—not his passing—during the days that followed.

"It's nothing to mourn about," Sonny Rollins said. "It's not that I'm not sorry we won't get a chance to hear him play any more or be in his company. That's true. But it's also really a joyful moment because he was here in this life and look what he left people, a legacy of wonderful music and the memory of a wonderful person. To know him and think about him brings light to me. We can't feel sad or sorry. We have to feel good about a man like Moody."

Moody was born in Savannah, Ga., on March 26, 1925, and raised in Newark, N.J. He converged with Dizzy Gillespie's first big band in the summer of 1946. His earliest work can be heard on Dizzy Gillespie: *Showtime At The Spotlite (Uptown)*. Gillespie became a mentor to the youthful Moody, a role that in some ways made brothers of them for life. The early band was a hive of musical energy. That's when saxophonist Jimmy Heath first met Moody (he would join the band several months after Moody left), and began a life long friendship. In 2005 Heath described his friend in the lyric he wrote to "Moody's Groove" ("Moody has more kisses than Hershey's..."), which the two performed in the Gillespie All-Star Big band.

"He is an original," Heath said. "No one else in the world is like Moody, one of the greatest human beings I ever met. We called each other 'Section' because we played in the saxophone section. Everybody remembers how he outgoing he was, and he was always that way, I think, though the kissing he might have picked up in Europe."

In the Gillespie band of 1946–'48 Moody helped set the bar for a coming generation of young saxophonists who would shortly consolidate the foundations of modernism. One of them was alto saxophonist Phil Woods.

"I loved Moody," Woods said. "His joy and energy were contagious. And he was one of the best improvisers ever! No one ran the changes like Moody—nobody! And there was never a more spiritual man than Moody. His horn and, indeed, his very persona exuded warmth and love. He was the only man whose kisses I welcomed. When he entered a room he kissed



everyone in it—and did the same when he exited. There was only one James Moody. I will miss his music and I will miss his kiss."

The eras of Moody's career can be sliced in several ways: by decade, by group, by association. He converted to Baha'i in the early '70s, following Gillespie, and some regard that as something of a watershed. But to friends like Woods, he was a fundamentally spiritual person, before and after his conversion to Baha'i, with or without the patina of an official faith.

"He was one of the most humanistic people I ever knew," noted Todd Barkin, producer and owner of the Keystone Club in San Francisco, where

Riffs ▶



Ornette Coleman

Moers Return: Ornette Coleman will headline the 2011 Moers Festival, which runs June 10–12. He had previously appeared at the German event in 1981 with Prime Time. Tickets are available. **Details:** moers-festival.de

Alligator @ 40: Chicago-based blues label Alligator is celebrating its 40th anniversary with a slew of historic releases. Company president Bruce Iglauer has selected and remastered tracks for the two-disc *The Alligator Records 40th Anniversary Collection*. The label is also releasing vinyl editions of its back catalog, including Buddy Guy and Junior Wells' *Alone & Acoustic*.

Details: alligator.com

Caine Fellowship: Pianist Uri Caine received a \$50,000 United States Artists fellowship grant on Dec. 7.

Details: unitedstatesartists.org

Blues Home: Memphis-based Blues Foundation will begin moving into its first permanent home in March. The 4,000-square-foot location at 421 S. Main St. will centralize the foundation's educational, audio-visual and retail opportunities, in addition to housing its staff and operations. **Details:** blues.org

Bayou Download: The New Orleans Musicians' Clinic has released a digital download of *Down On The Bayou II Live Jam From New Orleans*. Participants include Ivan Neville, Luther Dickinson and Gov't Mule. All proceeds from the sale will benefit the clinic.

Details: neworleansmusiciansclinic.org

Chicago Matinees: Chicago's Old Town School Of Folk Music has announced a new series of matinee performances of jazz composers at its 909 W. Armitage Ave. location on the first Sunday of each month.

Details: oldtownschool.org

Kelly Meets Woods: Saxophonists Grace Kelly and Phil Woods have teamed up for their upcoming disc, *Man With The Hat* (Pazz). **Details:** gracekellymusic.com

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Milton Suggs ▶
Circuitous Trajectory



Milton Suggs once set his sights on being a jazz pianist; instead he became a commanding jazz singer. As evidenced by his debut CD as a leader, *Things To Come* (Skiptone Music), the 27-year-old Chicago-based vocalist made a wise decision. The disc highlights a singer steeped firmly in the tradition of crooners such as Joe Williams, Eddie Jefferson and Jon Hendricks but with modern sensibilities that put him in the company of contemporaries like Jose James and Sachal Vasandani.

Suggs powers his mellifluous baritone through vocalese treatments of Cedar Walton's "Ugestu" (recast as "Fantasy For You") and Thelonious Monk's "Round Midnight," catchy originals like the forceful "My Last Goodbye" and the ballad "Seize The Moment," and glowing renditions of "We Shall Overcome" and "Lift Every Voice And Sing." He sings in an easy, conversational manner that's pliable enough to entice the jazz purist and melodically economical enough to pique the curiosity of r&b fans.

Suggs' trajectory to becoming a vocalist was rather circuitous. The son of jazz bassist Milton Suggs—who played with Mary Lou Williams, Elvin Jones and Rahsaan Roland Kirk—Suggs was born in Chicago but grew up with his mother in Atlanta. His initial career choice was broadcast journalism, which he studied at Florida A&M University. "I liked the idea of using that broadcaster's tone—using my voice in that type of way," Suggs explained. "But it started not to feel right after a couple of months."

Having studied bass and other instruments as a grade-schooler, Suggs took a renewed interest in music during his freshman year of college. "I decided to try to take some piano classes," he recalled. "I was going to try to enroll in the music program at Florida A&M, however I didn't have enough playing experience." So his mother encouraged him to visit Chicago and take lessons from his godfather—veteran pianist Willie Pickens.

Suggs journeyed to the Windy City for what at first was just going to be a summer of learning piano with Pickens. He enjoyed his studies and the Chicago jazz scene so much, he decided to stay. "[Pickens'] first mode of attack is to focus on the blues," Suggs said. "He always said that if you can play the blues and 'Rhythm' changes, then that would be your foundation." Pickens also imparted the values of listening intently and exploring different approaches to standards. "We would sit down and go slowly during practice and figure out what we were hearing. There was a lot of repetition. I would do four measures of a song about 20 times over and try to explore different options just to figure out what I'm hearing."

Suggs enrolled at Columbia College Chicago and began to hone his skills as a pianist and vocalist. He went on to get a master's degree in jazz studies from DePaul University, where he received a DownBeat Student Music Award for outstanding vocal performance. When Wynton Marsalis heard Suggs sing with the DePaul University Jazz Ensemble in 2008, the trumpeter encouraged him to focus on vocals.

When asked if he'll ever reignite his interest in jazz piano, Suggs said, "I feel like I have more of a voice as a singer than as a pianist. I felt like I didn't have anything really to say as a pianist." —John Murph

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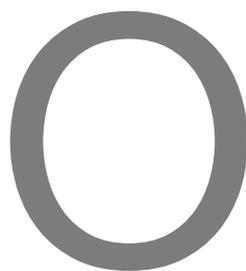
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Bunky Green & Rudresh Mahanthappa

BREAKING FREE OF THE SYSTEM

By Ted Panken // Photography by Jimmy Katz



On the surface, they make an odd couple. Vernice “Bunky” Green Jr., 75, director of jazz studies at the University of North Florida, is African-American, born to parents who migrated from Arkansas and Alabama during the Great Depression and settled in Milwaukee, Wis. Rudresh Mahanthappa, 39, of South Indian descent, is the first-generation son of a physics professor in Boulder, Colo. But on *Apex* (Pi), their co-led 2010 release comprising a suite of tunes that both contributed to the project, they play so synchronously that it’s a challenging proposition to tell who’s doing what.



Bunky Green (left) and Rudresh Mahanthappa at the Jazz Standard in New York City



1960. He quickly made his presence felt on a scene that he describes as “very fast, but more laid back than New York, so you could do yourself in a less frantic environment.” He cut a straightahead sextet date for Exodus with Jimmy Heath, Donald Byrd, Wynton Kelly, Larry Ridley and Jimmy Cobb, and a quartet side for Vee-Jay with Wallace, bassist Donald Garrett and drummer Bill Erskine. He frequently partnered with Garrett on “out of the box” projects, including an exploratory trio that did a concert—the one Threadgill attended—on which they “just started playing and tried to interact—that was the whole gig.”

A third transformative moment occurred in 1964, when Green, in Morocco on a State Department tour, traveled “through the back woods” to hear a performance. “We saw three musicians sitting on the floor in a circle,” he recalled. “One guy had a bagpipe, another had a small violin, and the third played a small drum that he put his hand into and played on top. I became mesmerized by the bagpipe player’s skill. It blew my mind, because he put together what I was hearing in my head. No chords. There was a drone of a fifth, and you played around that fifth and resolved it within yourself. Later, I started studying it and building from it, pretty much the way Rudresh visited his culture and started drawing on it. I’m not trying to copy the sound. I’m trying to get into the essence of their phrasing and how they circle the open fourth and fifth tonal centers that they use. I had to give up the standard jazz lines in order to do that.”

Ten years later, Steve Coleman, then 18, heard Green—at this point heading a newly formed Jazz Studies department at Chicago State University—either at Ratso’s on the North Side or Cadillac Bob’s, around the corner from his South Side house. “Bunky worked out patterns that sounded calculated, like a deliberate effort to get to his own thing,” Coleman stated. “As a result, his playing is very clear, precise, direct, and I could dig into it, try to analyze it and find out what it was. I wanted him to show me what he was doing, so I asked for a lesson, but Bunky turned me down. He told me, ‘I only give les-

sons to cats who need lessons, and you don’t. You need to go to New York.’ So I decided I’d listen and grab what I could.

“Although I noticed the patterns early on, Bunky used certain devices that intrigued me. He developed a special fingering to get a hiccup quality that you hear in North African singers. He also picked up a lot of augmented second intervals, as well as quartal stuff and pentatonics, from that part of the world. Whereas in those countries, the pitches stay pretty much the same, Bunky moved the intervals around in different ways. To me the blues is basically a modal music, without a lot of progression. Bird managed to put sophisticated progressions in the blues that gave it motion, but let it sound like blues, as opposed to, say, Lennie Tristano or Dizzy. Coltrane figured out a way to move the music that influenced him from Africa and India. Bunky figured out how to do this with the North African-Middle Eastern vibe.”

Along with what he does on *Apex*, Mahanthappa’s recent sideman work in DeJohnette’s new group with David Fiuczynski, George Colligan and Jerome Harris and in Danilo Pérez’s 21st Century Dizzy project (there are several open-ended Pérez–Mahanthappa duos on 2010’s *Providencia* [Mack Avenue]) may go some ways towards countering a critique that his musical production—particularly the 2006 release *Codebook* (Pi), comprising original pieces constructed of intervals drawn from Fibonacci equations, and *Mother Tongue* (Pi), on which the compositions draw from melodic transcriptions of Indian-Americans responding, in their native dialect, to the question “Do you speak Indian?”—is overly intellectual and insufficiently soulful.

“Everyone I look up to is simultaneously right brain and left brain, to use a dated term, or simultaneously intellectual and seat-of-the-pants instinctive,” Mahanthappa said. “Bartok played with Fibonacci equations. Bach played with Golden Section. Even Dufay’s motets, if you pick them apart, have a somewhat mathematical, formal approach. ‘Giant Steps’ and

'Central Park West' are math jazz. A lot of non-Western music has a foot in math as well. A lot of algorithmic thought goes into the way South Indian beat cycles are constructed and played; when the players solo, they know exactly where to start this polyrhythmic thing so it lands at a certain spot two minutes later."

