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*Jazz Album, Female Vocalist, Rising Star Jazz Artist & Rising Star Female Vocalist*

BY ALLEN MORRISON

The vocalist lands a quadruple crown of victories.



Ryan Truesdell (far right) conducts his big band, the Gil Evans Project. (Photo: Marc Santet)

Cover photo of Cécile McLorin Salvant shot by Jimmy and Dena Katz in New York City

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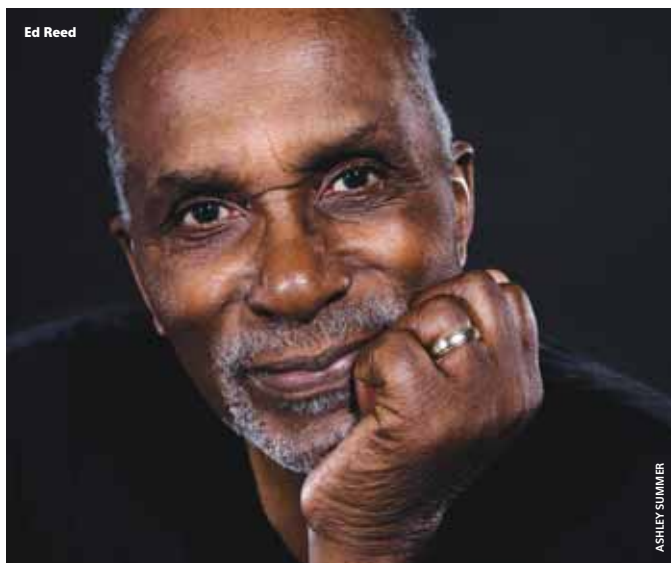
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# Stars Rise & Shine

**THIS IS CÉCILE'S MOMENT.** The results of the DownBeat Critics Poll provide a detailed portrait of the world of jazz, and in 2014, no young star is shining more brightly than singer-songwriter Cécile McLorin Salvant. Our critics honored her U.S. debut, *WomanChild* (Mack Avenue), as the Jazz Album of the Year. She also topped the categories Female Vocalist, Rising Star–Jazz Artist and Rising Star–Female Vocalist.

Her victories in the categories Female Vocalist (which is for established artists) and Rising Star–Female Vocalist, illustrate that she has broad support from a wide variety of critics, some of whom feel that Salvant has quickly leapt to "the big leagues" and deserves to be praised in the same breath as veteran performers. At DownBeat, we're very excited to watch her career develop, and we're honored to put her on the cover.

Another big winner this year is singer-songwriter Gregory Porter, who topped the categories Jazz Artist and Male Vocalist. In the 2013 Critics Poll, he took honors for Rising Star–Jazz Artist and Rising Star–Male Vocalist, so his wins this year nicely illustrate a typical trajectory. It's not unusual for an artist to win a particular Rising Star category and then eventually win that same category for established artists. If you were to look at the results of the DownBeat Critics Poll over the course of 12 years, for example, you could track an artist's ascension, from his or her first appearance toward the bottom of the Rising Star categories, climbing higher and higher until, perhaps, he or she lands at or near the top of an established artist category.

But every year, DownBeat fans inevitably ask us, "What is a Rising Star, anyway?" How do we define them? We don't. We keep the classification open to interpretation so that we can honor a variety of performers. One thing is clear, though: Age is not a factor. A Rising Star could be an artist in her twenties, like Salvant, whose career is still in its early stages. Or it could be a veteran performer in his forties whom our critics feel is deserving of wider recognition, such as Peter Bernstein, who topped the category Rising Star–Guitar. Or it could be an artist in his eighties, such as Ed Reed, who took the honor for Rising Star–Male Vocalist. Considering that Reed released his debut album in 2007, one can easily see why critics would hail him as a Rising Star in our poll. Reed's 2013 album, *I'm A Shy Guy*, includes his interpretations of songs recorded by the Nat "King" Cole Trio, and they're terrific. We're eager to hear what this "young" man does next.

Because this is the annual Critics Poll issue, it's our opportunity to honor new inductees in the DownBeat Hall of Fame. This year we salute three legendary artists who are no longer with us: guitarist Jim Hall (elected by our critics) and singers Dinah Washington and Bing Crosby (who were voted in by our Veterans Committee). If our efforts to enshrine them in the DownBeat Hall of Fame spur some teenage jazz student to seek out the music of these titans, then we've accomplished something of tremendous value.

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## Fueling the Flame

Thank you for the feature on saxophonist Eric Alexander, "Chicago Sound," in your June issue. I first heard Eric during his Chicago years and have kept listening ever since. It's important to focus on musicians like him. There are a lot of us DownBeat readers who still see room for young musicians to create and explore within the bebop/hard-bop legacy. Eric's dedication keeps the bebop flame burning brightly and reflects on how important and profound the creations of Parker, Gillespie, Powell and Monk still are more than a half-century since their origination. The music still has so much to give and, indeed, has room to grow.

Moreover, Eric has brought long overdue attention to Harold Mabern, who at 78 is as profound a pianist as ever. The fact that this hard-bop master is still with us and wailing is something the entire jazz community should be thankful for each and every day.

BILL BENJAMIN  
BILTMORE LAKE, N.C.



Eric Alexander

CHRISTOPHER DRUKKER

## Feeling More Fillmore

I'm writing in regard to the review of *Miles At The Fillmore—Miles Davis 1970: The Bootleg Series Vol. 3* in your June issue. Shame on Columbia/Legacy for sitting on this music for so long. *Miles Davis At Fillmore* was the first Miles record I purchased at age 19. It took some listening before it made sense, but once it clicked, it was (and still is) marvelous. Finally having the opportunity to hear all four nights unedited is wonderful. This is some of the most creative music ever, and 40 years later, it still sounds fresh and cutting-edge.

TOM GUILFOYLE  
AMBLER, PA.

## Investigating Dynamite

I've been reading your magazine since 1964, and I love your coverage of new, up-and-coming musicians. As a guitarist, I'm pretty conversant regarding the current players. I notice that in the DownBeat Critics Poll and Readers Poll, you seem to overlook Jonathan Kreisberg. I mean, come on guys, *Mary Halvorson*? Get serious! As Bob Dylan said, "Somebody better investigate soon." Kreisberg should be on your cover. He's dynamite!

JUD FRANKLIN  
JUD1@TRIAD.RR.COM

## Stryker Guide

In your June issue, I cannot believe that the article on Dave Stryker, "Retro Vibe," fails to mention his excellent book *Dave Stryker's Jazz Guitar Improvisation Method*, published by Mel Bay.

MANUEL A. TRUCCO  
MTRUCCO@MINDSPRING.COM

## Corrections

- Due to a misclassified entry in the DownBeat Student Music Awards (June), the co-winners for Large Vocal Jazz Ensemble, Undergraduate College division, are: Sac State Vocal Jazz from Sacramento State University, under the direction of Gaw Vang (Sacramento, Calif.); and Willamette Singers from Willamette University, under the direction of Wallace Long (Salem, Ore.).
- In the Student Music Awards section (June), under the category Latin Group, Graduate College Outstanding Performances, the Afro-Cuban Jazz Orchestra from Manhattan School of Music (New York, N.Y.) should have been listed as being under the direction of Bobby Sanabria.
- In the July issue, the Jazz On Campus feature on the CalArts jazz program contained errors. A revised version is posted at [downbeat.com](http://downbeat.com).

DOWNBEAT REGRETS THE ERRORS.

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# Beat

## New York City Fetes Miles Davis

Memorial Day traditionally honors America's servicemen and women. This year, the May 26 holiday also marked the birth of trumpeter Miles Davis. In keeping with the custom of honoring great Americans, New York City used the occasion to officially rename the 77th Street block of Manhattan between Riverside Drive and West End Avenue—which bears Davis' former address—as "Miles Davis Way." Close to 500 fans and many alumni of Davis' renowned bands celebrated with a joyous block party and ceremony.

Davis owned the four-story brownstone at 312 W. 77th St., formerly the chapel of a Russian Orthodox Church, from 1959 to 1985, according to the trumpeter's nephew and musician Vincent Wilburn Jr. It was here that Davis composed the modal sketches that became *Kind Of Blue*; where his '60s quintet of pianist Herbie Hancock, saxophonist Wayne Shorter, bassist Ron Carter and drummer Tony Williams rehearsed in the basement. It's where from '75 to '80 Davis went into seclusion to cope with illness and to shake addiction, and where he would later rehearse the bands that recorded his 1980s albums *The Man With The Horn* and *We Want Miles*.

Friends and family members who visited the brownstone through the years revealed many memories of the trumpeter.

"Miles loved to cook," Wilburn recalled. "He was mean on the skillet! We'd rehearse there. Uncle Miles would have a sketch. He would map out the music to feel the way he wanted it. Then we would record at Columbia 30th Street Studios the next day. He'd record everything and Teo Macero would splice and edit. Uncle Miles would say, 'I don't like this, pick this, do that,' until he formed the music he wanted. That's why the albums read 'Directions in Music by Miles Davis.'"

Davis occupied the two lower floors of the building and rented the upper floors to residents, including Williams, comedian Dick Gregory and actor Richard Pryor. Saxophonist Dave Liebman—who appeared on Davis' *On The Corner*, *Dark Magus* and *Get Up With It*—was among the speakers at the block party. In a separate interview, he recalled visiting Davis during his restless '70s period.

"Miles didn't like being alone too much," Liebman said. "He didn't sleep regular hours. There were a lot of other elements at work at that time. The actual night I was hired we listened to 'In Time' from Sly Stone's *Fresh* album about 50 times. Miles kept saying, 'That's what we're going to play!' There were instruments everywhere and an upright piano on the second floor. His living room was full of his paintings.

"When you hung with Miles you were definitely entering another time zone," Liebman added. "There was no feeling of night and day. Miles wasn't



in the best of health. And he was doing a lot of stuff—that was the lifestyle then. Once he had Tony Williams and me up sparring with each other—Miles was teaching us to box. I also remember back then he would take his check from Columbia Records and cash it at a Chinese-Spanish restaurant on 79th and Broadway [La Caridad 78]. It's still there."

Under the blazing Memorial Day sun, the Miles Davis Way street sign was unveiled, but not before many of the other musicians who played with the trumpeter spoke from the podium, including drummer Jimmy Cobb, bassist Buster Williams, percussionist Mino Cinelu, drummer Lenny White, guitarist Larry Coryell and flutist Bobbi Humphrey.

"Miles Davis ultimately became a great jazz musician because he understood how humility played into the music," T.S. Monk, son of pianist Thelonious Monk, told the crowd in New York. "When I was a little kid ... Miles Dewey Davis would come up to [our] house. I would open the door and he would say, 'Can you tell T. Monk, Miles is at the door?' Miles would come in and Thelonious might be lying in bed, and Miles would sit down at the piano and wait. Sometimes Thelonious got right up and Miles said, 'Show me this and show me that.' But sometimes he didn't get right up. And I saw Miles Dewey Davis sit at the piano silently waiting for Thelonious Monk to get up and give him the knowledge. That is humility."

Miles Dewey Davis would have been 88.

—Ken Micallef

Cyrus Chestnut



**Litchfield-Bound:** Pianist Cyrus Chestnut will headline opening night of the 19th annual Litchfield Jazz Festival, which runs Aug. 8–10 at Goshen Fairgrounds in Goshen, Conn. Other festival headliners include vocalist Cécile McLorin Salvant, saxophonist Kirk Whalum, trombonist Curtis Fuller, trumpeter Claudio Roditi, bassist Mario Pavone, guitarist Mike Stern, saxophonist-flutist Jane Bunnett and saxophonist Jimmy Greene. The Litchfield Jazz Festival Orchestra, featuring the faculty of Litchfield Jazz Camp, will make its debut in a tribute to guitarist Django Reinhardt.

**More info:** [litchfieldjazzfest.com](http://litchfieldjazzfest.com)

**Blues-And-Mortar:** Work has begun on the Blues Foundation's Blues Hall of Fame at 421 S. Main St. in Memphis, directly across from the National Civil Rights Museum. The building, which most recently served as headquarters for the 34-year-old Blues Foundation, is being gutted to accommodate both the Blues Hall of Fame and the foundation's offices. Upon completion in 2015, the foundation's collection of music, artifacts and ephemera that relate to the Blues Hall of Fame's 194 inductees will be displayed and made accessible to the general public for the first time. **More info:** [blues.org](http://blues.org)

**Gateway City Jazz Center:** Jazz St. Louis, a not-for-profit organization, has announced a \$10 million capital campaign supporting a new state-of-the-art live performance and jazz education center, jazz lounge and staff headquarters in the city's Grand Center district. The new facilities will be the Harold and Dorothy Steward Center for Jazz, housing the Centene Jazz Education Center, and the redesigned and renovated Ferring Jazz Bistro, home of the Jazz at the Bistro concert series. Wynton Marsalis and the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra have been booked as the inaugural concert in October. **More info:** [jazzstl.org](http://jazzstl.org)

**Jazz Songwriter:** Japanese trumpeter Shunzo Ohno received the Grand Prize in the 2013 International Songwriting Competition for his tune "Musashi." It's the first time in the 13-year history of ISC that the Grand Prize has been awarded to an artist in the Jazz category. Ohno moved from Japan to New York City in 1974 to perform with Art Blakey & The Messengers. Since then, he has made numerous recordings under his own name and appeared on more than 30 albums as a sideman.

**More info:** [songwritingcompetition.com](http://songwritingcompetition.com)

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**WHEN IT COMES TO JAZZ FESTIVAL CULTURE,** Quebec is a hotbed. Festival International de Musique Actuelle de Victoriaville (FIMAV), the most important avant-garde festival on this side of the Atlantic, celebrated its 30th anniversary from May 15–18, and sounded

Two of the standout sets with Quebecois roots featured saxophonists in duo settings making their Victoriaville debuts. Fine and flexible alto saxophonist François Carrier demonstrated a deep rapport with painterly drummer Michel Lambert on May 17 at the Pavillon Arthabaska.

The following day, Colin Stetson, a circular breathing master with a multi-reed toolbox, and violinist Sarah Neufeld melded minimalist riffs and hypnotic sonorities in an accessibly adventurous pairing. The exciting duo seemed to represent the possibility of bringing younger, pop-inclined ears into the avant-garde fold.

Two of the most memorable shows at this year's FIMAV involved musicians who are finding artistically rich ways to combine electronic processing and spontaneous improvisation. In separate sets by veteran artist Parker and Norwegian vocalist-electronic artist Maja Ratkje, the relationship between old and new

amounted to a blissful concert-going experience.

Parker has been experimenting with the delicate but grating process of live collaboration between free-jazz players and electronic musicians for years, including at past FIMAV shows, but his Electro-Acoustic Septet performance on May 18 seemed especially inspired. It helps that he keeps company with like-minded and able musicians, including trombonist and laptop master George Lewis.

Lewis was the outer figure on the septet's laptop flank, along with Ikue Mori and Sam Pluta, while the "unplugged" flank belonged to trumpeter Peter Evans, clarinetist Ned Rothenberg and cellist Okkyung Lee (who is a potent new artist to watch). The attuned Parker was always the center, confidently building a sturdy wall of composition without burying other players in the process. The riveting and elastic cross-talk of timbres and dialogues gracefully walked the electro-acoustic divide.

Although wildly different aesthetically, Ratkje achieved a similar synthesis with raw musical materials, improvisational fire and processing—armed only with her magnetically nimble voice and enigmatic musical mind. Ratkje, 40, has mellowed with age, and has peeled away the layers of bracing noise to reveal something more refined in her music. Inspired by her recent motherhood, she incorporated into her music the innocent tones of music box tinkles, echoes of a baby's voice and an eerily elaborate arrangement of a folk song about the mining life. Her compelling, hourlong show ended gently, with the idly whistling music box sparkling.

Ratkje's gift for sculpting with abstract sound, grounded by the pulsing humanity of her voice, resonated beautifully in the quaint setting of Victoriaville. —Josef Woodard

Maja Ratkje



hale, hardy and stylistically confused as ever—but mostly in a good way.

In the idyllic, rural Bois-Francs region southwest of Quebec City, you will find the small city of Victoriaville. Further south is the Montreal Jazz Festival, which turns 35 this summer, one of the finest general-purpose, all-around jazz festivals worldwide. But FIMAV is another rightfully world-famous jazz festival—and it's anything but general or all-around in focus.

Fueled by founder-director Michel Levasseur's passion for free-jazz and experimental music, FIMAV has come a long way in terms of international reputation. With 20 concerts in four days, the 2014 edition kicked off with a double appearance by guitarist Fred Frith, including a climactic revisit of his progressive rock project, The Gravity Band, on the last day of the festival. His duet with the British sax freethinker Evan Parker the day before was one of the festival's highlights.

There were fresher items on the programmatic menu, too, leaning towards jazz (Ken Vandermark's dazzling new large group project, Audio One) and noise-rock (Italian sludge metal Ufomammut and the fluid young guitarist Ava Mendoza), as well as some folkloric spices along the way.

The festival opened May 15 at new venue Pavillon Arthabaska, giving attendees a stunning panoramic view of Victoriaville from its hilltop vantage point. New-music hero Meredith Monk made her first festival appearance, accompanied by vocalist Katie Geissinger, who provided gentle-spirited vocal gymnastics.

On the same night, the ambitious Toronto-based Sun Ra tribute project Ratchet Orchestra made its world premiere of "Sun Ra at 100," with nearly 90-year-old Arkestra alumnus Marshall Allan on hand as special guest.



Joe Lovano

JIMMY KATZ

# Lovano Continues Quest, from Cleveland to Lagos

Since the year 2000, only two artists have won the Tenor Saxophone category in the DownBeat Critics Poll: Sonny Rollins and Joe Lovano. During that span, Rollins has topped the poll seven times, and Lovano has topped it eight times, including 2013 and 2014. Not only is Lovano recognized as one of the greatest tenor players of his generation, he's also an artist who has been key to the continued success of the venerable label Blue Note.

When former Blue Note President Bruce Lundvall would invite Lovano to talk about his new projects over lunch, he said, "Joe eats five courses and has 15 ideas." Lundvall signed Lovano in 1991 and since then, the tenor saxophone titan has recorded 22 Blue Note albums, with a new one scheduled to come out this fall and another slated for 2015.

Lovano's insatiable curiosity generates a con-

stant flow of new projects. In recent years he's worked with his stellar band Us Five, a collaboration with Dave Douglas called Sound Prints and a new group, Village Rhythms Band. But he's also steeped in other activities such as two German shows with the WDR Big Band; playing with the Joe Lovano Europa Quartet (where he collaborates with a variety of European artists); his String Quartet, which has 35 concerts already slated for the coming year; and his ongoing involvement in the Saxophone Summit, which he co-founded with Michael Brecker and Dave Liebman and which continues to record with Ravi Coltrane (including a brand-new ArtistShare album, *Visitation*).

"Just because I have all these bands going on doesn't mean that I'm leaving anything behind," said Lovano, who is a professor at Berklee College of Music, serving as the Gary Burton Chair in

Jazz Performance. "For example, I've written new music for my nonet that I'll be debuting at the Village Vanguard in February. Plus I play with a lot of different people playing different music all the time."

Lovano responded to news of this year's Critics Poll win with humility. "I'm surprised and of course honored," he said. "It's a thrill to be on the scene with such tenor company as Wayne Shorter and Sonny Rollins. They are the tenor masters, and you can hear their love and passion in their horns. It's a timeless thing. Then there's Chris Potter, Joshua Redman. We're all out there together."

**Talk about your relationship with the tenor sax.**

From the very beginning, my dad was my main influence—hearing him play his tenor sax

every day getting ready to go to a gig in Cleveland. It was the sound and feeling of how he played that struck me. The vibrations shook the house. So as a kid, it captured me completely. I started on the alto and then in the seventh grade went to the tenor.

### Besides your dad, how else did you get schooled in jazz with the tenor sax?

I heard a lot of people when I was in high school. A lot of players came through Cleveland. My dad took me to matinees at the clubs, and then when I got older and could drive, I'd go to the clubs on my own. You could listen to their recordings, but to be there in the room with Sonny Stitt, James Moody, Rahsaan Roland Kirk, Thad Jones and Mel Lewis really affected me. And then there was Ernie Krivda, who was based in Cleveland. He had such a unique, personal tenor voice.

### How did your interaction with other tenors influence you?

Everyone inspires each other. When you play toe-to-toe, that changes everything. Something happens in your body and in your concepts and appreciation. So over the years, I got to play with Sonny Stitt and sat in with Elvin Jones' band with Steve Grossman. I went to see Joe Henderson perform in Boston, and he saw me with my horn in the audience and asked me to sit in. Then playing with Dewey Redman in Charlie Haden's Liberation Music Orchestra. It was like a dream. Wynton hosted a saxophone night at Jazz at Lincoln Center, and I was playing with Johnny Griffin, Teddy Edwards and Von Freeman—three distinctive voices where you have to be yourself, to play who you are.

### Your new Blue Note album will be

### your Sound Prints Quintet collaboration with Dave Douglas. How did that come about?

I first met Dave in the late '80s when he was going to New York University and I was teaching there. He was one of the first cats who used to come to my New York loft and didn't play the saxophone. From our first encounter, I knew Dave was full of ideas. But we didn't play together until 2007 when we were both in the SFJAZZ Collective for three years. We talked about doing something together and finally did when Wayne Shorter's 80th birthday was coming up. We decided to use his inspiration as an artist to compose our own pieces. We didn't cover his material because he already had. We actually opened for Wayne on some dates in Europe, and then the Monterey Jazz Festival commissioned Wayne to write two pieces for us to play. We recorded our set there live.

### You're getting ready to launch the new album and yet you've already recorded your next one, due for 2015, with your Village Rhythms Band at the Blue Note in New York. What's the background on that project?

That [project] goes way back to when I was in my twenties and jamming with a bunch of Nigerian musicians at the Togo Suite in Cleveland. Then I traveled to Lagos, Nigeria, to play a festival with a band from Cleveland. It was Christmas week 1980 and I had just turned 29 on Dec. 29. There was a cat from Lagos who married a woman from Cleveland and he liked our band so he made the connections. We played in the huge arena—Tafawa Balewa Square—that holds 20,000, but only 800 showed up for our show, which was still



Lovano at Symphony Space in New York on March 22, 2013

STEVEN SUSSMAN

a lot. We spent time with Fela Kuti. It all inspired me and I started to write instrumental pieces based on that. You can hear echoes of that in my albums *Universal Language* and *Viva Caruso*. It's there in *Us Five*, too. But I started playing with [electric bassist] Matthew Garrison in a different way and linked up with [percussionist] Abdou Mboup, [guitarist] Liberty Ellum and [drummer] Otis Brown III. It all came together in an organic way. [Blue Note President] Don Was is excited about the project, which is another step in my development as a leader. —Dan Ouellette

## Barry Harris at The Gilmore: What You Hear Is What You Get

**HOME IS WHERE THE HEART IS. THAT WAS** certainly the case when pianist Barry Harris and his trio performed on May 4 at the Irving S. Gilmore International Keyboard Festival in Kalamazoo, Mich. The former Detroit native and jazz legend, 84, was joined by the estimable bassist Ray Drummond as well as his stalwart drummer since 1969, Leroy Williams.

Ambling out to a warm reception at the Williams Theatre on the campus of Western Michigan University, Harris was the epitome of right-here, right-now music making. Talking to the crowd as much as playing for them, the pianist's soft tone and sage remembrances almost made you forget that he was leading a patient jazz trio. Harris' performance was a lovely go-for-broke display that prided itself on pure expression and soulfulness over what practically every other pianist at this festival had in ample portions: virtuosity.

Whether it was a light dance with an uptempo take of "I Want To Be Happy" or getting the audience to join him in co-creating a song based around three called-out numbers from the

crowd (and thus three chords), Harris could be unpredictable.

He could also be playfully adamant: "You have to learn this song because you're gonna have to sing it," he said. "And you will sing, or I'll get angry! Don't disappoint me!" What became "The Gilmore 5-7-3" started out as a ballad only to become a gentle bossa nova, with the audience eagerly improvising.

Other songs followed in due course: "Prelude To A Kiss," "Lotus Blossom," "This Nearly Was Mine," all rendered with much taste and obvious group empathy, Harris providing generous amounts of solo piano playing along the way.

Defying gravity with a dreamlike "Round Midnight" and a meditative "Ruby, My Dear," Harris' approach to the material resulted in a series of played-through tunes more often than not, the melody many times the focus in lieu of flat-out improvising. More uptempo tunes included a dainty, driven "All God's Chillun Got Rhythm."

Drummond, the trio's veritable anchor at center stage, kept his eye on the pianist, as if to

Caught >

watch for any sudden moves or stops-and-starts that seemed to be part of the trio's way of playing through a song. Williams' light, sympathetic touch on brushes and timely, well-placed punctuations with sticks and bass drum showed that his connection to Harris goes way back.

Harris, a true taste of living history, delivered a once-in-a-lifetime musical experience for the audience at the Gilmore festival on its 25th anniversary. —John Ephland



Barry Harris onstage at the Gilmore Festival in Kalamazoo, Mich., on May 4

CHRIS MCGUIRE



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## Eclectic Duos Offer Surprises at Town Hall

**“NOBODY KNOWS WHAT’S GONNA HAPPEN—NOT YOU, NOT ME,** not even the musicians,” promoter Adam Schatz told the Town Hall audience on May 14 at the second edition of “A Night of Improvised Round Robin Duets,” a program of intriguing, unlikely duo performances that merged electronic experimentation with jazz improvisation.

The event, which was part of the Undead Music Festival and co-presented by Red Bull Music Academy, featured an all-star cast of musicians, including guitarists Marc Ribot and Nels Cline; pianists Marco Benevento and Allen Toussaint; trumpeters Dave Douglas and Wadada Leo Smith; and saxophonists Dave Murray and James Carter, among others. The result was a continuous flow of music that lasted two hours and highlighted some compelling pairings along the way.

The format for the unique concert series is the musical equivalent of a round-robin tournament: One musician starts a solo improv and after five minutes is joined onstage by a second musician. Five minutes later, the first musician leaves the stage and is replaced by a third musician, and so on.

Cline kicked off the evening with five minutes of unaccompanied guitar skronking that involved a wide lexicon of extended techniques from swiping, scraping and slapping the strings to screaming into his pickups while also utilizing howling feedback, creative looping and jarring Mahavishnu-esque arpeggiating.

Cline was joined onstage by electronic music producer and remix artist Daedelus (aka Alfred Darlington), who generated live percussive effects on a laptop. This duo created a sonic maelstrom that set a subversive tone for the evening.

Trumpeter Douglas then entered the fray, briefly overlapping with the squalls before Cline left the stage. Douglas’ furious open-horn blowing mixed with Daedelus’ dense trip-hop grooves, begging the question, “What if Miles Davis had made it into the 21st century?” Their duet soon cooled to a mellower mode as Daedelus triggered ambient washes beneath Douglas’ beautiful balladic playing.

Drummer and sound designer Shigeto replaced Daedelus and kicked off an urgently swinging groove on the kit, which Douglas immediately picked up on. This segment was the first of many to show how radically the music could shift in an improvised round robin session.

Keyboardist Amp Fiddler, part of the extended P-Funk family, strolled onstage and began singing in a falsetto voice in unison with Douglas’ trumpet before manning an electric keyboard as Douglas left the stage. His clavinet-fueled funk worked well with Shigeto’s slamming backbeats.

Pianist Benevento engaged in a conversational two-keyboard jam with Fiddler that opened with noodling and just began to coalesce into something before their time together was up.

Carter came on next with his typically audacious blowing and remarkable circular breathing on tenor sax, which brought out Benevento’s inner Cecil Taylor. The pianist was replaced by singer Petra Haden (daughter of bassist Charlie Haden), who had an instant rapport with the fire-breathing saxophonist. With Carter accompanying her wordless vocals with virtuosic arpeggiating and slap-tonguing on his horn, they created an unlikely but copacetic duo.

Haden, a keen listener and confident improviser, would often catch a fragment of melody in Carter’s playing and then use that as a motif, which the savvy saxophonist would build off of with extended harmonies and harsh multiphonics. As the strangest of strange bedfellows on this evening, the Haden-Carter duet introduced a refreshing sense of playfulness into the proceedings and received wild applause from the rapt audience.

The eccentric and endlessly creative multi-instrumentalist Jherik

Bischoff joined Haden for a quirky duet. On ukelele, the lanky Bischoff, wearing a suit and skinny tie, slapped the wooden body of the tiny instrument, building up a rhythmic pattern through his deft use of a looping device. After engaging in some close uke-voice conversations on top of that groove, Bischoff switched to a grunge-y, distortion-laced Hofner-like bass guitar and created a heavy motif that Haden soared over with her powerful voice.

Haden exited, making way for another of the evening’s odd couples: the edgy young sonic provocateur Bischoff and the old-school, avant-garde saxophonist Murray. With Bischoff strumming manically on his distortion-laden bass, Murray wailed over the top with his astonishing array of multiphonics, altissimo squeals and circular breathing. (One could see his influence on the younger saxophonist Carter, who explored some of the same extended techniques in his own playing.)

When drummer Carrington replaced Bischoff, the vibe shifted instantly to an intensely kinetic energy that recalled latter-day John Coltrane and



Terri Lyne Carrington and Marc Ribot at Town Hall on May 14

LAUREN GESSWEIN RED BULL CONTENT POOL

Elvin Jones (or Murray’s own tenor sax-drums duet encounters with drummers Jack DeJohnette, Rashied Ali or Milford Graves).

Guitarist Ribot, an obvious favorite with this crowd, came on next to engage in heated exchanges with Carrington. With his beat-up Fender Mustang guitar and nasty distortion, Ribot kept up the heightened energy before the two musicians slipped into a funk groove that allowed the guitarist to pull out his wildest Jack McDuff licks. (Ribot worked with the Hammond B-3 organist back in the early ’80s.)

New Orleans piano master Toussaint joined Ribot onstage for a steady flow of music that morphed from boogie-woogie to stately hymns to urgent shuffles and gospel flourishes, all imbued with the spirit of the Crescent City. Their instant rapport was no surprise, considering that Ribot had played on Toussaint’s acclaimed 2009 album, *The Bright Mississippi* (Nonesuch).

Trumpeter Smith brought the spirit of Louis Armstrong, Miles Davis and Lester Bowie to the Town Hall stage in his encounter with guitarist Kaki King. Their spacious jam was on the mellow side, more *In A Silent Way* than *Jack Johnson*. Smith closed out this round robin event by demonstrating his wide palette of tones, textures and colors—slurs, multiphonics and bold open-horn playing—in a stirring solo setting in which each note resonated with authority in the great hall. For an encore, the entire group assembled onstage and launched into a cacophonous free-for-all that was entirely anticlimatic after such intimate duo encounters.

—Bill Milkowski

# Hersch, Bey & Barber Among Artists Slated for OutBeat Fest

Philadelphia will make history this fall when the city hosts OutBeat, which organizers have dubbed “America’s First Queer Jazz Festival.” Presented by the William Way LGBT Community Center (with support from The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage), the weekend-long festival will feature performances by vocalist Andy Bey, singer-pianist Patricia Barber, pianist Fred Hersch and drummer Bill Stewart, among others.

The festival will take place Sept. 18–21 in a variety of venues, including the William Way LGBT Community Center, Chris’ Jazz Café, Painted Bride Art Center and the Philadelphia Museum of Art, with a day-long closing event at Union Transfer featuring food carts, vendors and performers in a blocked-off street outside the popular club. Along with the performances, the festival will host public events and panel discussions featuring many of the participating artists.

OutBeat will serve as the culmination of the annual music series hosted by the William Way LGBT Community Center, which has offered a variety of programs and assistance for the city’s LGBT community since 1976.

In a May 7 press conference at Philadelphia’s City Hall, Chris Bartlett, executive director of William Way, said that the festival “builds upon the great history of LGBT participation in jazz.”

Bartlett said, “This is really a story about the greatest LGBT city in the United States and the greatest jazz city in the country, and bringing together those two cultures.”

Composer Billy Strayhorn (1915–’67) will be honored by the festival with a celebration of his music by Philadelphia jazz musicians and possibly by an award for emerging LGBT artists in his name, according to Bartlett.

Also on hand for the press conference were two representatives of the city’s jazz community who have been involved with the planning of the OutBeat festival.

Homer Jackson, director of the Philadelphia Jazz Project, invoked Thelonious Monk’s “Round Midnight”: “At midnight, the nice folks were at home, but the music was a place for outsiders and outlaws,” he said. “Now we’re celebrating in the daytime the history and experience of the gay community.”

Mark Christman, founder and executive director of the jazz-presenting organization Ars Nova Workshop, announced the first few performers for the lineup. “I’m very excited about helping William Way execute their remarkable vision,” he said.

Philadelphia Mayor Michael Nutter’s office issued a press release that praised the city’s musical legacy. “We’re also a city that affirms the lives of LGBT people,” Nutter said. “Hosting the first LGBT jazz festival in North America provides an opportunity to showcase the rich and vibrant culture of our city.”  
—Shaun Brady



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Cécile McLorin Salvant at the Jazz Standard in New York City



# CÉCILE McLORIN SALVANT

## *YOUNG PROVOCATEUR*

By Allen Morrison | Photo by Jimmy & Dena Katz

**E**ighteen months ago, hardly anyone knew who Cécile McLorin Salvant was. Now *everybody* in the jazz world knows her name. In May 2013, she released her U.S. debut album, *WomanChild* (Mack Avenue), which became a Grammy-nominated best-seller. She has enchanted crowds at jazz festivals across the United States and Europe and appeared in multiple venues at Jazz at Lincoln Center, which used her as a cover girl for its New York City subway posters and 2013-'14 season brochure. It's no wonder Salvant has been compared, more than once, with some of the greatest jazz singers of all time.



JACK VARTOGIAN/FRONTROWPHOTOS

It is therefore a measure of how much all this has *not* gone to her head that, when asked to name some of her favorite experiences from the past year or so, she cited the unheralded little moments behind the curtain—not the honors, acclaim and standing ovations.

“There were certain moments when I was in rehearsal with my band,” she said. “I could feel that we were going to this sonic place I had in my head that had seemed not tangible or possible. [At that point] it’s not even about the music anymore: We’re on this next level of communication, which is pretty crazy—and rare. There were certain songs we would rehearse and feel that kinship, a serious spiritual connection. It felt like we were doing something really special.”

In a dressing room at Jazz at Lincoln Center’s Rose Theater, Salvant had just returned from the stage, where she ran through a rendition of the Ella Fitzgerald/Chick Webb lark “A Tisket, A Tasket” with the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra. It was her featured number for the following night’s annual JALC charity gala, which would include performances by Wynton Marsalis and the orchestra, Marcus Roberts, Dianne Reeves, Billy Crystal and Bill Cosby. She spoke between bites of her lunch, a turkey sandwich from the Whole Foods Market downstairs in the Time Warner Center.

Only 24, Salvant has already achieved a level of success in the jazz world that is rare for players of any age. Her remarkable showing in this year’s Critics Poll—not only topping the Jazz Album and Female Vocalist categories but also Rising Star–Jazz Artist and Rising Star–Female Vocalist—is the exclamation point to a meteoric rise that

began four short years ago with her surprise win at the Thelonious Monk International Jazz Vocals Competition in 2010.

In the audience at that event was Ed Arrendell, an artist manager with, at the time, a single client: Wynton Marsalis. Arrendell had attended the event every year but was usually “underwhelmed” by the young singers. “Cécile was different,” he said by phone from his office in Washington, D.C. “She had a sincerity, a soulfulness. There was something in her sound that let you know this was somebody who understood the tradition that she was representing.”

It was her mother who had advised her to enter the Monk contest, Arrendell noted. Later on, after Salvant had accepted his offer to manage her career, her mother suggested to Arrendell that he introduce Cécile to Marsalis. According to Arrendell, it was a natural step to take, but a risky one. “Wynton is very particular,” he said. “He’s very supportive, but he is unimpressed more often than he is impressed with talent. I think what really got Wynton’s attention about Cécile was that she *listened* to his advice.”

And what was that advice? Salvant put it this way: “I rehearsed with Wynton before one of his concerts in Paris. He talked about rhythm—that might have been what impacted me the most—and about not having a passive role with the band as a singer—that I could drive the band rhythmically as well. He told me to check out Louis Armstrong’s singing.”

Salvant grew up in Miami, her father a Haitian-born doctor, her mother a French educator and founder of a bilingual school. She’s fluent in French, English and Spanish. After years of

classical piano and voice lessons she made a crucial decision: to study music at the Conservatoire Darius Milhaud in Aix-en-Provence, France, where she was initially interested in French Baroque music but came under the influence of the jazz saxophonist and clarinetist Jean-François Bonnel. She found herself deeply immersed in the records of Bessie Smith and other great jazz singers who followed.

Following the Monk Competition, Salvant’s career skyrocketed as she began to collect extraordinary reviews. She is instinctively wary of all the praise. “I don’t read *any* articles about me. *Never*. And I don’t listen to my own music or watch my own videos,” she said. “It’s uncomfortable for me.”

