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Jazz, Blues & Beyond

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Jeff "Tain" Watts

BLINDFOLD TEST

Dave Liebman  
TRANSCRIPTION

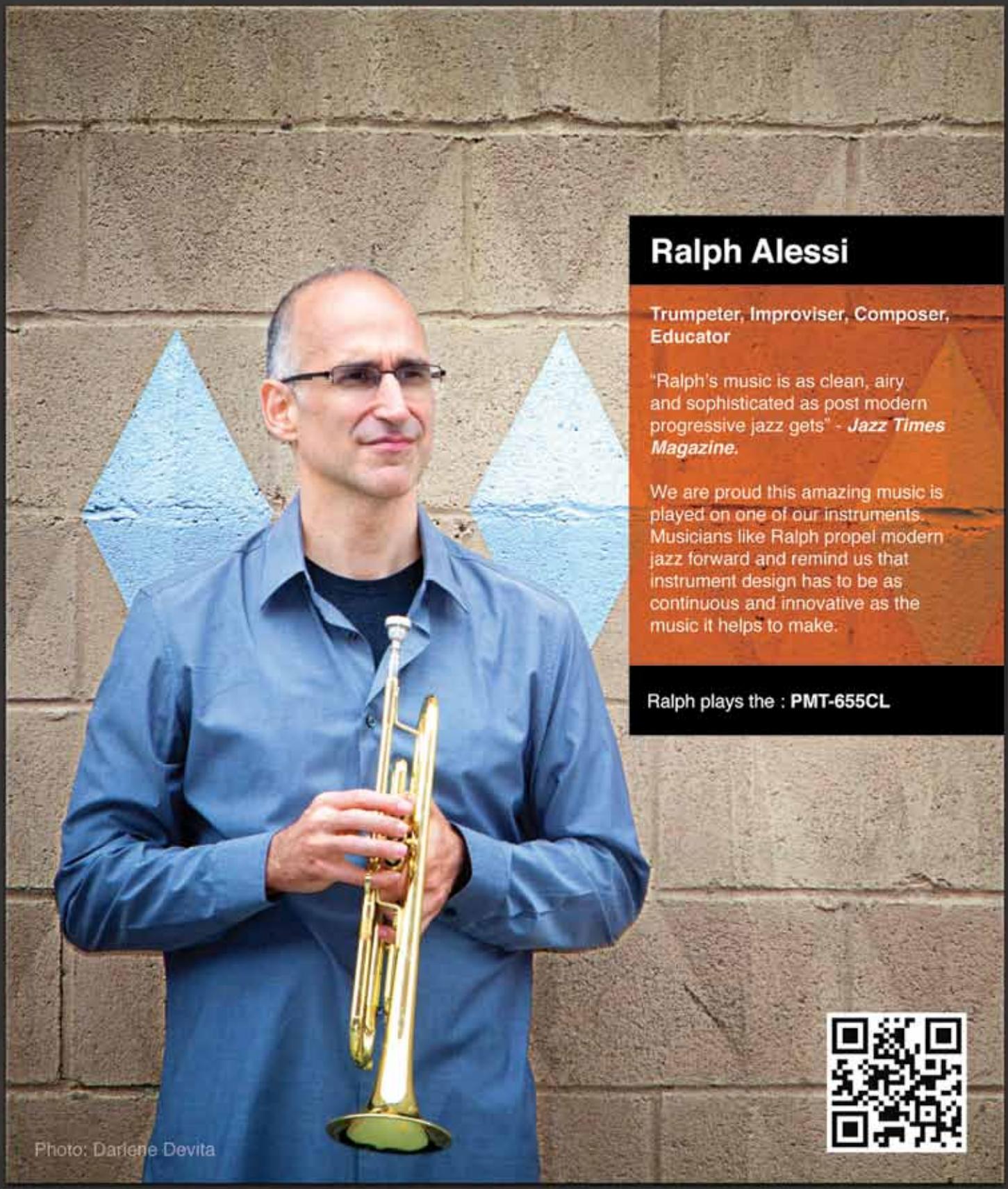
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w/Oscar Noriega, Matt Mitchell, Ches Smith

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| 2/16 | Boston, MA (Regattabar)             |
| 2/17 | New York, NY (Rubin Museum)         |
| 2/18 | Baltimore, MD (An Die Musik Live!)  |
| 2/19 | Washington DC (Bohemian Caverns)    |
| 2/24 | Austin, TX (venue tbd)              |
| 2/25 | Los Angeles, CA (Blue Whale)        |
| 2/27 | Santa Cruz, CA (Kuumbwa)            |
| 2/28 | Oakland, CA (Yoshi's)               |
| 2/29 | Eugene, OR (The Shedd)              |
| 3/1  | Seattle, WA (Earshot Jazz)          |
| 3/2  | Portland, OR (Alberta Rose Theater) |

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w/Helge Andreas Norbakken, Emilie Stoesen Christensen,  
Erland Dahlén, Torgeir Rebolledo Pedersen



# FEBRUARY 2012

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BY PHIL WOODS WITH TED PANKEN

In his remarkable memoir, *My Life In E-Flat*, alto saxophonist Phil Woods candidly explores his turbulent life and times. This exclusive excerpt paints a vivid portrait of Woods' first year in New York City. Just out of high school in Springfield, Mass., our hero leaves the comforts of home to bunk on the Upper West Side with guitarist Sal Salvador, bassist Chuck Andrus and pianist-arranger Hal Serra while attending the Juilliard School of Music.



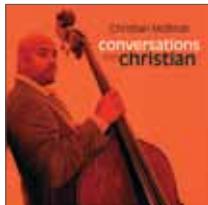
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Cover photo of Phil Woods shot by Michael Jackson, 2001. Image above courtesy of Detroit Jazz Festival, shot by Ara Howrani.

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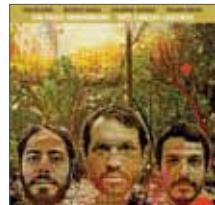
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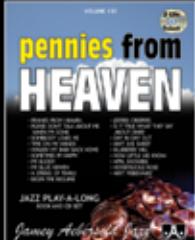
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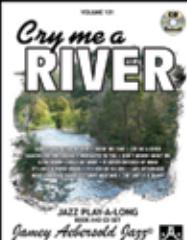
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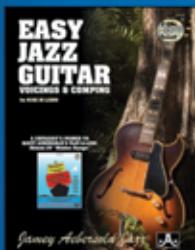
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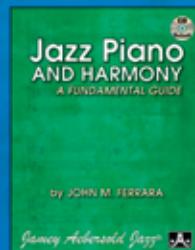
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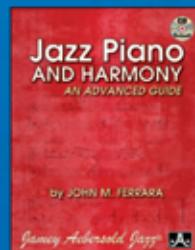
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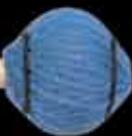
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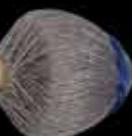
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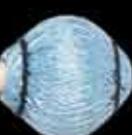
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## First Take | BY BOBBY REED

### Learning from Elders

**D**ownBeat was founded in 1934, and nowadays it's rare that we see top-notch performances by artists who are older than the magazine itself. However, there are still plenty of fantastic players out there who are octogenarians.

"Respect your elders." It's an expression that many of us heard while growing up, and it's a mantra that has always been embraced by jazz and blues musicians. In a recent span of five days, I had the honor of witnessing sizzling performances by jazz legends Benny Golson, Jim Hall, Roy Haynes and Jimmy Heath. All four gentlemen are over 80 and still performing at an exemplary level.

Onstage at Chicago's Symphony Center, the ever-youthful Haynes good-naturedly forced each musician on the bandstand to grab the microphone and address the crowd. By generating a round of stage banter, Haynes was clearly having fun, but he also seemed to be teaching his much-younger bandmates an important lesson in showmanship. He handed the mic to the terrific trumpeter Roy Hargrove, who quietly said, "A couple of days ago, I was spending some time with Sonny Rollins, and now I'm here with the great Roy Haynes...I'm learning so much."

Hargrove played at the Kennedy Center Honors gala (on Dec. 4 in Washington, D.C.), where Sonny Rollins, 81, was honored. A few days after that gig at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Hargrove was tearing it up onstage with Haynes. Hargrove is an established, mesmerizing musician, but he realizes that he can learn new things by interacting with his elders.

I've been thinking about octogenarians quite a bit lately because with this issue, DownBeat celebrates the 80th birthday of one of the world's most important alto saxophone players, Phil Woods. In an exclusive excerpt that Woods wrote with help from journalist Ted Panken, the saxophonist describes his early years in New York City, where he arrived in 1949 (see page 26).

Woods has influenced multiple generations of musicians, including Grace Kelly, who is literally young enough to be his great-granddaughter. In a sidebar that Michael Jackson wrote (see page 30), Kelly discusses all the things she has learned by observing and collaborating with Woods. The young alto saxophonist wisely refers to each performance with Woods as "a lesson."

In a cruel twist of fate, this is also the issue in which we pay tribute to one of the world's greatest drummers, Paul Motian, who died on Nov. 22 at age 80. Motian—who in 2011 won his first DownBeat Critics Poll award for best drummer—was a mentor to dozens of musicians (see page 50). In Ken Micallef's tribute, numerous virtuosos share stories about working with Motian, including Joe Lovano and Bill Frisell, who wrote via email, "He taught me, brought me up."

Perhaps the most significant way that we can thank our elders for their mentorship is by aspiring to be the best human beings that we can possibly be. Let's try.



Phil Woods

MARK SHELDON

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## Chords & Discords ▶

### Respect for Taylor

Eric Reed's remarks for the Blindfold Test in the January issue were not only rude but also disrespectful. It seems to me that Reed is a pianist who thinks he is all-knowing, but he comes off like someone with an enormous ego and full of himself. His comments about what jazz is (and what it is not) show his ignorance, not his knowledge. His remarks about Cecil Taylor were not called for. Cecil, who is one of the most respected pianists of this century and the last, was playing what Mr. Reed calls jazz over 60 years ago. What Cecil has forgotten Mr. Reed has yet to learn—including humility.

DICK MACE  
DICKMACE@NYC.RR.COM

### Support from a Veteran

I am 90 years old, which is the reason for my one-year subscription renewal. I've been a subscriber to DownBeat for approximately 70 years, including the time I was in the South Pacific for 35-plus months. I'm quite certain that one or two copies of your great magazine caught up with me on Guadalcanal.

RALPH LEWIS  
CHARTER MEMBER, THE NATIONAL WWII MUSEUM

**Editor's note:** We salute you. We often receive letters that say, "I have been a subscriber for 50 years," but it is a rare treat to hear from a reader who has subscribed for 70 years.

### Call for Less Negativity

In a two-star review of Cedar Walton's CD *The Bouncer* in the November issue, Bob Doerschuk goes to the trouble of *clocking* ("at 7:47") what he considers Walton's "muddy" elaboration and "fudged" notes on the track "Lament." A tone of Olympian disappointment pervades the review. This represents a new high (i.e., low) in surgical negativity and self-congratulatory hubris in a jazz critic. Let's hope it will stand alone in the annals.

TOM HASSETT  
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIF.

### Impulse Architects

In your November issue, I was disappointed by the format of the article that celebrated the Impulse label's 50th anniversary. The "my favorite album" theme has been used time and time again. A series of interviews with living members of the 1960s Impulse lineup (Curtis Fuller, Archie Shepp, McCoy Tyner, Pharoah Sanders, Sonny Rollins), exploring their memories of the label's studio experience and the feeling of being immortalized in its catalogue, would have been a more compelling read.

TOM HARDING  
HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA, CANADA

Cecil Taylor



CAROL FRIEDMAN

### Blindfold Observations

Rudresh Mahanthappa's Blindfold Test in the December issue was impressive in many ways.

But I was surprised that he missed Phil Woods and could only say it was someone who listened to a lot of Bird. On the Charlie Parker track (which he successfully identified), Mahanthappa said that on some records Bird relied on what he knew, and that on others he took chances. What Bird knew was his own style, which revolutionized jazz. So he laid back and copied himself at times in his later years—but he could still play his ass off.

JAY BREGMAN  
PROFESSOR OF HISTORY & JAZZ STUDIES  
UNIVERSITY OF MAINE

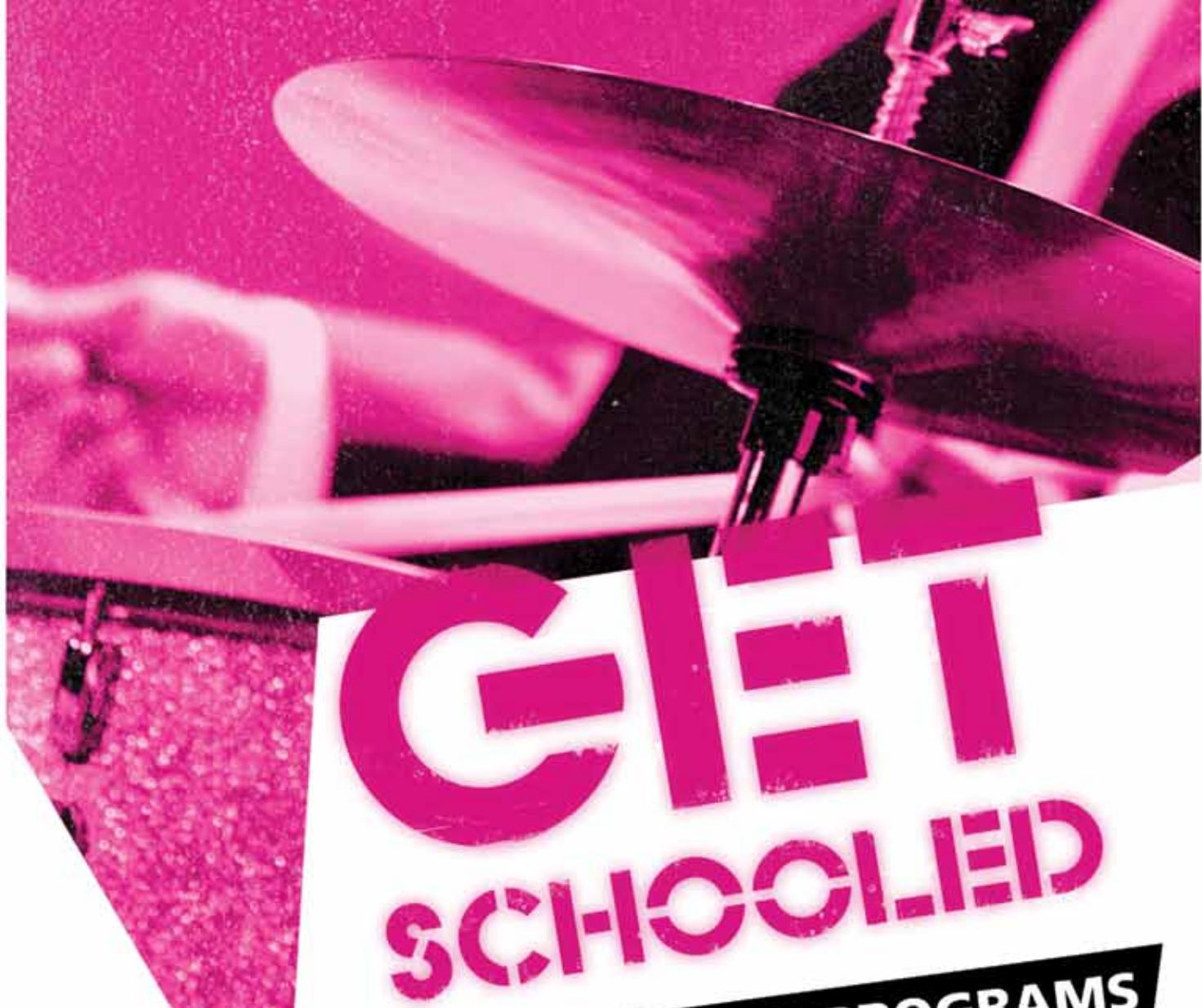
### Corrections

- In the article "Welcome to Tone Town!" in our January issue, the name of the CJP/UIC Jazz Academy at the University of Illinois at Chicago was misidentified.
- Also in our January issue, the CD review of *Threedom* by Pilc Moutin Hoenig misspelled the name of the record label Motéma.
- In the article "Must-Have Jazz DVDS of 2011" in our December issue, an editorial error misidentified the DVD that contains a guest appearance by Dizzy Gillespie. He appears on *Johnny Griffin: Live In France 1971*.
- Our article on a Louis Armstrong box set ("The Beat," November) implied that the first time Armstrong and Ella Fitzgerald worked together was in 1956. They previously had collaborated in 1950.

DOWNBEAT REGRETS THE ERRORS.

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# The Beat

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## Crowning Achievements

*Jimmy Heath, Tommy LiPuma Honored as WBGO-FM Champions of Jazz*

WBGO-FM's (Newark, N.J.) Champions of Jazz Benefit 2011 at New York's Lincoln Center featured a star-studded array of musicians, two honorees with a sense of humor and a few surprise performances. Held Nov. 2 in the Allen Room at Frederick P. Rose Hall, the benefit honored octogenarian saxophonist Jimmy Heath and veteran producer Tommy LiPuma.

After opening speeches by WBGO CEO Cephas Bowles and NPR President Gary Knell, Joe Lovano, Antonio Hart and Roy Hargrove blazed through the Heath hard-bop standard "C.T.A." accompanied by a rhythm section of Mike Clark, James Genus and Michael Wolff, the evening's musical director.

"I turned 85 last week and feel fortunate to still be here playing with the greats of this music," said Heath, who accepted his award from Kareem Abdul-Jabbar.

Lovano, Hart, Gary Smulyan and Todd Bayshore also offered note-perfect, swinging renditions of "Mona's Mood" and "New Picture," two of Heath's infrequently performed saxophone quartets. The music was decidedly urban, warm, reflective and highly melodious.

Danilo Pérez and Lizz Wright were also included in the program.

The LiPuma portion of the night began with an entertaining homage by NPR program host Ben Sidran, who referenced "the famous LiPuma procedure."

"[LiPuma] is the rare producer who works on the musician's side of the glass," Sidran said. "Most producers sit in the control room next to the engineer, taking phone calls and making dinner plans. Tommy actually sits out in the studio next to the cats, reading the charts and counting the tempos. So he feels what they feel when they feel it. If they feel good, he feels good. In fact, there's a story—a legend really—about Tommy in the studio. Cats say, 'When his ass starts shaking, you know the cake is baking.' Tommy gets the best out of the players because he is one of them."

LiPuma, 75, offered an interesting acceptance speech. "I am grateful to have been born in the '30s, and to have experienced the music of the '30s, '40s and '50s," he said. He also expressed his concern for radio. "That voice is in the dark ... because jazz is a commodity [now]."

Russell Malone played solo guitar on the

LiPuma-chosen "Heather On The Hill" from the 1947 Broadway musical *Brigadoon*. Hargrove followed, performing "The Nearness Of You" with Wolff's trio.

Natalie Cole directed her intimate vocalese to LiPuma as she performed her hit "Unforgettable." (LiPuma, who produced the record, had suggested she record the now-famous duet with her late father).

"That song changed my life," Cole said, addressing LiPuma. "You have so much knowledge." Though frail due to recent health problems, Cole and her magnetic performance were highlights. She closed out her set with a masterful rendition of Shirley Horn's "Here's To Life."

At the event's end, everyone gathered onstage for a full-cast version of Heath's "Gingerbread Boy," which included a high-flying scat duet between Cole and Wright.

The Louis Armstrong Educational Foundation (in partnership with WBGO) also presented their Satchmo award to pianist and educator Barry Harris, who said during his acceptance that "life is a bowl of cherries and jazz."

—Ken Micallef

## Riffs ▶



**Great Advice:** The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts has named Jason Moran as its artistic adviser for jazz. Moran will head up program development and artist curation for the Kennedy Center. He is the second person to hold the position, after the late Dr. Billy Taylor, who died in 2010.

**Brightest Bulb:** Pianist Gerald Clayton received an Edison Award for Best International Jazz Album for his disc *Bond*. Clayton, who accepted his award in the Netherlands on Nov. 16, also performed the composition "Round Come Round" with the Metropole Orchestra.

**Miles Movie:** Director George Tillman Jr. has signed on to direct and develop the film *Miles Davis*. Loosely based on Gregory Davis' book *Dark Magus: The Jekyll And Hyde Life Of Miles Davis*, the movie will depict the tumultuous career of the legendary trumpeter. It will also include such influential supporting characters as Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, John Coltrane and Billie Holiday.

**Motor City Jazz:** Multi-reedist and Wayne State University jazz professor Chris Collins has been appointed artistic director of the Detroit Jazz Festival. Collins will supervise the talent selection and musical direction of the festival, which is now in its 33rd year.

**Howlin' Bluesman:** Howlin' Wolf guitarist Hubert Sumlin died on Dec. 4 at age 80. Sumlin, whose haunting leads can be heard on "Smokestack Lightning" and "Killing Floor," was regarded as one of the blues' most influential players. During his career, he was also nominated for four Grammys and several Blues Music Awards.



## Caught

### Berlin Fest Leans Toward Folkish Themes, Tributes

For those interested in checking out what can loosely be called "Eurojazz," one decidedly fruitful option is to go to Berlin. Held Nov. 2–6, 2011, months after the European summer jazz festival circuit had wound down, the Berlin Jazz Fest may have been leaner in budget than its larger counterparts. But it was more inspired in terms of aesthetic outlook and theme-driven concepts.

One of the festival's main focal points was Poland, swirling around the legacy of late Polish pianist and film score genius Krzysztof Komeda. Polish jazz luminary Tomasz Stańko, once an ally of Komeda in the '60s, delivered a historically telling version of "Litania," a revitalizing homage to Komeda's music. The trumpeter conveyed the liberating flair, brooding Polish melancholy and folkish palette specific to his subject. Also on the Friday night bill were Adam Pierończyk's dynamic quintet and impressive solo pianist Leszek Możdżer. Możdżer, who recently released the album *Komeda* (ACT), crossed from lyrical, modern jazz piano to classical resonances, generally erring on the side of intelligence over sentimentality.

Remarkable French accordionist Richard Galliano unveiled a fascinating, jazz-lined tribute to iconic Italian film composer Nino Rota. Trumpeter Dave Douglas was on hand to savor and subvert the *La Strada* trumpet theme. The bittersweet, existential finale music to Federico Fellini's masterpiece *8½* took on new meaning and artfully swung hipness.

This year also offered less of an American emphasis. The star of that transatlantic component was Steve Swallow's limber, witty band (with wife Carla Bley as a ripe foil and texture-supplier on Hammond B3 organ). Swallow's unique lingo as a creator of pen-

sive ballads, quirky Monk-ish beats and twisty swing tunes seemed even more precious and singular in a live setting, especially with empathetic players such as saxist Chris Cheek and guitarist Steve Cardenas.

Charles Lloyd returned to Berlin with his new project featuring revered Greek vocalist Maria Farantouri, changing up his usual post-Coltrane quartet format. Keyboardist Joe Sample had his own grand European encounter, courtesy of the flexible National Danish Radio big band's reading of his *Children Of The Sun* suite, with guest trombonist and fest Artistic Director Nils Landgren contributing well-proportioned riffs.

American guests—particularly tenor saxophonists—also stood out in otherwise European groupings. Gary Thomas was a potent, poetic force in Pierończyk's band, and Mark Turner compelled and reinvented with every solo in Galliano's band.

This Berlin fest also featured some enticing ideas in the big band (and little big band) field, from the well-rounded sounds of BuJazzO & Maria Baptist "City Grooves" to the cross-stylistic madcapery of young composer Daniel Glatzel's Andromeda Mega Express Orchestra. With her Polish-German nonet, pianist-composer Ola Tomaszewska impressed with her strong voice, sophistication and a certain Maria Schneider-esque harmonic flair.

Moodier persuasions of the indie-jazz variety from Scandinavia impressed in late-night sets at Haus der Berliner Festspiele. Norway's PELbO (a trio with well-placed vocals, tuba and organically deployed gadgetry) and the expanded duo project of Sweden's beguiling Josef och Erika softly glowed with northerly introspection.

—Josef Woodard

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# The Resurrection of Astor Piazzolla

Bassist Pablo Aslan Finds Triumph in Failure with the Rebirth of Jazz Tango

Musical tributes to illustrious albums have never been more in vogue. But an homage to an artistic and commercial failure? That is far more rare.

In 1959, Argentine-born Astor Piazzolla—the future iconoclastic pioneer of *nuevo tango*—released the LP *Take Me Dancing!*, a bid to capitalize on the burgeoning popularity of Latin jazz, which Piazzolla saw “as the only way to break in the U.S.A.” The composer and bandoneón virtuoso aimed to create his own hybrid of jazz tango, though the arrangements left virtually no room for improvisation, with everything written out down to the patterns for guiro and bongo. Although pleased with the mix of originals and jazz standards at the time, Piazzolla soured on the album after it tanked. He even recalled it painfully as an instance of him having “sold his soul to the devil.”

Bassist-arranger-bandleader Pablo Aslan—born in Argentina but a longtime New Yorker, like Piazzolla for key stretches of his life—has reclaimed the best intent of this “cursed” album. He rearranged the material for a quintet of players who are bilingual in tango rhythms and jazz-style improvisation, yielding the Soundbrush album *Piazzolla In Brooklyn* (see Reviews, p. 70). “Piazzolla felt that he was guilty of an artistic sin with this album,” Aslan said at a Jazz at Lincoln Center concert showcasing the material. “But since sin is good for business in the 21st century, we have revisited the music.”

As a leader, Aslan has explored his vision of jazz tango on *Tango Grill* (Zoho, 2010), which was nominated for a Grammy award and a Latin Grammy; *Buenos Aires Tango Standards* (Zoho, 2007); *Avantango* featuring Argentine singer Roxana Fontan on several tracks (Zoho, 2004); and *Y En El 2000 Tambien* with saxophonist Thomas Chapin and pianist Ethan Iverson (EPSA, 1998).

Before co-founding his trio The Bad Plus, Iverson made his bones playing in dance bands, including tango with Aslan. “There’s a lot of rubato and beat coloration in tango, and it also swings,” Iverson said. “The tango bass uses arco playing in a completely idiosyncratic fashion. There are only a few who can do it. Pablo has all that tango language down perfectly but also can play jazz and avant-garde.”

*Piazzolla In Brooklyn* features an Argentine quintet of trumpet, bandoneón, piano, bass and drums. Those drums are played by Daniel “Pipi” Piazzolla, the nuevo tango maestro’s grandson, who recalls asking his grandfather about the ill-fated *Take Me Dancing!* “seven million times” only to be gruffly rebuffed. Between sips of espresso at a coffee shop on Manhattan’s Lower East Side, the affable, 49-year-old Aslan discussed their reclamation of jazz tango.



The Pablo Aslan Quintet

## Why were you motivated to create true jazz tango out of failed jazz tango?

I heard possibilities in this unrealized music, where it could be elaborated, where solo sections could be. It’s unusual to find Piazzolla repertoire that he didn’t do the definitive versions of himself. So I sensed a chance to bring something valuable to the material—maybe re-create this music in a way that he might have done if he were around now. I knew *Take Me Dancing!* as part of Piazzolla lore, but he didn’t want the recording out there at all, so it was hard to find. I snapped it up while on one of my record-hunting forays in Buenos Aires. I immediately heard that he was right: It’s awful. There isn’t really any jazz to it, just a simplified version of tango set to this clunky beat. Even if the original album is more of a fiasco of opportunism than an artistic experiment gone wrong, any professional musician with a family could identify with Piazzolla’s predicament at the time: How do you turn your music into food for your family?

## How much of your album is the original and how much is new?

We transcribed Piazzolla’s arrangements, using them as a springboard for our re-arrangements. The original bass and piano parts were written out, as typical for tango, but we made up our own rhythm-section parts. We opened

up passages for improvisation. Virtually all the music is Piazzolla’s, but we brought a new attitude to it: Let those who have the ability improvise melodically, but they must also have the right rhythmic sensibility, just as in Afro-Cuban or Brazilian jazz. Someone like Daniel Piazzolla is a walking manual on how to play his grandfather’s music. But when I first started working with Pipi, he said, “I think this is too much freedom.” Eventually, though, he was playing fluid and free with complete authority. He and I really feel the rhythms inside the rhythm together, so we can operate at the pulse level or fill in the texture with layers of accents.

## Piazzolla lived in Manhattan, and your recording was made in Buenos Aires. Why is the album called *Piazzolla In Brooklyn*?

The album is Piazzolla, but it’s also about where I’m coming from now, which is the jazz scene in Brooklyn. What’s Brooklyn about the record is the attitude. Piazzolla’s own records famously had this incredible energy—the bands played as if their lives depended on it. Even the stuff that’s romantic is painfully romantic. You sense a similar thing in [today’s] Brooklyn jazz scene, where there is a real sense of freedom and fire and invention—about inventing music in the moment without being beholden to pre-conceived notions.

—Bradley Bambarger

## The Francesco Bigoni Learning Experience: A Lesson in Collaboration

If all goes according to plan, Italian reedist Francesco Bigoni will complete his post-graduate studies at Copenhagen's prestigious Rhythmic Music Conservatory late this spring.

Bigoni moved to Denmark in the summer of 2009—the year he wed his Danish wife—and he took advantage of the school as a way to both further his jazz research and make connections in a city where he had none. “It was the first time I had put myself into an entirely new environment, and, in a way, start from scratch,” said Bigoni, 29, on a recent visit to Chicago, where



Francesco Bigoni

he was invited to play the annual Umbrella Music Festival in November. Ironically, the program marked his first formal jazz education. “It was a little strange to be in school after so many years,” he said.

Bigoni describes himself as self-taught. “I was a workshop student but I have an old-school type of training—just going to concerts, talking to other musicians, checking their stuff out, playing on records, playing concerts, making mistakes.”

He grew up in Ferrara, Italy, and discovered jazz through his father’s record collection. The first two albums he listened to, when he was 11, were by Ornette Coleman and John Coltrane.

“I didn’t understand the music, but I was still fascinated by it,” Bigoni said.

Once he started buying his own records, it was Charles Mingus that really struck a chord. Bigoni convinced his parents to buy him a clarinet, and before long he met other teenagers who were interested in jazz. But it was a summer workshop in Siena, Italy, that Bigoni has marked as a

critical turning point.

He initially enrolled in college to study mathematics but dropped out after six months to focus on playing music. He formed a band called Rootless in his hometown and slowly developed a national network of musicians. By 2005, Bigoni, along with seven other Italian musicians, formed the label El Gallo Rojo, which was nominally based in Verona.

“We made a collective,” he said. “Everyone is a co-owner and everyone makes his own contributions to the economy and choices about the music we are releasing.”

The label has since released nearly 50 titles—including the debut album by Rootless—often in limited quantities. Its core musicians, like fellow reedist Achille Succi and bassist Danilo Gallo, have become recognized as some of Italy’s best and most flexible players.

Since the label formed, Bigoni has played and recorded with numerous groups inside the collective, both as a leader and a sideman. He’s also worked with such Italian heavyweights as trumpeter Enrico Rava and trombonist Gianluca Petrella.

Surveying Bigoni’s work is a rewarding experience. His range is broad, and his enthusiasm, passion and execution are as infectious as they are impressive. These days, most of his working bands artfully balance composition with rigorous free improvisation.

On its superb debut *Blind Tail* (El Gallo Rojo, 2009) Bigoni’s long-running trio Headless Cat—with bassist Antonio Borghini and drummer Federico Scettri—dissects, on the fly, original written material, and maintains a clear connection with swinging post-bop. Contrastingly, the recent album *You Can Never Please Anybody* (Aut, 2011) by Bigoni reed trio Crisco 3 alternates between knotty free improvisation and straight-ahead tunes (including two pieces by legendary all-female group the Shaggs).

Since settling in Copenhagen, Bigoni has been working increasingly with Danish players. He recently released an eponymous debut by Hopscotch (with guitarist Mark Solborg and drummer Kevin Brow), which pushes his playing into louder, rock-tinted turf, for ILK Records.

“I’ve been interested in keeping all of my interests and influences together, and trying to create my own synthesis,” Bigoni said. “Obviously, that’s an issue for everyone.” Yet by teaching himself how to make music as a collective endeavor for so many years, he’s pulling it off. —Peter Margasak

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## Caught

## Ensemble Skills, Solo Chops Light Up Barcelona Festival

**R**ome colonized Catalonia two millennia ago. The Visigoths ejected them five centuries later. Since then, Italians and Catalans have developed diverging opinions on numerous subjects, among them what constitutes good cuisine and an appropriate supper hour. But representatives of both cultures shared a positive view of the five concerts by Italian artists presented by Umbria Jazz on Nov. 7–12, 2011, under the auspices of the 43rd annual Voll-Damm Barcelona International Jazz Festival.

On Nov. 8, in the acoustically pristine auditorium of the Conservatori Liceu, clarinet maestro (and Perugia native) Gabriele Mirabassi's well-honed chamber trio (guitarist Roberto Taufic and bassist Salvatore Maiore) played a soulful, witty Mediterranean-meets-Pan-American suite that blended chorinhos, bebop, ballads,arias and tarantellas. Playing a custom-made instrument and dancing as he blew, Mirabassi did not need a microphone to project his ebullient tonal personality.

At the same venue the next evening, pianist Giovanni Guidi improvised an impromptu solo concert when an emergency prevented trombonist Gianluca Petrella from reaching Barcelona in time for their scheduled duo. Guidi explored various stylistic food groups associated with the highest level of 21st-century Eurojazz. He concluded with "I'm Through With Love," developing the harmonic parameters with refined touch and just enough pedal, before morphing into "We Shall Overcome" at the end.

The following night, with Enrico Rava's quintet, both Guidi and Petrella displayed their ensemble skills (Gabriele Evangelista played bass and Fabrizio Serra played drums) during an hourlong set at Luz de

Gas, an old music-hall theater that now doubles as a chic after-hours discotheque. Using barely discernible visual cues, Rava presented a cogent, extended suite primarily consisting of songs from his new recording, *Tribe* (ECM). Petrella's expansive, lion's-roar sound, evocative of Rava's '70s employer Roswell Rudd, came through both in the numerous breathe-as-one trumpet-trombone unisons and contrapuntal episodes.

At the same venue on Friday, Cuban pianist-keyboardist Omar Sosa played a ritualistic duo with Sardinian trumpeter-flugelhornist Paolo Fresu. Sosa is uniquely positioned to syncretize the tropes of Western liturgical music and Afro-Cuban Abakuá rhythms toward transcendental ends. But for far too long, house-seeking showmanship outweighed unmediated musical dialogue.

On the following night, a few tunes into Stefano Bollani's standing-room-only piano recital at Luz de Gas, an audience member shouted out that Sergio Berlusconi had, at just that moment, resigned as Italy's prime minister. "This is very sad news ... we'll just have to go on without him," Bollani deadpanned, before launching into "If I Should Lose You," jetting the tempo with Conlon Nancarrow-like phrasing, then decrescendoing into a rubato section in which he abstracted the harmony to its limits and worked back into the theme.

Although she wasn't officially connected with the festival, a highlight of the week was bassist-composer Giulia Valle's kaleidoscopic, episodic pieces. Her quintet—drummer David Xirgu, pianist-keyboardist Marco Mezquida, tenor and soprano saxophonist Mertí Serra and world-class tenor Gorka Benítez—was more than up to the task.

—Ted Panken

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## Charles Bobo Shaw Human Arts Ensemble Conceré Ntasiah

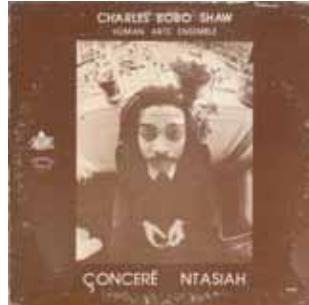
UNIVERSAL JUSTICE, 1978

The late 1970s in New York were such fertile, volatile times. Tributaries from around the country—Chicago and St. Louis in particular—had helped feed the city's new, indigenous jazz waterways, and a variety of mixing and blending was taking place. The loft scene was in high gear, acronyms like AACM and NMDS were on the tip of everyone's tongue, David Murray was making hardcore music with a drummer named Stanley Crouch, and the downtown improvised-music world was in formation, the Knitting Factory still a decade away. Recall the unlikely combination of jazz and No Wave in Defunkt, or the fresh version of jazz-funk fusion ushered forth by Ornette Coleman's Prime Time and Ronald Shannon Jackson's Decoding Society.

Lots of great music was made during this period, but not all of it was adequately remembered.

Drummer Charles Bobo Shaw was one of the central St. Louis musicians associated with the Black Artists Group (BAG), which he helped found in the mid-1960s. Later in the decade, a stint in Europe put him in touch with various international figures, and when he returned in the early '70s, he was rapidly becoming one of the best-known drummers in creative music. While he was with his mutable group, the Human Arts Ensemble, of which he shared leadership with saxophonist Luther Thomas, Shaw issued some of the classic LPs of BAG music, including the incendiary *Red, Black And Green* by the band Solidarity Unit Inc. and *Junk Trap* (Black Saint, 1978), as well as three essential records with Lester Bowie, produced by Michael Cuscuna and released on Muse, the final one a 1977 duet called *Bugle Boy Bop*.

A year later, Shaw took a ver-



sion of the Human Arts Ensemble with BAG mainstays Julius Hemphill and Joseph Bowie into the studio to record *Conceré Ntasiah*. Never reissued since, it's a great document of the period and a wonderful listen overall, with Hemphill's probing saxophone and Bowie riding ebullient roughshod trombone over various different grooves. Cellist Abdul Wadud, one of the most prominent players in the period, joins forces with guitarist Nyomo Mantuila and bass-

ist Alex Blake, laying down and coloring the light, bossa-inflected "Jacki B Tee" (man, I miss that Wadud strut!) and the chugging rock boogie of "Steam Away Kool 500." On the kit, Shaw is a chameleon, able to move between these different feels with ease. As a dedicated fan of Hemphill's alto, I was almost disappointed to see him listed exclusively on soprano on this ridiculously rare record, but the fact is he sounds terrific, a perfect complement to Bowie's big, brash bone. The title cut features an African vibe, Mantuila's nylon-string guitar acting as a kora, Wadud's quick glissades goosing Hemphill during his solo. Exciting sounds from a time when everything seemed possible and all roads converged in the Big Apple.

DB

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More than 60 years separate the first jazz recording in 1917 and the introduction of the CD in the early '80s. In this column, DB's Vinyl Freak unearths some of the musical gems made during this time that have yet to be reissued on CD.

## MCG Jazz's 25 Years of Innovation

Like an opening set, the 25-year-old Manchester Craftsmen's Guild seems to be just getting warmed up. This one-of-a-kind arts presenter showcases, documents and releases state-of-the-art live jazz recordings even as it strengthens the longtime Pittsburgh jazz community and contributes to the overall cultural and artistic diversity of the region by working with students through their concerts and master classes. And that's when they aren't breaking new ground.

According to Marty Ashby, executive producer of MCG Jazz, it all stems from its links to the players, including fondly remembered legends like Dizzy Gillespie, Ray Brown and Billy Taylor. "Artists like Paquito D'Rivera, Nancy Wilson and Dave Liebman have trusted the fact that we've had their best interests in mind," Ashby said. "The notion of capturing their art with high quality and a fantastic audience in a great building that was built to celebrate the legacy of their music—that's what the music hall was built for. I think that's why we've been able



to capture performances that you just can't hear anywhere else—with the same piano for 23 of 24 years, that Ahmad Jamal picked out."

That hall is a comfortable, 350-seat performance space that MCG Jazz has used since its inception in 1987, when it began its innovative four-day performances and recordings. The room and recording methods have changed little, except for a move from analog to digital and a "few sonic treatments here and there," Ashby said. "It's about audience development and expansion."

And is every show sold-out? "Pretty close," he

revealed. "Last year, we ran at just about 90 percent capacity, which is a miracle. And this year we're on track to do that, or even better."

MCG Jazz also embraces technology. "At the [mcgjazz.org](http://mcgjazz.org) website, you can digitally download everything in the catalog. On a worldwide basis, it's opened up a lot," Ashby said. Last January at the Arts Presenters Conference, MGG Jazz launched Jazz Commons, funded as part of the Doris Duke Jazz.NEXT program. "We're working on an app that will extend the consumer experience when people come to a concert here," Ashby said.

—John Ephland

## Caught

# Bear Creek Showcases Jam Sessions, Sit-ins

Spirit of Suwannee Music Park in Live Oak, Fla., provided an atmosphere tailor-made for audiophiles to transcend the mundane aspects of everyday life in hosting the Bear Creek Music Festival, held Nov. 10–13, 2011. The ethos of Bear Creek is identical to underground jazz clubs of the '20s and '30s in being a cutting-edge place to celebrate oneself.

On the evening of Nov. 10, early arrivers were treated to organist Dr. Lonnie Smith's first set of the weekend.

Smith breathes with his phrasing, which gives his sound an organic feel. On "Frame For The Blues," guitarist Jonathan Kreisberg ran into some troubles with his amp but fixed it with a smack of his fist. Kreisberg continued his state of cool on "Pilgrimage"—gospel oozing with melodies reminiscent of a simplistic beauty that became more complex with every turnaround until everyone present was worked into a frenzy of hands in the air. Drummer Jamire Williams possessed an explosive combination of speed and power.

Temperatures in north Florida dipped into the low 30s the next night, but festivalgoers



Medeski, Scofield, Martin & Wood

falling apart.

Later in the evening, Medeski Martin & Wood brought an avant-groove swagger to the stage. Their set was highlighted by a jam with tenor saxophonist Pee Wee Ellis and a sit-in by drummer Johnny Vidacovich. On Nov. 12, Benevento led his trio into the warm sun. Benevento played conductor during "The Real Morning Party," which evoked memories of a childhood sing-along.

That night, powers combined to form Medeski, Scofield, Martin & Wood. One could witness the connection between John Medeski and John Scofield as they musically opened doors for each other and sneakily handed each other the key, while Chris Wood's low end swung feverishly. Roosevelt Collier joined MSMW on pedal steel, and he reached an interesting moment as he traded licks with Medeski's melodica. Vidacovich sat in again while Billy Martin fused with the group by using several of his percussive knickknacks, vesting his energy in whatever he touched as he filled in the rhythmic cracks of the collective groove. —Scott T. Horowitz

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## Dimitri Vassilakis

### *The Awakening*

In 2009, a blaze gutted Dimitri Vassilakis' house in Greece, flames engulfing a lifetime of compositions and recordings along with most of his family's belongings. The saxophonist and singer, who had been working on his latest release, *Across The Universe* (Zone7), escaped the fire with only a few personal items and his instrument.

It was a devastating loss, but Vassilakis says he has become a better musician and a more centered person since the fire. Instead of being inhibited and self-conscious on the bandstand, he is now more willing to experiment, and he is less afraid of failure.

"When something like that happens, then you really realize what is important, and it awakens you," says Vassilakis, 50. "I'm more relaxed in my playing. When I play, I'm not anxious about how good I play."

This new outlook is stamped on *Across The Universe*, a group of songs in which he has tried to convey "warmth, compassion, love, enlightenment, soothing and positive energies," he says. The record can also be viewed as his vocal coming-out party. Vassilakis the vocalist emerged occasionally on his previous instrumental-driven records, but he sings on every track on his latest album, leading jazz arrangements of pop tunes like "Across The Universe," "Fool On The Hill," "Light My Fire" and "O-o-h Child."

