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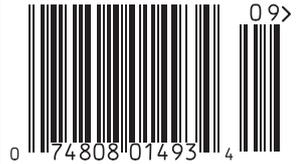
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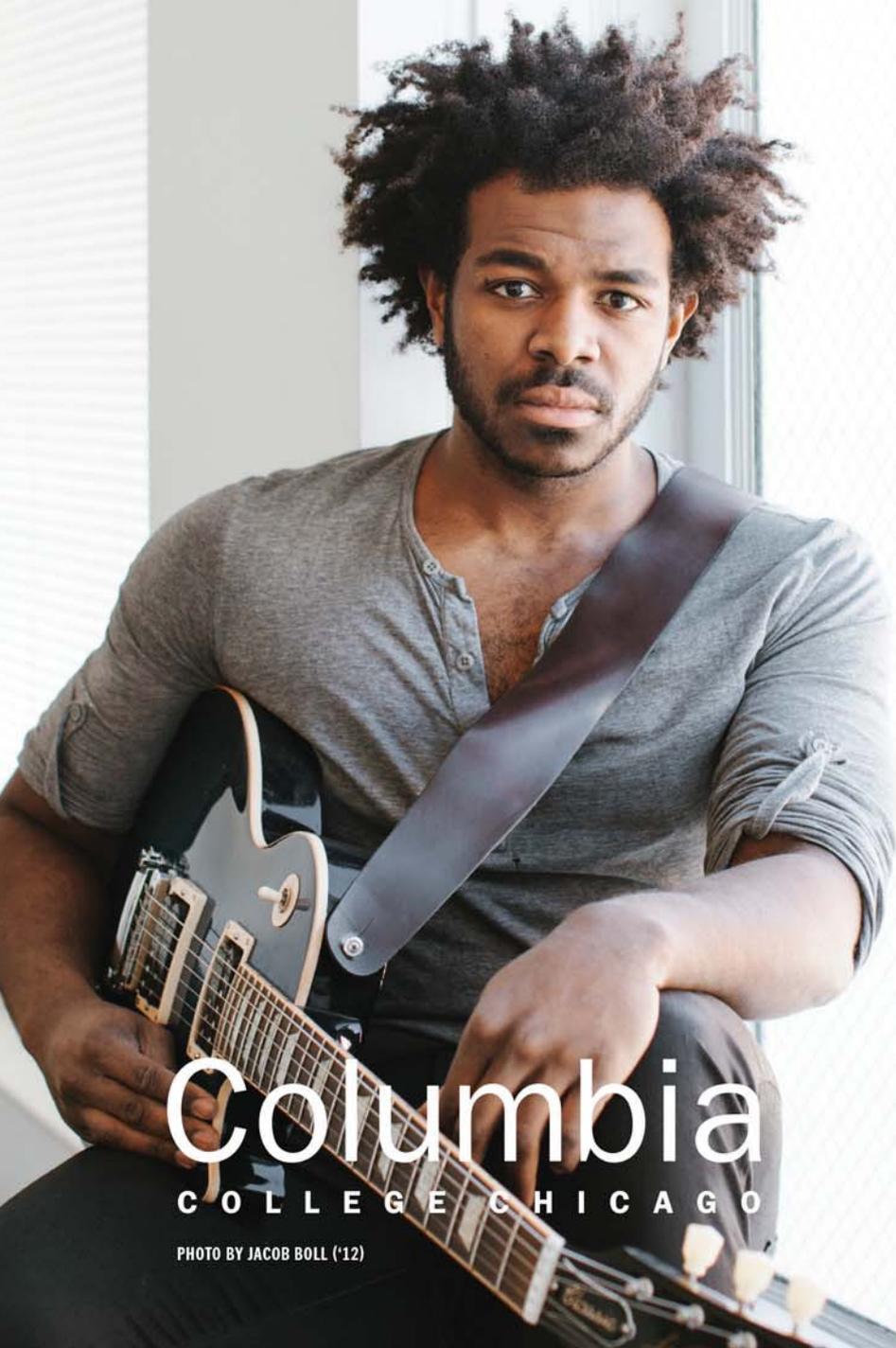
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# Great Artists



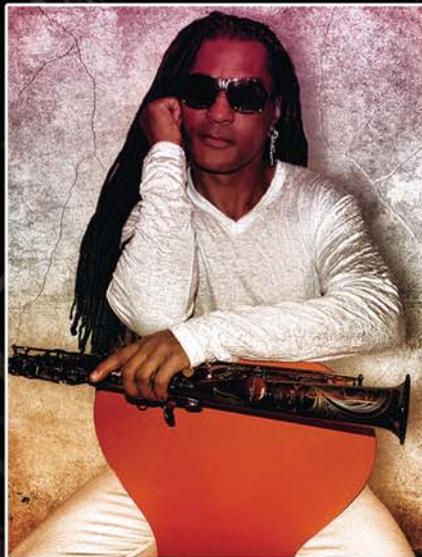
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# CANNONBALL

SEPTEMBER 2015

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**ON THE COVER**

## 24 Ornette Coleman

BY BILL MILKOWSKI

In celebration of a jazz icon, we look back at critical responses to his early works, present classic quotes by Coleman, and compile statements from his fellow musicians—all from the pages of DownBeat over the decades.



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Art Ensemble of Chicago members Lester Bowie (left), Joseph Jarman and Famoudou Don Moye perform in Chicago.

Cover photo of Ornette Coleman by Karen Kuehn

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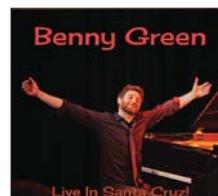
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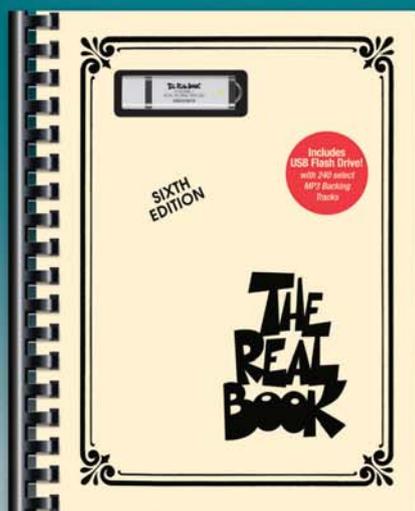
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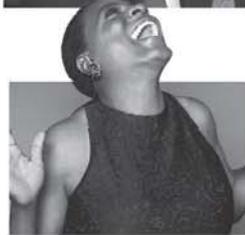
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**First Take** > BY BOBBY REED



Ornette Coleman (right) enjoyed shooting pool in his loft with good friends like Charles Lloyd.

**Celebrating the Trailblazers**

**LOVERS OF AVANT-GARDE MUSIC WILL FIND THIS ISSUE TO BE BITTER-SWEET.** We say goodbye to Ornette Coleman, but we also celebrate 50 amazing years of the AACM (Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians).

The titanic Coleman blazed trails in the late '50s and early '60s by bravely challenging, rethinking and rejecting some of the conventions of jazz. In our tribute that begins on page 24, we look back at Coleman's career and revisit the critical responses to his music, including the famous "Double View of a Double Quartet" review of *Free Jazz* from the Jan. 18, 1962, issue of *DownBeat*, wherein Pete Welding awarded it 5 stars, while John A. Tynan gave it zero stars.

Coleman embodied the notion that the artist should pursue the muse with steadfast devotion, despite any obstacles or naysayers.

As Coleman's career evolved over the decades, the jazz world expanded, and the center moved to the left. Coleman won a Pulitzer Prize and was honored with a Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award. The iconoclast became an icon.

When the AACM started in 1965, its founders sought the freedom to pursue nonconventional music on their own terms, and they established a cooperative to support artists whose work was outside the mainstream. Today, the AACM continues to thrive. (The Chicago Jazz Festival will present a special "AACM at 50" program on Sept. 3 featuring Henry Threadgill, Muhal Richard Abrams and others.)

The jazz world of 2015 is diverse, multifaceted, multicultural and expansive, boasting thousands of avant-garde artists eager to push the boundaries. There's also a strong interdisciplinary thread, wherein jazz musicians collaborate with poets, filmmakers, dancers and painters. Jazz today is enormously vast. We can thank Coleman and the early AACM pioneers for helping expand the art form.

On page 13, we've got a story on Threadgill (an AACM artist) being inducted into the Jazz Wall of Fame by the performing-rights organization ASCAP (American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers). We applaud ASCAP for honoring an artist who has long been at the vanguard of instrumental music.

In our Jazz On Campus column on page 94, Hans Sturm, who teaches at the University of Nebraska—Lincoln, reflects on the way the university's music school strives to expand students' horizons: "To younger students who might be familiar with the better-known composers and bandleaders in jazz, we want to say, 'Yes, but have you checked out Henry Threadgill?'"

Threadgill is but one example of a brilliant artist who is now exploring territory thanks to the ground broken by Coleman and the AACM pioneers.

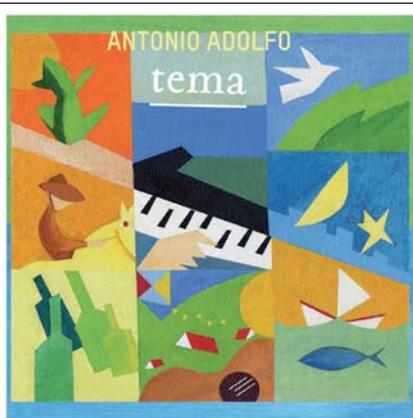
Reedist Charles Lloyd was influenced by Coleman's music, and he became good friends with the titan. Here's the statement Lloyd posted when he learned of his friend's passing: "Loneliness of the long distance runner. He knew his name and wouldn't play the game. Deep in stardust, he transposed the flight of Bird into the key of the Universe—the sighs, the cries, the tenderness, the warmth, the longing, the injustice and the justice. He understood and was beyond all that. Despite Kooliwaukee and Perspepitou, Pyramids came to say hello to him. He played on Vesuvius before it swallowed Pompeii. Music of the Spheres, his song is your song. Celestial. Manifest in the Absolute. Hologram."

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## Risky Behavior

I am a collector of DownBeat and have every issue from 1967–'83. At times, it can be difficult to read a review and imagine what an album *really* sounds like if you don't know the artist's music well.

In your August issue, critic Scott Yanow wrote a 2-star review of Dave Douglas' album *High Risk*. Because I had just seen two sets by Douglas on June 25 at the Rochester International Jazz Festival, when I read this review, it felt like déjà vu. I have never read such an accurate description of a CD in all my years of reading DownBeat.

I own more than 15 Dave Douglas CDs, and I agree with Yanow that this is not his best recording. The performance I saw was loaded with electronics, and it sounded as if the trumpet was added to the music after it had already been recorded. There were brief trumpet blasts—exactly as described by Yanow. It was as if he was at the show! I can't take anything away from Douglas



because he's such a great player. I stayed for both of his sets despite not really digging his most recent path—even though I had the option of seeing 14 other festival performances going on at the same time at different venues. I applaud Mr. Douglas for doing what he feels like doing, and I thank him for visiting our city. I'm sure he'll rebound with a new direction.

JAMES VERWEIRE  
 ROCHESTER, NEW YORK

## Farewell To Two Friends

Have you noticed how jazz—at least *good* jazz—grows with time? On the day that each of them passed, I immediately listened to the music of the dearly missed and immensely melodic Charlie Haden and the jarringly innovative and thoughtful Ornette Coleman. I discovered their music many years ago on the basis of DownBeat reviews. When I hear this music today, I once again have a full appreciation of their talents. They will always be with us.

VICTOR SNIICKUS  
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## Kudos to Cookers

In your August issue, I was thrilled to see The Cookers at the top of the category Rising Star–Jazz Group in the 63rd Annual DownBeat Critics Poll. I hope this poll win leads to wider exposure for this group of all-stars. I've been a Billy Harper fan since I heard him play with the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Orchestra in the 1970s. It's a pleasure to hear these giants perform and expand the traditions of hard-bop and beyond. I look forward to adding their next recording to my collection.

MIKE EBEN  
 TRANE12B@MAC.COM

## Beef with Critics

It is so sad to see what your critics have deemed to be both jazz and good music (63rd Annual DownBeat Critics Poll, August). Just about everything they gave top honors to is the "out" kind of stuff. Whatever happened to melody, swing and foot-tapping music? Just because something is different and "out" doesn't make it the best.

Additionally, I have question: Does your critic Bradley Bamberger like *anything*? Every time he reviews an album, he just trashes it. It's kind of funny because whenever he gives an album a bad review, I usually go check it out and end up liking it. This year I've purchased a few albums that he reviewed, and they were all far better than the rating he gave them.

KEVIN MCINTOSH  
 STERLING HEIGHTS, MICHIGAN

## Corrections

■ In the July issue, the review of Joe Locke's *Love Is A Pendulum* (Motéma) misidentified the saxophonist Rosario Giuliani, who plays on the track "Love Is The Tide." Victor Provost plays steel pan on "Embrace."

DOWNBEAT REGRETS THE ERRORS.

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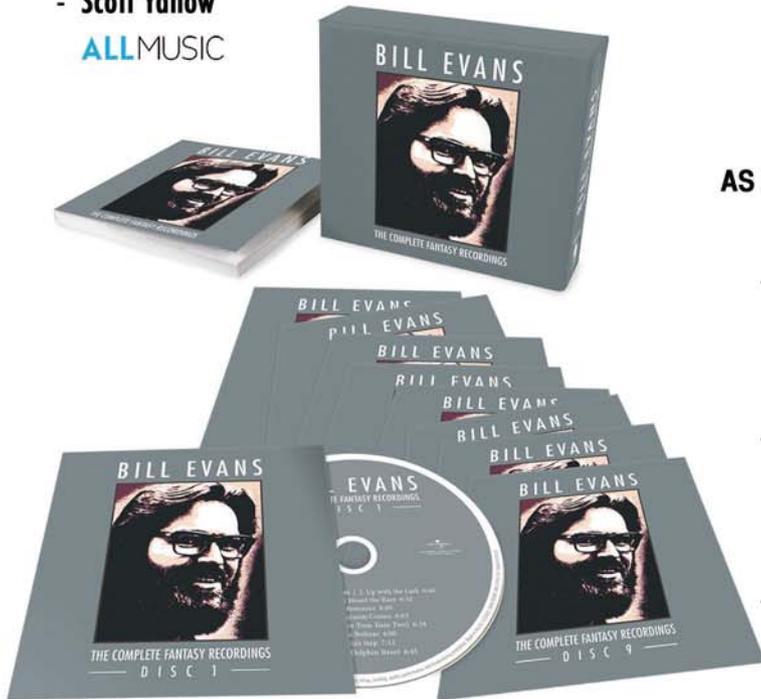
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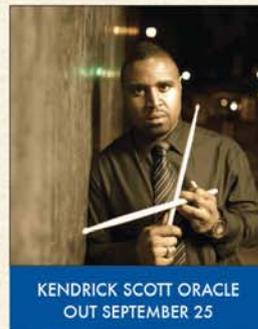
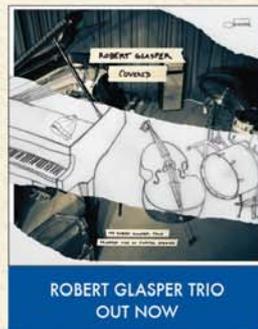
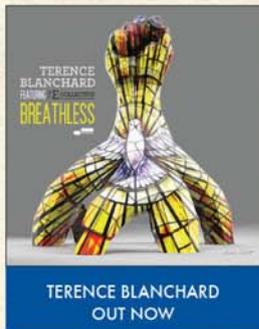
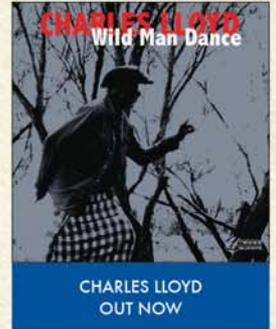
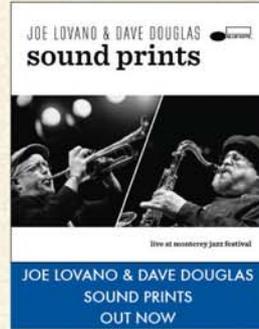
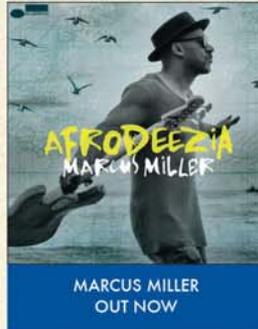
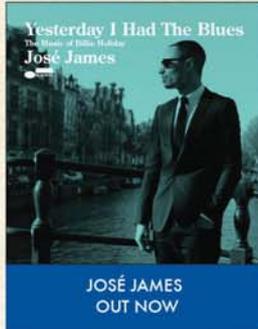
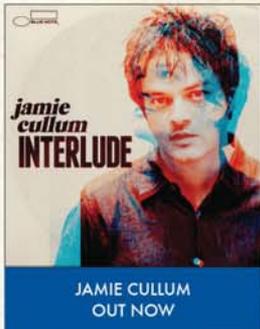


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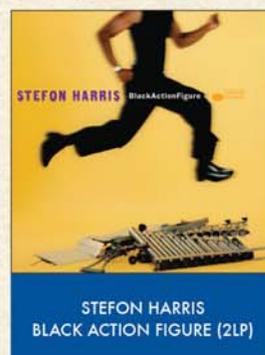
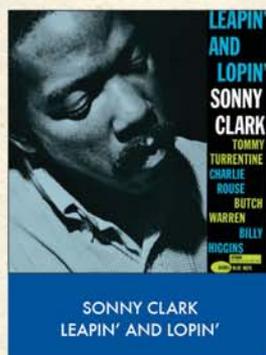
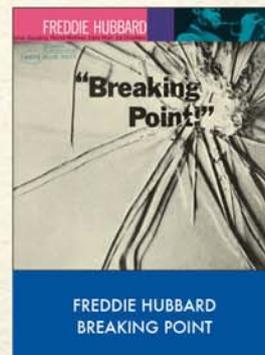
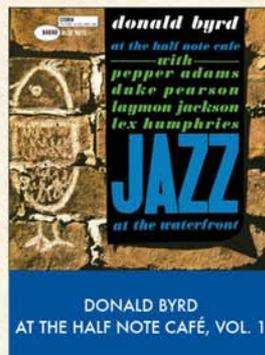
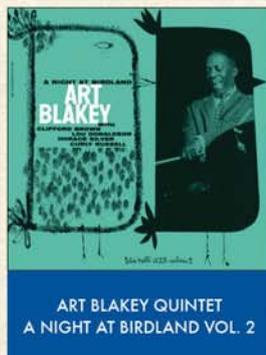
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# Beat

## Threadgill, Wein Among ASCAP Honorees

The performance-rights organization ASCAP added four names to the Jazz Wall of Fame in its Manhattan offices on June 15, honoring three composers representing the span of jazz history, along with a promoter who has become nearly as famous as the festivals he produces.

At the ceremony, ASCAP (the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers) also recognized young artists and composers, giving the proceedings a reach into the future.

The honorees included Jelly Roll Morton (1890–1941), a pioneering architect of the jazz form; Hoagy Carmichael (1899–1981), who composed some of the most popular tunes in the Great American Songbook; reedist Henry Threadgill, who has been at the vanguard of creative music for four decades; and George Wein, the producer of the Newport Jazz Festival and other events.

Feathers were also furnished for the caps of vocalist Lizz Wright, who received the ASCAP Foundation Vanguard Award, and pianist Guy Mintus, who was given the Herb Alpert Young Jazz Composer Award.

Carmichael's son, Hoagy "Bix" Carmichael, was present to accept recognition for the man who wrote "Stardust," "Georgia On My Mind," "Skylark" and "Rockin' Chair."

"It's my father—I just wish he were here to see this and feel this and understand this," said the visibly moved Carmichael.

New Orleans pianist Davell Crawford, representing the Louis Armstrong Educational Foundation, noted the generational stretch in accepting the award for Morton.

"This is great," he said. "Jazz continues on with all the young composers."

The scope of tradition was also represented by pianist Aaron Diehl, who was on hand to perform Morton's aptly named "The Finger Breaker" and, after Wein's induction, a spirited "Take The 'A' Train" with Wycliffe Gordon delivering the melody on his growling trombone.

With a career in jazz dating back to the early 1950s, Wein has brought many of the most-remembered moments in American music before the public. Tenor saxophonist Paul Gonsalves' legendary 27-chorus solo with the Duke Ellington Orchestra at the 1956 Newport Jazz Festival, Anita O'Day's wonderful performance documented in the film *Jazz on a Summer's Day* and Bob Dylan going electric all occurred at Wein-produced festivals.

"It is something to be here, because I couldn't understand why I was being honored," Wein, who is also a pianist, said in accepting the award. "I thought this was for songwriters. I started thinking of all the songs I ever wrote—which was one."

Wein resisted audience requests to sing the song, written when he was 14, but he did recite a few lyrics: "Why do we always/ break up in hallways/ Asking for one minute more?"



Pianist David Virelles (left), ASCAP Jazz Wall of Fame honoree Henry Threadgill and saxophonist Roman Filiu at the June 15 event

SCOTT WINTHROW/GAMUT PHOTOS

Bassist Marcus Miller, who was recently named an ASCAP board member, was called upon to introduce Threadgill.

"I'm the newest cat here, and this is the perfect way to make my debut," Miller said. "When I hear the music of Jelly Roll Morton, I can see the dresses the women were wearing. The primary responsibility is to reflect the times that you are in. There's no one in my opinion that represented the 1970s, the 1980s, like Henry Threadgill. That smooth, everything-is-in-its-place music wasn't appropriate."

Threadgill—who recorded arrangements of Morton's compositions with his trio Air in 1979—joked about getting notified about the award.

"It's certainly been a real surprise to have gotten this call from ASCAP," he said. "I knew about the Wall of Fame but I never think about things like this. I'm always in the trenches working. I thought, 'This is incredible. I better start checking the obituary columns [to make sure I haven't died]. Today, before I came, I checked a few papers, and I was all right.'"

Threadgill didn't bring an instrument with him to the event, but pianist David Virelles and saxophonist Roman Filiu played his "Where Coconuts Fall," from the 2001 Pi release *Everybody's Mouth's A Book*.

The composer also noted the importance of having an organization like ASCAP to protect the work of artists.

"We can't leave it to the birds," he said. "There's nothing you can leave it to but humanity. So in the end, that's the guardian of what we do."

—Kurt Gottschalk

## Riffs &gt;



Lizz Wright

#ESSE KITT

**Wright on Concord:** Vocalist Lizz Wright's debut recording for Concord Records, *Freedom & Surrender*, is available for pre-order via iTunes and other digital retailers. Anyone pre-ordering the album will receive an immediate download of "Lean In" along with three additional tracks prior to the official release on Sept. 4. Produced by Larry Klein, the recording includes drummer Vinnie Colaiuta, bassist Dan Lutz, percussionist Pete Korpela, guitarists Dean Parks and Jesse Harris and keyboardists Kenny Banks, Pete Kuzma and Billy Childs. Wright engages in an amorous duet with singer Gregory Porter on the slow-jam track "Right Where You Are."

**More info:** [lizzwright.ink.to/freedomsurrender](http://lizzwright.ink.to/freedomsurrender)

**Homage to Weber:** ECM will release Pat Metheny's *Homage à Eberhard Weber* on Sept. 11. The specially commissioned 30-minute suite by Metheny, with whom Weber played and recorded in the 1970s, made its debut this year in Stuttgart's Theaterhaus during a celebration of Weber's 75th birthday featuring key musicians from his storied career. Metheny performs with Gary Burton, Scott Colley, Danny Gottlieb and the SWR Big Band. Other tracks include selections from Weber's vast body of work performed by the bassist's longtime collaborators Jan Garbarek, Paul McCandless, Manfred Schoof and arranger Michael Gibbs.

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

**4 Nights of Corea:** SFJAZZ Center's 2015-'16 season begins Sept. 10 with Chick Corea in four programs over four nights: solo, in a duo with Gonzalo Rubalcaba, in a trio with Christian McBride and Brian Blade, and in a duo with Béla Fleck. The upcoming season will also feature premieres of new works by SFJAZZ Resident Artistic Directors Esperanza Spalding, Zakir Hussain, Eric Harland and Terence Blanchard.

**More info:** [sfjazz.org](http://sfjazz.org)

**Oracle on Blue Note:** On Sept. 25, Kendrick Scott Oracle will release *We Are The Drum*, the band's Blue Note debut. In addition to drummer Scott, Oracle includes saxophonist John Ellis, keyboardist Taylor Eigsti, guitarist Mike Moreno and bassist Joe Sanders. Each band member has a songwriting credit on the 11-track album, including six originals by Scott.

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

# Douglas' Risk Yields High Rewards in Montreal

**FOR HIS JUNE 30 PERFORMANCE AT THE** Festival International de Jazz de Montreal, trumpeter Dave Douglas and his quartet High Risk brought the forces of Electronic Dance Music and acoustic jazz together—literally. During a moment of hyper-charged jamming midway through the set, Douglas, hopping ecstatically around the stage, almost collided with a monitor at the base of beatmaker Shigeto's electronics table.

The near-collision was an apt metaphor for jazz's latest polarizing trend: the influence of EDM, hip-hop, ambient and house music. In recent months, the debate surrounding EDM-flavored projects by artists like Douglas, saxophonist Donny McCaslin, keyboardist Robert Glasper and producer Flying Lotus has risen to a clamor. Supporters call it an important step forward for jazz, while detractors condemn it as a cheap stunt.

The debate is hardly new. From the moment the Original Dixieland Jass Band first recorded "Livery Stable Blues" to the instant Miles Davis electrified his band, critics have been decrying technology as an affront to jazz's spontaneous, authentic "essence."

Naysayers fear that drum loops and audio samples could permanently replace drummers and pianists.

But as a number of acts at the Montreal Jazz Festival defiantly proved, the EDM movement—and the technology that accompanies it—is a force to be reckoned with in jazz, one capable of blazing fresh trails for a music that has always prided itself on innovation.

At the forefront of Montreal's electro-acoustic vanguard was Douglas. Joined by drummer Mark Guiliana (another EDM-friendly artist), bassist Jonathan Maron and the aforementioned Shigeto, the New York-based trumpeter spun beat-heavy tracks from High Risk's self-titled album to a crowd of curious listeners at L'Astral, a two-story cabaret-style jazz club.

The ensemble made no attempt to hide its EDM intentions. The first song opened with a wash of ocean-like ambient noise from Shigeto's computer, over which Douglas played slow, full-throated melodies. Shigeto—a supremely talented producer and DJ from Michigan—then began to interject sci-fi laser effects, intergalactic chimes and sloshy rain sounds. Guiliana and Maron flitted away underneath, bringing the electro-acoustic stew to a boil. As the song reached a climax, the group exploded into a trippy,

groove-oriented vamp, prompting wild applause and hoots of excitement from the audience.



Dave Douglas leads his band High Risk in Montreal on June 30.

MICHAEL JACKSON

Subsequent songs toyed with the porous barrier between electronic and acoustic music. One tune began with Douglas removing his mouthpiece and whistling into the leadpipe of his trumpet, creating spectral noises that matched the eeriness of Shigeto's electronic soundscape. Another song found Shigeto crafting rich textures and harmonic colors from piano samples and drum loops. A tribute to police-shooting victim Michael Brown fused whispery digital sounds and Douglas' crying trumpet into a heart-wrenching statement on loss and despair.

There were times when the acoustic elements of High Risk outshined the electronic ones. Guiliana impressed with his fleet and acrobatic drum solos. And Douglas, who remained unplugged and electricity-free throughout much of the show, made sweeping declarations with his warm, enveloping tone. Part of the joy in watching a group like this is witnessing how the flesh-and-blood musicians interact with pre-programmed beats. At its best—and Douglas' set certainly qualified—EDM-inspired jazz makes it easy forget about any kind of genre distinctions. When the music is this good, who cares what it's called?

The next night, at the 2,100-seat Maison Symphonique, pianist Jamie Cullum took a more "social" approach to integrating technology and jazz. Midway through his concert, he announced that he was going to bring a vocalist named Émilie Bernard to the stage. Bernard, it turned out, wasn't just any backup singer. As Cullum explained, she was a fan from Montreal who earlier in the year posted a video on her Twitter account vowing to lose over 100 pounds if the British crooner agreed to let her sing backup when he was in town. The duo performed Cullum's "Everything You Didn't Do" with surprisingly good chemistry, after which Cullum gave Bernard a huge embrace. Turning to the audience, he summed up the moment as accurately as possible: "That was so cool."

—Brian Zimmerman

# Third Stream Innovator Gunther Schuller Dies at 89

**GUNTHER SCHULLER, A** French horn player and musicologist who led the Third Stream movement, authored several important books, wrote some 200 compositions, established a degree-granting jazz program at the New England Conservatory of Music and co-founded the Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra, died June 21 at a Boston hospital. He was 89 and had been suffering from multiple medical problems, including leukemia.

The son of New York Philharmonic violinist Arthur Schuller, he took up flute and French horn as a child at the encouragement of his father. While attending Jamaica High School in Queens, he studied classical music theory and counterpoint at the Manhattan School of Music.

Schuller dropped out of high school to perform as a horn player with the American Ballet Theater, and went on to play with the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra and New York's Metropolitan Opera. He began composing at a young age, and his total output of classical and hybrid works over the years was groundbreaking and prolific.

Inspired by the music of Duke Ellington, Schuller discovered jazz as a teenager. He first came to the attention of jazz listeners as a member of Miles Davis' ensemble that recorded the *Birth Of The Cool* sessions in 1949-'50. He went on to work as a composer-arranger and collaborator with such prominent jazz artists as J.J. Johnson, Eric Dolphy, Dizzy Gillespie, Ornette Coleman, Bill Evans, Charles Mingus and Joe Lovano.

In 1955, Schuller cofounded the Modern Jazz Society—with pianist John Lewis of the Modern Jazz Quartet—for the purpose of merging the streams of classical music and jazz. (It was later renamed the Jazz and Classical Music Society.) The two musicians released a pair of albums in 1957-'58—*Music For Brass* and *Modern Jazz Concert*—featuring "Third Stream" compositions, a term coined by Schuller.

Three of Schuller's better-known publications include *Horn Technique* and the historical books *Early Jazz: Its Roots and Musical Development* and *The Swing Era: The Development of Jazz, 1930-1945*. His work as a writer of liner notes earned him two Grammy Awards.

Schuller began teaching at the Manhattan School of Music in 1950, and he spent a few years on faculty at Yale during the mid-1960s. He served from 1967 to 1977 as president of the New England Conservatory, where he founded the Third Stream program and started a ragtime ensemble that won a Grammy under his direction in 1974. He also taught at the Berkshire Music Center (now called Tanglewood) starting in 1963, and served as the institution's artistic director from 1969 to 1984.

In 1990, Schuller and jazz musician/educator/scholar David Baker cofounded the Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra, one of the nation's top repertory big bands. Other notable repertory projects included a performance of Mingus' previously unproduced extended work *Epitaph*; Schuller conducted and helped organize its premiere performance in 1989.

Gunther Schuller had a long affiliation with the New England Conservatory of Music.



ANDREW HURIBUT

Among Schuller's more notable Third Stream compositions are 1957's "Transformation For Jazz Ensemble," 1959's "Concerto For Jazz Quartet And Orchestra" and 1960's "Variants On A Theme Of Thelonious Monk."

Schuller won a Pulitzer Prize in 1994 for his orchestral piece *Of Reminiscences and Reflections*, a tribute to his wife, Marjorie Black, who died in 1992. He received a MacArthur Foundation fellowship in 1991, and was named an NEA Jazz Master in 2008.

Ken Schaphorst, who currently chairs the jazz studies department at New England Conservatory of Music, frequently invited Schuller to visit the conservatory to work with students. "Gunther Schuller was one of the most inspiring, contentious, honest and uncompromising individuals I've ever known," he said. "Gunther would always let us know how we could hear better, play better, communicate the ideas of the composer more faithfully. And on the very rare instances when I prepared the students well enough, or conducted well enough to satisfy him, his words of encouragement were all the more meaningful."

In the Feb. 12, 1976, issue of *DownBeat*, Schuller discussed his role as the leading proponent of Third Stream music and his views on the development of modern American music with journalist Robert Palmer.

"My whole concept of music is in fact a global one, where all musics coexist with each other," Schuller said. "To separate them out again is a little bit difficult to do. ... America represents a confluence of so many cultures, always cross-fertilizing each other. It never stops."

"Years ago I formulated the Third Stream idea, by which I meant just a lot of musics coming into each other, intersecting in different ways with different strengths and in different combinations. That process is going on right now, and I wouldn't be able to predict where it will be 10 years from now. We do that more than any other country in the world, and that, I think, is one of the characteristics of American music making. And it's very exciting."

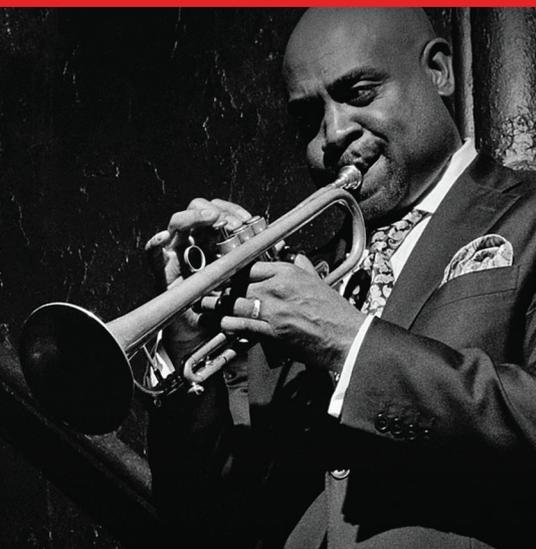
Schuller is survived by two sons who are professional musicians: Edwin Schuller, a bassist, and George Schuller, a drummer.

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## European Scene / BY PETER MARGASAK



Michael Edlund (left), Fabian Kallerdahl and Josef Kallerdahl of MUSICMUSICMUSIC.

## Collective Optimism

Bassist Josef Kallerdahl is enthusiastically optimistic about the future of HOOB Records, the collective label he co-runs in Gothenburg, Sweden. That's not an assessment one often hears in the record industry, but HOOB, which has more than 50 titles in its catalog, doesn't use profits as its key metric for success.

"The whole idea of HOOB is that the production of albums is a part of the musician's work as a whole," Kallerdahl explained. "The artists see their albums as so much more than a commercial product; [they are] artistic milestones and something you have to do to continue your work as a musician."

Last year, HOOB celebrated its 10th anniversary. In the spring of 2004, the imprint released *One Two Free*, the debut album by the piano trio MUSICMUSICMUSIC, which includes Kallerdahl, his pianist brother Fabian Kallerdahl and drummer Michael Edlund. Since then the label has grown organically, centered around a community of creative musicians in Gothenburg and Stockholm—an impressive development when one considers how inexperienced the Kallerdahl brothers and Edlund were when they launched the endeavor.

"At first we didn't have a clue about managing a label—no distribution, no routines for anything," said Josef Kallerdahl. "I used to bike around Gothenburg and give stores our albums, always forgetting to collect the money afterwards."

The label operates as a true collective, with each artist owning the rights to his or her recordings as well as the physical product. The artist takes 100 percent of the risk, operating without any meddling, and stands to make all profits once expenses are met. Each release must be supported by one of HOOB's three principals—who then serves as executive producer—while everyone involved contributes to promotion and graphic design.

"It means that the label can grow kind of fast without us having to invest a lot of time and money," Kallerdahl said. As a functioning entity with a growing catalog, the artists tap into a situation with established distribution—both physical and digital—and the imprint's name recognition.

Yet it's not a free-for-all, as the label owners are all busy with various musical projects, so the label roster has a close-knit vibe. "We are tight friends, and, in many cases, even family," he said. "I have to admit that knowing the people who want to release on HOOB is a big factor. We have to be able to trust that they understand what kind work they are expected to do."

As nice as this model is, it wouldn't matter much if the work wasn't up to par, but HOOB has established itself as a valuable source for some of Sweden's most exciting music. Reedist Nils Berg's Cinemascope project builds inventive arrangements for amateur performances the leader has found on YouTube videos from around the globe, while singer Ellekari Sander puts a distinctive, quirky spin on standards with her group The Other Woman. The idiosyncratic and wildly talented pianist and composer Cecilia Persson (known for her work with singer Sofia Jernberg in Paavo) recently released *Open Rein*, her stunning debut as a leader, while another of Kallerdahl's working groups, The Splendor, has issued a terrific set of moody post-bop on Forest. The label is open to music outside of jazz tradition, as evidenced by art-pop artists like Klabbes Bank and David Andreas, but jazz remains HOOB's primary focus.

"We try not to decide what kind of music we should bring to the label," Kallerdahl explained. "The artistic freedom is important, and it's fun to have different things in the catalog. The one thing that we all have in common is that we like doing things ourselves and in our own way. Maybe that is reflected in the music that comes out, too." **DB**



Mildred Williams (left), mother of Larry "Mud" Morganfield (center), joins Jerry Portnoy, Big Bill Morganfield and E.G. McDaniel at the Chicago Blues Fest.

© JACK VAREZ / GIGAFRONT/PHOTOS

Caught >

# DEE DEE'S FEATHERS

DEE DEE  
BRIDGEWATER  
AND  
IRVIN MAYFIELD  
WITH  
THE NEW ORLEANS  
JAZZ ORCHESTRA

## Chicago Blues Fest Salutes Icons

**THE CHICAGO BLUES FESTIVAL NEVER MISSES** an opportunity to stage an anniversary tribute set.

For the 32nd annual fest, which took place June 12–14 in Chicago's Grant Park, organizers wisely chose to dedicate a night to the memory of Chicago blues cornerstones Muddy Waters and Willie Dixon in the centennial year of their births (even though Waters' birth year is now generally recognized as 1913.)

Because Waters—a recent inductee in the DownBeat Hall of Fame—died in 1983 and Dixon passed away in 1992, the ranks of working musicians who played with the two legends during their peak years have thinned considerably. The solution: Build the lineup around family members and former sidemen.

The results proved a mixed bag for a pair of sets on June 14 at the Petrillo Music Shell. The Waters set, which brought the curtain down on the three-day event, offered enough highlights to satisfy the most discriminating Muddy-philes, while the Dixon tribute that preceded it was hit-and-miss.

Waters, born McKinley Morganfield, was the undisputed king of postwar Chicago electric blues. His powerful, nuanced baritone could be alternately seductive and threatening, punctuated by his piercing slide guitar.

Two of his sons, Larry "Mud" Morganfield and Big Bill Morganfield, have dedicated themselves in recent years to keeping Waters' music in the blues spotlight, both as performers on the festival circuit and through a series of albums that borrow heavily from their dad's sound as they attempt to carve out their own identities.

The Chicago-reared Mud, who lived independently of his father, and Big Bill, who lived with his grandmother in Florida as a boy and now makes his home in the Atlanta area, both inherited their father's vocal prowess, as they demonstrated onstage. Big Bill, who at age 58 is two years younger than Mud, began his recording career before his half-brother did.

Big Bill delivered a flawlessly constructed version of "I'm Your Hoochie Coochie Man," accompanied by some of Muddy's sidemen: guitarist-vocalist Bob Margolin, bassist Bob Stroger, drummer Kenny "Beedy Eyes" Smith (son of Muddy's drummer Willie "Big Eyes" Smith), pianist Barrelhouse Chuck and harmonica player Paul Oscher.

Early in his career, Big Bill copied his father's

every vocal inflection and mannerism, but as his stage presence and singing have evolved, he has developed a style all his own. It was fortunate the group got the showstopper, "Mannish Boy," out of the way early, because encores were prevented by an oppressive 9:30 p.m. curfew.

The lineup was almost totally reset for Mud's segment. Three latter-day Waters alumni—guitarists John Primer and Rick Kreher and harpist Jerry Portnoy—were teamed with bassist E.G. McDaniel and holdovers Smith and Barrelhouse Chuck.

Mud sat on a stool and emoted his heart out on lesser-known tunes and a trio of songs from his 2014 duo album with Kim Wilson, *For Pops: A Tribute To Muddy Waters*: "Nineteen Years Old," "Blow Wind Blow" and "Gone To Main Street."

The set ended, predictably, with everyone back onstage for a version of "Mannish Boy," as Big Bill and Mud traded verses. Most free-for-all climaxes break down because of too much instrumentation and too little restraint, but this one left the crowd in the jam-packed pavilion area shouting in vain for more.

The Dixon tribute, which included more than a half-dozen descendants—including children, grandchildren and even a great-grandniece—paled in comparison to the opening act, Billy Branch and the Sons of the Blues.

Branch returned as bandleader and harpist for the Dixon set, which included Willie's son Freddie on bass and the talented vocalist Bobby Dixon on keyboards.

This set featured more of a makeshift lineup, and despite Branch's impeccable musicianship and vocalist-guitarist Cash McCall's valiant efforts, it fell short. Still, it was fascinating to hear Branch's harmonica solos, a study in economy, juxtaposed with Sugar Blue's pyrotechnic harp flourishes.

It's one thing to remember Dixon as the poet laureate of Chicago blues, but quite another to hear a live exploration of his deep catalog of blues classics. After the band's workups of "I'm Ready," "Seventh Son," "Spoonful," "My Babe," "Little Red Rooster" and others, the typical reaction from a casual fan was, "I can't believe Dixon wrote all these songs!"

At the Chicago Blues Festival, that sentiment is a welcomed one. Such is the celebratory and reverent spirit that drives these tributes.

—Jeff Johnson



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# Horace Silver Saluted at Pittsburgh JazzLive

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At the fifth annual Pittsburgh International JazzLive Festival, the connections between fathers and sons emerged as a key theme, which was appropriate for an event taking place on Father's Day weekend (June 19–21).

Drummer Roger Humphries and trumpeter Sean Jones presented the world premiere of their compelling *Song For My Father Reimagined*, a project commissioned for the festival that saluted DownBeat Hall of Famer Horace Silver (1928–2014) and honored the 50th anniversary of his iconic Blue Note album. Humphries is the sole surviving member of the musicians who recorded *Song For My Father*.

During an interview with festival organizer Janis Burley Wilson, Humphries recalled when he, as a youngster, successfully auditioned for a spot in Silver's band: "[At] the studio where we had the audition, there were all kinds of guys there: Billy Cobham, Al Foster, Edgar Bateman Jr. I was very scared because when you hear these people play for my first time, it was frightening. I was the youngest one there, and he could see something in me where I was disciplined enough to follow him and be part of the band."