Throughout the recording, and on the four bonus video clips offered with an *Apex* download, Moran prods the flow into unexpected, "right brain" directions. He first recorded with Green on the 2004 date *Another Place* (Label Bleu), produced by Coleman, who persuaded Green to use him instead of the esteemed master bebop master pianist Green had asked for. "I wanted to hear someone interact with Bunky who wouldn't just lay down a carpet for him to play over," Coleman said. "Jason was one of the few piano players I could think of who had enough of the stuff Bunky wanted to hear—the sensibility of how to play a ballad, and so on—but could throw him some curveballs, push him in his thing so the album would represent something like the way he plays live.

"There's a wild element, an abandon in Bunky's playing. He lets his feelings out. It was there early on—he's one of those cats who got it young. He has a very strong embouchure, and his pitch is very centered, his alto tone is crystal-clear, nothing muscly about it. But he does false-fingerings to offset this, to get more rawness in his sound. He plays in the upper register without pressing the octave key, so he gets a throaty split-tone quality, an overtone sound, holding the pitch right in between the upper and lower registers."

Moran described his strategies. "When Bunky gets into his own language, I comp behind him in a way that uses some of what I gleaned from McCoy Tyner, not the chords or voicings, but the power," he said. "He gets to an angular sound that kind of free-floats up into the stratosphere, and what's attractive is that just when you think he has no further to go, there's like another mile-and-a-half, whether way up into the top of the instrument, or into deeper levels of rawness."

Discussing Mahanthappa's qualities, Moran referenced an old video game called *Punch-out!!*. "You'd press the button and it said, 'Body blow! Body blow!'" he laughed, swinging his arms back and forth like a pendulum. "Or like Neo punching in *The Matrix*, where you saw these multiple arms hitting the same spot. Rudresh has that kind of rapid fire, and when I play with him, I punctuate and jab. It isn't just that he plays really quick ideas, but his tone and attack are very different from Bunky's—more direct, while Bunky slides more."

Both of Mahanthappa's recent employers note his open mind and fierce, unmediated execution as a selling point. "Rudresh does things that remind me of a little kid, like, 'Let's go and play,'" Pérez said, extending Moran's analogy. "When he develops a line, there's much excitement and raw energy, but he also improvises with great clarity."

"There was a lot of commotion about Rudresh," DeJohnette remarked. "He gets a sort of Indian flute or Arabic nai sound on the saxophone, and I've been interested in Indian scales and ragas and rhythms since the '60s, so I thought his sensibility—and the rawness he brings—would work out for my music."

"I've been dying to play with Danilo and Jack forever," Mahanthappa said. "There's a certain validation in working with them, as well as Bunky. At Berklee or when I lived in Chicago, I was inspired when people who I thought were authentic, regardless of jazz genre, would say, 'Yeah, man, keep doing what you're doing.'"

Green himself intends to devote a greater proportion of the second half of his eighth decade to performing than has been his custom since the '60s.

"I've never been desperate about getting ahead," he said. "All I ever wanted was some recognition for my place in history. I believe in my heart that I'm responsible for a stylistic thing that spread all around the country, and nobody really knew the source. That's the only thing I've regretted, but now I seem to be getting credit. It always took someone else to motivate and push me. I'm not an aggressive person, and unless you're aggressive you become complacent and don't move. Maybe it would have been better for me if I had been, because I would be quite established now. But I'm going to keep pushing in terms of playing more and getting more exposure—and we'll see what happens."

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Omar Sosa GOES DEEP

By Dan Ouellette

When he was commissioned by the Barcelona Jazz Festival in 2009 to be one of three artists to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Miles Davis' *Kind Of Blue*, Omar Sosa told a Barcelona reporter that what he was being asked to do was like being thrown into a lion-packed arena at a Roman circus. But the Cuba-born, Barcelona-based pianist/keyboardist/bandleader, who has recorded more than 20 albums and garnered three Grammy nominations, did his homework, studied the original compositions closely, assembled a sextet featuring guest trumpeter Jerry González to decipher his complex arrangements and held court at L'Auditori for his festival performance. Sosa, a risk-taker with an adventurous streak and a no-borders attitude, plugged in and presented an electronically hued version of *Kind Of Blue* that was more like the 1969 Davis blitzing into *Bitches Brew* than his mellow modal jazz of 1959.

John McNeil

All Wit

By Jim Macnie

They come each week, and each week they make you chuckle. Sometimes they read like this: “Wednesday is Tiki Barber’s birthday. To celebrate, the band is moving to an earlier start time of 8:30. In addition, the audience will be asked to participate in blocking and tackling drills between sets. Shoulder pads will be provided, but everyone should bring their own helmet and cleats. No wagering.”

And sometimes they read like this: “To celebrate the 120th anniversary of the official opening of the Eiffel Tower, the band will present works by French composers such as François Rosolineau, Thelonious-Claude LeMonk and Jean Coltraine. There’s no minimum, so pay a cover, hang out for three sets and have some brie. Or some epouisses. Scratch that: epouisses smells like death, so vile that it’s actually illegal to carry it on the Paris Métro.”

They’re header paragraphs of invitations to see John McNeil’s various bands at Puppets, a Brooklyn jazz club. The trumpeter doesn’t like to do anything without giving it a bit of flair, so for several years now, his weekly gig reminders have been crazed and cool. On his 61st birthday, the text promised a red velvet cake so good, “It will make you slap your grandma.”

Ask anyone who knows McNeil, and they’ll mention the fact that he’s part wag, part wiseass and all wit. A string of quips often shoots from the bandstand when the now-62-year-old brings his freebop antics to an audience. He’s just as quick with a snarky comment as he is with trumpet flourish. The first time I saw him play, he intro’d Russ Freeman’s “Batter Up” with a gleefully sarcastic mention of how lame the Mets were. After an impromptu gig with other New York jazzers last spring, while everyone from Tony Malaby to Rob Garcia was congratulating each other for some nifty coordination during a totally abstract piece, McNeil told his mates with a smile, “You guys were lost a lot of the time, but yeah, it was cool.” They expected nothing less. Everyone knows that he’s a guy who has levity for lunch.

“When we made *East Coast Cool*,” says saxophonist Allan Chase, “we took fun photographs of ourselves dressed in suits, acting like Chet and Gerry. When it was time to decide which of the shots to use, John started sending me these PhotoShopped variations of the cover with the most hilarious fake album titles, many of them *quite* obscene—about 25

came through before he was done, and each was more outrageous than the last.”

The 2006 record Chase alludes to was a novel date, opening the door to a new slant on the 1950s West Coast sound, which is often typified by the darting interplay of the musicians he mentioned, Mr. Baker and Mr. Mulligan. McNeil conceptualized the approach, putting a modern spin on an orthodox repertory. He’s long appreciated the lithe intricacies of cool jazz, having shared bills with Baker and done time in Mulligan’s large ensembles. But he also digs the open territories of free-jazz, and has lots of skills when it comes to launching investigatory solos. *East Coast Cool*’s blend of chipper melodies and mercurial improvs was unique. Its tunes, mostly written by McNeil to bridge the particulars of each element, ingeniously straddled the two approaches.

“When he handed me my music folder, the cover title read ‘CGOA,’ recalls Chase. “I said, ‘John, what’s that mean?’ ‘Chet and Gerry on acid,’ he deadpanned.”

A similar whimsy has been driving the otherwise serious music projects McNeil has helmed for the last few years. His latest Sunnyside album, made in collaboration with tenor saxophonist Bill McHenry, is called *Chill Morn, He Climb Jenny* (yep, it sounds dirty, but it’s an anagram of their names). Like *Rediscovery*, the disc that preceded it, the program contains a scad of unique spins on actual West Coast nuggets that the pair have refined during the last few years. Freeman is a central figure here: Everything from “Band Aid” to “Happy Little Sunbeam” to “Bea’s Flat” is part of the McNeil–McHenry book. Those titles are surrounded by Wilber Harden, Jimmy Van Heusen and George Wallington ditties. It’s a tack that has earned the trumpeter wider visibility. A few years ago the New York Times proclaimed the pair’s weekly interpretation of such jewels to be “one of the best jazz events in the city.”



Kevin Eubanks Shapes His Post-Leno Career

By Kirk Silsbee

It's 10 a.m. at Paty's, a popular breakfast destination in Toluca Lake, Calif. Much of its business comes from the people who work in nearby Burbank, where Disney and NBC are headquartered. In a booth by the window, guitarist Kevin Eubanks—casual in his sweatshirt and baseball cap—has made short work of his morning meal. His day began at 5:30; he's already got an “Access Hollywood” taping under his belt. Last night he rode down Hollywood Boulevard in the Santa Claus Lane Parade, a fair barometer of SoCal celebrity status.

After 18 years—as both a sideman and a leader—Eubanks has left “The Tonight Show” to try his own wings. It might be tempting to say that he has arrived. In fact, he's been a part of the larger jazz consciousness since the early 1980s, when Bruce Lundvall signed him to the Elektra/Musician label. Maybe it would be more accurate to say that the non-jazz audience is coming to Eubanks.

He left the show several months ago and has been navigating his way through a career transition: weighing offers, floating trial balloons, and rightfully proud of his new album and label association. *Zen Food* on Mack Avenue is a solid instrumental collection that has more virtuosity,

variety and ensemble empathy than many of the self-conscious concept albums and recorded “projects” that regularly issue these days.

His “Tonight Show” collaborators (saxophonist Bill Pierce, keyboardist Gerry Etkins, drummer Marvin Smith and bassist Rene Camacho) surround Eubanks on the album. “I've been with these musicians for so long that when I write, they're the voices that I'm writing for; I know that they'll be playing it,” he says. “So it's an easy fit. I think we all learn from each other. And sometimes I think they kind of look to me to say, ‘What do you think here?’”

Yet the recording didn't come together

effortlessly. “The one inherent problem you can have is if you try to record music like this before it's reached the shape you really want it to be. Sometimes you have to play it in a club and reach an emotional climax a few times before you realize that's the shape of the song. Sometimes you realize we're just not there yet. And that's actually what happened with this record. We tried to record the songs earlier and we didn't really get it; we realized it just wasn't done yet.”

A couple of miles away on Cahuenga Boulevard in North Hollywood is the Baked Potato, Eubanks' club of choice. Owned and operated by legendary session pianist Don Randi, it's a real musi-



cians' club. That's where Eubanks has gone to hone his chops in a way that he couldn't on the studio set. "The Baked Potato is exactly the kind of place I'm talking about; it has got a great history," Eubanks says. "They let you be a musician there. You can just concentrate on the music when you go in there, just let it hang out. If it splats against the wall, that's where it is and you have a blast doing it. Then you get that out and it's, 'Oh, I remember this feeling.' The places where you can get to that core energy are somehow overlooked by everybody other than the musicians, but they're invaluable."

Did Eubanks see his job on "The Tonight Show" as enlarging the jazz audience? "The show was not the place to hold up pictures of Miles and Trane and try to convert people to jazz. It's a classic rock demographic, and you can't make that leap in that setting. But when they followed us to the club and heard us, then they learned something new. People would say, 'Oh, I didn't know you played this kind of music.' I'd say, 'What did you think I play—Rolling Stones songs?' But then you can direct them to someone they should discover."

There's a fair amount of writing on *Zen Food*, like the multi-layered "Los Angeles." Eubanks grins when he's complimented on the piece's complexity. "Most of the time," he explains, "the songs get titled afterward. That piece has a lot going on in it, and it came to me that it

was like this city. People from back East think it's all relaxed and slow-paced out here. But all it takes is a phone call to change your life and all of a sudden, you're moving at top speed in an entirely new neighborhood."

The years of acting as comedian Jay Leno's musical foil have imparted some valuable knowledge and sensibilities to Eubanks, but it didn't come without growing pains. "The hardest thing for me to get used to," he confesses, "was not to take it personally when I didn't get reinforcement in the way I was used to getting it. Nobody pats you on the back and tells you you're doing a good job; you're just one of many people and you're all expected to do your job. In that corporate system, their way of acknowledging my work was when contract negotiations came up. Then you could say I'd like this or I'd like that, and you came to an agreement. That's how they show appreciation in TV."