He heard these radio hits while growing up in Athens and chose the songs to bridge the past and present. Vassilakis arranged the two Beatles pieces—"Fool On The Hill" and the title track—as a busy samba and an introspective ballad, respectively. Both charts have contrasting chorus sections that ramp up into swing. (The Beatles buff also recently recorded "The Long And Winding Road" for a compilation released by Bentley.)

"In my arrangements, I want to reveal the hidden meanings and energy of the songs, unveil their full potential!" he says, adding that it's important to contribute new ideas to the compositions, not simply perform a copy of the original tune.

*Across The Universe* is anchored by Vassilakis' New York-based quartet—pianist Theo Hill, drummer Sylvia Cuenca and bassist Essiet Essiet—which recorded initial tracks for the fully orchestrated arrangements in a small New Jersey studio. Cuenca remembers that the saxophonist came into the session with a set idea of the pop tunes, but he allowed the musicians to interpret them up to a point. The drummer, who has been playing gigs with Vassilakis



for years, was initially drawn to his rhythmic style of playing, and the two soon developed a close working relationship.

"He's really great to work with," Cuenca says. "He's always very energetic and very positive and supportive."

Essiet came to the session with the original songs in the back of his mind. It's music he grew up with as well, and his approach to performing the pieces didn't change simply because the tunes weren't from the standard jazz repertoire. After all, he pointed out, today's standards were yesterday's popular songs.

"I don't look at styles so much—you have a structure, you have a melody, and you can do whatever you want to," Essiet says. "Jazz allows you to take it in any direction you want to take it. There are no rules that say, 'Do it this way or that way.'"

Vassilakis started on his musical path not as a jazz saxophonist, but as the bassist and singer of a Greek pop band that ably captured America's mid-'80s musical zeitgeist. The group thrived for a while, but differences with its label eventually led to the band's dissolution. Vassilakis had his most concentrated interactions with jazz around this time—

John Coltrane's *A Love Supreme* and Charlie Parker's Savoy recordings—and he was captivated as much by the style of playing as the authenticity of the musicians. As a pop singer, he had been used to manufacturing an image. In jazz, nobody worried about that.

"I thought, 'Wow, what's happening here?'" he recalls. "Whatever they feel, they expose it. They don't have to pretend."

A little more than a year after first picking up the saxophone, Vassilakis entered a university program, sometimes practicing 10 hours a day to make up for lost time. Jazz and classical saxophone dominated his life, but his pop roots were always below the surface, waiting to re-emerge.

Decades removed from that intense study, Vassilakis is able to reflect on the role of music in his life. Lately, he has been focusing on Zen-like therapies, and he is a devoted cyclist and runner. Taking care of himself, he's seen, is reflected in his playing.

"It's not about how many hours you study or how fast you play or how many transcriptions you have done," he says. "The sooner you realize that, the sooner you become a better player."

—Jon Ross

## Franco D'Andrea

### Lifelong Explorer

**A**t 70, Italian pianist Franco D'Andrea straddles nine decades of jazz: one foot in the music of the 1920s, the other in contemporary sounds. It's a posture he has maintained since he first encountered the music of Louis Armstrong at age 14.

"I was a casual listener, not very interested in music," he said in lyrical, highly accented English while seated in a restaurant in Siena, Italy.

In 1954, at a friend's house in his native Merano, a small city near the Austrian border, he heard a recording of "Basin Street Blues" by Armstrong's All-Stars with Trummy Young and Barney Bigard.

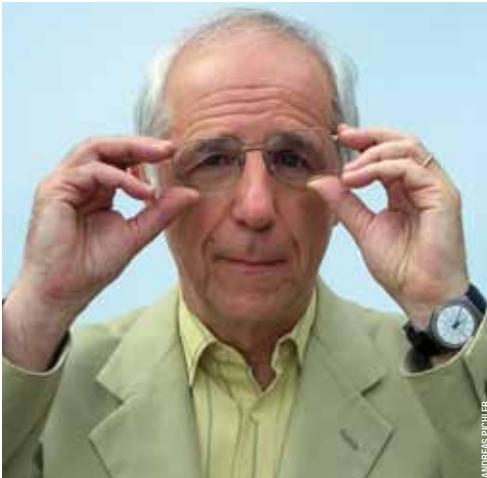
"Of course, I immediately wanted to play trumpet. I had heard the best of that period for Armstrong. In a couple of years, he would sound not so good, but at that time . . ." he gestured, accompanied by one of his frequent explosions of laughter. "For me, at the time, it was the personalization of the sound that captured me. My mother played classical music, but I was not interested in instruments that always sounded the same. But, you take Johnny Dodds with his radical vibrato, Sidney Bechet and Barney Bigard—they all sound so different from one another. That got to me."

For the next five years, he focused on trumpet, clarinet and soprano saxophone, in self-directed study that was halted when another friend played him a 1955 recording of Horace Silver with the Jazz Messengers. It sent him in a new direction, initiating a dichotomy that still exists.

"I was in two places," he said. "I realized I needed to study harmony to understand this new language. I was curious, so I turned to my mother's old piano to try to figure out Silver's voicings. It was so exciting, and it sounded so completely different."

Although D'Andrea had common teenage interests at the time—sports and space exploration—music was his calling: "I became a musician because of jazz. It spoke to me when other music did not. I was lucky to grow up at a time when you could see and hear the old masters, as well as newcomers like Ornette Coleman."

It was a good time to be in Europe, too, as numerous American artists took up residence on the continent. Throughout the '60s, D'Andrea took advantage of what was on offer at that historical crossroads, playing with expatriates like Max Roach, Kenny Clarke and Johnny Griffin, as well as with younger players like Steve Lacy. In 1965, Griffin offered the pianist a full-time gig, but D'Andrea decided to stay closer to home.



ANDREAS RICHLER

"Mine is a sentimental story," he said, "involving the woman I married. I decided to remain in Italy."

Despite eschewing extensive travel outside his native country, D'Andrea's career as a leader began to pick up in 1968, when he formed the Modern Art Trio with drummer Franco Tonani and bassist Bruno Tommaso. Four years later, smitten by the burgeoning jazz-rock fusion movement, D'Andrea, Tommaso and three others formed Perigeo, which became a popular recording act throughout Italy.

"I loved being involved in all those explorations. I was as interested in jazz-rock as in working with Lacy at a time when he was trying very hard to go beyond the limitations of the soprano sax."

With the dissolution of Perigeo in 1977, D'Andrea began a 20-year period of moving between projects. This eventually led to a quest for some stability. "I always dreamed of having a steady group—a team," he said. And now, for the past 15 years, he has achieved that goal with reed player Andrea Avassot, bassist Aldo Mella and drummer Zeno De Rossi. The quartet's latest recording, 2010's *Sorapis* (El Gallo Rojo), illustrates their close relationship and their mastery of contemporary rhythm and harmony.

More recently, D'Andrea has fulfilled another longtime dream, forming a trio that features clarinet and trombone and reaches back 90 years in jazz history. "We start with the colors of Ellington's band from the '20s and Armstrong's Hot Five, and try to develop in other directions, imagine things from that point while forgetting what has gone on since. I'm fascinated by the spontaneity of that time, and that way of making jazz was interrupted too early by history."

"So while we explore past possibilities unrealized, my quartet continues to explore the future. It is the possibilities of this music that I love so much. There are so many; it's impossible to try them all."

—James Hale

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## Players ▶

### Darius Jones *Diving In*

Maybe it's the intimacy of the venue, but on stage at Brooklyn's Bar 4 in front of a few locals, Darius Jones doesn't shy away from personal details. "This is a new tune," he announces. "It's about a one-night stand."

Too much information for some, perhaps, but for Jones, playing the alto saxophone is always an act of spilling the guts. His new trio CD on AUM Fidelity, *Big Gurl (Smell My Dream)*, is the second volume in his ongoing autobiography in music, following his debut as a leader, 2009's *Man'ish Boy (A Raw And Beautiful Thing)*.

"I feel like it's important to tell my story," Jones says, "because the world is just these combinations of stories. Every human being is a universe, and we're just bumping into these different universes each day. I can't really dive into someone else's universe, so I'm diving into mine."

*Man'ish Boy* began the story with Jones' upbringing in the Southern church, hearing gospel, blues and r&b. "If I was to say anything was my ingrained culture, I'm a choirboy," Jones says. "I was a very sheltered child."

*Big Gurl*, with his working trio of Adam Lane (bass) and Jason Nazary (drums), picks up the story with Jones' arrival in Richmond, Va., where he studied at Virginia Commonwealth University. The outline is familiar: Kid from a religious background leaves home, encounters the wider world and goes a bit wild. But in Jones' case, along with that taste of newfound freedom came the realization of his life's dream.

"I realized I was in love with music one night when I was listening to the Miles Davis Quintet," he recalls. "I was sitting there, depressed, and I really heard what he was doing for the very first time. It was like a bomb going off in my brain. I just started weeping, and at that moment I knew I was in love with this. And I was terrified, because at that point you can't turn back. This is what I'm going to do, and I'm not just going to do it, I'm going to become like Ornette or John Coltrane. I want to affect this music."

A lofty ambition, but one that some of his elders feel is within his reach. Pianist Cooper Moore, who joined drummer Bob Moses to form the trio on *Man'ish Boy*, says, "Darius knows what the journey is. He knows how far he has to go, and he knows how hard you have to work at it. He knows the tradition, and he knows his place. He knows—without being a braggart about it—that he's going to make a difference."

Jones arrived in New York in 2005 to find himself swimming against a new tide of hyper-intellectual modern jazz. While his music stays rooted in a raw, gutbucket swamp of gospel and blues, the trend among his peers was toward



PETER GAMBUSIAK

higher-degree sonic mathematics. "I spent a whole summer doing nothing but studying Steve Coleman's music," Jones recalls. "After that, my brain hurt and I knew I'll never want to be a player like that. I want things to be more organic. For me, it's about soul power. It's about getting drippy and having that visceral response."

Pianist Matthew Shipp recognized those qualities when he first saw Jones' trio at the 2009 Vision Festival in New York. "I'm cynical," Shipp says. "But I was completely blown away. My first impression was that Darius was approaching avant-garde playing with an extremely authentic jazz sensibility. His phrasing was so snakelike, elastic and rooted in a Cannonball-ish way that night. I was shocked, because I didn't expect to hear that from some younger guy." That initial encounter ultimately led to the duo CD *Cosmic Lieder* (AUM Fidelity), which finds Jones and Shipp melding their respective vocabularies.

Much like Shipp, Jones seemed to arrive fully formed, emerging immediately as a leader rather than serving time in apprenticeships. His collaborations have been selective: stints with bassist Trevor Dunn's Proof Readers, drummer Mike Pride's From Bacteria To Boys and the eardrum-piercing collective quartet Little Women.

But his main project is to tell his own story, and his first two CDs only scratch the surface. A third, *The Book Of Mabel*—a quartet record with Dunn, pianist Matt Mitchell and drummer Ches Smith—is already recorded. Randal Wilcox, the artist responsible for the albums' vivid covers, is collaborating with Jones on a graphic novel. "I'm trying to do something as a jazz musician that has never been done," Jones says. "I'm trying to be the Prince of this whole thing: the freaky, scary guy, but you love me." —Shaun Brady

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## Rick Drumm

### Return from the Unknown

If you ask Rick Drumm about the genesis of his new jazz CD, *Return From The Unknown*, be prepared to hear a testament to music, musical friends and the human spirit.

In 2009, Drumm was diagnosed with B Cell Non-Hodgkin Lymphoma, a cancer of the lymphatic cells of the immune system. It was devastating news for the lifelong drummer, who has made his musical name at his day job—working as a top executive at companies like Remo, Vic Firth and his current gig as president of D'Addario & Co.

But the percussionist (whose name *really* is Drumm) found the strength to get through it all in the company of his friends, family and drum kit.

To beat back the lymphoma, Drumm underwent an aggressive series of chemotherapy treatments. "Whenever I had a chemo session, I came home and played, did something physical, just to reinforce that the cancer was not going to beat me," he said. "It was very therapeutic."

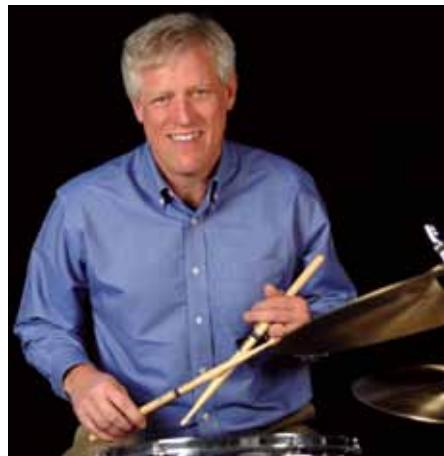
He also got the idea of inviting a few friends

over for a jam session. The guest list included his backing band, the Fatty Necroses—guitarists Fred Hamilton and Corey Christiansen, bassist John Benitez, Axel Tosca Laugart on piano, Frank Catalano on tenor sax, Mike Brumbaugh on trombone, and trumpeter Pete Grimaldi.

"I reached out to guys whom I had played with through the years in different musical scenarios," Drumm said. "Basically I said, 'I can't get to where you guys are—can you come to me and do a concert at my house?'"

The jam session went so well that after Drumm finished chemo, he asked the group if they would record with him.

"When you go through this, it reinforces what is truly important, and that's why I wanted to do this record," Drumm said. "So I went to Fred and Corey, and they wanted to write all new music for this album. We spent two days recording at Sear Studio in New York, and we had a great engineer, Chris Allen. Then, I played some of the unmixed cuts for Peter Erskine, and



Peter said that I had to take this to Rich Breen [at Dogmatic Sound in Burbank, Calif.], who does a lot of Peter's recordings, and he also mixes for the Yellowjackets, Charlie Haden and others."

Twenty-five percent of all proceeds from the CD will be donated to Strike A Chord, a charity that offers instruments and music lessons to children going through a serious illness ([strikeachordforchildren.org](http://strikeachordforchildren.org)). —Frank Alkyer

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# Phil Woods Takes Manhattan

“I smoked two packs a day from 15,” Phil Woods said in 2007, during a conversation for a DownBeat cover story on the occasion of his 29th Readers Poll Award for Best Alto Saxophonist. “And did a lot of blow, smoked a lot of grass and drank a lot of booze. I’ve had fuckin’ fun! I never thought life was a lemon to be squeezed dry. You’ve got to live it, man.”

Not long after that piece appeared, Woods asked journalist Ted Panken to help him whip into shape the long, sprawling manuscript of his remarkable memoir, *My Life In E-Flat*, in which he candidly explores his turbulent life and times—his marriage to Chan Parker and his relations with their children; the teeming nightclub, studio and workshop scenes of '50s and '60s New York and the personalities that inhabited them; his consciousness-expanding half-decade in France, where, at 37, he became a leader; his burgeoning career after returning to the States in the early '70s; his struggles with alcohol and cocaine. Now 80, Woods claimed his 31st Readers Poll award this year, and continues to record prolifically, as documented on a two-alto encounter with teen wunderkind Grace Kelly on the Pazz release *Man With The Hat* (see sidebar on page 30). In July, Woods released a fluid, old-master duo with pianist Bill Mays titled *Woods & Mays* (*Palmetto*).

What follows is an exclusive excerpt written by Woods with help from Panken. This selection is from Chapter 3, titled “I’ll Take Manhattan.” The prose is a vivid portrait of Woods’ first year in New York City. Just out of high school in Springfield, Mass., our hero leaves the comforts of home to bunk on the Upper West Side with guitarist Sal Salvador, bassist Chuck Andrus and pianist-arranger Hal Serra, all hometown chums (as were drum legend Joe Morello and reedman Joe Lopes), while attending the Juilliard School of Music.

In the spring of 1949, Hal Serra, Sal Salvador and Chuck Andrus came to New York as a trio and set up a pad in an old brownstone building on 93rd Street and Riverside Drive. They invited me to join them. At the time, I was not convinced that I had the right stuff to be a real jazz musician, and was going through youthful uncertainty about what do I want to be. Once I got to New York, I realized I had to do something, and since I was toying with the idea of being a classical clarinet player, I figured I should go to school, so I enrolled in a summer extension course at Manhattan School of Music.

Two mornings a week, I walked cross-town to MSM’s building at 238 East 105th Street for my classes. They were nothing terribly challenging: the basic Wedge harmony system, a hold-over from another era, and some keyboard harmony. I found that I had more keyboard aptitude than most of the other students, who knew more than I did about the classical repertoire but had less harmonic knowledge. One hot day, after exams, I bought a shaved cherry ice on 116th Street in Spanish Harlem and let out a loud, primal scream. I was so happy. Jazz giants such as Bean and Prez and Pops and Bird and Bud and Fats and Diz walked the same streets that I screamed on!

The summer passed quickly. Sal’s parents owned an Italian grocery store in Springfield, and they sent us care packages, so we ate lots of pasta, sausage and meatballs. The lovely Thalia film theater was two blocks away, and I saw movies by Rossellini, DeSica and Renoir. Some weekends, we spent the

night working on balsa-wood model planes to a soundtrack of location radio broadcasts hosted by Symphony Sid Torin and Bob Garrity. At dawn we’d fly them in Central Park. Sal’s planes were always the most sloppily built but flew the best. Other times, guitarists like John Collins, Johnny Smith and Chuck Wayne came over to jam all night with the great Jimmy Raney and Tal Farlow, both new to New York and living in the same West 93rd Street building. Everyone wanted to check out Tal, who had hands like ham hocks and was making a name for himself. There wasn’t a piano, but Hal played brushes on a phone book and Norm Diamond played bass. I heard some incredible music at those sessions—things like “How High The Moon,” which I knew from Don Byas’ recording of it, and they played “Half Nelson” on the changes of “Lady Bird,” which was beyond my ken at the time. Once I asked if I could sit in, and they said, “You’re not ready.” They were right. I was still a novice. But I was a quick study.

Although I did well at Manhattan School of Music, I didn’t care for the lessons or for my new clarinet teacher, and I decided to transfer to Juilliard for the fall semester. My friend Joe Lopes had matriculated there after leaving the Navy in 1946, and helped me prepare for Juilliard’s more stringent entrance examination requirements. He attended the same year as Miles Davis. When Miles auditioned, Joe said, all the other trumpet students lined up in a row. Professor William Vacchiano, the principal trumpet with the New York Philharmonic, pointed to each in turn,

and they unleashed a very robust high note with lots of vibrato. When he pointed to Miles, a little nanny-goat middle-register sound came out. The students laughed at his thin tone, but Vacciano heard something. He hushed them up immediately. Many years later, he said that Miles was one of the best students he ever had.

I was told later that the clarinet jury didn't think I had the right stuff, but a word from Vincent James Abato, my soon-to-be teacher, convinced Juilliard that I was a worthwhile candidate. I loved being in school. Something about Juilliard felt similar to what happens in the Village Vanguard, that venerable jazz joint. You feel the spirits of all the artists of the past who performed there; you appreciate its history and significance.

When I told my folks that I wanted to be a musician, they said, "Do what you want, but try your very best to be good at whatever you choose to do!" Mom went back to work at our local bank to help pay for my schooling—according to the 1949 Juilliard catalogue that survived our 1987 fire, room and board was estimated at \$800 for 37 weeks, while carfare and incidentals were another \$400, and books and music were \$30. I contributed, too, of course. Right after arriving in New York, I got a transfer card from the Springfield local into Local 802 and started working club dates. I didn't have a lot of work, but enough Italian weddings to get by.

Due to the obligations of his contract with

ABC Radio, Mr. Abato taught at Charlie Colin's studio on West 48th Street, right across the street from Charlie Ponte's Music store, which later moved to 46th Street. I knew nothing of Mozart or Brahms, but I worked hard. I had the required constipated-looking embouchure and posture, and I would be giving it a lot of shoulder, but Mr. Abato would be looking out the second floor window, combing his sleek, black Italian hair. All of a sudden, usually in the middle of the andante movement, he'd shout, "Madonna! Look at the knockers on that broad!" One day he asked me to play some jazz for him. Then he picked up his clarinet and messed up some Benny Goodman licks to show me that he knew about this jazz stuff. Later, whenever someone mentioned my name, he said, "Phil Woods? Taught the kid everything he knows."

Juilliard instituted a new approach to teaching music that was considered very extreme. Out went the traditional Wedge harmony book. Gone were the divisive pigeonhole classes. Best of all, they dispensed with species counterpoint, an archaic pedagogy that forbids quarter notes for the good part of the school year. Now everything was grouped into a category called Literature and Materials of Music, an open approach where one teacher guides you through the year with an emphasis on writing for whatever instrumentation is available in your class.

William Schuman, the school's president, had assembled a crackerjack faculty, includ-

ing composers William Bergsma, Henry Brant, Vincent Persichetti and Peter Mennin. At daily after-lunch concerts, I heard the music of Charles Ives, Carl Ruggles and Edgar Varèse. Just down the street at Columbia University's Composer's Forum Concerts, Vladimir Ussachevsky presented his first electronic tape experiments, along with other far-out stuff that makes today's so-called avant-garde sound like Emmanuel Chabrier.

Rumor had it that Bird wanted to study with Edgar Varèse, but I don't think that they ever got together. Varese lived close by, as did Henry Brant, who was afraid of objects falling out of the sky and crushing his frail body. We would watch him walk home after class staying as close to the building as possible, hugging his way in a rectilinear path to avoid those pesky flying saucers.

There was very little jazz activity at the school, although Teo Macero had an extracurricular large jazz ensemble. We gave some great concerts for the student body. One unforgettable happening required four conductors. Musicians were all over the hall, playing the weirdest experimental stuff you ever heard. In the middle of it all, a beautiful young opera singer stuck her head out of the ladies room door and intoned a woeful, major-seventh interval while my friend Chasey Dean played some soulful bebop blues tenor from the second balcony.

At one after-lunch recital, John Cage lectured our rowdy student body. As he mounted

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# The Cat in the Hat



MICHAEL JACKSON

Phil Woods and Grace Kelly backstage at *Gesù* in Montreal, July 2, 2011

**A**t the 2011 Montreal Jazz Festival, Phil Woods performed with teenage alto sax sensation Grace Kelly's quintet. They delivered a rousing rendition of Bud Powell's "Webb City," as well as Kelly's bop composition dedicated to Woods, "Man With The Hat," which is also the title track to her recent Pazz CD. Prior to the concert, DownBeat sat down backstage with Woods, later joined by Kelly, for a chat.

**I understand that you are writing a memoir. Is it finished?**

**Phil Woods:** No, because I am not finished. I am still at it. I write a column for the Al Cohn Memorial Library in the town where I live, Delaware Water Gap, called *The Notes* and another column called *Attila The Gap*, which I thought was bloody clever.

**You are partial to puns, though usually good ones.**

**Woods:** If it ain't fun, I want no part of it, man. That's the only reason I play. This angst of the artist? Get off it, mate—play your goddamn horn, have a beer and a shot, smoke a joint, be happy. There's enough misery in the world without your miserable artist shit. It's a group art. You can't be an insufferable bore by yourself, or you'll be lucky if you get a beat from the rhythm section.

**You're very upbeat, given your recent health problems.**

**Woods:** I'm 79 with the body of a 78-year-old. I had laser surgery on my eyes three days ago, just threw my glasses away. I have a new lens in each eye. I couldn't read music; now it's like I'm an 8-year-old with brand-new eyes. I thought my living room walls were yellow, but they're white. It gives me faith in humanity that man can study and find the way to help an old codger see

again. We've got to stop the nonsense, man, take care of each other and do the good stuff, which is why I am here playing music with Grace Kelly, who I think is the future of the alto saxophone.

**Will you be reading music tonight?**

**Woods:** Yeah, there's stuff I want Grace to learn, including an obscure ballad of Strayhorn's called "Ballad For Very Tired And Very Sad Lotus Eaters."

**Do you think Grace is an old soul, reincarnated, because she has so much together so young? Or am I being pretentious?**

**Woods:** You are being pretentious... but then most writers are.

**You conferred one of your leather caps on Grace when you first heard her.**

**Woods:** It was the first time we played together in Pittsfield, Mass. I said, "Play good and you can keep the hat." We did "I'll Remember April," and she played the hell out of it. She was 14.

**Grace, what's it like sharing the stage with one of your heroes?**

**Grace Kelly:** It's been amazing. I love his stories about Jackie McLean and Cannonball. We did this record, and I was so excited that we were actually able to tour it and do three weeks in Europe. What I've learned from him musically onstage and soaked up from his sound has been so powerful. It's difficult to verbalize because it is all flowing through my head. I am trying to grab on to whatever I can. Every performance is a lesson, and he makes us all try to go to that next gear. His sense of time, melody and lines are things that always captured me from the very beginning.

—Michael Jackson

the small podium, David Tudor sat at the piano, staring into its entrails. Cage took his time, looking out over the composers and musicians of the future with benign grace. He pulled out a huge stopwatch and set it, making a great to-do, and then he began to intone very dramatically: "There was a man on a mountain and there was a man in the valley and the man in the valley said to the man on the mountain ..." *CRASH! BANG! KABOOM!*

David Tudor had attacked the undefiled nine-foot Steinway with a big rubber hammer—the same pristine piano that the jazz band was never, ever allowed to play. I loved it. All the boppers loved it. After this musical lecture and blacksmithing exhibition, we adjourned to the student lounge, where some of the more anal-retentive composition majors assailed and harassed this gentle man whose only message was that all sound is music. It made sense to the jazz musicians.

Between Juilliard's classic, streamlined discipline and the opportunity to hear all of the jazz music available to an energetic young man in New York City in the '50s, I think I had the best possible education. Given the regional nature of the music business, it is still possible to stay in Columbus, Ohio, and make a living at music. But the young jazz artist must be able to operate on this vibrant, dynamic island of the best in the world. As the saying goes, if you can't find it in New York, it doesn't exist.

My second academic year went according to plan. I wrote more, and my clarinet studies with Mr. Abato were going well. I had come to terms with the challenging creative sophistry that surrounded me in the big city. I had never thought about atheism, agnosticism or skepticism (or any other "ism"), but now I began to read about such matters with the same intensity as I listened to music. I went to Juilliard's extensive music library of 78-rpm records, started at "A" for Albeniz and listened my way through "X" for Xenakis.

In those pre-Taft-Hartley Act days, when you first joined the union, you had to report any engagements that you did and were only allowed single engagements for the first three months. Once I did a club date in the Bronx, which should have paid \$55. The guy only gave me \$25. You had to report to the union what you did that month. I said, "I did a wedding," was asked what I got, and when I mentioned the amount, was told, "That's not even scale; who did you work for?" They called the guy down, and he was given a warning—he gave me my check right then and there. I became a staunch union supporter, as I remain.

Juilliard was in Harlem, and sometimes I played there, too. I sat in at the Baby Grand on 125th Street a couple of times with a trumpet player and education major named Scotty, who played in the house band. More often, I went to the Paradise Club at 110th Street and Eighth Avenue, where tenor saxophonist Big

Nick Nicholas ran a famous jam session. I don't remember the sequence of events that got me onto the bandstand, which lined up with the bar, but the first time I played, I was welcome. I was playing pretty good by then, and everybody said, "Yeah, he's a comer." Big Nick, who wasn't that old himself, gave the kids a chance.

Joe Allard was installed as professor of saxophone in 1950. I toyed with the idea of changing my major to saxophone, but political considerations—a part of every institute of learning—led me to stay with the clarinet. There was more clarinet literature available, and I was playing plenty of alto sax at night. Alto saxophones are like bats; they fly better in the dark. Apart from everything else, it was a pain in the ass to change majors this late in the game.

There were always some drugs around the school, mostly a little reefer from Scotty, a sweet cat who was putting himself through school selling joints. Scotty had a room at the Claremont, a predominantly black residential hotel next door to Juilliard. Heroin was coming on strong. Some Korean vets who had gotten strung out in the Army were using their G.I. Bill funds to attend Juilliard. A lot of them were saxophone majors (those numbers increased dramatically with Joe Allard's arrival), but a lot of good jazz players and students on all instruments were using, too. Junk was now readily available in the Claremont Hotel, and other dope shops opened on Claremont Avenue.

I wasn't using junk, but I was getting high as much as I could. Scotty had no truck with heroin, but he would sell me three joints for a dollar, which I broke down and smoked in a pipe to squeeze out every drop. I would round out the weekend with a quart of Schaeffer's beer, and listen to Symphony Sid's live broadcasts from Birdland while I worked on my counterpoint exercises. It kept the buzz on when I was doing the work, and I could sleep better. Some people would consider a quart of Schaeffer a lot, but it was over a four- or five-hour period, and then I'd go to bed. Booze didn't get serious until after Juilliard.

Reefer seemed to help the creative process, and it became part of my lifestyle. I always had some around. I loved the focus I could get on my music—I'd smoke a joint, sit at the piano and zone out, and just start writing songs. I liked to play high, but only a buzz. Reefer then wasn't like it is today, and you didn't get as loaded.

I even became a connection. Some weekends, I'd buy a bulk amount from Scotty at \$10 an ounce, take the bus home to Springfield for a gig as a special guest with Joe Lopes, and Joe would sell it on the side for \$20. We'd split the profits.

Like Hal, Chuck Andrus was drafted for the Korean War, and on the night he left, he told me where he had buried his reefer in his cellar, in case he got killed or suffered amnesia. As soon as he left, Joe and I dug it up. When Chuck

returned from the service, we were a little embarrassed to see him and tell him about our lowly deed. He smiled, grabbed a big chainsaw, applied it to the cello that had gone with him throughout the Korean War, and cut it in half, just like a magician—except instead of a lady, out came condoms bulging with reefer. "No problem," he said, "but you guys are sure enough low-lives." Joe and I agreed, and Chuck gave us all big rubbers of reefer.

All the junkies kept asking me if I wanted a little sniff. They said, "What the hell, you smoke dope and cigarettes and you drink. It's time for you to know what getting high like a man is all about." I said, "No-no, no-no-no." I think in my heart, I knew that 50 million junkies could not be wrong. It had to be a fantastic high. But for some reason, I never went for it. Sitting around, dozing and scratching, is not something I find amusing.

Later, I did try some heroin in Florida, because it was a one-time thing and not readily available there, so I knew I wouldn't be able to find any more. I got violently sick. I knew a bebop drummer named Buddy Rand, né Rosenthal, who wrote 12-tone music and was terribly far out! He told me all about the legend of Sisyphus. He got strung out and died a few years later of an overdose. Al Daniels, a good composer, bebop trumpeter and pianist, also gave up the ghost to the Big O. I'm sure it had something to do with Bird, who was omnipresent in every aspect of bebop, and smack was part of his mystique. **DB**

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# DAFNIS PRIETO BREAKING THE WALL

By Ted Panken | Photo by Michael Jackson

**T**he world is now offering affirmation to Dafnis Prieto. A few years ago, that was not the case. “You’ll Never Say Yes,” the penultimate track of Prieto’s first self-released recording, *Taking The Soul For A Walk*, is a rubato, ostinato miniature with a gorgeous line and a floating, ambiguous feel. Prieto—who immaculately directs and textures the flow from the trapset—once described it as reminiscent of “the old Paul Motian–Keith Jarrett approach of open sound.”

“It reflects the emotion of frustration I feel of always trying to break the wall,” Prieto explained in 2008. “It’s not specifically related to the music business—it could be a personal thing also. I’m trying to show people what I’m doing, and I have inside myself the thought that they will never recognize it—they will never say yes.”

He was reminded of this remark three years later, after the MacArthur Foundation Fellowship named Prieto one of 22 awardees of its annual, no-strings-attached \$500,000 gift.

“I’m honored and happy to have been selected,” he responded during an interview in New York City, at his Washington Heights one-bedroom. “But I want to

work, and it’s hard for me to feel like the MacArthur is going to be the answer.” Legs akimbo, Prieto sat in his living room/practice den, which held a spinet piano, an electronic drumkit, a desktop computer, small instruments, books, CDs and various artwork.

“I will feel much better when I see that presenters notice what I’m doing and start to open their doors for my music,” he continued. “But why do I have to wait for a MacArthur to get attention when I’ve been doing as much as some people they’re already booking? Sometimes it seems the only way to get to those places is if somebody is behind you with a very recognized name, maybe George Wein or some guy who looks like a *padrino*.”





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In point of fact, on the previous evening, Wein had witnessed Prieto's first New York concert since the MacArthur announcement—a mindboggling scratch-improvised duo with tabla player Pandit Samar Saha, out of Benares, India, a master practitioner of Hindustani classical vocal and instrumental forms.

For the first 40 minutes, a packed house at the Cornelia Street Café saw the protagonists trade solos of gradually increasing length. Navigating a drumkit setup with a frying pan amongst the cymbals and a pair of orange jam-blocks, Prieto, keeping a clave metronome on the hi-hat, designed polyrhythms with a “melodic” connotation reminiscent of a Cuban Max Roach. Saha established his own terms of engagement, then Prieto, deploying brushes, alternated swishes and stutters. Saha emulated them with the right hand on his *dayan* drum, punctuating with the left on the *bayan*. Prieto established another clave, displacing it with surging, wave-like embellishments. Saha rendered the patterns with his own ideas and subdivisions as Prieto kept the pulse; he withdrew as Prieto postulated a rumba, establishing and sustaining three independent lines. The mind-reading continued over a sequence of exchanges—Prieto, barely moving a muscle above his elbows, soloed at length on the ride cymbal and hi-hat, crisply executing intricate figures; Saha turned the *bayan* on its side, extracting a tapestry of rhythm-timbre from its metal skin; riposting, Prieto seemed to elicit all the colors of the kit before he transitioned to a tumultuous *cumbia* that Saha used as a foil to improvise in his own argot.

Neither drummer seemed to have broken a sweat, but they decided to take a breath. “This is a pretty interesting fusion you’re hearing,” Prieto remarked, as he lifted two supersized mallets. “Now we’re going to get a little bit wild.” Positioned over the drums like a jockey steering a thoroughbred, he unleashed a volcanic wall of sound, then juxtaposed whispers with rolling thunder, playing soft with the left hand, loud with the right, and vice-versa. Mixing percussive hand chops with skin-to-skin rubs, Saha transformed his drums into animistic sound containers. Prieto responded with long cymbal washes, complemented by feathered bass drum beats. Using his tuning fork as a mallet, Saha explored further overtone combinations. And then they stopped.

Over the past decade-plus, Prieto, 37, has made it his business to investigate the correspondences and distinctions between the drum languages of India and his native Cuba, where he lived until 1998. Indeed, as we spoke, he was preparing for a November-to-mid-December residency at the Swarnabhoomi Academy of Music in Mumbai.

Questioned on the subject, Prieto answered, “Right now, it’s harder to separate things in my brain than to put them together.” Then he gave it a shot.

“One general similarity is that each culture

contains a very wide possibility for improvisation,” he began. “One difference is that we work a lot with intuition, while they are really conscious of the mathematical, scientific aspect of rhythm—where the note is played inside of a bar or inside of a certain length. In Cuban music, each instrument plays an intricate melodic line. The pulse is there, but the beat doesn’t need to be heard. In most Indian music, the solos are very sophisticated, but without that intricacy in the melodic lines between the instruments; the connection between the three is in relationship with the beat.”

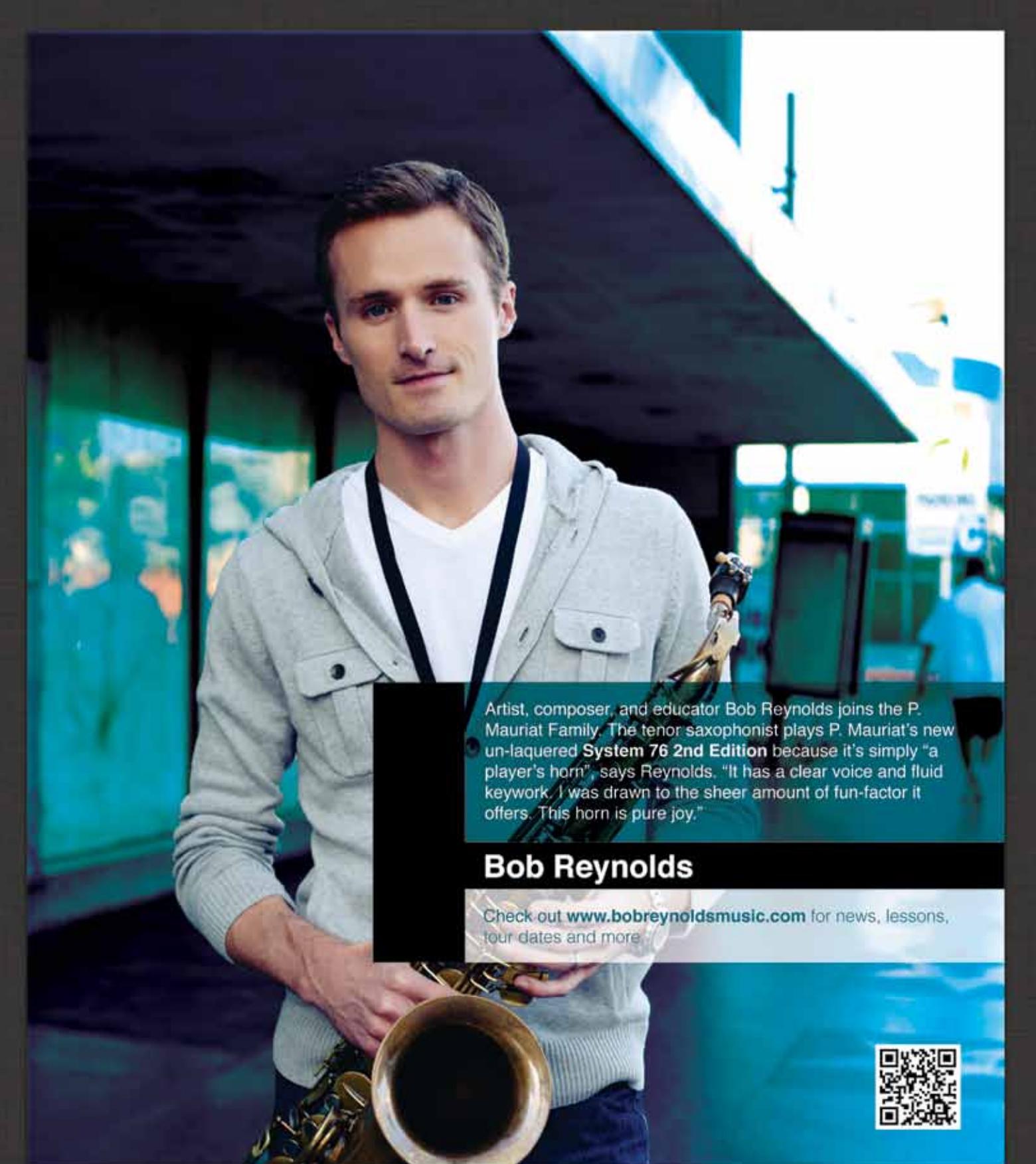
During the concert, Prieto noted, he’d “mixed everything,” sometimes manipulating Cuban rhythms with *tihais*, a North Indian technique that involves three syncopated repetitions of a structure landing on the first beat.

“I never see myself as a Cuban player, or Latin player, or swing player, or fusion player,” he said. “My voice is not anybody else’s voice, and it doesn’t matter which language I speak—it’s going to be the same sound. My idea of soloing is the freedom to play anything you want, creating something in the moment with the sounds you’re able to execute, while being simultaneously aware that you’re creating a bigger compositional structure. I like the idea of trying to do more with less—using one single phrase or rhythm for the structure and getting many different meanings out of that same idea.

“We all manipulate sounds, and we have the right to feel a relationship with those sounds. Sometimes I look for a sound in the drums, and that gives me the technique to play it. Sometimes I visualize myself doing something I haven’t seen before, and that gives me the specific sound I want to play. I’m not necessarily thinking in melody or in rhythm—sometimes it’s visual art, form, or a structure, or developing some philosophical or conceptual ideas about objects, or even visual illusions. Any information I see that’s interesting, that I feel comfortable with and connected to, I will transmute and transform into sound.”

Prieto’s heritage-meets-modernity aesthetic took shape during formative years in the predominantly black Condado district of Santa Clara, an old colonial city built on the processing and distribution of sugar. Himself of Spanish descent, Prieto internalized the beats of rumba from carnival musicians on the streets outside his home, and received formal instruction on bongos and congas at age 7. At 10, he entered the local conservatory to study classical percussion, teaching himself to play trapset on the side. At 14, he attended the National School of Music in Havana.

Through his four years at the school, Prieto absorbed the idiosyncrasies of Cuba’s state-of-the-art percussionists and drummers—trapsetter Enrique Pla from Irakere, congueros Tata Guines, Changuito and Miguel “Anga” Diaz. He freelanced, playing post-*timba* “Latin-Cuban Jazz” in units with Irakere trumpeter Julio Padron and pianist Roberto Carcasses,



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as well as pianist Ramon Valle's trio. He made his first trip to Europe with a Pan-American-oriented ensemble led by Chilean pianist-guitarist Carlos Maza, who drew deeply on Brazilian visionaries Egberto Gismonti and Hermeto Pascoal, invoking imperatives of playing feelings, telling stories with sounds and beats. Further stimulation came in 1996, when Steve Coleman came through Cuba for field-work on a recording project, bearing information on South Indian music and ways to render astrological and numerological principles in notes and tones.

Soon thereafter, Prieto joined the road warrior rank-and-file with Jane Bunnett's Spirits of Havana ensemble. He also workshopped with the experimental band Columna-B, with Carcasses, saxophonist Yosvany Terry and bassist Descemer Bueno (best known for his involvement in Pan-Caribbean hip-hop band Yerba Buena), which refracted Gonzalo Rubalcaba's plugged-in ensemble music of the latter '80s and Coleman's odd-metered structures, augmenting the mix with jagged tumbaos and elements drawn from hip-hop, funk and the Euro-classical canon. (The 1998 *Mas* CD *Enclave* documents an unbridled recital.)

As his conceptual horizons expanded, Prieto felt increasingly stifled. "There were only a few musicians I felt the empathy to play with," he recalled. "I was treated like a crazy guy; some people felt I wasn't representing their idea of how to play the tradition. But the way we see tradition sometimes is just a pre-meditated idea of what it really is. Don't get me wrong. Since I was little, I played dance music and popular music—which is the same thing in Cuba. I love a lot of dance bands from Cuba. Once in a while, I like the experience of playing drums with Los Van Van. But after I got into jazz and into more avant-garde or contemporary music, the idea of playing music for dancers was already washed out."

On tour with Bunnett in 1999, Prieto, by then a Barcelona resident, moved to New York City on his work visa. Soon thereafter, he took an engagement with singer Xiomara Laugart on which trumpeter Brian Lynch—with whom he'd played the previous year at Stanford University, while in residence via an arts grant to attend a master class with Billy Higgins and Albert Heath—was present.

"Just from that gig [at Stanford], I thought this guy has more happening in terms of playing Afro-Caribbean music with a real jazz sensibility than just about anyone I'd heard," Lynch recalled. "He had the chops, the finesse, the dynamics, the reactivity, the feel, the swing. It was like, 'Oh, this is the cat.' There wasn't a doubt about it."

Others felt similarly. Springboarding off a weekly hit with Lynch, and gigs with Coleman and Henry Threadgill's Zood ensemble, Prieto quickly became one of New York's busiest sidemen, accumulating a resume that, by 2002, cited consequential engagements with a diverse

assortment of challenging leaders—Eddie Palmieri, Andrew Hill, the Fort Apache Band with Jerry and Andy González, David Samuels and the Caribbean Jazz Project, D.D. Jackson, Michel Camilo and Peter Apfelbaum—as well as a trio with John Benitez and Luis Perdomo, and numerous ad hoc gigs at downtown musician hangs like the Zinc Bar and the Jazz Gallery, where he also played his first U.S. gigs as a bandleader.

