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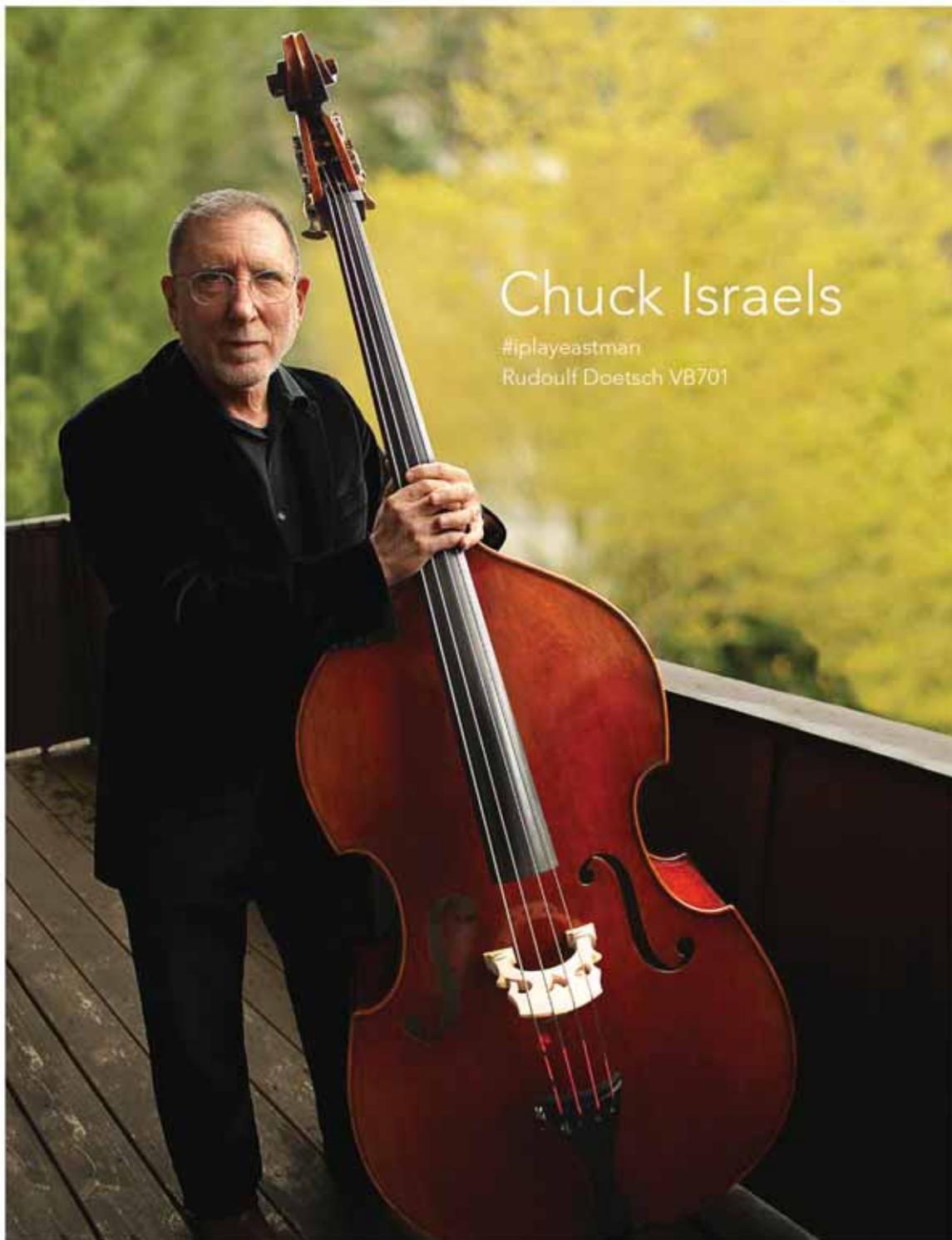
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SEPTEMBER 2016

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Get Up & Dance

BY PHILLIP LUTZ

With his latest album release, Kenny Garrett has turned the notion of tribute on its head. Rather than dedicating songs to musicians, the 55-year-old globetrotting saxophonist tips his hat to the fans, proffering an explicit invitation for them to do their dance.



Pedrito Martinez (second from left) and fellow musicians gather in the control room while recording his album *Habana Dreams*.

DANIELLE MOIR

Cover photo of Kenny Garrett by Jimmy Katz

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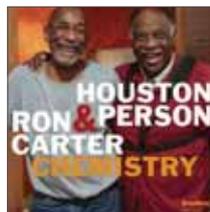
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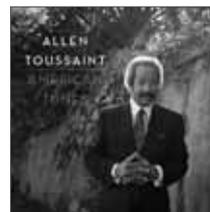
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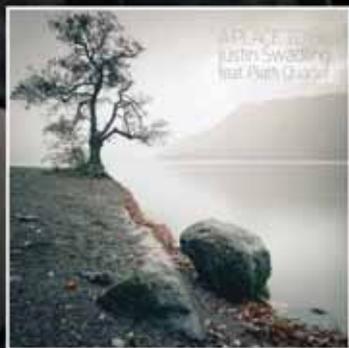
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First Take > BY FRANK ALKYER



©BENOIT ROUSSEAU/FESTIVAL INTERNATIONAL DE JAZZ DE MONTREAL
 José James (left), Ben Williams and Takuya Kuroda perform at Gesù in Montreal on July 8.

A Prayer for Peace

DOWNBEAT HAS ALWAYS BEEN A PLACE WHERE THE HISTORY OF our times is told through the eyes of musicians. World wars, the struggle for equality, the rise and fall of governments and tyranny have all been documented in some way in this magazine—through the words and music of improvising artists. And it's happening again.

As the final weekend of Festival International de Jazz de Montreal unfolded, the American musicians traveling north of the border were in deep thought about the police shootings of Alton Sterling in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and Philando Castile in Minneapolis, Minnesota, as well as the five police officers shot by a sniper in Dallas.

It made for some somber, reflective moments in Montreal, with many musicians dedicating sets to the fallen as well as making a call for peace. Among the most poignant was singer José James, a son of Minneapolis, who opened his concert at Gesù on July 8 with thoughts on it all.

James told the audience that the tragic events and continuing unrest happening back home would add new meaning to the program he would perform that night—a tribute to the great trumpeter/singer Chet Baker.

"I was asked to do this project, specifically by the festival, to honor Chet Baker . . . [Baker] loved black culture, loved black music. [He was an artist] who largely worked and played and performed within a largely white West Coast jazz culture in the '50s. . . So, I thought it would be interesting to look at his music from the perspective of my community and my culture. I mean, you can see my band looks a little bit different."

James chuckled and gestured toward his bandmates: the Japanese artists Takuya Kuroda on trumpet and Takeshi Ohbayashi on keyboards, along with African-American artists Nick Smith on drums and Ben Williams on bass.

"Jazz has been one of America's only saving graces. It's been one of the only spaces where black people and white people and Latinos and everybody could come together. In New York, in Cafe Society, where Billie Holiday sang 'Strange Fruit' in the first integrated club in New York City. Jazz made that possible. Jazz made integrated bands possible . . .

"So, I want to dedicate this music not only to the memories of the recent fallen, but also, most importantly, to the children in those families, because the only enemy that we have—that we *all* have—is hate. And jazz is against hate. And that's why we're here tonight."

James and his band then delivered one of the festival's most memorable concerts. The music that evening was as compelling as his words—shot right from the collective heart of those five jazz musicians into the collective heart of their audience. Peace.

DB



Gerald Albright at the 2016 Légère NAMM Jazz Jam

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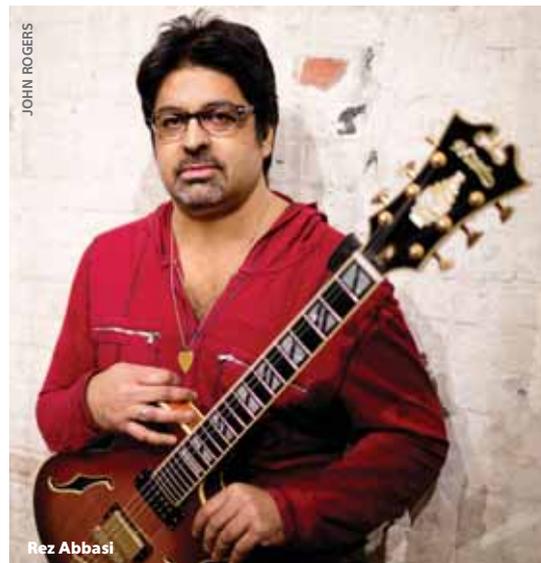
Abbasi's Not Shy

I want to thank DownBeat for giving my album *Behind The Vibration* the "Hot Box" treatment in the August issue. However, I was a bit perplexed by the commentary from the reviewers.

I never expected these folks to love anything outside of their wheelhouse, but I didn't expect simplistic, silly phrases to justify their critiques: "existential music that's shy about identity," "overdriven fusion power," "gonzo flash" and "feels like an exercise." These are weak descriptions that say more about a limited mindset than about the music.

It begs the question: Why is there such a wide disconnect between many critics and many jazz fans? Thankfully, we still have thoughtful critics who are open-minded enough to hear the vision in front of them rather than scoffing at virtuosity, experimental textures or rock energy.

I invite anyone who is interested to hear the entire album for free at the website <https://cuneiformrecords.bandcamp.com/album/behind-the-vibration> and judge for themselves



JOHN ROGERS

Rez Abbasi

at no risk. This seems to be the only useful way to overturn weak and one-sided criticism.

REZ ABBASI
HARLEM, NEW YORK

Member of the Club

When the pianist Jon Mayer received only a 2½ star review for his album *Nightscape* from DownBeat critic Bob Doerschuk, I told Jon that he was in good company. I call it "Bob's 2½ Star Club."

Mr. Doerschuk has assigned an even lower rating, 2 stars, to albums by great pianists such as Cedar Walton (*The Bouncer*), Mike Longo (*Sting Like A Bee*) and Freddie Redd (*Music For You*).

In the Chords & Discords section of your August issue, Luis Perdomo complained about this problem, and I noticed that in the Reviews section of that same issue, Mr. Doerschuk gave only 2½ stars to an album by Cyrus Chestnut (*Natural Essence*).

In the more than 100 sessions that I produced in 37 years (1981 to 2008), there has never been a performance (a final take) where the musician or I considered it only fair or just good.

It is hard enough to sell recorded music in today's market without Mr. Doerschuk's one-sided, negative opinions. It is an insult to these truly great pianists.

MARK FELDMAN, RESERVOIR MUSIC
KINGSTON, NEW YORK

American Icon

It is undeniable that the celebration of International Jazz Day at the White House on April 29 was a huge hit. But what a pity that after playing music by John Lennon, Buddy

Guy, Aretha Franklin, Sting, Prince and other pop composers, nobody even mentioned the name Edward Kennedy "Duke" Ellington, who is arguably, along with Louis Armstrong, the most important figure in jazz history.

Ellington was born on that same day, April 29, exactly 117 years ago in that same city: Washington, D.C. What an oversight!!!

PAQUITO D'RIVERA
PAQUITODRIVERA.COM

Remembering Pike

I have not seen an obituary in DownBeat for vibraphonist Dave Pike, who passed Oct. 3.

As an artist with more than 20 leader albums—and a collaborator who recorded with Herbie Mann, Barry Harris, Bill Evans, Lee Konitz, Eddie Daniels and Don Friedman (just to mention a few)—Pike was one of the most important links in the chain of vibists. He should not be overlooked.

LENNIE CUJE
ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA

Remembering Friedman

Master pianist Don Friedman died on June 30, and DownBeat did not post an obituary on its website. Shame on you.

HÉLIO HELMAN
EDITOR@PLASTICOSEMREVISTA.COM.BR

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Beat

Vázquez Keeps on Learning

To celebrate his 40th anniversary in the music business, trombonist Angel “Papo” Vázquez hosted a celebratory concert on April 30 in the Bronx, where he initially earned recognition in the exploding Latin jazz, salsa and Afro-Caribbean music scenes of the 1970s. As a teenager, Vázquez played in a band led by famed Cuban trumpeter Alfredo “Chocolate” Arementeros before working with percussionist Manny Oquendo and Jerry and Andy González in Conjunto Libre and then helping to found the acclaimed Fort Apache Band with the González brothers.

During his musical fête at the Hostos Center for the Arts and Culture, the now 58-year-old trombonist performed original, deeply rhythmic compositions reflective of his Puerto Rican heritage with his regular septet, Mighty Pirates Troubadours, and was joined by two special guests, vibraphonist Joe Locke and trumpeter-vocalist Jerry Medina.

When *DownBeat* caught up with Vázquez recently, an early summer recording date loomed, and he was busy arranging the music on his next project—Bach’s Goldberg Variations re-imagined for a jazz quartet.

“For me, it has been a struggle of the human spirit to get where I am today,” he said while preparing imported Puerto Rican coffee for a guest at his co-op apartment in Bronxville, New York, which he shares with his wife, Lina, a business analyst. “It’s tough out there, and I’m always wondering where the next adventure will lead me. But I feel lucky to be surrounded by people who care for me—especially my wife, family and bandmates. The beauty of this journey, what makes it so satisfying, is you never stop learning and growing.”

Vázquez’s immersion into the musical culture of Puerto Rico stands among his earliest memories. Born in Philadelphia, he moved with his family to Vega Baja, a small city on Puerto Rico’s north coast, when he was 3. His paternal grandfather, father and an uncle were troubadours, and the living room of the home Vázquez grew up in was constantly filled with guitarists and singers playing *música jíbara*, a traditional style that originated from the Spanish settlers who traveled to the Caribbean islands in the 17th century. “For a lot of Puerto Ricans, this is our blues music,” Vázquez remarked. He started playing the trombone after returning to live in north Philly and attend high school, but he didn’t discover his passion for music until he sneaked into a church dance where Willie Colón was leading a band. The impressionable youth was astounded by the power of the live ensemble with two trombones out front.



Papo Vázquez performs at the 2013 Litchfield Jazz Festival.

“That changed me,” Vázquez said.

A fascination with jazz improvisation began after a friend lent him two seminal albums, J.J. Johnson’s *Blue Trombone* and John Coltrane’s *Live At The Village Vanguard*. Further development on his instrument came when he studied with Slide Hampton and played alongside Curtis Fuller in Hampton’s World of Trombones.

A more deliberate education in the percussive Puerto Rican musical styles of *bomba* and *plena* began when Vázquez returned to the island in 1981 and joined Batacumbele, a Latin fusion band. He moved back to New York in 1985 and worked for a while with Tito Puente and Dizzy Gillespie before focusing on composing and leading his own groups. Since his debut album as a leader, 1993’s *Breakout*, Vázquez has put his particular stamp on what he calls “bomba jazz,” releasing nine albums, the last six with his Mighty Pirates Troubadours. *Spirit Warrior*, the trombonist’s latest recording, offers listeners a full spectrum of Afro-Caribbean rhythms and soundscapes, which are in full evidence whenever he performs with his Troubadours or his 17-piece Mighty Pirate Orchestra and Dance Band, which earned a Grammy nomination for its 2008 album *Marooned/Aislado*.

“The musicians I work with must be willing to learn and commit themselves to this music,” Vázquez said. “Not everyone fits the bill. We’ve created our own sound after many years of trial and effort. What’s important is making sure you have an active conversation with the drummers and keep an open mind. The final equation includes love and respect, which is what we send out to our audiences.” —Thomas Staudter



Joshua Redman

Duo Reunion: On Sept. 9, Joshua Redman and Brad Mehldau will release *Nearness* (Nonesuch), a selection of duets recorded live during their recent European tour. The duo will tour in support of the release, with stops in Urbana, Illinois (Krannert Center) on Sept. 23; Kalamazoo, Michigan (Dalton Center) on Sept. 24; Minneapolis (The Dakota Jazz Club and Restaurant) on Sept. 25–26; New York (Rose Theater, Lincoln Center) on Sept. 30; Santa Monica, California (The Broad Stage) on Oct. 2; and San Francisco (Miner Auditorium, SFJAZZ Center) on Oct. 6–9. joshuaredman.com; bradmehldau.com

Winning Composer: The BMI Jazz Composers Workshop's 28th Annual Summer Showcase Concert culminated in a victory for saxophonist/clarinetist/composer Dan Block in June. Block was named the winner of the BMI Foundation's 17th annual Charlie Parker Jazz Composition Prize. His piece, "Madrigal," was chosen by a judging panel that included Wynton Marsalis, Jimmy Heath and Alan Ferber. bmi.com

Maui Fest: The Maui Jazz & Blues Festival has announced the lineup for its sixth edition, to be held Sept. 10 at the Royal Lahaina Resort in Maui, Hawaii. Scheduled performers include Joe Louis Walker, Delfeayo Marsalis, The Band Courtbouillon (with Wayne Toups, Steve Riley and Wilson Savoy), Javon Jackson, Gabriel Mark Hasselbach, Rock Hendricks, Benny Uyetake, The Jazz Alley TV Trio and the King Kehaulike High School Jazz Band. Numerous festival-related events will take place on the island Sept. 8–11. mauljazzandbluesfestival.com

Final Bar: British-born drummer Randy Jones, a member of the Dave Brubeck Quartet from 1978 to 2010, died June 13 at age 72 in New York. Jones was also known for his work with Maynard Ferguson, Tony Bennett, Billy Eckstine, Cleo Laine, Chet Baker, Milt Jackson, Gerry Mulligan and Bill Watrous.



Christian Scott aTunde Adjuah performs at Gesù during the Montreal Jazz Festival on June 30.

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Scott, Guests Soar at Montreal Jazz Festival

ONE OF THE DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF the annual Montreal Jazz Festival is its famous "Invitational" series, which showcases select artists in multiple contexts. This year, the festival cast twin spotlights on trumpeter Christian Scott (aka Christian Scott aTunde Adjuah) and pianist Kenny Barron.

Scott's three-night stint, held in the venue Gesù, featured his bold ensemble, joined on nights two and three, respectively, by swampy guitarist Charlie Hunter and eminent vocalist Lizz Wright.

Scott's strong, abiding band is an evolving unit, with the younger generation represented by 21-year-old flutist Elena Pinderhughes and her brother Samora, who offered intriguing harmonic and rhythmic concepts on acoustic piano and Rhodes, plus the fleet and flexible alto saxophonist Braxton Cook. Scott's long-standing allies Corey Fonville on drums and Kris Funn on bass held down the rhythm section foundation while enhancing the grooves with enticing nuances and in-the-moment inventiveness.

Scott—who is 33 but began his professional career at age of 14—has now covered enough diverse terrain to fit the notion of the "Invitational" series as a forum for artists with eclecticism in the blood (and oeuvre).

Much of the repertoire for his Montreal residency was repeated night after night, though, as it was culled from his 2015 album *Stretch Music* (Ropeadope), including the tribute to his tribal New Orleans heritage, "The Last Chieftain." One highlight in his current songbook was the tender "Diaspora," a showcase for Pinderhughes' flute prowess and grace.

Technically adroit yet melodically focused, Scott often kept his playing simultaneously brash and cool. There were virtuosic bursts and craggy catharses involved, but he also exuded a minimalist mystique, complete with two microphones: one a clean sound, one for effects-colored sonics and expressionistic deviations from purity.

Scott's guests made their own indigenous contributions to the particular evening's musical patois. Hunter's engaging shuffle-and-scramble style on his customized seven-string guitar injected a sloppy, saucy energy into the band sound, and he brought an entirely different rhythmic feel and chordal soloing to "The Last Chieftain"—New Orleans logic recast by a passionate outsider.

Wright's role in the Scott residency came from a different place, ushering in a warm glow of soulful, gospel-soaked radiance and, as Scott rightly described, a "regal" presence.

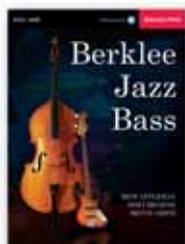
Before launching into the testimonial glory of "Surrender," Wright mused that "for the first time in my life, I'm the oldest person on the bandstand." She is all of 36, but blessed with an old soul's majesty and control.

Scott's "Invitational" series thus closed on a soulful, church-ified note, one in which the honored artist graciously yielded the spotlight to his inspired guest. From another angle, though, on that song, the focus went wide to include the feel of the entire ensemble onstage, extending out into the appreciative crowd. Suddenly, this rehabbed church venue embodied a type of universal religiosity, the kind made possible through the sheer power of enlightened song.

—Josef Woodard

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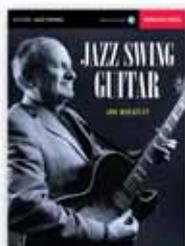


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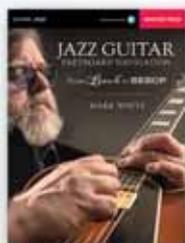
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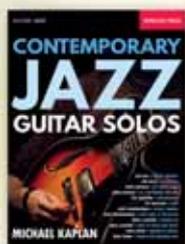
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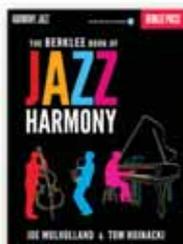


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Nash's 'Presidential' Project Blooms

DURING AN ELECTION CYCLE IN WHICH POLITICAL ORATORY IS often delivered via Twitter and sound bites, Ted Nash's *Presidential Suite: Eight Variations On Freedom* (Motéma) is refreshing both in premise and execution. Premiered by the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra in January 2014 (billed on the CD as the Ted Nash Big Band), the eight-part suite mixes the 56-year-old saxophonist/flutist's compositions with excerpts from iconic speeches on the subject of freedom by eight 20th-century political leaders, each read for the occasion by a separate surrogate.

The piece gestated in mid-2012, when trumpeter Wynton Marsalis (the JLCO's managing/artistic director) approached Nash to compose a long-form follow-up to the JLCO-commissioned piece *Portrait In Seven Shades*. In searching for "a strong theme or through-line," Nash, the son of the prominent trombonist Dick Nash and the namesake nephew of a first-call studio saxophonist, hearkened to his formative years growing up in Los Angeles.

"My parents were civil rights activists, very liberal and open-minded," Nash said, recalling that they hosted parties for the Black Panthers during the '60s. "I don't want *Presidential Suite* to have a particular political slant, but I did grow up with a strong message of human rights and freedom." He took a systematic approach to winnowing down a few hundred speeches to the final eight: "I looked for three elements: a prominent orator, a significant statement and considerable eloquence. I also looked for rhetorical brilliance, originality, historical importance, delivery and inspirational quality. The ones that made my A-list were the ones that moved me the most emotionally. Great rhythm and intonation, too, because that's part of what I was dealing with."

After completing due diligence, Nash—who has written 56 arrangements for JLCO apart from the two extended pieces—set to work. He spent much of a JLCO tour "sitting on the bus with my keyboard, my laptop, headphones on," transcribing the pitches and vocal cadences of four U.S. presidents (Franklin D. Roosevelt, John F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson and Ronald Reagan)—as well as Winston Churchill, Jawaharlal Nehru and Nelson Mandela—into musical notation. From those raw materials, he created compositions tailored to the messages, to the personalities that delivered them, and to the musical personalities of his bandmates. "It was a fairly intuitive process," he said. "I would sit and try just to feel something, without having too strong rules in approaching each song."

For example, in FDR's State of the Union address of Jan. 6, 1941 (11 months before Japan attacked Pearl Harbor), he cited freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want and freedom from fear as the four overarching American freedoms. After pianist Dan Nimmer's Bobby Timmons-ish opening solo, mirroring Roosevelt's pattern of "ending most of his phrases with a long cadence down," Nash constructs four separate environments that precipitate a staunch, affirmative solo by trumpeter Kenny Rampton; a jubilant gospelized declamation by trombonist Vincent Gardner; an outer partials exploration by alto saxophonist Sherman Irby; and a Mingusian "don't mess with me" statement by bassist Carlos Henriquez.

The late baritone saxophonist Joe Temperley—who suggested that Nash explore Winston Churchill's "We Shall Fight On The Beaches" speech from June 4, 1940, when Nazi forces were at the height of their power—takes an eight-bar solo on the through-composed "This Deliverance," whose solemn yet affirmative mood captures the milieu to which it refers. On the evocative "Spoken At Midnight," refracting Nehru's oration to the Indian Constituent Assembly on the eve of India's independence, Nash sets up striking instrumental voicings within a 7/4 structure that contains several subordinate time signatures within it.



Ted Nash's new album is titled *Presidential Suite: Eight Variations On Freedom*.

Nash opens "The American Promise" (based on LBJ's March 15, 1965, speech before Congress in support of the Voting Rights Act) with a parodic cowboy motif that signifies on Johnson's Texas origins, before Nimmer channels Paul Bley in duo with drummer Ali Jackson, leading up to a big band unison on "a wild free-bop line" upon which Marsalis (his only appearance on the album) and trombonist Elliot Mason solo forcefully. "Johnson's pitches were just about impossible to put in a consistent tonal center," Nash said. "Everybody in the band is on board and speaking these words."

Marsalis advised Nash to investigate Burmese activist's Aung San Suu Kyi's iconic essay "Freedom From Fear," the source of the ruminative "Water In Cupped Hands," which is the only musical selection that originated not from a spoken speech but completely in Nash's imagination. Oscar-nominated actress Glenn Close reads the text before the instrumental, as does Oscar nominee Sam Waterston before "The American Promise." "The actors were the only people I invited to read," Nash said.

Executive Producer Kabir Sehgal invited the others, who include former U.S. Sen. Joe Lieberman, diplomat William vanden Heuvel, British statesman David Miliband, author Deepak Chopra, former heavyweight champion Evander Holyfield and historian (and Sehgal's liner note co-author) Douglas Brinkley.

To finance this mega-project, which includes a 20-page booklet with comprehensive liner notes, Nash said he raised "somewhere over \$25,000" via Kickstarter, and contributed another several thousand dollars "out of pocket." "As Wynton says, it's so important to document the things you do," Nash said. "I hope it's not just for archival reasons, and that people will actually check it out."

Presidential Suite will be released on Sept. 9. Nash and special guests will perform selections from the album on Nov. 8 (Election Day) and Nov. 9 at the Jazz Standard in New York. —Ted Panken

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Inspired Sets Put Xalapa on Jazz Map

JOHN PATITUCCI ENTHUSIASTICALLY addressed a thousand cheering attendees who packed Xalapa's Sala Emilio Carballido in the Teatro del Estado on June 23 for a concert by his trio with Chris Potter on tenor saxophone and Rudy Royston on drums: "It's incredible to see all these people excited about this music."

It was night three of the second edition of the Xalapa International Jazz Festival in the capital of the state of Veracruz, Mexico, and the bassist had just concluded an a cappella blues inspired by Mississippi Fred McDowell's "Moving Train."

Over the preceding 50 minutes, the trio had played five Patitucci originals, many from his 2009 album, *Remembrance* (Concord), recorded with tenorist Joe Lovano and drummer Brian Blade. In the past, Patitucci had played separately with Potter and Royston, but the Xalapa show was their first concert as a unit. With only a master class that morning as an opportunity for a quasi-rehearsal, the musicians inhabited the music with confidence and extreme individuality, as though seasoned by two weeks on the road. Throughout, Royston propelled the flow with authoritative, ebullient intention, conveyed with resonant beats and creative textures. Potter embraced the swing-



ing context, improvising with capacious tone and seemingly unlimited technique, telling stories informed by his exhaustive knowledge of the language of Charlie Parker. Patitucci simultaneously fulfilled the functions of leader and sideman, establishing a vibrational ambiance for each selection, uncorking unfailingly sup-

portive grooves and probing bass lines with huge, supple tone.

The musicians established chemistry from the jump: Patitucci's intense opening solo to "Joe Hen" propelled Potter into a burning, take-no-prisoners solo that refracted Joe Henderson's phrasing, language and rhythmic approach, his huge sound counterstating Henderson's soft voice. A rubato triologue centered by Patitucci's vamp set up Potter's fragmentary ruminations on the opening section of "Monk/Trane"; the time-feel switched to medium-slow swing as the theme of John Coltrane's "Giant Steps" emerged, launching Potter on a far-flung testimony. In contrast, the leader concluded deliberately, with earthy variations on the iconic changes.

After Patitucci's homage to McDowell, Potter upped the ante on "Without A Song." He emulated Rollins' famous opening statement from *The Bridge*, then conjured a mighty solo during which Rollins seemed to speak through him like an orisha possessing a master initiate.

There had to be an encore. "We're going to do a little more Sonny Rollins for you," said Patitucci, before introducing the fourth part of *The Freedom Suite*. Without sheet music, the trio nailed the chop-busting line with explosive panache.

The following evening, Miguel Zenón's quartet channeled similar levels of creative energy in an elegant set that included several numbers from the alto saxophonist's upcoming release. That pianist Luis Perdomo and bassist Hans Glawischnig have played with Zenón since the fall of 2000 (drummer Henry Cole joined in 2004) was evident in the cohesiveness and mutual intuition they displayed in interpreting their parts. —Ted Panken

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Silva Seeks Chaos, Clarity

"I like when music can take unexpected turns," said the remarkable Portuguese trumpeter Susana Santos Silva not long after her first visit to Chicago, where she encountered some fresh musical surprises in a pair of improvised performances. "I like when there's implicit harmony, and I like melodies. I like chaos, but I also like clarity and beauty; of course, there can be beauty in chaos as well. I like the storms, and I like the calm before and the stillness afterwards. I like structure and I like freedom."