When reminded about the comparisons to Billie Holiday, Ella Fitzgerald and Sarah Vaughan, she shook her head. “That’s pretty crazy,” she said in a measured way. “I have friends who get *The [New York] Times*, and when they read that, they freaked out. It was *scary* to be compared to those people, but it was a great honor. I guess for me it just means that whoever wrote that thinks that I’m a jazz singer. I try not to think about it too much—I certainly do not compare myself to them.”

Her collaborator and close friend, 28-year-old pianist Aaron Diehl, said he sees the connection, however. He enumerated her gifts in a Skype call from Bern, Switzerland, where they were on tour. “She’s special in so many ways—a brilliant musician, a brilliant mind,” Diehl said. “Very mature. Not just a singer. She’s a jazz musician.”

Diehl cited her propensity for starting an improvisation on the bandstand, just like any other band member. “She can take the



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music anywhere, really," he said. "She instinctively channels the entire continuum of jazz history, but without letting it overshadow her own personality."

In conversation, Salvant was modest, even admitting to intermittent doubts about her own validity.

"I've often asked myself, what's the point of this?" she said. "Sometimes I think, 'Gosh, there is no point. What am I doing? This isn't worthwhile; it isn't contributing anything substantial to the world.' Which sounds crazy, maybe, but I deeply feel that way sometimes." The feeling lifts, she said, when she and the band have one of those moments that make her say, "Wait, we're actually doing something that's important."

The *WomanChild* album captures more than a few of those moments. Recorded in the studio with Diehl on piano, Rodney Whitaker on bass, Herlin Riley on drums and James Chirillo on guitar and banjo, it's a mix of old and new, including rarely heard gems from Bessie Smith, Valaida Snow and turn-of-the-century vaudeville star Bert Williams; mid-century delights such as "I Didn't Know What Time It Was" and "What A Little Moonlight Can Do"; and a few of her own compositions that show a diverse array of modern influences from the jazz and classical worlds.

"There were a couple of moments during the session that were really special for me," she recalled. "One where I was recording [Smith's] 'Baby, Have Pity On Me' with just James [Chirillo] and Herlin [Riley]. There was something about the way they played it that I really dug." Another was Fats Waller's "Jitterbug Waltz," which she performed at the piano alone. "For me, that was overcoming my biggest fear: playing the piano in front of other people." The track affords a special window into her musical soul: "It sounds like what I do when I'm working on things at home," she explained.

Salvant started playing piano at age 4. "My mom forced me to study piano until I was 18," she said. "I was always really nervous about it. I never practiced except for one hour before the lesson. When I moved to France and started singing jazz, my mom met the jazz teacher and told him that I used to play the piano." Thereafter, she played in class with a trio. "He taught me some basic things, but I had to learn a lot on my own, and figure things out by playing and transcribing and listening to pianists."

Salvant always liked to sing, performing a solo in her kindergarten class production of *Oklahoma!* Later on, she said, "I heard Charlotte Church on TV, and I was completely dumbfounded by the idea that this 13-year-old could sing in front of an orchestra and move an audience to tears. And I thought, 'I want to be a classical singer, and I think I could do it.' I was about 10 or 11. It was very much like an 'astronaut' type of dream. I loved the idea of opera, the challenge of that repertoire and how dramatic it is. But I was really into Disney movies, too, and I liked that Broadway type of singing."

*WomanChild* exudes a sense of artistic confidence and self-assurance. It's a myth, she insisted.



JIMMY & DENNA KATZ

"During the recording I was super into it; I thought it was cool. The doubts crept in later. About a week later, I started having a panic attack. *Doubt*. I'm a very self-doubting person, I guess. I remember thinking, [slipping into a low whisper] 'Oh, what have I done? I've made a terrible mistake. Wrong repertoire, wrong arranging, wrong everything.'"

There was considerable anticipation for her U.S. debut album, and Salvant was aware that, if she were lucky, people would actually listen to it. "I was worried what people would think of me," she said. "I was particularly afraid people might think I was lazy. I thought people might think it wasn't inventive enough, or raw enough."

Many high achievers in the arts and elsewhere suffer from "impostor syndrome"—the feeling that you're faking it, despite ample evidence to the contrary, and fear that at any moment they will be revealed as a fraud.

"I actually did literally wake up in a cold sweat a couple of weeks ago, thinking the exact same thing. It's not a joke. I know the feeling." All that insecurity, however, can inspire higher achievement, she said.

For all her humility and self-doubt, part of Salvant's emerging identity is as a provocateur. She likes to rediscover unusual, sometimes outlandish material from the last century—like Bert Williams' signature hard-luck song, "Nobody,"



A photograph of a man, Ulysses Owens Jr., playing a drum set. He is wearing a blue long-sleeved shirt and is focused on his performance. The drum set includes several large, golden cymbals and a snare drum. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the cymbals and the drummer.

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and the decidedly un-politically correct “You Bring Out The Savage In Me,” originally sung by the underappreciated jazz vocalist Valaida Snow—and examine it in a postmodern light. Her approach is to inhabit the song without judgment, leaving it up to the listener to evaluate.

“I didn’t think of them as risks, because I love those songs,” she said. “These are interesting songs and they pose interesting questions.”

A true jazz aficionado, Salvant said she plans to keep mining the past for under-heard songs that are cultural markers.

“I’ve started getting into listening to overtly

sexist songs,” she said. “Maybe not really sexist, but songs in which the woman is in this very domestic role.” She cites a current favorite, “When I’m Housekeeping For You” by Jazz Age sweetheart Annette Hanshaw, which includes the lyrics:

*“My baby likes bacon / And that’s what I’m makin’ / While I’m cooking breakfast / For the one I love.”*

“I’ve also been listening to ‘coon songs,’ very racist material. And folk songs—Jean Ritchie and Skip James, getting back into rural blues. But I don’t listen only to old songs.”

A follow-up to *WomanChild* is now in the

planning stages, as Salvant and the band try out new material on the road.

“I’m thinking a lot about recording an old song called “What’s The Matter Now,” which Bessie Smith used to sing. It’s really sassy and very ... powerful. But the next album is going to be a little different. There’s going to be a lot more Great American Songbook stuff, and more original compositions, too. I like it when the audience is a blank slate and they haven’t heard the song sung by Nat ‘King’ Cole or whoever. I like the idea of having people discover something.”

The album concept will be mostly songs of unrequited love, she said. “My favorite music has always been on that subject. And I just wrote a lot of songs about that.” As for covers, Salvant said she’s leaning toward recording “So In Love” by Cole Porter. “I loved that when I first heard it,” she said. “It’s got a very unusual structure. We’ve been doing it at gigs.”

Like many of her arrangements, “So In Love” evolved over time, with contributions from Diehl, drummer Rodney Green and bassist Paul Sikivie. “I love Cole Porter—his music is really sexy and funny. We’re also doing ‘Most Gentlemen Don’t Like Love.’ Not the typical Porter songs.”

Pressed for more possible titles, she said they might include an arrangement by Diehl of “Something’s Coming” from *West Side Story*. “Oh, and we’re leaning toward recording [Burt Bacharach and Hal David’s] ‘Wives And Lovers’—on the sexist theme,” she said.

In fact, it’s one of the first songs that comes to mind when thinking of so-called “sexist” material.

“Yeah!” she says with enthusiasm. “That song is great—a gem, my gosh! It’s so crazy!”

But won’t it make some people’s skin crawl?

“I hope! When I first heard it, I was like, wow! I laughed. I won’t assume the persona. I’m just going to sing it. I mean, there are certain songs I know I can’t sing—certain ‘coon songs’ in particular that I would love to sing, but I know I can’t. I wouldn’t want anything to be misconstrued.”

Salvant said some material might just be too inflammatory. “When I sang ‘You Bring Out The Savage In Me’—that might be the furthest I can go, as far as singing racist material. I never thought of that song as a risk. I started singing it in France—I just thought it was funny—that kind of a perception of a black woman.” On *WomanChild*, she has fun with the idea, including a modified Tarzan-yell, inviting the audience to laugh at the original sentiment while still digging her campy, pitch-perfect performance of it.

“I hope they’re laughing,” she said.

Although she’s become well-known for mining material from the early 20th century and even older, as in the case of the folk ballad “John Henry,” Salvant is a musical omnivore. She admits to being curious about punk rock and shock rock—“all this repertoire in the ‘80s and ‘90s ‘Riot Grrrl’ movement ... women singing sometimes really gruesome songs. It’s intense and hardcore, but there’s a strong message behind it. You have to hope that people get what you’re trying to put out there.

“I used to be really into grunge in high school, and then I moved on,” she continued. “I used to be a big Alice in Chains fan.” She sang those songs, but only in her room. Her current listening includes

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hip-hop, neo-soul and a lot of singer-songwriters.

"I've been listening to Joni Mitchell lately. I used to really *not* dig what she did. It was just that *every* jazz singer was listening to Joni Mitchell and freaking out about her. I didn't want to get in on that. And then I heard *Blue*, and I thought, 'Wow, this is great, beautiful writing.'"

One wonders how different Salvant might sound today if she had gone to a good jazz program in the United States. "To be honest, I would have sounded like everybody else," she said. "I'm a bit of a sponge and adapt to my environment." Although she learned to sing the usual standards in France, her mentor Bonnel also introduced her "to a whole world of singing that people here don't know—people like Valaida Snow and Bessie Smith. I mean, everybody *talks* about Bessie Smith in schools, but it's superficial. You're not expected to spend six months listening to only that, day in and day out. And I *did* that in France. Not because my teacher expected me to do it, but he gave me her whole discography and said, 'You should check it out.' And I became obsessed."

Salvant is happiest when she is totally immersed in her musical obsessions. They could lead her anywhere, she said, even back to classical singing. And she's working hard at becoming a better songwriter. Asked about her writing process, she said she doesn't have one yet. "I'm not experienced enough. I'm just trying to learn how to write. I'm trying a lot of different things."

She reflected on her continuing development: "For me, the sound I'd *like* to have, I don't have yet. I'd really *like* to have it. When I feel like I'm getting close to that—those moments are amazing." **DB**

Salvant, seated here at the Jazz Standard in New York, admires Bessie Smith and Joni Mitchell.



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# 62<sup>nd</sup> ANNUAL CRITICS POLL

## JAZZ ALBUM OF THE YEAR



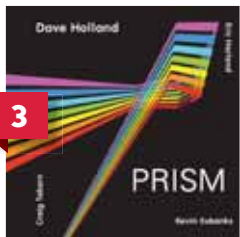
2

**Ambrose Akinmusire, *The Imagined Savior Is Far Easier To Paint*** (BLUE NOTE)

59

One of the prime and powerful fresh voices in 21st century jazz pursues new paradigms in a musical context that folds in aspects of classical music, subtle

hip-hop vibes and straightahead jazz quintet fodder.



3

**Dave Holland & Prism, *Prism*** (DARE2)

52

Far better than a conventional supergroup, Prism is a democratic, hornless quartet of different sensibilities who join forces to make music that none of them would make on their own. The nine

originals are engaging, many of them full of adrenaline.



4

**Gregory Porter, *Liquid Spirit*** (BLUE NOTE)

50

The singer-songwriter's major label debut marks his ascent into the top ranks of jazz and r&b vocalists today. Ten originals showcase Porter's innate gift for composing poignant songs

based upon personal experiences.



5

**Pat Metheny Unity Group, *Kin*** (NONESUCH)

41

The Unity Group concept has coalesced, and the guitarist has drawn the different strands together into a unified whole befitting the band's name. Metheny plays magnificently, and multi-instrumentalist Giulio Carmassi fills out the arrangements.



6

**Frank Wess, *Magic 101*** (IPO)

39

The mood is gentle, the sound intimate and amorous on this program of warm ballads and one blues. Wess, who passed away last October at age 91, comes to us here in full flower, skills and sound intact.

**Cécile McLorin Salvant, *WomanChild***

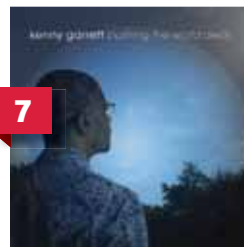
(MACK AVENUE)

77



1

The vocalist's U.S. debut is a Grammy-nominated best-seller that draws on songs spanning three centuries of American music. She is joined by a world-class band, and her captivating singing is immersed in the immediacy of the moment.



7

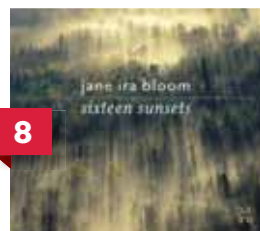
**Kenny Garrett, *Pushing The World Away***

(MACK AVENUE)

38

The saxophonist continues to explore the vast territory opened by John Coltrane and Sonny Rollins,

while at the same time forging a personal middle ground between their knotty variations and his own singable tunes.



8

**Jane Ira Bloom, *Sixteen Sunsets*** (OUTLINE)

36

The beauty of Bloom's soprano saxophone tone is prominent on this program of eight classic ballads and six original compositions. Each song offers a demonstration of immaculate control and imaginative phrasing and attack.



9

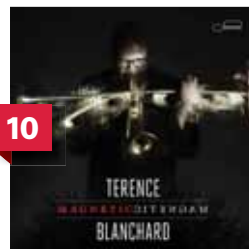
**The Bad Plus, *The Rite Of Spring*** (SONY

MASTERWORKS)

34

The Bad Plus is the rare group with enough chops and chutzpah to take on the notorious Stravinsky/

Nijinsky ballet, which a century ago signaled the beginning of music's "modern" age. The trio's version is as earthy as it is ingenious.



10

**Terence Blanchard, *Magnetic*** (BLUE

NOTE)

32

The art of blowing defines this date, where the trumpeter delivers a big blast of head-down, hard-driving swing. Even when

the funk gets filtered through the rhythm section, an anything-goes vibe prevails.

<b>11</b> Dave Douglas, <i>Time Travel</i> (GREENLEAF) 31	Wadada Leo Smith & TUMO, <i>Occupy The World</i> (TUM) 27	Tierney Sutton, <i>After Blue</i> (BFM JAZZ) 24
<b>12</b> Keith Jarrett/Gary Peacock/ Jack DeJohnette, <i>Somewhere</i> (ECM) 30	Craig Taborn Trio, <i>Chants</i> (ECM) 27	<b>19</b> Andy Bey, <i>The World According To Andy Bey</i> (HIGHNOTE) 23
<b>13</b> Matt Wilson Quartet + John Medeski, <i>Gathering Call</i> (PALMETTO) 29	Randy Weston/Billy Harper, <i>The Roots Of The Blues</i> (SUNNYSIDE) 27	<b>20</b> Kenny Barron, <i>Kenny Barron &amp; The Brazilian Knights</i> (SUNNYSIDE) 22
Eric Alexander, <i>Chicago Fire</i> (HIGHNOTE) 29	<b>16</b> Darcy James Argue's Secret Society, <i>Brooklyn Babylon</i> (NEW AMSTERDAM) 26	Cyrus Chestnut, <i>Soul Brother Cool</i> (WJ3) 22
Preservation Hall Jazz Band, <i>That's It!</i> (SONY/LEGACY) 29	The New Gary Burton Quartet, <i>Guided Tour</i> (MACK AVENUE) 26	Albert "Tootie" Heath/Ethan Iverson/Ben Street, <i>Tootie's Tempo</i> (SUNNYSIDE) 22
<b>14</b> Michele Rosewoman's New Yor-Uba, <i>30 Years! A Musical Celebration Of Cuba In America</i> (ADVANCE DANCE DISQUES) 28	Christine Jensen Jazz Orchestra, <i>Habitat</i> (JUSTIN TIME) 26	Dianne Reeves, <i>Beautiful Life</i> (CONCORD) 22
Chucho Valdés, <i>Border-Free</i> (JAZZ VILLAGE) 28	Warren Wolf, <i>Wolfgang</i> (MACK AVENUE) 26	Catherine Russell, <i>Bring It Back</i> (JAZZ VILLAGE) 22
<b>15</b> Chick Corea, <i>The Vigil</i> (STRETCH/CONCORD) 27	<b>17</b> William Parker, <i>Wood Flute Songs: Anthology/Live 2006–2012</i> (AUM FIDELITY) 25	<b>21</b> 3 Cohens, <i>Tightrope</i> (ANZIC) 21
	<b>18</b> Craig Handy, <i>Craig Handy &amp; 2nd Line Smith</i> (OKEH) 24	<b>22</b> Fred Hersch/Julian Lage, <i>Free Flying</i> (PALMETTO) 20
		Bill Frisell, <i>Big Sur</i> (OKEH) 20

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## HALL OF FAME

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# JIM HALL

## POET *of the Guitar*

BY BILL MILKOWSKI | PHOTO BY JAN PERSSON

**A**s the newest inductee into the DownBeat Hall of Fame, the late guitarist Jim Hall (Dec. 4, 1930–Dec. 10, 2013) takes his place alongside fellow elite six-stringers Wes Montgomery, Django Reinhardt, Frank Zappa, Pat Metheny and his idol Charlie Christian. An important figure in the evolution of jazz guitar, Hall's sublime touch, crystal clear articulation, uncanny lyricism, harmonic sophistication and restrained but rhythmically assured sense of swing paved the way for generations of guitarists, from John Scofield, Bill Frisell, John Abercrombie, Mike Stern and the aforementioned Metheny to Peter Bernstein, Kurt Rosenwinkel and Julian Lage. A consummate accompanist and master of motivic development, Hall established a new aesthetic on the guitar that is being carried on to this day.

Hall of Fame  
inductee Jim Hall





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Throughout his lengthy career, Hall chose his notes so judiciously that he was once called “possibly the slowest guitar soloist in jazz” by one writer. His true genius was not measured by speed but rather by his melodic approach to improvisation, his empathetic and wholly pianistic approach to comping and the clarity of intention and deep feeling that he imbued in each note played.

“I suppose I’m really a swing kind of musician,” Hall told *DownBeat* in the July 1, 1965, issue. “I play the wide, broken phrases and have the easy time conception you usually associate with swing. Sure I’ve heard and I value Charlie Parker highly, but I don’t aim to play that way—that long eighth-note line. My personality seems to lead me into an easier, looser, maybe Lester Young kind of conception. ...

“My job, as I see it, is to help make the parts fit the whole. You see what I mean by listening? For example, the thing I pay the most attention to when I’m on the stand is time-feeling. In other words, I’m listening to the rhythm section all the time. I guess that also puts me in the old-style jazz class.”

From Scofield’s perspective, Hall and Wes Montgomery brought jazz guitar into the big leagues on par with saxophone, trumpet and piano during the 1950s. “But Jim was very different than Wes,” Scofield said. “He’s well known

for bringing this lyricism to the guitar, but people don’t recognize what a swinging player he was, how rhythmically compelling his lines were. When he played single notes, he could swing like a horn player. He really did bring a beauty to playing the guitar that no one in jazz had before, but his lines swung. He could play with this incisive beat in his music that goes way beyond the guitar. It’s the voice of this language of jazz that came through him and transcended the guitar. And that’s what you really have to do on your instrument; otherwise, you’re just playing guitar music.

“He was my role model in jazz, completely,” Scofield continued. “When I was in high school, I got Wes Montgomery records and Jim Hall records at the same time. I was very lucky that that was some of the first jazz guitar I got to hear. But Wes had just died and Jim was around, so I got to see him in New York City when I was in high school in Connecticut around ’68–’69. I was lucky I was able to hear him play live in those early days. Then in the early ’70s when I was a Berklee student, Gary Burton gave me Jim’s phone number. I went to Jim’s apartment and took a lesson from him, and we stayed in touch from then on. Jim was *it* for me. He was my role model. He still is.”

Hall was Frisell’s role model as well. “Jim Hall made such extraordinary, beautiful music, like nothing we had heard before,” Frisell said

in a statement he provided to *DownBeat* last December, shortly after Hall’s passing. “Absolutely one of a kind. A master. We all know that. But what I’m thinking about now is the humanity, humility, generosity, *strength*. In all his interactions—whether on the bandstand or in everyday conversation—it always seemed as if his energy and attention was directed outward, away from himself. He listened. *Listened* in such a big way, and cared. He was so aware of what was going on around him and could transform it, bring it (us) together, lift it up. It wasn’t about him. It was about all of us. He never looked back, never settled, uncompromising, kept going and going, stayed excited, curious, like a little kid. Wow. Jim Hall! Amazing. Thank you, Jim.”

James Stanley Hall was born in Buffalo, N.Y., but grew up in Cleveland, where he began playing guitar at age 10. Initially inspired by guitar greats Reinhardt and George Van Eps, he was particularly taken by Christian, whom he had first heard on a Benny Goodman Sextet recording. “He had a combination of musicality and brains that were unreal to me,” Hall said of Christian in a 2001 *DownBeat* interview conducted by saxophonist Greg Osby (who featured Hall on his 2000 CD *The Invisible Hand* and appeared on Hall’s 1998 album, *By Arrangement*). “[Christian] used all those things we’re talking about: space, surprise, turning the meter around.”

Hall began working professionally around Cleveland as a teenager and in 1955 enrolled at the Cleveland Institute of Music, where he studied piano, bass and music theory. A year later, he relocated to Los Angeles and soon came to prominence in drummer Chico Hamilton’s West Coast cool quintet. Hall later joined the adventurous trio led by saxophonist-clarinetist Jimmy Giuffre and featuring bassist Ralph Pena, appearing on the innovative 1957 album *The Jimmy Giuffre 3*. That same year, Hall released his first recording as a leader, *Jazz Guitar* on the Pacific Jazz label, which tellingly included a rendition of the Benny Goodman-Charlie Christian tune “Seven Come Eleven.” This led to nightclub engagements and recordings with such like-minded players as Bob Brookmeyer, Hampton Hawes and Paul Desmond before Hall signed on for a yearlong engagement in 1960 accompanying singer Ella Fitzgerald, which forced him to find new ways of placing notes in relation to lyrics and explore a more spacious approach to playing.

“I’m interested ... in the guitar as an accompanying instrument,” Hall said in the 1965 *DownBeat* article. “Comping is almost second nature to a pianist, but I really can’t think of any outstanding guitar accompanist for horns or singers. You don’t hear too many guitarists that can accompany that well. I sometimes think the art of accompanying is neglected because there is so much emphasis on being a soloist. You know, accompanying is really not an instrumental technique—to listen and to anticipate what the leader or singer is going to do so that your comment fits it perfectly.”

Hall’s year with Sonny Rollins in 1962 was enriching and produced the timeless classic *The Bridge*. Said Abercrombie of that album, which also featured bassist Bob Cranshaw and drummer



Ben Riley, “I heard it in a record store when I was 17 and had an epiphany. I didn’t know what Jim was doing, but it sounded so perfect.”

“When I listen to guys like Sonny Rollins, their playing is so brilliant it scares me,” Hall said in the July 19, 1962, issue of *DownBeat*. “It’s exciting; you can never second guess with Sonny. With lots of other people, you know where they are going, and you kind of sneak along to there. Maybe you even beat them to it. But with Sonny anything can happen. Playing with Sonny is exciting.”

That same pivotal year, 1962, Hall recorded the first of two important duet encounters with pianist Bill Evans, *Undercurrent*, in which he further refined his aesthetic on such delicate offerings as John Lewis’ “Skating In Central Park” and the jazz standard “Darn That Dream,” both showcasing their highly interactive hookup.

In 1963, Hall worked in a quartet led by flugelhornist Art Farmer. Together they recorded the aptly titled *Interaction*. Farmer later alluded to the guitarist’s huge harmonic palette in saying, “When you have Jim Hall, you don’t need a pianist.”

Hall’s output during the ’70s included the first of his introspective duets with bassist Ron Carter, 1972’s *Alone Together* on Milestone, 1975’s Creed Taylor-produced *Concierto* on CTI (featuring Carter, Desmond, Chet Baker, Roland Hanna and Steve Gadd) and his hard-swinging trio outing *Live!* on A&M/Horizon, recorded at Toronto’s Bourbon Street club with the top Canadian rhythm tandem of bassist Don Thompson and drummer Terry Clarke on revelatory romps through Charlie Parker’s “Scrapple From The Apple” and Jerome Kern’s “The Way You Look Tonight.”

The ’80s saw two more duet encounters with bassist Carter—1984’s *Live At The Village West* and 1985’s *Telephone* (both on Concord)—and the superb *Power Of Three*, recorded live at the 1986 Montreux Jazz Festival with Wayne Shorter and Michel Petrucciani. Hall’s output remained steady throughout the ’90s on Telarc Records and included a number of firsts, like his first use of a Whammy Bar digital effects pedal on the track “Whistle Stop” from 1993’s *Dedications & Inspirations*, which was also his first unaccompanied outing; his initial encounters on record with guitarists Frisell and Stern and tenor saxophonist Joe Lovano on 1995’s *Dialogues*; his first fully realized Third Stream experiments on 1997’s *Textures*; and his first use of strings and brass sections on 1998’s arranger’s showcase *By Arrangement*. In 1998, Hall also received the prestigious Danish Jazzpar prize.

The concert to commemorate that award involved his working quartet with drummer Terry Clarke, bassist Thomas Ovesen and saxophonist Chris Potter, augmented by the Zapolski String Quartet on Hall’s intriguing “Thesis,” written in 1953 while he was a student at the Cleveland Institute of Music, and also on a rendition of Jimi Hendrix’s “Purple Haze.” The concert was documented on 1999’s *Jazzpar Quartet + 4* on the Storyville label.

In 1999, the elder statesman recorded the intimate *Jim Hall & Pat Metheny* with his friend and guitar disciple. “I’m still training and the guitar is still a mystery to me,” Hall said in the liner notes (written by his daughter Devra) to that duet project. “I’m not sure I have what’s called a *style*, but I have an approach to music, an attitude to consciously allow myself to grow. I don’t like to be boxed in or labeled as having to do with any certain period of jazz music or music in general.”

Named an NEA Jazz Master in 2004, Hall continued to play for another decade, releasing such acclaimed albums as 2005’s *Magic Meeting* with Scott Colley and Lewis Nash; 2005’s *Free Association* with pianist Geoffrey Keezer; 2008’s *Hemisphere* with Frisell, Joey Baron and Colley; 2010’s *Conversations* with Baron; and 2012’s *Live At Birdland* with Baron, Osby and Steve LaSpina (all on the the ArtistShare label). Hall’s last public appearance was alongside guitar disciples Bernstein and Abercrombie in The Allen Room at a Nov. 23, 2013, Jazz at Lincoln Center concert. He died two weeks later from heart failure at age 83.

Bernstein later wrote an epitaph for Hall on his Facebook page: “So sad to hear that the master musician Jim Hall has left this earth. He left it a much better place through his deep humanity, which came through his music in such a profound way. He showed us the power of subtlety, nuance and understatement. His strength and expressiveness came from playing only the essential. A true poet of the guitar and one of the most thoughtful people I have ever known. I feel so privileged to have had him as a teacher and example of a human being so completely generous of spirit.”

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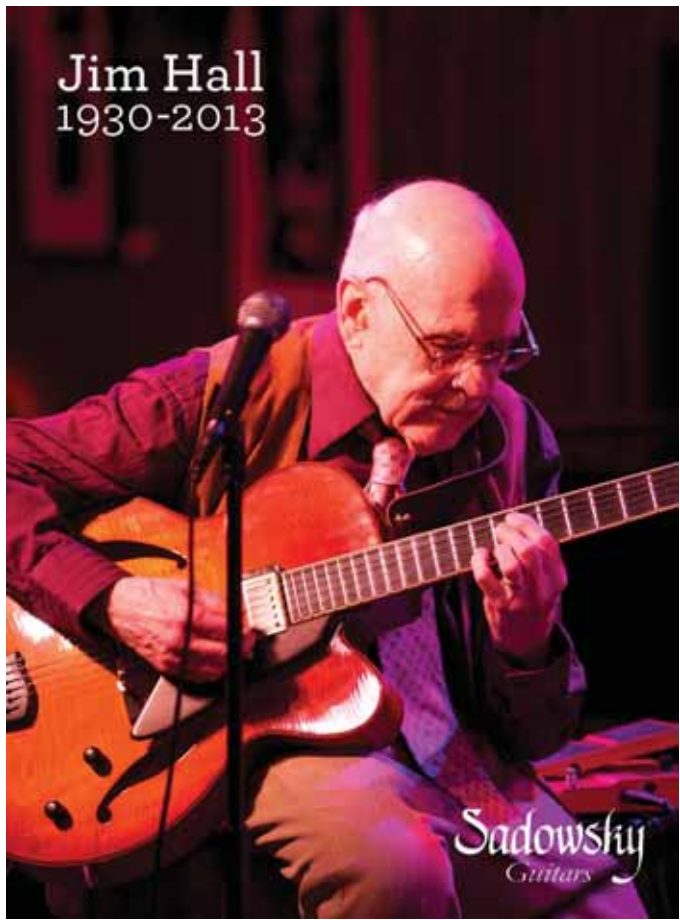
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## VETERANS COMMITTEE HALL OF FAME

# Dinah

## WASHINGTON

### ROYAL TALENT

By Howard Mandel

It's taken more than 50 years since her death for Dinah Washington to be ushered into the DownBeat Hall of Fame, but it seems like she was destined for it from the start. "Evil Gal Blues" and "Salty Papa Blues," her debut recordings of 1944, were written and produced by jazz critic (and future DownBeat editor) Leonard Feather.

For the next two decades—until her death at age 39 in 1963—Washington sang jazz, blues and ballads with Chicago-honed smarts and soulfulness. Whether jamming with musicians such as Lionel Hampton, Clifford Brown, Clark Terry, Max Roach and Arnett Cobb or crossing over to middle-of-the-road audiences with strings-drenched hits like "What A Difference A Day Makes" and "Unforgettable," she popularized a vast range of repertoire without compromising her voice or betraying her style.

Born Ruth Lee Jones, raised to sing and play piano in a church choir and getting her first taste of professional showmanship in the gospel circuit of the Sallie Martin Singers, she went secular as a 15-year-old talent show winner and never looked back. Dubbed "Queen of the Jukebox" early in her career due to an unbroken string of successful singles, and soon thereafter "Queen of the Blues," she took her royal designation to heart. Listen to any of her hundreds of songs and hear her consistently preside over her accompaniment with to-the-manner-born confidence. Her distinctively grainy vocal timbre, perfect diction, subtle interpretive nuances and sophisticated sense of rhythm make even mediocre lyrics worth a replay. She was a compelling storyteller with both a common and unusually refined touch.

Having high regard for Bessie Smith, Billie Holiday, Frank Sinatra and Ray Charles, as well

as her peers Ella Fitzgerald and Sarah Vaughan, Washington could build an ordinary lament such as "Nobody Knows How I Feel This Morning" into a testament of epic, edgy expressivity. She brought genuinely good humor to romps like "Is You Is Or Is You Ain't My Baby" and "Makin' Whoopee," contagious sexiness to "All Of Me," sardonic resignation to "Send Me To The Electric Chair" and sheer thrills at a fast pace to "Lover Come Back To Me."

Though she rode to fame on the first wave of rhythm and blues, much of her music could have easily been country or cabaret. She sang Hank Williams' "Cold, Cold Heart" and Noel Coward's "Mad About The Boy" as well as "This Bitter Earth," one of the darkest of all ballads. She is always convincing.

As a musician, Washington could be generous to other musicians, providing important experience in her backup trio to pianists Wynton Kelly and Joe Zawinul, bassist Keter Betts and drummer Jimmy Cobb, among others. She had a tumultuous life, constantly on tour, in and out of romantic relationships with alarming velocity (she had seven husbands and innumerable affairs). Biographer Nadine Cohodas details it all in *Queen: The Life and Music of Dinah Washington*, which also provides important documentation of musical arts and entertainment in the United States from the end of World War II through the

assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

The '50s, during which Washington reigned, was a period of enormous change. She was often featured in the African-American press—but also music trade publications and mainstream media—as a representative of a new generation of upwardly mobile black urbanites. She sported fine clothes, shoes and furs, understanding that image was an essential part of public performance. Perhaps she was too self-conscious of that. Washington was not naturally slender and struggled with her body image; she was especially concerned with her weight, which fluctuated. Her dependence on prescription drugs (for dieting and insomnia) led to her accidental death by overdose.

Over the fast course of Washington's rise to fame, pursuit and capture of ever more lofty plateaus, her voice frayed and her breath flagged on rare occasion, but any diminishment of her talents and popularity was slight. She had the sound of a woman who was observant, strong and resilient as well as vulnerable. The female singers who arose in the '60s took her as their model: Aretha Franklin, Gladys Knight and Diana Ross are unimaginable without her as a predecessor. Every singer today who's tough and wry and insists on telling the truth about men and women borrows from Washington's insights and stance.

Washington's art endures and will be revered for decades to come. Long live the Queen! **DB**

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VETERANS COMMITTEE  
HALL OF FAME

# BING CROSBY

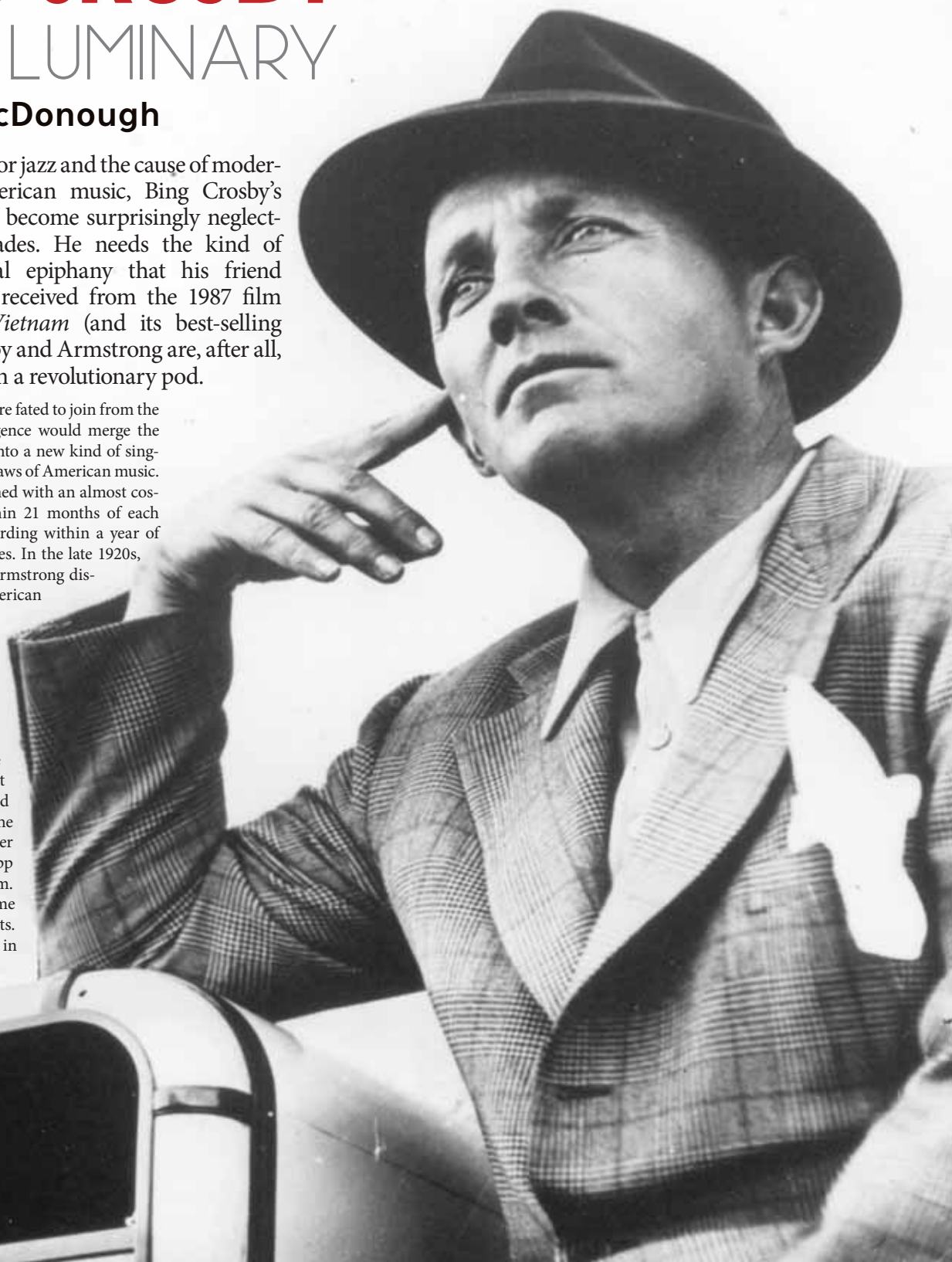
## JAZZ LUMINARY

By John McDonough

For all he did for jazz and the cause of modernity in American music, Bing Crosby's presence has become surprisingly neglected in recent decades. He needs the kind of restorative cultural epiphany that his friend Louis Armstrong received from the 1987 film *Good Morning, Vietnam* (and its best-selling soundtrack). Crosby and Armstrong are, after all, two seminal peas in a revolutionary pod.

The two musicians were fated to join from the beginning. Their convergence would merge the crooner and the hipster into a new kind of singer that would rewrite the laws of American music. The arc of their lives aligned with an almost cosmic precision. Born within 21 months of each other, Crosby began recording within a year of Armstrong's first Hot Fives. In the late 1920s, Crosby found jazz, and Armstrong discovered the Great American Songbook, creating a hot zone of symbiosis.