Another highlight was a trio performance by tenor saxophonist David Murray, pianist Geri Allen and drummer Terri Lyne Carrington. During a version of the folk song "Barbara Allen" (arranged by Allen), the interplay between Murray and the pianist evoked the unwavering



Sean Jones performs at the Pittsburgh International JazzLive Festival on June 20.

PITTSBURGH INTERNATIONAL JAZZLIVE FESTIVAL

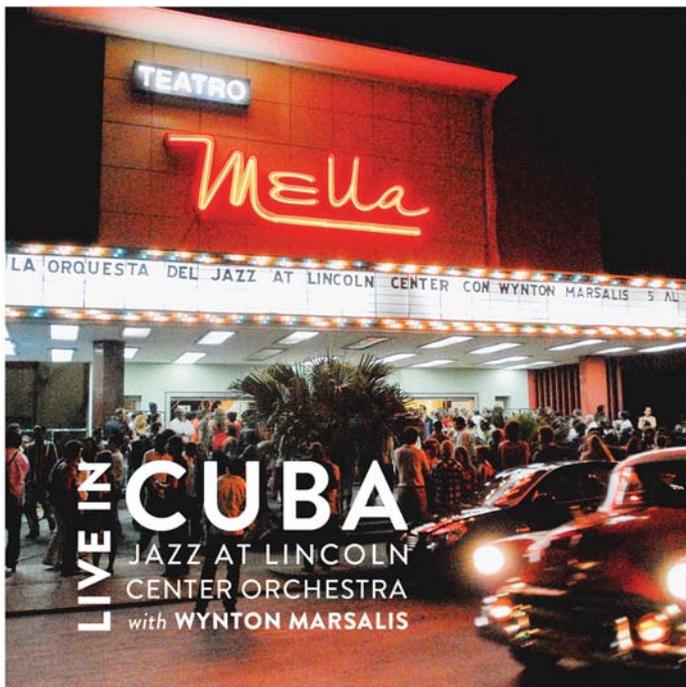
bond between John Coltrane and McCoy Tyner.

On June 21, bassist Christian McBride's trio came out swinging, showcasing a tight rapport between the leader, drummer Ulysses Owens Jr. and pianist Christian Sands. The highly melodic set included strong versions of Stevie Wonder's "Send One Your Love" and "Good Morning, Heartache," popularized by Billie Holiday.

The fest's after-hours jam sessions at Sonoma Grille were led by Humphries and another Pittsburgh native, jazz drummer Poozie Bell.

These sessions are an opportunity to watch

young musicians develop their talent, like saxophonist Winston Bell (son of Poozie Bell), who took full command on Wayne Shorter's "Fee Fi Fo Fum." Another player who made an impressive showing was trumpeter Braxton Bateman. Talent runs in his family. He's the son of trombonist Edgar Bateman III and the grandson of drummer Edgar Bateman Jr., who played with Coltrane in Philadelphia before Elvin Jones ultimately joined the saxophonist's band. For Winston and Braxton, their love for jazz grew from watching their fathers play. —Shannon J. Effinger



## LIVE IN CUBA JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER ORCHESTRA with WYNTON MARSALIS

Recorded in front of a clamorous, sold-out crowd in Havana, *Live In Cuba* features the first—and only—concerts in Cuba put on by the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra with Wynton Marsalis. This two-disc album captures the big band's unforgettable exploration of the connections between American jazz and Afro-Cuban music, from bebop to bolero and beyond.

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Players >

## JULIA HÜLSMANN

.....

### Seeking Poetry

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For the U.S. debut of her trio, German pianist Julia Hülsmann played a two-night stand at Café Sabarsky, specifically its Neue Galerie, an Austrian restaurant referred to as “the closest thing Manhattan has to a Viennese coffeehouse.” Sitting in with the group was singer Theo Bleckmann, who appears on her new album, *A Clear Midnight: Kurt Weill And America* (ECM). Bleckmann and Hülsmann’s chemistry on stage, unique and vital, reflected the rapport they enjoyed in the studio on this, their first collaborative recording.

Hülsmann has a history of working with singers. Asked if her collaboration with Bleckmann was a key motivation for *A Clear Midnight*, she immedi-

ally replies with a resounding “Yes!” With eyes sparkling, and animated gestures appropriate for the bustling, Friday-afternoon activity of Midtown’s Ameritania hotel lobby, Hülsmann adds, “They [Kurt Weill Foundation] asked if we would work with Theo. I had planned to work with him anyway. Then I found some unknown sheet music of Kurt Weill’s. The book is called *Unsung Weill*, with music that was cut out from certain musicals. Most of them have never been recorded.”

As a child growing up in Bonn, Hülsmann didn’t aspire to become a professional musician. “I started late, at 11. That’s when I decided I wanted to learn the piano. I had started with the flute,

and then with classical piano, of course. [My parents] waited for me to decide what I wanted to do, so there was no pressure at all. I grew up in a musical household; both my parents played piano.

“I avoided piano competitions growing up,” the 47-year-old adds. “It’s not my kind of thing. My father introduced me to jazz. He listened to Monk, and I clearly remember this Paul Bley record, *Open, To Love*. I started having jazz-piano lessons with this teacher, but he was totally into old jazz. He transcribed solos and I played them, and not only piano solos but Louis Armstrong. I didn’t want to become a musician ... too much pressure and competition. I had wanted to study psychology. But then I heard Bill Evans. That was a turning point. It was so beautiful.”

As for the band, in 1997 bassist (and husband) Marc Muellbauer joined her, followed in 2002 by drummer Heinrich Kobberling, and finally in 2011 by trumpet/flugelhorn player Tom Arthurs. She does most of the collaborating with Muellbauer. “Marc does the lion’s share of arrangements,” she says. The new CD follows 2013’s *In Full View* quartet album and 2011’s trio outing *Imprint* (both on ECM).

Hülsmann’s views on lyrics have evolved. She notes, “Words are important to me, absolutely. It started in 2000, in New York, because I was here to study music. I was not interested in singers, or lyrics or whatever, but I went to a concert with Wolfgang Muthspiel, and [Norwegian] Rebekka Bakken was singing. So, I realized I can write music but I can’t write any lyrics. And so, I look for poems. I started with e.e. cummings and Emily Dickinson. And it became one of my favorite things: writing music to poems.”

That led to the linkage of lyricists with Weill. In the case of Walt Whitman poems, the Kurt Weill Foundation wouldn’t allow her to rearrange Weill’s music, considering that she was not going to use all four available pieces but just two. “So then, I decided to write new music—nothing to do with Kurt Weill,” she recalls. “And I thought, ‘I would like to write music to Walt Whitman poems.’” In the end, the title track as well as “A Noiseless Patient Spider” and “Beat! Beat! Drums!” are grouped together in the track sequence for *A Clear Midnight*.

An unusual arrangement of “Mack The Knife,” by Bleckmann and Hülsmann, is counterintuitively slow, almost unrecognizable with its graceful entrance. “That happened very, very late, like three days before the recording,” she recalls. “We were sitting on the train, after a concert, and we thought, ‘We need something else, there’s something missing.’ So, we thought, what about ‘Mack The Knife’? It’s really difficult when you have a tune that’s been played a million times. So we had to find a totally different arrangement. For me, it’s important when I play and when I arrange a tune; it’s my world, and my approach to music. So, we sat there. It was a very, very hot day in June, and we just played around, and suddenly it was there, in an hour. Normally, I never work like that. I am a person who is in my room, alone, and I work on things, and try to listen, and then I finish it. And then we play it.”

—John Ephland



Players >

## JEREMY UDDEN

*Influenced by  
Bandmates*

Saxophonist Jeremy Udden caught the jazz bug as a teenager, but that wasn't what cemented his love for performing live. The versatile reedist grew up in Plainville, Massachusetts, where as a high school student he was in a local ska-punk band that gave him his first taste of democratic collaboration.

"I'm a band guy," said Udden, who currently plays in his own eclectic group, Plainville, and alongside trumpeter John McNeil in the West Coast-style collective Hush Point. "Those were formative experiences for me."

He moved to New York City in 2005 after earning a graduate degree at New England Conservatory and spending time on the road as a member of Boston's eclectic Either/Orchestra. When Udden began composing music for a new project, he found he couldn't quite shake the rock music he was reared on—nor did he want to. "There's a song on the first Plainville record which is basically a Pixies ripoff, and that's me being a skateboarder and listening to that music growing up," he explained.

A key influence on the band's dusky sound was the involvement of guitarist and banjo player Brandon Seabrook, whom Udden has known since his teenage days. Seabrook's membership in Plainville allowed Udden to tap into influences like Elliott Smith and Neil Young on the project's 2009 debut, released by Fresh Sound.

Seabrook, who frequently veers toward dissonant extremes, has helped the saxophonist modulate his aesthetic. "My writing can be a little too pretty or precious at times, so it was helpful to have [Brandon] involved," Udden said. "The combination of Brandon on one side and [keyboardist] Pete Rende on the other, where he can err on the side of pretty—that is the balance for the band."

Udden is writing new music for Plainville, but the group hasn't released anything since its 2011 album *If The Past Seems So Bright* (Sunnyside). He has pursued a similar sound on a collaboration with French bassist Nicolas Moreaux called *Belleville Project* (Sunnyside), and continues to explore his love for folk material in New Old Timers, which adopts old-timey string band songs for a horn-fronted quartet.

All that activity is in addition to his work in Hush Point. About five years ago, Udden began to sub for Bill McHenry in a band the saxophonist co-led with McNeil. Occasional gigs led to weekly rehearsal sessions, and eventually they enlisted a rhythm section (currently bassist Aryeh Kobrinsky and drummer Anthony Pinciotti) and formed Hush Point, whose restrained energy recalls cool jazz, but conveys no sense of nostalgia.

Udden and McNeil began composing together during their rehearsals, which was something that the reedist had to adjust to. "When you're alone, you can come up with a stupid idea and erase it if it doesn't work," Udden said. "But when you're standing in a room with someone, it can be intimidating at first." Udden explained that he now enjoys the practice, in part because it takes him back to his days in rock bands.

"Jeremy and I found that creating effective, contrapuntal lines required us to think and play as one person," McNeil said. "There is always a logic to [Udden's] improvising. He doesn't have the all-too-usual approach of cobbling together one unrelated phrase after another."

The partnership with McNeil has led Udden to rediscover his love of jazz tradition. "He really got me engaged in that music again," Udden said. "It's still so alive for him, so it stays alive for me."

—Peter Margasak



## ROMERO LUBAMBO SETEMBRO

SSC 1427 - IN STORES 9/4/2015

"Ever since I was a very young boy in Rio de Janeiro, I was mostly influenced by three types of music: Classical, Brazilian, and Jazz. This is the music that filled my home, not only from radio and recordings, but also live, with my family playing different instruments and singing.

In these recordings I bring all the influences from my childhood, and play like a Brazilian "under the Jazz influence". There are some American standards, some Brazilian standards and some original material. And I am also playing electric jazz guitar as well as acoustic guitars."



## JOHN HÉBERT RAMBLING CONFESSIONS

JEN SHYU vocals ANDY MILNE piano  
BILLY DRUMMOND drums

SSC 1413 - IN STORES 9/4/2015

The work of vocalist Carmen McRae was the original inspiration behind John Hébert's most recent quartet. The bassist and composer has long appreciated McRae's unique voice and style. But as with so many things, as time passed, the project evolved, from a simple repertory ensemble into a showcase for Hébert's compositions and the creative interplay among four outstanding musicians. The results of the ensemble's work can be heard on this new recording.

The compositions and arrangements that Hébert brought to the band were only minimal sketches used with the intention of letting the ensemble develop the material in performance, creating a new interpretation every time they play a piece.



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## JASON MILES

### The Miles Connection

Trumpeter Ingrid Jensen and keyboardist Jason Miles

JEAN-PIERRE LEDUC

Keyboardist Jason Miles has seen a lot during the past 40 years. His career as a professional musician—producer, arranger, composer, programmer—kicked into high gear with his first album as a leader, 1979's *Cozopolitan*, featuring Michael Brecker, Marcus Miller and Badal Roy.

A duo album with trumpeter Ingrid Jensen, *Kind Of New* (Whaling City Sound) is the latest addition to his impressive oeuvre. Joining them for this obvious nod to a former employer, Miles Davis, are such talents as Jay Rodriguez, Jeff Coffin and Gene Lake, who help to foster the vibe on 11 funky originals along with a version of Wayne Shorter's "Sanctuary."

It isn't the first time Jason has sought to invoke the spirit of Davis, his having been on board for such noteworthy Davis titles as *Tutu*, *Amandla* and *Siesta*. "In 2005, after five years of getting constantly rejected, I got a deal with Narada/EMI to make my album *Miles To Miles: In The Spirit Of Miles Davis*," he recalls. "The idea came from a song Michael Brecker and I wrote that ended up being called 'Ferrari,' inspired by a drive Miles took me on up Pacific Coast Highway when I was hanging with him at his house in Malibu. Mike said, 'This sounds like something Miles would be doing now. You should make a whole album of music like this.' I got many greats to participate, like Meshell Ndegeocello, Carter Beauford, Bob Berg, Nick Payton, Mike and Randy [Brecker], Tom Harrell, David Sanchez and James Genus."

The keyboardist credits Davis' *Live-Evil* (featuring Keith Jarrett on Fender Rhodes) with inspiring him to make *Kind Of New*.

Jason, 63, is happy to talk about his time with Davis and the impact it had on the new album. "It all came from five years of hanging, talking and working with Miles," he says. "The way he put his bands together and his concepts—it was all about casting the right people for his vision of the music, getting a small group of the best musicians who could appreciate the space to make the groove strong and build the melody around it."

Jensen's presence forms a bridge for Jason with this project. In fact, there is an ongoing band to play

this music, the two having been bandstand collaborators on and off for years. As Jason puts it, "The point is to bring this concept to the public and let them experience the small electric ensemble that goes beyond your just-jamming vibe; one that can develop the music and reintroduce the paradigm that bands like Weather Report, Return To Forever, the Crusaders, the Pat Metheny Group and Mahavishnu Orchestra brought to the forefront. These were the bands and artists that started with Miles. *Miles To Miles* had a number of different trumpet players. On *Kind Of New*, Ingrid's superb sound, improvisation and understanding of what this project was about brought the concept full-circle. You need that voice in front to bring the melody alive. We played a number of shows under the radar to test it out, and then decided to make the album."

As Jensen sees it, "The Miles connection is a big part of it, but there's a common thread set up by both of our special relationships with Michael Brecker and his constant openness and support in both of our lives. Jason's ears are huge, and his deep, passionate style of putting together the melodies and ideas that we wrote, without losing the live essence of it all, is pure artistry. After playing some of our book live for the first time the other night it's even more clear to me how brilliant Jason is at shaping things into place: from the badass cats he hires to the sound structuring he [creates] around all of it once the tunes start rolling and flying."

Jason's diverse credits include work with Sting, Roberta Flack, Grover Washington Jr., Chaka Khan and Ivan Lins (Jason's *A Love Affair: The Music Of Ivan Lins* won him a Grammy). He also formed the fusion group Global Noize with DJ Logic.

But Davis devotees might wonder, isn't *Kind Of New* just a rehash? Jason responds adamantly: "That is exactly what I *didn't* want it to be. It takes the great elements of modern progressive jazz and keeps strong melodies afloat with a very modern groove that really is now. We were privileged to work with some killer drummers and bass players who understood the mission. I also wanted to reintroduce the Fender Rhodes sound: the sound that had that edge, the sound that made it so funky and unique."  
—John Ephland



Players >

# MATTHEW STEVENS

*In Due Time*

KATHERINE BROOK

Good things come to those who wait. That maxim surely held true for guitarist and composer Matthew Stevens. For the past decade, he's been a rising star because of his sparkling contributions to the all-star NEXT Collective and ensembles led by trumpeter Christian Scott and drummer Terri Lyne Carrington. But instead of leaping at the first chance to release a solo disc, the 33-year-old Toronto native waited until he had something genuine to say. Based upon the music on his sterling debut, *Woodwork* (Whirlwind Records), Stevens' patience served him well.

In addition to his cogent guitar improvisations, *Woodwork* reveals Stevens to be an exceptional composer and bandleader. The music reconciles the electric and acoustic sonic realms, while also exhibiting fetching melodies and wondrous harmonies. He also displays a knack for nifty rhythmic hooks, as evidenced by such standouts as the anthemic "Star L.A.," which sounds as if it could have been on a post-Jaco Pastorius Weather Report album; the bucolic ballad "Brothers," an ideal vehicle for Stevens' mastery on the acoustic guitar; and the percolating "Ashes (One)" and "Ashes (Two)," which reflect Stevens' exploration into Latin rhythms.

Stevens' ensemble, which features pianist Gerald Clayton, bassist Vicente Archer, drummer Eric Doob and percussionist Paulo Stagnaro, animates the diaphanous compositions with a bracing collective empathy, which, in turn, elevates the material beyond a callow blowing session.

When asked why it took so long to release a solo date, Stevens, sitting in the Renaissance Hotel lobby in Washington, D.C., just hours before performing with Esperanza Spalding at the D.C. Jazz Festival, replies: "Everybody has their own timeline and you can't fight it. I was very aware of wanting to take the time to sift through a lot of different stuff and come out with

something that I could stand behind 100 percent." He plans to go into the studio in January to record a follow-up disc.

Stevens is a singular talent brimming with a strong identity. But he's not a stylist who's locked into one particular sound or approach. Instead, he conjures and adapts textures and melodic passages to meet the composition's needs. "I think in every style of music, there's a tendency to stick to a particular timbre, especially guitarists," he says. "Some people come with the idea of, 'This is the particular sound I use in every situation no matter what the musical context.' For me, that never resonated. I like using different sounds and I like letting the song tell me what kind of sound it needs."

Doob, who's been playing with Stevens for nearly a decade, observes that the persuasive strengths of Stevens' music lie in how seamlessly he intertwines his gifts as a composer and improviser. "His music is not so much about just having an introductory melody, on which we're just off to the races soloing all over it," Doob explains. "Matt's done a lot of thinking in terms of how to write music that organically brings out his abilities to improvise. Also, his music feels bigger than any specific genre. You can't really pigeonhole it into one thing. More often than not, his compositions—whether they are harmonically complex or not, aggressive or tender—tend to be beautiful, lush and always melodically compelling."

And while Stevens tends to pen tunes that burst with accessibility, there's an enigmatic quality that surges throughout them. "A lot of people write songs about a particular event or person, or to evoke a particular emotion," he explains. "Since I'm not a lyricist, music, for me, has always been about saying something that I don't know how to say through words. My music exists alone, on its own terms." —John Murph



Ornette Coleman at the 2008 Chicago Jazz Festival.

# REMEMBERING ORNETTE COLEMAN

BY BILL MILKOWSKI • PHOTO BY MICHAEL JACKSON

**A** true revolutionary, Ornette Coleman dramatically altered the course of music with his 1959 manifesto *The Shape Of Jazz To Come* and continued to make profound contributions to jazz for more than half a century. When the saxophonist-composer passed away on June 11 at age 85, the jazz world lost a DownBeat Hall of Famer, an NEA Jazz Master, a Pulitzer Prize winner and a Grammy Lifetime Achievement honoree.

Coleman's instantly identifiable voice on the alto saxophone, characterized by a pungent tone and a keening, plaintive cry that carried the deep blue feeling of his native Texas, rang out with rare authority, melodic invention and poignant lyricism on timeless gems like "Peace," "Ramblin'," "Turnaround," "Blues Connotation," "Sleep Talking" and the haunting, dirge-like standard "Lonely Woman," which rock icon Lou Reed once called "the greatest melody anywhere."

# ORNETTE SPEAKS

Ornette Coleman was the subject of numerous *DownBeat* reviews and features over the decades. Here are some of his more memorable statements from our archives.



Coleman poses with a plaque honoring his win in the category New Stars—Alto Saxophone of the 1960 *DownBeat* Critics Poll.

DOWNBEAT ARCHIVES

**A**pril 8, 1965: "I'd rather take my chances and truly play—and see if a person really liked it—than try to figure out something that people are likely to like, play that, and believe that that's what they really like."

**J**une 1, 1967: "How many of us would like to find a way to have all of the many chances to serve in their most useful and most productive environment? But one cannot find or learn how to reach these goals, because the music life of today, as it happens to us, has robbed the musician of his own values of searching for how, why and where.

"His values must not cause others to hate, cheat and misunderstand. I don't know who my personal enemies are or why I feel that they exist in and out of the music world, but I hope my talent and beliefs won't offend any sex, religion, or political and social pleasures.

"I have always searched in myself before accusing another for something that I have suffered from, before I acted to cure the cause. One who is suffering from an imperfection of any music expression has only his own conviction to accuse. But when that expression has had an outsider decide its value, and the outsider uses that musical expression to condemn a social thought, the result is only hate, cheating and loss of music value.

"So why don't we Americans, who have a duty to our neighbor and our mother country, get off this

war-jazz, race-jazz, poverty-jazz and b.s. and let the country truly become what it is known as (GOD country)—unless we fear God has left and we must make everyone pay for His leaving? I am sure if we prayed, He'd at least give the place back to the Indians because it isn't going to mean anything to us anymore if we find that we are hating each other.

"Maybe God will let us all go back home."

**N**ov. 22, 1973: "I think basically that I try to stay with the traditional concept of being an improviser without having to rely upon Tin Pan Alley structure. I started out trying to be what I believe is a natural player, and so many people thought I was just picking up the horn and playing. I realized that that wasn't my purpose, trying to prove to other people that all you had to do was get an instrument and play.

"I started around 1950 compiling all the things that I had taught myself about music. And I finally realized I had come up with some personal theories that involved orchestrated music. Instruments only play a certain melodic line in relationship to orchestrated music. Undoubtedly, those instruments were designed to play certain melodic and harmonic structures to enhance other melodic lines and structures.

"Whenever I used to play the saxophone with the changes on the piano, I'd always find myself playing in a different register in the chord. Yet I'd still be playing the changes. I remember once, I was in California with Clifford Brown, Max Roach, Kenny Drew, and I think it was Sonny Rollins on tenor. I asked them to let me sit in—this was in the early '50s—and they started playing "Donna Lee" and "Back Home In Indiana." I knew the changes and started playing along, and finally I couldn't play, because I didn't want to stay on that same pattern. So I started playing the way I play today. And they walked off the bandstand on me."

**O**ct. 5, 1978: "If you're playing a melody and you don't have everything in your mind that you can do with that note—what some people call improvising, which I now call the harmolodic theory and method, which has to do with using the melody, the harmony and the rhythm all equal—that I find that it's much easier when a person can take a melody, do what they want to do with the melody, then bring his expression to yours, then combine that for a greater expression. But there are not many people that I've been able to teach how to do that because I haven't been working with a lot of people. But the people who I have worked with, they know how to do that."

**J**une 1986: "The thing that I really want to achieve in my lifetime is to inspire people to be individuals. That to me is it."

**A**ugust 1987: "You know what's incredible? Every time I read a review of my record, it says I'm the only one soloing. That's incredible, because that's *all* Prime Time's doing. I'm the one that's stuck—they're the ones that are free. Because people hear the horn standing out in front, they think that I am doing the soloing, but that's just the sound of the instruments. I mean, when you hear my band, you *know* that everybody is soloing, harmolodically. Here I am with a band based upon everyone creating an instant melody, composition, from what people used to call improvising, and no one has been able to figure out that that's what's going on. All my disappointment about it just makes me realize how advanced the music really is."

**F**ebruary 1996: "Like everything in Western culture, everything has to have a value more than to yourself, no matter what you do, regardless of how good you are or how bad you are, how beautiful or how ugly. You have to, if you're going to come to the stage of expression, first find the people who will allow you in their territory. To see if the value of what you do fits the image of what they're doing in relationship to wealth. Some people find that quicker than others. There's nothing wrong with that; it becomes more a personal privilege than a free opportunity. I think that's the reason why the music in America is so limited as far as concepts of sound. America, it's a young country, and yet the ancestors that ran America came from an old country. I don't think we'll ever catch up."

**A**ugust 1998: "I'm tired of being juried by people who don't know what I'm doing. The record companies make a profit off your past, but they say they're not interested in what you're doing *now*. The music industry is mostly interested in my past, never in my future. But I believe that kind of thinking hasn't brought us any closer to each other. Art is not for the special person, it is for anybody."

**D**ecember 2005: "With all the music I write, I always give the people who are playing with me the privilege to add anything to what I'm doing. I don't think of being a leader; I think of being a sharer."

**D**ecember 2008: "Life is not an object, it's not a form, you can't see it, you can't talk to it or at least it can't talk back. But it allows you to know that there is something eternal, and you didn't create it. You can't prove that you created life. Human beings don't spend enough of their love for life to understand why the quality of life is so easy to be made into anger, disappointment. Whatever it is, someone can say something to you and you want to fight. But that's not life doing that, that's jealousy, envy, dishonesty. Those things come into being because of value and wealth."

Coleman at Carnegie Hall in New York City on June 25, 2003.



Although Coleman's renegade approach to the music shattered many of the rules of jazz, it liberated generations of musicians from the confines of preconceived chord sequences, opening the door on a new era of "free-jazz" that continues to yield ambitious results to this day.

Born in Fort Worth, Texas, on March 9, 1930, Coleman played tenor sax in r&b and bebop bands as a youth before switching to alto, which became his main instrument after relocating to Los Angeles in 1954. Due to his penchant for microtonal abstractions, which conventional players regarded as unacceptably sharp or flat, he met resistance in his early days from musicians who were reluctant to let him near the bandstand. But he eventually found an inner circle of like-minded renegades in pianist Paul Bley, drummers Ed Blackwell and Billy Higgins and bassist Charlie Haden, who together began forging a new collective improv language at places like L.A.'s Hillcrest Club.

Coleman's triumvirate of forward-looking albums with his quartet—1958's *Something Else!!!!* along with 1959's *Tomorrow Is The Question* and the prophetically titled *The Shape Of Jazz To Come* (also 1959)—ushered in the free-jazz movement and introduced Coleman's "harmolodic theory," whereby harmony, movement of sound and melody all share the same value.

After moving to New York in November 1959, Coleman gained notoriety from a 10-week residency at the Five Spot with his quartet of trumpeter Don Cherry, Haden and Higgins. For a second four-month residency at the Five Spot in 1960, Blackwell replaced Higgins on drums. And still Coleman faced hostility from certain critics and colleagues. Miles Davis dismissed him as "psychologically screwed up," while Max Roach allegedly punched him in

the mouth during his Five Spot residency and Roy Eldridge famously declared, "He's jiving, baby!"

And yet, there were those who championed his cause, including Leonard Bernstein, Gil Evans and John Lewis, who regarded Coleman as an extension of Charlie Parker and who had brought him to the attention of Atlantic Records.

Three Coleman landmarks from around 1960—his provocative double-quartet project *Free Jazz* and two potent quartet recordings, *Change Of The Century* and *This Is Our Music*—helped coalesce the free-jazz movement. In 1965, Coleman recorded two volumes of a live trio recording (*At The Golden Circle*) with the new rhythm tandem of bassist David Izenzon and drummer Charles Moffett. The following year he introduced his 10-year-old son Denardo Coleman as the drummer, alongside Haden, on another trio recording, *The Empty Foxhole*. Ornette closed out the decade with two acclaimed recordings—1968's *New York Is Now* and *Love Call*—that featured him doubling on trumpet alongside tenor saxophonist Dewey Redman, bassist Jimmy Garrison and drummer Elvin Jones.

Redman would later appear alongside Haden and the double-drum tandem of Higgins and Blackwell on Coleman's wildly ambitious 1971 Columbia Records debut, *Science Fiction*, which included the harmolodic aria "What Reason Could I Give" with Indian vocalist Asha Puthi and the whirlwind title track featuring trippy, echo-laden narration by poet David Henderson. Also of note on that edgy outing is "Rock The Clock," which has Ornette on violin, Redman alternating between tenor sax and musette and Haden playing his upright bass through a wah-wah pedal to "Purple Haze" effect.

Coleman continued to push the envelope on 1972's *Broken Shadows*, which featured Redman, Haden, Higgins and Blackwell along with trumpeters Cherry and Bobby Bradford, pianist Cedar Walton, guitarist Jim Hall and blues vocalist Webster Armstrong. It was followed that year by the epic concerto *Skies Of America*, which was

recorded at Abbey Road Studios in London and consisted of one long Coleman composition performed by the London Symphony Orchestra, conducted by David Measham.

The mesmerizing *Dancing In Your Head* (1977), featuring the Master Musicians of Jajouka, introduced Coleman's new electric Prime Time band including the twin guitars of Bern Nix and Charles Ellerbee, drummer Ronald Shannon Jackson and the dynamic young electric bass guitarist from Philadelphia, Rudy McDaniel (who would soon become known as Jamaaladeen Tacuma). Coleman's recording as a sideman on *Tales Of Captain Black*, a 1979 release on the Artists House label led by guitarist and harmolodic disciple James "Blood" Ulmer, is also noteworthy during this period for conjuring up wah-wah-inflected fantasies of Eric Dolphy jamming with Jimi Hendrix.

Coleman began courting a new muse on 1982's decidedly groove-oriented jazz-funk manifesto *Of Human Feelings*, which was driven by Tacuma's potent Steinberger electric bass lines in combination with the tandem drummers Denardo Coleman and Calvin Weston. Other important recordings of the decade included Coleman's collaboration with guitarist Pat Metheny on 1986's *Song X*, which also featured Haden and drummer Jack DeJohnette, and 1988's *Virgin Beauty*, featuring guest appearances by Grateful Dead guitarist Jerry Garcia on three tracks. The ambitious double album *In All Languages* (1987) featured a reunion of Coleman's original quartet of Higgins, Haden and Cherry along with performances by the electric Prime Time band featuring Tacuma and Al MacDowell on electric basses, Ellerbee and Nix on guitars, and Denardo and Weston on drums.

The '90s were marked by typically provocative statements, such as 1995's *Tone Dialing* (with Kenny Wessel and Chris Rosenberg on guitars, MacDowell and Brad Jones on basses, Dave Bryant and Chris Walker on keyboards, Denardo on drums, Badal Roy on tablas) and 1996's simultaneous quartet releases, *Sound Museum: Hidden*



*Man and Sound Museum: Three Women* (both featuring pianist Geri Allen, bassist Charnett Moffett and drummer Denardo).

Coleman's Pulitzer Prize-winning *Sound Grammar* was recorded live in Ludwigshafen, Germany, on Oct. 14, 2005, with his 21st century quartet of son Denardo on drums and the two-bass tandem of Juilliard-trained arco master Tony Falanga and upright player Greg Cohen, a long-standing member of John Zorn's Masada. Cohen was later replaced in the lineup by electric bassist and former Prime Time member MacDowell, who forged an indelible hookup with Falanga through his deft chording of the low-end instrument, essentially providing a pianistic comping function in the band.

The venerable, beloved Coleman was feted at an all-star 84th birthday celebration in Brooklyn at the Prospect Park Bandshell on June 12, 2014. Organized by Denardo, the gala featured onstage comments by Sonny Rollins as well as performances by Joe Lovano, David Murray, Henry Threadgill, Branford Marsalis, Antoine Roney, Ravi Coltrane, James Ulmer, Geri Allen, Bill Laswell, Zorn, Laurie Anderson, Patti Smith, tap dancer Savion Glover and Red Hot Chili Peppers bassist Flea.

Coleman played alto saxophone at the event—his last major public appearance. After Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams read an official proclamation declaring it Ornette Coleman Tribute Day in the borough, the honoree gave a speech that was brimming with emotion.

"All I know to do is cry," Coleman said. "It's so beautiful to see so many beautiful people who



Charlie Haden (left), Ornette Coleman, Denardo Coleman and Dewey Redman perform at Philadelphia's Town Hall on June 16, 1968.

BOB FUENTES/DOWNBEAT ARCHIVES

know what life is, who know how to get together and help each other."

The jazz landscape in 2015 is vastly different from the one Coleman encountered as a young man. The borders have been expanded, and Coleman deserves much of the credit for that. During a eulo-

gy at the June 27 funeral held at Harlem's Riverside Church, Denardo said this about his father: "He was down-to-earth and simple, yet complex and sophisticated. It's not like he didn't like order; he just didn't accept the order imposed on him. . . . He went his own way, and I think we're all a little better for it." **DB**

## FREE JAZZ: THE ORIGINAL REVIEW(S)

**J**an. 18, 1962: *The following contains excerpts from DownBeat's review of Coleman's double-quartet album Free Jazz. In a break from what had been a tradition of assigning one reviewer to any given album, DownBeat invited two critics with vastly different viewpoints to assess and rate the music on this landmark release. The concept of offering multiple reviews of an album eventually led to the development of The Hot Box, which today is a favorite among DownBeat readers.*

### Pete Welding's Review

Rating: ★★★★★ (Five stars)

In this, his most recent Atlantic recording, iconoclast alto saxist Coleman carries to their logical (though some listeners will dispute this term) conclusion the esthetic principles present to a lesser degree—quantitatively, at least—in his previous recordings.

The entire LP—both sides—is given over to a collective improvisation by a double quartet that lasts 36½ minutes. Using only the sketchiest of outlines to guide them, the players have fashioned a forceful, impassioned work that might stand as the ultimate manifesto of his new wave of young jazz expressionists. The results are never dull.

In first hearing, *Free Jazz* strikes one as a sprawling, discursive, chaotic jumble of jagged rhythms and pointless cacophonies, among which however

are interlarded a number of striking solo segments (particularly those of the two bassists). The force, intensity, and biting passion that motivate it also come across.

On repeated listening, however, the form of the work gradually reveals itself, and it is seen that the piece is far less unconventional than it might at first appear. It does not break with jazz tradition; rather, it restores to currency an element that has been absent from most jazz since the onset of the swing orchestra—spontaneous group improvisation.

All things considered, the disc is largely successful—it certainly lived up to Coleman's dicta, at least. It is a powerful and challenging work of real conviction and honest emotion; it poses questions and provides its own answers to them; it is restless in its re-examination of the role of collective improvisation, and this is, in many respects, where the work is most successful.

### John A. Tynan's Review

Rating: Zero Stars

This friendly get-together is subtitled "a collective improvisation by the Ornette Coleman Double Quartet." One might expect a "collective improvisation" by Coleman's usual crew of four to be a merry event. But here we shoot the moon. It's every man-jack for himself in an eight-man emotional regurgitation. Rules? Forget 'em.



Where does neurosis end and psychosis begin? The answer must lie somewhere within this maelstrom.

If nothing else, this witch's brew is the logical end product of a bankrupt philosophy of ultra-individualism in music. "Collective improvisation?" Nonsense. The only semblance of collectivity lies in the fact that these eight nihilists were collected together in one studio at one time and with one common cause: to destroy the music that gave them birth. Give them top marks for the attempt.

# ARTISTIC RESPONSE

Musicians made plenty of powerful statements about Coleman in the pages of *DownBeat* over the years.



Coleman received tremendous praise and harsh criticism from other musicians.

PHOTO: HOWARD DOWNBEAT ARCHIVES

**J**uly 19, 1973: "Ornette came out of Bird. So, what he's doing now may sound mysterious to the uninitiated, but he is a straight swinger from way back. Ornette Coleman can play." —*Thad Jones*

**J**une 1986: "[What affected me] was just the general feeling I got from listening to Ornette and the musicians that played with him: They're playing the music that they felt strongest about with this incredible love and joy about it, without worrying about style, or what was current. It seemed very direct to me, and while, obviously, a large part of the music that I've done over the years stylistically is not close at all, there's always that same feeling I try to play with. ... To me, Ornette's music is about melody. There's a lot more going on besides that, of course, but it's about singing, and talking, and about the shape of the line—and to me it transcends style. It's really pure, and that, more than anything else, has been the inspiration I've drawn from listening to Ornette's music over the years." —*Pat Metheny*

**A**ugust 1992: "The thing about Ornette that's so incredible is that he's one of the only musicians I can think of who has a complete musical universe at his fingertips all the time. Almost everybody else is

dealing with a little bit of this or that. Ornette started from the ground up and invented this way of playing. That, to me, is truly inspirational." —*Pat Metheny*

**A**ugust 2007: "Everything he says is compelling. Every single interview of him I find totally transforming, as well as every story that I've ever heard about him." —*Jenny Scheinman*

**A**ugust 2007: "He needed to go to New York to get closer to the energy that was going to give him the ways to go through a lot of different doors. What they presented sounded like it came out of the bowels of the ghetto. It cried and ached. It was such a change to so many musicians. A lot of musicians didn't like what he was doing, but as long as it was the truth—you unzipped your body and gave out the deepest, darkest thoughts you had—it didn't matter." —*Bobby Hutcherson*

**A**ugust 2013: "He always surprises you. There's never anything that you can predict; his music is predictably unpredictable, and lovely, gentle, beautiful, pretty. That's what Charlie Parker used to say: 'Look for the pretty notes.' And Ornette has a million of them." —*Charlie Haden*

**M**ay 26, 1960: "There are many important musicians who are advocates of Ornette's freedom theory in improvisation. But there are fewer who would use his approach to sound and harmony. I would say that 75 percent of jazz musicians dismiss Ornette's whole thing. But he has caused more reflection and analysis than anyone since Bird, Diz and Thelonious.

"But the so-called 'music of tomorrow' theme, which accompanies his performances, is more harmful than good. Ornette is a man to be reckoned with today. A Miles Davis is basically an impressionist, Charles Mingus a surrealist, John Lewis a neo-classicist. But how do you classify an Ornette Coleman?"

"His followers believe that his is the 'shape of jazz to come.' I feel that though Ornette may influence future jazz, so will George Russell's Lydian concept of tonal organization, Coltrane's sheets of sound, Miles' melodic lyricism, and Gil Evans' clusters of sound in rhythm.

"Ornette Coleman is an innovator of the first water. But he is certainly no messiah."

—*Julian "Cannonball" Adderley*

**M**ay 26, 1960: "It's like organized disorganization, or playing wrong right. And it gets to you emotionally, like a drummer. That's what Coleman means to me." —*Charles Mingus*

**N**ov. 2, 1967: "If Ornette wants to play more than one instrument, he ought to go and listen to Victor Feldman's album, and learn how to play more than one instrument. You just don't pick up an instrument and start to play and because you are Ornette Coleman, it is immediately great—that's a lot of crap." —*Shelly Manne*

## Ornette Coleman

1930 - 2015

Innovator • Revolutionary • Virtuoso  
Genius • Friend

"Meeting Ornette Coleman was one of the greatest thrills of my career. He had a magical way of looking at everything, he simply saw (and heard) the world differently from us mere mortals. He was one of the greatest influences on my life and he will be terribly missed."

Jody Espina





Art Ensemble of Chicago: Joseph Jarman (left), Malachi Favors Maghostut, Famoudou Don Moye, Lester Bowie and Roscoe Mitchell

PAUL NATKIN/PHOTO RESERVE INC



Renee Baker

MARK SHELDON



Muhai Richard Abrams

MICHAEL JACKSON



Henry Threadgill

PAUL NATKIN/PHOTO RESERVE INC



Ernest Dawkins

MARK SHELDON



Fred Anderson

MARK SHELDON



Amina Claudine Myers

MICHAEL JACKSON

# AACM

BY HOWARD MANDEL

# 50 YEARS OF FREEDOM

**NAME** an American non-profit artists collective—focused on any medium of imaginative self-expression—that for 50 years has promoted innovation by imposing no aesthetic rules except that members’ efforts be original.

There is only one such group: the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians, or AACM.

Generating successive waves of unique individuals, the AACM has seen its adherents emerge from local obscurity to international fame via high-profile performances and lauded recordings, philanthropic support, prestigious awards and appointments to important academic institutions. Throughout 2015, the organization’s half-century anniversary has been and continues to be celebrated far and wide at festivals and museums, in operas and self-produced concerts that remain true to the group’s fundamental principles while looking to the future.

Founded in Chicago in April 1965 from kitchen-table discussions of four African-American jazz musicians—pianists Muhal Richard Abrams and Jodie Christian, trumpeter Kelan Phil Cohran and drummer Steve McCall—the AACM was an early manifestation of do-it-yourself determination, initiated by people who had learned about activism from the civil rights movement. Today the AACM has a roster of 131 members, independent but interactive chapters in Chicago and New York City, global influence and an industrious network that reaches beyond genres to enable all manner of daring, ambitious musical activity.

The AACM’s ranks include National Endowment of the Arts Jazz Masters; Guggenheim, MacArthur and Doris Duke fellows; a Herb Alpert Award winner, at least one finalist for the Pulitzer Prize and professors at major colleges and universities. Its best-known members include Abrams, Dee Alexander, Anthony Braxton, Ari Brown, Ernest Dawkins, Joseph Jarman, Nicole Mitchell, Roscoe Mitchell, Amina Claudine Myers, Mike Reed, Rasul Siddik, Wadada Leo Smith, Henry Threadgill, Edward Wilkerson Jr. and Kahil El’Zabar, as well as the late Fred Anderson, Lester Bowie, Pete Cosey, Malachi Favors, Fred Hopkins, Leroy Jenkins, John Stubblefield and Kalaparusha Maurice McIntyre. These “outside the box” musicians have released thousands of hours of recorded music, never settling for comfortable conventions, usually aiming for new music breakthroughs.

Collectively as well as individually, AACM members have worked hard, accomplished much and seldom let successes go to their heads. As Abrams, the association’s eminence, said modestly in reference to Roscoe Mitchell, Threadgill and Jack DeJohnette (who’ve known each other since the early ’60s and collaborate on DeJohnette’s recent ECM album, *Made In Chicago*): “We’ve been associated a long time, and we just come together and play music. There’s no difference [between then and now] except for that which happens when the music is played. For the musician, it’s a continuous practice, you realizing your intent as an artist. Each person has his or her own approach, but we have that practice in common.”



## AACM's Powerful Women

In 1965, the membership of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians reflected the dominant masculine makeup of jazz culture. But over the course of five decades, women have increasingly joined and been lauded as equals by the collective.