Her embrace of such polarities has allowed to Silva to become one of the most exciting improvisers in the world—and people are noticing. Over the last few years, she has released nearly a dozen recordings that document her expanding number of collective projects and collaborators.

Whether in thrilling duo projects with the Swedish bassist Torbjörn Zetterberg and the Slovenian pianist Kaja Draksler or in larger ensembles like her new group Life and Other Transient Storms (with Zetterberg, Denmark's Lotte Anker on reeds, and Swedes Sten Sandell on piano and Jon Fält on drums), Silva's versatility and fearlessness is readily apparent. She draws easily on both jazz tradition and extended technique, eschewing hierarchical judgment in favor of what works best in a particular setting.

On last year's terrific quintet outing *Impermanence* (Carimbo/Porta-Jazz), she worked from written material, uncorking deeply lyric, moody lines within inventive, richly sprawling arrangements, but she primarily engages in mostly improvised endeavors these days. Her predilection for improvised duo projects exposes risks and technical limitations, but she wholeheartedly embraces the task.

"You are discovering this person on stage as musical explorations develop, and it can be extremely hard, but also extremely gratifying," she said. "I like the challenge. Maybe I should not risk failing, but I can't do that—it's stronger than me."

As much as she loves improvisation, she admits that she's wracked by doubts, so writing music and making definitive decisions has been tough for her. Silva had planned on using composed material for the Transient Storms project, but a lack of rehearsal time prevented it from happening when the group first assembled. "These musicians are such amazing improvisers and I feel, a bit, that giving them written material would not necessarily make the music better."

The 37-year-old trumpeter has come a



Susana Santos Silva

FRANK SCHEMMANN

long way since her childhood in Porto, located about 200 miles north of Lisbon. "I had a very diverse path in music," she recalled. "I got lost many times, which was very fruitful because I slowly collected a bunch of experiences that truly enriched my view of music, how I play, and who I am as a musician and a person." Early on Silva studied classical music and standard jazz literature.

For two decades she's been a member of Porto's Orquestra Jazz de Matosinhos—which has collaborated with Kurt Rosenwinkel, Dee Dee Bridgewater and Carla Bley, among many others. But it wasn't until Silva attended graduate school in Rotterdam in the late aughts that her music opened up and she fully embraced improvisation. Silva explained that it wasn't through school that her thinking expanded, but through experiences on the bandstand. In Rotterdam she met the Portuguese bassist Gonçalo Almeida, and with the Canadian drummer Greg Smith they formed Lama, which gained international attention through its releases on the Clean Feed label, including collaborative albums with reedists Chris Speed and Joachim Badenhorst.

Silva just moved from Porto to Stockholm—she's worked with numerous Scandinavian musicians—but it seems as though she's on the road more than she is at home. "It's quite a special feeling to know so many people around the world, so that wherever you go you know you have a friend to make music with, to hang, and to celebrate life."

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Young Talent Adds Spark to Tri-C Jazz Fest

NOW IN ITS 37TH YEAR, THE TRI-C JAZZ FESTIVAL IN CLEVELAND has become an annual meeting place for some of jazz's most prominent musicians. With its growing reputation, Tri-C has also become a showcase for promising young jazz talent, and during the 2016 edition, which ran June 23–25, a pair of bandleaders—both under 35—delivered inspiring sets.

Melissa Aldana, who topped the category Rising Star–Tenor Saxophone in the 2015 DownBeat Critics Poll, showed off her brawny tone and lyrical style for a small but appreciative crowd at Tri-C on June 25. She performed several tunes from her new album, *Back Home* (Wommusic), accompanied onstage by the same international trio that played on the album: American pianist Emmet Cohen, German drummer Jochen Rueckert and Chilean bassist Pablo Menares. Aldana, 27, possesses a keen and distinct jazz vocabulary. Her playing is marked by a muscular forward motion, full of long, exploratory lines that slice deeply into a song's soundscape. This propulsion was most prevalent on "Elsewhere," a new composition with a strong, spiraling pull.

Clevelanders Dominick Farinacci, an impassioned young trumpeter, was another of the festival's emerging jazz celebrities to perform that day. A product of the Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C) music department, the 33-year-old Ohio native first rose to prominence after catching the ear of Wynton Marsalis at a previous Tri-C Fest. In the years since, Farinacci has toured the world as Lincoln Center's Global Ambassador to Jazz. In that role, he spent three years in Doha, Qatar, organizing jazz education initiatives and concerts.

Farinacci—whose new Mack Avenue album is *Short Stories*—has a



Dominick Farinacci performs for a hometown crowd at the Tri-C Jazz Festival in Cleveland on June 25.

STEPHANIE SHACTER

pendant for the New Orleans tradition, but he isn't afraid to open the door to other genres. His performance at Tri-C—in which he was accompanied by keyboard legend Gil Goldstein (on accordion) and percussion master Mathias Kunzli, in addition to a piano trio and string section—demonstrated this stylistic flexibility. The trumpeter opened with a boisterous rendition of "Bamboleo" (the Spanish-language song popularized by the Gipsy Kings), incorporating flavors as diverse as calypso, flamenco and early swing. And on "Doha Blues," an original written to commemorate his stint in Qatar, Farinacci blended the gauzy impressionism of early Miles Davis with the sounds of a *meuzzin's* call to prayer.

From the stage, the trumpeter thanked his family, as well as the countless other "moms" who encouraged his jazz calling in the Cleveland suburbs. It was a sincere statement of gratitude from a local hero who had triumphed on the international stage—which, on this night, happened to be in his hometown.

—Brian Zimmerman

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Photo by Richard Termine

MMFI Honors Black Musicians Unions

THE MUTUAL MUSICIANS FOUNDATION INTERNATIONAL TURNED back the clock to honor living members of Black Musicians Unions in Kansas City and across the country June 16–18.

Fourteen musicians—all members of segregated unions in Atlanta, Chicago, Kansas City, Philadelphia, New Orleans, Boston and other cities—received proclamations at City Hall on June 16. And at the inaugural Legacy 627 International Music Awards on June 17, MMFI Executive Director Anita Dixon paid tribute to them as well.

“We titled this event ‘The Shoulders Upon Which We Stand,’ and I’m so very proud to honor these wonderful musicians, and document their stories and memories,” Dixon told the audience at the Bruce R. Watkins Cultural Heritage Center.

Videotaped interviews with the musicians took place at the Mutual Musicians Foundation Building, which served as the headquarters for Musicians Protective Union Local 627 for four decades. Located in the heart of the famed 18th and Vine entertainment district, the building is now the headquarters for MMFI, incorporated to manage the building and assets of the union after its merger with Local 34 in 1970.

MMFI operates as a social club for musicians and fans, with weekend jam sessions in a small club decorated with photos of Kansas City jazz greats like Count Basie, Mary Lou Williams, Charlie Parker and dozens more. But when MMFI gained non-profit status in 2013, it also began to focus on efforts to preserve Kansas City’s jazz heritage and increase its educational outreach efforts.

For Donald Gardner, a member of Local 274 in Philadelphia, the parallels between MMFI and the Clef Club that developed from Local 274



Anita Dixon, executive director of MMFI (front), poses with musicians celebrating a proclamation at City Hall in Kansas City. From left: James Patterson, Lee Brown, Warren Smith, Esdras Lubin, Jack Jeffers, Marvin Pattillo, June “Pepper” Harris, Lovett Hines, Wallace Jones, Dixon, Donald Gardner, John Mosley, Godfrey Powell, William “Doug” Carn, Dr. Larry Ridley

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before its own merger are striking. “We started the Clef Club as a way to protect the Local’s assets,” Gardner explained. “Over the years, it’s changed from being a social club to a concert venue as well as a base for educational programs. When I see what they’re doing with the videotaped interviews, it’s inspiring. This is the Clef Club’s 50th year, and we’re trying to raise money to document our own history.”

For Dixon and MMFI, this is only the first chapter of an ongoing effort to record the history of Black Musicians Unions while the members are still here.

“When I became director, I was bothered there was a forgotten piece of history here in Kansas City,” Dixon said. “I wanted to see how many musicians who were members of 627 were still alive—and document their stories. And we decided to reach out and contact musicians who had been in other black unions around the country. We’d like to get a grant to create an archive of interviews.”

—Terry Perkins

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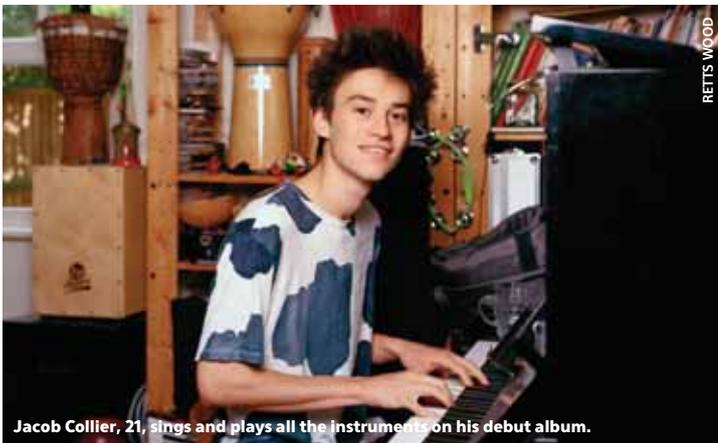
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Jacob Collier, 21, sings and plays all the instruments on his debut album.

In Jacob Collier's Room

YOU MAY HAVE SEEN THEM BY NOW: VIRAL VIDEOS OF THE HAND-some, skinny Londoner in his home studio, the image of his face multiplied by six, eight or 12, singing multipart jazz-funk choral arrangements of songs like “Fascinating Rhythm,” “Close To You” and even the theme to *The Flintstones*. More than a one-man Take 6, however, Jacob Collier accompanies himself on piano, melodica, stringed instruments, drums and all manner of percussion.

Collier's first self-produced YouTube video, Stevie Wonder's “Don't You Worry 'Bout A Thing” in 2013, has been viewed more than 1.5 million times and, like the ones that followed, is a marvel of technical ingenuity. But all that gee-whiz technology wouldn't matter if Collier's arranging talents were not so profound and his performances not so spectacular.

After receiving accolades from Herbie Hancock, Pat Metheny and Mark Kibble of Take 6, the largely self-taught musician (who attended the Royal Academy of Music for two years) was snapped up by Quincy Jones' Qwest Records. He plays and sings every part on his debut album, recorded entirely in his home studio and appropriately titled *In My Room*. The collection includes three covers and eight originals, including the jazz-fusion opus “Don't You Know,” which he also recorded with Snarky Puppy on *Family Dinner, Vol. 2*. DownBeat spoke to the 21-year-old via Skype from London.

Some of your songs, like your version of Brian Wilson's “In My Room,” play with time in an arresting fashion.

There was an amazing teacher at the academy, Barak Schmol, who teaches world rhythms. After class, I'd ask him to teach me more about certain things, like the ancient Cuban tradition of *batá* drumming. It was a way of feeling time which I was fascinated by: a feeling of a “lack of grid,” but there really is a solid grid. “In My Room” is a *batá*-inspired groove.

Some listeners may jump to the conclusion that your ultra-refined harmonies are electronically manipulated. Are they?

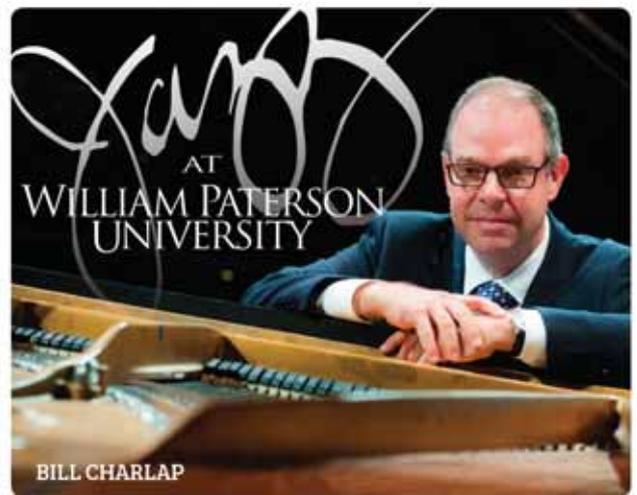
No, there's no computer system that helps me; it's only my ears. When I'm singing a capella harmonies, I don't tune to the piano; normally I tune to the harmonic series. In that way, all of the harmonics are completely in tune.

For a guy who does it all himself, you also seem to find genuine joy in your collaborations, for example with Snarky Puppy.

There are so many of them, but they play together without getting in each other's way. I threw that tune (“Don't You Know”) at [bassist/bandleader] Mike League, and they essentially learned it by ear in one day.

What would you say is your main musical instrument?

That's a tough one; I guess I'd say the human voice. But everything I sing is informed by drumming and bass playing, and piano because of all the harmony. I'd probably say my main instrument is that room, because, when I'm in it, I know how to achieve the sounds that are in my head. —Allen Morrison



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Purely through serendipity, not prior calculation, the release of Ehad Asherie's *Shuffle Along* (Blue Heron) coincided with the superb Broadway reinvestigation of that iconic African-American revue from 1921. Playing solo, the 36-year-old pianist addresses eight Eubie Blake tunes from the original production with the individualistic approach to converging various mid-20th-century New York piano dialects that stamps his 10 previous leader albums.

In the manner of Dick Hyman, an acknowledged influence, Asherie—often in the course of a single song—morphs from authoritative contrapuntal stride piano passages to surging horn-like lines and percolating ostinatos à la Bud Powell or even Monkish dissonances. His time is impeccable, his left hand formidable, his touch nuanced, and he generates impressive melodic flow from highbrow harmonic streams.

"I fell in love with jazz piano through bebop—also McCoy Tyner and Brad Mehldau—and went backwards," Asherie said via Skype from São Paulo, Brazil, where he spent the first 10 days of June. On the previous evening, he'd played duo with local guitarist Bina Coquet, a frequent partner since 2003, juxtaposing stride and *manouche* jazz on an array of '20s and '30s *chorinhos* and sambas.

"About nine years ago I realized that everything comes from James P. Johnson," Asherie continued. For a short list, he cited "Carolina Shout," "Harlem Stride," "You've Got To Be

Modernistic" and "Jingles." "Then I concluded that it actually comes from Eubie Blake, who said James P. played everything he did, but in every key and twice as fast," he added. Asherie noted that Blake composed the *Shuffle Along* songs "before jazz forms had been codified, thereby escaping a lot of clichés and generic patterns. That offers a wide-open universe for interpretation; you're not stylistically locked in."

That freewheeling attitude infuses another recent release, *Gems By The Piano Giants* (Clarinet Road), on which Asherie and virtuoso clarinetist Evan Christopher—joined thrice by singer Hilary Gardner—inhabit repertoire along a timeline that traverses the early '20s (Johnson's "Love Bug," Blake's "You're Lucky To Me," Jelly Roll Morton's "The Pearls," Fats Waller's "My Fate Is In Your Hands") and a Dick Wellstood contrafact of Duke Ellington's "Jubilee Stomp" titled "Fast As A Bastard") to the late '40s (Mary Lou Williams' "In The Land Of Oo-Bla-Dee" and Bud Powell's "I'll Keep Loving You"), with visits to less-traveled byways of Teddy Wilson ("The Little Things That Mean So Much") and Hoagy Carmichael ("April In My Heart").

"I love playing duo and playing without bass, and I've done it a lot," said Asherie, who has displayed his facility for the idiom on two conversational albums (on Posi-Tone) with tenor saxophonist Harry Allen. "People think of stride as the left hand going *oom-pah, oom-pah*, but there's so much more—10ths, bass lines, counterpoints. I've always advocated transcribing

from records, not necessarily to learn a piece note-for-note, but for the process of learning the language of jazz. It's like learning poetry. Once you learn the language, speak it, and come to it from a place of knowledge, anything is possible."

Asherie began learning piano language at age 6, when his Israeli parents lived in Milan. Lessons continued after he moved to a Westchester suburb two years later, and, as Asherie progressed through middle school, he became immersed in jazz. At 14, he made his first visit to the newly opened Greenwich Village venue Smalls. The club didn't have a liquor license, and by Asherie's junior year of high school—with his parents' blessing—he became a regular, commuting to make the evening's first show and not leaving until the jam session ended at 6 a.m.

Along the way, he interacted with tough-love bebop practitioners like pianist Frank Hewitt and drummer Jimmy Lovelace, and future stars, like guitarist Peter Bernstein. Asherie also "messed around" with the house's Hammond B-3 organ, his instrument on two albums with Coquet and on 2010's *Organic*, recorded with Bernstein and alto saxophonist Dmitry Baevsky.

"If I hadn't come to New York, I wouldn't be what I am today," Asherie said. "Whether it's James P. or Bud or Monk, that New York sound of being in the moment and going for something has formed me more than anything. That's the way I play, and that's what New York is about." —Ted Panken

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NAOMI MOON SIEGEL

Melodic Traveler

Trombonist Naomi Moon Siegel has called many places home. For the past eight years, she's been based in Seattle. But before that, she lived in Oakland, California. As a kid, she lived in North Carolina, Massachusetts and Illinois with her parents and two older brothers.

Siegel has also taken trips to Costa Rica, Senegal and Gambia, each of which afforded beneficial composing retreats. In 2012, while in Costa Rica, she challenged herself to create something new every day.

"I find it easier to compose when I'm not in Seattle," she explained. "I treated [those challenges] as more of intuitive composition processes in which I just channeled what I was hearing—instead of aiming to compose something specific. Earlier, when I was studying at Oberlin Conservatory, I felt pressured to compose stuff that was complex and harmonically 'out there.' Now I just let that go and compose whatever comes to me."

Siegel's globetrotting reveals itself on *Shoebox View*, a debut album that's at once personal and polyglot. The disc seduces immediately with the soulful "Jeannine's Joy," on which she layers multiple trombone harmonies and melodic riffs atop of Thione Diop's evocative Senegalese percussion. Andrew Vait's faint synthesizer accompaniment and Jefferson Rose's shadowy electric bass thicken the song's harmonic sweep, while Siegel's burrished-tone trombone states an anthemic melody that bursts into a triumphant solo. Siegel said that the song's namesake (and inspiration) is her girlfriend of the past four years. "I was really trying to capture Jeannine's nuanced spirit; she's a super vivacious woman."

Siegel composed "It's Not Safe" and "Casa De Aves"—two other highlights from the disc—in Costa Rica. The former bounces to a laidback reggae-rock groove while the latter features a penetrating melody. Siegel



Trombonist Naomi Moon Siegel recruited keyboardist Wayne Horvitz to play on her new album, *Shoebox View*.

penned "It's Not Safe" on the secluded Playa Negra beach after a man approached and advised her to leave, arguing that the beach was dangerous for a young lady to be alone with her just trombone. "From that moment, the melody and riff idea for the song came to me," she recalled.

"It's Not Safe" also features contributions from Seattle-based jazz maverick Wayne Horvitz, who plays organ and Wurlitzer on four other songs as well. In Horvitz, Siegel found a kindred spirit and a mentor. She has performed several times with him in his Royal Room Collective Music Ensemble. "I really love the way Wayne treats harmony," Siegel said. "He often veers toward more simplistic triadic harmonies instead of all the altered extension chords."

Horvitz has long admired Siegel's playing, particularly her rhythmic timing. But it wasn't until he participated on *Shoebox View* that he learned of her compositional acumen. "She's willing to tap into the music that she really loves, which includes jazz but also reggae, funk, electronica, West African stuff and pop," he said. "Also, she isn't afraid to have fun. That's important to me. When you listen to the Duke Ellington or Count Basie bands, the musicians didn't sound like they were afraid of having fun."

Seattle has proven to be an ideal city for Siegel because it affords her opportunities to collaborate regularly with such esteemed artists as Horvitz, fellow trombonist Julian Priester and saxophonist Skerik.

Siegel recalled that her two-year stint in Oakland had been emotionally taxing. "When I was in Oakland, I was a young, insecure musician," she said. "I felt like I had to do anything to try to fit in to get a gig. Because of where I was in my self-development—plus the scene that I was in—I felt closeted. I kept my sexuality to myself. I didn't intentionally hide it, but I never felt that I was my full, authentic, vibrant self. In Seattle, I've been able to cast aside relationships that aren't so nourishing to be in environments that are inspiring—musically and interpersonally."

But for all of Siegel's love for Emerald City, she and Jeannine are planning to move to Missoula, Montana. "I love being in cities because of the vibrant culture and music. But I *really* love being in nature—that's what really inspires me," Siegel said. "I'm just trying to flip the balance. Instead of living in the city with nature relief, I'm trying to have nature with city relief."

—John Murph

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Todd Coolman's new album is titled *Collectables*.

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TODD COOLMAN

Bassist, Educator, Fisherman

For most musicians, time is something to count. It's a measured ideal with which to align an internal musical clock, the meter that provides the all-important pocket. But for other musicians, time is a deeper pursuit, practically a calling. On *Collectables* (Sunnyside), Todd Coolman's first album in 10 years, the bassist goes deep into the terrain of time.

"For me, the experience of time is multidimensional," Coolman said from his New Jersey home. "There's time as it pertains to music and the beauty of jazz as it relates to time or rhythm, which is an endless quest. Time fascinates me in the pursuit of playing music that makes people feel good. That's one appeal. Another concept is the reality of time in terms of the clock—the passage of minutes and seconds and hours. And as a collector I have another fascination. Collectable things have a time stamp. I collect fly fishing lures. If I am holding a lime-green Creek Chub Pikie, I know when that lure was manufactured so I can reflect on that era of time. For me, the study of time is a hobby within itself."

Time gets its due respect on *Collectables*, which features the trio of Coolman, pianist Bill Cunliffe and drummer Dennis Mackrel (aka Trifecta) issuing time as wide and polished as a cruising Cadillac, a feel so big and plush it recalls the Great Jazz Trio of Hank Jones, Ron Carter and Tony Williams.

Coolman has an impressive resume. He has performed with Horace Silver, James Moody, Gerry Mulligan and Benny Golson, among many others, is a professor of music in the jazz studies program in the Conservatory of Music at Purchase College (SUNY), and is director of the Skidmore Jazz Institute. Coolman has written two books aimed at bass players: *The Bass Tradition* and *The Bottom Line* (both Aebersold Publishing), and he's a sought-after writer, evidenced by his Grammy-winning liner notes to *Miles Davis Quintet 1965–1968*.

On *Collectables*, such tracks as Ahmad Jamal's "New Rhumba" and Miles Davis/Victor Feldman's "Joshua" achieve a rhythmic state of grace as Coolman's trio crafts a wonderfully expansive and purposeful pulse.

The bassist said that Mackrel deserves much of the credit for *Collectables'* artistic peaks.

"Dennis is a complete musician," Coolman said, "a brilliant composer, a really good arranger, and he understands all aspects of music. When Dennis plays, he is thinking orchestrally. That contributes to our having a big sound as a trio, because he is thinking in terms of the broadest possible spectrum."

An instructor since entering the SUNY system in 1998, Coolman is well equipped to gauge the changes between double bass students then and now.

"Students may be more proficient technically now," Coolman said. "They have a lot of access to more resources. Where they still need enlightenment is in understanding the historic aspects of the music. They also need to understand the role of the bass, which fundamentally hasn't changed. Your role is at the bottom of the music, to be foundational and supportive. If they want to make a good living, they have to learn to support other people."

Musician, collector, bird watcher, martial artist and fly fisherman, Coolman brings a philosophical approach to his many pursuits.

"In an ideal sense, fly fishing and music are a similar state of mind," Coolman said. "When you're playing music well, there is a certain effortlessness and mindlessness to it. The music is playing you; it's a very Zen experience. There is an analog with fly fishing, because the emptier your mind can become, the better you will do. It's meditative. When you're fly fishing perfectly, you become the fly. And when playing music at your best level, it's just in the air and it just happens." —Ken Micallef



JOANNA WALLFISCH

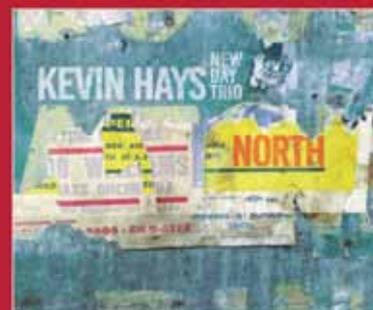
GARDENS IN MY MIND

with DAN TEPFER & SACCONI QUARTET

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Gardens In My Mind is a collection of recent pieces arranged by both Joanna Wallfisch and Dan Tepfer for the Sacconi Quartet along with new material that Wallfisch wrote specifically for the recording.

Joanna Wallfisch's collaboration with the Sacconi String Quartet was not merely a lucky opportunity. It allowed her to realize her music in a new way. Writing these arrangements for her songs made it possible for her to realize what she considers to be her pieces' definitive versions. The addition of new colors and aesthetic to her music on *Gardens Of My Mind* highlights Wallfisch's playfulness and trust in her fruitful imagination.



KEVIN HAYS with NEW DAY TRIO

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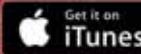
SSC 1464 - IN STORES NOW

It has been some time since Hays recorded an acoustic piano trio. Over the past few years, Hays has become reacquainted with drummer Greg Joseph. Through Joseph, he met bassist Rob Jost. This led to Hays forming his New Day Trio, a dynamic ensemble that can handle the leader's challenging jazz charts and his more folk/rock leaning vocal pieces.

Hays's musical scope goes beyond the jazz standards he incorporates on the record, bridging his love of classical, blues, soul, folk and rock music into his originals.



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Sirius Quartet, from left: Fung Chern Hwei, Gregor Huebner, Jeremy Harman and Ron Lawrence



PHILIPP NEUMANN

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It took more than 30 years for the Sirius Quartet to get it right.

Not that the in-demand string quartet—which has worked with Dianne Reeves, John Escreet and John Zorn, to name a few—has been doing anything wrong. But, according to violinist Ron Lawrence, the sole remaining member from the group’s inception as the Soldier String Quartet, it’s only with their new album, *Paths Become Lines* (Autentico Music/Naxos), that they’ve finally documented themselves as the ensemble he wanted all along: specifically, a group of string players who could write original material and perform and improvise on works

by such composers as Henry Purcell, Charles Ives and György Ligeti. “It took a long time to find the right people,” Lawrence said.

The right combination of composer-improvisers solidified in 2010, as “an interesting mix ethnically and generationally,” according to cellist Jeremy Harman, the last to join the group. “We’ve found a pretty interesting mix of our own personalities,” he said.

The Soldier String Quartet was founded by the ever-inventive Dave Soldier in 1984. One of the forces behind the Thai Elephant Orchestra, Soldier is by day a neurobiology professor at Columbia University.

That group (which often stretched the definition of “string quartet” in terms of instrumentation) played together for 20 years with a rotating membership that included, at times, violinists Regina Carter and Mark Feldman, bassists Mark Dresser and Jerome Harris and percussionists Jim Black, Kevin Norton and Ben Perowsky. The eventual dissolution of the group influenced Lawrence’s attitude about forming a group and keeping it together.

“I was sitting there, and people were fighting, and the whole situation was blowing up, and I just wanted to keep doing music with Elliott Sharp,” he recalled. “I wanted to keep using extended technique and playing really loud.

“I loved playing with Dave,” he continued. “As a violist, I was playing music uptown. I had some good gigs, but I wanted to do other things as well. I love the idea of getting in up to your elbows.”

Although the group has included some distinguished members in the past—including violinist Jennifer Choi and cellists Mike Block and Dave Eggar—it’s only with Harman and violinists Gregor Huebner and Fung Chern Hwei that Lawrence finally found kindred spirits.

Paths Become Lines is the sixth release under the quartet’s name, but the first to highlight the diverse compositional voices of its members.

The title track, which was composed by Harman, features multiple melody lines over a steady pulse, betraying his punk/metal past. Fung’s three contributions show an appealing tendency toward humor and sentimentality. And Huebner’s richly lyrical String Quartet No. 4, Opus 44, “The Wollheim Quartet” earns the group its stripes as a “serious string quartet.”

“For a long time we didn’t know what to call ourselves,” according to Fung. “It’s not fair to call ourselves ‘classical’ or ‘jazz,’ so we came up with this term.”

In the fall, the foursome will host and curate the Progressive Chamber Music Festival in October at ShapeShifter Lab in Brooklyn, no doubt attracting other likeminded musicians as well as new fans.

Ultimately, the quartet’s goal is to be a recognizable unit—four distinct voices with one cohesive sound.

“There aren’t many people—Stan Getz, Chet Baker, Miles—who from the first sound they play, you know it’s them,” Huebner said. “That’s what we want to do as a quartet.”

“You might not call it ‘jazz’—it’s a personal project for all of us,” Lawrence added. “In Dave Soldier’s group, everybody had a different point of view about where they wanted to go. Dave’s idea of a string quartet was a drummer and two singers and the string players. He’d have like eight people on stage. A lot of very good musicians went through the group. Now we have four unique points of view who are really interested in creating a whole.”

