193 GREAT JAZZ VENUES

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Contributing Designer Žaneta Cuntová
Circulation Manager Kevin R. Maher
Assistant to the Publisher Sue Mahal
Bookkeeper Evelyn Oakes
Bookkeeper Emeritus Margaret Stevens
Editorial Assistant Baxter Barrowcliff

ADVERTISING SALES
Record Companies & Schools
Jennifer Ruban-Gentile
630-941-2030
jenr@downbeat.com

Musical Instruments & East Coast Schools
Ritchi Deraney
203-445-6260
ritched@downbeat.com

Advertising Sales Associate
Sam Horn
630-941-2030
samh@downbeat.com

OFFICES
102 N. Haven Road, Elmhurst, IL 60126–2970
630-941-2030 / Fax: 630-941-3210
http://downbeat.com
editor@downbeat.com

CONTRIBUTORS
Senior Contributors:
Michael Bourne, Aaron Cohen, Howard Mandel, John McDonough
Atlanta: Jon Ross; Austin: Kevin Whitehead; Boston: Fred Bouchard, Frank-John Hadley, Chicago: John Corbett; Alan Gross, Michael Jackson, Peter Margañas; Bill Meyer, Mitch Meyers; Paul Nuttall; Howard Reich; Denver: Norman Provizer; Indiana: Mark Shulman; Jason: Will Smith; Los Angeles: Carl Gilson, Todd Jenkins, Kirk Silbee, Chris Walker, Joe Woodard; Michigan; John Ephriand; Minneapolis: Robin James; Nashville: Bob Doerr; New Orleans: Erik Golding, David Kuhn, Jennifer Orell, New York: Alan Bergman, Helix Boyd, Bill Douthart, Irina Gittler, Jacques Languirand; North Harris, O.D; Jackson, Jimmy Katz, Jim Maines; Ken McGuire, Dan Ouellette, Ted Pardi, Richard Seidel, Tom Stauffer, Jack Vartoogian, Michael Warren; North Carolina: Robin Tolleson; Philadelphia: David Adler, Shaun Birdy, Eric Fier; San Francisco: Mars Bredow, Forrest Bryant, Clayton Call, Yoshi Katz; Seattle: Paul de Barros; Tampa Bay: Philip Booth; Washington, D.C.: Waltz Jenkins, John Murphy; Michael Wildermuth; Belgium: Jos Knapen; Canada: Greg Bulum, James Hale, Diane Moon; Denmark: Jan Persson; France: Jean Slaten; Germany: Dettla Schille, Hyo Voltz; Great Britain: Brian Prestley, Japan; Kyóshi Koyama; Portugal: Antonio Rubio; Romania: Virgil Mirâi; Russia; Cyril McCelebr; South Africa: Don Albert.

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A Friendly, Funky Monster
BY JOSEF WOODARD
This fiercely independent jazz band, currently riding high with world tours and a quickly expanding discography on its own GroundUP label, has become a model of self-reliance.

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A Class Act

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WE LIVE IN A TIME OF DISUNITY AND strife. Today’s news headlines are often about tensions between two groups who cannot see eye-to-eye, whether it’s politicians accusing each other of misdeeds or community activists at odds with the local police department.

Some of these divisive issues are extremely serious, while others amount to petty bickering. Whether the problem is large or small, it seems that a solution could be found—or maybe some progress would be made—if the two parties could just reach some kind of common ground and listen to one another. Perhaps our civic leaders should look to artists for examples of how people from diverse backgrounds can work together toward a common goal.

One of the key community builders in jazz today is drummer Mike Reed (who is profiled in this issue). He wears many hats. Reed founded the wonderful, adventurous Chicago jazz venue Constellation; he is also founding director of the Pitchfork Music Festival and the programming chair of the Chicago Jazz Festival. In each of these roles, he works to bring people together. During a recent interview with Senior Contributor Aaron Cohen, Reed said, “The thing I discovered about myself … the thing that I’m most interested in, is getting people together and being a part of it.”

That desire to unify people is manifest in his programming at Constellation, where he strives to get young audience members and young musicians in the same room with revered veterans like Roscoe Mitchell and Wadada Leo Smith. Such gestures help eliminate the perception that there’s a “generation gap” between older and younger musicians.

As Reed told Cohen, if you want to get to know someone better, invite them over for dinner. And that’s exactly what the band Snarky Puppy has done, particularly with its acclaimed album _Family Dinner, Volume One_, and the new release _Family Dinner, Volume Two_ (described in our cover story). The above photo of Snarky Puppy & Co. brings to mind the phrase “It takes a village.” Depicted in this photo are bandleader Michael League (crouching in front, with a cajon) and the “family” of musicians who made the new album. Collaborators included Becca Stevens, Väsen, Susana Baca, Charlie Hunter, Salif Keita, Knower, Jeff Coffin, Laura Mvula and David Crosby.

We certainly don’t intend to belittle the extremely challenging problems that our civic leaders face nowadays. But maybe, just maybe, if they look at what artists like Snarky Puppy are doing, they’ll work a bit harder on bringing people together.

Let us know what you think about the role of jazz in unifying people. Post on our Facebook page or email us at editor@downbeat.com. Thanks for interacting with us, and please keep on reading.
Woods’ Final Bow
Thank you for your tribute to Phil Woods (The Beat, December). My wife and I saw his final concert, on Sept. 4 at MCG Jazz in Pittsburgh. I first discovered Woods’ artistry on some Monk recordings I bought in the late ’60s, and I have been a fan ever since. During that Pittsburgh concert, as brilliant as his playing was, Woods seemed labored at times. On at least one occasion it seemed as if he just stopped playing and turned the music over to the orchestra. (This was a Charlie Parker With Strings concert.) That led me to wonder if he had planned on retirement earlier, or if he made his retirement announcement on the spur of the moment. At several points he reminisced about his career with wonderful stories. He described his love of Dizzy Gillespie and his work with him—quite the opposite of his feelings toward Benny Goodman, primarily based on his being a sideman on Goodman’s U.S.S.R. tour.
All in all, it was a wonderful night and we were honored to be there and hear him. It left us with memories that will stick with us forever—seeing and hearing this wonderful artist swinging so perfectly.

BOB & DIANE ANDERSON
MORGANTOWN, WEST VIRGINIA

Underrated Trudell
As a long-time jazz fan and reader of DownBeat, I just can’t believe the disconnect that some of your reviewers have regarding straight-ahead, swinging jazz. It seems like the “cool” thing now is to be “out” and to say, “To heck with tradition.” One recent example is Bob Doerschuk’s review of the Dan Trudell Trio’s album Dan Trudell Plays The Piano in your January issue. If you’re into traditional jazz, there’s no way that’s only a 3½-star album! At the very least, it should get 4½ stars. Every song on the album stands on its own. Perhaps reviewers should designate their genre preferences because otherwise they might turn people off to fantastic listening opportunities.
KEVIN MINTOSH
STERLING HEIGHTS, MICHIGAN

Remembering Mark Murphy
The great jazz singer Mark Murphy departed this life on Oct. 22, leaving a legacy of fantastic recordings that we will always treasure (First Take, January). Michael Bourne said it well in his First Take essay: Murphy was “a singer’s singer.” We shall not see his like again.
JACK WHITLINGER
APOLLO, PENNSYLVANIA

Where’s the Latin Jazz?
I just browsed through most of the 2015 issues of DownBeat, give or take one or two.

In the April issue, I noticed that the Blindfold Test with vibraphonist Warren Wolf did not include any selections by one of the greatest vibes players of all time, Tito Puente. When I looked at the other tracks included in the Blindfold Tests for the year, I noticed there were no selections by Latin Jazz artists. This is an egregious and dishheartening oversight. Please stop treating Latin Jazz in a token manner and start including it in the Blindfold Test.

MARCELLA JENKINS
MARCELLAJENKINS@YAHOO.COM

Editor’s Note: Our December 2015 issue included a Blindfold Test with Pete Escovedo & Sheila E. in which they were asked to comment on Tito Puente’s “3-D Mambo” and Machito’s “Cannonology.”

Charity Case
In your October issue, the review of Mark Ribowsky’s book Dreams To Remember; Otis Redding, Stax Records, and the Transformation of Southern Soul made a reference to Redding’s participation in the 1967 Monterey International Pop Festival. I’d like to offer some details.

All the proceeds from the festival did indeed go to a charitable fund that continues to receive revenue from CD and DVD sales, licensing of film/audio clips, etc., which supports a variety of educational and artist-development programs. All the musicians who performed at Monterey were told in advance that their time was to be donated, and they all agreed. The festival could not have happened without the bands waving their fees. The only artist who was paid was Ravi Shankar, whose deal was made prior to the involvement of festival producers Lou Adler and John Phillips.

My brother Harvey and I are co-authors of the authoritative history of the festival, A Perfect Haze: The Illustrated History of the Monterey International Pop Festival. I call our book authoritative because Mr. Adler gave us unprecedented access to his exhaustive files, correspondence, legal contracts and other ephemera, which document the event’s charitable directive.

KENNETH KUBERNIK
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

In the Doghouse
I just read the results of the Readers Poll in your December issue. Snarky Puppy?! Maybe when my fellow readers were voting in the Jazz Group category, they thought they were voting for the band with the cutest name.

JOHN BARRETT
ATLANTA

Accentuate the Positive
It’s sad to see readers spending time and energy to rip magnificent artists like Charles Lloyd and Mary Halvorson in the Chords & Discords section in recent issues of DownBeat. Everyone is certainly entitled to their own opinion, and even critics famously disagree on artists and music at times. But why go through the trouble of writing a letter to the editor in order to slam artists that so many others love? Innovative musicians like Lloyd and Halvorson should be celebrated for what they bring to jazz, which is one of the key reasons I have subscribed to DownBeat for years.

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Horn Wins Monk Institute Jazz Vocals Competition

Distinguishing superb scatting from the superfluous kind was part of the task for the expert judges at this year’s Thelonious Monk Institute International Jazz Vocals Competition. The victor, Jazzmeia Horn of Dallas, demonstrated her talents in traditional singing as well as the more difficult art of scatting.

On Nov. 14 at UCLA’s Schoenberg Hall, 11 hopefuls took the stage, each of them launching into intricate, wordless improvisations that more often proved far more prolix than profound.

Dee Dee Bridgewater—who served as a judge alongside Patti Austin, Al Jarreau, Freddy Cole and Luciana Souza—commented that honing the art of scatting takes a long time. “When you’re young, scat-singing is more of an idea instead of an art; you get better the more you do it,” Bridgewater explained. “You have to grow into it and develop your phrasing. The younger singers seem to create their scat vocals before they even get on stage; so it’s not really improvisation and communicating with the musicians on stage. Scatting needs to come out of the musical conversation, in real time.”

As winner of the Monk Competition, Horn received a $25,000 scholarship and a record deal with Concord Music Group.

The second-place finalist—Veronica Swift of Charlottesville, Virginia—received a $15,000 scholarship. Third-place finalist Vuyolwethu Sotashe, who hails from Mthatha, South Africa, received a $10,000 scholarship.

During the semifinals, Horn immediately established herself as a favorite by delivering a bristling reading of Monk’s “Evidence,” on which she spat out crisscrossing passages with the rhythmic flow of a freestyle rapper. The 24-year-old singer was clearly in a Betty Carter state of mind, as she embodied the icon’s playful sense of daringness, even mimicking some her body movements. Horn exhibited a flair for singing rhythmically complex lines in ballad form with her alluring rendition of Jimmy Rowles’ “The Peacocks,” before explicitly paying her debt to Carter with a frisky take on her composition “Tight.”

The next day, at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood, Horn dazzled even more. Before closing her finalists-round performance with a glowing rendition of Herb Ellis’ “Detour Ahead,” she brought a timely sociopolitical undertone to the evening by first singing James Weldon Johnson’s “Lift Ev’ry Voice And Sing” before seguing into a barrelhouse makeover of Bobby Timmons and Jon Hendricks’ “Moanin.” Here, Horn went far beyond recital mode by imbuing the material with unflinching conviction.

The event also included a moving tribute to music industry icon Quincy Jones, who received the institute’s Humanitarian Award. A rotating cast of stars paid their respects with performances of songs related to Jones, ranging from the instrumental themes for TV shows (Sanford and Son and Ironside) to jazz standards (“Come Fly With Me,” sung with gusto by Seth MacFarlane) to the Michael Jackson hit “Human Nature,” highlighted by Wayne Shorter’s inquisitive soprano saxophone.

—John Murph
Salvant, Rosenwinkel
Stun in Barcelona

UNLIKE OTHER FAMOUS JAZZ FESTIVALS
that present multitudes of master practitioners in a compressed amount of time, the Voll-Damm International Jazz Festival of Barcelona proceeds at the stately pace of a late supper in the Catalanian capital, allowing its audience a chance to savor the intricacies of each artist with the same intensity that local residents apply to consuming food and wine.

The 47th edition opened on Sept. 26 with a concert by Diana Krall, and entered high gear on Oct. 22 with Chick Corea and The Vigil, presenting between four to six bands a week during the ensuing timeframe. Among them have been a cohort of world-class pianists—Danilo Pérez with the Children of the Light Trio; trios led by Uri Caine, Stefano Bollani and Giovanni Guidi; diasporic explorations by young Cubans Roberto Fonseca and David Virelles; and two concerts apiece by Cuban maestros Chucho Valdés and Gonzalo Rubalcaba.

Another highlight was a Nov. 19 performance at BARTS, a performance space on the Parallel, where singer Cécile McLorin Salvant and her trio performed for a packed house.

Road-tested and synchronous after three weeks into a zigzag-touring route of Europe, pianist Aaron Diehl, bassist Paul Sikvive and drummer Lawrence Leathers took the stage and played a brisk chorus on Lerner and Loewe’s “On The Street Where You Live,” setting up Salvant’s tour de force reading. She inhabited the lyric with a cabaret singer’s finesse and dramatic sensibility without ever descending into mannerism—though static—aflowing rhythm, inflecting each syllable with proper emphasis, juxtaposing purrs and hollers as the lyric demanded, moving smoothly through her capacious range.

Salvant applied similar aesthetics to the remaining 13 songs, stamping her personality on a century’s worth of American repertoire with an in-the-moment, all-jazz-is-modern sensibility without ever descending into mannerisms or irony for irony’s sake.


It was unclear how fluent in English Salvant’s listeners were, but they hung on her every syllable throughout, captivated by her warm, direct, unaffected stage presence and the universal language of masterfully rendered notes and tones.

Salvant is Salvant in whatever context she performs, but it must be noted that the trio functioned collaboratively throughout the proceedings, alert to her every cue, and soloing creatively within whatever idiom was in play, a single example being Diehl’s blues-drenched, locked-hands solo on “Growlin’ Dan.”

On the previous two evenings, on the other side of town, in L’Auditori at Barcelona’s Conservatori Liceu, Artistic Director Joan Cararách had booked guitarists Marc Ribot and the Young Philadelphians (Jamaaladeen Tacuma, G. Calvin Weston, Mary Halvorson) and a solo concert by Kurt Rosenwinkel.

For Rosenwinkel, “solo” did not mean unaccompanied. As denoted by two numbers titled “Imaginary Friend” and “Imaginary Friend’s Friend,” he surrounded himself with a laptop, a keyboard, various looping devices and a headset, deploying the gear to create a fount—though static—bass lines and beats that framed long, melodic improvisations.

At the beginning, Rosenwinkel created a drone with a South Indian connotation, then began guitar ruminations that morphed into the motif of “You’ve Changed,” upon which he piggybacked into a stream of melody within which could be detected fragments of “Without A Song” and “Jitterbug Waltz.” On “Path Of The Heart,” from 2010’s Our Secret World, he improvised over self-generated clave beats with characteristically luminous tone, which also animated a reading of Monk’s “Ugly Beauty,” which he introduced with upper-partial overtones.

Later, he created a kind of quasi-charanga band, setting up an Afrocubanistic 6/8 beat that framed a flowing guitar solo that complemented flute-like synth lines created by his unparalleled left hand. It was melodic playing at the Sonny Rollins-John Scofield level; it seemed he could continue all night long and the audience would still be captivated.

—Ted Panken
Blue Note Stars Set Sail

FOR SEVEN DAYS IN LATE OCTOBER/EARLY NOVEMBER, ONE OF the hippest jazz clubs on the planet was no jazz club at all, but rather Cunard Line’s flagship Queen Mary 2, during the inaugural Cunard/Blue Note “Jazz at Sea” festival, during a transatlantic crossing from Brooklyn to Southampton, England.

Accompanied by label president, bassist/producer Don Was, the musicians onboard included some of Blue Note Records’ biggest names: singer Gregory Porter, pianist Robert Glasper, and the Blue Note 75th Anniversary Band, an all-star group featuring Glasper, bassist Derrick Hodge, drummer Kendrick Scott, guitarist Lionel Loueke, saxophonist Marcus Strickland and trumpeter Keyon Harrold (subbing for Ambrose Akinmusire). Other players onboard included drummers E.J. Strickland and Mark Colenburg, pianist Fabian Almazen, keyboardists Michael Aaberg and Federico Peña, guitarist Mike Moreno and bassist/singer Alan Hampton.

The inspiration for the partnership was Cunard’s, according to Stanley Birge, vice-president of Cunard, N.A., who explained that by booking jazz stars, the passenger ship line, long known for its cultural programming, is trying to appeal to current customers but also to attract a new generation to the cruise line.

The experiment got off to rather a shaky start after dinner on the first evening, on the stage of the ship’s 1,094-seat Royal Court Theatre. Was appeared in his usual shades, dreadlocks and cowboy hat. “How many of you are familiar with Blue Note Records?” he asked. A smattering of applause. “How many are jazz fans?” Another smattering. The atmosphere seemed tense as the band came out and silently took their places, no one knowing how this would fly with the passengers. They launched into Ornette Coleman’s “Turnaround,” with a series of playful solos that sometimes left conventional tonality behind. Somewhere between a quarter and a third of the audience headed for the exits. Porter won over plenty of new fans with his compelling shows, and by the time the 75th Anniversary Band took the stage again a few nights after its first performance, the players had made a few adjustments, incorporating familiar jazz standards like “So What?” to meet the audience halfway. “I thought they were most generous in understanding that a large portion of the audience was uninitiated,” Was said. “They played half of Kind of Blue last night!” he laughed. “It was really fun.”

On the question of whether the paring of Blue Note and Cunard would win new customers to Blue Note or help the label sell more CDs, Was was thoughtful. “My overall feeling ... is that selling records to consumers is not a viable business anymore. So this is a radical, futuristic model for how everybody can make a little bread, and you can bring in new people to hear the music.”

Cunard has scheduled two more transatlantic crossings aboard the 2,500-passenger ocean liner in 2016: westbound departing Southampton on Aug. 1 (with Loueke and Herbie Hancock) and eastbound from Brooklyn on Oct. 26 (with Porter and other musicians). — Allen Morrison
On Oct. 12, Parks and Danish tenor saxophonist Christian Vuust released the sublime duo album *Storytelling*, an intimate, melodic gem that combines Danish traditional music with American standards. The Denmark-based Vuust, who was in New York on a two-month residency in 2013, met Parks when he enlisted him along with Jeff Ballard and Ben Street to record his *Urban Hymn* album. Vuust described why he and the pianist clicked: “Aaron has an undogmatic, open, yet personal approach to a song. He is a non-lick player; he is true to the song. It’s all about the song. This inspires me a lot.”

The *Storytelling* package includes a CD and 44-page hard-cover booklet with the song lyrics—in English as well as Danish—along with Vuust’s commentaries. Parks interacted with Vuust again when the pianist was a faculty member and artist in residence for two-and-a-half months at JazzDanmark in Copenhagen, where he composed music and performed with Danish jazz musicians. During the end of his stay, he and Vuust recorded *Storytelling*.

**What attracted you to doing an album with Christian?**

I liked the way he played—to the point, to the center. And his tone is beautiful and warm. When we toured his *Urban Hymn* album, we’d duo on “Summer Beyond” and it felt good. That’s when he proposed to make the duo album. When we recorded in Copenhagen, we didn’t do any rehearsing. We just brought tunes in—mostly Christian, who brought in Danish tunes. I brought in “Foolin’ Myself,” which we had performed with his band, as well as the standards “Ghost Of Yesterday,” the Gershwins’ “The Man I Love” and “Gone With The Wind.” But it was his brainchild. I was just trying to figure out where we were and what service I could give so that I could join the party.

**In the album’s liner notes, Christian advises musicians to become good storyteller—specifically, to develop the story that lies hidden in every good song, make the story their own and invest in the attempt to communicate the story to the listener.”**

That’s a priority to both of us. I’ve always thought in terms of narrative in my music. What we’re doing is to stay true to the essence of what these songs are, how we can continue the story, to follow through. Not to assert yourself. The story is there, so let’s follow it naturally.

**Did Christian talk with you beforehand about the meaning behind the Danish songs you played?** He said that he felt you “somehow intuitively understand the musical nuances and the artistic messages in the Danish standards.”

He told me a little about the lyrics. But more so, he talked about the mood, the essence. Sometimes I wasn’t sure if my version was right, but I went on without knowing.

**Christian said that when you toured Denmark in October, several people from the audience asked him, “How can Aaron play the Danish songs so well, not having grown up with this music?” He told the people it was because you had a unique artistic sensitivity.**

The Danes grew up with these songs, so I end up playing them a little bit differently. They’re beautiful songs that I treat with care. I noticed people coming up to me and saying, “I’ve never heard this song this way. I didn’t know it could be done this way.” They were pleased. That’s what I love about Denmark. It has a great tradition of singing old folk songs. When I was at a master class at Engelsholm [Castle], at the beginning everyone sang three or four songs from the *højskole* song-books of Danish tunes. Everyone knows them and they are sung all the time. I love that tradition.

—Dan Ouellette
Artists Reflect on Allen Toussaint’s Legacy

RARELY HAS A SINGLE ARTIST CONTRIBUTED IN SUCH A VAST AND lasting way to both the New Orleans music canon and the larger scope of American r&b, jazz and rock as Allen Toussaint did over the course of his decades-spanning career. That fact became even more poignant in the wake of his death on Nov. 10, as musicians from New Orleans and the world reflected on his influence.

Among them was Meters bassist George Porter Jr., who marveled at Toussaint’s ability to help artists “find stuff in themselves that they didn’t know was there.”

“Your talent as a musician and a producer has been a major role model in how I approach my own music and how I interact with other musicians on stage and in the studio,” Porter wrote. “You are a true legend and have left a legacy like no other.”

Delfeayo Marsalis, who worked in Toussaint’s studio as a high school student, called Toussaint “a great mentor with a generous heart” who “was able to capture the joy, intrigue and exuberance of New Orleans music over the course of six decades.”

Pianist Lawrence Sieberth spoke in more specific terms about Toussaint’s approach to interpreting music.

“You can’t play an Allen Toussaint song with a chord sheet. It’s the spirit. That’s it completely. It’s a certain level of freedom and putting your heart into the music. It’s not about regurgitating the music; it’s about letting it flow through you.”

In lieu of a jazz funeral, Toussaint’s family opted to host a visitation followed by a tribute and memorial service that drew thousands to the Orpheum Theater in New Orleans on Nov. 20.

Following an emotional performance of “Let’s Live” by Cyril Neville, New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu addressed the somber audience.

“Losing Allen is New Orleans’ musical Katrina,” he said. “We’ll recover, but it will never be the same.”

The next three hours featured moving tributes from artists such as Dr. John, the Preservation Hall Jazz Band, Jimmy Buffett, Boz Scaggs, Elvis Costello and many others.

After a sermon, the pianist’s longtime reed player Brian “Breeze” Cayolle performed a plaintive rendition of “Ave Maria.”

The event concluded with the musicians returning to the stage for an emotional performance of “I’ll Fly Away.” Finally, pallbearers followed members of the Preservation Hall Jazz Band, Trombone Shorty and other players in a procession out of the auditorium. As they reached the street, hundreds of mourners fell in line behind them, breaking into song as the casket was ushered past Canal Street to Toussaint’s final resting place.

—Jennifer Odell

Berlin Jazz Fest Balances Tradition, Adventure

ONE DISTINGUISHING ASPECT OF THE BERLIN JAZZ FESTIVAL IS ITS rotating director’s chair, which makes for an ever-shifting change of the aesthetic guard every few years. This year’s new director was British journalist Richard Williams, who follows on the heels of more recent directors Bert Noglik, Nils Landgren and Peter Schulze.

For the festival’s 51st edition, which ran Nov. 5–8, Williams stated that his intention was “to ask what jazz is, and what it can become.” To that end, he put on a strong, provocative and varied program, rising to the challenge of juggling musical adventures with comforting traditions.

Listeners got a taste of the delicate balance on opening night, which commenced with the abstract and largely improvisational Berlin-based Splitter Orchestra giving a powerful yet detailed reading of guest composer George Lewis’ “Creative Construction Set.” The strongest show of the festival, however, was a masterful performance by trumpeter Ambrose Akinmusire, who led his quartet (with special guest vocalist Theo Bleckmann) for the closing set on Nov. 8.

Also on opening night, singer Cécile McLorin Salvant demonstrated the kind of jazz intelligence and theatrically tinged dynamism that makes her one of the most exciting new vocalists on the scene. Another potent young voice, virtuosic French accordionist Vincent Peirani, mixed up musicality and post-fusion fodder. Of the British music in the mix, impressive young trumpeter Laura Jurd’s Dinosaur offered up some savory, funk-fueled neo-fusion grooves, while Dylan Howe’s Subterraneans took on David Bowie’s “Berlin”-era repertoire.

The geo-cultural GPS then moved from the British Isles to the Puerto Rican/New York City scene, via the vibrant alto saxophonist and conceptualist Miguel Zenón and his “Identities Are Changeable” project. And on Nov. 7, Charles Lloyd brought his cross-cultural “Wild Man Dance” project to a crowd of eager listeners. Opening for his set was the supple and dazzling Tigran Hamasyan Trio.

But this reviewer was pulled away by the lure of catching the remarkable Paal Nilssen-Love and his Large Unit, one of the most stellar examples of a free-improvised big band project. They have invented their own sense of groove, removed from any other group’s, and reached new heights and new ambient dimensions in the process. The unfolding here-and-now of the set proved fairly overwhelming. —Josef Woodard
When Miho Hazama headlined at Jazz Standard on Sept. 30 with her 13-piece chamber band m_unit, she proved herself an engaging new voice on New York’s jazz scene. The 29-year-old composer and arranger—who grew up in Tokyo and now lives in Harlem—represents the next generation of large ensemble leaders, ably joining the ranks of such established orchestra leaders as Maria Schneider and Ryan Truesdell.

In fact, Schneider in many ways has served as a mentor. “Maria has helped me a lot, including helping me to get my first dream show at Jazz Standard,” said Hazama, who graduated with a master’s degree in composition from the Manhattan School of Music (where she studied with Jim McNeely) in 2012. “I met Maria at MSM where she taught a master class... I gave her my first CD [2013’s Journey To Journey] and she loved it. Since then, she has supported and encouraged me.”

Hazama, whose second album is the spirited Time River (Sunnyside), has been garnering impressive stature as a composer. Last year she won the 16th Annual Charlie Parker Jazz Competition Prize for her work “Somnambulism,” and the year before she received the Japanese 24th Annual Idemitsu Award—the first time a jazz composer has won the prestigious prize. In 2011 she received an ASCAP Foundation Young Jazz Composer Award.

Hazama’s music is complex, teeming with unexpected twists and jolting turns as well as pockets of frenzy that lead into wonder. Case in point: “The Urban Legend,” the uplifting opening tune of Time River. It has an element of swing in 5/16 time but also features horns darting over lush strings, a scampering rhythm that leads to a rolling piano solo and a tenor saxophone sprint before the band returns to the tune’s catchy motif that appears, disappears and reappears throughout the song. “The inspiration for this comes from the music I compose when I travel,” Hazama said.

Hazama didn’t fully plunge into jazz until she came to New York, focusing primarily on the compositional aspects of the music. “I chose to be a composer because I was interested in geometry and logical concepts I could explore,” she explained.

Even so, in delving into math-inspired jazz, Hazama concluded that her music needed a more soulful depth. “The first time I showed some of my earlier music to my mother, she was shocked,” she said. “I realized that I have to keep in mind that I want to entertain as well as be an artist. ... Instead of focusing on harmony only, I needed to keep melody in mind to make my music memorable to the listener.”

As revealed in her Jazz Standard show, Hazama exudes confidence. She doesn’t shy away from asking marquee artists to guest on her recordings. For Journey To Journey, she enlisted Stefon Harris and Steve Wilson. For Time River, she brought in Joshua Redman and Gil Goldstein—both musical heroes.

Hazama’s musical introduction to Goldstein came from listening to his production and arrangements on Michael Brecker’s 2003 Quintet album Wide Angles. While she was working as an arranger/orchestrator with Ryuichi Sakamoto, she discovered that he had worked with Goldstein and knew him well. So she emailed him and sent him a copy of her first album. He replied with a link to a YouTube song he performed that reminded her of a song she had written but never recorded. “It’s one of my favorites that I had written for a quintet, so I rewrote it so that he could play it with m_unit,” she said.

Goldstein takes the accordion spotlight on the emotive “Under The Same Moon,” which he also performed with m_unit at the Jazz Standard.

“Miho wants to make her big band not sound like a big band,” Goldstein said. “She brings the aesthetic and sensibility from Mike’s work to herself, and she’s special in how she knows how to compose the licks and nuances. She does what all grown-up composers do: express a distinctive idea and develop and unfold it. It’s that unfolding that makes her so special and reappears throughout the song. “The inspiration for this comes from the music I compose when I travel,” Hazama said.

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Dan Ouellette
For Christian Howes, jazz defies definition. The violinist’s new album, *American Spirit* (Resonance Records), is a beautifully eclectic work that speaks to his disdain for pedantic debates over what jazz is. It’s also a celebration of the United States’ deep musical heritage, influenced by Howes’ U.S. State Department visit to strife-torn Ukraine in 2014.

“No matter what opinion you have on whatever issue, you should feel proud that you are American,” said Howes. “If we focus on the things we share, the qualities we agree are important, then we can get rid of some of the polarization, the nitpicking. Which is the same thing I’m saying about music. Why are we nitpicking about what’s jazz and what’s not jazz?” he said. “It’s about music, and music is about spirit.”

Mixing traditional jazz, modern jazz, r&b, blues, folk and classical music, Howes’ new CD represents an effort by the 43-year-old to come to terms with changing life priorities. The married father of two is a critically acclaimed jazzman with a diverse musical range comparable to that of Jean-Luc Ponty. He also is an educator committed to breaking down established notions about the violin’s role in improvising and composition.

From age 5, however, the prime focus of Howes’ upbringing in Columbus, Ohio, was preparing for a career as a classical violinist. Then, at 19, Howes’ life took an unexpected turn: He was arrested for LSD trafficking and sentenced to spend six to 25 years in jail. It was a frightening development. But being incarcerated expanded his understanding of humanity, and it broadened his musical palette. Playing a range of tunes for the prison church congregation gratified a long-suppressed urge to explore different musical styles.

He was released after four years on good behavior. Soon afterward, he decided to reject an offer of full-time employment with the Columbus Symphony to throw himself into gigging at local clubs and restaurants.

For a State Department concert in Kiev, the Ukrainian capital, Howes and a youth orchestra teamed up to perform Scott Routenberg’s “Concerto For Jazz Violin.” It was a tense time, as a violent, deadly battle raged between government forces and pro-Russian rebels. Howes was astounded as spectators, giving the orchestra and him a standing ovation, suddenly broke into a rendition of Ukraine’s anthem of solidarity.

Back in the studio, Howes focused on short solos rather than virtuosic displays when recording *American Spirit*.

“The desire [during the sessions was] to express exactly what needs to be expressed and nothing less,” said bassist Ben Williams, part of a lineup that included pianist Josh Nelson, organist/pianist Hamilton Hardin, drummer Gregory Hutchinson and vocalist Polly Gibbons. “A lot of music today is a little too self-gratifying.”

For Howes, the album speaks to music’s purpose and power: “When I was younger, it was all about climbing the ladder of success and proving myself. Now, I want my energy directed toward something bigger, something meaningful. If I play music, there’s a bigger reason for doing it. It’s about creating meaning for people, it’s about making people feel good. It’s about expressing humanity.” —Michael Barris
Now promoting its third album for Cuneiform, *Golden Years*, Norway’s award-winning band Pixel continues to build momentum. Double-bassist/vocalist Ellen Andrea Wang, drummer Jon Audun Baar, trumpeter Jonas Kilmork Vemøy and saxophonist Harald Lassen tore things up at last fall’s Stockholm Jazz Festival, playing to a full house at the jazz club Fasching. With members composing music for the band, their unique blend of danceable jazz with indie pop and rock continues to include tight arrangements, ample room for blowing and fetching vocals.

All four have careers and collaborations of their own, with everyone approaching 30. But, as Lassen, who came up with the title for *Golden Years*, noted, “The music is about staying young.” Regarding the follow-up to 2014’s *We Are All Pixels* and 2012’s *Reminder*, he said, “This is the best record we’ve made so far, and, for sure, they are golden years for us.”

The members of Pixel are longtime students and fans of American jazz. They are also, naturally, students of Norway’s jazz history, and they’re ready to make their own mark in that great lineage. “We have had a really strong jazz scene in Norway for the past 40 years,” Lassen said. “People are still talking about Jan Garbarek and his group with Arild Andersen. But we are ready to change that.” (His bandmates chuckled in delight at that statement.)

Indeed, Pixel wants to distance themselves from the stereotype of what fans have come to think of as “Nordic jazz.” “We’re something else,” Wang said with a broad smile. “With our music, we want to challenge the [notion that] Nordic jazz is introverted, self-important. We like more the joy in the music, and to have the connection with the audience and to play with more energy. We’re singing, everybody.”

While early on Wang was more central to Pixel’s sound, *Golden Years* reflects a collective quartet sound. Nowadays each member has an equivalent role. “Vocals can be added as an instrument [by everyone]—not like a singer in front of the band, but they become a part of the band that is natural,” Wang said. “All the instruments have an important voice in Pixel.”

The band—whose busy schedule includes shows at Ronnie Scott’s in London (Jan. 4) and Bimhuis in Amsterdam (Jan. 5)—are road warriors whose malleable songs evolve over the course of a tour. The compositions are also transformed during the recording process.