At first, the most active females in the AACM were Peggy Abrams (Muhäl's wife) and Sandra Lashley, working largely behind the scenes. Pianist-composer-singer Claudine Myers (she added "Amina" to her name in 1967) performed on the second-ever AACM concert of Aug. 23, 1965. Today, there's an informal women's caucus, consisting of flutist Nicole Mitchell, cellist Tomeka Reid, pianist-singer and dean emeritus of the AACM School Ann Ward, violinist Renee Baker, vocalists Dee Alexander, Iqura Colson and Rita Warford, percussionist Coco Elysses, singer-harpist-flutist Sonjia Hubert Harper (aka Maia) and Janis Lane-Ewart, a non-instrumentalist who provides organizational, promotional and curatorial support.

"There was never any problem with my being a woman in the AACM," Myers says. "I was always encouraged. The musicians were always positive. I had no negative experiences at all." Born in central Arkansas, where she took piano lessons at her small town's Catholic school, she moved to the Dallas-Fort Worth area at age 11 and accompanied the choir of her Baptist church. She studied concert music and music education at college in Little Rock, Arkansas, and moved to Chicago in 1963. There she met drummer Jerol Donovan (later named Ajaramu), whom she married and with whom she played in a trio. She backed up saxophonists Sonny Stitt and Gene Ammons and was introduced by singer Fontella Bass—then trumpeter Lester Bowie's wife—as a studio musician to Chess Records. Myers is first



Nicole Mitchell

2015 MARK SHELTON

heard employing full AACM-encouraged originality on Kalaparusha Maurice McIntyre's 1969 album *Humility In The Light Of The Creator*.

Nicole Mitchell moved to Chicago in 1990, meeting Maia and Douglas Ewart while playing for change on downtown streets. She, Harper and guitarist-bassist-keyboardist Shanta Nurullah banded together in the all-female group Samana, and in 1995 Mitchell performed her AACM initiation concert, accompanied by guitarist Jeff Parker, with her one-year-old daughter on her back.

"There weren't that many women then on the scene in general," Mitchell recalls. "I think there are more now, but still not enough. I try my best to get women to play with me—my Black Earth Ensemble is usually half women, though I change the personnel for every performance. I've been working with JoVia Armstrong, a singer-songwriter, percussionist and new AACM member, and Mankwe Ndosi, who became a member this year as well. I'm also working with Lauren Deutsch, executive director of the Jazz Institute of Chicago, to raise funds to get all the women of the AACM together for a panel discussion and performance in December, to finish off the 50th anniversary celebration. That would be a good thing to do. It's never happened before." —Howard Mandel

The musicians who constituted the AACM at its start certainly didn't find it easy to realize their intents. The four founders represented a larger coterie of jazz- and blues-steeped professionals who felt ignored if not purposely shut out of commercial venues, studio work under their own names and radio airplay because they pursued the freedoms and explorations advanced by such New York City-based free-thinkers and avant-gardists as Albert Ayler, Ornette Coleman, John Coltrane, Eric Dolphy, Elvin Jones, Sun Ra, Cecil Taylor and McCoy Tyner.

Attendees at the AACM's inaugural open meeting in May 1965, as described in *A Power Stronger Than Itself: The AACM and American Experimental Music* (the authoritative history written by member George E. Lewis), wanted to create a practical, productive self-help group with a central mission of supporting creative musicians. To do so, members stopped pursuing gigs in noisy nightclubs and pulled together to stage their own events. Abrams had a Monday night lab band trying out original compositions mostly for the enlightenment of the participants. (His Experimental Band, harkening to those days, will play a special anniversary gig at the Chicago Jazz Festival on Sept. 6.) Members organized concerts in art galleries, lofts, coffeehouses and University of Chicago facilities. They designed and distributed posters, sold tickets and set up an AACM School at a community center on Chicago's South Side.

"It was like a musical family," woodwind player Roscoe Mitchell remembers. "If it was your concert, I'd be there moving the chairs around, making sure you were comfortable and that everything went well. If it was *my* concert, you'd be there doing that for me. I'd be excited to go see what others were doing, then I'd run back home, practice and get ready for my concert. We inspired each other."

The early AACM members forged enduring connections, like those leading Mitchell, bassist Malachi Favors, trumpeter Lester Bowie and saxophonist Joseph Jarman to form the Art Ensemble of Chicago (later adding drummer Famoudou Don Moye). But there was more group interaction than band exclusivity.

In 1968, the first albums by AACM musicians—Mitchell's *Sound*, Abrams' *Levels And Degrees Of Light*, Jarman's *Song For* and Braxton's *3 Compositions of New Jazz*—were issued by Chicago's Delmark Records. The sounds presented were more self-consciously composed but just as startlingly original as what the AACM's East Coast counterparts were doing. The Chicagoans' music was distinguished by their use of toys and unusual instruments, homemade percussion rigs and drummer-less formats, wordless vocals, abstract formulas, poems, attention to dynamics and inclusion of silence. For live shows, members often added interpretive dancers, their own paintings, face paint and costumes. Of course, their challenge of conventions was not to everyone's taste.

In 1969, the Art Ensemble traveled to Paris, immediately followed by Braxton, Smith, Leroy Jenkins and Steve McCall, and had an enormous impact, accelerating the development of the European avant-garde. When these expats returned to the States in the early '70s, they settled in New York (Smith chose New Haven,

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Connecticut) for greater opportunities. Threadgill and Abrams followed, as did keyboardist Amina Claudine Myers and drummer Thurman Barker; psychedelic-soul-rock guitarist Pete Cosey was soon hired by Miles Davis. But a core contingent of Chicagoans stayed where they were, and more musicians continued to gather under the banner, gaining experience by creating together.

Veteran tenor saxophonist Fred Anderson extended mentorship and opportunities to up-and-comers who performed with him at a series of venues, most famously the Velvet Lounge. Among them were trombonist Lewis (who joined the group at age 19 in 1971), saxophonist Chico Freeman (sax master Von Freeman's son), reedist Douglas Ewart, saxophonist Edward Wilkerson Jr., drummer Reggie Nicholson and pianist Adegoke Steve Colson with his wife, vocalist Iqua Colson.

The productivity of AACM members and the musicians they collaborated with throughout the 1970s, '80s and '90s—mostly on albums from boutique labels like BYG-Actuel, Arista-Novus, Black Saint/Soul Note and Disk Union/DIW, as well as self-productions distributed by New Music Distribution Service, an outgrowth of Carla Bley and Michael Mantler's Jazz Composers Orchestra Association—belies the impression popularized by documentarian Ken Burns that experimentalism in jazz had fizzled. Neo-conservatism did sweep American culture in that era; young lions, admiring Wynton Marsalis, looked back to Duke Ellington and hard-bop for direction. Well-financed jazz series and facilities arose with the support of corporate sponsors, while the AACM operated on members' dues and the occasional grant. But thanks in large part to the indefatigable, grassroots energies of AACM stalwarts, progressivism was sustained in the States and abroad.

"Organizations like the AACM are the most powerful dimension for artists to think of, coming from the latter part of the 20th century," says trumpeter Smith, whose extended work *Ten Freedom Summers* (Cuneiform) was a finalist for the 2013 Pulitzer Prize for Music. "Organizations are bigger than individuals, and have the potential for significant change in our society. Most organizations excel in philosophy and words but can't actually perform the actions they propose. The AACM has done the best it can. It has functioned well as an opportunity for like-minded artists to meet and to provide opportunities in which those artists could function."

Smith was among the first AACM musicians to secure a college-level teaching position, as an adjunct at University of New Haven in the mid-1970s; last year he retired from two decades at California Institute of the Arts. "Going into the educational system allowed us the opportunity to become self-sufficient and save for the future," he says; he also believes that "creative music offers the greatest opportunity for employment after music school." He is otherwise less than sanguine regarding the AACM in academia.

"The big dilemma," he says, "is how much knowledge can be provided by creative artists within those institutions. There are not only the hindrances from school administrators, but also students resisting new information." Still, many of

his AACM colleagues have thrived as educators—in 1993 drummer Thurman Barker took over an associate professorship at Bard College in upstate New York that Smith had previously held—and as teachers they've tended to attract talented protégés who've expanded upon their endeavors.

For example, Smith's frequent partner Braxton taught at Mills College in Oakland, California, in the 1980s (now Roscoe Mitchell holds the Darius Milhaud Chair in Composition there) and became a professor of music at Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut, in the 1990s; he retired in 2013, having been named an NEA Jazz Master (an honor also extended to Abrams). Braxton, a MacArthur fellow, has established the Tri-Centric

Foundation to support his work and legacy, utilizing the talents of his former student, cornetist Taylor Ho Bynum, and continuing to employ ex-students such as guitarist Mary Halvorson to perform his uniquely complex music.

Lewis, who served as assistant professor of music at University of California, San Diego, from 1993 to 2004, is now the Edwin H. Case Professor of American Music at Columbia University in New York. (He was also named a Guggenheim fellow in 2015, and like Braxton has received a MacArthur fellowship.) Lewis' students have included alto saxophonist Steve Lehman and drummer Tyshawn Sorey (both winners of Rising Star categories in the 2015 DownBeat Critics Poll)

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as well as pianist Courtney Bryan.

Lewis commends flutist Nicole Mitchell for what he calls her “meteoric rise in academia.” Recipient of a 2011 Alpert Award in the Arts, Mitchell has been a full-fledged AACM member since 1995, and was the organization’s first woman president. (She remains an advocate for women in the organization; see sidebar on page 32.) A former faculty member with the Vancouver Creative Music Institute, the Sherwood Flute Institute, Banff International Jazz Workshop and the University of Illinois, Chicago, Mitchell is currently professor of music at University of California, Irvine, teaching in the new Integrated Composition, Improvisation and Technology (ICIT) graduate program.

Closer to the collective’s home-base, bassoonist and saxophonist Mwata Bowden, who came to the AACM in 1974 and served as the chair in Chicago from 1989 to ’98, is director of jazz ensembles at University of Chicago. His perspective on the organization’s developments in the 10 years since its 40th anniversary is insightful.

“In around 2005,” Bowden explains, “we realized that the music played by the AACM Experimental Ensemble was no longer so ‘experimental’—it was tried and proven and now part of the history of music as it’s evolved. Taking a cue from the Art Ensemble’s motto ‘Great Black Music—Ancient to the Future,’ we came up with a new, definitive name for our big band. Now it’s the AACM Great Black Music Ensemble, to represent that the music is mature and many of our basic ideas have come to fruition. We’re still looking forward but we understand what we’re talking about, we have a vocabulary and rhetoric for it, and it’s been recognized. If you’re going to talk about jazz or improvised music in the U.S., now you have to mention the contributions AACM members have made. After 50 years we’re taking a more consolidated but still open-ended approach to new music, whether it’s improvised or composed.”

Smith regrets that the AACM has never been able to have its own recording studio or distribution network. “That it’s survived 50 years is immensely worth celebration, but if you can’t develop wealth, your impact and ability to sustain a presence is limited,” he says. “You have to fund-

raise every time you want to do something, and there’s a limit to foundations giving you money.”

Similarly, Bowden admits to reservations about the AACM’s collective structure. “We’re still run by artists,” he says. “We haven’t moved to a corporate model or tried to be a business machine. I’m not sure what kind of artistic changes would have occurred if we’d tried that, but we perpetuate ourselves so that we maintain control in a way we all find comfortable. There are individuals among us who are business-savvy about their careers, and that kind of entrepreneurship has been important for our longevity. But we’ve felt it’s best to let people take on those responsibilities for themselves. Whether a more business-like structure would be better is hard to say. But I think we’ve remained a viable artistic resource for our community, and our community is now really worldwide.

“I’m sure the founders didn’t see that the AACM was going to last 50 years,” he continues. “The average duration for artists collectives is seven years, max. Luckily for those of us who came later, they put things down on paper about the organization that had the effect of bringing younger musicians in, so a whole new crop is here with us now. Most of the students I’ve taught at the AACM School are open-minded thinkers, in touch with their cultural heritage and community-oriented. They’re aware of the importance of sharing information, of giving back for what they’ve received and of continuing to bring in younger people.”

Indeed, Bowden has passed down the AACM mantle directly to his son Khari B., self-described “disco-poet” who was chair from 2011 through May 2015. (Abrams remains the New York chapter chair.) “As unusual as our organization is—and we’ve heard this from funders—no one can argue that it doesn’t work,” Khari says. “We’re not sure why it works, but it works. It may be crazy, but so is the music. We’re sticking to our plan, and moving forward. The interest we’ve gained from this 50th anniversary has motivated us as an organization to continue to try new and innovative things, to incorporate the further reaches of our creativity.” He mentions the AACM’s Street Beat summer series offering “healing performances”

to youth in some of Chicago’s violence-plagued neighborhoods, and also that in fall 2015 the AACM will open a Saturday school at Chicago’s Carruthers Center for Inner City Studies (a campus of Northeastern Illinois University).

Saxophonist Ernest Dawkins, Khari B.’s successor as AACM Chicago chair, says his vision is “to strengthen the capacity of the organization to be viable unto itself, dealing with finances.” While grateful for support from the MacArthur Foundation and Chicago Community Trust, he says, “I need to do more to get more. In general, American society doesn’t support the arts, and that’s been particularly so when we’re talking about creative music and jazz. But the music continues to evolve, and the AACM has been a catalyst.”

How does one get to be an AACM member? “Well, the Chicago and New York chapters are two separate entities,” Dawkins says, “but we adhere to pretty much the same principles. Come to our concerts—that’s the first thing. Hang out. Let members get to know you. Get a member-sponsor, write a letter, put on a concert that’s sometimes private but usually public. The AACM has never meant to promote one certain aesthetic approach, and now we’ve got young people in the organization, about a dozen members in their 30s, who are bringing in more electronics, rap and hip-hop, the contemporary vibe.”

Audiences will have plenty of opportunities to enjoy music by AACM artists in 2015. In Chicago alone, there are dozens of musical presentations scheduled in the coming months. One venue for them is ex-AACM chair Mike Reed’s performance space Constellation. In addition, the DuSable Museum has mounted the exhibit “Free at First: The Audacious Journey of the AACM,” co-curated by long-affiliated Janis Lane-Ewart, full of singular instruments, photos and lore; it runs through Sept. 6. The Museum of Contemporary Art’s exhibit “The Freedom Principle” (named after jazz journalist John Litweiler’s book) features musical installations, graphic scores and artifacts, plus live performances. It runs through Nov. 11.

In New York, the AACM has scheduled anniversary concerts on four Fridays in October, underwritten by a \$25,000 matching grant from the Robert D. Bielecki Foundation.

As to why the AACM has endured longer than any comparable artists-run non-profit collective, “It’s because of our principles,” says reedist Henry Threadgill, recent recipient of a Doris Duke Impact Award. “The AACM offers musicians and especially composers encouragement to create your own music. To work it out, define it and get the support from the people in the organization so you can play it and support one another. Why would you run away from principles like that?”

Roscoe Mitchell agrees. “I’ve always felt that it would go on, and I’ve always liked the comfort that I get from it,” he reflects. “I could always say I’m a member of the AACM, and that means something in the world. Here it is the 50th anniversary, and I don’t know where the time went. All of us have been playing together a lot throughout these years. Some of my greatest experiences were hanging out with Threadgill, being in the Experimental Band, being first dean of the AACM School. It seems like not that long ago, although I guess it was.” **DB**

## AACM as Opera

**G**eorge E. Lewis, an AACM member since 1971, is the most comprehensive documentarian of the AACM. His authoritative history *A Power Stronger Than Itself: The AACM and American Experimental Music* won the 2008 American Book Award. For the AACM's 50th anniversary, Lewis has transformed portions of that text, which includes compelling oral history, into the libretto for *Afterword: The AACM (as) Opera*.

Excerpts from the chamber work's first act, vividly sung by Chicagoans Julian Terrell Otis, Gwendolyn Brown and Joelle Lamarre—accompanied by members of the International Chamber Ensemble (ICE) conducted by David Fulmer—were previewed last May at Roulette in Brooklyn; a full production will be staged at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago on Oct. 16–17. As presented in the concert version without its planned multimedia components, *Afterword* is a challenging work—feisty in tone, thick with nuance and detail.

Its story veers from stark descriptions of racism in the South—which pushed the families of first-wave AACM members north in the Great Migration—to intense debates derived from transcripts of AACM meetings in 1965 concerning fine points of policy that have affected the group's trajectory from then until now. The through-composed score, fleshed out by interludes that ICE performed of Lewis' 1977 composition "Shadowgraph 5," is a kaleidoscope of lines and textures underplaying melodic motifs or pulsating rhythms, yet arriving at dramatic peaks. Its ideal audience is almost by definition AACM devotees, as a climax revolves around whether the artists collective should be named for creative music or creative musicians.

"This opera wasn't my idea," said Lewis, a trombonist, electronic and computer music innovator, and Columbia University professor. "In 2010, I was a resident scholar at the Franke Institute for the Humanities at University of Chicago. James Chandler, the director of the institute, mentioned during a discussion we had that he thought *A Power Stronger Than Itself* would be



great as some sort of play, because of the voices that populate the book. It occurred to me that these voices, especially of some of the older generation such as Muhal [Richard Abrams], Steve McCall and Eugene Easton, were indeed very poetic, intensely coherent and logically beautiful. In 2014, my collaborators Sean Griffin and Catherine Sullivan came to the same conclusion: that the book could provide the substance of an opera of ideas. That's how *Afterword* happened.

"I'm interested in opera singing, and quite moved by these singers. It's particularly interesting to me to have people from the South Side of Chicago singing their history. I think of that as connecting generations." The composer himself will perform on Oct. 9 in an all-acoustic brass-and-percussion concert with Tyshawn Sorey, Eli Fountain and Thurman Barker as part of the New York City AACM chapter's 50th anniversary series, at a venue to be announced.  
—Howard Mandel

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# TERELL STAFFORD PHILADELPHIA SOUL

BY PHILLIP LUTZ

Showtime was an hour away and Terell Stafford was buzzing. Grabbing a spot on the long bench in the rear of the Village Vanguard, the trumpeter, whose quintet would soon command the stage, was fully engaged in the evening's preparations—from running down the set list to securing the placement of promotional cards on the tables—even as he chatted about his life and career.



Stafford has long known what makes the Vanguard cook, having spent many a Monday night playing in its resident Vanguard Jazz Orchestra and, in March 2011, stepping out as a leader when a weeklong engagement built around his album *This Side Of Strayhorn* (MaxJazz)—perhaps the definitive quintet take on Billy Strayhorn, Duke Ellington's alter ego—became a high-profile affair, generating favorable press and drawing him into the spotlight.

Now, on a hot June night, Stafford was back to lead another tribute—this one to an artist who, in some ways, was his own alter ego: Lee Morgan.

The similarities between the two trumpeters were hard to ignore. They shared an association with Philadelphia (Morgan a native son, Stafford an adopted one) and aspects of a language (the soulful side of bebop and its variants). But first and foremost—according to John Clayton, the bassist, bandleader and producer of *BrotherLee Love* (Capri), Stafford's new Morgan-heavy collection—they shared “the fire.”

That was immediately evident as Stafford—joined by tenor saxophonist Tim Warfield, pianist Bruce Barth, bassist Peter Washington and drummer Billy Williams—brought the spirits blazingly to life in the cool, dark basement. It was the fourth of the residency's six nights, the hinge night. And, in Warfield's words, “It was a joyous experience.”

The program had varied little from night to night, drawing tunes and their basic treatment directly from *BrotherLee Love*. Like the album, the set opened with a sizzling “Hocus Pocus,” originally from 1964's *The Sidewinder*, Morgan's biggest seller and the album that essentially set the stage for boogaloo-inflected efforts like “Yes I Can, No You Can't,” from 1966's *The Gigolo*, which closed Stafford's set.

Leavening the mix were “Mr. Kenyatta,” whose slick rhythmic shifts rivaled those of Morgan with Wayne Shorter and Herbie Hancock on 1964's *Search For The New Land*; a sultry “Candy,” the title tune of Morgan's 1958 survey of standards, rendered at a slow burn; and the easy shuffle of “Petty Larceny,” a minor blues from *The Freedom Rider*, Art Blakey's 1961 ode to civil rights crusaders (released during Morgan's stretch with the Jazz Messengers).

Throughout the set, the 48-year-old Stafford proved an instrumentalist in complete control, his cadence established by series of sparkling eighth-note runs punctuated by strikingly executed textural effects, notable among them a mean growl. His tone covered the spectrum, from the blaringly bright to the deeply dark. All of it was offered without a trace of irony.

“He plays what he means,” Barth said.

In that, the set recalled the recording session. Clayton, who in addition to producing for Stafford employs him in the Clayton Brothers Quintet,

explained that he did not want the kind of stop-and-start routine in which each tune was dissected in the control room before the band moved on. “That can sap the continuity of making music,” he said.

Rather, he said, he was seeking a session akin to the performance turned in by the quintet in its week at the Vanguard in May of last year, right before they recorded *BrotherLee Love*. “When I listened to them, there was great energy, concentration, communication,” he said. “I thought, ‘We can't lose this. We don't want to destroy this.’”

And they didn't. The group moved seamlessly from the Vanguard bandstand on Sunday to Brooklyn's Systems Two Recording Studio on Monday. “They recorded one song after another as though they were in the Vanguard,” Clayton recalled. “Then we had a listening session, and if they thought they wanted to do a second take on anything, they did. But most things were great the way they were.”

The idea for the tribute arose after Stafford and the group—Dana Hall was the drummer at the time—performed a concert devoted to Morgan's music at the Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts in Philadelphia in February 2012. For the concert, Stafford recruited a student at Temple University, where he is director of jazz studies and chairman of instrumental studies, to transcribe about 15 Morgan pieces. Stafford and Warfield worked through the melodies at Temple “until they came together,” he said.

They decided, by and large, to hew closely to Morgan's original arrangements, though the wisdom of doing so had not been immediately obvious. In rehearsal, Stafford said, the band tried to reimagine those arrangements. “Nothing worked,” he said. “So we were all like, ‘This is a sign: Leave it alone and play the music.’”

“We get charged as jazz musicians to get super creative with things that are innovative. But sometimes it's just best to honor what came before you, and do it in your way and in your voice and in your style.”

When Clayton entered the picture, he had reservations about the approach. “At first,” he said, “I thought, ‘Shouldn't we rework this? Shouldn't we do our best to rearrange it and put our own thumbprint on it?’ Then I realized, ‘No, our own thumbprint is on it anyway, in that they are doing their best to find what they defined as the magic of the original recordings. It was almost retro, and kind of cool that they were not doing what everybody else was doing.’”

Just as the band emulated the original arrangements, Stafford said he patterned aspects of his instrumental approach on Morgan's. “There are certain ways he played the horn that were really exciting,” he said. “That is what has always touched me about him. There's soulfulness in everything he plays. Listen to him on the original of ‘Moment's Notice,’” he said, referring to the harmonically rich John Coltrane tune from the 1957 Blue Note album *Blue Train*. “There's still soulfulness, even as he's navigating through these chord changes.”

Stafford noted that Morgan and Coltrane both developed blues-inflected voices shaped by Philadelphia. “It's a very soulful city,” he said,

Terrell Stafford's training in classical music has influenced his jazz albums.



PHILIPPE LEVY-STAB

“where everything you’re surrounded with is about the blues. You’re drenched in it.

“I remember Shirley Scott playing complicated songs,” Stafford continued, referring to the Philadelphia organist who became a major influence on him after Warfield introduced the two musicians. “She would always, *always* incorporate the blues, which was like the soulful element beyond soulful. It was tangible. The people loved it.”

All around the city, he and Warfield found that audiences craved the soulful approach, whether they were playing the jazz club Ortlieb’s or in the Scott-led house band for the short-lived game show *You Bet Your Life*, which was taped in Philadelphia. “They wanted to hear your soul, not your intellect. Don’t come to impress them with a bunch of fancy things you worked out in a practice room. Come and play from your heart. That’s what Philadelphia taught me.”

Like many of the city’s best young players, Stafford served apprenticeships of sorts with an array of local legends, among them Mickey Roker, Bootsie Barnes and Jimmy Oliver, in addition to Scott. “When they called it the City of Brotherly Love, there was a reason,” Stafford said. “There was such a sense of family, so many musicians who were open and willing to show you things and allow you to come into their world. That really set my career on a path.”

For Stafford, the path to Philadelphia had been a circuitous one. A native of Miami, he went to middle school in Chicago before moving to Maryland, where he attended high school and did his undergrad-

uate study at the University of Maryland. There, he almost abandoned music when a professor told him that his propensity for playing on the side of his mouth would limit his playing life.

“The day I graduated I put my trumpet in the case and I became a computer programmer for an insurance company,” he said. The year was 1988.

Later that year, however, he received an invitation to hear the Eastman Wind Ensemble at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., with Wynton Marsalis as the featured soloist. Marsalis, in a short interview, said he pointed Stafford to his teacher, William Fielder, whom Stafford credited with convincing him to return to the trumpet. Fielder (who died in 2009) told him to play as he saw fit. Among Stafford’s cherished instruments today is Fielder’s gold-plated Mount Vernon Bach trumpet from the 1950s.

At first, Stafford studied privately with Fielder. But the lessons were costly, he said, and it made economic sense for him to enroll at Rutgers University, in New Brunswick, New Jersey, where Fielder was on the classical faculty. To be with-in shouting distance of Rutgers, Stafford said,

he found accommodations in Downingtown, Pennsylvania. At that point, he met Warfield, who invited him to jams in nearby York. A lifelong relationship was born.

“The jams with Tim were what really taught me jazz,” he said. Warfield suggested that they learn a few tunes and play them at jam sessions. “‘We’ll be a team forever,’ he said. I thought, ‘This guy’s crazy.’ But we learned ‘Autumn Leaves,’ ‘Straight, No Chaser,’ ‘Miles’ Theme,’ ‘Misty.’ We went out to jams. And people started hiring us as a team.”

The first gigs, Warfield said, were in central Pennsylvania haunts like Lucky Seven Tavern in Harrisburg. In the years since, the relationship has deepened and, in the June set at the Vanguard, seemed to have become almost telepathic, their trading bringing to mind a couple who finish each other’s sentences. While their language was not identical—Warfield, for starters, roamed a bit more consistently outside the changes—the tone of the musical conversation was a near-perfect blend, the bells of their horns seemingly intertwined.

“We have this weird kind of thing together,” Stafford said. “When we play a melody, we don’t have to talk about things too much. We just listen to each other and fit into each other’s sounds. I’ve never played with an individual who’s that easy to play with.”

Clayton, suitably impressed, coined a term to describe the musicians’ sonic melding. “It doesn’t sound like a trumpet or sax,” he said. “It sounds like a ‘traxophone’ or something.”

As it happens, Stafford’s ability to

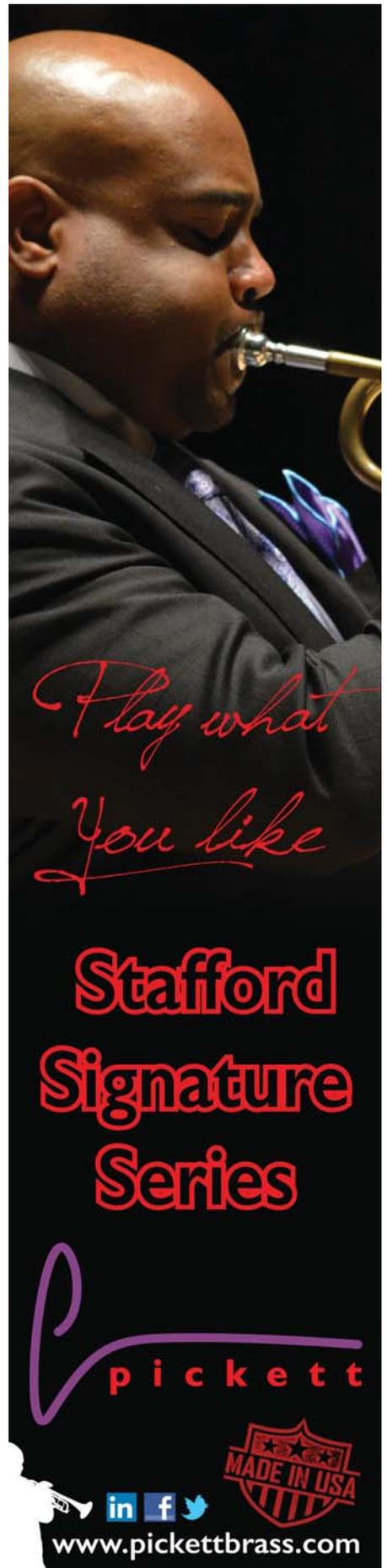
reach inside the mind—and horn—of a colleague extends beyond Warfield, Clayton said. It applies as well to his front-line relationship with saxophonist Jeff Clayton in the brothers’ quintet.

“I hear them constantly talking about intonation, tone color, about how to alter their own playing to fit with the other person,” Clayton said. “I hear my brother saying, ‘Don’t change. I’ll change my notes to blend with you.’ Or I hear Terell saying, ‘Let me hear what you’re doing there. I’m not quite getting your phrasing and articulation.’”

For Stafford, developing such sensitivity on jazz turf took time. “I went through a long period where people made fun of me,” he said, noting that he had found it difficult to shake the rhythms of his training in the European classics. “People called me ‘Haydn’ because I sounded like I was playing a Haydn trumpet concerto every time I played jazz. I really had a hard time with the concept of swing.”

At Rutgers, he said, a lack of knowledge of tunes and basic jazz language compounded his problems. When he approached the jazz faculty about being admitted to the master’s program, he

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was turned down. Still, he continued to work on his jazz chops, which advanced considerably after a chance meeting with Clark Terry, who taught him about doodle tonguing. That “opened my world,” he said, and led naturally to the swing he seems to display so effortlessly today.

Developing as a jazz player while studying the classical curriculum at Rutgers proved to have a downside. Stafford became proficient enough to land a gig with saxophonist Bobby Watson, but the gig necessitated touring and, in requesting a leave from his studies, he misrepresented Watson’s group to school authorities as a classical chamber

about discipline. He warms up and warms down after a set. He has a great understanding of detail, the way he chooses to articulate with whoever he is playing with. And he has a very noble, regal sort of sound. It’s like, ‘Listen here.’ You stop and look up.”

Keeping up that sound requires diligence; Stafford admits to being “fanatical” about adhering to a practice regimen. Nonetheless, he is branching out further, beyond his playing and university teaching. He has accepted a position as managing and artistic director of the nonprofit Jazz Orchestra of Philadelphia

to lead such an effort in Philadelphia because he is a “great trumpet player and a great teacher with an array of skills.”

The Philadelphia orchestra often plays the music of artists with connections to that city, like Morgan, Scott, Jimmy Heath and Benny Golson, who was the featured soloist at a concert at the Kimmel Center in May. The band’s roster includes musicians with Philadelphia ties, including Warfield; bassist Lee Smith, Christian McBride’s father; and trumpeter Nick Marchione, a longtime section mate of Stafford’s in the Vanguard orchestra.

Stafford said he envisions a growing educational role for the orchestra. “I want the band not only to represent the music but to reach out to the youth in Philadelphia—to teach and mentor.” Along the same lines, Stafford is in his fifth year as director of an all-city band of high school students.

With all the activity, Stafford has not devoted as much time as he’d like to writing. “Favor,” the sole Stafford original on *BrotherLee Love*, was written on commission. Drawing obliquely on “Amazing Grace,” the piece opens with an unaccompanied trumpet solo that offers some of the most technically and emotionally demanding playing on the album.

“It fit in beautifully,” Barth said.

For Stafford, writing is not simply a matter of creative expression. It helps him make sense of, and overcome, dyslexia: “The best way for me to get through this disease,” he said, “is to challenge it.” In the future, he said, writing could be a very specific means of expressing his appreciation to people who have helped him. He said he hopes to write a piece for each one.

Meanwhile, he is working to overcome other challenges, not least prejudice in the academic community. “There were some folks who weren’t really happy that I became the head of the classical department,” he said. “‘What is this jazz guy doing? He doesn’t know anything about classical.’ But in fact, I probably had more experience playing classical than I did jazz when I started.”

That kind of attitude may be waning, Clayton said, suggesting that Stafford quite possibly has been at the forefront of the change. “He might be an early example of what I believe is a sign of the times,” he said. “I’m finding that more and more young people are not allowing themselves to be pigeonholed. It’s just music. There are so many influences you can embrace now that it’s getting harder and harder for people to categorize you. I’m ready for these walls to come down.”

By his own admission, Stafford spent his youthful years building walls of his own, even as his father wanted him to play jazz. “I would dabble in it,” he said, “but my peers were playing classical music. I didn’t want to be the one who was different. So to fit in and conform, that’s what I did.

“It was later in life that I found out that the best musicians play both things—classical, jazz, it doesn’t matter.”



Stafford's album *BrotherLee Love* is a tribute to Lee Morgan.

PHILIP LEVY-STAB

ensemble, inviting a suspension. Looking back, he regrets the misrepresentation.

“If I had to do it again, I wouldn’t do that,” he said.

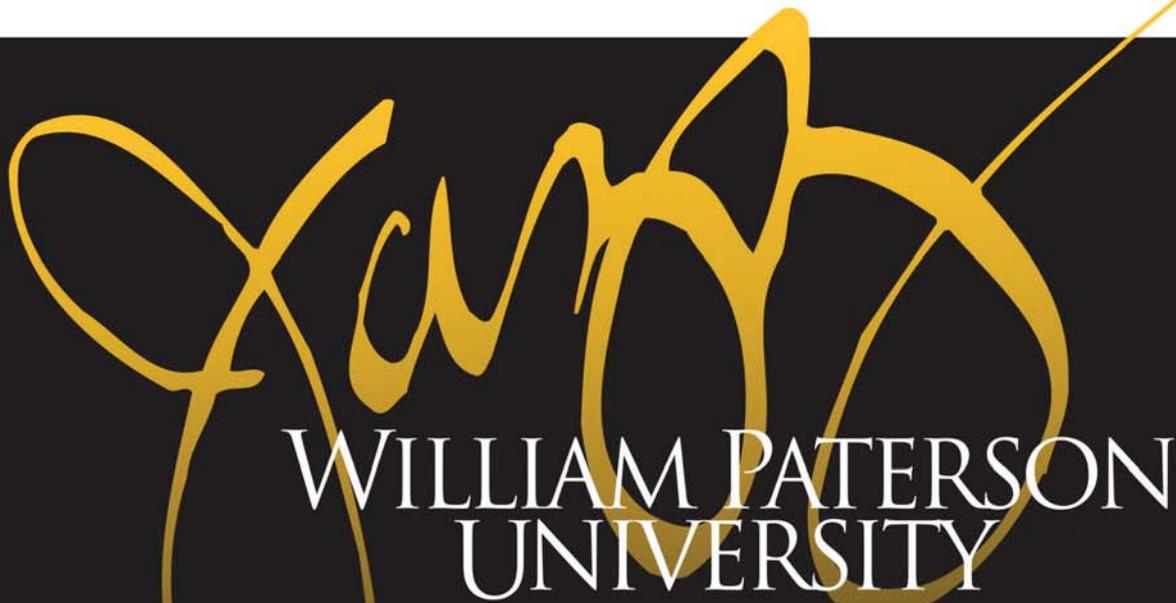
He returned to school after a year—“panicked,” he said, “because I knew that if I didn’t finish my courses, my parents would have a meltdown”—and earned a master’s degree in classical trumpet performance in 1993. Despite the suspension, he said his time at Rutgers had been well spent—and Warfield agreed.

“The clarity he has on the instrument relates to his classical training,” Warfield said. “It’s

despite some initial hesitance because of the additional administrative and fundraising duties the job entails.

“My first instinct was: ‘I don’t think so. I have enough to do at Temple, in my own quintet,’” he said. “But the person who told me I should do it was Wynton Marsalis. He went, ‘Do it. I’m here to help you.’ So I did it.”

Marsalis said the project was important because “we need to bring jazz into the community”; Jazz at Lincoln Center, he noted, is expanding its community outreach beyond New York City. Stafford, he added, is equipped



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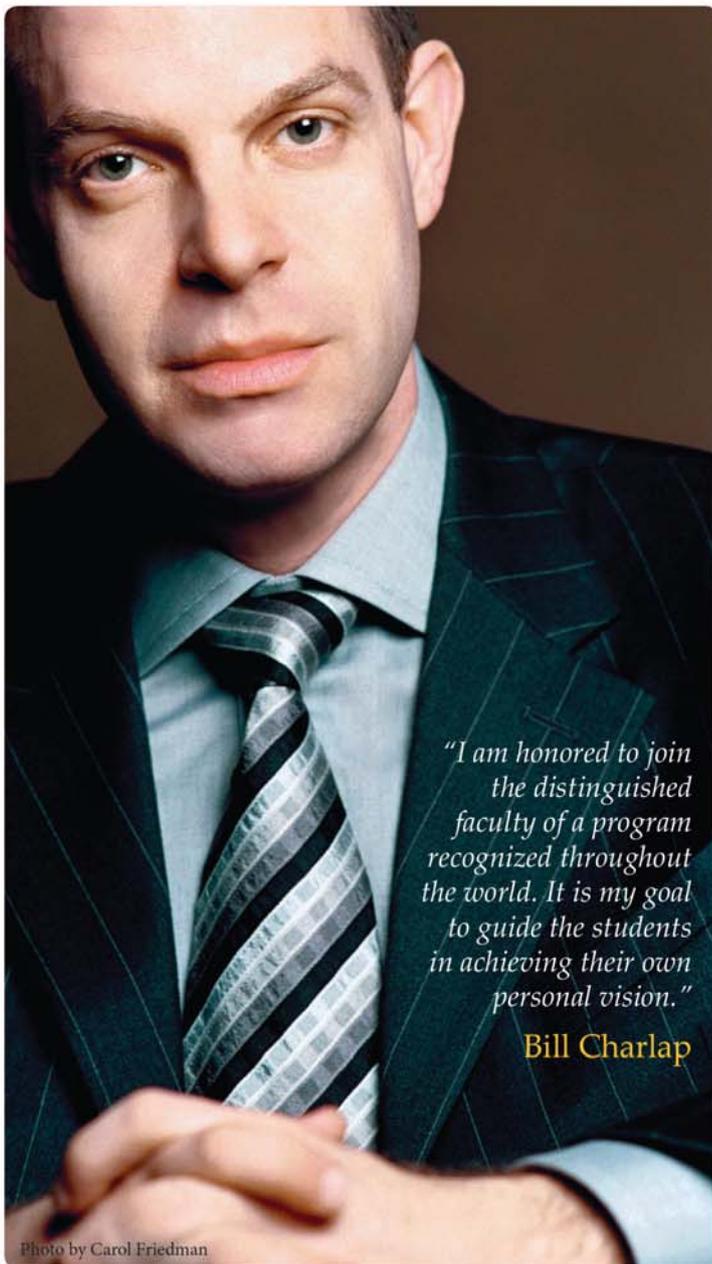
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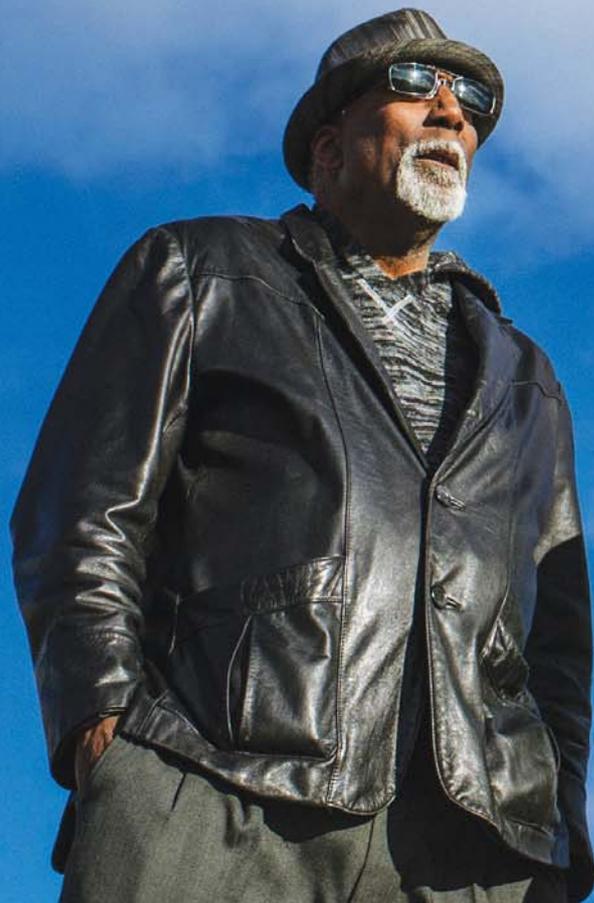
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**Bill Charlap**

Photo by Carol Friedman

CHARLIE HUNTER  
**GROOVE  
FACTOR**

— BY BILL MILKOWSKI —  
PHOTO BY PAUL OLKOWSKI



**W**hen Charlie Hunter locks into a groove with his custom-made seven-string Jeff Traugott guitar, he gets so deep in the pocket that he can pull a band along with him like swimmers caught in a riptide. And the bass notes issuing from his hybrid beast are so low you can feel them in your chest. Indeed, this kind of resounding, authoritative groove has been at the heart of Hunter's music since his formative days on the Bay Area scene. "That's just what I grew up listening to, it's where I come from," said the 48-year-old guitarist, who resides in New Jersey with his wife and two children. "That was Berkeley in the '70s and '80s. Funk was the rhythm that we all played. I don't think we knew to call it that, but that was the vibe. And it didn't matter if it was a shuffle or a country beat, it had to be funky."

That heavy Bay Area groove factor has enlivened Hunter's music for almost 25 years, going back to his 1993 debut, *Charlie Hunter Trio*, and continuing through more than 30 albums as a leader or co-leader for the Blue Note, Ropeadope and Thirsty Ear labels as well as his own Charlie Hunter Music.



Curtis Fowlkes (left), Charlie Hunter and Bobby Previte collaborated on the new album *Let The Bells Ring On*.



Hunter spent part of his youth in Berkeley, California.

PAUL GIKOWSKI

His latest potent trio outing, *Let The Bells Ring On*, is a collaboration with seasoned veterans Curtis Fowlkes on trombone and Bobby Previte on drums. Together, they navigate different aspects of groove on tunes like the frantically uptempo “Pho-Kus-On-Ho-Ho-Kus,” the slow-moving street beat number “Vernel” or the jangly opener “Anthem: USA.”