"New York is a functional place," Prieto said. "You get to meet a lot of people, most importantly—if they are interested—the people that you really want to meet. In order to play with Steve Coleman and Henry Threadgill, to connect with them and experience their music one-to-one, you most probably will have to be here. Steve's approach to rhythm will challenge any drummer—who wants to do it right—

**"My idea of soloing is the freedom to play anything you want, creating something in the moment with the sounds you're able to execute, while being simultaneously aware that you're creating a bigger compositional structure."**

to develop skills of coordination and independence. With Henry's music, I learned that each tune should be developed as much as possible in its diversity of sounds, that each should have its own character with different structures and instrumentations. I had an opportunity to exercise my imagination, to represent the music, like acting. You have to own the character and the intention, and put your own voice on it."

As he soaked up information, Prieto began to refine his instrumental voice as well, mining Cuban raw materials in a systematic, meticulous manner. "I started looking at everything that came from my country as an observer," he explained. "Now I have an enormous amount of different sounds at my disposal. Sometimes I play things that represent or imitate the sound of the congas, or the *batas*, or *timbal*, or bongos or maracas—or from inside myself." He trained himself to make the instrument an extension of his brain—he speaks the rhythms, speeds them up and slows them down at will, plays and subdivides any theme on any limb at any time.

"I've heard that idea of intricacy of lines—having one theme in the bottom that becomes the top theme later on—in ancient African music and also in the Baroque," he said.

Prieto called on all of these attributes in guiding his sextet and quartet through cohesive suites of music on, respectively, *Taking The Soul For A Walk* and *Si o Si Quartet: Live At The Jazz Standard*, both on his imprint, Dafnison. "The rhythm is usually really important and strong, and he guides the band on the drums," said Manuel Valera, who played piano on both dates. "The compositions have strong melodies, with no frivolous notes. They're fun to play over, and each has its own character. It's definitely rooted in Cuban music, but less like the Latin jazz tradition, and more compositional, with rhythms from Cuba that people don't really use here. The group orchestrations are unconventional, and he has an interesting approach to orchestrating his compositions on the drums, certain grooves and colors that are perfect with whatever the tune is calling for."

Accolades continue to roll in for Prieto. He has been commissioned to compose a new piece for his sextet to debut at the 2012 Newport Jazz Festival, which will take place Aug. 3–5. The commission is being funded by a grant from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation.

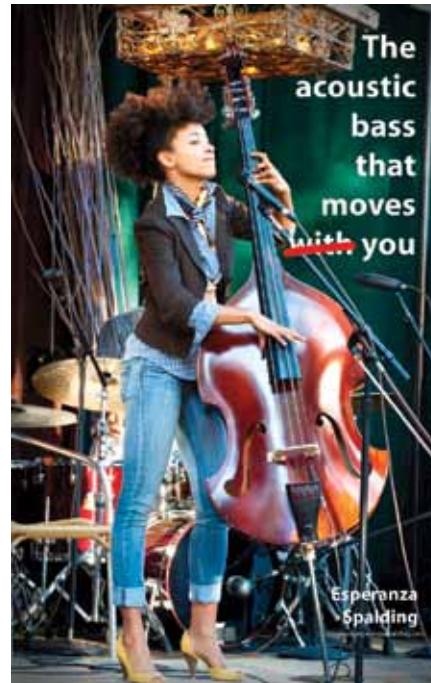
Meanwhile, using the MacArthur funds, Prieto intends to record the Proverb Trio, an improv project with Jason Lindner on keyboards and vocalist Kokayi freestyling on trans-Yoruban chant, hip-hop, r&b and jazz.

"It would be almost impossible to make music this way with other musicians," Prieto said. "We completely accept each other. I feel open to express anything I want, and so do they. We are not trying to do anything. We are just doing it."

Inevitably, he emphasized, that expression will reference Cuban roots. "This is not clothes that I put on and take off," he said. "This is the way it is. It's the resonance of a specific attitude and a specific meaning that I've captured from when I was a child until now, and is still inside me. Like talking. Certain words mean something specific. It's the same thing in rhythm."

Prieto added that the MacArthur provides him funds to publish a method book—in English—that "explains some of the things I did in order to develop independence and conceptualize my ideas. It's about my passion for the drums. It's analytical, it's instructional; in a way, it's poetical. It's a result of all my teaching experiences in clinics and things like that, and my experience of teaching at NYU for six years, which helped me organize information that I already knew intuitively. Somehow, it reflects all these things."

But above all else, he reiterated, "I want to keep playing my own music as much as possible. I am not the kind of musician who only assumes that music is a job, and I have to do anything to get money. When I play music I don't like, I go home and I don't feel good." **DB**



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Stanley Jordan at the Dakota Jazz Club in Minneapolis, Jan. 9, 2011

STANLEY JORDAN

# THE SCIENCE OF GUITAR

By Fred Bouchard : Photo by Andrea Canter

**T**racking Stanley Jordan's meteoric career from Greenwich Village street player to stadium icon to recent re-emergence as a desert guru requires a conversation with the guitar legend.

The ebullient, cosmic plectrist—who conquered festivals, performed with Stanley Clarke and Dizzy Gillespie, and pioneered a scintillating tapping technique that stopped trains and dropped countless jaws—seemed to disappear into a shimmering cloud of stardust in the '90s.

Jordan's extended sabbatical from commercial recording and touring—between 1996's *Bolero* (Arista) and 2008's *State Of Nature* (Mack Avenue)—took him on a spiritual journey from burner to learner, and a personal evolution from player to teacher. Today, a more reflective Jordan is equally apt to play gypsy Bartók with Regina Carter, Sinesi duos with Sharon Isbin, funky blues with Charlie Hunter and chugging swing with Bucky Pizzarelli.

On the road promoting *Friends*, his new Mack Avenue CD, Jordan makes a whistle-stop in Boston at Scullers Lounge. It's a familiar scene: a warm, strong house, an enthusiastic crush of old fans and eager students, the foyer in a hubbub for chatting and autographing CDs.

"We've booked Stanley since 1993," enthuses legendary impresario Freddy Taylor. "First every two years, but yearly since 2001. His one-nighters are a most consistent draw. He's reinvented himself from trio to solo and back, and is very comfortable onstage."

Jordan's supporting musicians take the stage, men of substance in subdued khaki. Jordan, graceful and slender in a sweeping dashiki, accentuates his 6-foot 2-inch frame with thick-heeled shoes. With him are a long-time collaborator, power drummer Kenwood Dennard, and a first-time colleague, solid bassist Ron Mahdi, both Berklee College of Music stalwarts.

They open the set with classics, make a pop stop, move to originals and climax in swing.

Jordan's will-o-the-wisp mentality takes unexpected twists and asides. His solo style is still billowing, entrancing, ethereal. Dennard

is a force of nature, and Mahdi is powerful and focused.

Delivering Debussy's "Reverie" as a cha-cha, Jordan's purling two-bar exchanges between his right and left hand float taut single-note lines over bubbling arpeggios.

A wildly percussive flamenco cadenza leads "Song For My Father" into bossa, Jordan's left hand scrolling piano arpeggios while his right plays with a herky-jerky strut. As he clomps off the beat in those heavy heels, his loosey-goosey piano runs don't all ring true, but this reckless genius maintains his freewheeling, devil-may-care demeanor. Mahdi's bass tugs a double-time rhumba coda over Dennard's hammering tubs.

On Bartók's "Intermezzo," Jordan pours out immense technical resources like lava: gnarled like tree bark and layered like seismic excrescences, natural and imperfect. It's a phenomenon to marvel at—brilliant, tortured.

Mozart's "Adagio" is a tricked-out hurdy-gurdy, dynamics shifting in a web of arpeggios and counter-lines. He's a plectral Art Tatum, smitherening gorgeous refractions of mirrored light.

"I Kissed A Girl" (yup, Katy Perry) swings, accelerating, as Dennard's power brushes add to the wacky, glitzy fun.

Jordan introduces "Return Expedition" as a free-form space trip for the audience to soar: "This is for those who tell us we play too many notes, or not enough; too slow or too fast; who told us to put our music in a box. Be free! Music is infinite, wild, magic, no fear, no limits, no rules...." The tight-chorded, lock-hand guitar slithers with criss-crossed lines. In a meltdown, Dennard bashes his cymbal off its housing.

"A Place In Space" bubbles with glee, a double-triple thrashing in a funhouse kaleidoscope, faster than the mind can compute. The "Over The Rainbow" solo mimics harpsichord or zither, with a garish, bittersweet, Jimi Hendrix-

singed coda. "Seven Come Eleven" chills as an encore, Jordan delicately picking left-hand piano and right-hand guitar lines with Mahdi funky blue over Dennard's Gene Krupa-like tom-toms.

In an interview over camomile tea upstairs in Boston's Doubletree Suites, Jordan is warm, attentive, all ears. He speaks with soft assurance about his life's path since opting out of the business in the mid-'90s. There is a seamless flow between his integrating Princeton studies in computer music with recent pursuits of music therapy at Arizona State University. He shares ideas on musical experiments and ecological concerns for the planet, a philosophical approach to marketing, a symphonic project, and innovations in computer music and data sonification.

Most of all, Jordan voices his musical quest for a higher calling, beyond entertainer and artist, to that of teacher and healer.

## How far back do you go with drummer Kenwood Dennard?

I used to see Kenwood around town playing with Jaco Pastorius. I met him at a little club called 55 Grand Street. I was a street musician and would sit in. His first question to me was, "Do you play the blues?" When I told him, "Oh, yeah!" he said he knew he wanted to play with me.

His creativity is boundless. He sometimes does things he's never done. He has a great energy. I love him as the Mozart of the drums; like Mozart and Ellington, his music is accessible, but very deep. I once spent a week studying eight bars of a Mozart string quartet.

Kenwood's airy, elegant, the more you look the more you see. He's very easy to listen to. My granddaughter was 8 months old watching Kenwood play a drum solo in San Diego. "Spare her!" I joked, "You're spoiling the poor child!" I like his solos on "Samba Delight" and "Capital J"

[from *Friends*]. He swings, then goes outside the time. He's a master of polyrhythms, like in Africa: Nobody states exact metronomic time, but it's solid in the middle, the heartbeat of the community.

### What's your guitar on this gig?

I'll play the Arpege [by luthier Pascal Vigier, made of graphite phenolic and wood] with low action that improves the acoustic sound. If it's too high, you don't get the sustain, but if it's too low, it compromises dynamics. It's my main guitar. I focus on the guitar to give orchestral capability, but retain the expres-

sive dynamics.

### But piano was your first love and you're back to it?

My sister says I was messing with piano at 3. I composed my first song at 5 and started lessons at 7. Piano was natural for me; when I sit at the piano, I make music. I didn't start guitar until I was 11, but most of my formal training is on guitar. I consider myself a guitarist who also plays piano. To go back to my "true nature"—to move outside the mental grid of being a guitarist—I returned to the piano. The fear went

away, and all I thought about was the music. We need to do that as humans, not be afraid of making our lives truly sustainable. When we lose the fear of what we might have to give up, we'll be caught up in making it happen and find solutions to save our planet.

### How about refinements of technique? Do you still tune in fourths?

I control pitch with low frets. Louder notes are higher pitched. I like to say it's easy, but it's really challenging. Several picky little things make a big difference. I still tune in fourths, but on the Arpege I don't change tunings because I don't like to mess with my string locks. I'd go to another guitar, but not on the road. I always get along well with Scullers' piano.

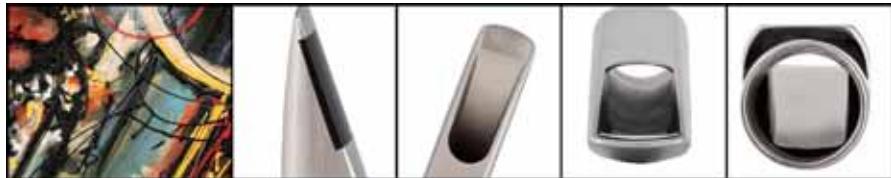
I published an article on the 0-11 Mod 12 system that [music theorist] Milton Babbitt pioneered; I want to reference that because it's important ["Introducing the Chromatic System for the Guitar," *DownBeat*, July 2008]. What jazz people are reaching for can be attained through that system. I first discovered that system in high school when I realized conventional notation wasn't adequate. When I got to Princeton, I found that Babbitt used it in his music.

My father suggested I apply to Princeton, but it was an afterthought. I met their recruiter and coolly asked the dealbreaker: "Does Princeton have computer music?" When he said, "Actually, they do," I sat there with my jaw on the floor! Back then few U.S. campuses offered serious computer music. In the '60s, they started pure digital synthesis: You could make music by programming, and for the first time in human history, we had an instrument that could make any possible sound. That's what attracted me to Princeton. Director Paul Lansky is still there, but he's moved on from computer music. He says it's too easy now.

### What was moving to Sedona, Ariz., all about?

I've always loved nature and wanted to get out of the rat race. Lily Tomlin said, "Even if you win the rat race, you're still a rat." I'd built a life that wasn't nurturing my spirit, and I had to make a decision to reclaim it. People told me, "Don't do it! You'll lose your career momentum!" And they were right, but it was one of the best decisions I ever made. I was going from the road to the studio to the airport to the hotel, and all the while there were many things I wanted to pursue and never had time. It was a longer break than I'd anticipated, but many things I did motivated me to get back into the scene.

People said, "Oh, you're being too intellectual, just play your guitar! You're losing focus!" All those things were important to me. My mother was working on a Ph.D. that cross-pollinated literature and philosophy, and I was inspired by what she was doing. I started to read philosophy of art, and hit on this wonderful idea, that aesthetic philosophy could be the theoretical foundation for marketing in arts. It



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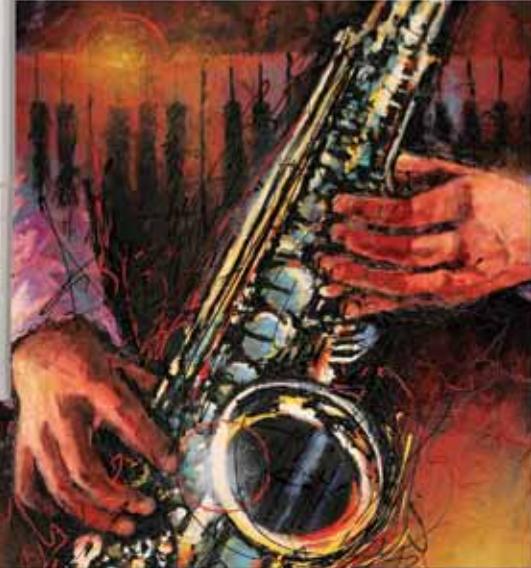
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gave me ideas of being different and still finding your niche. People either misunderstood or they boxed me stylistically. That's one thing that drove me out of the scene. Using the principles, I could better present myself. Mack Avenue is open to my ideas on this, and it's been beneficial. The presentation of what I'm doing as an artist is more accurate than it's ever been, and I've been able to offer suggestions to others.

### Audiences often need a handle for the music.

Most people live in a linguistic world, so if you can meet people where they live, and then find the right words to explain the music, people know what kind of head to bring to the music. You can use it as an educational tool, but it also satisfies the marketing element, because it can increase the audience without compromising the music.

### You've anticipated something that today affects all thinking young musicians. With the demise of big labels, everyone's scuffling to get their voices heard.

It is more complex today, but it's also more open. One idea is that I favor the concept of integration over fusion. When you fuse two things, you create something new, but the originals are lost. But when you integrate, the originals keep their integrity and reach a higher level. For me, integration best expresses what I do when I'm combining styles of music, say jazz and romantic, or jazz and rock: I try to keep my favorite elements from both. When I get out and trumpet that I prefer this term, it helps people understand my music better, and helps my marketability without having to change the music.

### A tune that illustrates that openness might be "Return Expedition," where you alert the audience that the band's going into a free-improv zone before you actually go there.

Everyone can relate to that. I was in Bob Evans' high-school classroom and the subject of avant-garde came up. Someone said, "I can't relate to it. What do you think?" I thought a minute, and said, "Sometimes the music is so powerful that the conventional rules of music are too limiting to contain the impulses that we feel. Sometimes it's so powerful, raw, complex and real that you just have to break the rules. It's not the point to do it, but sometimes you just have to do it, when the rules ain't cuttin' it."

Once I said that, I realized that anyone could understand that concept, and maybe I should explain these things to the lay audience. Back in 1991, the Jacksonville Jazz Festival asked me to do a master class on the beach. I asked the crowd—girls in bikinis, boys playing volleyball—how many were musicians. Few hands went up. I thought, "Okaaay." I was not prepared to teach to non-musicians, but I did it anyway—but I took extra time to explain the

concepts. And it worked!

For improvisation, I explained the styles of different improvisers over changes. Charlie Parker typically attacks the new note in the next chord, while Miles Davis sits on the note that transitions from one chord to the next. This relates to philosophies of life: Charlie attacks the new situation, and Miles rolls with the punch, dependent on the chords.

find metaphors and analogies that'll draw people into the jazz world.

### You've talked about examining the interplay between humanity and the natural world. What musical experiments have come from your time out in the desert?

That's a big subject. I've always been a nature kid. I was fortunate being raised where I could access nature. I got lost in fascination with the fractal aspect of the natural world. I'd walk along a creek, and I'd imagine it was a canyon on Jupiter. My outer-space fantasies, I'd live out in nature. That's not so strange, really, because the planets are part of the natural world, too. On *State Of Nature*, "A Place In Space" deals with the reality of us Earth people being on a rock in space in the middle of a galaxy in the universe. I was always into the big picture. I loved looking through a microscope at one-celled animals. One of the greatest nights of my life was when I found Saturn and its rings through a simple refractor telescope. It was fuzzy at first, then I focused it and *Boom!*—I flipped.

When we recorded *State Of Nature* in California, I thought it would be fun to take a vacation and show my girlfriend some places I visited growing up. It was nice but also a little sad to find so many environments had been disrupted. For example, seeing seals where they normally would never be, due to global warming. I felt I wanted to say something, but not in a preachy way—people get enough of that. I wanted to use the music to help people feel their connection with nature. Al Gore told us the practical things we have to do; he had that covered. Our musical world is the inside world—feelings, attitudes—so I felt I could create an inner version of that.

That came about from my studies in music therapy, reading books by Dr. Barbara Crowe at Arizona State University. She shows how music therapy works through complexity science, and chaos theory, the non-linear sciences with unpredictable effects. Humans are complex beings, and the theories address our complexity holistically. Where a pharmaceutical agent can address one level, and may be effective on that one level, Crowe's idea is that music can go beyond therapy and become an applied philosophy that helps us understand the world better. You can be a naturalist and a humanist at the same time.

### How does your vision take shape?

As a spokesperson for the American Music Therapy Society, I lecture to groups of physicians, psychologists, hospital administrators. I might pose two questions: 1) Where did we go astray from nature? and 2) What can we change on the inside to motivate us to reconnect with nature? We've only been here 1 million years, and we'll either find our niche or be eliminated. We're finding out where we fit as a species. My message with the Mozart piece ["Adagio" on *State Of Nature*] is trying to say, "Let's celebrate ourselves as a beautiful creation of nature, and

## FRIEND FINDER

Among the guest contributors on Stanley Jordan's *Friends* (Mack Avenue) are Ronnie Laws (soprano sax) and Mike Stern (guitar). Both briefly discussed what it was like to work with Jordan.



### Ronnie Laws

Stanley and I have played festivals over the years, like St Lucia. I've always loved his artistry! He said he had me in mind for the samba, he was still writing it out at the session, done live, like the old days. I miss that spontaneity. It brings out another element, feeding off each other rather than playing over an impersonal recorded track. Interacting with your peers is a gratifying experience. Our package group, Harmony 3 [Ronnie Laws, Stanley Jordan and Tom Brown], will play a major concert in Cerritos, Calif., on Feb. 17.



### Mike Stern

Stanley's a wonderful musician and a great guy. We hadn't played for years, and not very often, but it was fun. Stanley reminded me that we played "Giant Steps" once in a hotel room someplace. I said, "Great, let's go for it!" The approach was spontaneous. Kenwood Dennard was setting up, and we asked him to play brushes. It's different with Stanley, as he's playing the bass as well as the solo. We did a couple of takes and it was real natural.

—Fred Bouchard

### A simple message is: If you have 10 things to do, pick the hard ones first.

Yeah, use your intellect, your powers of categorization, to choose three top tasks—then pour your soul into it. These are universal principles that anyone can understand. [The terms] *debts* and *credits* confuse me; it's part of the accountant's jargon that protects the profession. In music, people get intimidated by concepts they might clearly understand, but they just lack the words. I feel passionate that we can

not separate ourselves from it." Crowe's ideas taught me universal things about performing. With some tunes, thinking too much kills the spirit. On others, relentlessly thinking through a musical process helps find a solution.

### Tell us about your work in the growing field of data sonification.

It's not a household word yet, but a lot is happening. The ear understands differently from the eye. We can use sound and music to represent information, whether from science, political polling data, financial data, market trends. I've done work converting data to sound and developing the mapping. I've used weather data variables, straightforward barometric pressure readings, and converted them into sound waves. You need a lot of readings to create the sound. I had years of graph data from a weather station that took a reading every 15 minutes. Variations that were too subtle for the eye became obvious to the ear. When you give the analyst both visual and audio, they get a more complete picture.

### And your computer interests?

I've written academic articles in the field of computer science and computer music. I co-wrote one for IBM Systems Journal on how APL [a programming language] can be useful for musical mathematical notation, as a rapid development tool for both music software and developing musical structure.

### Have you recorded and marketed your computer music?

Yes, but it's very under-represented in my work. On "Asteroids" [from *Cornucopia*, Blue Note, 1991] I used granular synthesis created on APL software. You hear 100,000 brief sounds that add up to a cloud of sound. You first hear background radiation, like pebbles, then sounds get bigger and closer. I tried to capture the fear of cruising through the asteroid belt. Kenwood played on that. For the listener, the harmonic rhythm is different from that in a conventional composition; instead of a slide show of separate musical images, it's more like a movie of quick, similar images. Every eighth-note there's a new chord, but there are lots of common tones. Instead of chord, chord, chord, it's like you're continuously cruising through harmonic space. Just when you think you're converging into an extended E minor chord, you whirl around it into a new direction.

### Like fractals.

There were fractal elements in some sequences. *Cornucopia* was like my *Electric Ladyland*. I'd hit my stride, did things my way, was ambitious. I had to cut corners and record parts in my home studio, but musically it was worth it. The title track was the first 20 minutes of a four-hour free improvisation I recorded in a hotel in Martinique. I included it because I noticed that when I played it for people, it had the strange spiritual effect of making people get

quiet and open up their hearts. There was a subliminal power to the music. This was an early precursor to my work in music therapy.

### Can you track how to elicit these effects in people, how to draw them out?

No, mostly it's anecdotal, but I know when I'm in that space as a performer. If I have a good show, people talk to me backstage about the music. If I have a great show, people talk about *themselves*. They say, "Man, I felt this, I felt that." I've always placed a high importance on

the effect of my music, and that's one thing that drew me into music therapy.

I used to play with Flip Nuñez, a well-known pianist in the Bay Area. Once when an audience member shouted out a tune title, Flip said, "Now I know what you want, but I'm gonna give you what you need!" That, to me, says it all. You don't have to give in to the audience as a crowd-pleaser, but it acknowledges that you are serving the audience. We may run into people who don't like the way we present ourselves, but I feel I did them a favor, because they saw and heard me, and their world got a little bit bigger. DB

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# GARY SMULYAN

# Baritone Believer

By Geoffrey Himes :: Photo by Leanne Powers

**G**ary Smulyan was 22 when he got the call. It was Bill Byrne, offering Smulyan the baritone saxophone chair in Woody Herman's band, extending an opportunity to bust out of the Long Island club scene and to tour the world with a steady paycheck. There was only one problem: Smulyan had never played the baritone sax in his life.

A bebop fanatic, he had always played Charlie Parker's horn, the alto sax. He was such a Phil Woods disciple that he had never even thought of playing any other instrument. But here was Byrne, misled by Smulyan's friends in the band, offering the chair, but needing an answer right away. Smulyan knew it was a chance that might not come again. He knew it would be easier to switch to the baritone than the tenor, which is tuned in the key of B-flat, while the alto and baritone are both in the key of E-flat. So he gulped and said yes.

"I went out and bought a student-model baritone sax," he recalls today. Smulyan, a short, wiry man with a salt-and-pepper soul patch beneath his lip and a silver-and-black print shirt, leaned his elbows on the dining-room table of an Upper West Side condo in Manhattan, musing on the month that changed his life forever. "I practiced as hard as I could, and two weeks later, on May 25, 1978, I joined the band in Bridgeport, Connecticut. I found myself sitting next to Joe Lovano. When I left the band two years later to the day, the baritone had become my main voice. I was deeper into it than I had ever been with the alto. It complete-

ly changed how I heard music.

"It's an octave lower, obviously, and it requires more air because there's more tubing to fill up. It requires a different kind of articulation because if you don't articulate crisply, you won't hear specific notes; you'll just hear a low rumble. But the baritone is in the range of the human voice; it can play anything that a baritone vocalist can sing. No one on any instrument has played a more beautiful ballad than Harry Carney; no one has been more lyrical than Gerry Mulligan. If you listen to a great baritone player like Ronnie Cuber or Nick Brignola, you hear a different conception on the horn than you hear from an alto or tenor player. You hear a sonic personality that's particular to the baritone."

Today Smulyan personifies that distinctive sound. He has won the Baritone Saxophone category in the DownBeat Critics Poll for five consecutive years (2007-'11). He won the top baritone saxophonist honor from the Jazz Journalists Association in 2004, 2007, 2009 and 2010. Smulyan has the big, resonant timbre we expect from the big horn, but he is also able to carve out the individual notes of a mel-

ody, even at blistering bebop speeds. He has not only been a key part of such bands as the Mel Lewis Jazz Orchestra, the Mingus Big Band, the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra and the Joe Lovano Nonet but has also recorded 10 albums under his own name, including the new *Smul's Paradise* (Capri).

"He's been the voice on the baritone for a long time," Lovano says. "Gary digs deep inside himself when he plays, so his delivery touches you. It's not just notes; it's a way of playing. Some baritone players get lost in the lower depths, but Gary has a real presence. He has a clear articulation both in the section and on his solo flights, where you hear his beautiful harmonic flow. Gary lifts a rhythm section; he captures you with his ideas."

"After playing the bari for two years," Smulyan says, "when I picked up the alto again, it seemed like a little toy. There's this perception that the bari is limited because it's big and ponderous, but I found there were no limits to what it could do. It could be sensitive; it could be powerful. I could express anything I wanted to express. It wasn't so much that I picked the baritone as the baritone picked me."



Gary Smulyan, on tour in Basel, Switzerland, with the George Gruntz Concert Jazz Band, April 30, 2011

The Herman band that Smulyan joined in 1978 included not only Lovano but also bassist Marc Johnson, pianist Dave Lalama (Ralph's brother) and longtime Herman veteran Frank Tiberi. The reed section featured three tenors and a baritone but no altos, the template for Herman's legendary Four Brothers. The bandleader, in fact, was notoriously suspicious of alto players trying to pass themselves off as baritone players.

"The bar was definitely raised for me when I joined that band," Smulyan admits. "I'm sure I had a thin sound after just two weeks of grappling with the instrument, and I'm sure Woody could tell. But he didn't fire me, so he must have heard the germ of something else, the potential to become a real baritone saxophonist. Woody had all these wonderful arrangements that featured the baritone from the Four Brothers days. I wasn't just playing parts; I was getting solos. Even when I was reading section charts, I rarely played the root notes in those arrange-

ments. I often played inner voicings within the chord. It was great."

When Lovano left the band in January 1979, Bob Belden replaced him. "When you're the new guy in a big band," Belden says, "you always want to look over at the next guy's score to see where you are in the chart. On one side was Frank Tiberi, who never said anything, so he was no help. On the other side was Gary, but he was no use because he didn't even have a score. He had memorized the entire book; that's how smart he was. The way he played indicated how smart he was. He didn't waste notes. He picked all the good notes and left all the bad notes behind. For him, it was like a puzzle to be solved."

"Gary has a photographic memory," Lovano confirms. "He can play an arrangement a few times and then put the music away. In the Mel Lewis Band, which we were both in together, Gary would put his music away while the rest of us still had it out, because those Thad Jones arrangements are very complicated."

Smulyan had never focused on baritone saxophonists before he joined Herman's band, but he used those two years to study the musicians who played it and the conceptions they brought to the instrument. The youngster listened to every LP he could find and would practice along with the records. When he noticed how much Harry Carney's sound resembled a cello, Smulyan started practicing along with Pablo Casals' Bach Cello Suites as well. But the record Smulyan listened to the most was 1967's *Live At The Village Vanguard* by the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Jazz Orchestra, featuring baritone saxophonist Pepper Adams.

"I wore that record out," Smulyan says. "I had never listened to Pepper when I played alto, but when I started paying attention to bari players, Pepper grabbed me the most. He was a hard-bop player out of Charlie Parker, which is where I was coming from, while Mulligan was coming out of Lester Young. Pepper Adams proved you could play the baritone saxophone as fast and as fluidly as you could play the alto or tenor."

After two years of international jazz festivals and high school gymnasiums, nightclubs and state fairs, Smulyan was ready to get off the road and back to New York. When he got the chance to sub with Lewis' band (after Jones had emigrated to Denmark), Smulyan was thrilled. He was even more thrilled when the band's baritone chair opened up and he was invited to take it over. He continues in that chair today, even now that the band has been renamed the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra.

"To play Thad's arrangements and Bob Brookmeyer's arrangements was fabulous," Smulyan exults. "Mel was a lot like Woody: He knew what he was looking for in musicians and how to fit them together. Mel's band was like an 18-piece quartet. The music was written around the soloists, and you were encouraged to take long solos."

## BARI TREASURE

Gary Smulyan played his very last show with Woody Herman in Stockholm in 1980. After the show, an elderly Swedish fan came up to Smulyan and said, "I have this old baritone sax in my shop that I've been having trouble selling, and I think you would like it. Would you like to see it?" It was 11:30 at night on the last night of a European tour, but Smulyan had been having problems with his current horn, so he said, "Sure."

"We went to this gentleman's shop in downtown Stockholm," Smulyan recalls, "and there, on the upper shelf, was this bari case covered in thick dust. The owner took it down, opened the case and pulled out this 1936 Conn 12M. I played it and immediately heard the difference. The horns made before World War II had more brass in the alloy, so they vibrate more. During the war, the military took all the brass to make artillery shells, so the horns weren't as vibrant. The Conn's aren't as easy to get around on as the Selmers, but you get used to it, and it's worth it for that sound."

It's the main baritone saxophone Smulyan has played since. He uses it on the road, in the studio and at home to practice. When traveling with an instrument became such a hassle, he experimented by traveling with just a mouthpiece and renting a horn wherever he was going, but that was fiasco. "You have a sound in your head," he explains, "and if you don't have the horn that makes that sound, you're not happy."

—Geoffrey Himes

Over the course of his career, Smulyan has played in a lot of big bands—the Lionel Hampton Big Band, the Mingus Big Band, the Dave Holland Big Band, the Carnegie Hall Jazz Band, the DMP Big Band, the Smithsonian Jazz Orchestra and more—as well as a number of "little big bands"—the Lee Konitz Nonet, the Joe Lovano Nonet, the George Coleman Octet and the Tom Harrell Octet. But Smulyan soon discovered a disconcerting fact of life about baritone saxophonists: They have a lot easier time finding gigs in large lineups than in small combos.

"Playing in big bands was invaluable in learning how to read, how to blend and how to listen—because you're not playing all the time," Smulyan acknowledges. "But I grew up playing small-group music. It was my first love, and it remains so to this day. But the baritone rarely gets hired—or even thought about—when a quartet or quintet is forming, unless you're the leader. I think it's due to unfamiliarity. There's no reason not to hire a baritone, but in the history of jazz, hundreds of alto and tenor players have achieved success in small groups but only one baritone player: Gerry Mulligan. Even Pepper couldn't keep a band together. He had to play with local rhythm sections when he toured. The same with Nick Brignola. You want to play your own music with the musicians you want to play it with, but it's hard for a baritone saxophonist to do that."

"We tend to stereotype musicians by their instruments instead of paying attention to the person behind the instrument," adds Belden. "There are so many ways to use the baritone in a small group, but for some reason, people don't take advantage of it. That prejudice has really hurt the instrument. As a result, not as many people play it, and those who do tend not to be soloists. Part of it is the glamour factor. It's not as sexy to hold a big baritone around your neck as it is to hold a tenor or alto. But Smulyan still believes in the instrument. A lot of other people have given up, but he's never given up. Because he plays melodically, everything he plays could work in a small-group setting."

Smulyan's big break came when he was playing on a session for pianist Mike LeDonne's 1988 debut album, *'Bout Time*, for the Dutch label Criss Cross. The label's Gerry Teekens had insisted that Smulyan and Tom Harrell be the horns for the quintet date. Teekens was so impressed by Smulyan's playing that the baritone saxophonist was offered his own chance to make a debut album, 1990's *The Lure Of Beauty*, with Ray Drummond, Jimmy Knepper, Mulgrew Miller and Kenny Washington. The followup was 1991's *Homage*, a tribute to Adams with Drummond, Washington and Tommy Flanagan.

"Tommy wasn't doing many sideman sessions then," Smulyan says, "but he went way back with Pepper in Detroit. Spending eight hours in the studio with Tommy was one of the high points of my life."

That was followed by a trilogy of Criss Cross

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**Gary Smulyan**  
Downbeat Critic's Poll Winner  
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Check out Gary's latest recording "Smul's Paradise" from Capri available in early 2012, featuring Mike LeDonne on organ, Peter Bernstein on guitar, and Kenny Washington on drums.



photo by Leanne Powers

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albums (1993's *Saxophone Mosaic*, 1997's *Gary Smulyan With Strings* and 2000's *Blues Suite*) arranged by Belden. "You don't overwrite for Smulyan," Belden remembers. "He's the focus of the session, because he can steamroller anyone. It was like arranging for a vocalist like Billy Eckstine, because Gary has that same baritone sound. He's always been into singers like Sarah Vaughan and Carmen McRae; that's how he learns songs. Because he plays melodically, everything he plays could stand alone."

"I'm intrigued by projects that aren't likely jazz projects," Smulyan adds. "Does the world need another version of 'Stella By Starlight'? No. But there aren't a lot of baritone-and-strings albums, so I did that with Bob. Baritones rarely play together, so I co-led a band with Ronnie Cuber and Nick Brignola for a Gerry Mulligan tribute [1998's *Plays Mulligan* (Dreyfus)], by the Three Baritone Saxophone Band]. There aren't a lot of trios led by baritones, so I did that with Christian McBride and Ray Drummond [2006's *Hidden Treasures*]. I always ask myself, 'What can I do to separate myself from the hundreds of other jazz-combo albums that are going to come out?' Playing the bari separates me from the start, but I always ask, 'What else can I do?'"

One thing he could do was dig into his life-long stash of obscure Tin Pan Alley tunes. "I don't know where he finds them," marvels LeDonne, "but Gary's got a treasure chest of

"There's this perception that the bari is limited because it's big and ponderous, but I found there were no limits to what I could do. It could be sensitive; it could be powerful. I could express whatever I wanted to express. It wasn't so much that I picked the baritone as the baritone picked me."

pop songs that no one else knows. Whenever we're backstage at a festival, he'll play a tune on the piano from some show I never heard of—and they're all great tunes. Maybe because Frank Sinatra never recorded them, they've been forgotten, but melodically and harmonically these songs stand up with the best-known standards. But no one's sick of having heard them a million times."

Album titles such as *Hidden Treasures* and *More Treasures* (both on Reservoir) reflected this approach. Instead of enticing the listener with familiarity, Smulyan is trying to seduce with unfamiliarity, the chance to hear Great American Songbook numbers that haven't been done to death. An album like the 2008 Reservoir CD *High Noon: The Jazz Soul Of Frankie Laine* is a very different strategy than covering Gershwin or Radiohead songs.

"I've been collecting records since I was a kid," Smulyan explains. "I'd spend every weekend scouring flea markets and department stores. I found this [1956] record Laine did with

Buck Clayton called *Jazz Spectacular*. Like a lot of people, I didn't know who Laine was, but I could hear he had a real jazz and blues sensibility in his phrasing, even though he was a huge pop star in the '40s. I investigated further and learned he was a great composer who used a lot of cool changes."

Another neglected hero was the inspiration for Smulyan's new album, *Smul's Paradise*. Don Patterson is best known as the organist on some classic Sonny Stitt trio projects, but Patterson started out as a gifted pianist and brought all that technique to the Hammond B3. It reminded Smulyan how much he had always loved the organ—the way its big, sustaining sound and throbbing bass lines echo what a baritone saxophone does. He wrote a tune for Patterson, "Blues For DP," and picked out two Patterson compositions, "Up In Betty's Room" and "Aries," as the core of the new project. To fill the organ bench, the saxophonist turned to his longtime collaborator LeDonne (who has played on five Smulyan albums). LeDonne is perhaps best known as a pianist, but he leads an organ trio every Tuesday night at Smoke in New York City. He's a huge Patterson fan, too.

"Don had those swinging bass lines like Jimmy Smith," LeDonne points out, "with that bluesy flavor, but he's also playing all the bebop changes. Plus, he has all these new sounds he created by changing the organ stops. To me, Don and Jimmy are up there on the same level. But Don gets no respect, which baffles me."

In addition to the two Patterson originals, there are three by Smulyan and one apiece by George Coleman, Bobby Hebb and another neglected organist, Rhoda Scott. Though the organ provides the theme for the album, the baritone saxophone still dominates the proceedings. The result is another revelatory project from an underrated artist on an underrated instrument. If Smulyan is not well known among the general public, though, at least his fellow musicians know what he's doing.

In 2010, for example, Smulyan attended the ceremony where Sonny Rollins became the first jazz artist to win the McDowell Medal for an "outstanding contribution" in the arts, joining such past winners as Leonard Bernstein and Georgia O'Keeffe. When the critic Gary Giddins introduced Smulyan to Rollins, the white-bearded "Saxophone Colossus" said in his characteristic croak, "So, you're the guy who's been winning all those polls." Smulyan was flabbergasted and stammered, "How did you know that?" Rollins replied, "Oh, I get all the magazines."

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# The Music in Motian

*Former collaborators reminisce about the colorful, influential career of the late drummer*

By Ken Micallef  Photo by Jimmy Katz

**P**aul Motian, whose traditional yet artfully abstract drumming expanded the instrument's role and possibilities, and who contributed to every style in jazz from bebop to free to beyond, died Nov. 22, 2011, at the age of 80. The cause of death was myelodysplastic syndrome, a bone-marrow disorder with which Motian was only recently diagnosed.

Many musicians who Motian worked with and nurtured for over 50 years can attest that he was all about living in the moment, distilling the past and shaping the future.

"Paul made you stand on your own two feet," saxophonist Joe Lovano said. "Everyone had to play with the drive of the drummer on whatever instrument you played. Paul didn't just play along with you, he played a counterpoint with you. It was a circular, flowing, rhythmic exploration together, and it was still as present and strong today as it was his whole life. Bill [Frisell] and I had such amazing periods of development while playing with him."

"No words for what I am feeling now," guitarist Frisell wrote via email. "Music is good. Paul Motian was a musician. He taught me, brought me up. Pointed the way. Showed me things I never could have imagined. Led me to places of extraordinary beauty. Indescribable. Paul never let up for one second. Raising it up. Always. No compromise. Listen to the music. I am blessed to have known him."

Before Motian's revolutionary 1980s period, when he created the template that he'd explore until the end of his career, he was an important member of groups led by Bill Evans and Keith Jarrett. But he also worked with many other bandleaders, including Lee Konitz, Warne Marsh, Mose Allison, Stan Getz, Johnny Griffin, Coleman Hawkins, Lennie Tristano, Thelonious Monk and Paul Bley, a major influence on Motian's cerebral and visceral approach. Motian's late '50s-to-early '60s period hinted at the individualism his drumming would take on in later years. His swing feel was consistently unerring and gorgeous, but he could also travel to new lands that no drummer before him dared to visit.

"Paul Motian had the audacity to sound unschooled, which was a major taboo in drumming," Danish drummer Kresten Osgood said. "He had a very radical drum sound. Most people, when they hear that sound, would immediately tune differently. He had some cymbals that were the opposite of the jazz aesthetic, and loud hi-hats. He's playing with the sound of failure on the drums. It's an anti-hero approach. But because he played with such sensitivity and touch and amazing timing and musicality, it's another aesthetic. It becomes beautiful the same way that pop art is beautiful. It's not the actual painting; it's the *idea* of the painting. And

he was dangerous."

Not only could Motian's drumming be perceived as dangerous—you never knew what to expect from a Motian performance—his personality could be a study in brutal honesty.

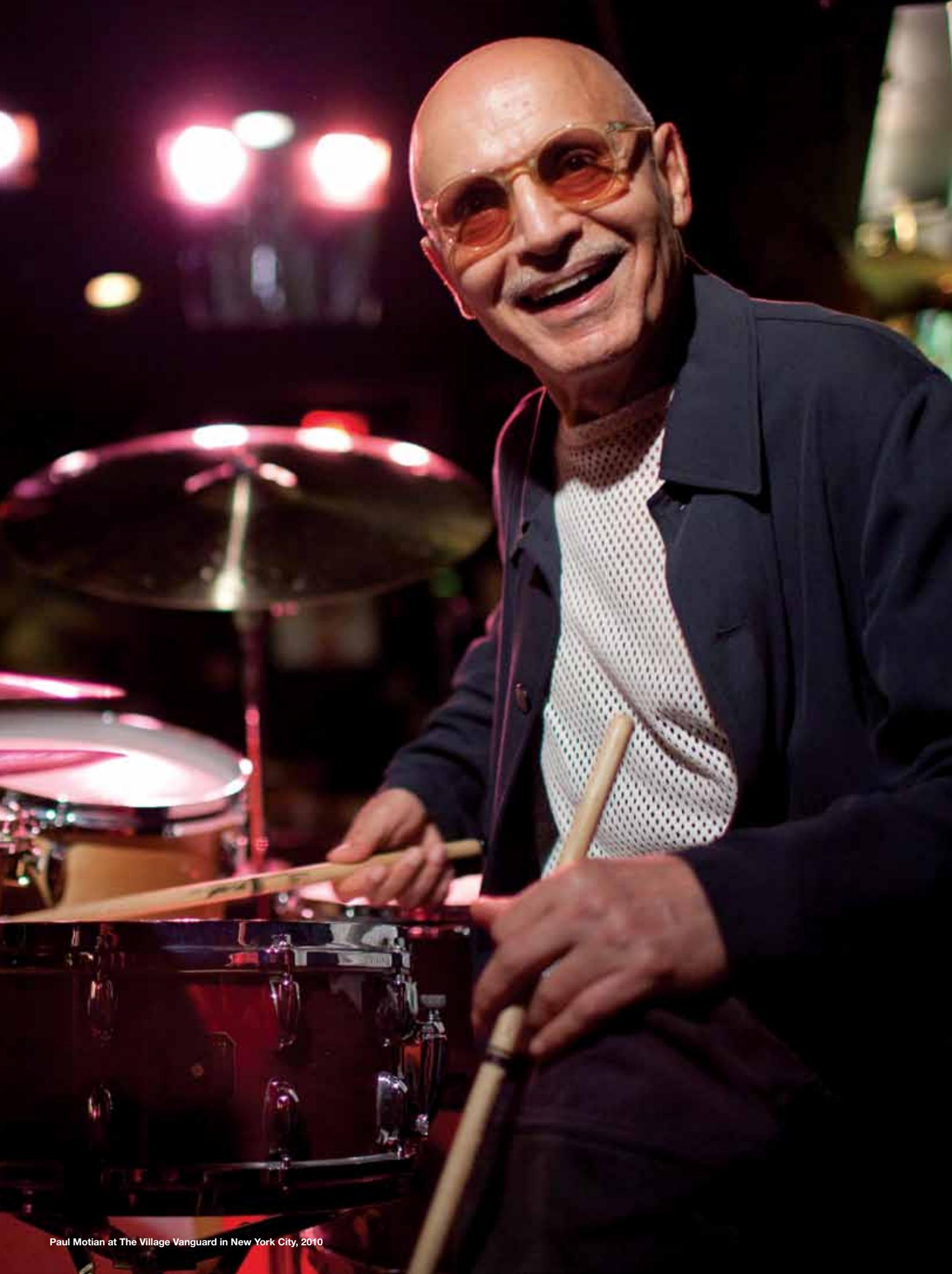
"Paul just didn't give a shit, in a really positive way," bassist Gary Peacock said. He and the drummer worked together with pianists Bley, Evans and Jarrett. "He cut through a lot of bullshit just by being that way. And he never really protected himself. He never tried to cover his ass, he never tried to be diplomatic or not be diplomatic. He was just a really wonderful spirit that continues to nourish me. Paul was an absolute demonstration of musical integrity, humor, consistency, exuberance and candor. He was one of the most upfront people I've ever met in my life. Those qualities are a permanent contribution to my life as a person."