“Last year [2014] was a very productive year for us,” Vemøy said. “We had almost 100 concerts, so we got to play a lot together. *Golden Years* was recorded in five days. With this record, we wanted to take everybody’s ideas, not throw anything away before it was tested out and tried; and we were very open to each other.”

The conversation concluded in Fasching’s backstage green room with a discussion about recording a live album that would capture the onstage spontaneity for which Pixel is known. Wang sees performing their songs live as an opportunity for refinement: “This is the fun part,” she said, “knowing it can always get a little better.”

—John Ephland
It can take ages to become an overnight success in Nashville. Case in point: guitarist Colin Linden. A longtime Music City fixture, he’s toured with Bob Dylan and Emmylou Harris, led two trios whose critical successes predated the current Americana boom and built a reputation as a multi-instrumentalist and producer blessed with taste and integrity.

“I’ve played on 400 albums,” he insists over the buzz and clatter of coffee machines and conversation at the cafe Eighth and Roast. “But I’ve only recently been given the chance to record frequently with musicians who are really experienced. Working with [music director] Buddy Miller on the Nashville TV show has made it possible.”

ABC’s country music prime-time soap has put Linden on the fast track to opportunity. “I’m the performance supervisor,” Linden says. “I play about 75 percent of the guitar you hear on the show. When we go on the road, I play with almost all of the actors. I like to think I’m involved pretty deeply in developing the nuance that the cast members bring to their roles.”

These developments are like the ignition switch on a vehicle Linden has been building since his formative years in Toronto—the scene that spawned Robbie Robertson, Amos Garrett, Amos Wilcox and other blues-inflected guitarists who nourished him as a singer and player.

Linden sees everything he plays through the prism of the blues. This perspective is also largely what drew him to bassist John Dymond and drummer Gary Craig, his musical associates for more than 25 years. (Keyboardist Richard Bell was an equally vital part of the group until his death from multiple myeloma in 2007.) Sticking with the same players for so long involves walking a wire between playing intuitively and lapsing into predictability; thus far, according to Craig, they’ve kept their balance.

“There’s nothing more valuable than having many, many years of playing with people you can relate to,” the drummer says. “I’ve gotten to know Colin’s phrases and motifs. When I hear them coming, I can accompany them however I want because I know how they’re going to happen.”

It took longer for the trio to come up with a name than to establish their synchronicity. Known now as The Rotting Matadors, they hold the center on Linden’s latest album, the superb Rich In Love (Stony Plain). Enhanced by guest appearances from harmonist Charlie Musselwhite, keyboardists Reese Wynans and Tim Lauer and vocalist Amy Helm (daughter of Levon), the program moves from slinky and soulful on “I Need Water” to roadhouse raw on “The Hurt” and Delta deep on the title track. And yes, a current of blues flows from track to track; that wellspring is far from dry.

“I’m touched by the music of the past,” Linden says. “The great blues artists are like mountains: You can build the biggest city you want next to them, but it’ll still be dwarfed by Howlin’ Wolf, Muddy Waters, Blind Lemon Jefferson, Robert Johnson, Son House, Willie Lee Brown and Reverend Gary Davis. I’m a forward-looking guy. I want to do better than I do now. But always, I do my best to represent my heroes, too.”

—Bob Doerschuk
Snarky Puppy members Jay Jennings (left), Mike Maher, Jason Thomas, Michael League, Nate Werth, Shaun Martin, Chris Bullock and Justin Stanton.
Snarky Puppy has become a monster—albeit a friendly, funky monster—and all through its own fiercely independent means and devices. This jazz band out of University of North Texas, formed in 2002 and now riding high with world tours and a quickly expanding discography on its own GroundUP label, has become a model of self-reliance. Rare in the jazz world is the DIY success story that results in a truly global reach. After doggedly working just beneath the radar for years, Snarky Puppy has hit it big, with a Grammy award (Best R&B Performance for “Something,” featuring vocalist Lalah Hathaway, from the 2013 album Family Dinner, Volume One), strong sales for 2015's band-plus-orchestra CD Sylva (with the Metropole Orkest) and a victory in the Jazz Group category of the 2015 DownBeat Readers Poll. Additionally, Sylva is nominated in the category Best Contemporary Instrumental Album for the Grammy Awards that will be presented on Feb. 15.

In a way, the band’s new theme song could be “Sleeper,” from 2014’s We Like It Here, which starts slowly before kicking into a higher, groove-consuming gear. The band boasts a personally tended, organically grown, very enthusiastic fan base, a phenomenon that invites comparisons to Phish and Dave Matthews Band.

Snarky Puppy’s new album, Family Dinner, Volume Two, is decidedly homegrown yet wildly ambitious, with a diverse roster of guests that includes vocalists David Crosby, Susana Baca, Becca Stevens and Salif Keita, as well as guitarist Charlie Hunter and saxophonist Jeff Coffin.

The new album also marks the band’s entry into the major-label world, via an interesting partnership. Michael League, the band’s powerhouse yet soft-spoken leader, is quick to explain that Snarky Puppy was not “signed by” a major label, and that the album is issued on the band’s own imprint, GroundUP, but will be distributed by Universal Music Classics. It’s an important distinction—one in keeping with his overall vision and career goals.
Snarky Puppy | A FRIENDLY, FUNKY MONSTER

“We’re still independent, 100 percent—you don’t give that up easily after 12 years,” League said. “That has given us a lot of leverage over any negotiations that have taken place with majors, because they know walking into the situation that we’re not in a position where we really need them. That’s great, because then you can really talk as peers, and not as suits and plebeians.”

All of these converging energies and spotlights stoke a basic question among critics and fans who have only recently heard about the band: Just who and what is this thing called Snarky Puppy?

For newbies, the best introduction to the band is to attend one of its concerts, where the infectious energy, ambience, groove power and tunefulness come through—especially when the crowd is stocked with avid believers. In September, the band was greeted by a sold-out audience at the 1,700-seat UCLA Royce Hall, a few days after they made their first main-stage appearance at the Monterey Jazz Festival. (The band’s previous Monterey shows were in the much smaller Garden Stage.)

Indeed, Snarky Puppy’s steep ascent in the last couple of years can be gauged by venue sizes. In the past, performing in Los Angeles meant a gig at the showcase club The Mint, whereas this year the band played the massive Hollywood Bowl during the Playboy Jazz Festival.

The band duly rocked Royce Hall in a show that was opened by another young band drawing on fusion sounds: Kneebody. Much of the Snarky Puppy material, stretched and altered to suit the moment of this show, was from the band’s last “normal” instrumental album, We Like It Here, including the jazz-rocky jabs and intricacies of “What About Me?” and the more balladic and soothing contours of “Kite.”

Stylistically, Snarky Puppy cuts a unique profile. While the term fusion seems appropriate—especially regarding the interplay of electric bass, crunchy-toned electric guitar and keyboard heat on retro synths and keyboards and a powerful drum/percussion force in the rhythm section—there are strong elements of a little big band, clearly reflected in the arrangements for horns. Elements of African and Latin music, plus plenty of ’70s funk and soul-jazz, are in the mix as well, and the melodic and even romantically inclined instincts and sometimes mini-epic structures of League’s compositions are reminiscent of the Pat Metheny Group. (Metheny has proudly expressed his admiration for Snarky Puppy.)

While in Los Angeles, League sat down for a long interview over an Iron Duke Stud-Finder beer at Good Microbrew & Grill in the hip neighborhood Silver Lake. Midway through the interview, our server came by, gazed at my record-player and asked who League was connected with. “Snarky Puppy,” she mused, “I’ve heard of that. Is that a web comedy?” “No,” he said with a smile, “but it could be. We just played at the Hollywood Bowl. Maybe you saw our name advertised.”

As it turns out, the name Snarky Puppy was stolen from his brother when League needed to advertise his new project for a humble college gig in a pizza parlor basement. The unlikely moniker has attained its own cruising altitude as a band name, a reference to a sound—and, yes, a brand. But it resonates with the music to which it is attached, both accessible and muscular, a kindly creature with a potential bite.

Putting the band’s story-so-far in a compact nutshell, founder-bassist-arranger-composer-CEO League said, “I started with my buddies, and we just played local gigs for free. We made a little record in a local studio and booked a tour, which was more like a college road trip. And that begat another tour and another tour and then we made another record. Then, it started snowballing.

“Man, I sent emails to every booking agency and every management company and everyone referred me to record label I could think of. Nobody cared. When you do that for seven years and you start to have some success, you start to realize, ‘We actually don’t need those things.’ That’s when I started to feel like the Catalans or the Quebecois feel: ‘We are independent. That’s who we are.’”

Saxophonist Chris Bullock recalled the many rough and lean years before the recent upturn. “It had been a slow burn for a long time,” he said. “For so many years, we were grinding on the road, playing our music in front of empty rooms—or rooms with the same number of people that are onstage and finding hippie houses, anywhere we would crash just to save some money, because we weren’t making any playing gigs.” Fast-forward to now, and this nine-piece-plus band is making ends more than meet and plotting its future moves.

High on the list of League’s influences, in terms of what grew to be the Snarky Puppy jazz-funk sound, were keyboardists Bernard Wright and Don Blackman.

“Really, the school that I think Snarky Puppy comes from, if you want to nail it down—while the Metheny Group is definitely an influence and Weather Report is definitely an influence—we’re more from the school of Don Blackman,” League said. “He played with Miles and loads of people, and had a solo career. But my mentor is a guy named Bernard Wright, who also recorded with Miles. He grew up as one of the Jamaica boys, with Marcus Miller and Lenny White. So Nard was my mentor. Donald Blackman was Nard’s mentor and a guy named Weldon Irvine was Donald Blackman’s mentor.

“It all goes back to this Jamaica, Queens, black thing of really knowing jazz but also really knowing how to groove and how to play r&b. It’s this weird school that is super unknown, but its influence is felt second-hand, in a big way.”

League grew up listening to Led Zeppelin, a band he described as one of his biggest influences, but he was drawn to the groove element of a variety of genres. “I grew up with James Brown and Stevie Wonder and Zeppelin, and groove and pop bands,” he said. “But also, I was in jazz school and loved the jazz thing. So there definitely was an element of wanting to blend those things, but that real black American music—that thing didn’t happen until our third or fourth year. That was a whole new world for me.”

Tapping into the musical languages and structures of pop and r&b has always been a part of League’s m.o. as a composer, and band
His touch is his legacy.

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conceptualist. “In today’s world,” he says, “with people’s attention spans and aesthetics and preferences, you’re already swimming upstream with a band without a vocalist. So we do everything we can to provide motifs and making sure that the grooves are always interesting, that the melodies are always singable and catchy, and that compositionally, there is lots of stimuli—for us, as well as the listener.”

He paused to clarify the point. “I don’t ever follow the listener,” League said. “I feel very strongly in the idea that the artist should lead the listener and not follow. But when I say these things about the music being accessible or catchy, I mean that as much for us as for the audience. We’re guys who, when we get in the van, we don’t turn on a modern jazz album. We listen to Led Zeppelin, CSNY, Smashing Pumpkins and Michael Jackson.”

Diversity of tastes and skill sets comes naturally to the musicians in the band’s stable. Trumpeter/keyboardist Justin Stanton admits that the band is “a multi-headed beast. We have a lot of interests, so we just try to cram it in as best we can. We get bored easily.” From a more practical, on-the-job perspective, League comments, “We’re all session guys, too, and are sidemen for anyone from Erykah Badu to Kirk Franklin to Justin Timberlake, to jazz guys, like Wayne Krantz.”

In terms of its current personnel set, Snarky Puppy is, by its nature, a malleable and changeable beast, with musicians shifting in and out of a given tour or album project. “Over the course of 2013,” League says by way of an example, “probably 25 guys will have played gigs as Snarky Puppy. But maybe 13 do the records.”

League said that the expandable personnel strategy was “totally born out of necessity. When we were first getting started, I said yes to every gig. That’s one of my things in life: I feel like everything is an opportunity, and I don’t like the possibility of an opportunity lost.”

“I would say yes to gigs and then guys couldn’t make it. I’d have to find another guy, who learned the music and played the gig. I figured, ‘Well, shoot, he’s already done all the work and sounds great. So the next time the guitar player can’t do it, I’ll invite him. Or maybe we’ll have both of them, anyway.’ We just kind of accumulate members as we meet guys who fit the ethos and have a great attitude, who are responsible, play great and can groove and interact. They should have that two-minded thing, with jazz interaction but also the sensibility of ‘I like to play a song.’”

Keeping that critical balance of jazz fluidity and supportive song-consciousness is a key factor in what gives the band its identity—amidst the admitted swirl of confusion over what to call and where to put the band in the musical landscape. “When people call us a fusion band,” League says, “I kind of cringe a little bit, because a lot of what people consider fusion is not something I would like. But when they call us jazz, I feel like that’s a little more accurate, but I still don’t feel like that’s really right.

“I guess we’re more similar to the Jazz Messengers or Mingus or Ellington or the Hot Seven than we are to modern-day jazz guys. In that way, I think we are jazz, because we’re taking the jazz tradition and doing our thing with it, which relates to today.” But he draws the line when it comes to applying the band’s approach directly to the modern jazz scene, as such, adding, “We improvise all the time, and every night we play each song differently. But all of the improvisation is built around serving the composition.”

Two of the longer-standing core members of the band are Stanton and saxophonist Cory Henry, both of whom eased into the Snarky slipstream while attending UNT, after intending to head into possible careers as teachers and/or bandleaders in academic settings.

Dazzling keyboardist Cory Henry has been in the fold about five years, and by now has cemented his place in the ranks. This year, he is slated to release two albums of his own on the GroundUp label. Henry, who wears his vintage influences of Herbie Hancock, Chick Corea, Bernie Worrell and Billy Preston well on Hammond B-3 and his Moog, asserts, “Snarky Puppy is a mixture of so many different things. It can be anything on any given day, because the band plays so much. And within that freedom, in a way, we all still practice restraint. We let the music grow freely.”

The recent spate of upward mobility for the band has ostensibly been “in the can.” But the artists started showing up, it was really cool. We had created this schedule that allowed them to have a lot of free time, so they could come and rehearse their tune and then be free to do what they wanted.

“But what ended up happening, the end result, was that the artists stuck and hung and were vibing and sitting in on everyone else’s rehearsals. So there was this really beautiful energy off everybody together in the room, creating this thing together. It added to the energy.”

“David Crosby was someone who stayed for every moment he could sit in a room and watch people making music. He was there, laughing, acting like a kid, having fun and cracking jokes. It was just a cool energy, because everyone stuck around and wanted to be a part of the process, and witness what everyone else was doing. It created that family vibe—not to be cheesy, but it felt like that by the end of the week when it came time to actually record the music in front of the studio audience.”

League explained that during the sessions, “Every last person was of the same mind. When everyone was together in the room, everybody just changed. It was crazy. There are no green rooms, so nobody had any privacy. At the studio, there is the main studio space and then a kitchen downstairs, which was like the green room. Everyone was together.”

“At any given point during the day, you’d...
walk downstairs and Crosby would be singing a song on the couch and Olov [Johansson] from Väsen would be playing nyckelharpa and Jacob Collier would be playing melodica. It was crazy. I don’t even know how to explain it. It was like camp.”

While Volume One mostly stuck to an r&b-driven “sophisto-soul” format, the new Family Dinner ventured out into the world, to the Peruvian chanteuse Baca, the Swedish folk-rock group Väsen and, with Keita, to Mali (where League traveled to record Keita in his home studio).

Keyboardist Henry felt that the sessions were one of the most creative projects in which he has participated. “It was a world full of people with the concept of no boundaries, mixing textures and creating colors that are vibrant and new,” he remembered. “The band stretched as far as we could to make each song as different stylistically as you can, while still making it feel good.”

Snarky Puppy, a 21st-century wonder in the extended quarters of the jazz scene, may be—along with groups like Kamasi Washington’s West Coast Get Down collective—harbingers of new musical models rising up for the vast talent pool of young musicians facing a fragmented music business.

Stanton pointed out that “the model is so different from bands that were similar to us in the ’70s and even the ’80s, in the financial state of things in music and how it is supported. I feel like, in a lot of ways, we’ve had to rely on our own inventiveness, in a way, and just persevere to try to make things work and push things forward on our own.

“Luckily, it has caught on. We don’t take any of that for granted. We want to just keep the momentum going as much as we can and keep making music together, because we enjoy doing it. As cliché and cheesy as that sounds, that’s why everybody is doing it.”

League views the long haul and rapid rise of the band in a late-blooming, positive light. “From the very beginning,” he said, “if we had a stylist and a branding agent and a manager and handlers, all this kind of stuff, advisors, little musical Karl Roves behind the scenes … I don’t think we’d be the band that we are.

“I feel very fortunate that we had this incubation period where no one knew about us and no one cared. We were able to kind of grow like a fungus, in whatever direction that we grew in. Then, by the time anyone found out about us, we know who we are. This is who we are. We know because we have years behind us, being ourselves. We tried all these things and they didn’t work, musically. These things work, musically, and we love these things.

“So I’m glad now, in retrospect, that no one cared about us.”

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Paquito D’Rivera at the 2015 Barcelona Jazz Festival (Photo: Lorenzo Duaso/Voll-Damm Festival Internacional de Jazz de Barcelona)
In the years since DownBeat profiled Paquito D’Rivera in 2009, the 67-year-old clarinetist/saxophonist/composer/arranger has further expanded an already formidable resume. Over the intervening six years, D’Rivera released six albums—most recently *Aires Tropical* (Sunnyside)—each documenting a fully realized project with a distinctive character unto itself, unified by his brilliant musicianship and tonal charisma. He earned a 2011 Grammy for Best Classical Contemporary Composition for “Panamericana Suite,” and a Latin Grammy for Best Latin Jazz Album for the CD bearing that title, while *Song For Maura*, from 2013, won that year’s Grammy for Best Latin Jazz Album, an honor also bestowed upon it by the 2014 Latin Grammy Awards.

D’Rivera continues to compose, to perform as a soloist with orchestras and ensembles around the world, and, most importantly, to present repertoire spanning his 35 years as a bandleader with his virtuoso working quintet (Diego Urcola, trumpet and valve trombone; Alex Brown, piano; Oscar Stagnaro, bass; Eric Doob, drums).

D’Rivera was about to embark on a road trip with that unit when DownBeat met him in early November at the New York office of Sunnyside Records, the distributor of his new album, *Paquito And Manzanero*, comprising primarily Brown’s inspired arrangements of songs by iconic Mexican composer Alejandro Manzanero.

After a week of concerts in Florida and Louisiana, D’Rivera would visit the Miami Book Fair to discuss improvisation and the lasting power of classics in music and literature with Ilan Stevens, the translator of *My Sax Life*, his picaresque, poignant, amusing memoir. The intention was to publicize a new epistolary memoir, *Letters to Yeyito: Lessons From a Life in Music* (Restless Books), in which D’Rivera repurposes and recontextualizes material from *My Sax Life* and its 2011 follow-up, *Portraits and Landscapes*, but also adds much that is fresh. The episodes are responses to a letter that D’Rivera received in Cuba a half-century ago from a young correspondent named Yeyito asking the then-16-year-old first-call musician—who was already well known on the island as a member of the Teatro Musical de Havana—for tips on pursuing a career in music.

“Yeyito made a mistake,” D’Rivera recalled. “He never wrote the return address. After *Portraits and Landscapes* came out, a friend called and said, ‘I want you to write a book of letters to an aspiring musician, a young student.’ This became a great opportunity to answer Yeyito’s question.”
Deep Connection

In his memoir Letters to Yeyito (Restless Books), Paquito D’Rivera details his life and musical experiences in the form of letters to a fan named Yeyito. The book chronicles everything from his youth in Cuba to his work as a sideman for Dizzy Gillespie. In the following excerpt, D’Rivera describes his friendship with the Cuban writer Guillermo Cabrera Infante.

It all began one afternoon at the end of the ‘60s at the Antillars Bar of the Hotel Habana Libre [the old Hilton]. The bar is located at the entrance of the Salón Caribe, where the show goes on every night. …

Since it was still early, the bar was deserted. I was alone on one of the wicker stools drinking a Cuba libre. There were only a couple of Canadian tourists sipping their mojitos slowly and ceremoniously at the small tables, while my friend Nicolás Reinoso walked in hastily. Without even saying hello, taking advantage that the bartender was far from us catering to the tourists, Nicolás looked around, took a book from his pocket, and passed it to me.

“Take a discreet glance at this book,” he said. “If you’re interested, take it home, but return it as soon as you read it. It belongs to a friend from the Spanish embassy.”

The book was Tres Tristes Tigres by Guillermo Cabrera Infante, who, like many other persona-non-grata authors unwelcomed by the cultural authorities of the island, was forbidden. You could only acquire it through someone who brought it from the outside, said El Negro, although it was us who were on the outside of everything.

Chino Infante’s emblematic novel became a true symbol to young people like me who tried uselessly to reconstruct and build over the ruins of Havana, the hallucinatory environment that the writer from Gibara described so masterfully in those pages. Since that time, the tribulations of Bustoferdón, Arsenio Cué, the Star, and the rest of Infante’s characters remained forever encrusted in my mind.

That is, until November 1981, when Dizzy Gillespie hired me for a European tour that included a couple of nights at the famous Ronnie Scott’s Jazz Club in London. I knew of cinematographer Jorge Ulla’s relationship with the almost mythological G. Cain, Cabrera Infante’s pseudonym when he wrote for Carteles magazine. It was Ulla who gave me his telephone number in the city of Sherlock Holmes, where he lived.

“Hello … Miriam, it’s me, Paquito, inviting you to Dizzy’s show at Soho’s Ronnie Scott’s.” I left the names of Mr. and Mrs. Cabrera Infante on the guest list that evening. At the end of the show, the couple came backstage to meet Dizzy Gillespie, a legendary character for Cabrera Infante, who was always a modern jazz lover.

“We almost didn’t get in!” said his charming wife, Miriam.

“It was sold out,” Guillermo added. “And they listed our names as Mr. and Mrs. Elefante!”

This made Dizzy laugh. He never learned the writer’s name and always called him Señor Elefante. Two days later, an extensive and beautiful article from Cabrera Infante about our presentation in the club was published in an important London newspaper.

My admired fellow countryman would later write several notes for the back covers of my records and the prequels for the Spanish edition of my first book, My Sax Life. In the form of revenge, as he used to say, I then wrote a piece for three basses called “Tres Tristes Tigres.” One of the basses was Cachao, and it was recorded on my album 40 Years Of Cuban Jam Session, a fun Miami project in which our common friend Andy García played the bongos.

The last time I saw Cabrera alive was at the end of a concert with Yo-Yo Ma in London. His health was already in decline, and his demeanor was fragile and painful. He hugged me, and while he did, the image of that November 1981 evening at Ronnie Scott’s came to mind. It had marked the beginning of a beautiful and lasting friendship, one that flourished from my deep adoration and originated at the bar of the magical city the author of Vista del Amanecer en el Trópico (A View of Dawn in the Tropics) so passionately loved and to which he sang praises through time and space like no one else did, “with a tiger’s voice and an elephant’s memory,” until the very day of his death.

Much of Letters to Yeyito is about travel. How often were you able to get off the island before you defected?

The first time I went out after they took power was in 1968, when we went to Eastern Europe. Wherever we arrived, the chief of the delegation kept all the passports. You couldn’t decide on your day off, “I am in Russia; I am going to take a ferry to Finland.” It’s very different to travel as an independent person.

What do you think would have happened if you’d stayed in Cuba?

I am sometimes a little polemical. If you’re polemical in this country, your problem can be personal with people who don’t like your invective or have a different opinion, but that’s about it. But being polemical in a totalitarian system can be fatal. So what would have happened to me is unpredictable, because when I see something I don’t agree with, I have to say it. I did that when I lived there. I didn’t get in trouble because I was a popular musician with Irakere and had many friends, but that was going to end any minute. Chucho [Valdés] once told me: “Man, you have to stop all this bullshit; now
calm down, do your work.” I said yes, because Chucho and Oscar Valdés had taken me out of involuntary retirement and put me to work again in Irakere. For two years I did nothing, and they paid my salary. I knew sooner or later I’d get in trouble, so it was about time to leave.

**You ran up a down escalator in the airport in Madrid. Did you plan the method of escape?**

Well, not the entire thing, because I was never in that airport before. But for the first time I had my alto with me. I always put the saxophone in the big cases where they put all the instruments. I said I took it to do repairs or something like that.

**But you improvised the “how.”**

The how, yes. My mother and father already lived here for many years, so part of the thing was already taken care of. Part of it was going to the American Embassy with a passport. I had a visa that said I was in America before [with Irakere in 1978 and 1979], a visa in Angola during the war and a visa for the Soviet Union. The Consul said, “You are going to tell me that you are not a spy?” “I am a saxophone player!” “But you were already in New York.” I was scared to shit, waiting that week. Then they called my mother and said, “OK, his visa is approved.”

**What’s the back-story for Paquito And Manzanero? It has a straightahead jazz flavor.**

Two producers in Mexico—Eugenio Elias, a symphonic trumpet player, and Maribel Torre—called to talk about a project with Armando Manzanero. I love his compositions and I like his personality. The first thing they said was, “We don’t want strings, we don’t want bolero and we don’t want a percussionist. We want a CD that sounds as if Manzanero was born in New Orleans—a pure jazz CD.” That’s why I used Carlos Henriquez on bass and Antonio Sanchez on drums. I didn’t have time to write the arrangements, so Alex Brown did them. Manzanero was happy.

**Your recent album Aires Tropicales is the latest on which you present Cuban styles from different eras. You perform with a string quintet of Cubans living in Spain. Were you playing much Cuban music when you lived in Cuba?**

Not really. A writer named Lydia Cabrera went to Paris to study, started thinking about the beauty of Cuban culture and became a folklorist. She wrote, “I discovered Cuba at the banks of the Seine River.” The same thing happened to me here. In Cuba, I wanted to do American music.

**Your CD Jazz Meets The Classics also features your group.**

I think the first time I mixed one style with the other was when I arranged Mozart’s “Adagio” for Irakere. The melody suggested a blues. Ever since, I like to imagine a European composer being born in Latin America. How about if Chopin was born in Brazil? In those days they didn’t have the percussion instruments we inherited from Africa. I am sure if Chopin heard these versions of “Fantasia Impromptu” or “E-Minor Prelude,” he would like it because of the New World rhythms.

**It and your album Live Tango were recorded in concert. Is there a difference for you between the studio and performance contexts?**

It’s two different animals, and I prefer the organized animal—the studio. But if you record live, it’s important to rehearse well. That way you make less mistakes.

**Some musicians feel the important thing is not whether you make a mistake, but where you go with it. You’re not of that opinion.**

No. Jazz is about improvisation, and in improvisation you take risks. That is why classical musicians are afraid of improvising on a recording. It’s always possible you will have an accident because of the spontaneity. But you cannot make something beautiful of the accident. It’s not horrible, but it’s nothing to celebrate.

**With the thawing of U.S.-Cuba diplomatic relations, is there a possibility that you’ll go to Cuba?**

No. I don’t trust these people. The same people who destroyed that country with that ideology say, after 57 years, they are going to fix the country. That doesn’t make sense. The first thing when you want to fix something is to hold elections, call other people to fix the country, not the same ones who destroyed it. It’s better there for American business people, but not for my family.

**You write so vividly and nostalgically about your 32 years in Cuba, it’s as though you’re still living it.**

My biggest nostalgia is for what they have destroyed—the democratic mentality of our people. Cubans haven’t exercised their vote since 1952. They don’t feel the nostalgia for voting or electing their own people. They are happy to receive something, anything.

**Is it important to you to play with Cuban musicians, as on Aires Tropical or an engagement several years ago at Dizzy’s Club?**

Both were a lot of fun. Always the Cubans have their own thing. There’s common roots, common language, like bebop players who know quotes and clichés from that era. Lately I have to say that I’ve received with joy notice of a few young people in Cuba who played my music at graduation recitals. That was not happening five years ago. I have to confess I was happy. So things are changing, except the government.

**You’re going to be invited sometime.**

Probably, yes. Fifty-six years is too many years with the same people giving orders. I am sure something is about to happen, but I don’t know what. In the meantime, I live in this beautiful city that I love.
It’s noon on a crisp November Sunday on the campus of the University of Missouri at Columbia, and Randy Brecker is well into a busy day of events. It’s part of a four-day whirlwind of workshops, master classes, lectures and rehearsals leading up to a performance with the university’s Concert Jazz Band and then a lecture the following day.

Invited to campus as part of the Chancellor’s Distinguished Visitor’s Program, Brecker has already shared breakfast with a group of jazz grad students and faculty before kicking off a master class on the topic of “Entrepreneurship in the Music Business.”

It’s certainly an appropriate subject for Brecker, who over the course of five decades has become one of the most genre-defying trumpet players on the planet. He earned his straightahead and bop credentials in the 1960s playing with Clark Terry, Duke Pearson, Horace Silver and Art Blakey’s Jazz Messengers.

Brecker then became a pioneering figure in jazz-rock and fusion—playing with guitarist Larry Coryell and his Free Spirits band, recording with Blood, Sweat & Tears and founding the band Dreams with his brother Michael. He went on to achieve worldwide popularity by blending funk and r&b with the Brecker Brothers, first in the mid-’70s and then again in the early ’90s.

Brecker’s work as a studio musician is mind-boggling. He’s added his trumpet and flugelhorn to more than 1,000 recordings by a diverse range of artists. The massive list includes Charles Mingus, Carla Bley, Frank Sinatra, Bruce Springsteen, James Brown, Parliament/Funkadelic, Dire Straits, Lou Reed, Steely Dan and Frank Zappa.

Brecker has released more than a dozen recordings as a leader, the latest of which, RandyPOP! (Piloo), nods to his early career as a session musician—but offers a tremendously satisfying twist. The repertoire on RandyPOP! includes famous hits to which Brecker contributed, such as Todd Rundgren’s “Hello, It’s Me” and Paul Simon’s “Late In The Evening,” but all the material is performed with terrific new arrangements written by keyboardist Kenny Werner. The album was recorded live at New York’s Blue Note with an incredible band that included Brecker, Werner, David Sánchez (tenor saxophone), Adam Rogers (guitar), John Patitucci (bass), Nate Smith (drums) and the leader’s daughter, Amanda Brecker (vocals).

During the master class in Columbia, Brecker took the audience on a journey back to his musical roots in Philadelphia—listening to his father play recordings by Clifford Brown, playing free-form duets with his brother Michael in the bathroom (“great acoustics!”) and being exposed to r&b music watching early episodes of American Bandstand (then based in Philadelphia) on TV.

Brecker reminisced about musical turning points in his life, such as meeting David Sanborn; he described exacting takes in the studio during the recording sessions for Steely Dan’s 1980 album Gaucho; and he threw in lessons on double-tonguing and techniques for building velocity and increasing air capacity.

During a break after the master class, Brecker, whose 70th birthday was quickly approaching, reflected on the relationships and opportunities that have shaped his long, unique career.
What was the turning point when you began to seriously consider a career as a musician?

The Stan Kenton band camp was a pivotal point. My teacher was Marvin Stamm, who was five years older than me. He led our particular band. Peter Erskine, who was seven years old, was at camp. Peter’s father was the camp doctor. And his older sister was around, and she loved Marvin. I’ll never forget, the band was pulling away and Marvin was waving goodbye to her, and she was at the curb crying because he was leaving. And I said, “This is what I want to do the rest of my life.” That’s my first conscious recollection of that. At that camp, when I saw all the guys in Kenton’s band and their garulous nature and the way they dressed—little things like that created an impression on a 15-year-old. I said, “This is it.” I met all these great musicians, and I never looked back.

In addition to Sanborn, pioneering fusion players like Larry Coryell also influenced you.

When I was 19, I was chasing my first girlfriend out to Seattle. She lived in Olympia, and I took some creative writing courses at the University of Washington. I met Larry that summer, and we played together quite a bit. He doesn’t get enough credit. He really created that whole movement. He had so much technical proficiency on guitar but he had that Texas thing going, too. He knew a lot of the guys in the rock bands, and I’d follow him around. We used to go hang out with Jefferson Airplane, and they were heavy into Gil Evans. Larry had this group called the Free Spirits with Jim Pepper and Bob Moses, and there were sessions all the time at a place called The Scene. Jim Pepper was also a great influence on my brother. So it was a really exciting period.

When your brother, Michael, came to New York, you began playing together in the band Dreams.

I came in 1966 and Mike came in 1969. I had been out on the road with Horace Silver playing with Billy Cobham, and Horace decided to break up the band. So we came back to New York with our tails between our legs. By then, Mike had met this great trombone player, Barry Rogers, who in turn had met two singer-songwriters, Jeff Kent and Doug Luban. They were looking for a trumpeter and a drummer. And I said, “Well, me and Billy just came into town!” That’s how the band Dreams started.

We became the house band at the Village Gate. And we’d open the show for comedians and eventually got signed to Columbia Records. Billy was just on fire back then. He really created that style of jazz-rock drumming. John McLaughlin stole him from us so we eventually broke up.
Dreams and that regular Village Gate gig helped open the door to session work.

We became known as an entity—and that was a good thing. Later guys caught on and if they had a horn section, they gave it a name, like the Uptown Horns. A lot of contractors and musicians came down to hear us. And that did open a lot of doors for session work, plus we got signed to Columbia.

What events led to the creation of The Brecker Brothers?

After Mike came to town, I thought, “I’ve got to put Sanborn and Mike together as a horn section.” That was one of the impetuses for me to start writing my own music. By 1974, I had written nine arrangements with us as the horn section. We were rehearsing with ex-members of Dreams—Will Lee on bass and Don Grolnick on keyboards—and had befriended Steve Kahn and a young drummer, Chris Parker.

And a guy named Steve Backer called me up. He had just signed a production deal with a new label, Arista, which was led by Clive Davis, who had previously signed Dreams to Columbia. And Steve said, “If you call this band the Brecker Brothers, we’ll sign you and you won’t have to do a demo.” At first I said, “No, it’s supposed to be a Randy Brecker album.” But it was just too good of an opportunity, and I finally relented.

The Brecker Brothers Band moved jazz fusion toward r&b and funk.

We were r&b fans, it was as simple as that. We came up with this r&b background, so we were funk guys. For lack of a better term, we loved the funk. Also, with Dreams, we had run into Parliament/Funkadelic and George Clinton, and had played on their records, and had done some sessions with James Brown with Fred Wesley. So our music had that element, and people thought that we were black. It was kind of like the second Average White Band. People would show up at gigs and say, “Where are the Brecker Brothers?” We’d say, “We’re the Brecker Brothers.” They’d look at us aghast since we were white kids … until we started to play.