No white singer listened more closely to Armstrong than Crosby, whose early recordings betray a two-track tension between the intuitive jazz singer who hung out with Bix Beiderbecke and Frankie Trumbauer and the husky romantic balladeer whom producer Jack Kapp had tabbed for stardom. Racial protocols of the time precluded cross-racial duets. But Crosby was not shy in his admiration.



Crosby made Armstrong his co-star in the 1936 movie *Pennies From Heaven*, and they met often after World War II, first on Bing's radio programs, then on the charts when their 1951 duet on "Gone Fishin'" made the top 20. They teamed up again in the 1956 movie *High Society* and four years later on their only album, *Bing & Satchmo*.

The Aug. 22, 1956, issue of *DownBeat* featured Crosby and Armstrong on the cover, and in one of the accompanying stories, *High Society* film producer Sol C. Siegel explained how pleased he was with the casting: "I was particularly anxious to have Armstrong [in the film] because of his close association over the years with Bing Crosby."

Now the two singers are finally reunited in the *DownBeat* Hall of Fame, 37 years after Crosby's death and 62 years after Armstrong became resident number one in 1952.

Why has it taken six decades to honor Crosby's place in jazz history? The answer lies in two factors: the enormity of his shadow as a popular entertainer, as well as the diversity of his talents, which made him the only performer of his century to occupy the heights of all three media platforms simultaneously: film, broadcasting and records.

He accomplished this by wrapping his music around a happy-go-lucky persona that thumbed its nose at status and materialism. He sang populist tunes that belittled the values of the one-percenters of his era ("I've Got A Pocketful Of Dreams").

In films, he was naturally into characters who were uncomfortable with responsibility and who favored the vagabond life. During the Great Depression, Crosby did more than merely ease the moral stigma of unemployment. He made laziness a virtue and invited the poor to look down on the rich. The persona aged well. He was equally at home in the prosperous '50s when he became a soothing antidote to the rat race of conformity. Crosby was a beatnik at heart, unimpressed, even puzzled, by his own legend.

It was his good luck to be part of the Paul Whiteman band at a formative time. Whiteman presented a distilled kind of jazz that buffed out any rough edges. But Crosby, Beiderbecke, guitarist Eddie Lang and other Whiteman sidemen sought the music out at its sources, were imprinted with it, and helped synthesize its possibilities.

If Armstrong was the first important black singer to use improvisation on popular songs, Crosby was among the first white singers to see it as a Magna Carta that could liberate the American song from the tyranny of the operetta. His rhythm tunes were full of the freedom Armstrong took—but with none of its direct language. In Crosby's scat singing, especially, it's clear his rhythmic thinking was all Beiderbecke, not Armstrong—never more apparent than on his 1932 "Sweet Sue," which Bix had recorded with Whiteman four years earlier.

Crosby was at home with the Whiteman jazz contingent, along with the other young, hot, white players he worked with in the East. After Whiteman, he settled in California and began his rise to superstardom. But the jazz singer never disappeared inside the crooner. The first empowered the second and formed the matrix for the next

two generations of singers who would dominate American music: Frank Sinatra, Tony Bennett, Peggy Lee, Jo Stafford, Dean Martin, Billy Eckstine and, well, everybody.

In later Crosby couplings with Armstrong, the Mills Brothers, the Boswell Sisters, Jack Teagarden, Joe Venuti, Johnny Mercer and others, a smoother Crosby still crackled with the spirit that ignited the first important generation of white jazz players. It remained his most natural environment. But it didn't stop him from negotiating a brassy, Basie-ish makeover on Verve in 1956 with conductor Buddy Bregman. *Bing Sings Whilst Bregman Swings* would be the best of his

late-career jazz albums.

But a quieter, more intimate jazz sensibility would settle on an older Crosby in the more sequestered surroundings of the Buddy Cole Trio, which backed him on radio into the 1960s. (Crosby was perhaps the last major star to give up his loyalty to the medium.) In 2012 Mosaic Records released 160 of these concise, relaxed performances in a box set titled *CBS Radio Recordings 1954-56*. Their casual flow and unforced lyricism represent the essence of what jazz and popular music had once given to each other when Crosby paved the way—and until rock changed the rules.

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## HISTORICAL ALBUM OF THE YEAR

### Miles Davis, *Miles At The Fillmore—Miles Davis 1970: The Bootleg Series Vol. 3*

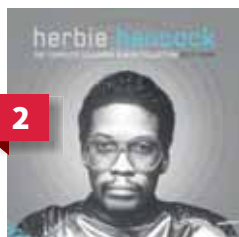
(COLUMBIA/LEGACY)

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1



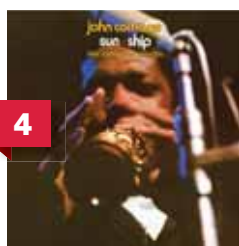
**2** Herbie Hancock, *The Complete Columbia Album Collection 1972–1988* (COLUMBIA/LEGACY) 86

Hancock's 16-year run on Columbia, represented here on 34 discs, marked the keyboardist's most restless and exploratory period.



**3** Clifford Jordan, *The Complete Clifford Jordan Strata–East Sessions* (MOSAIC) 83

These sessions from the late '60s/early '70s find the assertive saxophonist in the roles of recording artist and producer to equally formidable colleagues.



**4** John Coltrane, *Sun Ship: The Complete Session* (IMPULSE/VERVE) 72

This two-disc set presents the raw materials that would eventually become *Sun Ship*: complete takes, alternate takes and inserts from the original 1965 session.



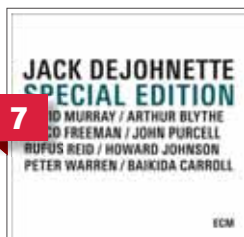
**5** Louis Armstrong, *The Okeh, Columbia & RCA Victor Recordings 1925–1933* (SONY/LEGACY) 67

This 10-CD set is the most comprehensive collection of the trumpeter's most decisive and innovative years ever assembled. These recordings seal the historic convergence of jazz and the Great American Songbook.



**6** Miles Davis, *The Original Mono Recordings* (COLUMBIA/LEGACY) 62

Audiophiles will relish the original mono mixes of momentous recordings by Davis with his "First Great Quintet" and in collaboration with Gil Evans, along with some enticing rarities.



**7** Jack DeJohnette, *Special Edition* (ECM) 60

This set of four remastered albums underscores the excitement of invention and possibility one can hear in this era of DeJohnette's career, from 1979–'84.



**8** Art Blakey & The Jazz Messengers, *The Complete Jazz Messengers At The Café Bohemia* (PHOENIX RECORDS) 51

Hear Blakey & The Jazz Messengers' complete Nov. 23, 1955, Café Bohemia performance (originally released on three separate LPs) as well as the 10-inch bonus album *Horace Silver Quintet, Vol. 2*, featuring the same personnel.



**9** John Coltrane, *Afro Blue Impressions* (PABLO) 49

Straddling two worlds, Coltrane plays material from the late '50s while applying radical new concepts of time and harmony at two European concerts recorded in 1963.

**10** Tommy Flanagan/Jaki Byard, *The Magic Of 2* (RESONANCE) 48



This 1982 meeting between pianists Tommy Flanagan and Jaki Byard at San Francisco's Keystone Korner illustrates the transcendent artistry of two master modernists in duet and solo settings.

**11** John Carter/Bobby Bradford Quartet, *Flight For Four* (INTERNATIONAL PHONOGRAPH) 43

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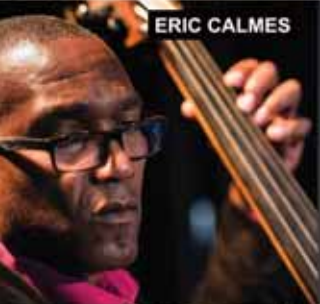
**20** Donny Hathaway, *Never My Love: The Anthology* (RHINO) 24



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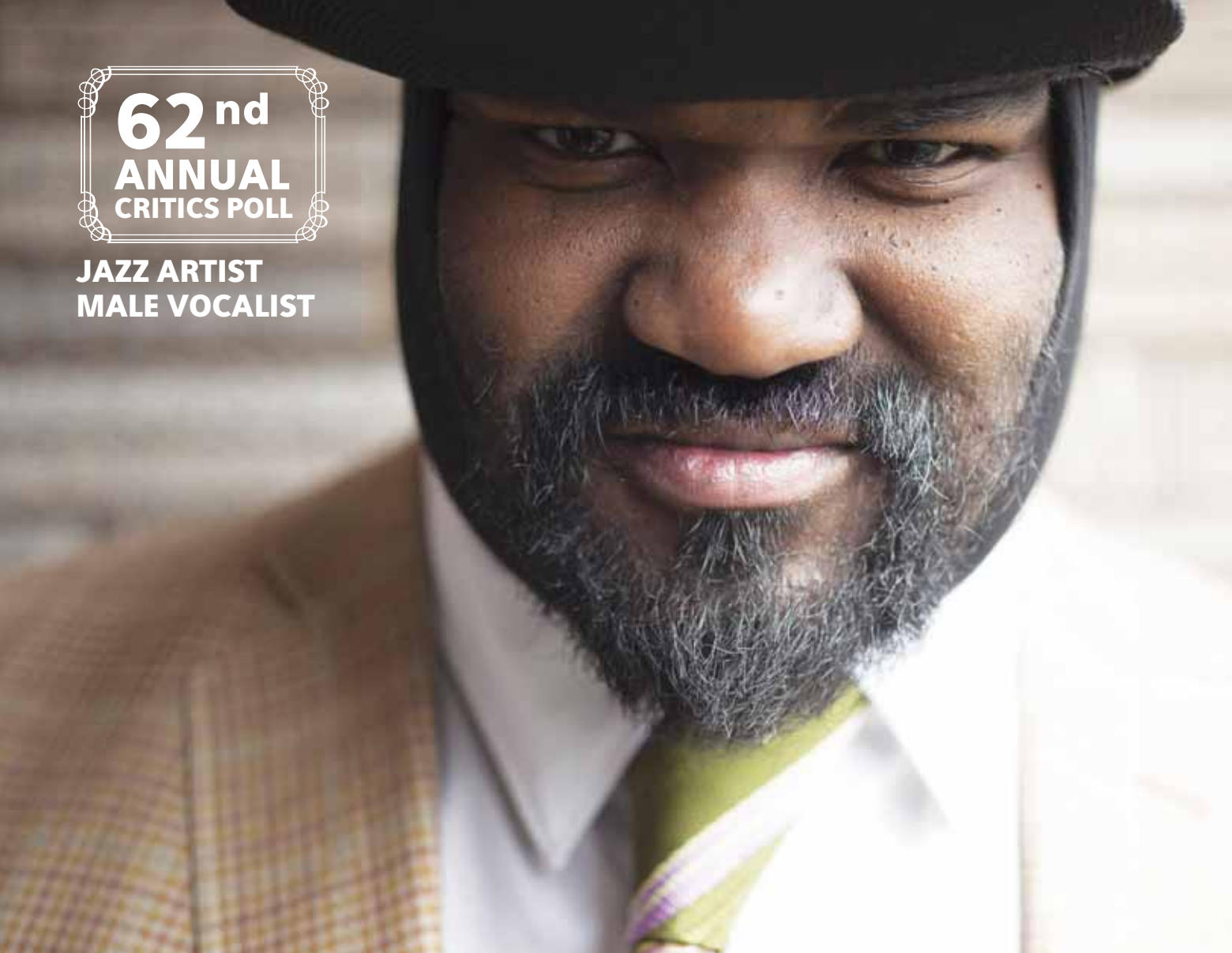
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**JAZZ ARTIST**  
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# GREGORY PORTER

## Feeling *Free*

BY GEOFFREY HIMES | PHOTO BY SHAWN PETERS

**F**or a long time, it seemed as if vocal jazz was stuck in a stylistic rut while instrumental jazz was evolving rapidly—one style after the other. While sax playing was being overturned every five years by the likes of Sonny Rollins, John Coltrane, Ornette Coleman, Sam Rivers, David Murray and Michael Brecker, jazz singing seemed relatively unchanged as each generation continued to model themselves on Billie Holiday, Ella Fitzgerald and Nat “King” Cole.

Things loosened up in the mid-'90s, thanks to Cassandra Wilson and Kurt Elling. Wilson proved you could apply post-bop principles to jazz singing while incorporating both the repertoire and character of post-Beatles rock and soul. She soon inspired the likes of Norah Jones, Lizz Wright and René Marie to follow a similar path.

Elling married virtuosic technique to smart, unpredictable material. But since his arrival on the national



scene nearly 20 years ago, fans of male vocal jazz have been waiting for the next breakthrough artist. Now he's here.

A former college football player from Southern California who wears a bushy beard and a distinctive black-knit cap with a visor and ear flaps, Gregory Porter has devoted most of his albums and concerts to his own compositions, which owe as much to Donny Hathaway and Bill Withers as to George Gershwin and Jon Hendricks.

Porter has won over a growing audience as well as critics, who honored him as the top jazz artist and male vocalist in the 2014 DownBeat Critics Poll. (He topped the categories Rising Star–Jazz Artist and Rising Star–Male Vocalist in last year's Critics Poll.) Porter became a star not by consciously rebelling against business as usual but by entering the jazz field as an outsider oblivious to the unspoken rules.

"I had a healthy ignorance of what I should do," he sheepishly admitted. "My first record company wanted me to do standards for my first record. But I was writing and I said, 'Let me sing my own little songs and see what happens.' I wanted to try something new, something that was connected to the tradition but maybe sung in a different way. I know the audience isn't supposed to be the guide to the artist, but sometimes they are. Before I made that first record, I was including my own songs like '1960 What?' in the same sets with standards like 'Moody's Mood For Love,' and the audience was getting excited about my songs. I think jazz fans were eager to hear some different songs."

The term "singer-songwriter" is most often used in the folk and rock fields, but it fits Porter, because his singing is shaped by the songs he writes and vice versa. His latest album, *Liquid Spirit* (Blue Note), and his two previous discs—*Water* and *Be Good*, both on Motéma—have all featured original material, and they've all received glowing reviews.

In concert and in the studio, Porter's voice echoes the testifying fervor he learned at his mother's church in Bakersfield, Calif. It makes sense that he would write songs with moral points expressed in down-home metaphors. His lyrics and melodies resemble the streetwise vernacular of Marvin Gaye and Stevie Wonder, so it's not surprising that his vocals do as well.

"I'm still pulling from Stevie," he said. "I'm really dealing with the influences from my youth to write new stories that reflect my personal issues. What I do on *Liquid Spirit* is what we did every Sunday morning, but now they play it on VH1 Soul next to Beyoncé, so it seems current. There's something in my music pop fans can relate to, but then they say, 'Why did you do that? Why didn't you do the second part the same way you did the first part?'"

"And I say, 'Because I'm a jazz singer, so I'll deviate in the melody. I'll sing ahead of the beat or behind the beat; I'll change the harmony. If it feels free, it feels right.' Last month's concerts will be a little different than next month's concert, because I'll find something new in the melody or something new in the lyric that I'll emphasize. I feel bad for pop singers [who are] expected to sing

the same song in the same way in the same key 20 years after it was a hit."

Porter rejects the idea that he's doing something unprecedented in jazz. He regards vocal jazz interpretations of songs by Wonder and The Beatles during the 1960s and '70s not as commercial compromises, but as signposts pointing the way forward. He notes that listeners sometimes forget how artists like Leon Thomas, Andy Bey and Etta Jones bridged the gap between the Great American Songbook and soul music, not to mention the obvious jazz influences heard in the music

of Hathaway, Gaye and Ray Charles.

"When you're talking about that post-Civil Rights, feel-good, looking-up music of Marvin and Donny," Porter said, "that existed in the music of Leon, Andy and Esther Phillips. But it didn't seem to get the official stamp. It came out of that gospel-soul tradition, so it might not have been embraced by the jazz establishment. I would love to have seen a show where Leon, Andy and Frank Sinatra were on stage together, because that's the full spectrum of jazz vocals." **DB**

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# MARIA SCHNEIDER

## Orchestral Prowess

BY TED PANKEN | PHOTO BY JIMMY & DENA KATZ

In 2005, shortly after receiving her first Grammy for her fourth album, *Concert In The Garden*, Maria Schneider pinpointed the significance of the honor. “It means something more to me than my view of myself,” she said. “People in the general audience may not be exactly sure what a Pulitzer is, but they know the Grammy as the ultimate music award.”

The composer, then 44, added that she had “dreamed of winning a Grammy” while growing up in Windom, Minn.—an agricultural community of 3,600 in the state’s southwest corner. “I’d say my speech at home when nobody was looking,” she said.

But in her brief 2005 remarks, Schneider deviated from the “I want to thank my mother and father” script of childhood. Rather, she acknowledged the members of the Maria Schneider Orchestra, an entity since 1992, and ArtistShare, which released her self-funded *Concert In The Garden*. Later in 2005, Schneider would top three categories in the DownBeat Critics Poll: Jazz Album, Composer and Arranger. In the 2008 Critics Poll, with *Sky Blue* (ArtistShare), she topped those three categories again, along with an honor for Big Band. In this year’s poll, the Maria Schneider Orchestra was named top Big Band, and its leader once again honored as top Composer and Arranger.

In 2014, Schneider spoke from the same Grammy podium to accept her Best Contemporary Classical Composition award for *Winter Morning Walks*, which comprises two through-composed song cycles commissioned and performed by soprano Dawn Upshaw—who also earned a Grammy (for Best Classical Vocal Solo), as did engineer Tim Martyn and producer David Frost. For the occasion, Schneider delivered eloquent denunciations of digital file-sharing and Spotify that were quoted in national media and went moderately viral.

“I didn’t expect to win, but when Tim and Dawn were announced, I realized I’d better start thinking of what to say, because this could happen,” Schneider said a few months later in her apartment on Manhattan’s Upper

West Side. “I feel I’ve been given a position, and I wasn’t going to fritter away this amazing opportunity. The second I got the award, I decided I’d say this is legalized theft, which is exactly what it is. Everybody went crazy and applauded. How long are we supposed to take this?”

It was time to discuss music. “I feel a little guilty,” Schneider said of her latest Grammy. “All these people push through that classical world their whole career, and I come in with this big grab. But I’ll take it.” She also expressed discomfort with DownBeat’s 2014 Best Arranger designation. “Arranging is a special art, taking a standard piece and reforming it,” she said. “It’s not the same as orchestrating.”

On *Winter Morning Walks*, Schneider applies her orchestral prowess to frame Upshaw’s intuitively penetrating interpretations of two very different suites. On “Stories,” set to Mark Strand’s translations of five ironic, melodramatic poems by Brazilian Carlos Drummond de Andrade (1902–’87), she provides the 34-piece St. Paul Chamber Orchestra (SPCO) with intricate, sweeping scores. The title piece comprises nine poems that Nebraskan Ted Kooser, a one-time American Poet Laureate, wrote while recovering from cancer.

Oswaldo Gojilov, one of several prominent contemporary composers who regard Upshaw as a muse, introduced her to Schneider with a gift of *Concert In The Garden* in proximity to Schneider’s first Grammy. “There aren’t many times these days where I actually fall in love with a CD,” Upshaw said by phone. “But I started to play this one over and over again in its entirety. It brought me joy at a difficult time in my personal life. Maria’s music has so much power, so unaffected and even ecstatic; it brings out the best in life. It was something new for me, and I wanted to hear it live.”

Upshaw attended Schneider’s annual Thanksgiving week residency at Manhattan’s Jazz Standard, where they became acquainted. During a subsequent conversation, she began to envision a collaboration. “I thought perhaps we’d meet someplace neither of us could imagine,” Upshaw said. “I’m drawn to chiseled musical voices—music that, when I hear it, touches me, and I feel

I can live in that world and express myself. When I am most myself in somebody else's music, I find that their music is like nobody else's."

It was a year or two before Upshaw—by now involved with SPCO programming as an artistic partner—gathered the courage to reveal her proposition. "Maria was scared at first because I came from another world, but I thought the possibilities were huge," Upshaw said. "The melodies are so beautiful—and I do like to sing a good melody. I'm glad I acted on the impulse."

The choice of repertoire and musical direction was entirely Schneider's. "I'd sent Maria a few things that she didn't go for, which was fine," Upshaw said. "I think the composer will be most inspired by something they find on their own."

Schneider wanted something that was "almost folk poetry, not complex and difficult, but with a narrative, human element that my music has." A Brazilian friend suggested Drummond, and Schneider—who has incorporated Brazilian elements in pieces like the contrapuntal "Choro Dançado" from *Concert In the Garden*—"went to town."

"I thought my Brazilian music influence was a good meeting point with classical music," Schneider said. "You can play it without drums, and it has groove and tempo and time, which I put into the orchestral lines. The classical world is used to pulling ahead and falling behind, but a big band plays the beat right when the ictus of my hand is going down—not late, not early. At certain points I wanted that relentless time, which was a challenge for the players."

For the follow-up, which debuted in June 2011 at the Ojai Classical Music Festival (music-directed by Upshaw), Schneider decided to compose a looser, sparer, more intimate piece for the Australian Chamber Orchestra, a string ensemble whose musicians stand and function without a conductor, with improvised sections from pianist Frank Kimbrough, reedist Scott Robinson and bassist Jay Anderson, all members of her band for more than two decades. Within the pared-down setting, she mirrors the interior, animistic quality of Kooser's works, which evoke, Schneider observed, "the open prairie landscape that I come from, so pale in the winter—I don't want to say bleak—and so beautiful."

Beginning with 25 poems that she placed on a board above the upright piano in her living room-work space, Schneider culled nine pieces that most



Dawn Upshaw (left) and Maria Schneider collaborated on *Winter Morning Walks*.

JIMMY & DENA KATZ

"spoke to me as music." She referenced her orchestration of "Perfectly Still This Solstice Morning," which opens the proceedings. "I could immediately imagine Frank playing these little crystalline, biting things," she said. "Writing this, I was out on a limb, and being able to write for people I know so well made it easier. My music has gradually been getting closer to some realm that's right in the middle of classical and jazz, where the improvisations are woven into the formal development of the music. So I decided to pull the strings and Dawn a little bit into my world by including my guys. Also, as opposed to big compositions, it was fun to write songs, short little nuggets, a defined melody, as opposed to a melody that keeps developing throughout a piece."

In constructing the songs, Schneider said she forgot herself in the texts, and drew on firsthand observations of her collaborator's tonal personality from their initial encounter. "The language gives a rhythmic and almost a melodic contour," she said. "That took me out of the realm of genre and into the world of trying to evoke something from each poem. I also followed the sound of Dawn's voice, which has such a beautiful tone, with a beautiful low range. I love the way she enunciates and projects the meaning of the words

# FREDA PAYNE

## JAZZ SINGER

*Come Back To Me Love* is Freda's remarkable all-new recording. Captured in the hallowed environs of Capitol Records' Studio C in Hollywood—where Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin and a host of legends once recorded—this features an assemblage of top-flight musicians on a mix of standards and originals arranged and conducted by Grammy® winning producer Bill Cunliffe.

Freda, whose teenaged pop success ("Band of Gold," "Bring the Boys Home") led to her fulfilling her dream of being a jazz singer and whom has performed with the big bands of Quincy Jones and Duke Ellington, recently wowed audiences with her turn as Ella Fitzgerald in a musical theater production.



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with a human depth and perspective.

"If I did something well on this, it's that the music serves the poetry. Sometimes I hear classical music that deconstructs the words and the way someone would speak a phrase to a point where it's unrecognizable. I don't know why you would write for words if you don't want to enhance the meaning of those words."

Having her bandmates on board enabled Schneider to incorporate "spatial notation" that allowed them "to improvise textures with directions I provided. Some songs are very specific, but some are open, where the orchestra can hang on to things longer, and Dawn can sing out of time." She added that during an 11-concert tour of Australia in February for which she wasn't present, "Scott, Frank and Jay took more liberties each night, which made Dawn take more liberties, which made the orchestra do the same. By the end, everyone was smiling at each other, hearing the little things. It brought them to a point of more malleability as a whole group."

As a concrete example of how keenly Schneider attends to "the little things," Kimbrough told an anecdote from the May 2012 recording dates for *Winter Morning Walks*, soon after a Florida-to-Canada tour that she did supervise. "Maria is a perfectionist's perfectionist, and she tweaked things right up to the last minute," Kimbrough said. "While we were recording 'Walking By Flashlight,' I was playing a four-bar passage at the front, just quarter notes, before everything comes in. Maria stopped me on about the second bar and told me that I had rushed the second beat of the first bar. She hears with a microscope, and she was working with a producer and recording engineer who also hear on that level."

As 2014 proceeds, Schneider's itinerary includes several performances of *Winter Morning Walks*. She was also considering several commission offers, although she expressed ambivalence about taking on projects that incur continual "low-level stress." "I'm not prolific, and I don't churn things out," she said, noting that a bout with breast cancer a decade ago had shaped her perspective on the matter. "I say no to a lot of things, even things maybe I shouldn't say no to, because I know the psychological place I need to be to live. Commissions only turn into money later when you sell or perform the music, which is another reason why I like writing for my band. I pay for this stuff through gigs and especially clinics."

As we spoke, Schneider was coming to grips with a \$26,000 charge related to an accidental unit overage in the pressing of *Winter Morning Walks*. "It's a \$200,000 record; I had made \$110,000 back, so I was at the \$90,000 loss point, but now, overnight, it's \$116,000," she said. "Sales are slow now. I'll sell them at gigs, and people will perform the music, so in time it will pay for itself. But, oh, my God, I can't keep sliding backwards. I don't have endless funds. A lot of people don't [realize that] I struggle as much as I do."

This being said, Schneider expressed her determination to follow through on a scheduled orchestra recording at the end of August. Slated for release in 2015 on ArtistShare, it will document music she's composed since the 2007 sessions that generated *Sky Blue*, including beyond-category

pieces like "The Thompson Fields" and "Arbiters Of Evolution," which draw deeply on memories of her rural Minnesota childhood.

"I grew up in a town with no record store, with a complete hodgepodge of records in our house, everything from Peruvian music to Arthur Rubinstein to albums by Artie Shaw and Earl Hines," Schneider said. "I was never taught to have allegiance to any particular thing. Everything I heard was, 'Oh, that's cool. That's fun.'"

She became immersed in jazz after moving 300 miles east to Minneapolis to enroll at the University of Minnesota, where she majored in composition and music theory from 1979 until

1983. She maintains that those studies continue to animate her creative process.

"The classical world at the time was super hung-up on atonality and serialism, and it almost felt like you weren't relevant if you didn't join the program," Schneider said. "To me, the jazz world was much more cutting-edge, because it accepted all kinds of music on its own terms, from Cecil Taylor-like to Louis Armstrong-like, and everything in between. It felt like a world where I could find myself, because it was so open-minded, which I feel it is to this day—down to DownBeat asking me about *Winter Morning Walks*. It's an incredible genre. I love it."

DB

## Driftwood

Wolfgang Muthspiel guitar  
Larry Grenadier double-bass  
Brian Blade drums

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**BLUES ARTIST**  
**BLUES ALBUM**

# BUDDY GUY

## **BLUES** COMMANDER

By Aaron Cohen | Photography by Paul Natkin

**O**n any given night at the Chicago club Buddy Guy's Legends, the blues hero's presence is everywhere, even when the man himself *isn't* sitting quietly in a corner by the door. Large photos of Guy adorn the room, along with some of his guitars, an array of framed memorabilia and a portion of the many awards he's accumulated, including six Grammys. Although his name and face are depicted on the giant sign mounted on the front of the building, Guy does not seek attention when he's off-stage: He's happy to just watch the band from his preferred barstool. He also knows that, soon enough, a chunk of the patrons will swarm over to him.





PAUL NATKIN/PHOTO RESERVE

“Once a few of those phone cameras start flashing,” said Legends office manager Annie Lawlor, “that’ll start them all.”

She’s right, and after a short while Guy graciously poses for fans’ photos, autographs CDs and shares a few wickedly funny anecdotes that will remain off the record. He’s equally enthused about the accolades that have flooded his way during the past few years, including this year’s DownBeat Critics Poll wins for Blues Artist and Blues Album, for *Rhythm & Blues* (RCA/Silvertone). Guy was also named a 2012 Kennedy Center Honoree (the same year as Led Zeppelin, whose guitarist Jimmy Page owes a considerable amount to Guy and his colleagues). That same year, Guy performed at the White House and while that event was newsworthy enough, he also garnered attention for convincing President Barack Obama to sing with the band.

Guy received another award this past May, which may not seem as glamorous, but conveys just as much personal meaning. He was given an honorary degree from Louisiana State University, which was where he worked as a maintenance man before moving to Chicago in 1957. In the early 1950s, Guy was unable to attain much formal education. As a teenager, his mother suffered a stroke, so he had to help with chopping crops and plowing the fields.

While his family understood his desire to move north for a better income and chance to learn about music directly from the blues masters, Guy’s home state never left his consciousness. This year he also bought a home near Baton Rouge.

“The few people still alive who knew me in Louisiana cry every time I go there and talk,” Guy said. “The white lady whose plantation we were living on, said, ‘Come sit down and pull up a chair beside me’ and also said, ‘Congratulations.’ When I left there, we couldn’t even ride in the front of the car with them, go to the same bar, or use the same washroom. We didn’t bring that up, but I could see it in her eyes because she cried.”

Education, mentorship and schooling come up frequently during a conversation with Guy in his office, one floor above the Legends stage. One of his reasons for opening the club was to have a space to teach young people about the blues, just like Muddy Waters had mentored him more than 50 years ago. Teenage guitarist Quinn Sullivan is one of Guy’s protégés and he’s looking for more.

“Any young kid, I can give a tip to, I would. I owe it to them to keep the blues alive. If I see someone who can play, I call them up,” Guy said. “They have a law here, they can’t stop a guy from working. If someone is 12 or 13, and I call you and pay you to play, but I can’t serve you drinks. One guy brought his kid from Canada, another brought a bunch of kids from California. Bring them early on a Friday or Saturday so they don’t have to go to school the next day. Some little girls came up and they were not nervous or shaking at all. I just played Greenwich, Conn., a couple nights ago. You know that’s a very rich town and I walked off the stage and saw many 6, 7, 8, 9, 10-year old kids. They were following me like you see on the news when a duck has babies and they’re crossing the expressway.”

At the same time, Guy chuckles at the memory of how, at first, his own children did not recognize his artistry. During this conversation, his guitarist son Gregory was taking care of the club’s business in an adjoining office. But initially Guy’s music couldn’t compete with the pop stars of the early and mid-1980s.

“One Fourth of July, we put the record player and speakers outside, and I was cooking barbecue,” Guy recalled. “Michael Jackson and Prince were selling records like hotcakes, and they were playing them. Everyone was dancing. Every time someone would slip one of my records on, my son would take it off and say, ‘I don’t want to hear that.’ Now, every time I tell him about that, he looks at me with a few tears in his eyes and says, ‘Dad, I just didn’t know.’ But I’m glad. They realize [the importance of] the music I play. When you see me, I don’t dance and carry on as well the rest of the kids do, but I do let you know I enjoy what I’m doing.”

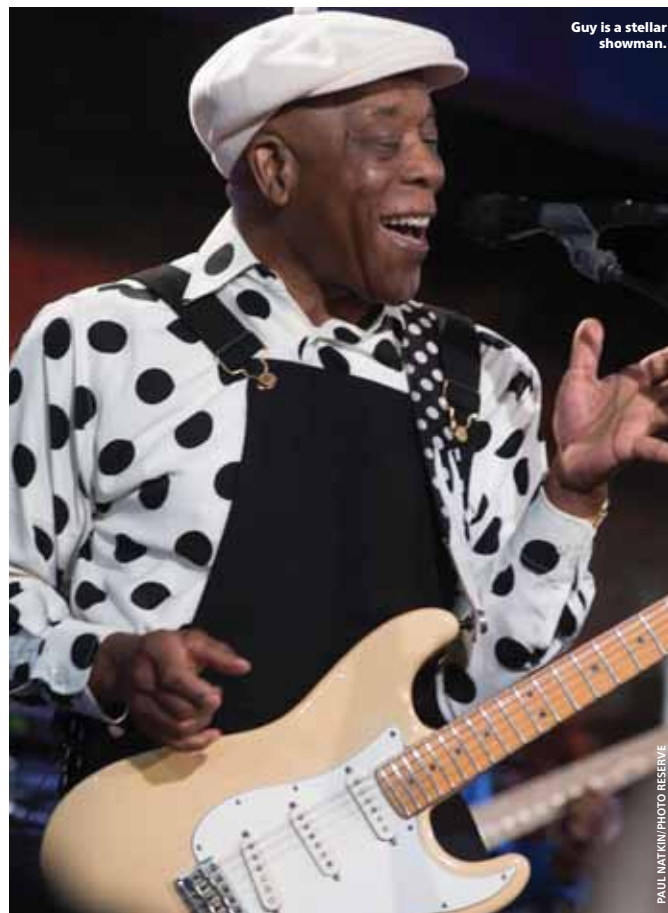
That description of Guy’s performance style is quite the understatement. Long regarded as an incredible showman, Guy will play the guitar behind his back, pick the strings with his teeth, and use a cordless guitar so that he can stroll to the bar—or even walk outside—all while delivering a stinging solo. Such flashiness would be mere novelty were it not for his virtuoso skills as a guitarist as well as his authoritative vocals.

Loyal Chicagoans have the opportunity to see what Guy does up close during his monthlong residencies, which happen every January at his club. Some of those shows were chronicled on the 2012 concert album *Live At Legends* (RCA). While the album captures the extravagant energy he brings

**“THESE KIDS WERE FOLLOWING ME, LIKE YOU SEE ON THE NEWS WHEN A DUCK HAS BABIES AND THEY’RE CROSSING THE EXPRESSWAY.”**

to the electric guitar, Guy points to an acoustic six-string in his office and explained that he enjoys playing such songs as Ray Charles’ “What’d I Say” on that instrument. Clearly, he’s seen a lot of changes in his decades of playing, but he feels that the basic elements inherent in his music remain constant.

“You can amplify it and electrify it, but you can still tell it’s a guitar,” Guy said. “When the British started playing the blues with the big amplifiers, they needed a truck to carry a load around. We used to go in a car and take the four-by-four amplifier and drums and put them in the car. When I was recording for Chess they had a reel-to-reel tape. Now you go into the studio and they punch buttons. It’s all tech, but I’ve experienced a little more with the guitar and my little singing, but it’s still the music that we began playing. But there was no such thing as all those special effects when I started



Guy is a stellar showman.

PAUL NATKIN/PHOTO RESERVE

playing. B.B. King had that vibrating in his left hand and nobody had that. Jimi Hendrix came up with the wah-wah. Music goes like automobiles, first auto had a lantern and now if it starts raining, I don’t have to turn on my windshield wipers. How did they figure out how to do that? Music just keeps up with everything else in creative technology.”

Guy commands a younger generation of musicians from different genres to meet him on his own terms, especially on *Rhythm & Blues*. His collaborators include Gary Clark Jr., who does a guest spot on “Blues Don’t Care” and Beth Hart, who sings on “What You Gonna Do About Me.” Even in a troubled market for recorded music, the 21 included songs are spread across two CDs.

“We were in the studio and they always ask for 15 or 16 songs. When I got to 16, maybe 17, I said, ‘Do we have enough?’ They would throw something at me and I said, ‘Wait a minute, that sounds good, and *that* sounds pretty good.’ Then we got to 21 and invited Keith Urban to sing [on ‘One Day Away’]. I said, ‘Man, you got me hooked now, just go on.’ [Producer] Tom [Hambridge] said, ‘We’ll present them with a double album.’ I said, ‘Whatever it takes, you can put three out there as far as I concerned.’ Hopefully, we’ll have something that will get airplay and that some of the young kids I met wouldn’t mind playing.” Other guests on the album include Kid Rock and Aerosmith bandmates Steven Tyler, Joe Perry and Brad Whitford.

But Obama remains the most prominent voice to sing with Guy. Even though it was only for a few bars, the guitarist still can’t believe that he made this request to the most powerful person in the world—and that the president accepted.

“Somebody whispered in my ear, ‘He’s from Chicago and if you ask him to sing “Sweet Home Chicago,” he might come up and sing.’ B.B. King was sitting there and he came up and made a speech. I said, ‘Mr. President, you can sing the first verse of this.’ If he didn’t, I would’ve felt like an idiot. But he turned around and B.B. handed him the mic. Thank God. The good Lord looked down on me and saved me because he did it. B.B. said, ‘You made him do it.’ I didn’t, but I’m glad he did. To say something to the commander in chief—and he *applied* it—I’ll carry that to my grave.”

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**RISING STAR DRUMS**

# RUDY ROYSTON

**'IRON SHAPES IRON'**

By Ken Micallef | Photo by Steven Sussman

**W**hen he arrived in New York City from Denver in 2006, Rudy Royston fully expected that local drummers would, to use his term, “vibe” him.