“To play with someone like Charlie, who’s got the groove on lockdown, it really frees me up,” said Previte. “He’s a self-propelled kind of guy. And I’m just adding to the propulsion rather than propelling it myself, which is always great if you can do it. Basically, I hear things and I like to color what’s going on. That’s what I do: I color the groove. I think Charlie enjoys that I’m bringing something that is not just about specific beats assigned to specific tunes. I do what I feel and Charlie seems to think that’s cool. And I get to do what I like best.”

Though Previte has been known as one of New York’s prime downtown composer-bandleaders for the past 30 years, he does have some history in playing shuffles and grooves. “I played five sets with [blues guitarist-singer] Bobby Radcliffe every Saturday night for years. That’s where I cut my teeth on that style of music. We’d play for the tip jar, which was sumptuous at the end of the night. He had such a huge repertoire and I fine-tuned my blues and shuffle playing on that gig.”

Although Hunter and Previte had previously played together in the improvising cooperative duo Groundtruth, the guitarist had something else in mind for this particular trio. “I called Bobby and said, ‘Dude, I want to hire Bobby Previte the drummer.’ Because Bobby Previte the composer and the conceptual artist ... that’s a huge part of who he is. But Bobby Previte the *drummer* is overlooked way too often. When I was thinking about this music, where I’m coming from is not really a chops-oriented kind of jazz so much, it’s more coming from a blues and r&b base, but with the ability to improvise as well. You can find maybe a few younger generation players who can do that, but really not so much. It’s not their thing. But Bobby cut his teeth playing the rock songs on the

radio in the ’60s. Here’s a guy who saw Hendrix when he was 15 years old. I mean, this is where he’s coming from. And he played with Johnny Copeland and Albert Collins. This is a dude who knows that music, but he’s also a consummate improviser and composer. And so I started there.”

Next came the idea of adding trombonist Fowlkes as the third member of the trio. “Curtis and I go back a ways,” Hunter said. (Fowlkes played on the guitarist’s 2003 quintet album *Right Now Move*.) “Originally I thought it would be nice to have a band with a singer, but every time I’ve tried to do that under my own name it didn’t really work for me so well. So I thought, ‘How close can I come to a singer?’ And naturally I thought of Curtis. His personality in what he does with the trombone is like getting to have a Paul Foster [from the Soul Stirrers] or David Ruffin [of The Temptations] who can also improvise and deal with jazz music.”

“I’ve played with some of the young trombone chops guys, and they all love Curtis,” he added. “As they should. He has so much history and feeling that it goes way beyond chops. I think it was Henry Threadgill who said it best, that Curtis cracks notes better than some people play them. I would have to agree with that.”

Both Previte and Fowlkes heap equal praise on Hunter, who has been confounding guitar aficionados for several years with his hybrid axe—which combines the lower three strings of a bass and the middle four strings of a guitar—and unorthodox technique. His uncanny ability to play independent bass lines against guitar comping and melodic lines can be a bit disorienting to the uninitiated. “It’s really not the independence but the interdependence of bass lines and chords and melody,” Hunter explained. “And that idea got me going back and listening to the music that my mom liked—records by Mississippi John Hurt, Rev. Gary Davis, Blind Blake and Joseph Spence. All the Piedmont stuff and the Delta stuff, all that contrapuntal guitar playing that just kills. So I listened to that and I was like, ‘OK, this is what my instrument is supposed to do.’ It’s more about the interdependence and the groove and the feel than

it is about anything else.”

There can be a downside to performing two instrumental functions in one, according to Hunter. “It’s not flashy,” he said. And while there is a bit of flash on *Let The Bells Ring On*—particularly on Hunter’s hyper chicken-picking showcase, “Hillbilly Heroine Chic”—the guitarist is content to lay back and let the music just feel good.

This patient, less-is-more approach is something that Hunter simply wouldn’t have been able to fathom when he was looking to make a name for himself on the Bay Area scene. “When I was starting out, there was a real premium put on chops and being able to really shred on your instrument in a linear fashion,” he recalled. “And so I thought, ‘Man, this is what I have to do!’ And I was into it because I was young. When you’re young you want to be just exploding in all directions. I actually played with Ronald Shannon Jackson once when I was 22. I was in that group Disposable Heroes of Hiphoprisy and we were playing at Yankee Stadium opening up for U2 [on 1992’s Zoo TV tour]. And my friend Don called me and said, ‘If you get some time, come by and play with Ronald Shannon Jackson at this jam we’re doing.’ It was at a crazy rehearsal space across from the Port Authority. So I went down there, and I was just awful. I played horribly ... too many notes and just garbage, you know? I was playing like a 22-year-old kid who was trying to impress. And afterwards, my friend was like, ‘Dude, why did you play all that bullshit?’

“But as I got older I started to realize I’m never gonna be a jazz guitar player like Russell Malone or Kurt Rosenwinkel. I just don’t have that ability on my instrument. I probably couldn’t even do that on a six-string guitar. And I’m never going to be a super techy bass player because I don’t have an affinity for that, either. So then I realized, ‘Why am I trying so hard to put so many things in here?’ And there came a point where I just stopped trying to play in an opportunistic way where I’m always thinking, ‘Lemme do that baddest shit right here,’ and sacrifice the groove for that. It sounds bad when I try to play shit that’s hard for me to play ... stuff that doesn’t make sense for me to play. I over-play stuff and it’s just a mess.

“So now, instead, I think, ‘Let’s think about the right hand more than the left hand. Think about the flow and the groove and how that feels, and sacrifice everything for that.’ And I’m still working on getting it better because I still have serious holes that need to be filled. It’s such a hard-ass instrument to play, and it takes a lot of time.”

Elsewhere on *Let The Bells Ring On*, the trio hits a catchy mode on “Welcome To Nutley,” which could serve as the theme song for a sitcom. From that snappy affair, the trio leaps headlong into a spacious abyss on the evocative, slow-moving bolero “Fellini Farm Team,” which is underscored by Previte’s haunting mallet work and Hunter’s rolling arpeggios. Pink Floyd fans will certainly hear a similarity here to the classic “Us And Them” on this spacy anthem. “Ojai House Coat Of Arms” is a crazy, boisterous groover fueled by Previte’s slamming rock backbeat before settling into a classic Motown feel. “Vernel” (named for the late New Orleans drummer Vernel Fournier, who authored the classic “Poinciana” beat in his

days with the Ahmad Jamal Trio) is a slow-grooving street beat vehicle that features strong playing by Fowlkes and a brilliantly melodic solo by Previte. "I wanted to capture Vernel's vibe on this tune because his feel is just breathtaking," Hunter explained. "If I could ever achieve a feel like that on my instrument, I would just be like, 'All right, it was all worth it.' Vernel is incredible."

The program closes with the whimsical waltz "Spence," dedicated to the eccentric fingerstyle guitarist Joseph Spence, a huge influence on Hunter's own approach to his axe. "Talk about flow!" Hunter said. "Talk about a rhythmic thing that just won't stop on the guitar. That's some of the baddest stuff ever."

A groovemeister to his core, Hunter has had a special affinity for drums throughout his career. He keeps a kit at home and plays every day, though he remains humble about his abilities. "I'm the world's worst local amateur drummer," he said. "I don't play drums really great. I can play a nice funk groove, though. But that's all I want to do."

Some of Hunter's drumming partners over time have included Leon Parker (their 1999 Blue Note collaboration, *Duo*, set the template for the guitarist's future duo encounters with drummers), Bay Area icon Mike Clark, session drummer Bernard Purdie (they had a memorable one-off gig at Iridium a few years back) and his longstanding Bay Area colleague Scott Amendola, who played on two recent duo recordings with Hunter, 2012's *Not Getting Behind Is The New Getting Ahead* and 2013's *Pucker*.

"What I always look for in drummers is that they have a perfect blend of the visceral and the

intellectual," Hunter said. "Leon definitely had that. I remember once when we were touring and I saw him do like a 15-minute solo with just a bass drum, a snare drum and a little ride cymbal. Scott Amendola and I have been playing together forever. We have this duo thing that we probably will do forever, off and on. And Bobby is just amazing. We started off as a duo and it was completely improvised. Then we had the idea of adding a different third person every time we played. We had a semi-regular gig at the Knitting Factory; every three months we would do four or five nights and it would be a different person every night. We got a chance to play with people I never would've really had a chance to play with, like Oliver Lake, Randy Brecker, Uri Caine, DJ Olive, DJ Logic, Jane Ira Bloom, Ray Anderson and Lew Soloff. Bobby and I established a tight, intuitive chemistry on those gigs, and now to have him in the trio is such a great experience. He just brings so much to the table every time we play."

"When you get to be this age, you're just you," said Previte, 64, about his playing in Hunter's current trio. "That's who you are. I do what I do and it's not for everybody, but Charlie likes it and we have a good time together. I'm not leading the band, none of that pressure's there."

"I hire people that I don't tell what to do," added Hunter. "Because why would I tell them what to do? You just hire the right people and let them do what they do. Bobby and Curtis are a generation ahead of me, and I had been a fan of their music. So to be able to play with them is a treat because they both know exactly what to do with this material."

According to Hunter, there are fringe benefits to the lengthy rides to gigs in his car: "Curtis is one of the best storytellers, and he can really get on a roll when we're just driving for hours to a gig somewhere. So between him and Bobby, it definitely is a serious education."

"Almost every group I ever had, I never wanted to be 'the leader,' Hunter continued. "But because of the crazy instrument that I play, it kind of put me in situations where, 'Well, if you wanna work at this, you have to be a leader and make your own band, 'cause no one's gonna hire you because it's such a weird thing you do and it takes up too much space.' There's no way out for them if you really suck. So I keep practicing, trying to get better at what I do. That's the goal. And it never ends. I practice and I record myself and listen to it later and I'm like, 'Well, you know, you still suck. Keep working on that groove thing because it's still not as great as you think it is.'"

Regarding his role in Hunter's trio, Fowlkes said, "It's fun and it's challenging, but Charlie's also very cool and loose about it during the playing, so he's not obsessing about things. He likes to explore stuff. And that's a good thing for me because it takes a lot of the pressure off of being in such a small situation. I'm not usually in such a revealing situation like this. So it's good to be in it with Charlie, a person who would let that happen and enjoy the exploration along the way."

You can hear their collective exploration on *Let The Bells Ring On*, or experience it live on the trio's tour through the remainder of 2015. That's where the music really opens up. **DB**



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MICHAEL BENEDICT

# SPOTLIGHTING A FORGOTTEN STAR

By Kirk Silsbee / Photo by Rudy Lu

Most albums are sonic stepping-stones on an artist's career path. Occasionally there are recorded statements that become milestones for the artist, and maybe the genre as a whole. More exceptional is the album that is artistic destiny. That's the case with drummer and vibraphonist Michael Benedict's new album, *Circulation: The Music Of Gary McFarland* on the Planet Arts label.

The fifth CD under Benedict's name, it comes at a pivotal point in his career. "I'm just now retiring from teaching," Benedict said, referring to his faculty position at Greenville High School, near Albany, New York.

Each of his albums has featured music by the maverick composer McFarland (1933-'71), culminating in the new tribute CD. "I've played a lot of his compositions," Benedict said. "His music has become an obsession."

It might seem unusual that a contemporary musician would be so taken with the work of an artist who had relatively a short career that ended about 45 years ago. However, McFarland's legacy intersects with the drummer's personal and musical trajectory. "He put a special spin on things," Benedict said. "The vibraphone was Gary's primary instrument, not piano. He had a real gift for melody—even in arrangements of other people's tunes. He wrote melodically first and harmonically second."

McFarland's orchestrations seemed to have an extra palette of pastel colors and softened textures. The bossa nova sounds of the early '60s had a profound impact on him. "Gary wrote differently for the orchestra," Benedict explained. "He played vibes with a light touch and he approached the orchestra in the same way. That, along with the fact that he was largely self-taught, made him unique and identifiable."

Benedict, 59, was born and raised in Rome, in central New York. At 16, his dad took him to hear the Stan Kenton Orchestra. "I heard Peter Erskine playing the drums, and that was it for me," Benedict recalled. "When I saw him, he was 18—two years older than me. I was floored that someone could play that way at that age."

At the State University of New York at Potsdam's Crane School of Music, Benedict ran with a jazz minority that included tenor saxophonist Loren Schoenberg and pianist Pete Malinverni. The student ensembles were invaluable to the Benedict's development, but he still earned a teaching degree.

Though it ultimately proved to be a prescient move, Benedict played and toured for 10 years as a working drummer. His activities usually centered in upstate New York; then, in 1987, he moved to New York City and freelanced with Malinverni and Schoenberg, among others. From 1988 to 2000, Benedict played drums in the Paragon Ragtime Orchestra.

In 1979, Benedict met Gail McFarland, the composer's widow, and two years later they were married. The couple raised Gail's two children from her marriage to Gary. While Benedict had heard the name, he wasn't familiar McFarland's music at the time.

McFarland was a gifted composer/arranger who got serious about music in his early twenties. Herb Pomeroy and John Lewis gave him early assignments. The Gerry Mulligan Concert band played McFarland's first high-profile pieces. He subsequently collaborated with Stan Getz, Anita O'Day, Steve Kuhn and Bill Evans, flirted with pop music and recorded an ambitious suite, *America The Beautiful*, which mixed jazz with rock and orchestral music. For such a short career, McFarland had quite a varied output.

With guitarist Gabor Szabo and vibraphonist Cal Tjader, McFarland started the short-lived Skye Records label. It was a notable inroad into the idea of an artist-owned recording venture.

During his marriage, Benedict gained insight into McFarland's musical outlook: "Gail told me Gary was a state champion high school quarterback



in Oregon," he pointed out. "She said he thought of an orchestra in terms of a team on a field, so to speak."

Gail was diagnosed with cancer in 2004 and died three years later. In that period, Benedict curtailed his music career entirely to care for her.

"After she passed," Benedict said with a sigh, "I started playing again; I started my Bopitude band." Though there were nods to McFarland's music on Benedict's albums, they reflected a hard-bop bent.

Kristian St. Claire's documentary *This is Gary McFarland* (now available in a CD-and-DVD package) has generated interest in McFarland's compositions, so for Benedict, the time was right to record a tribute. When his money was secure (he used his own savings to finance the album) and he felt his playing was up to it, he began developing the program for *Circulation*.

Thomas Bellino, whose non-profit Planet Arts label had released the last two Bopitude albums, was crucial in bringing *Circulation* into being. A Grammy-nominated producer (for the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra's 2014 disc *Overtime: The Music Of Bob Brookmeyer*), Bellino deliberated with Benedict on how to approach McFarland's music.

They agreed that in order to underscore the timeless appeal of McFarland's tunes, they needed 21st-century voices to interpret it. Young saxophonist Sharel Cassidy augmented Bopitude's core group of pianist Bruce Barth, bassist Mike Lawrence and drummer Benedict.

"I wanted Bruce to arrange the material," Benedict explained. "He was very respectful of Gary's music and its original intent, but I wanted him to put his own stamp on it. After all, it's 45 years since his death and a lot has happened in jazz in that time."

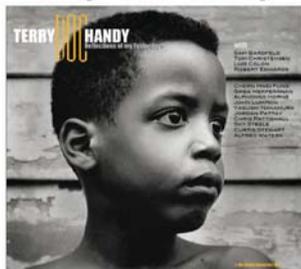
Bellino brought in vibraphonist Joe Locke for the sessions. "He's my favorite vibes player," Benedict said, "and one of the best to ever play the instrument. To watch him play and listen to him was so extraordinary."

*Circulation* was clearly a labor of love for those involved. But that doesn't mean that Bellino could completely ignore the realities of the jazz marketplace in 2015. "Things are changing so fast in the recording industry," Bellino conceded, "that we don't make many records. Planet Arts is a 501(c)(3) non-profit [organization], and we help artists get their product made: recording, production, distribution and promotion. We get paid up front and they make their money on the back end."

If *Circulation* does well, Benedict's next ambition is to make a big band album devoted to McFarland's compositions.

DB

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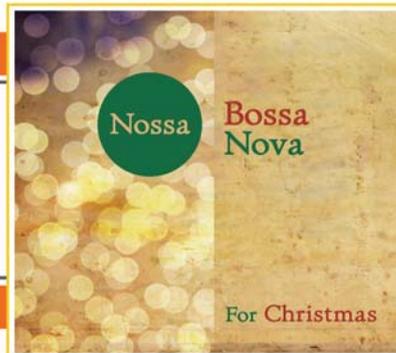
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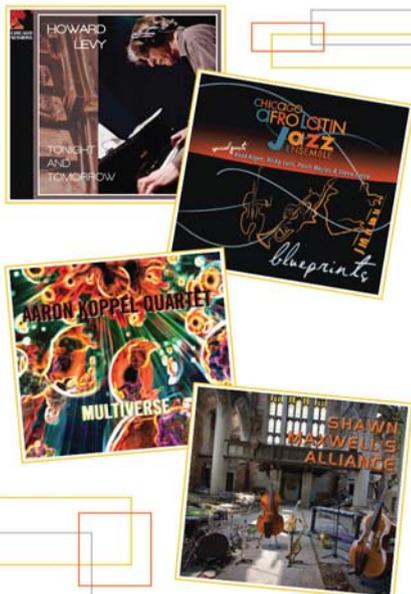
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## INDIE LIFE

MICHAEL GRIFFIN

# PERSEVERANCE PAYS OFF

By Bob Doerschuk / Photo by Bridget Arnwine

In 2013, alto saxophonist Michael Griffin treated himself to a trip to New York City. Though he was only in his early twenties, he had already reached the peak of the jazz community in Sydney, Australia. He'd been leading his own groups there since he was 17. So he figured he'd spend six weeks in the jazz capital of the world, listening to and hopefully sitting in with the elite of the hard-bop school he loves.

What he didn't know, when he bought his ticket, was that the Thelonious Monk International Jazz Competition would be happening there during his stay—and that saxophone was the focus of that year's event.

Upon learning about the competition, Griffin called the contest officials and persuaded them to accept an online application, an exception to the usual snail-mail/CD requirements. He cobbled together some iPhone recordings from a recent gig, which luckily included a performance of "Round Midnight," added an unaccompanied blues that he cut in his bedroom and sent it off. He made the cut. Griffin subsequently progressed all the way to the semifinals.

"I think of myself now as 'before New York' and 'after New York' because I learned so much," he said. "Quite frankly, the first week was the hardest because I got my butt kicked. Seeing the quality of musicians at jam sessions made me remember that I always had to bring my 'A' game. So by the second week, I started to stand out at jam sessions. And then at the competition after that, I got to hang out with Roy Hargrove, Branford Marsalis, Wayne Shorter, Herbie Hancock, Marcus Miller and Kurt Elling.

Jimmy Heath even had me to his home in Queens and gave me a picture of himself with Charlie Parker and John Coltrane. Getting his approval was one of the proudest moments of my life."

Nowadays Griffin is winning kudos throughout Australia and beyond with his debut album, *Unexpected Greeting*. Fronting his quintet on a set of originals and standards, he flaunts an assertive tone, with an advanced harmonic sensibility and technical fluency that confirm his reverence for Bird and Cannonball Adderley.

With the same initiative that earned him a



Michael Griffin performs at the 2013 Thelonious Monk International Jazz Saxophone Competition.



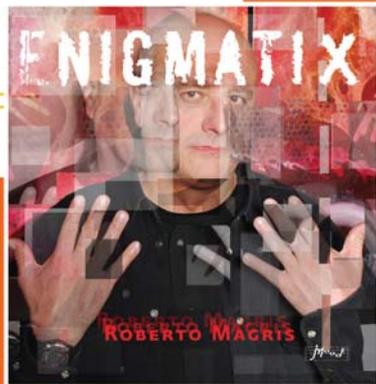
### Household Ink Records *Balladismo and Moncaup*

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last-minute invitation to the Monk Competition, Griffin persuaded the Australian Broadcasting Corporation to release his project. "Around 2010, when I was 19 or 20 years old, I asked them if I could be interviewed on one of their programs," he recalled. "At the time, I really had nothing to talk about; all I could say was that I play saxophone. But they told me to send some stuff that I'd done to Malcolm Stanley, who has a radio program called *Jazz Track*. He was very impressed and he said, 'I want you to record for ABC,' which I did in 2011."

As with a growing number of young musicians, Griffin's album was released in digital format only. But, he insists, this wasn't because of any mandate on his part. "The ABC decided not to put it out on CD. I thought about doing it, but I would have had to pay for printing it. And I almost did. I actually like CDs. But I wondered how many people buy them these days. Most of the time, people seem to listen to music on their iPod or their computer. Quite a lot of people do ask me if they can buy it on CD from me, but it's one of those things where I might print 500 or 1,000 CDs [that would be] sitting around, as most people buy it online."

Griffin took a DIY approach to marketing the project. "Getting reviews, setting up interviews—that was all done by me," he said. "I'm very grateful that the ABC released it and that they made it available on Amazon, iTunes, Xbox Music, Google Play and all that stuff. But I'm the one who had to fight to get it out there."

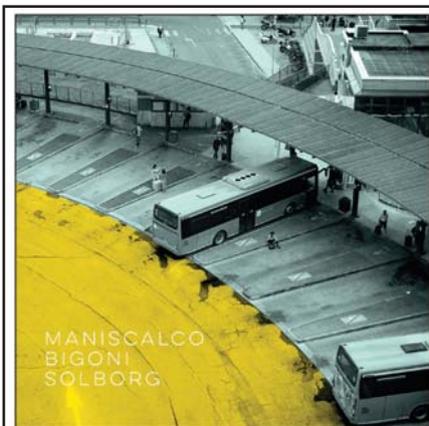
Griffin maintains hands-on contact with every aspect of his career. Part of his approach involved setting up a Facebook page, where he posts articles and reviews. He also stocks performance footage on YouTube, including videos from the Monk Competition.

"The beauty of the Internet is that the whole world can see what you're doing," he said. "But you still have to get things reviewed and get yourself known in the right places. If you're on YouTube, it takes [effort to get a] review in a newspaper or a major magazine. It's a nonstop hustle. You have to keep going, no matter how big you get. You have to keep putting yourself out there and trying to create opportunities."

Griffin is based in Sydney, a city he has always loved but whose borders have begun feeling a little cramped. "There are some nice jazz places here," he said. "Venue 505 is a major one. It actually started out as sort of a secret, underground club. I did my album launch there earlier this year. Another is Foundry616, which has some great stuff going on; international artists often play there. But those are the only two major places. The downside of Sydney is that a lot of stuff closes by 11:30. That's the beauty of New York City: You can go to Smalls until 4 in the morning."

Griffin has his sights set on returning to the Big Apple, this time for a much longer or even permanent stay. "I'm trying to get my artist visa and move there in January," he said. "I'm a bopper. New York is a bop town. So that's where I have to be, because I do live and breathe jazz."

DB



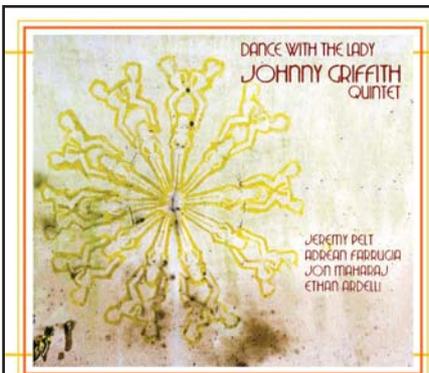
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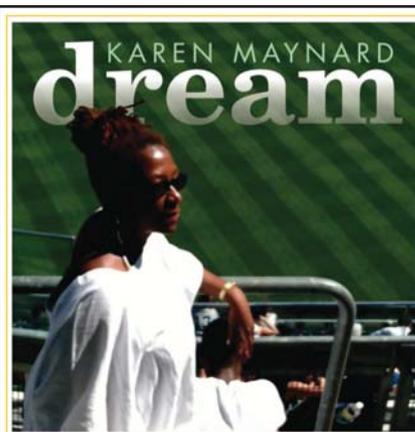
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International Anthem Recording Co.

# CATERING TO COLLECTORS

By Aaron Cohen / Photo by Nathan Michael

The Chicago label International Anthem Recording Company had a modest beginning. About three years ago, recording engineer David Allen lugged his tapes, analog recorder and a couple of microphones to the Chicago basement bar Curio during cornetist Rob Mazurek's residency. Allen said his friend Scott McNiece—who programmed the concert and asked him to document it—was “into doing non-traditional things in a non-controlled environment and was not anal about being in a pristine studio.” The results became the start of an equally unconventional company.

Mazurek's live recording, *Alternate Moon Cycles*, was the first LP on International Anthem, which McNiece runs along with Allen and Joe Darling. The label's focus is on musicians who take jazz-based ideas into open-ended directions, such as saxophonist Nick Mazzarella and drummer Makaya McCraven. The roster also includes eccentric folk singer Rob Jacobs.

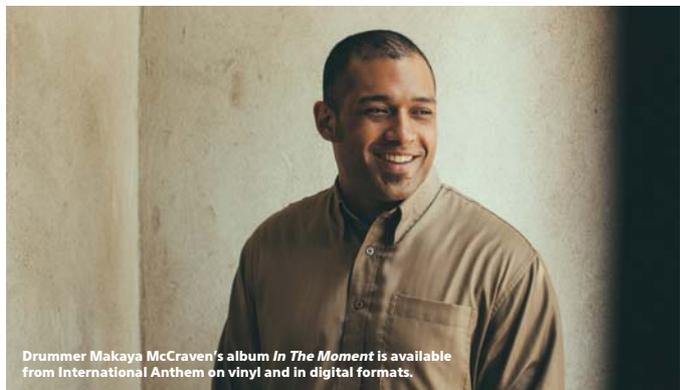
Although most International Anthem titles are also available in digital formats, the label has quickly built a reputation for carefully pressed vinyl albums with superb packaging. *Alternate Moon Cycles* is also available on cassette, housed in a specially carved wooden box.

“We're record collectors,” McNiece said. “It's important that the experience of the music be as engaging as possible. If it's only digital, people are not going to get the proper experience of that music.”

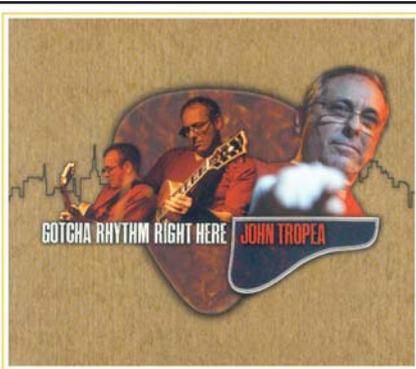
McNiece and Darling previously had started the company Uncanned Music, which develops customized playlists for bars and restaurants. McNiece said Uncanned still pays the bills for International Anthem. (A Kickstarter campaign also helped.)

McCraven's two-LP set, *In The Moment*, was made from live concert recordings, but he didn't want the album to be a merely straightforward presentation of the shows. Instead, he drew on his experience in different kinds of music, including hip-hop, to cut and paste the program together.

“I wanted it to be obvious that [the album] was live, but to tell the story of *how* the improvisation happened—the spontaneity we were involved in—but still keep it concise and listenable for a broad range of listeners,” McCraven explained. “It was pressed on heavy vinyl, and each side of the record is as short as possible to dig the grooves deeper to get better sound quality.” **DB**



Drummer Makaya McCraven's album *In The Moment* is available from International Anthem on vinyl and in digital formats.



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★★★★½ — *DownBeat*, August 2015

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**Michel Nirenberg**  
*Retrato/Portrait*

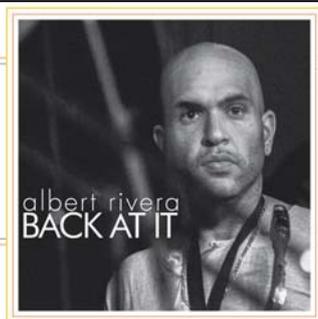
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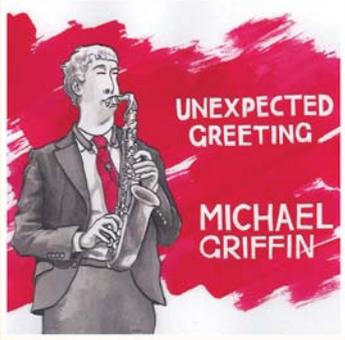
In the San Francisco Bay Area, Margie sends 'thanks' to the support of Angelicas, Cetrella, Kuumbwa Jazz, SFJAZZ, Stanford Jazz Workshop, Pacifica Performances, Jazzschool at the California Jazz Conservatory, Bach Dancing and Dynamite Society, Nick's Rockaway Beach, Hyatt Regency/San Francisco Airport, Yoshi Jazz Club and KCSM-FM JAZZ 91.1 Radio ... and many more!

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**Michael Griffin**  
*Unexpected Greeting*

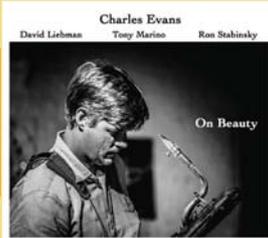
Australian Jazz Saxophonist Michael Griffin, a semifinalist in the 2013 Thelonious Monk International Saxophone Competition, has released his debut album *Unexpected Greeting* on major Australian label, ABC Jazz.

"*Unexpected Greeting* is an engaging mix of originals and standards, instrumental and vocal, featuring material that takes note of the bop traditions and skillfully builds on them in satisfying ways. Griffin's group is a surprise package of talent and cohesion."

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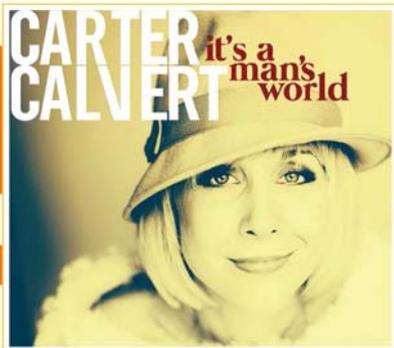
A ten-piece meditation on darkness featuring:

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Jesse Lewis—Guitar  
Jeremy Noller—Drums  
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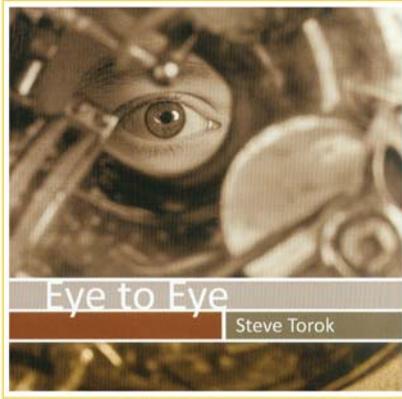
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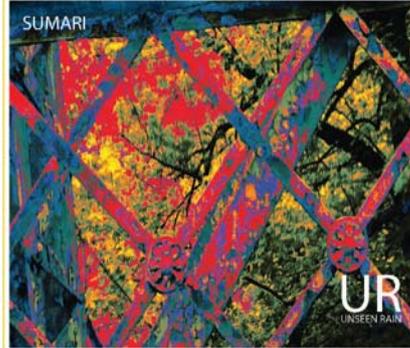
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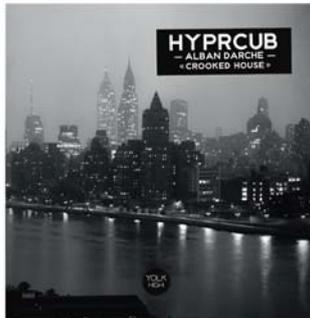
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# REVIEWS >



Fred Hersch

MARTIN ZEMAN

## Fred Hersch *Solo*

PALMETTO 2180

★★★★★

Fred Hersch delivers a beautiful performance here. No, there is no “but” lying in wait just ahead. The beauty radiates with considerable persuasion and intricacy along with the sense of acoustic space around it. The fact that there are other masters of what might be called the philharmonic keyboard who can summon a similar procession of elegance (such as Keith Jarrett) doesn’t diminish this music’s appeal. Recorded in a small church in upstate New York, the album was not intended for release. But Hersch says that he felt it caught the best of him, so here we are. “A found object,” he calls it.

*Solo* has moments of rhythmic thrust and playfulness, but it doesn’t really swing much in the traditional sense. Hersch has other intentions. He bestows the piano’s most fulsome resources—dynamics, pacing, motion, space—on a program of five standards and two originals. “Caravan” is the most adroit of the standards. He plays it as if the keyboard is too hot to touch, picking at it with light, cat-like jabs.

This soft terseness creates a jousting banter between his right hand and left. It has a fragile transparency, in contrast to the tumult most pour onto this tune. The nice thing about such a familiar piece is that the listener can share in the unexpectedness of it. Surprise is nothing more than violated expectation. There can be no surprise inside a piece of music that isn’t preceded by expectation. Players who believe otherwise are only surprising themselves.

“In Walked Bud” is similar in its curt articulation. It is certainly the most brisk and jazz-worthy interpretation of the lot. I like to believe that Hersch is thinking hard about every twist he gives this twisty Monk classic. If so, it’s full of good choices. Hersch’s own “Whirl” starts in an urgent undertow of turbulence, thins out, then winds through a pattern of surges, highlighted by a few tactical retreats and a forte finale.

Sometimes beauty can become a bit humdrum, something that exists for the sake of its own observance. “Pastorale” seems to drift into that kind of atmospheric passivity. But Hersch is a romantic, and romantics do that. He phrases in scooping caresses, the way a violinist might squeeze expressive authority by sliding softly into a note.

“The Song Is You” is far less at risk of disappearing into itself because it comes with a strong and independent identity, which Hersch never loses sight of. His variations are emotionally connected and wonderfully fitted to the material. Though not technically a jazz standard, “Both Sides Now” is one of the relatively few first-class tunes written in recent decades. The Joni Mitchell song has been largely ignored on the jazz side, but Hersch finds in it a rich playground for his lustrous voicings and orchestral coloring. It’s a superb rendering of a wonderfully crafted melody.

—John McDonough

**Solo:** Olha Maria/O Grande Amor; Caravan; Pastorale; Whirl; The Song Is You; In Walked Bud; Both Sides Now. (60:39)

**Personnel:** Fred Hersch, piano.

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



## Ku-umba Frank Lacy & Mingus Big Band *Mingus Sings*

SUNNYSIDE 1407

★★★★½

Exploring novel ways to plumb the Charles Mingus legacy has led the Mingus Big Band to this extraordinary project: *Mingus Sings*. Mingus' lush orchestrations have drawn the talents of a number of great lyricists. On *Mingus Sings*, these songs are assembled from their disparate and sometimes obscure haunts, and placed in the capable hands of Ku-umba Frank Lacy.

Lacy is a deeply musical person whose main axe has been trombone, and he has been a voluble contributor on that instrument in the Mingus Big Band. Here, Lacy shows himself to be equally confident as

## The Bad Plus and Joshua Redman *The Bad Plus Joshua Redman*

NONESUCH 548920

★★★★★

You don't think of The Bad Plus as a band that needs help. Since the trio ignited itself a decade-and-a-half ago, it's been rich with intrepid ideas and the skills to fulfill them. But fellow travelers have been intermittently welcomed. Guitarist Bill Frisell was invited to celebrate Paul Motian's music, and vocalist Wendy Lewis joined to put an art-song spin on classic rock nuggets, so the bridge-building that Ethan Iverson, Reid Anderson and Dave King effect with Joshua Redman on this latest album has precedent. What makes it unusual is its depth; mining a connection that seems intuitive to both sides, it's as if the saxophonist were a blood brother.

Integration is everything here. The Bad Plus is famous for throwing curveballs into their pieces. Contoured rhythmic wobble, feints toward melodic disintegration, grandiosity that may or may not arrive with a grin—each has been an occasional part of their design schema. Redman's horn, though naturally expressionistic, navigates such waters masterfully. Together, on bubbly ballads like "Beauty Has It Hard" and bristling ruminations like "The Mending," the group alignment is spot-on. When I caught them on stage at the start of a summer tour, the coordination was even more expert, with all four members honing their moves to support the music's architecture while

a crooner. His perfectly controlled vibrato on "Sweet Sucker Dance" allows Joni Mitchell's lyrics to pack their powerful poetic punch, blowing life into them but never obscuring their meaning. Indeed, Lacy approaches the songs as he would on his instrument—with tasteful, unpretentious phrasing. Above all, he stays true to the music's original intentions. On Mingus' elegiac "Duke Ellington's Sound Of Love" or the Langston Hughes poem "Consider Me," he respects the songs for what they are.

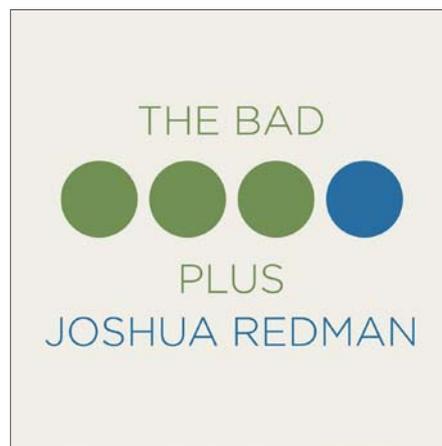
Of course nothing like this would work without the band. The Mingus Big Band is humming along here, and trombonists Conrad Herwig, Coleman Hughes and Earl McIntyre more than make up for Lacy's absence. Hughes contributes a melancholic trombone solo on "Weird Nightmare," a song that shows that Mingus didn't need anyone else to write lyrics for him. Sy Johnson's arrangement on the hipster tale "Dry Cleaner From Des Moines," with lyrics again by Mitchell, is tight as a hairpin turn. A program that encourages repeat listens, *Mingus Sings* demonstrates that an ingenious approach to a well-known archive can yield surprising results.

—John Corbett

**Mingus Sings:** Consider Me; Dizzy Profile; Weird Nightmare; Portrait; Goodbye Porkpie Hat; Sweet Sucker Dance; Invisible Lady; Duke Ellington's Sound Of Love; Dry Cleaner From Des Moines; Noonlight; Chair In The Sky; Eclipse; Jelly Roll. (73:05)

**Personnel:** Frank Lacy, vocals; Jack Walrath, Alex Norris, Lew Soloff, trumpet; Alex Foster, alto saxophone, flute, clarinet; Craig Handy, Wayne Escoffery, Abraham Burton, Brandon Wright, tenor saxophone; Ronnie Cuber, baritone saxophone; Conrad Herwig, Coleman Hughes, Earl McIntyre, trombone; David Kikoski, piano (1–7); Helen Sung, piano (8–13); Boris Kozlov, bass (1–7); Mike Richmond, bass (8–13); Donald Edwards, drums.

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



still finding room to be playful—two discrete lingo letting loose by keeping things wound tight.

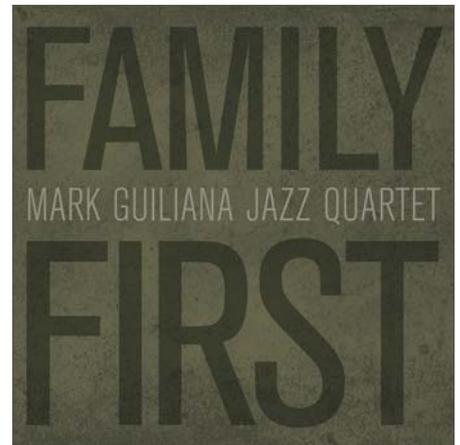
Still, the foursome knows when to let off steam. From the giddy romp of "County Seat" to the dizzy swirl of "Faith Through Error," they've not abandoned hubbub. The ardor that forms so much of jazz's temperament is coursing through these tracks, even if it's meted out, and by the time the epic "Silence Is The Question" drifts away, you'll know charisma is a big part of *The Bad Plus Joshua Redman's* equation.

—Jim Macnie

**The Bad Plus Joshua Redman:** As This Moment Slips Away; Beauty Has It Hard; County Seat; The Mending; Faith Through Error; Lack The Faith But Not The Wine; Friend Or Foe; Silence Is The Question. (59:18)

**Personnel:** Reid Anderson, bass; Dave King, drums; Ethan Iverson, piano; Joshua Redman, tenor saxophone.

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



## Mark Guiliana Jazz Quartet *Family First*

BEAT MUSIC PRODUCTIONS 003

★★★★★

Mark Guiliana is a young drummer with a creative command of electronics. Here he debuts an acoustic quartet worthy of admiration. Quiet, minor and processional, *Family First* is an understated, friendly album ripe with gorgeous melodies. It should draw both casual and avid jazz listeners. Guiliana doesn't overwhelm the music with bombast; the undercurrent of his vamps sets the mood. The band handles the sudden changes in tempo and volume that characterize his open-form tunes with easy grace. Even when the feeling is solemn, celebratory joy seeps through.

"ABED" is an especially attractive melody, stated by tenor saxophonist Jason Rigby in a plain, lightly hollow middle register that recalls West Coast jazz, with a Monkish solo by pianist Shai Maestro, who also played with Guiliana in bassist Avishai Cohen's trio. A dirge-like cover of Bob Marley's "Johnny Was" is reminiscent of Swedish trio's E.S.T.'s slow-motion tempos. "The Importance Of Brothers," with a dramatic marching thump, collapses into a fluttering interlude, resumes its deliberate trudge, opens up with a free solo by Maestro and flutters back out.

"Welcome Home" has the prayerful, throaty cry of Pharoah Sanders, and the title tune tolls under a chuffing sax solo, with atmospheric cymbal work by Guiliana. Bassist Chris Morrissey takes a lovely turn on "The Importance Of Brothers."

As a soloist, Guiliana is alternately light on his feet ("ABED") and fiery ("Long Branch"), with Rigby running lines around him on the latter. On "One Month," which shifts to a gospel feel in the middle, the drummer sets up a nervous vamp, alternating between low and high pitches of tom and snare. "From You" proceeds over a broken, odd-metered push-pull figure. Sometimes the band is content to simply state the tune, as on the elegiac "2014," demonstrating their ensemble coherence.

Guiliana's plugged-in music has been a treat, especially last year's *My Life Starts Now*. Hopefully, we will be hearing more from this acoustic quartet.