In his later years, Motian refused to leave the country to tour or record—he didn't need to. Motian's weeklong stands at New York's Village Vanguard (with the Lovano/Frisell trio and other configurations) became cherished, sold-out events. His voluminous ECM and Winter & Winter output as a leader typically featured younger musicians who vied for the opportunity to work with the combustible master. And while he nurtured younger talent, Motian's connections ran deep throughout jazz history.

"He was a special human being in every way," said bassist Charlie Haden. "People are lined up together like the stars sometimes—people who have a close feeling with each other, the way they see life and the way they imagine their place in the universe. I always felt a special feeling with Paul, and I knew that we were supposed to meet and play music together. When you meet someone like Paul it's not really about music anymore. It's about the universe, about the planets, about where we are and about discovering why we're here. The feeling I got from Paul was music playing nature and nature playing music."

The new double-CD *Further Explorations* (Concord Jazz) is a trio recording featuring Motian, Chick Corea and Eddie Gomez. This 19-track live album was recorded at New York's Blue Note in May 2010. Additionally, an ECM recording with Motian, Masabumi Kikuchi and Thomas Morgan will be released this spring.

DB



Paul Motian at The Village Vanguard in New York City, 2010

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## GREAT JAZZ ROOMS

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**AMBIENCE IS KEY TO THE JAZZ LISTENING EXPERIENCE.**

Whether it's an in-house Dixieland brass band, artist-led master classes, vintage architecture or stick-to-your-bones comfort food, each of these locales contributes something unique to the burgeoning jazz community. But one thing that they share is a rich heritage. Some have birthed legendary recordings. Others have housed memorable trio dates. The walls of these establishments convey a fascinating history that, in some cases, spans close to a century. Whether their preference is fusion or free-jazz, live music aficionados will always be able to find their own personal jazz haven—anywhere in the world.

PHOTOS BY MICHAEL JACKSON

## EAST: BOSTON

**The Acton Jazz Café**

**452 Great Rd., Acton MA  
(978) 263-6161**

[actonjazzcafe.com](http://actonjazzcafe.com)

Gwenn Vivian's suburban club/restaurant features acclaimed local musicians nightly, except for Mondays. Proud new addition: a restored 1912 Baldwin grand piano.

**Chianti Tuscan Restaurant & Jazz Lounge**

**285 Cabot St., Beverly MA  
(978) 921-2233**

[chiantibeverly.com](http://chiantibeverly.com)

This upscale, intimate North Shore lounge books national and regional musicians of various jazz styles nightly.

**Lilly Pad**

**1353 Cambridge St.,  
Cambridge MA**

**(617) 395-1393 :: lilly-pad.net**

In Inman Square, the home base of the Fringe and other innovative Bostonian musicians welcome touring performers like Jacob Fred Jazz Odyssey.

**Regattabar**

**1 Bennett St.,  
Cambridge MA  
(617) 395-7757**

[regattabarjazz.com](http://regattabarjazz.com)

The award-winning "Best of Boston" nightclub at the first-rate Charles Hotel in Harvard Square is now in its 26th year.

**Ryles Jazz Club**

**212 Hampshire St., Cambridge MA  
(617) 876-9330 :: rylesjazz.com**

The two-floor venue, featuring Latin dancing upstairs and jazz downstairs, has been an Inman Square landmark since 1994. Jazz brunch every Sunday.

**Scullers Jazz Club**

**400 Soldiers Field Rd.,  
Boston MA**

**(617) 562-4111 :: scullersjazz.com**

Overlooking the Charles River, the posh 200-seat club at the Doubletree Guest Suites hotel presents well-known musicians like Joe Lovano, Stanley Jordan and Christian McBride.

**Wally's Café**

**427 Massachusetts Avenue,  
Boston MA**

**(617) 424-1408 :: wallyscafe.com**

Family run since its opening in 1947, the storied South End club near Berklee College of Music and NEC offers live jazz or blues every day of the year.

## EAST: NEW HAMPSHIRE

**The Press Room**

**77 Daniel Street,  
Portsmouth NH  
(603) 431-5186**

[pressroomnh.com](http://pressroomnh.com)

Nestled in a tourist-friendly port city, the attractive two-level restaurant-plus-club has a weekly jazz jam, a Saturday jazz lunch and performances every evening.



## EAST: NEW JERSEY

**Shanghai Jazz Restaurant & Bar**

**24 Main St., Madison NJ  
(973) 822-2899 :: shanghaijazz.com**

The 85-seat North Jersey club boasts a dining room with an unobstructed view of the stage, a pan-Asian menu and a roster of world-class jazz artists featured six nights a week.

## EAST: NEW YORK

**55 Bar**

**55 Christopher St., New York NY  
(212) 929-9883 :: 55bar.com**

This former Prohibition-era speakeasy on the ground floor of a Sheridan Square brownstone in the West Village plays host to a thriving jazz and blues menu of under-the-radar artists.

**92nd Street Y**

**1395 Lexington Ave., New York NY  
(212) 415-5500 :: 92y.org**

This vital cultural center for the arts features the renowned jazz series which, in 2011, spotlighted Paula West, Kurt Elling, and the duo of regulars, Bill Charlap with mother Sandy Stewart on vocals.

**92nd Street Y/Tribeca**

**200 Hudson St., New York NY  
(212) 601-1000 :: 92y.org/tribeca**

The 92YTribeca's jazz offerings lean toward adventurous up-and-comers and decidedly un-Upper East Side acts such as Marco Benevento and Jamire Williams' ERIMAJ.

**Birdland**

**315 W. 44th St., New York NY  
(212) 581-3080 :: birdlandjazz.com**

A stone's throw from Times Square, Birdland books an array of jazz acts, from legends such as Frank Wess and Jim Hall to newcomers like Cyrille Aimee. Weekly residencies include the Louis Armstrong Centennial Band and Arturo O'Farrill's Afro Latin Jazz Orchestra.

**Blue Note**

**131 W. 3rd St., New York, NY  
(212) 475-8592 :: bluenote.net**

One of the most jazz-oriented destinations for tourists, the Blue Note showcases all the jazz stripes from smooth to fusion, as well as late-night shows with young upstarts. The club's label, Half Note Records, records live shows.

**Cornelia Street Café**

**29 Cornelia St., New York NY  
(212) 989-9319**

[corneliastreetcafe.com](http://corneliastreetcafe.com)

The distinguished Greenwich Village restaurant/cabaret has an excellent fusion menu and small-stage entertainment in the basement. Recent artists include Rez Abbasi, Aaron Goldberg, Ralph Alessi and Marilyn Crispell.

**Dizzy's Club Coca-Cola**

**33 W. 60th St., 5th Fl., New York NY  
(212) 258-9595 :: jalc.org/dccc/**

This ideal venue for neophytes offers a schedule of top-flight, straightahead acts. It also boasts the best view of any New York jazz club: overlooking Columbus Circle and Central Park.

**Fat Cat**

**75 Christopher St., New York NY  
(212) 675-6056 :: fatcatmusic.org**

This West Village hangout showcases live music every night, from locals like Champian Fulton to well-established artists such as David Weiss and Arturo O'Farrill. Fat Cat also boasts a late-night jam that runs until 5 a.m.

**Iridium**

**1650 Broadway,  
New York NY  
(212) 582-2121**

[iridiumjazzclub.com](http://iridiumjazzclub.com)

Iridium was Les Paul's weekly gig until his passing in 2009 (Mondays feature famous guests sitting in with the Paul's band). A range of jazz acts like Jeff Lorber, Arturo Sandoval and Mike Stern settle in for days.

**Jazz Standard**

**116 E. 27th St., New York NY  
(212) 576-2232**

[jazzstandard.net](http://jazzstandard.net)

The Jazz Standard has showcased the most varied and adventurous jazz in the city, from one- or two-night runs (Regina Carter, Joe Locke) to multi-night stays (Ron Carter, Dave Douglas). The club is also home base for the Mingus heritage bands every Monday night, which recently celebrated their third anniversary there. It is easily the most comfortable room in New York to see jazz, and is located downstairs from Danny Meyer's Blue Smoke BBQ restaurant. A rare bonus: There is no minimum charge for drink or eats.

**Jazz Gallery**

**290 Hudson St.,  
New York NY**

**(212) 242-1063 :: jazzgallery.org**

This non-profit is a valuable proving ground for artists exploring new jazz vistas. Monday night's "Steve Coleman Presents" is now in its 8th season.

**Joe's Pub**

**425 Lafayette St.,**

**New York NY**

**(212) 539-8778 :: joespub.com**

Recently reopened after a refurbishing, Joe's eclectic musical offerings range from pop to world to cutting-edge jazz.

**Le Poisson Rouge**

**158 Bleeker St.,**

**New York NY**

**(212) 505-FISH**

[lepoissonrouge.com](http://lepoissonrouge.com)

While the legendary Village Gate has been long gone, into its space has slid an exciting venue that focuses on the fusion of "popular and art cultures," according to founders Justin Kantor and David Handler. It's ground zero for the January Winter JazzFest bash.

**Showman's Bar**

**375 West 125th St.,**

**New York NY**

**(212) 864-8941**

A one-time hang for Apollo Theater artists, Harlem's longest-running jazz club features jazz shows Wed.-Sun. with straightahead, blues-infused music and an onstage Hammond B3 ready to go.

**Somethin' Jazz Club**

**(formerly Miles' Café)**

**212 E. 52nd St., 3rd Fl.,**

**New York NY**

**(212) 371-7657 :: somethinjazz.com**

Miles didn't cut the mustard as its name, so it's now Somethin' Jazz Club in Midtown with fine acoustics and an 1888 Steinway grand. The offerings have been scaled down from marquee acts to newer artists.

## Smalls

183 W. 10th St., New York NY

(212) 252-5091

[smallsjazzclub.com](http://smallsjazzclub.com)

The quintessential jazz dive offers superb bookings, with a history of upstarts gracing the stage since the club opened in 1993. You're likely to see Orrin Evans leading his Captain Black Big Band and vibes player Tyler Blanton.

## Smoke

2751 Broadway, New York NY

(212) 864-6662

[smokejazz.com](http://smokejazz.com)

Smoke features top-tier acts in a classy Uptown room. No-cover Mondays are anchored by the Smoke Big Band directed by Bill Mobley and a jam session led by John Farnsworth.

## The Stone

Ave. C and 2nd St., New York NY

[thestonenyc.com](http://thestonenyc.com)

As artistic director of a space that gives 100 percent of the door to the musicians, John Zorn created the Stone to showcase cutting-edge experimental jazz artists. It's not classy (folding chairs and standing room), but the music is real.

## Village Vanguard

178 7th Ave. South, New York NY

(212) 255-4037

[villagevanguard.net](http://villagevanguard.net)

The low-ceiling, triangular basement room has served as a cornerstone of modern jazz and the site of over a hundred recordings since the mid-1950s. Weeklong bookings have ranged from regulars like the late Paul Motian with Bill Frisell and Cedar Walton to The Bad Plus and the 3 Cohens Sextet.

## Zinc Bar

82 W. 3rd St., New York NY

(212) 477-9462 :: [zincbar.com](http://zincbar.com)

With a new Klavierhaus Steinway gracing the room, Zinc Bar's music menu includes a full platter of jazz, African, Brazilian, Afro-Caribbean bands and groove-oriented jazz.

## EAST: RHODE ISLAND

### Sidebar Bistro

127 Dorrance St., Providence RI

(401) 421-7200

[sidebar-bistro.com](http://sidebar-bistro.com)

Located downtown, this underground restaurant/club with wood ceilings and brick walls has a warm ambiance. Local musicians perform Tues.-Sat.

## EAST: PHILADELPHIA

### Chris' Jazz Café

1421 Sansom St., Philadelphia PA

(215) 568-3131

[chrisjazzcafe.com](http://chrisjazzcafe.com)

The only full-time jazz club left in the city presents local and national art-

ists six nights a week. The Bad Plus and Chris Potter visit roughly once a year, as do ex-Philadelphians like Ari Hoenig and Kurt Rosenwinkel.

### Deer Head Inn

5 Main St., Delaware Water Gap PA

(570) 424-2000

[deerheadinn.com](http://deerheadinn.com)

The Pocono Mountains house this legendary B&B, site of the well-known live recording by Keith Jarrett's trio. The inn is home base for a coterie of nearby residents, most notably Phil Woods.

### Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts

300 S. Broad St., Philadelphia PA

(215) 893-1999

[kimmelcenter.org](http://kimmelcenter.org)

The home of the Philadelphia Orchestra hosts two jazz series: one for major touring artists like Herbie Hancock and the Wayne Shorter Quartet, the other curated by pianist Danilo Pérez.

### LaRose Jazz Club

5531 Germantown Ave., Philadelphia PA

(215) 844-5818

This intimate Germantown cabaret-style venue pays tribute to old-school Philly jazz with saxophonist Tony Williams' long-running Monday night jam session and concerts by respected locals.

### Le Cochon Noir

5070 Parkside Ave., Philadelphia PA

(215) 879-1011

[lecochonnoir.com](http://lecochonnoir.com)

This BBQ joint offers a blend of jazz, blues and r&b, culled mostly from the ranks of artists like singer Denise King and the Jump City Jazz Orchestra.

### Loews Hotel

1200 Market St., Philadelphia PA

(215) 627-1200

[loewshotels.com](http://loewshotels.com)

Smart, sultry-voiced vocalist Joanna Pascale holds court from 6pm to 9pm three nights a week at the hotel's SoleFood Lounge.

### Painted Bride Arts Center

230 Vine St., Philadelphia PA

(215) 925-9914

[paintedbride.org](http://paintedbride.org)

The city's longest-running jazz series favors multicultural fusions—it presented Rudresh Mahanthappa's Kinsmen and Amir ElSaffar's Two Rivers projects.

### Philadelphia Museum of Art

2601 Benjamin Franklin Pkwy., Philadelphia PA

(215) 763-8100

[philamuseum.org](http://philamuseum.org)

The PMA's Great Stair Hall is a stun-

ning site for its Friday after-work Art After 5 series. The museum also commissions new works inspired by its exhibits, including pieces by Joe Lovano and Chris Potter.

## EAST: PITTSBURGH

### MCG Jazz

1815 Metropolitan St., Pittsburgh PA

(412) 323-4000 :: [mcgjazz.org](http://mcgjazz.org)

The jazz arm of the multi-disciplinary non-profit arts organization Manchester Craftsmen's Guild presents artists who bolster its educational mission in its 350-seat venue.

## EAST: VERMONT

### Leunig's Bistro & Cafe

115 Church St., Burlington VT

(802) 863-3759

[leunigsbistro.com](http://leunigsbistro.com)

The old European-style restaurant has won over jazz fans with its mid-week shows and its booking during Burlington's Discover Jazz Festival.

## EAST: WASHINGTON, D.C.

### Birchmere Music Hall

3701 Mt. Vernon Ave., Alexandria VA

(703) 549-7500 :: [birchmere.com](http://birchmere.com)

Technically, this popular barnyard-style performance space isn't a jazz club, but it does host delicious Southern-flavored comfort food and acts like Herb Alpert, Jane Monheit or Tuck & Patti.

### Blues Alley

1073 Wisconsin Ave. N.W., Washington DC

(202) 337-4141

[bluesalley.com](http://bluesalley.com)

This venerable jazz hot house began edging out talented straight-ahead jazz artists but still glimmers when the club hosts its youth orchestra summer jazz camp and the annual Big Band Jam jazz festival.

### Bohemian Caverns

2001 11th St. N.W., Washington DC

(202) 299-0800

[bohemiancaverns.com](http://bohemiancaverns.com)

The Bohemian Caverns has finally channeled its legendary status. You'll hear young guns like Robert Glasper, JD Allen and Gretchen Parlato or seasoned heavyweights like Bennie Maupin or Pharoah Sanders.

### The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts

2700 F St. N.W., Washington DC

(202) 467-4600

[kennedy-center.org](http://kennedy-center.org)

The Kennedy Center hist wide-ranging programming, as well as the Mary Lou Williams Women

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in Jazz Festival and Monk Institute International Competition finals.

### The Music Center at Strathmore

**5301 Tuckerman Ln., North Bethesda MD**  
**(301) 581-5100 :: strathmore.org**

As the Kennedy Center's main competitor for top D.C. area high-end performance space, Maryland's elegant Strathmore does showcase artists like Patti Austin, Kurt Elling and Ramsey Lewis.

### Twins Jazz Lounge

**1344 U St. N.W., Washington DC**  
**(202) 234-0072 :: twinsjazz.com**

The U-Street club promotes the city's riskiest lineups, often providing a hub for jazz artists visiting from Scandinavia and Brazil as well as homegrown talent.

### Warner Theatre

**513 13th St. N.W., Washington DC**  
**(202) 347-4707**  
**warnertheatre.com**

The downtown performance space has opened doors for such luminaries as Cassandra Wilson, Al Jarreau and George Benson, thanks in huge part to the programming strategy of the Washington Performing Arts Society.

### SOUTH: ATLANTA

#### Churchill Grounds

**660 Peachtree St. N.E., Atlanta GA**  
**(404) 876-3030**  
**churchillgrounds.com**

Area groups perform almost every weeknight, with more established bands hitting the stage Fridays and Saturdays.

#### The Five Spot

**1123 Euclid Ave., Atlanta GA**  
**(404) 223-1100 :: fivespot-atl.com**

Programming at this Little Five Points bar leans toward the experimental, as area musicians from Indie Revenge to Kebbi Williams mix with national acts.

#### High Museum of Art

**1280 Peachtree St., Atlanta GA**  
**(404) 733-4444 :: high.org**

Every third Friday, local and national groups compete with the din of after-work revelers in the cavernous atrium, but the programming is usually spot-on.

#### Spivey Hall

**2000 Clayton State Blvd., Morrow GA**  
**(678) 466-4200 :: spiveyhall.org**

This university recital space is pricey, but it boasts the Atlanta area's best acoustics. Past performances by marquee stars were well worth the trek south.

#### Twain's Billiards and Tap

**211 East Trinity Pl., Decatur GA**  
**(404) 373-0063 :: twains.net**

Twain's is home to Atlanta's most notable jam session. The band encourages students and goes toe-to-toe with national acts breezing through town.



### SOUTH: AUSTIN

#### Elephant Room

**315 Congress Ave., Austin TX**  
**(512) 473-2279**  
**elephantroom.com**

A classic basement club just blocks from the State Capitol, the Elephant has become the epicenter of an active and accomplished local scene.

#### One World Theatre

**7701 Bee Cave Rd., Austin TX**  
**(512) 329-6753**  
**oneworldtheatre.org**

Housed in an artfully embellished two-story Tuscan-style villa, this small hall distinguished by high-quality production stages a steady schedule of big-name talent.

### SOUTH: DALLAS/FORT WORTH

#### AT&T Performance Arts Center

**2100 Ross Ave., Dallas TX**  
**(214) 880-0202 :: attpac.org**

The centerpiece of the revitalized 10-acre Dallas Arts District provides world-class concert facilities featuring superlative lights and sound for touring jazz acts.

#### Scat Jazz Lounge

**111 W. 4th St., Fort Worth, TX**  
**(817) 870-9100**  
**scatjazzlounge.com**

A stylish subterranean jazz bar with sophisticated sensibilities, the Scat Jazz Lounge provides music fans with a refuge in historic Sundance Square.

### SOUTH: FLORIDA

#### Blue Jean Blues

**3320 N.E. 33rd St., Fort Lauderdale FL**  
**(954) 306-6330 :: bluejeanblues.net**

Jazz, blues, and Caribbean music meet and mingle at this swanky gathering place near Fort Lauderdale beach.

#### Bradfordville Blues Club

**7152 Moses Ln., Tallahassee FL**  
**(850) 906-0766**  
**bradfordvilleblues.com**

It's a one-room cinder block juke joint

where original autographed portraits of major blues artists adorn the tables.

#### Della's After Dark

**608 Oakfield Dr., Brandon FL**  
**(813) 684-3354**  
**dellasafterdark.com**

High-end jazz, played three nights a week by saxophonist Valerie Gillespie, gypsy jazzers Impromptu and Trio Vibe, keeps people coming back to this gem of a restaurant.

#### Fox Jazz Club

**5401 W. Kennedy Blvd., Tampa FL**  
**(813) 639-0400 :: foxjazzclub.com**

The Tampa Westshore district staple offers music five nights a week in two simultaneously running venues.

#### Heidi's Jazz Club

**7 N. Orlando Ave., Cocoa Beach, FL**  
**(321) 783-4559**  
**heidisjazzclub.com**

For two decades, Heidi's has been the Space Coast place to go for the best local jazz, which lifts off five nights a week.

#### Stogies Jazz Bar

**36 Charlotte St., St. Augustine FL**  
**(904) 826-4008**

Located inside a late-1800s home, Stogies Jazz Bar features more than 100 imported beers, 65 varieties of port and 55 kinds of wine. Cigar lovers can sample the wares of a humidor packed with 100 varieties of cigars.

#### Van Dyke Cafe

**846 Lincoln Rd., Miami Beach FL**  
**(305) 534-3600**  
**thevandykecafe.com**

This nightspot, with a trendy Lincoln Road address on Miami Beach, offers an eclectic mix of jazz, blues, funk, r&b and Afro-Cuban music.

#### Vines Grille & Wine Bar

**7533 W. Sand Lake Rd., Orlando FL**  
**(407) 351-1227 :: vinesgrille.com**

Live jazz, by locals and such nationally known artists as clarinetist Allan Vache and trombonist Bill Allred, is on the menu at Vines' five nights a week.

### The Spotted Cat

**623 Frenchmen St., New Orleans LA**  
**(504) 943-3887**  
**spottedcatmusicclub.com**

Music-obsessed Frenchmen Street revelers pack into this intimate and friendly space for energetic sets by multi-realist Aurora Nealand or free swing dance lessons with pianist Brett Richardson.

### SOUTH: HOUSTON

#### Cezanne

**4100 Montrose Blvd., Houston TX**  
**(832) 592-7464 :: cezannejazz.com**

An intimate, art-filled upstairs listening room with an enlightened audience, Cezanne is a sublime setting for up-close-and-personal listening.

#### Wortham Center

**501 Texas Ave., Houston TX**  
**(713) 237-1439**  
**houstonfirsttheaters.com**

The Wortham Center provides two comfortable, acoustically excellent downtown concert halls, which serve as home for a variety of arts organizations.

### SOUTH: NASHVILLE

#### F. Scott's Restaurant and Jazz Bar

**2210 Crestmoor Rd., Nashville TN**  
**(615) 269-5861 :: fscotts.com**

Attached to a gourmet eatery, the lounge seats 40 and hosts local talent, with solo piano Mondays and Tuesdays and combos Wednesdays through Sundays in an elegant art-deco setting.

#### The Jazz Cave Nashville Jazz Workshop

**1319 Adams St., Nashville TN**  
**(615) 242-5299 :: nashvillejazz.org**

A modest cover is charged at this intimate, 72-seat setting, which is also BYOB. Jam sessions are held monthly.

### SOUTH: NEW ORLEANS

#### The Blue Nile

**532 Frenchmen St., New Orleans LA**  
**(504) 948-2583 :: bluenilelive.com**

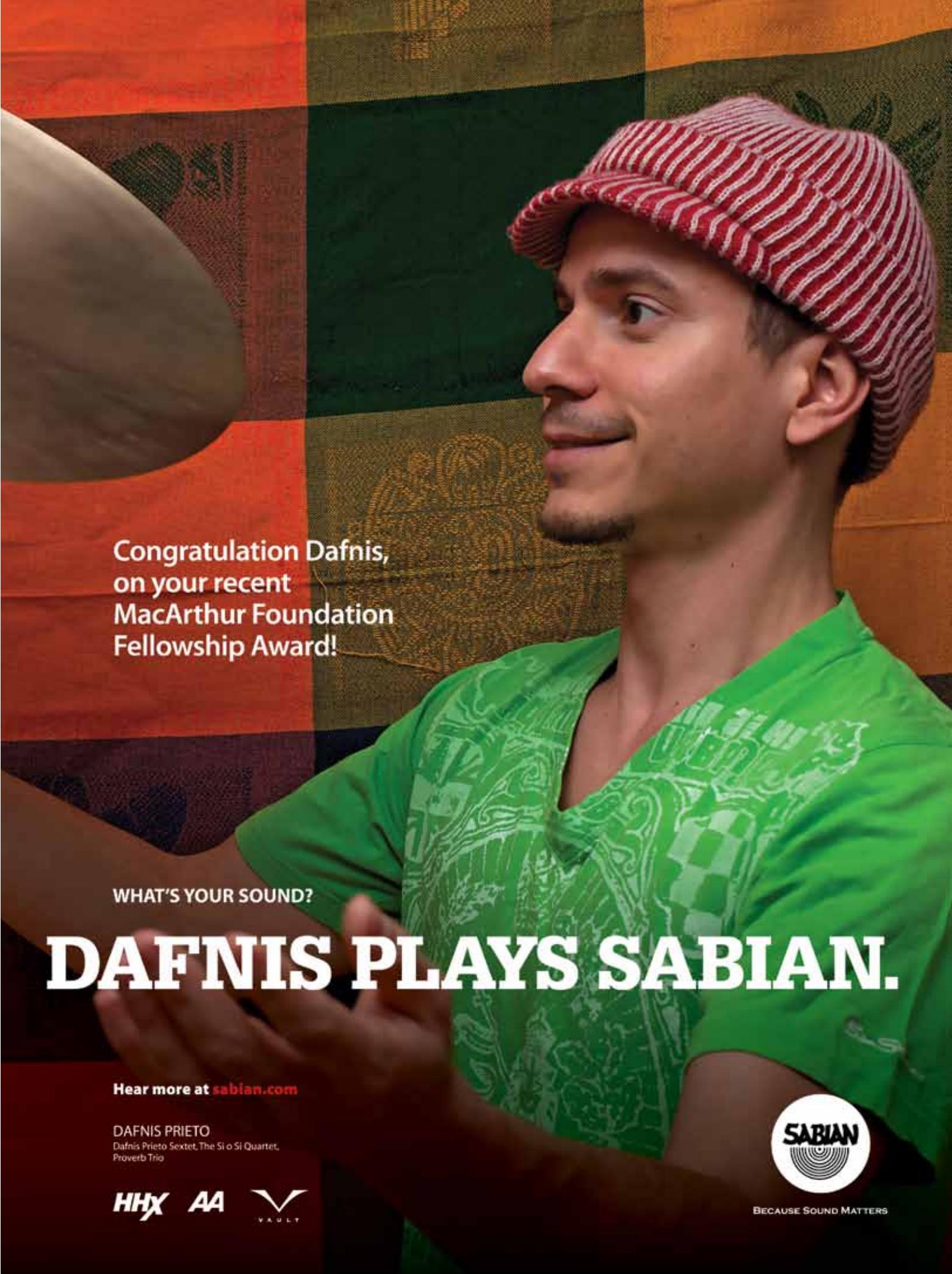
Jeff Albert's Tuesday-night Open Ears music series presents improvisers such as Helen Gillet, James Singleton, Ken Vandermark and Hamid Drake.

#### Chickie Wah Wah

**2828 Canal St., New Orleans LA**

**(504) 304-4714**  
**chickiewahwah.com**

Rootsy blues like Jon Cleary and swing-minded jazz like Meschiya Lake tend to rule the music calendar at this cozy Mid-City music scene staple.



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## Where It Lives

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(816) 474-8463



American Jazz Museum showcases the sights and sounds of jazz through interactive exhibits and films, the Changing Gallery exhibit space, Horace M. Peterson III Visitors Center, Blue Room jazz club and Gem Theater.

For events and to purchase tickets visit us at:  
[www.americanjazzmuseum.com](http://www.americanjazzmuseum.com)

### The Columns Hotel Bar

3811 St. Charles Ave.,  
New Orleans LA  
(504) 899-9308  
[thecolumns.com](http://thecolumns.com)

With its Victorian-era bar and sprawling porch, the Columns exudes old Garden District charm. It's an unusual but enticing venue to catch regional jazz/folk acts.

### The Contemporary Arts Center

900 Camp St., New Orleans LA  
(504) 528-3805 :: [cacno.org](http://cacno.org)

Relationships with JazzNet and NEA Jazz Masters on Tour support jazz programming at this arts center, where concerts benefit from beautiful acoustics and an in-the-know, heavily local crowd.

### d.b.a.

618 Frenchmen St.,  
New Orleans LA  
(504) 942-3731  
[dbabars.com/dbano](http://dbabars.com/dbano)

The musical hub of Frenchmen Street focuses on local blues, brass bands, swing and rock, served up alongside an awe-inspiring whisky and beer menu.

### Dos Jefes Uptown Cigar Bar

5535 Tchoupitoulas St.,  
New Orleans LA  
(504) 891-8500  
[dosjefescigarbar.com](http://dosjefescigarbar.com)

Cigar and jazz aficionados converge nightly on this low-key Uptown haunt. Joe Krown, John Fohl, Carl LeBlanc and Rick Trolson are all good musical bets.

### Fritzels

733 Bourbon St.,  
New Orleans LA  
(504) 586-4800  
[fritzelsjazz.net](http://fritzelsjazz.net)

The oldest operating jazz club in the Big Easy boasts a comfortable vibe and solid traditional New Orleans jazz bookings.

### Irvin Mayfield's Jazz Playhouse

300 Bourbon St.,  
New Orleans LA  
(504) 553-2331  
[sonesta.com/  
RoyalNewOrleans](http://sonesta.com/RoyalNewOrleans)

Enjoy sets by contemporary "piano professors" like Tom McDermott, new work from Jason Marsalis and updated traditional jazz classics from Leon "Kid Chocolate" Brown.

### The Maison

508 Frenchmen St.,  
New Orleans LA  
(504) 371-5543  
[maisonfrenchmen.com](http://maisonfrenchmen.com)

An eclectic assortment of jazz, brass and Latin bands represent a wide—and generally free—swath of music on the Maison's three stages.

### The Maple Leaf

8316 Oak St.,  
New Orleans LA  
(504) 866-9359  
[mapleleafbar.com](http://mapleleafbar.com)

Gloriously sweaty late nights dancing to Rebirth Brass Band or Johnny Vidacovich's Trio under a pressed tin ceiling define one of NOLA's most historic, fun venues.

### Ogden Museum of Southern Art Presents Ogden After Hours

925 Camp St.,  
New Orleans LA  
(504) 539-9600  
[ogdenmuseum.org/  
ogden\\_after\\_hours.html](http://ogdenmuseum.org/ogden_after_hours.html)

A combination of emerging and veteran Southern musicians perform Thursdays at 6 p.m. in this contemporary art gallery in the Warehouse District.

### Palm Court Jazz Café

1204 Decatur St.,  
New Orleans LA  
(504) 525-0200  
[palmcourtjazzcafe.com](http://palmcourtjazzcafe.com)

Nina Buck's airy French Quarter restaurant is a mecca for traditional New Orleans jazz lovers looking to wave their handkerchiefs to legends like Lionel Ferbos.

### Preservation Hall

726 St. Peter St.,  
New Orleans LA  
(504) 522-2841  
[preservationhall.com](http://preservationhall.com)

For 50 years, the owners of this former art gallery and home to the Preservation Hall Band have tirelessly conserved the sanctity of traditional New Orleans jazz while developing new audiences.

### Snug Harbor Jazz Bistro

626 Frenchmen St.,  
New Orleans LA  
(504) 949-0696 :: [snugjazz.com](http://snugjazz.com)

The flagship venue for contemporary New Orleans jazz, Snug hosts nightly performances by scene staples like Ellis, Jason and Delfeayo Marsalis, James Singleton and Charmaine Neville.

### Sweet Lorraine's Jazz Club

1931 St. Claude Ave.,  
New Orleans LA  
(504) 945-9654  
[sweetlorrainesjazzclub.com](http://sweetlorrainesjazzclub.com)

Smooth jazz, blues and occasional performances by improvisers like Kidd Jordan are featured at this three-decades-old 9th Ward night-club and restaurant.

### Three Muses

536 Frenchmen St.,  
New Orleans LA  
(504) 298-8746  
[thethreemuses.com](http://thethreemuses.com)

This bustling Frenchmen strip

favorite presents free local jazz, swing and brass. Use the money you save to sample the fantastic global small plates.

### Tipitina's

501 Napoleon Ave.,  
New Orleans LA  
(504) 895-8477  
[tipitinas.com](http://tipitinas.com)

Professor Longhair's spirit presides over this classic Uptown funk hub devoted to supporting New Orleans' music culture and education. Sunday music workshops give kids a chance to play with local pros.

### Vaughan's Lounge

800 Lesseps St.,  
New Orleans LA  
(504) 947-5562

Kermit Ruffins and the BBQ Swingers made Thursday nights at Vaughan's a tradition more than a decade ago, but performances by Corey Henry, Shamarr Allen and other local bandleaders are also good bets.

### SOUTH: SOUTH CAROLINA

#### The Jazz Corner

1000 William Hilton Pkwy.,  
Hilton Head Island SC  
(843) 842-8620  
[thejazzcorner.com](http://thejazzcorner.com)

The owner leads a New Orleans-style group on Tuesday. Singer Bobby Ryder's big band swings semi-monthly.

### MIDWEST: CHICAGO

#### Buddy Guy's Legends

700 S. Wabash Ave.,  
Chicago IL  
(312) 427-1190  
[buddyguys.com](http://buddyguys.com)

In January, renowned guitar shredder Buddy Guy warms his own stage, now located in the old Hot-house jazz club building.

#### Chicago Cultural Center

78 E. Washington  
St., Chicago IL  
(312) 744-6630  
[chicagoculturalcenter.org](http://chicagoculturalcenter.org)

This landmark building houses three venues—the Claudia Cassidy Theater, the Preston Bradley Hall and the informal Randolph Café. The European Jazz meets Chicago event in November is essential.

#### Chicago Symphony Center

220 S. Michigan  
Ave., Chicago IL  
(312) 294-3000  
[cso.org](http://cso.org)

The 2500-seat Orchestra Hall dates back to 1904, but it accommodates recent performers like Nicholas Payton and Ravi Coltrane and perennials Wynton Marsalis and Keith Jarrett.



### Andy's

11 E. Hubbard St.,  
Chicago IL  
(312) 642-6805  
[andysjazzclub.com](http://andysjazzclub.com)

If you dig happy hour jazz, Andy's is a lively alternative to rooms where you may be shushed. The downtown bar and restaurant attracts suits drifting in for a pint after the day gig. Top local musicians are regularly featured including tyros Marquis Hill and Rocky Year alongside veteran hommen Mike Smith and Eric Schneider.

### Elastic

2830 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago IL  
(773) 772-3616  
[elasticrevolution.com](http://elasticrevolution.com)

Heavies Evan Parker, Matthew Shipp and David S. Ware have shared the roomlong stage of this Avondale BYOB with countless debut assemblies from Chicago's improv pool.

### The Green Mill

4802 N. Broadway Ave., Chicago IL  
(773) 878-5552  
[greenmilljazz.com](http://greenmilljazz.com)

Charlie Chaplin used to tie his horse outside, and Al Capone was a mainstay. Weekends are reliably strong with long-running house band the Sabertooth Organ Quartet regaling nighthawks until 5 a.m.

### The Hideout

1354 W. Wabansia Ave., Chicago IL  
(773) 227-4433  
[hideoutchicago.com](http://hideoutchicago.com)

The Wednesday night Immediate Sound Series hosted by Mitch Co-caniq is the main jazz draw at this funky bar with a juke joint backroom.

### Hungry Brain

2319 W. Belmont Ave., Chicago IL  
(773) 709-1401  
[umbrellamusic.org](http://umbrellamusic.org)

On Sunday, the Hungry Brain's Transmission Series is a haven for progressive jazz fans. The cozy dive bar with a decent jukebox draws fellow musicians and critics for hip NYC and Euro improvisers like Endangered Blood or alum of Amsterdam's ICP Orchestra.

### Jazz Showcase

806 S. Plymouth Ct., Chicago IL  
(312) 360-0234  
[jazzshowcase.com](http://jazzshowcase.com)

Joe and Wayne Segal's new room

just south of the Loop doesn't disappoint. Expect top-drawer talent, like Kurt Rosenwinkel and Joe Lovano.

### Katerina's

1920 W. Irving Park Rd., Chicago IL  
(773) 348-7592 :: [katerinas.com](http://katerinas.com)  
Chanson blends with bebop, Brazilian, rembetika, swing and gypsy jazz in this venue's eclectic listings. Guitarist Alfonso Ponticelli, trumpeter Victor Garcia and singer Spider Saloff are regulars.

### Old Town School of Folk Music

4544 N. Lincoln Ave., Chicago IL  
(773) 728-6000  
[oldtownschool.org](http://oldtownschool.org)

A welcome addition to Lincoln Square since 1998, this midsize 425-seat auditorium offers a classy listening room for guitar heroes like Bill Frisell and Pat Metheny.

### SPACE

1245 Chicago Ave., Evanston IL  
(847) 492-8860  
[evanstonspace.com](http://evanstonspace.com)

The midsize backroom, adjoined to a stylish, popular pizza pub, has gained its own niche with a potpourri of jazz nobility—Christian McBride, Brad Mehldau, Jeff Coffin's Mu'tet and sparky pairings of jazz and blues.

### The Whistler

2421 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago IL  
(773) 227-3530  
[whistlerchicago.com](http://whistlerchicago.com)

This hipster hang runs its own record label, which releases material from the likes of Blink and Matt Ulyer's Loom on retro formats. Tuesdays are given late-night life with the underground Relax Attack Jazz Series.

### MIDWEST: CLEVELAND

#### Nighttown

12387 Cedar Rd., Cleveland Heights OH  
(216) 795-0550  
[nighttowncleveland.com](http://nighttowncleveland.com)

This New York-style supper club, which is more than 40 years old, has featured live jazz since 2001. The music room has been remodeled with a new stage and without sight-obstructing pillars.

### MIDWEST: DETROIT/ANN ARBOR

#### Baker's Keyboard Lounge

20510 Livernois Ave., Detroit MI  
(313) 345-6300  
[bakerskeyboardlounge.com](http://bakerskeyboardlounge.com)  
Since opening in 1934, Baker's has been the hub of Detroit's jazz scene, featuring the city's top artists in regular jam sessions and extended residencies.

#### Dirty Dog Jazz Cafe

97 Kercheval Ave., Gross Pointe MI  
(313) 882-5299  
[dirtydogjazz.com](http://dirtydogjazz.com)

The Dirty Dog specializes in live jazz and sophisticated small-plate dishes in an intimate, Old English pub setting. The program features many artists from the Mack Avenue label.

#### Kerrytown Concert House

415 N. 4th Ave., Ann Arbor MI  
(734) 769-2999  
[kerrytownconcerthouse.com](http://kerrytownconcerthouse.com)

Home of the acclaimed Edgefest festival, this non-profit arts organization focuses on community engagement. The intimate 110-seat venue presents classical and cabaret as well as jazz, while rotating art exhibits are displayed on the walls.



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## Bach Dancing & Dynamite Society

### Douglas Beach House

Half Moon Bay, CA  
[www.bachddsoc.org](http://www.bachddsoc.org)  
650-726-4143

After you've heard about this place for years, there is no way to know until you get here—beyond our expectations. —Brian Blade

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—DownBeat Magazine, February 2011



### The Jazz Corner

jazz club & restaurant  
**843-842-8620**  
[thejazzcorner.com](http://thejazzcorner.com)  
1000 William Hilton Parkway  
C-1 The Village at Wexford  
Hilton Head Island, SC 29928

## MIDWEST: INDIANAPOLIS

**Chatterbox Jazz Club**

435 Massachusetts Ave.,  
Indianapolis IN  
(317) 636-0584  
[chatterboxjazz.com](http://chatterboxjazz.com)

They've been proudly presenting the live and local jazz scene for nearly 30 years, and tout free jazz jams on Sundays and Mondays and many special events.

**The Jazz Kitchen**

5377 N. College Ave.,  
Indianapolis IN  
(317) 253-4900  
[thejazzkitchen.com](http://thejazzkitchen.com)

This place delivers on a number of fronts, featuring a Latino/New Orleans fusion-type menu, local, regional and national jazz entertainment, and Latin Dance nights.

**Madame Walker Theatre Center**

615 Indiana Ave., Indianapolis IN  
(317) 236-2099  
[walkertheatre.com](http://walkertheatre.com)

Named for one of America's first self-made female millionaires, this Indianapolis institution is a cultural education and performing arts mecca spotlighting frequent local and national jazz and related music concerts.

**The Palladium at the Center for the Performing Arts**

335 City Center Dr., Carmel, IN  
(317) 843-3800  
[thecenterfortheperformingarts.org](http://thecenterfortheperformingarts.org)

Under the direction of multi-Grammy Award winner Michael Feinstein, this acoustically perfect facility boasts a diverse calendar for 2012, including Spyro Gyra, Herbie Hancock, Kevin Eubanks and Bobby McFerrin.

## MIDWEST: KANSAS CITY

**The Blue Room**

1616 E. 18th St., Kansas City MO  
(816) 474-2929  
[americanjazzmuseum.com](http://americanjazzmuseum.com)

As part of the American Jazz Museum, the Blue Room resembles a nightclub from the '30s in the historic 18th & Vine jazz district. Inside the museum, the historic Gem Theater hosts the ongoing "Jammin' At The Gem" series.

**Folly Theater**

300 W. 12th St., Kansas City MO  
(816) 474-4444 :: [follytheater.org](http://follytheater.org)

The non-profit Folly's jazz series spotlights top touring acts. The 2012 lineup includes the Grace Kelly Quintet, John Pizzarelli Quartet and the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra.