—Kurt Gottschalk

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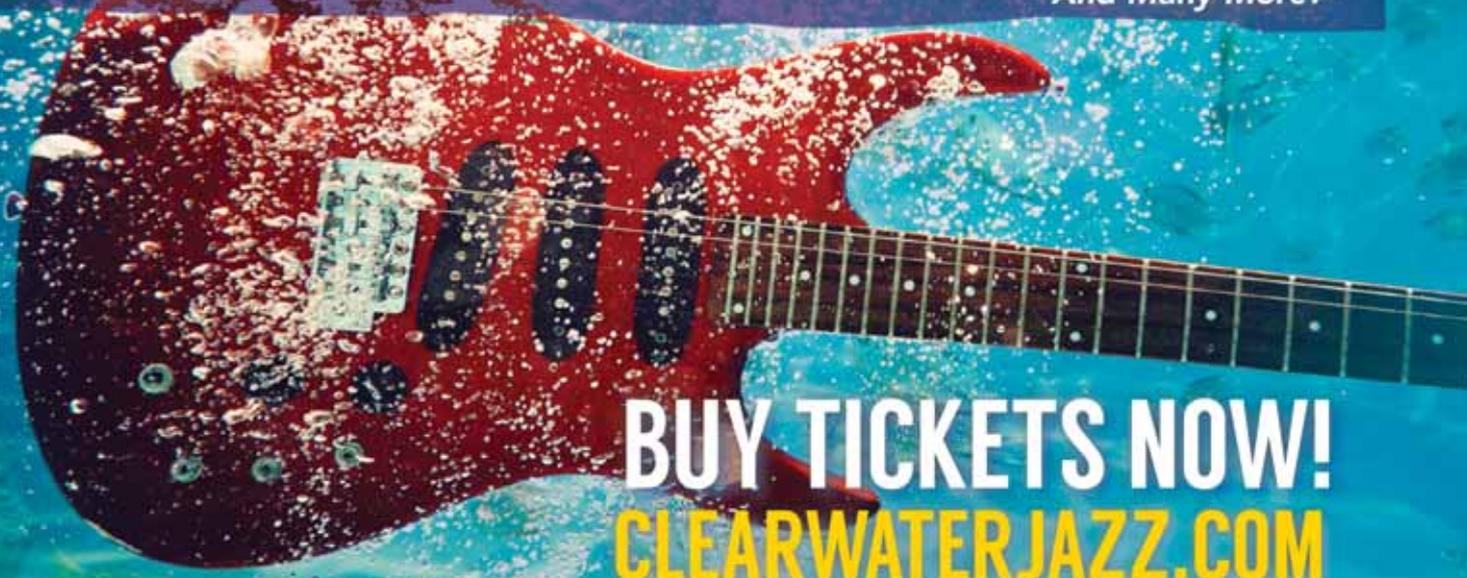
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Kenny Garrett

GET UP & DANCE!

BY PHILLIP LUTZ | PHOTO BY JIMMY KATZ

Kenny Garrett—whose rise from Detroit-bred wunderkind to globe-trotting saxophonist was nothing if not meteoric—is, at age 55, a remarkably humble presence. Despite having realized many of his dreams, **Garrett has consistently paid homage to the giants who influenced him.**

Between 1996 and 2008, Garrett issued album-length tributes to John Coltrane, Charlie Parker and Miles Davis, with whom he played for five years. More recently, he has, on the Mack Avenue albums *Seeds From The Underground* (2012) and *Pushing The World Away* (2013), dedicated songs, in whole or part, to at least nine musicians, among them Chick Corea, a frequent collaborator whom Garrett will join in December as part of a birth-

day bash at the Blue Note in New York.

Garrett has also paid tribute to people who have been helpful behind the scenes. *Seeds From The Underground* includes “Wiggins,” for Bill Wiggins, a beloved band teacher of Garrett’s from Detroit. And *Pushing The World Away* includes “Brother Brown,” for Donald Brown, whose role as Garrett’s producer has yielded both that album and the saxophonist’s latest CD, also on Mack Avenue: *Do Your Dance!*



**'Do whatever it is
you do—if it's
in rhythm, off
rhythm, whatever
your concept is.'**

But with that effort, out in July, Garrett has turned the notion of tribute on its head. Rather than dedicating songs to musicians, he tips his hat to the fans, proffering an explicit invitation to, well, do their dance—and so they have, transforming the spaces where he plays from listening rooms into makeshift dance halls that can take on the feel of revival tents.

“When I was young, my teacher, Marcus Belgrave, used to call me ‘the preacher,’” Garrett said, as he relaxed in a Manhattan teahouse in June before what would prove to be a frenzied, four-night run at Blues Alley in Washington. “There was something to that. But I didn’t recognize it.”

These days, he has begun to recognize it. He has seen the crowds in Europe, Japan, Asia and the United States become a decidedly more kinetic lot. Without coaxing, they have begun rising from their seats, alternately swaying to the beat and dancing in the aisles as they groove to infectious set-closers like “Wayne’s Thang,” a tribute to Wayne Shorter, and “Happy People,” a nod to Herbie Hancock.

Pianist Vernell Brown Jr., whose history of recording with Garrett stretches from 2002’s *Happy People* (Warner Bros.) to *Do Your Dance!*—bassist Corcoran Holt, percussionist Rudy Bird and drummers Ronald Bruner Jr. and McClenty Hunter round out the album’s instrumental personnel—said the phenomenon had at times become a bit overwhelming.

“We wouldn’t tell people, they’d just get up and dance,” said the pianist, a member of Garrett’s working quintet, which has recently added drummer Marcus Baylor to the lineup. “There was one time, at a theater in Cleveland, when there were so many people crowding around the piano, I couldn’t even see myself.

“It mesmerizes me. Obviously, people are hearing and feeling something in Kenny’s music that makes them want to get up and express themselves. With all the tragic things going on in the world, we pour our heart and soul into it. This is an opportunity for everyone to get up and dance, and forget about all the suffering.”

As the enthusiasm has grown, Garrett has more actively stirred the spiritual pot—punctuating his solos with exhortations to the assembled masses, particularly those who seem too shy to make a joyful noise. “I tell them, ‘Do your dance,’” he said. “We’re just having a big party. We’re taking you on this journey and we’re at that point. Do whatever it is you do—if it’s in rhythm, off rhythm, whatever your concept is.”

Inspired by the outpouring, Garrett said he felt compelled to write a song that could serve as a vehicle for reaching out. That song became the title track of the new album, an unabashed exercise in accessibility that features a funky 1970s vibe, a clearly delineated head and a rap, dropped in after the musical bed had been laid, that functions as a definite mood enhancer.



Kenny Garrett performs at the 2015 Newport Jazz Festival.

STEVEN SUSSMAN

‘Whether we’re performing live or in the studio, my goal is to conjure an emotion. If they can feel that emotion, my goal is accomplished.’

Supplied by producer Brown’s son, Donald Brown Jr.—also known as Mista Enz—the rap is a kind of plea for living in the here-and-now: “I don’t know tomorrow/ but I know this day/ Long as you’re with me/ everything’s OK.”

“That’s how it started,” Garrett said, adding that once he had written the title tune, the album’s pieces began to flow. What became the album opener, “Philly,” had its roots in a gig near Temple University in the City of Brotherly Love. “The older people were dancing to all the songs—the fast tunes, the slow tunes, the bossa—and I said, ‘Wow, this is amazing. That’s what jazz is all about—dancing and participating in the music.’ So I came up with ‘Philly.’”

The tune opens with pianist Brown’s rubato intro—a plainly conceived, plaintively executed improvisation built around the melody’s central motif—that moves with dispatch into a polyrhythmic tear replete with escalating waves of emotion reminiscent of the classic Coltrane quartet.

Echoes of that Philly-associated group, Garrett acknowledged, crossed his mind as he was putting pen to paper. They are inescapable in the playing, having been explicit since at least 1996, when Garrett, whose scintillating gifts had by then taken the jazz world by storm, issued *Pursuance: The Music Of John Coltrane* (Warner Brothers).

“Of course,” he said. “Coltrane’s always there in spirit.”

The Coltrane spirit—and, for that matter, that of Charlie Parker, whom Garrett honored in 2001, playing alto on Roy Haynes’ *Birds Of A Feather: A Tribute To Charlie Parker*—is very much alive and well in the album’s closing tune, a smoker called “Chasing The Wind.” “The concept,” Donald Brown said, “was when you chase the wind, you can’t really catch it. You can feel it, you can’t really see it. It’s like either you’re chasing the Trane, John Coltrane, or you’re chasing the Bird, Charlie Parker. But they’re flying in so many different directions, it’s hard to

catch them.”

In their high-flying modal discourse, “Philly” and “Chasing The Wind” fall into a zone that Garrett occupies with a singular command. At the same time, it’s hard to imagine anyone negotiating a deft dance step to the tunes as they might when confronted by the spare sensibility of “Backyard Groove,” “Waltz (3 Sisters),” “Calypso Chant” and “Bossa”—songs that, along with “Do Your Dance!,” populate more than half the collection and are more purposely prosaic.

They also seem to accommodate the trajectory of Garrett’s career, which these days is encompassing an ever-broader palette for an ever-wider public. “I have evolved,” he said, “compositionally, harmonically, as a person. Some of the things I was concerned about in the beginning I’m not really concerned about. I’m concerned with making sure I put out the music I hear and I feel.”

Percussionist Bird, who has known Garrett since the two shared band pits more than 30 years ago in the Duke Ellington Orchestra (under Mercer Ellington) and later played together in Davis’ band, said he had noticed a slight populist shift in Garrett’s emphasis, if not a wholesale change in approach.

“I’ve been waiting for that kind of feel,” Bird said. “I think I hear more of it from Kenny

now. He had so much more to let out, which is the best thing to do. Do your own dance, you know? He did his own dance, and now a lot of it is out.”

Part of Garrett’s evolution is an overt turn (or, more precisely, return) to the world of hip-hop. And among the tracks on *Do Your Dance!*, that influence is clearest on “Wheatgrass Shot (Straight To The Head),” a tense trip into the domain of minor seconds, a repeating harmonic feature that offers the sonic equivalent of the jolt Garrett claims awaits those who ingest the nutrient-rich title substance.

To make it real, Garrett said, he needed a rapper who could convey the essence of wheatgrass. “I thought that would be the best way to tell the story,” he said. “If you’ve never had wheatgrass, it’s kind of wild. You’re drinking something that’s giving you all these emotions.”

“I told [Donald Brown Jr.] my experience with it, but I wanted him to tell his experience,” Garrett explained, adding that he was impressed with the results: “Wheatgrass shot to the head/ I’m flying now/ Open me up to this life.”

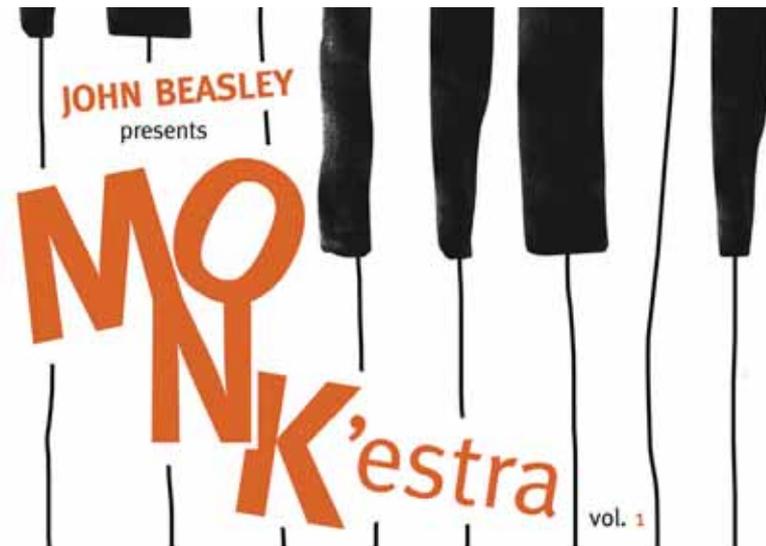
Throughout much of the process of writing and developing the piece, he said, he left the musicians in the dark about his intention to add the rap. Dutifully, they laid down the instrumental track, which Garrett then sent to Donald Brown Jr., who added his words from his home studio in Tennessee.

Bird confirmed that he had no idea that a rapper had been enlisted. Yet Garrett had conveyed enough of the piece’s internal workings—and, more important, its soul—that Bird felt confident in the composer’s intentions. As a result, he applied techniques he used on *The Miseducation Of Lauryn Hill*, which won the Grammy for Album of the Year in 1998.

“The rap part surprised me,” he said. “But the music felt like it was going that way, whether it had rap on it or not. And when I heard the rap was there, I said it made sense.”

Overall, he said, the piece fit the arc of Garrett’s career. “I see where Kenny’s going, and it kind of gels,” he said. “The statement he’s making now is pushing a more diverse audience, a younger demographic along with the old and the older. We welcome that. You want young people to get involved with the music. You do a little bit of what they’re used to and show it works with jazz. They clap together, they dance together. The young people do their hip-hop moves. Everyone gets up and does their dance.”

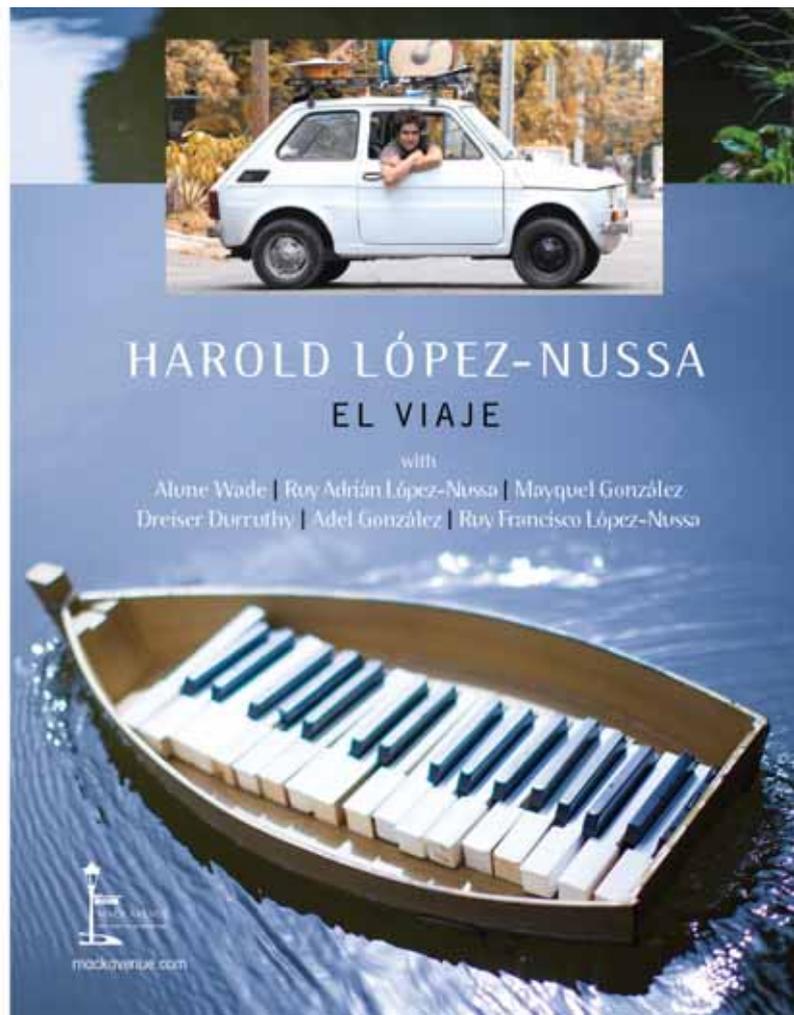
In fact, Garrett’s fusing of the jazz and hip-hop languages had been documented in 1995, when he deployed his saxophone on *Guru’s Jazzmatazz Volume II: The New Reality* (Chrysalis), and in 1999, when, as a vocalist, he nailed the insistent refrain of “tick tock don’t stop” on his own “Back Where You Started,” a



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time-bending piece from *Simply Said* (Warner Jazz). A decade later, Q-Tip sought him out for the ambitious *Kamaal The Abstract* (Battery), contrapuntal hip-hop with a bit of bebop inflection.

Garrett's influence in certain quarters of the hip-hop community has been profound, according to producer and alto saxophonist Terrace Martin. A member of the West Coast Get Down collective, Martin said that Garrett's style—down to the way he articulates grace notes—outlined his own alto playing on

the Kendrick Lamar track "Alright" from the 2015 Grammy-winning *To Pimp A Butterfly* (Interscope).

"He changed the way everybody looks at music," Martin said. "I grew up in South Central, where you were lucky to make it to 25. He grew up in Detroit, with the same struggles. He was so important to us; he represented freedom. I can still hear him playing with Miles Davis, African musicians, jazz musicians, rock musicians. It's about having an open mind."

Garrett lamented that the attention Davis paid to hip-hop, during the time he and Bird

were with the trumpeter, was often overlooked. "Sometimes, when people think about hip-hop, they think people are doing something new," Garrett said, referring to its application to the jazz idiom. "People forget Miles did it."

"At that time hip-hop was part of my generation. So Miles was actually taking from that generation. All the music is connected. I don't look at it as drastically different. Miles had a rapper to help him understand that—a rapper who was organizing everything. He was playing his music on top of that."

Davis' *Doo-Bop* (Warner Brothers), made with the aid of hip-hop producer Easy Mo Bee and released posthumously in 1992, was his last studio album. But hip-hop elements were slipping into Davis' language at least five years before, with Ricky Wellman, an exponent of the early hip-hop-inflected go-go beats, holding down the drum chair in the band in which Garrett and Bird played.

By Bird's account, Garrett assumed a special status on the Davis bandstand. "When I look at Kenny and Miles," he said, "it was almost like Miles was passing the torch. Kenny got a chance to play. It was, 'Play, just play, you're the boss.' Miles didn't let everybody do that."

For his part, Garrett, who is often remembered for his searing statements on Davis' 1989 album *Amandla* (Warner Brothers), a high point artistically in the late-period work, has absorbed Davis' lessons. Garrett, whose debut album on Mack Avenue—*Sketches Of MD—Live At The Iridium*—was a 2008 tribute to Davis, can, when developing material, prefer action over talk.

Pianist Brown recalled that, rather than haul out lead sheets, Garrett, in working through the intro to "Philly," demonstrated the chord voicings he wanted Brown to use as points for extrapolation.

"Kenny gets on the piano and starts playing," he said. "It's one of those unsaid things. You just watch the musician play. I've got a little bit of a photographic memory, so that's our relationship. We play but we don't talk about it much. We listen to the sound and hear what it is."

Garrett explained: "That's the communication that Miles had with his band. They played together so long that it wasn't about them saying what it is; it was about 'we breathe together.' That's what I try to get from my band."

"When we're performing live or in the studio, my goal is to conjure an emotion. If they can feel that emotion, my goal is accomplished. If we're playing a hip-hop song, play it as authentically as we can. If we're playing swing, make it swing. If we're playing African music, make it have those elements."

"I want to keep the spiritual components of the music there. If we can do that, I'm happy."

Keeping the spirituality alive is facilitated by rituals, none more keenly observed than the

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group huddle before the show. The band gathers in a circle backstage, in the green room or dressing room, for a kind of silent prayer. “It’s a magical, spiritual experience,” Brown said. “There’s no ego with anybody in the group. Everybody has their thing they do.”

Brown, a former winner of a DownBeat Student Music Award, has contributed Buddhist elements to the band’s spiritual mix. Drawing on that belief, to which he said he was introduced by Hancock, he chants, “Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.” The chant has been useful in the practical as well as the spiritual realm.

“In the studio,” he said, “it was rough. It was hard. We couldn’t get the music right. So I’d get my beads and go in the corner and start praying.” Others joined, he said, and the impromptu rite helped smooth the rough patches.

The chant has also made its way into the music, set against a meditative 5/4 beat on the title tune from *Pushing The World Away*. Similarly, on the new album, Brown’s chanting is incorporated into the sublime “Persian Steps,” with Bruner on drums and Garrett manning the piano and overdubbing the flute and shruti box, a kind of Indian accordion.

Garrett’s spirituality has long been recognized as a vital part of his art. As a mentor in Detroit, Belgrave may have been onto the fact early. But it has been a subject of comment in more recent times by the likes of guitarist John McLaughlin, with whom Garrett—along with Corea, Christian McBride and Vinnie Colaiuta—played in the Five Peace Band.

Garrett said that McLaughlin, a onetime devotee of the Indian spiritual leader Sri Chinmoy, would, before going onstage, inquire about the state of his being and the prospects for its impact on the coming performance. “He would say, ‘Are you going to take us transcendental tonight?’ Basically, he was saying, ‘Are you going to go to that higher place?’ I kind of liked that.”

Garrett displayed an instinct for negotiating the complex maze of human emotions as far back as the 1980s. After playing with Bird in the Ellington band—a stint that included sharing a tour bus in the musical *Sophisticated Ladies* in 1983—and playing together on Garrett’s albums *Garrett 5*, in 1989, and *African Exchange Student*, in 1990, he and Bird developed a relationship off the bandstand.

“We were living near each other in New Jersey,” Bird said. “We would have jam sessions at my house. And if we had any problems at home, we’d drive on the parkway and talk music, work it out and then go home. We’d laugh about it. It was therapy.”

Garrett wasn’t only a calming presence one-on-one. He revealed an ability to soothe the anxieties of the multitudes as he slid into a preacher’s cadences—like those, perhaps, that Belgrave had noted some three decades ear-

lier—while giving the 2011 commencement address at Berklee College of Music, where he received an honorary doctorate in music.

“Now is the time to plan your life,” he told the graduates. “Now is the time to be around positive-energy people. Tomorrow’s not promised; now is the time. Now is the time to go out in the world and spread some love for your music. Now is the time to set the tone for your life. Now is the time to heal this planet through your music.”

Back in the Manhattan teahouse, that thoughtful bearing was fully in evidence. Revealing an asceticism as he politely declined

a cup of tea amid the abundant offerings—no wheatgrass was available—he mused about a possible future for his musical life.

“There are a lot of other ingredients I hear,” Garrett said. “A lot of things that can change in the music. I think we’ll be able to go to a different place. I’m in a place where I really want to play, to explore some harmonic devices. Sometimes it’s the hip-hop music, but it’s also a tune like ‘Chasing The Wind,’ where you really have to play. It’s a balanced thing.

“I just try to do the best I can with what I’ve been given. There’s more for me to do.” **DB**

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Carla Bley



‘I imagine music and write it down. The secret is to keep writing until it’s good.’

THE TRAILBLAZER STILL BURNS

By Thomas Staudter | Photo by Claire Stefani

By any measure, an 80th birthday is a milestone worth celebrating, but perhaps even more so in the jazz world—for many obvious reasons that need no enumeration. The fact that notable practitioners of the improviser's art continue to make it thus far, including, in the last year or so, Ramsey Lewis, Roswell Rudd, Albert "Tootie" Heath, Harold Mabern and Karl Berger, doesn't necessarily mean life is getting easier for jazz artists. (It isn't.) Aside a discussion of breakthrough medical advances being partly responsible for increased longevity in some individuals, though, it is plainly satisfying to see the attention—special gigs, awards and honors, career overviews, CD releases and re-releases, and much-deserved appreciation—that comes with the significance of just staying alive. The continuing vitality of these octogenarians on the bandstand makes the celebrations that much sweeter.

Carla Bley, the jazz iconoclast, dedicated contrarian and enthusiastic mirth-maker, may have wanted to let the occasion of her Big Eight-Oh pass on May 11 with little public notice or fanfare. Under most circumstances, she would have ensured that it sneaked by as just another quiet, productive day at the home she shares with bassist-composer Steve Swallow in a small hamlet outside Woodstock, New York.

After all, throughout her long career as a composer, instrumentalist and bandleader, Bley has endeavored to let her musical artistry serve as an expression of her thinking and personhood, mostly eschewing the ego-driven cult of celebrity endemic in the entertainment business and instead sharing her time in the spotlight with her collaborators and co-conspirators on the bandstand. Her characteristic evasiveness extends to her recognizable helmet-like coiffure, a curtain of thick, straight hair that has kept her eyes nearly hidden from view for decades.

So, it was an undeniable surprise, then, to learn that Bley, a 2015 NEA Jazz Master, would not only be performing a short concert on the evening of her birthday at Steinway Hall in Midtown Manhattan, joined by Swallow, her partner of 30 years, and saxophonist Andy Sheppard—but she would also be participating in a question-and-answer session afterward.

Bley's birthday this year neatly coincided with the early May release of *Andando el Tiempo*, a new CD with Swallow and Sheppard on ECM Records, the label that has been distributing Bley's catalog on her own WATT label since the late 1970s. With Bley on piano, this exquisite chamber jazz trio has been working on occasion for more than 20 years; their first album was 1995's *Songs With Legs*, which they followed 18 years later with *Trios*—Bley's first on ECM proper, and also her first recording that she didn't produce herself or co-produce with Swallow, handing the reins instead to ECM founder Manfred Eicher, who oversaw *Andando el Tiempo* as well.

Sheppard explained that he was partly responsible for Bley working directly with Eicher on *Trios* and *Andando el Tiempo*. In a conversation at a small, trendy Manhattan hotel before the birthday concert, having flown over from his home in London the day before, Sheppard recalled that while he was recording *Trio Libero*, his 15th album as a leader and his second as a leader on ECM, Eicher expressed to him an interest in producing Bley's next album. "He asked me to approach her with the idea, which I thought was interesting, but I didn't know how she was going to react," said Sheppard. "So, of course, I called Swallow."

Like many jazz listeners of a certain age, the saxophonist, now 59, first discovered Bley's artistry on *Escalator Over The Hill*, her quasi-theatrical sprawl of musical genres and stylings set to the poems of



Andando el Tiempo is the new album by Carla Bley (left) Steve Swallow and Andy Sheppard.

Paul Haines, which was recorded by the Jazz Composers Orchestra and an eclectic group of special guests over two years and finally released in 1971. Now regarded as a cultural benchmark of sorts, the album served as his “baptism by fire,” said Sheppard, just as he was beginning to play the saxophone. Years later, when he was cutting his first album as a leader, Sheppard chose Swallow as a producer on the strength of the bassist’s work with guitarist John Scofield. The two men remained friendly, and eventually Bley hired the saxophonist in October 1988 to join her big band in time for the “live” recording of her album *Fleur Carnivore* with the directive that he learn the clarinet, an instrument he’d never played before.

“Carla is an original, and constantly evolving,” said Sheppard, also a member of a quartet called The Lost Chords with Bley, Swallow and drummer Billy Drummond when not minding a busy solo career in England. “Early on, I figured that I would have to find a way into her music, which is all about a democratic process—her trust in you and the way everyone in the band helps each other. Each new piece she brings to the table has some twist in it, and you’ll find yourself exploring chords you’d never really played before in a framework that is turned upside-down. In the end, her music makes sense, but there are so many challenges. It’s inspiring, though, and every time I’m on stage with her I feel privileged.”

On the evidence of her last two recordings,

Bley has shifted into a new gear, choosing to explore the intimacy of a drummer-less trio with two of her closest musical confidantes, and as a result, putting the focus on her underappreciated piano playing and the sublime, empathic interplay of the musicians.

While Bley and Swallow have produced several duet recordings over the years—the last of which was 1999’s “live” *Are We There Yet?*—both *Trios* and *Andando el Tiempo* stand as serious, purposeful projects, uncharacteristically devoid of any of the wisecracking levity for which the couple is well known. With Eicher in charge of the production at the Auditorio Stelio Molo of RSI, the Swiss public broadcasting company located in Lugano, both albums see the trio in canny concentration, narrow and intense, yet reveling in mutual delight. Recorded on the stage without the use of headphones or monitors, the music was played live without overdubs—resulting in a vivid, unvarnished sound—“the trio exposed,” as Sheppard said. One of the sound engineers told the saxophonist the music sounded like “a post-modernist apartment with no comfortable chairs,” a description that apparently pleased Bley.

In accord with author Joan Didion’s dictum that it is “well advised to keep on nodding terms with the people we used to be,” Bley, while still moving forward, often returns to her older compositions and repurposes them for different ensembles and musicians. Such is the case on *Trios*, with five compositions appropriat-

ed from the long span of her career, including “Wildlife,” from her 1985 album *Night-Glo*, and “Vashkar,” first recorded in the early 1960s by her then-husband Paul Bley (1932–2016).

As a defiant statement of continued vitality, Bley presents three new compositions on *Andando el Tiempo*, further establishing the trio as her prevailing palette. The title track (which translates to “the passing of time”), stretching over three movements (“Sin Fin,” “Potación de Guaya” and “Camino al Volver”) and totaling nearly 30 minutes in length, was written for a friend dealing with addiction and recovery, Bley states in the album’s liner notes. “Saints Alive!” is a quaint expression in response to “especially juicy gossip,” Bley writes, and “Naked Bridges/Diving Brides,” the title taken from one of Haines’ poems, was penned as a wedding present for Sheppard. The music throughout is intricate and dramatic, with stately tempos and mesmerizing interplay—an album-length conversation on three distinct subjects, where Bley’s composed ruminations and thinking-out-loud drift brilliantly in and out of improvisation.

At Bley’s birthday concert, the plan was to play some of the music from *Andando el Tiempo* for the invitation-only audience, but Bley apparently had another idea. “We’re playing an entirely new piece, one that we haven’t even rehearsed yet,” said Sheppard with a sigh and a smile. “Carla sent the music over to my hotel earlier so I could take a look at it.”



© CLAIRE STEFANI

Swallow (left), Bley and Sheppard at Steinway Hall in New York on May 11

The small concert space in the basement of the newly opened Steinway Hall holds about 70 seats, and they all filled quickly in anticipation of the trio's performance and the Q&A. After Swallow tuned his electric bass and readied his equipment, the trio took the stage, all dressed in elegant black clothing. Bley introduced her new work, "Copycat," mentioning it consisted of three parts, and then set to work, playing the first few phrases with Sheppard on tenor saxophone before Swallow joined in. At first, Sheppard's horn whispered tentatively, but as the music progressed his phrases became louder and sturdier. Swallow soloed with Bley providing solid ground beneath him, her eyes glancing at the pages of music, looking at each of her bandmates, then back at the music, her piano reliably setting the course. Sheppard switched to soprano sax for the sprightly second section of "Copycat," and then back to tenor for a heart-breaking rendition of "Utviklingssang," the opening track on *Trios*. The music's emotional resonance swept over the silent audience, with Sheppard's delicate flutter above the quiet pulse of piano and bass a thing of utter beauty.