"I feel like it's easy to be myself in the TV studio. Even though it's going out to untold numbers of people, I'm in this recording studio, if you will. Everybody in the place is after the same objective, even though it's a whole organization of people. And they're all just pulling for you because they're all part of the production. It feels like everybody's pulling for you; you're not competing against anybody. The show is the star."

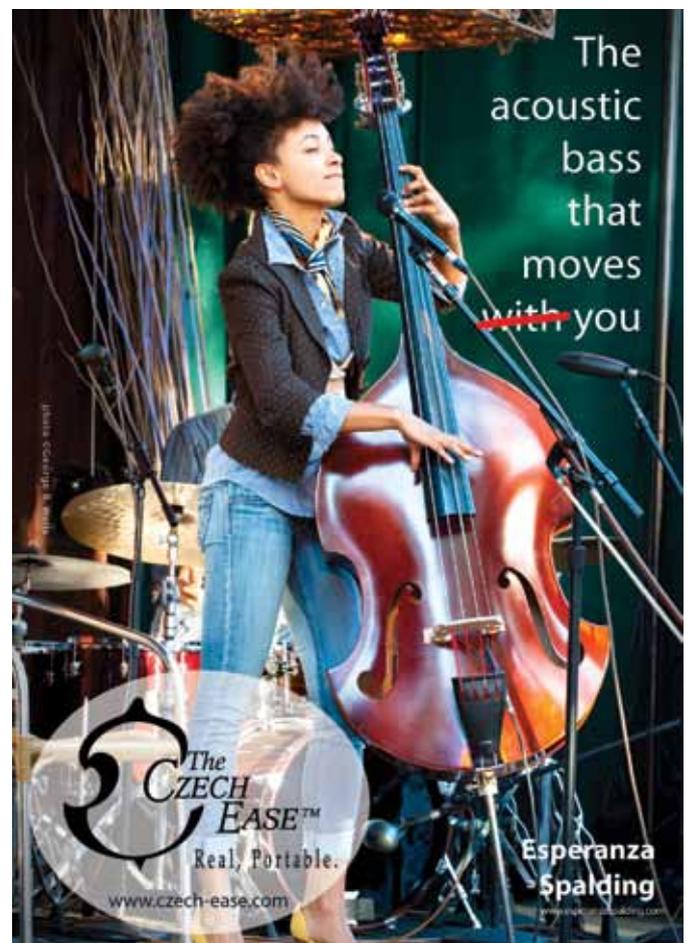
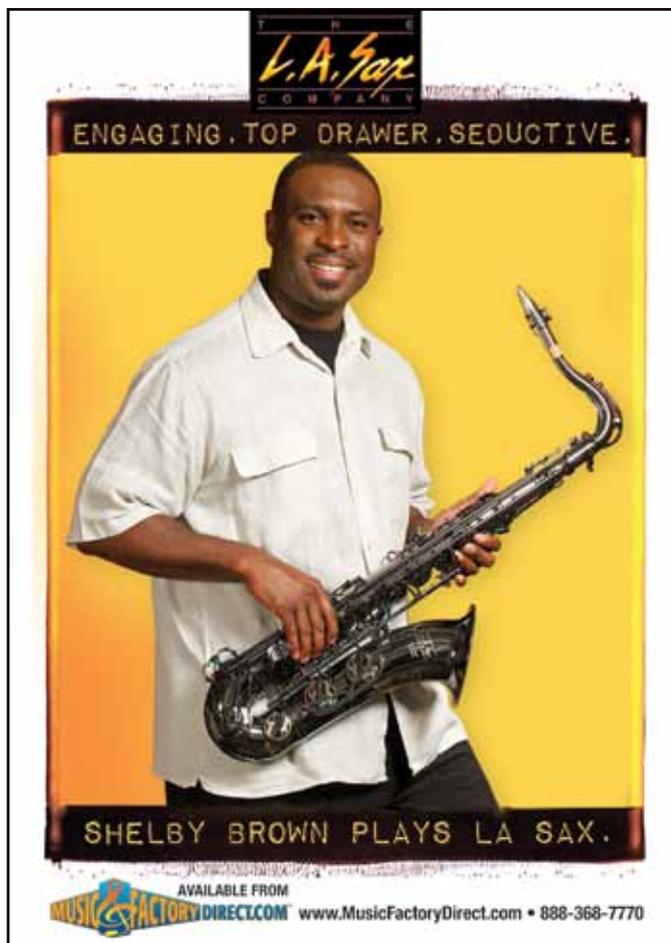
His on-camera chemistry with Leno was

easy and familiar, though ironically, the two men are quite different. Leno collects automobiles, and Eubanks finds no romance in cars. Kevin's passion is the music he lives, and Leno wonders, in all sincerity, if anything has happened in music since 1969. "He doesn't even have a CD player in his car," Eubanks says, incredulously. "When you can drive a stick shift," Leno has offered to Eubanks, "I'll get a CD player."

Their bond was in their selflessness to the production and their ironclad work ethics. "I complimented Jay once on how much he gives to the show and he said, 'Me? What about you? Have you even missed one day of work?'" In fact, Eubanks had a perfect attendance record. "You work off of your passion," he points out, "and then when things get rough and there are problems to solve, that's when your work ethic kicks in and you see it through."

Eubanks' long tenure with the show is studded with great musical memories, and it's imparted respect for other musical forms. "I love playing with Willie Nelson," he says. "What you hear in him is the essence of country—on every note. Dolly Parton's like that, too. Underneath all the big hair and everything else is an everyday person who's a big talent."

He's especially going to miss the interaction with guitarist B.B. King, a "Tonight Show" regular. "When I told B.B. I was leaving," Kevin says with gravity, "I could see some disappointment



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**Randy Weston
and his African
Rhythms Sextet**
The Storyteller

MOTEMA 51

★★★★½

Randy Weston, 84, is that rare bird—an original, creative voice—though he has always identified with tradition: namely, the spirit of his African ancestors. But Weston, a gentle giant of a man, has always embraced opposites easily. As a pianist, his orchestral approach and fondness for color owe a lot to Duke Ellington. Yet his pared-down melodies, judicious use of dissonance and disjunctive trains of thought—jumping in a trice from thunder to light rain—are more like Thelonious Monk.

This live recording of Weston’s African Rhythms Sextet, the first since 1999, is timely, as the pianist recently published a welcome as-told-to autobiography with the same title. As a composer, Weston tends to revisit and rework seminal pieces again and again, but the reward is not so much in the intricacies as a spiritually incandescent mood. A creator of shape-shifting atmospheres, Weston’s band conjures spirits the way an African lithophone player calls out to various gods with different scales, hoping for a visitation.

Unsurprisingly, the album has an autumnal as well as celebratory feel, reinforced by the passing of Weston’s longtime trombonist Benny Powell shortly after it was made. The music is lovely, but does not always catch fire and a few tracks go on a bit long. Weston’s stream-of-consciousness solo style sometimes crosses the line from brilliance to noodling. His opening solo, dedicated to the great Afro-Cuban drummer Chano Pozo, has some fine, dancing moments, with wisps of



CAROL FREDMAN

pretty melancholy threaded throughout. It segues directly into “African Sunrise,” in which the band explores the Afro-Cuban fusion Pozo brought to life with Dizzy Gillespie. Blues-crying alto saxophonist T.K. Blue’s allusions to “Hot House,” “Night In Tunisia” and “Manteca” are nice touches. Weston’s music never strays far from the blues; Powell is down with the program on this soulful outing on “Jus’ Blues,” the aptly titled second movement of “The African Cookbook Suite.” Weston rumbles up a fine mess here himself, a sort

of work song with quartal underpinnings. Bassist Alex Blake has a fine run in the third movement, “The Bridge,” thrumming a flamenco feel. Weston’s more recent, ceremonially slow composition “The Shrine” offers haunting voicings for flute, trombone and piano, and the witty, Monkish “Loose Wig” offers Weston’s only splashy, carefree moments, ending with an animated conversation between all the instruments. Weston gets into some gliding stride on his classic “Hi Fly,” also taken very slowly, followed by

a speedy coda, “Fly Hi,” and ends his set as he traditionally does, with the great Ghanaian drummer Guy Warren’s “Love, The Mystery Of,” explaining to the crowd that the band has tried to “capture the spirits of the ancients.”

From time to time, they do.
—Paul de Barros

The Storyteller: Chano Pozo; African Sunrise; The African Cookbook Suite; Tehuti, Jus’ Blues, The Bridge; The Shrine; Loose Wig; Wig Loose; Hi Fly; Fly Hi; Love, The Mystery Of. (74:18)
Personnel: Randy Weston, piano; Benny Powell, trombone; T.K. Blue, alto saxophone; flute; Alex Blake, bass; Neil Clarke, percussion; Lewis Nash, drums.
Ordering info: motema.com

Harmonicats Unleashed

Tad Robinson: *Back In Style* (Severn 0050; 47:21 ★★★½) Robinson, here on his fifth album, is one of those rare soul-blues singers who manages to finesse the sense of wonder at the heart of assertions on the power of love. His vocals and harp playing are personalized and immaculately ordered into arrangements of quality songs mostly written by him and bassist Steve Gomes. The supporting studio band, featuring guitarist Alex Schultz, is with Robinson all the way, though a cheesy electric piano does their Memphis soul approximations no favor.

Ordering info: severnrecords.com

Bob Corritore & Friends: *Harmonica Blues* (Delta Groove 139; 72:40 ★★★½) Impresario Corritore collects 15 tracks that he recorded in the studio the past few decades with veterans gigging at his Rhythm Room club in Phoenix. Big Pete Pearson dredges up true grit singing "Tin Pan Alley," Eddy Clearwater cuts a swath of fun through "That's My Baby" and Little Milton, on vocals and guitar, takes listeners to school with his "Six Bits In Your Dollar," a bad-feeling-this-morning lesson. These guys, along with Nap-py Brown, Koko Taylor, Pinetop Perkins and the rest, may be past their prime but they're blessed with unconquerable spirit. They're also comfortable with the house band helmed by Corritore, a damn good harp player with a lively sense of history.

Ordering info: deltagroovemusic.com

The Chris O'Leary Band: *Mr. Used To Be* (Fidellis/Vizztone 001; 40:10 ★★★½) O'Leary, formerly with Levon Helm's Barn-burners, is a more than capable singer and Chicago-style harmonica stylist; the proof comes in the shuffles and jump numbers he handles with suave assurance on his debut recording. It's really the slow tempo of "Blues Is A Woman" that draws out his best singing, reminiscent of Jimmy Witherspoon. His Hud-son Valley-based cohorts stir up the all-original material without faltering. Young guitarist Chris Vitarello merits notice for his technical powers and imagination, his reach extending to rockabilly and swinging jazz.

Ordering info: vizztone.com

Tas Cru: *Jus' Desserts* (Crustee Tee 1001; 47:35 ★★★½) Cru, a sometimes face-tious and other times serious storyteller in rural New York State, gives the engaging original songs of his second album a comfy, intimate



Tad Robinson: Assertive love

feel with his distinctive singing voice and his prowess on harmonica and guitar. He's ably supported by a keyboards/drums/bass/sec-ond guitar team of a similar stamp.

Ordering info: tasclu.com

Mitch Kashmar & The Pontiac: 100 *Miles To Go* (Delta Groove 140; 50:24 ★★★) This reissued 1989 album by the California jump-blues band features Kashmar, then in his late 20s, on still-ripening vocals and harp. He conveys motion and force, especially effective when his tin instrument emits flows of graceful notes. Now-deceased harmonica marvel William Clarke guests on "Horn Of Plenty." Two bonus tracks made at a studio reunion just a few months ago, the swamp-sodden "When You Do Me Like That" and mildly political New Orleans romp "Petroleum Blues," have Kash-mar showing more assurance and having fun, though neither tune soars.