## MIDWEST: MILWAUKEE

**Jazz Estate**

2423 N. Murray Ave., Milwaukee WI  
(414) 964-9923 :: [jazzestate.com](http://jazzestate.com)

A vintage '50s hipster vibe sets the scene for live jazz showcases five nights a week. Everyone from Cedar Walton and

**Blue Whale**

123 Astronaut E S Onizuka St. Ste 301, Los Angeles CA  
(213) 620-0908  
[bluewhalemusic.com](http://bluewhalemusic.com)

This new-ish haunt, in the Little Tokyo area of downtown Los Angeles, has been generating a good buzz for its vibe, its "hidden jewel" status and its open-minded booking policy, including generous nods to some of L.A.'s riches in the left-field jazz department, from Brad Dutz to Billy Childs. Music from Thursday-Sunday.



Louis Hayes to local heroes Don Trudell and Berkeley Fudge has appeared here.

## MIDWEST: MINNEAPOLIS/ST.PAUL

**The Artists' Quarter**

408 St. Peter St., St. Paul MN  
(651) 292-1359 :: [artistsquarter.com](http://artistsquarter.com)

The Artists' Quarter's intimate basement is a favorite among local and national acts. Roy Haynes has recorded live here, and Harry "Sweets" Edison called it "just like New York."

**Dakota Jazz Club & Restaurant**

1010 Nicollet Ave., Minneapolis MN  
(612) 332-1010 :: [dakotacooks.com](http://dakotacooks.com)

Jazz and non-jazz lovers have enjoyed Dakota's noteworthy jazz acts. The upscale venue has an open atmosphere, with a wood-and-brick interior as the backdrop, good sightlines, a nice balcony and nary a bad seat in the house.

**Hell's Kitchen**

80 9th St. S, Minneapolis MN  
(612) 332-4700  
[hellskitcheninc.com](http://hellskitcheninc.com)

Hell's Kitchen serves up really good food from its chef-owned restaurant and tons of great jazz several times a week, featuring great touring and local acts like singers Arne Fogel and Nichola Miller, and the edgy jazz of Vital Organ.

**Walker Art Center**

1750 Hennepin Ave., Minneapolis MN  
(612) 375-7656 :: [walkerart.org](http://walkerart.org)

The Walker offers Twin Cities audiences some of the most original, daring and unforgettable live performing art experiences available anywhere in the world. Many projects share a joyous disregard for standard artistic boundaries.

## MIDWEST: ST. LOUIS

**Jazz at the Bistro**

3536 Washington Ave., St. Louis MO  
(314) 289-4030  
[jazzstl.org/jazz-bistro](http://jazzstl.org/jazz-bistro)

Jazz at the Bistro, located in St. Louis' Grand Center arts district, showcases

top-name artists such as John Scofield, Dianne Reeves and Ahmad Jamal. The intimate 150-seat club also has a full dinner menu and wine list.

## WEST: SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA

**Bach Dancing & Dynamite Society**

311 Mirada Rd., Half Moon Bay CA  
[bachddsoc.org](http://bachddsoc.org)

This converted beach house still holds the title of most picturesque jazz and classical venue in the Bay Area. The non-profit presenter holds concerts on Sunday afternoons and offers a light food, drink and spirits menu. Patrons can stroll on the beach in between sets and bring their own picnics.

**Kuumbwa Jazz Center**

320-2 Cedar St., Santa Cruz CA  
(831) 427-2227 :: [kuumbwajazz.org](http://kuumbwajazz.org)

Kuumbwa Jazz Center typically presents touring and established musicians on Mondays and both rising and local talent on Thursdays. It also hosts master classes.

**Rasselas Jazz Club & Restaurant**

1534 Fillmore St., San Francisco CA  
(415) 346-8696  
[rasselasjazzclub.com](http://rasselasjazzclub.com)

Calendars aren't available at the venue itself, but once there, one can enjoy Ethiopian cuisine and jazz, Latin and R&B seven nights a week amidst the venue's high ceilings.

**Savanna Jazz**

2937 Mission St., San Francisco CA  
(415) 285-3369  
[savannahjazz.com](http://savannahjazz.com)

Two-parts club, one-part bar and one-part classroom-with-a-bandstand, the educator-owned Savanna Jazz venue presents live jazz Wed.-Sun.

**Yoshi's Oakland**

510 Embarcadero West, Oakland CA  
(510) 238-9200  
[yoshis.com/oakland](http://yoshis.com/oakland)

Since 1997, Yoshi's in Jack London

Square has hosted the likes of Chick Corea, Diana Krall and Chris Botti. It continues to present a mix of jazz, popular and international music seven nights a week, with food and drink served from the adjoining restaurant and bar.

**Yoshi's San Francisco**

1330 Fillmore St., San Francisco CA  
(415) 655-5600  
[yoshis.com/sanfrancisco](http://yoshis.com/sanfrancisco)

Many have remarked that this is how set designers envision nightclubs. With bi-level seating, an elegant bar and a foodie-approved restaurant, it's the home of jazz, hip-hop, neo-soul and more every daily of the week. The Branford Marsalis Quartet and the late Gil Scott-Heron have gigged here.

## WEST: DENVER

**Dazzle**

930 Lincoln St., Denver CO  
(303) 839-5100  
[dazzlejazz.com](http://dazzlejazz.com)

Dazzle features live performances in both the DazzleJazz Showroom and the Dizzy Room every day. The Showroom is designed with the jazz listener in mind, featuring acoustically treated walls and optimal seating. The performances are front and center, and not treated as background music.

**El Chapultepec**

1962 Market St., Denver CO  
(303) 295-9126

A downtown landmark since 1933, El Chapultepec is the swinging home to Denver's finest jazz and r&b artists, who command the stage in the tiny club seven nights a week. The house serves basic Mexican fare, dished up in a dive-bar atmosphere.

## WEST: LOS ANGELES/SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

**Anthology**

1337 India St., San Diego CA  
(619)595-0300  
[anthologysd.com](http://anthologysd.com)

The brainchild of real-estate developer Howard Berkman, this SoCal locale evokes the feel of a '30s supper club

boasting a hearty cocktail of vocal jazz and fusion acts.

#### Athenaeum Music & Arts Library

1008 Wall St., La Jolla, CA  
(858) 454-5872

[ljathenaeum.org/jazz.html](http://ljathenaeum.org/jazz.html)

This thoughtful series in the pleasantly rambling, heady acreage of La Jolla presents jazz with the seriousness and dignity befitting the art form.

#### The Baked Potato

3787 Cahuenga Blvd.,  
Studio City CA  
(818) 980-1615  
[thebakendpotato.com](http://thebakendpotato.com)

A landmark, if agreeably funky and homegrown jazz room in Los Angeles, the Baked Potato, run by keyboardist Don Randi on the calendar, has been a spawning ground for all manner of fusion-related music going back to 1970.

#### Catalina Bar & Grill

6725 W. Sunset Blvd  
#100, Los Angeles, CA  
(323) 466-2210  
[catalinajazzclub.com](http://catalinajazzclub.com)

Major acts—including McCoy Tyner, John Scofield, Ahmad Jamal, and countless others—settle in for multi-night runs in the room, now an oasis on Sunset Boulevard tucked into an unexpectedly utilitarian-looking office building.

#### Hollywood Bowl

2301 North Highland Ave., Los Angeles CA  
(323) 850-2000  
[hollywoodbowl.com](http://hollywoodbowl.com)

During the summer concert season in this renowned 17,000-capacity outdoor amphitheater, a few evenings of jazz sneak into the mix of classical music, pop, “world music,” starting with the annual two-day Playboy Jazz Festival in June.

#### Lobero Theatre

33 E. Canon Perdido St., Santa Barbara CA

(805) 963-0761 :: [lobero.com](http://lobero.com)

A true jewel of a jazz room, this historic theater dates back to the late 19th century and has hosted many a fine jazz concert over the years. Charles Lloyd, a Santa Barbaran, recorded here, as did late pianist Horace Tapscott.

#### Los Angeles County Museum of Art

5905 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles CA

(323) 857-6000 :: [lacma.org](http://lacma.org)

The vast cultural campus of LACMA still hosts jazz—usually finer locals from various attitudinal corners, mainstream to avant-garde—on early Friday evenings April–November, outdoors in the Central Court.

#### The Lighthouse Café

30 Pier Ave., Hermosa Beach CA  
(310) 376-9833  
[thelighthouscafe.net](http://thelighthouscafe.net)

Though it's less jazz-centric than it once was in its storied days when Howard Rumsey's Lighthouse All-Stars held court here, Lighthouse Café retains remnants of its old glory as one of Southern California's classic beachside jazz spaces.

#### Steamers Jazz Club and Cafe

138 W. Commonwealth Ave., Fullerton CA  
(714) 871-8800  
[steamersjazz.com](http://steamersjazz.com)

One of the better L.A. jazz clubs is actually in Orange County. Steamers, a humble club and eatery in Fullerton, is a well-established haven for some of the finest players So-Cal has to offer.

#### Vibrato Grill Jazz

2930 N. Beverly Glen Circle, Los Angeles CA  
(310) 474-9400  
[vibratogrilljazz.com](http://vibratogrilljazz.com)

Nestled in the twining terrain just below Mulholland Dr., this welcoming continuation of the restaurant-jazz-club tradition is now owned by Herb Alpert, who plays here now and again, along with notable locals as the Bob Mintzer Big Band.

#### Vitello's

4349 Tujunga Ave., Studio City CA  
(818) 769-0905  
[vitellosjazz.com](http://vitellosjazz.com)

Of special interest are ace guitarist John Pisano's jazz guitar summit meetings, almost every Tuesday night.

#### Walt Disney Concert Hall

111 S. Grand Ave., Los Angeles CA  
(323) 850-2000  
[laphil.com](http://laphil.com)

Since opening in 2004, the Frank Ghery-designed Disney Hall has been touted as an architectural marvel. The LA Phil has its home here, and memorable artists include Ornette Coleman and Keith Jarrett.

#### WEST: PORTLAND

##### Jimmy Mak's

221 N.W 10th Ave., Portland OR  
(503) 295-6542  
[jimmymaks.com](http://jimmymaks.com)

Portland's signature jazz club in the warehouse-turned-artsy Pearl District is a spacious, handsomely-appointed room that hosts national and local acts in a warm, hip atmosphere.

#### WEST: SEATTLE

##### Boxley's

101 W. North Bend Way, North Bend WA  
(425) 292-9307  
[boxleysplace.com](http://boxleysplace.com)

North Bend, 45 minutes from Seattle, is known as the location of *Twin Peaks*, but this Cascades logging town also hosts a lively jazz room with bookings by Seattle's Pony Boy label.

##### Dimitriou's Jazz Alley

2033 6th Ave., Seattle WA  
(206) 441-9729 :: [jazzalley.com](http://jazzalley.com)

As Seattle's premiere jazz club for 30-plus years, the spacious, upscale Jazz Alley boasts A-list artists from Roy Hargrove to Chick Corea, great sightlines, tasteful decor and a stupendous sound system.

##### Egan's Ballard Jam House

1707 N.W. Market St., Seattle WA  
(206) 789-1621  
[ballardjamhouse.com](http://ballardjamhouse.com)

Started by a jazz mom, Egan's is a small black box with a bounty of spirit and one of the few places in the country that welcomes student groups.

##### Tula's

2214 2nd Ave., Seattle WA  
(206) 443-4221 :: [tulas.com](http://tulas.com)

Owned by former Navy band trombonist Mack Waldron, Tula's is Seattle's welcoming bebop hang, where locals congregate and out-of-town acts occasionally blow through, too.

#### ARGENTINA

##### Notorious

Av. Callao 966 (C1023AAP), Buenos Aires  
54 11 4814 6888  
[notorious.com.ar](http://notorious.com.ar)

Located in the sultry Barrio Norte district, this bossa-heavy hotspot boasts a music store and a welcoming garden for jazz al fresco.

##### Thelonious Club

Jerónimo Salguero 1884  
12 Floor, Buenos Aires  
54 11 4829 1562  
[thelonious.com](http://thelonious.com)

Friday and Saturday nights tout a double feature of local musical talent at this Palermo night spot, but on any given night Wed.–Sun., the club's stylish patrons take in the city's best improvised music.

#### AUSTRALIA

##### The Basement

29 Reiby Pl., Sydney  
61 2 9252 3007  
[thebasement.com.au](http://thebasement.com.au)

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Quay, thus it is not averse for the over 40-year-old club to book blues, funk, cover bands and DJs.

#### Bennett's Lane

25 Bennetts Ln., Melbourne

61 3 9663 2856

[bennettslane.com](http://bennettslane.com)

A revered jazz haunt, Bennett's Lane is a 200-capacity backstreet joint that has hosted Harry Connick Jr. and Wynton Marsalis but also supports local heroes like Paul Grabowsky, Joe Chindamo, Mike Nock and James Morrison.

#### AUSTRIA

#### Blue Tomato

Wurmserg 21, A-1150 Vienna  
43 1 985 5960 :: [bluetomato.cc](http://bluetomato.cc)

This tiny club packs it in for an adventurous program of jazz, improvised, experimental and rock music, attracting important players from the U.S. and all over Europe.

#### Jazzland

Franz Josefs-Kai 29,  
1010 Vienna

43 1 533 2575 :: [jazzland.at](http://jazzland.at)

This 36-year-old club, in a 200-year-old cellar, hosts mainly local gigs, but American musicians play frequently.

#### Porgy & Bess

Riemergasse 11, 1010 Vienna  
43 1 503 7009 :: [porgy.at](http://porgy.at)

This 18-year-old room can take in up to 500 patrons. It features jazz from the United States and Europe, including some of the more adventurous European improvisers, with regular jam sessions and a willingness to stage big bands.

#### ZWE

Floßgasse 4, 1020 Vienna  
43 67 6547 4764 :: [zwe.cc](http://zwe.cc)

This cozy club, which opened in 2007, has quickly gained a good reputation as a go-to spot for strong Austrian jazz, with plenty of open-mic nights and jam sessions.

#### BRAZIL

#### The Maze

Rua Tavares Bastos 414 casa 66,  
Rio de Janeiro

55 21 2558 5547 :: [jazzrio.info](http://jazzrio.info)

This famed Rio bed and breakfast plays host to a wealth of romantic riverside jazz, but it's also the location of historic recordings from Billie Holiday and Ella Fitzgerald.

#### CANADA

#### Casa del Popolo

4873 Boulevard Saint- Laurent,

Montreal QB

(514) 284-3804

[casadelpopolo.com](http://casadelpopolo.com)

A vegetarian restaurant that holds

only 55 people, the Casa has become the spiritual heart of Montreal's vibrant alternative art scene. Its annual Suoni Per Il Popolo festival mixes various genres.

#### Cellar Jazz Club

3611 W. Broadway St.,

Vancouver BC

(604) 738-1959

[cellarjazz.com](http://cellarjazz.com)

The site of dozens of live recordings produced by club owner and saxophonist Cory Weeds, the Cellar provides a mainstream counterpoint to Vancouver's woolly improvised music scene.

#### Diese Onze

4115-A Rue St. Denis,

Montreal QB

(514) 223-3543

[dieseonze.com](http://dieseonze.com)

Located in Montreal's hip Plateau neighborhood, Diese Onze doesn't have the best sightlines, but the vibe is friendly, and the atmosphere akin to an art gallery.

#### Largo Resto-Club

643 Rue Saint-Joseph Est,  
Quebec City QB

(418) 529-3111

[largorestoclub.com](http://largorestoclub.com)

Located in a bohemian neighborhood outside the tourist-friendly old city, Largo doubles as a first-class Italian bistro and intimate jazz venue. Owner Gino Ste-Marie is a stickler for good sound.

#### L'Astral

305 Rue Saint-Catherine Ouest,  
Montreal QB

(514) 288-8882

[salleastral.com](http://salleastral.com)

Owned by the team that manages the Montreal Jazz Festival, L'Astral is a two-tiered venue with a capacity of 350–600 and a state-of-the-art sound system.

#### National Arts Centre Fourth Stage

53 Elgin St., Ottawa ON

(613) 947-7000

[nac-cna.ca/en/fourthstage](http://nac-cna.ca/en/fourthstage)

A cabaret-style room with a seasoned sound crew, NAC's Fourth Stage is frequently used by the Ottawa International Jazz Festival for off-season bookings. It's also home to a monthly series curated by bassist John Geggie.

#### The Rex

194 Queen St. West,

Toronto ON

(416) 598-2475

[therex.ca](http://therex.ca)

The kind of workingman's tavern that draws both students and hipsters, The Rex also just happens to feature a steady stream of top-notch bands, every night of the week and at weekend matinees.

#### Trane Studio Jazz Lounge

964 Bathurst St., Toronto ON

(416) 913-8197

[tranestudio.com](http://tranestudio.com)

A gorgeous red-brick room with a pressed-tin ceiling, the Trane runs the gamut from historical jazz perspectives to contemporary r&b and world music.

#### Upstairs Jazz Bar & Grill

1254 Rue MacKay,

Montreal QB

(514) 931-6808

[upstairsjazz.com](http://upstairsjazz.com)

An exceptionally well-managed basement room, Joel Giberovitch's club has developed a reputation as a venue for listeners.

#### Yardbird Suite

11 Tommy Banks Way,

Edmonton AB

(780) 432-0428

[yardbirdsuite.com](http://yardbirdsuite.com)

Open since 1957, the spacious Yardbird Suite is operated by volunteers of the Edmonton Jazz Society. Tuesday-night sessions feature the city's best players, while out-of-towners like Jane Bunnett, Amos Garrett and Nancy Walker are frequent visitors.

#### CZECH REPUBLIC

#### Jazz Dock

Janáčkovo nábřeží 2,

150 00 Prague 5

42 7 7405 8838 :: [jazzdock.cz](http://jazzdock.cz)

This young club, built in a newly constructed modern building, has sometimes drawn criticism for audience noise during performances, but its wide-ranging programming is impressive, touching on all styles.

#### DENMARK

#### Copenhagen Jazzhouse

Niels Hemmingsens Gade

10, 1153 Copenhagen

45 7015 6565 :: [jazzhouse.dk](http://jazzhouse.dk)

Denmark's leading club is cozy for big bands and small combos. Visiting American jazz stars and up-and-comers pass through here, too.

#### Jazzhus Montmartre

St. Regnegade 19A,

1110 Copenhagen

45 3172 3494

[jazzhusmontmartre.dk](http://jazzhusmontmartre.dk)

Recently relaunched at the same location of the famous jazz club of the same name, this new, high-end location aims for a similar mix of American and European talent.

#### FRANCE

#### Le Caveau de la Huchette

5 Rue de la Huchette, Paris

33 1 4326 6505

[caveaudelahuchette.fr](http://caveaudelahuchette.fr)

This Latin quarter building has been a jazz club since 1946. It has

## The Vortex

11, Gillett Square,  
London N16  
44 20 7254 4097  
[vortexjazz.co.uk](http://vortexjazz.co.uk)

Situated in one of North London's latter-day town squares in the Dalston Culture House, this venue has one of the broadest booking policies in town, but you are more likely to catch cutting-edge saxophonists Ingrid Laubrock and Lotte Anker here, or brilliant Welsh pianist Gwilym Simcock.



a great main room, "the cave," for hectic dancing to Hammond grooves and an upstairs bar with charismatic staff.

## Duc Des Lombards

42 Rue des Lombards, Paris  
33 1 4233 2288  
[ducdeslombards.fr](http://ducdeslombards.fr)

A chic space with cabaret tables, banquets and Chet Baker and Art Blakey album covers adorning the walls, this is a serious jazz room.

## The New Morning

7-9 Rue des Petites  
Ecuries, Paris  
44 1 4523 5141  
[newmorning.com](http://newmorning.com)

Set in the heart of the city's nightlife, New Morning has an incredible classic jazz resume but mixes in other genres as well.

## GERMANY

### A-Trane

Pestalozzistr. 105,  
10625 Berlin  
49 30 3132 550 :: [a-trane.de](http://a-trane.de)

This slick, state-of-the-art space presents an impressive mixture of styles played by local and touring artists from around the world, with generous helpings of sophisticated pop and rock and world music.

### Aufsturz

Oranienburger Straße  
67, 10117 Berlin  
49 30 2804 7407 :: [aufsturz.de](http://aufsturz.de)

This club attracts beer aficionados, but its music programming is just as strong, with an emphasis on avant-garde and improvised jazz.

### B-Flat

Rosenthaler Str. 13,  
10119 Berlin-Mitte  
49 30 2833 123  
[b-flat-berlin.de](http://b-flat-berlin.de)

This roomy, modern club, with the bands playing in front of its floor-to-ceiling glass facade, focuses on German artists, but presents the occasional touring European act.

## Bix Jazzclub

Gustav-Siegle-Haus  
Leonhardplatz 28,  
70182 Stuttgart  
49 711 2384 0997  
[bix-stuttgart.de](http://bix-stuttgart.de)

This atmospheric room programs a nice mix of jazz styles and a sprinkling of soul and pop, featuring a steady diet of German musicians.

## Domicil

Hansastr. 7-11, Dortmund  
49 231 862 9030  
[domicil-dortmund.de](http://domicil-dortmund.de)

Having moved into a new location a few years ago, Domicil has continued its progressive booking policy, mixing jazz and world music.

## Quasimodo

Kantstr. 12A, 10623 Berlin  
49 30 3128086 :: [quasimodo.de](http://quasimodo.de)  
The modern, lively jazz cellar holds 400 when busy, which it often is. Prog-rock and even disco are offered here, along with blues and world music. It buzzes during Berlin Jazz Fest.

## Stadtgarten

Venloer Straße 40, 50672 Köln  
49 221 952 9940 :: [stadtgarten.de](http://stadtgarten.de)  
This adventurous space presents all stripes of music, but its programming is firmly rooted in jazz.

## Unterfahrt

Einsteinstraße 42,  
81675 Munich  
49 08 9448 2794 :: [unterfahrt.de](http://unterfahrt.de)  
Presenting mostly European musicians that range from avant-garde to traditional vocalists, Unterfahrt has offered adventurous programming and regular jam sessions for close to 30 years.

## GREAT BRITAIN

### The 606 Club

90 Lots Rd., London SW10  
44 20 7352 5953  
[606club.co.uk](http://606club.co.uk)

The Six prioritizes British musicians, and some of the finest have

occupied the basement space for over 30 years. Tuesdays and Wednesdays are double bills, with singers on Sundays.

## Barbican Centre

Silk St., London EC2Y 8DS  
44 20 7638 8891  
[barbican.org.uk](http://barbican.org.uk)

The Barbican purports to be the largest performing arts centre in Europe. It is an imposing City of London multi-venue with a 2,000-seat hall and theatre about half that size. Artistic associates include Jazz at Lincoln Center.

## Café Oto

18-22 Ashwin St., Dalston,  
London E8 3DL  
44 20 7923 1231 :: [cafeoto.co.uk](http://cafeoto.co.uk)

A comparative youngster on the London scene, Oto opened in 2008. With standing/sitting room for about 200, it has gained notoriety for its repeat hostings of Marshall Allen's Sun Ra Orchestra.

## Jazz Café

7 Parkway, London NW1 7PJ  
44 20 7485 6834  
[venues.meanfiddler.com/jazz-cafe](http://venues.meanfiddler.com/jazz-cafe)

Back in 1990, John Dabner conceived this trendy venue, fashioned from a bank building, as a full on jazz club. Mean Fiddler took it over, widening the scope bands with acid-jazz or funk appeal.

## Pizza Express Jazz Club

10 Dean St., London W1  
44 20 7437 9595  
[pizzaexpresslive.com](http://pizzaexpresslive.com)

A long-running room in the heart of Soho, The Pizza remains a mainstream perennial, offering decent Italian food and top-notch music.

## Ronnie Scott's

47 Frith St., Soho, London  
44 20 7439 0747  
[ronniesscotts.co.uk](http://ronniesscotts.co.uk)

Ronnie's now turns the house around on Friday and Saturday, and the support act goes on last



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FEB 3	Ray Greene
FEB 4	Duke Robillard of Blues Room
FEB 10	Mac Odem
FEB 11	Greg Abate Quartet
FEB 17	Tribeca
FEB 18	Dan Moretti
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## Wigmore Hall

36 Wigmore St., London W1U 2BP  
44 20 7258 8200 :: [wigmore-hall.org.uk](http://wigmore-hall.org.uk)

This midsize, yet intimate hall is appreciated by classical performers for its acoustics. It's now included in London Jazz Festival events, and pianists are a predictable draw.

## HUNGARY

### Budapest Jazz Club

Múzeum street 7, 1088 Budapest  
06 30 3429 303 :: [bjc.hu](http://bjc.hu)

Arguably the best jazz room in Budapest, this club presents a diverse mixture of Hungarian and international artists, giving the space over to classical music on Sunday.

## ITALY

### Alexanderplatz

Via Ostia, 9, 00192 Rome  
06 3974 2171 :: [alexanderplatz.it](http://alexanderplatz.it)

Italy's oldest jazz club attracts its own breed of pilgrims: Lovers of fine food, vintage wine and great music.

### Cantina Bentivoglio

Via Mascarella, 4/b, Bologna  
39 51 265 416 :: [cantinabentivoglio.it](http://cantinabentivoglio.it)

Located near the historic center of Bologna, this popular wine bar and restaurant presents jazz nightly in the restored cellar of a medieval palace.

### La Salumeria Della Musica

Via Pasinetti 4, Milan  
39 2 5680 7350 :: [lasalumeriadellamusica.com](http://lasalumeriadellamusica.com)  
The keeper of the jazz flame in Italy's media, fashion and finance capital is also a delicatessen serving salamis, sausages and cheeses alongside a musical menu ranging from Phil Woods to Billy Cobham and Bill Frisell.

### Panic Jazz Club

Piazza degli scacchi, Marostica (VI)  
39 4 2472 707 :: [panicjazzclub.com](http://panicjazzclub.com)

This club not only features a fine restaurant, but it is also connected with a recording studio and hosts such Italian musicians as saxophonist Michele Polga as well as an ongoing gospel series.

### Portale Casa Del Jazz

Viale di Porta Ardeatina 55, Rome  
39 6 704 731 :: [casajazz.it](http://casajazz.it)

A ritzy venue opened in 2005 in a villa once owned by a prominent mafia don, La Casa del Jazz presents a wide variety of jazz styles, with some detours into classical music.

## JAPAN

### Alfie Jazz House

6-2-35 Roppongi, Tokyo  
81 3 3479 2037 :: [homepage1.nifty.com/live/alfie](http://homepage1.nifty.com/live/alfie)  
This club in the heart of Roppongi perceives itself as sophisticated and not just a hang for jazz nerds. Choice Latin groups play regularly as well as Japanese jazz notables.

### Blue Note Tokyo

6-3-16 Minami Aoyama, Minato-ku, Tokyo  
81 3 5485 0088 :: [bluenote.co.jp](http://bluenote.co.jp)

Established in 1988, the club is a large, theater-like jazz cabaret (300 seats), and it serves as one of the most popular nightlife attractions in the stylish Aoyama area.

### **Blue Note Nagoya**

**Mana House B2F, Nagoya**

**81 52 961 6311**

**nagoya-bluenote.com**

Now celebrating its 10th anniversary, Blue Note Nagoya has filled the need of jazz and soul music in Nagoya area in style. It has welcomed many professionals of all ages on its stage including Toots Thielemans, Roy Hargrove, David Sanborn and Hiromi.

### **Jazz Inn Lovely**

**1-10-15 Higashizakura**

**Higashi-ku, Nagoya**

**81 52 951 6085**

**jazzinnlovely.com**

Centrally located, this intimate club is one of the premier places in Nagoya to enjoy live jazz. Opened 30 years ago, patrons have seen some of the regular artists who appear on the stage go on to become nationally known recording stars.

### **JZ Brat**

**26-1 Sakura-gaoka-cho,**

**Shibuya-ku, Tokyo**

**81 3 5728 0168 :: jzbrat.com**

Located inside Tokyo's fashionable Cerulena Tower hotel, JZ Brat is a supper club known for presenting fine jazz as well as pop music artists from Japan and beyond.

### **Body and Soul**

**6-13-9 Minami Aoyama, Tokyo**

**81 3 5466 3348**

**bodyandsoul.co.jp**

One of the most time-honored jazz clubs in Japan, Body and Soul has been highly regarded for providing sophisticated and mature jazz for more than 30 years.

### **MEXICO**

#### **Zinco Jazz Club**

**Motolonía 20, 5 de Mayo,**

**Col. Centro,**

**Mexico City, Mexico**

**55 5518 6369**

**zincojazzclub.com**

Behind the modest art deco architecture and cozy ambience, this Prohibition-style jazz haunt welcomes many international artists.

### **THE NETHERLANDS**

#### **Bimhuis**

**Piet Heinkade 3, Amsterdam**

**31 20 7882188 :: bimhuis.nl**

Bimhuis has maintained the same progressive booking policy that it started in 1974. The best of the Dutch scene meets with other European, American and African artists at this thriving institution.

### **Jazz Café Alto**

**Korte Leidsedwarsstraat**

**115, Amsterdam**

**31 20 626 3249**

**jazz-cafe-alto.nl**

A cozy, atmospheric old-school

room catering to more mainstream sounds from Amsterdam talent. Saxophonist Hans Dulfer and trumpeter Saskia Laroo are among those holding weekly gigs.

### **NORWAY**

#### **Bla**

**Brenneriveien 9C, Oslo**

**47 22 209 181 :: blx.no**

Ensnconed in a former factory, this 300-seat club knits a multi-tiered daily offering of domestic and international pop, rock and jazz, alongside theater, film and literature.

### **Nasjonal Jazz Scene**

**Karl Johans Gate 35, Oslo**

**47 23 896 923**

**nasjonaljazzscene.no**

This Oslo club is the best and most consistent jazz venue in the country, presenting a stellar mix of touring artists, along with a terrific program of Norway's mainstream and avant-garde sounds.

### **PORTUGAL**

#### **Hot Clube De Portugal**

**Praça da Alegria, 39, Lisbon**

**351 13 467 369**

**hotclubdeportugal.org**

Jazz started in Portugal during the late '40s in this small basement in Lisbon. It's open nightly from Tue.-Sat.

### **SOUTH AFRICA**

#### **The Radium Beer Hall**

**282 Louis Botha Ave,**

**Orange Grove,**

**Johannesburg**

**11 7283 866**

**theradium.co.za**

On the first Sunday of the month, jazz trombonist/arranger/educator John Davies leads his 19-piece big band. The walls are decorated with photos of jazz artists who have played at the venue since it opened in 1929.

### **SPAIN**

#### **Café Central**

**Plaza del Angel 10, Madrid**

**34 91 3694 143**

**cafecentralmadrid.com**

This informal art deco cafe close to the Plaza del Angel has been one of the few Spanish clubs offering extended engagements for journeying European and American musicians.

### **SWEDEN**

#### **Fasching**

**Kungsgatan 63,**

**Stockholm**

**46 8 53482960 :: fasching.se**

Fasching's excellence lies in the eclecticism of the programming, while retaining a solid base in re-

flecting the whole spectrum of the Stockholm jazz scene.

### **Glenn Miller Café**

**Brunnsgatan 21,**

**111 38 Stockholm**

**46 8 100 322**

**glennmillercafe.com**

This tiny restaurant and bar is one of the best places to hear both up-and-coming post-bop and free-jazz from Sweden and around Scandinavia.

### **SWITZERLAND**

#### **Marian's Jazz Room**

**Engestrasse 54,**

**CH-3012 Bern**

**41 31 3096 111**

**mariansjazzroom.ch**

This exclusive club is located in the downstairs of the Innere Enge hotel. It offers a jazz brunch on Sundays.

### **Moods**

**Schiffbaustrasse**

**6, 8005 Zurich**

**41 44 2768 000**

**moods.ch**

Moods is located in the Schiffbau, an old industrial building that has been transformed into a cultural center. The club offers a program of European and American jazz stars, as well as funk, soul and world music acts.

### **TURKEY**

#### **Babylon**

**Asmali Mescit Mh.,**

**Sehbender Sokak 3,**

**Istanbul**

**90 212 2927 368**

**babylon.com.tr**

Babylon opened its doors in 1999 as a multipurpose performance center and is Turkey's leading live music venue. The club presents a monthly program featuring eclectic selections from jazz to reggae, world music to electronica, Latin to Turkish vibes.

### **Istanbul Jazz Center**

**Ciragan Caddesi Salhane Sk.**

**No.10 34349,**

**Ortakoy-Istanbul**

**90 212 32 5050**

**istanbuljazz.com**

Featuring a beautiful Yamaha C7 grand piano, "JC's" is an ideal venue for acoustic jazz and fine dining. The room hosts jazz history seminars every Saturday afternoon.



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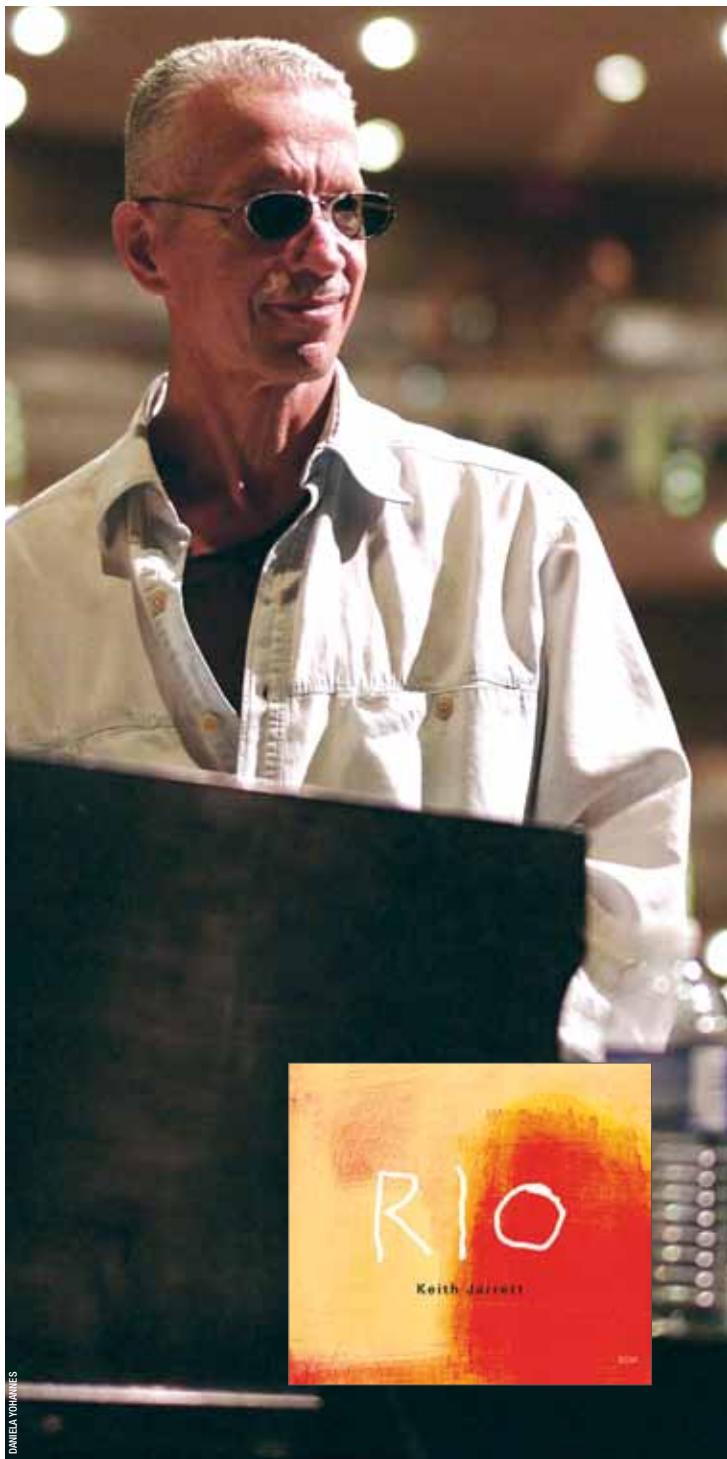
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Masterpiece ★★★★★ Excellent ★★★★ Good ★★★ Fair ★★ Poor ★

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# Reviews



## Keith Jarrett

### Rio

ECM 2198/2199

★★★★★

When Keith Jarrett played a solo concert in Rio de Janeiro in April 2011 after an absence from that magical city of more than two decades, he said he had the odd sensation he had left behind some “unfinished business.” Well, it’s finished. *Rio* is the most astonishingly beautiful album he has made in many years. Some of its 15 succinct cuts sound as if they were mysteriously dictated to him as complete compositions. But of course they were improvised in the moment. Jarrett attributes his extraordinary Rio experience in part to a new optimism he felt after having discovered a new love (in stark contrast to the dark album *Testament*, recorded in the wake of a marriage breakup), but also to his cultural receptivity to the Brazilian setting. The pastel harmonies, svelte harmonic changeups and rhythmic surprises of Brazilian music flavor this almost casually brilliant album.

Jarrett can be garrulous, but in this concert he practices an impressive economy. The longest track is 8:40 and most are around 5 or 6 minutes. None is named, but the hyper-lyrical ones progress into a more deeply felt romance, in the largest sense of that word. In these three tracks, Jarrett moves through intimations of MPB (Brazilian popular music), a riff through several keys on a three-note figure that might become the tune “My Romance” and a ballad that overflows with saudades.

Which is not to say this program is all hearts and flowers. Jarrett starts by plunging into anxious atonal waters, but shifts quickly to shimmering dissonance, then a lively pulse in three, rocking through a bent cycle of fifths. It is here the soft Brazilian light first peeks through, creating an opening for the lyricism of cut four. Jarrett then falls into one of his familiar gospel pulses, and a martial interlude gives way to his second lyrical flight. By now, the world has cracked open. Jarrett happily hopscotches through it in six, capping his delight with a disarmingly simple 1–3–5–8 arpeggio, as if to say even a triad is enough to delight him. A twinkling stream of starlight follows, swarming with pentatonics—Bud Powell on steroids—giving the impression Jarrett is so confident now he feels he can travel anywhere. A medium minor blues with a gentle honky-tonk pulse gives way to a deliberate drive of big, passionate chords that sweetly resolve into calm. Then come the saudades and what were presumably the encores: a gospel lilt with grace notes and some heady tremolos.

“I’m afraid to go back,” Jarrett said a few months after the concert because he felt he could never do this again. He doesn’t have to.

—Paul de Barros

**Rio:** Disc One: Part I; Part II; Part III; Part IV; Part V; Part VI (39:14); Disc Two: Part VII; Part VIII; Part IX; Part X; Part XI; Part XII; Part XIII; Part XIV; Part XV (51:20).

**Personnel:** Keith Jarrett, piano.

**Ordering info:** [ecmrecords.com](http://ecmrecords.com)

**Bill McHenry**  
**Ghosts Of**  
**The Sun**  
SUNNYSIDE 1244  
★★★

It's probably unfair to start this review by talking about the drummer. Saxophonist Bill McHenry's personal and lovely musical vision is the dominant force on *Ghosts Of The Sun*.

But we've just lost Paul Motian as I write this review, and listening to the record I'm reminded what a tremendous and original voice he was, how he could magically re-imagine the role of the drums in music like this, making it something other, something unlike anything else, a music of displacements, a propulsive-ness based on accents rather than repetitions, finesse rather than force. Motian was a heavy presence, and you can hear that with absolute clarity on this disc.

It's an outing that sat in the can for five years. Those projects sometimes get buried, but fortunately McHenry persevered. His compositions leave lots of space for the band to push and pull; rather than dictate the form, he makes the band play with it, reinvent it. On "La Fuerza," the saxophonist steps out front for a great solo



while on "William III" he moves between chords and unison melodies with McHenry, stepping up for a distortion-saturated solo.

McHenry's playing is understated, thoughtful, beautiful without being lavish. On the quieter "Lost Song," he intones with the guitarist's reverberant sound, offering a drier, more sober counterpart. I like the way he gets stuck on a note a couple of times on "Little One," not stuttering but giving a little honk, like a nice driver behind someone at a light. McHenry's is human music, vulnerable and pleasingly imperfect, with tenderness and intellect. And some super drumming. —John Corbett

**Ghosts Of The Sun:** Ms. Polley; La Fuerza; Anti Heroes; Ghosts Of The Sun; William (Drums); Little One; William III; Lost Song; Roses II. (47:40)  
**Personnel:** Bill McHenry, tenor saxophone; Ben Monder, guitar; Reid Anderson, bass; Paul Motian, drums.  
**Ordering info:** [sunnysiderecords.com](http://sunnysiderecords.com)

**Joel Frahm Quartet**  
**Live At Smalls**

SMALLSLIVE 23  
★★★½

This erudite encounter, mainly between Joel Frahm and Kurt Rosenwinkel, has a warm but rigorous intelligence bracketed by a straight-up blues at the top and a swinging bop closer.

Although I would be hard pressed to identify Frahm's tenor in a Blindfold Test lineup, he is a fine player who works with admirable civility inside what has come to be called the post-bebop genre, meaning all things John Coltrane and beyond. Frahm has edited out the gaudy unruliness and excess, fashioning a modus operandi that accommodates the chord substitutions that give contemporary jazz its character without crowding out the little melodic nuggets, riffs and rhythmic punch that occasionally make it memorable. Rosenwinkel is generally mellow, offering a level of spontaneous intricacy that has made him something of a Lennie Tristano disciple.

"Short Rack" is a medium slow, 12-bar blues. But it cannot easily contain the eagerness of the principles to cover twice the ground in half the time. "A Little Extra," an eccentric and appealing little line, is the subtlest and freest of the pieces in terms of structural permissiveness and malleable tempo. Frahm rambles amiably within an open but not necessarily random logic made engaging by his warm and friendly sound. Rosenwinkel



continues the vibe until a steady pulse appears and he shoots off in urgent double-time clusters. The two converge as if by providence on a common lick leading them back to the main theme. On "What's Your Beat?" Rosenwinkel shifts into extensive comping behind Frahm before launching into an interlude of long, organ-like chords, then improvising at length over a single chord that seems to come out of an anonymous keyboard. The music retreats more into ballad territory on a lovely and leisurely "Chelsea Bridge," which doles out a full two-and-a-half minutes per chorus. —John McDonough

**Live At Smalls:** Short Rack; A Little Extra; What's Your Beat?; Song For Mom; Chelsea Bridge; Alert; Steeplechase. (63:45)  
**Personnel:** Joel Frahm, tenor saxophone; Kurt Rosenwinkel, guitar; Joe Martin, bass; Otis Brown III, drums.  
**Ordering info:** [smallslive.com](http://smallslive.com)



**The Curtis Brothers**  
**Completion Of Proof**

TRUTH REVOLUTION 2

★★★

In the press materials for *Completion Of Proof*, Zaccai Curtis declares his band's latest work to be a "response to the modern, swingless, no-language 'jazz' that labels are pushing." Indeed, the tunes the pianist has written and performs with his bassist/brother Luques hark to identifiable swing. The template for the group's second disc is knotty hard-bop, and from the ensemble attack to the harmony choices, there's a feeling of *déjà-vu* in the air. The music has its sights set on kicking the particulars of a certain past into an idealized future, and through chops, verve and formula, they do so with aplomb.

But by the third track there's a bit of foregone conclusion to the program. The bandleaders are skilled up-and-comers from Hartford, Conn., and are navigating the New York scene. Their debut, *Blood, Spirit, Land, Water, Freedom*, stressed Caribbean grooves and generated passages titillating and wan. *Completion Of Proof* applies a more overt focus. It's got punch—any group with Ralph Peterson, Bryan Lynch and Donald Harrison in blowing mode would have to—but it too often telegraphs its destinations.