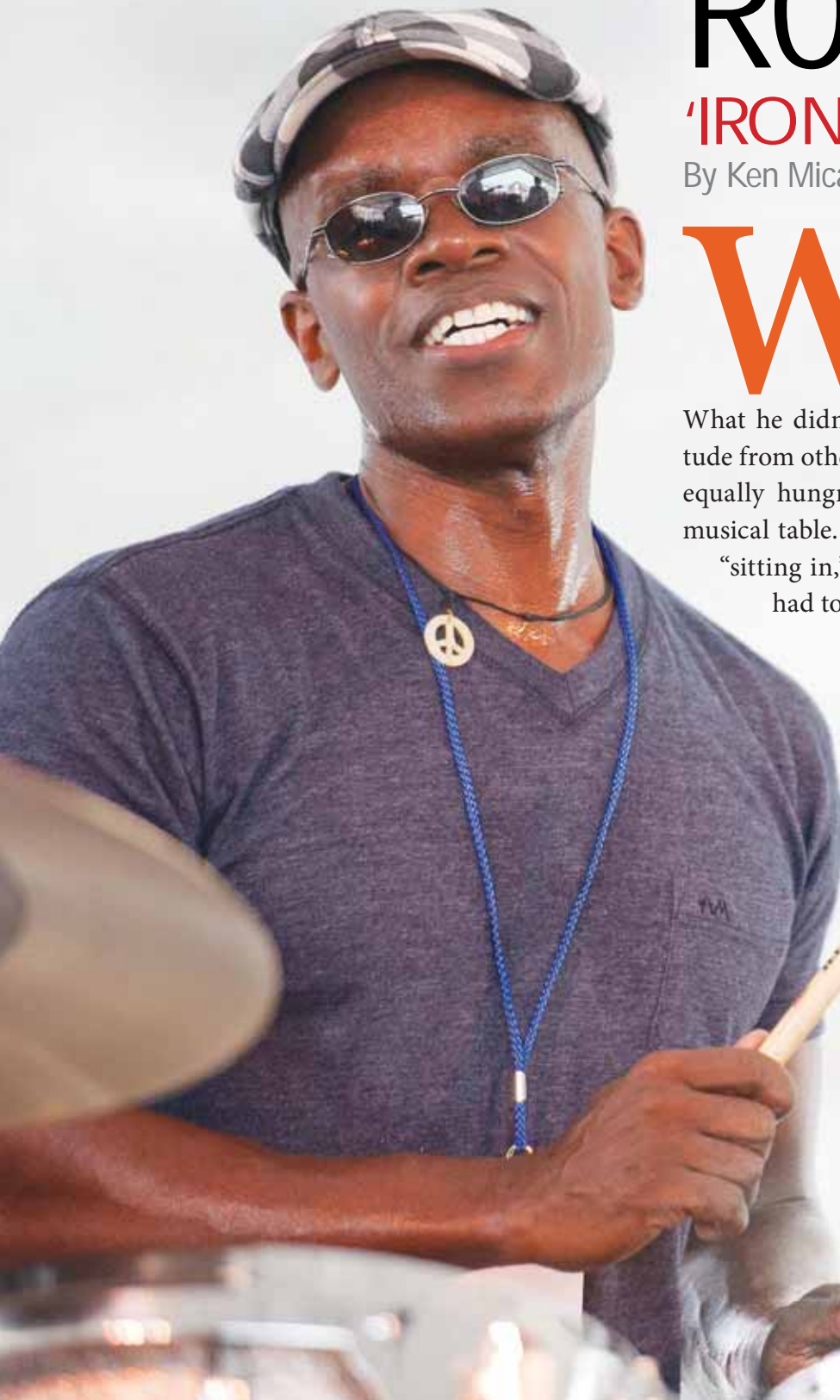
What he didn't expect was a serious dose of attitude from other types of instrumentalists who were equally hungry for a place at the city's crowded musical table. Every scene has its own protocol for “sitting in,” and the then 34-year-old drummer had to negotiate his admittance.

“When I got to New York, I didn't even know how to sit in,” Royston recalled with a smile. “What's the routine? Am I supposed to sign a piece of paper? Some cats were vibing me consistently at different clubs. And they weren't drummers, but saxophone players and a trumpet player. Drummers know right away if you can play, and they're cool with you. But these other cats were giving me the eye. I was like, ‘Man, *really?* I've been playing since you were in a high chair.’ But ultimately it was all fine.”

Royston—now an established force on the NYC scene—is too friendly to hassle any newcomers these days. Among the stars who have benefitted from his highly charged drumming style are Bill Frisell, Dave Douglas, Ravi Coltrane, Jason Moran, Tia Fuller, JD Allen, The Mingus Big Band, Jenny Scheinman and Jeremy Pelt. Drawing on a background in orchestral percussion, the native Texan generates an enormous range of color and detail from a drum kit, his muscular playing fueled by swing and groove.

Royston's debut as a leader, *303* (Greenleaf), takes its title from the area code for Denver. The album boasts an unusual lineup, with guitarist Nir Felder, saxophonist Jon Irabagon, pianist Sam Harris, trumpeter Nadjé Noordhuis and two bassists who perform together on almost every track: Mimi Jones and Yasushi Nakamura.

Royston double-majored in poetry and music



# “New York defines who you are as a musician because you realize pretty quickly that everyone here can play.”

at the University of Denver. His study of poetry undoubtedly informed the thematic nature of his drumming and the impressive structure of his musical compositions. “When I read Langston Hughes at DU,” Royston said, “I realized, ‘This is music, the rhythm of it, the development of it, the theme of it—the whole beauty of a blank piece of paper that you are going to create a timeless work on. It’s a canvas for you to work with. I fell in love with the beauty of words, and it reminded me of the beauty of melody. Poetry is like music. Music is like poetry.’”

Performing in May with guitarist Jeff McLaughlin’s trio at the tiny Bar Next Door in

Greenwich Village, Royston injected “Stella By Starlight” with dizzying layers of rhythmic complexity, gracefully shifting the rhythm between half-time and 4/4, dissecting the pulse and then digging into a deep, wide groove. Royston’s playing provided a lesson in musicality and possibility, like a poet grooving high. This elasticity of approach also informs *303*, especially its suite-like title track.

“I didn’t want to have a conventional song form, like AABA for ‘303,’” Royston said. “I wanted it to be more like AA, and then we went into a completely different feel. We don’t return to the first melody; we transition in the middle and go

somewhere else. We didn’t have to return to the top of the tune. It went in another direction, into a different realm. Then the song ends.”

*303* ranges from tranquil original compositions (“Mimi Sunrise”) to Mozart (“Ave Verum Corpus”) to an interpretation of Radiohead’s “High And Dry.”

“Rudy had a vision for this band, and it worked,” Felder said. “Rudy’s tunes are very through-composed and very sectional and he trusts his musicians. He let us do our own thing and sound like ourselves. It’s always good when a bandleader trusts you to play who *you* are. I don’t think [this music] would have worked with a different drummer or a different bandleader. Like a lot of great drummers, Rudy is a texturalist.”

Nine years on, Royston still appreciates the trial by fire he experienced as a drummer landing in New York City. Perhaps his next album will be titled 212.

“New York defines who you are as a musician because you realize pretty quickly that everyone here can play,” Royston explained. “But what can you say that will make you different from these other 20 drummers? If you don’t figure that out, you’re going to get lost in the swirl of drum sounds. You find out where you are and who you are; it refines you because you’re in the middle of all that. Iron sharpens iron. You’re immediately playing better because you’re around all these great musicians. After that initial shock of getting better, then the work comes. Then you get it together.”

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**RYAN** | BY PHILLIP LUTZ  
PHOTO BY SHAUN MADER

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# TRUESDELL

## Behind the Note

**RISING STAR BIG BAND // RISING STAR ARRANGER**

**D**ecompressing in his Manhattan apartment, Ryan Truesdell was barefoot and a bit hoarse—a far cry from the impeccably attired, clear-voiced presence he had been on the bandstand the week before as he presided over the latest installment of the Gil Evans Project at the Jazz Standard.

The engagement, the Standard's third annual May showcase for the Evans project—and the fourth occasion on which Truesdell had brought Evans' music in some form to the Manhattan club—had been an intoxicating six-night affair. But it had also proved a strain, what with Truesdell shepherding two big bands through 14 sets of demanding material he had spent years collecting and shaping.

Adding to the pressure was the knowledge that the sets were being recorded for a follow-up to the album *Centennial*:

*Newly Discovered Works Of Gil Evans* (ArtistShare)—a slightly daunting prospect because that 2012 collection had garnered a raft of awards. The disc earned three Grammy nominations and resulted in a posthumous Grammy win for Evans in the category Best Instrumental Arrangement, for "How About You."

Truesdell's work continues to receive accolades, the latest being two wins in the DownBeat Critics Poll in the categories Rising Star—Big Band and Rising Star—Arranger. The victory for Rising Star—Big Band, Truesdell said, held special significance because it helped counter the lingering stereotype of the ensemble as a mere repertory band.

"It's giving us the validation of being an actual band," he said.



A Friday set at the Standard left little doubt about that. Before a packed house, the band—20-strong, including French horns, a tuba, a viola and a singer—offered an electrifying hour, from the opening chords on the Willie Dixon blues “Spoonful” (pianist Frank Kimbrough later tagged his account of Evans’ angular clusters a “call to arms”) to the waning bars of “Concorde,” an intricate exercise in linearity. Both tunes had appeared on 1964’s *The Individualism Of Gil Evans*.

This set at the Standard, covering Evans’ middle period (the late ’50s through the mid-’60s), followed three nights in which a band of 22 drew solely on Evans’ complex earlier arrangements for Claude Thornhill’s orchestra—arrangements favoring rapid and frequent internal shifts that Kimbrough said often obviated comping.

“If you were to put chord changes in,” Kimbrough explained, “they would be changing every eighth note.”

As it happened, a desire for change—write large—has emerged as central to Evans’ sensibility. Truesdell, 34, said Evans’ archival scores revealed him to be a man who was “constantly searching for something, some new sound.” This sentiment was amplified by Noah Evans, Gil’s older son, who, caught between sets at the Standard, said that when it came to his charts, his father was “incapable of leaving well enough alone.”

Evans’ drive is reflected in the heavily marked-up pencil scores, or copyists’ cleaned-up versions—often hastily rendered—that Truesdell has been mining for the better part of a decade. Amid the scores, Truesdell said, he has searched for wayward accidentals, missing bars and some larger “scientific equation” by which he could identify patterns revealing Evans’ underlying intentions. Those intentions could prove elusive; when the trail grew cold on a particular score, he would ink it and pass it on to the players.

“I could then pencil in things we might change, like phrasings and articulations,” he explained.

In Truesdell’s apartment, evidence of his efforts abounded. Photocopied scores from Drury University’s Thornhill archive sat piled under photos of Evans that lined a wall. Scores painstakingly transferred to PDF format, many from the Evans family, filled pages on Truesdell’s computer screen. All told, Truesdell said, he had compiled nearly 250 charts, about 70 of which had never been recorded.

Pinned to his corkboard was a fragment from one such tune, “Laughing At Life.” The fragment showed how Truesdell had untangled Evans’ idiosyncratically compressed notation by expanding it to three staves from two. The tune, a vocal arrangement from 1957, had been introduced to the world in the Friday set, Truesdell said, adding that he had initially doubted the score would ever see the light of day.

“I was afraid the band was going to veto it because it’s crazy hard,” he said.

Like many of Evans’ arrangements, “Laughing At Life” features unconventional coloration arrived at through unorthodox means—namely, trombone and tuba parts that plumb the uncomfortable upper reaches of their ranges in briskly

paced passages executed in unison with the alto and tenor saxophones.

“Gil wanted to hear not just a note,” Truesdell emphasized. “He wanted to hear the person *behind* that note—the pain-and-suffering aspect of playing.”

Plenty of similar maneuvers from the Evans playbook will be on display both onstage and on record in the coming months. In November, Truesdell will lead a group of 37 musicians on the Zankel Hall stage of Carnegie

Hall. And in February of next year, the new album will be released.

As Truesdell works his way through the 16 hours of music recorded in May, he will be balancing a number of factors in deciding which tunes make the cut. For all his attention to detail, though, a note-perfect performance will not necessarily be at the top of the list.

“The vibe is more important,” Truesdell said. “And I think Gil would have said the same thing.”

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**RISING STAR KEYBOARD**

# MARC CARY

## PREFERENCE FOR RESONANCE

By Jeff Potter | Photo by Steven Sussman

**O**nstage, Marc Cary projects a big presence. Stylishly dressed, the pianist sports billowing dreadlocks that halo his chiseled features. He creates a massive, resonant sound from the keys, unleashing complex, grooving explorations that spiral further upward with each successive phrase.

Yet, when encountered offstage—casual in his blue warm-up jacket and wrapped dreads—the wiry pianist-keyboardist seems smaller than his onstage persona. He speaks with a soft, FM-deejay voice and calmly observes his surroundings with tranquil eyes.



But make no mistake: The focused intensity still burns. When Cary starts talking music, he can cover vast terrain, fervently philosophizing with enthusiasm and amazement.

After completing a regular workout on V-Drums, Cary said, “In my other life, I was a drummer.” It’s a slightly misleading statement because he’s a drummer in this life. Rhythm remains central to all his music, whether he’s playing an acoustic piano, electronic keyboards or a trap set. Cary, 47, cut his teeth behind the kit in the groove-intensive go-go scene of Washington, D.C. That experience gave him a foundation and remains a crucial influence. “Back then, our group—The High Integrity Band & Show—had dancers, and unicyclists grooving back and forth on the sides of the stage, and people doing flips. That’s the vibe. A band would come up with a song, a rhythm and a dance. Go-go has its own clave, which gives it the official stamp that it’s a form, a culture.”

After switching from drums to trumpet, Cary discovered a higher calling on keys. Moving to New York in 1988, he rapidly became a sought-after sideman, taking high-profile gigs with Betty Carter and Roy Hargrove, as well as a 12-year stint with Abbey Lincoln. Since his 1995 leader debut, *Cary On*, Cary has built a discography characterized by an increasingly eclectic palette and bold departures—most controversially on the 1999 release, *Rhodes Ahead, Vol. 1*, which showcased his prowess on Rhodes piano in an experimental jazz/dance mix.

Following Lincoln’s passing, Cary paid loving tribute to the vocalist with his acclaimed 2013 solo piano album, *For The Love Of Abbey* (Motéma). The heartfelt release offered a fresh take on Lincoln’s iconic material. “Being around Abbey, I understood where she breathed,” he explained. “I understood the balance of weight that she wanted between the lyric and the music. The lyric was, in a way, more important to her: She was into telling stories. There were times when I was playing onstage with her that I held back tears because of the way she delivered those songs. So, for me, the actual meaning is now permeated in the chord. When I play the chord, I hear the lyric that goes to the chord. Understanding her phrasing was the biggest thing that helped me approach that record.”

Cary’s latest disc, *Four Directions* (Motéma), marks the return of his Focus Trio, an adventurous unit that unites his acoustic and electric facets. The CD introduces a revamped lineup including drummer-tabla player Sameer Gupta and bassists Burniss Earl Travis II and Rashaan Carter, who play individually and in tandem. The ambitious album straddles straightahead, electronic-dance and funk, along with North Indian, Malian and Native American music. One infectious track, “Indigenous,” is particularly meaningful for Cary, whose mother is a Wampanoag tribal chief.

“The bass line and melody comes right out of Native American repertoire—like a combination of three folkloric melodies. That was the backdrop of my household, with drummers and singers coming to the house. I grew up in the sweat lodge. We lived in Maryland—the Piscataway Indian Nation headquarters. My mother grew up

fighting in the American Indian Movement—the AIM. Hence, my use of those songs. But I never try to do things literally; I prefer the resonance.”

In addition to Focus Trio gigs, Cary’s docket is brimming with projects, including an upcoming resurrection of *Rhodes Ahead*, a go-go album and a digital release from the collective Cosmic Indigenous. Of the latter, Cary said, “That group deals more with the Malian approach in my indigenous explorations. All the songs are in [the form of a] North Indian classical *raag*, but the melodies and lyrics are Malian.”

Ultimately, “Indigenous” holds a greater universal meaning for the venturesome pianist: “In Western music, you have the seven-tone scale.

Five tones are omitted. Those tones are pentatonic. And the pentatonic is the spiritual tone set that is found in all spiritual and indigenous music. I call it ‘the ether’—it’s on top. Whenever you want to go outside of a scale or add something, you’re dealing with the ether. And indigenous music is based on that ether—the spiritual element.

“The main thing is the intention behind what you say musically; [that’s] the beauty,” he continued. “If you’re thinking something and you hit that note, the resonance of what you’re thinking actually goes through that note. It’s like a telephone frequency carrying your voice—literally. That’s the power.”

DB

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IMAGE © 2014 LAUREN DEUTSCH



# 62<sup>nd</sup> ANNUAL CRITICS POLL

## Complete Results

We are proud to present the results of the 62nd Annual DownBeat International Critics Poll, which includes Jazz Album of the year (page 28) and Historical Album of the year (page 38). Results for Established Talent are on pages 56–61, and the Rising Star categories are on pages 62–67.



### Hall Of Fame

#### Jim Hall ..... 108

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- Yusef Lateef..... 77
- Lee Konitz..... 67
- Tony Bennett ..... 60
- Randy Weston ..... 60
- Anthony Braxton..... 56
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- Jack DeJohnette..... 48
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- Paul Bley ..... 44
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- George Duke ..... 40
- Chico Hamilton ..... 39
- Fred Anderson ..... 36
- George Benson ..... 35
- B.B. King ..... 35
- Pharoah Sanders..... 35

#### VETERANS COMMITTEE Hall Of Fame

#### Dinah Washington .... 71%

#### Bing Crosby .... 67%

Note: Artists must receive at least 66% of the Veterans Committee votes to gain entry.

Other artists receiving more than 50% of the vote:

- Muddy Waters ..... 61%
- Mildred Bailey ..... 57%
- Scott LaFaro..... 57%
- Eubie Blake ..... 52%
- Red Norvo ..... 52%

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THE RESULTS ARE IN

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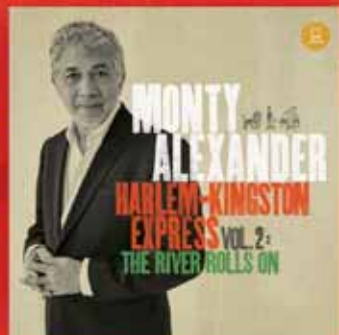
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Peter Bernstein



3 Cohens



Avishai Cohen

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**Bill Frisell**  
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**Jack DeJohnette**  
Drums

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Percussion

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**3 Cohens**  
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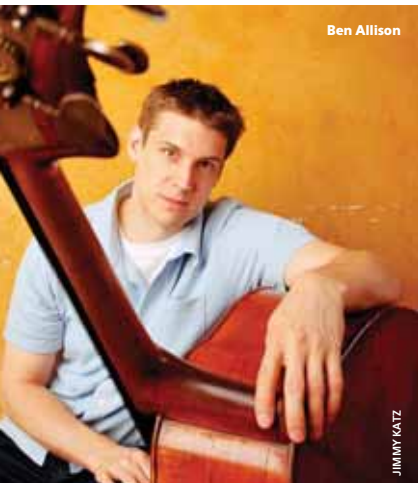
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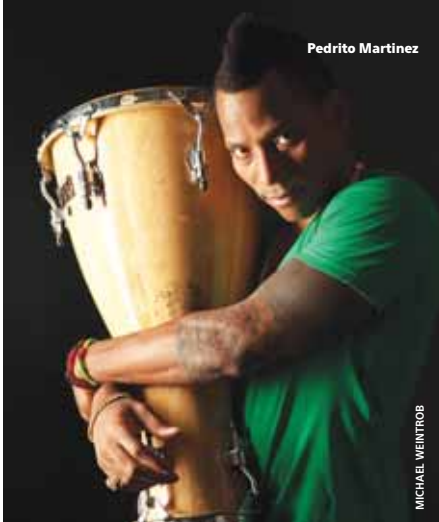
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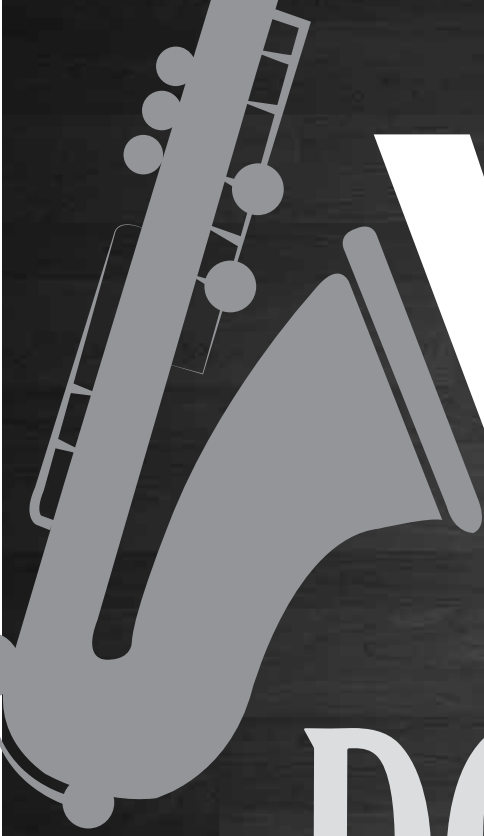
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Steve Lehman (second from right) leads his Octet

JOHN ROGERS

## Steve Lehman Octet *Mise En Abîme*

PI 54

★★★★★

If you can still place any belief in the notion of advancement in musical thinking, let's imagine that there are two fundamental ways that it can happen. A musician can push the music from within, forcing it to open up based on its own germinal potentialities. Or, alternatively, extrinsic elements can be brought to bear, to synthesize with an alien musical tradition and in the best situation forge a new music. As he proves again on *Mise En Abîme*, alto saxophonist Steve Lehman is one of the most successful of the latter category, a genuine inter-genre pioneer.

Even if you know nothing about spectral composition or electroacoustic music—the two French contemporary experimental traditions

that most directly inflect the jazz foundation of this endeavor—one listen to Lehman's intrepid squad-tet and something is clearly different, especially in the harmony department. Chris Dingman plays a specially equipped microtonal vibraphone, and an interest in the beatings and dissonant charge of microtonality are omnipresent, as are jostling polyrhythms, sometimes running contrarily. The real achievement is that this neither clots up nor does it sound robotic; the band maintains a fulsome flow, so when Lehman and tenor saxophonist Mark Shim break out for a drumless interchange at the end of "Codes: Brice Wassy," it's the continuation of an organic dialogue.

The live electronic components on *Mise En Abîme*—like the big, dark clusters that bookend "Autumn Interlude"—are deployed not for superficial effect but in order to extend the harmonic palette and to introduce productive confusion

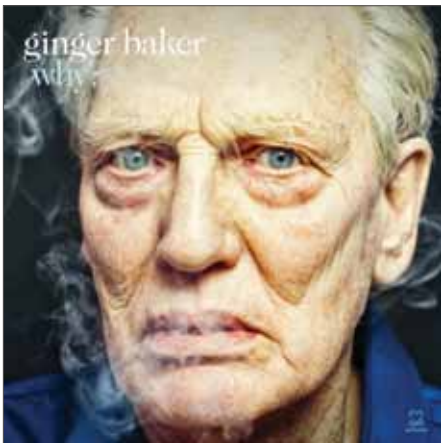
about acoustic and non-acoustic origination—what instrument makes what sound? Lehman's approach to composition is at once confluent with the post-Steve Coleman framework and cut from its own cloth, embracing complexity and comprehensibility, gyration and groove, and a most profound sense of adventure. I'm rarely moved to say something like this, but Steve Lehman's work is required listening for the next generation.

—John Corbett

**Mise En Abîme:** Segregated And Sequential; 13 Colors; Glass Enclosure Transcription; Codes: Brice Wassy; Autumn Interlude; Beyond All Limits; Chimera/Luchini; Parisian Thoroughfare Transcription. (39:48)

**Personnel:** Steve Lehman, alto saxophone, live electronics; Mark Shim, tenor saxophone; Jonathan Finlayson, trumpet; Jose Davila, tuba; Tim Albright, trombone; Chris Dingman, vibraphone; Drew Gress, bass; Tyshawn Sorey, drums.

**Ordering info:** [pirecordings.com](http://pirecordings.com)



## Ginger Baker Why?

MOTÉMA 148  
★★★★½

If you've seen the documentary film *Beware of Mr. Baker*—or, for that matter, looked at Baker's glowering photo on the cover of this CD—you're aware that the drummer best known as the engine of the jazz-rock fusion trio Cream is a volatile character. That's why this album, Baker's first since 1998, is something of a surprise. A minimalist, dry, carefully calibrated excursion into modest African polyrhythms braided with bluesy tenor sax, sinuous bass and no chordal instrument, *Why?* has the spare, ceremonial gravity of a tribal ritual.

Baker's interest in Africa is not new—he famously collaborated with Nigerian bandleader Fela Kuti

## Hiromi Alive

TELARC/CONCORD 35307  
★★★★½

To some degree jazz is beholden to nuance, and Hiromi gets that, but after a decade of trying to bring more fruitful dynamics to her music, the Japanese pianist is still confused about the process of rendering subtleties. This new trio date is void of the hokey electronics that the 37-year-old bandleader has employed on past albums, but the overarching template is the same. The impressive interaction she and her colleagues enjoy is marred by a manic ensemble demeanor. Flourishes appear where none are needed. Bluster dominates when more judicious moves are called for.

This caffeinated attack is regrettable, because the celebrated pianist can seemingly pull off any keyboard maneuver she chooses. A spray of notes instantly exploding out of a pacific passage? Easily done. A right-hand flourish dressing up a killer vamp? All night long. What's missing is a natural feel. Almost every move that Hiromi and her bandmates make on *Alive* has an obtrusively architectural vibe. Rather than three improvisers uniting to create a blend, it feels like three factory workers building an elaborate Ikea bureau while playing beat-the-clock. And while they may achieve their goal—it's still an Ikea bureau.

Maybe that notion of prefab design is part of the problem, too. This set of tunes is flecked by ready-made motifs that feel like they've been heard previ-

ously—surprises are few. Bassist Anthony Jackson and drummer Simon Phillips are a formidable rhythm section on paper, but they tend to manhandle the music. Phillips steers closer to Ginger Baker than he does Elvin Jones; time and again his fills boast a regimented attitude that ignites the group's turbo drive—at one point I thought I was listening to a Yes tribute album. Thrills are expected in music, and Team Hiromi knows how to dispense them, but they need to work on a new trick. Playing to the gallery is becoming wearisome.

*—Jim Macnie*

**Alive:** *Alive; Wanderer; Dreamer; Seeker; Player; Warrior; Firefly; Spirit; Life Goes On.* (74:54)

**Personnel:** Hiromi, piano; Anthony Jackson, contrabass guitar; Simon Phillips, drums.

**Ordering info:** [concordmusicgroup.com](http://concordmusicgroup.com)



ously—surprises are few. Bassist Anthony Jackson and drummer Simon Phillips are a formidable rhythm section on paper, but they tend to manhandle the music. Phillips steers closer to Ginger Baker than he does Elvin Jones; time and again his fills boast a regimented attitude that ignites the group's turbo drive—at one point I thought I was listening to a Yes tribute album. Thrills are expected in music, and Team Hiromi knows how to dispense them, but they need to work on a new trick. Playing to the gallery is becoming wearisome.

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**Personnel:** Hiromi, piano; Anthony Jackson, contrabass guitar; Simon Phillips, drums.

**Ordering info:** [concordmusicgroup.com](http://concordmusicgroup.com)



## Orrin Evans' Captain Black Big Band Mother's Touch

POSI-TONE 8123  
★★★★½

Pianist Orrin Evans composed six of these nine pieces, but delegated the arranging and orchestration to a half dozen colleagues. In projecting his ideas onto the big band screen, the ensemble arrangements are smart and contemporary in feel and bring a welcome balance between brass and reeds.

But they are perhaps just a little too hip and proud to simply swing, or maybe that would be pandering. Much of this music, though not difficult, may need to be met at least halfway by those who prefer their big band sounds cut into more straight-ahead, 4/4 slices. That said, in most cases the music wraps itself nicely around the soloists rather than deserting them after an opening chorus. Trumpeter Tatum Greenblatt's romp through the peekaboo riff on Wayne Shorter's "Water Babies" represents a remarkably well-sustained partnership between ensemble and soloists.

Evans' instincts as a composer are traditional but thin. "Explain It To Me" is written in a standard AABA Tin Pan Alley form, but passes off as a short warm-up exercise. But musicians are rarely melodists. So like much of the best jazz (Ellington's "Concerto For Cootie"), the song works because arranger David Gibson and Marcus Strickland's soprano find possibilities and rigor where none would seem to exist. Evans' piano drives it with a percussive introduction and vampy undertow. The two curious turns at "Mother's Touch" seem hardly worth inclusion, let alone title-track status. They are ornate but brief bridges to nowhere. "Prayer For Columbine" finds saxophonists Tim Green and Stacy Dillard conversing in an overlapping, often colliding dialog of free musical verse. It's the most untamed of the range of moments Evans offers here, and a cathartic closer for a fine band looking for new vigor inside an old format.

*—John McDonough*

**Mother's Touch:** *In My Soul; Explain It To Me; Mother's Touch Part I; Dita (For Karyn Warren); Tickle; Maestra; Water Babies; Mother's Touch Part II; Prayer For Columbine.* (50:11)

**Personnel:** Tanya Darby, Duane Eubanks, Tatum Greenblatt, Brian Kilpatrick, Frank Morgera, trumpets; David Gibson, Conrad Henwig, Andy Hunter, Stafford Hunter, Brent White, trombones; Mark Allen, Todd Bashore, Doug DeHays, Stacy Dillard, Tim Green, Victor North, Marcus Strickland, saxophones; Orrin Evans, Zaccai Curtis (3, 8), piano; Luques Curtis, bass; Anwar Marshall, Ralph Peterson (2), drums.

**Ordering info:** [posi-tone.com](http://posi-tone.com)



# The Hot Box

Critics	John McDonough	John Corbett	Jim Macnie	Paul de Barros
<b>Steve Lehman Octet</b> <i>Mise En Abîme</i>	★★½	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
<b>Ginger Baker</b> <i>Why?</i>	★★★	★★	★★½	★★★½
<b>Hiromi</b> <i>Alive</i>	★★★	★★½	★★½	★★
<b>Orrin Evans</b> <i>Mother's Touch</i>	★★★½	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★½

## Critics' Comments

### Steve Lehman Octet, *Mise En Abîme*

When you're making a list of the era's badass bandleaders, include Lehman. The electro-acoustic framework of this jewel is as rich as jazz gets, and the interaction kills. I just jotted it down on my "best of the year" possibilities list.  
—Jim Macnie

Never mind "spectral harmony," this is just flat-out great new music, with an emotional edge that transcends theory and a delicious sense of multiplicity and intention. Lehman sends his alto saxophone sailing over chimey, microtonal vibraphone and a determinedly indeterminate sense of time. Truly original.  
—Paul de Barros

You can hear this long-familiar, free-ish music and never know you're in the Tomorrowland of "spectralism." Method over passion here. A knotty, systematic intellectualism played with the precise staccato patter of a typewriter that pushes back emotion. But pockets of sweetness, spark and purpose, too. Warrants cautious attention.  
—John McDonough

### Ginger Baker, *Why?*

Who wants subtlety? Rock's Gene Krupa plunges through nine cuts at pretty much a single tempo. But his elemental logic and relentless pulse keep their focus. Like one of Rollins' long, rolling encores, repetition can galvanize a crowd. No Williams or Rich. But simplicity intoxicates. Ellis is a decent foil who never complicates Baker's life.  
—John McDonough

Let's assess this on its own merits, as if Baker wasn't a rock legend: He's not a strong jazz drummer. Despite some evident Nigerian influence, the solos and fills are sluggish and cliché-ridden, the chick of the hi-hat an unwavering presence. Ellis sounds fine, but he'd be better in the company of equals.  
—John Corbett

Hats off to anyone who puts Pee Wee Ellis up front, but there's something oddly mechanical and mildly listless about the action on this one. Baker often has a regimented feel to his work, and on this one, the swing never really lifts off.  
—Jim Macnie

### Hiromi, *Alive*

She has crazy good technique, especially those block chord flurries, but this is everything I think of as bad music: melodramatic thunder spelled with sentimental, ninth grade piano. She can play the blues, though.  
—Paul de Barros

Each of these carefully plotted pieces is a roadmap of contrasts and tensions. Hiromi can turn a bluesy phrase ("Spirit") and sustain a swinging line ("Wanderer"). But here she is just one in a cast of many Hiroimis, each with her own role in the larger, more extravagant theater of Hiromi! *Alive* is more theater than jazz, but a good show anyway.  
—John McDonough

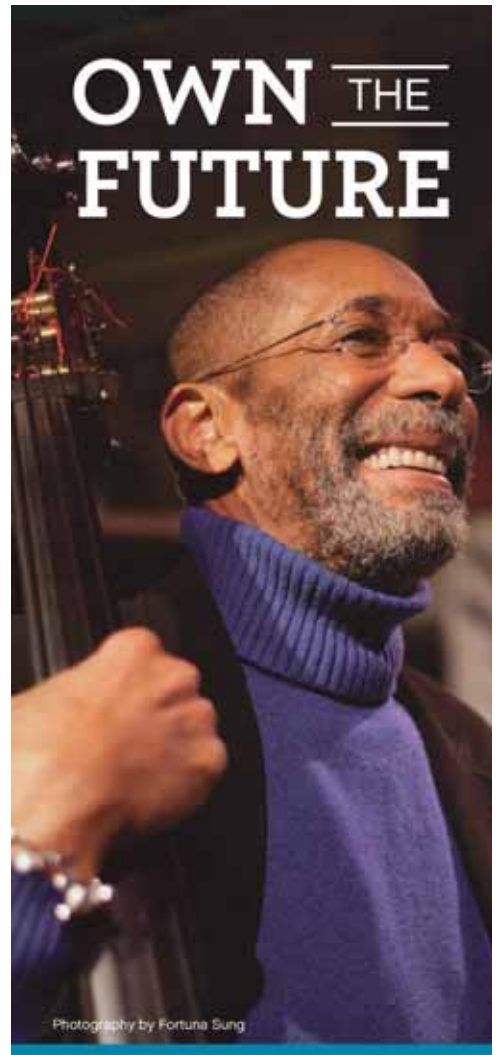
No doubt she throws a lot at the keyboard, and there are swatches of infectious energy that benefit from her chops. Everything about *Alive* has a pro air—Phillips' drumming, pop-blues-isms, gospel swells. Even the inspiration seems professional. Too slick, too little surprise.  
—John Corbett

### Orrin Evans' Captain Black Big Band, *Mother's Touch*

Big bands beg explanation when they're little more than a context for soloists. Evans works on a model where the band and the featured improvisers work in symbiosis; it's possible for a listener to shift focus from one to the other and interest doesn't flag. Having folks like Marcus Strickland on the team certainly helps, and Evans himself displays a deft touch.  
—John Corbett

Simple but intricate, complex but emotional. Plenty of push and shove (à la the old David Murray Big Band), but the charts get the respect they demand. Soloists abound, but no one overstays their welcome. Philly FTW!  
—Jim Macnie

The last album by this vital big band felt like a rough-edged jam. This one is almost too sleek, with its muted trumpets and flutes and brassy panache. I like the moving inner parts, though, and "Prayer For Columbine," with trombonist Conrad Herwig's solo, is stellar.  
—Paul de Barros



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# KEITH JARRETT CHARLIE HADEN

LAST DANCE

ECM

## Keith Jarrett/Charlie Haden *Last Dance*

ECM 0020803

★★★★

There is an uncomfortable finality to the title of this album—a finality that seems tacked on long after the recording date. Closing with Gordon Jenkins' "Goodbye" doesn't help. These informal duo sessions were recorded seven years ago, prior to Haden's much publicized health setbacks, and serve as a sequel to the 2010 duet release, *Jasmine*.

Jarrett and Haden go back much further than that, though. They first played together on record in the 1960s and all of the tunes on this album

could have just as easily been played at that first dance. With a few exceptions, slow and low is the tempo for the session with lengthy ballads like "Everything Happens To Me" and "Every Time We Say Goodbye" treated to passionate and achingly deliberate explorations.

Jarrett and Haden stretch out without feeling long-winded. They take their time through a setlist that feels driven by an open-ended feeling of, "Well, how about ... ?" The album is poignant and romantic, drifting along in no particular rush aside from one track—a lively take on Bud Powell's "Dance Of The Infidels." Jarrett swings jauntily, dropping staccato clumps with his left hand while

Haden walks. A 12-minute version of "It Might As Well Be Spring" follows and it is gorgeous in its unhurried familiarity.

There are some recording lineups that are simply impossible to imagine and then there are records like this. Anyone with a cursory familiarity with these two elder statesmen will not be surprised by these performances, but they will be completely satisfied. —Sean J. O'Connell

**Last Dance:** My Old Flame; My Ship; 'Round Midnight; Dance Of The Infidels; It Might As Well Be Spring; Everything Happens To Me; Where Can I Go Without You; Every Time We Say Goodbye; Goodbye. (77:21)

**Personnel:** Keith Jarrett, piano; Charlie Haden, double bass.

**Ordering info:** [ecmrecords.com](http://ecmrecords.com)

## Gordon Goodwin's Big Phat Band *Life In The Bubble*

TELARC 35453

★★★★½

If you've paid attention to the arc of composer-band-leader Gordon Goodwin's big band career and recordings, you know to expect the unexpected from him and his Big Phat Band. They've taken the jazz orchestra well beyond 4/4 swing with smart writing, instrumental virtuosity and humor.