Ordering info: deltagroovemusic.com

Swississippi Chris Harper: *Four Aces And A Harp* (Swississippi 2010; 72:40 ★★) Harper, a Swiss, bankrolled this part-Delta acoustic and part-Chicago electric album and got to live out his fantasy of tooting his Marine Band (reverentially) and singing (awkwardly) on "Eyesight To The Blind" and other classics in the company of real-deal bluesmen Jimmy Burns, John Primer, Willie Smith and Bob Stroger. Singer-guitarist Burns and guitarist Primer have their moments, but they can't save this album from the discard pile. **DB**

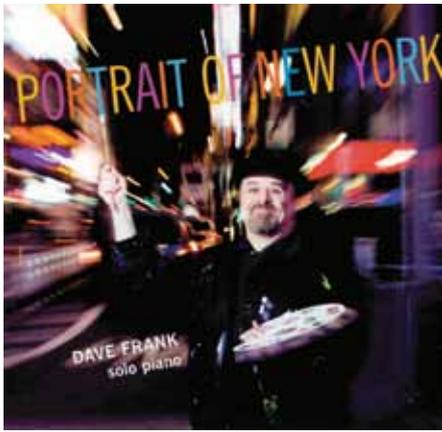
Ordering info: swississippi-records.com

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Dave Frank
Portrait Of New York

JAZZHEADS JH1181

★★★

Dave Frank identifies himself unequivocally on his website as a solo player. A specialist in a generalist's age, he sets the bar high. And on *Portrait Of New York* as on previous projects, he mostly clears it, though he might have set it on a different set of bars.

The most obvious reference point in Frank's performance is the late Dave McKenna, whose mastery of the left-hand walking bass made solo performance his strongest metier. This is obvious on the first track, "Full Force NYC," which opens with a long string of low-register eighth-notes. But where McKenna typically dug into the keys with an intensity that pulled his performance way off tempo in a long but irresistible acceleration, Frank paints almost an abstract picture. His tempo slows slightly down as he scatters fleet single lines and a few chords after bringing in his right hand. This, plus a few breaks where the bass line morphs momentarily into quizzical dissonances or simply stops, undercuts his momentum. Though the performance is built on the concept of a swinging groove, it comes across as oddly academic. Despite the title, the song sounds an awful lot like "Tangerine."

Frank channels this spirit more persuasively when he mixes it with another inspiration on a track whose title says it all. "McKenna/McCoy" opens with a pair of sturdy fifths in the left hand, a foundation for a harmonic elaboration that brings McCoy Tyner quickly to mind. From here, a fusion of aesthetics begins, with voicings, rhythmic placements and a modal flavor to his solo developing over an alternation of prowling bass, jabbed and softer accents, and silences below. This interplay catches fire now and then, though again the positive impression is more conceptually interesting than viscerally exhilarating.

There is much more range than this in Frank's playing. "Manhattan By Moonlight," an original, is a lovely miniature, played rubato, opening over a delicate tonic note with a fig-

ure that suggests a distant carillon chiming the hour. From the simplicity of this beginning, Frank expands gently into moodier chords, darker with blues insinuations and played with gorgeous restraint. His approach to "My Man's Gone" is similar, though he allows a little more dynamic contrast particularly in the middle of the tune. These changes are handled with taste and feeling.

The boogies and blues that fill much of this *Portrait* seem relatively undeveloped, with the exception of "Times Square," another Frank

tune whose left-hand ostinato, built on alternating bars of eight and nine, sets an intriguing stage for the brisk lines and clustered chords in his right hand. Rather than act as a thinking man's McKenna, Frank may find his truest muse is as an interpreter of intriguing and often ballad-oriented originals. —Robert Doerschuk

Portrait Of New York: Full Force NYC; Broadway Boogie-Woogie; This Nearly Was Mine; Midtown 9 AM; Perdido; My Man's Gone; Lower East Side Shuffle; McKenna/McCoy; Manhattan By Moonlight; Bowery Blues; You And The Night And The Music; Times Square. (50:45)
Personnel: Dave Frank, piano.
Ordering info: jazzheads.com

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**Wyatt/Atzmon/
Stephen**
*For The Ghosts
Within*

DOMINO 271
★★★★½

In the wake of co-founding England's pop group The Wilde Flowers, Robert Wyatt went on to co-found the progressive jazz-rock (then fairly psychedelic) band Soft Machine in 1966 as a drummer. Since leaving SM in 1970, this innovative, restless force has taken many of his jazz roots and recombined them with a series of ever more startling collaborations, spearheaded by his singing voice and ongoing outward-bound proclivities.

For The Ghosts Within is another one of those collaborations, this time between Wyatt (who, apart from his singing, some trumpet and composer credits, adds percussion/brushes and a bit of whistling), saxophonist Gilad Atzmon and violinist/composer Ros Stephen, whose Sigamos String Quartet serves as the instrumental backbone to the recording. Bassist Richard Pryce augments the group. Throughout this set of standards mixed with originals are special instrumental and repertoire choices that keep the program always a little offbeat even as it remains thoroughly lyrical and listenable.

With a title like this one and with Wyatt on board, the chances of the proceedings sounding more wistful than not are good. This despite the sunshine offered to such material as Thelonious Monk's "Round Midnight" (an uplifting whistle instead of a lyric), pop-rock rap with the politically themed, at times cartoonish-sounding "Where Are They Now" and the perennial half-

**Stephan Crump/
James Carney**
Echo Run Pry

CLEAN FEED 199
★★★★★

These two musicians know how to sail confidently in mainstream as well as uncharted waters; collectively their associations include Michael McDonald and Ravi Coltrane as well as Liberty Ellman and Nels Cline. Although these two pieces were freely improvised, with a consequent lack of rigid structure, they unfold with a clarity that draws on the full breadth of their experiences. While Carney spends considerable time playing under the lid of his piano, pulling and slashing at the strings as though he's applying Derek Bailey's guitar attack to a harp, he's also quite willing to state a bold melody and let it flow. Crump's technical range is similarly wide open, encompassing bongo slaps



glass-full, gets-'em-every-time anthem "What A Wonderful World." A sense of melancholy tends to predominate, as Wyatt and company revisit classic heartbreakers like "Laura," "Lush Life" and "What's New?" In each case, Wyatt's crooning and the arrangements (by Stephen, with two from Jonathan Taylor) lend a kind of delicacy unique to the material at hand with Atzmon's soulful reed playing tipping the music ever more toward a jazz vibe here and there. Atzmon's production (which pulled Wyatt and his serene, thin yet totally evocative voice in from another studio) adds reeds, electronics and accordion. Wyatt's wife, Alfie Benge, also gets into the mix with tender lyrics to "Lullaby For Irena" as well as contributing to the uncharacteristically raucous, haunting title track (complete with vocal chorus and some harrowing horn-playing from Atzmon), the lyrics inevitably serving to further Wyatt's emotional and sonic reach.

A tad sentimental here and there, *For The Ghosts Within* manages to carry within each song great care, delivered as a package, giving one the sense that this music was made all in one day, and all in one place, even though it wasn't. A cozy arrangement, indeed. —John Epland

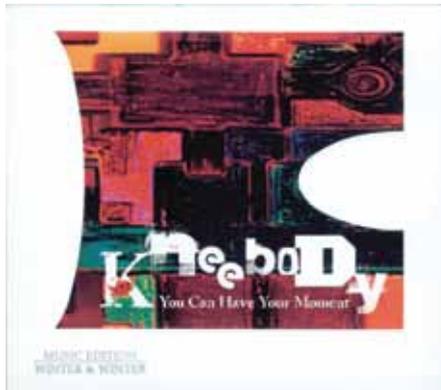
For The Ghosts Within: Laura; Lullaby For Irena; The Ghosts Within; Where Are They Now?; Maryan; Round Midnight; Lush Life; What's New?; In A Sentimental Mood; At Last I Am Free; What A Wonderful World. (56:06)

Personnel: Robert Wyatt, voice, brushes, backing vocals, percussion, whistling, trumpet; Gilad Atzmon, alto saxophone, soprano saxophone, clarinet, bass clarinet, accordion, Palestinian shepherd's flute, backing vocals; Sigamos String Quartet: Ros Stephen, violin, viola (backing vocals), Tom Piggot-Smith, violin, Rachel Robson, viola, Daisy Vatalaro, cello; Richard Pryce, double-bass; Frank Harrison, keyboards (3, 4, 6); Stormtrap (Abdullah Hashem), voice (4); Yaron Stavi, double bass, electric bass (4); Julian Rowlands, bandoneon (10).
Ordering info: dominorecord.co.us



and fleet, propulsive runs. More impressive than the breadth of their resources is the intelligence they exercise in selecting from them. Whether contrasting inside-piano buzzing with an elegantly descending pizzicato figure or finding concord in a passage of delicate beauty, they make music that intuitively makes sense; if this were science, one would say that it has face validity. The self-sufficiency of this effort bears notice; Crump recorded the music in Carney's Brooklyn loft, achieving impressive clarity and presence using one stereo microphone and a portable digital recorder. Most likely the absence of outsiders and familiarity of setting also contributed to the intimacy of this excellent performance. —Bill Meyer

Echo Run Pry: Rodeo Gwen; Wood Genre. (48:54)
Personnel: Stephan Crump, double bass; James Carney, piano.
Ordering info: cleanfeed-records.com



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WINTER & WINTER 910 165

★★★½

On its third album, the hard-hitting quintet Kneebody invests heavily in groove, which isn't such a difficult thing to do when your post-bop is already so deeply inflected with post-rock, fusion and rhythmic ideas nabbed from hip-hop. (On the other hand, it might be a little strange when you consider that its 2009 collaboration with vocalist Theo Bleckmann scored a Grammy nomination in the classical crossover category for a collection of Charles Ives songs). My initial impression of the music left me focusing on the gritty, intensely cohesive ensemble work—I could barely remember that there were plenty of solos—which in this case is a positive accomplishment. The rigorous compositions from the band's members generally weave multiple sections together with seamless yet bold transitions, and with most of the tunes by trumpeter Shane Endsley and keyboardist Adam Benjamin there are subtle variables and cue systems that give the pieces an alluring flexibility when performed live.

Drummer Nate Wood, electric bassist Kaveh Rastegar and keyboardist Benjamin carve out huge, steadily morphing grooves that usually support plangent, sophisticated melodic shapes that give up their essence calmly. The horns of Endsley and reedist Ben Wendel frequently provide contrapuntal richness and additional harmonic depth, with improvised passages perfectly woven into the fabric of ensemble sound. While Kneebody really digs tricky, rhythmically disorienting grooves like the ones on “No Thank You Mr. West” or “Nerd Mountain,” they can also handle more gentle ones with the requisite patience and sensitivity. I could use a bit more space in the thick arrangements, but sounding gauzy couldn't be further from Kneebody's concerns here.

—Peter Margasak

You Can Have Your Moment: Teddy Ruxpin; Held; The Entrepreneur; No Thank You Mr. West; You Have One Unheard Message; The Blind; You Can Have Your Moment; Desperation Station; Nerd Mountain; Call; Unforseen Influences; High Noon. (55:16)

Personnel: Adam Benjamin, Fender Rhodes, effects; Shane Endsley, trumpet, effects; Kaveh Rastegar, electric bass, effects; Ben Wendel, saxophone, melodica, effects; Nate Wood, drums.