How did your new album, RandyPOP!, come about?

Originally it was my wife’s [Ada Rovatti] idea, and I kind of I pooh-poohed it. Years ago she said, “You’ve been on so many recordings. Why don’t you record some of those hits but redo them?” Then Jeff Levenson from the Blue Note also came up with the idea, and actually helped me put it together. We had done a previous project with Rosanne Vitro called Delirium Blues, where she took some of her favorite tunes and had Kenny Werner revamp them. I thought his arrangement of “What Is Hip” by Tower of Power was brilliant.

So I said, “Let’s call Kenny.” And he did such a great job interpreting these tunes and putting a new slant on them. And Jeff really helped put the band together, and they were really off the charts. Nate Smith, Adam Rogers, John Patitucci, David Sánchez and my daughter, Amanda, singing some really hard stuff. She’s had a nice career on her own and that was the first time we actually worked together.

What’s your next project?

I haven’t really formulated it yet. It’s a long process these days, and I’m quite involved with playing, teaching and trying to be on the road less since I have a 7-year-old daughter. So a lot of it is taken up with family time, plus I’m trying to spend more time on the horn when I’m home. I’m thinking of doing something straightforward. I’ve never really done a small-group record of just jazz standards. There always seems to be some kind of production or some kind of bigger hoopla in mind, so I’d like to just do something simple—go in the studio with a rhythm section, me playing trumpet and flugelhorn, and just nail some tunes and call it a day. That’s what’s swirling in my mind. So that’s probably going to happen.

Ches Smith
The Bell
Craig Taborn
Mat Maneri

Ches Smith drums, vibraphone, timpani
Craig Taborn piano Mat Maneri viola

IN CONCERT
2/14 Berkeley, CA
2/15 Portland, OR
2/16 Seattle, WA
2/17 Vancouver, BC
2/18 Detroit, MI
2/19 Buffalo, NY
2/20 Cleveland, OH
2/21 Madison, WI
2/22 Minneapolis, MN
2/23 Milwaukee, WI
2/24 Chicago, IL
2/25 Pittsburgh, PA
2/26 Philadelphia, PA
2/27 Baltimore, MD
2/28 Washington, DC
3/25 New York, NY
There was no subtlety to an incident that drummer Mike Reed and his People, Places & Things band endured on April 3, 2009, during a European tour. As they were en route to Krakow, Poland, a train conductor mistakenly (or perhaps purposely) told them to disembark and change trains in the Czech town of Prerov. For the next few hours, the group had to seek shelter from a neo-Nazi mob. Reed’s recent artistic response to that blunt attack is a multilayered project that reflects his perceptive intelligence, his musical ambition and his deep commitment to unite people.

Reed, who has described the Prerov altercation in detail on his website (mikereed-music.com), draws on it for a new project, Flesh and Bone. Drawing inspiration from diverse sources—including Amiri Baraka’s declarations alongside the New York Art Quartet—Reed assembled an instrumental sextet that is augmented by spoken-word performers. When the Flesh and Bone project made its world premiere at the Art Institute of Chicago on Nov. 20, the performance did not incorporate any ostensible musical or verbal statements about the incident in Prerov. Instead, Reed used the neo-Nazi encounter as an opportunity to examine numerous topics, including war, immigration, jazz history, contemporary African American struggles and the works of author Ta-Nehisi Coates and painter Archibald Motley.

Despite the heavy subject matter, Reed did not temper his upbeat tone at the Art Institute, even if that initially seemed to contrast with Kevin Coval and Marvin Tate’s pointed verbal deliveries. Their words navigated through such themes as police killings, cultural blending and the threat of fascism. The band responded with a propulsive drive akin to Charles Mingus’ take on swing before the horns veered into a collective improvisation reminiscent of classic New Orleans jazz.

The encore served as a memorial to pianist Allen Toussaint, who had passed away on Nov. 10. Ultimately, it all fit musically and thematically. The concert could be read as this band’s way of showing that cross-cultural harmonies offer the best kind of resistance to authoritarianism.

“Over the last few years, there’s been a backlash, a re-meeting with the realities of what it means to be people of color in the United States,” Reed said. “That’s a product of how quickly [an event] can be captured nowadays and [spread] all over the world as if it’s happening for the first time. The [Prerov incident] is shocking to 17-, 18-, 19- or 20-year-olds. But I’m saying, ‘No, what did you think the world is like?’ So with this project, it’s not about me retelling the story. I can tell it: ‘This is what happened.’ But what it’s about is, ‘What are you able to reflect on and discuss?’”

That question also encapsulates Reed’s work as an artist, organizer and club owner. He was speaking in an office at Constellation, the venue he opened in 2013 in Chicago’s Roscoe Village neighborhood. It’s a bustling hub. In less than three years, Constellation’s performance areas have hosted a slew of global artists while also providing a performance space for young locals to jam or premiere their compositions.

The venue’s success keeps him busy. It has often been up to Reed to find last-minute piano tuners or the best price for the bar’s lime supply. His unflappable demeanor prevents everyday commotion from devolving into chaos. He does not need to speak loudly to explain that all of this is his way of building an enduring community.

“The thing I discovered about myself … the thing that I’m most interested in is getting people together and being a part of it,” Reed said. “It’s how I make bands, it’s how I play the drums. I’m not out there being a fancy soloist and being on top. I pull together these aggregations. I have these places where people come together.”

BY AARON COHEN I PHOTO BY MICHAEL JACKSON
An inclusive spirit also runs throughout the recent People Places & Things disc, *A New Kind Of Dance* (482 Music). As Reed mentions in the album’s notes, the inspiration was the late Ornette Coleman’s 1976 album *Dancing In Your Head*; his own wholly unpredictable music inspires the same kind of psychic choreography.

*A New Kind Of Dance* draws connections between old and new experiences. Reed, 41, grew up just north of Chicago in the diverse, multicultural town of Evanston, Illinois. His childhood memories include attending a free concert by drummer Hamid Drake and listening to blues musicians Billy Branch and Carl Weathersby talk to his elementary school class. Reed received a drum set at 13, but his parents encouraged him to play sports instead of music. A record collector with a pronounced interest in hip-hop, Reed said, “I thought for a second I’d be a DJ.”

Leaving home to attend the University of Dayton gave him the freedom to focus on performing, but he also felt out of place among students who had concentrated on music much earlier in their lives. But what may have been a disadvantage turned into an opportunity.

“When I got to college and I could do what I wanted, I [realized I] was behind,” Reed recalled. “So I had to book a gig if I wanted to play. So that’s where that started. I want to play, these guys are cool, they want to play, so let’s get a gig.”

When Reed returned to Chicago in the 1990s, he discovered numerous other opportunities. He worked blues gigs and played “Volare” for Italian weddings in the suburbs. Legendary saxophonist Von Freeman (1923–1990) gave him the freedom to focus on his own wholly unpredictable music, and Reed reworked this concept in a multi-themed composition that flows through several directions for more than a half hour.

Saxophonist Roscoe Mitchell also performs on *Empathetic Parts* and has become a regular collaborator with Reed. Other jazz veterans have brought him into their projects. Last October trumpeter Wadada Leo Smith’s Golden Quartet included Reed for a performance at the University of Chicago’s Logan Center. Smith’s series of long and short notes doesn’t always rely on strict metrical counts, and Reed reworked this concept in a way that intentionally obscured who was creating the basic pulse.

“Mike was so magnificent, we didn’t have to rehearse,” Smith said. “His musical personality has the courage and character to contribute his portion, and when you give him the score, he can design his music around that score. Most drummers could not have done what he did without causing a great deal of conflict or being lost most of the time.”

Reed followed Roscoe Mitchell and Smith’s lead through his membership in the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians, serving as vice chairperson from 2009 to 2011. Nicole Mitchell and Tomeka Reid also served as AACM executives and pay tribute to the organization on the recent *Artifacts* (482 Music), which presents interpretations of compositions from such alumni as Amina Claudine Myers, Anthony Braxton and Fred Anderson, whose photograph hangs above Constellation’s bar.

Reed diligently maintains the AACM’s legacy of artist entrepreneurs such as Anderson. In December, he reopened the Hungry Brain. He also continues to run the Pitchfork Music Festival, a three-day indie-rock event that brings 60,000 people to the city’s Union Park. Typically, Reed stays in the background; Pitchfork president Chris Kaskie described Reed’s leadership approach as “removing his own self-interest for the greater good.”

“We try to do things that speak to people who have a similar aesthetic and then connect them,” Reed said. “What it really comes down to is wanting to get people together.”

Reed’s involvement with large outdoor concerts and small venues has certainly given his organizational work a large profile. But his ongoing encouragement of young artists may have the most lasting influence. One of his groups that performed at Constellation last summer was an ensemble of about 10 musicians exploring big band repertoire, from Count Basie to Sun Ra. The event was called a Rent Party—a nod to informal Harlem apartment gatherings from decades past—because it raised funds for a few minor repairs to the building. Along with Reed’s longtime partners, he also invited such players as saxophonist Irving Pierce, who is just a couple of years out of high school.

“If you want to [build relationships with] people who are operating in the same fashion, you have to invite them over,” Reed said. “Invite them over to dinner. So, yes, there is a thought to fostering a welcoming environment, an entry point. There are gaps [between] generations of people, which have done bad things to the audiences and the music. So I’m trying to keep that as a flow, for other people who were mile-markers along the way.”
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Our annual Jazz Venue Guide is your passport to awesome music rooms around the globe. On the following pages, the listings are divided by geographic region, and a music note beside a venue name indicates there is an advertisement for that establishment within this guide. Interspersed among the listings are features on five venues: Blues Alley in Washington, D.C. (page 42), Murry’s in Columbia, Missouri (page 48), The Royal Room in Seattle (page 52), Upstairs Jazz Bar & Grill in Montreal (page 57) and The Jazzkeller in Frankfurt, Germany (page 62).
While every major city in the world has a jazz club, only a handful of cities have a venue that has entered the realm of the iconic jazz club. New York has Birdland, the Blue Note and the Village Vanguard; Chicago has The Green Mill; London has Ronnie Scott’s. It’s only fitting that Washington, D.C.—the capital of the country that gave birth to jazz—should have its own iconic club: Blues Alley. Located in the Georgetown neighborhood, Blues Alley has hosted the most revered names in jazz.

Wynton Marsalis recorded an album at Blues Alley. So did George Shearing. So has Pat Martino. For decades, Ahmad Jamal rang in the New Year from the venue’s bandstand. Drummer Roy Haynes and trumpeters Terence Blanchard and Roy Hargrove currently play Blues Alley every year. And in 2015, the famous club celebrated its 50th anniversary.

The ambiance of the venue is a strong part of its enduring appeal: red-brick walls festooned with musical instruments and photos of jazz musicians, all visible by virtue of the stage lights and candles on the club’s small, elegantly draped tables. Entrees on the dinner menu are named after artists who have played Blues Alley (Sarah Vaughan’s filet mignon, Stanley Turrentine’s crab cakes). Hollywood set designers couldn’t have conceived a more perfect example of a great jazz club, and as such it attracts a diverse clientele of not only local music lovers but tourists from around the world.

“People will come to Washington and say, ‘I’ve been told to come to Blues Alley,’” said owner and executive director Harry Schnipper. “People make reservations and don’t even ask who’s performing.”

That kind of prestige is belied by Blues Alley’s location. Yes, it’s in Georgetown, but its name is no accident: It is literally an alley dwelling, a 200-year-old former carriage house that’s tucked behind the neighborhood’s main drag. To find it, one has to know where to look.

An out-of-the-way location is precisely what Tommy Gwaltney—who opened Blues Alley in 1965—was looking for. Gwaltney, a clarinetist and vibraphonist who’d been working on the trad-jazz circuit since the ‘40s, had ambitions for a club, but nothing terribly fancy. He just wanted an inexpensive place where he could serve drinks, jam with his buddies and bring in his heroes from the circuit on weekends.

He got exactly what he wanted. The likes of Pee Wee Russell, Maxine Sullivan and Wild Bill Davison held the bandstand on Saturday nights. On weeknights, the owner doubled as the bandleader, putting a loose ensemble called the Blues Alley Cats through their hot jazz paces for hours at a time. It was Gwaltney who, in 1966, made the first recording at the club: the aptly titled This Is Blues Alley.

The club retained that character for roughly its first decade. The headliners grew in stature, with pianist Earl Hines and trumpeter Roy Eldridge taking the stage. A group of regular customers, not large but loyal, began circulating there—though they weren’t necessarily customers for the music. “It was … a moderately successful jazz joint,” John Bunyan, who would eventually buy the club, remarked in 2002, “but was more popularly known in Georgetown as a drinking establishment as opposed to a venue for jazz artists. The bartenders were the main feature and not the music.”

That began to change in 1973, when
Bunyan bought Blues Alley and began to contemporize its bookings. Old-school jazz still had a place, with headliners that included Teddy Wilson and Gwaltney himself. Local acts were welcome, too, including a house band led by guitarist Danny Gatton. But bebop vibraphonist Milt Jackson also began to appear regularly, as did legends like Horace Silver and Art Blakey. Fusion, then making inroads to the pop charts, made its presence known as well, in artists like guitarist Larry Coryell and his Eleventh House project.

It took about five years for Blues Alley to build its reputation as a great spot for jazz in Washington. But in the intervening period, many of the city’s other dedicated jazz venues closed, shrinking its competition; the Kennedy Center, which had opened in 1971, offered jazz, but it was slow to establish itself. More importantly, in 1978, legendary trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie was wowed by the club when he played there, and spread the word among his peers that it was the place to play in D.C. Huge stars such as Marsalis, Jamal and Sonny Rollins became regular performers there.

By the time of Blues Alley’s 20th anniversary celebration—which featured Sarah Vaughan, Tony Bennett, Buddy Guy, and Mel Tormé—its stellar reputation among jazz musicians, fans and tourists was completely secure. It has remained so ever since, even through another ownership change—Schnipper purchased the club in 2003—and it continued to attract major players to its bandstand. Marsalis’s 1986 concert album, Live At Blues Alley, has entered the jazz canon; the singer Eva Cassidy (1963–96) made a similarly titled album in 1996 that helped lead her to worldwide fame. In 2011, Martino’s quartet made another successful recording there with Undeniable: Live At Blues Alley (HighNote).

“It’s one of the greatest jazz clubs in the world,” said trumpeter Brian Lynch, who’s performed there frequently in his projects with pianist Eddie Palmieri. “I treasure a place like that so much because there’s so few of the old-school clubs that have that kind of historic continuity.”

Another artist who reveres the venue is saxophonist Joe Lovano, who played Blues Alley in 2013 as part of the Grand Slam Quartet with guitarist Jim Hall, bassist George Mraz and drummer Lewis Nash. “That was such a special, intimate [show],” Lovano recalled. “It’s rare to have a club … that’s created not only for us as players but also for fans—one that feels so comfortable and where you can hear the music unfolding in a really intimate way.”

Blues Alley has outstanding shows scheduled throughout 2016. The month of March will offer a special focus on jazz guitar, including performances by Stanley Jordan, Kevin Eubanks and Peter White, as well as Mike Stern and Four Generations of Miles ensemble. In April, Schnipper will produce a week-long series focusing on Japanese musicians (in partnership with the Embassy of Japan). Among the performers will be up-and-coming composer and bandleader Miho Hazama.

In addition to presenting terrific shows, Blues Alley has a deep commitment to jazz education. In 1985, Gillespie suggested that Bunyan establish a youth orchestra, asking, “How are you going to develop new jazz audiences and artists if you don’t take the initiative to cultivate the talent yourselves?” Thus the nonprofit Blues Alley Jazz Society was born, as was the Blues Alley Youth Orchestra. The band consists of local student musicians between 14 and 17 years old. Auditions are held every fall. The orchestra performs several times a year throughout the area, including a Christmas performance at Blues Alley.

Schnipper became executive director of the Jazz Society in 1993, 10 years before taking over the venue. “There’s all these outstanding university programs around the country, that are filled with accomplished student musicians,” he pointed out. “Well, those students didn’t just fall out of the sky! There’s a provenance here, and that provenance is the people we work with on the front line of jazz.” Schnipper has expanded the nonprofit component to include a summer jazz camp, founded in 2000 (the alumni of which are often recruited for the Youth Orchestra); and the Big Band Jam, an annual jazz festival and for students, which began in 2005. Last year, the festival’s guest-artist-in-residence was trumpeter Sean Jones, and this year, that role will be filled by multi-instrumentalist Andrew White. (The Big Band Jam will take place April 18–30.)

“I’m very passionate about this [mission],” Schnipper said, “allowing a child in the metropolitan area to be able to not only be exposed to jazz music, but also have an opportunity to perform in world-class venues.”

Jazz bassist Michael Bowie serves as director of both the Youth Orchestra and the summer camp. “I’m not the head chef,” Bowie said modestly. “I’m just the line cook.” The bulk of his job, he explained, is building the band’s book: “You want the kids to know that they’re the best of the best, so it’s got to be better than what they get in the schools.”

Bowie expressed great pride in the young musicians who participate. “The quality of the students just gets better and better every year,” he said. “These days it sounds like a real big band, and a pretty good one—and then you realize that these kids are 15, 16, 17 years old.” His opinion is shared by those in the know: In January of 2015, the Blues Alley Youth Orchestra swept six of the seven award categories at the Essentially Ellington Regional High School Jazz Band Competition.

Schnipper—who was the co-recipient of the Mid-Atlantic Jazz Festival’s 2015 Jazz Educator of the Year award (shared with Ellis Marsalis)—has helped create a unique situation in D.C. He said, “You tell me another for-profit jazz club in America that has their own orchestra, their own summer camp, and their own children’s jazz festival—because I haven’t heard about it. We are clearly doing something right.”
United States

EAST

CONNECTICUT

Firehouse 12
45 Crown St.
New Haven, CT
(203) 785-0468
firehouse12.com
Firehouse 12 is an award-winning bar, state-of-the-art recording studio and unusually intimate music venue located in New Haven’s historic Ninth Square District that has booked artists such as John Zorn, Satoko Fujii and Ralph Peterson.

The Side Door Jazz Club
85 Lyme St.
Old Lyme, CT
(860) 434-0886
thesidedoorjazz.com
The Side Door Jazz Club opened its doors in 2013 when Ken Kitchens refurbished the Old Lyme Inn. The inaugural performance was George Wein and his Newport All-Star Band and The Side Door has hosted world-class jazz artists ever since. The Gary Smulyan Trio is scheduled for Feb. 19.

MARYLAND

An Die Musik Live!
409 N. Charles St.
Baltimore, MD
(410) 385-2638
aniediemusiklive.com
This venue is housed on the second floor of a historic townhouse sandwiched between the Mount Vernon neighborhood and Downtown Baltimore. An Die Musik Live! has music several nights each week and has presented shows by Dave Douglas and Wyanne Wolf.

Bethesda Blues & Jazz Supper Club
7719 Wisconsin Ave.
Bethesda, MD
(240) 330-4500
bethesdabluesjazz.com
Among the artists who have nearly every day of the week. An Die Musik Live! has music several nights each week and has presented shows by Dave Douglas and Wyanne Wolf.

New York

Birdland
315 W. 44th St.
New York, NY
(212) 581-3080
birdlandjazz.com
An iconic name in the history of the jazz, Birdland is in its third incarnation and continues to book the top acts in jazz on a nightly basis. The Mack Avenue Incarnation and continues to host artists both in and outside of the Boston scene. It has been named best jazz club in Boston as well as New England by numerous publications.

Regattabar
1 Bennett St.
Cambridge, MA
(617) 661-5000
regattabarjazz.com
Regattabar is a 220-seat venue that hosts artists both in and outside of the Boston scene. It has been named best jazz club in Boston as well as New England by numerous publications.

Scullers Jazz Club
400 Soldiers Field Rd.
Boston, MA
(617) 562-4111
scullersjazz.com
Scullers Jazz Club has been a hot spot for jazz in Boston for the past 26 years. Upcoming shows include New York Voices (Feb. 12–13) and blues pianist Marcia Ball (Feb. 16).

Wally’s Café Jazz Club
427 Massachusetts Ave.
Boston, MA
(617) 424-1408
wallyscafe.com
Wally’s Cafe is among the oldest family-owned and operated jazz clubs in existence. Founded in 1947, this venue provides a forum for local and national acts alike, such as Houston Person and Ragan Whiteside.

NEW JERSEY

Robin's Nest
Rhythm & Blues
3103 Tremley Point Rd.
Linden, NJ
(908) 275-3043
robinsnestrhythmandblues.com
Robin’s Nest, which refers to itself as “a slice of Mississippi in the heart of New Jersey,” is open six days a week and has theme nights such as Wednes- day Blues Party, Thursday Funk R&B and Sunday Cool Jazz.

Shanghai Jazz
24 Main St.
Madison, NJ
(973) 822-2899
shanghajazz.com
Entering its 20th year, Shanghai Jazz is a club and restaurant that emulates Shanghai, China, “the Paris of the Orient,” in the 1920s and ’30s. The club presents local and world-class jazz artists six nights a week.

Trumpets Jazz Club
6 Depot Square
Montclair, NJ
(973) 744-2600
trumpetsjazz.com
Trumpets, now in its 30th year, features jazz five nights a week as well as blues, world and sometimes even classical. Starting in 1985, Trumpet’s has been a main stop in New Jersey for local and national acts alike, such as Houston Person and Ragan Whiteside.

Dizzy’s Club Coca-Cola
10 Columbus Circle, 5th Floor
New York, NY
(212) 258-9595
jazz.org/dizzys
A venue inside Jazz at Lincoln Center, Dizzy’s has 140 seats for patrons to come and see re-nowned jazz acts such as Chris Potter, Paquito D’Rivera, Nicholas Payton and Dick Hyman.

Fat Cat
75 Christopher St.
New York, NY
(212) 675-6056
fatemusic.org
Fat Cat’s known in New York for its late-night jam sessions held after midnight and hosted by a
different artist every night. The club also hosts two shows each evening featuring artists and ensembles from across the country.

Iridium
1650 Broadway
New York, NY
(212) 582-2121
theiridium.com
The longtime weekly residency of guitar great Les Paul helped popularize the Iridium, which has presented jazz legends such as the Jazz Messengers and Charlie Haden, as well as the best players on the scene today.

The Jazz Gallery
1160 Broadway, 5th floor
New York, NY
(212) 242-1063
jazzgallery.org
The Jazz Gallery is open Thursday through Saturday and serves as an incubator of experimentation and collaboration for innovative jazz musicians.

Jazz Standard
116 E. 27th St.
New York, NY
(212) 576-2232
jazzstandard.com
Every Monday since 2008, the Mingus Big Band has held court at the Standard. The rest of the week is filled with performances by touring artists such as Lionel Loueke, Joey DeFrancesco and Matt Wilson.

Le Poisson Rouge
158 Bleecker St.
(646) 820-9452
lepoissonrouge.com
Located on the same site where the Village Gate once stood, Le Poisson Rouge has been described as a “multimedia art cabaret” and has hosted jazz acts such as Anthony Braxton and Bill Frisell. Upcoming shows include Dan Tepfer (Feb. 8) and Gregory Porter (Feb. 13).

Mezzrow
163 W. 10th St.
New York, NY
(646) 476-4346
mezzrow.com
Named for clarinetist Milton “Mezz” Mezzrow, the club is a jazz listening room and lounge located in the heart of Greenwich Village. It focuses on solo piano shows and duo shows by artists such as Johnny O’Neal and Peter Bernstein.

Minton’s
206 W 118th St.
New York, NY
(212) 243-2222
mintonsharlem.com
Minton’s is the revival of the legendary jazz club called Minton’s Playhouse. World renowned for being the birthplace of bebop, the bandstand presented such luminaries as Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie and Kenny Clarke. Minton’s reopened in 2013 and is open five days a week.

ShapeShifter Lab
18 Whitwell Place
Brooklyn, NY
(646) 820-9452
shapeshifterlab.com
ShapeShifter Lab is a large space in Brooklyn offering nightly live shows by the likes of Ravi Coltrane and Johnathan Blake.

Smalls
183 W. 10th St.
New York, NY
(212) 252-5091
smallslive.com
Smalls hosts performances every night of the week, which can be attended in person or viewed via live stream on the club’s website. Recent performers include Willie Jones III, Melissa Aldana and Brian Lynch.

Smoke
2751 Broadway
New York, NY
(212) 864-6662
smokejazz.com
A little more than 50 can be in attendance seven nights a week at this candlelit supper club, which is evocative of an earlier age. Smoke’s schedule includes artists such as Emmet Cohen, Russell Malone and JD Allen.

The Stone
Avenue C at 2nd St.
New York, NY
(212) 473-0043
thestonenyc.com
The Stone is composer John Zorn’s performance space that focuses exclusively on the music, hosting mainly experimental and avant-garde acts. The Stone is a not-for-profit that welcomes all ages and books performances on a curatorial basis.
The Village Vanguard
178 7th Ave. S.
New York, NY
(212) 255-4037
villagevanguard.com
Known to many for its reputation of being a launchpad for many jazz greats, the Vanguard is now in its 80th year and is still the spot to see the best in jazz, from veterans to young stars.

Pennsylvania

Chris' Jazz Café
1421 Sansom St.
Philadelphia, PA
(215) 568-3131
chrisjazzcafe.com
This venue presents more than 500 performances a year, featuring the likes of Ravi Coltrane, Dave Douglas and Pat Martino, for audiences of all ages. Open jam sessions happen each Monday night.

Deer Head Inn
5 Main St.
Delaware Water Gap, PA
(570) 424-2000
deerheadinn.com
Deer Head Inn boasts the title as “the oldest continuously running” club in the United States and is known as the “Home for Jazz in the Poconos.” This venue served as the location of pianist Keith Jarrett’s live album At The Deer Head Inn. Performers in January will include Bill Washer, Spencer Reed, and Katie Baker & Vic Juris.

South Jazz Parlor
600 N Broad St.
Philadelphia, PA
(215) 600-0220
southrestaurant.net
South Jazz Parlor hosted a weekly residency by jazz pianist Orrin Evans, which featured performers like Marc Cary, Jeremy Pelt and Renee Rosnes.

Washington, D.C.

Blues Alley
1073 Wisconsin Ave. NW
Washington, D.C.
(202) 337-4141
bluesalley.com
Since 1965, this legendary club has hosted hundreds of jazz musicians—from Charles Mingus to Wynton Marsalis to Stanley Jordan. The club continues to book jazz approximately 360 nights a year. The venue has also helped promote jazz education.

Bohemian Caverns
2001 11th Street NW
Washington, D.C.
(202) 298-0810
bohemiancaverns.com
Bohemian Caverns first became a hot spot in D.C. area by hosting acts like Cab Calloway and Duke Ellington. Today, although still underground, the venue is in limelight, presenting artists like Ron Carter, Pharoah Sanders and Jeremy Pelt.

KC Jazz Club at The Kennedy Center
2700 F Street NW
Washington, D.C.
(202) 467-4600
kennedy-center.org
One of several venues inside The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, the intimate KC Jazz Club has a capacity of 160 and has presented artists such as Carmen Lundy and Grace Kelly. Pianist Jason Moran is the Kennedy Center’s artistic director for jazz.

Twins Jazz Lounge
1344 U Street NW
Washington, D.C.
(202) 234-0072
twinsjazz.com
Located along the famous U Street Corridor, Twins presents local, regional and international acts as well as fine dining, with a menu that has American, Ethiopian and Caribbean cuisine. Eugenie Jones will play two sets on Feb. 14.
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Marshall Wood — Bass

With much love and appreciation,

[Signature]

Tony Bennett
MURRY’S: JAZZ IN A COZY SETTING

There may not be a more unlikely location for a successful jazz venue in the Midwest than Murry’s in Columbia, Missouri. The combination club/restaurant is located in a nondescript strip mall between an insurance office and a dry cleaner—more than two miles south of Columbia’s bustling downtown district.

But last year, Murry’s co-owners Bill Sheals and Gary Moore celebrated the club’s 30th anniversary, and during those three decades, the intimate venue has hosted a who’s who of jazz notables. The list includes legends like Tommy Flanagan, Von Freeman, Phil Woods, Billy Higgins and James Williams, and contemporary players such as Terell Stafford, Brad Mehldau and Christian McBride.

The co-owners became friends in the early 1980s, when Sheals hired Moore as a bartender at a Columbia club. The two also shared a love of jazz—although of very different styles.

“I’m a St. Louis guy, and grew up listening to musicians like Julius Hemphill and Oliver Lake on the local scene,” Moore said during a break between afternoon and evening sets at Murry’s by Rufus Reid’s Out Front Trio with Tia Fuller. “But Bill came from more of a big band background.”

“Give me Glenn Miller—morning to night,” Sheals interjected.

Despite their stylistic differences, both agreed they wanted to start a restaurant/music club in Columbia that featured a quality menu and jazz on a regular basis. After searching almost a year for a downtown spot, Sheals and Moore eventually found a home for Murry’s. Although the out-of-the-way location wasn’t ideal, they were determined to make the new venue work.

Murry’s opened on July 1, 1985, billing itself as a place with “Good Food, Good Jazz.” The tasty menu soon attracted attention, but it took several months to get the musical element in gear.

“We had some musicians who were local and others come in from Kansas City and St. Louis, but getting national acts here was hard,” Moore recalled. “So we asked a friend of ours, Jon Poses, to help out.”

Poses, who had moved to Columbia from New York City in the late ’70s as a graduate student at University of Missouri’s journalism school, had become director of jazz programming at a local public radio station.

Poses brought pianist James Williams to play at Murry’s in September 1985, and since then he’s booked more than 200 national acts into the venue, which now seats 125 guests.

At first, national acts were booked only on Saturday evenings, and music started later in the evening to avoid conflicts with patrons who were looking for a great meal but were unwilling to pay a cover charge. The Saturday night series eventually ended in late 1994.

By then, Poses had decided the time was right to start an annual jazz subscription series in Columbia. He called it “We Always Swing,” and it debuted in 1995 with six concerts. By 1998, Poses was again presenting concerts at Murry’s—but this time on Sundays and as part of the series.

“We had been closed on Sundays, because Missouri license laws [regarding the sale of alcohol] made it too expensive to stay open,” Sheals explained. “But that changed, and we talked to Jon about doing Sunday shows here.”

Today, it’s the special Sunday “We Always Swing” 3:30 and 7 p.m. sets featuring national musicians that have put Murry’s on the map. The 2016 lineup includes Warren Wolf (Jan. 24), Danilo Pérez (Feb. 28), Aaron Diehl (March 13), Champian Fulton (April 3) and The Bad Plus with Joshua Redman (April 17).

“People love it,” Moore said. “The other thing that’s cool is that the musicians love it, too. We’ve had everyone from Toots Thielemans, Bobby Watson, Joey Calderazzo, Matt Wilson and Brad Mehldau say how much they enjoy the club’s incredibly intimate atmosphere.”

“It doesn’t hurt that we feed ‘em well,” Sheals added with a laugh. —Terry Perkins
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**SOUTH**

**FLORIDA**

Bradfordville Blues Club  
7152 Moses Lane  
Tallahassee, FL  
(850) 906-0766  
bradfordvilleblues.com  
This juke joint, which is located among fields and oak trees, has hosted bluesmen Bobby Rush, Jimmy Rogers and Big Jack Johnson.

Heidi’s Jazz Club  
7 North Orlando Ave.  
Cocoa Beach, FL  
(321) 783-4559  
heidisjazzclub.com  
Heidi’s presents jazz five nights a week. Local and regional artists play on Fridays and Saturdays, while Heidi’s Open Jam Session is held every Sunday.

**GEORGIA**

Churchill Grounds  
660 Peachtree St.  
Atlanta, GA  
(404) 876-3030  
churchillgrounds.com  
Jazz greats such as Donald Harrison, Freddie Cole and Chico Freeman have played this Atlanta venue. It held the Harper Family Jam Session every Thursday night in November and December.

Velvet Note  
4075 Old Milton Pkwy.  
Alpharetta, GA  
(678) 563-5588  
thewelvetnote.com  
Located just outside of Atlanta, this venue has hosted Christian McBride, Diane Schuur and Lew Soloff. The open mic jam session happens every Thursday night.

**LOUISIANA**

Blue Nile  
532 Frenchmen St.  
New Orleans, LA  
(504) 948-2583  
bluenilalive.com  
The Blue Nile, which was once the Dream Palace, is one of the oldest music clubs on Frenchmen Street. Local, national and internationally famous bands perform seven nights a week on two stages.

d.b.a  
618 Frenchmen St.  
New Orleans, LA  
(504) 942-3731  
dbaneworleans.com  
d.b.a. is home to an assortment of local blues, jazz and brass bands who play nightly, as well as a bountiful bar with 20 beers on tap.

Fritzell’s European Jazz Pub  
733 Bourbon St.  
New Orleans, LA  
(504) 986-4800  
fritzelsjazz.net  
Fritzell’s been around for nearly 50 years and is the oldest club in New Orleans. Located in a building built in 1831, Fritzell’s features traditional and Dixieland jazz.

The Maison  
508 Frenchmen St.  
New Orleans, LA  
(504) 371-5543  
maisonfrenchmen.com  
Located on the famous Frenchmen St., The Maison has three stages that host performances of various musical acts and genres seven nights a week.

The Maple Leaf Bar  
8316 Oak St.  
New Orleans, LA  
(504) 866-9399  
mapleleafbar.com  
Operating for more than 40 years, this venue presents local and nationally known acts playing jazz, blues, funk, r&b, rock and zydeco.

Irvin Mayfield’s Jazz Playhouse  
300 Bourbon St.  
New Orleans, LA  
(504) 553-2299  
irvinmayfield.com  
Owned and named for Grammy-winning trumpeter Irvin Mayfield, the Jazz Playhouse is located within the Royal Sonesta Hotel. In addition to Mayfield himself, recent performers include the Adonis Rose Quartet and Leon “Kid Chocolate” Brown.

Palm Court Jazz Cafe  
1204 Decatur St.  
New Orleans, LA  
(504) 525-0200  
palmcourtjazzcafe.com  
The Palm Court has been called a “mecca for jazz” in the French Quarter. It offers traditional jazz five nights a week.

Preservation Hall  
726 St. Peter St.  
New Orleans, LA  
(504) 522-2841  
preservationhall.com  
This French Quarter landmark books over 350 nights of jazz performances a year, including those from the world-famous Preservation Hall Jazz Band. The building itself dates back to the 1800s.