Goodwin's savvy ability to feature his players is as much a key to the band's distinction as its world-class playing. Wayne Bergeron's precise, on-the-beat classical trumpet intro to "Years Of Therapy," Andrew Synowiec's rock guitar on a shuffle blues ("Synolicks") and Eric Marienthal's funky alto on a fun reworking of the theme to the '60s TV show *Get Smart* are just some of the changeups, curveballs and spitters that Goodwin serves up here. You never know what's coming with this outfit, but it's always intriguing and exciting.

Goodwin writes prolifically for the studio. It's easy to just focus on the skillful way he sets instruments off against the ensemble, explores a tension dynamic between brass and reeds, or moves vertical figures up and down behind a linear theme. But the execution is so uniformly inspired and inspiring—drummer Bernie Dresel's manifold versatility, Bergeron's phenomenal range, the uniform section phrasing at high tempos—that the writing proficiency can sometimes be taken



for granted. Though Goodwin and company are mindful of traditional big band styles and techniques, this band is bowing to and preserving nothing. It's using the big band configuration to bust the 21st century wide open. —Kirk Silsbee

**Life In The Bubble:** Life In The Bubble; Why We Can't Have Nice Things; Synolicks; Years Of Therapy; The Passage; Garaje Gato; Does This Chart Make Me Look Phat?; Get Smart; On Green Dolphin Street; Party Rockers. (51:56)

**Personnel:** Gordon Goodwin, piano, tenor saxophone; Wayne Bergeron, Dan Forno, Willie Murillo, Dan Savant, Bob Summers (9), trumpets; Andy Martin, Charlie Morillas, Francisco Torres, Craig Gosnell, trombones; Eric Marienthal, soprano, alto saxophones; Sal Lozano, piccolo, flute, alto saxophone; Brian Scanlon, clarinet, tenor saxophone; Jeff Driskill (1, 2, 5, 7–9), tenor saxophone; Kevin Garren, tenor (3, 4, 6), alto (2); Jay Mason, bass clarinet, baritone saxophone; Andrew Synowiec, guitar; Rick Shaw, acoustic, electric bass; Bernie Dresel, drums; Joey DeLeon, percussion; Judith Hill, vocal (10).

**Ordering info:** [concordmusicgroup.com](http://concordmusicgroup.com)



## Fred Hersch Trio *Floating*

PALMETTO 2171

★★★★½

It's interesting how Fred Hersch—a pianist-composer with an emotive touch and encyclopedic knowledge of the jazz songbook—chooses his trio partners, complementing his essentially lyrical art with rhythm mates from jazz's edgier realm. After enlisting bassist Drew Gress and drummers Tom Rainey and Nasheet Waits in earlier trios, the new Fred Hersch Trio with drummer Eric McPherson and bassist John Hébert made its studio debut with 2010's *Whirl*, then released the magnificent double-album *Alive At The Vanguard* two years later (both on Palmetto).

Now comes the studio follow-up, *Floating*, which Hersch programmed to mirror one of his trio's typical club sets, with its arc and variety, if not quite the same level of excitement. There's an upbeat standard to open and a Monk tune to close, with a brace of originals and a ballad standard in between. That opener is a pointillistic Latinization of "You And The Night And The Music," showcasing McPherson the colorist. The album's title track delivers the best of Hersch as a composer; it's a beautiful piece of harmonic richness and deep feeling. Another affecting highlight is "Far Away," which Hersch dedicated to Israeli pianist Shimrit Shoshan, McPherson's late wife, an up-and-comer who passed away at 29.

Hersch's "West Virginia Rose" is an Americana poem of a song that the pianist wrote for his mother and grandmother—and that serves as a prelude to the skittering funkiness of "Home Fries," which Hersch dedicates to the Louisiana-bred Hébert. "Arcata," marked by a rhapsodic and faintly Latin melody, as well as a free-spirited rhythmic vitality, comes with a dedication to another bassist with whom Hersch has played, Esperanza Spalding. The treatment of Monk's "Let's Cool One" is too lightweight. But this trio is an ideal vehicle for Hersch, balancing subtle loveliness with forward-minded energy.

—Bradley Bamberger

**Floating:** You And The Night And The Music; Floating; West Virginia Rose; Home Fries; Far Away; Arcata; A Speech To The Sea; Autumn Haze; If I Would Ever Leave You; Let's Cool One. (58:34)

**Personnel:** Fred Hersch, piano; John Hébert, double-bass; Eric McPherson, drums.

**Ordering info:** [palmetto-records.com](http://palmetto-records.com)

## Braxton's Tri-centricity

In the spring of 2007, composer-reedist Anthony Braxton, then 62, remarked that he intended "to get at least two more operas performed before leaving the planet." In April, three months after receiving a 2014 NEA Jazz Master Award, Braxton fulfilled this aspiration at Brooklyn's Roulette, where his TriCentric Foundation staged *Trillium J (The Non-Unconfessionables)*, a four-act science fiction opera involving 12 singers, 12 solo instrumentalists, two dancers, full orchestra and visual projections.

The *Trillium* opera cycle, one of Braxton's ongoing projects, contains different chapters that also function as standalone operas. *Trillium J* will now move into the studio, with plans for its release on CD/DVD in 2015. Braxton's fourth performed opera, *Trillium E: Wallingford's Polarity Gambit—Composition No. 237*, was released in 2011 and has some structural and procedural similarities to the new opera. The libretto—a "fantasy story base" conceived in counterstatement to the murky storylines of the seven "Light Cycle" operas of Karlheinz Stockhausen (1928–2007)—is dystopian and sardonic. The four autonomous scenarios, which address large themes (materialism, technology, colonialism, imperialism), are intriguing. Unfortunately, the narratives proceed in nomenclature drawn from the immense *Tri-Axium Writings* project, in which Braxton codified his aesthetic logic system. The dialogue, initially amusing, soon feels wooden, lugubrious and repetitive. The characters are cardboard caricatures; the plots unfold with the nuance of a '50s sci-fi B movie.

The music is another story. Braxton illuminates the embedded metaphysics with a cohesive, primarily atonal score, a kind of mid-20th century Euro-canon gumbo seasoned with extended techniques, close harmonies, rhythmic asymmetry, electronics and passages that draw from Gregorian chant and Native American and Asian ritual traditions. The orchestra renders the complex ensemble passages with transparent, one-voice precision, virtuosic both in listening and execution. The 12 soloists operate creatively within their assigned parameters. The singers nail their high-degree-of-difficulty parts with panache and soulfulness.

In a 2008 lecture on Stockhausen's piano music at Wesleyan University (where he taught from 1992 until last year), Braxton said that his conceptual hero's rejection of "body rhythmic logics" was "no light matter." His own embrace of deep rhythm, previously documented on duo recordings with drum masters like Max Roach, Andrew Cyrille and Gerry Hemingway, is palpable on *Trio (New Haven) 2013 (New Braxton House 903; 56:07/59:20/59:07/57:30 ★★★★★)*, an encounter with drummers Tomas Fujiwara (left channel) and Tom Rainey (right channel). On each of the four CDs, the protagonists navigate and develop different structural and timbral ter-



Anthony Braxton

CAROLYN WACHNICK

rain. Braxton plays all his instruments—soprano, soprano, alto, baritone, bass and contrabass saxophones—with authority, postulating fresh ideas throughout the proceedings, engaging the drummers, who are keenly attentive to color and space, in a constant feedback loop. As resourceful, dynamic and individualistic as the playing is, everyone sustains equipoise between personal expression and the collective creation of form.

Conversational imperatives also infuse *Duo (Amherst) 2010 (New Braxton House 902 DVD; 46:23/44:09 ★★★★★)*, comprising two episodic, master-class excursions through the improvised space by Braxton (on four saxophones) and Taylor Ho Bynum (on six trumpets), operating with mutual intuition honed through a two-decade relationship that began as teacher-student, and now is peer-to-peer. It is possible to download an audio-only version, but the DVD is highly recommended. The two cameras zoom in for tight close-ups, illuminating the physicality of the creative process, and pull back for long shots depicting the ritualistic and formal components that underpin the ebb and flow, which follows the template of Braxton's frequently visible graphic score and the inexorable progress of an hourglass positioned between the players.

It's fascinating to observe the gestures that accompany a decision to end a colloquy on one instrument and launch a new train of thought on another; Bynum's facial contortions as he blows with gusto on the hybrid "trumpbone" or elicits melodic gurgles on a trumpet that he twice pours water into and slowly empties. Braxton's visage is metamorphosed as he tongue-speaks on first the baritone and then the soprano saxophone while retaining absolute control of pitch and articulation. Such elevated moments are the rule, not the exception; the discrete chapters connect and coalesce—tri-centrally, of course—into an inevitable whole. **DB**

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## Great Voices of Harlem

Gregory Porter  
Donald Smith • Mansur Scott  
Paul Zauner's Blue Brass

### Gregory Porter/Donald Smith/Mansur Scott/Paul Zauner's Blue Brass *Great Voices Of Harlem*

PAO 11210

★★★★½

Before closing in early 2011, St. Nick's Pub was a stronghold of jazz activity in Harlem dating back to the 1940s, when stride pianist Luckey Roberts owned and immodestly called this nightclub Lucky's Rendezvous. It's where in the late '80s visiting European trombonist Paul Zauner first heard singer Mansur Scott and, in recent years, Donald Smith and Gregory Porter. Duly impressed, he formulated a plan to record the three singers with his Blue Brass group back home in Lower Austria. The session took place in mid-2012, just as Porter's career was taking off in a big way behind his second album, *Be Good*.

### Henry Butler, Steven Bernstein and The Hot 9 *Viper's Drag*

IMPULSE 3781279

★★★★★

What began as a reunion run at the Jazz Standard is shaping up to be the year's most exciting collaboration. While capturing the spirit of early 20th century jazz and blues, primarily from New Orleans, Henry Butler, Steven Bernstein and The Hot 9 cast historic material in a progressive (often Butler-centric) light on the revived Impulse label's debut release.

As an arranger, Bernstein often takes humorous liberties; here, his reconstructions are more reverent. By recasting snippets of Butler's playing into new arrangements, Bernstein yoked the bandleaders' sounds to their source material; from there, unexpected interpretations ranging from cerebral to sexy to funny abound.

The title track opens with a flurry of arpeggiated chords, propulsive rhythmic switchbacks and tension-courting horn parts before Butler veers into Fats Waller's strut-worthy opening motif with an extra dose of swagger. When The Hot 9 shifts into big band swing, Butler's right hand weaves dexterously around hair-thin spaces in the music, giving it a novel edge. The woozy horn parts bookending Jelly Roll Morton's "Wolverine Blues" set up a similar dichotomy between upbeat and edgy.

There's plenty of bawdiness here, too. A greasy take on "Gimmie A Pigfoot" boasts multiple layers of horns sliding over and on top of one another

As a presentation of three worthy singers—two of them underappreciated then and now—this album fares well. Porter, Smith and Scott are the genuine article, jazz for listeners who value soul and truth-telling as much as technical prowess. Deep-throated Porter is a wizard of expression, smoothly interpreting the lazily paced "Mona Lisa" and the sugary "Somewhere Over The Rainbow" with utter naturalness. Donald Smith is no slouch, either. Tapped into the same incantatory spirit as the late Leon Thomas, he works himself into a state of screamed rapture on "Expansions." He merits praise for the forcible directness of the sincerity he lends "My One And Only Love" and for his this-is-hip way with "Watermelon Man." Esteemed elder Mansur Scott, who grew up in Harlem at the same time as Charles Mingus, has a distinctive musical personality that elevates the appeal of freshly arranged chestnuts "Days Of Wine And Roses" and "Stella By Starlight."

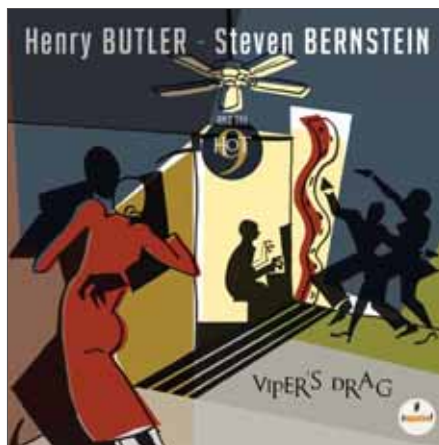
Throughout the album, Zauner and his band (with pianist Smith) prove they are skillful musicians, whether playing acoustic or plugged in, but when the arrangements grant them room to stretch at the expense of the singers, it's disappointing.

—Frank-John Hadley

**Great Voices Of Harlem:** Moanin'; Intro Peace; Peace; Expansions; Somewhere Over The Rainbow; Doing Hard Time; Stella By Starlight; Watermelon Man; My One And Only Love; Days Of Wine And Roses; Mona Lisa; Song For My Father. (66:17)

**Personnel:** Gregory Porter, vocals; Mansur Scott, vocals; Donald Smith, vocals, piano, Fender Rhodes; Paul Zauner, trombone; Barney Girlinger, trumpet, flugelhorn; Klaus Dickbauer, alto saxophone, bass clarinet; Klemens Pilem, tenor saxophone, alto flute; Martin Reiter, piano, Fender Rhodes; Wolfram Derschmidt, bass; Howard Curtis, drums.

**Ordering info:** [pao.at](http://pao.at)



er between punctuating bursts of trombone funk. After some elegant exchanges between violin and piano atop Herlin Riley's funeral drum rolls on "Buddy Bolden's Blues," Butler improvises on the "funky butt" angle, crooning "dirty butt, stanky butt/ Take it away" with delectable anguish. The album closes with Butler's James Booker tribute, a fitting finish given the disc's brilliant blend of virtuosity and cheekiness.

—Jennifer Odell

**Viper's Drag:** Viper's Drag; Dixie Walker; Buddy Bolden's Blues; Henry's Boogie; Gimmie A Pigfoot; Wolverine Blues; King Porter Stomp; I Left My Baby; Some Iko; Booker Time. (51:55)

**Personnel:** Henry Butler, piano; Steven Bernstein, trumpet; Reginald Veal, bass; Herlin Riley, drums; Charlie Burnham, violin; Peter Apfelbaum, Michael Blake, tenor, soprano saxophones; Erik Lawrence, baritone, soprano saxophones; Doug Wieselman, clarinets; Curtis Fowlkes, trombone; Matthew Munisteri, guitar.

**Ordering info:** [universalmusic.com](http://universalmusic.com)



### Theo Croker *AfroPhysicist*

OKEH/DDB 379631

★★★★½

Though it's actually his third release as a leader, Theo Croker's *AfroPhysicist* bears all the markings of a debut CD. It arrives under the auspices of an encouraging mentor—Dee Dee Bridgewater, who produced and co-released the album on her DDB Records imprint along with singing on three tracks—and supplements Croker's core band with a host of special guests, showcasing the trumpeter-composer's vision in an ambitious variety of settings.

The disc is certainly an unveiling of Croker as a bold new voice, his first recording in six years and the first since his life-changing move to Shanghai, China. Ironically, this Florida-born jazz musician, the grandson of legendary New Orleans trumpeter Doc Cheatham, had to travel halfway around the world to find his own voice.

The range of Bridgewater's vocal contributions to the album is evidence of its wide lens: She first croons a smooth, soulful rendition of Buddy Johnson's "Save Your Love For Me," made famous by Nancy Wilson; reappears for a torch-song stroll through "Moody's Mood For Love" featuring Croker's nostalgic muted solo; and concludes with a piquant, Afro-Cuban-inflected version of Michael Jackson's "I Can't Help It."

Throughout, Croker toes the line between wide-ranging and eclectic to a fault. The disc opens with a gutsy solo tribute to his grandfather, "Alapa (For Doc)," which explores the extremes of his playing from elegiac breathiness to low moans and upper-register squeals, providing a hint of the boisterous playing to come. That's followed by the raucous funk of "Realize," a modern fusion groove on "Light Skinned Beauty" and antic virtuosity with "The Fundamentals," where the core band's blistering interplay hints at greater things to come—with less guest-star clutter to obscure its sound.

—Shaun Brady

**AfroPhysicist:** Alapa (For Doc); Realize; It's Not You, It's Me (But You Didn't Help); Light Skinned Beauty; Wanting Your Love; Save Your Love For Me; Visions; The Fundamentals; Roy Allan; Moody's Mood For Love; I Can't Help It; Bo Masekela. (55:32)

**Personnel:** Theo Croker, trumpet, conductor; Sullivan Fortner, piano, Hammond B-3, Fender Rhodes, background vocals; Kariem Riggins, drums; Michael Bowie, bass; David Gilmore, guitar; Luisito Quintero, percussion; Irwin Hall, alto saxophone, alto flute; Andrea Murchison, trombone; Jumaane Smith, trumpet; Stacy Dillard, tenor saxophone; Jason Marshall, baritone saxophone; Dee Dee Bridgewater, vocals (6, 10, 11); China Moses, background vocals; Stefan Harris, vibraphone (7); Roy Hargrove, vocals (9).

**Ordering info:** [okeh-records.com](http://okeh-records.com)

## Felipe Salles *Ugandan Suite*

TAPESTRY 76023

★★★★★

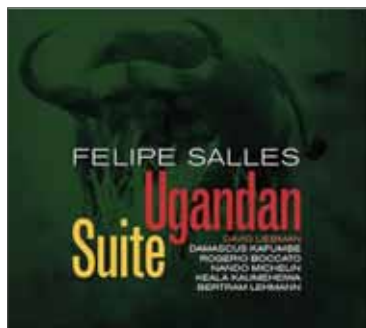
The unalloyed folkloric roots of African music continue to yield jazz riches. It's always instructive to go back to primary sources, which is what the São Paulo-born reedman, flutist and composer Felipe Salles did in 2011 when, supported by a research grant, he visited Uganda. His five-movement *Ugandan Suite* has programmatic themes and references. It begins with flute birdcalls, and each section is named for a specific animal. But its real subject is music, and Salles digs into specific traditions and regional styles not as pastiche but as raw material for his own fertile musical imagination. East African multi-instrumentalist Damascus Kafumbe nails genre sources, as well as rich color and inexorable grooves, with a plethora of indigenous instruments, aided by Brazilian percussionist Rogerio Boccato. Kafumbe and Boccato's grooves and Salles' melodic gifts are the hooks that pull your ear from one movement to the next. It helps that Salles' partner on the front line is reedist Dave Liebman. "Movement 4—The Rhinoceros" features a tenor "battle" between Salles and Liebman that was inspired by Liebman's experience in the two-horn bands of his old boss, drummer Elvin Jones—another musician who incorporated African rhythms into American jazz. With that, *Ugandan Suite* comes full circle.

—Jon Garelick

**Ugandan Suite:** Movement 1—The Buffalo; Movement 2—The Elephant; Movement 3—The Leopard; Movement 4—The Rhinoceros; Movement 5—The Lion. (53:48)

**Personnel:** Felipe Salles, tenor, baritone saxophones, flutes, bass clarinet, handclaps; David Liebman, wooden flute, soprano, tenor saxophones; Damascus Kafumbe, (o)mgalabe, (elengom'enene, (elnduumi, kadodi, inemba, indonyi, mbuutu, mpuuny, atin bull, min bull, ngalabi drums, ndingidi tube-fiddle, adungu bow-harp, nsaasi gourd shakers, madinda xylophone; Rogerio Boccato, percussion, enduumi drums, handclaps; Nando Michelin, piano, handclaps; Keala Kaumehelewa, bass, handclaps; Betram Lehmann, drumset, atin bull drums, handclaps; Lucas Apostoleris, handclaps.

Ordering info: [felipesalles.com](http://felipesalles.com)



## Mark Weinstein *Latin Jazz Underground*

ZOHO 201403

★★★★½

Merging the Afro-Cuban tradition with a tribute to avant-garde titans Ornette Coleman, Sam Rivers and Andrew Hill, flutist Mark Weinstein's *Latin Jazz Underground* is a sprawling rhythmic freeway within a dark-hued melodic vision. Though Weinstein's stellar cast

works the material from the outside-in—using a free-ish, churning rhythmic bed as its springboard—the Afro-Cuban melodic tradition keeps a loose lid on the churning pot of sounds. There's a humid street feel to the music, as if you've stumbled into a Spanish Harlem jam in the 1970s, and that's no coincidence. Pianist Aruán Ortiz suggested shaping the music as a tribute to the loft jazz scene of the '70s wherein the compositions of Coleman, Rivers and Hill entered. Drummer Gerald Cleaver, who can groove à la his Detroit heritage and also play gracefully within the free environment, was the logical choice; percussionist Román Diaz provided subtle ambient firepower. Bassist Rashaan Carter had the task of bridging the low end within these markedly different worlds. Opener "Gregorio's Mood" is the perfect template for this experiment, an odd, ascending (yes, Andrew Hill-like) melody charging over a loose Afro-Cuban pulse, giving way to a mysterious rubato section, then solos over the groove. The album seeks to maintain this consistency of contrast throughout, and mostly succeeds. Sometimes the grooves stutter, other times the solo sections teeter between groove and free, the left and right feet unsure where to step next. But as experiments go, *Latin Jazz Underground* is a serious brew.

—Ken Micallef

**Latin Jazz Underground:** Gregorio's Mood; Open Or Close; Dance Of The Tripedal; For Emilio; Tete's Blues; Nature Boy; Mellifluous Cacophony; Mark's Last Tune. (55:24)

**Personnel:** Mark Weinstein, concert, alto, bass flutes; Aruán Ortiz, piano; Rashaan Carter, bass; Gerald Cleaver, drums; Román Diaz, percussion.

Ordering info: [zohomusic.com](http://zohomusic.com)



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## Melissa Aldana & Crash Trio *Melissa Aldana & Crash Trio*

CONCORD JAZZ 35281

★★★★★

Remember the thrill of hearing saxophonist James Carter for the first time, tearing it up on the opening track of his breakout album *JC On The Set?* As risky as it is to compare musicians, it is difficult not to flashback to Carter's entrance when first encountering Melissa Aldana's breathy, rippling solo that opens her first major label recording—part of her reward for winning the 2013 Thelonious Monk International Jazz Competition. While her Concord debut is not her first recording, Melissa Aldana & Crash Trio's self-titled release sounds like both an

## David Weiss *When Words Fail*

MOTÉMA 144

★★★★★

Even if you didn't read the liner notes—or happened to ignore one of the titles, "Loss"—you would know that something is amiss on trumpeter-composer David Weiss' new sextet album. Harmonies shift in unsettled patterns; the pieces, beautiful as they are, work through their troubles in long, ruminative phrases; and the soloists likewise pitch their virtuosity in search of an elusive place they can call home.

It turns out that none of this is coincidence. Weiss, founder of hard-bop revival band The Cookers, as well as of the New Jazz Composers Octet, said he was inspired to write the pieces on the album following a tough year of loss, professionally and personally. One piece, "Passage Into Eternity," is in memory of saxophonist Jimmy Greene's daughter Ana Márquez-Greene, who was killed in the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting. In a final cruel irony, the bassist on the set, Dwayne Burno, died just weeks after completing the recording.

Which isn't to say the music is a downer. If nothing else, the record is thematically about perseverance. The tunes are lovely, and the tempos varied. On "When Words Fail," the background figures rise like a question—why? The soloists play questing lines as if in search of an answer. On "Wayward," alto saxophonist Myron Walden wanders down several paths before rising to a frenetic pitch of testifying, at which

audacious calling card and an invitation to follow her blossoming career.

There is nowhere to hide in a saxophone-bass-drums trio, and Aldana has no intention of playing shy. With the exception of Pablo Menares' lengthy bass introduction to "Tirapie" and Francisco Mela's opening statement on "Peace, Love & Music," she fills every inch with hurtling phrases, exuberant vertical runs and register-spanning accents. Sonny Rollins is an obvious reference point, but so are more contemporary players like Mark Turner—in conception, if not sound—and Chris Potter. The free-style phrasing and loose rhythm of "Peace, Love & Music" and the witty coda of "M&M" sound thoroughly modern, a balance to the timeless groove and sure-handed hard-bop of "Bring Him Home."

Aldana's playing affirms the decision of the Monk competition judges—who included Wayne Shorter, Jane Ira Bloom and Branford Marsalis. She has imagination, technical facility and power leavened with the ability to play softly. What is less clear is her conception as a bandleader. While "Turning" displays true group interaction, elsewhere the three sound like they're playing in parallel, with no question of who the star is. But given the purpose and timing of this recording, that seems beside the point. This is a showcase, an opportunity to stun an audience that only comes once, and Aldana more than fulfills what's expected of her. She'll have plenty of time to play a more nuanced role. —James Hale

**Melissa Aldana & Crash Trio:** M&M; Turning; You're My Everything; Bring Him Home; Tirapie; Peace, Love & Music; Pardon; New Points; Dear Joe; Ask Me Now. (52:38)

**Personnel:** Melissa Aldana, tenor saxophone; Pablo Menares, bass; Francisco Mela, drums.

**Ordering info:** [concordmusicgroup.com](http://concordmusicgroup.com)



point a background chorus of trumpet and tenor come in to attempt consolation.

There are also the kind of brash, uptempo swingers one associates with the hard-bop school. On "The Intrepid Hub," in which Weiss pays tribute to Freddie Hubbard (with whom he worked in the NJCO), and "White Magic" (British pianist John Taylor's take on Herbie Hancock's "Riot"), each soloist in turn comes flying out of the gate, yet another kind of affirmation. —Jon Garelick

**When Words Fail:** The Intrepid Hub; When Words Fail; MJ; Wayward; White Magic; Loss; Lullaby For A Lonely Child; Passage Into Eternity. (61:10)

**Personnel:** David Weiss, trumpet; Myron Walden, alto saxophone; Marcus Strickland, tenor saxophone; Xavier Davis, piano; Dwayne Burno, bass; E.J. Strickland, drums; Ben Eunsen, guitar (3, 8).

**Ordering info:** [motema.com](http://motema.com)



## Kavita Shah *Visions*

INNER CIRCLE MUSIC 0404

★★★★★

Kindred spirits and fellow sonic globetrotters—singer Kavita Shah, the native New Yorker of Indian descent, and Benin-born guitarist and co-producer Lionel Loueke—join forces in this breathtakingly beautiful collaboration that brings a wealth of musical influences to bear. With Loueke's distinctive percussive guitar work weaving in and out of the mix, Shah soars with understated majesty while alternately singing in Portuguese, Spanish and English.

*Visions* opens with the enchanting "Sodade," a tune made famous by the late Cape Verdean singer Cesaria Evora. Sung in Portuguese, it features the glistening strings of master Malian kora player Yacouba Sissoko and the subtle presence of a string quartet conducted by Miho Hazama. Shah's ambitious arrangement of Stevie Wonder's "Visions" has her creating a glorious overdubbed vocal choir on top of a surging pulse of tablas interacting with drum 'n' bass beats while her unique reading of Joni Mitchell's "Little Green" incorporates Sissoko's kora, Steve Newcomb's delicate piano, drummer Guilhem Flouzat's sensitive brushwork, Linda Oh's sparse bass and Michael Veanu's gentle chord swells into an affecting blend.

Shah and her flexible world music crew turn in a tabla-fueled rendition of British rapper M.I.A.'s hit "Paper Planes," which features guest Steve Wilson wailing on soprano sax à la Wayne Shorter to Joni Mitchell. Veanu's fleet-fingered solo here will make guitar enthusiasts sit up and take notice. Other highlights on this auspicious debut include Shah's spirited duet with Loueke on the entrancing Bahian groover "Oju Oba" and her intimate encounter with piano, kora and talking drum on "My Time Is When." Shah's intriguing musical self-portrait concludes by exploring her Indian classical roots on three mesmerizing ragas. —Bill Milkowski

**Visions:** Sodade; Visions; Little Green; Tabla Interlude; Paper Planes; Triste; Moray; Deluge; Oju Oba; My Time Is When; Rag Desh; Alaap; Rag Desh; Teentaal Gat; Rag Desh; Meltdown; Sodade Postlude. (62:00)

**Personnel:** Kavita Shah, vocals; Lionel Loueke, guitar, vocals (1, 9, 14); Steve Wilson, saxophone, flute (5, 6, 8); Yacouba Sissoko, kora; Stephen Cellucci, tabla; Steve Newcomb, Fender Rhodes, piano; Michael Veanu, guitar; Linda Oh, bass; Guilhem Flouzat, drums; Rogério Boccato, percussion; Miho Hazama, conductor; Curtis Stewart, violin; Tomoko Omura, violini; Nick Revel, viola; Will Martina, cello.

**Ordering info:** [kavitashahmusic.com](http://kavitashahmusic.com)

# Still Plenty Meat Left on These Bones

**Dave Spector, *Message In Blue* (Delmark 836; 58:56 ★★★★★)** Guitarist Dave Spector's stock in trade, firmed up across 10 solo or co-starring outings, is playing gutsy Magic Sam-and-Otis Rush Chicago blues with undercurrents of T-Bone Walker's Texas blues, Kenny Burrell's jazz stylings and Hendrix lyricism. He is phenomenal here, cutting the figure of someone in complete control of his craft whether out front on instrumentals or accompanying vocalists. Otis Clay and Spector summon up a desperate intensity as they plead for a second chance at love in their spirited revival of the Chicago soul classic "Got To Find A Way," and the two show a pained resolve about leaving heartache behind when honoring Bobby Bland with the slow blues "This Time I'm Gone For Good." Clay also projects unending passion singing "I Found A Love," though the makeover of this 1967 Wilson Pickett hit really sticks in memory for Spector's taut expressivity and the vibrato of his amp. The guitarist should have insisted the amazing 71-year-old singer stay put in the studio; keyboard player Brother John Kattke barely suffices as vocalist for "Same Old Blues" (Spector gives the lie to the title, potently developing his ideas) and two more. All seven instrumentals are sterling, brimming over with human voice-like guitar intonations and intimations.

Ordering info: [delmark.com](http://delmark.com)

**Tommy Schneller, *Cream Of The Crop* (Cable Car 0311; 52:34 ★★★★★½)** Based in Germany, Tommy Schneller is a proponent of stylish, handsome roots music gravitating toward the American South's soul and r&b traditions. For all its suggestions of Dr. John and Lou Rawls, his deep-chested singing voice has a radiance of its own, imparting a sense of cool emotional equilibrium to good tunes primarily about happy romance that were written by blues guitarist-producer Henrik Freischlager. Crisp, coruscating horn arrangements executed by perfectly capable r&b-jazz saxophonist Schneller and two brass players contribute to the success of the music.

Ordering info: [cablecarrecords.com](http://cablecarrecords.com)

**The Robert Cray Band, *In My Soul* (ProVogue 7436; 48:58 ★★★★★)** Robert Cray's high level of proficiency as an impassioned singer and terse guitarist is always secure, and his latest record, produced by Steve Jordan for a Dutch label, has an aura of quality. Yet his original songs and his covers of Otis Redding and Bobby Bland material are pedestrian. So are his sidemen's contributions. It's certainly not the Mercury 1980s when outstanding producer-songwriter Dennis Walker was in his corner.

Ordering info: [mascottlabelgroup.com](http://mascottlabelgroup.com)

**Pork Chop Willie, *Love Is The Devil* (PCWM 002; 51:58 ★★★★★½)** Guitarist-singer Bill Hammer and classical-trained violinist Melissa Tong



advocate for the evocative one-chord blues of the Mississippi hill country on their first album, which finds them with two different rhythm sections (one on their NYC home turf, the other in the Sunflower State). All the better for Hammer's Norman Bates-in-straitjacket vocals, PCW invests original stomps and spellbinders by R.L. Burnside and Junior Kimbrough with fire and conviction. Their truest achievement, though, is spurring listeners to seek out the music of the aforementioned past masters, whose narrative skills and sense of place introduced a type of euphoria beyond the reach of idolaters.

Ordering info: [porkchopwillie.com](http://porkchopwillie.com)

**Mel Brown B-3 Organ Group, *More Today Than Yesterday: 16th Anniversary Show, Vol. 2* (Self Release; 54:39 ★★★★★½)** Something special occurs when this local quintet appears at Jimmy Mak's jazz club in Portland, Ore. Playing "Hip Shaker" and "House Of The Rising Sun," saxophonist Renato Caranto works himself into a state of wild excitement worthy of a honking tenorman walking the bar in r&b's golden age. On the aforementioned and most of the other well-played songs, drummer Mel Brown, guitarist Dan Balmer and swinging organ player Louis Pain evince a more temperate but equally convincing affinity for the blues.

Ordering info: [cdbaby.com](http://cdbaby.com)

**Eden Brent, *Jigsaw Heart* (Yellow Dog 2116; 47:55 ★★★★★)** Resistant to being painted into a corner as a blues woman, Eden Brent spins elements of Southern blues, soul, gospel and country into motion in a dozen tracks on this made-in-Nashville album. Now 11 years and five albums into her recording career, she's reached maturity as a singer, pianist and songwriter; originals and covers like Joan Armatrading's "Opportunity" document her investment in the resiliency of the human spirit. But Colin Linden's production work and the Canadian and Nashville studio musicians come off as drab and freeze-dried when acclimating themselves to Brent's vibrant talent.

Ordering info: [yellowdogrecords.com](http://yellowdogrecords.com)

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## Juhani Aaltonen *To Future Memories*

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## Henrik Otto Donner & TUMO *And It Happened ...*

TUM RECORDS 039

★★★★

These two albums on the Finnish label TUM offer two very different types of tribute: *To Future Memories* presents seven pieces from composer Antti Hytti, performed by a sextet led by the saxophonist-flutist of Juhani Aaltonen. Aaltonen is also the principal soloist on *And It Happened ...*, a collection of compositions by Henrik Otto Donner performed by a big band, strings and vocalist Johanna Iivanainen. Although Donner was involved in putting the album together, his death prior to its completion transformed a career retrospective into an unintended valediction.

Of the two albums, *To Future Memories* is the more satisfying. The expanded-quartet lineup—featuring piano, two double basses and percussion as well as drums—creates a sound that is full and encompassing but rarely dense or unnecessarily busy. Tatu Rönkkö's percussion is so carefully judged that it often blends seamlessly into the spare, elegant drumming of Reino Laine. Similarly, the playing of bassists Ulf Krokfors and Ville Herrala has an unobtrusive synergy, contributing vast textural depth without overwhelming the predominantly meditative mood. Yet it is Aaltonen—primarily on tenor saxophone, although he switches to flute or bass flute on three tracks—



whose sound and vision preside over the album. His style is at once melodic and restless, shifting frequently between long phrases and busy exploration, and his vocabulary of technique on all three instruments is impressive.

*And It Happened ...*, on the other hand, is an intriguing album that, despite moments of inspiration, never quite manages to coalesce. Its motivating force, Donner, was a legendary figure in Finnish music who was active in a variety of genres as a performer, composer, arranger and label-boss. For this album, Donner rearranged a number of compositions spanning the half-century of his career—including new, English-language settings of several older songs. Four songs feature Iivanainen, whose readings are refined, graceful and refreshingly free of ostentation. Yet these songs sit awkwardly next to the extended compositions like the 11-minute “Have Me, Hold Me” and the 15-minute title track, with their complex multipart arrangements and solo saxophone passages. While the performances captured here are of a uniformly high quality, there is also a sense that the album has attempted to squeeze too great and too varied a musical personality onto a single disc.

—Jesse Simon

**To Future Memories:** Reminiscence; Kukunor; To Future Memories; Hiisi; Ursula; All The Birds; Haze. (53:25)  
**Personnel:** Juhani Aaltonen, tenor saxophone, flutes; Iro Haarla, piano, harp; Ulf Krokfors, Ville Herrala, bass; Reino Laine, drums; Tatu Rönkkö, percussion.

**Ordering info:** [tumrecords.com](http://tumrecords.com)

**And It Happened ... :** Junnuda?; Close Your Eyes; Entreaty; The First Summer; Have Me, Hold Me; These Are The Days; And It Happened ... ; For Friends And Relatives. (49:48)

**Personnel:** Juhani Aaltonen, tenor saxophone, alto flute; Johanna Iivanainen, vocals; Mikko Hassinen, Henrik Otto Donner, conductor; TUMO, orchestra.

**Ordering info:** [tumrecords.com](http://tumrecords.com)

## Dena DeRose *We Won't Forget You ... An Homage To Shirley Horn*

HIGHNOTE 7263

★★★★★

A few years before her death in 2005, jazz singer and pianist Shirley Horn met Dena DeRose and, recognizing a kindred spirit, complimented her on her singing and piano playing. On *We Won't Forget You ... An Homage To Shirley Horn*, DeRose pays tribute by exploring 11 songs from Horn's immense repertoire. While DeRose has a similar, understated and economical style, she does not attempt to copy Horn. The tone of her voice is different on the track “Sunday In New York,” and there are moments when she sounds like Susannah McCorkle, and her piano playing is a touch more modern. She succeeds at the difficult balancing act of paying homage to an idol while putting some of herself into the songs. Horn became famous for her slow-burning ballads, but DeRose does not overemphasize that aspect of her style on this CD. Her version of “A Time For Love” is surprising, as she turns it into a medium-tempo swinger that includes some heated trumpet from Jeremy Pelt. While the ballads are there—including a wistful version of “Quietly There,” an atmospheric “You Won't Forget Me” and a touching solo rendition of “You're Nearer”—most of the songs are taken at a medium-tempo pace. “You Stepped Out Of A Dream,” which starts as a ballad but becomes a cooker before long, “Sunday In New York,” “I Just Found Out About Love” and “Wild Is Love” are each given joyous treatments. All three horn players have moments to shine during their brief appearances; the trio's close interplay makes it clear that they have played together often. But the main stars of this tasteful and heartwarming tribute are Dena DeRose and the legacy of Shirley Horn.