Team Curtis is pro crescendo, and with Peterson's ultra-physical approach amping the action, the splashes soak everyone in their path. "Mass Manipulation" and "The Onge" have lots of inner flourish that vivifies the music. They also manage to work in some nuances. Sustaining intricacy is high on the band's to-do list, and thanks to some Brazilian percussion, their thicket of sound comes with a labyrinthine feel. Perhaps the fiercest moments arrive at the tail of "Manifest Destiny." —Jim Macnie

**Completion Of Proof:** Protestor; Madison; The Onge; The Wrath; Mass Manipulation; Manifest Destiny; Sol Within; Jazz Conspiracy. (54:02)  
**Personnel:** Zaccai Curtis, piano; Luques Curtis, bass; Ralph Peterson, drums; Brian Lynch, trumpet; Donald Harrison, alto saxophone (1, 2, 3, 7, 8); Joe Ford, alto saxophone (4, 5, 6); Jimmy Greene, tenor saxophone (4, 5, 6); Pedro Martinez, bata (4, 6); Rogério Boccato, Brazilian percussion (5); Reinaldo de Jesus, barreles (7).  
**Ordering info:** [curtisbrothersmusic.com](http://curtisbrothersmusic.com)

# The Hot Box

CD ▾	Critics ▶	John McDonough	John Corbett	Jim Macnie	Paul de Barros
Keith Jarrett <i>Rio</i>	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
Bill McHenry <i>Ghosts Of The Sun</i>	★★	★★★★	★★★½	★★½	★★½
Joel Frahm Quartet <i>Live At Smalls</i>	★★★½	★★★	★★★½	★★★½	★★★½
The Curtis Brothers <i>Completion Of Proof</i>	★★★	★★★½	★★★	★★★	★★★

## Critics' Comments

### Keith Jarrett, *Rio*

If improvisation is conversation, maybe the art of epic improv is less exclusive than we imagine. Ellington did it in the '50s on a scale contained only by modesty, no deterrent here. Perhaps Jarrett was thinking Duke as implications of "Prelude To A Kiss" seep into "Part IV." Or maybe "Little Liza Jane" on "Part V." No matter, no sweat. He makes it work.

—John McDonough

As inclined as I am to complain that there's been an inordinate amount of Jarrett solo material produced in the last 35 years, this double disc is impeccable and full of surprises. His powers of invention have rarely been as acute, his tendency towards draining beatitudes at a minimum, the notion of a highly listenable mixed program at the fore. Listen to him invent an instant standard on "Part IV."

—John Corbett

He's getting to the good stuff quickly these days. No pianist makes a chattering web of dissonant notes glow with such connect-the-dots beauty, and there are a couple pieces on this set that turn pins-and-needles motifs into prayers of a sort. Seems like it's "so long excursions, hello jaunts." Gorgeous.

—Jim Macnie

### Bill McHenry, *Ghosts Of The Sun*

McHenry's icy sound may be admirable in its unflinching rectitude and purity of pitch, but, alas, mechanical in its power to communicate color and feeling. A sometimes unforgiving free player, his attack is inclined to be rhythmically stiff and severe; his ideas, a pageant of scales.

—John McDonough

Love the way their wandering is always reined back in. The saxophonist keeps a balance between the abstruse and the fetching, and he allows both plenty of leash. Motian patters, Monder paints and Anderson pins down all the poetics. There are snoozy spots, but the reward is that profound simmering.

—Jim Macnie

Motian, who died just as this album came out, is all over its dreamy, quiet sense of an inner voyage. His nuanced composure will be sorely missed. Sadly, though saxophonist McHenry plays with a disarmingly folksy directness, he never seems to get his engine going, so the project feels a bit like a scene in a snow globe.

—Paul de Barros

### Joel Frahm Quartet, *Live At Smalls*

Excellent working combo caught at work: Rosenwinkel slinky, Frahm gutsy, covering bases harmonically, slinging inventive phrases. Some originals do the trick, like the surprise-packed "A Little Extra" and the gentle intelligence of "Alert"; the softcore funk of "What's Your Beat?" is less exciting and then there's the wan "Song For Mom." I'd direct mother, instead, to the lovely version of "Chelsea Bridge."

—John Corbett

Informality is his friend, and this freewheeling excursion recorded down at the West Village club teams with the kind of ease that marks the saxophonist's oft-inspired solos. A blues, some bent bop, Strayhorn's most luminous ballad—they're all essayed with a knowing lift. Hats off to a great choice of folks.

—Jim Macnie

Frahm swings with Wayne-like aplomb (and a gorgeous upper-register sound) yet, curiously, projects very little urgency. Somehow, he's cool and hot, light and heavy at the same time. You could say the same thing about bandmate Kurt Rosenwinkel, who leavens his reverb and rangy asymmetry here with some refreshingly straightahead blues and bop. "Chelsea Bridge" is a keeper.

—Paul de Barros

### The Curtis Brothers, *Completion Of Proof*

This nervous little CD seldom sleeps. A contemporary bebop quintet/sextet with a revolving front line and a vaguely Latin rhythmic undertow. The tempos gallop, and Brian Lynch makes for a tight ensemble lead. The brassy writing is jumpy and energetic without being especially interesting. But Harrison is in crisp form.

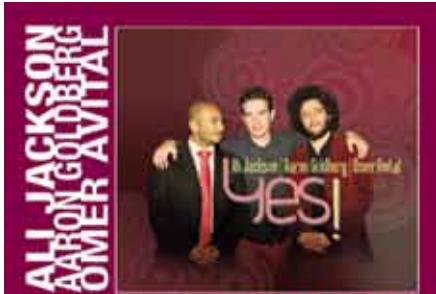
—John McDonough

Tight band, inspired blowing, especially from all three saxophonists, not always engrossing compositions ("The Manifest Destiny Suite" excepted), but a solid mainstream outing confirming the brothers' strengths. One quibble: Zaccai is mixed too high, throwing off the balance. It's a piano, not a horn.

—John Corbett

The tune titles from this fiery piano-and-bass brother team are progressive, but the Blakey-bound music is not—though inviting ex-Messengers Brian Lynch and Donald Harrison to lead the charge makes for an enjoyable retro journey. Bassist Luques Curtis has a lovely, warm sound and flow.

—Paul de Barros



**YES!**

SSC 1271 / in Stores JANUARY 17

Sometimes the only preparation needed to record a stirring album is a longtime friendship. Bassist Ali Jackson, pianist Aaron Goldberg and drummer Omer Avital have known each other since their years in college, have played more gigs than they can count and consider each best of friends. On their new CD **Yes!** the three came together to record a spirited program of original compositions from each member of the group along with some tremendous interpretations of material from artists like Abdullah Ibrahim, Duke Ellington and Thelonious Monk.



Available on  
**iTunes**



**JAHIRA**

SSC 1310 / in Stores JANUARY 31

It was while touring with Barretto's New World Spirit ensemble that Glawischnig was initially led to the acoustic bass guitar. Glawischnig found an acoustic bass guitar that provided the sonic palette that both were looking for and a flexibility that wasn't available with the double bass.

He has decided on a trio setting because of his regard for the intimacy of the smaller ensembles of Sonny Rollins and Charlie Haden. The musicians that he chose for the group are exceptional young talents, saxophonist Samir Zarif and drummer Eric Doob.



Available on  
**iTunes**

## Pablo Aslan Quintet *Piazzolla In Brooklyn*

SOUNDBRUSH 1023

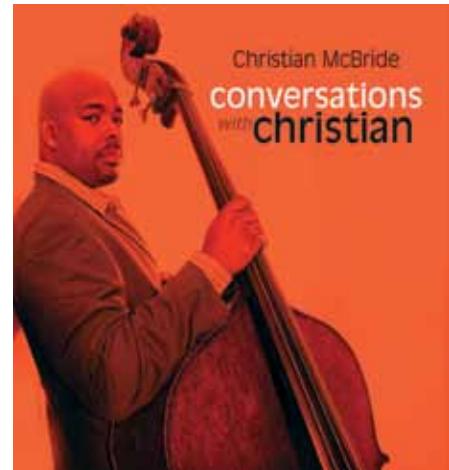
★★★★

There may be odder ambitions than wanting to remake what Astor Piazzolla considered the worst album of his career, but give bassist Pablo Aslan credit: At least he did the job right.

The story begins in 1959, when the Argentine tango giant was working as a session musician in New York. Working with a half-dozen or so jazz and Latin session players, he arranged an assortment of jazz standards and original tunes in a style that tried to apply a bebop twist to a tango-based pulse. But the rhythm work was mechanical and there wasn't another solo voice for Piazzolla to play off of, making the end result—released on Tico Records as *Take Me Dancing!*—utterly undeserving of its exclamation point.

Aslan, an Argentine bassist and composer with a strong background in both jazz and tango nuevo, recognized both the potential and failings of *Take Me Dancing!* and does an excellent job of rescuing Piazzolla's vision. For starters, he expands both the arrangements and the ensemble, not only adding trumpet to Piazzolla's original combination of bandoneon, piano, guitar, bass and percussion but allowing room for improvisation by all the players, not merely the leader.

As such, *Piazzolla In Brooklyn* easily lives up to the composer's early imagining of jazz tango. Nicolas Enrich's bandoneon is near-



ly as supple and inventive as the master's, and deftly evokes the mannered melancholy of the film ballad "Laura," while Gustavo Gergall's lithe, authoritative trumpet lines bring a bopish brashness to the Piazzolla-ized "Lullaby Of Birdland."

But drummer Daniel "Pipi" Piazzolla—Piazzolla's son—is the most important link here, for as his playing moves easily between a loping jazz groove and a taut tango pulse, he bridges the gap between jazz and tango in ways the original album never imagined.

If this is the musical equivalent of speculative fiction, let's hope Aslan brings us more.

—J.D. Considine

**Piazzolla In Brooklyn:** La Calle 92; Counterpoint; Dedita; Laura; Lullaby Of Birdland; Oscar Peterson; Plus Ultra; Show Off; Something Strange; Triunfal. (45:00)

**Personnel:** Gustavo Gergall, trumpet; Nicolas Enrich, bandoneon; Abel Rogantini, piano; Pablo Aslan, bass; Daniel "Pipi" Piazzolla, drums.

**Ordering info:** [soundbrush.com](http://soundbrush.com)

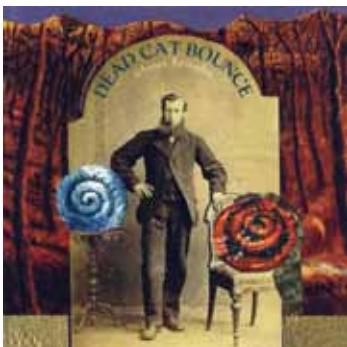
## Dead Cat Bounce *Chance Episodes*

CUNEIFORM RECORDS 323

★★★★

For feline lovers reading this, don't worry: Boston sextet Dead Cat Bounce takes its name from a term used in stock trading that suggests "creative rebirth and renewal ... as time, tradition and masters move on," the way alto saxophonist/bandleader Matt Steckler sees it.

Steckler formed the group 15 years ago, and *Chance Episodes* is its fourth CD. Experience together is obvious on this excellent collection of 11 Steckler originals, the blending of horns, or flutes and clarinet, superb, notably in such moments as the ominous beehive hum during "Far From The Matty Crowd" and "Salon Sound Journal." The latter begins with a wheeling Steve Lacy-like soprano line counterweighted with "in the round" antiphony from the saxes and later, flute. Eventually drums and bass kick in, then drop out again during a seesawing figure that



precedes swaggeringly tight harmonized section play.

A pastoral, chamber interlude follows, then underrated master Charlie Kohlhase, the veteran here, now on alto rather than his default baritone, blows a spiky solo recalling Oliver Lake's brash tonality. The gorgeous section line returns to close out.

Steckler describes his composing ethos with umimations like "negotiating ... the liminal space" and "narrating ... a timeline of human experience." He's clearly an intellectual but delightfully eclectic, as cognizant of the AACM (the flute escapades on "Bio Dyno Man" remind of Nicole Mitchell) as South African kwela and marabi—on "Township Jive Revisited," Ambrosio and Carbone make out like Johnny Dyani, and Tony Allen and the gritty soprano from Jared Sims is pitch-perfect.

—Michael Jackson

**Chance Episodes:** Food Blogger; Tourvan Confessin'; Far From The Matty Crowd; Salon Sound Journal; Bio Dyno Man; Silent Movie, Russia 1995; Watkins Glen; Salvation & Doubt; Township Jive Revisited; Madame Bonsilence; Living The Dream. (69:59)

**Personnel:** Matt Steckler, Jared Sims, Terry Goss, Charlie Kohlhase, woodwinds; Dave Ambrosio, bass; Bill Carbone, drums.

**Ordering info:** [cuneiformrecords.com](http://cuneiformrecords.com)

## Christian McBride *Conversations With Christian*

MACK AVENUE 1050

★★★★

Has anyone since Dizzy Gillespie combined as much ebullience and musical technique as Christian McBride? Whether trading quips with actress Gina Gershon as she riffs on soulful Jew's harp or playing stud to Dee Dee Bridgewater's vamp, he serves as the garrulous host throughout these 13 "conversations." Of course, his bass speaks loudest, and it speaks in a wide variety of dialects here.

The range presented—African rhythms with Angelique Kidjo, European classicism with Regina Carter, deep swing with Ron Blake—is almost dizzying, and while that may not make for the most cohesive album, there are enough highlights to satisfy any listener.

There are outrageous pyrotechnics on a long, multifaceted duet with Chick Corea, a meditative, dark arco dirge to accompany the late Billy Taylor's poignant "Spiritual" and spirited bebop phrases traded with an equally lively Roy Hargrove. As a showcase of McBride's rich mastery of the language, it would be difficult to top "Sister Rosa," a nicely nuanced exchange with guitarist Russell Malone. But a personal favorite is McBride's meeting with Hank Jones. As was his norm, Jones defied his 90 years, matching the bassist for spunk and wit in a piece that glows with warmth.

Depending on your taste, Sting's highly mannered, drawn-out vocal treatment of his "Consider Me Gone" and Gershon's star turn may leave you cold, but even then there is so much humanity in everything McBride plays that the music wins out.

—James Hale

**Conversations With Christian:** Afrika; Fat Bach And Greens; Consider Me Gone; Guajeo Y Tumbao; Baubles, Bangles And Beads; Spiritual; It's Your Thing; Alone Together; McDuke Blues; Tango Improvisation #1; Sister Rosa; Shake 'N' Blake; Chitlins And Gefiltefish. (77:10)

**Personnel:** Christian McBride, bass, electric bass, vocals (7, 13); Angelique Kidjo (1), Dee Dee Bridgewater (7), Gina Gershon, vocals, Jew's harp (13); Sting, vocals (3), guitar (3); Roy Hargrove, trumpet (5); Ron Blake, saxophone (12); Eddie Palmieri (4), Billy Taylor (6), Hank Jones (8), George Duke (9), Chick Corea (10), piano; Regina Carter, violin (2); Russell Malone, guitar (11).

**Ordering info:** [mackavenue.com](http://mackavenue.com)



## Vyacheslav Guyvoronsky *Pieces For String Trio And Trumpet*

LEO 587

★★★½

## Vlady Bystrov/Alexey Lapin *Rimsky-Korsakov. Crosswise*

LEO 582

★★★

Since the collapse of the former Soviet Union, Leo Records has consolidated its position as a prime champion of Russian jazz. Among the musicians its owner Leo Feigin has brought to Western ears' attention, trumpeter Vyacheslav Guyvoronsky and pianist Alexey Lapin are arguably the ones who deserve the closest scrutiny. Their most recent recordings are informed by classical music but reveal two radically different approaches.

At 70, Guyvoronsky belongs to an older generation of Russian musicians who still rely heavily on structure. While most of the backdrop provided by the string trio spans several classical eras from Baroque to Romantic, concessions are also made to more contemporary concepts. And rather than merging two genres and creating a questionable hybrid that could be identified with the Third Stream, Guyvoronsky privileges juxtaposition. As a result, the trumpeter engages in improvisations over a mostly composed canvas supplied by the trio. For the most part, Guyvoronsky succeeds in presenting challenging music in a palatable package.

The great composer Rimsky-Korsakov's lifespan pretty much coincided with the Romantic era. However, he is known for embracing Eastern music and eschewing Western music structures and was a self-proclaimed rule breaker. This is this spirit that reed player Vlady Bystrov and Lapin strive to honor. They belong to a newer generation than Guyvoronsky's, which grew up under Communism but came to maturity at the same time their country went through abrupt changes. Rimsky-Korsakov. Crosswise falls squarely in the free improvisation category. Bystrov has a strong penchant for electronic devices

that he deploys with varying degrees of success. The much-derided EWI surely works best with this type of music but can still be off-putting. On the other hand, the real-time processing tools enhance his phrasing, either broadening the sound of his alto ("Prelude") or deepening his soprano ("Echoes"). Lapin just sticks to the piano and occasionally reaches inside to strum the strings. His influences are not obvious, which betrays the emergence of an original voice and should be an encouragement to explore his other works and collaborations. Ultimately, what is most striking is the

fact that Bystrov and Lapin are real team players. They agreeably share leading and supporting responsibilities when they are not simply engaged in clever dialogues. —Alain Drouot

**Pieces For String Trio And Trumpet:** Forced Landing In Mexico; Chopin's Mazurka; Puzzles; Pastoral Fugue; A. Tavrov's Butterfly; Fugue With A Lost Theme; Sol-fa In Tibetan Style; Ballad; Burgher's Concert; Saraband. (48:57)

**Personnel:** Vyacheslav Guyvoronsky, trumpet; Vladislav Pesin, violin; Dmitry Yakubovsky, alto; Mikhail Degtyarev, cello.

**Rimsky-Korsakov. Crosswise:** Preamble; Precaution; Rock-n-Roll-n-All; Prelude; Echoes; Crosswise; I Do What I Damn Please; Cuimin Qu; Contradiction; Desert Wind; Calm; Sirens; Rimsky-Korsakov-The Master; Encounter With An Elf. (63:36)

**Personnel:** Vlady Bystrov, alto, soprano saxophone, B-flat clarinet, D clarinet, alto clarinet, bawu; EWI, Kaoss Pad 3, Air FX; Alexey Lapin, piano.

**Ordering info:** [leorecords.com](http://leorecords.com)

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**Jason  
Adasiewicz's  
Sun Rooms  
Spacer**  
DELMARK 2012  
★★★

Jason Adasiewicz once said that jazz's great vibraphonists treat their instrument like a horn. "They're in for a chorus, they play some amazing shit, and then maybe there will be a little comping," he said, "but it's very minimal." His playing with Sun Rooms proposes a much broader role; the vibes generate melody and harmony the way a piano might in another trio, but they're also like a drum kit, the source of the ensemble's energy.

This expanded responsibility suits Adasiewicz's aggressive playing style, but it requires a combination of selflessness and intelligence from the other musicians. The bassist has to make himself felt without compet-



ing with the ocean of sound that issues from Adasiewicz's mallets, and the drummer must be willing to play half-throttle yet keep things swinging. One reason that this trio pulls this tricky combination off so well is because they're equally invested in the result. There may be one guy's name on the record sleeve, and he may write most of the

material, but this trio started out as a collective named Spacer; co-founders Nate McBride and Mike Reed are just as invested as Adasiewicz in realizing the group's dynamic blend of force and reserve. Reed's cymbal accents give like elastic and McBride's bass lines seem reduced yet essential and swing gracefully.—Bill Meyer

**Spacer:** Solo One; Hi Touch; Run Fly; Pillow; The Volunteer; Bees; Bobbie; Diesel; Waiting In The Attic; Solo Two. (42:06)  
**Personnel:** Jason Adasiewicz, vibraphone; Nate McBride, bass; Mike Reed, drums.  
**Ordering info:** [delmark.com](http://delmark.com)



**Gilad Hekselman  
Hearts Wide Open**

CHANT DU MONDE 2742037

★★★

Since his New York arrival in 2004, and now with three albums to his credit, 28-year-old Gilad Hekselman continues to bring fresh ideas to jazz guitar in this not-so-new millennium. Hekselman's glowing, gleaming, seamless guitar playing instantly grabs your attention and quickly delivers on that promise. Possessing a beautiful tone and wonderfully fluid phrasing, Hekselman's writing is also consistently first-rate, personal and moving beyond cliché.

"Hazelnut Eyes," the opener to *Hearts Wide Open*, recalls the high-flying vistas of Pat Metheny with its soaring arrangement and iridescent guitar lines. Pizzicato picking and darting drum patterns fill "One More Song," which possess a kinetic, edging-forward feel similar to the work of Vijay Iyer. "Flower" floats propulsively, mostly due to Marcus Gilmore's hands-on trap drums approach. The title track is especially expansive. Hekselman, Gilmore, bassist Joe Martin and tenor player Mark Turner create a mini-symphonic work of sorts, maneuvering large gusts of sound that swell with great dynamic range and intensity.

There's a constantly shifting undercurrent to Hekselman's music, the rhythms punching the air and dancing aloft, while the guitarist jetties along clouds, creating airy shapes and multi-colors that never quite touch down. Pat Martino's darting lines and straight-ahead flow are recalled on "The Bucket Kicker." "Understanding" rides a slow-motion, aerial flight. Finally, "Will You Let It?" is nearly rubato, the group simply hovering in a kind of agitated reverie. Throughout, Hekselman guides the music with a bittersweet inflection.

—Ken Micallef



the key. But it always leads back to familiar territory, particularly in the placement of ancient turnarounds at the end of each verse.

Except for another blues, Jimmy Rowles' "Magic Bluze" played as a somnambulant trudge, the covers on *To My Surprise* provide the best content. But "I Hadn't Anyone 'Til You" isn't the most daring tune to subject to a soft-shoe arrangement.

There are bright moments. "Old Devil Moon" gets a medium-up treatment, with Longo delivering some nice reharmonizations. The best is saved for the end, on "In The Wee Small Hours," where Longo's meditation on the first verse is warm with sensitivity and a careful match of voicing to melody. This sets the mood for a lovely finale, which feels more welcoming than most of what came before.

—Bob Doerschuk

**To My Surprise:** A Picture Of Dorian Mode; Still Water; New Muse Blues; Limbo; Alone Again; I Hadn't Anyone 'Til You; Old Devil Moon; Magic Bluze; To My Surprise; You've Changed; Eye Of The Hurricane; In The Wee Small Hours. (64:32)  
**Personnel:** Mike Longo, piano; Jimmy Owens, trumpet, flugelhorn; Lance Bryant, tenor saxophone; Bob Cranshaw, bass; Lewis Nash, drums.  
**Ordering info:** [jazzbeat.com](http://jazzbeat.com)

**Hearts Wide Open:** Prologue; Hazelnut Eyes; One More Time; Flower; Brooze; Hearts Wide Open; The Bucket Kicker; Understanding; Will You Let It?; Epilogue. (60:25)  
**Personnel:** Gilad Hekselman, guitar; Mark Turner, tenor saxophone; Joe Martin, bass; Marcus Gilmore, drums.  
**Ordering info:** [harmoniamundi.com](http://harmoniamundi.com)

**Mike Longo Trio + 2  
To My Surprise**

CONSOLIDATED ARTISTS  
PRODUCTIONS 1030

★★½

Mike Longo's latest is perfect to use on Blindfold Tests. Everyone plays well, but if you didn't see their names in advance, it's unlikely that you'd be able to identify them. The music they make passes by in familiar packages.

The leader shows the most individual style. Unfortunately, he can be recognized by his use and reuse of certain stock figures and voicings. Longo plays a lot of augmented chords, nudging the fifth up half a step. He also likes overlaying a major II over the I root. Now and then, these elements open the door toward a whole-tone figure or run. Within these formulae, Longo further restricts his range.

On "A Picture Of Dorian Mode," a bop-like blowing tune, his left-hand comps tend to hang on one voicing until the next chord comes, rather than be fleshed out. Even having the band cook behind him doesn't quite dispel the static impression. And on "Still Water," a three-chord minor blues-like tune, his solo breaks down as a handful of funk clichés.

The writing on the original material isn't too exciting, either. "New Muse Blues" is, naturally, a blues, which imposes some limitations right there. But by setting it as a shuffle and kicking it off with tenor player Lance Bryant and Jimmy Owens on trumpet playing an elemental riff, Longo works not to find something fresh but rather to conform to listener expectations. Whole-tone runs lacing his choruses are played well, and he veers occasionally outside

## Expansive Brass

The pairing of congas and trumpet to purvey the music of Cuba is such a natural that if Chano Pozo and Dizzy Gillespie hadn't popularized it, it would have still found its way into people's ears. ***Chano y Dizzy!*** (Concord Picante 33095; 55:13 ★★★★) celebrates that classic sound, as interpreted by Poncho Sanchez and Terence Blanchard—both worthy inheritors of the tradition. While tunes like "Tin Tin Deo," "Manteca" and "Con Alma" can't be avoided, Sanchez and Blanchard dodge the usual tribute trap by including some original material and slowing things down for a gorgeous rendering of Ivan Lins' "Nocturna."

Ordering info: [concordmusicgroup.com](http://concordmusicgroup.com)

A product of the Eastman and Juilliard schools of music, Mike Cottone is an impressive technician, which is amply showcased on an extended trumpet-and-drums cadenza on Freddie Hubbard's "Dear John." Fluid and crisply articulated, Cottone's playing on ***Just Remember*** (Self-released; 51:21 ★★★) recalls Hubbard, and his arrangements of his six originals are not unlike prime-time Hub, particularly when there's electric piano in the mix. But, while there is some grit on "Gyroscope," and strong drumming by Jared Schonig, much of the recording has a slick sheen and a feeling of over-familiarity.

Ordering info: [mikecottone.com](http://mikecottone.com)

Trumpeter Dave Douglas put in some early time as a street musician, and ***Bad Mango*** (Greenleaf Music Portable Series #3; 35:41 ★★★★), which combines him with the Brooklyn-based quartet So Percussion, occasionally explodes with manic busker energy. The EP also throbs with layers of shimmering, interlocked rhythm, a reflection of So's Steve Reich influence, and the quartet provides Douglas with a shifting canvas on which to splash a variety of colors.

Ordering info: [greenleafmusic.com](http://greenleafmusic.com)

It's not unusual for trumpeters to say that their instrument is merely a tool—a means of expression. On ***Amplified Trumpets*** (Carrier 010; 64:11 ★★½) Peter Evans and Nate Wooley really mean it. While the sound of air being pushed through brass tubing can be heard occasionally, more dominant is the shriek and skirl of severely distorted amps. Noise sculpting is best when there is an arc or path to be followed; here, the sonic gestures often lead nowhere very revealing. This is likely an interesting project to see live, but as an isolated document it is wanting.

Ordering info: [carrierrecords.com](http://carrierrecords.com)

Dave Douglas



Making its recording debut after more than 20 years together, Dan Jacobs's quintet clearly has its material—including a pair each by Wayne Shorter and Bill Mays—under its fingers. The flipside is that ***Play Song*** (Metro Jazz 1001; 76:09 ★★★) sounds like it was recorded in the 1980s, with an overly bright mix that accentuates the splashy cymbals and zooming electric bass. Jacobs is a solid-if-unspectacular trumpeter, but the recording doesn't serve his journeymen bandmates well.

Ordering info: [danjacobsmusic.com](http://danjacobsmusic.com)

On her fourth album as a leader, ***Blue Glass Music*** (Blue Bamboo 019; 51:30 ★★★½), Texas native Carol Morgan is not afraid to go deep. With the exception of a sprightly "I Love You" and a spirited "Glyph"—highlighted by an impish Matt Wilson—Morgan plays it slow, soulful and dark. An imaginative reinterpretation of "Lonely Woman" is the centerpiece: part African dance, part surging techno-throb with Wilson and bassist Martin Wind providing the momentum. Tenor saxophonist Joel Frahm makes an ideal frontline partner.

Ordering info: [bluebamboomusic.com](http://bluebamboomusic.com)

Although British by birth, Hayden Powell has lived in Molde, Norway, much of his life, and his sextet on ***The Attic*** (Inner Ear 13; 41:10 ★★★½) is a strong representation of the contemporary Norwegian improvised music scene. In fact, the album provides as a good a look at his bandmates—particularly pianist Eyolf Dale—as it does Powell. It's a well-matched group that sounds suited to the kind of highly textural music that Powell composes. The 10 pieces are mostly short and vertically structured, which leaves the listener wishing for a bit more melodic development.

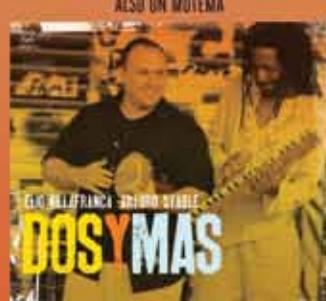
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## Dan Blake *The Aquarian Suite*

BJU RECORDS 29

★★★½

Something notable is going on with this young, deep and proudly chordless quartet, coming by way of the new Brooklyn jazz scene, and the Brooklyn Jazz Underground label, to put a finer name on it. From the opening, deceptively easy-does-it swing of "The Whistler" to the primal, post-free-jazz wail and acoustic slink of "Epilogue: Cavemen Do It Too," Dan Blake's imprint, as composer and player and bandleader, demands attention.

Blake, whose versatility and probing ears have made him a ripe collaborator for both Julian Lage and Anthony Braxton within a year, brings an intelligence and taste for adventure but also a solid swing and tradition-hugging mandate to his work as both player and writer. In other words, he slaloms his way around the middle to the left end and back, and finds enough logical junctures to make his music work, stretch and play out naturally.

As suggested by the album's title, the eight juicy Blake originals hang together as well as alone, as parts of a contiguous suite-like whole. In this chord-free—but hardly empty-sounding—context, we naturally detect echoes of Ornette Coleman's prototypical quartet format, and sometimes at least trace elements of Coleman's quixotic harmolodic spirit, but we



also find links to attitudes and vocabularies from jazz's past, from Charles Mingus' and Dave Douglas' worlds of musical thinking, for instance.

In "Mister Who," Blake plots out a tricky melodic maze for his nimble bandmates, rhythmically morphing as it goes, but the

band also handles the balladic impulse beautifully on "The Best Of Intentions" and "You Cry So Pretty," blessed with a lustrous vulnerability befitting the title, and vice-versa. "The Road That Reminds" and "Aquarian" clock in at around a dozen minutes each and allow for interplay and suite-within-the-suite structures.

Trumpeter Jason Palmer, a commanding player at once bold and elastic, makes an ideal foil for Blake's frontline horn roles. Drummer Richie Barshay does virtually all the right things, including dialing in a subtlety of feel and channeling restraint and ensemble-sensitive instincts, as does Jorge Roeder, an assured bassist. While a sturdy showcase for Blake's particular set of talents, this disc also boasts a band with a sure sense of integrated "groupness," a quality in short supply on today's jazz scene.

—*Josef Woodard*

**The Aquarian Suite:** The Whistler; Mister Who; The Best Of Intentions; How It's Done; You Cry So Pretty; The Road That Reminds; Aquarian; Epilogue: Cavemen Do It. (65:04)

**Personnel:** Dan Blake, saxophone; Jason Palmer, trumpet; Jorge Roeder, bass; Richie Barshay, drums.

**Ordering info:** [bjurecords.com](http://bjurecords.com)

## Lauren Henderson

### Lauren Henderson

SELF RELEASE

★★★½

Ingénue vocalist Lauren Henderson has a lot going for her: a warm, intimate voice, good time, controlled vibrato and an unforced swing. She's an inviting singer whose low-level dynamic draws the listener in. This unassuming debut is a little short on playing time, but it portends bigger and better things.

Henderson might not break any new ground with her choice of material, but it suits her very well. Jobim's "Dindi" is sweetly sensual, and Maria Vera's "Veinte Años" is sung ably in Spanish. She caresses "More Than You Know" and rides the understated swing that the fine rhythm section, led by pianist Sullivan Fortner, provides on "Taking A Chance On Love." Bill Evans' "Waltz For Debby" is rendered in Swedish, adding to the inherent enchanted quality of the tune.

Artistic maturity encompasses many qualities, and one of them is a sense of the appropriate. Young artists all have to hone their inner editor and beware of novelty for its own sake. Johnny Mercer's lyric to "Skylark" is



one of the most heartfelt in all of the Great American Songbook, but singing it to a funk beat subverts its impact. Likewise, her funking of "Born To Be Blue" and recasting "I Should Care" as a "Rhythm" tune are questionable calls. Henderson should outgrow these lapses of judgment. When she does, jazz will have a vibrant new star singer.

—*Kirk Silsbee*

**Lauren Henderson:** Dindi; Skylark; More Than You Know; Veinte Años; I Should Care; Do I Love You?; Só Tirinha De Ser Com Você; I Got It Bad (And That Ain't Good); Born To Be Blue; Monicas Vals (Waltz For Debby); Taking A Chance On Love. (41:16)

**Personnel:** Lauren Henderson, vocals; Sullivan Fortner, piano; Ben Leifer, bass; Jesse Simpson, drums.

**Ordering info:** [laurenhendersonmusic.com](http://laurenhendersonmusic.com)

## BALLAKÉ SISSOKO VINCENT SEGAL CHAMBER MUSIC



## Ballaké Sissoko & Vincent Segal *Chamber Music*

SIX DEGREES 65703611712 9

★★★½

One is the son of a highly respected Malian griot. The other grew up in Paris' raunchy Pigalle district, near the cabaret lights. Their training is very different. Ballaké Sissoko learned the kora, a 13-string harp, as part of a folk tradition, while Vincent Segal is a classically trained cellist. Both have branched out far from their roots, Sissoko to play with Taj Mahal and others, Segal to play in his trip-hop duo Bumcello and on the recordings of a hugely diverse array of Western and African artists.

Though they come from different directions, they meet in a very satisfying middle on *Chamber Music*. Recorded in 2009 at Salif Keita's studio in Bamako, Mali, the album features original compositions by the two musicians, and though they wrote them separately, they are of a remarkably single mind. On four songs, the two are completely alone together, engaged in a complicated dance.

Segal's approach to the cello changes with the song. He plays a pizzicato rhythm as Sissoko's kora flurries around him on his own "Oscarine"—interestingly, Sissoko's compositions generally give him more melodic opportunities. The two reconcile their competing pasts in numerous ways, sounding decidedly ancient on "Houdesti" and "Histoire de Molly" as the recording captures the scratch of bow on string, while "Ma-Ma' FC" is a modern blend of European and Malian folk sounds.

The sound of the record is intimate and inviting, and the few guest musicians yield the show entirely to the headliners. Perhaps it's just that these worlds have been collaborating for a long time now, and there are predecessors to learn from, but this meeting is seamless.

—*Joe Tangari*

**Chamber Music:** Chamber Music; Oscarine; Houdesti; Wo Yé N'Grougobine; Histoire de Molly; "Ma-Ma' FC"; Regret-A' Kader Barry; Halinkata Djoubé; Future; Mako Mady. (55:11)

**Personnel:** Ballaké Sissoko, kora; Vincent Segal, cello; Awa Sanagho, vocal (7); Mahamadou Kamissoko, ngoni (3); Fasssey Diabate, balafon (3); Demba Camara, bolon (2, 8, 10), kangan (6, 7).

**Ordering info:** [sixdegreerrecords.com](http://sixdegreerrecords.com)

**Us3**  
*Lie, Cheat & Steal*

US3 005

★★

Nearly two decades ago, Us3 dropped the massively popular "Cantaloop (Flip Fantasia)" and quickly became emblematic for all that was wack about the fusion of jazz with hip-hop. Thirteen years and eight albums later, the British outfit has held steadfastly to this "from bebop to hip-hop" aesthetic for better or worse. The band has eschewed its reliance on '60s soul-jazz samples and has attempted to toughen up its rap narratives. Nevertheless its newest disc, *Lie, Cheat & Steal*, is an anachronistic affair that never heats up.

Rappers Oveous Maximus and Akala try admirably to bring a credible street menace to cuts like the opening "Ghost" and "Wild West," but their growling flow are leaden and their rhymes are pedestrian at best. Producer Wilkinson brings a clear, sonic heft to the proceedings. But it can't conceal the rather unexciting arrangements on songs such as the drum-centric "Puppets," the samba-driven "You Make Me Wanna" or the jazzy "Invincible." Us3 shows promise on "(You Are) So Corrupt" when it delves in Afrobeat. Even here, though, it's saddled by stiff beats and corny rhymes.

—John Murph

**Lie, Cheat & Steal:** Ghosts; Who Am I?; Lie, Cheat & Steal; Wild West; The Ring; Uptown; Pressure Bursts Pipes; I Feel You; You Can Run But You Can't Hide; Puppets; (You Are) So Corrupt; You Make Me Wanna; Invincible. (54:24)

**Personnel:** Ed Jones, tenor saxophone (2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13); Bryant Corbett, trumpet and flugelhorn (2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12); Chris Storr, trumpet (4, 10); John Crawford, keyboards (1, 3, 9, 12); Mike Gorman, keyboards (5, 13); Barry Green, keyboards (7, 8); Tim Vine, keyboards (2); Neil Anguile, keyboards (6); John Turville, keyboards (11); Chris Dodd, double bass (1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 13); Francesco Lo Castro, guitar (1); Adam Phillips, guitar (4); DJ First Rate, scratching (2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 12, 13); Irene Serra, vocal sample (9); Helen McDonald, vocals (11); Geoff Wilkinson, all other instrumentation and programming; Oveous Maximus, rap (1, 3, 4, 6, 8, 12, 13); Akala, rap (2, 3, 5, 7, 9, 10, 11).

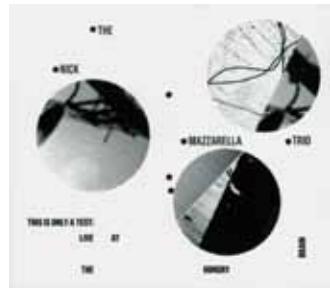
**Ordering info:** [us3.com](http://us3.com)



**Nick Mazzarella Trio**  
*This Is Only A Test: Live At The Hungry Brain*

SONICHLA 001

★★★½



Alto saxophonist Nick Mazzarella has been turning heads within Chicago's vibrant jazz and improvised community over the last couple of years, and with his second album he seems poised to keep attracting notice. From the opening notes of the title track, his admiration for Ornette Coleman is glaring. In fact, the listener would be forgiven for mistaking the opening burst of the tune for Coleman's "The Fifth Of Beethoven." The 27-year-old reedist doesn't deny Coleman's influence, yet while many of Mazzarella's original themes here echo the melodic joy of his musical model, once he's zoomed past the head of those pieces he tends to let loose in a way that's increasing of his own design.

In a sense this blistering live set—with excellent support from his long-running rhythm section of bassist Anton Hatwich and drummer Frank Rosaly—captures Mazzarella in transition. His torrid solos here often leap into the fire breathing realm of late-'60s John Coltrane and Pharoah Sanders, stoked by the pure energy of his cohorts, yet any apparent stylistic schizophrenia feels like the saxophonist emerging from a cocoon, with great promise on the horizon. Still, *This Is Only A Test* is nothing to sneeze at; there's infectious ebullience across the whole collection, and Mazzarella deftly balances his extroverted impulses with a beautiful tenderness on a ballad like "A Memory For Faces."

—Peter Margasak

**This Is Only A Test:** Live At The Hungry Brain: This Is Only A Test; Do Not Disturb; Sundown; Newsprint; Clockwork; For Henry; Boarding Pass; A Memory For Faces; Circumstantialism. (55:56)

**Personnel:** Nick Mazzarella, alto saxophone; Anton Hatwich, bass; Frank Rosaly, drums.

**Ordering info:** [nickmazzarella.com](http://nickmazzarella.com)

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## Ran Blake & Dominique Eade *Whirlpool*

JAZZ PROJECT 3002

★★★½

This duo release is long awaited, with the sessions recorded in 2004 and 2008. In defense of the delay, pianist Ran Blake comments in Bob Blumenthal's informative liners: "Good wine breathes over the years, and Dominique is a vintage musician."

Blake was vocalist Eade's mentor in the New England Conservatory's Third Stream department, and she avows she never felt patronized by her professor. Blake once made an album dedicated to Sarah Vaughan, and there are traces of Vaughan's vibrato and arch pitch-flattening in Eade's explorations. Another influence may be Roberta Flack, who hovers behind Eade's affecting original "Go Gently To The Water," and her Anglicized diction (Eade was born in the U.K.) momentarily recalls Annie Ross on "Falling."

Thelonious Monk-ish plinks from Blake on "After The Ball" betray his primary influence, but otherwise this duo displays outstanding originality over some well-worn structures. For "The Thrill Is Gone," the melody is flattened and drained of contradictory emotional freight—but no one ever interpreted it this



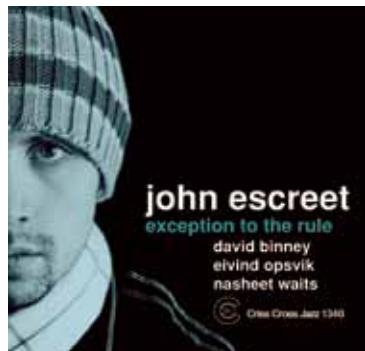
## John Escreet *Exception To The Rule*

CRISS CROSS 1340

★★★★

A cursory listen to the sometimes dense, dissonant and jagged music on pianist John Escreet's album might place him in the camp of the abstract expressionists. But delve deeper and find a musical architect. He's able to compose in a way that unleashes his soloists—chiefly alto saxophonist Dave Binney—in often-torrential ways. That's Escreet devising highly structured passages that seem to fully engage the players. Just as importantly, Escreet knows enough to remove the compositional constructs and let the music just breathe. If Cecil Taylor is Jackson Pollock with little apparent structure in his kinetic gesture, Escreet is Hans Hoffmann with well-considered slabs of color and shape as design elements.

A case could be made for Escreet as a composer with stronger ties to contemporary classical music. The formless, textural "Electrotherapy" is oblique minimalism. And don't look for song forms, blues or melo-



way. "The Wind" starts with a sequence of onomatopoeic gusts of the keys before Eade's chilling valediction, which recalls Vaughan's bleak "To Say Goodbye" from *Copacabana*.

Blake never makes glib commentary; he offers a subtle harmonic roadmap where necessary, but his deeper mood illustrations are far more intriguing, here whipping up the dynamics to abet the pathetic fallacy—linking human feelings with natural forces.

Though the intellectual interplay will interest music analysts ("Out Of This World" is particularly obtuse), there are lovely pure moments: On "Where Are You?" Eade is Wendy waiting for Peter Pan.

Remarkably, during Blake's harmonic gutting of "Devil Moon" and his Alice-in-Wonderland colorations on "Falling," he remains supportive, and Eade's ability to match his creativity without attempting to slipstream—instead making bold long-tone decisions—is the genius of this remarkable pairing.

—Michael Jackson

**Whirlpool:** My Foolish Heart; Dearly Beloved; The Wind; Go Gently To The Water; Old Devil Moon; Pinky; Falling; Where Are You?; Out Of This World; The Pawnbroker; Dearly Beloved; The Thrill Is Gone; After The Ball. (43:22)

**Personnel:** Ran Blake, piano; Dominique Eade, voice.

**Ordering info:** [dominiqueeade.com](http://dominiqueeade.com)

ic content in his work. Yet try and find the hammered rhythmic propulsion of his keyboard driven as strongly as "Escape Hatch" in the conservatories. His vocabulary is admirable, recalling Paul Bley's Morse-code pointillism here, high-speed spikiness there, tender lyricism interludes as well as gale-force downpours.

Binney is the featured performer here. When Escreet and bassist Eivind Opsvik lay out on "Wayne's World," the sinewy alto swirls in long lines and tight turns to Nasheet Waits' peppery drums. Binney spins, jumps and ducks nimbly through Escreet's ornate edifices, like on "Collapse," with its extreme intervals. And Escreet doesn't exempt himself from the rigors of his own demanding forms: A unison piano-alto passage in the title piece is fast and complex, with perfect parallel execution. Escreet has a lot to say, and he articulates it well.