—Paul de Barros

**Family First:** One Month; ABED; 2014; Long Branch; Johnny Was; From You; The Importance Of Brothers; Welcome Home; Family First. (61:07)

**Personnel:** Mark Guiliana, drums; Chris Morrissey, bass; Shai Maestro, piano; Jason Rigby, tenor saxophone.

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

# The Hot Box

## Mighty Sam McClain 1943 - 2015

Critics	John McDonough	John Corbett	Jim Macnie	Paul de Barros
<b>Fred Hersch</b> <i>Solo</i>	★★★★	★★★★½	★★★★	★★½
<b>Ku-umba Frank Lacy &amp; Mingus Big Band</b> <i>Mingus Sings</i>	★★★	★★★★½	★★½	★★½
<b>The Bad Plus and Joshua Redman</b> <i>The Bad Plus Joshua Redman</i>	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★½
<b>Mark Guiliana Jazz Quartet</b> <i>Family First</i>	★★★	★★★★½	★★★★½	★★★★

### Critics' Comments

#### Fred Hersch, *Solo*

Hersch lays out a program so rich you'll want to savor it in increments, enjoying its bittersweetness and poignancy, even the version of "Both Sides Now," which is faithful, romantic and still somehow deeply intelligent. —John Corbett

It's a recital with the markings of a casual salon affair—the prettiest parlor concert ever. And the details carry the day. Just listen to him mess with the rhythmic values on "In Walked Bud." —Jim Macnie

Hersch is one of our best pianists, no argument, thanks to his immaculate touch, crystalline sound and profound sense of story as a soloist. But except for a lovely Jobim pairing and the swinging "In Walked Bud," this album has too much churn and not enough burn. —Paul de Barros

#### Ku-umba Frank Lacy & Mingus Big Band, *Mingus Sings*

Lacy's bristly vocals make this a songbook album. But as such, the material mostly lives in the insular and self-nourishing Mingus bubble, not beyond. The lyrics are earnest but tend to lie nervously on music not intended to be sung. "Dry Cleaner" is the most fun and least pretentious. Sy Johnson's charts showcase the Mingus band and soloists with an agreeable generosity. —John McDonough

Hats off for giving this elaborate program a whirl while trying to personalize Mingus' "passions of a man," but Lacy's voice isn't something I'll need to investigate much further. There's a certain charm at hand, but it lacks the skill to sustain real interest. —Jim Macnie

Assembling Charles Mingus charts for which he and others (Joni Mitchell, Elvis Costello) wrote lyrics is an absolutely stellar idea. But having trombonist Ku-umba Frank Lacy sing them in his strained, stabbing, raspy voice is not. A lyric sheet—no doubt prohibitively expensive—would have helped. Still, it's nice to have these all in one place. Sy Johnson's arrangements are marvelous. —Paul de Barros

#### The Bad Plus and Joshua Redman, *The Bad Plus Joshua Redman*

More than a drop-in, Redman coalesces here with The Bad Plus, a group wherein each member pulls his own distinct weight and experience. A smart and well-tempered seminar. Some pieces are so tight they sound almost through-composed. But even on a windswept wildflower like "County Seat," an ensemble precision and restraint reign. A remarkable partnership of sovereign sensibilities. —John McDonough

Everyone holds back so brilliantly here that the explosive crescendi ("Faith Through Error") and swinging passages ("County Seat") have extra cathartic weight. But the restrained parts have another expressive power, and the trio's simply never sounded better than in this simpatico joining of forces with Redman. Iverson continues to be one of today's most comprehensive talents. —John Corbett

Who knew this would be such a great fit? Redman sounds like he's always been a member of this eclectic jazz-rock trio, especially as he glides over an unexpected scale into a pool of piano on King's secret-sounding "Beauty Has It Hard" and blowing free on Iverson's "County Seat." —Paul de Barros

#### Mark Guiliana, *Family First*

Guiliana offers a set of restful originals, for a drummer at least. Rather than drive the material, he nudges it. On the few that call for percussive dazzle, he shows us what he can do by laying down a rumbling ground fire broken by minefields of rim shots. But the Basie-ish "ABED" is real timekeeping. —John McDonough

Beautiful little rhythm section tristes, proclamatory pop melodies, a sly Marley cover—lots to love about *Family First*. Especially dig the leader's crisp drumming and the ensemble's fresh sound. —John Corbett

At first a bit too formal, but it draws you in further with each repeated spin. And ultimately the regimentation is a boon, helping to sustain focus. Plus: You do Marley's "Johnny Was," and I'm down. —Jim Macnie



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## Gary Peacock Trio *Now This*

ECM 2428

★★★★★

At 80, bassist Gary Peacock is probably best known for his role in Keith Jarrett's long-running "standards trio." But his own trio—with pianist Marc Copland and drummer Joey Baron—is an exceptional model of instrumental balance, melodic interpretation and refined elegance.

On Peacock's seventh ECM recording as a leader, the band appears particularly single-minded, playing with a high level of unity and sense of purpose. Baron, in particular, sounds telepathic, accompanying his bandmates with a deft touch on cymbals for much of the time. He also

demonstrates a singular knack for knowing when to push up the energy—adding hand drums to the feathery meditation "Gaia" and introducing a rare snare drum to "Noh Blues" for some critical ballast. The decision to concentrate primarily on cymbal work places more emphasis on Peacock's bass, which sings with woody depth throughout.

The trio revisits two Peacock favorites—the mysterious-sounding "Moor," first recorded on *Eastward* in 1970, and the regal "Requiem," which made its appearance the following year. The bassist also looks to the past with Scott LaFaro's "Gloria's Step," which is given a lightly swinging treatment, setting it apart from the dominant impressionistic mood.

The gentle ballad "Christa" also stands out for its adherence to traditional song form. With its subtle movement—Baron a standout again—harmonic rigor and gorgeous melody, it actually sounds like something Jarrett might play, and Copland creates an effective balance between a crystalline top end and darker chords.

In general, it is Copland who sets the mood throughout, using long-sustained treble notes to establish the emotional tone, while Peacock and Baron lock in with him to create dream-like movement on "Shadows," the feeling of falling snow on Copland's composition "And Now" and multi-directional exploration on Baron's "Esprit De Muse."

—James Hale

**Now This:** Gaia; Shadows; This; And Now; Esprit De Muse; Moor; Noh Blues; Christa; Vignette; Gloria's Step; Requiem. (57:53)

**Personnel:** Marc Copland, piano; Gary Peacock, bass; Joey Baron, drums.

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

## Pete Rodriguez *El Conde Negro*

DESTINY

★★★★½

Critics typically mouth descriptors like "grooving," "hard-charging" and "rhythmic" when referring to Latin or Afro-Cuban music. And trumpeter/vocalist/composer Pete Rodriguez certainly brings the burn to *El Conde Negro*, the follow-up to his dynamic debut, *Caminando Con Papi*.

Rodriguez is part of modern-day and historic Latin jazz royalty, after all, having barked cues while playing trumpet and percussion on the bandstand of his legendary salsero father, crooner Pete "El Conde" Rodriguez. But by the age of 15, Pete was also playing classical music with a symphony orchestra in Puerto Rico. These varied experiences help explain music that is not only instrumentally ferocious, but texturally rich and at times, profoundly intimate.

Accompanied by a band of ringers—pianist Luis Perdomo, bassist Ricky Rodriguez, drummer Rudy Royston and percussionist Robert Quintero—Rodriguez creates compositions rich in musical depth, tone and beauty, as well as rhythm and melody. An equally exceptional singer, Rodriguez conveys passion and longing in every phrase, giving his music an appeal beyond genres. Rodriguez's trumpet playing is colorful, both hot blooded and pastoral, winsome and charged.

"Stolen Changes," for example, darts like battling fireflies, from Afro-Cuban to straightahead,



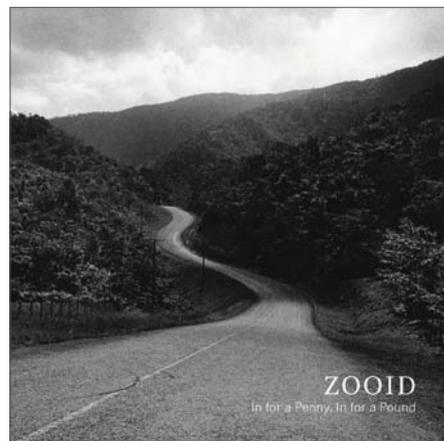
with through-composed sections where Royston and Quintero tumble together, hand in glove. The song hits a breakdown, percussion and trumpet leading the charge, supported by Perdomo's cerebral comping. Throughout, riches of texture and atmosphere mark every song on this exceptionally clear and cliché-free album.

—Ken Micallef

**El Conde Negro:** Soy La Ley; Stolen Changes; Catalina La O; Gravity; Convergencia; Ten Fe; Sombras Que Paso; Perdomo's Blues; Guaguanco De Amor; El Conde Negro. (71:23)

**Personnel:** Pete Rodriguez, trumpet, vocals; Luis Perdomo, piano; Fender Rhodes; Ricky Rodriguez, bass; Rudy Royston, drums; Robert Quintero, percussion.

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



## Henry Threadgill Zooid *In For A Penny, In For A Pound*

PI 58

★★★★½

Henry Threadgill and his remarkable band Zooid continue to reap dividends from their exploration of how fixed intervals can be utilized as a polyphonic improvisational form—a seemingly inexhaustible concept allowing for fresh elucidation of his singular melodies, as terse and fragmented as they are in this project. Of course, melodic writing isn't the point of Zooid. Instead, the assignment of specific three-note intervals to each musician offers a loose road map for an exhilarating collage of improvised lines free of constraints imposed by chords or modes. *In For A Penny, In For A Pound* is an extended suite, or "epic" as Threadgill calls it, with four of the six movements devoted to a singular instrument (with the exception of the composition for Jose Davila, who doubles on trombone and tuba). But that focus is relative, as the rest of the group is heavily involved in each song.

As usual, Threadgill's music arrives *sui generis*, but there are antecedents percolating through his writing and his characteristically unique timbres—the agile, rubbery puffing of Davila's tuba combined with the jaggedly martial patterns of Elliot Kavee's drumming recalls the leader's early fascination with marching bands. The real achievement of this group revolves around an ever-strengthening rapport and quicksilver sense of interaction. For this stuff to work as potently as it does, the musicians must listen on a very high level, absorbing everything going on around them. Threadgill often sits out for extended spells, but his rich solos—a tapestry of terse but poignant phrases guided by a holistic view of the action, rather than a linear one—tend to stitch everything together. Still, there are so many fast-moving details and epiphanies at work here that it takes some rigor to hear how it all fits together, even if isolated phrases and sallies are rich in delight.

—Peter Margasak

**In For A Penny, In For A Pound:** (Disc One): In For A Penny, In For A Pound (opening); Ceroepic (For Drums And Percussion); Dosepic (For Cello). (Disc Two): Off The Prompt Box (Exordium); Tresepic (For Trombone And Tuba); Unoepic (For Guitar). (79:09)

**Personnel:** Henry Threadgill, alto saxophone, flute, bass flute; Jose Davila, trombone, tuba; Liberty Ellman, guitar; Christopher Hoffman, cello; Elliot Kavee, drums, percussion.

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



**Denny Zeitlin and  
George Marsh**  
*Riding The Moment: Duo  
Electro-Acoustic Improvisations*

SUNNYSIDE 1408

★★★★

Denny Zeitlin is one of those now-historic pianists who has played the gamut of jazz. Even so, he's never been entirely comfortable with convention. The same can be said for drummer/percussionist George Marsh, whose tempered, unequivocal playing accompanies Zeitlin on *Riding The Moment*. In each other's company, they seem right at home.

Coming in the wake of Zeitlin's 2013 solo electro-acoustic release, *Both/And*, this album reunites two musicians who first worked together during the late '60s on into the '70s. But for Zeitlin, the fascination with electronics precedes their earliest collaborations. Listening to *Riding The Moment*, one might gather a more "synthesized" approach to his ever-evolving melding of electronics with the acoustic piano.

Given the trajectory of keyboard electronics since those early days, it's remarkable how Zeitlin seems to rely on more basic sounds, suggest tones deriving more from a computer than a keyboard. Indeed, his approach—including some vivid sounds and textures in the form of bass notes—recalls early electronic music from Gil Mellé.

*Riding The Moment* is aptly titled, given that it's all about spontaneous composition (as if that were an alternative to just plain improvising). The duo vibe contributes to this spirit of improvisation, but mainly because the two musicians are veterans of the jazz scene who have never been content to rehash or sound "novel."

The best moments come when the two get crazy, as they do on "Wheels & Tracks," in which the speed of the moment pushes the two past more meditative, seemingly tentative gestures. Zeitlin toggles between the electronic and acoustic as if in a swirl of emotion, and Marsh, equally up to the task on drumset, uses everything in his kit to help get the pianist's emotional message across. Other moments seems stunted, or like internal experiments. They feel incomplete, holding only

mild interest. Such is the case with "Very Bari," which wanders between dryness and sparse moments of lyricism.

"Gears" probes with the kind of cause-and-effect interaction that suspends any need for a jazz framework. And yet, along with the set closer "Quest," it is the album's most conventional piece, akin to something approaching an actual composition. Zeitlin's fanciful keyboards combine with Marsh's propulsive swing to create a song of sorts, and the tune's slow-grinding groove seems inevitable.

This is where the chemistry between old friends becomes palpable. Since the vast major-

ity of the music didn't involve overdubs, *Riding The Moment* comes across as a cohesive effort. At times it's fun, and generally interesting. But all said, this is not particularly memorable music.

—John Ephland

**Riding The Moment:** Back On The Horse; Fermenting; Marching To A Different Drummer; Setting Sail; Vortex; Broken Nest; The Visit; Wheels & Tracks; Very Bari; Gears; Down The Rabbit Hole; Quest. (75:54)

**Personnel:** Denny Zeitlin, acoustic piano, hardware and virtual synthesizers, keyboards; George Marsh, drums, percussion.

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

**Enrico Rava Quartet  
w/ Gianluca Petrella**  
*Wild Dance*

**Enrico Rava** trumpet  
**Francesco Diodati** guitar / **Gabriele Evangelista** double bass  
**Enrico Morello** drums / **Gianluca Petrella** trombone

The five Italians play a program of Rava originals which cover a broad range of moods – from brooding ballad playing to fiery up-tempo post-bop.

**Stefano Battaglia Trio**  
*In The Morning*

**Stefano Battaglia** piano  
**Salvatore Maiore** bass / **Roberto Dani** drums

On his sixth album for ECM the Italian pianist and his trio reflect on the work of American composer Alec Wilder (1907 – 1980).



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ECM



## Branford Marsalis Quartet *A Love Supreme: Live In Amsterdam*

MARSALIS MUSIC/OKEH 88875069032

★★★★★

In 2002, when saxophonist Branford Marsalis released his interpretation of John Coltrane's iconic *A Love Supreme* on his own *Footsteps Of Our Fathers*, many in the jazz community were outraged. Contrary to their misgivings, the skies did not fall, and Coltrane's original was not diminished.

Call this reissue of 2003's *A Love Supreme: Live In Amsterdam* the anti-*Blue* (the divisive note-for-note copy of *Kind Of Blue* by Mostly Other People Do The Killing). This time around, Marsalis' take on the masterpiece maintains the structural frame-

## Zach Brock *Serendipity*

CRISS CROSS JAZZ 1380

★★★★½

Zach Brock, one of a handful of great jazz violinists currently active, grew up influenced by both Stéphane Grappelli and classic Blue Note hard-bop recordings. During his formative years he was strongly affected by Jean Luc Ponty and Zbigniew Seifert, a highly individual violinist who grew up isolated from much of the jazz world in his native Poland. Brock has blended together these inspirations to form his own passionate post-bop style.

Brock begins *Serendipity* by paying homage to Seifert on "City Of Spring," a performance that hints at both 1970s fusion and McCoy Tyner-inspired modal music. "Serendipity" uses a three-note pattern to disguise the fact that it is built upon the chord changes of "It Could Happen To You." The "deception" continues throughout the tradeoff of pianist Aaron Goldberg and drummer Obed Calvaire before the standard gradually surfaces during the cooking piano solo. Bassist Matt Penman also has a solid and concise moment in the spotlight.

The modern folk song "Swansea" inspires a lyrical and passionate performance from Brock. The violinist joyously revives Ponty's "Sunday Walk" (a boogaloo blues). He and his bandmates sound like they are clearly having fun during their individual statements. "Some Other Time" is taken slow and given a conventional but satisfying treatment with warm and melodic improvisa-

work of the original, but only as a jumping-off point. While there is some Trane in Marsalis' tone and attack, and some McCoy Tyner in pianist Joey Calderazzo's left hand, their approaches to how they convey this music are all their own. The result is proof that epochal music needs to be played, not just listened to in its original form.

This performance of the suite from Amsterdam's Bimhuis sounds especially fluid—with Marsalis, Calderazzo, bassist Eric Revis and drummer Jeff "Tain" Watts going for the spirit of Coltrane's expression of devotion rather than trying to replicate the original. One aspect is that Watts drives the quartet more actively and aggressively than Elvin Jones, whose approach was governed by interaction and response. On "Part II—Resolution," for example, Watts sounds like he's soloing through the latter half of Calderazzo's supercharged improvisation, and he punctuates Marsalis' choruses with assertive tomtom and cymbal combinations.

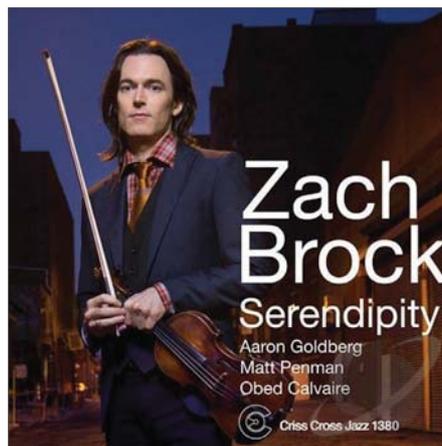
In addition to paying homage to the Coltrane suite on its 50th anniversary, this reissue serves as a potent reminder of how powerful and cohesive the quartet was with Watts on drums, prior to his departure from the group in 2009. Rather than tomb raiding, Marsalis has succeeded in breathing new life into a decades-old classic—the equivalent of backing a low-mileage, vintage Ferrari out of the garage and doing a few laps around the speedway.

—James Hale

**A Love Supreme:** Live In Amsterdam: Part I—Acknowledgement; Part II—Resolution; Part III—Pursuance; Part IV—Psalm. (48:26)

**Personnel:** Branford Marsalis, tenor saxophone; Joey Calderazzo, piano; Eric Revis, bass; Jeff "Tain" Watts, drums.

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



tions by Goldberg and Brock. On Charlie Parker's "Segment," Goldberg surprisingly builds his solo off of phrases associated with Lennie Tristano, while Brock makes a virtuosic uptempo bop solo sound easy. The romantic yet mildly unsettling "Sally's Song" precedes Brock's "Summer Dance," an episodic work that returns us to the fusion of the first piece.

There are no slow moments to *Serendipity*, a wide-ranging set that serves as an excellent vehicle for Brock and his quartet.

—Scott Yanow

**Serendipity:** City Of Spring; Serendipity; Swansea; Sunday Walk; Some Other Time; Segment; Sally's Song; Summer Dance. (54:12)

**Personnel:** Zach Brock, violin, baritone violin; Aaron Goldberg, piano; Matt Penman, bass; Obed Calvaire, drums.

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



## Brian Landrus Trio *The Deep Below*

BLUELAND 2015

★★★★★

It's no criticism to say that low-woodwind specialist Brian Landrus is in love with his own sound. After all, a good sound is fundamental for any musician: You're not going anywhere without it. In Landrus' case, sound isn't merely another tool—it appears to be an important source of ideas. Choosing from baritone sax, bass clarinet, bass flute or bass saxophone for a particular number is as important a decision for him as tempo or key.

Take opener "Fly," from this trio disc with bassist Lonnie Plaxico and drummer Billy Hart. As he moves from theme to solo on his bari, Landrus transitions with a downshift in register and gorgeous little pearl of a figure. It's as though he creates the roadmap for each tune based on the horn he uses to play it. Likewise, the spectral breadth of bass flute is the perfect vehicle for the folkloric allusions of "Ancient."

There are, of course, instances when Landrus' great chops—and the dramatic impact of a particular horn—are their own justification, as in the opening blast on the bass saxophone feature "The Beginning." But it's impressive how well each of these pieces is arranged as an integrated whole, and not merely a solo showcase. On the Sinatra torch song "I'm A Fool To Want You," Landrus gives the opening melody to Plaxico, setting up a later trade of solos in which baritone sax and acoustic bass become two halves of the same personality. Though leaning mostly toward ballad tempos, this album swings hard all the way through—often thanks to Plaxico and Hart, but also to the leader's sublime time feel (check his a cappella "Giant Steps"). It doesn't hurt that Landrus can produce an unforced, pure tone in every register, even at his most forcefully expressive.

—Jon Garelick

**The Deep Below:** Fly; Sophisticated Lady; The Beginning; Fields Of Zava; Giant Steps; Will She Ever Know; It Comes Together At The End; Just A Fading Memory; I'm A Fool To Want You; Orebro Treaty; Ancient; Open Water; The Age; Once Again. (52:01)

**Personnel:** Brian Landrus, baritone saxophone (1, 2, 5, 7, 9, 13), bass clarinet (4, 8, 10, 12, 14), bass flute (6, 11), bass saxophone (3); Lonnie Plaxico, bass; Billy Hart, drums.

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



**Chris Dingman**  
*The Subliminal And The Sublime*

INNER ARTS INITIATIVE 001

★★★★★

Considering the essence of his instrument, it's only fitting that vibraphonist Chris Dingman would compose an extended piece exploring the beauty of long tones, ringing sonorities and overlapping harmonic waves. On his sophomore outing as a leader, Dingman does so brilliantly.

The mallet man's through-composed, five-part suite is informed by jazz, ambient sound, impressionism, world music and dabs of minimalism. Inspired by his meditative wanderings in the American West, Dingman specifies the suite's concept as a statement on the essence of nature.

*The Subliminal And The Sublime* is based on the concept that, under the surface of our apparent reality, there are subliminal layers of patterns, detail and depth," he writes in the liner notes. "When we look at these layers more closely, we have the opportunity to discover sublime truths about our world and ourselves."

Such lofty declarations commonly amount to little more than liner note babble. But Dingman's layered compositions and intuitive performances successfully achieve his ambition.

The suite opens with Dingman bowing his vibraphone, coaxing swelling notes, harmonics and emerging harmonies from the instrument, while manipulating a liberally depressed sustain pedal—a method he skillfully employs to create rich colors throughout.

Several minutes in, ensemble members enter in a confluence of sonic rivulets. The swirling sound evolves over a lyrical 61-minute work that spans the grand to the minimal in a masterly paced arc of tension and release.

But the atmospheric nature of the suite never succumbs to wandering; instead, the subtle, yet complex layers skittering below the surface consistently engage.

Pianist Fabian Almazan accompanies with a composer's ear, while guitarist Ryan Ferreira plucks shimmering, almost harp-like

chords that are frequently inseparable from the vibraphone. Justin Brown subtly transports the fluid motion and punctuates dramatic peaks with powerful drum surges.

Linda Oh's bass playing is elegantly grounding yet never insistent, while Loren Stillman's alto saxophone often defers to the ensemble texture, tenderly singing in his upper register. And there's consistently inventive soloing all around.

There are moments of sudden breathtaking texture: a sparkling ostinato orbiting Oh's pensive bass solo or an ensemble tapestry of

bell-like notes sounding like a chorus of rim-rubbed wine glasses.

Sometimes tender, sometimes rugged, it's a landscape both beautiful and persistently mysterious. We're compelled to listen, then listen even closer.

—Jeff Potter

**The Subliminal And The Sublime:** Tectonic Plates; Voices Of The Ancient; Plea; The Pinnacles; All Flows Forth. (60:54)

**Personnel:** Chris Dingman, vibraphone; Loren Stillman, alto saxophone; Fabian Almazan, piano; Ryan Ferreira, guitar; Linda Oh, bass; Justin Brown, drums.

**Ordering info:** [inner-arts.org](http://inner-arts.org)



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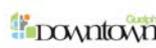


IMAGE © 2015 LAUREN DEUTSCH

## Vital Organs

**Pat Bianchi, *Higher Standard* (21-H Records 001; 57:30 ★★★★★)** The Rochester native and organist in Pat Martino's trio for the past four years brings a reverence for the old school, a masterful touch with grooving left-handed bass lines and a scorching right-hand technique to this set of jazz standards, Broadway show tunes and two originals. Accompanied by the swinging Philly-based guitarist Craig Ebner and veteran drummer Byron Landham (a longtime member of Joey DeFrancesco's group), Bianchi tears it up on "Without A Song," famously covered by Sonny Rollins on *The Bridge* (1962), and flaunts his Jimmy Smith-inspired burn on a relaxed medium-tempo rendition of Horace Silver's "Blue Silver," the latter featuring an outstanding solo from Ebner. The syncopated crew steps into a more modernist, Larry Young-ish zone on Bianchi's "The Will Of Landham," which again showcases the organist's incendiary right-hand runs. And they settle into a mellow accord on two songs associated with Bill Evans—Leonard Bernstein's poignant "Some Other Time" and the great pianist's gently swinging waltz, "Very Early"—both underscored by Landham's inimitable brushwork. Then it's back to the sheer burn factor on John Coltrane's "Satellite," Oscar Pettiford's "Bohemia After Dark" and Bianchi's own jaunty "Blues Minus One," the latter fueled by Landham's conversational, loosely swinging pulse. This is feel-good music delivered by three consummate pros on the organ group circuit.

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

**Brian Charette, *Alphabet City* (Posi-Tone PR8140; 55:12 ★★★★★½)** An in-demand organist on the New York scene, Charette pushes the envelope in a few unconventional directions on his ninth release as a leader. Joined by guitarist Will Bernard and drummer Rudy Royston, the versatile crew incorporates James Brown-inspired funk ("They Left Fred Out"), unabashed fusion (the aptly named "Not A Purist") and Eastern European folk elements ("Hungarian Major") into the eclectic mix. "Sharpie Moustache" is a minor blues that falls somewhere between The Meters and Booker T & The MG's while the rock-ish "Disco Nap" turns Royston loose at the tag. "Avenue A" is a gentle ode to Charette's beloved East Village neighborhood and "Split Black" offers Bernard a chance to stretch out on a distortion-laced solo. And while the closer, "The Vague Reply," is perhaps the most conventional B-3 number here, it is clear that Charette wants to take the organ out of the jazz lounge and test-drive it down some very different roads with this ambitious release.

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

**Alex Norris Organ Quartet, *Extension Deadline* (Brooklyn Jazz Underground 052; 50:25 ★★★★★½)** Royston also makes an appearance on this exhilarating modernist outing led by trumpeter Alex Norris and featuring George Colligan on Hammond organ and Gary Thomas



Pat Bianchi

on tenor sax. Though Colligan is rarely heard in this kind of setting, he acquits himself nicely on urgently swinging tracks like the bristling closer, "Red Flag," and the incendiary title track, as well as on the relaxed, medium-tempo swinger "Night Watchman," which has Norris playing a beautiful flugelhorn solo and Thomas blowing in typically searching fashion on his robust tenor solo. Other highlights on this superb outing, which is fueled by Royston's crisply swinging, remarkably interactive touch on the kit, are the swaggering "San Jose," a mellow rendition of Bobby Hutcherson's gorgeous waltz "Little B's Poem" and Colligan's surging "Optimism." A stellar effort by an all-star crew that exudes a high level of intensity and a collective sense of burn from track to track.

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

**Ray Anderson's Organic Quartet, *Being The Point* (Intuition 71313; 52:48 ★★★★★½)**

Gary Versace is the organ foil to Ray Anderson's trombone on this spirited and highly unorthodox organ group offering that travels from upbeat calypso-meets-funk ("At Home in the Muddy Water") to mournful requiem ("Marching On—Blues For John Lewis") to bittersweet ballad ("Child's Eyes") to the compelling second line number "Investigations," which features Tommy Campbell stretching out on a melodic drum solo. Versace is turned loose to wail on the uptempo swinger "Hot Crab Pot," which is brimming with quirky, Cage-ian interludes, and also on the skronk-fueled title track, which carries a slightly sinister vibe. Versace also delivers a wistful, lyrical organ solo on the hauntingly beautiful "Realization." Anderson's love of the Hammond B-3 is as strong as the rest in this roundup, but his application of that hulking beast here is also wildly different than the others. **DB**

**Ordering info:** [rayanderson.org](http://rayanderson.org)



## Makaya McCraven *In The Moment*

INTERNATIONAL ANTHEM 0003

★★★★★

Fusion jazz, with its embrace of electricity and studio post-production, and free improvisation, which elevated spontaneous improvisation, arose at roughly the same time. While their commercial fortunes contrast strongly, they are united in the disparagement they've earned from certain corners of the jazz community. On *In The Moment*, they come together in a truce brokered by a third genre: hip-hop.

Mind you, Makaya McCraven probably isn't too worried about what you call the music on *In The Moment*. As befits a drummer whose CV includes stints with both Bobby Broom and Bernie Worrell, he's more concerned with making music that breathes and grows. McCraven assembled the album from live recordings made during an extended sojourn at the Bedford, a restaurant in Chicago's Wicker Park. Neither the membership of his band nor the material they played was fixed. Rather, whoever joined him improvised the music, constrained only by McCraven's strong preference for a clearly stated groove. McCraven and a sequence of bassists never betray that imperative, but they find within it plenty of room for exploration. He races ahead of the beat, elaborates upon it, briefly suspends it and reduces it to essentials, creating a framework capable of supporting complementary rhythms, spacy atmospheres and short, pungent melodies.

Though the music is improvised, it has also been diligently distilled, and sometimes enhanced by added loops. While eight additional players appear alongside McCraven on the record, there are never more than five at a time, and often only three. Vibraphonist Justin "Justefan" Thomas and guitarist Jeff Parker are McCraven's foils, adding both cloudy textures and acid tones. Each gets some licks in, but this is music is more about achieving and sustaining a collective vibe than making solo statements, and on that level it is quite successful.

—Bill Meyer

**In The Moment:** Exploration Intro; The Jaunt; Slightest Right; First Thing First; Lonely; Gnawa; On The Spot; Butterscotch; TomTom; Three Fifths A Man; In The Moment; Quartz; Just Stay Right There; Untitled; Requests; Time Travel; The Encore; The Drop; Finances. (73:42)

**Personnel:** Makaya McCraven, drums, beats, loops, overdubs; Matt Ulery, double bass, electric bass; Marquis Hill, trumpet; Junius Paul, double bass, electric bass; Justin "Justefan" Thomas, vibraphone; Jeff Parker, guitar; Joshua Abrams, double bass; De'Sean Jones, tenor saxophone; Tony Barba, tenor saxophone, electronics.

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

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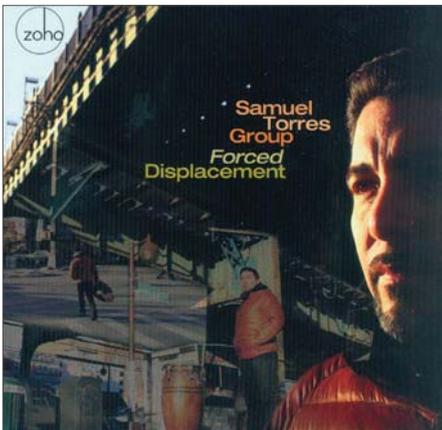
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**Samuel Torres Group**  
**Forced Displacement**

ZOHO 201507  
★★★★★

**Gabriel Alegria Afro-Peruvian Sextet**  
**10**

ZOHO 201509  
★★★★★

Upon arriving in the United States from his native Colombia 25 years ago, percussionist Samuel Torres was quickly recruited into trumpeter Arturo Sandoval's band. Since then, he's become an in-demand conguero, accompanying top names in jazz, Latin and pop. But Torres has always remained equally dedicated to composi-

tion, so when he received a grant from Chamber Music America in 2012, he seized the opportunity to bring those talents to the forefront. This, his third disc, is the product of that effort.

His 10-segment suite is a dedication to the numerous Colombians who've been displaced due to the country's long-festering conflict between guerillas, paramilitary groups and the national army. Accordingly, there are passages of melancholy, often with a haunting lyricism that's both unsettling and beautiful. These moments are balanced with strains of joy and declarations of fortitude and hope, often proudly resounding with Colombian folkloric elements.

The drum is certainly the pillar of this recording, and Torres makes this evident from the overture, choosing to introduce the suite's central motif on congas. His use of his percussion in a melodic role is especially dramatic in "Finale," which features a five-minute solo that bookends the suite. Balanced and brimming with emotion, sophisticated and passionate, Torres' heartfelt gesture to his homeland is a new career apex.

Also on the Zoho label is trumpeter Gabriel Alegria's 10. The title refers to the decade anniversary of his marvelous Afro-Peruvian Sextet. For the past decade, the group has been a prominent catalyst in the wedding of jazz harmonies with the Peruvian rhythms, especially *festejo*, a music born from the black populations of the country's coastal region.

The tracks alternate between American and Peruvian standards. Making the intercontinental concept even more literal, the band performs two national anthems: "The Star Spangled Banner"

and "Himno Nacional Del Perú."

The opener, "Caravan," immediately sets the tone. In the most direct application of *festejo*, the song is rascally and raucous. Layers of traditional percussion define the distinctive Afro-Peruvian feel. From that point, the album's musical sources become increasingly integrated.

A highpoint, "Homenaje A Chinchá," is also the most border-defying number. Here, tabla master Badal Roy joins Alegria for a percussion breakdown that builds to ecstatic peaks. It's a disc to be loved by progressives and block-party dancers alike.

—Jeff Potter

**Forced Displacement:** Overture; Las Canta'oras (The Female Singers); Velada De Tambores (Drums Soiree); Narrador De Espejismos (Narrator Of Mirages); Niño Pensante (The Thinking Child); El Silencio Desplazador (Displacing Silence); Lluvia, Luna Y Voz (Rain, Moon And Voice); Ermlsen, El Hijo De San Juan (Ermlsen, The Son Of San Juan); El Orgullo Del Tambor (Drum's Pride); Finale. (49:55)

**Personnel:** Samuel Torres, congas, claps; Michael Rodriguez, trumpet, flugelhorn; Yosvany Terry, alto and soprano saxophones; Luis Perdomo, piano; Marshall Gilkes, trombone, claps; Ricky Rodriguez, acoustic bass; Obed Calvaire, drums, claps; Jonathan Gómez, tambor alegre, tambora costeña, maracaón, tambor llamador, calabaza; Edmar Castañeda, claps.

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

**10:** Caravan; Take Five/El Condor Pasa; Taita Guaranguito; My Favorite Things; Birdland; Himno Nacional Del Perú; Lonely Woman; Contigo Perú; Homenaje A Chinchá; The Star Spangled Banner. (58:35)

**Personnel:** Gabriel Alegria, trumpet, flugelhorn, guapeo, vocals; Laura Andrea Leguía, soprano and tenor saxophones, guapeo, vocals; Freddy "Huevito" Lobatón, cajón, quijada, cajita, campana, guapeo, vocals; Yuri Juárez, acoustic and electric guitars, vocals; Hugo Alcázar, drums, guapeo, vocals (1-4, 6-8); Shirazette Tinnin; drums (5, 9, 10); Ron Carter, bass (1, 4, 8); John Benitez, bass (2, 3, 7); Essiet Essiet, bass (5, 6, 9, 10); Russell Ferrante, keyboards (6, 8); Arturo O'Farrill, piano (6, 10); Felix Valdelomar, guapeo, vocals (3, 7); Octavio Castillo, steel guitar (3), kalimba (9); Daniel Susnjar, second drum set (7); Pepe Villalobos, guapeo, vocals (3); Rostia Guzmán, guapeo, vocals (3); Gustavo Urbina, guitar, vocals (8); Badal Roy, tablas (6, 9), voice of the drum (9).

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

**Adam Rogers & David Binney**  
**R&B**

CRISS CROSS JAZZ 1379  
★★★★½

Listeners buying this album based on the title alone might be surprised to find that this is not a collection of Little Richard covers. Instead, it is compilation of swing and bop classics recorded by Rogers (guitarist Adam) and Binney (saxophonist David). Bolstered by bassist Reuben Rogers (no relation) and drummer Gerald Cleaver, this album is still a surprise.

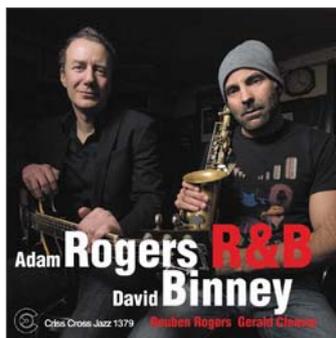
There are no original compositions from the quartet, just nine standards direct from a Jazz 101 course stretching back to the 1930s. They all receive fairly straightforward performances, allowing the co-leaders ample space to stretch out on familiar material. Binney, in regard to Rogers, states in the liner notes that he has "never played as much unison with anyone in [his] life." Their comfort with each other is apparent from the first note of Charlie Parker's "Ah-Leu-Cha," a brisk back-and-forth that pairs nicely with Miles Davis' "Sippin' At Bell's" several cuts later. The band gets furthest out with "My Ship," with Adam Rogers plucking delightfully cosmic dissonances and Reuben Rogers getting a sweet turn in the spotlight, and on an interpretation of Gordon Parks' "Don't Misunderstand," Binney gets downright romantic, fluttering over Cleaver's understated brushes. This is an accessible date with four guys who could play like this all night long—and likely have.

—Sean J. O'Connell

**R&B:** Ah-Leu-Cha; Introspection; In Love In Vain; Africaine; Don't Misunderstand; Sippin' At Bell's; Skydive; My Ship; I Feel A Song Coming On. (67:24)

**Personnel:** Adam Rogers, guitar; David Binney, alto saxophone; Reuben Rogers, bass; Gerald Cleaver, drums.

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



**Matt Lavelle/Jack DeSalvo/Tom Cabrera**  
**Sumari**

UNSEEN RAIN 9962  
★★★★★

Given that Matt Lavelle has studied with Ornette Coleman, and that Jack DeSalvo spent time in Ronald Shannon Jackson's Decoding Society, one might expect their group with percussionist Tom Cabrera to flex some harmolodic muscle. But if they do, it's not by playing like their mentors. While certain precedents are evident—the Bill Dixon-esque contrasts of space and density, the blend of swing and Middle Eastern rhythms made famous by Rabih Abou-Khalil—these musicians don't really sound like anyone else.

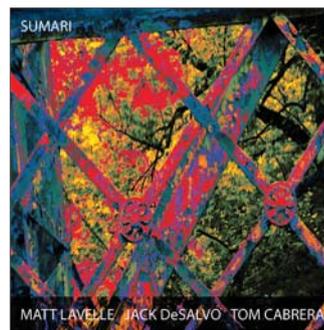
What they don't do is as important as what they do. Cabrera's kit includes doumbek, frame drum and riq, but his playing doesn't trade on exoticism. Rather, he uses the sonic qualities of each sparingly to create shifting patterns out of texture and implication. DeSalvo completes the rhythms with similarly spare phrases plucked from his cello and mandola. On brass and alto clarinet, Lavelle draws out his notes long enough to bring attention to the subtle variations he can exude within a single breath. The persistence of these tones means that when he does break into quicker phrases, the effect is galvanizing. While the music is collectively improvised, it aims for and achieves the directness of song.

—Bill Meyer

**Sumari:** Seth Dance; Counterparts Are Comparatively Encountered; Scientific Cults And Private Paranoias; Reincarnational Civilizations; Alternate Presents And Multiple Focus; The Gates Of Horn; The Nature Of Mass Events. (66:06)

**Personnel:** Matt Lavelle, trumpet, cornet, flugelhorn, pocket trumpet, alto clarinet; Jack DeSalvo, cello, guitar, mandola; Tom Cabrera, doumbek, riq, frame drum, tar, bass drum, percussion.

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



**Vinicius Cantuária**  
*Vinicius Canta Antonio Carlos Jobim*

SUNNYSIDE 1428

★★★★½

Recorded in Tokyo and Rio de Janeiro, with an international cast of guest vocalists and instrumentalists, Vinicius Cantuária's tribute to bossa nova master Antonio Carlos Jobim proves that the style "Tom" birthed in the early 1960s is now music of the world: timeless, evocative and forever dreamlike.

A brilliant interpreter of the Jobim oeuvre, Cantuária's rich vocals, sizzling acoustic guitar and subtle percussion express the eternal bossa nova vision with deep intuition.

An album of pristine Jobim covers featuring Cantuária's vocals and guitar would have been enough, but the guest musicians add another layer of expression to the deserving Jobim songbook. Popular Brazilian vocalist Joyce Moreno joins Cantuária for a dreamy "Caminhos Cruzados," and the song's highlight is a breathtaking acoustic solo by guitarist Chico Pinheiro, whose ringing, rising notes are pure sun-streaked bliss. Bill Frisell works his warped electric country magic on "Só Danço Samba," a buoyant pulse that floats on the Rio breeze, lovely and clear, and American jazz-pop vocalist Melody Gardot balances "Insensatez" with her tremulous coo. Cantuária closes with "Você Vai Ver," completing his masterpiece, mystery intact.

—Ken Micallef

**Vinicius Canta Antonio Carlos Jobim:** Lúgia; Caminhos Cruzados; Vivo Sonhando; Só Danço Samba; Eu Não Existo Sem Você; Este Seu Olhar; Retrato Em Branco E Preto; Por Causa De Você; Garota De Ipanema; Felicidade; Insensatez; Inútil Paisagem; Você Vai Ver. (39:55)

**Personnel:** Vinicius Cantuária, vocals, acoustic guitar, electric guitar, percussion; Bill Frisell (4, 12), Ricardo Silveira (9), electric guitars; Ryuichi Sakamoto, piano (5, 8); Joyce (2), Melody Gardot (11), vocals; Chico Pinheiro (2), Celso Fonseca (3), acoustic guitars; Ryoji Orihara, electric bass (7); Jyoji Sawada, double bass (1); Ayumi Hashimoto, cello (6).

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



**Joshua Breakstone**  
*2nd Avenue: The Return Of The Cello Quartet*

CAPRI 74137

★★★★★

Ever since his first recording as a leader (1983's *Wonderful!*), Joshua Breakstone has remained one of the most consistent of all jazz guitarists. He has never strayed from the straightahead path, holding his own with veteran greats (including Barry Harris, Kenny Barron, Pepper Adams, Jimmy Knepper and Jack McDuff) all while maintaining an attractively clean tone and an unhurried style.