After taking a bow, the three musical artists sat in front of the audience with Ben Finane, editor in chief of *Listen: Life with Music & Culture*, a classical music magazine. Swallow answered a question about playing in a trio without a drummer, saying that "if you can't get a great groove, you should get off the bandstand," and adding that "touch and alliteration can coat music with as beautiful a mist" as cymbals. Bley deflected a few questions to Swallow, but at one point stated that she merely "writes the music while Steve and Andy add the personality and everything else—that's the dynamic of this trio." A question about Bley's piano playing was, again, handled by Swallow, at her insis-

tence: Her spare tonality, he said, was influenced by Ernie Wilkins' big band arrangements and John Lewis of the Modern Jazz Quartet. "If it was, I've failed miserably," quipped Bley with a straight face. Other questions were met with more self-deprecation and equivocation. Given the handheld microphone to answer another question about composition, Bley made a peevish face and said, "I imagine music and write it down. The secret is to keep writing until it's good." Finane took a question from an audience member who wanted to know what special wisdom was behind her skilled assembly of musical artists, including Jack Bruce, Linda Ronstadt and Gato Barbieri, for *Escalator Over The Hill*; Bley responded that she merely hired anyone she could "off the street." The Q&A finished, Bley and Swallow signed CDs and greeted guests at a champagne reception.

A few days later, per arrangement, I traveled to Woodstock and arrived at the home where Bley and Swallow live. Starting with a discussion regarding the creation of "Andando el Tiempo," an entirely at-ease Bley said that the composition "coincided with a personal experience that made the music slanted toward the reality in my life." She continued: "Everyone knows someone who has had a problem with an addiction. If it hadn't happened to someone in my world, I would not have written that piece. It was solely personal, and I think the way Andy and Steve played on it, they have a personal connection, too, or they would not have been able to play like that. The sadness in it was unique and palpable, and so was the hard work of the last part, 'Camino al Volver,' getting on the hard road back, and the music reflecting that in a programmatic way—the climbing

arpeggios, then the fall that happens after them. Suddenly, I was able to use these non-musical references to keep enlarging the piece."

The long-term relationship Bley has had with ECM stretches over 40 years, when she began her independent, artist-owned record label and separate distribution service—which even carried ECM for a while. Recording *Trios* directly for the label, she said, "was so exciting—I didn't have to do anything, I just played. Manfred has some tunes he wanted to hear—'Do you guys play "Vashkar"?'—so we played it and a lot of the things we were playing together in public at the time. He chose the songs, and then he would choose the takes. I thought it was interesting—I had never had anyone tell me what to do in my whole life, and I wanted to be told! [But] nobody ever cared what I did. I wanted a record company. I tried Columbia, Atlantic, Blue Note—go down the line. I was working on *Escalator Over The Hill* at the time, and everyone thought the music wouldn't sell. I waited and tried to get a deal. The wait got longer, and the album grew and became albums. It kept growing because I couldn't get a deal." ECM will be releasing Bley's next project as well, an oratorio she has written for big band and boys choir titled *La Leçons Française*.

Talking about her 80th, "the birthday to celebrate, I figured," said Bley, brought back memories of her only birthday party, which took place when she was 8 and around the time her mother died from rheumatoid fever. Her father, who began teaching his daughter piano a few years earlier, allowed five bales of hay to be dragged into their Oakland, California, home and spread over the furniture.

Bley also recalled seeing Lionel Hampton perform "Flying Home" when she was 11 or 12, which immediately aligned her toward jazz. Another pivotal moment: hearing the Ornette Coleman Quartet at the Five Spot Café in 1959. Another musical touchstone? Thelonious Monk, said Bley. Moving to Woodstock and teaching with Karl Berger in the Creative Music Studio there ... working with Charlie Haden and the Liberation Music Orchestra ... and back to the present day: She has become a slow, fastidious composer, Bley explained, taking five months to complete "Andando el Tiempo."

After a while, a neighbor, Julie, who also works as an assistant to Bley and Swallow, stopped by to work in the office. Bley got up and walked around the house somewhat stiffly, the result of a recent stumble, but overall the couple look and seem healthy, having given up years ago any vices they may have had. They work and practice separately during the day, then after dinner usually rehearse some music together. Before I drive off they characteristically mug for some photos, and then walk back inside their home, where every day is a celebration of sorts.

DB



**PEDRITO
MARTINEZ**

SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

By Dan Ouellette | Photo by Danielle Moir



WHEN ASKED WHAT WAS GOING TO HAPPEN AT HIS NEW YORK RECORD RELEASE PARTY ON JUNE 21 FOR HIS NEW ALBUM *HABANA DREAMS (MOTÉMA)*, PEDRITO MARTINEZ LAUGHED AND SAID, “WE’RE GOING TO GRAB THE CROWD’S ATTENTION RIGHT AWAY. THEY’LL START DANCING, AND THEN EVERYONE’S GOING TO GO CRAZY. WE WANT TO BRING A LOT OF ENERGY AND DO A SHOW THAT PEOPLE WILL REMEMBER.”

His prediction was accurate. With tables pushed back to The Heath’s outskirts to allow for the frenzied dancing, Cuba-born, New Jersey-based Martinez and his quartet—electric bassist Alvaro Benavides, percussionist Jhair Sala and pianist/keyboardist Edgar Pantoja-Aleman—delivered a high-voltage, 90-minute set that felt like a community party. Boldly and lyrically singing, Martinez played on the four congas located in front on center stage and accented bass notes on the cajón upon which he sat. At one point, the muscular leader left his command post and danced with women in front of the stage.

Recorded in Cuba, the mélange of music on *Habana Dreams* ranges from standard Afro-Cuban rumbas to grooving jazz to percussive pop. Like its predecessor, 2013’s *The Pedrito Martinez Group (Motéma)*, the album fits into the Latin jazz category for marketing, awards and poll purposes. But Martinez’s unconventional approach—rhythmic stops/starts and acceleration within songs, synth voicings, rapping, four voices singing, no horn sections—has made him a mighty force to break out from the steadfast boundaries of the genre’s tradition.

At 42, the handsome batá virtuoso, champion conguero and dynamic vocalist looks like he’s in his mid-thirties. When he talks, he sounds like he’s in his mid-twenties, bubbling over with enthusiasm and emphasizing the word *beautiful* to refer to his life story and his rise as a band leader. Indeed, Pedro Pablo “Pedrito” Martinez has come a long way since playing \$1-per-month gigs in his homeland as a youngster.

“I’ll always continue to play the rumba tradition, but now to bigger audiences,” Martinez said the day before The Heath show during a conversation at the David Rubenstein Atrium of Lincoln Center. “I want different people to listen—not just Cuban people, not just Latin people. I want the jazz audience, the pop audience, the salsa audience.”

For Martinez—wearing a dark BLVD baseball hat, a gold crucifix and a T-shirt adorned with sayings such as “Rebel Soul”—the timing for his rise outside of Cuba (where he’s a bona fide star) couldn’t be better. Martinez took advantage of recent improvements in U.S.-Cuba relations by recording the bulk of *Habana Dreams* last October at Havana’s renowned historic studio Areito/EGREM, located a stone’s throw from

the Cayo Hueso barrio where he was born and raised. “That was a thrill,” he said. “I grew up listening to all the music that was recorded there in the ‘60s, ‘70s and ‘80s.”

It was a welcome-home event that proved significant if only for Martinez (who has lived in the States since 1998) getting the opportunity to collaborate with his three Cuba-based, percussion-playing brothers for the first time on record on the folkloric composition “Recuerdos.” With Antonio Martínez Campos on quinto, Mario Martínez Campos on congas and Adrián Lázaro Martínez on claves—aided by the leader’s spiritual and musical mentor, Román Díaz, on congas—the band sparked while Martinez sang with elation.

“These things happen only once in a lifetime,” he said. “I hadn’t played with them since I was 25 years old. I taught all of them how to play. So when we went to the studio, the energy was off the hook. It was unique and spiritual. I never realized how talented they all were. When they started to play, I almost cried.”

Growing up in the barrio, Martinez lacked the connections required to attend music school. “I had a lot of friends in the neighborhood who played music, so we all learned in the streets,” he said. “A lot of what you learn in the streets they don’t teach you at the school.”

Martinez learned Afro-Cuban music through his Yoruba-based santería religious life. Cayo Hueso is a neighborhood that served as one of the important birthplaces for the connection between religion and music—where African religious practices led to conga-charged music. Music and dance played a critical role in the ceremonial life of the Yoruban religious practice with the batá, imported to Cuba along with slaves from Nigeria, serving as the primary ceremonial drum.

At age 15, Díaz asked Martinez if he could be a last-minute substitute vocalist for a santería ceremony he was performing. The two became close. “Román became like my godfather in religion,” said Martinez, noting that Díaz, who came to New York in 1999, is featured on two *Habana Dreams* songs. “When I was young in Cuba, he protected me and he introduced me to a lot of musicians. He also got me out of Cuba three different times when I was playing in his band—to Costa Rica, the Canary Islands, Paris. He’s been one of my mentors, a hero.”

As a result, Martinez delved more deeply into his spirituality, finding the wellspring for his music that continues today. “For me, the most important part of the religion is the music,” he said. “When I talk about my religious life, I talk about the music. It’s given me all I need—the tenacity, the discipline, the soul.”

As a composer (he wrote or co-wrote five of *Habana Dreams*’ nine tunes), Martinez says that when he goes into his room with all his deities displayed, he finds his freshest musical



Pedrito Martinez at the 2014 Newport Jazz Festival

ideas, which eventually get turned into songs. A santería priest, he performs for local communities in New Jersey, the Bronx and Brooklyn. “People love the music and how deep you can get into the spiritual,” he said. “That’s the spine. All my ideas come from that spine.”

A major turning point for Martinez occurred when Canadian flutist/saxophonist Jane Bunnett—who had recorded her pivotal album *Spirits Of Havana* celebrating Afro-Cuban music in 1992—returned to the island in 1998 and saw him perform at Casa de la Cultura de Centro Habana in percussionist Pancho Quinto’s polyrhythmic rumba band. Bunnett decided to enlist the entire band to tour with her and her husband, trumpeter Larry Cramer, in Canada and the States. “I owe Jane a lot,” Martinez said. “The way it worked in Cuba at the time was if someone from the outside wanted to tour a group, they could do it. I learned a lot from touring with Jane, and really it was the first time I played Latin jazz with all the singing, dancing and playing.”

Martinez was 25 and he could envision a better world ahead. He didn’t return to Cuba, but instead settled into a Cuban/Latin community in New Jersey. “I saw a big potential to see a better future as a musician,” he said. “I wanted to open my mind to the other worlds—and I did it. It was the best decision I made in my life.” He already had a taste for the world of music outside of his experience as a player—listening at night to the forbidden U.S. rock ‘n’ roll radio stations that broadcast music by the likes of Rolling Stones and Kool & The Gang. “We had that in Cuba even though it wasn’t legal to listen to because of the political situation,” he said. “We loved it. All the bass players, the drummers, the singers were influenced by American music—rock, hip-hop, jazz.”

Once established Stateside, Martinez played gigs and santería ceremonies and quickly started meeting people in New York. In 2000, he received an email about the Thelonious Monk International Afro-Latin Jazz Hand Drum Competition. Martinez performed in

the contest and won a prize of \$20,000. Also in 2000, film director Fernando Trueba featured him in his Latin jazz documentary *Calle 54*.

“The Monk award opened up so many doors for me, even with percussion and drum companies giving me instruments,” he says. “Then I started playing with Paquito D’Rivera and Bryan Lynch.”

Martinez quickly realized he had a lot to learn about the jazz world. Lynch became one of his teachers. When Martinez joined a jam with the trumpeter, he was befuddled by the irregularities in the music’s time. “I didn’t know what was going on,” Martinez admitted. “He was playing a song in 5/4 time at the Zinc Bar, and I couldn’t get it. That inspired me to learn the new things. But I knew I could because I was hanging with the right cats.”

Meanwhile, Martinez’s group was finding its own voice. The band used to play multiple nights a week at the homey restaurant/venue Guantanamera in Midtown Manhattan. “Every day we played we were experimenting with sound,” he said. “We played a lot of our ideas, with breaks and different harmonies and melodies. One day I realized PMG had its own sound. We had a powerful sound, and then worked on dynamics and became more careful of the lyrics so that they had a positive message.”

As fate would have it, one night producer Narada Michael Walden stopped by Guantanamera. After the set, he invited Martinez to perform at Carnegie Hall for the biennial Rainforest Foundation benefit concert, for which Walden served as music director. The organization, founded by Sting and his wife, Trudie Styler, held benefit concerts that featured pop, rock and r&b stars. In his first year, Martinez met and played with Sting, Bruce Springsteen, Lady Gaga and Mary J. Blige. “It was magical,” he said. “They had a big setup of percussion for me, and they let me play whatever I wanted. They let me be myself.”

Word quickly spread as rock stars made their way to Guantanamera and watched in wonder as PMG tore down the house. Martinez

linked up with Eric Clapton and James Taylor, performed a concert with Paul Simon at Jazz at Lincoln Center and worked on a project with Springsteen and his wife, Patti Scialfa. "That Carnegie Hall show opened so many more doors for me," Martinez said, noting that he has since appeared on more than 100 albums.

As a leader, Martinez has recorded five albums, beginning with 2005's self-released *Mother Africa*. In 2013, he recorded the flamenco-infused *Rumba De La Isla*, a tribute to renowned Spanish flamenco singer Camarón de la Isla. In the same year, PMG released its eponymous debut for Motéma, produced by drummer Steve Gadd and featuring guitarist John Scofield and longtime mentor Wynton Marsalis on trumpet.

In the back-story for *Habana Dreams*, the headline is that Martinez recorded the bulk of the album in his homeland. But the subhead is the impressive cast of guests that the leader assembled, including fellow noteworthy Cubans: songwriter/vocalist Descemer Bueno, rapper/spoken word artist Telmary Díaz and Cuban superstar Isaac Delgado. Also appearing as a marquee guest is vocalist Angélique Kidjo, who sings in fiery Yoruban on "Tributo A Santiago De Cuba."

Marsalis returns as a guest on two tunes, including "Mi Tempestao." "I wrote that for my wife," Martinez said. "It's like going on a trip. It starts as a *timba*, then goes into a very romantic salsa and goes into a folklore place with Telmary's jazz poetry."

While they have known each other since he arrived in the U.S., Martinez developed a special relationship with Marsalis when the trumpeter asked the percussionist to teach him how to write with authenticity music for a new suite of Cuban folkloric and santería Afro-Cuban orchestral music. *Ochas* premiered at Jazz at Lincoln Center in 2014 and featured the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra, pianist Chucho Valdés and a percussion section led by Martinez, who also contributed ritual chants.

"Wynton wasn't familiar with Yoruban music and how to transport that into jazz," Martinez recalled. "And he said, 'I'm your student, Pedrito. Tell me what to do.' Well, what he did was amazing. He showed me how much respect he has for the music tradition."

Also featured is New York-based Panamanian singer/composer Rubén Blades, who animatedly converses vocally with Martinez on the traditional tune "Compa Galletano" and contributes a composition to the album, "Antadilla."

With all the high-profile guests, the fact that the PMG operates as a collective could easily be lost. Even though Martinez generally directs the repertoire, when the band hits, it's an organic, democratic experience, said five-string bassist Benavides, who's been a PMG band member since 2008. "Pedro's a magician with his hands on the congas," Benavides said. "He's the leader, but he's not selfish. He leads by letting the flow take over, so that each of us can bring our own ways of playing to the table."

At The Heath concert, PMG hit the ground running, which, frankly, surprised Benavides. "For years we played almost every day, which was how we all became so tight and got our sound," he said. "We used to play 300 days a year, but that's diminished in the last few years. Before this show, we had gone a month without seeing each other. But all that time it was as if we were accumulating energy. PMG is like an addiction. When we haven't played together for a few weeks, we need a fix."

Guests came along for the ride, including Román Díaz for a conga romp, and in jam mode young trumpeter Kalí Rodríguez-Peña, who's a Marsalis protégé. Plus, guitarist Bernie Williams dropped by and showed that he could swim in the flow the band brewed up.

Reflecting on where he is now in his career, Martinez credited PMG for much of his success. "They're the important part of how it all works," he said. "And look at this group: Alvaro is from Venezuela. Jhair, who I taught how to play percussion when he was 9 years old, is from Peru. And Edgar is from Santiago de Cuba. We could call ourselves the United Nations Band, though Dizzy Gillespie already used that term and it was United Nation Orchestra. But PMG is no orchestra, though oftentimes we sound like one. As a quartet, it's beautiful."

DB

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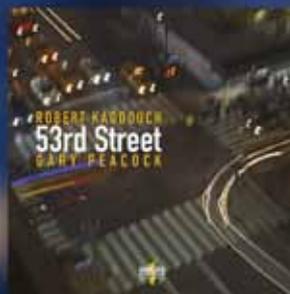
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In New York, 21 July 2015, after two days of recording, night falls and lights quickly illuminate the whole city. As Robert Kaddouch and Gary Peacock play on into the night, the origins of each musical piece and even the songs' titles start to be forgotten. What remains is a musical High Line where the musicians, like tightrope walkers, venture to new musical heights. Their first album, *53rd Street*, explored the standards. High Line ascends to a freer, more improvisatory, realm.

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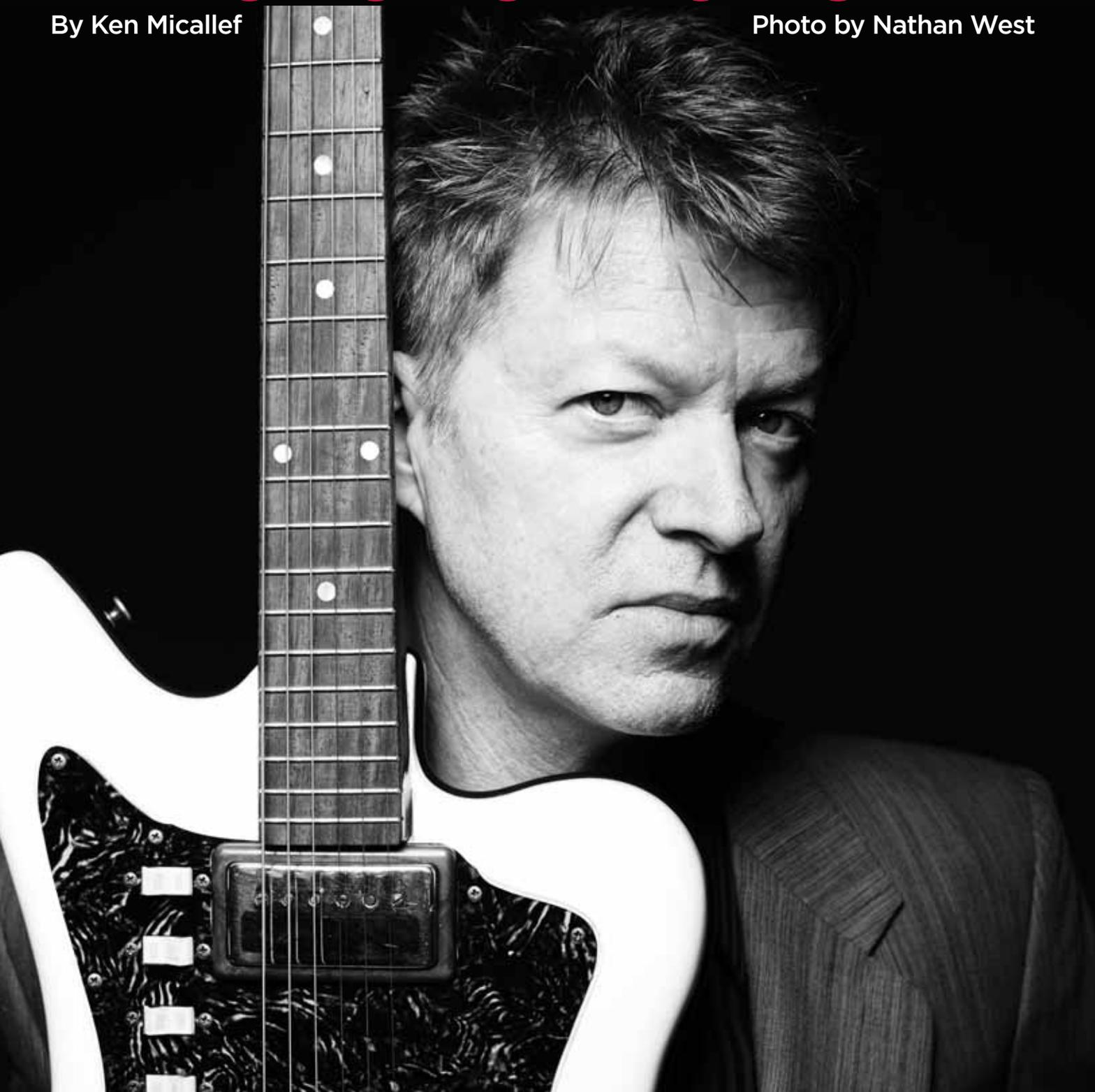


NELS CLINE

BRINGING 'LOVERS' TO LIFE

By Ken Micallef

Photo by Nathan West



Discriminating record collectors of the late '50s and early '60s knew how to make whoopee. While Hugh Hefner promoted the Playboy ideal, sound-shapers Esquivel, Les Baxter and Frank Sinatra provided the soundtrack, selecting exotica, strings and an arrow through the heart as romantic settings in which to wage amore. Sinatra's torch song trilogy—*In the Wee Small Hours*, *Where Are You?* and *Sings For Only The Lonely*—inaugurated the “doomed lovers” concept album, while Prestige Records’ “Moodsville” series of LPs encouraged midnight seduction backed by maestros Eddie “Lockjaw” Davis, Coleman Hawkins, Kenny Burrell and Shirley Scott.

B ut in today's musical climate—where eroticism is manifest in the sexualized r&b of Rihanna and the bump-and-grind synths of FKA Twigs—do torch songs stand a chance?

No one would figure Nels Cline, best known as the melody-looping guitar strangler from the rock band Wilco, as a romantic at heart. But the 60-year-old's double CD/LP set, *Lovers* (Blue Note), is a return to the torch of Sinatra, the woodwinds of Esquivel and the sensuality of Bronislau Kaper's soundtrack to *BUTterfield 8*—crossed with elements that are equally dark, furtive and unknowable.

“I wanted to cover songs from sources I was obsessed with that I thought would fit into this edgier mood-music record,” Cline explained from a Manhattan bistro. “In other words, a jazz record along the lines of Stan Getz's *Focus* or Miles Davis' *Sketches Of Spain*. Orchestrated, but maybe a little less overtly jazz. I wanted to include songs from movies and musicals, improvisation, original material and a certain amount of indeterminacy. That's always part of my deal.”

Produced by David Breskin with orchestral arrangements by trumpeter Michael Leonhart, *Lovers* is a stunning recording, featuring uniquely crafted renditions of standards, show tunes and Cline's original material. Obscure vehicles like “The Search For Cat,” a little-known Henry Mancini soundtrack interlude, and the theme from 1974's *The Night Porter*, the Italian film about sexual and sadomasochistic obsession, widen the album's considerable arc. Leonhart masterfully conjured the vibe of Satyajit Ray's films for some songs, Johnny Pate and J.J. Johnson's blaxploitation scores for others.

“We wanted minimal, lush and cinematic,” Leonhart said. “I envisioned a Third Stream, Gil Evans approach. We used elements of progressive mid-century classical music and avant-garde. It was important to have strings and woodwinds and bassoon. [We also used] celeste, vibraphone, marimba, different gongs. That gave us some really cool colors.”

Leonhart's vision inclined to the cerebral and graphic, Cline's to the emotional and intuitive.

“I first thought of *Lovers* as a mood-music record that would function like wallpaper music,” Cline explained. “Or something that would create an atmosphere that was darker, murkier and a little more transgressive and that went *beyond* romance. Mood-music records were mostly designed to create an atmosphere of romance. They often depicted an opera clutch, a jeweled glove, cigarettes and two martini glasses on the cover. You'd put the record on your fancy KLH Model Twenty Integrated Stereo, mix the martinis, then snuggle with your beloved on the couch and hope for the best.”

Julian Lage—who recorded the 2014 duo album *Room* (Mack Avenue) with Cline and toured with him to promote it—was enlisted to play rhythm guitar on *Lovers*.

Cline's jazz lineage runs deep, including work with Wadada Leo Smith as well as departed titans Charlie Haden, Julius Hemphill and Eric Von Essen (his bandmate in the group Quartet Music). Cline is a polyglot guitar wizard, his journeys into punk (The Crew of the Flying Saucer), microtonal music (Acoustic Guitar Trio), free-jazz (The Nels Cline Singers) and rock (Wilco, The Geraldine Fibbers) all suitable vehicles for his outrageous skill set. But *Lovers* is something altogether different.

“In terms of both its inspiration and its execution, *Lovers* has unusual breadth and depth,” Breskin said. “Nels recorded fully orchestrated pieces as old as a 1929 Jerome Kern song (‘Why Was I Born?’) and classics by Rogers and Hart (‘Glad To Be Unhappy’) to contemporary songs by Sonic Youth and Arto Lindsay, right through to his own tunes. Within all that, there is a focus on romance and romanticism. Michael Leonhart had a significant role on the *sound* of the record as did our engineer, Ron Saint Germain. We were going for ‘stark lush’ or ‘sumptuous minimalism’ and an un-ironic and unapologetic sense of ravishing beauty—but not nostalgia.”

Cline, a native of Los Angeles, first envisioned a concept album titled *Lovers* in the 1980s, back when he was a worker bee at the L.A. record shop Rhino Records.

“My *Lovers* list for the past 25 years was getting longer and longer,” Cline recalled. “The first impulse was to create a darker mood-music record including the theme from *The Night Porter*, my version of ‘Cry, Want’ by Jimmy Giuffre and Annette Peacock's suite [‘So Hard It Hurts/Touching’] from Paul Bley's *Ballads* [ECM, 1971]. It's a pure obsession, an aesthetic choice based on things that I love and feel. I felt that aesthetically, musically, *Lovers* would fill a niche and be something I would want to buy.”

Containing 18 instrumental tracks, *Lovers* requires more than a casual listen to fully grasp its concept and beauty. Though Cline claimed *Lovers* wasn't written as a suite, the album's four vinyl sides (or two CDs) follow an unfolding narrative that should be listened to in a single sitting. Performances from trumpeter Steven Bernstein, clarinetist Ben Goldberg, harpist Zeena Parkins, percussionist Kenny Wollesen, drummer Alex Cline (Nels' brother), keyboardist Yuka C. Honda (Nels' wife) and 17 other musicians create a complex sonic world. *Lovers* is like a new lover: Investing time yields rich rewards.

“The songs have references to deviant love, twisted love, tortured love, unrequited love, fulfilled love, timeless love,” Leonhart said. “Nels is

a profound thinker and poet. He is highly aware of the lyrics to each song, their significance and structure. He's approaching them as a well-versed poet combined with a 'downtown' jazz musician mixed with the encyclopedic knowledge of a record store owner."

Lovers opens with the expectant orchestral tones of Cline's "Introduction," followed by his "Diaphanous," a lush ballad framed by a lovely, radiant guitar solo.

"'Diaphanous' is similar to Bill Evans' 'Peace Piece,'" Cline said. "The roses and hearts come later with 'Beautiful Love,' which originally appeared in [the 1932 film] *The Mummy* with Boris Karloff. It's in 3/4; Kenny Wollesen's vibraphone has the fast motor going to get that 1930s sound. I didn't want any of this to be kitsch, but I did want to reflect a certain amount of musical history."

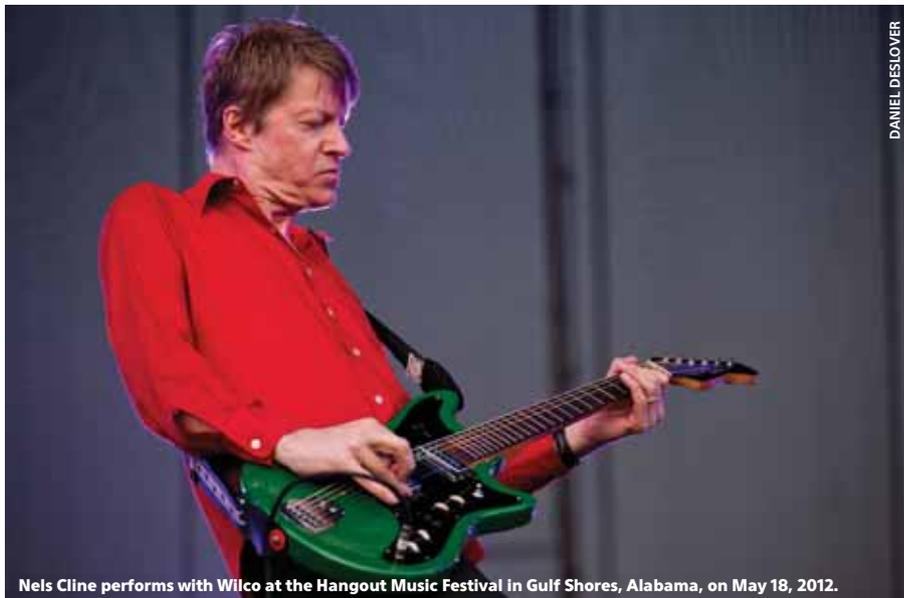
A rich, mournful take on "Glad To Be Unhappy" is followed by another Cline original, then Giuffre's desolate "Cry, Want," a spectral vision in Cline's hands.