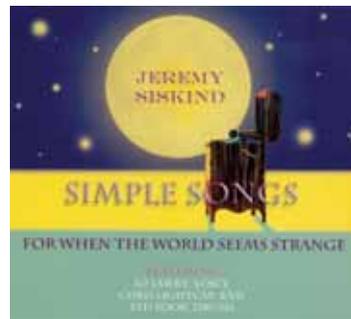
Ordering info: winterandwinter.com

Jeremy Siskind *Simple Songs For When The World Seems Strange*

BROOKLYN JAZZ

UNDERGROUND 020

★★★★



Like his mentor Fred Hersch, Jeremy Siskind likes to tread the ground between jazz and art music, unafraid to wear his heart on his sleeve or to subjugate swing in favor of languid lyricism. On “Little Love Song”—one of three pieces to feature vocalist Jo Lawry—Siskind melds a ripe melody line with lyrics that remind you that he has a master's in English. It seems to be something that might've come out of a Stephen Sondheim musical, yet Siskind's trio—which plays on half the recording—features Chris Lightcap and Ted Poor, two of the most interesting rhythm section players in contemporary improvisation. He wraps everything up with a seemingly unironic take on “The Candy Man.”

The paradox of Siskind's ability to shift shapes and dodge expectations lingers throughout his sophomore recording, but there is also

a sense of purpose, which keeps it from sounding like a pastiche by a prodigiously talented young musician.

As a soloist, Siskind is impossible to pigeonhole, delving into stride on “The Inevitable Letdown,” exploring some pretty, quiet counter-movement on “Venice” and channeling Glenn Gould (down to the glottal noise) on the wistful “Audrey's Song.” Fronting his trio,

he sounds more modern, building to muscular climaxes on the title composition and “A Single Moment” and riding herd over a relentless martial rhythm on “Firstness.”

From Brad Mehldau to Ethan Iverson, plenty of younger pianists tread similar territory, but Siskind distinguishes himself in his duo work with Lawry. In that setting, he seems even less wedded to the jazz continuum. “Hymn Of Thanks” draws on English church tradition, and their work on “Six Minute Tango” would fit well in a cabaret. In the end, Siskind seems happy to go his own way.

—James Hale

Simple Songs For When The World Seems Strange: Venice; The Fates; Hymn Of Thanks; Firstness; Audrey's Song; Six Minute Tango; The Inevitable Letdown; Simple Song (For When The World Seems Strange); A Single Moment; Little Love Song; The Candy Man. (55:39)

Personnel: Jeremy Siskind, piano; Jo Lawry, vocals (3, 6, 10); Chris Lightcap, bass (2, 4, 8, 9, 11); Ted Poor, drums (2, 4, 8, 9, 11).

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Amy Cervini

Lovefool

ORANGE GROVE 1103



Amy Cervini is one of many young jazz singers trying to expand the range of acceptable material beyond the hidebound Great American Songbook; if you count its cutoff point at about 1965, its latest songs are about 50 years old. Here she addresses latter day music by singer/songwriter Jack Johnson, Green Day, the Cardigans, Willie Nelson and Depeche Mode. Her trio of pianist Michael Cabe, bassist Mark Lau and drummer Ernesto Cervini works hand-in-glove with her natural, unforced singing. Guest appearances by Joel Frahm's tenor, Marty Ehrlich's bass clarinet and String Nucleus lend well-placed tang and textural variety.

She has a small, attractive voice that's sure-toned and swings easy. Cervini uses Johnson's "Upside Down" as a playful rhythmic playground, while Blossom Dearie and Jack Segal's "Country Boy" gets a much deeper lyrical reading. Nelson's flat-footed "Sad Songs And Waltzes" and the tongue-in-cheek tango title track are slyly quirky and fun, while the French lyrics on "Quand Je Marche" make for lush sultriness. Cervini's own, dreamlike "Lonely Highway" sublimely hovers in the realm of art songs. The one false note is Nellie McKay's backhanded slap against marriage and mother-



hood, "I Wanna Get Married." Snarkiness, no matter how sweetly sung, is still snarky.

Don't be fooled by Cervini's song choices. Savvy treatments of her most "standard" material (like "Comes Love," Fred Hersch's "Lazin' Around" and "The More I Go Out") use tasty phrasing choices, discreet octave jumps, melisma and glisses. Her choice and abilities leave no doubt that she's a real jazz singer, and one who can gently yet firmly reshape material.

—Kirk Silsbee

Lovefool: Bye Bye Country Boy; Upside Down; Sad Songs And Waltzes; Good Riddance; Lovefool; Quand Je Marche; I Wanna Get Married; Enjoy The Silence; Lazin' Around; Comes Love; Lonely Highway; The More I Go Out. (51:20)

Personnel: Amy Cervini, vocals, melodica (6); Joel Frahm, tenor saxophone (1); Marty Ehrlich, bass clarinet (5, 11); Michael Cabe, piano, Fender Rhodes (6, 8); Mark Lau, bass, background vocal; Ernesto Cervini, drums, percussion, accordion (6, 11), background vocals; Earl Maneein, violin (5); Matt Szemela, violin (5); Jon Weber, viola (5); Jessie Reagen, cello (5).
Ordering info: amycervini.com

Tarbaby

The End Of Fear

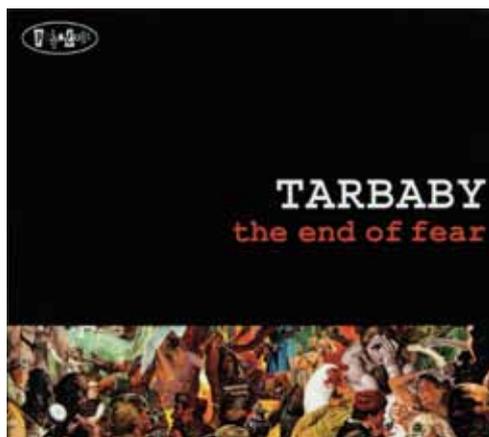
POSI-TONE 8069



Tarbaby is lots of things. The collective's sophomore outing, *The End Of Fear*, is by turns scattered, focused, even jarring. But never dull. The dozen tracks feature pianist Orrin Evans, bassist Eric Revis and drummer Nasheet Waits, in addition to several well-known horn players. The tracks are fairly brief, suggesting the musicians are still gathering themselves: trying something and then, for better or worse, moving on.

The blueprint tries like crazy to create common ground for both tunes and free-jazz. It succeeds, but the group needs to refine this difficult concept. On "Heads," a voice sample of Duke Ellington defines jazz as "freedom of expression"; as if to demonstrate, trumpeter Nicholas Payton sprints out of the gate over a jittery rhythm section. The trio, sans horns, brings similar swagger to "Sailin' On," a minute-long cover of a song originated by the punk band Bad Brains in 1982.

While the group's go-for-broke spirit is admirable, the more conventional tracks stand out. Revis' "Brews" owes a debt to Thelonious Monk, but the performance is quite good. A deliberate

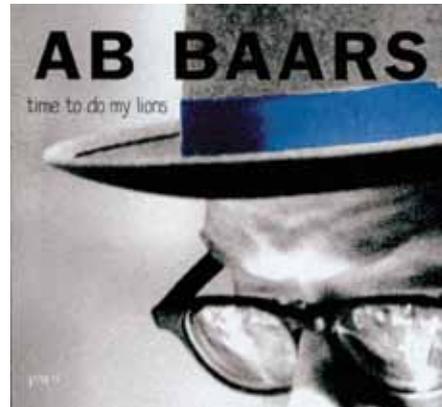


reading of Fats Waller's "Lonesome Me" spotlighting tenor player JD Allen provides a respite from the tumult and eclecticism. Another quartet features alto player Oliver Lake performing his composition "November '80," a study in freedom and control. The track succeeds where others like Andrew Hill's lugubrious "Tough Love" lose their footing. While *The End Of Fear* lacks consistency, the potential for great music is arguably present.

—Eric Fine

The End Of Fear: E-Math; Brews; Heads; Utility; Jena 6; Sailin' On; Lonesome Me; November '80; Hesitation; Tails; Tough Love; Abacus. (51:36)

Personnel: Orrin Evans, piano; Eric Revis, bass; Nasheet Waits, drums; JD Allen, tenor sax; Oliver Lake, alto saxophone; Nicholas Payton, trumpet.
Ordering info: posi-tone.com



Ab Baars

Time To Do My Lions

WIG 17



On his first solo album since *Verderame* from 1997, Dutch reedist Ab Baars sounds more jagged, intense and exploratory than ever. His work has always been smart and marked by meticulous care, but as he's aged he's increasingly channeled his ideas into concentrated, perfectly pitched excursions that focus on specific notions, without wasted notes. Best known for his long-running membership in the ICP Orchestra, Baars, who turned 55 this November, is second only to the group's co-founder Misha Mengelberg when it comes to staunch modernism, and it makes sense that he revisits his wonderfully herky-jerk homage to the pianist "Gammer" (it translates as "donkey-like") on zigzagging clarinet scuffed by upper-register multiphonics and low-end squawks; the original tune first appeared on Baars' previous solo outing.

His deep love and respect for jazz tradition streaks his dark sound—his authoritative tenor playing on the album opener "Day And Dream" is studded with elliptical phrases that might've been transmitted by primo Archie Shepp or Von Freeman, but rather than connecting his lines with florid embellishment and predictable turn-arounds, he patiently leaves them as stark yet info-packed patterns that stand and resonate deeply on their own. The same cool thoughtfulness manifests itself differently on a couple of gorgeous shakuhachi pieces; "Nisshin Joma," named after a collection of lion drawings by the Japanese artist Hokusai, expertly uses the gossamer breathiness of the instrument to shape a series of elegant lines with the kind of spare simplicity common to so much art from Japan. Baars doesn't mimic the sound of Japan in the slightest, even when playing one of its traditional instruments, but the clarity of his playing clearly suggests an appreciation for its singular aesthetic.

—Peter Margasak

Time To Do My Lions: Day And Dream; Time To Do My Lions; Purple Petal; 12 O'clock And All Is Well; Nisshin Joma; Gammer; Ritratto Del Mare A Anzio; Watazumi Doso; The Rhythm Is In The Sound; 730 Union Street. (49:37)

Personnel: Ab Baars, tenor saxophone, clarinet, shakuhachi.
Ordering info: stichtingwig.com

Arguing The Great Voices

Twenty yeas ago Will Friedwald published *Jazz Singing: America's Great Voices from Bessie Smith To Bebop And Beyond*, an original, provocative, often flippant melange of fact and commentary that purveyed praise and contempt with a subjective elegance. Born in 1961, he plays the advocate from a position of scholarship without the prejudicial taints of nostalgia.

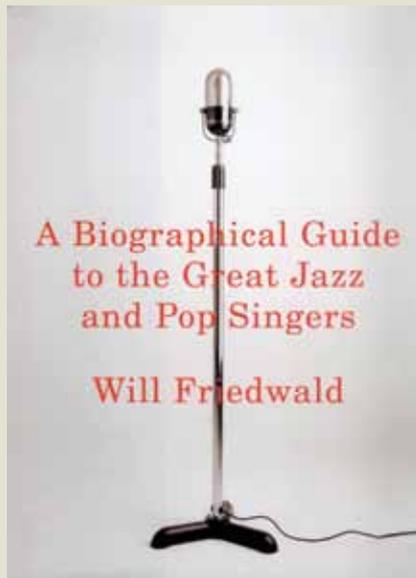
Now, with *A Biographical Guide To The Great Jazz And Pop Singers* (Pantheon), he has spread out. No more splitting hairs between jazz singers and everyone else. He tackles them all here from Eddie Cantor to Bob Dylan in a survey that covers pop, musical theater, cabaret and even a few rock singers who've traded up to pre-rock standards. The book is about singers, but the admission ticket (with few exceptions) is the common ground they share with the American songbook, a theme that excludes most contemporary singers under 50, save for Diana Krall, Michael Bubl  and a few others.

The structure at first glance is standard encyclopedia form. Its first 540 pages include free-standing, alphabetically listed entries on 103 individual singers, plus another five "extras" in the final 30 pages. In between are another 240 pages of thematic essays that cover an additional 117 singers in 26 separate groupings such as "Singing Songwriters," "Female Band Singers" and "Male Band Singers."