*2nd Avenue* is a follow-up of sorts to 2013's *With The Wind And The Rain*. The latter found cellist Mike Richmond joining Breakstone's trio, which at the time included bassist Lisle Atkinson and drummer Eliot Zigmund. This new disc features the same lineup, except with Andy Watson on drums. The repertoire is inspired, including worthy obscurities by Lee Konitz ("Thingin'" which is the saxophonist's melody line on "All The Things You Are"), Cannonball Adderley ("Home"), Dexter Gordon ("Evergreenish") and Sonny Clark ("My Conception"). The guitarist is particularly rewarding on the two ballads ("I Wish I Knew" and "My Conception"), keeping the music interesting by letting the melodies breathe. He is also equally skilled on the uptempo tunes, such as the witty "I'm An Old Cowhand," the cooking "The Lamp Is Low" and his lengthy "2nd Ave: Blues For Imahori."

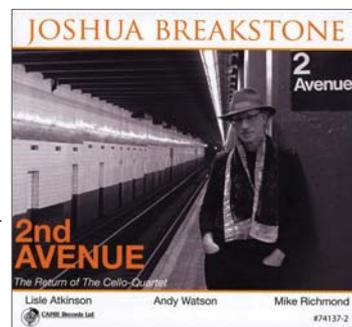
Atkinson and Watson also have their brief spots, but *2nd Avenue* is primarily a fine showcase for Breakstone.

—Scott Yanow

**2nd Avenue:** Thingin'; Home; I'm An Old Cowhand; I Wish I Knew; Evergreenish; The Lamp Is Low; Hit It; My Conception; 2nd Ave: Blues For Imahori. (71:07)

**Personnel:** Joshua Breakstone, guitar; Mike Richmond, cello (1–3, 5, 7); Lisle Atkinson, bass; Andy Watson, drums.

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



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## More Soulful Than Most

**Delta Moon, *Low Down* (Jumping Jack 12015; 45:11 ★★★★★)**

The 10th album by this blues-rock band in Atlanta follows the game plan of previous efforts by sustaining a musical atmosphere of swampland sultriness. The potency of guitar work by Tom Gray and Mark Johnson remains strong, and their riffs are compellingly coherent. Gray sings nine equally impressive original songs in a sandpapered rasp that's a salve for the affective aches and urgencies acknowledged throughout his thoughtful lyrics. Their best album also shines for a memorable take on Skip James' "Hard Time Killing Floor Blues."

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

**Layla Zoe, *Live At Spirit Of 66* (Cable Car 0311-46; 43:32/50:13 ★★★½)** A Canadian often on tour in Europe, Layla Zoe may be the most passionate blues singer anywhere. Here she gives it her all in front of her ponderous, stuck-on-Hendrix German power-trio in a Belgian club. Even as her immense lung power keeps the volume sky-high, Zoe keeps sight of the emotional core of nerve-end-startling original compositions about self-preservation, lovers, afterlife and her Canadian roots. Knowing the importance of aching sensitivity to modern blues, the singer also commands attention in a quiet mode on a couple tracks, including most of an 18-minute feminization of James Brown's "It's A Man's World."

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

**Steve Riley & The Mamou Playboys, *Voyageurs* (Self Release; 61:46 ★★★★★)** Accordion master Steve Riley and his feisty troupe of South Louisianans are worth slogging on foot through acres of marshes to hear in person, especially if they're performing songs off their 14th album. As an excellent Cajun folk band with Creole r&b leanings, the Playboys rely on old bayou musical tricks—for starters, striking accordion, fiddle and guitar textures—to stir the roux of originals and newly powered-up versions of Lafayette Parish tunes. But the status quo gets flipped by the Celtic-sounding "Malcolm's Reel" and by the bluesy rocker "Bottle It Up," two songs by band fiddler Kevin Wimmer requiring Riley to use a new custom-made accordion that allowed him access to once-unreachable sharps and flats.

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

**Voo Davis, *Midnight Mist* (Butter & Bacon; 62:52 ★★★½)** An exercise in modern blues-rock, Voo Davis' third album, recorded in Louisiana, has affinities to albums by The Allman Brothers Band and Lynyrd Skynyrd. Yet this native Alabamian based in Chicago isn't some rank emulator; instead, he brings his likeable, individualized vocals and guitar exhilarations to bear on hardwearing self-penned numbers that carry his own Southern blues moods. Davis is convincing whether hewing to full-tilt or easy-does-it tempos.



Franher Joseph (left), Vic Stafford, Tom Gray and Mark Johnson of Delta Moon

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

**The Texas Horns, *Blues Gotta Holda Me* (Vizztone TH01; 51:02 ★★★½)** The Texas Horns, around since 1999 but only now releasing a debut album, are more blues-oriented than similar horn bands of high quality like Lavay Smith & Her Red Hot Skillet Lickers and Mike Merola's City Boys Allstars. Saxophonists Mark Kazanoff and John Mills and trumpeter Al Gomez are to be admired for their high spirit and their ability to shuffle, swing, second-line and stomp in-house tunes (many are instrumentals) along with artifacts originating with Louis Jordan, Percy and Curtis Mayfield and Earl King. Kazanoff proves to be an unremarkable vocalist, so it's fortunate that luminaries Marcia Ball and W. C. Clark stopped by to sing a song apiece.

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

**Danielle Nicole, *Wolf Den* (Concord 36460; 51:01 ★★★★★)** Ex-Trampled Under Foot singer-bassist Danielle Nicole strikes out on her own under the watchful eye of guitarist-producer Anders Osborne in funky New Orleans. There's plenty to be thankful for, starting with Nicole's assured vocals and the level of presence and control in her delivery. The songs, most penned by Nicole and Osborne, are a satisfying bunch except for a misguided stab at arena-rock profundity, "Didn't Do You No Good." If Etta James were alive, she would likely approve of Nicole's version of "Breaking Up Somebody's Home" but tell Nicole to be more vigilant about the hazards of histrionics.

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

**Larry Campbell & Teresa Williams, *Larry Campbell & Teresa Williams* (Red House 285; 44:00 ★★★★★)** Tendering their first album for approval, Larry Campbell (who's worked with Bob Dylan, many others) and his wife Teresa Williams are fast becoming the new darlings of Americana with their clean and melodic singing on pure, intelligent songs composed by Williams. They radiate, too, when reviving Rev. Gary Davis' rendition of "Keep Your Lamp Trimmed and Burning." Reminiscent at times of husband-wife acts Richard & Linda Thompson and Maria & Geoff Muldaur, the two are wholly successful in creating a fresh music out of folk, gospel, blues and pure country music. **DB**

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



### Giovanni Guidi Trio *This Is The Day*

ECM 2403 4709271

★★★

From the first notes of the opening track to the echo-drenched fade of the final chord, *This Is The Day* radiates a multilayered beauty. Every note glistens, and Manfred Eicher's production caresses the silences left by each musician, so that each pause is like a breath being held, eloquent in its emptiness.

All three musicians work the spaces between their notes masterfully. "Carried Away" begins with Thomas Morgan's unaccompanied bass, played unhurriedly for about a minute. The tone alone induces a kind of spell, full of wood and air, deep and dark. Then the listener notices that Morgan is playing the theme of the piece doubled by Guidi in the upper midrange of the piano. They move together for a few seconds, sketching out a minor-key melody, after which they drift into their own ruminations, with drummer João Lobo adding some atmospheric mallet taps and cymbal whispers. All three ease in and out of free time. And then it evaporates, leaving a meditative silence as its memory.

Just about every moment of *This Is The Day* is gorgeous. Whether extemporizing freely or working with dolorous Spanish-sounding themes articulated with minor sixths ("Where They'd Lived," "The Night It Rained Forever"), the trio maintains a bucolic vibe.

A creepy scenario unfolds on "The Cobweb," with brushes scuttling on a snare and Morgan's bass wandering like a shadow across a darkened kitchen floor. On another track, all three musicians play freely but without seeming to listen to what the others are doing, each being too wrapped up in his own soliloquy. Guidi's piano rambles almost atonally, as if spouting nonsense, then splits into different lines that heat up as if in an angry dialog. The title? "The Debate."

Think of *This Is The Day* as a single work. Then slip into the still waters and enjoy.

—Bob Doerschuk

**This Is The Day:** Trilly; Carried Away; Game Of Silence; The Cobweb; Baiiia; The Debate; Where They'd Lived; Quizas Quizas Quizas; Migration; Trilly Var.; I'm Through With Love; The Night It Rained Forever. (77.23)

**Personnel:** Giovanni Guidi, piano; Thomas Morgan, bass; João Lobo, drums.

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

**Devin Gray**  
*Relative Resonance*

SKIRL 029  
★★★★★

Drummer Devin Gray mastered his chops during years spent in Baltimore, and even though he relocated to New York in 2006, he took his time developing his own projects there. His terrific 2012 debut *Dirigo Rataplan* was made with a group of players with deep ties to Baltimore—bassist Michael Formanek, saxophonist Ellery Eskelin and trumpeter Dave Ballou—but his dazzling new album proves beyond any doubt that he's found his groove in the Big Apple. On *Relative Resonance* he leads a powerful band—reedist Chris Speed, pianist Kris Davis and bassist Chris Tordini—through eight knotty originals that reflect the influence composers with a penchant for extended, shape-shifting themes: Tim Berne and Henry Threadgill.

Sometimes Speed and Davis play spindly independent lines, simulating a kind of torn Möbius strip, which each flailing end desperately seeking to reconnect. Those bobbing-and-weaving lines are set within frenetic but tightly coiled high-energy grooves (with shades of Jim Black apparent). On a track like "In The Cut" the beats simulate the fractured patterns of drum-and-bass, with Tordini's stabbing figures at once clinging to the drummer's lines while reach out harmonically to Speed and Davis, who play fluid, snaking solos, before the tempo cools and the melodists join together to state the reconstituted, decelerated head. "Notester" is another time-tripper, with the rhythm section stretching the groove like taffy, while on the rather open "Undo The Redo" he hints at a rubato feel all the way through. *Relative Resonance*, a phrase borrowed from Elvin Jones, is detail-rich and rigorous, requiring serious attention and paying serious dividends in kind.

—Peter Margasak

**Relative Resonance:** City Nothing City; In the Cut; Notester; Jungle Design; Transatlantic Transitions; Undo The Redo; Relative Resonance; Search it Up. (52:41)

**Personnel:** Devin Gray, drums; Chris Speed, tenor saxophone, clarinet; Kris Davis, piano; Chris Tordini, bass.

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



**Lazer Lloyd**  
*Lazer Llyod*

LOTS OF LOVE  
★★★★½

Lazer Lloyd is a solid improviser and a charismatic performer who eschews the face-pulling acrobatics that lead guitarists often fall prey to. In performance, he tends to stand in one place, rocking back and forth as he unspools his intricate single-note runs and stinging bent-note phrases. The guitarist is supported by the rhythms of bass man Moshe Davidson and drummer Elimelech Grundman, but it's his exuberant vocals and razor-sharp guitar work that gives the music its energy.

"Rockin' In The Holy Land" is a bluesy stomp driven by Grundman's four-on-the-floor backbeat, a jubilant singalong chorus and an extended solo from Lloyd that slides from the Mississippi delta to brittle, staccato Chuck Berry-like fills. His quiet acoustic take on Otis Redding's "(Sittin' On) The Dock Of The Bay" features a vocal that's a consummate display of understated grief. Album opener "Burning Thunder" and the follow-up "Suffering" are full of anger and frustration. Lloyd's tension-filled solos match the emotional tenor of the songs, portraying a soul torn between the desire for release and a tendency to keep repeating self-destructive patterns.

Lloyd gives sway to his spiritual side on the jazzy r&b-flavored "Whole Heart" and "Time To Love," a late-night groove that slowly builds to deliver one of the record's most frenzied solos. Lloyd's playing has echoes of many blues, rock and jazz greats, with hints of Berry, Albert King, Jimi Hendrix and Wes Montgomery floating through the mix.

—j. poet

**Lazer Lloyd:** Burning Thunder; Suffering; Rockin' In The Holy Land; Never Give Up; Out Of Time; Broken Dreams; Set My Soul Free; (Sittin' On) The Dock Of The Bay; Moroccan Women; Love Yourself; Time To Love; Whole Heart. (56:00)

**Personnel:** Lazer Lloyd, guitar, vocals, harmonica; Moshe Davidson, bass; Elimelech Grundman, drums; Kfir Tsairi, keyboards (2, 3, 4, 5).

**Ordering Information:** [lazerlloyd.com](http://lazerlloyd.com)



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**David Cook**  
*Scenic Design*

BROOKLYN JAZZ UNDERGROUND 055

★★★★½

*Scenic Design*, the second disc from pianist David Cook, is beautiful in its simplicity. That sentiment may be surprising, considering Cook has worked as music director for high-flash pop acts like Taylor Swift and Jennifer Hudson. But on this disc, his jazz sensibilities are completely removed from arena pop. Cook showcases slowly expanding music, using each track to develop well-planned aural ideas.

On Cook's uptempo tunes—the whirling “Shift,” the in-the-pocket “80s TV Theme Song”—his playing is deliberate. The music never gets away from the pianist, and he seems most comfortable letting his ideas ferment and expand at slower speeds. This isn't to say *Scenic Design* doesn't have its mad-cap moments; on “Shift,” Cook and his supporting cast of trumpeter David Smith and saxophonist Ben Wendel create vertiginous, acrobatic solos full of rushing notes. Cook relies on his sidemen to elevate his compositions. One of the best examples of this is “Safe & Sound,” a duet with Smith. The tune begins with an interlocking, pointillistic introduction, then leads into a soaring solo trumpet melody. This push-and-pull creates tension, propelling the music forward in a way not heard on other tunes on the disc.

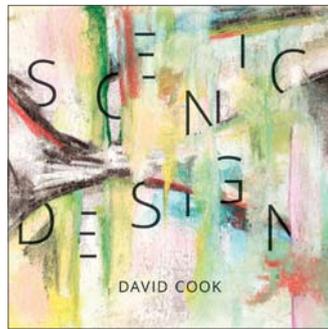
*Scenic Design* showcases a well-rounded pianist continuing to develop new ideas. Though Cook is most compelling when crafting soft ballads, his compositional ideas translate well to more spirited songs.

—Jon Ross

**Scenic Design:** Flower+Hope; 80s TV Theme Song; Shift; I Know You Know; Scenic Design; Long Ago & Far Away; Safe & Sound; Midwestern; Still. (47:06)

**Personnel:** David Cook, piano; David Smith, trumpet; Ben Wendel, tenor saxophone; Matt Clohesy, bass; Kendrick Scott, drums; Shayna Steele, vocals (4).

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



**Brad Myers**  
*Prime Numbers*

COLLOQUY 1357

★★★★★

Veteran guitarist Myers exhibits old-school soulfulness, a highly syncopated sense of comping and a relaxed sense of swing on his long-overdue debut as a leader. With vibraphonist Chris Barrick joining him on the front line alongside tenor saxophonist Ben Walkenhauer, Myers spins warm, deliberate lines on his Grant Green-flavored opener, “Bentley's Blues,” as well as on winning interpretations of Wayne Shorter's “The Big Push” and Thelonious Monk's “Evidence.” There's also a tip of the hat to Monk on the quirky, tempo-shifting “Spherical,” which serves as a potent solo vehicle for drummer Tom Buckley.

Walkenhauer distinguishes himself as a blistering soloist on Myers' opus “Rules Of Three,” and delivers with poignant lyricism on the crystalline ballad “You Are Here.” The guitarist shows tasty restraint in his solos on two bossa nova originals, “Sunset In Curaçao” and “There Is Space For Us,” and Barrick contributes a striking, rhythmically shifting arrangement of Bronislaw Kaper's oft-covered classic “Invitation.” This swinging session, anchored by the fundamental bass grooves of bassist Peter Gemus, marries modernist ideas with a straightahead sound.

—Bill Milkowski

**Prime Numbers:** Bentley's Blues; Evidence; Sunset in Curaçao; Spherical; Rule Of Threes; The Big Push; You Are Here; There Is Space For Us; Invitation. (67:01)

**Personnel:** Brad Myers, guitar; Chris Barrick, vibraphone; Ben Walkenhauer, tenor saxophone; Peter Gemus, bass; Tom Buckley, drums; Michael Mavridoglou, trumpet (5, 8); Dominic Marino, trombone (5).

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



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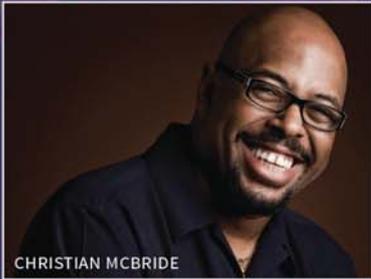
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# From the Fields

The term “field recording” encompasses many types of captured sounds and noises, but what all field recordings share in common is a connection to time and place. Five new albums employ field recordings for very different purposes and from wildly different sources, but all five vividly capture the spirit of where they came from.

**Lawrence English's *Viento* (Taiga 029; 35:09 ★★)** attempts to document the forlorn, windswept landscapes of Antarctica, where the Australian sound artist visited to make this project. “Patagonia” captures the banging of metal on metal; it feels as though the structure it was recorded from is precarious. In “Antarctica,” the wind is unceasing, creating a stark sense that this is a not a place one would survive without strong shelter.

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

***Music Of Tanzania* (Sublime Frequencies 096; 61:32 ★★½)** is perhaps the most traditional documentarian release of the five, consisting of field recordings gathered by sound artist Laurent Jeanneau between December 1999 and March 2000. It captures the music of several marginal ethnic groups from the country's vast hinterlands, the Datoga, the Makonde, the Hadza and the Mtwara. The Hadza are still people of the bush, and their thumb piano music is hypnotic; other sounds include bowed strings, shakers, singing and dancing. The second LP is devoted to long recordings of Makonde and Mtwara ceremonies. The Mtwara peoples' singing and flutes bear distant traces of Arabic music in their modal melodies. This is music of people constantly on the edge of losing their way of life, and it's hard to know how much longer it will be around in this form.

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

***War Is A Wound, Peace Is A Scar* (Glitterbeat 021; 35:39 ★★)** features recordings of various artists that the producers collectively label Hanoi Masters. It intimately captures a handful of elderly veteran singers and instrumentalists singing about the Vietnam War. Americans are rarely exposed to this viewpoint, and though the words are in Vietnamese, a haunted sense of loss lives inside these voices. The stringed instruments embrace microtonality, their melodies slurring from



Zomba Prison Project

note to note in an otherworldly reminder of the music that may be about to fade away as this generation dies away and leaves behind a globalized nation.

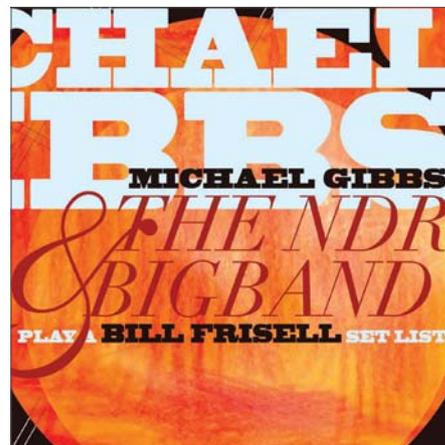
Ordering info: [glitterbeat.com](http://glitterbeat.com)

***Zomba Prison Project's I Have No Everything Here* (Six Degrees 19379; 31:25 ★★)** dives deep into the world of a neglected population of inmates and guards at a prison in Malawi. Many prisoners and guards (male and female) recorded here have regular access to instruments, and while Stefano Nyerenda's rap on “Women Today Take Care of Business” sounds bracingly of-the-moment musically, most of the others prefer a more basic guitar-and-voice approach, singing sweetly songs whose melodic grace is undercut by titles such as “I See The Whole World Dying of AIDS,” an ebullient song sung over cycling guitar by a guard named Ines Kaunda.

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

Finally, ***Glassine's No Stairway* (Patient Sounds 073; ★★½)** takes an interpretive approach to field recording. To compose this album, the Baltimore-based artist rearranged surreptitiously captured recordings of people showing off their guitar skills (and their inevitable attempts at Led Zeppelin's “Stairway To Heaven”) at the music retail store Guitar Center. The resulting soundscape artfully reconstructs the often bewildering sonic environment of an instrument store into hazy, atmospheric instrumental sketches that emphasize the distance between people as they fill the same space with sound. **DB**

Ordering info: [glassinemusic.bandcamp.com](http://glassinemusic.bandcamp.com)



## Michael Gibbs and the NDR Bigband Play A Bill Frisell Set List

CUNEIFORM RECORDS RUNE 400

★★★★

At the 2013 Überjazz Festival in Hamburg, Germany, conductor Michael Gibbs and the NDR Bigband sought to answer a burning question: How much fire could a large ensemble bring to a typical Bill Frisell set? Would the extra instrumentation ruin the guitarist's aesthetic? With Frisell at the helm, the band played through his own compositions, standards and favorite covers—proving that, yes, bigger can sometimes be better.

On tracks like “Throughout” and “On The Lookout/Far Away,” the ethereal, floating textures of Frisell's work expertly translate to a large ensemble; the added instrumentation instills the atmospheric chords with depth. Gibbs holds the ensemble at bay, propping up Frisell and each soloist; the superbly blended backgrounds move as one, focusing all attention to the featured players.

The soloists really make this performance. On Frisell's “Throughout,” tenor saxophonist Christof Lauer takes Frisell's sprawling guitar lines, compresses them and speeds everything up. His solo works well because the bit of manic playing comes out of a sublimely peaceful tune. Lauer returns with a more subdued demeanor on “Subconscious Lee.” The ensemble playing on this tune teeters on the edge of collapse for a bit, but a string of clearly articulated phrases keeps everything together.

The band might be at its best in the more tender moments of Frisell's aesthetic. Frisell's fragile introduction of “You've Got To Hide Your Love Away” turns into a poignant cover of the Beatles tune when the entire band enters, rising in volume but never getting overly aggressive. By laying back and letting Frisell's music shine, Gibbs and the NDR Bigband have created an essential entry in Frisell's oeuvre. —Jon Ross

**Play A Bill Frisell Set List:** Throughout; Las Vegas Tango; Subconscious Lee; On The Lookout/Far Away; Misterioso; Monica Jane; You've Got To Hide Your Love Away; Benny's Bugle; Freddy's Step. (61:06)

**Personnel:** Michael Gibbs, conductor; Bill Frisell, Stephan Diez, guitar; Jeff Ballard, drums; Thorsten Benkenstein, Ingolf Burkhardt, Felix Meyer, Michael Leuschner, trumpet, flugelhorn; Fieta Felsch, Peter Bolte, alto saxophone, flute; Christof Lauer, tenor and soprano saxophones; Lutz Buchner, tenor saxophone, clarinet; Thomas Gramatzki, baritone saxophone, bass clarinet; Dan Gottshall, Klaus Heidenreich, Stefan Lottermann, trombone; Ingo Lahme, bass trombone, tuba; Ingmar Heller, bass; Vladyslav Sendecski, piano; Marcio Doctor, percussion.

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

**Roberto Magris**  
*Enigmatix*

JMOOD 010  
★★★★½

Italian pianist Roberto Magris, who prides himself on having played with such legends as drummers Albert “Tootie” Heath and Idris Muhammad, as well as saxophonist Herb Geller, goes modern and groovy on *Enigmatix*, his intriguing foray into complex funk and pop. Here, he works with bassist Dominique Sanders, drummer Brian Steever and percussionist Pablo Sanhueza, whose congas give the tunes heft and a faint Latin accent.

Magris is a player of considerable flair. His right hand is a wonder; check out how he embellishes Monique Danielle’s vocals on “No Sadness,” how he builds the Stevie Wonder tune “My Cherie Amour” into a big statement, how he modulates the groove of both versions of the title track with fast, high cascades. As a soloist, Magris doesn’t skimp on his improvisations, but fortunately stops short of floridity. Even on the Monkish “J.F. No Key,” he stays on course, maintaining control as the tune shifts mood and meter. The song showcases the band’s strengths: confident rhythms (the drums-bass interplay is consistently delicious), Magris’ easy authority and a constant sense of joy. The one anomaly is “Counterparts,” where Magris fastens onto a stark descending figure as his rhythm section works around him, shifting sonority and attack every few bars. Were this band less inventive, the cut would be boring. It’s not.

—Carlo Wolff

**Enigmatix:** Enigmatix—Part 1; Counterparts; No Sadness; J.F. No Key; Enigmatix—Part 2; My Cherie Amour; Do It Again. (66:12)

**Personnel:** Roberto Magris, piano; Dominique Sanders, acoustic and electric bass; Pablo Sanhueza, congas and percussion; Brian Steever, drums; Monique Danielle, vocals (3).

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



**John Hollenbeck**  
*Songs We Like A Lot*

SUNNYSIDE 1412  
★★★★½

Joining forces again with inventive singers Kate McGarry and Theo Bleckmann and keyboard wizard Uri Caine, drummer John Hollenbeck stands on the podium here, not behind his kit, and indulges deeply in philosophical meditations (often mesmerizing but academic) on midcentury pop anthems, with asides in Rumi and Pharrell Williams.

Hollenbeck’s organic building blocks are all in place: clear lines layered and overlapped, entwining unisons, pointillistic starscapes, fractaled arpeggios; these approaches echo his chamber pieces and draw on Bob Brookmeyer’s composing concept of single-cell lasering into infinity.

Joy bursts from the opening arpeggios and antiphonals on “How Can I Keep From Singing,” a Christian hymn repurposed by the late Pete Seeger, then fold into a wordless duo between Bleckmann and Steffen Webber’s tenor sax. Bleckmann’s bald, creamy autovox limns the verse of Cyndi Lauper’s “True Colors” before McGarry breaks into the song’s familiar chorus, with Tony Lakatos’ sax filigree interspersed throughout.

“Constant Conversation” opens with side-drum patterns in something like 13/4 and vocals reading the words of mystic poet Rumi over fluttering brass. “Close To You” moves as a dead-slow dirge for McGarry’s voice, over which textured asides and polyphonic fantasias trump melody line. Comic relief bursts in as a fragment of arcane humor, translating Daft Punk/Pharrell Williams’ “Get Lucky” into vocoder Russian.

—Fred Bouchard

**Songs We Like A Lot:** How Can I Keep From Singing?; True Colors; Constant Conversation; Close To You; Get Lucky Manifesto; The Snow Is Deep On The Ground; Up, Up And Away. (57:08)

**Personnel:** Kate McGarry, Theo Bleckmann, vocals; Uri Caine, piano, organ; Gary Versace, melodica, organ; Frankfurt Radio Big Band.

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



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## Steve Slagle & Bill O'Connell *The Power Of Two*

PANORAMA 005

★★★★½

*The Power Of Two* had its genesis on Aug. 3, 2014, the day that pianist Kenny Drew Jr. passed away at just 56 years old. Steve Slagle was so moved by Drew's premature death that he immediately composed "KD Jr.," a song that is both melancholy and more upbeat than one might expect. While it mourns Drew's passing, it also celebrates his life and musical legacy.

"KD Jr." became the inspiration for *The Power Of Two*, a set of duets with pianist Bill O'Connell. Consisting of five Slagle originals, O'Connell's "A New Day," a brief free improvisation and four

songs from other sources, *The Power Of Two* builds and extends upon the mood set by "KD Jr." The feeling of melancholia permeates the more lyrical performances, particularly the medium-tempo ballad "One Life," as well as the concise rendition of the standard "I'll Wait And Pray" and the spirited original "Into Your Grace."

However, this duet set also explores other moods and tempos. The opening "Good News" is a bluesy number with a scalar melody and altered chords, and features a downward motion felt throughout the performance. "A New Day" captures some of Slagle's most heated playing along with hints of Keith Jarrett in O'Connell's solo. Miles Davis' "Circle" gets a rare revival and still sounds modern nearly a half-century after its debut. And the title track has a complex melody worthy of the late Ornette Coleman, along with some intense improvising.

In addition to his distinctive alto playing, Slagle displays fluency and individuality on flute during Bill Evans' playful "Peri's Scope," Dave Brubeck's "The Duke" and the brief, free-form "Whistling Spirits." While O'Connell is often in a supportive role, his very attentive playing and quietly inventive ideas should not be overlooked. He proves to be a perfect musical partner for Slagle during this thoughtful outing.

—Scott Yanow

**The Power Of Two:** Good News; One Life; Peri's Scope; I'll Wait And Pray; A New Day; KD Jr.; The Power Of Two; The Duke; Circle; Into Your Grace; Whistling Spirits. (53:30)

**Personnel:** Steve Slagle, alto saxophone, flute; Bill O'Connell, piano.

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

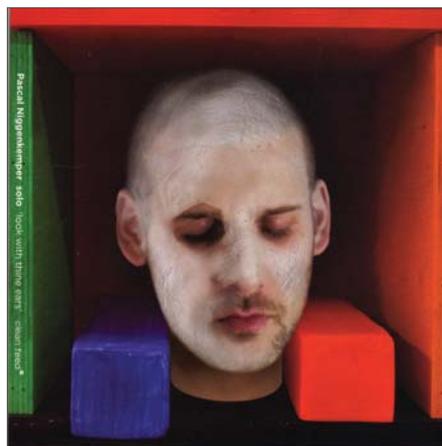
## Pascal Niggenkemper *Solo: Look With Thine Ears*

CLEAN FEED 324

★★★★★

Franco-German bassist Pascal Niggenkemper has called New York City home for the past decade, and has spent half of that time honing the singular approach to his instrument that is showcased on this CD. He recorded it shortly after a gig in which he accompanied a production of *King Lear*, and that experience likely influenced this music as strongly as his metropolitan environs. Shakespeare indulged in precipitous shifts of mood and tone throughout his plays, and a walk through the Big Apple's notoriously lively streets is an opportunity to experience a no-quarter bombardment of sights and sounds.

Niggenkemper makes something similar happen in real time with his acoustic bass. He uses a host of unspecified treatments to expand his instrument's voice to encompass buzzes, rattles and woofer-rupturing groans, and employs his remarkable technique to make it sound more like an ensemble than a single instrument. As befits a man who has worked with both Weasel Walter and Maria Schneider, he doesn't stay too long in one sonic space. He bows harmonics with the percussive insistence of a telegraph key operator on the title track, and then follows it up with a savagely distorted blast that's more reminiscent of Colin Stetson's baritone sax barrages than any string piece one might name. At the other end of the energy spectrum, he uses patient pluck-



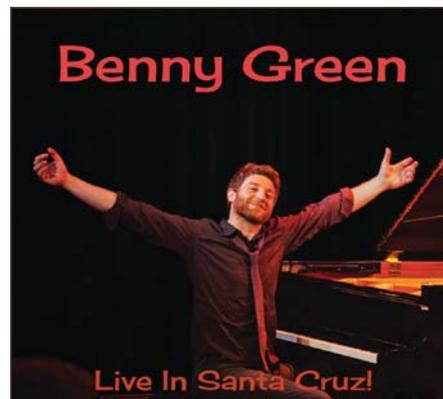
ing and a light shower of rattles to sound like the duet album that Charlie Haden and Ed Blackwell should have made but never did on the gorgeously solemn "Unpublished Virtues Of The Earth." This track is key to this record's enduring appeal. It's not just an exposition of extended techniques; it uses those methods to express a range of deeply felt emotions.

—Bill Meyer

**Look With Thine Ears:** Look With Thine Ears; This Shall Not Be Revoked; If You Will Marry, Make Your Love To Me; Men Of Stone; At Fortune's Alms; Let Me Kiss Your Hand; Let Me Wipe It First, It Smells Of Mortality; Unpublished Virtues Of The Earth; Sharper Than A Serpent's Tooth; Be This Perpetual; Blow Wind And Crack Your Cheeks; Let The Fork Invade The Region Of My Heart; Let Me Still Remain The True Blank Of Thine Eye. (55:24)

**Personnel:** Pascal Niggenkemper, bass.

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



## Benny Green *Live In Santa Cruz!*

SUNNYSIDE 1401

★★★★★

Benny Green may be the most accessible piano player since Gene Harris. At least, that's one of the many lessons offered by *Live In Santa Cruz!*, Green's latest live disc.

Recorded at the Kuumbwa Jazz Center on the 20th anniversary of Green's performance there with the Ray Brown Trio, this is transparency in the best sense of the word. In his music, and in his boyish enthusiasm between songs (in which he assures his audience that they're beautiful), he emanates positivity.

On uptempo numbers, rather than flaunt his virtuosity, he seems almost surprised and delighted by the powers at his command. At a rapid-fire clip, his left-hand attack is sharp; he might emphatically jab a low note or an open fifth to punctuate the groove, as on "Certainly." But it's not his dexterity that impresses most; it's his intelligence. Racing through changes in brisk, even 16th notes, he never sounds repetitious except where repetition is deliberate.

"Bish Bash" showcases the group's compatibility. When Green invents a figure with triplet accents, bassist David Wong maintains his eighth-note walk while drummer Kenny Washington recreates the triplet feel on bass drum and cymbal without a moment's pause.

A different light illuminates the ballads. Heavy pedaling behind dense clusters, tremolos and smears add plenty of juice to the medium-tempo "Phoebe's Samba," but on "Cactus Flower" the delicate tone sounds as if Green was playing another piano. He maintains this hushed approach on "Golden Flamingo," the better to allow Washington to shine on brushes.

The final ingredients of Green's accessibility are his compositions and their brevity. He wrote all nine tracks, each with a nicely crafted first verse and a scenic roadmap for solos. The longest track is "Anna's Blues," hitting five-and-a-half minutes at the end. But by that point, with the crowd clapping along to the joyous shuffle beat, even *that* feels a little too short.

—Bob Doerschuk

**Live In Santa Cruz!:** Certainly; Phoebe's Samba; Cactus Flower; Sonny Clark; Golden Flamingo; Tales Of Malone; Forgiveness; Bish Bash; Anna's Blues. (42:13)

**Personnel:** Benny Green, piano; David Wong, bass; Kenny Washington, drums.

**Ordering Info:** [sunnysidezone.com](http://sunnysidezone.com)



## Hamilton de Holanda *World Of Pixinguinha*

ADVENTURE MUSIC 10912

★★★★

Relatively unknown in the United States, saxophonist Alfredo da Rocha Viana Jr., also known as Pixinguinha, was Brazil's first true pop star, taking advantage of the new technologies of radio and recording in early 20th Century Rio de Janeiro. Pixinguinha blended earlier variants of the choro style with jazz-like harmonies and sophisticated arrangements, eventually touring with the group Oito Batutas to great acclaim in Europe. On *World Of Pixinguinha*, the strength and beauty of Pixinguinha's music is wonderfully realized by Brazilian mandolin (or *mandolim*) master Hamilton de Holanda.

Rio de Janeiro's Holanda has recorded more than 20 albums of mandolin virtuosity. His prowess matches Mike Marshall and Chris Thile, yet he retains a richness and vibrancy that is unique. Surrounding himself with musicians drawn from jazz's global elite, Holanda makes a case for the mandolin as a supreme improvising instrument, recalling, in his hands, the energy and invention of Django Reinhardt.

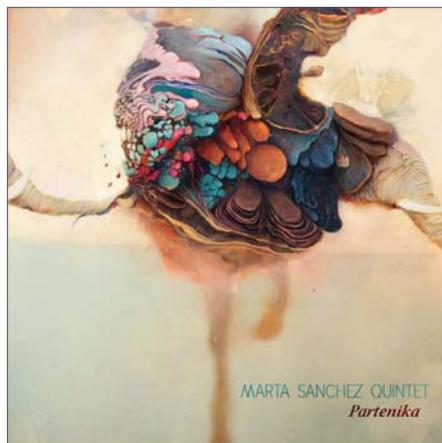
Holanda's dazzling originality is evident in the solo-mandolin album opener "Naquele Tempo," followed by 11 tracks of Pixinguinha-inspired majesty. Accordionist Richard Galliano joins Holanda for a poignant yet still rip-roaring "Agradecendo," whereas pianist Stefano Bollani and Holanda circle each other like bull and bullfighter in the tense but joyful "Canção Da Odalisca." The familiar melody of "Um A Zero" goes by in a flash in a Holanda duet with trumpeter Wynton Marsalis. Pianist Chucho Valdés guests on two tracks: "Lamentos" and its opposite, the festive "Benguelê." The songs bring forth the sound of two masters in a playpen of their own design.

*World Of Pixinguinha* is a study in passion and contemplation, beauty and splendor, from the old world to ours. —Ken Micallef

**World Of Pixinguinha:** Naquele Tempo; Lamentos; Agradecendo; Canção Da Odalisca; Um A Zero; Ingênuo; Rosa; Seu Lourenço No Vinho; Benguelê; Yaó; Capricho De Pixinguinha; Carinhoso. (51:44)

**Personnel:** Hamilton de Holanda, mandolin; Stefano Bollani (4, 8), Mário Laginha (7), Omar Sosa (10), Chucho Valdés (2, 9), André Mehmari (11), piano; Richard Galliano, accordion (3, 6); Odette Ernest Dias, flute (12); Carlos Malta, tenor saxophone (12); Wynton Marsalis, trumpet (5).

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



## Marta Sánchez Quintet *Partenika*

FRESH SOUND NEW TALENT 470

★★★★

## Michael Oien *And Now*

FRESH SOUND NEW TALENT 467

★★★½

There's an intriguing flow throughout *Partenika*, pianist Marta Sánchez's second album as a leader. Like the heartbeat of a city or the pulse of an ecosystem, Sánchez's original pieces mesh together into a comprehensive framework.

The native of Spain and current Brooklyn resident was classically trained at her hometown conservatory before earning her master's degree in jazz from NYU. For this disc, she utilized one of her New York-based working bands, a cohesive unit compiled from international voices. (Alto saxophonist Román Filiú is from Cuba by way of Spain; tenor player Jerome Sabbagh hails from Paris; bassist Sam Anning grew up in Perth, Australia; and drummer Jason Burger was born and raised in California.)

"Opening" begins with cymbal washes, arco bass and Sánchez's hypnotic piano lines. It's an understated display of dramatic catch-and-release, with the bandleader's fluid keyboarding acting as a through line. The subsequent "Patella Dislocation" offers considerably more tension than relief. Shifting rhythms lay the foundation for some freer soloing before an extended solo by

Burger.

According to the Ethan Iverson-penned liner notes, the title track was "influenced by Greek street music heard near the Parthenon." One quickly can imagine tourists and locals populating the historic site, as Sánchez gently prods them along with her pathos-filled comping.

The journey concludes with the kinetic "El Paso De Los Años," which allows each of the band members to stretch out as a group, leaving the listener at once satisfied and a little breathless.

Also on Fresh Sound New Talent, Michael Oien's *And Now* suggests a certain type of sound: It gives the impression of an ECM project, or perhaps a reunion of the Metheny/Mehldau Quartet. Instead, it's a prelude to a diverse set of pieces that Oien has written over the years.

The bassist's debut album begins with delicate playing from pianist Jamie Reynolds, which is colored in by deeply felt passages from guitarist Matthew Stevens and subtle brushwork from drummer Eric Doob. Steadily, Oien's thoughtfully placed notes emerge. Using an alternative approach, the bandleader starts off "Skol" unaccompanied, with a sonorous tone and an infectious groove that later propels alto saxophonist Nick Videen's sinewy lines. Doob is given a super-sized solo in which he glides with flowing tomtom accents.

The three-part "Dreamer" suite is an ambitious contribution to this album. "Part I" could be interpreted as waking from sleep, with Videen's plaintive wailing, Doob's hazy cymbals and Stevens' ghost-like guitar effects in full play. "Part II" quickly transitions from a freewheeling group escape to a slower, more carefree romp, and "Part III" brings everything together with a searching yet life-affirming strut. —Yoshi Kato

**Partenika:** Opening; Patella Dislocation; Partenika; Balada Del Momento; Yyyyy; Andy; Small Game; El Paso De Los Años. (51:54)

**Personnel:** Marta Sánchez, piano; Jerome Sabbagh, tenor saxophone; Román Filiú, alto saxophone; Sam Anning, bass; Jason Burger, drums.

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

**And Now:** In The Early Autumn; Skol; Mad To Live; Ask Anyone; Smile This Mile; Dreamer (Part I); Dreamer (Part II); Dreamer (Part III); All My Trials. (48:54)

**Personnel:** Michael Oien, bass; Matthew Stevens, acoustic and electric guitar; Nick Videen, alto saxophone; Jamie Reynolds, piano; Eric Doob, drums; Travis Laplante, tenor saxophone (3).

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

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**Todd Marcus Jazz Orchestra  
Blues For Tahrir**

HIPNOTIC 10013  
★★★★½

Four years ago, much of the world watched as the Arab Spring transpired on their television screens. Clarinetist Todd Marcus was one of those witnesses. Like millions of others, he experienced roller-coaster emotions, from anger to confusion, despair to hope.

But Marcus differed from most of his fellow long-distance viewers. One, he had a personal stake in what was happening, being the son of an Egyptian father. And two, as a self-taught composer, he could translate the full range of his feelings into music. *Blues For Tahrir* is Marcus' reflection on the emergence of a democratic movement on those fateful days in Cairo.

The instrumentation of the orchestra is defined largely by Marcus' embrace of the bass clarinet. Within the context of the ensemble, his infatuation with deep sounds moves the center of his arrangements to a lower than normal range. With his fondness for interspersing clustered harmonies and open spaces, Marcus portrays the Tahrir Square uprising mainly in shadows—yet glimmers of light become visible in the darkness.

We hear it in one of the album's most compelling moments, "Tears On The Square." The song opens with a beautiful unaccompanied passage by bassist Jeff Reed, who plays with deliberation, using rubato and artfully applied glissandi to infer breath, or perhaps sighs of sadness. After a moment, Irene Jalenti enters with a wordless vocal; rather than take the spotlight, she integrates into the mix, adding an extraordinary, heartbreaking sheen to the instruments—an inspiring touch.

There's much more to experience on this disc. Russell Kirk's blazing alto solo evokes the helter-skelter suggested by the title on "Protest." Complex rhythms evaporate into looser, though not entirely free, improvised sections on the album's finale. Altogether, *Blues For Tahrir* is as contradictory and moving as the pivotal episode that inspired it.

—Bob Doerschuk

**Blues For Tahrir:** Many Moons (Intro); Many Moons; Blues For Tahrir Suite: Adnan; Reflections; Tears On The Square; Protest; Alien; Wahsouli; Summertime; Bousa. (66:23)

**Personnel:** Todd Marcus, bass clarinet, percussion (3, 5, 10); Gregory Tardy, tenor saxophone; Russell Kirk, alto saxophone; Brent Birkhead, alto saxophone (2, 3, 6, 7, 9), flute (except 3, 6, 9); Alex Norris, trumpet; Alan Ferber, trombone; Xavier Davis, piano; Jeff Reed, bass; Eric Kennedy, drums; Jon Seligman, percussion (4, 5, 10); Irene Jalenti, voice (5, 7, 9).