—Scott Yanow



**We Won't Forget You ... An Homage To Shirley Horn:** You Stepped Out Of A Dream; Sunday In New York; Quietly There; A Time For Love; Don't Be On The Outside; You Won't Forget Me; I Just Found Out About Love; Big City; You're Nearer; Wild Is Love; The Great City. (50:26)

**Personnel:** Dena DeRose, vocals, piano, organ; Martin Wind, bass; Matt Wilson, drums; Eric Alexander, tenor saxophone (1, 2); Jeremy Pelt, trumpet (1, 4, 6); Gary Smulyan, baritone saxophone (8).

**Ordering info:** [jazzdepot.com](http://jazzdepot.com)

## Anne Mette Iversen's *Double Life* *So Many Roads*

BROOKLYN JAZZ UNDERGROUND 041

★★★★½

Danish bassist-composer Anne Mette Iversen, a member of the Brooklyn Jazz Underground collective who now splits her time between New York and Berlin, has a classical background revealed in compositions that would've been termed Third Stream in the 1950s—though her latest work is far more seamless than many like-minded pieces of that era. *So Many Roads* comprises a tune-rich, 36-minute suite in which jazz and classical elements are beautifully in sync. As with the first half of her 2008 double-album *Best Of The West/Many Places*, the new release features a jazz band alongside 4Corners, a string quartet of players from the Danish Radio Symphony Orchestra. Iversen the bassist combines lithe spring with a deep-well tone, and she sets the scene with the substantive solo “Prologue,” which unspools hints of motifs to come. Then, with “Chapter One,” the strings and jazz band bloom into the piece's signature melody. Swedish trombonist Peter Dahlgren, who has a gorgeously singing tone, voices that tune again before he goes into an involving solo as the strings swirl around, arco then pizzicato. Iversen has orchestrated this music with allure, the studio at the Royal Danish Conservatory in Copenhagen capturing it in great sound. There is an episode in “Chapter Three” that brought to mind acoustic bass guitarist Jonas Hellborg's unsung 1991 album *The Word* with Tony Williams and the Soldier String Quartet; that was a darker, more elemental affair, but the blend is evoked when 4Corners plays long, melodic bow strokes as drummer Otis Brown III roils with imaginative tension underneath. Along with Brown, Iversen's long-running quartet includes saxophonist John Ellis and pianist Danny Grissett, who both play wonderfully burnished improvisations here that bounce off Iversen's fertile material. Strings and piano present a limpid “Epilogue,” a bitersweet conclusion to an essentially life-affirming suite. The only real problem with *So Many Roads* is that the journey ends before you want it to.

—Bradley Bamberger



**So Many Roads:** Prologue; Chapter One; Chapter Two; Chapter Three; Chapter Four; Epilogue. (36:33)

**Personnel:** Anne Mette Iversen, double-bass; John Ellis, soprano, tenor saxophone; Peter Dahlgren, trombone; Danny Grissett, piano; Otis Brown III, drums; Tine Rudloff, Sarah McClelland, violin; Anne Soren, viola; Mats Larsson, cello.

**Ordering info:** [bjurecords.com](http://bjurecords.com)



# Country Cousins

**Nickel Creek, *A Dotted Line* (Nonesuch 541944; 37:11**

★★★★½) If the jazz world had the energy, innovation and melodic joy of progressive bluegrass trio Nickel Creek, we'd have Charlie Parkers on every block. Reunited after seven years away, this Grammy-winning group has roots deep in country, western swing and bluegrass, but the members have pushed their influences so far beyond what anyone could have expected that *A Dotted Line* consistently takes one's breath away. Sharing vocal and virtuoso instrumental duties, Chris Thile (mandolin, bouzouki, vocals), Sara Watkins (fiddle, vocals) and Sean Watkins (guitar, vocals) fill their music with great detail, rapt individual performances and solos, and crisp lead and harmony vocals. As if alluding to

Nickel Creek



BRANTLEY GUTIERREZ

contemporary classical, hip-hop and even The Beatles isn't enough, the trio writes and performs heart-wrenching ballads ("Love Of Mine"), high-plains-flying jazz ("You Don't Know What's Going On") and freedom anthems ("Destination") with all the elation of proselytes on a mission. Nickel Creek burns down the barn and builds it anew.

**Ordering info:** [nonesuch.com](http://nonesuch.com)

**Neil Young, *A Letter Home* (Reprise 540933; 39:05 ★★★)** A letter-in-song, *A Letter Home* was recorded in a 1947 Voice-O-Graph recording booth by Jack White at his Third Man Studios. *A Letter Home* has the sound of a moldy 78 disc, complete with marginal frequency range and tinny sound. Why Young chose this archaic route is anybody's guess, and it's all the more odd as he's singing some of his favorite old songs. Released not long after the announcement of Young's hi-res PONO music player, *A Letter Home* is available in multiple vinyl and digital formats. The formats are high-tech but the performances are abruptly lo-fi. Covering Phil Ochs' "Changes," Gordon Lightfoot's "If You Could Read My Mind," Tim Hardin's "Reason To Believe," Willie Nelson's "Crazy" and others, Young tosses off these crusty ditties with what sounds like first-take immediacy. He adds nothing special or unique to the classics, except his creaky voice and comfortable-as-his-old-face delivery. *This* album, from the man who once sang "Helpless" and "The Needle And The Damage Done" with such feeling and power.

**Ordering info:** [neilyoung.com](http://neilyoung.com)

**Ben & Ellen Harper, *Childhood Home* (Prestige Folklore; 33:48 ★★★)** Who would have guessed that nu-hippie Ben Harper's mom is even more soulful than he is? The Harpers perform intimate acoustic songs on guitars and gentle percussion accompanied by their mournful and bloodline-close harmony vocals. Reminiscing on love, places and people lost to time and the

elements, the duo weaves a striking if ultimately sad song cycle. Ben and Ellen's songs are muted tales, like some Dorothea Lange-worthy, Depression-era dustbowl Okies singing of what once was and can never be again. On "A House Is A Home" they sing, "A house is a home even when the dog is too old to bark/ Even when there's ghosts, even when you got to run from the ones who love you most." They sing like a true mother and son team: Ben riding the higher harmony, Ellen often taking the lower-register, supportive role. And while Ben definitely gets off some good ones, it's Ellen's songs that spit revolutionary zeal. Documenting corporations run amok in "Farmer's Daughter," she sings, "Dupont, Dow and Monsanto/ They own the pollen, own the seed/ Own us from head to feet/ They own the air we breathe." Mom and the kids: The new faces of American activism?

**Ordering info:** [benharper.com](http://benharper.com)

**Various Artists, *All My Friends: Celebrating The Songs & Voice Of Gregg Allman* (Rounder 1186135394; 73:25/76:18 ★★★)** Some 44 years on from The Allman Brothers Band's debut, elder southern rock statesman Gregg Allman gets his back slapped from a cast that includes Don Was, Dr. John and Jackson Browne, recorded live at Atlanta's Fox Theatre. These covers of now-classic Allman tunes are uniformly spirited. Guitarists Warren Haynes and Derek Trucks burn on "End Of The Line"; Susan Tedeschi is appropriately Sister Rosetta Tharpe-ish on "Stand Back" in a note-perfect cover; John Hiatt goes all marble-mouthed in another ultra-clean cover of "One Way Out," making you wonder if today's southern rockers ever improvise beyond the greasy guitar solos? Anyway, Duane Allman and Berry Oakley are surely looking down from above, saying, "You've done well, baby brother."

DB

**Ordering info:** [rounder.com](http://rounder.com)



## AZAR LAWRENCE THE SEEKER

Azar Lawrence tenor and soprano saxes  
Nicholas Payton trumpet  
Benito Gonzalez piano  
Essiet Okon Essiet bass  
Jeff "Tain" Watts drums  
SSC 1392 / In Stores July 8



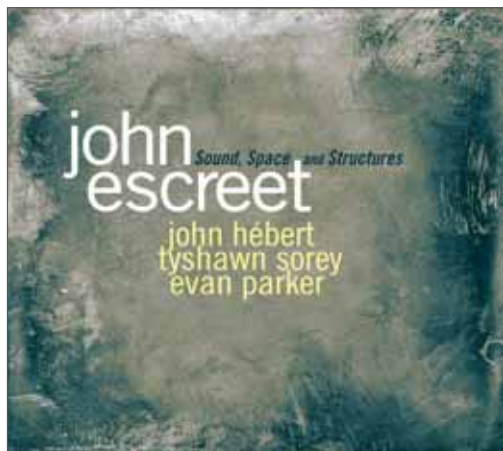
*Azar Lawrence stands apart from his peers with his searing, passionate saxophone sound and brilliant compositional style. His new live recording, **The Seeker**, will stand as an important milestone in the ever-fascinating musical journey that Lawrence has taken to create healing music for the world.*

photography by Moses Hernandez



[iTunes.com/Sunnyside](http://iTunes.com/Sunnyside)  
[sunnysiderecords.com](http://sunnysiderecords.com)





## John Escreet *Sound, Space And Structures*

SUNNYSIDE 1386

★★★★

The first LP collaboration between British pianist John Escreet's trio and the U.K. saxophone colossus Evan Parker is divided into nine parts, but should be viewed as one piece with nine movements. Recorded just a week after their first performance at The Stone in New York City, *Sound, Space And Structures* presents various groupings of the four participants—bassist John Hébert and drummer Tyshawn Sorey round out the lineup—and a constantly shifting approach to sound and texture.

## Jenny Scheinman *The Littlest Prisoner*

SONY MASTERWORKS 8884302305

★★★★★

The resume of the boundary-pushing jazz violinist, composer, arranger and sometime singer Jenny Scheinman has included leading her own ensembles through eight previous, critically acclaimed albums; serving as a mainstay of guitarist Bill Frisell's various performing groups for over a decade; and arranging or playing fiddle for major pop-rock acts including Norah Jones, Lou Reed and Metallica. With this album she convincingly adds "Americana singer-songwriter" to her bio.

For an Americana album, Scheinman may have the world's most overqualified backup band, consisting primarily of Frisell on guitar and Brian Blade on drums and harmony vocals. The melodies, built on familiar country and bluegrass structures, might make you think you have heard them before. But the lyrics, by turns gritty and poetic—about poisoned love, dysfunctional families and generally desperate characters—remind you that you haven't.

Scheinman delivers her hard-luck stories in strong and haunting vocals. The title song is a startlingly original portrait of a female convict, eight months pregnant, who imagines the life her baby will have on the outside. Scheinman sings in character: "I could have been a teacher and I could have been a cop/ But I sucked up cocaine like it was cherry pop." It almost sounds like a classic bluegrass song, except for the disquieting frankness of the story and

The opening piano-drums duet—a stormy clash of blunt gestures—would seem to point toward a brutalist approach to music making, but it is a feint. The beauty is in the subtle meshing of tones as much as in harsh combinations.

One understated blend comes in the second movement: a combination of Escreet's icy arpeggios and Parker's circular breath control on soprano, which often takes on the timbre of an electronic instrument. A very different combination of the same instruments—prepared piano and dark tenor sax—mark "Part IV," with the muted, buzzing strings taking on the role of psuedo-electronic tone. A switch to strummed piano and arco bass creates a mirror image of light and dark.

These various couplings lead toward and away from the centerpiece, "Part VI," which, at almost nine minutes, is the most extended quartet piece. A series of short phrases woven into a conversation, it illustrates the close listening and responsiveness that made adding the veteran reed master to Escreet's four-year-old trio a natural. Yes, the recording could be longer, the best improvised moments used as springboards to broader exploration of themes, but as a set of onetime journeys of discovery, this is an effective, occasionally exciting, document.

—James Hale

**Sound, Space and Structures:** Part I; Part II; Part III; Part IV; Part V; Part VI; Part VII; Part VIII; Part IX. (43:50)

**Personnel:** John Escreet, piano; Evan Parker, soprano saxophone, tenor saxophone; John Hébert, bass; Tyshawn Sorey, drums

**Ordering info:** [sunnysiderecords.com](http://sunnysiderecords.com)



the vibraphone chords added to the chorus, which mark it as something fresh and inspired.

Frisell plays brilliantly, as usual, like someone exploring a spooky old attic littered with curios and treasures; each shimmering harmonic is like a little discovery. The stark approach of this disc puts Scheinman's unaffected, plaintive voice front and center and lets her deliver the unsettling lyrics with stiletto-like precision.

—Allen Morrison

**The Littlest Prisoner:** Brother; Run Run Run; Thirteen Days; The Littlest Prisoner; My Old Man; Houston; Debra's Waltz; Just A Child; Bent Nail; Sacrifice. (38:13)

**Personnel:** Jenny Scheinman, vocals, violin, octave violin, octave mandolin; Bill Frisell, guitar, ukulele; Brian Blade, drums, harmony vocals, vibraphone; Tony Garnier, bass; Bruce Cockburn, guitar; Gary Craig, tambourine.

**Ordering info:** [sonymasterworks.com](http://sonymasterworks.com)



## Andy Biskin's *Ibid* *Act Necessary*

STRUDELMEDIA 014

★★★★★

Last fall, clarinetist-composer Andy Biskin staged a performance at the Brooklyn Academy of Music that revealed yet another of his talents: film animation. Biskin animated a dozen classic cartoon panels by Rube Goldberg, and accompanied the film with a live sextet performance of his original cartoon score. The killer punchline was the title: "Goldberg's Variations." The project was invigorating, challenging, wildly eclectic and snappy.

Goldberg's iconic panels are perhaps apt metaphors for Biskin's own craft: disparate elements somehow surreally working together for a common end. And it's the "getting there" that's the real fun. Ever since his 2000 leader debut, *Dogmental* (GM Recordings), the ingenious Biskin has proven to be a singular composer and nimble, inventive improviser. Grounding the nuttiness factor is a deep love of world folk music—especially Americana—including Dixieland, ragtime, blues, swing, marches, Tin Pan Alley and a hint of the traveling circus. Ultimately, this amalgam is less about subversion than loving embrace.

*Act Necessary* may be Biskin's most light-hearted release to date while also achieving his finest balance of reverence and iconoclasm. With his quartet, *Ibid*, Biskin has consciously chosen to embrace the open-spaced possibilities of the bass-less format rather than thinking about ways to supplant the "missing" part. The band nails that goal brilliantly, interacting with an open clarity of texture and a footloose freedom that swings in its own way.

The clarinetist has ideal partners in mischief here. Cornetist Kirk Knuffke, trombonist Brian Drye and drummer-percussionist Jeff Davis all manage to find lyricism and rhythmic ease even within the knottiest of segments and they revel in the joie-de-vivre. It's a Chaplin-esque ensemble: At one moment they're profound, at the next they proudly take a pratfall.

—Jeff Potter

**Act Necessary:** Act Necessary; Companion Piece; Just Like Me; Page 17; What I Wouldn't Give; Balderdash; Whirligig; Pretext; The Titans; Annie's Day. (52:47)

**Personnel:** Andy Biskin, clarinet; Jeff Davis, drums, percussion; Brian Drye, trombone; Kirk Knuffke, cornet.

**Ordering info:** [strudelmedia.com](http://strudelmedia.com)

**Roscoe Mitchell with Craig Taborn and Kikanju Baku**  
*Conversations I*

WIDE HIVE 0317

★★★★★

**Roscoe Mitchell with Craig Taborn and Kikanju Baku**  
*Conversations II*

WIDE HIVE 0319

★★★★★

Multireedist Roscoe Mitchell is well into his 70s, but coasting just isn't on his agenda. These two albums, which are products of the same two-day session, reflect a recent strategy in which the master woodwind player has matched up with much younger drummers who have some concepts of their own.

Like drummer Mike Reed and multi-instrumentalist Weasel Walter, both of whom he has played with in the past year, Kikanju Baku, the percussionist on this session, is a player who makes things happen. Possessed of both manic energy and a fine instinct for restraint, he articulates elaborate shapes that sound like they owe as much to prog rock as to any tradition of improvisation.

Mitchell takes to their convolution like a duck to water; his own playing is all sharp angles, coarse cries and pitches so acrid, they seem to have been set alight by Baku's ferocity. Taborn's piano runs match Mitchell's lines in momentum and persistence, but he also has good instincts for when to



Calling; Darse; Last Trane To Clover Five. (76:25)

**Personnel:** Roscoe Mitchell, flutes, saxophones; Craig Taborn: piano, organ, synthesizers; Kikanju Baku: drums, percussion

**Ordering info:** [widehiverecords.com](http://widehiverecords.com)

**Conversations II:** Frenzy House; Chipper And Bing; Stay Hayfer; They Rode For Them; I'll See You Out There; Wha-Wha; Bells In The Wind; Shards And Lemons; Just Talking; Next Step; Fly Over And Stay A While. (63:16)

**Personnel:** Roscoe Mitchell, flutes, saxophones; Craig Taborn: piano, organ, synthesizers; Kikanju Baku: drums, percussion

**Ordering info:** [widehiverecords.com](http://widehiverecords.com)

hold back; there are long passages where he plays sparsely or not at all. His other keyboards add subliminal textures and tonal variety without once lapsing into mere novelty.

Both of these CDs are remarkably consistent; the engagement and invention never flags, which makes it hard to favor one over the other. Honor also goes out to the session engineers, Gregory Howe and Jimmy Fontana. Not only is the sound crisp and immaculate, it imparts a spacial experience that makes it feel like the music is happening all around the listener.

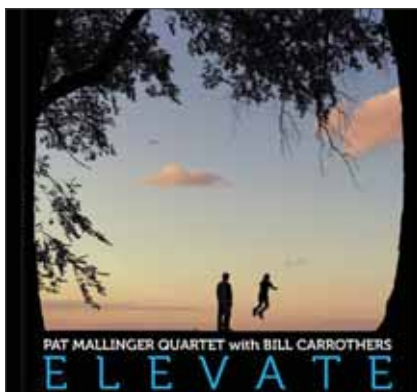
—Bill Meyer

**Conversations I:** Knock And Roll; Ride The Wind; Distant Radio Transmission; Rub; Who Dat; Splatter; Cracked Roses; Outpost Nine

**Pat Mallinger Quartet with Bill Carrothers**  
*Elevate*

PJM 1002

★★★★★



Channeling the spirits—something of an AACM cliché in Chicago—happens without pretension, just focus, in more mainstream circles. Pat Mallinger has held down a decades-strong steady gig at Chicago's Green Mill with the Sabertooth Organ Quartet. He's a social animal who loves entertaining the crowd, but when it's time to blow, he closes his eyes and digs deep. "Copacetic" is a uniquely American term, popular with turn-of-the-century Harlem hipsters, roughly meaning "all cool." Here it's a breezy bop head at odds with more modal Mallinger themes. The leader has a forceful, dependable rhythmic drive, nudging the groove insistently before pianist Bill Carrothers—a probing, intelligent player—builds an increasingly ambidextrous, layered solo. First-call drummer George Fludas and bassist Dennis Carroll muster executive contexts for each cut. Carroll's bass commentaries are notably succinct on "Sunshine Rollins," which nods more to John Coltrane than to Sonny Rollins (given Mallinger's quote of the former's "Like Sonny"). Carrother's fabulously splintered break on "Ho-Ho-Kus Blues" suggests his adventurousness; when Mallinger enters, his lower-register alto masquerades as tenor. A nice micro-ascending riff from Carroll heralds the head counterweighted with Monkish seesaws from Carrothers, who quotes Monk's "Bemsha Swing" during the somewhat Kenny Garrett-like vehicle "Double Whammy." "Prognosis" shares the mortality awareness of late Billy Strayhorn, and "Oatmeal Song" riffs on Mallinger's Celtic roots. Organically flowing, passionately played, highly recommended.

—Michael Jackson

**Elevate:** Copacetic; Sunshine Rollins; Ho-Ho-Kus Blues; Singing Praises; No Rolling Rock; Prognosis; Double Whammy; 240 Edith Drive; Oatmeal Song; Oakdale Avenue; Windtree. (74:07)

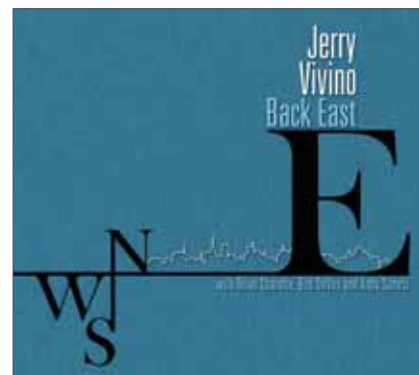
**Personnel:** Pat Mallinger, alto, tenor, soprano saxophones, Chinese Xiao flute; Bill Carrothers, piano; Dennis Carroll, bass; George Fludas, drums.

**Ordering info:** [patmallinger.com](http://patmallinger.com)

**Jerry Vivino**  
*Back East*

BLUJAZZ 3414

★★★★



Jerry Vivino, a longtime member of Conan O'Brien's talk-show bands—the saxophonist has been with O'Brien since the *Late Night* days—doubtless has a hectic television schedule. When he's not playing for nightly talk-show crowds,

he's pursuing session work in Los Angeles. The saxophonist is a busy guy, so it might be odd that *Back East*, his first recording since 2006, has such a laid-back feel. On the album, Vivino, on tenor saxophone and flute, presents a group of standards and original tunes with a foundation of funk and don't-rush-me blues. Brian Charette's Hammond C-3 helps establish this groove, but even when Vivino rips vertiginous phrases from his flute, as on "Comin' Home Baby," with a bit of double-tonguing and humming thrown in, he still plays it cool. Even "Cherokee" is easygoing, though at times, Vivino sounds a bit more frantic and frenzied as he navigates the uptempo changes on his flute. Vivino seems more at home at ballad speed. Back on tenor, his "When I Fall In Love" is filled with deliberate spaces and a deep, wide sonority that perfectly suits the song. Seven of the tracks are flute features, but his chameleon abilities on tenor—his sound, not just his approach, on "What's Happening Cat" is wholly different than on "When I Fall In Love"—is the album's highlight. As a goodbye, Vivino ably takes over vocal duties on the last track, a sensitive "Squeeze Me." Though the saxophonist weaves through a wide range of material on multiple instruments throughout the disc, his thoughtful, considered approach to music brings the album together.

—Jon Ross

**Back East:** What's Happening Cat?; Comin' Home Baby; Cat Nap; Cherokee; When I Fall In Love; Seven Steps To Heaven; Isn't She Lovely; Back East; Secret Love; Three And One; Miss You The Most; Squeeze Me. (57:17)

**Personnel:** Jerry Vivino, tenor saxophone, flute, alto flute, vocal (1); Brian Charette, Hammond C-3; Bob DeVos, guitar; Andy Sanesi, drums; Tony Ferrari, spoken word (1).

**Ordering info:** [blujazz.com](http://blujazz.com)



## Rubén Blades *Tangos*

SUNNYSIDE 1383

★★★★

When he first recorded “Pedro Navaja” with Willie Colón in 1978, Rubén Blades’ career was ascendant, and the song’s fiery salsa arrangement was decked out with police sirens to hammer home its sophisticated narrative about a criminal’s life and death.

Thirty-six years later, the song pulses in on a delicate bass line and builds into an exquisitely intricate tango, less like an inferno and more like a kaleidoscope looking at stars. No longer a young singer with a political science degree and a social

## Honest John *Canarie*

RUDI 1019

★★★★

Reedist Klaus Ellerhusen Holm is one of the most curious and probing improvisers within Norway’s bustling creative music scene. He plays in the stylistically elusive trio Ballrogg and he’s worked with bassist Ingebrigt Håker Flaten and the improvising quartet Muringa, among others, but nothing has revealed the full range of his ideas like this wonderful little album by his quintet Honest John.

Aside from the unusual, chamber-like timbre created by his excellent group—thanks largely to the brittle banjo tones and fluid electric guitar sound of Kim Johannesen and the astringent, virtuosic violin playing of Ole-Henrik Moe—his compositions tackle a diverse array of gambits, beginning with the spiky, wide-open forms of the roiling “Laacs” and closing with the driving “Raclette/Hollandsk Calypso,” part of which tips its hat to the vibrant Dutch jazz scene, buoyantly injecting a Caribbean lilt in a manner similar to how Amsterdam musicians borrow from South African kwela. The rhythm section of bassist Ola Høyer and drummer Erik Nylander provides an exceptionally fluid foundation for the jagged arrangements and heady interactions between the front line.

Honest John moves easily between conventional jazz solos and absorbing explorations of color. The title track opens with terse clarinet pops and snorts, short and strident violin double-stops, and gnarled

consciousness on his sleeve, the former government official is re-engaged in projects that capture his imagination, enlisting longtime collaborator Carlos Franzetti to reinvent classic titles from his songbook as tangos, though the two do bring a Caribbean rhythmic twist to the genre.

The first half of the album features a small orchestra with strings and a battery of bandoneons. Blades sings gracefully, his voice grown sonorous with age but still supple, and Franzetti’s arrangements quiver around him. Nothing ever quite settles in these arrangements.

The album’s second half features a smaller band, augmented by a separately recorded full orchestra, and the feel is somewhat different, more stately, and with less independent activity among the strings.

These new versions of old songs won’t ever replace the originals, which hold a unique place in Latin music, but they offer an imaginative and frequently arresting new look at tunes few might have guessed could sound this good as tangos.

—Joe Tangari

**Tangos:** Paula C; Ligia Elena; Ella; Pablo Pueblo; Pedro Navaja; Vida; Juana Mayo; Sebastian; Parao; Adan García; Tiempos. (48:08)

**Personnel:** Rubén Blades, vocals; Carlos Franzetti, arrangements, musical direction, electric piano (6–11); Leopoldo Federico, Carlos Corrales, Federico Pereiro, Lautaro Greco, bandoneons (1–5); Damian Bolotin, Pablo Agri, Miguel Angel Bertero, Brigita Danko, Mauricio Svidovsky, violins (1–5); Benjamin Bru, viola (1–5); Diego Sanchez, cello (1–5); Nicolas Ledesma (1–5), Allison Brewster Franzetti (6–11), piano; Horacio Cabarcos (1–5), Pedro Giraud (6–11), bass; Daniel Binelli, bandoneon (6–11); Leonardo Suarez Paz, violin (6–11); Francisco “Pancho” Navarro, guitar (6–11); The City of Prague Symphony Orchestra (6–11).

**Ordering info:** [sunnysiderecords.com](http://sunnysiderecords.com)



banjo chords over the coolly simmering machinations of the rhythm section before a loping groove and sleek melody emerges, while “Ab Vibb” begins with a long-tone blend of upper-register clarinet and guitar feedback before unfolding into a stately martial dance of contrapuntal melody. Holm has a clear affection for the sort of corkscrewing melodic lines of both Henry Threadgill and Tim Berne, but the instrumental makeup and the rhythmic feel at play are unique to Honest John. *Canarie* is one of the best debuts I’ve heard in a few years. —Peter Margasak

**Canarie:** Laacs; Canarie; Ab Vibb; Chachas; Happy Guigue; Tresko Og Ost; Maaslander; Mimosette; Raclette/Hollandsk Calypso. (48:15)

**Personnel:** Ole-Henrik Moe, violin; Kim Johannesen, guitar, banjo; Ola Høyer, bass; Erik Nylander, drums; Klaus Ellerhusen Holm, alto saxophone, clarinet.

**Ordering info:** [rudirecords.com](http://rudirecords.com)



## Charlie Dennard *From Brazil To New Orleans*

SELF-RELEASE

★★★

Keyboardist-pianist Charlie Dennard’s history with New Orleans goes back 20 years. He studied with pianist Ellis Marsalis at the University of New Orleans while playing in a range of bands from Quintology’s modern jazz to Michael Ray and the Cosmic Krewe’s space funk. After a decade as a music director for Cirque du Soleil, Dennard journeyed back to the Crescent City to join up with many of his old friends to make a record that mixed New Orleans and Brazilian music.

*From Brazil To New Orleans* is a lovely combination of lighter Brazilian songs and heavier New Orleans rhythms. The second-line intro on “Quando O Galo Cantar” leads to a mix with Brazilian percussion that brings out the best of both genres. Dennard uses this concept throughout the record, with Josh Geisler’s bansuri flute adding South American texture and melody over Doug Belote’s pushing drum fills on “Itape.”

Guitarists Steve Masakowski and Brian Seeger turn in lyrical solos throughout the disc. Masakowski plays with an airy feel over Dennard’s ’70s-style piano and synthesizer vamp on “Abrindo A Porta,” while Seeger shines alongside the leader’s bluesy Fender Rhodes on “Valsa Luisiana.”

The songs here are simple and pretty. Even when Dennard’s band makes the music denser by emphasizing the horns, the musicians don’t weigh down the songs. The horn arrangements keep the music interesting—like the slow, majestic fanfare on “Asa Branca”—or light and nimble on “Capoeira Mata Um.” Dennard makes this a team effort by letting his fellow musicians share the spotlight, but when it’s his turn to solo, he is in command, and his lines are effortless, beautifully complementing the songs. —David Kunian

**From Brazil To New Orleans:** Itape; Capoeira Mata Um; Abrindo A Porta; Asa Branca; Quando O Galo Cantar; Senhorrinha; Valsa Luisiana; Africa Mae; Ganga Zumbi. (46:44)

**Personnel:** Charlie Dennard, piano, Hammond organ, Fender Rhodes, accordion, melodica, synths, synth programming, percussion; Doug Belote, Gerald French, drums; Matt Perrine, bass, tuba; Tommy Sciple, bass; Steve Masakowski, 7-string acoustic guitar; Josh Geisler, bansuri flute, guitar; Brian Seeger, Scott Myers, Rick Musallam, guitars; Eric Lucero, trumpet, flugelhorn; Brent Rose, soprano, tenor saxophone, flute; Ray Moore, baritone, alto, soprano saxophone, flute; Rick Trosen, trombone; Michael Skinkus, James Mack, Billy Hultling, percussion; Jason Mingleldorf, bass clarinet; Annette Bauer, recorder; Jack Craft, cello; Tatiana Parra, vocals.

**Ordering info:** [charliedennard.com](http://charliedennard.com)

# Armstrong & Avakian: By Hook or By Crook

**Columbia And RCA Victor Live Recordings Of Louis Armstrong And The All Stars (Mosaic 257; 79:00/73:03/72:21/76:51/78:35/72:59/68:16/67:15/78:12 ★★★★★½)** begins in a transition time for jazz when New Orleans and Dixieland styles were taken more seriously than they are today. Jazz was still very young in 1947. There were no chapters yet on bop or free-jazz, and millions still saw Dixieland as the music's most authentic voice. (It was still the backbone of such pure-jazz labels as Blue Note.)

When Armstrong broke up his big band that year and reverted to his Dixie roots, the jazz world cheered, even as it prepared to divest its trad wing to the Dukes of Dixieland. Sonny Rollins and Miles Davis were creating a new modernity for a more elite audience where Armstrong would be duly honored but thoroughly ignored. But he soldiered on, still a breathtaking player, performing to millions on the music's periphery to whom he became the personification of substance and spirit. They sustained his global popularity. The price was a cage of concert set pieces that gave his group an effective formula of quality control but exasperated critics and Columbia producer George Avakian, who found it nearly impossible to get new material out of him. Yet, by hook or crook, he managed to record the All Star's finest work. This is largely the tale told in this Mosaic set, along with some of the smoke and mirrors that made it possible.

As tape became the industry standard, Avakian learned that by splicing the choicest bits of several takes together, he could construct a perfect master. To some this was a dishonest manipulation of reality. To Avakian it was getting the best possible performance, even if it meant patching live imperfections with studio fixes and covering it with dubbed applause. "I hate it when people get into the files," Avakian told annotator Ricky Riccardi, "and [discover] that three takes were used in something." Yet, that's exactly what Riccardi and producer Scott Wenzel do here—reverse-engineer Avakian's seamlessly constructed illusions into the scraps from which they were often stitched. Today, Avakian, 94, has become the best authority on his own sometimes-arbitrary ingenuity.

The first disc presents the familiar Town Hall concert of May 1947, a onetime event that became the audition for The All Stars. It is a full-out jam session on 20 standards Armstrong had played for years in which well-mapped solos suddenly run wild in a fresh, unrehearsed and spontaneous landscape. Armstrong dominates every performance with a wrath and ferocity he hadn't shown in years. The other heroes are drummer Sid Catlett and particularly Jack Teagarden. If you want to learn why he is still arguably the great

Louis Armstrong

COURTESY OF THE LOUIS ARMSTRONG HOUSE MUSEUM



est trombonist in jazz history, listen here. When we get to the previously unissued Carnegie Hall concert on disc two, though, The All Stars are a working band and falling into routines that would erode their reputation. Sidemen get more feature time than the leader.

Avakian enters on disc three with the assembly of the *Ambassador Satch* LP. But just as we think The All Stars are captives to their formulas, we find an unissued "Royal Garden Blues" caught by a TV crew in West Africa. It's a stunner in which everyone suddenly breaks loose of his traces. Armstrong and clarinetist Edmond Hall are on fire. Riccardi believes that this group (with Hall and drummer Barrett Deems) was the sweet spot in The All Stars' 25-year history. I don't disagree. Deep inside this stage act lived a great jazz band.

Since the late '30s jazz had aspired to a cultural parity with classical music. This produced Armstrong's 1956 "St. Louis Blues" with Leonard Bernstein before a crowd of 21,000 at Lewisohn Stadium in New York. The two join like two earnest but mismatched actors for the theater of it all. With no common ground on which to converge, the two idioms simply switch back and forth. But Bernstein and Armstrong are showmen and understand the drama of the moment. For reasons explained in the notes, we get two unissued versions of the nine-minute piece. The next day The All Stars were at Ravinia Park near Chicago, where I saw Armstrong for the first time and, at 14, thought the music was all happening for the first time.

Much of the material Avakian could not issue in the 1950s is here. Among the finds, Louis' complete Newport sets of 1956 and '58. If it was all undervalued then, however, it should not necessarily be overvalued today—merely appreciated as the work of a great artist who tried to give every audience the show it expected. Avakian had Armstrong at a time when his playing was still consistently magnificent. He captured it brilliantly. It's enough that these nine discs preserve that unique sound.

DB

Ordering info: [mosaicrecords.com](http://mosaicrecords.com)

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**Dino Saluzzi Group**  
*El Valle De La Infancia*

ECM 0020544  
★★★★★

A major figure in Argentine music, master bandoneon player Dino Saluzzi revisits his “family band” in a sweeping canvas alive with lyricism. Inspired by the villages of Saluzzi’s youth, the music pulses with the sweet melancholy of memories past, tempered by a sense of hopefulness expressed through simple, restrained melodies. That’s not to imply a lack of depth. The patient, reflective music manages to arrow the heart while avoiding any hint of saccharine.

In his early career, Saluzzi explored Argentinian folk music, jazz, and the avant-garde and eventually established himself as one of the

**The Eric Starr Group**  
*Such Is Life*

BRONX BOUND RECORDS  
★★★★½

Drummer-composer Eric Starr showcases a myriad of talents on his second self-produced outing as a leader. Though he composed all the songs and wrote all the lyrics on *Such Is Life*, contributed a melodic vibes solo on “The Conjuror” and an unaccompanied “Drum Solo,” wrote all the orchestral arrangements for the Ethel string ensemble and even wrote a violin solo for Cornelius Dufallo on the epic “Dream Me Part II,” this ambitious project is as much a showcase for his brother Nelson Starr, who sings in a strong, engaging vocal style throughout while also providing guitar and piano parts on several tunes.

Iain Ballamy, former member of Bill Bruford’s Earthworks, adds alluring tenor sax on “Dream Me Part I” and also provides a robust solo on the swinging opener, “Can Spring Be Far Behind.” The title track is a romantic ballad imbued with Nelson’s emotive vocals and his economical piano solo along with Ethel’s rich strings and Ballamy’s Getzian tenor sax work. Ballamy also offers an outstanding tenor solo on the melancholy ballad “For Better Or For Worse (For M.A.N.),” in which the leader uses brushes and mallets to dramatic effect.

Eric Starr’s other compositional highwater mark here, aside from his ambitious two-part “Dream Me,” is “Quietude,” a piece that builds

leading pioneers of his instrument along with his friend Astor Piazzolla. Following a string of RCA LPs in the ’70s, Saluzzi landed with ECM in 1982. That long, ongoing relationship with the label has afforded him wider exposure to western jazz audiences and a flexible platform for his hard-to-categorize works. Saluzzi’s family group—whose core premiered on *Mojotoro* (ECM) in 1991—features brother Felix on clarinet and tenor saxophone, nephew Matias on bass and son José Maria on guitar (who played drums in the original lineup). On *El Valle De La Infancia*, the kinfolk are joined by Nicolás Brizuela on seven-string guitar and Quintino Cinalli on drums.