Prime Example  
1909 N Broad St.  
New Orleans, LA  
(504) 701-9007  
primeexamplejazz.com  
Prime Example showcases New Orleans jazz artists, including Donald Harrison and Nicholas Payton, with two shows a night most Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays and the occasional special Saturday show.

Snug Harbor Jazz Bistro  
626 Frenchmen St.  
New Orleans, LA  
(504) 949-0696  
snugjazz.com  
This venue has presented jazz acts for more than 30 years, booking artists like Dr. Lonnie Smith and Donald Harrison, with music every night of the week.

Spotted Cat  
623 Frenchmen St.  
New Orleans, LA  
(504) 943-3887  
spottedcatmusicclub.com
The Cat, as it’s known to locals, is the spot to see local blues and jazz acts. The venue hosts performances every day of the week, typically with three acts per day.

**Three Muses**
536 Frenchmen St.
New Orleans, LA
(504) 252-4801
3musesnola.com
Three Muses presents jazz six nights a week alongside a diverse array of internationally inspired dishes by Daniel Esses.

**Tipitina’s**
501 Napoleon Ave.
New Orleans, LA
(504) 895-8477
tipitinas.com
Named for the song by New Orleans icon Dr. Longhair, Tipitina’s began as a neighborhood juke joint and is now one of best-known clubs in New Orleans, in part for its Tipitina’s Foundation, which provides instruments to local schools.

**Tennessee**

**Alfred’s on Beale**
197 Beale St.
Memphis, TN
(901) 525-3711
alfredsonbeale.com
Located on the famous street for blues, Beale Street, Alfred’s opened in 1986 and is the home of the Memphis Jazz Orchestra.

**Scat Jazz Lounge**
111 W. 4th St.
Fort Worth, TX
(817) 870-9100
scatjazzlounge.com
This venue is located in the basement of the historic Woolworth building, in the heart of downtown Fort Worth’s Sundance Square. It features straightahead jazz showcases by local, regional and national acts six nights a week. The Chris Milyo Big Band recently performed there.

**Texas**

**Carman’s De La Calle**
320 North Flores
San Antonio, TX
(210) 281-4349
carmensdelacalle.com
This Spanish restaurant hosts jazz performances each Thursday, with other nights dedicated to flamenco and world music.

**Cezanne**
4100 Montrose Blvd.
Houston, TX
(713) 522-8621
cezannejazz.com
This jazz club presents jazz on Friday and Saturday nights, spotlighting regional talent. The Dennis Dotson Quartet with Peggy Stern will play on Jan. 29.

**Mississippi**

**119 Underground**
119 S. President St.
Jackson, MS
(601) 352-2322
underground119.com
This venue is the spot to see local and regional jazz and blues acts like Jesse Robinson, who performs every Tuesday.

**Ground Zero Blues Club**
252 Delta Ave.
Clarksdale, MS
(662) 621-9009
groundzerobluesclub.com
Known by many for its Oscar-winning co-owner, longtime Mississippian Morgan Freeman, this venue is located at the birthplace of the delta blues.

**NORTH CAROLINA**

**Beyü Caffé**
335 W. Main St.
Durham, NC
(919) 683-1058
beyucafe.com
This venue combines a coffee shop, restaurant, bar and jazz club. Fred Wesley & The New JB’s recently played there.

**SOUTH CAROLINA**

**The Jazz Corner**
1000 William Hilton Pkwy.
Hilton Head Island, SC
(843) 842-8620
thejazzcorner.com
The Jazz Corner is an award-winning jazz room located in the popular vacation destination of Hilton Head Island. The venue books acts seven nights a week with many weekly residencies. Internationally acclaimed vocalist René Marie will perform on Feb. 13.

**TENNESSEE**

**The Jazz Cave**
1319 Adams St.
Nashville, TN
(615) 242-5299
nashvillejazz.org
The Nashville Jazz Workshop (which presents shows at The Jazz Cave) serves as a gathering place for musicians, students, and jazz fans, who can attend concerts or take jazz vocal and instrumental classes.

**Texas**

**Carmen’s De La Calle**
320 North Flores
San Antonio, TX
(210) 281-4349
carmensdelacalle.com
This Spanish restaurant hosts jazz performances each Thursday, with other nights dedicated to flamenco and world music.

**Cezanne**
4100 Montrose Blvd.
Houston, TX
(713) 522-8621
cezannejazz.com
This jazz club presents jazz on Friday and Saturday nights, spotlighting regional talent. The Dennis Dotson Quartet with Peggy Stern will play on Jan. 29.

**Mississippi**

**119 Underground**
119 S. President St.
Jackson, MS
(601) 352-2322
underground119.com
This venue is the spot to see local and regional jazz and blues acts like Jesse Robinson, who performs every Tuesday.

**Ground Zero Blues Club**
252 Delta Ave.
Clarksdale, MS
(662) 621-9009
groundzerobluesclub.com
Known by many for its Oscar-winning co-owner, longtime Mississippian Morgan Freeman, this venue is located at the birthplace of the delta blues.

**North Carolina**

**Beyü Caffé**
335 W. Main St.
Durham, NC
(919) 683-1058
beyucafe.com
This venue combines a coffee shop, restaurant, bar and jazz club. Fred Wesley & The New JB’s recently played there.

**South Carolina**

**The Jazz Corner**
1000 William Hilton Pkwy.
Hilton Head Island, SC
(843) 842-8620
thejazzcorner.com
The Jazz Corner is an award-winning jazz room located in the popular vacation destination of Hilton Head Island. The venue books acts seven nights a week with many weekly residencies. Internationally acclaimed vocalist René Marie will perform on Feb. 13.

**Tennessee**

**Alfred’s on Beale**
197 Beale St.
Memphis, TN
(901) 525-3711
alfredsonbeale.com
Located on the famous street for blues, Beale Street, Alfred’s opened in 1986 and is the home of the Memphis Jazz Orchestra.

**Scat Jazz Lounge**
111 W. 4th St.
Fort Worth, TX
(817) 870-9100
scatjazzlounge.com
This venue is located in the basement of the historic Woolworth building, in the heart of downtown Fort Worth’s Sundance Square. It features straightahead jazz showcases by local, regional and national acts six nights a week. The Chris Milyo Big Band recently performed there.
Touring musicians will tell you Seattle has one of the country’s finest jazz clubs—Dimitriou’s Jazz Alley—and Emerald City players are lucky to have their own showcase in the cozy Belltown boîte called Tula’s. But pianist, composer and bandleader Wayne Horvitz, who moved to Seattle from New York in 1988, thought there was something missing. Four years ago he decided to remedy that with The Royal Room.

“I wanted something that felt more like a community place, a place that mostly served local music but was nice enough that people on tour could come through,” Horvitz explained.

Known for an eclectic body of work that includes the chamber opera *Joe Hill*, rock and funk groups like Pigpen and Zony Mash, an avant-garde trio with the late Butch Morris and manning the keyboards in John Zorn’s *Naked City*, Horvitz came up in the 1980s as part of New York’s “downtown” scene. The Royal Room was partly inspired by the Tin Palace, an East Village club located down the street from CBGB’s.

“It was a hang,” said the animated, 60-year-old musician. “That’s kind of what I had in mind.”

The concept has caught on. Over the years, The Royal Room has hosted the likes of Bill Frisell, Bobby Previte, Allison Miller and Nels Cline, but also served as a “project room,” as Horvitz likes to call it, for Seattle-based artists such as violist Eyvind Kang, French horn player Tom Varner, trumpeter Cuong Vu and funky sax man Skerik. On any given night you might hear alt-country, blues, rock, jazz, avant-garde classical music or—on alternate Mondays—Horvitz’s Collective Music Ensemble, a “conduction” project inspired by Horvitz’s old bandmate Morris.

But the town’s best young straightahead improvisers can be found there, too, particularly at the 10 p.m. Monday “Monk Jams,” or the club’s “Home for the Holidays” series featuring local youngsters shaped by the city’s renowned high school jazz band programs.

Ensconced in the corner of a building owned by a venerable African-American social club, the Royal Room is in Columbia City, a recently gentrified neighborhood full of bars and restaurants about five miles south of downtown. The triangular, 2,500-square-foot spot is actually three venues in one: a performance space with a large stage and a score of four-seater dinner tables; a full-service bar, with extra seating at high counters; and a corner area sometimes curtained off for late-night sessions like the Monk Jam. With revealed brick and wood surfaces, antique-looking ceiling lamps and windows to the sidewalk, the Royal Room has a warm, welcoming feel. Many nights there is no cover charge.

Horvitz says running the club is “the hardest thing I’ve ever done in my life,” thanks to the meager margins and precarious economics of a small venue. The Royal Room accommodates 120–150 guests, and a few bad nights can add up quickly. But his partners in the venture, Steve and Tia Freeborn, have extensive business experience, having run Seattle’s fabled OK Hotel, where everyone from Nirvana to Charles Gayle used to play. Despite the challenges, Horvitz and the Freeborns have kept the place afloat. They’ve also earned the loyalty of the community.

“People stop me in elevators downtown and say, ‘You’re Wayne Horvitz!’” the pianist said with a smile. “I’m always hoping they’re going to say how much they like my music, and they say, ‘Thank you so much for the Royal Room.’ That’s one of the things that keeps me going.”

It keeps the scene going, too.

“You can fail gracefully there,” said Skerik. “I really see it in the lineage of the Knitting Factory and the OK Hotel, a very cool extension of that.”

The venue accommodates musicians with a Steinway piano, full drum kit, Hammond B-3 organ, Fender Rhodes, Wurlitzer piano and a Clavinet keyboard.

“I’m not smart enough to solve the problem of a local drummer being able to make a living wage,” Horvitz joked, “but if they play here, at least they’re not going to have to drag their drums to the car at 2 in the morning.”

—Paul de Barros
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MIDWEST

ILLINOIS

Andy’s Jazz Club
11 E. Hubbard St.
Chicago, IL
(312) 642-6805
andyjsjazzclub.com
Now in its 40th year, this Loop jazz club presents many of Chicago’s top jazz artists and covers a range of styles from traditional jazz and swing to bebop, fusion and Latin jazz. A Spotlight Performer series showcases some of today’s most in-demand touring musicians. Regular local performers include the Bobby Broom Trio, Chris Foreman & Soul Message and the Eric Schneider-Pat Mallinger Quintet.

B.L.U.E.S.
2519 N. Halsted St.
Chicago, IL
(773) 528-1012
chicagobluesbar.com
Located in Chicago’s Lincoln Park neighborhood, B.L.U.E.S. is a welcoming space for seasoned blues fans and first-time patrons. The bill is filled with local favorites like John Primer, Eddie Shaw and Pistol Pete.

Buddy Guy’s Legends
700 S. Wabash Ave.
Chicago, IL
(312) 427-1190
buddgyu.com
Seven nights a week, Buddy Guy’s world-renowned club hosts blues artists of all shapes and sizes, including Vance “Guitar” Kelly and the Backstreet Blues Band, Marty Sammon Blues Band, and Guy himself, who holds a nearly month-long residency each January.

Constellation
3111 N. Western Ave.
Chicago, IL
constellation-chicago.com
Located on Chicago’s North side, Constellation was founded in 2013 by drummer/composer Mike Reed. Constellation’s mission is to present progressive performance and forward-thinking music with a focus on jazz, improvisation and contemporary classical.

The Green Mill
4802 N. Broadway Ave.
Chicago, IL
(773) 878-5552
greenmilljazz.com
This historic establishment, which maintains an authenticity of the ‘30s and ‘40s in its vibe and decor, books the best in local, regional and national talent, covering a broad spectrum of jazz styles. The club is also the longest continuously running jazz club in Chicago. Recent headliners have included Patricia Barber, Bob Mintzer and Ed Petersen.

The Iron Post
120 S. Race St.
Urbana, IL
(217)337-7678
facebook.com/theironpost
This college-town watering hole is a hidden treasure that books music nearly every day of the week—mostly of a jazz persuasion.

Jazz Showcase
806 S. Plymouth Ct.
Chicago, IL
(312) 360-0234
jazzshowcase.com
Founded by impresario and NEA Jazz Master Joe Segal, the Jazz Showcase has presented some of the best acts in jazz since 1947. Visiting artists frequently play extended engagements, like Roy Hargrove—who led his quintet there for a week leading up to New Year’s Eve.

Kingston Mines
2548 N. Halsted St.
Chicago, IL
(773) 477-4647
kingstonmines.com
Kingston Mines is a well-known blues bar that’s been kickin’ since 1968. This joint hosts live blues on two stages, seven days a week until 4 or 5 a.m. Lil’ Ed & the Blues Imperials play Jan. 22–23, and Billy Branch headlines Jan. 29–30.

SPACE
1245 Chicago Ave.
Evanston, IL
(847) 492-8860
evanstonspace.com
SPACE prides itself as not being easily pegged as a jazz or rock club. This intimate venue presents top acts like Gary Burton, Stanley Clarke and The John Scofield & Joe Lovano Quartet, who will perform Feb. 5.

INDIANA

Chatterbox Jazz Club
435 Massachusetts Ave.
Indianapolis, IN
(317) 636-0584
chatterboxjazz.com
Located in the center of the Massachusetts Avenue cultural district, the Chatterbox offers...
jazz seven days a week, with no cover charges Sunday through Thursday.

**The Jazz Kitchen**
5377 N. College Ave.
Indianapolis, IN
(317) 253-4900
thejazzkitchen.com
For just over 20 years, The Jazz Kitchen has been the place to see the best in jazz in Indianapolis. Featuring a unique menu of culinary creations from around the world, this aptly named venue books national acts such as Yellowjackets, Dave Stryker, Joey DeFrancesco and Pat Martino.

**MICHIGAN**

**Baker’s Keyboard Lounge**
20510 Livernois Ave.
Detroit, MI
(313) 345-6300
theofficialbakerskeyboardlounge.com
Boasting the title of the world’s oldest operating jazz club, this Art Deco-style, 99-seat club with a piano-shaped bar began presenting pianists in 1934 and has hosted a who’s who of jazz luminaries ever since. Ella Fitzgerald, Miles Davis, Oscar Peterson, Maynard Ferguson, Modern Jazz Quartet and Nat “King” Cole all played this room during their day.

**Bert’s Market Place**
2727 Russell St.
Detroit, MI
(313) 567-2030
bertsentertainmentcomplex.com
Located in Detroit’s Eastern Market District, Bert’s is a one-stop shop for those seeking entertainment. Part soul food restaurant, part cocktail lounge and part theater, Bert’s hosts jazz every Thursday and Friday and blues every Saturday. James Carter, Marcus Belgrave and Johnny O’Neal have all made recent appearances.

**Cliff Bell’s**
2030 Park Ave.
Detroit, MI
(313) 961-2543
cliffbells.com
Cliff Bell’s originally opened in 1935 and has maintained its Prohibition-era vibe since it reopened in 2005. Hosting mostly local acts, the club is located in the heart of Detroit’s entertainment district and is just around the corner from Woodward Ave., Comerica Park and Ford Field. Terence Blanchard and his quintet The E-Collective take the stage for two sets on Jan. 24.

**Dirty Dog Jazz Café**
97 Kercheval Ave.
Gross Pointe, MI
(313) 882-5299
dirtydogjazz.com
The Dirty Dog Jazz Café is an English-styled pub that has hosted greats of the Detroit scene and beyond, like Johnny Bassett, Johnny O’Neal and Freddie Cole. Today, acts like Thornetta Davis, Charles Boyles and Jason Marsalis grace the Dirty Dog stage.

**Jazz Café at Music Hall**
350 Madison St.
Detroit, MI
(313) 887-8500
jazzcafedetroit.com
The Jazz Café at Music Hall has been a

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**Bastian Weinhold**
Cityscape

German born drummer Bastian Weinhold presents his 2nd album as a bandleader. Modern, contemporary NYC Jazz at its best Adam Larson-saxophone, Nils Weinhold-guitars, Raviv Markovitz-double bass, Bastian Weinhold-drums

www.bastianweinhold.com
cultural resource in Detroit for eight years, offering performances of many kinds from poets, Broadway and musicians, such as Detroit natives Ralphe Armstrong, Luis Resto and Kimmie Horne.

Kerrytown Concert House
415 N. 4th Ave.
Ann Arbor, MI
(734) 769-2999
kerrytownconcerthouse.com
Home of the internationally acclaimed Edgefest jazz festival, Kerrytown is an 110-seat venue a few minutes from Michigan Stadium. Kerrytown brings established jazz acts like Dave Liebman and Dave Douglas, as well as classical and cabaret artists.

MINNESOTA
Dakota Jazz Club
1010 Nicollet Avenue
Minneapolis, MN 55403
(612) 332-5299
dakotacooks.com
The premier spot for jazz in the Twin Cities, the Dakota opened 30 years ago and became a national jazz venue in the late 1980s when it booked the likes of Ahmad Jamal and McCoy Tyner. Today, the Dakota hosts performances every night and presents top acts like Kurt Elling and Roy Haynes.

Upcoming shows include Bill Frisell (Feb. 20) and the Rebirth Brass Band (Feb. 25).

MISSOURI
The Blue Room
1616 E. 18th St.
Kansas City, MO
(816) 474-2929
club.americanjazzmuseum.org
The performance space of the American Jazz Museum in Kansas City’s 18th & Vine district hosts multiple jazz performances each week. Big bands perform the last Monday of every month, and a Latin jazz/salsa series gets shaking on the last Thursday of every month.

Ferring Jazz Bistro
The Harold & Dorothy Steward Center for Jazz
3536 Washington Avenue
St. Louis, MO 63103
(314) 571-6000
jazzstl.org
Part of the new Harold & Dorothy Steward Center for Jazz, the revamped Jazz Bistro hosts local and national acts in a state-of-the-art venue that seats 200. Upcoming performances include Branford Marsalis (Feb. 8–10) and Dave Liebman Expansions (April 23).

Murry's
3107 Green Meadows Way
Columbia, MO
(573) 442-4969
murrysrestaurant.net
Murry’s, which opened its doors in 1985, is a 130-seat venue that promises its patrons “Good food, good jazz and good people.” Pianist Tom Andes performs there frequently both in a solo and trio setting. Murry’s has served as the main concert space for the “We Always Swing” Jazz Series since 1997. Ravi Coltrane, Terell Stafford, Harold Mabern and Joey DeFrancesco are a few of the internationally recognized artists who have played there.

OHIO
BLU Jazz+
47 E. Market St.
Akron, OH
(330) 252-1190
blujazzakron.com
BLU Jazz+ is a music venue and photography gallery, with a kitchen and full-service bar, located in the historic arts district of downtown Akron. The venue is open Wednesday through Saturday and presents local and internationally known jazz artists, such as Houston Person, Ken Peplowski, Gary Smulyan and Bill Cunliffe.

Nighttown
12387 Cedar Rd.
Cleveland, OH
(216) 795-0550
nighttowncleveland.com
Named in reference to the red-light district in James Joyce’s Ulysses, Nighttown is an Irish-styled pub and restaurant that recently turned 50. Nighttown brings jazz to Cleveland by booking national and international acts like the Wallace Roney Sextet and Hugh Masekela.
Upstairs Jazz: Montreal Inspired

The Upstairs Jazz Bar & Grill cooked up a special musical feast to mark its 20th anniversary in November. The 11-night mini-festival offered a diverse program illustrating the club’s tradition of highlighting local as well as international artists playing a broad range of styles.

Entrepreneur and jazz aficionado Joel Giberovitch founded Upstairs (ironically located downstairs at 1254 McKay in downtown Montreal) in 1995. He was only 23. Inspired by a trip to New York City to explore legendary clubs such as Bradley’s and the Village Vanguard, his vision soon became clear: creating a great jazz club where the music and musicians would be appreciated and respected.

With a booking ratio of 80 percent artists from Quebec and the rest of Canada, and 20 percent international artists, the club sustains strong programming throughout the year, partnering with the Festival International de Jazz de Montréal during the summer with its own consistently solid series.

One of the oldest jazz clubs in Canada, Upstairs presents jazz 363 nights a year. Featured artists have included Barry Harris, Dr. Lonnie Smith, The Heath Brothers, Sheila Jordan, Azar Lawrence, Dave Liebman and Jimmy Cobb, as well as rising stars such as Gilad Hekselman, Mark Guiliana and Christian Scott.

Giberovitch has invested much into the sound, feel and design of the club. This cozy, wood-paneled semi-basement (capacity: 70), located in a nearly century-old building, offers great acoustics and a well-balanced sound system. A custom Yamaha drum set (inspired by the kit Elvin Jones played) is available to performers, as is a newly installed, sumptuous sounding Steinway B. (The Upstairs piano is tuned at least once a week.) Record sleeves of timeless jazz albums and portraits of jazz giants adorn the brick walls.

There is also a real attempt at Upstairs to optimize the audience’s listening experience. The kitchen is located at the back of the club, and when the musicians are playing the staff makes every effort to keep things as quiet as possible—even refraining from shaking martinis and making cappuccinos during solos.

Among the club’s milestones, Giberovitch recounts its initial transition from a piano bar to a jazz club charging a ticket price (initially set at $2); the addition of Chilean-born chef Juan Barros to the team (a jazz fan who has been passionately running the kitchen for the past 18 years); the club’s 10-year anniversary, marked by the acquisition of a Yamaha C3 piano; and the purchase of the building housing Upstairs, solidifying its future.

Upstairs also maintains relationships with the city’s music schools; McGill’s jazz students perform early sets on Tuesdays and Thursdays, while Concordia University hosts an afternoon jam session on Wednesdays.

Closing the 20th anniversary festivities on Nov. 22 was a soulful exchange between veteran saxophonist Houston Person and versatile Montreal pianist Julie Lamontagne.

“It’s like the old clubs used to be,” said 81-year-old Person. “It’s got that intimate feeling. The audience is right there; they’re very attentive, very aware of what’s going on. And it’s still a lot of fun.”

Jean-Michel Pilc, who also played at the anniversary festival, praised Upstairs for its great appreciative audience and warm vibe. “It’s musician-friendly,” he said. “Everyone on staff is a music lover. And it feels like home, musically and otherwise.”

A screening of director Guylaine Dionne’s documentary film about the club on Nov. 16 was followed by a spirited jam session led by in-demand drummer Jim Doxas, who has been holding down the Monday night jam session for the past decade.

It was a night of genuine camaraderie, providing one of the anniversary’s highlights: a 30-minute rendition of Sonny Rollins’ “Tenor Madness” featuring 10 horn players crowding the stage, eager to share in this unique, uplifting moment—a memorable celebration of the club and the city’s vibrant jazz community.

—Sharonne Cohen
**WEST**

**ARIZONA**

**Elliot’s On Congress**
135 E. Congress St.
Tucson, AZ
(602) 795-0464
elliottsoncongress.com
This restaurant offers an exotic take on American fare and hosts the Jazz Guild Jam each Monday night.

**The Nash**
110 E. Roosevelt St.
Phoenix, AZ
(602) 795-0464
thenash.org
Named for Phoenix native Lewis Nash, who recently appeared with the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz UCLA Ensemble, The Nash is owned by Jazz in Arizona, a nonprofit organization whose mission is to preserve the culture of American music. The venue hosts classic jazz, new music concerts, performances by student musicians, local pros, touring artists and weekly jazz jam sessions, as well as workshops, master classes and clinics.

**Pastiche**
3025 N. Campbell Ave.
Tucson, AZ
(520) 325-3333
pasticheme.com
Located right down the street from the University of Arizona campus, Pastiche presents weekend jazz performances, with the Pete Swan Trio appearing each Friday and the Pete Swan Quartet each Sunday. The restaurant features an extensive lunch, dinner and bar menu.

**NORTHERN CALIFORNIA**

**Bach Dancing & Dynamite Society**
311 Miranda Road
Half Moon Bay, CA
(650) 726-4143
bachddsoc.org
The Bach Dancing & Dynamite Society is a nonprofit organization that has been presenting jazz, classical and world music at the Douglas Beach House since 1984. McCoy Tyner, Anthony Braxton, Jimmy Heath, Dave Douglas and Larry Coryell are just a few of the jazz artists who have appeared during the last 50 years.

**Kuumbwa Jazz Center**
320 Cedar St.
Santa Cruz, CA
(831) 427-2227
kuumbwajazz.org
Dating back to 1975, Kuumba Jazz is a nonprofit community organization that presents acts like Chris Potter, Pat Martino and Christian Scott in a 200-seat venue. Upcoming shows include Booker T. Jones (Feb. 5), the Gary Peacock Trio (Feb. 15) and Regina Carter (Feb. 29).

**Savanna Jazz**
1189 Laurel St.
San Carlos, CA
(415) 279-8259
savannajazz.com
Formerly located in the Mission District of San Francisco, this venue has moved about 25 miles south and is now located in San Carlos. The venue is operated by guitarist and author Pascal Bokar, who has performed at the club and presented shows by international stars such as Dave Liebman and Cedar Walton. The venue now bills itself as the “No. 1 Jazz Club in Silicon Valley.”

**The Sound Room**
2147 Broadway
Oakland, CA
(510) 496-4180
soundroom.org
This all-ages Oakland listening room is home to the nonprofit Bay Area Jazz and Arts Inc., whose mission is to present and promote jazz as an art form in the Bay Area. Harvey Wainapel, Frank Jackson and the Peter Smith Trio have all graced the stage in recent months.

**Yoshi’s Oakland**
510 Embarcadero West
Oakland, CA
(510) 238-9200
yoshis.com/oakland
Yoshi’s started in 1972, seats 310 patrons and serves as the premier location in the Bay Area for live jazz and Japanese cuisine. Roy Ayers, Chris Potter and Herb Alpert are just a few of the names that grace Yoshi’s event calendar.

**SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA**

**The Baked Potato**
3787 Cahuenga Blvd.
Studio City, CA
(818) 980-1615
thebakedpotato.com
Blue Whale
123 Astronaut E. S. Onizuka Street #301
Los Angeles, CA
(213) 620-0908
bluewhalemusic.com
Steve Coleman and Kendrick Scott have played this space for live jazz and art in the Little Tokyo neighborhood of Los Angeles.

Catalina Bar & Grill
6725 W. Sunset Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA
(323) 466-2210
catalinajazzclub.com
Situated on the famous Sunset Boulevard, Catalina Bar & Grill has lived up to own motto of “nothing but the best in jazz” over the years by booking jazz acts like Dizzie Gillespie, Art Blakey, McCoy Tyner, Chick Corea, Max Roach, Wynton Marsalis and many more.

Lobero Theatre
33. E Canon Perdido St.
Santa Barbara, CA
(805) 966-4946
lobero.com
Originally built in 1873, the Lobero Theatre is the oldest running theatre in the state, hosting acts like Clark Gable, Ingrid Bergman and Igor Stravinsky. Starting in 1949, the Lobero Theatre began showcasing jazz performers like Dave Brubeck, Herbie Hancock, and Wayne Shorter. Upcoming shows include the Mack Avenue Superband (March 31) and the Kenny Barron Trio (April 18).

Upstairs at Vitello’s
4349 Tujunga Ave.
Studio City, CA
(818) 769-0905
vitellosjazz.com
Vitello’s was once the hangout of Frank Sinatra and the Rat Pack, but now the E Spot Lounge, located just above the Italian restaurant, serves as a venue for jazz, blues, Latin and r&b.

Vibrtro Grill Jazz
2930 N. Beverly Glen Circle
Los Angeles, CA
(310) 474-9400
vibratogrilljazz.com
Legendary Trumpeter Herb Alpert’s own L.A. restaurant presents acclaimed artists like Guitarist Larry Carlton at the Kuumbwa Jazz Center in Santa Cruz, California.
Doug Webb, Carl Saunders and Chaka Khan.

**COLORADO**

Dazzle
930 Lincoln St.
Denver, CO
(303) 839-5100
dazzlejazz.com
Jazz acts like Don Byron, Monty Alexander and Chris Potter take the stage at Dazzle in Denver seven nights a week.

El Chapultepec
1962 Market St.
Denver, CO
(303) 295-9126
thepeclodo.com
This well-known nightclub features regular live jazz, late hours and Mexican chow served on paper plates—right down the street from Coors Field. Monday is jam session night.

Nocturne
1330 27th St.
Denver, CO
(303) 295-3333
nocturnejazz.com
Billed as a “modern jazz & supper club,” Nocturne presents jazz Tuesday through Saturday, featuring local and national talent.

**NEW MEXICO**

Outpost
210 Yale SE
Albuquerque, NM
(505) 268-0044
outpostspace.org
Outpost is a nonprofit, member-supported performing arts center that offers educational programs to both children and adults as well as hosting more than 100 shows a year featuring artists in jazz, blues, folk and world genres.

**OREGON**

Jimmy Mak’s
221 NW 10th Ave.
Portland, OR
(503) 295-6542
jimmymaks.com
Portland’s signature club in the artsy Pearl District hosts local talent as well as national acts such as George Colligan and Hailey Niswanger.

Wilfs Restaurant & Bar
800 NW 6th Ave.
Portland, OR
(503) 223-0070
wilfsrestaurant.com
A restaurant that has been in business for more than 40 years, Wilfs presents jazz Wednesday through Sunday. Ron Steen and Kerry McCoy performed there recently.

**WASHINGTON**

Boxley’s
101 W. North Bend Way
North Bend, WA
(425) 292-9307
boxleysplace.com
Boxley’s is a nonprofit venue that provides a showcase of student ensembles during weekdays. Regional and national artists play on the weekends, including such acts as Bryan Carter, Katy Bourne Quartet and Jay Thomas.

Dimitriou’s Jazz Alley
2033 Sixth Ave.
Seattle, WA
(206) 441-9729
jazzalley.com
Dimitriou’s has been serving up jazz and R&B in Seattle for more than 30 years. Upcoming performances include Tower of Power (Jan. 21–24), Sonny Fortune (Feb. 16–17), Kurt Elling (Feb. 18–21) and Pat Martino (Feb. 23–24).

Egan’s Ballard Jam House
1707 NW Market St.
Seattle, WA
(206) 789-1621
ballardjamhouse.com
Egan’s offers the Seattle community more than the average jazz club. During the day, the club opens its doors for rehearsals and workshops. In the evening, Egan’s presents local acts, student ensembles and open jam sessions.

The Royal Room
5000 Rainier Ave S
Seattle, WA
(206) 906-9920
theroyalroomseattle.com
With a grand piano, a generous stage and a comfortable neighborhood feel, The Royal Room welcomes patrons of all ages to dine and hear live music seven nights a week. When local artists perform, there is no cover charge. The venue also presents nationally touring acts, such as Allison Miller and Bobby Previte, and it presents shows as part of the Earshot Jazz Festival.

Tula’s
2214 Second Ave.
Seattle, WA
(206) 443-4221
tulas.com
One of the venues for the Earshot Jazz Festival, Tula’s hosts jazz seven nights a week. The month of December included 12 nights of big band performances.
ARGENTINA

Notorious
Av. Callao 966
Buenos Aires
54 11 4813 6888
notorious.com.ar
This stylish, intimate joint is one of Buenos Aires’ premier jazz venues. Up front you can buy CDs of various music genres, while in the back the restaurant-cafe (overlooking a verdant garden) hosts live shows nearly every night.

Thelonious Club
Jerónimo Salguero 1884
Buenos Aires
54 11 4829 1562
thelonious.com.ar
Named for legendary jazz pianist Thelonious Monk, this club is one of the few places to hear first-rate jazz in Argentina. Thelonious features live jazz bands Wednesday through Sunday nights.

AUSTRALIA

505
280 Cleveland St.
Surry Hills, New South Wales
61 422 583 190
venue505.com
Opened in 2010, 505 was developed as an artist-run performance/workshop space for Sydney-based musicians and theatrical performers. Created as a meeting place for artists from the two mediums to see each other’s work and initiate collaborations, 505 features jazz, funk and other genres.

Bennetts Lane
25 Bennetts Lane
Melbourne, Victoria
61 3 9663 2856
bennettslane.com
Bennetts Lane is actually two venues providing music seven nights a week. The original venue has hosted both jazz and non-jazz artists alike, a few examples being Prince, Wynton and Branford Marsalis. The “Jazz Lab” has presented Chick Corea, Herbie Hancock and Kurt Elling.

Bernie’s Jazz & Piano Café
92 Abbott Street
Cairns, Queensland
61 7 4041 4603
Bernie’s brings local and traveling acts to Cairns from Tuesday to Sunday each week.

The Sound Lounge
City Road and Cleveland St.
Chippendale, New South Wales
61 2 9351 7940
sima.org.au
One of a handful of venues affiliated with the Sydney Improvised Music Association, this café-style lounge seats 120 patrons. SIMA hosts a jazz night every Friday and Saturday, booking Sydney-based and visiting performers.

AUSTRIA

Blue Tomato
Wurmsergasse 21
Vienna
43 1 985 5960
bluetomato.cc
Porgy & Bess showcases jazz performers each day of the week. It has presented Rudresh Mahanthappa, Wadada Leo Smith and Bela Fleck. Joe Locke and his quartet perform Jan. 27.

The Jazz Dock in Prague
The Jazzkeller is the last jazz club standing in Frankfurt am Main, Germany, and most likely the oldest one in Europe. Its history is one of survival—and one that draws several parallels with that of post-World War II Germany.

The club was founded in 1952 by trumpet player Carlo Bohländer, who discovered in the still-damaged city center the ideal cellar to open a venue inspired by the French Existentialists, which he ended up calling Le Domicile du Jazz (or Jazz House). Early on, it thrived on the heavy presence of American soldiers, including members of the U.S. Army Big Band located in nearby Wiesbaden. Saxophonists Leo Wright, Joe Henderson and Don Menza, bassist David Friesen and French horn player David Amram were among those who frequented the club and rubbed shoulders with locals during the 1950s and ’60s.

When the bulk of U.S. troops departed, Le Domicile du Jazz—which had by then become the Jazzkeller—maintained its wonderful ambiance but offered jazz more sporadically. In 1977, with the Mangelsdorff brothers (legendary trombonist Albert and saxophonist Emil) at its helm, the club regained some of its jazz luster. But it was in 1986 that it changed ownership one last time to become the Jazzkeller we know today.

“I was living in Berlin at the time and could not find an investor there to open a jazz club,” said Eugen Hahn, the current and enthusiastic owner. “My friend at Timeless Records in Holland—and others who knew that I was looking for a place—brought that location to my attention.” Hahn hailed from East Germany, where he was known as a jazz and rock bass player as well as a music promoter.