But these essays are not bare-boned bio sketches. Each is a probing, subjective commentary, typically with an opening anecdote or observation that becomes the rhetorical trigger for his particular theme. Friedwald explores the interaction between "personas" and music and vice-versa, and how they mutually sustain or subvert illusion to create a complete performer. He argues that the controlling independence of Barbra Streisand robs her of the vulnerability necessary to validate her signature song, "People." "I remain completely unconvinced that she's a person who needs people," he writes.

His essays are rich in such juicy assertions, often tantalizing in their startlingly but always provocative and usually plausible. He zeroes in, for instance, on two Billie Holiday air shots with Count Basie, claiming they are perhaps "the highlights of her recorded output"—a big bet to put on such a tiny sampling of Holiday's remarkable work. Paragraph after paragraph is mined with such scintillating declarations, often over similarly obscure points but engineered to invite debate. Friedwald has a broad perspective of cultural context (films, radio, social history) and a mind like switchboard. The result is unexpected cross-references that bring intellectual life to factual detail.

The scope of the book's judgments make



no pretense of hiding the author's comfort in the safety of history, where all outcomes are known and all stories told. He dismisses his own generation's cultural crucible as "the general disaster area known as the sixties and seventies." The more contemporary his subjects (Betty Carter or Cassandra Wilson), the more he seeks out specific "highlights for us more conservative listeners." Many newcomers are briskly summarized in thematic essays: "Retrocrooner Boychicks," "Contemporary Cabaret" and "Rock Goes Standards." The last is an especially skeptical chapter in which he seems to underestimate the American songbook's capacity for unexpected reinterpretation, whether by Louis Armstrong, Blossom Dearie, Carly Simon, Rod Stewart or even Linda Ronstadt.

Friedwald deals with all the greats, of course. But the book's value is the attention it brings to artists who are not written about often, mainly because they were peripheral to jazz, like Gene Austin, Buddy Clark and Perry Como. Comic Martha Raye gets a major boost as a singer based on a very limited body of work. Alice Faye "may be the single most significant female singer in Hollywood history," Friedwald writes in another surprising but well-argued stroke.

Some singers he humbly admits to not getting. He grew into Mabel Mercer, but confesses that he still cannot hear in Helen Merrill what most of the best musicians have heard since the mid-1950s. Some singers he profiles seem a bit distant from his purpose. Eddie Cantor, Sammy Davis, Sophie Tucker and Jimmy Durante were singing entertainers who perhaps belong in a separate book.

This is still a wonderful book to read around in, and given Friedwald's instincts as a polemicist, it's also likely to become influential. **DB**

Ordering info: randomhouse.com

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Stayin' Alive

The trajectory of what I thought my life in music would be is not very much like what has happened, but it's not all bad news. In fact, what the jazz tradition has demonstrated over the years is an uncanny ability to address all kinds of challenges—social, economic, artistic—in order to advance this living music. The current state of the music “business” has stopped more than a few people I know, but as a creative person, I will continue to find ways to play and hear the music that I love.

Once upon a time, the norm was that major labels signed and cultivated artists they believed would last. The artist was recorded in a big, beautiful studio and promoted by the in-house team who was well connected to the powers-that-be. The tab was running and the hope was that the expenses would be recouped by the label in album sales. More often than not, the artist made a very small percentage of sales but might be lucky enough to have some tour support from the label, and their careers developed with time and exposure. Many strong relationships were built and plenty of great music was recorded and released this way, but there was more to the story.

Years ago, I read a book called *Hit Men* that chronicled the music business as a daunting tale of corruption, immorality and greed. Although it depressed many who read it, I found it liberating because it made me realize for *certain* that there was no rhyme or reason to the business. If I wanted to keep playing, I would have to use creative energy to stay in the game as well as to play the music. I identified myself as a “lifer,” who would play music no matter what happened in the business.

Enter technology. New world. New game. Few rules. The Internet, where the production and distribution of music is undergoing change, is still basically the Wild West. Most music is available for downloading (free or purchased) or may be sold by someone who has nothing to do with the artist or a record company, so young music lovers have come to believe that music is free. They may never buy a CD in their life; their music is downloaded or “shared” (a.k.a. stolen), and there are very few rules in place for how it is distributed on the web. Record companies have sued the fans and royalties aren't being paid. The world is upside down! Apps and technology now rule the culture more so than music. How can a musician make money anymore?

With the Internet as a global distributor, artists can find the people who like their music and service those fans on a more personal level. Instead of a record company telling them what will sell, what they should record, or with whom they should be recording, artists get to make the music they want and in their own time frame. Likewise, the fan is not being told whom they should listen to or purchase. In a strange way, globalization has brought us back to grass roots. The thing that will make people want to have your music is that it speaks to them. The people who love music will be surfing the web, looking to discover something great. If you can provide that for them, they will tell their friends who will tell their friends who will tell their friends. *It will be the music that will get people's attention.* And they will support you. Just like the old days.

I find this an inspiring idea, but it does leave many unanswered questions. For an established artist with a fan base, folks can easily find you. If you are just emerging, you may have to negotiate a number of possibilities, like how to record your music—which takes funding. The Internet has created new and interesting ways to do this. There are several sites through which you make a pitch to friends, fans and strangers about funding your project. My favorite is Kickstarter, where you set a monetary goal and a deadline to fundraise your expenses through pledges from people who want to support your effort. You can offer perks at different levels. Donors can be as involved in the project as much or as little as you want them to be. People can get advanced copies or exclusive offers for various levels of donations or go hear some music with you, come over for dinner, or anything you invent. If you don't reach your goal, nobody pays, which is an excellent



JUDY SCHILLER

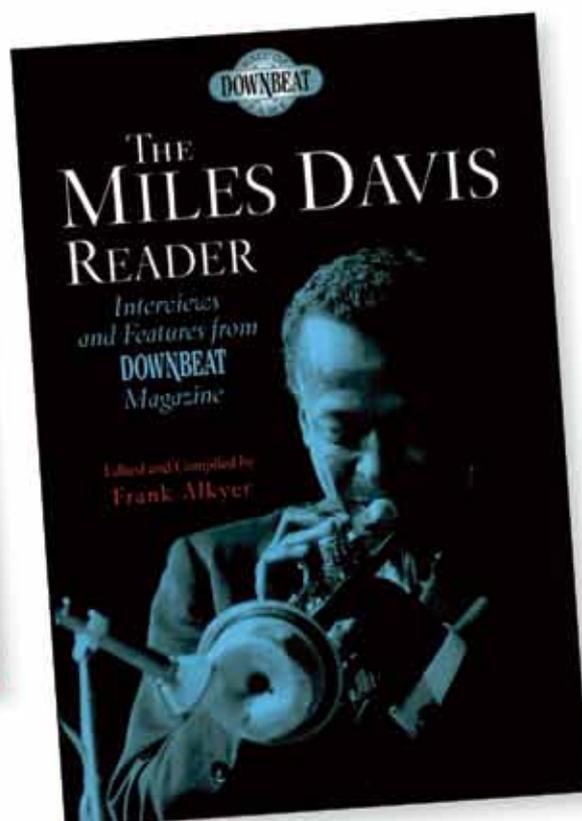
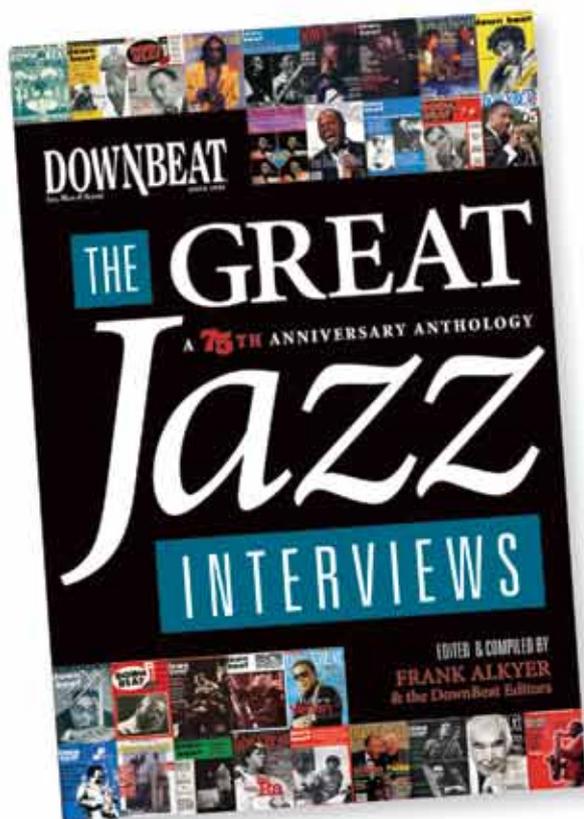
incentive to get the word out. The only cost is Kickstarter's cut, which is 5 percent. You can also put a PayPal “Donate” button on your website and fundraise through a PayPal account. Get creative!

Distribution no longer favors the business side. Now you can distribute your music from your website and from indie sites like CD Baby. No longer at the mercy of whether your label (if you had one) has good distribution and can get good placement in record stores, you will have to do what you can to be heard. Once again—get creative.

Streaming is likely to be the future of music, but will most jazz fans, who love to own whole collections of their favorite artists, settle for whatever is streamed to them? Hard to say, but the majority of even jazz fans will come to hear what they know through the Internet and streaming. Music Choice, Sirius and other subscription-based music sites have whole channels with different styles of jazz, from traditional to bebop to big band to avant-garde. Some sites have samples of tunes with links to Amazon to buy them. Everyone is trying to figure out the new game plan, and I don't think it's in place yet. Be bold if you have the stomach for it. The more we can embrace the changes, the better chance the music has of being heard and appreciated by new audiences.

In a perfect world, musicians don't have to think about anything but music. Someone else takes care of recording details and touring details and distribution/sales details so the artist can be free to create unencumbered. This world is pretty far from perfect, so if you want a life in music, I hope you can find it in yourself to be as involved in the details as you can. Optimism, improvisation and willingness to explore new possibilities help, too! **DB**

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BY JIMI DURSO

Jeremy Pelt



Jeremy Pelt's Evocative Trumpet Solo On Ralph Peterson's 'The Vicious Cycle'

Drummer Ralph Peterson's composition "The Vicious Cycle," from the 2002 release *Subliminal Seduction* (Criss Cross), is quite a challenge to improvise on. Though the form is an even 24 bars, that may be the only thing standard about this tune. Most of the chords are inverted and in some instances are over bass notes with no relation to the triad (like the B \flat maj7/E \flat in measures 3, 7, 27 and 31). Many of the chords are anticipated, coming in on the last eighth note, and in some places quarter note, of the previous measure. And though the song is based on 4/4, there are the measures of 2, 3, 5 and even 9/8 that are interspersed throughout the piece with landmark-like qualities through which the soloist must navigate.

Trumpeter Jeremy Pelt not only makes it through two choruses of this obstacle course, he does so in such an evocative way as to make the piece appear to the listener to be much simpler than it is. In dealing with the rhythmic aspect, notice how Pelt's first phrases start on downbeats, making the underlying time signatures clear. It isn't until measure 8 that we hear Pelt playing over a bar line. He does this more frequently as his improvisation progresses, but he

still makes it clear with his note choices where the downbeat is. For example, the descending chromatic line at the end of measure 11 lands on the seventh of the D7(#9) in measure 12 and then continues as a scalar line. From measure 12 to 13 we see a similar concept, ending measure 12 with E \flat and F (the \flat 9 and #9 of the current chord) and landing in between on the E natural on the downbeat of measure 13, where it is the third of the C/G chord. This not only makes the chord change clear but also emphasizes that this is the "one" of a new measure.