The interaction between bandoneon and guitars is an artful tension-and-release, alternating between tightly composed passages and intuitive improvisation, coaxed by Cinalli’s jazz-inflected brush grooves and splashes of color. Felix employs his tenor to serve the ensemble, economically choosing his notes with nary a 16th-note run in sight. When he’s aggressive, as in “Salida Del Templo,” his open-throated, raspy tone is hymnlike. Saluzzi’s extensive ECM discography has explored every format from solo to symphonic. But when it comes to painting a picture of his homeland and childhood on *El Valle*, nothing beats family.

—Jeff Potter

**El Valle De La Infancia:** Sombras; La Polvadera; Pueblo: Part I, Labrador; Part II, Salavina; Part III, La Tristecita; A Mi Padre YA Mi Hijo; Churqui; Urkupaña: Part I, Salida Del Templo; Part II, Ruego, Procesion Y Entonacion; La Fiesta Popular: Part I, La Danza; Part II, Galanteo; Part III, La Perseguida; Part IV, Atardecer; Part V, En La Quebrada De Lules; Tiempos Primeros: Part I, La Arribera; Part II, La Casa Paterna. (62:22)

**Personnel:** Dino Saluzzi, bandoneon; José Maria Saluzzi, guitar, requinto guitar; Colacho Brizuela, guitar; Felix “Cuchara” Saluzzi, tenor saxophone, clarinet; Matias Saluzzi, bass guitar, double bass; Quintino Cinalli, drums, percussion.

**Ordering info:** [ecmrecords.com](http://ecmrecords.com)



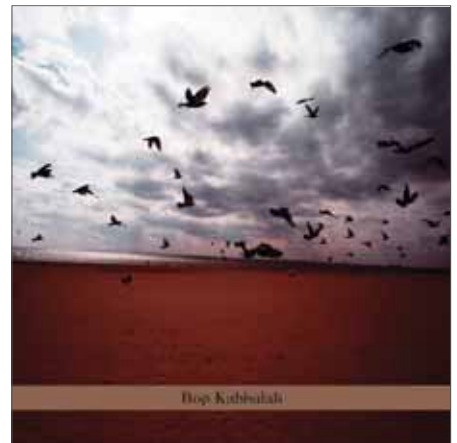
to some energized double-time peaks that feature Ballamy’s heroic tenor playing while also creatively interweaving the strings into the fabric of the surging groove. Eric’s narrative approach on “Drum Solo” shows he’s listened intently to both Joe Morello and Max Roach. And his winning, Latin-tinged “In The Spirit” shifts nimbly from sophisticated pop to 4/4 swing, fueled by brother Nelson’s urgent wordless vocals. A noteworthy sophomore effort.

—Bill Milkowski

**Such Is Life:** Can Spring Be Far Behind; The Conjuror; Dream Me Part I; Dream Me Part 2; Such Is Life; Commotion; Quietude; Drum Solo; In The Spirit; For Better Or For Worse (For M.A.N.). (54:36)

**Personnel:** Eric Starr, drums, vibes, keyboards, piano, percussion; Nelson Starr, vocals, piano, guitar (2); Iain Ballamy, tenor sax; Ike Sturm, double bass; Ethel, string ensemble; Alex Freeman, trumpet; Greg Smith, French horn; Jeff Myers, guitar (3, 10).

**Ordering info:** [ericstarrgroup.com](http://ericstarrgroup.com)



**Ty Citerman**  
*Bop Kabbalah*

TZADIK 8183  
★★★★★

Ty Citerman is no stranger to experimentation—or animation. A member of avant-garde collective Gutbucket, the guitarist has also performed with Glenn Branca, Rhys Chatham and John Zorn. Akin to the latter risk-taker, Citerman shares interest in setting music to films and graphic novels. The pastime becomes apparent throughout the spirited *Bop Kabbalah*, on which active dialogues unfold like those in comic books. While words such as “blat!” “zap!” and “whiz!” aren’t uttered, onomatopoeia dot Citerman’s sonic landscapes.

The composer’s clever song titles indicate the project’s nose for humor and imagination. “The Cossack Who Smelt Of Vodka,” “The Synagogue Detective” and “The Voice That Led Us Here And Then Waltzed/Hobbled Away” sound as if they could be names of *The Adventures of Tintin* volumes, or borrowed from the pages of another classic *bande dessinée*. Similarly, the openness, leanness and sequential flow in Citerman’s arrangements reflect the focused minimalism inherent in individual comic panels. Seldom haphazard and never rushed, his quartet allows narratives to unfold. Tone, interplay and pacing take precedence. Only on the overly mystic “Exchanging Pleasantries With A Wall” does the group want for direction.

At its core, the record serves as Citerman’s vision of Jewish-themed music filtered through an improvisational lens. Traditional klezmer and nigunim strains mix-and-match with rock, swing and modalism, creating snazzy hybrids that—again, reminiscent of the snappy language in comic books—snoop, spy and survey with one eye toward the serious and the other toward make-believe. Request this at your next bar mitzvah.

—Bob Gendron

**Bop Kabbalah:** The Cossack Who Smelt Of Vodka; (Conversation With) Ghosts; Snout; The Synagogue Detective; After All That Has Happened; Talmudic Breakbeat; Exchanging Pleasantries With A Wall; The Voice That Led Us Here And Then Waltzed/Hobbled Away. (50:58)

**Personnel:** Ben Holmes, trumpet; Ken Thompson, bass clarinet; Ty Citerman, electric guitar, prepared guitar, electronics; Adam D Gold, drums.

**Ordering info:** [tzadik.com](http://tzadik.com)

## George Mraz & Emil Viklický *Together Again*

ACT 9622

★★★★½

## Gwilym Simcock & Yuri Goloubev *Reverie At Schloss Elmau*

ACT 9624

★★★★½

“Duo Art” is a new series launched by German label ACT. Among the initial offerings are two piano-bass pairings that share a strong Slavic flavor. Although both strive to blend classical music and jazz, each duo implements a different strategy with strikingly different results.

Pianist Emil Viklický and bass player George Mraz are veteran players. They were born in what was known at the time as Czechoslovakia and studied at the Berklee College of Music. Viklický decided to head back east; Mraz opted to stay in the States to enjoy a formidable career that gave him a much greater profile. *Together Again* is their third album and, like its predecessors, pays tribute to the cultural heritage of Moravia, the eastern region of the Czech Republic. Viklický’s confident attack leaves no room for approximation and contributes in large part to the vitality and joy that exudes throughout the record. He has in Mraz a most sympathetic partner with whom he can engage in richly melodic dialogues. Viklický is the main writing force, as he is solely responsible for the original compositions as well as the arrangements of traditional tunes, including two pieces by the great Czech composer Leoš Janáček for whom Moravian folk music was also a great source of inspiration. It is as an arranger that Viklický impresses most. He is even able to infuse the blues in Janáček’s piece “Thank You, Laca.” By underlining the harmonic and rhythmic similarities between his own compositions and the



other source material, he creates a coherent program. He could have stretched out from an improvisational standpoint, but it is difficult to know whether this would have detracted from the project’s overarching goal.

Harmony and melody are also the main focus of another duo in the series: rising British pianist Gwilym Simcock and a lesser-known Russian bassist Yuri Goloubev. Both are gifted instrumentalists who share a classical background and an interest in 19th-century Romantic music, which may explain why they are much more reflective in their approach. Simcock has a great ability to make the piano sing, but is more affected than Viklický. Compared to Mraz, Goloubev has a

drier sound and is busier, often to the point where he, too, eagerly delves into ostentatious runs. He could learn from the two Czechs and focus on the music rather than technique. This is not to say that he is incapable of discipline, as his poignant arco playing on the duo’s rendition of Italian composer Giovanni Bottesini’s “Reverie” can attest. The other songs are all originals by either Simcock or Goloubev and the Briton takes first prize for the unpredictable “Pastoral” and the energetic “Antics” that enlivens a set that relies too much on formulas and tends to run in circles. Simcock confesses that he “enjoy[s] writing optimistic, happy music,” but listeners will have to reach for *Together Again* to really find it.

—Alain Drouot

**Together Again:** Dear Lover; Poem; Theme From 5th Part Of Sinfonietta; A Bird Flew By; U Dunaja, U Prespurka; Austerlitz; Moon, Sleeping In The Cradle; Thank You, Laca; Up On A Fir Tree; I Saw Grey Pidgeon; In Holomóc Town. (51:45)

**Personnel:** George Mraz, bass; Emil Viklický, piano.

**Ordering info:** [actmusic.com](http://actmusic.com)

**Reverie At Schloss Elmau:** Pastoral; Lost Romance; Shades Of Pleasure; Antics; A Joy Forever; Non-Schumann Lied; Flow; Vain Song; Reverie. (61:26)

**Personnel:** Gwilym Simcock, piano; Yuri Goloubev, bass.

**Ordering info:** [actmusic.com](http://actmusic.com)

## Big Sam’s Funky Nation *Evolution*

HYPERSOUL

★★★★

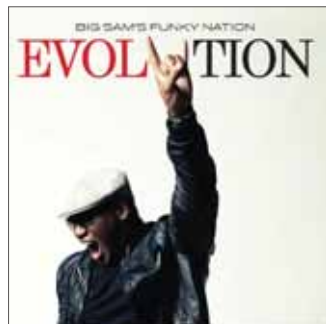
The trombone—not only one of the most expressive instruments but also a fixture of New Orleans music—is primed to become the rock instrument of the 21st century. It’s no longer merely a jazz and funk instrument (as played by Jack Teagarden, J.J. Johnson or Fred Wesley). Groups like Bonerama and Trombone Shorty & Orleans Avenue are taking it into entirely new directions. Sam Williams, leader of Big Sam’s Funky Nation, is poised to join his trombone-playing contemporaries. A dynamic and charismatic frontman, Williams’ live presence comes across well on this record, with a sound that encompasses dance-y funk-rock. His trombone fights its way around loud guitars on “Breaking The Rules” and sprays complex riffs on the Funkadelic-like “I Need Ya.” The band stretches out with a strutting, sassy jazz riff on “Tweet” and attempts some fusion and prog-rock passages on “What’s Yo Name.” The funk comes out with “Gimme Dat” and “Bad Karma,” the latter referencing 1980s Minneapolis funk with its distorted snare and chunky, squealing guitar. The music is energetic, and although the lyrics embody a party aesthetic, they tend toward the pedestrian. On opening track, “Breaking The Rules,” Williams meets a woman at a party and, against his better judgement, decides to “go with [his] body and have some fun.” Later on, his tired description of a woman who is “hot like a coffee pot” comes off as a cliché that listeners have heard too many times. Despite the lyrics, *Evolution* is a groovy, horn-driven rock record that can barely contain itself.

—David Kunian

**Evolution:** Breaking The Rules; Freak; Gimme Dat; I Need Ya; Bad Karma; What’s Yo Name; Tweet; Mountain Top; Coffee Pot; Love On My Side; Addicted. (43:18)

**Personnel:** Big Sam Williams, lead vocals, trombone; Drew “Da Phessah” Baham, trumpet, vocals; Joshua “Conn” Connelly, guitar, vocals; Jerry “Blakk” Henderson, bass, vocals; Chocolate Milk Williams, drums; Dwayne “Big D” Williams, percussion.

**Ordering info:** [bigsamsfunky.com](http://bigsamsfunky.com)



## Margie Baker *Sings With So Many Stars*

CAP 1037

★★★★

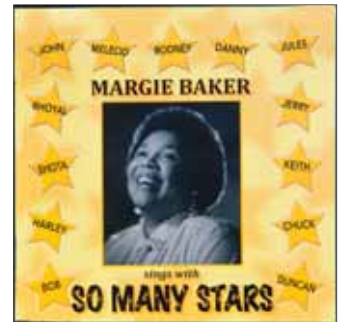
Though this release is under the name of veteran jazz singer Margie Baker, its value is as much for the assemblage of talented North Californian instrumentalists who perform. With the vast array of 13 players who make guest appearances, this might well have been subtitled “A Great Day in San Francisco.” The downside is that the musicianship overshadows Baker’s vocals. Baker has a rough-hewn alto of circumspect range. Her voice has character but there doesn’t seem to be a surplus of wind capacity. Her phrasing can be stilted, melody is at a premium and the held notes are labored. And her alternate lyrics to “Mais Que Nada” probably won’t win her any Brazilian fans. Baker can, however, channel passion admirably. “So Many Stars,” a lesser-known gem from Sergio Mendes and the Bergmans, successfully juxtaposes her sandpapery vocals against the silky accompaniment. She is generous with solo space and Baker typically sings a chorus before a string of instrumental solos. Trombonist Danny Armstrong takes an expressive plunger chorus on “In A Mellow Tone” that wouldn’t have been out of place in Duke’s trombone section. With few exceptions (“Come Sunday,” “Lazy Afternoon,” “Nightingale”) she’s singing well-worn fare. But turn Baker loose on “You’ve Changed” or “Everyday I Have The Blues” and her worldliness has a charm that can’t be learned in any music school.

—Kirk Silsbee

**Sings With So Many Stars:** Disc 1: Deed I Do; Round Midnight; Mais Que Nada; So Many Stars; Gee Baby; In A Mellow Tone; Go Away Little Boy; Everyday I Have The Blues; You’ve Changed; Señor Blues. (47:27) Disc 2: Lazy Afternoon; Mood For Mr. Moody; Invitation; Lucky So And So; Can’t Take My Eyes Off You; Chains Of Love; I Want A Little Boy; Nightingale; There Will Never Be Another You; Come Sunday. (47:03)

**Personnel:** Margie Baker, vocals; Danny Armstrong, trombone; Jules Broussard, saxophones; Melcio Magdaluyo, flute, saxophone; Bob Brumbelee, Duncan James, Rodney Jones, guitar; Shota Osabe, piano, synthesizer; Keith Williams, piano; Chuck Bennett, Harley White Sr., bass; Rhoyalbalb Foston, Jerry Pannone, drums; John Santos, percussion.

**Ordering info:** [margiebakervocalist.com](http://margiebakervocalist.com)





**Jamie Saft/ Steve Swallow/  
Bobby Previte**  
*The New Standard*

RARENOISE 041  
★★★

Everything about *The New Standard* seems to warn of ironic subversion: the bold-faced “jazz” title set against the Spinal Tap-esque “none more black” cover; the fact that RareNoise is a label known more for aggressive noise than straight-ahead jazz; and, not least of all—the participants. Jamie Saft is a multi-instrumentalist and producer who has worked with experimentalists such as John Zorn and Merzbow, while bassist Steve Swallow has a lengthy pedigree, one that veers more toward fusion and Carla Bley’s arched-eyebrow oeuvre. Drummer Bobby Previte

emerged from the downtown scene to play contemporary classical and often radical jazz-rock hybrids.

But not long after *The New Standard* begins, it becomes apparent that no sabotage or subterfuge is forthcoming. This is a straight-faced jazz trio disc, one that at times feels like a loose jam knocked off at the end of a session. At other times, it’s an intriguingly intimate and exploratory trio outing. Saft wrote seven of the 10 tunes on the album, most of which are little more than sketches to kick-start the trio’s excursions, but it’s the deft flow of the restrained but expressive playing that stands out.

The album starts with the easygoing swing of “Clarissa,” driven by Previte’s laid-back brushwork and Swallow’s elastic electric bass. “Minor Soul” is the first of several self-descriptive titles (“Blue Shuffle” is another that seems never to have gotten past the initial name stage) and again places Saft’s closing-time piano in the spotlight. His trio mates get their own showcases as the session goes on: The title tune lets the colors of the instruments ebb and flow for several minutes before subsiding for an eloquent Swallow solo; Previte’s heavy, constantly shifting groove stands out on “Step Lively.” Saft mainly sticks to piano, but his organ playing is equally impressive, from the gospel swells of “Clearing” to the soul-jazz slow burn of “All Things To All People.”

—Shaun Brady

**The New Standard:** Clarissa; Minor Soul; Step Lively; Clearing; Trek; The New Standard; I See No Leader; Blue Shuffle; All Things To All People; Surrender The Chaise. (58:05)

**Personnel:** Jamie Saft, piano, organ; Steve Swallow, electric bass; Bobby Previte, drums.

**Ordering info:** [rarenoise.com](http://rarenoise.com)

**Luke Malewicz**  
*Green Ruins*

HERITAGE JAZZ 120884  
★★★½

Polish-born, Chicago-based trombonist Luke Malewicz has held down the lower end of several brass sections, especially in traditional-inclined jazz bands around his adopted hometown. His quintet’s debut is a solid mainstream disc and a personal statement from the leader. It consists entirely of Malewicz’s own compositions and the trombonist also served as *Green Ruins*’ producer.

While his writing is straightforward—pieces tend to be built around a series of crescendos—the tunes become solid vehicles for his own warm tone and often surprising dialogues with his sidemen. Opener “Basso Blue” is a lively tribute to Kenny Dorham’s “Blue Bossa” (which, Malewicz states in the notes, was his introduction to jazz standards). The trombonist’s approach echoes the relaxed leaps of Dorham foil Curtis Fuller, especially when Malewicz exchanges quick runs with tenor saxophonist Rich Moore.

Two ballads—“Heathers” and “The Sliv”—highlight different dimensions to Malewicz’s approach. On the former, he recalls some of J.J. Johnson’s fluid inflections, especially when he turns to a higher register above a rumble of darker tones. Malewicz describes “The Sliv” as a tribute to his departed uncle, and the trombonist effectively lifts himself up while pianist Andrew Toombs,



bassist Tim Seisser and drummer Makaya McCraven coalesce underneath.

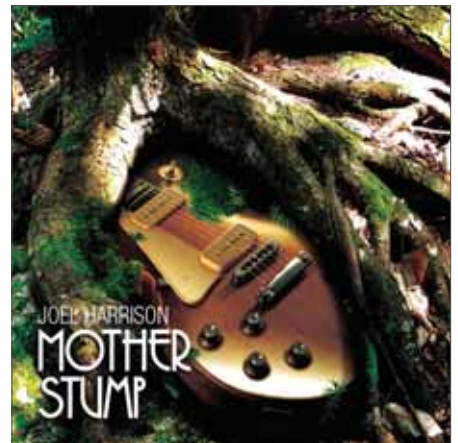
But the strongest partnership here is between Malewicz and Moore. On “Rooftops” the trombonist follows Toombs and Moore’s warm introduction and the two horns challenge each other to a mutually beneficial end. If small jazz ensembles still tend to shy away from featuring the weighty advantages of a trombonist, Malewicz’s range and firm melodic sense should start changing some minds.

—Aaron Cohen

**Green Ruins:** Basso Blue; Heathers; The Sliv; Rooftops; Green Ruins; My Fair Waltz. (40:11)

**Personnel:** Luke Malewicz, trombone; Rich Moore, tenor saxophone; Andrew Toombs, piano; Tim Seisser, bass; Makaya McCraven, drums.

**Ordering info:** [lukemalewicz.com](http://lukemalewicz.com)



**Joel Harrison**  
*Mother Stump*

CUNEFORM 390  
★★½

In recent years guitarist Joel Harrison has worked within an impressive range of contexts and styles, distinguishing him as a restless sonic explorer committed to forging new hybrids: chamber jazz, Indian fusion, African string music, new arrangements of Jimmy Giuffrè tunes. But his new disc, *Mother Stump*, takes a different direction by tapping into his roots—the blues, rock, soul, bluegrass and folk music he grew up with in Washington, D.C., during the ‘60s and ‘70s. Working with a lean, malleable trio featuring bassist Michael Bates and drummer Jeremy Clemons (and occasionally keyboardist Glenn Patscha), Harrison rips into the tunes with a focus on improvisation, rather than his signature elaborate arrangements or conceptual frameworks.

Harrison is an excellent technician and his band transforms a wide variety of material (Luther Vandross, Paul Motian, Buddy Miller, Leonard Cohen), including some originals, into well-played blues-rock and gritty fusion, splitting the difference between the urban blues of Stevie Ray Vaughan and the pastoral Americana of Bill Frisell. His tune “Do You Remember Big Mama Thornton?” rides a huge groove, summoning the titular belter’s outsized personality and power, but ultimately the guitarist’s slick tone and a crafty key change suggest a loose studio jam by Jeff “Skunk” Baxter that got left on Steely Dan’s cutting room floor.

The group brings a smooth urban flair to its take on Donny Hathaway’s “I Love You More Than You’ll Ever Know,” injecting a nice B.B. King vibe. A version of George Russell’s classic “Stratusphunk” creates a greater sense of space, with Harrison unfurling terse tendrils of sound, knotty phrases that give the listener room to breathe. But for the most part Harrison telegraphs the obvious. He and his band are clearly having a blast, but if you’re expecting something new or transcendent, look elsewhere. —Peter Margasak

**Mother Stump:** John The Revelator; Folk Song For Rosie; Wide River To Cross; Refuge; Do You Remember Big Mama Thornton?; I Love You More Than You’ll Ever Know; Stratusphunk; Folk Song For Rosie (A Slight Return); Suzanne; Dance With My Father Again; Wide River to Cross (Part 2). (60:15)

**Personnel:** Joel Harrison, guitars; Michael Bates, bass; Jeremy Clemons, drums; Glenn Patscha, Fender Rhodes, Hammond B-3 organ, Wurflitzer (3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 11).

**Ordering info:** [cuneformrecords.com](http://cuneformrecords.com)



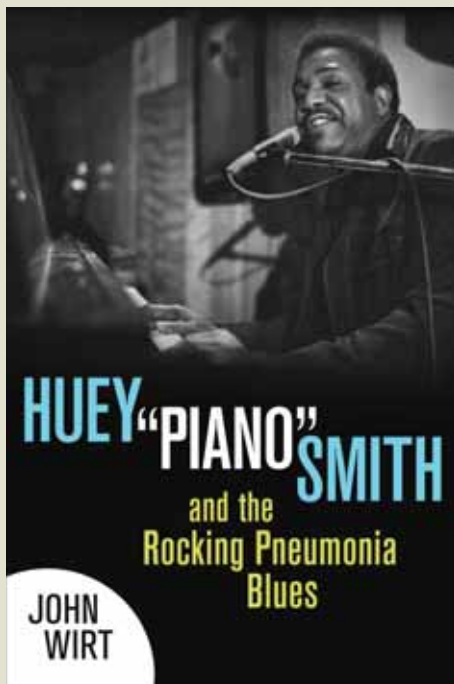
# High Blood Pressure Blues

In a city loaded with outstanding keyboardists, New Orleans' Huey "Piano" Smith always knew how to make himself heard. He captured and re-contextualized the city's famous syncopated beat and added his own sense of humor for a series of hit records as r&b began shaping rock 'n' roll during the 1950s. Smith also led a series of seemingly contradictory lives—from leading a wild touring group, The Clowns, to his decades as a devoted Jehovah's Witness. All of it presents a hefty task for a biographer, and journalist John Wirt delivers a thoroughly researched narrative in *Huey "Piano" Smith And The Rocking Pneumonia Blues* (Louisiana State University Press). Smith participated in this biography and Wirt interviewed him multiple times for the book, along with several of the musician's colleagues. These conversations—combined with a wealth of correspondences, court documents as well as newspaper and magazine archives—add up to an account that's as multidimensional as the musician.

Smith's story began in New Orleans' Uptown neighborhood, where he was born in 1934 and where Mardi Gras parades offered spiritual relief during the Depression. Postwar boogie-woogie records filled the local jukeboxes and Smith began playing blues piano at 8 years old. As a young man, he accompanied Guitar Slim and emphasized his left hand to compensate for the group's lack of a bassist—it was similar to what he had heard from pianist Professor Longhair. Soon enough, Smith became an in-demand session player around the city. His trills were a big part of Smiley Lewis' 1955 r&b hit, "I Hear You Knocking."

When Smith went into the studio with his own band in 1957, he added all of those elements, along with a beat that predated funk, and a comic sensibility for "Rockin' Pneumonia And The Boogie Woogie Flu." The song became a smash and others followed: "Don't You Just Know It" and "High Blood Pressure." Wirt details the scheming that went on within New Orleans record labels and studios, all of which would haunt Smith for decades. But the book also shows how much fun Smith had leading his music-comedy group, Huey Smith and The Clowns.

Even with the raucous energy that The Clowns must have brought to these performances, Smith himself usually remained in the background. And in telling his own story, the bandleader sometimes takes a back seat to such flamboyant characters as singer and female impersonator Bobby Marchan. Even during the conservative 1950s, The Clowns did not seem bothered by the openly gay Marchan, even as the bandleader remembers when the singer would shout out to allegedly closeted policemen

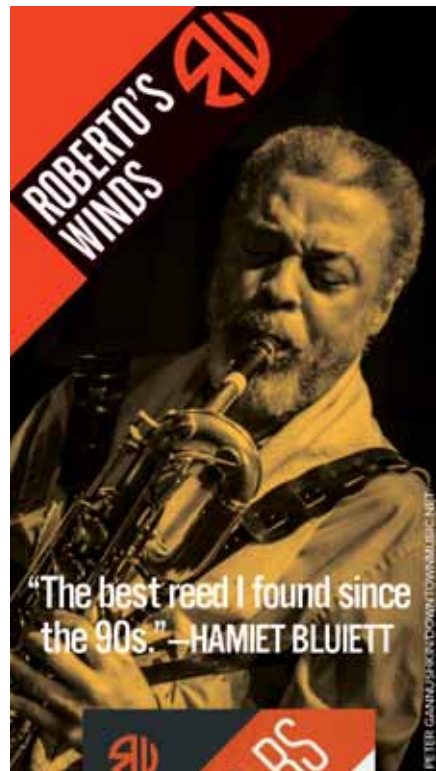


in Nashville. But touring also presented its hardships, especially as Wirt describes their gigs in the segregated South. Still, Smith said the group kept its spirits up and added that they received especially warm responses performing at white fraternities.

That era's segregation contributed to the indignity of Smith being robbed of his 1959 hit, "Sea Cruise." After Smith wrote and recorded the track, Joe Caronna, a partner of unscrupulous Ace label boss Johnny Vincent, had white singer Frankie Ford record a new vocal and issued the 45 under his name. "Listen, it had to shatter a lot of stuff in Huey, in anybody," said one of Smith's champions, Dr. John.

While a nostalgia craze for early rock 'n' roll and vintage r&b has thrived since the 1970s, this book also makes it clear why Smith never profited from the numerous reissues, cover versions and commercial uses for his compositions. Wirt investigates the ways record companies, lawyers, publishers and agents robbed Smith of his copyrights, and why the songwriter failed to achieve justice in court. Perhaps most painful of all was that bankruptcy left the creator of the song "High Blood Pressure" unable to afford the medicine he needed to treat that condition. After numerous legal battles against the music industry, it's no wonder that Smith prefers to sing the Jehovah's Witnesses hymnal nowadays. Wirt writes: "The man whose middle name is Piano finds peace and comfort in the promise of a new life far greater than anything mortal existence can give." **DB**

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JACK FRISCHUPRIGHT GRAPHICS

## 2 Views of the Blues in B $\flat$

**BLUES PHRASING IS A CORNERSTONE OF JAZZ VOCABULARY**, and mastering blues changes is a lifelong pursuit for contemporary musicians. This music is one of America's most vital contributions to world culture and has permeated music from almost every corner of the globe.

Playing a blues offers an opportunity to express your voice, remain true to your feelings, and to reach out and connect with the listener. Playing a convincing blues for a jazz musician means acknowledging tradition and adding something from your own bag. It is a vehicle to combine your emotions and intellect, and studying even a single chorus of a blues solo by your favorite instrumentalist can open new insights to the craft of improvisation.

The following examples offer a comparison of two like-minded guitarists, Kenny Burrell and Grant Green. Both solos share the same changes, are in the key of B $\flat$ , are two choruses in length, and were recorded during the classic hard-bop era (during the late 1950s and early '60s) on Blue Note Records.

The tempos differ in that the Burrell tune is approximately 125 b.p.m. and Green's is approximately 155 b.p.m. The slower tempo highlights Burrell's confidence in his clarity of ideas, use of space and blues vocabulary, while Green's choice of a medium tempo offers him the opportunity to weave his characteristic agile and complex bebop lines.

Also note these excerpts are drawn from Burrell's entire two-chorus solo, while Green's is a two-chorus solo that immediately precedes the out-head—he begins the tune by stating the head and then takes a four-chorus solo. Taking a second, shorter solo before stating the out-head was a common practice for Green throughout his career as a leader and is a testament to the energy and intensity he generated as an ensemble player. He was a great compere out of the Freddie Green tradition, often favoring repetition and two-note voicings that would lock a rhythm section into a ferocious groove. With that helping to drive his bandmates along, it is no wonder he would jump back in the ring to take a few more swings. As a result, his discography is loaded with great mini-solos like this one, which bookend the other soloists.

Burrell's examples are presented first, as his recording career predated Grant's by several years. Grant often cited Burrell as a top influence on guitar, and I was personally told by none other than B.B. King that Burrell was one of his favorites as well. King pointed out to me Burrell's top-notch blues playing, feel, economy and intellect.

Example 1 lays out the common element that links these two solos: blues changes in the key of B $\flat$ .

Example 2a shows the the root-position minor

pentatonic shape, which forms a convenient and recognizable "box" on the fretboard. This is one of the first scales every guitarist learns.

Examples 2b and 2c show both guitarists playing bars 1–3 (preceded by a pickup) firmly planted in this box. Bars 1–2 of each solo contain almost identical themes, and the interesting contrast comes on their resolutions in bar 3. Burrell's idea (2b) starts more rhythmically complex in bars 1–2 and resolves more simply in comparison to Green's (2c), which introduces more chromaticism in bar 3. Note how each ends on the flat-seventh scale degree of A $\flat$ , creating a springboard for a subsequent statement to begin in bar 4.

In Examples 3a and 3b, notice how Burrell uses double-stops on bars 9–11 (pickups start on bar 8). Example 3a is an extremely useful lick, again closely related to that familiar minor pen-

tonic box. You can hear some version of this lick in solos by Green, Pat Martino, George Benson and others. It's a great way for a guitarist to build drama through repetition, which is a trademark of organists like "Babyface" Willette, Jimmie Smith and Jack McDuff.

In Example 3b, Burrell cleverly works his way down the B $\flat$  minor pentatonic scale in double stops and then resolves it with a simple B $\flat$ –D $\flat$ –E $\flat$  theme, milking the three notes with varying rhythms. These double-stops must have been

### Example 1

### Example 2a

### Example 2b (Kenny Burrell)

### Example 2c (Grant Green)

### Example 3a (Kenny Burrell)

akin to what Leonardo Da Vinci had in mind when he wrote, "Simplicity is the ultimate form of sophistication."

The approach shown in Examples 4a and 4b is one of the most recognizable aspects of Green's sound. Here we see him establishing and developing a C minor dorian idea and getting the most out of the ii-V progression at this point in a blues form (4a: bars 8-11; 4b: bars 8-12). Both licks start with Green's characteristic triplet pickup on beat 4.

Examples 5a and 5b show how Burrell and Green, respectively, build complexity over the I chord leading up to the IV chord (bars 1-5 of the blues).

Burrell begins his chorus (5a) simply enough by developing a three-note theme of B $\flat$ -A $\flat$ -F in the manner we see in the previous examples. He then blasts off a string of triplets that highlight an E-natural, the flat-five blue note of the B $\flat$  minor tonality. His line is rhythmically crisp and demonstrates precision in moving up and down the guitar neck starting low, moving to a higher octave and returning.

Green pulls out all the stops here (5b) and plays an incredibly articulate, long, virtuosic line loaded with chord substitutions over the static B $\flat$ 7 chord. Bar 2 starts in F dorian and then moves up to F# dorian starting on the D on the end of beat 2.

This creates maximum tension, which is released when the line returns to F dorian for bar 3. Bar 4 is a similar half-step-above approach, cleverly outlining a E9 chord with a descending E mixolydian phrase that abruptly changes direction and retraces its steps in E $\flat$  mixolydian ascending over the E $\flat$ 9, which is the IV chord.

In the greater context of the entire choruses from which these two examples are drawn, it is important to note how the ideas these masters might play in bars 6-12 balance the chorus with simplicity and a tasteful use of space.

Each example here is easily digestible for practice in 12 keys and over several octaves. In striving to master the blues, remember to do a lot of transcribing—go to the source. As Willie Dixon, one of our most influential composers, said, "The blues are the true facts of life expressed in words and song, inspiration, feeling and understanding." I take it to mean, "The music speaks for itself." **DB**

New York City-based guitarist Charlie Apicella is the leader of the organ group Iron City. His third CD, *Big Boss*, is his first on Zoho Music and his debut as producer. His teaching credits include The New York Jazz Workshop and the summer programs of Jazz House Kids in Montclair, N.J., and The Noel Pointer Foundation in Brooklyn, N.Y. Apicella is an Eastman Guitars Featured Artist and a ZT Amplifiers Official Artist. Visit him online at [charlieapicella.com](http://charlieapicella.com) or email him at [contactironcity@comcast.net](mailto:contactironcity@comcast.net).

### Example 3b (Kenny Burrell)

### Example 4a (Grant Green)

### Example 4b (Grant Green)

### Example 5a (Kenny Burrell)

### Example 5b (Grant Green)

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# The Rigors & Rewards of the Road

**MOST PROFESSIONAL MUSICIANS SPEND** part of their careers on the road. This work provides a welcome change from the local gig grind, as well as steady (if temporary) income, and an opportunity to see a bit of the world. The ultimate tours pay megabucks, whisk you off to exotic locales in stylish private planes, have efficient tour management and abundant roadies, and put you up in fancy hotel suites. Unfortunately, most road gigs don't include such lavish perks.

When I was 19, I explored the highways and byways of the United States with "Brother" Jack McDuff in a small, sometimes rickety white truck in need of a paint job and a new muffler, helped lift his B-3 and Leslie out of said blundermobile, and after a five-hour gig, pocketed \$60—when we played. It was tough, but playing jazz with McDuff was a beautiful thing: He was a living encyclopedia of swing; he taught me to play as though my life depended on it (as it often did); we played great music; we ate superb soul food at private home "restaurants" that I never could have found on my own; I saw the country in a way that can only be accomplished by extensive, truck-bound travel.

Indeed, as literary iconoclast Jack Kerouac pointed out, the road can be addictive. You bust out of your rut, see new places, meet new people, and—if you're working—get paid for it. Some musicians are terminal party animals and the road is their sanctuary. Others enjoy playing music for new, diverse audiences. A high-profile tour can also improve your work prospects back home. If you're lucky enough to be touring with your own band performing your own music, this is its own reward.

Before he was a superstar, Pat Metheny crisscrossed the world playing small venues, crystallizing his sound, honing his compositions and building a formidable fan base. The 1980 album *American Garage* sealed the deal. Similarly, before they cracked the Top 10, The Police toured the States playing for tiny crowds. There's really no better way for a band to get its act together. Think Count Basie: Our heroes sounded so good in part because they played almost every night for decades—usually on the road.

These days, touring may be the *only* option. With the precipitous decline in studio work, the profusion of DJ-based entertainment, the erosion of intellectual property rights and union contracts, and the implosion of our major orchestras, Slovenia is looking mighty attractive.

There are also plenty of drawbacks. Despite being around your band buddies and performing for big crowds, a poignant loneliness—longing to be home—is omnipresent. When you leave loved ones at home, long absences can undermine your relationships (despite Facebook and Twitter, texting and Skyping). It's hard to maintain disciplined practice and fitness routines. Playing the

same music night after night can get boring. There are long hours spent at airports, in buses, at sound checks, in hotel lobbies; hurry-up-and-wait is the rule. Minor personality differences are amplified tenfold. And, of course, you won't be doing much sightseeing if your tour is cursed with a demanding road manager, itinerary or rehearsal schedule. This is especially torturous in pretty cities, island paradises and mountain retreats.

The typical road warrior must also struggle to find privacy and time for quiet reflection. Your fel-

low road rats often take up a great deal of physical, aural and karmic space, and urge you to "party" or simply annoy you with their collective hyperactivity, and your fans may distract you with other temptations. Don't join the fray—at least not all the time. Take up as little room as possible, and work diligently to maintain your discipline (practice, compose, read, exercise, explore your surroundings) and your equilibrium. Learn to shut out the din.

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## Five Signs That It's Time To Take a Break:

- 1) You lie awake thinking of ways to maim and torture hecklers.
- 2) You drink more than you practice.
- 3) Your colleagues look at you with a mixture of scorn and pity and say, "You should take some time off, dude."
- 4) You leave your instrument at a club and don't realize it's missing until three days later.
- 5) During a performance of *Cats*, you suddenly throw down your horn, jump out of the pit and start howling like a beagle.

DB



I find it helpful to use three criteria to determine the desirability of any job: 1) the quality of the music; 2) the people (I hope for warm, funny, energetic yet relaxed, smart colleagues who love life); and 3) the pay. I'll do a short job if any one of these elements is attractive, but I always hope for perfection in all three. Certainly if you're not making a lot of money, your level of satisfaction will largely depend on how much you enjoy the

music and the musicians. I've had gigs that were so good that I forgot I was getting paid at all, and others where no amount of money could have compensated for the horrendous cacophony that surrounded me. Situations arise where you don't have to work hard, but fat paychecks are floating around and you want your share. Just be advised that anything that bugs you during early rehearsals and band meetings often becomes all-consuming once you're out on the road.