When Hahn took over, the Jazzkeller began offering music almost every night—in an area not known for nightlife. “Frankfurt is not a town full of tourists—it’s a business city,” said Kerry Johnson, Hahn’s wife, an American who helps him run the venue. “With its skyscrapers, people believe it’s like New York, but the city is usually pretty empty after 7:30 p.m.”

Like many clubs around the world, the Jazzkeller is not impervious to changing tastes and the need to be profitable. The main focus is still on the bebop tradition, but the schedule has over the years become increasingly inclusive and now offers blues, as well as Latin and Brazilian music. In addition, Fridays are devoted to DJ sets. “I call it ‘dancing for adults,’” said Hahn. “The place is always packed.”

The owners have reasons to be hopeful. “We have been able to attract a younger audience in recent years,” said Johnson. “We benefit from several music conservatories within the larger metropolitan area. We have the HR Radio Big Band and Jazz Band, as well.”

In a town dominated by high finance, Hahn and Johnson’s sense of community makes the Jazzkeller a refreshing oasis. Patrons can order food from Bidlabu, a restaurant located next door that emphasizes regional ingredients.

Plus, musicians are deeply fond of the basement venue’s atmosphere. “Eugen Hahn’s love and dedication to the music is rare,” said saxophonist Rick Margitza. “He treats the artist with respect and makes us feel completely welcome. Hanging with him after the gig over a whiskey or two is one of the things I always look forward to, [mainly] because of the amazing stories he tells.”

—Alain Drouot
Treibhaus, which is German for greenhouse, is just that, a greenhouse. It presents numerous genres of music and has hosted jazz icons Ravi Coltrane, Jack DeJohnette and Steve Coleman.

**BRAZIL**

**Bourbon Street Music Club**  
Rua dos Chanés, 127 – Moema  
São Paulo  
55 11 5095 6100  
bourbonstreet.com.br  
For more than 20 years, this venue has brought the atmosphere of New Orleans’ Bourbon Street to the streets of São Paulo.

**The Maze**  
Rua Tavares Bastos 414/66  
Catete  
Rio de Janeiro  
55 21 2239 0305  
jazzrio.com  
The Maze is a bed-and-breakfast, an art gallery and a restaurant, as well as a concert venue. It books local jazz acts multiple nights each month.

**Miranda**  
1424 Avenida Borges de Medeiros  
Lagoa  
Rio de Janeiro  
55 21 2239 0305  
mirandabrasil.com.br  
This acclaimed Rio eatery hosts local and international acts like Nigerian guitarist/singer-songwriter Omara “Bombino” Moctar and Swiss soul singer Marc Sway.

**CANADA**

**Frankie’s Jazz**  
765 Beatty St.  
Vancouver, British Columbia  
604-688-8368  
frankiesitaliankitchen.ca  
Frankie’s provides a relaxing atmosphere where one can hear local and international talent four nights a week while enjoying Southern Italian cuisine and newly inspired dishes. The Oliver Gannon Quartet plays Jan. 30–31.

**L’Astral**  
305 Ste. Catherine St. W.  
Montreal, Quebec  
(514) 288-8882  
sallelastral.com  
Since 2009, this venue has presented acts like Kawandak, Yannick Rieu and Jesse Mac Cormack in its 320-seat performance space.

**The Rex Jazz & Blues Bar**  
194 Queen St. W.  
Toronto, Ontario  
(416) 598-2475  
therex.ca  
The Rex has been the place “where jazz lives” in Toronto since 1992. Wynton Marsalis, Kurt Elling and Dave Douglas have played there.

**Upstairs Jazz Bar & Grill**  
1254 Mackay St.  
Montreal, Quebec  
(514) 931-6808  
upstairsjazz.com  
Joel Giberovitch’s basement-room club has developed a strong reputation as a great listening venue. This club just turned 20, making it one of the oldest in Canada, and presents jazz up to 363 nights a year. The Paulo Ramos Brazilian Jazz Quartet plays on Jan. 22, and on Feb. 6 the venue presents a quartet performance by Fraser Hollins, Brian Blade, Jon Cowherd and Joel Miller.

**Yardbird Suite**  
11 Tommy Banks Way  
Edmonton, Alberta  
(780) 432-0428  
yardbirdsuite.com  
Run by volunteers, the venue, which opened in 1957, has been at its current location for 30 years. Jam sessions occur on Tuesday nights, while international, Canadian and Edmonton-based jazz artists perform weekly. The Yardbird Festival of Canadian Jazz is held every November.

**CHINA**

**The Cotton Club**  
No. 1416 HuaiHai Road  
Shanghai  
86 21 64377110  
thecottonclub.cn  
This club bills itself as one of the first clubs to bring jazz to China after a 40-year absence that followed the Shanghai jazz boom of the 1930s. It features a revolving cast of instrumentalists and singers.

**Fringe Club**  
2 Lower Albert Road, Central  
Hong Kong  
852 2521 7251  
hkfringeclub.com  
Built in an early 20th century dairy shop, a hodgepodge of jazz acts and genres can be heard at this intimate club. The space is part of the Fringe Club network of art, music and theater spaces.

**JZ Club**  
46 Fuxing West Road  
Shanghai  
021 6431 0269  
jzclub.cn  
With its atmospheric lighting, red lamps and high-quality jazz, JZ Club offers its patrons a little flavor of “old Shanghai.” Performers from around the globe regularly perform at the club. On weekends, the JZ Latino Project and JZ All Star Big Band frequently take the stage.

**COSTA RICA**

**Jazz Cafe**  
Carretera Interamericana, next to Banco Popular  
San Pedro, Montes de Oca Canton  
506 2253 8933  
jazzcafeestocostarica.com  
Located right outside capital city San José, this 220-seat club attracts locals, tourists and expats. Nearing its 20th year of operation, guests come here for the diverse booking of jazz, blues, salsa and rock.

**CZECH REPUBLIC**

**AghaRTA Jazz Centrum**  
Zelezná 16  
Prague  
420 222 211 275  
agharta.cz
This Old Town club plays host to Prague Jazz Festival shows. Housed in the basement of a 14th-century building, the venue includes an extensive CD and merchandise shop.

**The Jazz Dock**
Janackovo Nábřeží 2
420 774 058 838
jazzdock.cz
It’s all in the name. Part indoor, part outdoor, this modern club on the Vltava River presents an array of acts from around the globe. Larry Goldings’ trio with Peter Bernstein and Bill Stewart performs Feb. 9.

**Lucerna Music Bar**
Stešanská 36
420 224 225 440
musicbar.cz
Take 6, Straight No Chaser and Maceo Parker are some of the U.S.-based acts who have played this established, energetic club that hosts talent from around the world.

**DENMARK**

**Copenhagen Jazzhouse**
Niels Hemmingsens Gade 10
Copenhagen
45 3315 4700
Copenhagen Jazzhouse
This historic club, which was recently renovated, focuses on European talent.

**Jazzhus Montmartre**
St. Regnegade 19A
Copenhagen
45 31 72 34 94
jazzhusmontmartre.dk
Dexter Gordon and Ben Webster once made this club their base of European operations. The venue opened a renovated space in 2010 and continues its tradition of hosting top-notch musicians.

**ENGLAND**

**The 606 Club**
90 Lots Road
London
44 0 20 7352 5953
606club.co.uk
As a strong supporter of the music scene, Steve Rubie opened this spot in 1976 while pledging to only book British musicians. This treasured Chelsea spot has up-held that policy through the years.

**Cafe OTO**
18 - 22 Ashwin St.
Dalston
London
44 20 7923 1231
cafeoto.co.uk
This venue focuses on experimental sounds and music that’s outside the mainstream. Concerts happen almost every night and the daytime cafe has a lunch menu.

**Jazz Cafe**
5 Parkway
London
44 20 7485 6834
jazzcafelondon.com
The Jazz Cafe has a capacity of 420 and has played host to Jose Feliciano and Bobby Womack.

**PizzaExpress Jazz Club**
10 Dean St.
London
44 20 7437 9595
pizzalexpress.com
Located in the basement of PizzaExpress restaurant on Dean St., this venue has played host to acts like Norah Jones, Amy Winehouse and Walter Smith III.

**Ronnie Scott’s Jazz Club**
47 Frith St.
London
020 7439 0747
ronniescotts.co.uk
Started by English saxophonist Ronnie Scott in 1959, this club is the premiere jazz spot in London’s Soho district. The Mingus Big Band performs Jan. 25-30, and Lee Ritenour Quartet plays Feb. 4-6.

**The Vortex**
11 Gillett Square
London
020 7254 4097
vortexjazz.co.uk
Long-established in North London for more than 20 years, the Vortex is a beacon for contemporary jazz. The club regularly features world-class artists from the U.K. and overseas. Dave Lieberman & Liam Noble perform Jan. 28.

**FINLAND**

**Juttutupa**
Säästöpankinranta 6
Helsinki
358 20 7424240
juttutupa.com
The Rytmihäiriöklubi has been an important part of the jazz scene in Helsinki since 1997. It is located in the restaurant Juttutupa, which was founded in 1908. A wide range of jazz styles are presented, with an emphasis on young Finnish musicians. Through the years many international jazz artists have performed, including Tim Hagans, Jim Beard, Wayne Krantz, Marc Ducret and Ingebrigt Håker Flaten.

**Storyville**
Musiejgatan 8
Helsinki
358 50 363 2664
storyville.fi
This old coal cellar sits below a Cajun and Creole eatery and bar, opening its doors in 1946. Greats like Lionel Hampton, Count Basie and Art Blakey have played here.

**GERMANY**

**A-Trane**
1 Bleibtreustrasse St.
10625 Berlin – Charlottenburg
49 30 3132550
a-trane.de
One of the venues that presents Jazzfest Berlin shows, the A-trane opened in 1992 and has presented Lee Konitz, Herbie Hancock and Diana Krall.

**Aufsturz**
Oranienburger Straße 67
Berlin
49 30 2804 74 07
aufsturz.de
A-Trane is a jazz club, gallery, bar, recording studio and lecture hall. It opened in 2004 and hosts a weekly swing dance party as well as live performances by players from the local, national and European jazz scenes.

**FRANCE**

**Duc Des Lombards**
42 Rue des Lombards
Paris
1 4233 2288
ducdelombards.fr
Located in the heart of Paris, this jazz club and restaurant has hosted Wynton Marsalis, Biréli Lagrène and Ahmad Jamal. There are shows six nights a week and after-hours jam sessions on Friday and Saturday.

**Le Caveau de la Huchette**
5 Rue de la Huchette
Paris
4326 6505
caveaudelahuchette.fr
Housed in a building dating back to the 17th century, Le Caveau de la Huchette, this underground jazz club opened in 1946. Greats like Lionel Hampton, Count Basie and Art Blakey have played here.

**New Morning**
7-9 Rue des Petites Écures
Paris
33 1 45 23 51 41
newmorning.com
Since 1981, this Parisian mainstay for jazz has hosted Art Blakey, Chet Baker, Charlie Haden and non-jazz acts like Bob Dylan, Taj Mahal and Prince.

**Sunset-Sunside**
60 Rue des Lombards
Paris
33 0 1 40 26 46 60
sunset-sunside.com
Since 1983, this venue has been a proponent of French jazz artists as well as welcoming foreign acts. Miles Davis, Herbie Hancock and Lee Konitz have all played there, and today performers like Martial Solal can be found on the bill.
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Tübingen
07 07 1376 01
jpk.net
Since 1977, this venue has brought acts like Dexter Gordon, Chet Baker, Woody Shaw, John Scofield and Sun Ra to this picturesque university town.

Jazzkeller
Kleine Bockenheimer Str. 18a
Frankfurt
49 69 288537
jazzkeller.com
This basement grotto, started by German trumpeter Carlo Bohländer, has been Frankfurt’s gateway for jazz for almost 60 years and is open five nights a week. Upcoming shows include the Harold Mabern Trio featuring Joe Farnsworth on Jan. 26.

Quasimodo
Kantstraße 12A
Berlin
49 30 31804560
quasimodo.de
Quasimodo, which likens itself to the Jazz Café in London, has been presenting jazz for almost 50 years. One of the main hubs for jazz in Berlin as well as Europe. Quasimodo is a “student pub with cabaret” that was associated with the European free-jazz of the late 1960s and is one of the venues of JazzFest Berlin today.

Stadthagen
Venloer Straße 40
Köln
49 0221 952994 0
stadthagen.de
With more than 400 events a year, Stadthagen’s primary focus is jazz acts.

Unterfahrt
Einsteinstrasse 42
81675 Munich
49 0 89 448 2749
unterfahrt.de
Ernie Watts and Ravi Coltrane—along with many local, national and European acts—have played this staple in the Munich jazz scene. Joyce Moreno & Kenny Werner will perform on Feb. 5.

Jazz Café Alto
Korte Leidsedwarsstraat 115
Amsterdam
31 20 628 3249
jazzcafe-alto.nl
Amsterdam’s Jazz Café Alto has been serving the city’s jazz scene for more than 50 years and is a cozy joint in the Gracht- engordel neighborhood, the same area of the infamous Anne Frank house.

Victoria Nasjonal Jazz Scene
Karl Johans Gate 35
Oslo
47 23 89 69 23
nasjonaljazzscene.no/en
There is room for 300 patrons at Norway’s most prominent proponent of jazz, the Victoria Nasjonal Jazz Scene. Victoria has featured Snarky Puppy, Kamasi Washington and the John Scofield/Joe Lovano Quartet.

La Casa del Mendrugo
Calle 4 Sur 304, Centro Histórico
Puebla de Zaragoza, Puebla
52 55 5512 3369
zincajazz.com
Located in a basement in the city’s historic center, Zinc is a supper club that presents a variety of genres, including jazz and funk. The Zinc Big Band performs regularly.

HUNGARY
Budapest Jazz Club
Hollán Erno Utca 7
Budapest
36 70 413 9837
bjc.hu
This has hosted a bevy of Hungarian and international acts nightly for the last six years. The Budapest Jazz Club has jam sessions three nights a week and classical music every Sunday.

ISRAEL
Shablul Jazz
Airport Hangar 13
Tel Aviv
35 46189
shabluljazz.com
For over a decade, Shablul Jazz has provided a forum for jazz in Tel Aviv. Alongside many jazz performers, Shablul also books rock, funk, soul, Brazilian and world-music acts.

ITALY
Alexanderplatz
Via Ostia, 9
Rome
06 39721867
alexanderplatzjazzclub.com
Alexanderplatz first opened its doors in 1984, making it the oldest running jazz club in Italy. Located just a short walk away from St. Peter’s Basilica, Alexanderplatz is also a restaurant and recently presented Steve Turre.

La Casa del Mendrugo
Calle 4 Sur 304, Centro Histórico
Puebla de Zaragoza, Puebla
52 55 5512 3369
zincajazz.com
Located in a basement in the city’s historic center, Zinc is a supper club that presents a variety of genres, including jazz and funk. The Zinc Big Band performs regularly.

JAPAN
Alfie Jazz House
6-2-35 Roppongi
Hama Roppongi Bldg, 5F
Tokyo
81 3 3479 2037
alfiejazz.com/live/alfie
The creation of the late Motohiko “Toko” Hino—Japan’s greatest drummer during the 1970s and brother of trumpeter Terumasa Hino—Alfie’s is the jazz hotspot of Tokyo’s Roppongi district.

MEXICO
La Casa del Mendrugo
Calle 4 Sur 304, Centro Histórico
Puebla de Zaragoza, Puebla
52 55 5512 3369
zincajazz.com
Located in a basement in the city’s historic center, Zinc is a supper club that presents a variety of genres, including jazz and funk. The Zinc Big Band performs regularly.

Bimhuis
Piet Heinkade 3
Amsterdam
31 20 788 2150
bimhuis.com
Bimhuis was started in 1973, but moved into its new, futuristic home next to the Muziekgebouw aan ‘t IJ, a contemporary classical venue, in 2005. Bimhuis presents more than 300 concerts each year, billing local, European and international artists, as well as having the prestige of being a co-founder of the European Jazz Network. Harald Drake will perform on Jan. 23.

Victoria Nasjonal Jazz Scene
Karl Johans Gate 35
Oslo
47 23 89 69 23
nasjonaljazzscene.no/en
There is room for 300 patrons at Norway’s most prominent proponent of jazz, the Victoria Nasjonal Jazz Scene. Victoria has featured Snarky Puppy, Kamasi Washington and the John Scofield/Joe Lovano Quartet.
played every Wednesday night for the weekly jam session.

RUSSIA

Igor Butman Jazz Club at Polyanka
Bolshaya Polyanka Street, 27
Moscow
7 926 262 35 95
butmanclub.ru/index_en.html
This venue, run by saxophonist Igor Butman, helps spotlight jazz in Russia, and it has a counterpart club at Taganka.

Igor Butman Jazz Club at Taganka
Verkhnyaya Radischevska St., 21
Moscow
7 495 792 210 9
butmanclub.ru/taganka/en
Igor Butman’s club at Taganka is bigger than its counterpart at Polyanka and features concerts by small combos and orchestras performing jazz, fusion, funk, soul and ethnic music.

JFC Jazz Club
Shpalernaya St. 33
St. Petersburg
7 812 272 9850
jfc-club.spb.ru
JFC might be on the small side, but it’s style is inspired by New York. It’s a top spot in the cultural capital of Russia to hear modern jazz, but it also features blues, bluegrass and other styles.

SCOTLAND

The Jazz Bar
1A Chambers Street
Edinburgh
44 0 131 220 4298
thejazzbar.co.uk
In addition to jazz, this Edinburgh club also features funk, fusion, soul, blues, roots and acoustic music performed by U.K. acts and international touring bands. The club has multiple shows every night of the week.

SOUTH AFRICA

The Orbit
81 De Korte St.
Johannesburg
27 11 339 6645
theorbit.co.za
The Orbit traces its origins to a small social club started in Troyeville, Johannesburg, in the early 2000s. Now, more than a decade later, it’s a “space where musicians reach new heights with unlimited creative spirit.”

Straight No Chaser
79 Buitenkant St.
Cape Town
27 76 679 2697
straightnochaserclub.wordpress.com
This club was started by two musicians, takes its name from a Thelonious Monk song and models itself after the Village Vanguard, Ronnie Scott’s and Smalls.

SWEDEN

Fasching
Kungsgatan 63
Stockholm
46 8 20 00 66
fasching.se
Know locally as Scandinavia’s largest organizer of jazz, Fasching opened in 1977. The club also serves as a venue for the Stockholm Jazz Festival.

Glenn Miller Cafe
Brunnsgatan 21
Stockholm
46 8 10 03 22
glennmillercafe.com
This small cafe is not only a great spot for jazz, it is also a restaurant and bar. Its name is an obvious tribute and the club has become a staple for jazz in Scandinavia.

SWITZERLAND

Marian’s Jazz Room
Engestrasse 54
Bern
41 31 3096 111
mariansjazzroom.ch
From September to May, Marian’s hosts two concerts a day (except Sundays and Mondays). Located in the Innere Enge Hotel, the club started in 1992.

THAILAND

Saxophone Pub
3/8 Phayathai Rd. Victory Monument
Bangkok
+66 022 465 472
saxophonesnb.com
A popular club for jazz and blues since 1987, the Saxophone Pub is visited and enjoyed by both Westerners and locals alike. Thailand’s best in jazz—including Koh Mr. Saxman, T-Bone Band and Neung Jakkawal Bang—have all taken the stage.

TURKEY

Nardis Jazz Club
Kuledbili Sok. No:14
Istanbul
90 212 244 6327
nardisjazz.com
This club seats 120 and features various kinds of jazz every night of the week, from straightahead to ethnic jazz.
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1-877-904-5299/ DownBeatShop.com
Trumpeter Nate Wooley was a kid when he first heard Wynton Marsalis’ *Black Codes (From The Underground).* Like many jazz fans, he was floored by the creative frenzy of the (then) young phenom’s band. Through the years Wooley became increasingly impressed with the group’s nuanced methodologies. Now, after developing his own impressive approach to improv, he tackles nuggets from some early ’80s Marsalis classics, including 1986’s *J Mood* and 1982’s *Wynton Marsalis.* Thanks to imaginative arrangements and adventurous playing, this music is revitalized in Wooley’s hands.

Wooley’s own work isn’t usually associated with classicism or repertory, but those who follow his music likely know of his diverse interests. He’s an expert in extended techniques, is fluent in myriad outside lingos and uses overt swing when the notion strikes him; in even the most experimental moments, his lyricism and harmonic expertise are obvious. Here, those skills serve Marsalis tunes that were written in the shadow of Miles Davis’ second classic quintet, and the updates are loaded with the kind of maneuvers that keep ears perked. The push and pull of “Delfeayo’s Dilemma,” the textural brocades of “Skain’s Domain,” the lithe minimalism of “Blues”—each is a hook to woo listeners into the action.

The quintet is marked by Josh Sinton’s bass clarinet and Matt Moran’s vibraphone; their blend distinguishes the band’s sound to a degree. Each gets ample space to stretch on early music. Moran’s buoyant glide rides a near rampage from drummer Harris Eisenstadt on “For Wee Folks” and Sinton’s expressive rumination bubbles up on “Phryzzinian Man.”

The group’s last outing, 2011’s *(Put Your) Hands Together,* reminded listeners just how tight they are, but the gregariousness and groove of Marsalis’ tunes puts their enviable chemistry in an even more compelling light. This is the kind of repertory project that illuminates the interpreter more than the original source.

—Jim Macnie

*(Dance To) The Early Music*: Hesitation; For Wee Folks: Blues; Delfeayo’s Dilemma; Phryzzinian Man; On Insane Asylum; J Mood; Skain’s Domain; Hesitation/Post-Hesitation. (56:39)

Personnel: Nate Wooley, trumpet; Josh Sinton, bass clarinet; Matt Moran, vibraphone; Harris Eisenstadt, drums; Eivind Opsvik, bass.

Ordering Info: cleanfeed-records.com
Ingrid Laubrock
_Ubatuba_
_FIREHOUSE 12 04-01-22_ ★★★★★

Ingrid Laubrock has been on my watch list for the last five years. Born in Germany but based in Brooklyn, she’s a saxophonist of substance and a bandleader who’s willing to do things her own way. _Ubatuba_ is an excellent showcase for her forceful independence.

In brief notes, Laubrock describes some of the music as “like a big living organism waltzing over the listener.” It’s an apt image, particularly on “Any Breathing Organism,” an ambitious and challenging start to the CD. Long tones are assembled into clusters and chords, making a sort of tide-pool of sound, mouth noises claustraphobically recalling Roscoe Mitchell’s haunting piece “Tnoona.”

Laubrock isn’t afraid of stasis, but she’s got a band that’s capable of exploding, as on “Hiccups,” where drummer Tom Rainey is positively fissile, or “Any Many,” which gathers itself into a gently ambling proposal.

The compositions are exceedingly well integrated into the improvising, enough so that it’s often hard to tell where the seams are. Add the tuba (convincingly manned by Dan Peck) and the slightly circus-like feel of the charts, and Henry Threadgill is inevitably conjured.

Indeed, I hear more of his influence here than Anthony Braxton, with whom Laubrock has worked extensively. It’s a pleasure to hear Tim Berne’s alto saxophone sounding wonderful in tandem with Laubrock and trombonist Ben Gerstein.

—John Corbett

_Ubatuba: Any Breathing Organism; Homo Diluvii; Hiccups; Hall Of Mirrors; Any Many; Hypnog. Jerk. (GORDON)_

_Personnel:_ Ingrid Laubrock, tenor saxophone, alto saxophone; Tim Berne, alto saxophone; Ben Gerstein, trombone; Dan Peck, tuba; Tom Rainey, drums.

_Ordering info:_ firehouse12records.com

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_Joey DeFrancesco_
_Trip Mode_
_HIGH NOTE 7281_ ★★★

Here is a kind of _curriculum vitae_ of Joey DeFrancesco’s assorted and considerable talents that include—beyond the obvious on the Hammond B-3—side trips into trumpet, piano, keyboards and vocals. In fact, we hear most of it happening all at once on “The Touch Of Your Lips,” where he overdubs and accompanies his own coolly passive voice with both trumpet and piano. An organ solo would have given him a full house. He has performed often enough on trumpet on past CDs so that his cigarettes there are neither a surprise nor a revelation. But his brief Miles-esque solo here has nice flickers of unexpected spice. He’s good.

He enjoys similarly lush and lyrical conversations with himself on trumpet and piano on “Arizona Sunrise” and “On Georgian Bay.” He then vamps both muted and open on “What’s Your Organ Player’s Name,” first to a pingo keyboard overdub, and then to a funky B-3 companion with some catchy hooks tossed in.

Most of the tunes are by DeFrancesco. “Cuz U No” is a slow and soulful blues. “In That Order” and the title track are boppish and swinging, full of long, rippling lines that bubble like a thick sauce. They summarize the polished and fizz that routinely animate his B-3 style at medium to fast tempos. But pay attention as well to the very fine guitar work on each by Joe Zawinul’s mysterious “Speechless” has dramatic heft, but Janek Gwizdala’s electric bass and Beasley’s keyboards feel like they would be more at home on a WR tribute album.

But the nasal keyboard sounds and grand gestures of “Borges Buenos Aires” feel dated, as does the sappy, let’s-jazz-the-classics “Mahler.” Joe Zawinul’s mysterious “Speechless” has dramatic heft, but Janek Gwizdala’s electric bass and Beasley’s keyboards feel like they would be more at home on a WR tribute album.

A trip through old landscapes can be invigorating, and on this album, it is—when everyone’s playing for real instead of pretending the whole thing is a conceit.

—Paul de Barros

_Trip Mode:_ Trip Mode; Who Shot John; Arizona Sunrise; In That Order; Cuz U No; On Georgian Bay; The Touch Of Your Lips; Traffic Jam; What’s Your Organ Player’s Name. (58:22)

_Personnel:_ Joey DeFrancesco, organ (2, 4, 5, 8, 9), piano (3, 6, 7), keyboards (9), trumpet (3, 6, 7, 9), vocals (7); Dan Wilson, guitar (1), 2, 4, 5, 8, 91; Mike Boone (3, 6, 7, 9); bass; Jason Brown, drums.

_Ordering info:_ jazz depot.com

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_Peter Erskine_
_Dr. Um_
_FUZZY MUSIC 021_ ★★★

Peter Erskine has wanted to record an album of funky, jazz-rock grooves hearkening back to his days with Weather Report and Steps Ahead for a long time. That’s a good idea, but he has dressed it up as a cartoonish concept album in which he takes on a fictional persona—“Dr. Um” (get it?)—who takes the listener back in time to that fusion-laden era. The program is bookended with radio-play-like spoken word segments intoned by Erskine’s longtime theatrical friend, Jack Fletcher. The result is a nostalgic journey that overemphasizes Erskine’s keyboard player and co-producer John Beasley and winds up feeling a bit suburban.

When Erskine steps forward as a composer—and, occasionally, soloist—the music is more substantially of the moment. His “Hawaii Bathing Suit” has a crisp island groove that propels Bob Sheppard’s athletic tenor saxophone, and “Little Fun K” reprises that happy, finger-popping mood with a sweetly descending melody line and a zesty blues guitar solo by Jeff Parker. Erskine’s composition “Northern Cross,” which he recorded with Steps Ahead, captures a spirit of playfulness while maintaining its gravity.

But the nasal keyboard sounds and grand gestures of “Borges Buenos Aires” feel dated, as does the sappy, let’s-jazz-the-classics “Mahler.” Joe Zawinul’s mysterious “Speechless” has dramatic heft, but Janek Gwizdala’s electric bass and Beasley’s keyboards feel like they would be more at home on a WR tribute album.

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_Dr. Um:_ You’re Next; Lost Page; Hawaii Bathing Suit; Borges Buenos Aires; Little Fun K; Mahler Ich Bin Der Welt Abhanden; Gekommen!; Sage Hands; Okraphilia; Speechless; Sprite; Northern Cross; You Awake. (60:57)

_Personnel:_ Peter Erskine, drums, percussion; John Beasley, keyboards; Janek Gwizdala, electric bass; Bob Sheppard, tenor saxophone (2, 3, 7); Jeff Parker (5, 8), Larry Koome (10), guitar; Aaron Serfatsy, percussion (2); Jack Fletcher, voice (1, 6, 12).

_Ordering info:_ petererskine.com
Nate Wooley Quintet, (Dance To) The Early Music

Perhaps the first jazz album specifically premised on patricide. By itself, it comes off as a mix of interesting if off-center chamber jazz and avant-garde performance art. Taken with Wooley’s notes, though, it’s about a man measuring himself against the boy he once was and symbolically consuming the father figure who once inspired him.

—John McDonough

Friends close, enemies closer. A surprising conceit, very earnestly approached, tackling the music on its own terms but coming from the creative mindset that Marsalis once sought to abolish. Wooley’s assertive voice rings loud and clear.

—John Corbett

This swinging, high-level “inside-outside” jazz featuring Wooley’s brisk, rangy trumpet lines pushes at the edges of the ecstatic, elastic, soulful environment Marsalis created with his early tunes. A lovely idea, beautifully executed.

—Paul de Barros

Ingrid Laubrock, Ubatuba

The feel is experimental, nervous, heaving and programmatic, with breath the object of its concern. Can sound like a practice class. But it’s mostly lucidly composed and played in an expressionistic spirit with a subversive and risky appeal.

—John McDonough

Adore the drones that set the stage on this program, but the rabble-rousing is a smidge too acidic—it gets claustrophobic quicker than I thought it might. Big plus: the textural breadth that reminds you of its presence with regularity.

—Jim Macnie

Chattering, chuffing, overblowing, prying between notes, playing just above silence, wheedling in the altissimo—it can all sound like clinical inventory in less musical hands. But Laubrock tells dramatic stories in poetic periods of breath.

—Paul de Barros

Joey DeFrancesco, Trip Mode

All good variety, but his burners burn so white-hot that I find myself waiting around for them, be it the hard funk “Traffic Jam” or a classic sprint like the title track.

—John Corbett

Hard swinging, of course—that’s why he gets out of bed in the morning. And a little bit of adventure, too. But it’s no earth-shaker, just an inspired blowing session.

—Jim Macnie

There aren’t many musicians who could play organ, piano, trumpet and also sing on an album without giving the impression that it’s all about them. But DeFrancesco pulls it off. Timeless masterpiece? No. But a hell of a nice ride.

—Paul de Barros

Peter Erskine, Dr. Um

The touch is light and cagey and the tinkle of the electronics restrained. It lacks that sense of guilty pleasure that tends to compress such genres into witless ostinatos. But Erskine has broadened the palette and added a touch of maturity to the mix.

—John McDonough

Much musicality in a slightly mushy context. Slack tracks like “Sprite” jostle with killers, treading water where others dive deep.

—John Corbett

Playing’s fine, but the tunes are trite. And the echoes of Weather Report ape the aspects of the band that never turned me on—the pop veneer, the sweet melodies, the tail-wagging funk.

—Jim Macnie

Critics’ Comments

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FEBRUARY 2016 DOWNBEAT 71
Kenny Wheeler, among others, Pieranunzi in Proximity lets his young bandmates go where they may, guiding gently from within the ensemble rather than imposing his will. Such freedom within frameworks inspires cornetist/trumpeter Ralph Alessi, who is prominent, and saxophonist Donny McCaslin in compelling contrast. Bassist Matt Penman is extraordinarily sturdy—there’s no drummer but momentum never flags—and his solos shine softly.

There’s little in the way of blues connotation, but otherwise the album’s emotional spectrum is wide. “(In)Canto,” in 6/8, sets a sad-der-yet-wiser mood that carries past “Line For Lee” (on which Pierununzi reveals his debt to Bill Evans) to the tender “Sundays,” featuring McCaslin’s soprano and Alessi’s flugelhorn. “Within The House Of Night” is the darkest piece here, and “Five Plus Five” the most Ornettishly playful. Pieranunzi is inside the piano, working the pedals as well as plucking the strings, while Alessi riffs with a vocal-like timbre, and McCaslin blows as if testing his horn’s odd nooks. The quartet abstracts this theme to its limit, but reconvenes in an instant to where they started. Nice move, and certainly worth hearing again.

—Howard Mandel

Pianist Enrico Pieranunzi has established himself over 40 years as a star of Italian and international jazz. He possesses an appreciation of classic beauty and eagerness to experiment, technique to realize whatever he imagines, depth of feeling and flawless taste, as well as sparkling touch, mastery of impressionistic harmonies and rhythmic flexibility.

A former classical prodigy, pedagogue and colleague of Chet Baker, Charlie Haden and Kenny Wheeler, among others, Pieranunzi in Proximity lets his young bandmates go where they may, guiding gently from within the ensemble rather than imposing his will. Such freedom within frameworks inspires cornetist/trumpeter Ralph Alessi, who is prominent, and saxophonist Donny McCaslin in compelling contrast. Bassist Matt Penman is extraordinarily sturdy—there’s no drummer but momentum never flags—and his solos shine softly.

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Trumpeter Kenny Wheeler and pianist John Taylor were musical partners and best friends for 50 years, and one could sense the depth of their relationship any time you mentioned one to the other. That they died just 10 months apart—Wheeler at 84, Taylor at 72—makes this 2005 set for 50 years, and one could sense the depth of their relationship any time you mentioned one to the other. That they died just 10 months apart—Wheeler at 84, Taylor at 72—makes this 2005 set worth hearing again.

—Michael Jackson

Ochion Jewell Quartet VOLK SELF RELEASE ★★★★½

Aaron Vinton’s bold graphic cover art for tenor saxophonist Ochion (pronounced “Ocean”) Jewell’s VOLK is arresting to the eye, but the rich folk-flavored music contained within is multifariously arresting to the ear.

“Arresting” is an unfortunate choice of adjective, since part of the production proceeds for this album came from an out-of-court settlement with the NYPD (who, I guess somewhat sarcastically, are thanked for contributing). In a case of mistaken identity, Jewell was attacked by plainclothes officers and an attempt was made to frame him for drug possession. The resulting anxiety from the assault informs the music here, which dwells on the heritage of Jewell’s Appalachian origins, as well as other musical traditions from around the globe, including Andalusia, North Africa and the Ukraine.

There’s a remarkable equilibrium of folk, classical, jazz and improv elements. Case in point: “Give Us A Drink Of Water,” which toggles between sections inspired by Hindemith and Stravinsky, Coleman Hawkins and zithering Moroccan music (brought to life by Dawn of Midi pianist Amino Belyamani). Other compositions have a pastoral or communal air—“Gnawa Blues” and “The Master” feature Benin’s Lionel Loueke on guitar and Pakistani-American drummer Qasim Naqvi plying West African cross rhythms.