—Kirk Silsbee

**Exception To The Rule:** Exception To The Rule; Redeye; Collapse; They Can See; Escape Hatch; Wide Open Spaces; Electrotherapy; The Water Is Tasting Worse; Restlessness; Wayne's World. (58:30)

**Personnel:** John Escreet, piano, keyboards; Dave Binney, alto saxophone, electronics; Eivind Opsvik, bass; Nasheet Waits, drums.

**Ordering info:** [crisscrossjazz.com](http://crisscrossjazz.com)

## Lalah Hathaway *Where It All Begins*



## Lalah Hathaway *Where It All Begins*

STAX 32917

★★★

In 1998, Lalah Hathaway entered the studio with a small band of acoustic musicians. Her deep alto gave stylistic grace to *The Song Lives On*, but lately, Hathaway has moved past jazz. Her evocative voice is still front and center, but the musicians and the presentation have changed drastically. Regardless, Hathaway remains a compelling singer, and when she's backed by the vivacious programmed beats on *Where It All Begins*, her songs are infectious.

*Where It All Begins* is a celebration of popular r&b. Hathaway sounds like she's having fun. The cotton-like fuzz of the keyboards on "Strong Woman" is almost tangible, grounding the song in an aural fog, broken up by sharp, jarring offbeat claps. There are a few tunes that miss the mark—"Small Of My Back" and most of the more subdued songs—and the compositions, many of which were manufactured by writing teams, generally lack lyrical substance.

The standout is "My Everything," which sounds like a familiar pop song that has a few twists and turns. It's sparse compared to some of the tracks, and the song benefits from skin-tight, synthetic beats and a supple melody.

Judging by the liner notes, this is a nostalgic record for Hathaway; the image on the cover features a collage of her father's record albums, and there are family photographs sprinkled throughout the song credits. Driving this introspection is "I'm Coming Back," which originally was wrapped in the musical choices of the early '90s on Hathaway's first album. On *Where It All Begins*, Rachelle Ferrell helps strip the new arrangement down to its vocal elements. Here's hoping this look back convinces Hathaway to revisit her jazz side. —Jon Ross

**Where It All Begins:** Strong Woman; Where It All Begins; My Everything; Small Of My Back; If You Want To; Always Love You; Lie To Me; This Could Be Love; Wrong Way; You Were Meant For Me; I'm Coming Back; Dreamland. (55:09)

**Personnel:** Lalah Hathaway, Rachelle Ferrell, vocals; Mikey Dan, Tiffany Loren, background vocals; Mike Aaberg, keyboards; Chris Coleman, Eric Seats, drums; Melvin Davis, Eric Smith, bass; Jarius Mozee, guitar.

**Ordering info:** [concordmusicgroup.com](http://concordmusicgroup.com)

## Bright Side Of Misery

**Mary Flower: Misery Loves Company** (Yellow Dog 1842; 47:08 ★★★★) Twenty years and nine albums into her recording career, Flower is a superlative fingerstyle guitarist square in the Piedmont tradition. She also excels on lap steel. Easy confidence characterizes her singing style. Following a format of duets this time, she's joined in her subdued artistry by 10 fellow Oregonians and Nashville dobro player Colin Linden. All of the collaborations are winners. She and jazz pianist Dave Frishberg exchange sly grins laying out the cyanide-laced original "I'm Dreaming Of Your Demise." The guitarist and cellist Gideon Freudmann are at such a high a level of proficiency performing the instrumental "Devil's Punchbowl" that your heart will beat faster and your blood race. Along with black church-trained singer LaRhonda Steele, Flower gives a moving account of the afterlife on a striking cover version of Rev. Gary Davis' "Goin' To Sit Down On The Banks Of The River." No slack-off in authority, either, when Flower goes it alone on her arrangement of age-old "Scrapper's Blues," a salute to Chicago guitarist Scrapper Blackwell.

Ordering info: [yellowdogrecords.com](http://yellowdogrecords.com)

**Rob Stone: Back Around Here** (Earwig 4961; 52:10 ★★★) Rob Stone, in Chicago, has the ability and personality as a vocalist and a harmonica player to put over a dozen romps or downcast songs he wrote with guitarist Chris James and bassist Patrick Rynn. The New England native is deeply based in the Muddy Waters-Little Walter 1950s, yet he stays open to suggestions of r&b. In addition to James and Rynn, the musicians include venerable drummers Sam Lay, Willie Hayes and Willie "Big Eyes" Smith.

Ordering info: [earwigmusic.com](http://earwigmusic.com)

**John Mayall's Bluesbreakers: Crusade** (Sundazed 6275; 45:01 ★★★) Eric Clapton and Peter Green weren't the only young British guitarists groomed for the big-time in John Mayall's bands of the 1960s. Mick Taylor, 17, later of the Rolling Stones, handles himself well on this 1967 release, though he doesn't show the risk and emotional clout of his two predecessors. Mayall's elfin singing is an acquired taste, but it's clear the bandleader is emotionally invested in what he sings, especially his words to "The Death Of J. B. Lenoir" about the social-minded Chicago bluesman he had admired so much. This edition of the Bluesbreak-

Mary Flower



COURTESY MARY FLOWER

ers, one of dozens, was unusual in that it had two saxophonists.

Ordering info: [sundazed.com](http://sundazed.com)

**Paul Geremia: Love My Stuff** (Red House 239; 63:05 ★★½) On a collection of mostly solo live concert songs taped since the 1980s, singer/guitarist Paul Geremia lends friendliness to classic songs from the likes of Blind Willie McTell ("Stomp Down Rider"), Leadbelly ("Silver City Bound") and Jelly Roll Morton ("Dr. Jazz"). He even injects affability into his own divorce blues, "Where Did I Lose Your Love?" Geremia, however, isn't as convincing in the dark gloom of Rev. Gary Davis' "Death Don't Have No Mercy," maybe keeping lyrics at arm's length for the sake of self-preservation.

Ordering info: [redhouserecords.com](http://redhouserecords.com)

**The Bottoms Up Blues Gang: Handle It** (Blue Skunk Music 4545; 47:45 ★★★) Not just another general-purpose band in St. Louis, the BUBG relies on singer Kari Liston and guitarist Jeremy Segel-Moss to define its offbeat character. Liston's tight, high voice has a screwy edge, and she whistles and blows kazoo with self-mocking satisfaction. Segel-Moss' songs reveal his honest regard for jubilant New Orleans trad jazz ("First Of May") and his dizzying concern over the current Orwellian state of affairs ("New World Blues").

Ordering info: [blueskunkmusic.com](http://blueskunkmusic.com)

# RAY CHARLES



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**Paul Motian**  
**The Windmills Of Your Mind**  
 WINTER & WINTER 910 182  
 ★★★★½

If Sun Ra's motto was "space is the place," the late Paul Motian's ought to have been "space is the thing," for few musicians better understood the value of strategically placed silence. Motian didn't just emphasize the space between the notes; he made the implied feel of a rhythm as important as what got stated, a philosophy that helped every voice in his ensembles become part of the music's propulsion.

That's especially the case with this sweetly brooding meditation on memory, love and loss. It isn't just that most of the tracks are vocal numbers, framing Petra Haden's sweetly evocative soprano; even instrumental tracks such as "Let's Face The Music And Dance" or Motian's own "Trieste" seem more interested in melodic statement than improvisational stretching out.

But this isn't some just-the-facts-ma'am reiteration of standards. Just as Motian's impeccably controlled brushwork presents an almost inferential account of the beat, so the rest of the playing reads between the lines to find fresh meaning in familiar phrases. Take



**Motian Sickness**  
**The Music Of Paul Motian: For The Love Of Sarah**  
 GRIZZLEY MUSIC  
 ★★★★

Each time a record full of Paul Motian tunes is released, it only strengthens the argument that the drummer's compositions should be viewed as lasting musical documents that will add substance to jazz recordings far into the future. These pieces are of the jazz world, but as was proven by guitarist Joel Harrison's recent Motian tribute, *String Choir: The Music Of Paul Motian*, much of the music can also easily translate to the classical realm. The tunes are intricate, difficult pieces of music that, when done right, blur the line between classical and jazz, composed music and improvisation.

Motian Sickness, a group comprising three string instruments—viola, mandolin and bass—and a drum kit, has done well in its quest to translate Motian's music. The musicians convincingly display the complexity and beauty of Motian's work—the dense, thorny tan-



gle and precise interchange of "Dance," the subtle beauty of "The Story Of Maryam." Mat Maneri plucks and bows his viola strings and Jamie Masefield plays chordally or melodically on the mandolin, while John Hebert adds harmonic support on bass. These sometimes diametri-

cally opposed musical lines can create a thick, impenetrable racket or emerge from a dense tangle to engage in a sparse dialogue between solo voices. Drummer Jeff Cosgrove ably plays the starring role.

*The Music Of Paul Motian: For The Love Of Sarah* won't be the last career-spanning reflection on the late Motian, but Motian Sickness' ability to get to the heart of each tune while adding its own improvisatory voices will no doubt make this one of the best. —Jon Ross

**The Music Of Paul Motian: For The Love Of Sarah:** Dance; Conception Vessel; The Storyteller; From Time To Time; The Story Of Maryam; Mumbo Jumbo; Arabesque; For The Love Of Sarah; The Owl Of Cranstion; One Time Out. (58:04)  
**Personnel:** Jeff Cosgrove, drums; John Hebert, bass; Mat Maneri, viola; Jamie Masefield, mandolin.  
**Ordering info:** [cdbaby.com](http://cdbaby.com)

the title tune. Where most versions of "Windmills" emphasize the circular movement of Michel Legrand's constantly churning melody, this version takes its cues from Alan and Marilyn Bergman's text. Bill Frisell's chord substitutions echo the lyrics' dis-

association over Thomas Morgan's jabbing, fragmented bass, as Haden's laconic delivery teases out the melody. Seldom has the strangeness of that song been made so palpable.

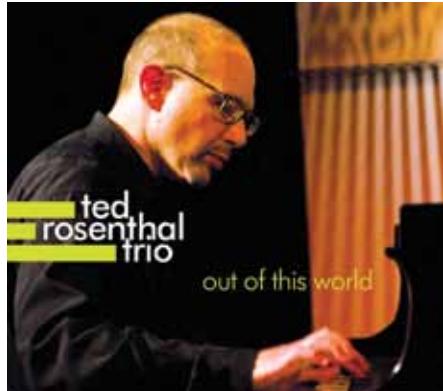
Because she doesn't employ the chesty sonorities and extensive vibrato most jazz singers rely on, Haden may seem at first an odd choice for these sessions. Listen closely, though, and she's as perfect a fit as Frisell. There's a tripping lightness to "It's Been A Long, Long Time" and a languorous confidence to "Lover Man," while her "I Loves You Porgy" is every bit as understated and emotionally charged as the drumming. And a higher compliment than that I can't imagine.

—J.D. Considine

**The Windmills Of Your Mind:** Introduction (1); Tennessee Waltz; The Windmills Of Your Mind; Let's Face The Music And Dance; Lover Man; It's Been A Long, Long Time; Little Foot; Easy Living; I've Got A Crush On You; Backup; I Loves You Porgy; Trieste; If I Could Be With You; Wednesday's Gone; I Remember You; Introduction (2). (52:24)

**Personnel:** Paul Motian, drums; Bill Frisell, electric guitar; Petra Haden, vocals; Thomas Morgan, bass.

**Ordering info:** [winterandwinter.com](http://winterandwinter.com)



**Ted Rosenthal Trio**  
**Out Of This World**

PLAYSCAPE 031010

★★★

There are standards done up proper, and then there "de-standardized" standards, plucked out of their commonly known *Real Book*-ish state and reshaped, refreshed. Pianist Ted Rosenthal adopts the latter approach on *Out Of This World*, his latest album with his fine and big-eared trio (Noriko Ueda, bass; Quincy Davis, drums). We get the idea from square one, in a version of the Harold Arlen/Johnny Mercer title track opening the session, taken out of the world it usually lives in, metrically, mostly in a surprisingly supple 9/8 groove.

Among the other shape-shifting moments on the record, "People Will Say We're In Love" barrels forth as an uptempo swing vehicle, de-ballad-ized for this occasion, and a chance for Rosenthal to unveil his clean-burning if sometimes overly tidy voice as a soloist. "Embraceable You," that commonly balladic number from the Gershwin songbook, appears in a restlessly paced 5/8 setting. "Cry Me A River" gets its own kind of rewrite/revamp, in a fast and fervent pulse, contrary to the slow norm of the song: It's more about a rushing river than a languid crying session.

Veering slightly left of the Great American Songbook—and illuminatingly so—Rosenthal smartens up the set with a bluesy swagger on Gershwin's "Prelude #2" and waltz luster for Billy Strayhorn's "Lotus Blossom," both played more "straight" and true to the form we know and love. As if to bring order and convention into the conceptual equation, the album closes with a suitably and familiarly slow-glowing, drums-with-brushes read on "In The Wee Small Hours Of The Morning." Rosenthal and company bring intelligence and true blue feeling to the project, although often the playing itself seems less center-stage than the conceptual spin of the staging itself. —Josef Woodard

**Out Of This World:** Out Of This World; So In Love; Have You Met Miss Jones; Prelude #2; Embraceable You; People Will Say We're In Love; Lotus Blossom; How Long Has This Been Going On; Cry Me A River; In The Wee Small Hours Of The Morning. (64:00)

**Personnel:** Ted Rosenthal, piano; Noriko Ueda, bass; Quincy Davis, drums.

**Ordering info:** [playscape-recordings.com](http://playscape-recordings.com)

## Gospel Eden Rediscovered

**Various Artists: This May Be My Last Time Singing—Raw African-American Gospel On 45 RPM, 1957–1982 (Tompkins Square 02639; 72:01/78:54/74:14 ★★★★)** Mike McGonigal is a fanatical collector of old gospel records. In an attractive foldout package with booklet, he presents a whopping 72 sacred tracks from as many obscure singers or preachers around the country. The Sensational Six and all the rest (mostly men) are ecstatic about God's involvement with their lives, and every single "good news" offering from them is compelling. Call it a small miracle. One caveat: The listener needs to be more than casually interested in historical gospel to sit right with all this pleading and pledging.

Ordering info: [tompkinssquare.com](http://tompkinssquare.com)

**Alexis P. Suter Band: Two Sides (Hipbone 082; 61:26 ★★½)** Suter understands the gospel foundation of her singing for blues and roots-music audiences. She brings the emotionalism of Sunday black church services to songs from her band (all worthy, excepting laborious "Whistling In The Dark") and to traditional gospel gems ("Didn't It Rain, "John The Revelator") and to one popular favorite (Bob Dylan's "Knockin' On Heaven's Door"). Suter's rich baritone dominates even when exaggerated production shores up bids for control by two backup singers and the guitarist.

Ordering info: [hipbonerecords.com](http://hipbonerecords.com)

**The Staple Singers: Be Altitude—Respect Yourself (Stax 32876; 49:36 ★★★)** In 1972, the Staples were securely settled in Stax pop-soul Memphis, having turned off the straightahead gospel path years earlier. The message song "Respect Yourself" and reggae-spiced "I'll Take You There," both commercial hits, are the main attraction here. Not unmindful of the Lord, Mavis sings those two and 10 more (two recently unearthed) with urgency. The Muscle Shoals supporting musicians are excellent.

Ordering info: [concordmusicgroup.com](http://concordmusicgroup.com)

**The Black Academy Concert Choir: Medicine (MCG Records 7077; 74:09 ★★★)** The Black Academy of Arts & Letters, a long-entrenched cultural arts institution in Dallas, sponsored this recent gala in the Dallas Convention Center. Along with the 80-member choir, the marquee singers affirming their trust in Jesus are Ruben Studdard (an "American Idol" winner), Ann Nesby and Jasmine Guy. Continually alert to funk, bandleader/bassist Sam Anderson wrote most of the contemporary-gospel songs.

Ordering info: [mcgrecords.com](http://mcgrecords.com)



Eddie Robinson

EMILY GALE

**Eddie Robinson: This Is My Story (The Sirens Records 5019; 51:32 ★★★½)** It's a joyous occasion: Pianist Eddie Robinson gets his first feature album in a distinguished gospel career dating to the early 1950s. An able musician in his elder years, the Chicagoan is steadfast in his belief in the redemptive power of faith. So are, no question, vocalists Milas Armour III, Uletta Jackson and Phinus Alexander Jr., each an individualist in tone and delivery. Organ and drums add to the spiritual glow.

Ordering info: [thesirensrecords.com](http://thesirensrecords.com)

**The Rance Allen Group: The Live Experience II (Tyscot 984190; 77:43 ★★★)** Arguably the first gospel recording artist to embrace r&b, when on the Stax roster in the early 1970s, Allen continues to attract attention with his impassioned vocals. This Nashville gala concert, in 2010, finds the elder testifying with Shirley Caesar and other notables, backed by a gospel-r&b band that sometimes sounds artificial. The peak of the excitement comes early: "Let The Music Get Down In Your Soul."

Ordering info: [tyscot.com](http://tyscot.com)

**McCrary Sisters: Our Journey (McCrary Sisters Productions; 55:17 ★★★½)** In the studio for their first album, the four sisters in Nashville prove they are talented singers. Each shows conviction and knows a thing or two about finding rapture. They write good songs and impressively interpret spiritual songs from Bob Dylan, Gary Nicholson and Julie Miller. They're open-minded, moreover, and welcome Delbert McClinton and his soul-blues band as guests. The McCrarys, whose father was a charter member of the great gospel outfit the Fairfield Four, should be heard by fans of secular Americana and roots music.

DB

Ordering info: [mccrarisisters.com](http://mccrarisisters.com)



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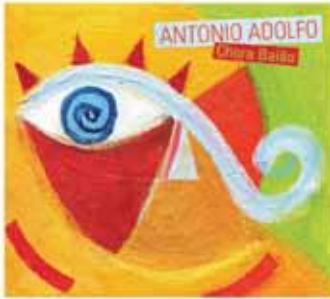
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## Historical | BY AARON COHEN

### New Look At Brother Ray

Ray Charles was well on his way to international stardom in the summer of 1961, but his audience most likely had no idea what to expect when he went onstage at the French Antibes Jazz Festival for a couple of concerts that July. It was his first time performing outside of North America, and while Europeans would've heard

such recent hits as "What'd I Say," it's not so certain they knew how Charles and his incredible band dove so deeply into pop, jazz and r&b along with his gospel-inspired inflections. Charles' performance was explosive: The crowd responded in kind, but what's just as incredible is the recent discovery that these gigs had been expertly filmed. They're presented on the essential DVD *Live In France 1961* (Eagle Rock 303859; 111:00 ★★★★½).

Jean-Christophe Avery shot the performance for television—thankfully, the cinephilic French used film rather than ephemeral videotape. Reelin' In The Years (producers of the "Jazz Icons" series) edited and remastered the footage, which looks and sounds remarkably clear. The DVD reaffirms that Charles was a first-rate jazz bandleader who used his piano cues to craft a new take on Count Basie's dynamics and hard-bop chord changes. Charles and his band begin the set with sharp renditions of James Moody's "The Story" and Horace Silver's "Doodlin'," both of which emphasize his best horn section: alto player/arranger Hank Crawford, trumpeter Philip Guilbeau, fluid baritone saxophonist Leroy Cooper and dual reedist David "Fathead" Newman. In particular, *Live In France* emphasizes how versatile Newman was: from his tender flute obligatos alongside Charles on "Georgia On My Mind" to strong tenor lines that respond to the combined voices on an uproarious "Tell The Truth." Of course, the main voice is Charles himself, and he's presented here in commanding and unguarded moments that offer a striking contrast to the choreographed television performances decades later. His phrasing, range and delivery on such songs as "Hallelujah, I Love Her So" set the standard for the male vocalists who followed, and the film shows how much work he put into it all when he hit the stage.

Many of Charles' fans believe that when



Ray Charles (left), Bruno Carr and Edgar Willis

COURTESY REELIN IN THE YEARS

he left Atlantic for ABC-Paramount a year before Antibes, he abandoned the raw spirit of his early work. The five-disc box set *Singular Genius: The Complete ABC Singles* (Concord 33258; 63:56/64:13/62:02/65:20/61:06 ★★★★½) proves otherwise. In fact, the collection as a whole offers a way to hear his musical evolution with more immediacy than listening to his 1960s and early 1970s albums in one sitting. True, as the '60s went on, he worked less with his classic horn section, and the pop background voices on such tracks as "Cry" from 1965 haven't aged even as well as that era's supper clubs. But there are numerous treasures here, many of which have never been on CD before. The pristine-sounding reissues reaffirms that Charles was setting his own pace and mostly keeping one jump ahead of the era's musical changes during the 13 years he was signed to ABC. Early on at ABC, songwriter Percy Mayfield was a part of the Charles camp and contributed such classics as "Hit The Road, Jack" and "The Danger Zone." But at the same time the singer brought fresh interpretations to such earlier r&b tunes as Ivory Joe Hunter's "A Tear Fell." When Charles set up his R.P.M. Studio in Los Angeles, he was also able to bring together great players from different backgrounds, like combining the gospel-trained prodigy organist Billy Preston and ace session bassist Carol Kaye on "Somebody Ought To Write A Book About It" in 1967. He also took on rock and folk songbooks, bringing in behind-the-beat grit to John Denver's "Country Roads" just as vividly as he famously remade country standards earlier. Though—just as importantly—Charles' apparent spontaneity fit an easygoing era. Kaye remembers the boss trying to "just catch some off-the-beat funky licks with my bass lines as if it was 'arranged.' It wasn't." She adds that his choices were never wrong.

DB

Ordering info: [eaglerocket.com](http://eaglerocket.com), [concordmusicgroup.com](http://concordmusicgroup.com)

## Jacques Loussier Trio *Schumann/Kinderszenen*

TELARC 32270

★★★

## Dan Tepfer *Goldberg Variations/Variations*

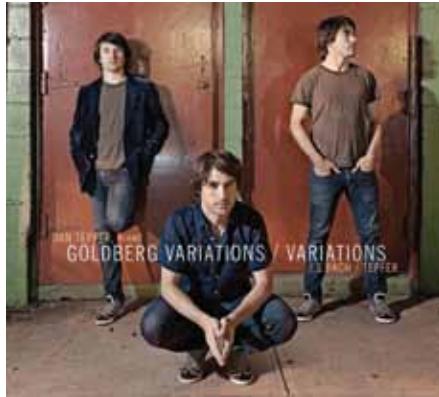
SUNNYSIDE 1284

★★★½

Classical music and jazz enjoy a rich synchronicity. Going back to stride piano, the early big bands and even before, many jazz artists have drawn directly from concert repertoire as sources. Results of these cross-genre projects have been mixed, depending on the intention and inventiveness of the performer. In two recent releases, we see how varied these results can be.

Jacques Loussier's legacy of fusing their best elements is arguably unequaled not only because of his supreme musicianship but even more so because of his respect for the material. On this exploration of Robert Schumann's *Kinderszenen*, that respect, animated by his trio's teamwork, creates a seamless and successful hybrid.

It's strong material, to start with. Schumann's melodies are as familiar as standards and more adaptable than much of the classical canon. Thus, "Von Fremden Ländern und Menschen" morphs smoothly into a medium-up bossa



nova, appropriate to the title ("Of Foreign Lands And Peoples"). Here, as on most of the album, Loussier stays very close to the score. On the brief "Kuroise Geschichte" he essentially renders the piece as is, adding a few elaborations but maintaining Schumann's rhythm; playing sparely, bassist Benoit Dunoyer de Segonzac and drummer André Arpino add a pleasantly swinging contrast. When the piano part is more linear, as on "Haschmann," they achieve the same effect by syncing to it.

Dan Tepfer tackles the same question of fidelity to the composition in his ambitious *Goldberg Variations/Variations*. The composer in this case is J. S. Bach, and for all his genius it is hard to imagine anyone whose works lend themselves less to jazz treatment, short of add-

ing a rhythm section à la the Swingle Singers. Tepfer addresses this conundrum by in effect returning to a Baroque concept of theme-and-variation improvisation. But where Bach and his contemporaries often created what we know now as their catalog by extemporizing on a melodic theme, Tepfer starts with the Goldbergs and, after adeptly presenting them, expands on their elements as a whole.

Not surprisingly, the results of Tepfer's experiments vary. Some feel a little forced; more often, he performs brilliantly. Improvisations 1 and 5 (on Variations 1 and 5) adapt the contrapuntal device for bracing flights of fancy. Improvisation 6 moves way beyond period harmony, with bitonal and dissonant items that fit the frame Tepfer creates.

It would be pointless to nitpick Tepfer's inventiveness further on a track-by-track basis. But he is to be commended for this fabulously challenging conception, paying tribute to the process of Bach where the substance of Schumann is what Loussier celebrates with equal eloquence.

—Bob Doerschuk

**Schumann/Kinderszenen:** Von Fremden Ländern und Menschen; Kuroise Geschichte; Haschmann; Bittendes Kind; Glückes Genug; Wichtige Gegebenheit; Träumerei; Am Kamin; Ritter vom Steckenpferd; Fast Zu Ernst; Fürchtenmchen; Kind Im Einschlummern; Der Dichter Spricht. (60:57)

**Personnel:** Jacques Loussier, piano; Benoit Dunoyer de Segonzac, bass; André Arpino, drums.

**Ordering info:** [telarc.com](http://telarc.com)

**Goldberg Variations/Variations:** Aria; Variations 1–30 alternating with improvised variations; Aria. (77:34)

**Personnel:** Dan Tepfer, piano.

**Ordering info:** [sunnyside.com](http://sunnyside.com)

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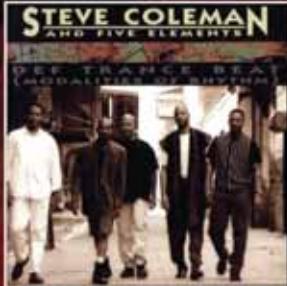
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## Michael Cain *Solo*

NATIVE DRUM MUSIC 0002

★★★½

In jazz the word “solo” can be taken to have two meanings, neither of which quite applies here. It can mean, on the one hand, a project committed by one musician alone, the implication being that it involves playing in real time without accompaniment. The other refers to all those notes one blows through several choruses while a rhythm section chugs helpfully along.

What Michael Cain does here falls somewhere between. He does work on his own, but he also records his own accompaniments, most of them insertions of old-school analog noise or some fragmentary percussion grooves. Their entrances and exits seem almost random, having more to do with what the moment calls for than with any more traditional sense of arrangement.

As a result, this mix of premeditation and improvisation—the lines between them are blurred to begin with—radiates an air of spontaneity. The first track, “Kammotion,” starts with Cain on piano, taking his time as he follows a few paths that lead to the fringes of atonality. This is followed by a sparkle of electronics, gnashing like hungry termites, and after that come some glittering synthesizer chords, voiced according to the Herbie Hancock canon. Eventually, Cain double-tracks the piano,



scampering in two fleet, free-tempo lines whose trajectories suggest birds frolicking, each on its own yet in sync somehow with the other.

Cain enhances his approach with a strong sense of timbre. Just as all the elements of the first track do suggest

“Kammotion,” “Prayer” opens with a chapel organ repeating a simple motif in a muted, meditative registration. Isolated piano notes sound around it, gathering into a pattern of ascending yet mournful lines. He introduces other elements, too, mostly echoes of exotic post-Moog keyboards.

Four of these five works follow this linear formula, even “The Question,” a solo piano piece whose clashing seconds and ruminative pace spin a web of enigma in little more than a minute. “Gerald” presents us with a piano line that wanders over a murky funk with a tiny bell adding a glimmer to the mix. It’s not until the closer, “The Last Waltz,” that a composition emerges with clear structure. The tempo is last-call slow, the changes nicely conceived and bass and drums keep the time. Cain is credited only for keys and electronics, so who are these mystery guests? Like this music as a whole, that is also an enigma, better savored than analyzed.

—Bob Doerschuk

**Solo:** Kammotion; Prayer; Gerald; The Question; Fast Waltz (29:54)  
**Personnel:** Michael Cain, piano and electronics.  
**Ordering info:** [michaelcain.com](http://michaelcain.com)

## Mozik

### *Mozik*

SELF RELEASE

★★★

Mozik—a quasi-fusion, quasi-Brazilian group led by two Berklee graduates—begins its self-titled debut release with a burst of frenetic energy, a busy piano line that seems to aurally reproduce the hustle and bustle of city life. “Web’s Samba” soon settles down into the melody, with Yulia Musayelyan’s dulcet flute tones subduing Gilson Schachnik’s disjunct piano playing. Schachnik wrote the piece, along with another track, “Zelia”; these compositions are full of harmonized, prog-like feats of musical muscle.

Russian-born Musayelyan is, arguably, the center of the album. She’s a vibrant enough flute player to have no trouble standing as the main voice of the ensemble and can hold her own leading the group. Her tone is pure and crisp, no doubt a result of her classical upbringing, and she has no trouble keeping the group’s many moving parts together.

Schachnik’s compositions are comprehen-



sive introductions to the Mozik style, but the real treat is the band’s reading of Herbie Hancock’s “Eye Of The Hurricane” and “Desafinado” by Antonio Carlos Jobim. The two melodies are given a rhythmically disorienting quality that, instead of detracting from the original composers’ intentions, adds new layers to two well-worn charts. On the other side of the spectrum, a piano trio reading of Thelonious Monk’s “Pannonica” is sped up and given a smooth Brazilian sheen.

Mozik certainly owes a lot to the 1980s. This connection to fusion history—its warts as well as its triumphs—could be a non-starter for some, but Mozik pulls off the dance between self-indulgence and quirky anachronism while keeping the music vivacious and exciting.

—Jon Ross

**Mozik:** Web’s Samba; A Felicidade; Eye Of The Hurricane; O Amor em Paz; Pannonica; Zelia; Desafinado; Canto das Três Racas. (55:15)  
**Personnel:** Yulia Musayelyan, flute; Fernando Huergo, bass; Mauricio Zottarelli, drums; Gustavo Assis-Brasil, guitar; Gilson Schachnik, keyboards.  
**Ordering info:** [cdbaby.com](http://cdbaby.com)

## BOB JAMES | KEIKO MATSUI

•ALTAIR & VEGA•



## Bob James & Keiko Matsui *Altair & Vega*

EONE MUSIC 2125

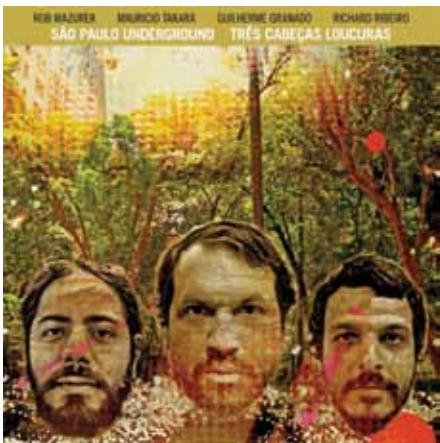
★★★★

Altair & Vega is an ambitious, unique and well-executed album that’s the product of a 12-year collaboration between Bob James and Keiko Matsui. The CD, which includes a DVD, finds the pair exploring the four-hand piano tradition of the 19th century. James and Matsui, who play together so well they sound like one person, blur the line between jazz and classical. Eighth-notes are often straight, most of the music is written, and the fair amount of rubato and sustain pedal gives the music a slight Romantic period feel, especially on Matsui’s “Invisible Wing.” James’ “Divertimento” is a variation of a piano duet piece by Haydn on which James and Matsui converse in various jazz and classical dialects. James’ arrangement of Bach’s “Jesu, Joy Of Man’s Desiring” stays relatively close to the original melody, although the several reharmonized sections are quite dissonant. The more jazz-inspired pieces, such as the title track, are quiet, introspective and frequently quite gorgeous.

The DVD contains selections from James and Matsui’s 2010 concert at the Manchester Craftsmen’s Guild in Pittsburgh. Watching their performance changes the way one listens to the CD, and the DVD shows the choreography involved in four-hand piano playing. Matsui often pulls her left arm in and slides closer to James on the bench for closely voiced three-hand passages and at times each player reaches across the other to get to one of the piano’s extremes. Three of the DVD’s six pieces are not heard on the CD: James gives an impressionistic and subtly swinging solo treatment of Ray Noble’s “The Touch Of Your Lips,” Matsui’s solo composition “Trees” is relaxing and tranquil, and James’ piece “Duo Oto Subito” mixes written four-hand parts with solos by each player.

—Chris Robinson

**Altair & Vega:** CD: Altair & Vega; Frozen Lake; Divertimento “The Professor & The Student”; Midnight Stone; Invisible Wing; The Forever Variations; Chorale From Cantata BWV 147 (47:41); DVD: Divertimento: “The Professor & The Student”; Frozen Lake; Trees; Duo Oto Subito; The Touch Of Your Lips; Forever Variations (45:10).  
**Personnel:** Bob James, piano; Keiko Matsui, piano.  
**Ordering info:** [eonomusic.com](http://eonomusic.com)



**São Paulo Underground**  
*Três Cabeças Loucuras*  
CUNEIFORM 325  
★★★★½

It took a few years, but with its third album São Paulo Underground has definitely found its footing, nailing an elusive meeting place between continents. The post-Don Cherry melodic splendor of Chicago cornetist Rob Mazurek has never been clearer, and it finds a simpatico home amid the polyrhythmic chaos forged out by his Brazilian cohorts. Mazurek and co-founder Mauricio Takara wrote the bulk of the material here, and all eight pieces concern themselves with various sorts of collisions—gentle vs. harsh, melodic vs. noisy, human vs. machine—but those battles aren't conflicts as much as they're stunning balancing acts.

Três Cabeças Loucuras (which translates to “three crazy heads”) is the first SPU record to so clearly tap into Brazilian traditions, but Takara and fellow percussionists Guilherme Granado and Richard Ribeiro eschew obvious cultural tourism, just as the cornetist doesn’t privilege jazz. “Pigeon” is built upon a traditional maracatu piece, but Mazurek’s power-house peals and snaking lines, some fuzzed-out keyboard riffs and the muted clatter of criss-crossing beats render provenance immaterial, while the cavaquinho playing of Takara on his beautiful “Carambola,” assaulted by dubby electronic pings and swooshes, only hints at tropical sounds until the outro, where a brief melodic fragment shoots for Carnaval bacchanalia. Mazurek lends some washed-out post-bossa singing on the opening of “Colibri,” but it dissolves in an intensifying fury of spaced-out horn blowing and swirling percussive accents. This high-energy romp takes the sting out of the term fusion in the best possible way.

—Peter Margasak

**Três Cabeças Loucuras:** Jagoda's Dream; Pigeon; Carambola; Colibri; Just Lovin'; Lado Leste; Six Six Eight; Rio Negro. (38:11)  
**Personnel:** Mauricio Takara, cavaquinho, drums, percussion, electronics, voice; Rob Mazurek, cornet, electronics, voice; Guilherme Granado, keyboards, loops, samplers, percussion, voice; Richard Ribeiro, drums, voice; Kiko Dinucci, guitar, voice; Jason Adasiewicz, vibraphone (5, 7); John Herndon, drums (5, 7); Matthew Lux, bass guitar (7).

**Ordering info:** [cuneiformrecords.com](http://cuneiformrecords.com)

**Neil Cowley Trio**  
*Radio Silence*

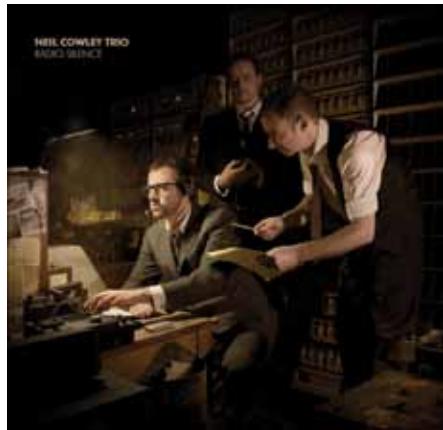
NAIM 147  
★★★½

From start to finish, *Radio Silence* is power-trio piano jazz, all of it with a hell-bent overlay. Things kick off with a kind of somber, quasi-classical introduction that soon becomes a bare-knuckles acoustic rock-out—pianist Neil Cowley, bassist Richard Sadler and drummer Evan Jenkins erupting the ghosts of some kind of Jerry Lee Lewis apparition, “Monoface’s” scowl emerging as something out of Nirvana by way of the Bad Plus.

And things don’t really let up through *Radio Silence*’s nine tunes. Even the serenity that courses through “Radio Silence” seems vulnerable to the sudden turns Cowley and company make. The tune may be balladic in nature and tempo, with more lyrical content, but the attitude keeps you on the edge of your seat. “Vice Skating,” likewise, combines the lyrical alternating with more hypnotic franticisms, Cowley’s full melody, rolling left hand and cautionary right hand stabs ominous preludes to a hint of Ahmad Jamal-like chromaticism before another launch.

Keeping Cowley’s classical background and his work with the Brand New Heavies, Zero 7 and Adele in mind, listening to him play “A French Lesson” one can derive their own ideas about how this guy seems adept at turning it on and off at a moment’s notice, “Lesson” laced with sputtering, extra-lyrical outbursts and some outright explosions.

By the time we get to “Desert To Rabat,” the vibe is less off-kilter manic, more ruminative, the lessening steam allowing for a closer listen. Alike with “Stereoface,” another medi-



um-tempo piece that Ramsey Lewis could pull off, its slightly funky textures adding to what is a nice vehicle to hear Sadler’s funky bass lines and Jenkins’ snappy, slightly New Orleans-style shuffle beats. The playful “Hug The Greyhound” adds to what is slowly becoming another display of active playing with patterns that somehow carry less gravitas.

And “Portal”—the longest cut at over 14-and-a-half minutes—becomes the most extravagant display of this band’s virtues and excesses, combining the serenely lyrical alternating with the return of Jerry Lee Lewis the Jazz Madman. But halfway through “Portal” there are almost two transitional minutes of nothing before the jazziest, urbane clubby trio enters playing with a hint of swing in 7 and a delicious series of chords with another hint, this time of sweet melancholy before one final, brief ratcheting up.

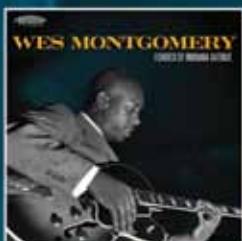
—John Ephland

**Radio Silence:** Monoface; Radio Silence; Vice Skating; A French Lesson; Gerald; Desert To Rabat; Stereoface; Hug The Greyhound; Portal. (55:59)

**Personnel:** Neil Cowley, piano; Richard Sadler, bass; Evan Jenkins, drums.

**Ordering info:** [naimjazz.com](http://naimjazz.com)

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## Books | BY ERIC FINE

### Chitlin' Circuit Chronicles

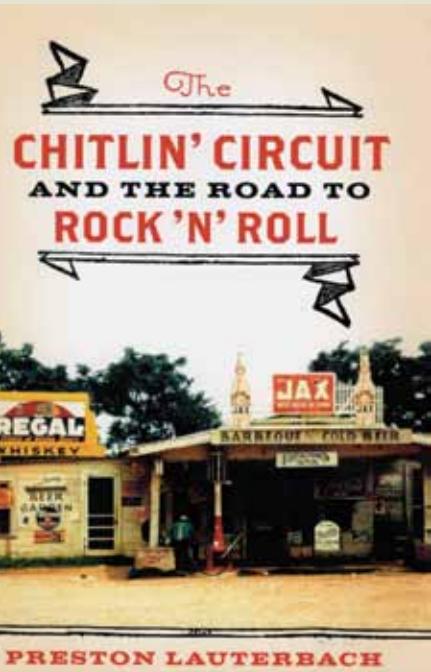
When it comes to r&b music in the 20th century, Preston Lauterbach not only could ace a survey course; he could serve as the instructor. There are few artists, promoters and venues he couldn't identify or chronicle. The first-time author dumps all of this knowledge into *The Chitlin' Circuit And The Road To Rock 'N' Roll* (W.W. Norton), a book blessed and cursed by its desire to rescue the less-heralded aspects of r&b history.

The chitlin' circuit was a patchwork of theaters, nightclubs and taprooms that spotlighted black music and theater. Its prime years took place before the civil rights era. For the majority of the performers, it provided their only outlet. The book traces the circuit's beginnings to the 1930s, when big bands from Northern cities began touring in the South. The circuit's profile increased after the outbreak of World War II. By then small groups, typified by Louis Jordan and His Tympany Five, had caught on. Venues could book r&b and blues singers for far less money than the swing "orchestras" of bygone days.

Black newspapers such as the Chicago Defender, Indianapolis Recorder and Houston Informer exaggerated the exploits of the various acts. This publicity, often paid for by promoters, helped fill house after house. The conditions were often harsh. The bands performed one-nighters at juke joints and lounges; reports of fights and shootings surfaced frequently. Backroom gambling operations, numbers rackets, prostitution and police corruption provided the backdrop. In segregated communities, the musicians faced the added challenges of finding restaurants and overnight accommodations.

Even so, the circuit spawned booking agencies and influential imprints, notably Chess in Chicago, Peacock in Houston, Specialty in Los Angeles and King in Cincinnati. Regional airplay and jukebox exposure allowed chitlin' circuit acts to gain further traction. Hit songs such as Roy Brown's "Good Rockin' Tonight" and Little Richard's "Tutti Frutti" found a niche with white listeners, prompting Billboard magazine to create an r&b chart in 1949.

The circuit's heyday occurred in the 1940s and 1950s, when its reach extended to the Northeast and Midwest. Its alumni included Duke Ellington, Billie Holiday, Chuck Berry, Ike and Tina Turner, Ray Charles, Aretha Franklin, the Isley Brothers, Diana Ross, Jimi Hendrix and Grover Washington Jr. In the 1970s and 1980s the circuit's presence outside the South declined, a casualty of urban renewal programs, riots and narcotics.



PRESTON LAUTERBACH

When Lauterbach confines himself to a single subject—profiling an artist or promoter, or chronicling an event—he sharpens his focus and imbues his prose with depth and color. He resurrects the bittersweet legacies of promoters Denver Ferguson and Don Robey, whose respective visions helped shape the circuit's early years. He chronicles, in tragic detail, the fire in 1940 that killed 209 people at the Rhythm Club in Natchez, Miss.

But too often, the text reads like a roll call of incidental names, dates and places. The sentences and transitions are sometimes sloppy. The overuse of clichés and vernacular makes matters worse. Still, for all of its detail, the book fails to cover a great deal. Louis Jordan, B.B. King, Little Richard and James Brown are featured prominently, alongside big band leader Walter Barnes, one of the circuit's pioneers. However, blues giants such as Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf and John Lee Hooker receive little mention; ditto for the legacies of Chuck Berry and Motown Records.

The attention paid to Hi Records and the rise of Al Green should have extended to Stax, that other Memphis imprint whose roster included Otis Redding, Isaac Hayes, Wilson Pickett, Sam and Dave, and Booker T. and the MGs. The book also ignores soul-jazz, whose popularity in the 1950s and 1960s introduced chitlin' circuit audiences to the organ combos of Richard "Groove" Holmes and others. Though it takes a few detours, Lauterbach's version of the "road to rock 'n' roll" travels mostly through the South and chronicles a largely forgotten cast. A broader focus would have resulted in a more definitive study. DB

Ordering info: [www.norton.com](http://www.norton.com)

## **Andy Statman** **Old Brooklyn**

SHEFA RECORDS HORN-3004/5

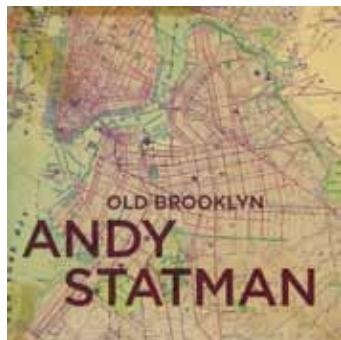
★★★½

Like the progressive bluegrass genre Andy Statman helped pioneer, Old Brooklyn employs a sweeping pallet of American musical traditions to create a seamless and highly spiritual sound imprinted with the gamut of jazz, klezmer, blues, bluegrass, rock and gospel.