I'm not advocating for road work or condemning it. Your tolerance for touring will be determined partly by the quality of the tour, and partly by your home life, age and current career options. When you do go out, you will discover your own travel rhythms and develop methods for coping with the hardships.

Finally, even if you're a bona fide road rat, you should take a vacation. It's easy to be lulled into thinking that a week in Miami playing a big corporate gig is a vacation. It is not. You must check out in earnest: Leave your instruments and your iPhone behind. Go to a quiet place. You will recharge your batteries and gain badly needed perspective, which more than compensates for the expense of the trip and any lost work. If you don't have the cash for such an essential luxury, then beg, borrow and barter; everyone knows someone who knows someone with a little shack in the woods, or a ride you can hitch, or a dog you can dog-sit in return for the use of their apartment. The people I know who never take real vacations are certified wrecks.

If you live in a throbbing metropolis like New York or Los Angeles, you need to abandon ship more often. Though all the loud noise, type triple-A people and the crowded, polluted conditions may effectively inspire you to create glorious music, it's just not enough.

Dan Wilensky has toured and recorded with hundreds of artists, including Ray Charles, Jack McDuff, Slickaphonics, Steve Winwood, Joan Baez, Cornell Dupree, Mark Murphy, R. Kelly, Manhattan Transfer, James Brown and David Bowie. He has played on numerous jingles, film soundtracks and TV themes, and can be heard on more than 250 records. His books *Musician!* and *Advanced Sax* and his four CDs as a leader are available at danwilensky.com and through other channels.

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BY MICHAEL BLAKE

# Michael Blake's Tenor Saxophone Solo on 'Tiddy Boom'

**LAST YEAR, I RECEIVED CHAMBER MUSIC AMERICA'S 2013 NEW JAZZ WORKS:**

Commissioning and Ensemble Development grant funded through the generosity of the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation. My resulting work, *Contrasts In Individualism*, reinterprets the contrasting styles of tenor saxophone pioneers Coleman Hawkins (1904-'69) and Lester Young (1909-'59). I premiered and recorded the work this year with my group World Time Zone, which includes bassist Ben Allison, drummer Rudy Royston and guest pianist Frank Kimbrough.

For years, the contrasting styles of Hawkins and Young often led musicians and listeners alike to choose between two different "schools" of jazz. I never took sides, and within this new work I strive to share my admiration for both "Hawk" and "Pres" (as these two historic figures are commonly known). The source of the music drew from the technical resources of both saxophonists, the individualism of their improvisations and the legacy that they left behind. I view their rhythmic, harmonic and melodic structures as similar to an elevator (Hawkins) and an escalator (Young): two different ways to get to the same place.

The title of my piece "Tiddy Boom" (which can be found online at [michaelblake.net/tiddyboom](http://michaelblake.net/tiddyboom)) is a Youngism used to describe when a drummer plays a supportive backbeat. The static harmonic structure, old-school key center (D $\flat$ , concert) and medium-up tempo (quarter note = 200) all provide a nice landscape for me to develop thematic solo material that draws from the legacy of the swing era. Hawkins certainly had a wider pallet in terms of his harmonic imagination, but what Young can do with less notes (especially the sixth and ninth) is invaluable to any melodic improviser.

In Excerpt #1 from my "Tiddy Boom" solo, after a rather abstract and bluesy opening (bars 1-8), my follow-up idea contains a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes that has elements of early Pres. The percussive nature of this phrase anchors the solo and tightens up the rhythm section. Although known for his melodic approach, Young's early solos are also ripe with a fully formed rhythmic structure that has had a huge influence on countless jazz artists. His sophisticated take on how a phrase can begin, develop and end is immediately evident in his early work with Count Basie. Later in life, Young's resourceful and economic approach was a poignant response to the fast-paced style of bebop. In bars 9-16, note the limited range of one octave and the use of accents to create a variety of note groupings.

Bars 18-22 (see Excerpt #2) exemplify a very Hawkins-like approach, and I enjoy taking some harmonic license before the piano accompaniment enters. The piano brings a new vibe, and at bars 27-29 I go for a "throaty" tone, leaving a little space for Kimbrough's entrance to resonate. It's only four bars, but it steers me in the right direction. The following lines are also reminiscent of Young, who, like Hawkins, was exceptionally capable at "tagging" the chords. Bars 39-42 show my reverence for Hawkins'



ROBERTO CIARELLI

## Excerpt #1

Pick up . . . . .

Chord progression for Excerpt #1:  
 1-4: F-7 B $\flat$ 7 E $\flat$ maj7 F-7 B $\flat$ 7 E $\flat$ maj7  
 5-8: E $\flat$ 7 A $\flat$ 7 D $\flat$ (#11) F-7 B $\flat$ 7  
 9-12: E $\flat$ maj7 F-7 B $\flat$ 7 E $\flat$ maj7  
 13-16: E $\flat$ 7 A $\flat$ 7 D $\flat$ (#11)

## Excerpt #2

Chord progression for Excerpt #2:  
 18-21: E7 E $\flat$ 7(b9) A $\flat$ 7 D $\flat$ 7 G-7  
 22-25: C $\flat$ (b9) F-7 B $\flat$ 7(b9) E $\flat$ maj7  
 26-29: G $\flat$ 7 F $\sharp$ 7 F-7 B $\flat$ 7 E $\flat$ maj7 F-7 B $\flat$ 7 E $\flat$ maj7  
 30-33: E $\flat$ 7 A $\flat$ 7 D $\flat$ (#11)  
 34-37: F-7 B $\flat$ 7 E $\flat$ maj7 F-7 B $\flat$ 7 E $\flat$ maj7  
 38-41: E $\flat$ 7 A $\flat$ 7 D $\flat$ (#11)

vertical style. His characteristic harmonic method often involved moving from chord tones to extensions in an unpredictable manner. For example, at bars 24–25, the leading-tone ascending chromatic line is played over a suspended C7. I don't play the third of the chord until the very end of the phrase (and as a passing note), but that is enough information to give us a sense of where the harmony is moving.

The chromatic minor thirds in bars 43–45 (see Excerpt #3) borrow as much from Ornette Coleman as they do from Young. Once again, I'm trying to be true to the “cool” nature of the tune, and throughout the solo I play a lot of eighth-note lines in the middle range of the horn. Bars 46–48 involve the most interesting harmonic opportunity in the progression, moving from the tritone substitution of E7 to the tonic, and then another tritone sub from D $\flat$ 7 (V of V) into the G minor. The following II–V movement (bars 49–51) consists of an ascending arpeggio that outlines the chord tones. This is a classic Hawkins device. The metaphorical river is overflowing, and the arpeggios are like sandbags holding back the pressure that is building up.

Bars 55–70 (see Excerpt #4) contain the climax of the solo. I started off bars 55–57 playing through the entire range of the saxophone from top to bottom. Like Hawkins, I am also big fan of the low-middle range of the tenor. As players these days tend to stay above the first octave break, this

area of the horn is often underutilized. I wanted to create a sense of call-and-response, and switching between the upper and lower ranges creates that effect.

Along with choosing the “right” notes, speed-of-light decisions involving range, articulation, dynamics and phrasing really bring a lot of personality to a solo. In fact, at the beginning of every new idea I get on “Tiddy Boom,” there is a subsequent and immediate reaction from the band that supports the potential intent of that idea. Being aware of that in a historical context is especially important when playing jazz *and* improvised music.

Delving deeper into the innovations of Hawkins and Young has revealed some of their secrets to me, but despite how much one analyzes what they played on their horns, the mysterious quality of their music remains intact. I appreciate the nuances and personal ownership of their note choices along with the emotional vulnerability they displayed. It's important to remember that their point of reference was not anything like what we have today. **DB**

Canadian-born saxophonist, composer and arranger Michael Blake has made New York City his home since 1986. Blake spent a decade as a sideman in John Lurie's Lounge Lizards and was a Composer in Residence in the Jazz Composers Collective. His 1997 debut CD *Kingdom Of Champa* (Intuition) was produced by Teo Macero, and a steady output of recordings since then reveals the evolution of a prolific composer and inventive saxophonist. Visit Blake online at [michaelblake.net](http://michaelblake.net).



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Follow the RW channel on YouTube for exclusive videos featuring your favorite artists.



### Excerpt #3

### Excerpt #4

## Sabian HHX Omni

### 2 World-Class Cymbals in 1

Sabian has added two more cymbals that are manufactured with the company's innovative Omni technique, this time to its HHX line.

HHX cymbals fall under Sabian's Modern category, but they are a darker and warmer than their category neighbor, the AAX series. "Modern Dark" is the way Sabian describes the HHX line, which includes a full assortment of cymbals from splashes, rides and hats to crashes and china cymbals. Now we can add Omni to that list.

Originally introduced with Sabian's AAX series, the Omnis are dual-zoned cymbals intended for use as a crash and a ride. They were co-developed with

Swiss drummer Jojo Mayer, who touts them as nothing less than the Swiss Army knife of cymbals: "This is a go-anywhere, play-anywhere cymbal, and ultimately, you can play any gig with just this one cymbal on your kit," Mayer said.

I tend to be skeptical about these types of marketing claims, but Mayer's statement turned out to be more than mere hype. I played a few sessions with just the HHX Omni and didn't feel like I was being restricted by the lack of sonic options coming from a single source.

The HHX Omni is a medium-weight cymbal with a thin edge and a medium-profile bell. The bell and the inner half of the cymbal are unlathed, while the outer half of is a fully

lathed cymbal that tapers to its thin edge. Visually, as well as sonically, the two sections are completely different. The result is like having two world-class cymbals in one.

While playing live, I found myself gliding back and forth between the two zones as the music called for subtle (and not so subtle) timbre changes. When playing on the outer lathed area, the cymbal had a nice wash with subtle dark textures that didn't overpower lighter passages. When I needed a bit more definition and bite, especially with the larger ensembles, I just moved the stick up 2 inches to the unlathed section and found a sound that had solid stick definition with less wash and fewer undertones. That is a lot of texture change for such a small physical movement.

The HHX Omni cymbals currently come in two sizes, 19-inch and 22-inch, and I was able to try them in number of different combinations with my standard cymbals. I even ended up using the 22-inch HHX alongside my regular 22-inch cymbal; between the two, I felt I had an enormous amount of sonic options, which isn't always the case when using two cymbals of the same size.

For me, the 22-inch HHX Omni excelled in all areas I needed it to. It had a warm, dark, washy feel but could also cut through the band when called upon. Even as a crash, it had a great fast attack that subsided quickly with no displeasing overtones. A cymbal that covers the entire spectrum like that shouldn't be taken for granted. I felt like there was an enormous amount of metallurgic brain power behind the development of this cymbal.

The 19-inch wasn't quite as flexible for me; I didn't find myself riding on it as much I do with my other 19-inch ride cymbals. But, it still had the two zones to choose from for maximum textures, and like the 22-inch, the crash textures were very pleasing: quick attack, warm decay, never overpowering the ensemble with bright, harsh tones.

Overall, the HHX Omnis are amazingly flexible cymbals that offer up a large assortment of sonic possibilities.

—Matt Kern

Ordering info: [sabianomni.com](http://sabianomni.com)



## Singleton Guitarworks Sensei5 Bass

### Traditional Platform, Exotic Touch

As an accomplished guitarist, Touch Singleton knows a thing or two about playability and tone. And for the past 23 years, he has utilized this knowledge to design and build a line of handcrafted boutique electric guitars. Eight years ago, at the request of a fellow musician in search of something truly unique, Singleton began to explore the world of electric bass and created the Sensei5. Featuring fine tone-woods, active electronics and an extremely comfortable profile, this five-string axe is a definite testament to Singleton's skill as a fine luthier.

As a player, Singleton came up during the fusion era of the 1970s, when artists were pushing the boundaries of musical genres by combining elements of jazz, funk and rock. Versatile music requires a versatile instrument, and crossover ability has been one of the guiding principles of Singleton's designs. His Singleton Guitarworks is a true one-man operation, with every guitar built from the ground up by Singleton himself (he produces about 25 instruments per year).

Using the classic Jazz Bass as his platform, Singleton had some specific goals in mind in designing the Sensei5. He wanted to build an instrument that allowed the individuality of the player's touch and the tone of the woods to come out through the amp without being masked by the electronics. The Sensei5 accomplishes this by being a highly versatile, extremely playable and incredibly responsive instrument. The bass features an asymmetrical double cutaway design that is lightweight and well balanced for comfortable playing while standing. The tone woods are striking on the Sensei5, which uses Louisiana swamp ash for the body, capped with highly figured burl maple and finished in a tobacco burst. The neck is carved from solid maple with a flamed maple fingerboard.



I found the Sensei5 to be smooth, versatile and responsive. As a player with smaller hands, I was surprised at how easily I adapted to the five-string neck, which has a great profile. The Sensei5 utilizes a dual pickup configuration with custom-designed Nordstrand pickups, and it features active circuitry with an onboard Audere three-band EQ preamp. The range of possible tones can be fine-tuned via the three EQ pots, a pickup blend pot and a master volume. In addition, a three-position toggle invokes a bass cut, treble cut or neutral setting. There is also a battery indicator light that will alert you if the preamp battery requires changing. The Sensei5 has a Hipshot "A" style bridge made from aluminum in order to maximize the transfer of string vibrations to the wood, and the B and E strings are run through the body to allow for a tighter response on the lower strings and provide a better overall balance across the fretboard.

This is a well-designed, hand-built instrument that, in Singleton's own words, "adds an exotic touch to a traditional platform." At a list price of \$3,250, the Sensei5 would make a proud addition to any bass player's arsenal. —Keith Baumann

Ordering info: [singletonguitars.com](http://singletonguitars.com)

# Ashdown PiBass-240

## Affordable, Powerful Micro Amp

Micro bass amps have become all the rage as Class D power has enabled amp makers to pump absurd amounts of sound into tiny packages.

The PiBass-240 is the newest in Ashdown's MiBass line of micro amps and lightweight speaker enclosures. It was designed in conjunction with Polish bass phenom Wojtek Pilichowski. If you check out his Extreme Bass on YouTube, you will hear the PiBass-240 in all of its slap-bass glory—clear and punchy with great articulation and presence. Impressive, but could this little 3.3-pound, fits-in-your-gig-bag-pocket bass head offer the tonal flexibility many bassists desire? I was skeptical, flat-out. But those doubts were put to rest very quickly.

The PiBass is a bit of a departure for Ashdown in that it features a digital power amp and no pre-amp tube. It has a flexible

signal post-EQ. One technical issue with my amp was a very loud "pop" when the amp was already connected to the speaker cabinet when powering up—a minor but loud annoyance.

Out of the box, I played my double bass through the PiBass on some bluegrass tunes. The amp's 240 watts into 8 ohms was way more than I needed for my 1x12 cabinet, and even though it took me a while to figure out the controls, I was able to get a warm, full and clear sound. Curiosity piqued.

Next on the docket was a straight-up rock show in a medium-sized club. My P-bass strung with roundwounds along with the PiBass and a 2x12 cabinet produced thundering results. I enjoyed plenty of headroom—the guitarists in the band were scratching their heads at the size of the head and the volume it produced.

The real moment of truth with the



semi-parametric EQ featuring four sliders for boost/cut of low, low-mid, hi-mid and treble. To the left of the low-mid, hi-mid and treble sliders are rotary controls marked "Freq-Hz." These are used to select the frequency at which the sliders boost and cut. This control allows the bassist to really contour the sound of each particular instrument (especially helpful with double bass and acoustic bass guitar). There is also a Bright button that boosts the highs pre-EQ, but does so in a way that is musical and not harsh. There are also Input and Output rotary knobs, plus an active/passive bass switch and a 1/4-inch headphone out. The balanced DI-out in the back has a ground lift and sends your

PiBass happened at a concert in an 1,800-seat theatre. I had my trusty 500-watt solid state head ready to roll through my 4x10 cabinet but was finding the sound a bit wanting. Then I tried a competitor's 500-watt micro amp—still not great. Why not give the PiBass a try? Wow—talk about 240 watts of good power. Warm, present and punchy, my Rickenbacker 4001 strung with flats sounded phenomenal. The PiBass won that round hands down (and fit into my gig bag after the show).

When setting out to create the PiBass-240, Ashdown and Pilichowski wanted a bass amp that was small, affordable and powerful enough to be used with only one cabinet (for budget and portability). If you are a bassist considering downsizing, the \$399 PiBass-240 should be at the top of your check-it-out list. —Jon Paul

Ordering info: [ashdownmusic.com](http://ashdownmusic.com)

# Yanagisawa WO Series Alto Saxophones

## Upgrades Yield New Pro, Elite Models

Japanese saxophone and mouthpiece maker Yanagisawa is known for producing professional-quality horns with outstanding ergonomics and a high level of structural integrity. That means that the horns have a reputation for being fast, accurate, solid and comfortable to play. Yanagisawa saxes also tend toward the bright side of the sound spectrum, making them an attractive option for modern-leaning players who want a little more sizzle than what other pro horns typically offer, vintage models in particular. Now, the company's high-end 900 and 990 series are getting significant upgrades, starting with the alto models.

The Yanagisawa WO series alto saxophones officially replace the 900 and 990 series. Several smart upgrades and improvements complement the classic Yanagisawa features on these horns and bring a sense of refreshment to a long-established brand—not a bad idea considering the growth of the pro sax market in recent times. WO alts formerly in the 900 series are now referred to as Professional models; the 990 series are now called Elite models.

I play-tested the new W010 Elite model (which replaces the 991) and W02 Professional model (which replaces the 902). The first thing I noticed on the WO series alts was the new front F key, which has been refashioned with a unique contour to accommodate the player's left-hand forefinger. Players with large hands might require a little time to adjust to the new mechanism; I have small hands and immediately found I preferred this new design over more traditional front-F configurations. It goes a long way in smoothing and strengthening the bridge between the saxophone's natural high range and the extended altissimo register.

Yanagisawa made some ergonomic tweaks on the WO series. For example, the right-hand pinky keys (E-flat and low C) have been reangled, and additional feet have been added under the right-hand side keys to give the mechanism more support and impart a heavier feel. Plus, the high E side key has been given a new winglike “scooped” shape. All of these changes facilitate speedy play and improve grip and stability.

Yanagisawa also redesigned the bore slightly in order to increase tonal resonance. “It seems to be most noticeable where the bore meets the bow and the bell,” said Bob Lichty, director of marketing for saxophones at Conn-Selmer, which distributes Yanagisawa in the States. “I find these new WO models are definitely a little more resonant down there than the 900 and 990 series were.” Tonehole position has also been modified, resulting in better intonation in the left-hand upper stack. A new strengthening plate has been placed on the front of the neck crook to add core weight. One nice feature from Yanagisawa's 990 series—a plate under the left-hand palm keys to provide extra weight and warm up the sound—can now be found on all WO alts.

The W010 played with a direct, punchy sound. I especially liked the double arms on the low C and low B keys, a reinforcement that helps prevent leaking and warbling. The W010 features the no-slip, under-slung octave-key design of the 990 series, which is a nice touch.

The brass used to make the horn comes from a different source than previous Yanagisawa saxophones—a material enhancement intended to improve the sound of all the brass models in the WO line.

I enjoyed manipulating different timbres on the W02, which is made entirely of bronze and has a softer, warmer, broader tone than traditional brass saxophones. This and other models in the Professional WO line feature post-to-body construction, making them lighter and allowing for quicker response and resonance.

Suggested retail prices on the WO series brass and bronze models range from \$5,380 to \$7,515. Yanagisawa offers precious-metal options on the WO series as well. Sterling silver components are available in various combinations (including the all-sterling W037), and the pink gold W020PG tops out the line.

The WO case has been updated with a convenient backpack strap and pockets for accessories—a big improvement over Yanagisawa's hard-shell wood case of the past.

Yanagisawa's upgrade of the 900 series and 990 series alts to the WO Professional and Elite series is a success. It will be interesting to check out the rest of the company's 900 series and 990 series sopranos, tenors and baris when they follow suit with upgrades to WO status in the future.

—Ed Enright

Ordering info: [conn-selmer.com](http://conn-selmer.com)



W02 Professional alto

W010 Elite alto

# LP Americana Series Octo-Snare Cajons

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LP's new Americana Octo-Snare Cajons add a bold, new dimension to your "un-plugged" set-up. They're available in 10-inch and 12-inch models and like every Americana Series Cajon, the Octo-Snare is handmade in the USA.

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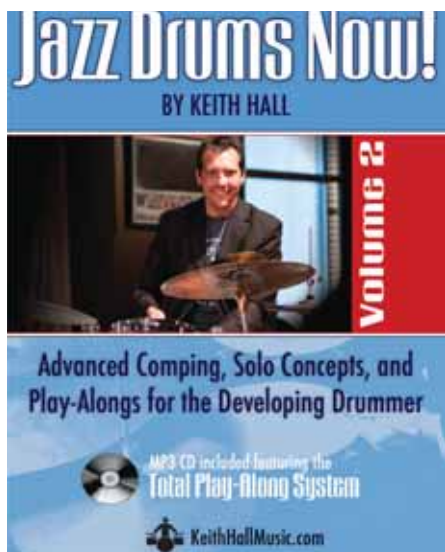
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### Now's the Time

Keith Hall Music has released Volume 2 of the instructional book *Jazz Drums Now!*, which includes an MP3 CD featuring the Total Play-Along System. The new volume covers groove tools, advanced comping and solo concepts for the developing jazz drummer as presented by Keith Hall, an adjunct drum set instructor at Western Michigan University. Hall provides recommended listening of classic recordings throughout the book. **More info:** [keithhallmusic.com](http://keithhallmusic.com)

### Micro Monitor

The 8010 Active Monitor from Genelec is the smallest member of the company's product range, which makes it ideal for small studios or OB vans and as a companion for portable recording devices. It features a balanced XLR input, 3-inch bass driver, 3/4-inch tweeter and Class D amplifiers.

**More info:** [genelecusa.com](http://genelecusa.com)



### iOS Jamming

Positive Grid has introduced the JamUp Plug HD, a studio-quality guitar and bass interface for use with recording apps on the iPad, iPhone and iPod touch. The pocket-sized device improves on the original JamUp Plug by offering a 24-bit/48kHz USB audio solution. The improved resolution enhances signal-to-noise ratio and helps eliminate feedback issues.

**More info:** [positivegrid.com](http://positivegrid.com)



### Piccolo Symphonies

Expanding its Symphony series, Schilke has added three mouthpieces created specifically for piccolo trumpet. The new mouthpiece choices come in cornet or trumpet shank. Now available in three rim sizes, the P5X, P6X and P7X models feature modified, comfortable rim and cup shapes with the traditional Schilke "X" piccolo backbore. They provide a balanced, even feel with a clear, resonant sound. **More info:** [schilke.com](http://schilke.com)



### 8-Sided Sound

The Octo-Snare cajon from Latin Percussion is a handmade, eight-sided drum fitted with fixed internal snares and dual playing surfaces. Its 5-inch-deep shell is constructed out of 9-ply Baltic birch, and it's available in a 10-inch diameter with birch top surface or a 12-inch diameter with hardwood sapele top surface. **More info:** [latinpercussion.com](http://latinpercussion.com)

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Wynton Marsalis (left) instructs students at The Juilliard School during a May 28 rehearsal as they prepare for a performance at Dizzy's Club Coca-Cola.



MAN MELVILLE/THE JUILLIARD SCHOOL

## Marsalis Named Director of Jazz Studies at Juilliard

**WYNTON MARSALIS' APPOINTMENT AS** director of The Juilliard School's jazz program is a homecoming of sorts. The one-time Juilliard wunderkind who left classical studies to take the trumpet chair in Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers has returned to his alma mater to lead a program that was created with the guidance of Marsalis' other Manhattan focus: Jazz at Lincoln Center (JALC). He will officially take over the post on July 1.

"I feel like I never left Juilliard," Marsalis said during a conversation in June. "I've always been a fan and supporter of the school—it was the reason I came to New York City—and Jazz at Lincoln Center has always had a very close relationship with it."

Juilliard's jazz program was created in 2001 as a pre-professional program for 18 students in collaboration with JALC. It was organized with considerable input from Marsalis, who serves as the JALC managing and artistic director. The program now offers degrees at bachelor's, master's and artist diploma levels, and draws about 40 students from around the world.

"We have a very small student body," said pianist Frank Kimbrough, who served as interim director before Marsalis came on board. "The faculty is large for such a small student population, so we offer a very hands-on approach."

The Juilliard program offers a wide range of performing opportunities for students, with ensembles appearing regularly at JALC's venues (including Dizzy's Club Coca-Cola), the Blue Note and various festivals. As the partnership between Juilliard and JALC continues to strengthen, students will have even more performance options, as well as the opportunity to participate in JALC's education initiatives.

"We're looking for these young, energetic minds to come in and challenge us," said Todd Stoll, JALC's vice president of education.

For Marsalis, the attraction goes beyond the jazz program to Juilliard as a whole and the way the 109-year-old institution reflects his worldview. "I'm such a believer in the integrated arts—dance,

opera, theater, everything—and the idea of the artist as citizen of the world," he said. "The history and tradition of Juilliard are second to none in engendering that concept.

"In taking on this new project, our goal is to free the students to maximize their potential, and to give them the tools to do that. I want to say to them: 'What do you want to see in the world? Create it!'"

In describing his priorities for his directorship, Marsalis divided them into three musically related areas: "Freedom of expression through improvisation, good manners and diplomacy, and soul—emotional depth and optimism."

"Wynton has a gift for appealing to students' intelligence and their sense of empowerment," said Kimbrough. "He's very articulate about describing what a piece of music needs to make it better, and he's extraordinarily generous."

"Young people sense Wynton's honesty and his supreme integrity about the music," Stoll said.

Marsalis dismissed the notion that studying jazz at a formal academic institution such as Juilliard would be radically different from the way he learned music on the bandstand as a young man. "My father, Art Blakey, all the older musicians I knew, they taught fundamental human values. They were always talking about the quality of your playing and what you needed to do to serve the music—to be a better musician, but also a better person. We have seen an explosion in music within academic institutions since the 1960s, but there have always been institutions where you can study your craft, whether it was individual teachers like Carl McVicker in Pittsburgh or the bands of Duke Ellington and Woody Herman.

"I've spent all my career listening to young people play, and helping them find ways to grow as people and musicians. This is going to give me an opportunity to continue that goal."

"Juilliard is an incredible place," Kimbrough said. "I feel good when I walk in the door here, and Wynton is going to make it even better."

—James Hale

Kate McGarry



MATTEO TRISOLINI

**Campsite Change:** The Janice Borla Vocal Jazz Camp has moved to a new location this summer. Birch Creek Music Performance Center in Egg Harbor, Wis., will present the longstanding event Aug. 10–16. Founded in 1989, the camp provides aspiring jazz vocalists an intense one-week course of study and skills development conducted by an artist faculty of professional performing and recording artists. This year's vocal staff artists are Janice Borla, Madeline Eastman and Kate McGarry. **More info:** [birchcreek.org](http://birchcreek.org)

**Get Sheddin':** One-on-one video music lessons are now available from some of the best jazz musicians in the world at the online marketplace intotheShed, whose roster of teaching artists includes Wess "Warmdaddy" Anderson, Wycliffe Gordon, Eldar Djangirov, Scotty Barnhart, Robert Hurst and many more. **More info:** [intotheshed.com](http://intotheshed.com)

**Doctor, Doctor:** Jazz guitarist Bucky Pizzarelli received an honorary doctor of fine arts degree from William Paterson University during the school's May commencement ceremony. A native of Patterson, N.J., Pizzarelli has maintained a longtime collaboration with Paterson's Jazz Studies program, including many years as an adjunct professor, and he performs regularly at the university. Also in May, saxophonist-composer Benny Golson was awarded a doctor of music degree from Howard University, his alma mater. In honor of his legacy, Howard bestows a Benny Golson Jazz Master Award to a deserving artist each year.

**Progressions Nucleo:** This spring, San Jose Jazz launched its first Progressions Nucleo, a Saturday-morning educational program that brings students from all three of the non-profit organization's partner schools together for a session of music-making, cultural expression and community-building exercises. Directed by Julie Rinard, the inaugural Nucleo event featured a performance by the San Jose Jazz High School All Stars Combo.

**More info:** [sanjosejazz.org](http://sanjosejazz.org)



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## Blindfold Test BY TED PANKEN

# Clarence Penn

Whether complementing the Maria Schneider Orchestra, Dave Douglas, Luciana Souza, Makoto Ozone, the late Michael Brecker or Fourplay, or helming his own well-wrought projects, Clarence Penn combines massive drumset skills with considerable prowess as a composer and real-time orchestrator. Recently he's contributed to such diverse albums as saxophonist Tim Warfield's *Eye Of The Beholder* (Criss Cross Jazz), singer Kate McGarry's *Girl Talk* (Palmetto) and harmonicist Gregoire Maret's eponymous eOne release. Penn's most recent leader date is *Dali In Cobble Hill* (Criss Cross Jazz) with saxophonist Chris Potter, guitarist Adam Rogers and bassist Ben Street.

### Marvin "Smitty" Smith

"The Road Less Traveled" (*The Road Less Traveled*, Concord, 1989) Smith, drums; Ralph Moore, tenor saxophone; Robin Eubanks, trombone; Steve Coleman, alto saxophone; Wallace Roney, trumpet; James Williams, piano; Robert Hurst, bass.

The drummer has a lot of chops! At first, I thought he was younger, but the low tuning of the bass drum and toms and the way the China cymbal is used means it's someone familiar with '80s and '90s fusion. It's borderline between a fusion and jazz feel, without electric instruments. Ah, it's Marvin "Smitty" Smith. It reminds me of Kevin Eubanks' record *Opening Night* that Smitty also was on. Robin Eubanks on trombone? The alto has a lot of chops—Greg Osby? 3 stars. Smitty has tended to tune the drums low, where it's less about touch than the technique. I like to hear Smitty on a jazz—or higher-tuned—set, where I can hear the drums speak.

### The Bad Plus

"Spring Rounds/Games Of The Two Rival Tribes/Procession Of The Sage/The Sage/Dance Of The Earth" (*The Rite Of Spring*, Sony Masterworks, 2014) Ethan Iverson, piano; Reid Anderson, bass; Dave King, drums.

Swinging. The vamp in the beginning reminds me of a McCoy [Tyner] tune. I hear Joe Henderson playing that melody. Now it's teetering on the avant-garde side of things. The drummer has strong technique. Joey Baron? Jim Black? I liked that polyrhythm, the way he turned the 3 into 4-over-3. Tyshawn Sorey? I liked the drum tuning, low but open; I loved the wide-open bass drum (it sounded like an 18-inch floor tom) in the beginning. All the tune's sections were interesting. 4 stars. [after] It was abstract to hear *Rite Of Spring* like that.

### Harvey Mason

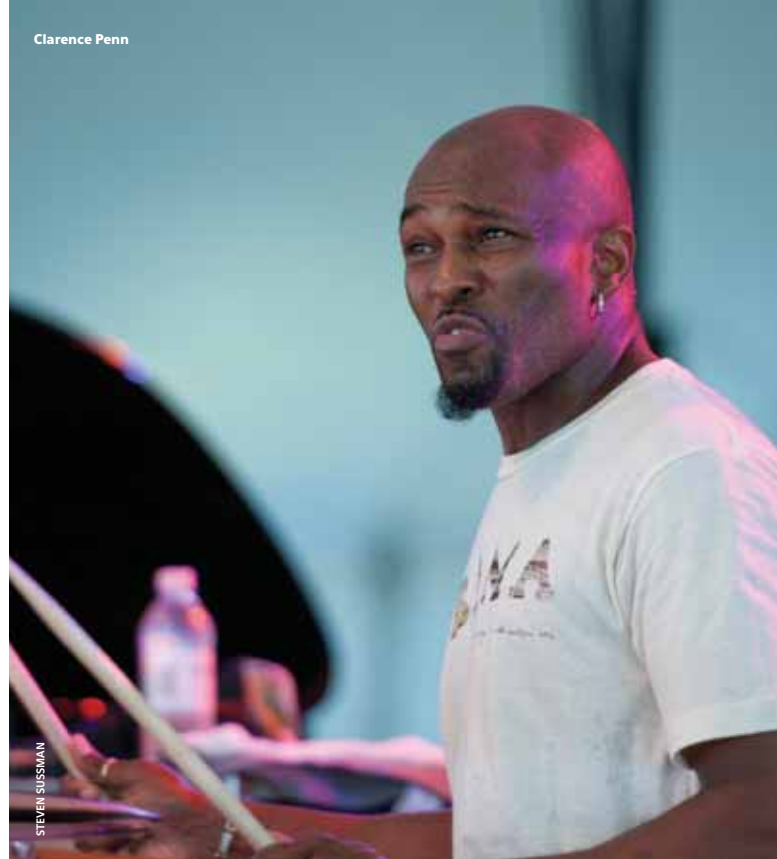
"Either Way" (*Chameleon*, Concord, 2014) Mason, drums; Matthew Stevens, guitar; Kris Bowers, Fender Rhodes, synthesizer; Ben Williams, electric bass.

Nice tune. The cymbal reminds me of Harvey Mason—a larger, thicker cymbal, without much air in it; very studio-esque. Also the tightness of the snare, but going to the low snare. Definitely Harvey. It's the intricate rhythms he's playing on the snare with the Blasticks, that cross between sticks and brushes. It sounds like a little shaker in the background, which could be the combination he's playing between hi-hat and snare. He's amazing at that. 5 stars. I didn't expect you to play Harvey, but I'm glad you did.

### Eric Reed

"Evidence" (*The Adventurous Monk*, Savant, 2014) Reed, piano; Ben Williams, bass; Greg Hutchinson, drums.

I'm partial to Monk. From the orchestration of the melody, it's a younger jazz drummer. It's a flat ride cymbal. I like the drum tuning, but not the way the drums are recorded, like in a big room. The piano sounds dry and the drums sound wet. At the beginning, the drummer played a delay thing on hi-hat that makes it sound like an echo; he's listened to younger guys like Chris Dave or Eric Harland. I didn't hear that stuff when they got into the solo and started swinging. I love that the pianist stated the melody and soloed off the tune; it felt good, sparse and disjointed in the beginning, then walking it at the end. Tension and release. 5 stars.



### Jeff Ballard Trio

"Beat Street" (*Time's Tales*, OKeh, 2014) Ballard, drums, percussion; Miguel Zenón, alto saxophone; Lionel Loueke, guitar.

It sounds a little like "St. Thomas." The alto is influenced by Kenny Garrett. It's either Yosvany Terry or Miguel Zenón; strong command of the instrument. Is there a percussionist? Sounds like Lionel Loueke on guitar; I thought it was bass in the beginning. He's a great player. [drum solo] He's been checking out African drumming. Jeff Ballard. I hear him in the snare and bass drum double-stops. [slower section] Nice transition. The drum solo was a tad long for me, but overall, very solid. 4½ stars.

### Steve Gadd

"Africa" (*Gadditude*, BFM Jazz, 2013) Gadd, drums; Larry Goldings, organ; Jimmy Johnson, bass; Michael Landau, guitar; Walt Fowler, trumpet.

I like the feel of that relaxed 3 and the organ. Interesting bridge. Is there also a percussionist? Then it's overdubbed. With just cymbal, snare and bass drum it's hard to figure out who it is, but the drummer got more active. It's a groove like Idris Muhammad might play. Is Christian Scott on trumpet? The drummer is definitely a seasoned, older cat—it's the combination of the snare and the musical way he played through the whole tune, not over-trying, sometimes playing straight off the cymbal, sometimes swinging off the cymbal. Billy Hart? 4 stars. [after] Get out of here! That did *not* sound like Gadd.

### Louis Hayes & The Cannonball Legacy Band

"Jessica's Birthday" (*Maximum Firepower*, Savant, 2006) Hayes, drums; Vincent Her-ring, alto saxophone; Jeremy Pelt, trumpet; Rick Germanson, piano; Richie Goods, bass.

The drummer is the leader. The drums are mixed high, especially the cymbal and hi-hat. The bass player is holding it down, swinging through everything. I love "Jessica's Birthday," which Cannonball Adderley used to perform. The trumpet player was excellent; all the solos were killing. That cymbal beat reminded me of when I was young and just coming to the music. Definitely an older drummer, using a thicker cymbal, which I don't particularly care for, but it's probably clearer for an older guy. His playing is vaguely familiar. 3½ stars. [after] That's how I learned how to play on top, listening to Louis. And he played that tune!

DB

The "Blindfold Test" is a listening test that challenges the featured artist to discuss and identify the music and musicians who performed on selected recordings. The artist is then asked to rate each tune using a 5-star system. No information is given to the artist prior to the test.

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# GREG OSBY

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Saxophonist, composer, producer and educator, Greg Osby has made an indelible mark on contemporary jazz as a leader of his own ensembles and as a guest artist with other acclaimed jazz groups for the past 3 decades. He continues to push limits, explore boundaries, and innovate.

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