Pelt also shows a deftness and playfulness in dealing with the odd and sometimes ambiguous harmonies—for instance, the unusual B \flat maj7/E \flat , which could be thought of as an E \flat Lydian sound. But when this chord occurs in measures 3–4, 7–8 and 27–28, Pelt instead plays B \flat major pentatonic, highlighting the upper part of the chord. And then when the chord comes up for the last time in his solo (measures 31–32), Pelt instead plays F major pentatonic. This brings out the upper parts of the B \flat (the seventh, ninth and 13th), but also makes the harmony more ambiguous (like F/B \flat /E \flat). He uses the same approach to the D \flat /E in measure 44, playing an A \flat major pentatonic line, again playing off of the fifth of the chord

♩=120
4:26

D/A B/F# C/G B^bmaj⁷/E^b E^b/B^o D/A B/F# C/G B^bmaj⁷/E^b

8 D^bmaj⁷ Cm⁷ B^bm⁷ Gsus⁴/A D7(#9)

13 C/G A⁷/G C/G G⁶ B^b/F G⁷/F 3

19 B^b/E³ Gm/F F[♯]m/E Fm/E^o D7(#9)

23 D^bmaj⁷ F/C E/B E^o/B^o D/A B/F# C/G B^bmaj⁷/E^b E^b/B^o

29 D/A B/F# C/G B^bmaj⁷/E^b D^bmaj⁷ Cm⁷ B^bm⁷

35 Gsus⁴/A D7(#9) 6 C/G A⁷/G C/G

40 G⁶ B^b/F G⁷/F B^b/F

44 Gm/F F[♯]m/E Fm/E^b D7(#9) D^bmaj⁷ F/C E/B E^o/B^o

to bring out the upper extensions (major seventh and ninth).

The D7(#9) that appears in measures 12, 22, 36 and 46 is another harmony that Pelt has fun with. The first time he plays a descending line that is basically D phrygian, only with the root missing. This makes it sound almost like C minor pentatonic with the sixth added, but the notes also can be heard as the alterations of the D7 chord: seventh, flat sixth, fifth, 11th, flat ninth, seventh and then sharp ninth. When the chord comes up in measure 22, however, he plays the sharp 11th, fifth and major third, two of these tones having not appeared in the previous instance. In measure 36 Pelt starts his line on the root, but the remainder of the measure is C minor pentatonic, which he had alluded to in mea-

sure 12. When the D7(#9) shows up for the final time three measures before the end of his solo, Pelt plays closer to the actual harmony by playing D minor pentatonic (though with the root missing). He uses the F, the sharp nine of the D7, as a pivot tone that becomes the third of the anticipated harmony of the next measure, and makes this clear by playing the rest of the D^b triad right afterward.

It's also interesting to note that Pelt is comfortable enough with his playing that he lays out for the first and last measures of his solo, giving it space to develop and blend into the final melody.

DB

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The first two horns in the series are the Pro-One alto (AS6200VLQ) and tenor (TS6200VLQ). Sax-section mate Bruce Gibson and I tried them both out during a two-hour test session in my DownBeat office, and we found both models to be incredibly responsive, great-sounding and easy to manage.

Key to the high performance of the Pro-One is the Ponzol-designed P1 neck, the angle of which causes the player's throat to open more easily, resulting in freer blowing, quicker response, significantly improved altissimo, precise intonation (nice octaves!) and more subtle tonal control.

Another important component of the new design is the Pro-One's well-contoured keyboard layout, also the result of Ponzol's input, which provides a comfortable feel and promotes an economy of hand motion that makes everything lay nicely on the horn. The ergonomic positioning and placement of keys makes it easier for the saxophonist to play with speed, accuracy and finesse. You get a nice even resistance from top to bottom, resulting in a consistent feel and a graceful touch. The tenor model includes two strap hooks, so you can choose the one with the best angle to suit your height, posture or embouchure.

In developing the Pro-One, Antigua conducted extensive research on the chemical composition and grain structure of the metal in some of the best professional-model saxes ever made—specifically, post-World War II Selmers. The company's engineering team found a source for such an alloy (which it termed Vintage Reserve) and came up with a computer-controlled annealing process that makes the instrument respond more like a saxophone that's been broken in and played for a while. The Pro-One even features metal thumb rests that let the player feel the horn vibrate in his hands, unlike plastic thumb rests, which tend to isolate vibrations and force the player to rely entirely on his ears for feedback.

The Pro-One has a hybrid bell diameter—one that's slightly larger than a standard bell size, but not oversized like many of the step-up horns that have been introduced in recent years. Antigua and Ponzol settled on an in-between bell size and length to help the player achieve an even timbre and balanced resistance through all registers of the horn.

Also contributing to the Pro-One's consistency of tone are drawn tone holes. The holes are rolled on the bell keys (low C, B and B-flat) and straight in all other areas, resulting in a hybrid of sorts. The rolled tone holes provide a larger contact area for the pads to seal and add strength, providing faster, more nimble response from the low notes and a deep, rich tone. The straight holes are more appropriate for the middle and upper registers of the horn, where rolled holes could have a tendency to spread the sound too much. The horns also feature high-grade Italian-made Lucien Deluxe leather pads and stainless steel tone boosters.

One of the cooler features on the Pro-One is a Ponzol-designed lifter for the G-sharp mechanism that acts like a teeter-totter and gives extra leverage to prevent sticking. The mechanism never fails, so goodbye sticky G-sharp keys. Other keywork enhancements include a little bridge between



the F and F-sharp keys that facilitates faster action and response in the right-hand key section. Antigua's Trident adjustable key arms on the bell keys improve radial rigidity and feature two adjustment arms for better balance and increased strength.

The Pro-One is finished in a conservative vintage lacquer and features elaborate hand-engraving for an elegant look that suits the burnished tone of this classic-sounding instrument.

The alto carries a suggested retail price of \$3,599, and the tenor lists at \$3,999.

The Pro-One doesn't screw around. With its superior design and construction and a bare minimum of bling, this saxophone is aimed directly at the professional market. The horns exhibit an overall coherence and clarity, with a nicely colored core tone that's always present, from subtone quiet to blazing loud.

—Ed Enright

Ordering info: antiguapro-one.com



Kawai MP10, MP6 *Sweet-Sounding Stage Pianos*

Over the past 80 years, Kawai has delivered high-quality acoustic pianos to the Asian and American markets, and has become one of the major players in that space. The company's digital offerings have been around for more than 25 years, and Kawai has demonstrated a commitment to developing and improving them with every iteration. Kawai offers many different series of digital pianos, ranging from lower-priced student models to almost every level of home-console-style digital to a wide variety of stage pianos. Two of the newest models that fit into this last category are the MP10 and MP6. While they share the MP designation, these are very different beasts, with different target audiences in mind. We'll look at the MP10 first.

The Kawai MP10 is designed to compete in the premium digital piano space. Priced around \$2,500 on the street, this piano is designed for the serious professional pianist. It does include 27 different sounds, all in the piano, electric piano and what they call the "sub" section—which includes strings, pads and vibes—all sounds designed to complement the piano. So if you are looking for an all-in-one synth workstation, this is not for you; if you are looking for a high level piano experience, then read on.

The construction of the MP10 is solid. At 70 pounds, it comes in on the heavy side for a stage piano, and it is also pretty large—you probably won't be sliding this into the backseat of the Civic. The upside of this kind of bulk is the solidity of play it offers. If you have it on a solid stand, the MP10 feels like a piano. The MP10 includes the newest Kawai RM3 digital piano action. The RM3 action uses fully wooden keys, and a really comfortable system of counterweights—it feels great. This action was released this year as a part of the company's celebration of 25 years of Kawai digital piano actions. The keys are covered in an ivory-like material that absorbs moisture, so the feel of the keyboard is really pleasurable.

The sounds are also very strong. Each sound section (piano/electric piano/sub) has its own control section, and can be switched on and off separately for layering and splits. The pianos are gorgeous. From the rich Concert Grand to the mellow Jazz to the bright Pop—these are all really usable. The electric pianos are likewise very playable. The Rhodes is really rich and full—it definitely feels like the real thing. The Wurli also has the sound of an authentic instrument, and is inspiring to play. Kawai also included a couple of decent clavs and a DX-style digital electric piano. The Electric Piano section also includes an amp simulator that is pretty solid and adds a lot of punch to these already excellent sounds. The Sub section's strings and pads are pretty good, and there are a couple of parameters to adjust that give a wide variety of options within each sound. There are a couple of multi-effects sends and reverb on each group, and a global EQ for the entire unit.

Also included in the MP10 is a stereo line-in that will accept another instrument output, which can be separately mixed in from the front panel. This signal then gets routed out through both the 1/4-inch amplifier outs

and the XLR balanced outs (which are unaffected by the volume slider). This is a really nice touch. These ins are also recorded when you use the internal song recorder, which can hold up to 10 songs in wav or mp3 format. There is also a MIDI control section with basic features for controlling external instruments. You can connect to your computer through the USB jack on the back to dump out and bring in setups and programs, as well as MIDI files in the SMF format. There is also a standard USB jack on the front of the unit for inserting a USB key loaded with songs. All-in-all, a very well-thought-out performance keyboard.

The MP6 lives in the mid-level stage piano market, street-priced at around \$1,500. There is a lot more competition in this space, and the MP6 has a feature set that matches up well with most of the competition. It is smaller than the MP10, but still large, although at 48 pounds it is much more manageable. It has a raised-angle front panel, which means it is not ideal for a second-tier keyboard, but it does give good access to all your controls. The action is different on the MP6, which uses the Kawai RM action. This means the keys are plastic instead of wood, and the mechanism is not as long as in the RM3 action, but it still feels very good, if not as authentic as the MP10.

The MP6 includes a much larger sound set, adding in organs, brass, vocal, guitar and more synth sounds. All are decent, although there are no real standouts here. The pianos are excellent, but the electric pianos are not the same as the ones found in the MP10, and not as good. The organs are likewise good, but not fantastic. All are pretty usable, though, and considering the lower price, there is a lot to like here.

The controls for the four zone levels, the parameter adjustments and the effects settings are arranged in a matrix with four buttons and knobs for easy access, and allow for quick edits on the fly without digging through menus. There are also four dedicated sliders for the zone levels, which make mixing layers and splits a snap.

There is also a sound recorder and a MIDI song recorder included here, but not the additional inputs on the MP10—still a nice feature, though. One of the areas where the MP6 does excel, though, is the editability of the sounds and parameters—they get pretty deep, and I suspect that with some time spent tweaking, you could get the factory sounds to sound great. There is also a lot of control over MIDI messages and CCs, which make it a very nice controller.

Kawai continues to offer good products in the digital piano market with the MP10 and MP6. The care and attention to the action is something one would hope for from a respected maker of acoustic pianos, and the playing experience was very positive. The MP10 is a gorgeous instrument, and needs to be considered if you are in the market for a high-level stage piano. The MP6 has some weaknesses, but also a number of strengths, and is definitely worth a look for the mid-level purchaser.

—Chris Neville

Ordering info: kawaius.com



{2}



{1}



{6}



{5}



{3}



{4}

{1} LUXURY CASE

Protec's new Lux PRO PAC cases feature a lightweight shock-absorbent shell to protect the instrument. They also include a zippered messenger section with a built-in organizer, tuck-away padded backpack straps, a water-resistant padded ballistic nylon exterior and a removable shoulder strap. Lux PRO PAC cases are available for B-flat clarinet, German clarinet, oboe and flute/piccolo. They come in black or chocolate.

More info: protechmusic.com

{2} MIDPOINT MOUTHPIECE

The M30 Lyre is the latest addition to Vandoren's French clarinet mouthpieces. This model is designed to be a midpoint between the gold-standard 5RV Lyre and the M30—its tip opening and facing length position it directly between the two. The mouthpiece is flexible with a big, round sound that's harmonically dense and easy to control. The M30 Lyre is available in Standard Profile, Profile 88 and 13 series models.