"'Cry, Want' is the first time we allude to dark longing," Cline explained. "It's a blues, but a very oblique re-imagining of blues form. Almost every piece Giuffre wrote around that time was some kind of a blues; 'Cry, Want' is an emotionally vague blues. I've always wanted to record it with bass flutes and marimba to create an orchestrated texture. That is the antithesis of the Jimmy Giuffre Trio in 1961, which was so spare, just piano, clarinet and bass. So the first time we are introduced to the idea of longing on the album is not wistful in a flowery way."

Side two opens with an explosive version of Gabor Szabo's "Lady Gabor," originally heard on Chico Hamilton's 1962 LP *Passin' Thru*.

"I wanted an atmospheric drone in the track, something trippy," Cline said. "The song is my idea of a good atmosphere for some kind of intimate activities. I was thinking John Coltrane's *Africa/Brass* [1961] and Gary McFarland's *America The Beautiful: An Account Of Its Disappearance* [1968]. Michael nailed the orchestrations. We merged two takes, one with no drums, and one with drums and better improvisation, where you can really hear all my guitar looping and effects."

Also on side two is Cline's unusual, swinging, poly-textural take on Sammy Fain's "Secret Love," including a nod to one of the guitarist's heroes. "I play a chord cluster that is like a heartbeat," Cline said. "Then I play it intentionally in A-flat major, which is the key Jim Hall used when he played the song on his album, *Live In Tokyo* [1976]. That's why I fell in love with the song. When I heard it with Michael's completed arrangement, I got so excited and I couldn't wait to play it for Jim. He would be so entertained that I played it in his key and I played a couple of his lines. But he passed away the last day of tracking. So he never got to hear it.



Nels Cline performs with Wilco at the Hangout Music Festival in Gulf Shores, Alabama, on May 18, 2012.

"So much of the record is an homage to Jim Hall," Cline continued. "I hope in some other ineffable plane that he gets to hear this music. We also did 'Beautiful Love,' which is my homage to Bill Evans in that we alternate between 3/4 and 4/4, which he often did in his trios. My playing there is also inspired by hearing Jim Hall and John Abercrombie play it. When people like Abercrombie, John Scofield, Bill Frisell and Marc Ribot hear this [album], they're going to know where I am thanking them."

Lovers grows darker as the program unfurls, decisively twisting on "The Night Porter/Max, Mon Amour," two soundtrack themes rolled into one. It's a gloomy vision, with literal chains being dragged and strings rubbed, slid, looped and delayed as drummer Alex Cline mightily swings his brushes.

"'The Night Porter' is the pivotal moment on the album," Cline confirmed. "I've been obsessed with the film actress Charlotte Rampling since the late '70s. The movie is essentially an investigation of a dominance and submission dynamic that I find to be not only compelling, but extremely romantic. The couple, played by Rampling and Dirk Bogarde, has thrown everything away to rekindle their bond. I added to that the music from another Charlotte Rampling movie, *Max, Mon Amour*. It's another transgressive story, a black comedy directed by Nagisa Oshima. The [film has a] little theme by Michel Portal, a free-jazz saxophonist from the '70s. I put the two themes together to create a suite dedicated to Charlotte Rampling."

Continuing Cline's mood-music epic, semi-faithful versions of Sonic Youth's "Snare Girl" and Annette Peacock's "So Hard It Hurts/Touching" are followed by the exquisitely tender and dramatic "The Search For Cat" from the 1961 film classic *Breakfast at Tiffany's*.

"I am obsessed with this interlude, which at

times is a melodic variation on 'Moon River,'" Cline explained. "[The interlude] is not on the [commercial] soundtrack. This is one of the most poignant, incredible, romantically charged scenes in the history of cinema. And the music is *insane*. From there we go into the last song, 'The Bond.' There is a common tone from the last chord of the Mancini song into 'The Bond.' When we realized we could connect these two pieces, my entire universe went electric. It was the most romantic thing to me ever, personally."

Cline's "The Bond" closes *Lovers* on a note of optimism and sweet finality. The closing, resounding chord may be the most starry-eyed moment in Cline's entire discography.

"I dedicated 'The Bond' to my wife, Yuka Honda," Cline revealed. "That piece is how Julian and I have been closing our duo shows for a while. It's so conclusive and very restrained, yet romantic. I knew it would end the album on a much lighter note than if I had made the record in the '80s."

Cline's fans are legion, and his work is deeply revered by colleagues, such as Lage. "Nels has such a beautiful focus, and when there's something he wants to do and make happen, it's very easy to take it seriously," Lage said. "You know he means business. It's a powerful thing to witness someone with Nels' level of conviction."

Cline's 25-year-old vision for *Lovers* has finally become a reality.

"Now I can die," Cline laughed. "I came through the experience in one piece and I don't sound horrible on the record, and I even like my own tunes. I didn't put my tunes on the record to say, 'Look, my shit holds up!' It was just to represent my aesthetic dreams. Michael Leonhart did such a beautiful job. To hear the music and know these are my tunes, it was completely mind-blowing. So I've realized that sometimes I do really like my own music." **DB**



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CAMERON GRAVES

TAKING CHARGE, TAKING FLIGHT

Anyone tuned in to the jazz world over the past year knows the name and/or sound of Kamasi Washington. The saxophonist-bandleader has loomed large over the scene, with recent accolades that include three wins in the 2016 DownBeat Critics Poll, including top jazz album, for his ambitious three-disc set *The Epic* (Brainfeeder). The saga of the late-blooming jazz star, who has been working as a sideman in r&b and hip-hop while honing his jazz persona for 20 years, is now a thickening and widening plot, including the public flowering of his close musical allies, such as Cameron Graves, the dynamic pianist who contributed to *The Epic*.

After playing with Washington and the surrounding coalition of players known as the West Coast Get Down, along with a more recent spot in Stanley Clarke's band, the technically potent and stylistically expansive Graves is stepping into the spotlight with his solo project, *Planetary Prince*—which is also a nickname. The album, which was recorded in one long session and yielded enough material for two volumes, blends Graves' jazz-entrenched and mostly acoustic style with elements that reflect his interest in rock, r&b and hip-hop.

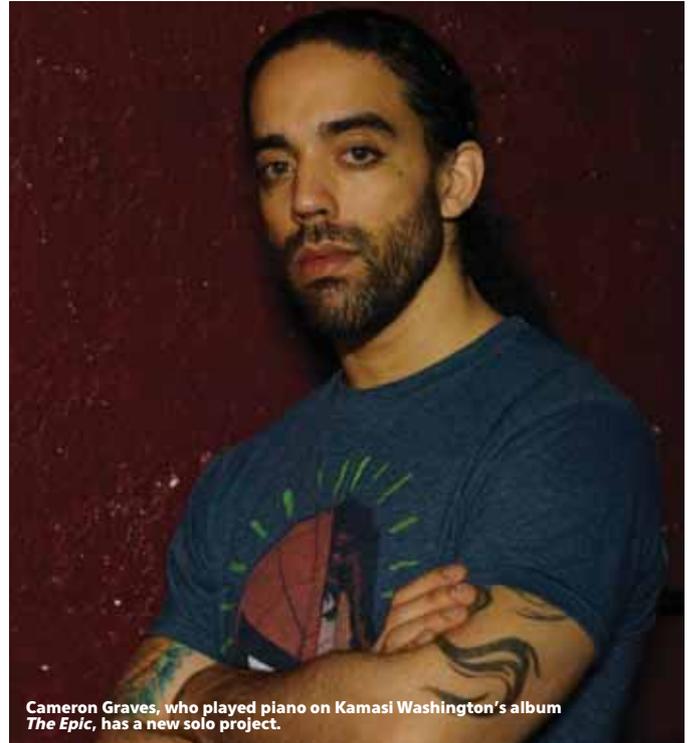
Graves has woodshedded and creatively conspired with Washington and other jazz-obsessed Los Angeles-born and bred musicians since high school in the mid-'90s. They formed the seminal group The Young Jazz Giants as teenagers. The list includes the Bruner brothers—drummer Ronald Bruner Jr. and well-known bassist Stephen “Thundercat” Bruner—and trombonist Ryan Porter, all appearing on Graves' new album (along with electric bass wizard Hadrien Feraud and gifted trumpeter Philip Dizack).

When asked if he is a multi-tasker, Graves chuckled and said, “I don't know if I'm a good multi-tasker, but I just make it happen. I try not to turn down gigs, especially gigs with my friends and business partners. I've known Kamasi since high school and I have always sacrificed and wanted to perform with Kamasi, whatever gigs he had. A long time ago, he would just get little, small gigs, and I would do all of that. As he started getting bigger, I tried to still keep in there, still keep doing those gigs. But then I also got this Stanley Clarke gig.”

Washington can still recall the heady adolescent era of collective fervor, solidarity and one-upmanship he experienced in high school with Graves and other friends, all partly inspired by the example of John Coltrane. “We would go to my house and play one song for four hours, because we heard [Coltrane] did that,” Washington said. “Ron Bruner Jr. and I would play sax and drums for hours and hours. We would be practicing night and day. Cameron was into that same thing, so he would call and ask, ‘How long did you practice today?’”

Music, and not just jazz, was an ever-present force in the Graves household, partly through the influence of his father, Carl Graves, an r&b singer whose single “Baby, Hang Up The Phone” was a Top 20 hit in 1974. “My dad was always listening to jazz, to Coltrane and things like that, but also to old-school r&b—Otis Redding, Jackie Wilson. Because of that, I grew up with that kind of sound, but I was in both worlds at the same time. I was also into classical music. I never stopped playing classical—I performed recitals and I loved Chopin. As soon as hip-hop started exploding in the mid-'90s with Missy Elliott, me and my brother Taylor started doing hip-hop productions.”

The Graves Brothers delved into studio work, learning to use Digital Performer and Logic and writing, producing and performing for film, television and rock projects—even a certain metal band fronted by an actress. “I wrote that whole *Wicked Wisdom* record for Jada Pinkett Smith,” he recalled. “We toured a long time with that, back in 2005, and played the Ozzfest.”



Cameron Graves, who played piano on Kamasi Washington's album *The Epic*, has a new solo project.

From Ozzfest to the jazz festival circuit? “Absolutely!” he said with a laugh. “But this time around, I'm trying to really do my thing with ‘Planetary Prince.’ Basically what that's going to be is a rock star of the jazz world.”

Just as Washington's band has broken through barriers of demographics and bookings—playing in “rock” settings (including the Coachella and Bonnaroo festivals this year) and other non-jazz contexts—Graves' music promises to appeal to a broader listenership. But he is entering into accessibility on his own terms.

“I have this new style,” he explained, “which is like aggressive metal jazz, but with piano. It's time to bring it to the forefront. I've had it for a while, but I really want to stretch out now. I think that it could work in conjunction with what Kamasi and Stephen are doing, to where it's now pushing jazz into this new realm. Everybody is going to pay attention to it, because it has this spirituality to it—especially Kamasi's stuff, with an Afro-centric spirituality. Mine would have more of a rock feel, like an Aerosmith or a Rolling Stones, but instead with jazz, with piano.”

“We're going to make it this mainstream thing. We're trying to bring virtuosic music to the mainstream, and not be so underground.”

Despite all the artistic peaks that Graves has enjoyed, his musical trajectory thus far has mostly been via underground, behind-the-scenes and decidedly “indie” pathways. Whatever the record company or logistical/distribution fate of *Planetary Prince*, and other projects to come out of the West Coast Get Down mothership, maintaining independent creative operations is a primary way of doing business—and making art—for them.

“There's a new way of going about that business today,” Graves said, “because the business has changed. It's kind of like you have to do everything yourself. You have to get your record together, you have to mix it and master it, get the package together with artwork and everything. You do it all the way up, so that it's a complete package.”

—Josef Woodard



Melody Gardot
Live At The Olympia Paris

Filed in October 2015, *Live At The Olympia Paris* captures Melody Gardot in concert, focusing primarily on songs from her most recent album "Currency Of Man" and 2009's "My One And Only Thrill" with a couple of surprise tracks thrown in for good measure.



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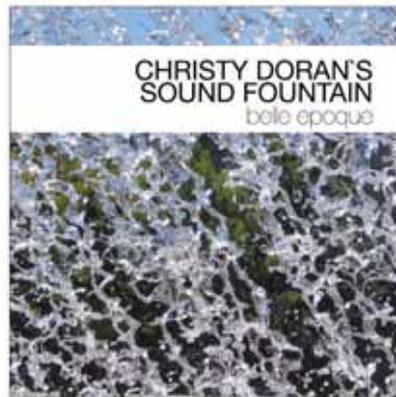


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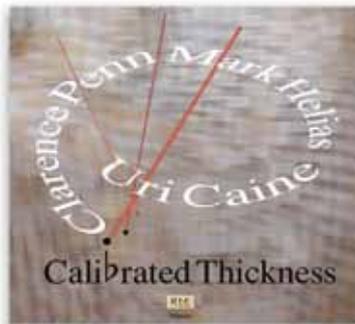


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RUSS NOLAN

DO THE HUSTLE

In-demand saxophonist Russ Nolan knows well enough that artists trying to establish themselves in a crowded, competitive environment cannot rely solely on talent to ensure a modicum of success (or even a sustainable wage). Indeed, it is his regular focus on self-promotion and aggressive networking that has made a difference when it comes to generating opportunities that have moved his career forward. Ten years of experience in sales and marketing from the early stages of his musical career helped, too.

“Selling people a product or service is not much different than selling what you do to strangers,” Nolan said prior to a recent trio gig at a social gathering hosted by a church on Manhattan’s Upper West Side. “That’s why I don’t get freaked out by the sales aspect of the music business. It is about staying organized and being methodical—making lists, creating a database, cold calling and keeping in touch. Most importantly, I make sure that I’m always easy to reach: I never want to lose a gig or miss hearing about something new because of a lack of communication.”

Nolan’s enthusiastic involvement in a wide variety of musical endeavors keeps his phone ringing. Since moving to New York City in 2002, he has made a name for himself as a forceful and dexterous practitioner on tenor and soprano saxophones with a growing expertise in Latin rhythms and musical styles—kindled initially through weekly dance excursions with his wife, Luz. In recent years he has been leading his own jazz ensemble (usually a quartet or quintet) and a salsa band for dancers, picking up corporate and wedding jobs when he can, and working with students as a clinician—the fruits of making connections and cultivating relationships.

“Hustling and doing what’s necessary to compete and survive—it’s not different for artists or those working in a corporation,” Nolan said. “The nice thing is my hard work gets me closer to achieving my goals, and the result is something I enjoy: being able to make music.”

Nolan’s continuous striving for new professional vistas and opportunities correlates with his output of recordings as well, with the steady appearance of four CDs in the last five years, including the newly released *Sanctuary From The Ordinary: Live At Firehouse 12*. Picking up on the nickname “Rhino” given to him by a fellow salesperson many years ago (“He said I liked to charge ahead,” the saxophonist said), Nolan releases his CDs on his own label, Rhinocerus Music. The inherent latitude on self-produced, self-released recordings allows Nolan to feature his own original compositions and choose his bandmates, oversee the album design and offer explanatory notes on the tunes, all of which help to personalize “the product” and bring the listener closer to the artist.

Making the most out of every situation is the hallmark of every DIY musical artist, and the recording of *Sanctuary* stands as a good example of how an enterprising performer looks to synchronize events and opportunities. The May 2015 “live” recording of Nolan and his working band—pianist Mike Eckroth, bassist Daniel Foose and drummer Brian Fishler—was put in motion a year earlier when he booked a gig at the New Haven, Connecticut, Firehouse 12 performance space only to discover that it was a studio facility as well.

“I wrote a lot of new music knowing we’d be able to record it there, and fortunately I was able to get a bunch of other gigs with the band right before,” Nolan said. “It was all one take—11 songs from two sets. I picked the best nine.” Similarly, Nolan will turn an out-of-town job as a clinician into a mini-tour, booking shows and gathering local musicians from a large array of contacts to join him on the bandstand. Once the gigs are set, Nolan then sends out e-blasts to one of the few dozen region-specific email lists he has generat-



Hard-working saxophonist Russ Nolan has his own label.

ed from previous visits to different areas around the country.

Full of moxie and positive thinking, Nolan, 48, grew up in a small town an hour north of Chicago. After earning his bachelor’s degree in performance from the University of North Texas in 1991, he moved to the Windy City to start his music career. “I called every music and club listing in the Yellow Pages and really pushed hard to find work,” he said. To this day, the saxophonist has never had a booking agent. To help support himself, he found work as a salesperson, first in the insurance business, then in the natural gas market. Even after moving to New York, Nolan continued to work for several years as a Midwest sales rep for Northfield, Illinois-based Gand Music and Sound, which helped beef up contacts and secure his many jazz workshop and clinician gigs.

Nolan’s musical evolution has kept pace with the development of his career’s business side. Chicago-area mentors like conductor-composer Cliff Colnot and Bloom School of Music founder David Bloom imparted on him helpful insights on being a professional musician. Studying with pianist Kenny Werner and saxophonists Dave Liebman, Chris Potter, Joel Frahm and John Ellis advanced Nolan’s technical prowess. He credited pianist Manuel Valera, who appears on his 2013 album, *Relentless*, in shaping his view of how Afro-Caribbean and pan-African rhythmic styles can be merged with modern jazz harmony.

In the meantime, Nolan has managed to earn a black belt in martial arts while also maintaining a steady presence on the salsa dance circuit around New York City. Incredibly, he does not own a car and utilizes mass transportation for most of his gigs.

“Every move Russ makes is a smart calculation,” said Fishler, who first appeared on the saxophonist’s acclaimed 2012 album, *Tell Me*. “There’s nothing he isn’t aware of. He is a master of getting his music out to the public on a consistent basis.”

—Thomas Staudter

Louis Heriveaux
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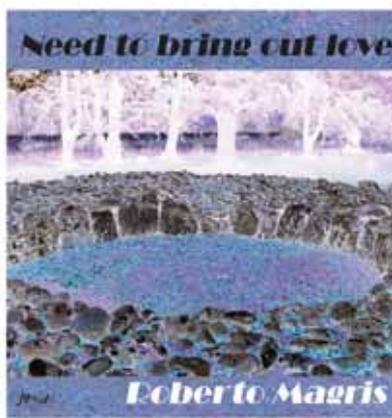
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INDIE LIFE

MOONJUNE RECORDS

IGNORING BOUNDARIES

Leonardo Pavkovic has had many jobs in the music industry, but the most impressive one is label founder. His MoonJune Records is celebrating its 15th year as a label dedicated to jazz, world music, fusion and other progressive styles. After working as a graphic designer (some of Pavkovic's designs adorn MoonJune covers), what sparked the idea to found a label was his relentless work on behalf of artists as a producer, tour manager and promoter. Founded in June 2001, the label's name comes from Soft Machine drummer Robert Wyatt's "The Moon In June."

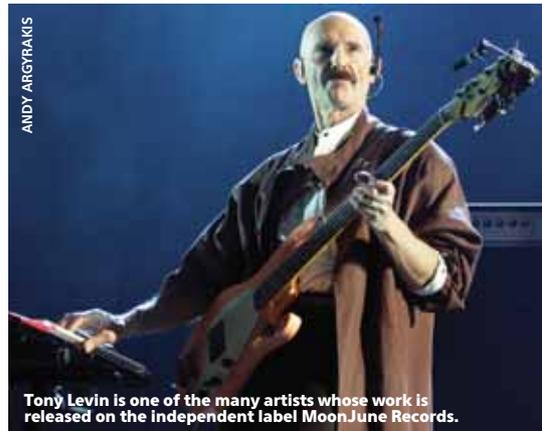
"What I have tried to do over the years," said the 54-year-old Pavkovic from his New York City home, "is find and record musicians from many parts of the world." And while it isn't easy to pigeonhole the diverse MoonJune catalog, one thing Pavkovic has always stressed is the importance of "ignoring musical boundaries" to showcase "challenging music without sounding 'over-produced.'"

This experimental cocktail of sounds, along with artful album covers, sets MoonJune apart from not only mainstream labels but most independent labels as well. Whether the music originates in Indonesia, Japan, Italy, Slovenia or New York, it appears that Pavkovic, who was born in the former Yugoslavia, has the planet pretty well covered.

Iconic electric guitarist Allan Holdsworth has credited Pavkovic with "getting his career going again." Cutting-edge experimental bands like The Wrong Object and douBt are known worldwide because of MoonJune. The same can be said of keyboardist Vasil Hadzimanov's refreshing, engaging fusion band featuring American alto player David Binney. And Pavkovic has been a major promoter of not only Holdsworth but another, related band with roots in the 1960s, the legendary Soft Machine.

Bassist and stick player Tony Levin represents one of many established artists on MoonJune. "Our recent Stick Men tour was booked by MoonJune, and the album [*Midori*] was released simultaneously," he said. "A lot of the heavy lifting was done for us so we could concentrate on making the live show as good as we could."

Boasting an impressive catalog of more than 80 titles, MoonJune has released (or reissued) such noteworthy albums as Holdsworth's *None Too Soon* and *Blues For Tony*, his tribute to Tony



ANDY ARGYRAKIS
Tony Levin is one of the many artists whose work is released on the independent label MoonJune Records.

Williams; guitarist Mark Wingfield's *Proof Of Light*; guitarist Dewa Budjana's *Hasta Karma*; and prog-rock band simakDialog's *Live At Orion*.

Additional recommended releases include drummer Jason Smith's *Tipping Point* with Gary Husband and Dave Carpenter, the late saxophonist Elton Dean and guitar experimentalist Mark Hewing's duo tour de force *Bar Torque*, and Machine Mass' *Inti* (featuring Dave Liebman). Due in October is the large-ensemble *Pasar Klewer* project by pianist Dwiki Dharmawan.

Pavkovic's experience booking and promoting shows has informed his approach as a label head: "My first 'professionally' booked gig was in May 2002, when I went to Japan for the first time, booking the legendary Italian prog-rock band PFM. Since then, I have booked over 60 tours in Japan and I have been to Japan 29 times. That same year I took PFM to Venezuela, Panama and Mexico. I have booked several thousands of gigs in over 40 countries, directly or indirectly, booking individual gigs and festivals by myself, or using agencies in Europe to book the band that I represented."

Pavkovic has five employees, but he also wears many hats. "I do everything myself: label, booking, management," he said. "When needed, I get some help from local New York City friends, who help me to do mailings. I have a guy in Florida who does my website [moonjune.com] and some social media, plus some publicity. I also do my own publicity and have a very big database of people who review prog, jazz, fusion, and avant music all around the planet." And, as he modestly added, "All my albums generate tons of press."

—John Epland



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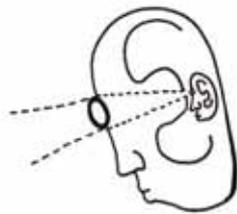
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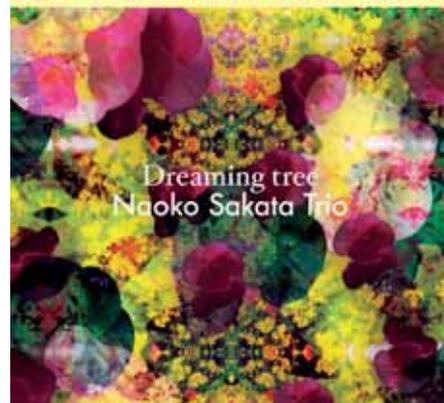
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Kirk Knuffke (left), Bobby Previte, Charlie Hunter and Curtis Fowlkes



JOHN ABBOTT

Charlie Hunter *Everybody Has A Plan Until They Get Punched In The Mouth*

GROUNDUP/UNIVERSAL B002522102

★★★★★

Charlie Hunter, who simultaneously limns bass lines, chords and melodies on his seven-string guitar, showcases a dandy new quartet featuring longtime and sometime collaborators Bobby Previte (drums) and Curtis Fowlkes (trombone), plus robust 2015 DownBeat Critics Poll winner Kirk Knuffke (cornet). As usual with Hunter, *Everybody* carves a deep groove, with lots of space between the instruments and elbow room for soloists. Blues is the lodestar, from the sweet moan of the rural—one of the tunes is by Big Bill Broonzy—to the biting twang of the urban, though a dub feel steals in, too.

Such an album could easily fall into finger-popping clichés, but Hunter's imaginative settings and inventive solos ensure that it does not. Though the hard-boiled song titles are funny—the album apparently takes its name from a comment made by boxer Mike Tyson—Hunter doesn't deal in Marc Ribot-style irony. He's a puncher, not a pundit.

The keeper here is "We Don't Want Nobody Sent," in which Hunter's tangy solo leaps tall buildings in a single interval. On "(Wish I Was) Already Paid And On My Way Home," Knuffke trades in funky Armstrong, but Fowlkes seems to have flat-out channeled Kid Ory on the polyphonic weave that is "Big Bill's Blues." Other standout tracks include the noir title track, with its suspenseful bass line, and the uptempo "Leave Him Lay," which features biting brass staccatos, a sighing bridge, elephant roars from Fowlkes and a Bix-y sweet flow from Knuffke.

—Paul de Barros

Everybody Has A Plan Until They Get Punched In The Mouth: Everybody Has A Plan Until They Get Punched In The Mouth; (Looks Like) Someone Got Ahead Of Schedule On Their Medication; Leave Him Lay; We Don't Want Nobody Sent; Big Bill's Blues; Latin For Travelers; No Money No Honey; Who Put You Behind The Wheel; (Wish I Was) Already Paid And On My Way Home; The Guys. Get. Shirts. (52:20)

Personnel: Charlie Hunter, seven-string guitar; Bobby Previte, drums; Curtis Fowlkes, trombone; Kirk Knuffke, cornet.

Ordering info: groundupmusic.net



Joe Lovano Quartet *Classic! Live At Newport*

BLUE NOTE 602547950383

★★★★½

The Newport Jazz Festival brings out the best in these veterans. Maybe it's a place where comfort, camaraderie and all the sailboats ease the need to prove what's already been proved. In this decade-old set from Newport '05, saxophonist Joe Lovano and his principal co-star, pianist Hank Jones, offer a half-dozen road-tested titles cherry-picked from various Lovano-Jones CDs from the mid-aughts. So don't look for new material or untested directions. For many of Lovano's fans, I suspect, it's the sort of

Erik Friedlander *Rings*

SKIPSTONE

★★★★½

Cellist Erik Friedlander is almost too amiable a melodicist to be such a natural fit for the Downtown New York scene. But his music is so flexible and inventive that he has earned himself a top slot there, working extensively with John Zorn and Dave Douglas and making lots of his own music. You could push a comparison with guitarist Bill Frisell too far, but it's not a bad place to start. Friedlander's compositions, like Frisell's, are often folksy and playful, but the cellist is an impeccable player and can head into more heady territory with ease.

Rings is the second project with Friedlander's trio Black Phebe, which he assembled to record the soundtrack for a 2012 film called *Nothing On Earth*. The backstory is helpful, because these pieces, too, have a cinematic vibe, occasionally slightly wanting for an image to accompany. This seems more pronounced on tracks where Shoko Nagai is playing piano, like "Tremors" and "Black Phebe," where everything's so consonant the energy drains away. Nagai is more convincing to me here on accordion, playing great Friedlander lines like "Small Things" or adding crunchy electronics and inside piano on "Canoe."

low-risk, straightforward comfort food they've been waiting for. So enjoy.

Lovano, Jones and bassist Mraz (with Lewis Nash replacing Paul Motian on drums here) revisit "Bird's Eye View," "Six And Four" and "Don't Ever Leave Me" from *Joyous Encounter* (also 2005). All are opened up to at least twice their earlier size, making clear that much was left unsaid the first time through. Lovano and Jones are stimulating and attentive conversationalists, always listening and often picking up on each other's quips. On "Don't Ever Leave Me," Jones lands his solo with a witty little descending sequence, like a child slapping at the keyboard. That would be the end of it, except that Lovano's ear spots it, picks it up and echoes it in lift-off.

Lovano is a player of many ancestors whose roots in bebop have lived to sprout branches that breathed the freer air of what we called in the old days "the new thing." His tenor can swing one minute, swoon the next—"I'm All For You" is largely cut from the classic romantic tenor sound—and then pop off the kind of throaty growls and zigzags that became the stuff of musical revolt in the 1960s.

—John McDonough

Classic! Live At Newport: Big Ben; Bird's Eye View; Don't Ever Leave Me; I'm All For You; Kids Are Pretty People; Six And Four. (57:48)

Personnel: Joe Lovano, tenor saxophone; Hank Jones, piano; George Mraz, bass; Lewis Nash, drums.

Ordering info: bluenote.com



Percussionist Satoshi Takeishi is integral, adding hand percussion and cymbals, extending the color range and punctuating grooves like "Flycatcher."