A trailblazing mandolin virtuoso and "newgrass" star for decades, Statman reformulated his artistic approach in the late 1970s, when he recorded his first album of clarinet-driven klezmer music. While he continued to perform in both genres and on both instruments, recent recordings like East Flatbush Blues and Awakening From Above have kept his clarinet and mandolin interests separate.

The two-disc set Old Brooklyn, however, spans the full range of Statman's creative impulses, with inspired results. Whether he's soloing alongside a tea kettle on a hot plate ("Totally Steaming"), covering gospel with Ricky Skaggs ("The Lord Will Provide") or exploring his old rock chops ("A Boppin' Crib"), Statman's compositions and interpretations are consistently emotive, as he uses melodies to hone in on each tune's underlying soulfulness.

Cameos by Skaggs, Béla Fleck, Paul Shaffer and others keep things lively thanks to the variety of unexpected voices, but the real star here is



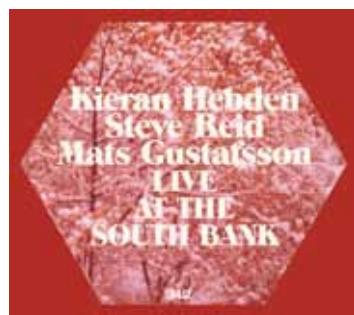
## **Kieran Hebden/ Steve Reid/ Mats Gustafsson** **Live At The South Bank**

SMALLTOWN SUPERJAZZ 211

★★★½

Drummer Steve Reid's first recording session was for Martha and the Vandellas' "Dancing In The Streets"; he went on to play with James Brown, Charles Tyler and Miles Davis. With such an illustrious resume, one might expect him to spend his late career taking victory laps, but instead he embarked on some of his most adventurous work with English electronicist Kieran Hebden, aka Four Tet. This is most likely Reid's last release, since he died of cancer less than a year after making it, and while it's hardly a perfect record, it stands as a monument to his defiance of convention.

Although Hebden sampled freely from jazz LPs, especially cosmic free music from the 1970s, he is no jazz musician. He revels in the fat bulkiness of synthesized sound, and his samples of albums and fellow players are so



thoroughly transformed by speed manipulation and looping that you'll rarely recognize his sources. Reid's response is to forge steadily ahead, imposing a cadence that is not so much like conventional swing as the surge of a steam engine. Only "The Sun Never Sets," with its stuttering glitch-tones arranged into a catchy tune, draws on the pop side of either man's repertoire. Elsewhere they travel on parallel paths, coexisting more than they collaborate. This results in fascinating atmospheres and murky washes, and it's mostly up to guest saxophonist Mats Gustafsson to impose coherence upon the music. The Swede's bawling reeds exude an unalloyed emotional intensity that drags Reid's cadences and Hebden's squelchy synth tones along like a hungry dogsled team headed for home.

—Bill Meyer

**Live At The South Bank:** Morning Prayer; Lyman Place; People Be Happy; Untitled; 25th Street; The Sun Never Sets. (41:54/41:01)  
**Personnel:** Kieran Hebden, electronics; Steve Reid, drums; Mats Gustafsson, saxophone, slide saxophone.  
**Ordering info:** [smalltownsupersound.com](http://smalltownsupersound.com)

Statman, whose dizzying inventiveness ultimately trumps the appeal of marquee names.

The disc's exuberant opener is one of the album's most adventurous tracks, featuring lap steel and mandolin jams, out clarinet solos and, ultimately, a dance-worthy rhythm that sets the stage for Fleck's instantly recognizable appearance on the up-tempo klezmer style of "My Hollywood Girls." When things slow down with "Life Cycles," Statman's plaintive solo clarinet is embellished with Eastern-influenced trills to match the lament-laden melody. Later, he adds another layer with "Bourbon In Jackson Hole," which he's reportedly called a bluegrass take on "Life Cycles." From start to finish, Statman's creative juxtapositions of genre-specific ideas make up for the seeming lack of editing that gave way to a potentially unwieldy record.

—Jennifer Odell

**Old Brooklyn:** Disc One: Old Brooklyn; My Hollywood Girls; Pretty Little Gai; The Lord Will Provide; Totally Steaming; Zhok Mahoney; Eitan And Zaidy; Since I Met You Baby; A Brighter Day; Life Cycles; Sally Ann; Y'all Come (48:18); Disc Two: Bourbon In Jackson Hole; A Boppin' Crib; Anthem; Waltz For Mom; Ocean Parkway; Shabbos Nigun; Mah Yedidus (How Beloved Is Your Rest); Blues In 3; The One In Nine; On The King's Highway; Uncle Mo; 21st Century Chicken Shack Back Blues; Long Journey Home (48:04).

**Personnel:** Andy Statman, clarinet, mandolin; Jim Whitney, bass; Larry Eagle, drums, percussion; Ricky Skaggs, vocals; Béla Fleck, banjo; Paul Shaffer, Hammond B3 organ, piano, synthesizer; Bruce Molsky, banjo, fiddle; Marty Rifkin, pedal steel; John Goodman, voice; Art Baron, trombone, euphonium, tuba; Lew Soloff, trumpet; Bob Jones, acoustic guitar; Kristin Mueller, surdo; The Statlettes, clarinets; Byron Berline, fiddle; Jon Sholler, acoustic, electric and steel body guitars.

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## Sax Solos Over Jazz Standards

I would like to introduce *Sax Solos Over Jazz Standards*, my new book and play-along CD that was recently released by Jamey Aebersold's Jazz Books. In it, I present sophisticated and balanced melodic statements based on standard changes that can serve as models for practice and study. While these solos are carefully "composed," each is designed to evoke the spirit of an improvised performance.

At the core of any investigation into the art of improvised music is the process of listening to and transcribing the work of past and present masters. These performances fully define the idiom and, for the astute listener, can point the way for future exploration and development.

To be able to execute the dexterous phrases associated with so many jazz performances, solid technical skills are required. Most players have spent a great deal of time practicing exercises and scale studies; a flashy lick or seemingly impossible run that goes by in an instant is most likely the result of many hours of practice and experimentation.

Technical prowess, however, is just a first step. Accomplished players must have a firm grasp of the intervallic relationships that make up the vocabulary and language of jazz combined with a thorough understanding of harmony and form. The development of melodic ideas in any improvised statement is directly related to the length and arrangement of individual phrases within a composition as well as the overall form.

Finally, technique, theory, language skills and experience must all come together for any artist to create a cohesive musical statement. Intervals and short melodic phrases must be arranged in a thoughtful and hopefully inspired manner to create a complete musical idea.

In the refined jazz "etudes" found in *Sax Solos Over Jazz Standards*, all of these elements come into play. In like manner, many facets of post-bop and contemporary playing styles are addressed, including the use of pentatonic scales, various types of chromaticism, the development of motivic ideas and even "outside" sensibilities.

To fully understand the intricacies of each piece, it is important that the reader be cognizant of the harmonies, chord-scale relationships and forms being used. What scale or mode is being indicated by the melodic line? Do certain structures point to alternate harmonic possibilities? How are different types of chromaticism employed? Sometimes the answers to these questions are obvious. However, a purposefully nebulous relationship between melodic ideas and a harmonic progression can also be a source of

### Example 1



### Example 2



### Example 3



### Example 4



excitement for both the performer and listener.

Throughout the various pieces found in this book, I attempted to balance these kinds of choices to create variety and interest. I also tried to incorporate well-established bits of vocabulary and language. These include often-used chromatic passages, classic arpeggios of certain harmonic structures as well as the use of altered pitches to create familiar melodic phrases. Pacing and the formulation of organic phrases were also considered. And, with each solo, I tried to tell a story.

From a technical perspective, this music is designed to challenge. Created originally for

the tenor saxophone, the intervallic leaps and lengths of phrases require solid mechanical skills and musicianship. All are written in common keys for the standards on which they are based. While a few altissimo notes are required for tenor and soprano saxophones, the E-flat transpositions fit neatly into the written range of alto and baritone. (Both B-flat and E-flat parts are included in the book.)

For each of the 12 pieces, there are two tracks on the accompanying play-along CD. The first track includes me playing the written solo on tenor with the rhythm section, then a quick fade-out. The subsequent track features the same

rhythm section accompaniment in its entirety for individual practice and experimentation.

Several excerpts from *Sax Solos Over Jazz Standards* demonstrate some of these ideas (all examples here are in B-flat). Example 1 contains the first eight bars of "Brown Out" (based on the changes to "Stella By Starlight"). The flowing melodic line clearly indicates the choice of chord scales and establishes a measured, organic sense of phrasing. Notice the one chromatic passing tone in bar 4 and the arpeggios in bars 5 and 7 that outline upper structures of each chord. These types of melodic and rhythmic sensibilities, firmly based in a post-bop style, underlie much of the entire text.

Example 2 is the bridge of "Silver Lining" ("In Your Own Sweet Way"). I composed this solo as a medium-swing exercise that focuses, in part, on double-time figures. Here you can see an interesting ascending motivic sequence in bars 59–61, followed by descending shapes in the chromatic ii–V sequence in bars 63–64. Notice also the use of a pentatonic scale pattern for the Emaj7 chord in bar 58.

"Totally Golden" is based on John Coltrane's "Impressions." Example 3 is the second "A" section of the form leading into the bridge. To echo

the quality of Trane's early '60s style, this piece is constructed predominantly from various pentatonic scales derived from the two modes that make up the original progression. Check out the simple, dramatic effect achieved with the introduction of the C-sharp in bar 12. The seemingly "outside" notes in bar 16 appear startling at first but are merely an anticipation of the change of key at the bridge.

In the first eight bars of the second chorus of "Yellow Dawn" (Example 4), you can see several types of chromaticism and phrases that allude to chord scales outside the written progression. The G-sharps in bars 34 and 37 are used as both lower chromatic neighbor tones and approach notes. A descending sequence in bars 37–39 creates the feeling of a downward spiral. The most unconventional notes in this passage are the E-flats in bars 38–39. Resultant melodic structures seem to indicate the momentary use of an E-flat whole-tone scale that



leads the listener away from the original tonality, then back again.

It is my hope that *Sax Solos Over Jazz Standards* will be especially useful to advancing players who are seeking solid material to digest. Hopefully readers will enjoy what's here and find material for personal study and practical application. Educators take note: These etudes can also function as challenging audition pieces for local, regional and state competitions.

DB

SAXOPHONIST TONY DAGRADI IS AN INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNIZED JAZZ PERFORMER, COMPOSER, AUTHOR AND EDUCATOR. FOR MORE THAN THREE DECADES HE HAS MADE HIS HOME IN NEW ORLEANS, PERFORMING ON TENOR AND SOPRANO SAX WITH MANY OF THE CRESCENT CITY'S MOST CELEBRATED ARTISTS. DAGRADI IS BEST KNOWN FOR HIS WORK WITH ASTRAL PROJECT, A QUINTET MADE UP OF TOP NEW ORLEANS PLAYERS DEDICATED TO PLAYING CUTTING-EDGE IMPROVISATIONAL MUSIC. SINCE 1990, DAGRADI HAS BEEN A PROFESSOR OF SAXOPHONE AND JAZZ STUDIES AT LOYOLA UNIVERSITY IN NEW ORLEANS. *SAX SOLOS OVER JAZZ STANDARDS* IS AVAILABLE ONLINE AT [JAZZBOOKS.COM](http://JAZZBOOKS.COM).

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## Dave Liebman's Range-Spanning Soprano Sax Solo On 'Port Ligat'

Besides being a stellar saxophonist, on both tenor and soprano, Dave Liebman is also a great author and educator, having written numerous works on jazz improvisation. He's well known for his chromatic approach and has written extensively on this subject. But what I want to examine here isn't his note and scale choices, but how he uses the range of his instrument to construct a solo that leads to an exhilarating climax.

A good example comes from a recent release, 2010's *Quest For Freedom* (Sunnyside), a CD of Liebman playing on mostly his own compositions arranged for big band by Jim McNeely. On the fifth track, "Port Ligat," after a wonderful duo improvisation between Liebman's soprano and pianist Richie Beirach, there is a long C# altered dominant section in which the ensemble builds behind Liebman.

The manner in which he employs the range of his instrument both complements this crescendo and makes for quite an emotional statement.

The first five measures cover only about an octave, and all in the middle range, from the E at the bottom of the staff to the F-natural at the top. At the end of measure six he brings us down to a low G#, the lowest note he plays in this section (and the lowest note available on soprano sax) and one that becomes very important as the solo progresses. After this, he starts bumping up the high end, but he does it slowly, reaching for a higher note in each successive phrase: F# in measure 9, G# and A in the next measure, and then B in measure 11.

The phrase from measures 10–12 stays up in this area, but then in measure 13 he drops down to a low D and sweeps up to a high D above the staff, the highest he's ventured so far,

# energy

7:32 C#11b13#9b9

before taking most of measure 14 to work his way back down to that low G#, the bottom he's set up for this improvisation. In measure 17 he runs from this low G# up to the high D-natural he topped out at before, encapsulating the entire range he's used thus far into one lick.

After spending the next seven measures working his way back down and up to this high D, in measure 25 he leaps up to a high F, a minor third above the high D that had previously been the high point. Liebman emphasizes this note by holding it for a full five beats, and playing it loud makes it all that much more climactic (as does the ensemble behind him arriving at double forte). After a measure break he leans into this high F again, and then swoops down to the G# at the bottom, again spanning the

full range in one lick, only now the range is larger and he's descending through it instead of ascending.

Liebman slowly constricts his range back to the middle octave for the next three-and-a-half bars, providing a bit of calm in the spate he's just created, and then lunges back up to a high C#–D trill, the previous high point, leaning on it for five beats before falling off it. Then, in measure 35, he pounces on it again and drops back to the low G#, once again hitting the bottom of his improvisation, but doing so in a manner that provides a poignant climax while giving a sense of finality to this section. **DB**

---

JIMI DURSO IS A GUITARIST AND BASSIST IN THE NEW YORK AREA. HE CAN BE REACHED AT [JIMIDURSO.COM](http://JIMIDURSO.COM).



 *Dream*

[www.dreamcymbals.com](http://www.dreamcymbals.com)

## Gen16 AE Cymbals

### *Advanced Acoustic/Electric Percussion*

Gen16 is the business division of Zildjian charged with creating “intelligent percussion” instruments to serve a variety of professional and home-based multimedia situations. Some forward-looking products under the new brand include Gen16 Grooves (collections of MIDI grooves by some of the world’s best drummers), the Digital Vault (a sampled collection of cymbals for DAWs) and the iPad/iPhone GroovePlayer app. Next up are the Gen16 AE (Acoustic Electric) Cymbals, a completely new category of instrument that Zildjian refers to as “modeled cymbals.”

These are not sampled cymbals; they are real cymbals, and the amplified tones are produced by a DSP interface that gets its signal from two tiny microphones embedded in the mounting system provided for each cymbal. Think about how an electric guitar operates versus an acoustic guitar.

A five-channel digital processor models the acoustic signal coming from the cymbals via the provided mini plug snake. The design of the DSP unit is very clean and modern, with adjustments for program setting, pan and volume for each of the five channels, and global settings for volume, reverb and mix for the optional incoming drum signal. The unit also has two mini plugs for headphones and for plugging in an iPod.

The AE Cymbals were very easy to set up (thanks to the fully adjustable AE Rack System, sold separately) and adjust with 20 program settings for each cymbal. The output from the main left and right to the board was a little low, but the unit had a clean enough signal that compensating with additional gain on the mixer didn’t result in any noticeable unit noise.

I found the shape, weight and playability of the cymbals to be quite comfortable. They are unlike any sort of MIDI-type trigger cymbal you may be familiar with. They are specially engineered so the volume is roughly 25 percent of a normal cymbal. The cymbal is drilled with a large number of small holes that minimize volume but are not so intrusive as to



affect playability. They look a bit like a spaghetti strainer, but they rebound and play as well as any cymbal in your personal collection.

The cymbal sounds all tend to be on the bright and present side. Of the 20 settings for each cymbal, about one-third are a straight-ahead type of sound, one-third are affected with some type of pitch-bend setting, and one-third exhibit a trash-type sound.

All in all, Gen16’s AE Cymbals are an interesting and exciting product. Some of the immediate uses that came to mind would be practice environments, small studios, churches, stage shows or any setting where volume and audio control need more granular adjusting than an acoustic cymbal can provide.

—Matt Kern

Ordering info: [gen-16.com](http://gen-16.com), [zildjian.com](http://zildjian.com)

## Zoom H2n Handy Recorder

### *Giant Leap Forward*

Samson Technologies has established itself as a leader in the handheld digital recorder market with its Zoom H1, H2 and H4n audio devices. The new H2n, a complete redesign of the H2, pushes the envelope with some amazing enhancements considering its small size and slim \$199 price tag.

With both internal and external improvements, the H2n represents a giant leap forward compared to its predecessor. The outer shell has been completely re-engineered with a sleek and comfortable form factor featuring easily accessible controls and a bright 1.8-inch backlit LCD display. The most significant additions to the H2n are found on the inside, where Zoom uses five high-quality microphones to provide not only pristine audio quality, but the ability to capture sound in a wide variety of stereo and surround-sound patterns.

There is a standard X/Y pair of mics available for normal stereo recording. The remaining three mics allow the unit to perform mid-side recording, a technique used in film and broadcast. One mic captures audio from the front, and the other two capture from the left and right sides. This results in a much richer stereo image and is useful where ambient sounds



are present. The H2n lets you control the level of the side microphones for fine-tuning the stereo image, and if you record in the unit’s special MS-RAW mode, you can even adjust the side mics after recording. The remaining two recording patterns—two-channel and four-channel—use all five mics, combining the X/Y stereo image with the mid-side image to provide capture from all directions.

The audio quality of the H2n is stunning, and the four recording modes produce incredibly realistic recordings. The H2n records to an SD card in a variety of compressed and uncompressed file formats with WAV files up to 24-bit/96kHz and MP3 files up to 320kbps. Recording is simple with auto-gain or manual level controls, an auto-

record function and a compressor/limiter. There are some nice built-in editing features like dividing a file and onboard format conversion. A USB connection allows quick file transfer or computer editing with the included WaveLab LE software. The Zoom H2n is an impressive recorder in both its quality and game-changing feature set.

—Keith Baumann

Ordering info: [samsontech.com](http://samsontech.com)

## Dream Dark Matter Cymbals Fire-Forged Tones

Dream's Dark Matter cymbals are not your run-of-the-mill cymbals. With their dark visuals, ominous tones and fire-forged origins, they're more like something out of *Lord Of The Rings*. The Dark Matter line has recently expanded from four rides (two 20-inch and two 22-inch) to an additional 24-inch ride, two crashes (16-inch and 18-inch), hi-hats (14-inch) and the massive 22-inch Moon Ride.



The common thread among the various Dark Matter models is that they have all been through the heating/tempering/shaping process two full times. Basically, Dream takes a perfectly good cymbal and sticks it in the fire again, then lets them sit for several months. This process is responsible for creating the complex and dissonant trashiness that characterizes the line.

The Dark Matter Energy series is based off of the company's Energy line. This is a fully lathed cymbal that has been reheated. The re-firing process adds a drier, complex undertone while still retaining the projection and warmth of the original Energy series. When I first tried out a 22-inch ride, it had great stick definition and interesting undertones, along with a washiness that never threatened to overwhelm. This struck me as a great all-purpose cymbal.

The next set is the Dark Matter Flat Earth rides. These cymbals were based off of Dream's 24-inch Small Bell Flat Ride. Originally introduced in 20-inch and 22-inch models, a 24-inch version has now been added. This cymbal is a close cousin to a flat-top ride, as it has almost no bell and a very small curvature. Because of the process, it has excellent stick definition like a flat-top, as well as the interesting overtones the Dark Matter process provides. I took the 22-inch and 24-inch for a drive, and they had incredible character (especially the 24-inch). The undertones were big, washy, dark and exciting. The 22-inch was a bit more controlled on the low end, but they both had a unique tone with enough bite to cut through an ensemble. I discovered I could give both the Dark Matter Energy and the Dark Matter Flat Earth a good *thwhack* with the shoulder of my stick to create an explosive sound with a quick decay while the lows sustained. It had a gong-like quality without sounding like an actual gong.

The Dark Matter Moon Ride is Dream's first non-lathed cymbal. To quote Brian LaRue, Dream's director of U.S. operations, it's like an "anvil with tone." This is a massive cymbal. If you like the sound of a Hammered K Custom but find yourself feeling like "it just needs more," then the Moon Ride is for you. By far the least crashable cymbal in the line due to its thickness, its ping and stick definition are outstanding. Somehow it keeps the dark undertones subtly within its quick decay. And the bell is huge—it actually looks like half a moon.

Rounding off the new line is an 18-inch crash/ride, 16-inch crash and the 14-inch hats. The crashes, like the rides, had an explosive attack but trailed off quickly with the lows sustaining. The 16-inch in particular had a gorgeous kind of low shimmer to it. The hi-hats were not as washy as I thought they would be, but they had a good, solid "chick" that cut through nicely when recording.

If you are after a dark, rich cymbal experience, make sure to keep this new line of Dark Matter cymbals on your radar.

—Matt Kern

Ordering info: [dreamcymbals.com](http://dreamcymbals.com)

## Vandoren V16 Metal Definitive Tenor Jazz Mouthpiece

With so many different brands and makes of metal tenor saxophone mouthpieces available today, it can be easy to forget one of the genre's definitive models: the Vandoren V16 metal.

I recently revisited the V16 metal for tenor, which has a design reminiscent of old metal Florida Links and draws its inspiration from the sound of jazz tenor players dating back to the 1950s. Constructed from what Vandoren calls "Bell Metal" brass and plated in 24-karat gold, these heavy mouthpieces have a warm, overtone-rich sound and provide lots of power when called upon. They feature colorful harmonics, crisp articulation and a wide dynamic range. In short, these are very well balanced pieces.

Upon play-testing the T75 and T95 from the V16 line, I was immediately struck by their ability to project—a quality that can likely be attributed to their relatively long rail curvatures, straight sidewalls and medium-small chambers. After playing both mouthpieces for about 20 minutes, I was impressed by their sheer flexibility of tone.

The T75, the standard model in the V16 line, has a fairly open tip (2.65mm) and a medium-long facing. It blew effortlessly with a medium reed, and I was able to get a slightly bright, focused tone that blended nicely with the rest of the sax section (from the second tenor chair).

The T95 features a wide-open tip (2.95mm) and a long facing, resulting in a huge sound that makes it suitable for soloing and wailing. When I went with a softer reed, it felt like I was capable of breathing fire through the horn.

The reason the V16s have remained popular among tenor players is that they provide tonal character with just enough edge. Both mouthpieces played and responded particularly well with Vandoren's Optimum ligature for tenor sax, available in silver or gold plating.

—Ed Enright

Ordering info: [dansr.com](http://dansr.com)





## BACK TO BLACK

Levy's Leathers has introduced black-on-black guitar straps.

The straps are made of 2-inch black garment leather with black embroidery, polypropylene web backing and a tri-glide adjustment. They are available in six designs. [More info: levysleathers.com](http://levysleathers.com)



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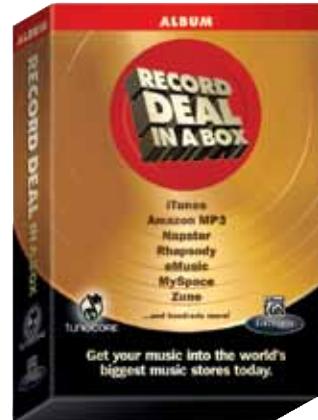
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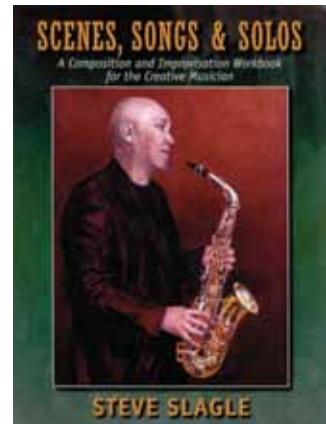
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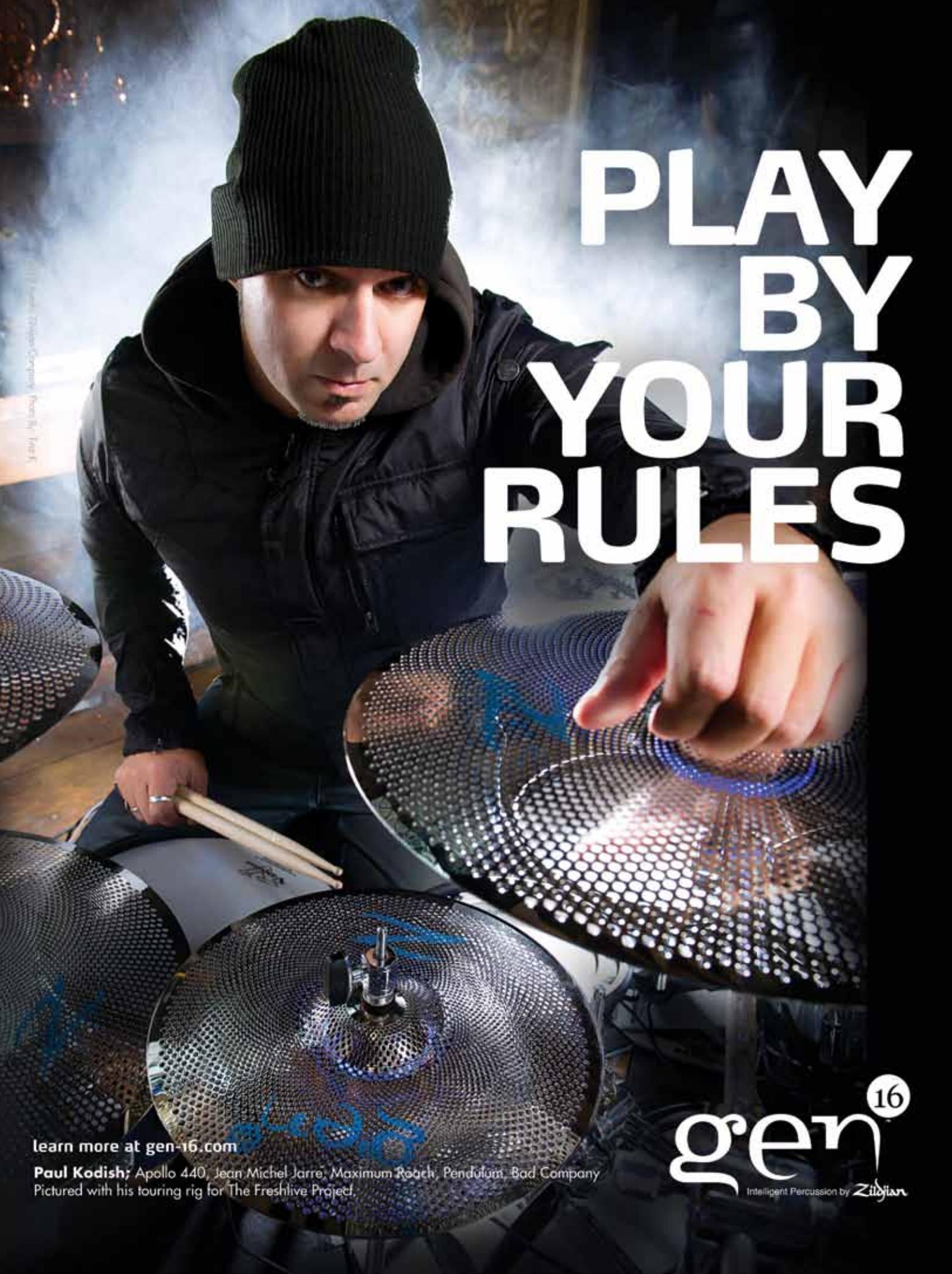
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## SPIRIT OF COMPOSITION

Jazz saxophonist, educator and composer/arranger Steve Slagle has created an original guide to tapping into the creative spark for composition and improvisation. In his book *Scenes, Songs & Solos: A Composition Workbook For The Creative Musician* (Schaffner Press), Slagle reveals the underlying components to songwriting. Using his own musical creations as examples, he explains in detail the inner workings of each piece in terms of its melodic, harmonic, rhythmic and structural components. [More info: schaffnerpress.com](http://schaffnerpress.com)



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Five Towns College Pre-College Jazz Ensemble

## Five Towns' Pre-College Jazz Program: Prep School for Hopeful Music Majors

Come this spring, jazz-hungry high-school students in New York's Nassau and Suffolk counties will enjoy a fresh opportunity to polish their craft. "Our goal is simple," said Thomas Manuel, band director for Five Towns College's (FTC) new Pre-College Jazz Ensemble. "We want to inspire young jazz musicians."

According to Professor Gerry Saulter, deputy chairman of FTC's music division, the pre-college program builds on young musicians' existing knowledge and experience. "The idea is to give high-school students in the Long Island area the chance to experiment and explore through a formal jazz band, beyond what their individual schools offer," Saulter explained. "That will include helping students work on elevated techniques and trying to nurture the spirit of jazz through a band situation."

Students accepted into the program will delve deeply into classic jazz repertoire, shedding on tunes made famous by Count Basie, Duke Ellington, Benny Carter, Dizzy Gillespie, Mary Lou Williams, Benny Goodman and others. "Behind each of these great bands were great composers and arrangers, such as Billy Strayhorn, Sammy Nestico, Gil Evans and Tadd Dameron," Manuel said. "The arrangers are perhaps lesser known—hence why we emphasize a comprehensive study of the Great American Songbook."

In addition to weekly instruction, ensemble rehearsals and workshops, band members hone their chops on the bandstand in front of live audiences. "The program emphasizes the expe-

rience of performing in a big band ensemble," Manuel said. "Students will play as the opening act to major national jazz figures at the Dix Hill Performing Arts Center at Five Towns College." In addition, FTC pre-college students will perform outreach concerts at nursing homes, hospitals and other locations.

"We want to give our students as many opportunities as possible to play in a formal setting, as well as to learn the history and legacy of big bands," Saulter added.

Saulter and his FTC colleagues became inspired to create their newest jazz initiative after witnessing the success of the institution's other pre-college opportunities, among them a guitar ensemble and an audio engineering course of study. "Over the last two years, the guitar program has literally doubled in size each year, and we've had to add additional semesters of the audio engineering program as well," Saulter said. "We wanted to expand from there. The institution had admired the work Tom Manuel had done with his jazz band program at Ward Melville High School, so we decided to expand in the jazz band direction with him as the leader."

To join the program, students audition live for FTC faculty and play tunes in varying styles backed by a professional trio. Drummers and bassists will need to hold their own with a variety of additional feels and tempos as well. "We're looking for well-rounded musicians with a strong work ethic," Manuel said, "and most importantly, a passion for jazz."

—Michael Gallant

## School Notes ▶

Vijay Iyer



CHRIS DRUKER

**New Direction:** Pianist Vijay Iyer has been appointed director of the Banff Centre's International Workshop in Jazz and Creative Music. Iyer, who will begin his tenure in 2013, will take the place of trumpeter Dave Douglas, who has directed the program for the past 10 years. Iyer will also be at the 2012 workshop, which takes place from May 21–June 9. Details: [banffcentre.ca](http://banffcentre.ca)

**Final Four:** Howard University jazz choir Afro-Blue was one of the top four finalists on the NBC program *The Sing Off*. During its final night on the show, the ensemble was joined by Smokey Robinson for a performance of "You Really Got A Hold On Me." Details: [howard.edu](http://howard.edu)

**New Wave:** The Brooklyn Academy of Music recently commissioned *Brooklyn Babylon*, a multimedia collaboration between bandleader Darcy James Argue and graphic artist Danijel Zezelj. The hourlong performance, for which Argue's band Secret Society provides the soundtrack, recently premiered at New York City's BAM Harvey Theater. Details: [bam.org](http://bam.org)

**Life Lessons:** University of North Texas jazz professor Ed Soph received the Yamaha Lifetime Achievement Award. Soph, who has been a Yamaha artist since 1986, has collaborated with the Stan Kenton and Woody Herman big bands and has also presented master classes at educational institutions around the world. Details: [unt.edu](http://unt.edu)

**Building Blocks:** The Berklee College of Music began construction of a \$100 million, 16-story modern tower on the school's urban campus, marking the first time in the school's 66-year history that a campus facility was built from the ground up. The 155,000-square-foot building, which is slated for completion in fall 2013, will house dorm rooms, a two-story dining hall, a student performance venue, recording studios, practice and ensemble rooms, and street-level retail space. Details: [berklee.edu](http://berklee.edu)

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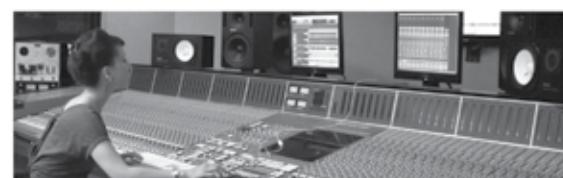


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## Jeff "Tain" Watts

In a historic broadcast on Sept. 4, 2011, JazzPlanet.tv presented the first-ever live webcast of a DownBeat Blindfold Test. Master percussionist Jeff "Tain" Watts weighed in on drummer-fueled music in front of an audience at the 32nd annual Detroit Jazz Festival. (Following the live stream, the Blindfold Test and other festival shows were archived at JazzPlanet.tv.) Watts served as the festival's artist in residence over the long Labor Day weekend. This was his fourth Blindfold Test.

### Elvin Jones/Jimmy Garrison Sextet

"Aborigine Dance In Scotland" (*Illumination!*, Impulse, 1998, rec'd 1964) Jones, drums; Garrison, bass; Prince Lasha, clarinet, flute; Sonny Simmons, alto saxophone; Charles Davis, baritone sax; McCoy Tyner, piano.

It's either Elvin Jones or a very studied replica. But I believe it is Elvin, Michigan's own. You can pretty much tell it's Elvin because of his vocabulary when he's playing the time and swinging. What he's playing is pretty hard—it doesn't get much harder. Elvin was always known for playing these abstract things. He had a penchant for selecting context that in the hands of another person would seem kind of corny. But with Elvin, you just have to laugh because he makes it work. This has a Scottish feel, while he also played tunes that were Japanese and Asian. Elvin is probably my greatest influence as far as taking liberties with time. I had the opportunity to meet him and spend time with him. It was during the time when I was playing in the *Tonight Show* band in 1993, when Elvin and I were two of the judges for the Thelonious Monk drum competition in New York. Afterwards we went to Bradley's and hung out, both of us sitting in with the band.

### Art Taylor

"Cookoo And Fungi" (*A.T.'s Delight*, Blue Note, 2007, rec'd 1960) Taylor, drums; Dave Burns, trumpet; Stanley Turrentine, tenor saxophone; Wynton Kelly, piano; Paul Chambers, bass; Carlos "Patato" Valdes, congas.

This was reminiscent of a lot of people. In the intro, there's a motif that's similar to the intro to "St. Thomas" that Max Roach plays on [Sonny Rollins'] *Saxophone Colossus*. But I don't believe it's Max, and the saxophonist doesn't sound like Sonny at all. This player did pitch-bending and elbow things that I associate with my homeboy Art Blakey. This person at times sounded like Blakey, the way he was playing the snare drum. But if it were Art, it's him playing slicker than I remember. Or maybe Philly Joe Jones affecting the African thing. But that's as close as I'm going to get. [after] It's Art Taylor? Yeah, he was always in the middle. He had a little bit of everyone in his playing. Kenny Washington is going to come to my home and beat me up because I missed Art Taylor. So I've got to get this album and go back to school.

### Jack DeJohnette Featuring Bill Frisell

"Ode To South Africa" (*The Elephant Sleeps But Still Remembers*, Golden Beams, 2006) DeJohnette, drums; Frisell, guitar; Ben Surman, additional production.

I haven't heard this. At first, the drums were sparse but totally carrying the rhythm. You can tell this drummer is a mature person who knows they can take their time and let the music go by. It's definitely more about setting a mood, as opposed to being a blowing vehicle or a jazz thing. It's hip, but could also function as some loungy, atmospheric music that's played softly in a club. The drummer played some things that I associate with Jack DeJohnette. If it's not him, then it's someone who is very influenced by him. There's a loose feeling, almost out of time like Elvin, but with different sounds that then resolve into a beat. [after] This is Jack? Yes, he likes to play loose and tight at the same time. He's patient enough to let the mood dictate. He always sounds so comfortable.



OLIVER LINK

### Terri Lyne Carrington

"Unconditional Love" (*The Mosaic Project*, Concord Jazz, 2011) Carrington, drums; Geri Allen, piano; Esperanza Spalding, bass, vocals; others.

Wow, wow, wow. This is a pretty song with some funk and Brazilian. I'm going to go out on a limb and say Terri Lyne Carrington. It's the type of setting she likes to create, and lately her albums have singers or she sings herself. I haven't heard this. But you can hear the way she hits the snare drum, and the piano sounds like Herbie [Hancock] or someone influenced by him, like Patrice [Rushen] or on a jive day Geri Allen. The vocalist is not Dianne Reeves, but has a Gretcheny [Parlato] feel. [after] It's Esperanza? I thought she was a bass player primarily. I would put this tune on and chill out at home with some Chablis. I like it.

### Francisco Mela & Cuban Safari

"Retrograde" (*Tree Of Life*, Half Note, 2011) Mela, drums; Uri Gurvich, saxophones; Ben Monder, guitar; Mauricio Herrera, Arturo Stable, percussion; others, bass and piano.

It sounds like a younger player playing the new style, which tends to be a straight eighth-note style, occasionally with odd time signatures and not necessarily rooted in a particular ethnicity. The body of the song is in 7, then there's a release that's in 4, and I enjoyed how they played on it. The horn player was playing the form and alluding to the 7 that was going on, but he was very free going over it. I'm thinking it could be someone like Eric Harland, but he tends to use tenor and not alto. I'm thinking Kendrick Scott. No, that's absolute. [after] It's Francisco Mela? Cool. I dig him and feel he will be an important drummer and bandleader down the road.

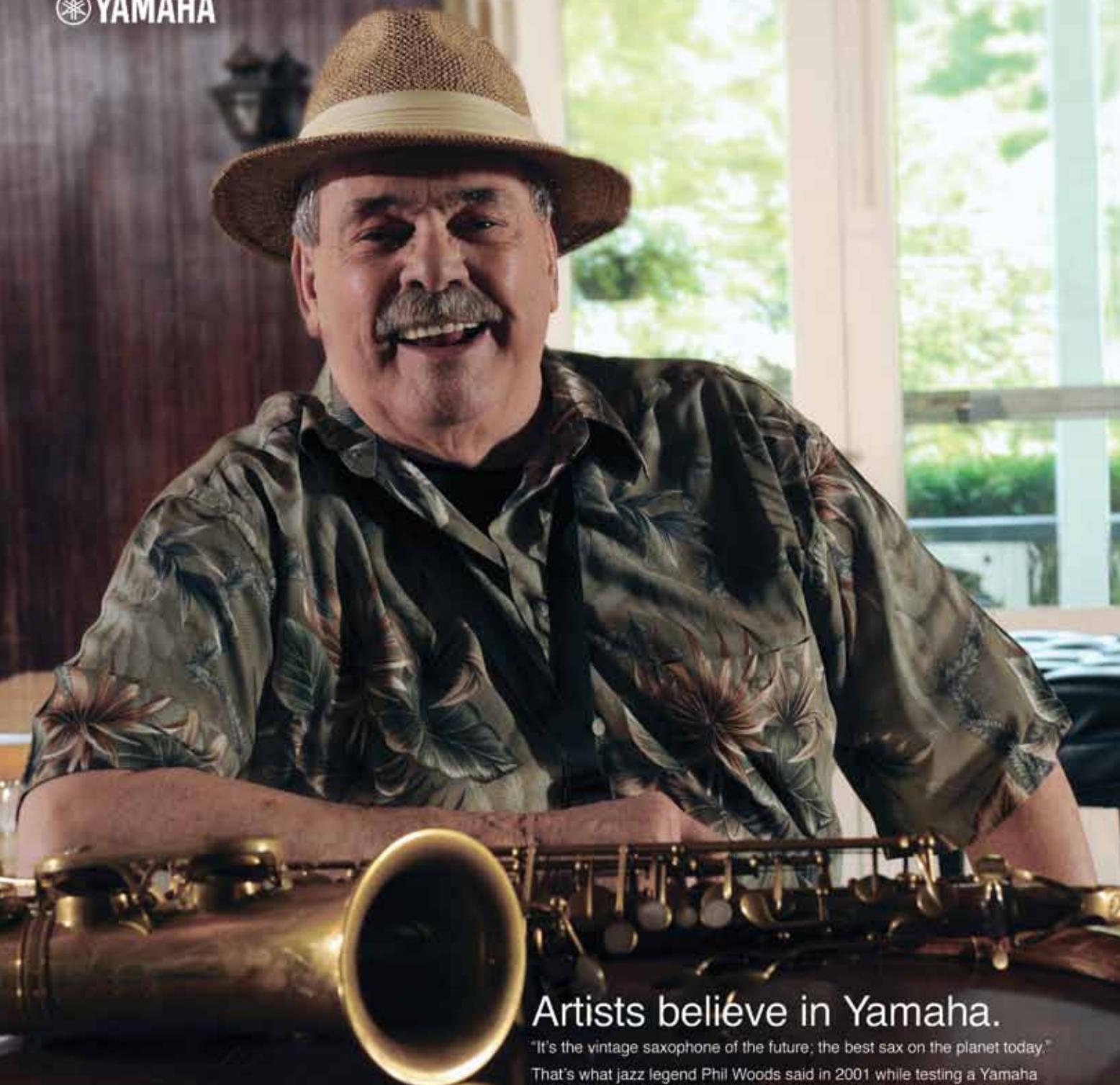
### Tony Williams

"China Road" (*Wilderness*, Ark 21, 1996) Williams, drums; Michael Brecker, tenor saxophone; Herbie Hancock, keyboards; Pat Metheny, guitar; Stanley Clarke, bass.

That is the very, very, great, great, very late bad drum-playing virtuoso throw-down...known as Tony Williams. This is an all-star band, with Stanley Clarke, Pat Metheny, my brother the late Michael Brecker, Herbie playing some clav. I never owned [Wilderness] until a couple of years ago. Tony had spent the last 10–15 years of his career pursuing orchestral music, even taking formal classes. Tony was bad. Great players are getting younger and younger, but Tony came out fully formed—a master by the time he was 16. Tony is the greatest example of combining his pure drumming ability with his knowledge of the tradition. **DB**

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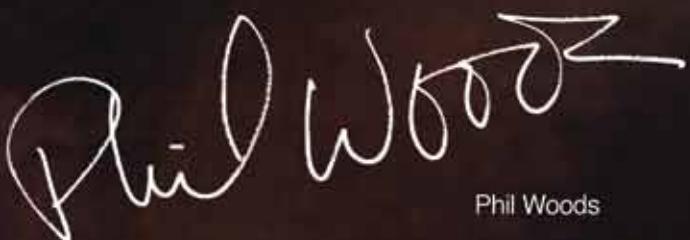
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