More info: vandoren.com

{3} TUNING KEY

Gibraltar's new Quick Release drum key makes tuning simple by including a knurled grip for fast, easy head changes and adjustments. The Quick Release drum key hooks onto any lanyard or carabineer clip for easy access.

More info: gibraltarhardware.com

{4} MORE COWBELL

Pearl's New Yorker Cowbells create a signature salsa sound with enough volume for any musical situation. The new line comprises three different bell sizes.

More info: pearldrums.com

{5} PERFECT BALANCE

The new Pro 2900 is the only open-backed headphone in Ultrasone's Pro series. Ultrasone has released both a standard, single-cable version and a balanced, double-cable version of these headphones. The Pro 2900s have a classic black design and velvet-covered black ear pads.

More info: ultrasone.com

{6} CLIP-ON, CLIP-OFF

Barcus Berry's new Sync Clip-On Tuner is a mini-sized chromatic tuner with an LCD display and a tuning range of A0 to A6. It offers fully adjustable clip-on mounting with silica gel clip pads to protect the instrument. The Sync Clip-On Tuner also features chromatic, guitar, bass, violin and ukulele tuning selections.

More info: barcusberry.com

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THE 21ST CENTURY SAXOPHONE

New York Jazz Academy Expands Its Mission

Saxophonist Javier Arau had a social agenda in mind when he established a youth saxophone workshop in 2009: to fill the void created by a sharp decline in public funding for school music programs.

"I felt that they were underserved," Arau said. "There are kids trying to work through jazz on their instruments, but are not having any chance to play with other kids and work with mentors. The schools have cut so many programs."

Arau leased a classroom at St. Bartholomew's Church in Midtown Manhattan, and spent heavily to advertise the week-long program. But when the first day of the workshop arrived that July, Arau had just six students. Things worked out, though.

"They all showed up [and] we had a blast," Arau said. "We were in this hot, little room with no windows. For them it was just this remarkable intensive. I don't think any of these kids knew there was this much to playing saxophone."

Although Arau lost roughly \$400, he deemed the venture a success. "You know, I had to stop looking at any of this the way a musician looks at a gig," he said. "I was a businessman, and that was like a trial-by-fire because you have to change your mindset."

Indeed, Arau altered a subsequent business plan for a year-round program after the overwhelming response came from adults. "I'd say nine out of 10 times," he recalled, "it was an adult calling, saying, 'What about me?'"

As a result, Arau's summer youth workshop grew into the New York Jazz Academy, a mostly adult program with an enrollment of roughly 200. It has also recently added introductory music courses for small children. The school opened in October 2009 at the Church of St. Paul and St. Andrew on the Upper West Side. A year later, it expanded to several other locations around Manhattan, in addition to Prospect Heights, Brooklyn and Mineola, Long Island. It has also launched the website nyjazzacademy.com. Its programs are affordable; typically \$30 for a two-hour class.

Arau, now 35, grew up in Sacramento, Calif., and earned degrees in jazz composition at Lawrence University in Wisconsin and New England Conservatory of Music. He moved to Brooklyn's Williamsburg neighborhood in September 2001, and then to Jackson Heights, Queens. Arau, a member of the BMI Jazz Composers Workshop, leads an 18-piece orchestra, serves as house saxophonist at St. Bartholomew's Church and has worked with Charli Persip's Super Band. His credits as a composer include scores for the indie film *Easy Listening* and *The Gold Wutahkee*, an Off Off Broadway musical.

The New York Jazz Academy includes combos and big bands, and weekly classes devoted to harmony, improvisation, guitar and voice. The faculty includes guitarist Brad Shepik, saxophonist Wayne Escoffery and singer Carolyn Leonhart. However, the students run the gamut: from a doctor and a minister to an assortment of college students and instructors, tradesmen and retirees. Many of the students studied music during their formative years and see the school as an opportunity to pick up their instruments again.

Trumpet player Michael Thuroff said he was first chair in New York's all-state band in 1963, and later played in a U.S. Army band and with the rock band Mitch Ryder and the Detroit Wheels. He quit after developing embouchure problems, but began playing again in 2009. He now

spends roughly eight hours a week at Arau's academy. "I only wish I was 25 again," said Thuroff, 65, a computer consultant. "[As a young musician] I played, I played, I played; I just never learned."

Dr. Jennifer Provataris, who works in the emergency department at Jacobi Medical Center in the Bronx, N.Y., played alto saxophone in a high school stage band before her focus shifted to college and then medical school. Armed with the same Bundy saxophone she played in high school, she attends one of the academy's improvisation workshops. "It was kind of killing me that I wasn't doing it anymore," Provataris, 36, said. "I wish I would have done something like this sooner."

For his part Arau is pleased with the school's steady growth and the opportunity to refine his personal method for teaching jazz. But Arau's mission remains incomplete.

"We're seeing such positive results from both the teaching methods and the business model," he said. "The next step is taking this beyond New York. This whole [program] could really benefit neighborhoods everywhere, whether it's in the tri-state area, the Midwest or even abroad."

—Eric Fine



Javier Arau

JASON RIVER



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Kenny Barron & Mulgrew Miller

Shortly before performing their duo concert at the 31st Annual Detroit International Jazz Festival on Sept. 5, Kenny Barron and Mulgrew Miller appeared at the Talk Tent before a live audience to listen to and reflect on a range of piano-based music. The Barron–Miller performance took place on the Carhartt Amphitheatre Stage.

Tommy Flanagan

“How High The Moon” (from *Lady Be Good ... For Ella*, Verve, 1994) Flanagan, piano; Peter Washington, bass; Lewis Nash, drums.

Kenny Barron: The minute I heard this I could tell that this was someone who liked Bud Powell, and it sounded like someone from Detroit. I was thinking Barry Harris, but Mulgrew said no because it sounded like the rhythm section of Peter Washington and Lewis Nash. That being the case, I thought it must be Tommy Flanagan, my hero.

Mulgrew Miller: I thought of Tommy right away, playing “How High The Moon.” I recognized his touch and that unique kind of language, vocabulary in his playing. What always gives Tommy away for me is his left hand, which is a kind of legato left hand as opposed to a rhythmic left hand. Tommy plays these sustained chords with his left hand.

Barron: When I was in junior high, I had an art teacher who used to bring in music for inspiration. In one class he played the Miles Davis recording of “In Your Own Sweet Way” with Tommy. I loved his touch and the way he phrased. He became an influence and continued to be an influence till the day he died—and he still is.

Eliane Elias/Herbie Hancock

“The Way You Look Tonight” (from *Solos And Duets*, Blue Note, 1995) Elias, Hancock, pianos.

Miller: This is an uneducated guess, but at least one of the pianists is a Cuban virtuoso. I’m venturing forth with Gonzalo Rubalcaba as a wild guess, playing with either Herbie Hancock or someone influenced by Herbie.

Barron: I’m definitely lost, but I’ll hazard a guess that this is Hiromi playing with Chick Corea. They both have a similar technique. It’s not? Well, I liked this. They both stretched the boundaries. That was very interesting.

Miller: I liked it as well—harmonically, rhythmically, and its form. It’s an adventurous version of the tune, without a straightahead swing. It’s what you’d expect from a modern piano duo. They’re both virtuosos with phenomenal technique and ideas. They’re in tune with each other. Personally, I would have been lost in the first eight bars.

Barron: This is Herbie? Is he playing with a Spanish pianist?

Miller: Is it Herbie and Chucho Valdés?

Barron: Eliane? I never would have guessed that, even though I’ve played duets with her.

Oscar Peterson

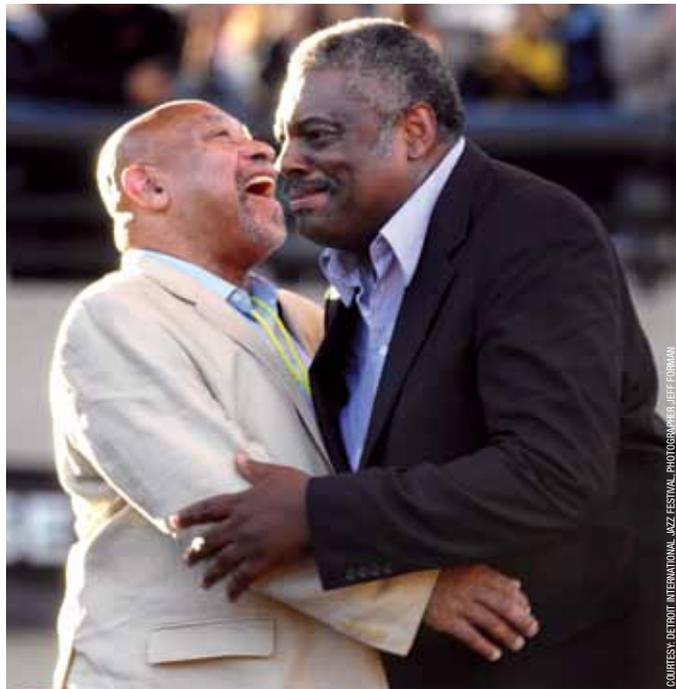
“The Sheik Of Araby” (from *This Is Oscar Peterson At The Piano*, Bluebird/BMG, 2002, rec’d 1945) Peterson, piano; Bert Brown, bass; Frank Garipey, drums.

Barron: I want to defer to Mulgrew, but I do know the song. It’s “Sheik Of Araby.” I don’t have any idea who this is, but it’s obviously someone who is older. The sound quality makes it sound old, and the way the bass player plays makes it sound old.

Miller: I’m going to take a wild guess. Is this Dorothy Donegan?

Barron: I liked this. It’s not my cup of tea, but from a piano point of view, it’s great.

Miller: And the left hand is incredible.



[An audience member guesses that this is “an old, old, old, old Oscar Peterson tune.”]

Barron: Wow, it was recorded in 1945? I was 2 years old.

Abdullah Ibrahim

“Blue Bolero” (from *African Magic*, Enja, 2001) Ibrahim, piano; Belden Bullock, bass; Siphon Kunene, drums.

Barron: I’m stumped. It’s a very beautiful piece. Whoever this is knows how to take their time and not play a lot of notes. If I would have to rate this, I’d give it 5 stars.

Miller: I have no idea, but I’ll just throw something out there. Is it Dollar Brand or Don Pullen or Geri Allen? It is Dollar Brand, I mean, Abdullah Ibrahim. I guessed him because the tune has an African folk element, and it has a simplicity of harmony. Abdullah isn’t into heavy improvisation. This tune stayed simple while also having a spiritual feel. That’s what led me to guess him.

Barron: I remember seeing Abdullah playing with saxophonist Carlos Ward at Sweet Basil on Monday nights. The music was so hymn-like. It was like being in church.

Miller: It’s funny, but at first I thought this might be Brad Mehldau, but then I could hear that the touch wasn’t his.

Fred Hersch

“I Mean You” (from *Fred Hersch Plays Thelonious*, Nonesuch, 1998) Hersch, piano.

Miller: Again, I’m not sure, but something about it reminds me of Jaki Byard. It’s the quirkiness. It sounded like someone a little older than any of the young pianists.

Barron: At first I thought it was Fred Hersch. It is? There was something in his phrasing. I’ve played duo with him on occasion. I thought it was Fred, but then it got a little busy—busier than I’ve heard him play. So that threw me off. But I’m glad I was right. I liked this a lot. It was very creative. This was a unique rendition of Monk.

Miller: I’ve known Fred a long time. We’re about the same age. I was living in Boston when Fred was at the New England Conservatory of Music studying with Jaki Byard, so I was close. I’m a great admirer of Fred. He always improvises with a lot of adventure. He has a lot of imagination and creativity. He’s got a lot to say.

COURTESY: DETROIT INTERNATIONAL JAZZ FESTIVAL; PHOTOGRAPHER: JEFF FORDMAN

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