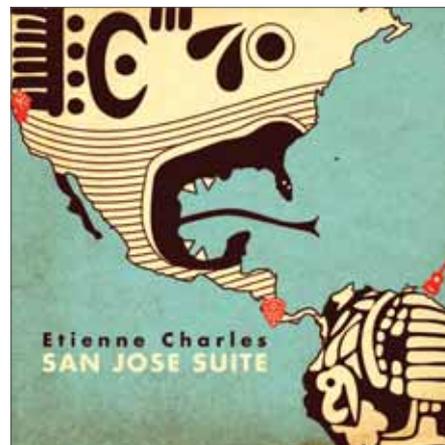
Friedlander's cello is at the group's core, and it's as sumptuous and woody as ever. On "Waterwheel," he's gently multitracked, a little cello choir, while on "Risky Business" he saws at a Balkan melody.

—John Corbett

Rings: The Seducer; Black Phebe; A Single Eye; Fracture; Risky Business; Tremors; Small Things; Solve Me; Canoe; Waterwheel; Flycatcher; Silk. (66:26)

Personnel: Erik Friedlander, cello; Shoko Nagai, piano, accordion, electronics; Satoshi Takeishi, percussion.

Ordering info: erikfriedlander.com



Etienne Charles *San Jose Suite*

CULTURE SHOCK ECO06

★★★★½

Seems like many cultural rainbows begin and end in political tension, so perhaps it's wise to hear trumpeter Etienne Charles' buoyant 10-part collage as a narrative arc highlighting the sense of invention that lies behind the passions of resistance. As the talented trumpeter explores the history of various locales named San Jose—in Costa Rica, California and his native Trinidad—he and his sextet concoct a variety of vivid temperaments. From celebration to defiance, each is as engaging as the next.

Although it has an amiable glide to it, "Boruca" is inspired by a festival that recalls battles between Costa Rica's indigenous peoples and Spanish conquistadors. Esprit and sobriety share space in the band's rendering, which illustrates a group trait sustained throughout the disc: The musicians are utterly casual, but radically tight. "Limon" is built on a steady rhythmic push, a tribute to the work of community building. It's balanced by the elan of "Cahuita," which fairly prances in its calypso-slanted revelry.

Charles' inspirations aren't entirely ancient. The ensemble's glance at California's San Jose has to do with the area's wealth imbalance in a post-Silicon Valley era, and the roiling "Speed City," a modern broadside that waxes funky while launching a spoken-word blast, recounts the revolts over segregation that once marked the campus of San Jose State University. Here the folkloric lyricism that started the album morphs into modern turbulence. As the transition takes place, it's pretty obvious that Charles has delivered a potent punch.

—Jim Macnie

San Jose Suite: Boruca; Limon; Cahuita; Hyarima; Revolt; Juego De Los Diablos; Muwekma; Song For Minh; Gold Rush 2.0; Speed City Intro; Speed City; Speed City (Reprise). (55:10)

Personnel: Etienne Charles, trumpet, percussion; Brian Hogan, alto saxophone; Alex Wintz, guitar; Victor Gould, piano, Fender Rhodes, organ; Ben Williams, bass; John Davis, drums, Dr. Harry Edwards, spoken word (10–12).

Ordering info: etiennearcharles.com

The Hot Box

Critics	John McDonough	John Corbett	Jim Macnie	Paul de Barros
Charlie Hunter <i>Everybody Has A Plan ...</i>	★★★	★★★★½	★★★½	★★★★
Joe Lovano Quartet <i>Classic! Live At Newport</i>	★★★½	★★★★½	★★★★	★★★★
Erik Friedlander <i>Rings</i>	★★	★★★½	★★★★	★★★★½
Etienne Charles <i>San Jose Suite</i>	★★★	★★★	★★★½	★★★

Critics' Comments

Charlie Hunter, *Everybody Has A Plan Until They Get Punched In The Mouth*

A lot of slow, funky blues with touches of New Orleans fundamentalism lurking on the sides. Fowlkes' smears, shouting plunger solos deliver a second layer of gritty counterpoint to Hunter's shimmering preachments. The music has an elementary authority that locks in quickly, holds its ground and reveres its sheer physicality. —John McDonough

Full-force joy, lots of New Orleans-style heterophony, all naturally recorded and played in a relaxed setting—with the sweetest band in hand. Hunter's more recent run of releases has converted me to fandom. —John Corbett

By betting the farm on the blues, this cagey quartet brings a big dose of swag to its gritty rambles. Knuffke and Fowlkes sound like long-lost brothers. —Jim Macnie

Joe Lovano Quartet, *Classic! Live At Newport*

Now that's a sexy lineup. It's how I prefer to hear Lovano, relaxed and in a straightforward setting, with challenging peers like Jones, who's kicking butt near life's end. —John Corbett

Joe and Hank had a win-win rapport, the saxophonist's brusque eloquence nudging the pianist's signature elan toward the rowdy side. You can appreciate Jones' graceful sway on "Big Ben." —Jim Macnie

Makes you wish you'd been there. But then, with this album, you almost are. Interesting to be reminded of how much Lovano has drawn from Sonny Rollins. And what a treat to hear the silky flow of Hank Jones. —Paul de Barros

Erik Friedlander, *Rings*

A rather barren lunar landscape. The music is quietly cold, open and shapeless, content in its isolated emotional ambiguity. Like movie music, its airless beauty demands a visual counterpoint to express. On its own, its artistry is passive, existing in a catatonic half-life awaiting the kiss of life. —John McDonough

Poise defines almost every move the inventive cellist makes, and this go-anywhere, do-anything trio has the personality of three or four discrete ensembles. —Jim Macnie

Playful, intimate, occasionally "out"—or as quiet as a Scandinavian snowscape—this lovely music feeds the soul. —Paul de Barros

Etienne Charles, *San Jose Suite*

The notes have a travelogue quality, but the music, underpinned by lenient Latin rhythms, sustains nicely. Charles' trumpet—nimble, never showy—has a burnished Ruby Braff quality on "Cahuita." The final three pieces are didactic lectures, an awkward fit. —John McDonough

The project has a very agreeable sound. Bassist Ben Williams penetrates these arrangements with his palpable presence, and the leader has panache, but the material is a little shy of the profound musical integration it hails. —John Corbett

Though this concept album trades in the warm, creamy sound and jaunty rhythms of Fender Rhodes-lined jazz fusion, it occasionally has a seriousness of purpose—see "Speed City," a revealing tale about racism—that counterbalances its recreational hedonism. —Paul de Barros

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Guillermo Klein

Los Guachos V

SUNNYSIDE 1414

★★★★½

It has been 20 years since Argentine composer-pianist Guillermo Klein first assembled his stellar 11-piece ensemble Los Guachos. To celebrate, he has composed two rhythmically knotty, harmonically allusive, structurally ambitious suites: “Suite Inidana” and “Suite Jazmin.” Both toy with the stuff of jazz standards, but the game Klein is playing has to do with various forms of musical symmetry, such as mirroring, inversions and retrogrades of harmonies and melo-

dies. Mozart was a master of such musical geometrics, but they aren’t exactly common in jazz.

It’s easiest to get a sense of what he’s up to on Miles Davis’ “Donna Lee.” It starts with guitarist Ben Monder pulsing 16th notes on the tonic. Then Chris Cheek, on baritone sax, enters with a seven-beat bass figure, over which a five-beat trombone pattern is eventually added. By the time you’re fully distracted by the carefully overlaid rhythms, Monder and bassist Fernando Huergo whisper a bit of the tune, but it’s just a hint; throughout, Davis’ melody appears only in fragments.

Because the music is so densely interwoven, it’s seldom clear how much is improvised and how much composed, something that may disappoint those waiting to hear Monder or saxophonists Bill McHenry and Miguel Zenon cut loose. But that would be missing the forest for the trees, as the collaborative energy of this ensemble is exhilarating in a way that solitary soloists seldom are.

—J.D. Considine

Los Guachos V: Suite Indiana (Back Home Again; Donna Lee; Patria Espiral); Suite Jazmin (Symmetry I; Si No Sabes 4/4; Si No Sabes 9/8; Burrito Hill Mirror; Human Feel Mirror; Jazmin; Symmetry II); Ashes; Quemando Velas. (54:24)

Personnel: Guillermo Klein, piano; Chris Cheek, soprano saxophone, tenor saxophone, baritone saxophone; Miguel Zenon, alto saxophone; Bill McHenry, tenor saxophone; Taylor Haskins, trumpet, flugelhorn; Diego Urcola, trumpet, trombone; Sandro Tomasi, trombone; Ben Monder, guitar; Fernando Huergo, bass; Jeff Ballard, drums; Richard Nant, percussion, trumpet.

Ordering info: sunnysidezone.com

Marc Ribot & The Young Philadelphians

Live In Tokyo

ENJA/YELLOWBIRD 7760

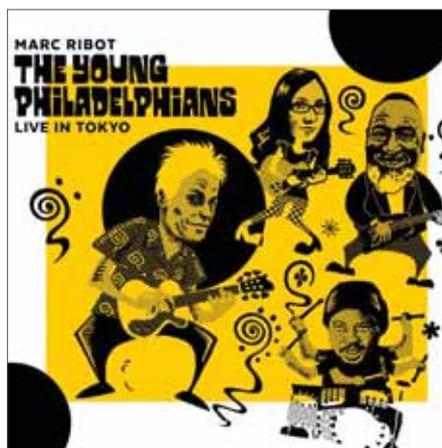
★★★★

The Young Philadelphians are yet another of guitarist Marc Ribot’s concept combos, this time dedicated to the classic 1970s Philly soul repertoire. Although the presence of Prime Time veterans drummer G. Calvin Weston and bassist Jamaaladeen Tacuma might suggest a harmolodic post-Ornette interpretation, the reality is more of a no-wave assault.

Fellow guitarist Mary Halvorson completes the lineup, moving across from Ribot’s Sun Ship band, and acting as a fitting partner for the copious wah-wah-ed, fuzz-duelling solos.

Recorded in 2014, this set list comprises hit tunes from the Ohio Players, Van McCoy, MFSB and The Trammps, among others. Ribot’s readings are unavoidably extreme when set beside the originals, with Halvorson providing an encouragingly competitive partner in the realms of dirty distortion and atonal razoring.

With Weston and Tacuma tightening the funky leash, and a local Japanese string trio providing the sweepingly symphonic layers, this is a highly curious blending, though com-



pletely addictive. Ribot is well versed in both camps: the funky and the punky, his solos unifying all aspects.

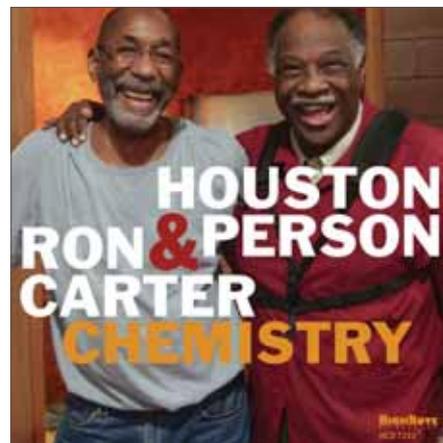
The best number of an already triumphant selection is “Love Rollercoaster” (by the Ohio Players), an avant-party blow-up, with Tacuma burbling like Bootsy, entering an abstract section before the deep groove hits again.

—Martin Longley

Live In Tokyo: Love Epidemic; Love T.K.O.; Fly, Robin, Fly; TSOP; Love Rollercoaster; Do It Any Way You Want; The Hustle. (53:57)

Personnel: Marc Ribot, Mary Halvorson, guitar; Jamaaladeen Tacuma, bass; G. Calvin Weston, drums; China Azuma, cello; Takako Siba, viola; Yoshie Kajiwara, violin.

Ordering info: jazzrecords.com/enja



Houston Person & Ron Carter

Chemistry

HIGH NOTE 7293

★★★★

When Garrison Keillor’s long-running radio program recently came to an end, one commentator recalled a Keillor meditation on aging: “You get old and you realize there are no answers, just stories.”

Saxophonist Houston Person, 81, and bassist Ron Carter, 79, are well past the point of searching for answers, but what stories they can tell. As two of the last remaining voices of their generation, they have the gravitas and breadth of experience to plumb the full depths of standards as well-trod as “Bye, Bye Blackbird,” “But Beautiful” and “Fools Rush In.” They possess two of the most recognizable voices in jazz, and the presence of fellow veteran Rudy Van Gelder in the studio ensures that every nuance, grace note and reverberation is clear.

At a glance, the selection of some songs might seem ironic: “Blame It On My Youth,” “Young And Foolish,” “When I Fall In Love.” Who are these codgers trying to kid? But both men retain a buoyancy and vitality in their playing that belies their years. On an atypically upbeat “Bye, Bye Blackbird,” Person’s tone is steely, his phrasing the epitome of swing. Carter is most often the one with the wry rejoinders: a sliding note that resembles a raised eyebrow here, a jaunty stroll there. Given their history, which dates back over multiple joint recording sessions to 1989’s *Something In Common*, it’s no surprise that they sound like a couple of well-seasoned guys who can finish each other’s thoughts.

There may be no answers for the ages here, but the stories told are timeless.

—James Hale

Chemistry: Bye, Bye Blackbird; But Beautiful; Young And Foolish; Fools Rush In; Can’t We Be Friends?; Blame It On My Youth; I Did Not Know What Time It Was; I Can’t Get Started; Blue Monk; When I Fall In Love. (49:30)

Personnel: Houston Person, tenor saxophone; Ron Carter, bass.

Ordering info: jazzdepot.com

**Tony Malaby
Paloma Recio**
Incantations

CLEAN FEED 367

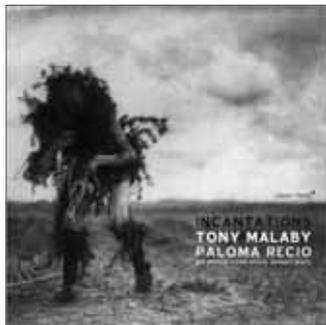
★★★★★

Paloma Recio, the name of Tony Malaby's longstanding quartet, translates as "loud dove," and it tips you to the paradoxes at work in the ensemble's music.

You can be sure that whatever they are playing will include a contrasting element. On "Hive," the leader's soprano saxophone forges ahead, keeping the tone clean until near the climax of a lengthy, ascending solo while guitarist Ben Monder waltzes from the start in distortion and low notes. And on "Procedure," Nasheet Waits' thrashing attack forges forward like a great predatory fish, while Monder's stop-start variations on a phrase tug like a desperate angler trying to wear down the big one on his line.

These contrasts ratchet up the tension, forcing the music into bursts of intense intra-combo struggle, but the music never lapses into chaos. Malaby may favor the harsh sonics of free-jazz, but they are often juxtaposed with gentler voices and reflective passages. Likewise, he uses Monders' effects-drenched guitar sound to cast an otherworldly glow on passages of jaunty, Monkish swing. Rather than speak with one voice, *Incantations* demonstrates the power of a thoughtfully mixed message.

—Bill Meyer



Louis Heriveaux
Triadic Episode

HOT SHOE 110

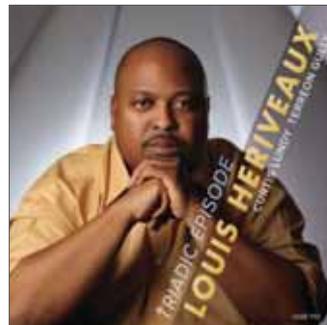
★★★★½

As debut records go, this one is an absolute stunner. Atlanta-based, New York-born pianist Louis Heriveaux has been piling up accolades since he performed Haydn's Piano Concerto in D major at his first recital at age seven. From there, Louis enrolled in various academic studies, garnering award after award. At age 19 he joined guitarist Russell Malone's band, followed by work with vocalist Nnenna Freelon, saxophonist Jimmy Heath, drummer Ralph Peterson and saxophonist Kenny Garrett.

Triadic Episode marks the debut of one of the finest, most inspired and effortless jazz musicians to come along in ages. Acknowledging equal debts to piano greats Mulgrew Miller and Kenny Kirkland, Heriveaux composes and performs with a sure brilliance, making every track on his long-overdue debut an absolute delight. Joined by upright bass master Curtis Lundy and stimulating drummer Terreon Gully, *Triadic Episode* lifts off on Miller's "From Day To Day" and soars until Gully's closer, "Swing'n Things."

This album's joys are many, its commitment total. Heriveaux's jazz baptism is complete.

—Ken Micallef



Incantations: Glass; Artifact; Hive; Procedure. (47:48)

Personnel: Tony Malaby, soprano, tenor saxophone; Ben Monder, guitar; Eivind Opsvik, bass; Nasheet Waits, drums.

Ordering info: cleanfeed-records.com

Triadic Episode: From Day To Day; Theme For Doslyn; Everything I Love; One For Simus; Lundy's Blues; Body And Soul; Triadic Episode; Blue Bossa; At The Crossroads; All The Things You Are; Swing'n Things. (49:00)

Personnel: Louis Heriveaux, piano; Curtis Lundy, bass; Terreon Gully, drums.

Ordering info: hotshoerecords.com

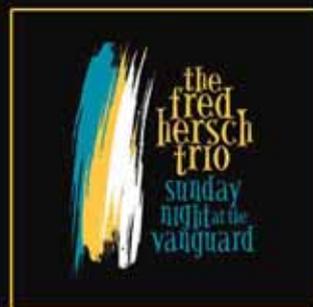
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Jane Ira Bloom

Early Americans

OUTLINE RECORDS 142

★★★★

For the past 35 years, Jane Ira Bloom has been one of a small handful of saxophonists to focus exclusively on the soprano. Her new album is her 16th as a leader, and for the occasion, she convened a trio featuring two longtime collaborators, bass player Mark Helias and drummer Bobby Previte.

The music covers a wide spectrum of approaches, emotions and rhythms, while remaining strong and cohesive. On some pieces—“Song Patrol” and “Dangerous Times” in particular—she mines the pastoral vein that musicians such as British reedist John Surman have explored, but with a more direct delivery and less interest in the eerie or atmospheric.

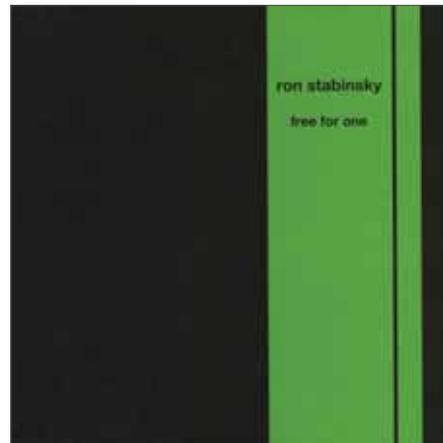
The forlorn “Other Eyes” features the saxophonist alternating crescendo and diminuendo phrases to great effect, while “Say More” proceeds like a freely improvised piece where the musicians let their fertile imagination flow. The groovy “Rhyme Or Rhythm” and the delightfully funky “Big Bill” find Bloom adding depth to compositions that are based on seemingly simple and memorable melodies.

Early Americans also includes a couple of unaccompanied pieces: one dedicated to the late Kenny Wheeler, which aptly captures the mood that inhabited the Canadian trumpet player’s lyrical and meditative universe; the other, the only piece not penned by Bloom, is a deeply felt rendition of the Bernstein/Sondheim staple “Somewhere.” This cover brings to a close an album that ranks among Bloom’s most accessible, as well as her most successful.

—Alain Drouot

Early Americans: Song Patrol; Dangerous Times; Nearly (For Kenny Wheeler); Hips & Sticks; Singing The Triangle; Other Eyes; Rhyme Or Rhythm; Mind Gray River; Cornets Of Paradise; Say More; Gateway To Progress; Big Bill; Somewhere. (52:24)
Personnel: Jane Ira Bloom, soprano saxophone; Mark Helias, bass; Bobby Previte, drums.

Ordering info: janeirabloom.com



Ron Stabinsky

Free For One

HOT CUP 151

★★★★

Mostly Other People Do the Killing, the group in which Rob Stabinsky has held the piano chair since 2011, has a complicated relationship with traditionalism. Yes, MOPDtK is notorious for its skewering of sacred cows, from the parodic album art for *This Is Our Moosic* to their much talked/carped about note-for-note recreation of *Kind Of Blue*. But it’s only because those jibes are so deeply grounded in the tradition that they get under the skin of less irreverent listeners. These guys really do know where-of they mock.

Given the jocular title, many listeners would expect more of the same from Stabinsky’s solo piano album, *Free For One*. And it is similar to MOPDtK’s aesthetic, but without the smirk. Instead, what Stabinsky delivers is a take on free-jazz that acknowledges influences while deftly dancing around them.

“Viral Infection,” for instance, opens with a looping set of right-hand chords in counterpoint against a lumbering left-hand figure; hearing the way Stabinsky plays with poly-rhythms as the harmony moves in ever-tightening circles, it’s hard not to flash on Cecil Taylor. Then there’s “Once, But Again,” where the inner voicings and lyric melody could pass for something from Keith Jarrett. And when Stabinsky moves to the extremes of the keyboard toward the end of “Rapture,” you’ll swear he’s been playing Ligeti in his spare time.

As wide-ranging and virtuosic as Stabinsky’s improvisations are, perhaps the most delightful thing about them is how pianistic the playing is. Not only is Stabinsky’s technique impeccable, but his tone is warm and resonant even at the music’s most frenetic. More like this one, please.

—J.D. Considine

Free For One: After It’s Over; 31; Viral Infection; Gone Song; For Reet; Not Long Now/Long Now; Rapture; Once, But Again. (44:30)
Personnel: Ron Stabinsky, piano.

Ordering info: hotcuprecords.com

Brian Charette

Once & Future

POSI-TONE 8153

★★★½

In every jazz lover’s mind there exists the perfect Hammond B-3 organ player. Whether that ultimate B-3 technician is Jimmy Smith, Charles Earland, Larry Young or Shirley Scott, certain defining parameters exist, regardless of the individual player.

But when it comes to Hammond B-3 mastery, Brian Charette wrote the book. Literally. His *101 Hammond B3 Tips* (Hal Leonard) covers, among other topics, “funky scales and modes,” “creative chord voicings” and “cool drawbar settings.”

Even more proof of his proficiency is heard on *Once & Future*, where Charette gives a master class in the many styles of B-3 playing, joined by guitarist Will Bernard and drummer Steve Fidyk.

Performing covers and original material, Charette’s B-3 touch is decidedly light, buoyant and playful. The album kicks off with Fats Waller’s “Jitterbug Waltz,” delivered in groove-a-licious waltz-time goodness. Bubbly, swinging and steaming are apt descriptions here.

The pace continues with Larry Young’s “Tyroné” (from 1965’s *Into Somethin’*), Bernard



and Fidyk ramping up the temperature with able solos and fatback groove.

The trio knocks back Freddie Roach’s “Da Bug,” paints a dutiful rendition of “At Last” and stomps hard on Jack McDuff’s “Hot Barbeque.”

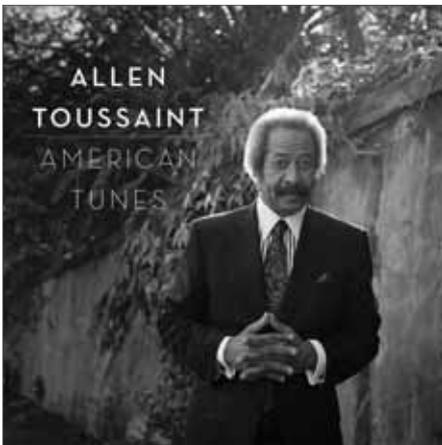
Both B-3 stylist and student, serious jazz scholar and glitzy entertainer, Charette can and does play anything.

—Ken Micallef

Once & Future: Jitterbug Waltz; Tyroné; Latin From Manhattan; Da Bug; At Last; Hot Barbeque; Dance Of The Infidels; Zoltan; The Scorpion; Falling Fourth; Ain’t It Funky Now; Mellow Mood; Road Song; Blues For 96. (58:11)

Personnel: Brian Charette, organ; Will Bernard, guitar; Steve Fidyk, drums.

Ordering info: posi-tone.com



Allen Toussaint
American Tunes

NONESUCH 554644

★★★★★

I was fortunate to see Allen Toussaint perform several times. His solo concert at the Montreal Jazz Festival ranks as one of my all-time favorite shows. For the pianist, who died in Madrid shortly after recording these tracks in 2015, this album is as poignant a goodbye as any.

Touted as the Ellington of New Orleans, Toussaint takes on Duke's "Come Sunday" and "Rocks In My Bed" (with vocals from Rhiannon Giddens) and Billy Strayhorn's

"Lotus Blossom" (featuring a quavering cameo from Charles Lloyd that could have used a retake). "Southern Nights" is the maestro's most indelible gift to the world, but his own versions have not always been the best. Here he couples with baroque-pop chameleon and kindred spirit Van Dyke Parks for a playful piano romp. *American Tunes* is a versatile sampler, revealing the richness of Toussaint's oeuvre, embracing party grooves with the same warmth as his sympathies for gospel, the canon of Fats Waller and Earl Hines and also classical (Louis Moreau Gottschalk's "Danza, Op. 33" with cello and harp arranged by Parks).

This saintly storyteller and seminal maven of New Orleans music totally owns "American Tune," rendering Paul Simon's original version airbrushed and anemic in comparison. It's Toussaint's only vocal after 14 diverse cuts and will stop you in your tracks: a truly moving farewell from an unforgettable, uniquely American artist.

—Michael Jackson

American Tunes: Delores' Boyfriend; Viper's Drag; I'm Confessin' (That I Love You); Mardi Gras In New Orleans; Lotus Blossom; Waltz For Debby; Big Chief; Rocks In My Bed; Danza, Op.33; Hey Little Girl; Rosetta; Come Sunday; Southern Nights; American Tune. (49:31)

Personnel: Allen Toussaint, piano, vocals (14); Jay Bellerose, drums and percussion; Bill Frisell, Adam Levy, Greg Leisz, guitar; Charles Lloyd, tenor saxophone; David Piltch, bass; Cameron Stone, cello (9); Amy Shulman, harp (9); Rhiannon Giddens, vocals (8, 12); Van Dyke Parks, piano (13).

Ordering info: nonesuch.com

Bob Mintzer
All L.A. Band

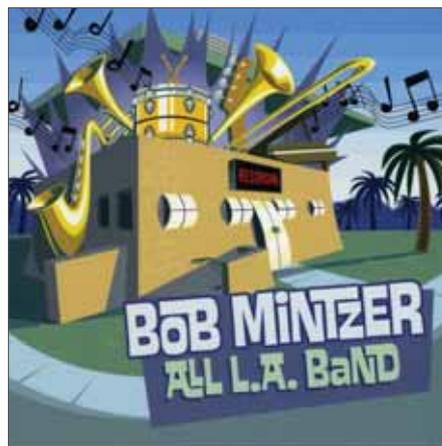
FUZZY MUSIC 022

★★★★★

Yellowjackets tenor saxophonist Bob Mintzer has been involved with big band jazz for close to 50 years. A Buddy Rich alum, he shares the 1970s big band experience with his colleague Peter Erskine, a veteran drummer of the Stan Kenton and Maynard Ferguson orchestras. The pairing is fortuitous on this release, which features Mintzer's writing and tenor, and a platinum assemblage of Los Angeles musicians.

The aforementioned jazz orchestras of the '70s played material that was fast and loud, making uneasy peace with the rock music of the day. These Mintzer charts are concerned with medium-tempo funk, r&b and Latin rhythms, crisp section writing and soloist platforms. Much of Mintzer's sharp-edged tenor, as on "El Caborojeño," shows him to be as much of a rhythm player as anything else. Likewise, Bob McChesney's vigorous workout to "Runferyerlife" recalls trombone fireballs Frank Rosolino and Carl Fontana.

There are no amorphous sonic clouds to be heard here. The unison muted trumpet theme of "Havin' Some Fun" recalls the lightly swinging Neal Hefti tunes written for the Basie band



of the 1950s. Mintzer's sections often riff off each other as a couple of horns would on a bandstand. Some creamy reed writing on "Original People" and a Bach-like brass introduction to "New Rochelle" suggest there are more Mintzer developments to come.

—Kirk Silsbee

All L.A. Big Band: El Caborojeño; Havin' Some Fun; Home Basie; Ellis Island; Original People; New Rochelle; Runferyerlife; Latin Dance; Slo Funk; Tribute. (60:43)

Personnel: Bob Mintzer, Bob Sheppard, Adam Schroeder, saxophones; Wayne Bergeron, James Blackwell, John Thomas, Chad Willis, Michael Stever, trumpets; Bob McChesney, Erik Hughes, Julianne Gralle, Craig Gosnell, trombones; Russ Ferrante, piano; Larry Koonse, guitar; Edwin Livingston, bass; Peter Erskine, drums; Aaron Serfaty, percussion.

Ordering info: bobmintzer.com



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more info: www.creativejazz.com



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-Ron Carter

more info: www.marcosvarelamusic.com

Available at:





Roscoe Mitchell *Sustain And Run*

SELO SESC 0065/15

★★★★★

Roscoe Mitchell has regularly included solo work in his rigorous practice throughout his lengthy career, and this stunning recital, recorded live in São Paulo, Brazil, in 2013, proves that this particular facet of his art continues to evolve. For three of the album's four extended improvisations Mitchell uses soprano saxophone, a wildly difficult instrument, especially when put through such extremes. The title track opens the album with head-clear-

ing intensity and offers a clinic on upper-register harmonics, as the saxophonist unleashes a largely uninterrupted stream of strident tones to create a mosaic-like quilt of sound. Rapid-fire phrases sound viscerally garbled by the way Mitchell controls intonation, moving from clean articulation toward shrill squawks, leaving a steady trail of high-frequency waves fluttering in the background. On "Thanks For The Call," he switches to soprano, slowing down the tonal manipulation into a pace closer to human breathing. He ends the song with a stunning, quavering long tone, but the ferocity of the sounds he creates is hardly mellow.