Only “Radegast,” with its anguish abstraction, suggests Jewell’s bitter recollection of his victimization. Still in his late 30s, he is quite the chameleon, but his tasteful multicultural quartet successfully weaves a broad harmonious tapestry.

—Michael Jackson

Kenny Wheeler/John Taylor

On The Way To Two
CAM JAZZ 7892 ★★★★

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—Michael Jackson
Zakir Hussain
Distant Kin

★★★★

Percussionist Zakir Hussain has done more to popularize Indian classical music and expand its vocabulary than any other artist on the scene today. Always on the lookout for unique opportunities, the tabla player accepted an invitation from the Scottish Arts Council to put together a band to perform a fusion of Celtic and Indian music.

The collaboration was successful, so Hussain took the band on the road. This album, recorded live during two concerts at San Francisco’s SFJAZZ Center, is a product of that tour. Rakesh Chaurasia’s bansuri (bamboo flute) plays Indian scales, then Charlie McKerron’s fiddle comes in to lay down a Scottish air on “Jig O’ Beer & Chai.” The sound is harmonically congruent with Hussain’s tabla, which add jig time accents that augment the jaunty flow as the tempo accelerates.

Fiddler Patsy Reid’s “The Baby Tune” opens with her fiddle exchanging phrases with Ganesh Rajagopalan singing an Indian scale; she continues to trade licks with Rajagopalan’s Indian violin without missing a step. The last track, “Encore: Making Music Revisited” begins with Tony Byrne’s exquisite fingerpicking on the Scottish tune “St. Kilda Wedding,” a slow beautiful ballad.

Hussain solos briefly before the ensemble shifts into “The Dirty Bee” to deliver a joyous finale. It sounds improvised and free, and despite the chorus of nine instruments, the music flows with one harmonious voice.

—j. poet

Distant Kin: Jig O’ Beer & Chai; Celnataka; Trinkamp/Tajir; Waterman’s; The Baby Tune; Michael’s Matches/Rakesh’s Bansuri; Watergirl And Then Some; Encore: Making Music Revisited. (53:36)

Personnel: Zakir Hussain, tabla, percussion; Tony Byrne, guitar; Fraser Fifield, pipes and whistles; Rakesh Chaurasia, bamboo flutes; Jean-Michel Veillon, flute; Patsy Reid, fiddle; Ganesh Rajagopalan, violin; John Joe Kelly, bodhran; Charlie McKerron, fiddle.

Ordering info: momentrecords.com

Kim Nazarian
Some Morning

★★★★

Singer Kim Nazarian believes in taking her time. Though this album comprises several sessions that were recorded between 2008 and 2014, it was worth the wait.

Nazarian possesses an easy-on-the-ear alto with a strong upper register, accessed by impressive glissandi—all the more impressive because she does it sparingly. Her vocalese exchange with John Pizzarelli on the Benny Goodman-associated trifle “Gotta Be This Or That” will bring knowing smiles to jazz ears.

The set is finely produced, with a rotating cast of excellent players. Extended listening allows savoring of pretty instrumental voicings and nice features like Alexa Still’s quietly sublime flute obbligatos to Paquito D’Rivera’s clarinet solo on “Tell Him I Said Hello.” An imaginative treatment of Irving Berlin’s “What’ll I Do” shows the clarity of her voice, emphasized next to a lyrical trombone solo from Jay Ashby.

Nazarian’s pretty tones on her own folksy “All In My Heart” glide with Barbara Bürkle’s organic background vocal complements. Two rubato originals, “Still Life” and the title track, have lovely accompaniment but tend to drag aimlessly. These are small caveats to an effort that isn’t just a statement—it’s an achievement.

—Kirk Silsbee

Some Morning: Robbin’s Nest/Boneology; Tell Him I Said Hello; Gotta Be This Or That; All In My Heart; What’ll I Do; Still Life; Some Morning; So In Love; If It’s Magic; Blue Sera; Tres; Road To Kuskur. (48:21)

Personnel: Kim Nazarian, vocals; Sean Jones, Steve Hawk, trumpets (1, 11); Jay Ashby, trombone (1, 5, 10, 11); Alexa Still, flute (2); Paquito D’Rivera, Anna Nelson, clarinet (2); Jesse McCandless, bass clarinet (2); Mike Tomaro (1, 11), Greg Nazarian (10) saxophones; Mark Soskin, piano (1, 3, 10, 11); Mark Shilansky, piano (2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9); Alysia Tromblay, piano (10); Gary Burton, vibraphone (7); Marty Ashby, guitar, percussion; Caitlin Merhtens, harp (8); Jiro Yoshida, guitar (4); John Pizzarelli, guitar, vocals (3); Dwayne Dolphin, bass (1, 3, 7, 9, 11), Leo Tranvaxa, bass (2, 5, 6, 8); Roger Humphries, drums (1, 3, 10, 11); Jamey Haddad, drums (2, 4, 5, 7, 8); kalimba (10); Alycia Tromblay, Peter Eldridge (7); Jay Ashby, Barbara Bürkle (4); Ian Ashby (10), background vocals.

Ordering info: kimnazarian.com

PAQUITO & MANZANERO

PAQUITO D’RIVERA PLAYS THE MUSIC OF ARMANDO MANZANERO

SSC 4557 / In Stores January 22, 2016

PAQUITO D’RIVERA: soprano sax & clarinet
DIEGO URCOLA: trumpet
ALEX BROWN: piano
CARLOS HENRIQUEZ: double bass
ANTONIO SANCHEZ: drums
special guest ARMANDO MANZANERO: voice

“The music of Mexican composer and pianist Armando Manzanzero has been a mainstay of the Great Latin American Songbook. His work has long transcended the borders of the Spanish-speaking world. His songs have been interpreted by artists as disparate as Elvis Presley, Andrea Bocelli with Cristina Aguilera, and Tony Bennett. They have been played in instrumental arrangements by orchestras and even jazz big bands. In Paquito & Manzanero, Cuban saxophonist and clarinetist Paquito D’Rivera and his quintet approach ten classics by maestro Manzanero with the “how” of Latin Jazz and by doing so they make them new again.

Don’t expect the obvious. D’Rivera is an early champion of true Latin jazz in any genre. His pan-Latin approach might draw from an Afro-Cuban music style—but can just as easily cite Argentine tango, Venezuelan waltz or Mexican huapango.

Here, the arrangements by long-time D’Rivera collaborator Alex Brown and Diego Urcola (on “Contigo aprendo”) re-imagine Manzanero’s songs in unexpected terms. “Amancito,” a bozal from the 1972 telecordsa “Corazon Salvaje,” is here a sunny baleta, but “Te Extraño” is permeated by the melancholy of tango. “Somos Novios,” which Percy Como sang as “It’s Impossible,” takes on a restless, odd-metered Latin groove, while “Voy a Apagar La Luz” becomes a club last-set bebop burner.

Maestro Manzanero has heard countless versions of his songs, ’but when musicians of such magnitude get involved with my music, it’s something very gratifying,” he says. “And when someone in jazz is interested in one my songs, it means to me that that’s an important song.”

—Fernando Gonzalez

Ordering info: itunes.com/paquito/rivera
sunnysiderecords.com
Mike Holober
Balancing Act
PALMETTO 2258
★★★★

Pianist-composer-arranger Mike Holober presses seven of his closest associates into startlingly creative service on Balancing Act, an emotionally persuasive album of six originals and two pop covers.

Holober’s octet, also called Balancing Act, develops an unusual and successful stylistic mesh. Each player gets to shine, whether it’s Jason Rigby, whose tenor saxophone and clarinet forays are impassioned and virtuosic; Brian Blade, whose swirling drums are always on point; Marvin Stamm, the expectedly deft trumpeter and flugelhornist; or vocalist Kate McGarry, in lead or augmentative role.

Holober’s stimulating tunes are unpredictable, often starting one way and ending another. More straightforward are the interpretations, including a lovely take on Billy Joel’s “Lullabye: Goodnight My Angel” and a saucy rendition of the signature Janis Joplin tune “Piece Of My Heart.” Both album and group are above all supple. And while the music appeals to the intellect, it’s also physical; you never know what kind of voiceing you might hear. —Carlo Wolf

Balancing Act: Book Of Sighs; Idiot; Lullabye: Goodnight My Angel; Grace At Sea; Piece Of My Heart; Canyon; Sighs Matter; When There Were Trains. (63:04)
Personnel: Mike Holober, piano; Brian Blade, drums; John Hebert, bass; Kate McGarry, vocals; Dick Oatts, alto saxophone, soprano saxophone; flute; Mark Patterson, trombone; Jason Rigby, tenor saxophone, clarinet, bass clarinet; Marvin Stamm, trumpet, flugelhorn.
Ordering info: palmetto-records.com

Scott Hamilton & Jeff Hamilton Trio
Live In Bern
CAPRI RECORDS 74139
★★★★

A mainstream dream team, this pair doesn’t get together as much as you’d imagine (they first recorded together on Tenorshoes in 1979). Their latest is a varied helping of relentlessly swinging, unpretentious standard fare recorded at Marian’s Jazzroom in Bern, Switzerland.

Scott fronts Jeff’s trio of Israeli pianist Tamir Hendelman and bassist Christoph Luty. The bassist’s drive is notable on “There’ll Be Some Changes Made,” which pairs Scott with Jeff’s stellar brushes. A prime example of Jeff’s trademark push and good-time feel occurs on his uncomplicated original “Sybille’s Day.” If you couldn’t blow your gasket with this team behind you, you’d best hang up your horn.

The ever-insouciant Scott never unduly rushes, so no surprise that his ace-in-the-hole is ballads. “Soul Eyes” features the saxophonist at his most fulsome and sincere, while “Ballad For Very Tired And Very Sad Lotus Eaters” is perfect for his yawning, vintage tone. —Michael Jackson

Live In Bern: September In The Rain; All Through The Night; Watch What Happens; Soul Eyes; This Can’t Be Love; There’ll Be Some Changes Made; Sybille’s Day; Key Largo; Woody’n You; The Champ; Ballad For Very Tired And Very Sad Lotus Eaters; You And The Night And The Music; Centerpiece. (65:38)
Personnel: Scott Hamilton, tenor saxophone; Jeff Hamilton, drums; Tamir Hendelman, piano; Christoph Luty, bass.
Ordering info: caprirecords.com

Eric Bibb/JJ Milteau
Lead Belly’s Gold
STONY PLAIN 1387
★★★★

Without Huddie Ledbetter (aka Lead Belly), there would have been no folk revival, so it isn’t hyperbolically to call this album Lead Belly’s Gold. The songs Bibb chose to perform are all well-known standards. Some, like “House Of The Rising Sun,” “Rock Island Line” and “Goodnight, Irene,” have become major hits for other artists over the years. Fans of bluegrass, folk and blues will know the rest.

Lead Belly was best known for his charismatic stage presence, powerful vocals and larger-than-life sound. Bibb doesn’t try to recreate Lead Belly’s aesthetic, but his understated performances have a respectful authority of their own. He brings a quiet intensity to “Goodnight, Irene,” singing the Lead Belly lyrics that have been edited out of the hit version—”If Irene turns her back on me, I’m gonna take morphine and die”—and includes three songs he wrote as a tribute to Ledbetter, including “Swimmin’ In A River Of Songs.”

Bibb’s erudite liner notes are just as affecting as his renditions of Lead Belly’s songs, naming him one of America folk music’s most important and innovative artists. It’s recognition that’s long overdue. —J. poet

Lead Belly’s Gold: Grey Goose; When That Train Comes Along; Swing Low, Sweet Chariot; On A Monday; The House Of The Rising Sun; Midnight Special; Bring A Little Water, Sylvie; Where Did You Sleep Last Night; When I Get To Dallas; Pick A B ale Of Cotton; Goodnight, Irene; Rock Island Line; Bourgeois Blues; Chauffer Blues; Stewball; Titanic; Swimmin’ In A River Of Songs. (55:00)
Personnel: Eric Bibb, vocals, acoustic and electric guitar, 12-string guitar; Jeff Hamilton, drums; Jeff Merry, vox, acoustic and electric guitar; Tamir Hendelman, piano; Mike Holober, piano; Wycliffe Gordon, trombone; Mike McCready, guitar; Allen Stone, tenor saxophone, clarinet, bass clarinet; Dr. John, piano, guitar; David Rainey, bass; Shuggie Otis, guitar; J.J. Milteau, harmonica; Larry Crockett, drums; Big Daddy Wilson, Michael Robinson, backing vocals; Gilles Michel, bass; Glen Scott, drums, bass, Wurlitzer; Michael Jerome Brown, 12-string guitar, mandolin.
Ordering info: stonysplainrecords.com

Josh Berman Trio
A Dance And A Hop
DELMARK 5021
★★★★

Josh Berman’s first two solo albums foregrounded a dialogue between his individual voice and larger contexts. On 2009’s Old Idea, you could hear him establishing his voice within the setting of the 21st-century Chicago avant-garde jazz scene; 2012’s There Now set up an exchange between that voice and another local scene, the Austin High Gang of the 1920s. Something similar is at work on A Dance And A Hop, but this time the focus has zeroed in on the cornetist’s instrumental, compositional and improvisational approaches.

For the first time, Berman leads an ensemble without a chordal instrument, or even another horn. All 11 compositions are his, and each is compact, clocking in between three and five minutes. Such pit demands that listeners pay attention to the details of the music, and there’s plenty to find there. But while the emphasis here is on Berman’s sound and ideas, their expression would be impossible without the contributions of bassist Jason Roebke and drummer Frank Rosaly. On “Your Uncle,” the bassist shifts effortlessly between shadowing the cornet’s lines and proposing alternatives to them, while Rosaly’s brushes-on-snare accompaniment keeps up a quiet but endlessly varied commentary on the proceedings. They don’t just play Berman’s music, they complete it.

A Dance And A Hop: Hang Ups; Blues; Wooden; Time/Trouble; Your Uncle; Mint; That’s Now; Luggage; Bridges; Today’s Date; Cold Snap. (43:59)
Personnel: Josh Berman, cornet; Jason Roebke, bass; Frank Rosaly, drums.
Ordering info: delmark.com
Saxophonics

Francesco Bearzatti Tinissima 4et, *This Machine Kills Fascists* (CamJazz 7893; 48:28 ★★★★) In what must be one of the more unorthodox tributes to great American folk icon Woody Guthrie, the versatile Italian saxophonist Francesco Bearzatti tips his hat and hat towards Guthrie with a set of original songs with the subject in mind. With *This Machine Kills Fascists* (so named for a phrase Guthrie wrote on his guitar), Bearzatti creates an evocative sound world, from the gospel-colored “Okemah” to the song-slinging of “Long Train Running.” Vocalist Petra Magoni cameos on “One For Sacco And Vanzetti” and the song set closes with the sole Guthrie-penned tune, the classic “This Land Is Your Land,” done up Bearzatti-on-Bourbon-Street style. A landscape of Americana intriguingly filtered through *jazz Italiana*. Ordering info: camjazz.com

Dave Wilson Quartet, *There Was Never* (Zoho 201512; 65:34 ★★★) With his fourth album, Dave Wilson, on tenor and soprano saxophones, puts a strong foot forward, backed by a tight and raring-to-go rhythm section of young pianist Bobby Avey, bassist Tony Marino and drummer Alex Ritz. From the tricky, pulsing energy of the opening “The Time Has Come,” on which the saxophonist brandishes his big tone and easily tumbling facility, to the simple folk theme of “On The Prairie,” *There Was Never* makes a varied and mostly powerful impact. Ordering info: markhauser.ch

Nicole Glover, *First Record* (Self Release; 46:34 ★★★½) In the notes for her impressive debut album, the young Oregon-based saxophonist Nicole Glover name-checks the great Wayne Shorter, recalling his advice to her to become a “leader” and an “individual.” As is evident on this eight-track song set, Glover took that advice to heart, carving out a sound all her own while capturing certain Shorter-esque touches along the way. Her cool, probing sense of phrasing and conceptual breathing gives her solos distinction. While her writing reflects an awareness of contemporary jazz notions, we also get a sense of historical grounding in deeply-rooted jazz idioms, from the soul-jazz of opener “Big B” to the Horace Silver-esque hard-bop of “No Ordinary Joe” (dedicated to another important California-based musician, drummer Joe La Barbera). *Art & Soul*, amply blessed with technical prowess, innate swing and more, is a robust debut statement worth celebrating. Ordering info: nicoleglover.com

Mark Hauser Quartet, *It’s All About The Journey* (bettersound; 63:15 ★★★) Swiss alto saxophonist/reed player Markus (aka Mark) Hauser gets around, stylistically and in terms of his varied life in music. At various times he’s been a sideman, bandleader, educator and even designer of mouthpieces. His long list of collaborators includes Billy Joel, Airoto Moreira and New Orleans drummer Johnny Vidacovich, and he has channeled his long, influential love of Art Pepper into a 2006 album, *A Tribute To Art Pepper*. Not surprisingly, hints of his affiliations and affinities tend to weave through the tracks of his latest album. Shades of Pepper shine through the fiery cool energies of this disc. Ordering info: markhauser.ch
If jazz artists continue to compose and play the kind of beautiful, exciting and highly listenable music that Amina Figarova delivers here, casual jazz fans may have a reason to get serious.

*Blue Whisper* is more about sound and feeling than cumbersome solos and note-filled melodies. The Azerbaijani-born composer and pianist gives us 10 songs that express a wide spectrum of emotions, with music that is often lovely and lively, begging you to sing or hum along. A product of both classical and jazz training, Figarova is not only a gifted composer, but also a complete pianist. She seems always to play the perfect passage, whether in a lead or supporting role.

The leader, however, fully shares the spotlight with her cohesive ensemble, which includes such standouts as Wayne Escoffery on tenor saxophone and Anthony Wilson on guitar. Playing together, they create a joyful, full-bodied sound. From the first notes of the first tune to the affecting final measure—you’ll want to hear it all. —Bob Protzman

Sam Sadigursky has been earning Gotham spurs for over 15 years as a reedman of thinking bands (e.g., Darcy James Argue’s Secret Society and Jamie Baum’s septet), a leader of chamber ensembles and a composer of poetic rambles. His new clarinet combo—with a fresh, edgy rhythm team of Bobby Avey on piano and Jordan Perlson on drums and frontline mate vibist Chris Dingman—offers ruminative, sweeping, mournful charts that allow stretches of loose development.

It takes guest trumpeter Jason Palmer’s playful presence to jumpstart his few tracks: the quasi-boppish “Do The Dance” nods askance at Dizzy Gillespie’s “Owl!” with flamboyant Gershwin-esque noodling; legato horns bubble exuberantly on “Life’s Flowering” over Perlson’s restless, less-mallets, while trumpet and drums wholly dominate “Math Music,” a fresh, edgy rhythm team of Bobby Avey on piano and Jordan Perlson on drums and frontline mate vibist Chris Dingman—offers ruminative, sweeping, mournful charts that allow stretches of loose development.

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*Blue Whisper*: Blue Whisper; Moving Upwards; Hear My Voice; The Hustler; Pictures; Marians; The Traveller; Moonrise; Juno; Hexa. (62:59)

**Personnel:** Amina Figarova, piano; Bart Patlette, flutes; Alex Pope Norris, trumpet, flugelhorn (except 8); Emre Hamsme, flugelhorn (8); Wayne Escoffery, tenor saxophone, soprano saxophone (1, 2, 7, 9); Marc Mommaas (8–10), tenor saxophone; Luques Curtis (1–3, 5, 7, 9, 10); Yasushi Nakamura (4, 6, 9); Jason Brown, drums; Anthony Wilson, guitar (9); Sarah Elisabeth Charles, vocals (10); Sahiya Bilal Tumba, Shamiyl Bilal Tumba, spoken word (3).

**Ordering info:** inandout-records.com

*Out of The Blue* is a labor of love for bassist and percussionist Brent Fischer, but it’s also an invaluable archive for the jazz-listening public. Brent, son of the late composer Clare Fischer (1928–2012), put together the album after digging through his father’s library of unpublished material. As he puts it in the liner notes, he discovered “one great find after another.”

The result is a collection of unreleased material and a smattering of standards that reinforce Clare’s brilliance as a composer and arranger. Many of the tunes had been previously recorded in one form or the other. “Two For The Road,” for example, is a solo piano reading based on a previously written orchestral version, while “Love’s Walk” is a trio rendition of a solo piece. Clare’s attentive, authoritative piano playing anchors the album with the seamless addition of other musicians. To paint a complete picture of his father’s works, Brent arranged the laid-back and funky “Love’s Walk,” “49 (Larry Ford)” and the title track, which features vocalese performances from Denise Donatelli and John Proulx. —Jon Ross

*Out of The Blue*: Love’s Walk; Tama Do Boreco De Palha (Theme Of The Straw Doll); When You Wish Upon A Star; Someday My Prince Will Come; Starbright; Two For The Road; Cascade Of The Seven Waterfalls; Out Of The Blue; Millionaire Walk; Amor Em Paz; Squatty Rous; Nuages; Nevernova; 49 Larry Ford; Carnaval/A Felicidade/Samba De Orfeu. (71:22)

**Personnel:** Claire Fischer, keyboards; Brent Fischer, bass, percussion; Peter Erskine (1, 4, 7, 11, 13), Mike Shapiro (2, 6, 8, 14), drums; Denise Donatelli (7), John Proulx (7), vocals.

**Ordering info:** clarefischer.com

*Follow The Stick*: Fast Money; String Of Pearls; 3+2; Mule; Do The Dance; Austerity Measures; Looks Can Be Deceiving; Reach; Life’s Flowering; Deadly Sins; Touché; Heart; Music/75 (26)

**Personnel:** Sam Sadigursky, clarinet, bass clarinet (6, 9, 11, 12); Chris Dingman; vibraphone, marimba (11); Bobby Avey, piano; Jordan Perlson, drums, percussion; Jason Palmer, trumpet (2, 5, 9, 13); Ljova, viola (1).

**Ordering info:** bjurecords.com

The album opens on a soulful note with “121st Street,” a buoyant funk number that falls between vintage Joe Sample and Grover Washington Jr. “Coming Down” is a more take-no-prisoners offering paced by Watts’ funky drummer pulse and a labyrinth of difficult unison lines by Ellis, Valera and Felder. “Gilding” is a mellow waltz-time ballad that highlights the remarkably lyrical harmonica playing of Grégoire Maret and also features suitably warm solos by Valera on Fender Rhodes and Felder on guitar. Highly recommended for fusion fans.

—Bill Milkowski

*Follow The Stick*: Follow The Stick (BJU 106)

**Personnel:** Cliff Brown, trumpet; Wee护士, trombone; Jack Sheldon, clarinet; Louis Hayes, drums; Ivory Joe Hunter, piano; Ray Brown, bass; Blue Mitchell, tenor saxophone (9); John Coltrane, tenor saxophone (9); Shelly Manne, drums (9); Al Grey, tenor saxophone (9); Martial Solal, piano (9); Jack Montrose, trumpet (9); Jimmy Smith, organ (9); Bobby Timmons, piano (9); John Clayton, bass (9); Max Roach, drums (9); Sonny Stitt, tenor saxophone (10); Joe Pass, guitar (10); Gato Barbieri, saxophone, flute (10); Claude Oden, piano (10); Larry Coryell, electric guitar (10); Joe Morello, drums (10); Paul Chambers, bass (10); Gary Burton, vibraphone (10); Gigi Gryce, alto saxophone (10); Al Foster, drums (10); Grégoire Maret, harmonica (10); Paul Proof, bass (10); Matthew Shipp, piano (10); John Clayton, bass (10); Mickey Paulson, drums (10); Lionel Loueke, guitar, vibraphone (10); John Coltrane, tenor saxophone, piano (10); Don Cherry, flute (10); Steve Lacy, tenor saxophone (10); Les Green, bass (10); Max Roach, drums (10); Junior Mance, piano (10); Howard Alden, clarinet (10); Scott直, alto saxophone (10); Brian Blade, drums (10); Hugh Ragin, bass (10); Jack Deshannon, guitar (10); John Clayton, bass (10); Zawdie Alem, piano (10); Henry Darrag, bass (10); Al Foster, drums (10); John Mclurkin, clarinet (10); Sam Sadigursky, clarinet, bass clarinet (10); Chris Dingman, vibraphone, marimba (10); Bobby Avey, piano (10); Jordan Perlson, drums, percussion (10); Jason Palmer, trumpet (10); Ljova, viola (10); BJU 105

**Ordering info:** bjurecords.com

*Urban Landscape*: 121st Street; Coming Down; Gilding; All Around You; Geometrics; Five Reasons; Never Absent; As Faster; Little By Little; New Ways. (73:22)

**Personnel:** Manuel Valera, Fender Rhodes; Mirmoog Voyager, Prophet 08, Hammond B-3 organ; John Ellis, tenor saxophone, bass clarinet; Nir Felder, guitar, John Benitez, bass; E.J. Strickland, drums (1, 3, 4, 6–9); Jeff “Tain” Watts, drums (2, 5, 10); Grégoire Maret, harmonica (3, 6), Paulo Stagnaro (4), Mauricio Herrera (5), percussion.

**Ordering info:** destinyrecordsmusic.com

*Clare Fischer* (CLAVO 201509)

**Out of The Blue**

**Rating:** 4½

Out of The Blue is a labor of love for bassist and percussionist Brent Fischer, but it’s also an invaluable archive for the jazz-listening public. Brent, son of the late composer Clare Fischer (1928–2012), put together the album after digging through his father’s library of unpublished material. As he puts it in the liner notes, he discovered “one great find after another.”

The result is a collection of unreleased material and a smattering of standards that reinforce Clare’s brilliance as a composer and arranger. Many of the tunes had been previously recorded in one form or the other. “Two For The Road,” for example, is a solo piano reading based on a previously written orchestral version, while “Love’s Walk” is a trio rendition of a solo piece. Clare’s attentive, authoritative piano playing anchors the album with the seamless addition of other musicians. To paint a complete picture of his father’s works, Brent arranged the laid-back and funky “Love’s Walk,” “49 (Larry Ford)” and the title track, which features vocalese performances from Denise Donatelli and John Proulx. —Jon Ross

*Self Portrait* (BJU 056)

**Rating:** 4½

Sam Sadigursky has been earning Gotham spurs for over 15 years as a reedman of thinking bands (e.g., Darcy James Argue’s Secret Society and Jamie Baum’s septet), a leader of chamber ensembles and a composer of poetic rambles. His new clarinet combo—with a fresh, edgy rhythm team of Bobby Avey on piano and Jordan Perlson on drums and frontline mate vibist Chris Dingman—offers ruminative, sweeping, mournful charts that allow stretches of loose development.

It takes guest trumpeter Jason Palmer’s playful presence to jumpstart his few tracks: the quasi-boppish “Do The Dance” nods askance at Dizzy Gillespie’s “Owl!” with flamboyant Gershwin-esque noodling; legato horns bubble exuberantly on “Life’s Flowering” over Perlson’s restless, less-mallets, while trumpet and drums wholly dominate “Math Music,” the galumphing closing tune. Otherwise, a placid, sometimes ominous, calm pervades the session.

Sadigursky presents an engaging musical persona: a composer of suave and awkward pieces, a multifaceted yet reticent player and a leader who yields ample space to his mates while feeling his way toward some brave new vernacular. —Fred Bouchard
Luis Muñoz

Voz

PELÍN MUSIC

★★★★

This music by the Costa Rican drummer Luis Muñoz, highly refined and subtle in detail, envelops one in aural pleasure. Surrender is the only option.

Muñoz, who also produced, orchestrated and arranged, has delivered an exceptional recording in the poetic and alluring Voz. It highlights three singers: the dusky Magos Herrera, from Mexico; the lighter-voiced Teka Penteriche, from Brazil; and Claudia Acuña, a Chilean of more conversational style. More than a mere star vehicle, Voz expresses a musical community.

The songs are intimate and expressive, the voicings delicate. Jonathan Dane, a trumpeter of lean and soulful line, shines on “Quisiera,” a showcase for Acuña and Penteriche, and on the shadowy “Journey Of Saint Augustine,” a tune embedding hismute among the careful bass of Brendan Statom and the tip toe guitar of Daniel Zimmerman.

Name-checking isn’t the point, however. The point is to luxuriate in one of the most attractive Latin American albums of the year. —Carlo Wolff

Our Space In Time

Robert Irving III

Generations

Our Space In Time

SONICE PORTRAITS JAZZ 1222

★★★★

Our Space In Time addresses such themes as the links between artists past and present, the balance of legacy and innovation, the significance of our current moment and the process of moving ahead. Robert Irving III, an under-promoted Chicago-based pianist and composer, has created a suite-like album that explores these concepts in progressive yet accessible contemporary jazz.

As a member of Miles Davis’ 1981 comeback band and later Davis’ music director, Irving rode a post-fusion wave when it was being supplanted by the Marsalis-led revival of hard-bop. Here he resurrects an alternative strategy that Wayne Shorter proposed in albums like Atlantis and High Life: tightly knit, complex charts for small ensembles that are flexible enough to couch striking personal statements but catchy enough to comfort audiences with an identifiable thread.

Irving writes close parallels for his three capable horn players and directs his rhythm section’s approach, leaving openings for his deft, light-fingered pianism. “Poznan Dream,” evokes an airy wistfulness that recurs later in the ballad “Octobre.” Scott Hesse’s guitar skirts through the saxophones on “Generations,” and is generously featured on “Maat.” “Energy,” suggestive of McCoy Tyner, packs punches with Laurence d’Estival Irving’s fervent saxophone wail.

The band’s response to the issues raised by its leader is to play together, in the moment. —Howard Mandel

LISA HILTON

NOCTURNAL

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GREGG AUGUST / TEREll STAFFORD

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FEBRUARY 2016 DOWNBEAT 77
In Good Hands

Anthony Geraci & the Boston Blues All-Stars, Fifty Shades Of Blue (Delta Groove 0171; 54:18 ★★★★) A charter member of Sugar Ray & the Bluetones has been the consistently excellent pianist in New England over the past quarter century. Recording a rare headline session, the Rhode Islander channels deeply personal currents of feeling through his dexterous investigations of the keyboard on a strong cache of 13 original tunes.

Ordering info: deltagroovemusic.com

Georgie Bonds, Hit It Hard (Roadhouse Redemption; 54:49 ★★★½) For his third album, Georgie Bonds—back in action after several surgeries—sings lyrics to passable original songs with an authenticity that proves this Philadelphian, who used to shoe horses for a living, has unflappably weathered his life’s travails. It’s no easy feat to signify one’s individuality treating Blind Willie Johnson’s gospel blues “The Soul Of A Man,” but he does, terrifyingly.

Ordering info: roadhouseredemption.com

The Jimmys, Hot Dish (Brown Cow 003; 60:28 ★★★★★) Wisconsin’s seven-piece club band, helmed by deft singer-keyboardist Jimmy Voegeli, makes a good case for international notice behind the rousing entertainment of their third record since forming in 2008. They run the stylistic gamut—jump blues, shuffles, boogies, golden-era r&b, even New Orleans traditional jazz—using an honest, crisp expressionism that pegs them as eccentrics of a particularly interesting sort.

Ordering info: thejimmys.net

Reverend Freakchild, Hillbilly Zen-Punk Blues (Treated & Released 006; 37:33 ★★★½) Screwball album title and nom de blooze notwithstanding, the Reverend isn’t prone to breaking free of conventional blues habits. Three albums into his career, the Colorado singer and guitarist imposes easygoing, secure-within-himself moods on most of his own tunes and on Mississippi Fred McDowell’s “I Wish I Was In Heaven Sitting Down” and Reverend Gary Davis’ “It’s Gonna Be Alright.”

Ordering info: treatedandreleasedrecords.com

Mighty Mike Schermer, Blues In Good Hands (VizzTone 1040; 52:42 ★★★★★) Mighty Mike Schermer revives on his fifth solo release the same gift for top-grade entertainment that informed his previous ones. Disciplined in his emotion, this first-call sideman for Marcia Ball and other worthies doesn’t make a big deal of his excellent guitar technique, keeping his lead lines eloquent on 13 sturdy originals.

Ordering info: vizztone.com

Ernest James Zydecologo, Automatic Harvester (Jam Rat 004; 50:10 ★★★★★) Ernest James, a singer and dazzler on accordion, keyboards and guitars, leads one of the few Creole r&b-style bands outside the Bayou State. Beyond the zydeco good times, James delivers blues of suitable purpose and intensity, notably the harrowing “Jack Ride, Jimmy Roll,” which tells of a murdern on the run in the antebellum South.

Ordering info: ejzydeco.com

Dave Alvin & Phil Alvin, Lost Time (Yep Roc 2447; 43:55 ★★★★★) On many tribute albums, musicians simply run through roots classics rather than provide their own flavors of expression. The Alvin brothers, with Dave’s distinctive high baritone voice and Phil’s blasting guitar to the fore, have no such trouble. They find new pockets of anxiety in James Brown’s “Please, Please, Please,” assess Willie Dixon socially aware boogie “Sit Down, Baby” and swingingly smooth out the lust that naturally pervades Big Joe Turner’s “Cherry Red Blues.”

Ordering info: yeproc.com

Art Pepper
Live At Fat Tuesday’s
ELEMENTAL 5990427 ★★★

Alto saxophonist Art Pepper’s extraordinary late-career comeback after years of imprisonment remains one of jazz’s great redemption stories, and this live session from 1981 is a welcome addition to the collection of music he recorded near the end of his life. It’s also a welcome reminder of the intimacy musicians and audiences shared at Fat Tuesday’s, the New York City club that was a regular stop for Dizzy Gillespie, Stan Getz, Freddie Hubbard and others. Those at the front tables literally sat at the feet of the musicians, and the exchange of energy created by that proximity is much in evidence here.

While best remembered as a hard-core bopper, by 1981 Pepper had incorporated some of the fire and extended techniques of the avant-garde into his playing. As a result, the opening “Rhythm-A-Ning” is filled with Coltrane-esque cries. Drummer Al Foster—who was about to rejoin Miles Davis for the first phase of his remarkable comeback—is the ideal accompanist, playing free behind Pepper’s choruses and then swinging hard behind Milcho Leviev’s piano solo.

On the ballad “Goodbye,” which the former clarinetist Pepper relates to his early love of Benny Goodman, the contemporary influence appears again, allowing him to move easily between tender passages and raw edges. Stretching out on “Make A List, Make A Wish” Pepper is particularly energized, expanding his second solo through twisting choruses.