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

# True to the Course

From the late 1960s through the mid-1970s, jazz veterans faced their own set of challenges. Rock and other popular idioms had captured the public's imagination and the new freedom principle in jazz continued to expand. Fusion offered another avenue, but how many musicians could be Miles Davis? Still, many older, and younger, jazz musicians thrived just through being themselves.

By 1970, **Duke Ellington and His Orchestra** remained a touring machine and the bandleader



Duke Ellington

kept expanding his compositional palette. On **The Conny Plank Session (Gronland; 29:26 ★★★★★)** the band runs through three takes each of two songs—"Alerado" and "Afrique"—in producer Conny Plank's Cologne, Germany, studio. While those tracks have been previously released, this disc (and included visuals) offers a fascinating look into Ellington's creative process at the time. On "Alerado," Wild Bill Davis' swirling organ lines sound like a classic response to the era's Hammond B-3 trend. On "Afrique," the orchestra works in freer harmonies, with an emphasis on the tom-tom drumming. The evolving takes illuminate how the group's tone shifts as the pieces are developed. Plank himself would go on to make his own impact on electronic music through his later years collaborating with Kraftwerk.

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

**Tony Bennett's** greatest duet partner was (and will always be) the brilliant pianist **Bill Evans**, whom he worked with in 1975 and 1976. They recorded two vocal jazz classics—*The Tony Bennett Bill Evans Album* and *Together Again*—and blended together so well, they needed no other accompanists. While these sessions have been available on CD, **The Complete Tony Bennett Bill Evans Recordings (Concord; 31:00/36:00/41:00/38:00 ★★★★★)** presents them on four audiophile LPs with numerous alternate takes and Will Friedwald's perceptive liner notes. Bennett and Evans' control of musical space and intuitive rhythmic sense sounds as remarkable today as it must have 30 years ago. On such standards as "Young And Foolish" and "But Beautiful," Evans unfurls unexpected progressions that complement Bennett's bel canto phrasing, even when they seem to be working in different harmonies. And Bennett also dynamically personalizes such Evans compositions as "Waltz For Debbie."

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

**Wild Bill Davison** was a top-flight traditional cornetist who had been playing since the 1920s, although his best work was with Eddie Condon during the '40s. In 1968, he made the astute decision to simply hire some great like-minded play-

ers and blow through tunes that were their stock in trade for **The Jazz Giants (Sackville 3002; 56:54 ★★★★★½)**, which was recently reissued with a couple bonus tracks. Some of the joys are in the three-way exchange with Davison, clarinetist Herb Hall and trombonist Benny Morton on such upbeat tunes as "I Found A New Baby." But the stunner here is bassist Arvell Shaw (a Louis Armstrong alum). His beautiful arco lines that introduce "Yesterday's" blend into all kinds of twists.

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

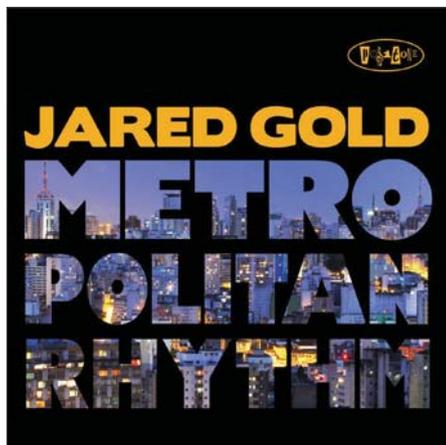
Despite **Buddy Rich's** reputation as a task-

master, he should also be recognized for highlighting individual textures within his bands. And during the late 1970s, he led especially strong groups, which comprise the live recordings on **Birdland (Lightyear 5365646223; 58:15 ★★★★★)**. Saxophonist Alan Gauvin taped these gigs and despite his liner notes' disclaimer about mic placement, the sound is clear. Rich emphasized the three-trumpet lead (which he called "Killer Force"), but this brass-heavy front line opened itself to sharp saxophone soloists, such as Turk Mauro's baritone on "God Bless The Child" and Steve Marcus' soprano on "Three Day Suckers." Rich provides the expected precision, but also surprisingly subtle brushwork on "Just Friends." The bandleader tries to adjust with the times through Tom Warrington's electric bass and a straightforward cover of Paul Simon's "Keep The Customer Satisfied."

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

While such veterans as these were choosing new directions—or forming deeper bonds with their own traditions, Michael and Randy Brecker represented the generation that was creating its own path. **The Brecker Brothers' The Bottom Line Archive (BFD 11; 70:40 ★★★★★½)**, was recorded in March 1976 and is the only legit live recording of the original band. Saxophonist Michael and trumpeter Randy pared down the jazz-rock fusion of such bands as Tony Williams Lifetime and emphasized call-and-response funk on "Jungle Walk" and "Keep It Steady." Along with Steve Khan's wah-wah and bassist Bill Lee's other effects, everyone's technique remained formidable.

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



**Jared Gold**  
*Metropolitan Rhythm*

POSI-TONE 8138

★★★

This session from organist Jared Gold netted nine breezy instrumentals—a little too breezy sometimes. They slip by from one track to another without ever demanding much attention, swinging mostly at medium tempo with lots of room for solos.

Very little has changed for the classic organ trio setting since it was established: Organists' feet still work too hard, and pop tunes always go over well. Those rules still apply for Gold's latest effort. A sprightly take on Paul McCartney's 45-year-old rock staple "Maybe I'm Amazed" fulfills that sec-

**Randy Brecker/Bobby Shew/Jan Hasenöhr**  
*Trumpet Summit Prague: The Mendoza Arrangements, Live*

SUMMIT RECORDS 658

★★★½

Despite vigilant photography from Studio Maly capturing the magnificent orchestra and star soloists in Prague's Smetana Hall, Summit neglected to note personnel of St. Blaise's Big Band or the Czech National Symphony Orchestra (both under the direction of Vince Mendoza) in the liner notes of this disc. Yes, it's boring to list everyone, but it's an obligation! The big band has a hard-working drummer and useful tenor sax and trombone soloists, but we don't know who they are.

Also, it would be helpful to know the solo order of the three featured trumpeters, although it can be surmised from Thad Jones' "Three And One"—the most quixotic Mendoza arrangement here—that bombastic Buddy Rich alum Bobby Shew goes first, taking scream lead forays; followed by the more halting swing of Jan Hasenöhr; then Randy Brecker, playing more fiercely than usual but with his same shrewd, buoyant ideas.

Brecker has compositional credits with the opener "Village Dawn" and "Creature Of Many Faces" and Hasenöhr's website indicates non-Mendoza arrangements of tunes by Jerry Goldsmith, Joe La Barbera and Shew were cut from this somewhat succinct release. Mendoza's own "Rhumba Alias" (presumably an homage to the late percussionist "Don" Alias) has Brecker

riding the insistent, eddying rhythms, and Kurt Weill's "Lost In The Stars" is a mellow flugelhorn feature for Shew, opened like a flower by Mendoza, who adds gentle shades and subtleties before dramatic tidal surges from full orchestra and tympani. The most thrilling cut is Mendoza's setting of the much-trodden "Caravan," which is reprised as an encore. The booming reverberations of the big hall only abet the ambition of Mendoza's dune-sweeping score.

—Michael Jackson

ond part of the contract. The modest shuffle features guitarist Dave Stryker on melody with solo duties being traded chorus by chorus. A downside of the organ trio is the sameness of tone. Often, the oscillating keyboard vibes are more comforting than muscular. They easily subdue the ears and rarely offer much in the way of aggressiveness. On *Metropolitan Rhythm*, a take on the lesser-known Monk tune "Let's Call This" is a nice foray into dissonance, and features some unique organ settings.

The pulse quickens on the Gold original "Homenagem" and Joe Henderson's "Granted." Drummer Kush Abadey is bustling, pushing the fast tempo with double-time tornadoes. On "Granted," Gold lets loose, rising over Stryker's staccato accompaniment and at one point battling one-on-one with Abadey before the drummer takes a rumbling solo of his own. This is the band at its peak, sharing melodic lines and fast-paced ideas.

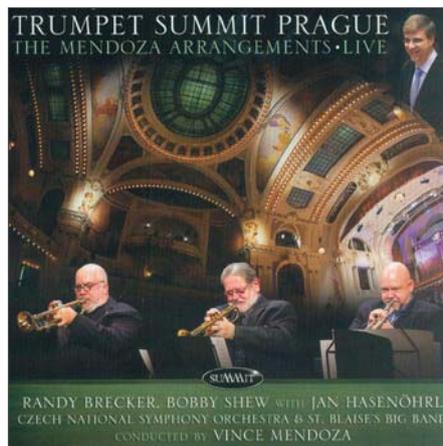
It is not clear what metropolis these rhythms come from, but this set is not the chaos of rush hour in the urban jungle. It's more reflective of the softening light on a Sunday afternoon.

—Sean J. O'Connell

**Metropolitan Rhythm:** Check-In; Maybe I'm Amazed; Let's Call This; God Has Smiled On Me; Homenagem; Risco; Granted; In A Daze; As Is. (47:03)

**Personnel:** Jared Gold, organ; Dave Stryker, guitar; Kush Abadey, drums.

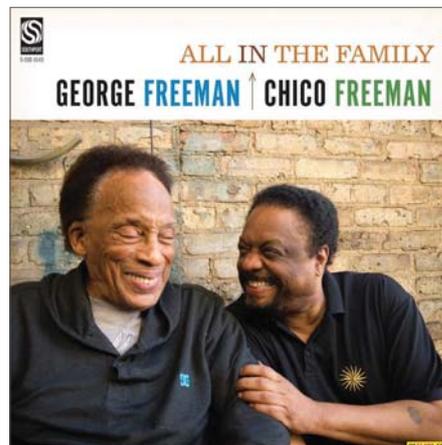
**Ordering info:** [posi-tone.com](http://posi-tone.com)



**Trumpet Summit Prague:** Village Dawn; Rhumba Alias; Lost In The Stars; Caravan; Creature Of Many Faces; Three And One; Caravan. (46:15)

**Personnel:** Randy Brecker, Bobby Shew, Jan Hasenöhr, trumpets; Czech National Symphony Orchestra; St. Blaise's Big Band; Vince Mendoza, conductor.

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



**George Freeman & Chico Freeman**  
*All In The Family*

SOUTHPORT 0143

★★★

Family reunions are times to reminisce. Saxophonist Chico Freeman recalls in the liner notes to *All In The Family* an instance in the 1970s when his guitar-playing uncle George called him for a gig. The elder Freeman's broad musicianship dispelled Chico's youthful opinions on the hierarchy of musical styles, a lesson that informs the diversity of the music on this CD.

But when one is making a record, it can be good to have a dissenter on hand to challenge the merit of certain ideas. Chico's decision to define family broadly—including associates and the sound of Chicago itself—has resulted in a record so diverse that many listeners will encounter a moment when they want to turn it off.

Of course, one can't blame Chico for wanting to show off his high-caliber associates, and this record features many. Bassist Harrison Bankhead's contrapuntal responses to Chico's bluff tenor phrases are very nearly worth the purchase price alone. And Kirk Brown's jaunty piano on "Chico" sets up a commandingly swinging and lyrically good-natured solo by George, whose tone and taste are consistently worth savoring.

But regrettable decisions at other turns tarnish the record's luster. A handful of exotic interludes featuring percussionists Hamid Drake and Reto Weber, are enjoyable, but frustratingly brief. One would prefer to hear an entire album showcasing Chico and the percussionists instead. Pedestrian electric keyboard sounds nearly derail "Angel Eyes," and when you hear that same instrument in tandem with Chico's over-sweetened soprano on "Five Days In May," you may feel like you've wandered into the wrong brunch. A hard-nosed winnowing could have made a better album out of this session.

—Bill Meyer

**All In The Family:** Dark Blue; Interlude V-2; Latina Bonita; Interlude V-6; My Scenery; Interlude V-9; Five Days In May; Vonski; Interlude V-8; Inner Orchestrations; Percussion Song Two; Chico; Interlude V-5; What's In Between; Essence Of Silence; Interlude V-4; A Distinction Without A Difference; Interlude V-10; Angel Eyes; Percussion Song One; Marko; Chico & George Introductions. (79:00)

**Personnel:** George Freeman, guitar; Chico Freeman, tenor and soprano saxophones; Kirk Brown, piano; Kurzweil keyboard; Harrison Bankhead, acoustic bass and vocal; Hamid Drake, drums, percussion; Reto Weber, hang, percussion; Mike Allemana, guitar; Joe Jenkins, drums; Joanie Pallatto, voice (2:1).

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



## Mathias Eick *Midwest*

ECM 2410 4708910

★★★★

Middle America meets Norway via Mathias Eick's *Midwest*. Or is it the other way around? Trumpeter Eick and his European brethren take their memories of traveling across the United States and turn them into music both formal and classical in execution. This is road music, cinematic in scope, in which the rolling hills are easy to imagine and the sky seems to go on forever. For jazz, the closest comparison might be some of guitarist Pat Metheny's odes to Americana, or the landscapes painted by fellow trumpeters Mark Isham and countryman Nils Petter Molvaer.

The solos are there, but in a contributory sense. Violinist Gjermund Larsen provides a nice counter to Eick's more recital-like tones. His phrasing, while at times an echo of the trumpeter's, carries just the right intonation. It's easily the most soulful sound on the album. The rhythm section plays the classic supportive role, pianist Jon Balke filling in lines with dreamy chordal patterns, while bassist Mats Eilertsen and drummer Helge Norbakken offer the necessary punctuation.

With two introductory pieces that float atop a 6/4 meter, Eick's extended lines suggest a long view of the open sky. "Lost," carried along by its simple 4/4 pulse, combines a bit of a country feel with a definite pop sheen. Not surprisingly, "Fargo" suggests something completely different than the film of the same name, even as it seems to hint at it. Eick's trumpet in its quieter moments sounds almost like a flute, and the improvising follows the tune's contours like a winding road through hill and dale. The delicate interplay between pianist and violin that ends the song is fetching.

*Midwest* echoes those maddeningly endless prairies and sometimes bleak desert-like panoramas that fill America's heartland, from the Dakotas through Kansas and on through Indiana. But the solemn, gradual flow of "November" ends this trip where it started, evoking images of a snowy Norwegian plain at dusk or dawn, reflecting back on a program that couldn't have been stamped "Made in America." —John Ephland

**Midwest:** Midwest; Hem; March; At Sea; Dakota; Lost; Fargo; November. (42:45)

**Personnel:** Mathias Eick, trumpet; Gjermund Larsen, violin; Jon Balke, piano; Mats Eilertsen, bass; Helge Norbakken, percussion.

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

## Books / BY KEN MICALLEF

# A Grateful Life

Drummer **Bill Kreutzmann** is one of the world's true rock stars, with accompanying tales of sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll—and more drugs and more sex—to prove it. While there's no denying that Kreutzmann led a charmed existence (what he calls his "Dance with the Divine"), he's also no stranger to struggle.

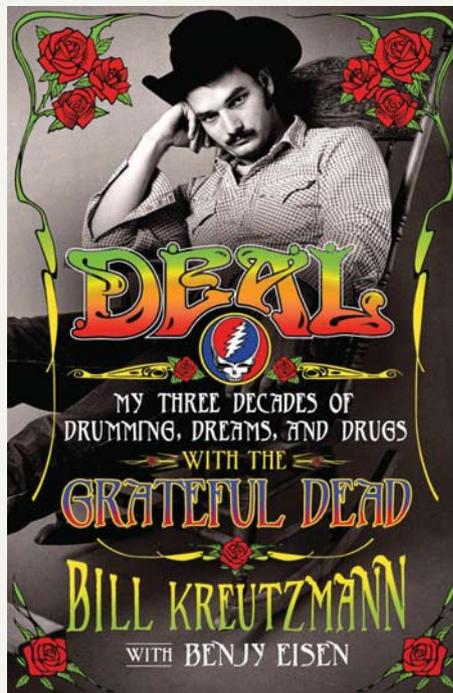
"During the 1960s we were just a bunch of kids with our own ideas about what you could do with rock and roll music," he tells co-author Benjy Eisen. "During the 1970s, we became the Grateful Dead. During the 1980s, we became genuine rock stars. From seed to flower to fruit."

If you're a fan of the Dead's epic rock jams and 30-year road warrior history, then ***Deal: My Three Decades of Drumming, Dreams and Drugs with the Grateful Dead*** will be conventional wisdom. If you're not a fan, the Grateful Dead's equally epic drug-taking and sex-fueled romps may seem at odds with their legendary jamband innovations. While the group undoubtedly pioneered a brand of improvisation—which Kreutzmann says charmed Branford Marsalis yet irritated Ornette Coleman—you can't separate the band from their drugs any more than you can separate Jerry Garcia from his tie-dye attire. That's not to criticize Kreutzmann, Garcia and fellow Grateful Dead members Ron "Pigpen" McKernan, Bob Weir, Mickey Hart and Phil Lesh; rather, it reignites the eternal question: Do drugs fuel or inhibit creativity?

With no particular regard to the answer, Kreutzmann reveals how the Grateful Dead made the leap from mid-1960s performances at San Francisco "Acid Test" parties (founded by Ken Kesey and fueled by Dead sound engineer and LSD pioneer "Owsley") to platinum-selling records, world tours, MTV success, love-ins and fall-outs. *Deal* is a rambling 365-page journey that bolts forward on its own crazy momentum, Kreutzmann detailing the harrowing and hilarious events that accompanied the band's rise to fame. But the book leaves out critical musical insights that would have made it more than a page-turner of rock 'n' roll hijinks.

Kreutzmann does shed light on his and drummer Mickey Hart's approach to playing odd meters ("We got away from being a blues band and started being more of an outsider jam band"), and offers a fine definition of the improvising musician: "Comprehending the concepts and being able to play the parts isn't enough to make you a good musician. You also have to have that feeling—you have to get in contact with who you are inside, somehow, and let it connect to the music and then the music will connect to the audience. ... Forget everything you know; forget what you learned in school. Forget yourself."

Insightful as he may be, Kreutzmann certainly isn't above revealing a few mischievous anecdotes. There was the time, for instance, in 1969 when the Grateful Dead appeared on Hugh Hefner's *Playboy After Dark* TV show, and sound



engineer Owsley spiked the show's "giant coffee dispenser" with LSD.

"At the end of the night Hugh Hefner tried to thank Phil [Lesh] and me," Kreutzmann writes. "He was really sincere but he was high on acid and it was hard for him to talk. All he could do was laugh."

Flash forward and we learn how the Grateful Dead were the first band to make a live 16-track recording; how Kreutzmann and a soundman once enjoyed an orgy with as many girls as could fit into their hotel room; the time they rode camels through the desert to a Bedouin musical jam; how he turned down a sexual encounter with Profumo Affair participant Christine Keeler; how Harrison Ford built one of Kreutzmann's first homes; his marathon cocaine binge with actor John Belushi; and, most touching, his abiding love for the late Jerry Garcia.

Of the band's ultimate purpose, Kreutzmann writes, "We wanted the music to take us to a place of transcendence and elegance," and there is no doubt that occurred for the Grateful Dead and its millions of followers, the "Deadheads." And it's really for them that *Deal* was written, and for whom it will thrill and inform.

These days, Kreutzmann plays with his band Billy & The Kids, and enjoys snorkeling and fishing near his home in Hawaii.

"Locals don't know me as 'Bill the Drummer,'" he writes, "they simply know me as 'Bill' ... a lucky man who had a crazy life back on the mainland. I spend many days helping out [my wife] on her organic farm and I jam with friends and I eat well and I just enjoy the hell out of island life. My island life." **DB**

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# KEYBOARD SCHOOL

DOWNBEAT GUIDE TO LEARNING JAZZ

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# The Dim7/Major or Minor 6 Pair Approach to Jazz Harmony

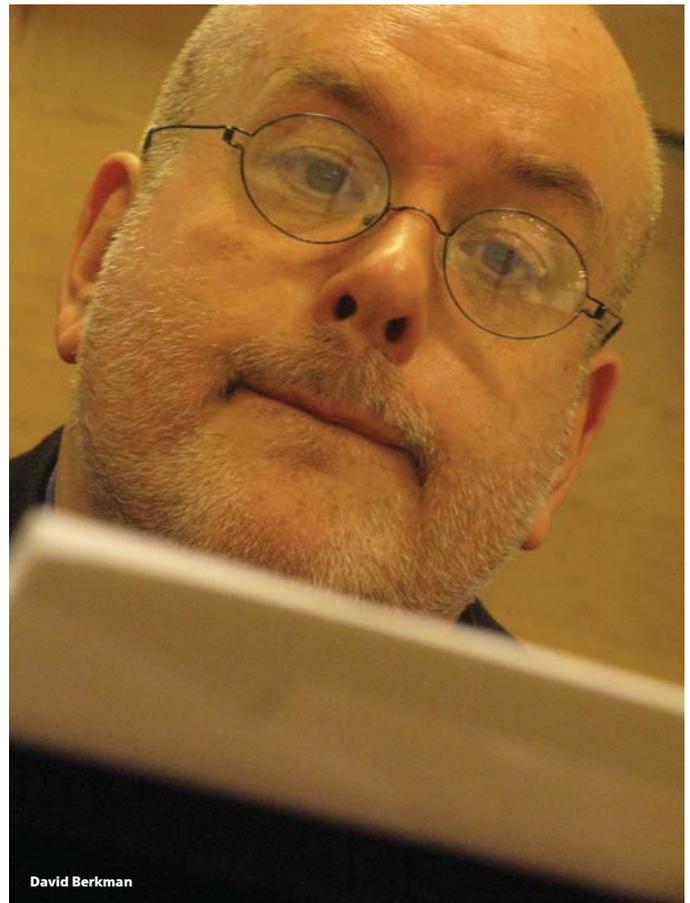
**WHEN YOU READ A HEADLINE LIKE THAT, IT DOESN'T EXACTLY GET** your juices flowing. That's the problem with writing about harmony—it sounds kind of dry, a lot of the sentences have numbers in them, and as you read them your eyes glaze over and you tend to fall into a stupor. This happens to me, too, and I teach a two-semester jazz harmony graduate course *and* wrote a book on jazz harmony, so you'd expect me to be at least mildly interested in this topic. But don't be fooled. The dryness of the language hides a fascinating and musically liberating pathway. The dim7/6th pair approach has opened a lot of interesting doors in my playing, and it can do the same for yours.

Jazz pianists have a long tradition of using diminished 7th and 6th chords. Barry Harris is probably the pianist/educator most closely associated with this kind of theory, but you can hear elements of this harmonic approach in many players, among them Hank Jones, Bud Powell, Bill Evans, Fred Hersch and Keith Jarrett. It's an approach that can lead to rich traditional jazz sounds or dissonant chords that evoke a modern classical harmonic palette, sometimes both at once. (It's also an approach that is often overlooked in jazz schools.) Once you understand the basics of working with dim7/6th pairs, you can go take this technique in the direction that reflects your own personal taste.

First, I have to backtrack a bit: The chord theory taught at most jazz schools is based on building up from the root in stacked thirds. Seventh chords have a root, 3rd, 5th, 7th, 9th, 11th and 13th. The appropriate tensions are usually chosen for a given chord (e.g.,  $\flat 9$  or natural 9,  $\flat 13$  or natural 13) so as to minimize dissonance with the chord tones, avoiding  $\flat 9$  intervals in particular, except in relation to the root of dominant 7 $\flat 9$  chords.

The result of this "stacked thirds" system is that for each chord I see on a lead sheet, there is a set of notes (chord tones and tensions) that are available for me to use to harmonize any particular melody note.

There are a lot of strengths to this system. First of all, it gives us a way of describing any note in relation to the root (even a weird one that we don't normally use, like a  $\flat 9$  or a  $\flat 13$  on a major 7th chord.) It also gives us a set of commonly used notes that work on each chord. What this system doesn't tell us is *how these notes want to move*. The note "D" on a Cmin9 is a static sound that has no inclination to resolve up or down. Of course, we develop a sense of where these tensions might want to go by working with them, but there's nothing written into the theory that tells us anything about this—*tensions are discrete colors that don't want to do anything in particular except bring*



David Berkman

*that color to the chord voicing.*

The big idea with this dim7/6th approach is that there are chord tones (1, 3, 5 and 6) and diminished 7th neighboring chord tones (2, 4,  $\sharp 5$  and 7) that go along with them. The diminished 7th notes want to resolve to the chord tones much as a suspension does in classical harmony. It's these eight notes, not the stacked thirds, that determine the vertical harmony of a chord voicing in this alternative system of dim7/6th pairs.

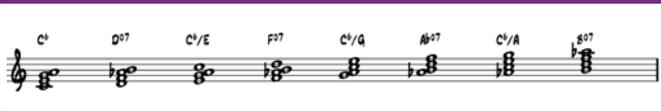
First of all, you should note that these chords (major 6ths and diminished 7ths) are diatonic to the major bebop scale. A major bebop scale is an eight-note scale—a major scale (ionian mode) with one added note, the  $\sharp 5$ . See Example 1.

If I make four-note diatonic chords out of this scale by starting on each scale degree and then stacking every other note of the scale above the root, something surprising happens. Starting on the root note and alternating scale degrees, the first chord is 1, 3, 5 and 6 (not 7, because of the half-step between 5 and 6), a Cmaj6. Starting on the second degree of the scale, the second chord is 2, 4,  $\sharp 5$  and 7, a Ddim7. The third chord is 3, 5, 6 and 1, or a Cmaj6, first inversion. The fourth chord is 4,  $\sharp 5$ , 7 and 2, or an Fdim7 (since

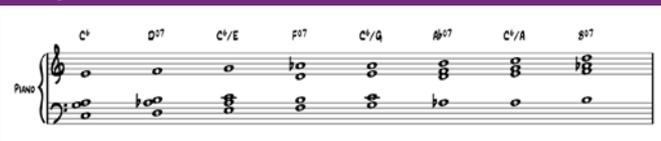
## Example 1



## Example 2



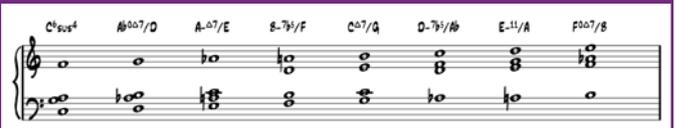
## Example 3



## Example 4



## Example 5



**Example 6**
**Example 7**
**Example 8**
**Example 9**
**Example 10**
**Example 11**
**Example 12**
**Example 13**
**Example 14**

diminished 7th chords located minor thirds apart are all inversions of each other, we can either call this chord an Fdim7 or a Ddim7, first inversion). The important thing to notice is that these four-note diatonic chords are all inversions of the first two chords. Instead of seven different chords (as I get when I make diatonic four-note chords out of most scales), I get only two different chords: the I major 6th (in C: C, E, G and A) and the ii diminished 7th (in C: D, F, A $\flat$  and B). See Example 2.

OK, so far so good. Let's make these chords sound a little more pianistic by taking them out of root position. I am going to use a voicing called "drop 2." To make a drop 2 voicing, start with a close-position voicing then drop the second voice of the chord (the alto) down an octave. If I do that to the close-position voicings in Example 2 and then arrange these voicings going up the scale, I get the sequence shown in Example 3.

This is a pretty, traditional sound, alternating diminished 7th chords and major 6th chords. It has very nice voice leading with the half-steps that result from the addition of #5 to the major scale. (Pianists should learn this progression in all keys.)

Now I'll play the ascending diatonic chords again, but this time I'll play the first major 6th chord for the three lower voices, and I'll "borrow" the top note from the diminished 7th chord that's coming next—the next chord up the scale—for the top note of the voicing. My first voicing will be (from bottom up) C, G, A and F. While still holding the bottom three notes of the chord, I'll resolve the F to an E, the third that belongs on the C6 chord. Now I'm ready to play the next chord

moving up the scale. Again, I'm going to play the bottom three notes of this voicing, in this case, the D, A $\flat$  and B of the Ddim7 with the top note G borrowed from the next chord up the scale, the C6/E. While the bottom voices sustain, the top note resolves down a step to the F, the note that belongs on the Ddim7. You can see the pattern in Example 4. Fortunately, it's a lot easier to see at the piano or to read in music notation than to describe in words.

An interesting thing about borrowing tones is that this process creates extremely unusual and dissonant voicings before they resolve. In Example 4 (and this is perhaps the simplest application of the idea of borrowing tones—borrowing the top voice from the next chord), we generate the following chords (before resolution), as shown in Example 5.

I've labeled the chords in Example 5, not because I think you need to memorize these unusual chord qualities (you don't), but just to show how strange these chords are. They are interesting additions to my voicing vocabulary, and of course that's not all. I can use any combination of borrowed notes and chord tones between these two chords however I wish. Example 6 is a pattern with the two middle notes borrowed.

The reason borrowing is so important is because in the dim7/6th system, all of these notes are available to use when you are playing a Cmaj6 (or Cmaj7, since a Cmaj7 is just a Cmaj6 with one borrowed diminished 7th note—the B). The last piece of the puzzle for me in appreciating this system was realizing that we can resolve the bor-

rowed notes back to the C6 chord (as we have done above) or we can rest on these dissonances, letting the suspension hang there, unresolved. We'll return to this idea in a moment, but first we have to look at the other scale that works with this dim7/6th system, the melodic minor bebop scale.

This is the same scale as the bebop major scale except that we flat the 3rd. See Example 7.

This scale generates the same diminished 7th passing chords, but instead of the inversions of the Cmaj6 chord we get inversions of a Cmin6 (C–6) chord. See Example 8. (Pianists should practice the progression in all keys.)

Now we can revisit our borrowing patterns using this scale. First, borrow the top note only, as shown in Example 9.

Now we can try borrowing using the two internal notes, as in Example 10.

Once again, many interesting combinations occur with this kind of borrowing. Pianists should try to come up with their own combinations of borrowing, again, practicing this in all keys.

As I mentioned above, you have to notice that the above patterns—that is all of these combinations of borrowed tones—are a way of expressing a Cmaj6 or a Cmin6. If you don't believe me, play the above diatonic chords up an octave with a C pedal in the bass and you'll hear the back-and-forth sound that resolves into a C chord each time. So all of these notes, the C, E, G and A and the D, F, A $\flat$  and B are available to use when I see a Cmaj7 (or C6) on a lead sheet.

The end result I am going for is this: Every chord that I find on a lead sheet can be understood

Example 15

Example 16

Example 17

Example 18

E $\flat$ 6

D07

PIANO

EACH NOTE OF THE DIM7 CAN RESOLVE DOWN A HALF STEP OR A WHOLE STEP TO 1,3,5,6 OF THE E $\flat$ 6 CHORD. OR I CAN LEAVE ANY OR ALL OF THE UNRESOLVED SUSPENSIONS AS IS

as a dim7/6th chord pair. Now my job becomes being able to convert lead sheet chords into these dim7/6th chord pairs.

Here are some of the main dim7/6th pair conversions for different chord types. There are certainly possibilities I haven't considered, but these are among the most commonly used choices. I'm going to put everything in C to make things easier, but of course you should learn these in all keys:

- C major possibilities = C6 and Bdim7, G6 and F#dim7 (over C) and Amin6 and Bdim7 (over C).

- Cmin6 = Cmin6 and Bdim7. This pair harmonizes a i minor sound.

- Cmin7 = E $\flat$ 6 and Ddim7 (over C). Minor sevenths are the same as major sixths in third inversion, so I don't need to convert these chords back to 6th chords—by which I mean, when I see a minor 7th, I think of it and the diminished 7th a half-step below it, instead of converting this chord to E $\flat$ 6.

- Cmin7 $\flat$ 5 = E $\flat$ min6 and Ddim7 (over C). Minor seventh  $\flat$ 5 chords are the same as minor sixths in third inversion, so I don't need to con-

vert these chords back to 6th chords—by which I mean, when I see a minor 7 $\flat$ 5 I think of it and the diminished 7th a half-step below, instead of converting this chord to E $\flat$ min6.

- Cdim7 = Cdim7 and Bdim7. A diminished 7th chord can't be understood as a dim7/6th pair, so this actually is an exception to our rule. However, we can make a pair for the diminished 7th chord by using a neighboring diminished 7th. These two diminished 7th chords together make a diminished 7th scale.

That leaves us dominant 7ths to consider. The dominant 7th chords are the most complicated, because we have to provide for all of the different combinations of available tensions. So we really need to look at three different types of dominant 7ths: natural tension dominants, fully altered dominants and 13 $\flat$ 9#9 dominants:

- C9#11 = Gmin6 and F#dim7 (over C).
- C7 $\flat$ 9#9#11 $\flat$ 13 (C7 altered) = D $\flat$ min6 and Cdim7 (over C).
- C13 $\flat$ 9#9 = B $\flat$ dim7 and Adim7. From C, this

is a half/whole diminished 7th scale.

Wow, that was a mouthful. Let's get to some real musical examples so you can see how this works in action.

Consider the melodic fragment shown in Example 11. Gmin7 (G-7) is an inversion for B $\flat$ 6, so I can harmonize this passage using the B $\flat$ 6 and Adim7 pair (or I can think of the pair as Gmin7 and F#dim7). I can harmonize the melody using a chord for each note, harmonizing notes that are from the B $\flat$ 6 group (beats 1 and 2 in the first bar and beat 3 in the second bar) with B $\flat$ 6 chords and harmonizing diminished 7th melody notes (beat 3 in the first bar and beat 1 in the second bar) with diminished 7th chords. In drop 2 voicings that would sound like Example 12.

I can harmonize songs like this, using no borrowing, with voicings in drop 2 form. It is an extremely effective traditional voicing technique. However, I can also add borrowing, which means that I can borrow notes from the B $\flat$ 6 chord (or Gmin7) when I am harmonizing a note that comes from the Adim7 (or F#dim7) and borrow notes from the Adim7 (or F#dim7) to harmonize notes from the B $\flat$ 6 chord (or Gmin7).

So here are just a few of the options open to me in harmonizing the above passage using borrowing techniques. Let's just focus on the first bar (which is a pickup bar). See Examples 13–16.

I have even more possibilities if I include other voicing structures than drop 2—see Example 17.

One last example—a major chord with the 5th in the melody. Many jazz standards begin this way—"It Could Happen To You," "Darn That Dream" and "Here's That Rainy Day," to name a few. Another way to think of the dim7/6th possibilities is as the chord tones of a major 6th plus the 9, 4, #5 and 7 available as suspensions that can resolve or not. This is a lot of harmonic richness that's unavailable in my stacked thirds system. Plus, I can tweak my voicings as I play them, letting the dissonance hang or resolving it. Beautiful counterpoint and inner voice movement often results from this approach, but even if I don't resolve the dissonance at all, the potential for resolution exists and the notes hang in a beautiful ambiguity. See Example 18.

Good luck with your own explorations. (For a fuller discussion of the dim7/6th system and additional jazz harmony ideas, see *The Jazz Harmony Book* from Sher Music Publishing.) **DB**

Pianist/composer/bandleader David Berkman has been an important part of the jazz scene for more than 30 years. He has played in numerous bands, including those of Tom Harrell, Cecil McBee and the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra, and has performed and/or recorded with jazz luminaries Brian Blade, Sonny Stitt, Dave Douglas, Dick Oatts and Chris Potter. Berkman has published three books with Sher Music Publishing, including last year's *The Jazz Harmony Book*, from which much of the material for this article was drawn. His latest CD, *Old Friends And New Friends*, was released in May 2015 on Palmetto Records. Berkman is an associate professor in the Queens College Jazz M.M. program in New York. For more information, visit davidberkman.com, shermusic.com and palmetto-records.com.

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# Using Language as a Tool for Composing and Improvising

## MUSIC AND LANGUAGE ARE CLOSELY

related. While it was once a common belief among anthropologists that music was an evolutionary byproduct of language, today the reverse opinion is commonly held, that music came first and language developed later. Regardless of which developed first, each likely began as an attempt to imitate different pitches and inflections heard in nature, and later progressed to the ability to communicate with others and eventually led to the development of melodies and harmonies (perhaps influenced by the natural pitch differences between the speech of children, women and men).

Speaking a language and making music are very similar activities. Each has rhythm, phrasing, expression, pitch and structural rules, and both strive to communicate something to the listener. However, musicians don't typically make use of the connection between the two in any sort of conscious way. Often when we switch into "music" mode, we begin to think only in the language of music. But if we leave the door open and use language as a tool to help us compose and improvise music, we can capitalize on the natural rhythms and pitches of language and the affinity that people naturally have for spoken language patterns to help us develop our own unique voices as musicians and make music that can be more appealing to a wider audience.

Critiques of beginning improvisers often include comments like, "You're playing too many notes," or, "You need to listen and interact with the other musicians." Both of these comments could be paraphrased as, "You're not playing like you speak." When we speak to each other, we take pauses to breathe and listen; when we improvise and compose music—which is just improvisation out of time—we should do the same.

This is particularly important for pianists, guitarists and any other musicians who play instruments that don't require occasional pauses to take a breath. When I first started composing music, I was focused on developing my musical ideas without much awareness of the need for any particular phrasing. After performing my earlier pieces with horn players, I realized the melodies I was writing were difficult to play because they didn't leave any room to breathe.

As a young jazz musician, much of my music education involved learning jazz standards. I was always impressed with the beautiful melodies and phrasing of these tunes. I don't remember if someone brought it to my attention or if the idea just came to me one day, but I later realized that the appeal of their phrasing stemmed from the fact that these standards were written with lyrics, and were meant to be sung. At that point, I began writing lyrics to all of my compositions, regardless of whether they would ever be sung by a vocalist, and

Caili O'Doherty



### Example 1

EXAMPLE 1 - FIRST SENTENCE OF ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND

A - LICE WAS BE - GIN - NING TO GET VE - RY TI - RED OF SIT - TING  
BY HER SIS - TER ON THE BANK, AND OF HAV - ING NO - THING TO DO:  
ONCE OR TWICE SHE HAD PEEPED IN - TO THE BOOK HER SIS - TER WAS READ - ING,  
BUT IT HAD NO PIC - TURES OR CON - VER - SA - TIONS IN IT, AND  
WHAT IS THE USE OF A BOOK, THOUGHT AL - ICE WITH - OUT PICT - URES OR CON - VER - SA - TION?

it improved my phrasing significantly.

Jazz musicians often ask themselves, "How do I develop my own voice as an improviser and composer?" First and foremost, it's very important to study the jazz tradition—to listen, transcribe and imitate other jazz musicians. Listening and imitation are the same steps we use to acquire spoken language. However, if all we do is imitate and play licks copied from other musicians, we won't be able to develop our own unique voices as artists. There are many techniques for helping musicians

make the transition into composing and improvising. One technique that I have found very useful is to use language patterns as a basis for creating music. This goes beyond simply writing lyrics to the music. The idea is to use different language patterns to help you create the original rhythms, accents, phrasing and pitches of the music. The language is not an afterthought; the words come first.

While attending Berklee College of Music, I had the privilege to study with Danilo Pérez in the Berklee Global Jazz Institute. He introduced me to

### Example 2

EXAMPLE 2 - TALK ABOUT YOUR DAY

### Example 4a

EXAMPLE 4a: 1 AND 62 "CHARLESTON RHYTHM"

### Example 3a

EXAMPLE 3a: FIRST PART OF THE TRIPLET

### Example 4b

EXAMPLE 4b: 1 AND 63

### Example 3b

EXAMPLE 3b: SECOND PART OF THE TRIPLET

### Example 4c

EXAMPLE 4c: 62 AND 64

### Example 3c

EXAMPLE 3c: THIRD PART OF THE TRIPLET

### Example 5

EXAMPLE 5: BEMBE

new ways of applying this concept to my improvisation, and many of the ideas and exercises in this article originated from him. The following exercises are intended to help us grow as improvisers and composers by imitating the natural rhythms and pitches of language. This is also a productive practice for beginning improvisers who don't know where to begin and might feel overwhelmed by the thought of improvising.

## Composing Music

Try writing lyrics first. Then sit down with your preferred writing instrument—piano, guitar, horn or whatever works best for you. Speak or sing the lyrics out loud and try to match the pitches of your voice to form the melody on your instrument. Now try it the opposite way and compose a melody first and try to write lyrics to the melody afterwards. Note: It's important to speak as you normally would, with pauses to give the music room to breathe.

## Practicing By Yourself

Try reading a book or magazine aloud and attempt to play the words on your instrument. Start by reading a short passage, and then try to imitate the inflections in your voice from the way you read the passage to how you play it on your instrument. (See Example 1.) This will take some practice to feel comfortable. Focus on imitating your vocal attack and the way you raise and lower accents when you speak. For instance, when you ask a question, you raise the pitch of your voice at the end of the phrase.

Another exercise is to transcribe people talking. Choose excerpts from television shows, movies, comedy shows, recorded live poetry, famous speeches or any other source of inspiring speech or dialogue. Work on phrasing your mel-

odies to imitate each speaker you transcribe and notice how everyone speaks differently. Your lines will be varied and unique.

## Practicing With Another Musician

Have a conversation with another person, and each of you try to play what you say. First, do this away from your instruments. Walk in a circle stepping to quarter notes and talk to each other about your day. Then scat what you say, without words. When this feels comfortable, instead of talking, just scat what you are trying to say. See if you can understand each other.

Then do the same thing using your instrument, while walking quarter notes in place. If you play a non-wind instrument like piano or guitar, you can talk about your day and try to play what you are saying at the same time. Try to match your instrument's notes to the pitches of your voice and not the other way around. Don't adapt the way you speak to what you play on the instrument. If you find this difficult, record your voice and then listen to the recording to identify your vocal pitches. Also, every language has a different natural rhythm to it, so when you do this exercise, speak in your native language. (See Example 2.)

## Rhythm Challenge

Now for a challenge. Go back to scatting without playing your instrument, talking about your day, but add in clapping different parts of the triplet while walking quarter notes in a circle. Clap the first part of the triplet, i.e. "DO"-da-la (see Example 3a). Next, clap the second part of the triplet, i.e. do-"DA"-la (Example 3b). Lastly, clap the third part of the triplet, i.e. do-da-"LA" (Example 3c).