Sound is also the focus on the epic "Conversations From The Right Stage," which unfolds patiently, teasing out harmonic effects from a loosely repeating string of single notes; with each pass Mitchell locates fresh nuances—some astringent, some dry, some tart—and he eventually builds those strands into slaloming melodic fragments, turning up the heat as he goes. The album ends with "Useful News," a coda that winds down the energy of the previous pieces without diminishing their exactitude or boldness.

—Peter Margasak

Sustain And Run: Sustain And Run; Thanks For The Call; Conversations From Stage Right; Useful News. (55:56)

Personnel: Roscoe Mitchell, soprano saxophone, soprano saxophone.

Ordering info: sescsp.org

Jeff Parker *The New Breed*

INTERNATIONAL ANTHEM 0009

★★★★★

Guitarist Jeff Parker—now living in Los Angeles but long a member of Chicago experimental rock combo Tortoise and the Windy City avant-jazz scene—has crafted an ingenious, genre-blurring urban soundscape with *The New Breed*.

By turns atmospheric and funky, the music mixes improvisation and composed material across frameworks of beats and samples, the sounds swirling together like echoes of different parties in an apartment building hallway. The physical package adds to the feel: The 49-year-old Parker titled the album after a clothing store his father owned in the 1970s, and the LP sleeve is adorned with old photos of hip dudes.

Parker's bell-toned guitar snakes obliquely through the rhythm arrangements, with sharp, rarely obvious note choices and subtly absorbing extended solos in album highlights "Jrifited" and "Get Dressed." The other solo voice belongs to saxophonist Josh Johnson, who winds a soulful improvisation across the six-string shimmer and sampled background voices on "Jrifited," subtly colors the cut-and-paste wooziness of "Executive Life" and adds



interest to the otherwise wan "Cliché," featuring Ruby Parker, the leader's daughter, on vocals. Slow-rolling sax-guitar unison lines mark the heat-haze cover of Bobby Hutcherson's "Visions," as drummer Jamire Williams adds heft to the bottom end. A hitch to the groove is that the party ends too soon, the album's short running time apparently set for an extra-fat vinyl LP sound.

—Bradley Bamberger

The New Breed: Executive Life; Para Ha Tay; Here Comes Ezra; Visions; Jrifited; How Fun It Is To Year Whip; Get Dressed; Cliché. (36:10)

Personnel: Jeff Parker, electric guitar, beats, samples; Josh Johnson, saxophone; Paul Bryan, bass guitar; Jamire Williams, drums; Ruby Parker, vocals (8).

Ordering info: intlanthem.com



Jamie Saft's New Zion feat. Cyro Baptista *Sunshine Seas*

RARENOISE 34849

★★★★★

Keyboardist Jamie Saft, bassist Brad Jones and drummer Craig Santiago are the New Zion Trio, the core of this mesmerizing dub excursion. Spanning the dreamy and the disruptive, *Sunshine Seas* takes you into the center of Saft's mind—and yours—with help from Cyro Baptista on percussion and the gossamer vocals of Saft's wife, Vanessa, on the title track.

This is retro-futuristic stoner music on its way to the spiritual, and Saft and Baptista create a resonant, reggae-based groove from the start with the shuddery, clacking "BrazilJah." Rattle and clank undergird Baptista's ululations, which fade into a shiver thanks to the edgy production by Saft and Columbia-based Dubmaster Christian Castagno.

"Chalice Pipe," the second track, is more relaxed. Saft plays acoustic guitar, relegating the bass role to Jones. There is gravity and humor, Saft buzzing around the keyboards, too, as Baptista vocalizes in the background. Immanence is the mood.

It's back to dub with "Mystics," featuring Saft's glassy synths and organ accents, Baptista's vocoder distortion and swaths of percussion. Repetition and depth are the watchwords; so is drama, as Baptista abruptly separates sections of the tune. A sonic haunted house indeed.

There is similarity among all but the final cut, the raucous and skittery "Samba Jahmekya," the liveliest and longest track. It's raw and propulsive, Saft slamming his acoustic guitar and tweaking synths to the max. The music saws and whips, the weave becoming more excitable. What a fine way to end this musical trip.

—Carlo Wolff

Sunshine Seas: BrazilJah; Chalice Pipe; Mystics; Sunshine Seas; Growing Grow; Onda; Ranking; Lamb's Bread; Samba Jahmekya. (54:28)

Personnel: Jamie Saft, keyboards, guitar, electric bass; Cyro Baptista, percussion, vocals; Brad Jones, acoustic bass; Craig Santiago, drums; Vanessa Saft, vocals (4).

Ordering info: rarenoiserecords.com

Frank Catalano
Bye Bye Blackbird

ROPEADOPE
★★★

Matters of Chicago saxophonics govern the form and content—as well as the subject and attitude—of tenor man Frank Catalano’s spirited new album. A tribute to belated Chicagoan horn legends Von Freeman and Eddie Harris, as well as the city that spawned them, the date also features an alive-and-kicking cameo guest, David Sanborn, who studied music at Northwestern.

As the album’s subtitle “Blowing In From Chicago For Von And Eddie” clarifies, this is a blowing session over simply stated standards, with a strong Windy City jazz imprint attached. In a way, the subtext is about Chicagoans who left the city, in various ways (passing on and as relocating émigrés), with the proudly Chicago-based Catalano’s big, honking, caressing and otherwise broadly swinging and soul-fueled tenor sound as an anchoring, ambassadorial presence from the city.

After the friendly blowing stage/mood is set with the swaggering Harris tune “Chicago Eddie,” Sanborn enters the mix with his unmistakable persona on alto. He slides easily into the context with well-placed craggy overtones and soulful riffs on the title tune and Stanley Turrentine’s timeless soul-jazz vehicle, “Sugar.”

—Josef Woodard

Bye Bye Blackbird, Blowing In From Chicago For Von And Eddie: Chicago Eddie; Bye Bye Blackbird; Sugar; All Blues; At Last; Shakin’ (31:40)

Personnel: Frank Catalano, tenor saxophone; Demos Petropoulos, Hammond B-3 Organ; Nir Felder, guitar; Jimmy Chamberlin, drums; David Sanborn, alto saxophone (2, 3).

Ordering info: ropeadope.com



Parks/Fonnesbaek/Bagge
Groovements

STUNT 15152
★★★

The product of pianist Aaron Parks’ artist residency in Denmark, *Groovements* features the talents of Parks with bassist Thomas Fonnesbaek and drummer Karsten Bagge, two Danish musicians he met during his stay. The album boasts a wide range of composers—from Carl Nielsen to Cedar Walton to Bruce Springsteen—and also includes compositions from each member of the trio and a group-composed piece. But due to the quality of the musicianship, the album is cohesive, rolling pleasantly from one tune to the next.

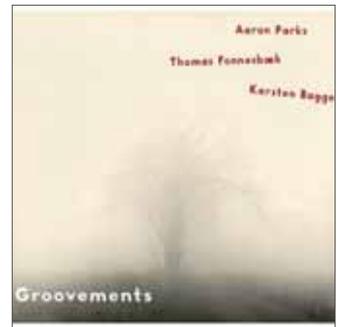
From the opening track, “Winter,” the beautiful, distinct voices of each member are instantly established. The piano covers the entire range, providing lush, open chords and gentle lines, and the bass, floating high into its upper register, provides a bittersweet countermelody. Meanwhile, the drums deliver an infectious groove. While the album’s energy level is mostly uniform, the record defies stasis, bringing the listener on an enjoyable ride they will undoubtedly want to repeat. Rarely can an album encompass such a diverse set of compositions—and match the tenderness of the originals—while also being extremely accessible.

—Izzy Yellen

Groovements: Winter; Alcubeirre’s Law; Bolivia; I’m On Fire; Elutheria; Tit Er Jeg Lad; A Rabbit’s Tale; Forever This Moment; Shapes ‘N’ Colors; You And The Night And The Music. (57:34)

Personnel: Aaron Parks, piano; Thomas Fonnesbaek, bass; Karsten Bagge, drums.

Ordering info: sundance.dk



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Together (and Apart) Again

Conventional wisdom says that tenor saxophonists are similar to Siamese fighting fish: put two of them together in a confined space and it's only a matter of time before they do battle. But three new releases by saxophonists **Chris Cheek** and **Seamus Blake**—two of them solo releases, one of them a collaborative project—prove that a pair of tenors can make more “magic” than “madness.”

The wide-ranging approaches of Blake and Cheek can be found not only in comparing their new efforts to one another but within each release on its own. Blake's *Superconductor* (5Passion; 63:46 ★★★★★) alternates between orchestral chamber-jazz and electronica, with Blake supplementing his tenor with EWI. It's a polarized and potentially polarizing session, sure to infuriate purists of any stripe. It's also ambitious and imaginative, exploring distinctive means to expand the jazz palette.

“Ohm” opens the album with a light-hearted burst of electro-funk driven by Scott Kinsey's '80s-soundtrack synths and Matt Garrison's rubbery bass grooves. John Scofield makes the first of three appearances on the Weather Report-inspired fusion of “Forecast,” engaging in a skronky back-and-forth with both of Blake's axes, while “Send In The Clones” is fueled by Nate Smith's skittering electronica rhythms. These pieces take turns with the pastoral exotica of “Sofa Song,” the darkly elegant “Last Continent” and the yearning “Gracia,” each boasting intricate arrangements for a 12-piece ensemble. Ping-ponging between the two stylistic extremes, *Superconductor* may never fully gel into a cohesive whole, but like the title suggests, its energy (and inventiveness) never flag.

Ordering info: 5passion.com

On the surface, Cheek's *Saturday Songs* (Sunnyside 1453; 65:51 ★★★★★) is a less daring outing, its focus more on fun than experimentation. But don't be fooled by the album's cheeriness (or the wacky portrait of the band decked out in *Arabian Nights* couture on the cover); these bright and buoyant tunes spur serious playing from Cheek and his bandmates. The leader's sly humor is evident from the outset, with the cowboy swagger of “String Finger,” which collides West with East as Cheek's slurred, street-smart solo gives way to David Soler's forlorn pedal steel. The latter is a consistent show-stopper throughout the album, whether uniting with Jorge Rossy's vibes to conjure ethereal, dream-like atmospherics for the pulsating “Eye Factory” or the lullaby-like “While You Sleep,” or adding a dose of Southern-rock twang to the



Seamus Blake (left) and Chris Cheek

JIMMY KATZ/CRISS CROSS JAZZ

summertime pop of “Ginger Something” and the hard-charging “Alhambros.”

Ordering info: sunnysidezone.com

Any expectation that *Let's Call The Whole Thing Off* (Criss Cross Jazz 1388; 62:52 ★★★★★) will find Blake and Cheek meeting in the middle of these two conceptions is immediately thwarted, as their sophomore Reeds Ramble recording is something else entirely. In some ways it's more straghtahead, but hardly predictable. Beginning with a flourish from Ethan Iverson's piano, the title track begins with the two tenors playing the song's introductory verse in sweet unison. The two reedists take Gershwin's classic “tom-ay-to/tom-ah-to” parrying to heart with their respective turns. In their respective solos, Blake takes the opportunity to subtly probe and dwell on the melody, while Cheek twists and warps it, gradually building the pressure to the point of eruption.

The album veers in several different directions, from the frenetic, almost madcap Latin bounce of Blake's “Choro Blanco” to the tender wistfulness of Irving Berlin's “Count Your Blessings.” Cheek's “Lunar” begins with Iverson's stormy refractions and maintains that overcast menace throughout, while Jobim's “Surfboard” is rendered in literal-minded waves that both co-leaders ride with agility. For those who like their tenormen dueling, there's “Limehouse Blues,” the oft-performed standard that here borrows from the countrified rendition by guitarists Chet Atkins and Jerry Reed that sets the stage for some unleashed blowing. **DB**

Ordering info: crisscrossjazz.com



Wayne Bergeron *Full Circle*

SCHOLZ PRODUCTIONS 2016

★★★★½

Wayne Bergeron is well known in the Los Angeles area for his high-note trumpet work, playing lead with many of the professional part-time jazz orchestras around town. Like one of his heroes, Maynard Ferguson, Bergeron has also developed into a fine bop-oriented soloist in the lower and middle registers.

For *Full Circle*, Bergeron enlisted a few of the city's top studio and jazz composers. Seven different arrangers (George Stone, Gordon Goodwin, Sammy Nestico, Bill Reichenbach, Chris Walden and Michael B. Nelson) contributed one chart apiece, while Dan Higgins wrote two and Wally Minko brought in three.

The album sticks primarily to the modern mainstream. The swinging “Bernie's Journey” (a close relative to “Bernie's Tune”) sets the standard for what is to follow with top-notch musicianship, fiery ensembles and fine solos including a statement from Bergeron that shows that he really means business.

Other highlights include Bergeron and strings on “Theme From Chinatown,” the tradeoff and interplay between the leader and his guest Arturo Sandoval on the title track, Nestico's ballad “A Pair Of Aces” and a double-time version of “Body And Soul.”

—Scott Yanow

Full Circle: Bernie's Journey; Seasoned Traveler; Jig; Theme From Chinatown; Full Circle; A Pair Of Aces; Body And Soul; Wayn-ology; First Impression; A Bone To Pick; James Bond Medley (Bond Theme; You Only Live Twice; Live And Let Die). (69:54)

Personnel: Wayne Bergeron, Dan Foreno, Gary Grant, Rick Baptist, Larry Hall, Chuck Findley, Rob Schaer, Jamie Havorka, Steve Strand, Dave Jensen, trumpets; Andy Martin, Andy Kaplan, Bob McChesney, Bill Reichenbach, Charlie Loper, Alex Iles, Steve Holtman, Michel B. Nelson, trombones; Eric Marienthal, alto; Dan Higgins, alto, soprano, flute, piccolo; Sal Lozano, alto, flute; Brian Scanlon, alto, flute; Tom Luer, tenor, clarinet; Bill Liston, Kirsten Edkins, Kenni Holmen, Gary Meek, Bob Shepard, tenor; Rusty Higgins, tenor, flute; Greg Huckins, baritone, clarinet; bass clarinet; Kathy Jensen, baritone; Christian Jacob, Wally Minko, Alan Pasqua, Mary Louise Knutson, piano; Barb Catlin, electric piano; Dustin Higgins, Cory Wong, guitar; Brian Kilgore, vibes; Trey Henry, Jimmy Johnson, Chuck Berghofer, Jim Anton, bass; Ray Brinker, Dave Weckl, Peter Erskine, Petar Janjic, drums; Dom Moio, Joey DeLeon, Adrian Areas, percussion; string section; Arturo Sandoval, trumpet (5).

Ordering info: waynebergeron.com

Ellery Eskelin Trio Willisau Live

HATOLOGY 741

★★★★

On the face of it, saxophonist Ellery Eskelin's latest release is "just" a live recording of a trio set captured at the experimental-leaning Willisau Festival in Switzerland, featuring kindred allies Gary Versace on Hammond B-3 and Gerry Hemingway on drums. But on close scrutiny, the recording is one of those inspired, surprising yet cohesive shows well worth documenting for posterity.

Eskelin, in mid-career, is a uniquely elastic and lyrical "avant gardist" who has no problem coming in from the cold and dealing with the lingua franca of standards. It's a tricky balancing act, all about nuances and attitudes in flux, but it's achieved on the album's epic suite, "On (Or About)," a 51-minute adventure that maneuvers through free ensemble zones and such standard-time oases as "Blue And Sentimental" and "East Of The Sun (And West Of The Moon)." The performance is a great example of outside-inside duality in the space of a single piece, with a disarming rightness and continuity within the seeming discontinuity.

Deceptively casual but deeper on inspection, this live set demonstrates a fluid continuum of spontaneity and deeply ingrained musical material bubbling up from the jazz collective unconscious.

—Josef Woodard

Trio Willisau Live: On (Or About); We See; I Don't Stand A Ghost of A Chance. (69:46)

Personnel: Ellery Eskelin, tenor saxophone; Gary Versace, Hammond B-3 organ; Gerry Hemingway, drums.

Ordering info: hathut.com



Will Vinson Perfectly Out Of Place

5PASSION

★★★★½

Saxophonist Will Vinson has written 10 unique tunes that challenge the notion of how jazz is defined in this era, and the English-born New Yorker has assembled a group of jazz progressives to help with this endeavor. The free-flowing music that evolves from this outing allows all the accompanying musicians to be involved in brief, sometimes extended ways—but always involved.

Besides Vinson (who doubles on synthesizers, flute and celesta), the players on this album include guitarist Mike Moreno, pianist Gonzalo Rubalcaba, bassist Matt Penman, drummer Jeff Ballard, vocalist Jo Lawry and percussionist Jamey Haddad. Rarely does the group play in a traditional bebop or straightahead way. Instead, the emphasis seems to be on sound colors, moods and intricate interplay among the musicians.

A composition titled "The Clock Killer" is quiet and slow-moving, creating oceanic beauty. And while there are numerous moments of tranquility on this album, there's also plenty of excitement, such as on the grooving "Stiltskin (Some Drunk Funk)" and the soaring "Skyrider."

—Bob Protzman

Perfectly Out Of Place: Desolation Tango; Upside; Willoughby; General; Skywriter; Intro To Limp Of Faith; Limp Of Faith; Stiltskin (Some Drunk Funk); Chalk It Up; The Clock Killer; Perfectly Out Of Place. (68:00)

Personnel: Will Vinson, alto saxophone, soprano saxophone, synthesizers, celesta; Mike Moreno, guitar; Gonzalo Rubalcaba, piano; Fender Rhodes, synthesizers; Matt Penman, bass; Jeff Ballard, drums; Jo Lawry, vocals; Jamey Haddad, percussion (4); Olivia De Prato, Joshua Modney, violin; Victor Lowrie, viola; Mariel Roberts, cello.

Ordering info: 5passion.com



Christy Doran Belle Epoque

BETWEEN THE LINES 71242

★★★★½

The cream of any genre is likely to rise to the top, and there's something to appreciate any time an extraordinarily talented human does what they do well. But there's also a lot of music that isn't the greatest of its kind, but doesn't merit dismissal as bad, either.

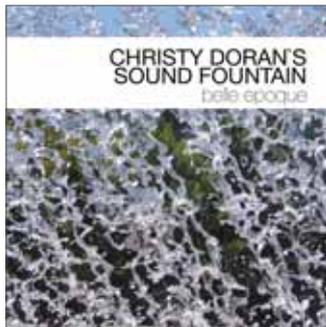
So one might likewise say that there is nothing wrong with *Belle Epoque*. The three globetrotting musicians—Irish-born, Swiss-based guitarist Christy Doran, Argentine bassist Franco Fonanarrosa and Swiss drummer Lukas Mantel—all demonstrate unerring control of their instruments and a fluent command of the fusion-esque genres they choose to span, which serves them well as they negotiate the record's eight original compositions. And they have each other's back when the music periodically lets go of stated meter for a moment of free interplay. It's all played with palpable joy and energy. Yet while nothing on the record sinks to the bottom, neither does it rise to the top. The busy passages confirm the musicians' agility, but they do not make a persuasive case for why we should care that much about it. If you're already a fan of these musicians, or of populsive fusion in general, ignore the stars and give this stuff a listen.

—Bill Meyer

Belle Epoque: El Escenario; Alien Abduction; Langa; Belle Epoque; Espantassuegras; Wandering Dune; Höhröner; Partners In Crime. (61:40)

Personnel: Christy Doran, electric guitar; Franco Fontanarrosa, bass; Lukas Mantel, drums, percussion.

Ordering info: betweenthelines.de





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Bring It on Home

The Mighty Mojo Prophets, *Record Store* (Mojo King Music; 55:48 ★★★½) Serving up their third entertaining album in a row, the Long Beach, California, band founded nine years ago by singer Tom Eliff and guitarist Mitch Dow exemplifies the sensibility of quality blues formed from elements of the West Coast, Chicago and Texas styles. On a program of original songs, Eliff explores lyrics that survey relationships or express the pleasure of having hung out at a certain vinyl emporium. Dow and harmonica player Tom Richmond are keen to construction, space and dynamics in their solos and interplay.

Ordering info: mojoking.com

Andre Williams, *I Wanna Go Back To Detroit City* (Bloodshot 234; 34:32 ★★★½) The 79-year-old singer known as "Mr. Rhythm" boasts an almost unbelievable background (he was a gutsy r&b singer in the 1950s, and once worked as a producer at Motown). His fourth album for the Bloodshot label finds him once again deploying his talent for fractious suspense: He gives the finger to award show snobs as he spits out "Hall Of Fame," and on "Mississippi Sue," he laments a gal he lost to the electric chair. Funk and blues riffs are supplied by, among others, noted guitarists Dennis Coffey and Matthew Smith.

Ordering info: bloodshotrecords.com

Little Boys Blue, *Tennessee* (Jaxxon/VizzTone 16; 56:16 ★★★½) This Jackson, Tennessee-based band, co-founded by JD Taylor two decades ago, is of strong, stirring mettle, combining blues, soul and Southern rock. Taylor's singing voice is firm and even, at no disadvantage for its lack of variety on original fare like the workout "Pack It Up Baby" and the ballad "Smoke Rings." Taylor knows his way around the harmonica, and guitarist Alex Taylor plays with consistent warmth and concision.

Ordering info: vizztone.com

Aki Kumar, *Aki Goes To Bollywood* (Little Village Foundation 1008; 51:30 ★★★½) Aki Kumar, a smart Chicago-style harmonica player born in Mumbai but long based in San Jose, dovetails Indian pop songs from Bollywood with the rhythms and spirit of the blues. He whets his imagination on hear-it-to-believe-it "Eena Meena Deeka" and 10 other tunes recorded with help from friends like guitarist (and sitar player) Kid Andersen and keyboards expert Jim Pugh. Most of the time Kumar sings in Hindi, which adds some vindaloo heat.

Ordering info: littlevillagefoundation.org

Various Artists, *The Rough Guide To Gospel Blues* (Rough Trade 1349; 75:35



★★★) This outstanding collection has 25 charismatic recording artists of the 1920s and '30s singing about Christian imperatives (with blues guitar accompaniment). Greats Bessie Smith, Memphis Minnie, Charley Patton and Blind Willie Johnson exhibit the keys to the heavenly kingdom, and a small flock of now-forgotten supplicants, including intense-voiced Blind Gussie Nesbit and hauntingly stark Blind Mamie Forehand, offer their profound supplications.

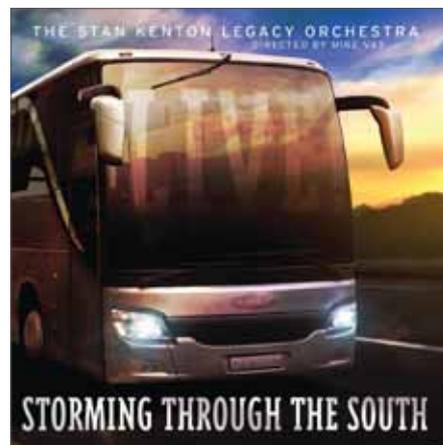
Ordering info: worldmusic.net

The Paul Butterfield Blues Band, *Live 1966* (Real Gone Music 0456; 63:02 ★★★) The specialness of Paul Butterfield's integrated Chicago band comes through despite the less-than-perfect sound reproduction of these unissued tapes from a coffeehouse gig in Boston. Solos by Butterfield on harmonica and Mike Bloomfield on guitar provide the thrill of knuckle-whitening roller coaster rides. Also playing for keeps on a dozen songs are guitarist Elvin Bishop, organ player Mark Nafatalin, bassist Jerome Arnold and drummer Billy Davenport.

Ordering info: realgonemusic.com

Louisiana Soul Revival, *Louisiana Soul Revival Featuring Doug Duffey* (Self Release; 36:17 ★★★½) A well-regarded Bayou State songwriter with ties to funkmeister George Clinton, singer-keyboardist Duffey leads a 10-piece r&b revue that is competent but largely uninspired. Of nine tracks, just "Love Into My Life" approaches transcendence. **DB**

Ordering info: cdbaby.com/cd/louisianasoulrevivalfeat



The Stan Kenton Legacy Orchestra *Storming Through The South* SUMMIT 678

★★★

Stan Kenton, who passed away in 1979, made it well known in his later years that he did not want there to be a ghost band after his death. In 1991, trumpeter Mike Vax, who considers his stint with Kenton to be one of the highpoints of his career, started an alumni orchestra that avoided being a mere recreation of the band. The group, which in recent times was renamed the Stan Kenton Legacy Orchestra (since it no longer consists exclusively of alumni), has released six albums to date.

It is immediately apparent while listening to the music of the orchestra that Vax has succeeded at drawing inspiration from Kenton's band while avoiding emulation. Other than Bill Holman's famous arrangement of "Malaguena," which is given a stirring rendition, none of the songs are closely associated with Kenton, although the late bandleader's arrangement of "I'm Glad There Is You" and Willie Maiden's version of "It Might As Well Be Spring" were in the band's book.

Recorded during a busy road trip through the South (16 cities in 17 days), these live performances give many of the players opportunities to solo. Trombonist Scott Whitfield and his wife, vocalist Ginger Berglund, are standouts, as are bassist Jennifer Leitham, baritone saxophonist Phil Hilger and Vax himself.

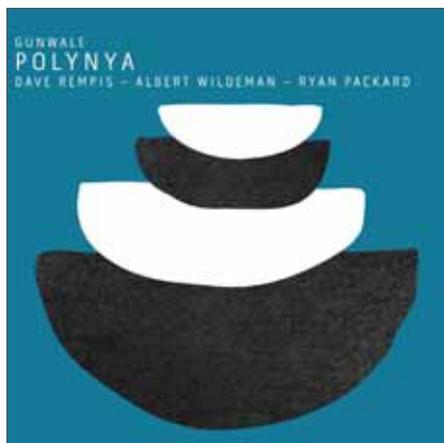
Though the sound quality could be better, fans of high-powered big bands will enjoy this program.

—Scott Yanow

Storming Through The South: Beat 70; Roy's Blues Revisited; Summer Violets; I'm Glad There Is You; Lefty Leaps In; Virna; Come Out Swingin'; Shell Game; It Might As Well Be Spring; You Turned The Tables On Me; Passages; Slow Boat To China; I'm Getting Sentimental Over You; Malaguena. (75:11)

Personnel: Mike Vax, Dennis Noday, Brian O'Flaherty, Steve Huffsteter, Jonathan Dane, trumpet, flugelhorn; Scott Whitfield, trombone, vocals; Dale DeVoe, Dave Klein, trombone; Kenny Shroyer, Rich Bullock, bass trombone; Kim Richmond, alto saxophone, flute, piccolo; Phil Hilger, alto saxophone, baritone saxophone, flute; Rick Condit, Pete Gallo, tenor saxophone, flute; Joel Kaye, bass saxophone, baritone saxophone, flute; Charlie Ferguson, piano; Jennifer Leitham, bass; Gary Hobbs, Claude Askew, drums; Ginger Berglund, vocals.

Ordering info: summitrecords.com



Gunwale *Polynya*

AEROPHONIC 011

★★★★

A polynya is an expanse of open water surrounded by sea ice, and it sets the stage for both life and death. Arctic explorers of yore endangered themselves when they mistook polynyas for unbounded ocean, but they are also breeding places for plankton and other sea creatures that form the oceanic food chain.

One supposes that saxophonist Dave Rempis, bassist Albert Wildeman and percussionist Ryan Packard, the Chicago-based

improvisers who constitute Gunwale, had both nutrition and hazard in mind when they named their debut album. With scant CD sales and fewer touring opportunities, the 21st century looks like a pretty inhospitable environment for creative music. But if you can acclimate yourself, there are riches in the chilly deep.

Rempis has had plenty of practice navigating such waters. He is an organizer as well as a musician, responsible for a weekly night of jazz and improvisational music at the Elastic Arts venue in Chicago. And in 2013 he founded the label Aerophonic in order to release his own music. But all of that fades away when you put on *Polynya* and acquaint yourself with his strengths as a musician.

First, there's his versatility. He can make quick, pungent statements and drive long improvisations that shift easily from swing to assertive acoustic funk. Then there's his adroit phrasing; he articulates commanding ideas that capitalize on whatever is happening around him. But Gunwale is a band, and Rempis is not the only reason to hear it. In free improvisation, growth comes from exchange; these musicians give as many ideas as they get.

—Bill Meyer

Polynya: Wire; Bevel; Liner. (56:14)

Personnel: Dave Rempis, alto, tenor, baritone saxophones; Albert Wildeman, bass; Ryan Packard, percussion, electronics.

Ordering info: aerophonicrecords.com

Tyshawn Sorey *The Inner Spectrum Of Variables*

PI RECORDINGS 65

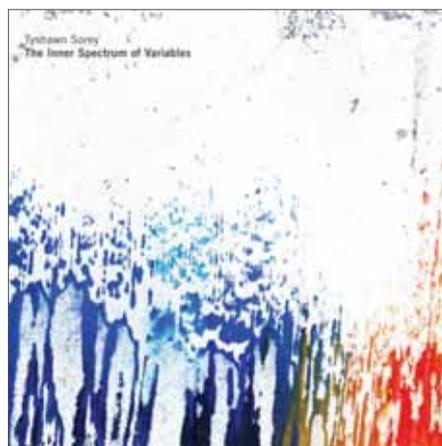
★★★★½

The title of drummer-composer Tyshawn Sorey's extended two-CD set recalls the ambitiously "cosmic" appellations of albums from the 1970s. But the actual music is less easy to nail down, both in terms of influence and style.