For any other group of disparate musicians, this might be just another night in a friendly club, but Pepper’s perilous past and palpable urgency made every night sound like it could be his last.

—James Hale

Live At Fat Tuesday’s: Rhythm-A-Ning: What Is This Thing Called Love?; Goodbye; Make A List, Make A Wish; Red Car (70:43) Personnel: Art Pepper, alto saxophone; Milcho Leviev, piano; George Miraz, bass; A Foster, drums.

Ordering info: elemental-music.com
Whirlpool With Ron Miles
Dancing On The Inside
EARS & EYES 15-032
★★★½

Charles Rumback
In The New Year
EARS & EYES 15-038
★★★★

Drummer Charles Rumback is a ubiquitous presence within the diverse Chicago music scene, a figure in demand due to his versatility and good taste. But as he often works within collectives and generously spends time as a sideman, knowledge of his talent hasn’t spread nearly as far as it should. The drummer stepped up his game in 2015, releasing a slew of recordings that suggest that he should be more than a Chicago treasure. Whirlpool is one of those collectives—a nimble trio with instrumentation modeled on the great trio led by Paul Motian, Rumback’s most profound influence as a drummer. Alto saxophonist Caroline Davis and guitarist Jeff Swanson don’t sound anything like Joe Lovano and Bill Frisell (the other members of that Motian trio), but they share the same telepathic rapport, navigating original tunes with empathy and grace.

While playing in Denver in 2013, the group invited the lyrical cornetist Ron Miles to sit in for a few tunes during a gig, and they clicked so much that the trio asked him to play on the entirety of its latest album. Dancing On The Inside makes clear that their connection is potent. Miles and Davis sound wonderful together on the frontline, shaping unison lines with a lush warmth. Swanson fills in lots of space with his moody arpeggios and tingling runs, and Rumback demonstrates a simultaneous crispness and druggy bottom that pushes and prods his cohorts away from glibness.

The drummer orchestrates a darker, more somber sound on his terrific quintet album In The New Year, for which he composed the lion’s share of the music. Guitarist Jeff Parker is a key factor in the mahogany timbre of the band, adding melancholy and bittersweet harmonies behind the sweet-sour braid of Caroline Davis’ alto saxophone and Jason Stein’s bass clarinet. Throughout the recording, Rumback invests significant energy in texture and color, providing a hefty presence that adds depth to the proceedings, and bassist John Tate does an excellent job in his role as timekeeper. The album ends with a gorgeous reading of Andrew Hill’s late composition “Tough Love,” which offers a pervasive air of melodic beauty with a steady, unering undertow of tension. These qualities masterfully complement one another here, but they’re also indicative of the entire collection.

—Peter Margasak

Dancing On The Inside: Dancing On The Inside; Deciduous; The Ocean Knows; Remedies; All Of Your Secrets; The Crew; Right Where; Ridges. (42:35)
Personnel: Charles Rumback, drums; Caroline Davis, alto saxophone, vocals; Ron Miles, cornet; Jeff Swanson, guitar.
Ordering info: earsandeyesrecords.com

In The New Year: In The New Year; Right Reasons; Convulsive; Dragons In Denver; Portrait Of Lorena; Peaceful Giant; Ash Wednesday; Tough Love. (52:43)
Personnel: Charles Rumback, drums; Caroline Davis, alto saxophone; Jeff Parker, guitar; Jason Stein, bass clarinet; John Tate, bass.
Ordering info: earsandeyesrecords.com
Beyond / BY BOB DOERSCHUK

Pickin’ Parlor
From folk strums to lightning-fast rolls, plenty of albums in and beyond the roots-music spotlight are grounded in acoustic guitar and banjo. Here are five diverse releases that might inspire you to strum along.

John Jorgenson, Divertuoso/From The Crow’s Nest (Cleopatra Records 44; 48:24 ✭✭✭✭) On sheer scale, this three-CD package demands attention. And, given the breadth and depth of Jorgenson’s artistry, that attention is well merited. Each of these discs showcases his mastery in a distinctive genre: Returning (52:22) concentrates on his well-documented exploration of Parisian swing, and Gifts From The Flood (88:31) offers music inspired by his various electric guitars. From The Crow’s Nest stems from a reunion of J2B, an all-star ensemble featuring multi-instrumentalists Herb Pedersen and Jon Randall along with bassist Mark Fain. Jorgenson draws heavily from the steady bluegrass of The Dillards, maintaining moderate velocity and favoring melodic invention over fireworks.

 Ordering info: clearecs.com

Steve Forbert, Compromised (Rock Ridge 61439; 79:13 ✭✭) Like most singer-songwriters ambling down the Americana highway, Steve Forbert makes no claim to instrumental virtuosity. He is, however, a seasoned balladeer with a distinctive vocal and lyrical style, both of which exploit the genre’s tolerance for idiosyncrasy. This means, for example, that Forbert can sound like he’s being strangled, at times to the point of incomprehensibility. On “You’d See The Things That I See (The Day John Met Paul),” he gargles the word after “I’m glad I’m not your ...” in a way that’s impossible to decipher, at least to this reviewer. Given the band’s lackluster performance, the occasional wordplay and unorthodox rhymes are hardly redemptive.

 Ordering info: steveforbert.mybigcommerce.com

Findlay Brown, Slow Light (Dead People’s Choice 016; 36:25 ✭✭✭½) More compelling and certainly more decipherable is this latest from British-born/Brooklyn-based singer-songwriter Findlay Brown. He self-accompanies on guitar with assurance, shifting from delicate fingerpicking to gentle strums depending on the material.

 Ordering info: rounder.com

Livio Minafra/Louis Moholo-Moholo
Born Free
INCIPIT 203 ★★★
In a meeting of generations, elder statesman drummer Louis Moholo-Moholo joins the young, aggressive Italian pianist Livio Minafra for six live free-improvisation duets culled from three European performances. The differences in age dissolve within the first few phrases; there’s a deep connection here.

Though free-form playing depends upon a mutual response to ideas, it’s uncanny how often this duo seemingly comes upon the same ideas simultaneously. The two artfully take their excursions through thematic and textural terraces that lend each piece suspense and satisfying “compositional” arcs.

Moholo-Moholo made a mark in the mid-’60s when, relocating from his native South Africa to London, he became a force in integrating African elements into British jazz. Becoming increasingly immersed in free-jazz, he frequently engaged in duets with pianists, including the album Remembrance (1989) with Cecil Taylor.

Here, the drummer morphs in and out of time and into free canvases, with textured waves that are powerful and decisive, yet sensitive and never overwhelming. He frequently makes painterly use of dowel sticks, using their legato attack to create singing musical phrases.

From the rumbling, ever-growing pedal-point surge of “Canto General” to the humorous syncopated brio march of “Foxtrot,” this one-minded duo is a mini-orchestra.

 —Jeff Potter

 Born Free: Livio Minafra, piano; Louis Moholo-Moholo, drums.

 Ordering info: egeamusic.com

EDIE BRICKELL (left) with Steve Martin
Galen Weston
*Plugged In*
BLUJAZZ 2015
★★★★

Galen Weston, who is based in Toronto, is a fusion guitarist with a passionate sound. During the first 15 years after he graduated college, he had a successful career as a businessman, eventually forming his own internet company. Three years ago, after participating in a jam session, he realized how much he had missed playing guitar, and returned to music. After extensive woodshedding, he recorded *Plugged In*, his debut album.

Joined by an attentive rhythm section and alto saxophonist Richard Underhill, Weston performs 10 originals, Keith Jarrett’s “Country” and the standard “Like Someone In Love.” A fiery and sometimes intense soloist, Weston’s playing is often rock-oriented, particularly on the opening “Funk Opus #2,” a high-powered jam. He displays more subtlety and a different tone on the lyrical medium-tempo ballad “Song For Daphne” and hints at George Benson on “The Yellow Guitar” (more than he does on the catchy and funky “Bensonite”).

Technically skilled and displaying his own personal voice as a soloist, Weston is an impressive guitarist, even if his originals are not particularly memorable. His playing will be of strongest interest to fans of blazing rock guitar.

—Scott Yanow

*Plugged In:* Funk Opus #2; Song For Daphne; Bensonite; The Yellow Guitar; Rose Garden; Country; Galen’s Vice–A Tribute To The 80’s; Austin; Tastless; Like Someone In Love; Late And Never; Rock Jam.

*Personnel:* Galen Weston, guitar; Matt Horner, piano; David Woodhead, bass; Al Cross, drums; Richard Underhill, alto saxophone; Rick Shadrach Lazar, percussion; Lenka Lichtenberg, vocals; Simeon Abbott, keyboards (1).

*Ordering info:* blujazz.com

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Tom Collier
*Across The Bridge*
ORIGIN 82703
★★★½

Since 1997, Origin Records has stood steadfast as a bulwark for West Coast jazz and classical musicians, and mallet-meister Tom Collier splendidly fills both categories. As chair of percussion studies at Seattle’s University of Washington, he’s performed with major symphonies as well as Earl “Fatha” Hines, Frank Zappa, Peggy Lee and Cal Tjader. (He lately recorded mallet transcriptions of two-piano Mozart and Haydn pieces for Origin’s classical division.) Here Collier brightly reflects on a well-spent West Seattle childhood, joined by master guitarists Bill Frisell and Larry Coryell (themselves with Seattle roots), who alternate or double with the tart electric plectra of Dan Dean, Collier’s musical partner for the past 40 years.

We hear no shortage of notes, ringing arpeggios or positive vibrations in this relaxed and funky set. Of special swagger is the stretch “Beach Drive,” which features some stop-time turnoffs for drummer Ted Poor. “Gold ‘N’ Blues” lopes along with Coryell’s bright guitar splashes, and Frisell laces out on “47th ‘N’ Hudson.” Throughout, Collier tap-dances lightly between woody solos and crisp, whispery comping. The final title track sprinkles Asian spice on a bluesy line, and we’re home after a scenic ride.

—Fred Bouchard

*Across The Bridge:* The Junction; Beach Drive; Gold ‘N’ Blues; The Admiral’s Point Of View; 47th ‘N’ Hudson; Genevieve; Harmonious Effusion On Olga Street; Fauntleroy Mist; Across The Bridge.

*Personnel:* Tom Collier, vibraphone, marimba; Larry Coryell, guitar (1, 3, 6, 9); Bill Frisell, guitar (2, 5, 8); Dan Dean, bass, guitar (3, 4, 7); John Bishop, drums (1, 3, 6, 9); Ted Poor, drums (2, 4, 5, 7, 8).

*Ordering info:* originarts.com

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Noah Preminger

**Pivot: Live At The 55 Bar**

**SELF RELEASE**

★★★½

On the cover of his latest album, 29-year-old saxophonist Noah Preminger stands outside Greenwich Village’s 55 Bar, suited and booted and appearing poised to herald a slick set of New York jazz.

On back of the CD is a picture of a fire bucket, a clue to the incendiary music within.

There is uncompromising candor in Preminger’s approach to the pair of compositions that make up this album: Bukka White’s “Parchman Farm” and “Fixin’ To Die Blues” (each track runs beyond 30 minutes). Preminger confesses an obsession with Delta blues, drawn to its emotional honesty. Certainly, after the bellowing two-horn entry, his full-bore blowing isn’t interested in regaling the cramped 55 crowd with tidy licks. Bassist Kim Cass and veteran Canadian drummer Ian Froman stoke the flames while Preminger and trumpeter Jason Palmer take turns with extended forays. Initially, promising up-and-comer Palmer quotes “Manëca” and Rollins fragments, but soon finds ways to navigate the white water set up by the rhythm section. Froman and Cass are not stopping on ceremony, pushing Palmer and Preminger beyond the prosaic, each horn matching their relentless flow.

—Michael Jackson

**Personnel:**

Oscar Perez, piano; Thomson Kneeland, bass; Alvester Garnett, drums; Bruce Williams, alto saxophone.

**Ordering info:** noahpreminger.com

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Ike Sturm +

**Evergreen**

**Shelter Of Trees**

**KILDE**

★★★½

Bassist-composer Ike Sturm, who has served as musical director for the jazz ministry at St. Peter’s Church in the heart of midtown Manhattan since 2004, offers a deeply personal statement with this collection of sacred music (dedicated to his late father, trombonist-composer-educator Fred Sturm) that speaks directly to the heart. Vibraphonist Chris Dingman and pianist Fabian Almazan supply a shimmering quality throughout, and bristling solos are added by alto saxophonist Loren Stillman and guitarist Jesse Lewis on uplifting pieces like “Rejoice,” “River,” “Renevol” and the dynamic title track. And Sturm exhibits an accomplished arranger’s touch on these 10 compelling pieces, particularly in his use of the angelic vocals of Melissa Stylianou, Chanda Rule and Misty Ann Sturm. Their religious messages on tunes like “Guide,” “Sanctus” and “Psalm 23” may be put-off to non-believers, but the sound of their crystalline voices uniting in song is undeniably beautiful.

Those with open hearts and minds may be profoundly moved by these seraphic sounds and divine sentiments.

—Bill Milkowski

**Personnel:**

Ike Sturm, bass; composer; Loren Stillman, alto saxophone; Fabian Almazan, piano; Chris Dingman, vibraphone; Jesse Lewis, guitar; Jared Schonig, drums; Misty Ann Sturm, vocals; Chanda Rule, vocals; Melissa Stylianou, vocals.

**Ordering info:** ikesturm.com

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Oscar Perez

**Prepare A Place For Me**

**MYNA**

★★★

“Just Everything,” the delicate opening track to Oscar Perez’s third album, is a bit of a false promise. By the solo section, the pianist is forging full speed ahead, creating a stream of swinging melodies atop the kinetic drumming of Alvester Garnett and the steady bass of Thomson Kneeland. The tune slows down a bit, and gets less aggressive, but Perez has already revealed himself. While his statue of a rollicking, hard-driving pianist who packs as many notes as he can into solos is never quite has already revealed himself. While his statue of a rollicking, hard-driving pianist who packs as many notes as he can into solos is never quite seems to the letter of the impossibly nostalgic melodies, this collection is an especially swingin’ brand of dinner jazz.

—Bill Milkowski

**Personnel:**

Oscar Perez, tenor saxophone; John di Martino, piano; James Chirillo, guitar; Gene Ammons) are suggestive of Person’s long career beyond the passing of his musical partner Etta Jones in 2001. There’s always the sense to Person’s regular pianist knows how to call a session, make everyone feel relaxed and get the best out of them. That’s certainly the case on *Something Personal.* “The Second Time Around” and the “Way We Were” (the latter a vehicle for Person’s most obvious antecedent, Gene Ammons) are suggestive of Person’s long career beyond the passing of his musical partner Etta Jones in 2001. There’s always the sense with this ballad-heavy repertoire that songs have to resonate on a deeply personal level.

Vibraphonist Steve Nelson adds harmony to Person’s regular pianist John di Martino and is featured to succint effect on a bossa-driven “Change Partners” (Person joins on the bridge for a nimble solo). Due to the lush sound, perfection and taste of drummer Lewis Nash, bassist Ray Drummond and guitarist James Chirillo (on four cuts), plus Person’s breezy loyalty to the letter of the impossibly nostalgic melodies, this collection is an especially swingin’ brand of dinner jazz.

—Michael Jackson

**Ordering info:** jazzdepot.com

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Houston Person

**Something Personal**

**HIGH NOTE 7282**

★★★½

Despite his name, Houston is not a Texas tenor but was born in South Carolina 81 years ago. A producer of other artists—such as Bill Hardman, Dakota Staton, Charles Brown and vibraphonist Johnny Lytle—Person knows how to call a session, make everyone feel relaxed and get the best out of them. That’s certainly the case on *Something Personal.* “The Second Time Around” and the “Way We Were” (the latter a vehicle for Person’s most obvious antecedent, Gene Ammons) are suggestive of Person’s long career beyond the passing of his musical partner Etta Jones in 2001. There’s always the sense with this ballad-heavy repertoire that songs have to resonate on a deeply personal level.

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—Michael Jackson

**Personnel:**

Houston Person, tenor saxophone; Steve Nelson, vibraphone; John di Martino, piano; James Chirillo, guitar; Gene Ammons) are suggestive of Person’s long career beyond the passing of his musical partner Etta Jones in 2001. There’s always the sense with this ballad-heavy repertoire that songs have to resonate on a deeply personal level.

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—Michael Jackson

**Ordering info:** jazzdepot.com

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Charles Ruggiero
As Heard On TV
RONDETTE 1014
★★★½

From Bob James to Quincy Jones, great jazz melodocists have paid the rent with TV themes for decades. But a full set of TV show themes as the launching point for a modern jazz record? That’s a completely different game.

But drummer Charles Ruggiero seems to have had fun putting together a DVR’s worth of melodies that would satisfy any couch potato. The result is a bizarre universe where every TV theme sounds like it was recorded in Rudy Van Gelder’s New Jersey studio circa 1965.

“Bewitched” bounces on Ruggiero’s nimble brushes with a muted Alex Norris on trumpet dancing throughout. A soul-jazz rendition of the “Law & Order” theme is laugh-out-loud funny when soprano saxophonist Stacy Dillard gives off a siren-like wail mid-solo. And the “Game Of Thrones” theme is drenched in the aquatic modalism of Herbie Hancock’s “Maiden Voyage,” serving as a “listen to this” kind of moment to share with non-jazz fans. For purists, this may be a polarizing record, but it has the potential to lure those drawn by the familiar to explore a full set of well-executed small combo jazz. A noble goal. —Sean J. O’Connell

As Heard On TV: Bewitched; Law & Order; Moonlighting; The Bugs Bunny Show; Game Of Thrones; iCarly; Good Times; The Honeymooners. (42:36)

Personnel: Charles Ruggiero, drums; Jeremy Manasia, piano; Mike Karn, bass; Ian Hendrickson-Smith, flute (1), alto saxophone (5, 6, 7); Alex Norris, trumpet (1, 6); Stacey Dillard, soprano saxophone (2), tenor saxophone (8); Laura Mace, vocals (6).

Ordering info: rondettejazz.com

No BS! Brass Band
Brass Knuckles
SELF RELEASE
★★★½

In music, very little matches the combined energy of the relentless rhythms of a drum corps and the solid funk of New Orleans-style brass band. But when you add that to the hitting cadences of rap and hip-hop, it can be exhilarating and exciting.

That’s why the name of this band and the title of this record is most appropriate. The No BS! Brass Band—based in Richmond, Virginia—plays all of these 11 tracks with power and conviction.

The talented ensemble was assembled by founders Reggie Pace (trombone) and Lance Koehler (drums), and nearly every member of the group has had conservatory training. Their eclectic musical style draws on elements from a vast range of artists, including James Brown, John Coltrane, Michael Jackson and Led Zeppelin, but their signature sound is completely original.

The music steps hard like the best high school and college marching bands. It is immediate and fresh, jumping right out of the speakers. —David Kunian

Brass Knuckles: 3 AM Bounce; Act Like You Know; The F.O.O.L.; Tyrannis; Brass Knuckles; Out Of Time; What Now; Get Slow; Nailbiter; Trilling Wise; 140W. (43:03)

Personnel: Lance Koehler, drums, vocals; Stefan Demetratidis, contra; Reggie Chapman, Dillard Watt, bass trombone; John Hulley, trombone; Bryan Hooten, trombone, vocals; Alex Norris, trumpet (1, 6); Stacey Dillard, soprano saxophone (2); Laura Mace, vocals (6).

Ordering info: nobsbrass.com

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Promising Forecast

The velocity of many, if not most, of the live tunes from Weather Report, The Legendary Tapes: 1978–1981 (Legacy 88875141272; 61:14/60:41/62:58/62:29 ★★★★★) may be the defining characteristic of this particular edition of the band. By 1978, co-founders Joe Zawinul (keyboards) and Wayne Shorter (saxophone) already had electric bassist Jaco Pastorius on board, but now the percussion was driven by drummer Peter Erskine and Robert Thomas Jr. (who appears on roughly half of these 28 cuts).

Starting with “8:30,” the pace of this collection is nothing if not frenetic. Along with the ever-present world-music influence on tunes like the lively, grinding “Sightseeing” and an extremely wound-up “Badia” (heard in medley with “Boogie Woogie Waltz”), there’s a sleight-of-hand bebop vibe to this music. Pastorius skating and gliding with his four-to-the-floor swing.

Two of the discs come from the group’s 1978 tour as a quartet, the other two from tours in 1980 and ’81, including their entire 1980 album Night Passage. Most of the cuts are from dates in Japan, but others include concerts in London and some U.S. cities.

“Fast City” on the third disc, Duke Ellington’s “Rockin’ In Rhythm” (also on Disc Three) and “Directions” (which closes this set) are inspired and energizing, the latter given a major facelift from its more rock-oriented roots. Interspersed are dreamier, more melodic tunes like “A Remark You Made,” Pastorius’ “Three Views Of A Secret” and “Brown Street.” These more intimate takes offer the most empathic, insightful quotes, while Carlos Santana, Flea, Sting, Bootsy Collins, Jaco biographer Bill Milkowski and Mike Stern chime in to sing praise on Pastorius. Filmed with a creative mix of animation, photos and video, the feeling is one of celebration despite the honest handling of Pastorius’ tragic demise. Disc Two brings us up to date with a 2015 tribute show at the Hollywood Bowl.

Ordering info: jacothefilm.com

Home movies, interviews and live concert footage illuminate a fascinating life on JACO: The Film (UP 1002; 117:00/100:00 ★★★★★), a new documentary on the legendary bassist produced by Metallica’s Robert Trujillo and Jaco’s eldest son, John Pastorius IV. Directed by Paul Marchand and Stephen Kijak, this two-disc set also includes many outtakes, with even more interviews. Shorter, Erskine and Joni Mitchell offer the most empathic, insightful quotes, while Carlos Santana, Flea, Sting, Bootsy Collins, Jaco biographer Bill Milkowski and Mike Stern chime in to sing praise on Pastorius. Filmed with a creative mix of animation, photos and video, the feeling is one of celebration despite the honest handling of Pastorius’ tragic demise. Disc Two brings us up to date with a 2015 tribute show at the Hollywood Bowl.

Ordering info: legacyrecordings.com

Kim Nalley

Blues People

SELF RELEASE★★★★

With her vaunted 3 1/2–octave vocal range, San Francisco jazz mainstay Kim Nalley is the musical equivalent of the pitcher with a 102-mph fastball. While the baseball flamethrower is usually relegated to the closer’s role, Nalley brings the heat through every moment of her new 14-song workout, Blues People.

The album’s title and concept are inspired by Blues People: Negro Music in White America, a 1963 study of African American culture and its impact on society by Amiri Baraka (writing as LeRoi Jones). Nalley covers the full range of the black experience, from the field worker (“Summertime”) to the high achiever (“Movin’ On Up”), from the profane (Bessie Smith’s “Sugar In My Bowl”) and the Dinah Washington number “Trombone Song”) to the sacred (two versions of the Mahalia Jackson gospel standard “Trouble Of The World”) and a haunting “Amazing Grace”).

Two Nalley originals allow the singer to weigh in on hot-button social issues. The blues-rocker “Big Hooded Black Man” is about racial stereotyping in general and the Trayvon Martin killing specifically, and the contemplative “Ferguson Blues” pays homage to Michael Brown as it asks why no police officers are ever arrested.

Nalley has been performing several of these songs live for years, notably the album closer, Bob Dylan’s “I Shall Be Released.” It’s one of the album’s chief strengths, but it’s also a sad reflection on the state of the music industry that a voice as big and bold as Nalley’s has gone unrecorded for such long stretches.

—Jeff Johnson

Blues People: Summertime; Big Hooded Black Man; Trouble Of The World (Organ Version); Listen Here!; Cold Duck; Compared To What?; Movin’ On Up; Never Make Your Move Too Soon; Sugar In My Bowl; Trombone Song (Big Long Sliding Thing); Ferguson Blues; Trouble Of The World (Organ Version); The Chair Song (If I Can’t Sell It); Sunday Kind Of Love; Amazing Grace; I Shall Be Released. (7:25)

Personnel: Kim Nalley, vocals; Tammy Hall, piano, organ; Greg Skaff, guitar; Michael Zisman, bass; Kent Bryson, drums; Bryan Dyer, background vocals.

Ordering info: kimnalley.com
East West Quintet

Anthem
SELF RELEASE
★ ★ ★ ½

Like their Brooklyn-based brethren Snarky Puppy, the East West Quintet is a clever, highly disciplined instrumental unit (actually a sextet) that marries visceral rock with jazzy improvisation and other disparate elements into an intriguing brew. “Draft,” for instance, opens with a minor key, chamber-like refrain from pianist Mike Cassedy, who is soon joined by trumpeter Phil Rodriguez and saxophonist Dylan Heaney layering close harmonies on top while Jordan Perlson beats a rapid-fire pulse underneath. Midway through, Simon Kafka joins the fray on heavily distorted guitar. You’re already juggling about four or five motifs on the opening track alone. Surprises like that abound on this genre-busting debut.

While keyboardist Cassedy is the principal writer on this project, guitarist Kafka contributes the thoughtful composition “Interstellar,” which has a slight ring of Steve Winwood’s “Can’t Find My Way Home.” Heaney’s lone composition, “Action Figure,” jumps from formidable ZZ Top crunch chords to sheer grindcore maelstrom. Cassedy’s other noteworthy composition, the oddly affecting waltz “White Lodge,” patiently builds to a cinematic crescendo of horns and twangy guitar before closing out the collection with ambient music swirls. —Bill Milkowski

Anthem: Draft; Next; Interstellar;Collider; Action Figure; Experiment No. 3; Something; White Lodge.
(45:30)
Personnel: Dylan Heaney, alto saxophone, tenor saxophone; Phil Rodriguez, trumpet; Simon Kafka, guitar; Mike Cassedy, piano, keyboards; Benjamin Campbell, bass; Jordan Perlson, drums.

Ordering info: eastwestquintet.com

Dave Chamberlain’s Band of Bones

Stomp!
BB PRODUCTIONS
★ ★ ★

As the guitar and saxophone were to the 20th century, the trombone will be to the 21st: the instrument that pushes the music and focuses it in many different ways and genres. Bonerama and Trombone Shorty are establishing it as a rock instrument, and in the world of big band, Dave Chamberlain’s Band of Bones is reasserting its power.

Their new record shows just how versatile the trombone can be. The band is both tight and crisp and almost Basie-esque on the opening cut, “King Porter Stomp,” but they also keep it nimble and light while backing up vocalist Kat Gang on “The Sweetest Sounds.” The arrangements are fine on the most part, with an inventive take on Strayhorn’s “A Flower Is A Lovesome Thing” that adds a new rhythm and subtle Latin feel.

The album’s one flaw is that it sounds too clean. Audiences would welcome more grit. Despite that, Stomp! is a great showcase for an instrument that is poised to have its day in the sun. —David Kunian

Stomp!: King Porter Stomp; Sambatropolis; The Sweetest Sounds; A Flower Is A Lovesome Thing; Flat Black; Band Of Bones; Blues; Chega De Saudade; Delilah; Is You Is Or Is You Ain’t My Baby; Pavane & Stomp; Amazing Grace. (61:47)
Personnel: Dave Chamberlain, trombone, flute, vocals; Hendrik Meurkens, harmonica (2); Kat Gang, vocals (3); Kenney Ascher, piano; Jerry DeVore, bass; Mike Campenni, drums; Chembo Corniel, congas, percussion (2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10); Charley Gordon, Sara Jacovino, Nate Mayland, Matt McDonald, Mark Patterson, Chris Rinaman, trombone; Max Seigel, Dale Turk, bass trombone.

Ordering info: bandofbones.com

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FEBRUARY 2016 DOWNBEAT 85
Main Stem

In the first half of the 20th century, Central Avenue was the vibrant hub of black Los Angeles. Art Tatum, Billie Holiday and Big Joe Turner were just a few of the visitors who spent meaningful time there, as did the Ellington, Basie and Lunceford bands. The street hosted fabulous floorshows at the Club Alabam, gestated Wynonie Harris and Jimmy Witherspoon’s stage skills, united Dexter Gordon and Wardell Gray in musical combat and saw Jack McVea formulate “Open The Door, Richard.” But the scene was all but dead by 1950, when restrictive housing covenants eased and the action drifted west.

Jazz’s critical arm was slow in recognizing the area’s importance to the music. Patricia Willard’s informative liner notes to the Black California LP compilation (Savoy 1980) signified a musical Atlantis ripe for rediscovery. Musician autobiographies by Charles Mingus, Red Callender, Buddy Collette, Roy Porter and Marshall Royal gave first-hand accounts of their times on L.A.’s Main Stem. Bette Yarbrough Cox’s Central Avenue: Its Rise and Fall (BEEM ‘96) most effectively chronicled the early years, and RJ Smith’s The Great Black Way (PublicAffairs ‘06) further fleshed it out with a real-life gallery of the Avenue’s more fascinating characters.

Now we have Peter Vacher’s Swingin’ On Central Avenue: African American Jazz in Los Angeles (Rowman & Littlefield). Vacher is a senior British jazz journalist who has specialized in the music of the era, and he knows that for every Mingus, Nellie Lutcher was not only handmaidens to the giants, but who led their own transcendent careers. Bebop and bop, a dynamic era. Pianists Betty Hall Jones and Chester Lane; drummers Monk Mccoy, Jesse Sailes and Red Minor Robinson; and bassist Billy Hadnot.

Many Central Avenue players were transplants with considerable experience. Hadnot had taken Walter Page’s place in the Benny Moten Orchestra and was in Harlan Leonard’s band. Roberts played in Buck Clayton’s Shanghaidi band and with Fats Waller before Basie called him in ‘42. And Ewing tells of a post-war period when he shared an apartment with Collette where Charlie Parker once visited.

Vacher has also collected a substantial number of rare photographs: a T-Bone Walker jam session, Kid Ory’s band at the Cricket Club, the Les Hite Orchestra in performance, Gerald Wilson at Shepp’s Playhouse and Dizzy Gillespie and Lester Young at Philharmonic Hall. But perhaps the most impressive aspect of this book is how the musicians survived after the ‘40s heyday. Pianist Lane and trombonist Ewing played many years at Disneyland with trumpeter Tedd Buckner. After retirement from Douglas Aircraft, bassist Hadnot retired and chose his jobs, like the World’s Greatest Jazz Band. Red Mack went into real estate.

Vacher has given us a valuable addition to the Central Avenue library, as rich in personal experience as it is broad in range.
David Gilmore
Energies Of Change
EVOLUTIONARY MUSIC 002
★★★★½

David Gilmore, a multifaceted guitarist known for his affiliations with the M-Base Collective, saxophonist Don Byron and percussionist Trilok Gurtu, is a thoughtful composer and ambitious performer. With his fourth release, he adds bandleading instincts to his already impressive list of talents and accomplishments.

He doesn’t skimp on the compositional offerings—seven of the nine numbers are impressive originals. The title track, which opens the album with broad, flowing strokes, sets the stage for pensive alto saxophone and bass clarinet solos by reedist Marcus Strickland and extended explorations by Gilmore and pianist Luis Perdomo.

Two non-originals serve as an illuminating foil to Gilmore’s pieces. “Over Shadow Hill Way,” written by the guitarist’s one-time bandleader, Wayne Shorter, features excursions by Strickland (again on soprano) and Perdomo. “Revelations” provides a reflective setting—Gilmore with acoustic guitar arpeggios and drummer Antonio Sánchez on brushes. It’s a nice outlier in both instrumentation and mood.

—Yoshi Kato

Energies Of Change: Energies Of Changes; Rajas Guna; Dance Of Duality; The Seeker; Sacred Pause; Over Shadow Hill Way; Awakening; Revelations; Trick Of I. (63:12)

Personnel:
David Gilmore, guitars; Marcus Strickland, alto saxophone (1), bass clarinet (1), tenor saxophone (2, 7, 9), soprano saxophone (3–6, 8); Luis Perdomo, piano (1–7, 9); Ben Williams, double bass; Antonio Sánchez, drums; Kofo Wanda, talking drum (3).

Ordering info: cdbaby.com

Romain Collin
Press Enter
ACT 9583
★★½

Jazz continues to be claimed, if only as a reference point, by musicians whose backgrounds and impulses are far from its origins. French pianist and composer Romain Collin has studied at Berklee, graduated from the Monk Institute and toured internationally with Herbie Hancock and Wayne Shorter. Yet on Press Enter he seems more interested in producing slick settings—“sound designs”—for second-rate soundtracks and semi-classical pop albums than in engaging with the spontaneity, invention, improvisation and vocabulary from which jazz grew.

Purveying ersatz minimalism (“99”), vainglorious repetition (“The Line”) and cloying sentimentality (“Holocene”), Collin may be trying to be commercial. I don’t think it works. On “Clockwork,” rippling figures, entry-level chromatic licks and a portentous bass part set up an interesting single-note foray, but the rippling never stops.

A few tracks indicate what Collin could do. On “Webs,” for example, he emerges for an unexpectedly celestial episode starting with a stunning long line, beautiful clusters and chords—which are quickly subverted by the heavy-handed rumblings that end the piece. —Howard Mandel

Press Enter: 99; Clockwork; Raw, Scorched And Untethered; Holocene; The Kids; Webs; San Luis Obispo; Event Horizon; The Line; Dividing Good And Evil Cuts Through The Heart Of Every Human Being; Round About Midnight. (46:12)

Personnel: Romain Collin, piano, sound design, programming; Luques Curtis, bass; Kendrick Scott, drums; Mino Cinelu, percussion (9); Megan Rose, vocals (1, 8); Jean-Michel Pilc, whistles (5); Grey McMurray, guitar (4); Laura Metcalf, cello.

Ordering info: actmusic.com

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I have a great deal of experience with all aspects of jazz recording—as engineer, producer, and lately, as a curator and restorer of rare old recordings from as far back as the 1950s.

I would like to share some sound advice on producing jazz recordings and also discuss how we restore and improve the sound of old analog tapes in preparation for release on Resonance Records.

There are several principles I adhere to when I consider producing a jazz artist for our label. First and foremost is the concept that the final product should be an accurate representation of the “art” of the musician, part of the artist’s legacy, a work to be proud of at any time in the future. It should reflect the state of their musical soul at the time it was recorded.