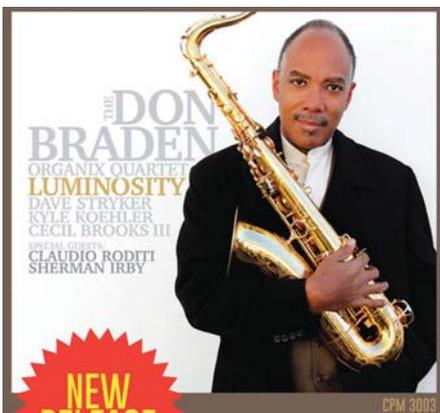
Once you have those triplet rhythms down, try switching to some traditional comping

rhythms. First, try the "Charleston" rhythm, i.e. 1 and the "and" of 2 (see Example 4a). Then try the 1 and the "and" of 3 (Example 4b). Lastly, try the "and" of 2 and the "and" of 4 (Example 4c). If you're up for even more of a challenge, do this while clapping the *bembe* rhythm (Example 5).

For rhythm section players, when this feels comfortable, instead of clapping the rhythms, try comping them on your instrument while talking about your day. Horn players can also try doing this on the drums or piano. These are also great exercises to work on improving your time feel.

It's important to mention that this is just one approach to improvising and composing, and it deals mainly with creating melodies and rhythms. You are still left with the task of creating harmonic structure. To create a captivating solo or composition, it's important to create tension and resolution, which can be formed through the melody and rhythm, but would be strengthened by developing complex harmony and longer lines. Conversation tends to consist of relatively short sentences, so using conversation alone as a source of improvisational ideas can tend to create short lines. However, the technique can be useful to help get you out of a rut of playing similar lines all the time. Of course, the melodic lines you create with this technique can be arbitrarily long depending on the language source you use. I encourage you to try out these techniques and see if they work for you. **DB**

Pianist Caili O'Doherty lives in Harlem, New York. She recently released her debut album, *Padme* (ODO Records), which features violinist Alex Hargreaves, saxophonists Caroline Davis and Ben Flocks, trombonist Eric Miller, bassist Zach Brown, drummer Cory Cox and special guests Mike Bono on guitar and Adam Cruz on drums. O'Doherty currently teaches private lessons in New York and works at Jazz at Lincoln Center as a piano accompanist. She endorses Nord keyboards and Mono cases. Contact her at [caili.odoherty@gmail.com](mailto:caili.odoherty@gmail.com) or visit her website at [cailimusic.com](http://cailimusic.com).



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STEVEN SUSSMAN

## Ethan Iverson's Idiosyncratic Piano Solo on 'Cheney Piñata'

THE BAD PLUS ISN'T A TYPICAL PIANO trio, and Ethan Iverson isn't a typical pianist. His tune "Cheney Piñata," a plucky Latin 6/8 tune (though Iverson says he hears it as a fast 3/4) from the 2004 album *Give* (Sony), is one of the more conventional items in the band's repertoire. But in Iverson's improvised solo, there exists much of the quirkiness that is often associated with the group.

The first thing I notice about this solo is Iverson's left hand. It's used very sparsely, and mostly on strong beats. Though this is something that's been considered un-hip since the days of bebop, there is a history of this in earlier jazz, as well as stride piano and ragtime styles. Also, the note choices are generally single or double notes that are strong parts of the chord, mostly root-3rd or root-5th. This also is an antiquated sound. Modern jazz pianists favor rootless voicings, leaving the job of providing the tonic to the bassist. Here, Iverson sets himself apart not by trying to do something more modern, but by bringing up something old in a new context.

But he's not beyond adding a new twist to this old staple. At measure 25, Iverson starts playing octaves in his left hand, but not always on roots. He keeps the B $\flat$  going under the E $\flat$  chord, which is the 5h of the chord, so it makes it sound inverted. But in the next bar, he moves up in half-steps. The B natural under the F chord is a very "out" tone, but provides a resolution when he brings it up to the C, giving us another chord over its 5th.

Then he drops down to the 3rd, keeping the chord inverted, but stays on this note (A natural) as the chord resolves to B $\flat$ . Putting a chord over its major 7th in this manner carries a lot of tension, with a strong pull to resolve upward to the root. Instead, Iverson drops down a half-step, making the B $\flat$  into a dominant chord. In this key, this serves as the V of IV, and the flat-7 in his left hand resolves quite nicely to the 3rd of the E $\flat$ , so those half-steps now make total sense. When the chord goes back to B $\flat$  in the next bar, Iverson continues his half-step descent, and we have a G $\flat$  under the B $\flat$  chord. This is also a very "out" note, with a pull to resolve down to the 5th, which Iverson does, creating another B $\flat$ /F-sounding chord. This very nicely moves to the F in the next measure. Once again, all this counterpoint makes aural sense.

Switching over to the right hand, which for the most part carries the melody of this solo, there are also some atypical characteristics. One thing that jumps out is the amount of range Iverson's right hand covers. From dipping down into the bass clef in bars 11–13 and 20, to ascending all the way up to the ultra-high B $\flat$ 's and C's he starts to favor in measures 27–31, he covers a range of over 3 1/2 octaves. Also, his approach to this extended range is enlightening. He starts in the middle range, where many solos typically take place. Then his range expands slowly, moving into the lower octaves in the aforementioned bars 11–13, then insinuating the upper area in bars 16–17. Over the

next three measures, he brings us back into the bass clef, and then abruptly jumps back up to what had been the high territory, but from here works his way up to the extreme end of the piano. Upon arriving there, Iverson then starts playing sweeping arpeggios that span a large part of the piano's upper register. Bar 30 is an extreme example, jumping from a low  $E_b$  up to a high  $B_b$ , and then up to a higher  $B_b$ . Notice how in the next bar his left hand's range has also expanded, encroaching into the treble clef.

Iverson's note and scale choices also serve to develop the improvisation. For his first six bars, he sticks to material diatonic to  $B_b$  major, mostly in scalar form. Staying "inside" like this also harkens back to older styles. In the next four measures, he introduces some chromaticism, but only as lower-neighbor notes and passing tones (nothing all that "out").

Bars 11 and 12 are the first place where we get an "outside" pitch: the  $F\#$  on the  $B_b$  chord, implying  $B_b$  augmented. If this was done on the  $V$  chord, it would be borrowing from the minor key, but since it's on the  $I$  chord it's extra "out." (Also

observe that the point at which he introduces this outside pitch is also the point at which he opens the range downward, both elements together creating a strong change in the texture of the solo).

Measure 16 is where we start to hear some bebop-style chromaticism. It's also the spot at which Iverson expands the boundaries upward, once again using multiple musical elements to create a greater sense of motion in the solo. This form of chromaticism continues up to bar 25, where he goes back to diatonic passages while simultaneously altering his approach to large arpeggios. This is also where the chromatics begin in the left hand, so here Iverson is not just bringing the tonal material back to the start, but also creating a juxtaposition between the "insidiness" of the high part against the "outsidiness" of the low part.

Iverson's use of these musical elements, particularly the way he plays them off against one another, makes for a very intense and idiosyncratic improvisation. **DB**

Jimi Durso is a guitarist and bassist based in the New York area. Visit him online at [jimidurso.com](http://jimidurso.com).



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# Akai Advance

## Virtual Synth Control

With more and more keyboard players turning to their computers as a source of sound generation, the controller market has become a constantly changing landscape as manufacturers try to figure out how best to present the greatest amount of control—taking into account the nearly unlimited variations presented by the virtual synth market.

Akai has released its Advance series of controllers as a possible answer. These are part of a new breed of controllers that offer intuitive real-time controls that morph with the virtual instrument you are controlling and don't require you to look at your screen while adjusting parameters.

Such a controller requires two components to succeed: the physical controller (hardware) and the software interface (called "VIP" by Akai).

Let's start by looking at the hardware. The Advance controllers come in 25-, 49- and 61-key sizes; I had the 49-key version for this review.

The case is solidly built, and feels substantial. It also has visual appeal—techie and sleek. The front panel has rubberized pitch and mod wheels, eight MPC-style pads with LED lights, eight large knobs, a smaller click-select type knob, transport controls and an array of buttons of various functionality. All of the controls feel solid and responsive, and the large knobs are easy to grab, with enough resistance to do precise adjustments on the fly.

The Advance features a 4.3-inch high-resolution screen that looks amazing. Bright, clear and extremely readable, it will immediately become the centerpiece of your programming once you start working with it. This becomes important when you are working with the VIP software, too, because you can access not only the controller menus, but full virtual synth parameters without needing to look at your laptop at all in most cases.

The keybed is nice and smooth, and features after-touch. It's a little stiffer than most other semi-weighted actions I have tried, but once you get used to it, it feels very playable. The Advance keyboards are USB-powered; they also have a power jack for use as a standalone controller. The rear panel features MIDI in and out, and sustain and expression pedal jacks. I prefer more pedal options on a controller, but this should be enough for most.

The real meat of the Advance comes in its software package. The VIP software is a hefty download—about 6 gigabytes—and the install took a few tries for me before it worked properly (Mac users, repair your permissions!), but once it was installed, it worked flawlessly. Akai has partnered with AIR to include a nice library of instruments and sounds with the Advance, including Hybrid 3, Eighty Eight Ensemble, Loom, Xpand!2, Velvet and Transfuser. These are all full versions, and are excellent products in their own right—bravo to Akai for adding this much value.

VIP starts off by scanning your system for all of your VST instruments. The VIP software will only recognize VST, not AU or AAX, although it can run as any of those standards inside another host. This scan can take a while if you have a lot installed, but it is well worth the wait. Once it finished, it built

a full library of all of my VST patches, fully searchable within the VIP interface—and consequently onboard the Advance itself.

VIP reads the standard tagging that most VST manufacturers use to help categorize and define the database of sounds, and once you're there, you can search sounds regardless of the instrument and load them right there. Most amazingly, this does not seem to add any discernible overhead to the VSTs themselves. In fact, the load time for most of them was markedly quicker than I have experienced in other hosts—some kind of caching magic at work here. At any time, you can click into the interface of any of the VSTs, so it's no problem to edit directly.

Meanwhile, over on the Advance keyboard, you can access all of these patches, instruments and searches right from the front panel—no more turning back to the laptop to tweak a sound. Akai has created maps for the most popular VSTs already, so the controls are set up as you dial up sounds. There are four bank buttons that allow you to go 32 deep in parameters on the knobs and pads, and all these assignments are editable right from the Advance.



This is a well-designed system, and Akai has already been talking up the enhancements and updates it intends to introduce in the coming months. The Akai Advance is an exciting development for virtual synth players, and goes a long way toward making them feel more like hardware. The cataloging that the VIP software does is also a welcome addition: no more opening up six different VSTs just to try and compare the "warm pad" sounds—now they all live in the same interface. There are competitors for this developing category, most notably the Native Instruments Complete Kontrol, and this means development here should be fast and furious. Akai has made a very strong start with the Advance line, and is well worth a look.

—Chris Neville

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# Spectrasonics Omnisphere 2

## Flagship Synth Gets Major Upgrade

When Omnisphere was released back in 2008, it blew away the virtual instrument community with its depth of features, programmability and amazing sound. It was an indirect outgrowth of Atmosphere, but moved from a hybrid sample player with some sound sculpting tools to a really unique synthesizer all its own, based on Spectrasonics' STEAM engine synthesis. It immediately became a staple of my arsenal.

Since then, Spectrasonics has done one large update (1.5), free to its users—this included several new features, and the introduction of The Orb, a new type of circular performance controller that can also be controlled by an iPad app in real time—but has otherwise stuck to occasional maintenance releases as needed. That is a long time to go without a major update, and it is a testament to the quality of this synth that version 1.x was still a dominant player for any virtual sound designer.

Enter Omnisphere 2, a truly sweeping upgrade. Spectrasonics has gone under the hood and tweaked just about every area of the synth, adding many of the most requested features and enhancing the features that were there to a huge degree. It's clear that Eric Persing and his team have not been sitting idly by these last several years. I will be focusing on the new features of Omnisphere 2 in this review.

This is a major upgrade that entails some time to install and download. The upgrade is a 20-gigabyte download, and the full version takes up eight DVD-ROMs. You will need 64 gigs of drive space when all is done, and you'll want your computer to be pretty powerful. This upgrade does require more horsepower than the original. Thankfully, this is an "in place" upgrade, meaning that it takes the place of your current Omnisphere installation and is fully backwards-compatible, so you won't have to worry about losing your user patches or having to keep both versions running to support your current sessions and setups.

The first thing you'll notice is an overhaul of the user interface. Omni 2 has a wider screen footprint and always includes a "mini-browser" in a side pane, which makes browsing patches much easier. This expands into a full browser that allows for extensive search and cataloging options—a must, as the new version adds in 4,500 new patches and sound sources, bringing the total to more than 12,000 sounds. Spectrasonics has also re-worked the way you access the layers within a patch and the FX and Multi layers—much more intuitive. Another welcome feature in the new browser is called "Sound Lock." Using this, you can lock down a variety of aspects of a given sound and browse through other patches maintaining these traits. So, if you really like the FX chain or arpeggiator in a certain patch but want a different underlying timbre, you can do so instantly—and this applies to a wide variety of settings. This makes unique patch creation a breeze.

Spectrasonics has also expanded the synthesis engine, including 400 new waveforms and wavetable synthesis for every waveform. They have also integrated a new granular synthesis algorithm that lets you do some truly inter-

esting things to your sounds. This is a subset of granular features that might be found in a synth like Reaktor, but still very powerful, and to my mind, more musical in its implementation. Perhaps the most requested feature that has now found its way into Omni 2 is import of user audio. Now, don't start mapping out multisamples just yet. This is not a sampler; it is a synth, and user multisamples are not supported. It does allow you to bring in any source of your choice, though, and this can be particularly satisfying when using the granular engine. Other enhancements include new filter types (to add to the already

ridiculous variety available), better ring mod and FM capability, and one-touch reversing of sound sources. The modulation matrix also gets an upgrade, and the new interface really helps when diving in deep here. You can modulate almost any source from any target—this is one of Omnisphere 2's real strengths. The expressivity you can achieve is rivaled only by a few of the very best virtual synths, and none of the others offers nearly the level of tweakability found here. You can now implement polyphonic LFOs and mod envelopes, too.

Omnisphere's arpeggiator was already one of the more powerful on the market, and I have always preferred its interface to most. But in Omni 2, you can even set up note transpositions to create step sequences—very cool. The new Speed Offset control also allows for some interesting speed options while not remaining locked to tempo.

The FX engine has undergone a massive overhaul, too: 25 new FX Units, spanning multiple types, have been introduced. The new amp simulators sound great, and the stomp box modeler is a blast to play with. There is a new set of "Analog" modulation FX, including phaser, flanger, chorus and vibrato,

and my favorite, the Solina Ensemble, which just melts in your mouth. The new Precision Compressor is very good-sounding, too, and deserves a mention.

In addition to the FX racks on each layer and common to both, there is now an Aux FX rack assigned to each patch. And, of course, there are FX sends available from the multi page. This means there are now 16 FX units available per patch, which allows for a whole different level of synth programming without having to go in and adjust your filters or mod routings. You can send any FX unit parameter through the modulation matrix, too.

The new features might make Omnisphere 2 seem a little overwhelming in its capabilities, but the new interface makes it easy to navigate, and even new users should be up and running in no time. The included sound library is fantastic, full of useable sounds in most genres, but the real strength of this synth is programmability. I have relied on Omni for years to recreate sounds from many eras and to design striking original sounds of my own. Omnisphere 2 gives us an amazing new palette to use and powerful tools to sculpt with. This synth is a must-have for any virtual synthesist. The upgrade for current users is \$249 (\$199 if you own Stylus RMX and Trilian), and the full package is \$499—well worth it for one of the few virtual synthesizers that can truly be called a classic.

—Chris Neville

Ordering info: [spectrasonics.net](http://spectrasonics.net)





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The CGP-700 Compact Grand Piano™ delivers authentic sound and feel, is great for an aspiring professional, and its wide range of Tones and Rhythms will inspire your music. Its library of sounds includes a stunning recreation of a 9-foot concert grand piano, plus many other instruments. The Color Touch Interface™ gives you easy access to the CGP-700's comprehensive features. From lessons to songwriting to live performance, the CGP-700 is designed to give your music the expression it deserves.

### 6 Speaker Sound System:

The CGP-700 has four speakers in the top panel, and two low-frequency speakers in its included stand, with a massive 40 watts of power. Whether you're enjoying the sonic experience of a 9-foot concert grand piano, playing along with the built-in rhythms, or listening to your MP3 player via the stereo aux input, this unique 3-way speaker system easily fills the room with rich, detailed sound.



### Color Touch Interface:

The CGP-700 is loaded with impressive features, but it's also incredibly easy to use. The centerpiece of the CGP-700 is a beautiful 5.3" color touchscreen. This high-resolution display is bright and clear, and makes full use of a huge color palette to keep you informed and in control. Navigating through the 550 tones and 200 rhythms is a breeze.

# CGP-700

# COMPACT GRAND PIANO™

## Kawai CA97

### Acoustic Immersion in a Digital Hybrid

With new samples of high-end grand pianos, the latest in Harmonic Imaging XL technology and flawless keyboard mechanics, the Kawai CA97 Digital Hybrid Piano captures the essence of playing an exquisite acoustic instrument. Designed for the piano purist, it's one of the most authentic-sounding and realistic-feeling digital pianos available today.

The centerpiece of this instrument is the sound of the ultra-premium Shigeru Kawai SK-EX concert grand. Channeled through Kawai's Soundboard Speaker System—which involves a real spruce soundboard and ribs—the SK-EX samples resonated with sparkling clarity and thundering power that I could feel in my feet (and seat). Overtones rang out with such natural resonance, it felt as if I was playing the world's finest concert hall grand piano. Playing the CA97's samples of Kawai's EX concert grand and SK-5 studio grand was a similarly striking experience in realism and empowerment.

Strong onboard reverbs added significant depth to these sounds—from a huge grand cathedral down to a small practice room. Players can use the CA97's advanced Virtual Technician to tweak the instrument's touch, voicing, hammer and key-release noises, as well as string, lid and damper resonance.

The CA97 also has a nice selection of jazz, upright, and modern and pop piano variations. Other useful sounds include electric pianos, drawbar and church organs, strings, harpsichords, choirs and synth pads.

More than just a source of great piano and keyboard sounds, the moving parts of the CA97 made my play-testing session eye-opening and inspiring. It has the longest keys of any digital piano, and they're weighted and balanced to rise and fall in a seesaw motion just like the real thing. This allows for the player to employ many of the subtle expressive nuances that are called for in serious acoustic piano repertoire. The keys are finished off with finely textured ivory- and ebony-like surfaces that absorb moisture and assist playing control.

The CA97's Grand Pedal Feel System added to the realism of my playing experience. It accurately replicates the damper, una corda and sostenuto pedals of Kawai's SK-EX and EX concert grand pianos.

USB connectors allow the CA97 to link to a computer for MIDI use, and data can be loaded and saved directly to USB memory devices. It also has the ability to play and record WAV and MP3 files directly via USB audio.

With a suggested retail price of \$5,999, the CA97 offers an extremely detailed acoustic piano portrait, with smooth tonal transitions across the instrument and throughout the entire dynamic range.

Thanks to Cordogan's Pianoland in Geneva, Illinois, for allowing DownBeat to play-test the CA97 in its retail showroom. —Ed Enright

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



## Casio Privia PX-860

### Smart Choice for the Practical Pianist

If the Kawai CA97 hybrid is the Rolls Royce of digital pianos, then Casio's Privia PX-860 is the Honda Civic: a reliable and modest performer that amounts to a smart choice for the economically minded pianist.

With an ultra-affordable retail price of \$1,499.99, the PX-860 brings a number of new features to the already established Privia line of digital pianos. One of the most inviting is a hall-simulator function that places the player

in one of four distinct sonic environments based on acoustic measurements taken at world-famous performance locations—the Dutch Reformed Church, Berlin Hall Philharmonic and the French Cathedral in Berlin, plus a fourth setting called Standard Hall. During a recent test-drive at Cordogan's Pianoland in Geneva, Illinois, I found that these preset effects make the most sense when playing Casio's beautiful grand piano samples (concert, modern, classic, mellow, bright) or organ patches (pipe organ, jazz organ,

electric organ 1, electric organ 2).

The reason the PX-860's pianos sound so good is because the instrument is equipped with what Casio calls "AiR Technology," which brings out little details like damper resonance and hammer speeds and makes tonal nuances sound much more genuine.

New string ensemble tones were developed for this line of Privia digitals (which also includes the PX-760 model). They sounded realistic and lush when played individually, but their true beauty emerged when I layered them with the onboard piano sounds. There are also new electric piano sounds derived from Casio's Privia PX-5S stage piano that you will want to use when the music calls for a Rhodes, Wurli or DX-7.

The PX-860 has a couple of "bonus" features for an instrument in this price range. A user-friendly "virtual technician" section lets the player adjust hammer response, string resonance and lid simulation to their liking. The three-way pedal system adds a nice touch for those pianists who want to employ una corda and sostenuto techniques.

I loved the keys of the PX-860. They have a great feel and sufficient bounce (without any noticeable "clunk"), and I didn't experience finger or wrist fatigue. Plus, they're textured so they don't feel slippery to the touch—a problem with some digital pianos, especially when fingers and hands start to sweat.

The Privia PX-860 is a sturdy competitor that's sure to appeal to players who need a great-sounding, practical solution at a more than reasonable price.

—Ed Enright

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





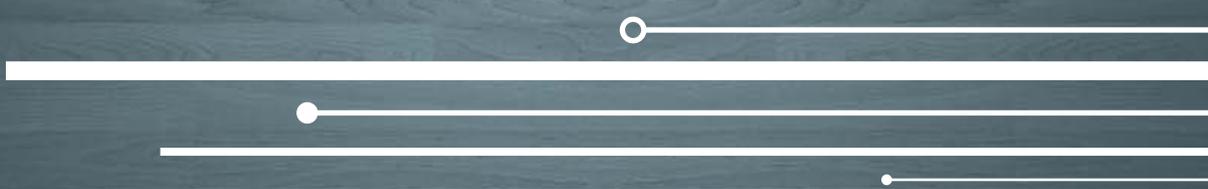
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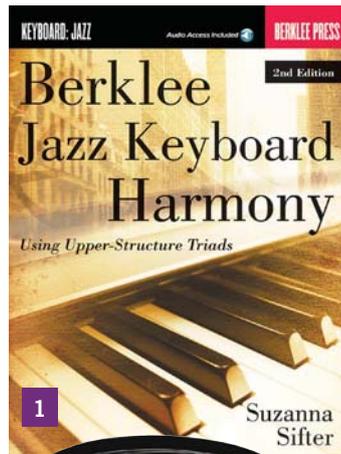
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### 1. Upper-structure Explorations

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### 2. A Grander Grand

Yamaha's GCITA grand piano is equipped with TransAcoustic technology that's capable of creating the sound of a 9-foot concert grand piano in a 5-foot, 3-inch baby grand. The GCITA is a hybrid-type acoustic-digital instrument that incorporates electro-acoustic transducers that cause the soundboard to vibrate in much the same way a speaker cone would—allowing for a unique and highly resonant combination of real acoustic sound and volume-controllable digital samples of pianos, electric pianos, pipe organs, harp-sichords and other instruments. The piano can also be played through headphones in digital-only mode for "silent" performance/practice. **More info:** [usa.yamaha.com](http://usa.yamaha.com)



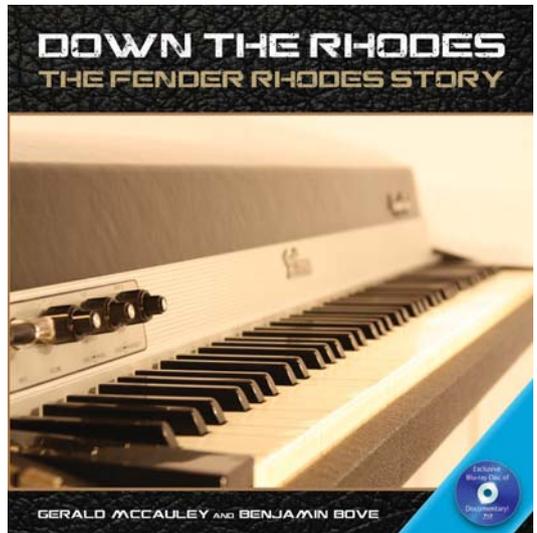
### 3. Dual-hinged Case

The new K-49 hybrid-design case from Mono is compact, light and rigid. A dual hinge design allows for top-loading quick access or traditional horizontal opening. The case has a water-resistant shell and a deep external pocket that can house pedals, cables and a laptop. **More info:** [monocreators.com](http://monocreators.com)



### 4. Rhodes Warriors

*Down The Rhodes: The Fender Rhodes Story* (Hal Leonard) is a historical tribute to the electric piano that revolutionized the sound of music. Through interviews with a cast of prominent artists—including George Duke, Chick Corea, Robert Glasper, Donald Fagen, Bob James, Dave Grusin, Quincy Jones, Joe Sample and others—authors Gerald McCauley and Benjamin Bove provide a glimpse into how this instrument played an integral role in the creation of some of the most memorable music from the 1960s through today. Many of the artist interviews appear on the included Blu-ray disc. **More info:** [halleonardbooks.com](http://halleonardbooks.com)



### 5. Birds of Play

Hohner has added the Black Hawk I and White Hawk II accordions to its Anacleto collection. The BH-1 (pictured) and WH-II have a tactile feel and fingerboard response, with button action that's unique to the Anacleto line. Both models feature a grille that allows for louder projection and diffusion of sound. **More info:** [playhohner.com](http://playhohner.com)



### 6. Advanced Digital Piano

Korg's new Havian 30 is designed for musicians seeking a stylish digital piano complete with advanced arranger functionality. Havian 30's RX (Real Experience) sound engine contains more than 950 expressive sounds, in addition to 420 dynamic styles, offering players a variety of fully orchestrated musical performances to play along with. **More info:** [korg.com](http://korg.com)



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The Jazz Education Network is dedicated to building the jazz arts community by advancing education, promoting performance, and developing new audiences.

UNL Jazz Orchestra 2.0 performs its fall concert at Kimball Hall on the University of Nebraska-Lincoln campus on Dec. 10.



## University of Nebraska—Lincoln Fosters Mentorship

**LOOKING BACK OVER THE EVOLUTION** OF the jazz studies program he directs at the University of Nebraska—Lincoln (UNL), Paul Haar recalls a turning point that came courtesy of vibraphonist Stefon Harris.

“Within the Glenn Korff School of Music, we had been discussing what we should do with our jazz program to compete,” said Haar, a Nebraska native. “What were the other programs doing that we should do? Stefon was here leading a master class and he really set us back on our heels by saying, ‘Why not concentrate on what you’re doing that’s different?’ The jazz program at UNL had a very mixed past; it had faltered a couple of times. Stefon’s comments really opened our eyes to how we might be able to move forward.”

Over the past decade, the school has differentiated itself by focusing on graduate courses, offering master’s and doctoral degrees in jazz studies (master of music and doctor of musical arts). At the undergraduate level, bachelor of music and bachelor of arts in music degrees are offered. But, although the university does not offer a specific jazz undergraduate degree, it encourages extensive interaction between its dozen or so graduate jazz students and undergrads in the broader music program.

“It’s a bit like a laboratory,” said Associate Professor Hans Sturm, a bassist who leads the Korff School’s strings area. “We like the cross-fertilization and really believe that mentorship is essential.”

The primary place where that interaction occurs is within the program’s two ensembles and eight combos. While undergrads are encouraged to compose a solo in the style of one musical genre, the graduate students might then illustrate how a specific musician who epitomizes the genre would typically voice the solo.

“The graduates serve as coaches,” said Sturm, noting that this approach is effective in demonstrating the breadth of jazz studies. “Undergrads at UNL have typically been the best players in any situation they’ve encountered at the high school level. What comes with one-to-one men-

torship is an expansion of horizons. To younger students who might be familiar with the better-known composers and bandleaders in jazz, we want to say, ‘Yes, but have you checked out Henry Threadgill?’”

Grads and undergrads also work closely in preparing and presenting four concerts each year—a kickoff performance, one with a historical focus, one featuring student compositions and one highlighting a guest artist. The guests, who also teach master classes, have included Ingrid Jensen, Poncho Sanchez and Ray Anderson.

The ability to work closely with undergrads is one of the things Haar looks for when evaluating applicants to the jazz studies program. Most of the doctoral students are looking to make the transition to teaching at the post-secondary level, while a number of those who apply to the master’s program seek to advance their careers as performers.

Haar said his goal is to equip the next generation of jazz teachers with an understanding of current technologies and prepare them to teach a wide variety of courses. Students are required to create a portfolio of resource materials with the aim of designing a comprehensive jazz program at either the high school or collegiate level.

Haar said future plans include the creation of a third jazz ensemble and the development of a final document that graduating students would leave with, combining a UNL-produced recording of the student’s original compositions and a collection of the student’s scholarly writing.

“I was a tenured professor at Ball State, where I’d been for 17 years, when I heard about this job,” Sturm said. “What made me want to move to Lincoln and start my career over again? It was the mentorship and personal attention that this program embodies. There is so much one-on-one interaction here—between the faculty and jazz studies students, and between them and the music undergrads. Learning about jazz is a long path, and this program really encourages exploration.”

—James Hale

Bill Charlap (left) performs with Tony Bennett.



**Paterson Taps Charlap:** Pianist Bill Charlap has been appointed director of the Jazz Studies Program at William Paterson University in Wayne, N.J. Charlap, who will join the university faculty on Sept. 1, becomes the fifth world-renowned musician to lead the program. Founded in 1973, the program has been directed by trumpeter and composer/arranger Thad Jones, bassist Rufus Reid, pianist James Williams and, most recently, pianist Mulgrew Miller, who died in May 2013. Charlap will direct six of the program’s 24 small jazz groups on a weekly basis. He will host the program’s dialogue days and participate in other activities and concerts. [wpunj.edu](http://wpunj.edu)

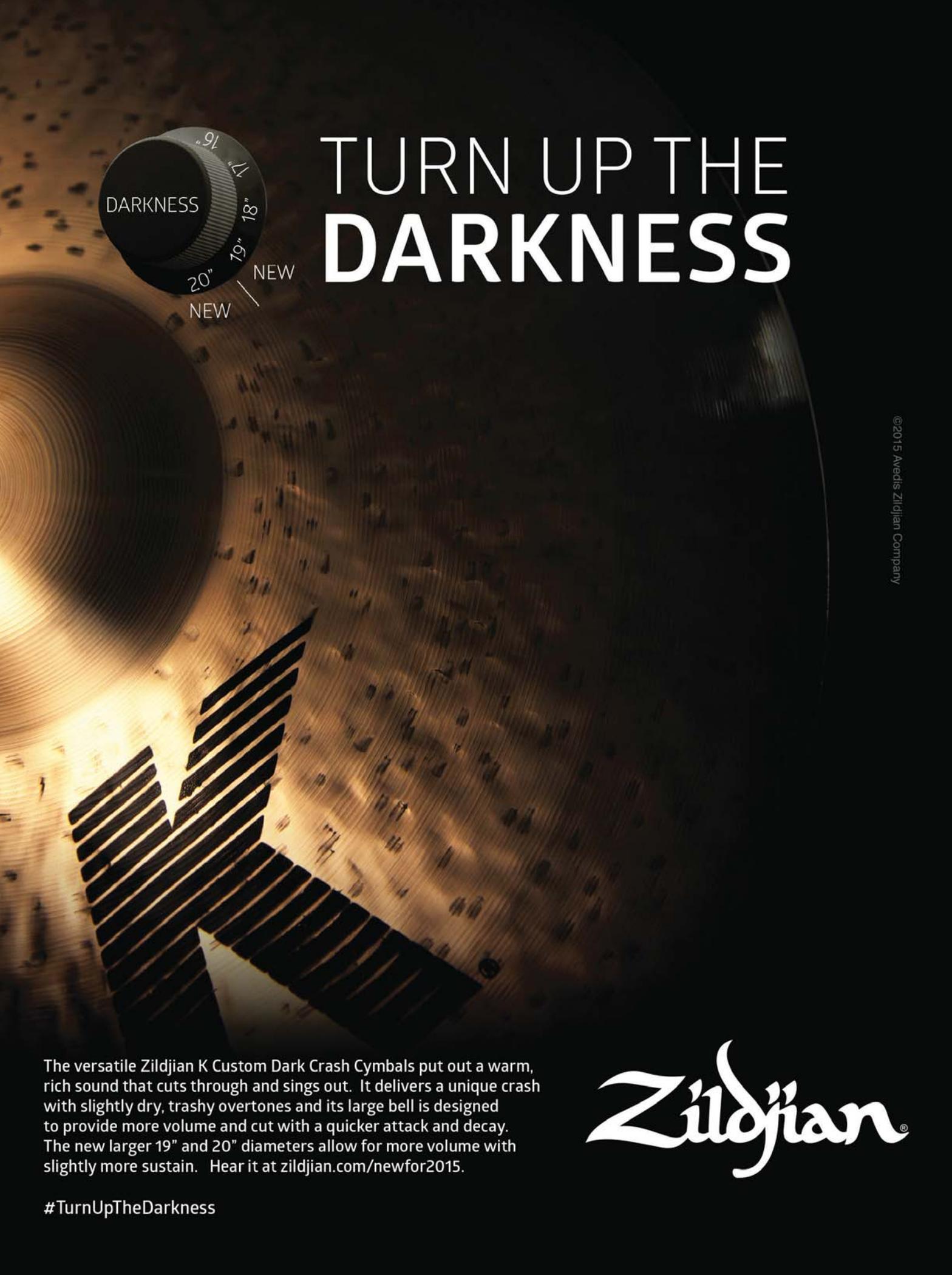
**Bass Essentials:** Larry Grenadier will conduct a bass master class at Rockwood Music Hall in New York City at 1 p.m. on Sept. 26. During the three-hour workshop, which costs \$150 per student, Grenadier will focus on aspects of jazz bass playing that he has found essential during his career, including bass line construction, soloing, practice ideas, rhythm section concepts, sound and overall technique. Space is limited, and students are encouraged to bring their instruments.

[ticketfly.com/event/904201](http://ticketfly.com/event/904201)

**New IJS Leadership:** Rutgers University—Newark Chancellor Nancy Cantor has appointed Wayne Winborne as executive director of the Institute of Jazz Studies (IJS), the world’s largest and most comprehensive jazz archive. Vincent Pelote has been named the institute’s director of operations. Following the retirement of longtime director and former DownBeat editor Dan Morgenstern, the IJS leadership was restructured to transform the position into the two newly created posts. [rutgers.edu](http://rutgers.edu)

**Preservation Ball:** The Preservation Hall Foundation will hold its second annual fundraiser ball at the Civic Theatre in New Orleans on Oct. 3, with an expansion event to take place at the Fillmore Auditorium in San Francisco on Nov. 6. Confirmed collaborators with the Preservation Hall Jazz Band for the concerts include Meshell Ndegeocello, Corey Glover, Deacon John Moore, Pinettes Brass Band and Beats Antique. Proceeds will benefit The Preservation Hall Foundation, whose education programs serve underprivileged children in the greater New Orleans area.

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



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Jim McNeely

## Jim McNeely

Not long after his 65th birthday, the eminent pianist-composer-arranger Jim McNeely—known for his 37-year association with the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra, his multiple Grammy-nominated albums and his chief conductor tenures for Denmark’s DR Big band and Germany’s HR Big Band—sat down for his first Blindfold Test.

### Lee Konitz-Ohad Talmor Big Band

“June ‘05” (*Portology*, Omnitone, 2007) Konitz, alto saxophone; Talmor, conductor, arranger; Orquestra Jazz de Matosinhos.

Lee Konitz. He sounds great, with such a rich, full sound. The writing starts with promise, and there are nice individual moments, but it gets much more conventional in spots. It wanders around, almost feels like it ends three times, then picks up again. I think the composer was of two minds—writing a piece that expressed their compositional ideas, but thinking, “I have to make sure Lee can play on this.” It seemed he tried to get in as many ideas as possible. It all could have been thinned out and shortened, including all the background stuff behind Lee, to let the darkness of his sound predominate more. Is it Ohad Talmor? He’s a good composer. 3 stars.

### Ryan Truesdell: Gil Evans Project

“Concorde” (*Lines Of Color: Live At Jazz Standard*, ArtistShare, 2015) Truesdell, conductor; Steve Wilson, alto flute; Dave Pietro, alto saxophone; Donny McCaslin, flute; Tom Christensen, oboe, English horn; Alden Banta, bassoon; Adam Unsworth, David Peel, French horns; Augie Haas, Greg Gisbert, Mat Jodrell, trumpets; Marshall Gilkes, trombone; George Flynn, bass trombone; Marcus Rojas, tuba; Lois Martin viola; James Chirillo, guitar; Frank Kimbrough, piano; Jay Anderson, bass; Lewis Nash, drums.

[immediately] “Concorde.” Ryan Truesdell’s version of Gil’s incredible piece of writing on John Lewis’ tune. I first heard it on the CD reissue of *The Individualism Of Gil Evans*; Gil didn’t allow it on the original LP. I’m so used to hearing Thad Jones and Phil Woods on this, it’s hard for me to separate them from the arrangement, even though these players are excellent. Some of Gil’s writing was rhythmically tricky, and Gil’s recordings are full of little mistakes, so it’s terrific to hear the writing so clearly from an ensemble that’s nailing it—especially that unison trumpet line at the end. But it also sounds weird—I miss those hanging threads on Gil’s recordings. You wrote the charts, read it down once in the studio, rolled the tape and went to the next one. Gil wasn’t thinking, “Maybe 30 years from now someone will want to study this in a school.” 5 stars.

### Vince Mendoza

“Poem Of The Moon” (*Nights On Earth*, Horizontal, 2011) John Abercrombie, guitar; Ambrose Akinmusire, trumpet; Kenny Werner, piano; Christian McBride, bass; Greg Hutchinson, drums; Jim Walker, flute; Maria Dickstein, harp; members of the Metropole Orkestra, strings.

I liked that a lot. It didn’t pretend to be more than it was—nicely restrained in a beautiful way. I loved the ending—very to the point. I loved the shape. I can’t identify the trumpet player, who sounded good. John Abercrombie on guitar? If it’s John with strings, it’s probably Vince Mendoza, one of my favorite composer-arrangers. I’ve learned a lot from Vince over the years. Probably Peter Erskine on drums. 5 stars.

### Arturo O’Farrill and the Afro-Latin Jazz Orchestra

“On The Corner Of Malecón And Bourbon” (*The Offense Of The Drum*, Motéma, 2014) Arturo O’Farrill, piano; Ivan Renta, Peter Brainin, tenor saxophones; Bobby Porcelli, David DeJesus, alto saxophones; Jason Marshall, saxophones; Seneca Black, Jim Seeley, John Bailey, Jonathan Powell, trumpets; Tokunori Kajiwara, Rafi Malkiel, Frank Cohen, trombones; Earl McIntyre, bass trombone; Gregg August, bass; Vince Chericó, drums; Roland Guerrero, congas; Joe Gonzalez, bongos.

Fun to listen to, though the beginning was scattered—like Don Pullen meets the World Saxophone Quartet in a big band with a Mideastern salsa band. When it finally settles into the groove, it sounds good—though when the two trumpets go back and forth, one of them tries to quote “Anything You Can Do I Can Do Better” and messes it up. The final way-up Latin section—I guess a *merengue*—was burning. But the beginning detracted from the total

effect. To me, each idea was presented in a box. Something to break down the separation to let it flow a little might have been more effective. 3 stars.

### JC Sanford

“Your Word Alone” (*Views From The Inside*, Whirlwind, 2014) Sanford, trombone; Taylor Haskins, Matt Holman, trumpet and flugelhorn; Dan Willis, soprano saxophone; Ben Kono, Chris Bacas, Kenny Berger, reeds; Mark Patterson: trombone; Jeff Nelson, bass trombone; Chris Komer, French horn; Jacob Garchik, accordion; Tom Beckham, vibraphone; Meg Okura: violin; Will Martina, cello; Aidan O’Donnell, bass; Satoshi Takeishi, percussion.

I liked that. It built nicely. A texture would get going and then be interrupted, but the interruptions made sense. They startled you, and then back to the quarter-note pulse. The string players sounded very good, and they did a good job of balancing everything. The playing was strong. 4 stars.

### Wynton Marsalis and Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra

“Saturday Night Slow Drag” (*All Rise*, Sony Classical, 2002) Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra and Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra.

Wild stuff. What the orchestra does in the beginning is striking. I like the brass writing, the way the composer uses the mutes. But the tension and wackiness we heard in the written stuff disappears when the solos start with just the rhythm section. It’s a fine, time-tested texture, but it’s a hole in the middle. After the solos, this wonderful double-time brass *tutti* happens for a few choruses, moving back into that vibe. 4 stars.

### Alan Broadbent and the NDR Big Band

“Sonata For Swee’ Pea” (*America The Beautiful*, Jan Matthias Records, 2014) Broadbent, piano, composer, arranger; NDR Big Band.

Well-written. My favorite part was the coda, when the composer started to work with ideas from the tune, which is pretty straightforward and conventional, and built a nice shape, with nice events in the head chorus. The piano playing was good; I liked the solo, though the flutes in the background were mixed a bit too forward for me. I wonder if the pianist was the arranger. 3½ stars.

### Maria Schneider Orchestra

“Nimbus” (*The Thompson Fields*, ArtistShare, 2015) Steve Wilson, Dave Pietro, Rich Perry, Donny McCaslin, Scott Robinson, saxophones and woodwinds; Tony Kadleck, Greg Gisbert, Augie Haas, Mike Rodriguez, trumpets; Keith O’Quinn, Ryan Keberle, Marshall Gilkes, trombones; George Flynn, bass trombone; Gary Versace, accordion; Lage Lund, guitar; Frank Kimbrough, piano; Jay Anderson, bass; Clarence Penn, drums.

Strong stuff. Great alto playing. Sounds like the writer has a bit of Gil Evans influence. The piano also has Gil-ish stuff happening. A very effective piece that built well. My only reservation is that, good as the alto player [Steve Wilson] is, at a certain point I thought it was time for him to stop and let the ensemble take over, and then bring him back in. After a while we start to say, “Oh, that alto is still playing; I want to hear what else is happening.” But the alto player did a great job of shaping the solo at the end and really coming down. 4½ stars.

DB

The “Blindfold Test” is a listening test that challenges the featured artist to discuss and identify the music and musicians who performed on selected recordings. The artist is then asked to rate each tune using a 5-star system. No information is given to the artist prior to the test.

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