A good producer emulates the listener who is going to buy the final recording. His job includes knowing which is the best take, checking for technical issues and, most of all, feeling when the recording is “locked in”—when it transports the listener. The producer is also the organizer, a chef who brings together the right ingredients to make the music the best that it can be and get the best possible performances from the artists. This would involve selection of the musicians and the music to be recorded.
The Producer’s Role

Jazz is at its best when all the musicians are musically “talking and listening” to each other in each moment. It’s the producer’s responsibility to help create an environment where such “magic” can happen. To me, this means:

• Not making commercial goals more important than the artistic ones, or trying to “sell” records with choices that compromise the outcome and do not serve the musician.
• Choosing music, whether originals or standards, with the following qualities: melody, harmony and rhythm, so that it becomes a challenge for the musicians on the recording. It is my personal belief that the music is more important than the musician. Take a great artist and give him mediocre music to play, and he will struggle. Take a mediocre musician and give him inspiring music, and he will play at his best (whatever level that may be).
• Not allowing individual solos to last for more than about 2 minutes. We’ve all heard recordings with 5- or 10-minute solos, and we’ve all gone to clubs and heard each tune take 15 minutes because every one of the musicians takes a long, self-indulgent solo. After three or four choruses with only three or four chords in a repeating pattern, the clichés and licks abound as the player literally is struggling to be original. That’s not going to produce the best results in the studio. It also turns off potential new jazz fans.
• Always having arrangements and a concept. No jam sessions, please! It could be as simple as a head chart, or as elaborate as a complete arrangement with individual parts by a real jazz arranger, which allows producer and artist to outline and structure a concept and treatment of each tune rather than throwing it together at the session. Be prepared, and treat the project as a concept. However, once in the studio, flexibility is important to allow changes to occur, since arrangements serve as a framework, not an absolute.
• Choosing musicians who are truly compatible musically and personally. One weak link breaks the chain and brings down the entire recording. Sometimes artists want to use their buddies, or musicians to whom they owe a favor. This is not a good idea unless those people are truly compatible on the same high level with the artist. Where feasible, I surround the artist with virtuoso-quality compatriots who will challenge them, which helps bring out the best.
• Treating everyone with respect. If the producer is unhappy with some aspect, take the particular player aside in private and discuss it in a positive manner. Musicians are artists and sensitive beings. Be kind, mature and helpful. As I say, “Choose love, not fear.”
• Taking time in the studio to assure that each musician can hear himself and the others clearly in the headphone mix. For Resonance Records recording sessions, we use separate multi-channel headphone mixers made by MyMix and very high-quality Sony MDR-7506 professional headphones.
• Always checking the tuning of instruments before each take. The tuning of stringed instruments is especially susceptible to drift. If using a piano, have it tuned before each session. A bad-sounding instrument is counterproductive. Make sure the studio or recording area is at a comfortable temperature and that humidity levels remain as stable as possible.

As a producer, I like to create a theme for the production. It can be anything from a tribute such as John Beasley’s Letter To Herbie, Toninho Horta’s To Jobim With Love, Donald Vega’s With Respect To Monty, Angela Hagenbach’s The Way They Make Me Feel (songs by Michel Legrand, Johnny Mandel and Henry Mancini), Polly Gibbons’ Many Faces Of Love (songs about five stages of love) or Christian Howes’ American Spirit (eclectic mix of Americana music).

This can add appeal for the listener, and the planning and thought it involves helps crystallize the overall project.

Getting a Good Sound

In getting a good recording sound, which is more important: the instrument, the microphone or the performer?

The performer is obviously first, as he or she produces the sound from the instrument. The instrument is second, as a bad one can really ruin the sound. Finally, it’s the mic. Why last? Because of the literally hundreds of different ones available, many will serve equally well, with one huge caveat: How are they positioned?

Proper mic technique is more important than the mic itself. Of course, it’s essential to know when to use a dynamic or a condenser microphone, or what pickup pattern is ideal for recording any given instrument. But choosing a $3,000 mic over a less expensive one is not necessary to achieve optimum results. I have used most of the great so-called “classic” microphones (starting in the mid-1960s), and I can tell you that with advances in technology, there
are mics that cost $250 that sound every bit as good as the far more expensive models. And, classic microphones have to be maintained and heavily restored as the parts age and sound quality degrades.

Here is what I want out of a microphone:

• Low distortion, essentially inaudible.
• As flat a frequency response as possible. Most mics have a rise somewhere in the high end. The precise non-flat portion of the spectrum gives a mic most of its sound character, along with other aspects like the type of sound capture element.
• To me, mic position is more important than any other issue when recording instruments. This is an area where experience is necessary, as it involves understanding the acoustics of the space the instrument is in, the pattern setting of the mic, placement distance and other such mechanical issues.

Sound Restoration

Resonance Records is actively involved in searching for and finding rare, never-before-released recordings of the icons of modern jazz. To date, we have released such important discoveries as In The Beginning and Echoes Of Indiana Avenue, which are the earliest known recordings of Wes Montgomery; John Coltrane Live At Mitten Hall; Live At Art D'Lugoff's Top Of The Gate, a prime 1968 Bill Evans live recording; Pieces Of Jade, rare recordings of Scott LaFarro; and Manhattan Stories, rare live recordings of 1965 concerts by Charles Lloyd. In the next 12 months we will release more rare old recordings by Larry Young, Shirely Horn, Sarah Vaughan, another previously unreleased Bill Evans Trio studio recording form the '60s, and a concert of Stan Getz with João Gilberto. In all cases, these were recorded directly to mono or stereo 1/4-inch tape.

The source recordings are often from live performances and are not studio quality. The tape has aged and may have dropouts, hiss, issues with uneven sound levels and poor balance between instruments, or other technical deficiencies.

In many cases, with the expertise of our engineer, Fran Gala, we can substantially restore or repair these deficiencies, making the end product more listenable. Gala has done a superb job of learning to utilize all the new digital software that has allowed us to clean, improve and even save extremely rare recordings—many of which had never been heard after they were recorded and stored, often under less-than-ideal conditions. In all cases, our philosophy is to proceed with the same attitude as with new recordings: Honor and respect the legacy of the artist, and do not release material that does not represent the artist properly.

There are some very time-consuming methods we use to achieve these goals. Let me elaborate on a few examples.

After we convert the audio to digital format in ProTools, we use these main software packages specifically for sound improvement: Izotope RX Advanced, Izotope Ozone, HOFA IQ-EQ and Melodyne Studio.

Izotope modules are our “Swiss army knife” for restoration, and we use them more than any other program. They offer a huge array of choices to improve sound, and can deal with everything from analog or digital distortion, to removing discreet unwanted sounds in the middle of other wanted sounds, to removal of all hiss from old tapes (improving the signal-to-noise ratio tremendously without reducing high frequencies). It allows us to visualize the sound so that the engineer can “paint” out sections in the same area and leave the surrounding areas intact, or replace the removed portion with a segment from an adjacent area.

An interesting example of Izotope RX use was when we encountered a stereo track from a studio recording made in the 1950s that contained, at two points in one song, a burst of about 10–15 seconds of the noise of a drill, such as would be used on a wall in a room adjacent to the studio. Thanks again to audio “superman” Gala’s expertise and experience, this annoying noise was completely removed without negatively impacting the musical sounds that occurred in the same period of time. It was truly as if the drill had never existed.

HOFA EQ is a special equalizer that also includes a spectrum analyzer to visualize the entire sound spectrum and allows changing settings to correct or emphasize any portion of the audible spectrum. It even allows a setting that is able to limit the volume of a precise portion of sound when it reaches a certain volume. One could boost the volume of a particular frequency only if it reached a certain level, and not below that level, or stop equalizing the sound if it went above a certain level. Most old tapes or audio cassettes have lost high-frequency response from aging. The equalizer is an essential tool in sound restoration when used properly.

Melodyne Studio is a fascinating piece of software. It was originally developed to correct the tuning of a single sound, such as a vocal. It visualizes the sound as discreet “blobs” that can be moved up or down to vary the pitch, stretched or squeezed to change duration; even the vibrato portion of the note may be changed. Several years ago, the software was improved to visualize the sounds in a polyphonic view, frozen as a series of notes that extend from the bottom low-frequency area to the top high-frequency area. Now we can change a single portion of a harmonic sound, such as one note in a piano chord, without affecting the others. Any sound may be removed, tuned, stretched or have its volume changed.

We realized that this new ability allowed us to find and manipulate any portion of the sound in a given instant of time. So, let’s say that there was a quartet playing, and the trumpet solo was not loud enough. It is possible to find those notes and selectively make them louder by increasing the size of the notes, without changing any other sounds. Even the harmonic portions of a sound appear as separate tones that also may be changed, to preserve the overall sound character of the entire note being played. This is very sophisticated, time-consuming work, but the results can be spectacular.

These software programs are very powerful and can also be misused. It takes time, trial-and-error and patience to get the most out of them. But, in our case, Gala has spent years with them and is now very fluent in their use.

I hope that what I have imparted in this article will be useful to those who would like to produce live jazz, or improve the quality of older tapes.
Making a Mix Template Keeps You Focused on Creativity in the Studio

In the record-making world, nothing has a bigger effect on how a song will sound than the mix. And in the mix, you have hundreds of choices to make. What kind of reverb to use and how much? How many of the recorded mics should I use on the kit? What’s the best combination of those mics? Where should I pan the guitars? Is the voice too loud? Is the solo too quiet? Am I getting all the bass notes?

It’s all this that makes mixing my favorite thing to do. The balance of instruments and the way they are treated can take the recording in as many directions as you can imagine.

I think of mixing as an artistic job, not a technical one. When it comes time to mix, you want to jump right in and be creative and free from the technical world. In order to do that, you have to be organized. Get the technical side out of the way so you don’t constantly find yourself stopping to add buses, sends, auxes and effects, and trying to remember what bus is for the drum reverb and what bus is for the vocal delay. And what was that great reverb setting I used last month?

If you find yourself in these types of situations, you should think about making a mix template. It will keep your focus on the song and not the building of your mix session. Over the years I have built, rebuilt and refined my template. It’s the starting point for every session I do, and it’s an essential part of my mix setup.

A mix template is the foundation of your mix session. In my template, I have effect returns routed and ready to go with reverb delays, chorus, etc. Some are mono, some are
stereo. I have auxes set up for sub-grouping instruments. Again, already routed, and in some cases with plug-ins set.

Next, I have my master section, with master faders loaded with my go-to plug-ins and some additional options standing by. All of that is sent to a stereo track, where I print the mix back into the session. Finally, I have several VCA faders set up and labeled.

This template is how I start every mix. It’s how I get to the creative part faster. I should note that not everything in my template always gets used. But in my mind, it is better to have it ready than to stop and add more buses, auxes and effects.

Making a template is simple. It’s taking what you already do and organizing it into a blank, clean session. You can get a head start by basing your template on a past mix. Just remember to delete the old automation. Your template should be specific to your tastes and workflow. Take what I have as a suggestion to start or modify your own.

To start, I want to organize and name all the buses in the I/O setup. Regardless of which DAW (Pro Tools, Digital Performer, etc.) you’re running, the I/O can be the messiest part of mixing “in the box” (entirely within a computer). Keeping it organized will save you from scrolling through a mess of unlabeled buses when assigning sends and routing channels.

In my setup, I have eight mono and four stereo buses for reverb (simply named RVB1, RVB2, etc.) and eight mono and four stereo buses for delay (DLY1, DLY2, etc.). Not all mono buses are for mono effect returns (auxes). I’ll use six as mono-to-stereo plug-ins on their respective aux. I also have buses dedicated for chorus, distortion (mono and stereo), sub and micro shift. In addition, I add generic FX auxes (named FX1, FX2, etc.) to customize based on the current mix.

A big part of my workflow is mixing through sub groups, so I add several stereo buses (named DRUMS AUX, BASS AUX, etc.). All my audio will be routed to these sub groups. All the sub groups are then sent to the master section (named 2MIX) and finally to a print bus, where I record the mix to a stereo track. While in the I/O setup, I also add additional generic buses, just in case. As you can see, I like having a lot of buses. Anything to avoid the I/O setup during the mix.

After all the buses are named, the next step is to create the aux returns for the effects, sub groups, master section and print track, and also the master fader, VCAs and stereo audio track for printing the mix.

Name everything, route the ins and outs, and solo-isolate everything. I also color-code each channel by type. It makes finding things easier, especially in large sessions. When I have parallel auxes, like the DRUMS and 2MIX auxes, I make a group for each.

Next, you want to add your plug-ins. This is completely based on personal preferences. Going back to old mixes to see what you use most is a great way to do this. For instance, if you always have a vocal sub group with a certain setting, incorporate it into your template. I like having the option to try several things quickly, so I have a bunch of reverbs—short and long, plates, hails and rooms. I do the same with the delay returns. Not every effect is always used, but I still have them in my template. It’s all about having the variety to quickly try things out and keep the mix going.

The majority of the sub groups start with no processing, and most of them are treated on a per-song basis. However, with the DRUMS AUX, I usually use some kind of parallel processing. I have a fader dedicated for each treatment.

The sub groups are a great way to treat a change to say, the horn mix—like if you want to clean up an overall issue or get a certain type of sound on the instruments as a section. For instance, I like to add a touch of compression to the horn mix to help it gel together. Or maybe I have a combination of bass mics and DI and just want it all to sound a bit brighter (I will do that on the BASS AUX group).

Finally, it’s on to the master section, where I go with the philosophy, “a lot of a little.” I have three 2MIX auxes (clean, compressed, distort), and they blend together to feed the master fader. The master fader has its processing in from the start. It is routed to the stereo mix track. That means I am listening through the track on input. The advantage is it allows me to A-B the old and new mixes, or reference an existing mix to the current one. It’s something I find very useful.

A template is also useful in tracking sessions. Generally, at a recording date, the final mix won’t be first in your mind. You are concerned with how the drums sound, the leakage in the piano, why the guitar amp is still buzzing, etc. But all the decisions you make during the recording will ultimately affect the mix, good or bad. (“Fix it in the mix,” anyone?)

Your monitor and reference mixes will have a big influence on how the band thinks they are playing, and which take is best. And if the singer isn’t happy with their sound, you’re in for a long night.

The final mix will be different, but a good reference mix is essential as you work on the project. It can establish sounds that will carry through to the end. I have worked sessions where the producer has asked to put the drums in a specific space to influence how the drummer plays. A ready-to-go setup that you can quickly import to any session is an invaluable tool to have when time is tight.


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Pete Karam is a multiple Grammy Award-winning audio engineer who has worked in and out of recording studios for more than 20 years. He has engineered a wide variety of projects, from albums with Pat Metheny, Ray Charles, John Mayer, Antonio Sánchez, Eliane Elias, Gary Burton and Eric Clapton to movies such as Team America, Hairspray, Shrek and The Bucket List. Karam has also worked in TV/video/web post-production for brands such as Nike, Rolex, Microsoft, Samsung, Listerine, Schick, Xarelto, Abilify, Macy’s and T. Rowe Price. He has recorded and mixed numerous Broadway cast albums, including Hairspray, Jersey Boys, Leap of Faith, Radio City Christmas Spectacular and Martin Short: Fame Becomes Me. Karam has recorded dialogue for animated movies including the Shrek series, Madagascar, Piglet’s Big Movie, The Emperor’s New Groove and Yes, Virginia. Visit him online at petekaram.com.
In 1994, the Jamaican ska group The Skatalites brought in a number of guest artists for its 30th anniversary album Hi-Bop Ska (Shanachie). One was jazz tenor saxophonist David Murray, who played on his own composition “Flowers For Albert.” Murray had recorded this in 1974 on his album of the same name, but originally it was done more like an avant-garde bossa nova. For this recording, it was played as a Jamaican ska.

As Murray plays through the chord sequence (I–IV–V in A♭, with the ♭VII and ♭VI added in) four times, he uses a number of musical elements to build his solo. First, let’s consider his note choices. For the first chorus, Murray uses almost no chromatic tones, even when the non-diatonic chord show up. He does play the C♭ in bar 7, which is the fifth of the F♭ chord, but he uses it as part of an F blues lick (F minor being the relative of A♭ major), so it doesn’t sound divorced from the key.

In the next chorus, however, Murray leaves the key of A♭ major and plays more notes relating to E (enharmonic F♭) when that chord occurs in bar 15. At the end of this chorus, he also gives us a lydian flavor with the D natural on the A♭ chord in bar 17, which sets up the D naturals that happen on the E♭ chord in measure 27. This note would have sounded very dissonant against the D♭ chord, but on these harmonies it sounds sweet. He also brings in the flat-7 of A♭ on the G♭ chord in measures 22 and 30, the final
two choruses, where it is the root note; during the first two choruses he stayed within the A♭ major scale for this harmony. So, as the solo goes on, he introduces more chromatics.

Murray also puts his extended range to work in helping to move this solo along. Though the first eight bars encompass a span of two octaves, in the next eight he adds another fifth to the top end of that, and for the next eight he takes it up an additional octave-and-a-half and spends much of this chorus up here. For the last eight, Murray brings it down from the stratosphere to wrap things up.

Rhythmic density is a third technique that creates push-and-pull within this improvisation. Murray uses it in conjunction with his range, playing the effects of one off the other. The first chorus is predominantly eighth notes, and in the second chorus Murray plays long strings of 16ths. For the third round, Murray reduces speed and plays notes of longer duration. Because he has jumped up into the upper range of the horn, holding these high notes creates more drama. For the final chorus, as he comes back down in range he also returns to playing dense strings of 16ths.

Another interesting aspect of Murray’s solo is his use of anticipation. In the ska rhythm, chords are played on the offbeats by the guitar and piano. This means that the chord for each bar is played on the “and” of 4. Given this, it’s surprising how often Murray anticipates the 1, playing on the “and” of 4 and holding into the next bar, as is common in other styles (anticipating measures 7, 19, 22 and 23), since this puts the chord tone of the upcoming chord on the previous harmony. One reason this doesn’t sound jarring is that these anticipations are still diatonic to the key, and so are extensions of the chords. For example, the A♭ anticipating measure 7, which is the third of the F♭ coming up, is the ninth of the G♭ that it is played on, so it’s not that “out” of a note.

In fact, Murray’s variation of accentuating both chord tones and extensions adds a lot of color to this solo. He will often stress chord tones—such as in bar 21, where he leans on the root of the E♭ (which, incidentally, was played as the ninth of the D♭ in the previous bar, anticipating this chord change)—but will also lean on tones more divorced from the underlying harmony. At the very start of his solo, Murray plays the G natural on the A♭ chord. It’s the major seventh, but it’s played against the rhythm section stating just the triad. We also get ninths, such as the E♭ he lands on squarely on the D♭ chord in the middle of bar 8. We even get an 11th at the beginning of measure 19, which is the root of the key, and so is still an “in” note even though it’s a non-chord tone.

Although Murray’s solo here is mostly diatonic, he creates tension-and-release by varying how closely related to the chord his melody notes are. And to give it a sense of completeness, he brings the improvisation to a close on the root of both the chord and key on the downbeat of the final measure, which is actually the beginning of the first chorus for the next soloist.

Jimi Durso is a guitarist and bassist based in the New York area. Visit him online at jimidurso.com.
La Bella Olinto

Spot-on Vintage P-Bass Tone

La Bella’s new Olinto Bass is not just your typical P-Bass clone. Using a 1963 P-Bass as its template, every Olinto bass is made to order and handcrafted by master luthier Mas Hino. The body is hand-carved. The flatsawn maple neck is hand-carved. The pickups and strings are hand-wound. This is no cookie-cutter instrument.

When I removed it from its case, I had in front of me a natural wood beauty, with golden hardware and strings (yes, golden strings) and a deep gold-anodized pickguard. I was a bit surprised to discover my tester to be fretless, but that just added to the intrigue and beauty of the instrument.

This customized Olinto featured a hand-selected natural walnut body and a Madagascar rosewood fingerboard. The fingerboard came from stock normally reserved for classical guitars, and its veins were multi-colored and lovely running down the fingerboard—truly an artisanal piece. The neck came from a hand-selected piece of flatsawn maple. That’s how it was done back in ’63, and flatsawn necks seem to have more warmth than their more stable and brighter quartersawn counterparts, according to La Bella. It’s a cliché to say that a bass plays like butter, but believe me, this Olinto is smooth, comfortable and fast.

Let’s talk strings. The beauties that came on the Olinto are La Bella 760Gs, wound from golden alloy and covered with white (clear) nylon. The strings were nicely pliable and easy to play, which is saying something when you are dealing with a heavy-gauge string (.060–.115, in fact). These strings had a wonderful warmth, as well as the desired “mwah” you expect from a fretless. They were a bit light on output, but that’s nothing a nice off-board preamp or an amp with plenty of headroom can’t cure.

Also included with the bass was an extra set of strings, La Bella’s 1954 Original Vintage Deep Talkin’ Bass Flats. When these were installed, the Olinto turned into a booming funk machine with hotter output and incredibly punchy attack and response. There was that ’63 P-Bass tone—wow. This set was another heavy gauge (.052–.110), but, again, completely playable. That is a testament to both the bass and the strings. Both flavors were fantastic, but very different—and simple to attain with a change of strings.

Regarding the pickup, I was amazed to learn about the process La Bella and Mas Hino go through to recreate the classic ’63 split-coil pickup. Every one is handwound by Mas on his Singer sewing machine, using the same slow, scatter-wound technique used in the ’60s.

While there are a lot of wonderful P replicas out on the market, La Bella’s Olinto really makes a statement.

—Jon Paul

Ordering info: labella.com

Universal Audio Apollo 8p

Track Larger Projects Through Classic Preamp Emulations

The Apollo 8p from Universal Audio is an upgrade to the company’s Apollo 8. It’s a professional-grade A/D and D/A conversion unit with onboard processing that runs Universal Audio plugins in order to take some of the processing load off of your computer’s CPU.

The Apollo line focuses on providing processing power and I/O (preamps and such) in a single unit. The Apollo 8p sports the most current UAD-2 DSP Quad core processing engine and eight preamps (the Apollo 8 had four). But these are not normal preamps—they are made specifically for tracking preamp emulations from Neve, API and Universal Audio.

The Apollo 8p has redesigned A/D and D/A conversion, giving the unit an increased dynamic range as well as lower Total Harmonic Distortion. Upgrades have been made to the front panel, with new features such as alt speakers, dim, mono functions and input and output monitoring capability.

All Apollo units come with the Console software, a virtual mixer that is used for tracking sessions and sits between your hardware and your DAW. Put your favorite tape emulation, tube preamps and EQ plug-ins on a channel. Then, route your reverb to the monitor sends, and save all your settings and routing configurations for later use. The Console software is a handy piece of software that should save you time in the long run.

I currently have an Apollo Duo and was sent two Apollo 8p models to test-drive. For the first time, I was able to try my hand at linking multi-

—Matt Kern

Ordering info: uaudio.com
Samson SR450/SR550 Headphones

Accurate, Detailed Reproduction

Samson has been providing audio solutions for more than 25 years, offering innovation and quality at competitive prices. Recently, the company has been in the process of reworking its headphone line, and the new SR450 and SR550 models are the beginning of this effort. Considering their extremely attractive price tags, these headphones deliver impressively accurate and detailed reproduction in a durable and comfortable package.

In moving forward with its headphone line, Samson set some specific goals. According to Sean Meagher, director of marketing, “We want to be taken seriously as a headphone brand.” Samson strives for a flat reference sound on all its headphone models.

The SR450 and SR550, which list at $29.99 and $39.99, respectively, share the same specifications and utilize the same internal components. The main difference is that the 450s are an on-ear design, while the 550s provide an over-the-ear fit. They are both constructed from lightweight, durable, flexible plastic that conforms to the shape of your head for comfortable extended use. On the inside are 40mm drivers with rare earth magnets that produce a full-range 20Hz–20kHz frequency response.

Both models fit nicely and are reasonably comfortable, with leather cushioned ear pads. Although I personally prefer the 550, the choice would certainly be up to the individual user. Over-the-ear phones also offer superior isolation from outside noise as compared to on-ear models.

Both the 450 and 550 performed surprisingly well for such low-priced headphones. The tonal reproduction is extremely flat, without the bass accentuation and treble harshness that are common on many budget-priced headphones. Subtle details come through nicely, and they can be worn for extended periods without experiencing ear fatigue. Even though they share identical specs, I found that the SR450 and SR550 actually sound different, with the 450s producing slightly more bass response. This is due to the variance in the cup size and placement on the ear.

Samson markets the SR450 and SR550 as entry-level phones for studio and mobile use. At these prices, you would be hard pressed to find a better option.

—Keith Baumann

Ordering info: samsontech.com

Zoom UAC-2 USB 3.0 Audio Converter

Big Studio Sound, Small Box

Zoom’s UAC-2 Audio Converter is a portable, high-resolution two-channel interface that features top-shelf components and USB 3.0 speed. The UAC-2 is part of the company’s second generation of recording interfaces, following the TAC line—one of the industry’s first interfaces to feature Thunderbolt connectivity.

USB 3.0 capability is at the heart of the UAC-2, providing the ability to run at resolutions up to 24-bit/192kHz with almost no discernible latency. USB 3.0 is 10 times faster than USB 2.0 and runs six times faster than FireWire. In addition, it allows the UAC-2 to operate on bus power alone, with no need for external power. The UAC-2 uses high-quality Burr Brown PCM 4202 analog-to-digital converters and AKM AK4396 digital-to-analog converters along with 4x upsampling to assure clean, noise-free audio.

The UAC-2 lives up to its plug-and-play promise. Connect the device via the included USB cable to your USB 3.0-equipped computer, install the drivers and you are ready to record. The UAC-2 is also compatible with older USB 2.0 devices. The interface will operate with your favorite DAW software, and it comes bundled with a copy of Cubase LE8.

According to Zoom Vice President of Brand Engagement Micah Eberman, simplicity, versatility and speed/low latency were key considerations when designing the UAC-2. Its front panel is straightforward, with two combo XLR/TRS inputs. There is also a Hi-Z switch for connecting instrument-level devices, and even a MIDI in and out port. On the output side, there is a volume control for the monitor outs and a headphone jack with its own volume, as well. The ability to monitor the audio directly from the interface offers latency-free listening, which is absolutely critical when recording. The UAC-2 can also be connected to an iPod utilizing an adapter cable and external power supply.

I found the quality of the recorded audio to be extremely good on the UAC-2 and was impressed with its accuracy and ease of use. Available for a street price of $249, the UAC-2 is a solid all-in-one solution for home recording and mobile applications.

—Keith Baumann

Ordering info: zoom.na.com
1. **USB Mic**
Audio-Technica has released the AT2020USBi cardioid condenser USB microphone featuring iOS compatibility. Modeled after the AT2020, this digital-output mic features an A/D converter to deliver high-resolution articulation and intelligibility that’s suitable for home studio recording, field recording, podcasting and voiceover use. More info: audiotechnica.com

2. **Fully Loaded Interface**
Steinberg’s UR242 audio interface features DSP power, class-compliant support for iPad, MIDI input/output, studio-grade converters and discrete Class A analog D-PRE microphone preamplifiers. The unit comes with a free Cubase AI download, providing a comprehensive set of tools for recording, mixing and editing audio. More info: steinberg.net

3. **Dynamic Phrase Synth**
The kaossilator 2S from Korg has been redesigned to feature unlimited undo/redo functionality and the ability to export multi-track audio data for immediate use within Ableton Live for a seamless production interrelationship. The palm-sized synthesizer/loop recorder, which features a touchpad interface, makes it possible for serendipitous phrases and sudden ideas to be easily incorporated into song production. More info: korgusa.com

4. **Mixer-Controller**
Akai Professional’s MIDImix is a compact, high-performance mixer that also has the ability to control a user’s DAW. The MIDImix includes eight individual line faders and a master fader, 24 control knobs arranged three per channel, and one-to-one mapping with Ableton Live. More info: akaipro.com

5. **Smart Monitoring**
Genelec’s 1234 Smart Active Monitoring System is designed to achieve accurate and powerful sound reproduction in demanding recording and mixing environments. It has a system frequency response from 29Hz to 21kHz and is capable of delivering 125dB SPL at 1 meter through a combination of efficient Class D amplifiers. The 1234 SAM is supplied with a RAM XL remote amplifier module. More info: genelecusa.com

6. **Suite Speakers**
IMS Technologies’ Christopher Speakers are three-way system mastering speakers featuring a transmission-line design. They use extra-large magnets and large voice coils for accurate audio reproduction. More info: imstechnologies.net
WE HIT IT

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TIMES BEFORE YOU HIT IT ONCE

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Hand Hammering is more than just history – it’s our DNA. That’s why we Hand Hammer a pair of HH hats over 2,000 times – and a 24” HH Ride over 4,000 times. It adds more complexity and tone, delivering unmatched sonic texture across the entire line of newly remastered HH cymbals.
LACM Offers Large Scope, Small Classes

SIZE IS ONE OF THE MANY FACTORS THAT prospective students consider in their search for a post-secondary music school. For those who fear getting lost in a large, impersonal institution, Dave Pozzi, the dean of faculty and students at the Los Angeles College of Music (LACM), believes his school in Pasadena, California, has no equal.

“In some classes, teachers outnumber the students,” Pozzi said, citing a horn band course with seven instructors and three students. “Our average student/teacher ratio is three to one.”

Housed in two buildings near the Foothills Freeway in historic Old Pasadena, LACM provides students close proximity to Los Angeles’ sprawling music community, with its myriad opportunities, in a small-scale setting.

“Because of that smaller student body, the learning environment at LACM is an ideal space for students to connect with and be known by their teachers,” added Jerry Watts, who chairs the bass department.

Founded in 1996 as the Los Angeles Music Academy, LACM has 160 students enrolled in four programs: bachelor of music, bachelor of arts, associate of arts and a one-year diploma program. The LACM Online program offers guitar and drum certificate courses, and the school also runs summer and weekend programs with specific concentrations.

Approaching its 20th anniversary, the school has recently undergone widespread expansion, adding concentrations in brass/windwinds, songwriting and the business of music to existing majors in bass, guitar, drums, vocals, music production and recording, and composition for visual media. Significant new hires include Grammy winner David Joyce as vocal department chair, former ASCAP executive Ron Sobel as music business advising chair and longtime Norah Jones collaborator Adam Levy as head of the guitar department.

After living and teaching in New York City for a decade, Levy said one of the factors that attracted him to LACM was the way the school integrates individual instrumentation study. “There is lots of cross-pollination in the classes,” Levy wrote in an email. “That gives all students a chance to appreciate the perspective of other instrumentation and vocalists, and to make music in the types of situations they’re likely to encounter later as working professionals.”

Since joining the school last fall, Levy has staged master classes with jazz guitarists Anthony Wilson, Doug Wamble and Jeff Parker, and exposed students to a range of other players, including Maroon 5’s James Valentine.

For Joyce, who has worked as a studio singer and producer with musicians like Natalie Cole, David Byrne and Burt Bacharach, the attraction to LACM was the opportunity to focus on artistry.

“My first take when this offer came up was, ‘I don’t want to just turn out new candidates for The X Factor,’” Joyce said. “I want to help turn out artists with different areas of expertise.”

Another goal of his is to expand the jazz focus at the institution. “I knew that jazz was already a big part of LACM, largely because of Tierney Sutton’s position on the faculty,” said Joyce, “but I want to go beyond that to bring in jazz ensemble classes and set really high standards in terms of artistic integrity. I look for singers who are really open to learning and motivated to bring artistry to everything they do.”

—James Hale
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- Steve Clarke
Pictured with his Pro One Soprano SS6200VLQ
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FEBRUARY 2016 DOWNBEAT 105
**Terri Lyne Carrington**

Drummer, composer, producer and Grammy winner Terri Lyne Carrington bedrocks her forward-looking musical output with an exhaustive knowledge of the roots and branches of jazz, world music and technology. She plays an array of instruments on her new CD, *The Mosaic Project: Love And Soul* (Concord). This is her first Blindfold Test.

### Ali Jackson

"Ali Got Rhythm* (*Amalgamations, SunnySide, 2013) Jackson, drums; Aaron Goldberg, piano; Carlos Henriquez, bass.

It’s swinging hard. Something in the ride cymbal pattern reminds me of Ali Jackson. I love his forward motion on the beat. It doesn’t feel rushed, but it’s real edgy. I tend to play more behind the beat than that, but I appreciate when somebody does it well. Usually I’d rather listen to something that was done when the style was fresh, cutting-edge, pushing a boundary, but musicians who preserve a style from another time period are playing an important role. 3½ stars overall; 4½ for Ali, because I could pick up his ride cymbal.

### Kendrick Scott

"Never Catch Me* (*We Are The Drum, Blue Note, 2015) Scott, drums; John Ellis, tenor saxophone, bass clarinet; Mike Moreno, guitar; Taylor Eigsti, Fender Rhodes; Joe Sanders, bass.

The toms and snare sound like Kendrick Scott, but the bass drum sounds heavier than Kendrick’s. Some things remind me of Eric Harland, and there’s a beat I’ve heard Jamire Williams play—there’s a school of drumming that’s pulled from the same sources. I enjoyed the counterpoint between the two melodies. I like the piano sound. The drums are featured, but aren’t overwhelming. It’s nice to hear something in 4. So much music now is in odd time signatures, which I like playing, too—but you have to balance it. I would buy this track for sure. 4 stars. [after] Kendrick’s playing has grown. His articulation, ideas, everything feels more intentional.

### Jeff “Tain” Watts

"Brilliant Corners* (*Blu, Vol. 1, Dark Key, 2015) Watts, drums; Troy Roberts, tenor saxophone; David Budway, piano; Neal Caine, bass.

Jeff Watts. From the first beat. Jeff has a distinctive way he plays that swing-funk thing. His triplet is very distinct. With the metric modulations, the tune sounds like either something by [Thelonious] Monk that he arranged or wrote in Monk’s style as a tribute. I’m not crazy about the sound of the recording, though it has a certain rawness I like, with everyone playing in a room. At one point, he started playing a hi-hat, and it was overwhelming. I don’t know who the tenor player is, but he sounded great. The piano solo was great. 4 stars. The playing is strong enough that I can get past the sound.

### Antonio Sanchez

"Fall* (*Three Times Three, CamJazz, 2014) Sanchez, drums; John Scofield, guitar; Christian McBride, bass.

That’s Antonio. That little sound, the bell. [bass solo] During the ostinato, I couldn’t tell it was Christian, but the solo tells me. It sounds amazing. I’m used to hearing Sco play more lines; this is a pastoral sound. Antonio is playing very cinematically and texturally. I love the sound of the recording and his drums—full and powerful, so balanced. 5 stars. The song itself sucks you in: it isn’t over-arranged, and it’s the right combination of players. Antonio masterfully took up the right amount of space without overplaying. What he played was tasty, but also meaningful.

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.
ADAM LARSON

Saxophonist, Composer, Bandleader

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