Loosely speaking, this is a modern classical composition, complete with string quartet, acoustic piano and percussion lineup. But Sorey has not been confined by the fences that are usually erected by creators of such works.

A mournful cello begins "Movement II," groaning in contrast to the bright piano. It's an introverted contemplation, but with firm strokes made by Ruben Kodheli's bow. This brooding is edged with a sour vibrato, creating an old-school Romantic aura. The violin and viola skip and parade, preening themselves sweetly. The sound is more retro than ironic.

The second disc opens with the 15-minute "Reverie," a high point of the work. Delicate gongs and cymbals create a restful aura, with sustained resonances and shimmering touches. The strings encroach gradually, with soft drones followed by a faint piano appearance.



A spirited string motif heralds the Bartók-ian gloom of "Movement IV," which oddly develops into a swinging gypsy-jazz section as bass and drums settle into a rolling gait.

Sorey is probing multiple musical areas, but the segues sound natural. At its climax, the movement drops into free fall, losing its swing, but gaining another kind of freedom.

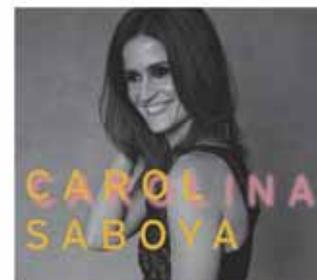
—Martin Longley

The Inner Spectrum Of Variables: Disc One: Movement I; Movement II; Movement III. (57:59) Disc Two: Reverie, Movements IV; Movement V; Movement VI; Reprise. (59:41)

Personnel: Tyshawn Sorey, drums; Cory Smythe, piano; Christopher Tordini, bass; Ruben Kodheli, cello; Kyle Armbrust, viola; Chen Hwei Fung, violin.

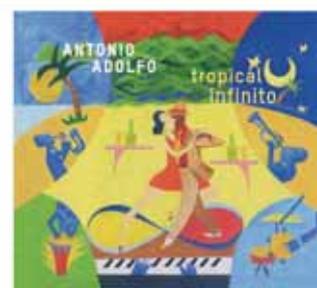
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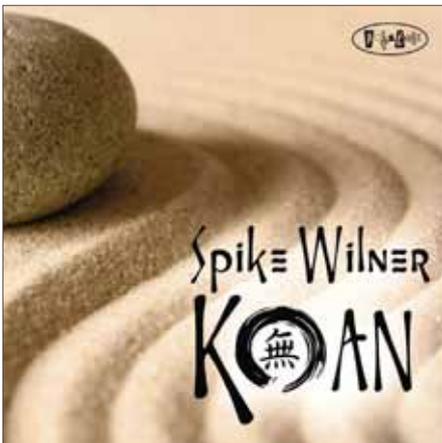


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Spike Wilner *Koan*

POSI-TONE 8152

★★★★

Spike Wilner may be best known these days as a partner in (and manager of) the famed Smalls Jazz Club. But those who haven't patronized the Greenwich Village venue or subscribed to its SmallsLIVE media archives may be unaware of his parallel career as a pianist and leader of his own trio.

An alumnus of the inaugural class of Manhattan's New School for Social Research Jazz and Contemporary Music program,

Peter Kuhn *The Other Shore*

NOBUSINESS 88

★★★½

No Coming, No Going: The Music of Peter Kuhn, 1978–79

NOBUSINESS 89-90

★★★½

Clarinetist/saxophonist Peter Kuhn was part of the New York loft scene, working with tenorman Frank Lowe, clarinetist Perry Robinson and trumpeter Lester Bowie in the '70s and '80s. After a long dry spell, Kuhn resurfaced in San Diego a few years ago. These two albums show where he came from and where he is now.

Kuhn's present work on *The Other Shore* is relaxed and assured. His bass clarinet is capable of languid insouciance or corkscrew runs. His tenor can be as slack as a junkie on the nod, as on "Unstrung Heroes," or hard-edged. Nathan Hubbard's drums push against Kuhn, while bassist Kyle Motl is both percussive and harmonically challenging to the horns.

No Coming, No Going is the material from Kuhn's *Living Right* (Big City) LP, with trumpet color from Toshinori Kondo and Arthur Williams. While Kuhn's early improvs can be short on thematic arc, bassist William Parker is a Trojan throughout, holding the center. A

Wilner boasts a style that can be gutbucket at times and precisely articulate at others.

Koan, which the liner notes explain is "a paradoxical anecdote or riddle, used in Zen Buddhism to demonstrate the inadequacy of logical reasoning and to provoke enlightenment," features five originals; six covers of tunes by Duke Ellington, Noël Coward and Ornette Coleman; and "Blues For the Common Man," a terrific original based on Aaron Copland's *Fanfare For The Common Man*.

Strutting with a hard-bop winningness, Wilner's "Iceberg Slim" opens *Koan* with a jam session standard-in-the-making. With its flowing lines and grand themes, the title track actually sounds as if it's a lost selection from a classic Broadway musical.

The pianist has a great rapport with bassist Tyler Mitchell and drummer Anthony Pinciotti, his working trio. The spiraling "Monkey Mind" finds the three musicians impressively locked in. *Koan* is a worthy document of a notable trio and the compositional prowess of its bandleader.

—Yoshi Kato

Koan: Iceberg Slim; Koan; Warm Valley; I'll See You Again; Hot House; Monkey Mind; Gypsy Without A Song; Trick Baby; Three Ring Circus; Young At Heart; Lonely Woman; Blues For The Common Man. (60:52)

Personnel: Spike Wilner, piano; Tyler Mitchell, bass; Anthony Pinciotti, drums.

Ordering info: posi-tone.com



delightful drum solo by Denis Charles on "Chi" reminds what a treasure he was. A second CD of a Kuhn and Charles duet recital shows the stringent clarinet admirably compatible with the potent Charles drum patterns.

—Kirk Silsbee

The Other Shore: Is Love Enough; Causes And Conditions; Unstrung heroes; Not Two; Volition; No Coming, No Going; The Other Shore; Beginning Anew. (63:18)

Personnel: Peter Kuhn, clarinet, bass clarinet, alto saxophone, tenor saxophone; Kyle Motl, bass; Nathan Hubbard, drums.

No Coming, No Going: Disc 1: Chi; Manteca, Long Gone, Axistential; Red Tape. (39:13). Disc 2: Stigma, Axistential; Drum Dharm; Headed Home. (60:34)

Personnel: Disc 1: Kuhn, clarinet, bass clarinet; Toshinori Kondo, trumpet, alto horn; Arthur Williams, trumpet; William Parker, bass; Denis Charles, drums. Disc 2: Kuhn, clarinet; Denis Charles, drums.

Ordering info: nobusinessrecords.com



Dave Anderson *Blue Innuendo*

LABEL 1 2003

★★★★½

New York-based saxophonist-composer Dave Anderson has pulled together a stellar lineup of fellow New Yorkers for the first recording under his own imprint, Label 1, and third album overall.

Organist Pat Bianchi, a longtime member of Pat Martino's trio, fuels this B-3 quartet session with his deep-grooving bass lines, warm comping and exhilarating right-handed runs, while fleet-fingered guitarist Tom Guarna plays Anderson's partner on the front line, executing tight unison and harmony lines on heads and contributing a number of outstanding solos, particularly on the surging modernist opener "Urban Dilemma," the exuberantly swinging "Redeye" and the funky "22 Doors." Veteran drummer and joyful swinger Matt Wilson elevates the proceedings with a flowing rhythmic pulse, hip syncopations and unpredictable accents on the kit.

Minnesota native Anderson alternates between soprano and tenor saxophones throughout this copasetic session, soaring on the former on the uptempo romp "Genealogy" and the lush ballad "Stuck," while digging deep on the latter on his burner "12-Step Blues," the mellow bossa nova-flavored "Parallel Present" and his ode to Joe Henderson, "The Phantom."

Wilson showcases his remarkably melodic approach to the kit on "Two-Tone Tune," while Bianchi delivers a combination of laid-back charm and pure burn on the title track, Anderson's tribute to organ great Joey DeFrancesco. Great chemistry, great playing and good vibes by a kindred crew.

—Bill Milkowski

Blue Innuendo: Urban Dilemma; 22 Doors; 12-Step Blues; Parallel Present; Genealogy; Stuck; The Phantom; Two-Tone Tune; Blue Innuendo; Redeye. (57:42)

Personnel: Dave Anderson, tenor saxophone, soprano saxophone; Tom Guarna, guitar; Pat Bianchi, organ; Matt Wilson, drums.

Ordering info: daveandersonjazz.com



**Savoldelli/Casarano/
Bardoscia**
The Great Jazz Gig In The Sky
MOONJUNE 079

★★★½

You don't have to care about '70s rock to know Pink Floyd's *Dark Side Of The Moon*. It's an album as prismatic as its iconic cover, and many have paid tribute. It's been played as reggae, prog-metal, jam band funk, bluegrass and so much more. And as it turns out, there's enough richness in its harmonies and melodies for countless jazz covers.

Vocalist Boris Savoldelli, saxophonist Raffaele Casarano and bassist Marco Bardoscia opt for a deep dive into psychedelia, boldly using the original music as a jumping-off point without directly covering much of it. In fact, it's the moments when they stick most closely to the originals that fall short, as Savoldelli pushes the lyrics out in a breathy croak that does poor justice to the words. This rarely takes more than a minute or so, though; the real meat here is long, flowing soundscapes where Savoldelli's manipulated voice and Casarano's sax unfurl billowing melodies over heaving electronic textures.

That said, Bardoscia is the stealth star here. His bowed bass is the emotional core of the long "Us And Them," grounding Savoldelli's version of the odd non-verbal vocalizations of Pink Floyd's weirder early days. Bardoscia's plucking on "Breathe" outlines the song's familiar contours without ever playing any of the familiar notes. The album as a whole works similarly, using the original as a basic framework and striking out from there. Ultimately, it's the record's exploratory spirit more than its interpretations of the music that most closely ties it to its inspiration.

—Joe Tangari

The Great Jazz Gig In The Sky: Speak To Me; Breathe; On The Run; Time; The Great Gig In The Sky/Money; Us And Them; Any Colour You Like; Brain Damage; Eclipse. (49:12)

Personnel: Boris Savoldelli, vocals, electronics; Raffaele Casarano, saxophone, electronics; Marco Bardoscia, bass, electronics; Dewa Budjana, guitar (6); WK569, background sound manipulation (6, 7); Maurizio Nobili, reciter (5, 9).

Ordering info: moonjune.com

Blazing the Electronica Trail

By the time a guitar was first plugged into an amp, the electronic revolution in music had taken spark; eventually, flesh on wires and sticks on drums needn't be part of the equation. But whether the mode is organic or synthetic, human imagination remains the essential component.

Picking up on cues from precursors Erik Satie, John Cage and Morton Feldman, **Brian Eno**—a graduate of the fecund English art school system and an alum of art-rock iconoclasts Roxy Music—pioneered the field of ambient music, producing a line of hugely influential electro-acoustic soundscape LPs, from such milestones as 1978's *Music For Airports* to 2012's gallery tapestry *Lux*. Of course, Eno has also functioned as one of the most inspiring studio catalysts in rock history, co-producing the best albums by Talking Heads and U2, along with collaborating on some of David Bowie's most groundbreaking music. Scarcely less striking is the series of wildly imaginative avant-rock albums Eno made as a vocalist-cum-mad scientist, starting with his 1973 debut, *Here Come The Warm Jets*, which still sounds delightfully modern. The 68-year-old Eno's latest album, ***The Ship* (Warp; 47:30 ★★★★★)**, sees him fusing various aspects of his studio self.

Eno's suite-like album explores the way humankind toggles between "hubris and paranoia," using the Titanic and World War I as touchstones, but also hinting at political developments today. The music has a filmic quality, blending singing, spoken word, musique concrète, open-form song and ambient sounds to dramatic effect. The album's high point, though, is its gorgeous closing cover of The Velvet Underground's "I'm Set Free," which Eno sings as a secular hymn on how we must seek workable evolution, resisting the illusion of those who claim to know the one right way, any one truth. *The Ship* is album as experience, odd yet moving.

Ordering info: brian-eno.net

Jean Michel Jarre, born the same year as Eno, has set attendance records around the world since the late '70s, his synthesizers an inescapable sonic influence from new age backgrounds to Hollywood soundtracks. But the Frenchman's work has tended to favor spectacle over subtlety. Though marred by characteristically cheesy sounds, his set of collaborative albums, *Electronica 1* and the new ***Electronica 2: The Heart Of Noise* (Columbia 88875196672; 74:14 ★★)**, feature impressive lineups, with the first ranging from Tangerine Dream and Pete



Brian Eno

Townsend to Vince Clarke and Moby. The latest release boasts the likes of Pet Shop Boys, Hans Zimmer, new avant-star Julia Holter and Cyndi Lauper. Best by far is the dark-hued "Here For You," with post-punk electro-auteur Gary Numan.

Ordering info: jeanmicheljarre.com

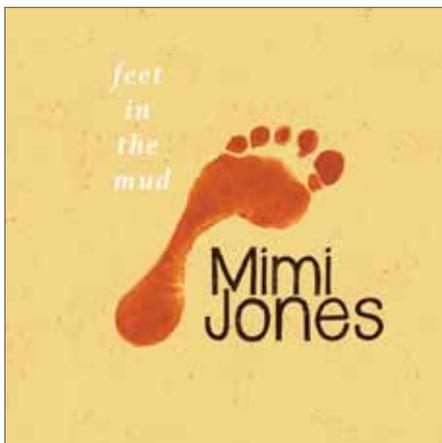
The club-fueled, pop-minded techno of **Moby** was one of the signature sounds of the '90s, capped by his hit album *Play* and its melding of gospel samples with cool-toned dance grooves. With ***Music From Porcelain* (Little Idiot 046; 66:06/74:31 ★★★★★)**, the 51-year-old Moby—born Richard Melville Hall—has anthologized his work as a soundtrack to his candid memoir, *Porcelain*, and its tales of a Connecticut kid's hedonistic rise in a still-gritty New York City. Not all the tracks have aged well, the pop mainstream having absorbed their mannerisms totally. More exciting is the bonus disc Moby had the generosity to include; it features artists who influenced him, from 808 State to A Tribe Called Quest.

Ordering info: moby.com

One of Europe's most jazz-savvy electro-acoustic groups of the past two decades, **The Dining Rooms**—the studio duo of Italian multi-instrumentalists/producers Stefano Ghittoni and Cesare Malfatti—has released its most sophisticated record to date, ***Do Hipsters Like Sun Ra?* (Schema; 42:17 ★★★★★½)**. In referencing the eccentric big-band modernist—and electronics advocate—Sun Ra, the duo pledges allegiance to an ever-imaginative sonic capaciousness. The album is a beautifully atmospheric, hard-grooving blend of beats, loops, samples and live instrumentation (a guitar here, a sax there), with Spaghetti Western sounds, dub-bass spaciousness and hip-hop rhythms part of a mix that feels very human.

DB

Ordering info: ishtar.it



Mimi Jones *Feet In The Mud*

HOT TONE

★★★★

As both a bandleader and head of the Hot Tone Music label, Mimi Jones continually makes intriguing creative choices. For her fourth album, the bassist/vocalist presents nine trio numbers and three quartet tunes. She also sings on half the tracks—four originals with lyrics plus wordless vocals on her own “One 4JB” and Wayne Shorter’s “Fall.”

Splitting time between piano and Fender Rhodes, Jon Cowherd jells as a member of the

Dan Pratt *Hymn For The Happy Man*

SAME ISLAND MUSIC 1601

★★★★½

A bold yet subtle saxophonist, Dan Pratt shows his three-dimensional musicality as a versatile composer and leader on his fourth album. Shifting from his previous incarnation in the organ trio zone, he asserts himself beautifully in the classic quartet format. It’s a commanding quartet at that, bolstered by ever-on-the-spot bassist Christian McBride, drummer Gregory Hutchinson and pianist Mike Eckroth.

On this date, recorded late in 2013 but just out this year, Pratt is clearly the lead voice in the mix, but remains attentive to the ensemble work/play ethic. His elegance and creative fire seem to resonate with the album cover—an amiably bizarre Magritte-esque image of a well-dressed man with his horn and bowler hat, but minus the man himself. The image projects the musician’s delicate balance of confidence and humility, of being both in-the-moment and keen to the musical overview.

Things kick off boldly but not necessarily characteristically with the cool, angular “Gross Blues,” its mix of propulsion and quirks suggesting Monk in the shadows. The title track is metrically tricky but somehow melodical-

Mimi Jones Band. His time with Brian Blade’s Fellowship Band and with vocalists Cassandra Wilson and Lizz Wright fits perfectly with Jones’ soul-infused, autumnal singing and broad range as an instrumentalist.

There’s an easygoing familiarity to Jones’ “Lyman Place,” which was inspired by pianist Bertha Hope, but the album also features moments of gravity. The mournful “Applause” was penned for the late Rebecca Buxton’s suicide after battling with depression. It’s highlighted by the author’s understated, ethos-laden vocal delivery. Later, an uptempo workout about life in the Big Apple, “The Grinder” recalls the legacy of 52nd Street, and “The Min-Or Way,” dedicated to Thelonious Monk, Charles Mingus and Ornette Coleman, showcases Samir Zarif’s assured soprano saxophone tone.

A major highlight, Jones’ “Happy” is dedicated to her husband, pianist Luis Perdomo, who is represented as both producer of the album and composer of the jubilant title track. A mellow examination of The Beatles’ “Blackbird” concludes the album as a nice coda.

—Yoshi Kato

Feet In The Mud: Mr. Poo Poo; American; Elevate; The Min-Or Way; Fall; Lyman Place; Applause; One 4JB; The Grinder; Happy; Feet In The Mud; Blackbird. (55:07)

Personnel: Mimi Jones, bass, vocals (2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 10); Samir Zarif, soprano saxophone (4, 5, 8); Jon Cowherd, piano, Rhodes (1, 10, 11); Jonathan Barber, drums.

Ordering info: hotttonemusic.com



ly sparkly, but the stronger tune of the lot is “Junket,” with a folksy-spiderly melody reminiscent of late ’70s Keith Jarrett.

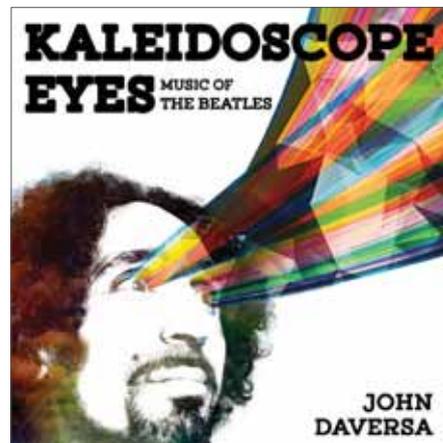
The band closes with a take on Kurt Weill’s “Speak Low,” with added transitional material and a powerhouse tenor solo which starts out in angular mode but heads outward and upward from there.

—Josef Woodard

Hymn For The Happy Man: Gross Blues; New Day; River; Warsaw; Junket; Riddle Me Rhumba; Hymn For The Happy Man; Speak Low. (59:53).

Personnel: Dan Pratt, tenor saxophone, alto saxophone; Mike Eckroth, piano; Christian McBride, bass; Gregory Hutchinson, drums.

Ordering info: danpratt.com



John Daversa *Kaleidoscope Eyes: Music Of The Beatles*

BFM JAZZ 302 062 433 2

★★★★

In spite of all the books, tribute albums and documentaries, there is always something to say about the Beatles. On *Kaleidoscope Eyes*, trumpeter-composer John Daversa tries to say all of it, rebuilding all or part of a dozen Beatles songs using his Progressive Big Band, which includes 65 instrumentalists and singers. And in trying to say everything at once, Daversa sometimes makes a good point; other times, he trips over his own words.

The album, recorded live, is full of varied textures and creative ideas. Time signatures shift unexpectedly, solos crash land in the middle of songs, and only “Good Day Sunshine” gets anything at all like a straight cover.

But problems arise on “I Saw Her Standing There,” which neglects its title tune in favor of a disjointed pile-up, with an awkward rap verse that sounds like it came from another album. Likewise, “Here Comes The Sun” nicely dissects the source material, but then gets bogged down in an interminable synthesizer solo.

Daversa is a talented arranger who clearly is inspired by this material, but *Kaleidoscope Eyes* is often too much of a mouthful to clearly articulate what he has to say.

—Joe Tangari

Kaleidoscope Eyes: Music Of The Beatles: Good Day Sunshine; And I Love Her; Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds; Here Comes The Sun; Do You Want To Know A Secret; I Saw Her Standing There; Michelle; Kaleidoscope Eyes Medley (With A Little Help From My Friends; Ob-La-Di, Ob-La-Da; Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band; I Am The Walrus); Good Day Sunshine (Reprise). (60:22)

Personnel: John Daversa, trumpet, EVI, vocals; Jeff Driskill, Phil O’Connor, Tom Peterson, Phil Feather, Katisse Buckingham, Bob Carr, Nancy Newman, reeds; Bill Booth, Alex Iles, Paul Young, George Thatcher, Chad Bernstein, Tyler Giroux, Javier Nero, Chris Palowitz, Will Wulfbeck, trombone; Craig Gosnell, Guy Manning, tuba; Ron King, Bijon Watson, Glenda Smith, Rob Schaer, Jay Daversa, Daniel Rosenboom, Aaron Smith, Derek Ganong, Jesus Mato Jr., trumpet; Tommy King, piano, keyboards; Andrew Synowiec, guitar; Nick Mancini, vibraphone; Jerry Watts Jr., bass; Gene Coye, drums; Joe Martone, percussion; Susan Chatman, Peter Kent, Gina Kronstadt, Songa Lee, Jordan Slocum, Yihuan Zhao, Sharon Jackson, Kathleen Robertson, violin; Matt Nabours, Kate Reddish, Jimbo Ross, viola; Peggy Baldwin, Giovanna Clayton, Paula Hochhalter, Liza Liu, Judy Kang, Nika Ross, cello; Genevieve Artadi, Zane Carney, Carol Huston, Kate Reid, Ann Sheridan, Greg Whipple, choir; Christine Guter, Renee Olstead, vocals.

Ordering info: bfmjazz.com



Peter Erskine (left), Palle Danielsson and John Taylor

Lean Forward: Erskine's Trio Years

You'd never guess that one day, drummer **Peter Erskine**—initially famous for his emergent work in the big bands of Stan Kenton and Maynard Ferguson, and later in the fusion outfit Weather Report—would resurface as the leader of a piano trio both radical in concept and soft-spoken in tone. But from 1992 to 1997, after very instructive trio stints (first with guitarist John Abercrombie and bassist Marc Johnson, then with saxophonist Jan Garbarek and bassist Miroslav Vitous), Erskine set up shop with pianist John Taylor and double-bassist Palle Danielsson.

The group's four albums are collected in the four-CD set ***As It Was* (ECM 2490-93; 58:39/64:21/57:14/50:45 ★★★★★)**. When one of those albums was originally reviewed in an issue of *DownBeat* from the 1990s, the predominant critique was that there was "no there, there." But a serene re-listening of "New Old Age" may turn the tides. The song begins with Taylor on solo piano, his playing circular and deliberate. One could easily get the impression that the trio was trying for a version of aimlessness as they sidestepped the usual solo-based format of a traditional piano trio. But as Erskine says in the liner notes, his intent was to find a way of playing that would "get audiences to lean forward in their seats," where the trio would "consider solos to be non-events," and where "the arc of the tune didn't need any visible peaks." Was he taking that Weather Report idea of "we solo but we never solo" and applying it to the piano trio? These four CD titles—*You Never Know* (1993), *Time Being* (1994), *As It Is* (1996) and *Juni* (1997)—seem to hint at this kind of suspended animation.

On *You Never Know*, Taylor's "Evans Above" points to the abstraction that was to come. In the meantime, his "Clapper-clowe" is both playful and driving. Erskine's "On The Lake" brings us back to that place

where serenity, quietude and deep listening go hand in hand, and the album ends with the only standard they covered on disc, Cole Porter's "Everything I Love."

When *Time Being* arrived, it was obvious how embedded the trio's shared language had become. "Terraces" is evidence. The song is simple yet ornate, pensive yet wayward, thoroughly melodic but with no apparent center. This shared communion of musical spirits deepens with Erskine's "For The Time Being." Quietly but restlessly inconclusive, the music sounds like one person playing three instruments, moving in and out, never separate.

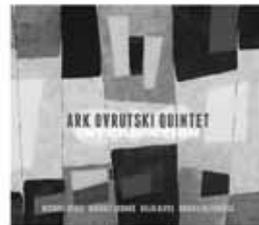
Textures reveal more subtle contrasts on *As It Is*, starting with Taylor's "Glebe Ascending." Erskine's natural affinities with color—via the metals and skins of his drums—mix with Danielsson's gentle counterpoint and Taylor's ascending lines to suggest a dance of sorts, the three weaving their respective voices together. Erskine's pen shines particularly bright with "The Lady In The Lake," a wistful tune that suggests a Kenny Wheeler influence. More bounce comes with Taylor's "Episode," featuring a lively yet controlled Erskine. The busy unison lines keep all three on their toes.

Juni begins with the abstract "Prelude No. 2." Taylor's light touch on piano leads into dual soloing by the others before all three finish together, maintaining their rubato feel. Wheeler's danceable "For Jan," by contrast, feels like a song. With the melody first stated by Erskine, the tune becomes a relaxed swinger that gracefully slides from 4/4 into 3/4 en route to a gorgeous theme. Erskine's "Twelve" swings with teasing fervor, Taylor trying to find something sweet to turn it right side up. The beautiful "Namasti" quietly closes out this chapter in music, reminding us this stuff hasn't aged one bit. Probably never will. **DB**

Ordering info: ecmrecords.com

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Talk to Me

Although the Internet has wrought dramatic changes in journalism, there are still more people than ever writing non-classical music criticism. It's easy to forget—or to never realize—that once upon a time there was a serious dearth of serious jazz criticism.

Few figures helped change that situation as much as Ralph J. Gleason, who was arguably the first writer to cover jazz and pop music for a mainstream daily newspaper, the San Francisco Chronicle, beginning in the early 1950s. He had tastes that extended beyond mainstream jazz—he interviewed Frank Sinatra and Fats Domino, and he was one of the first critics to recognize the genius of Lenny Bruce. He composed dozens of jazz album liner notes and he co-founded the Monterey Jazz Festival. He was also an associated editor and critic for DownBeat.

Gleason had a deep love and understanding of jazz, bringing a scholarly rigor to his work. ***Conversations in Jazz: The Ralph J. Gleason Interviews* (Yale University Press)** collects fourteen in-depth interviews with legendary musicians he conducted from his home in Berkeley, California, between 1959 and '61—with the exception of his talk with Duke Ellington, which occurred as part of a TV broadcast.

The meticulous transcriptions indicate a remarkable level of respect the various subjects felt for Gleason—Ellington even says, "I feel like I'm on the same level with you because you have proven that you are a great listener." It's extremely rare to encounter interviews today where an artist shares as much as figures like John Coltrane, Sonny Rollins and Bill Evans did with him. Indeed, nearly all of these encounters feel much more like conversations than interviews.

There are fascinating philosophical collisions expressed by different subjects. Dizzy Gillespie insists that solos shouldn't be extremely long, saying, "Give me two and a half choruses and that's it." On the other hand, Rollins mentions playing a single piece for a whole set at Birdland, saying, "If it's good, the people don't even realize that it's so long because they're all engrossed."

Gleason probed into mildly technical questions about creativity that helped illuminate the artistic core of his subjects—like asking Coltrane if he runs new tunes through his mind before playing them, or questioning Evans about if the endless striving for originality in jazz can inhibit a natural way of playing. Over the last five-and-a-half decades, so much about jazz practice has become well known, but things were less



clear in 1961 when he asked Horace Silver, "When you write out new things for the group, how much is actually written?"

Some interviews revolve around existential issues—such as when Coltrane discusses whether he feels a sense of responsibility to the listener. The saxophonist responds, clearly delving deep inside of himself: "I've found that sometimes just me having a good time isn't enough for people at all times. There are some things that have to be considered, too. Maybe I get a kick out of staying up playing the hardest song I can find or doing some things that are to me very clever, where this man here don't know nothing about it ... As to what I want to actually convey, what I really want to say with the music, I haven't gotten it together yet."

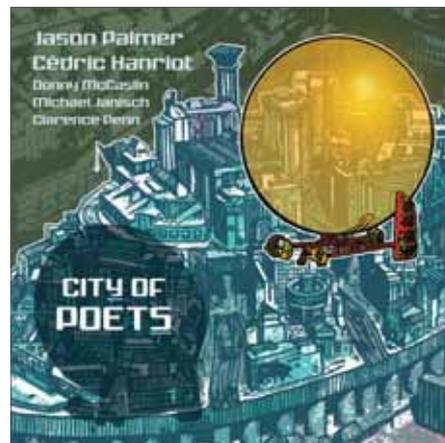
A similar sense of humility surfaces in the Rollins interview, where the saxophonist admits that bad performance can have an adverse affect on him: "The other night, for instance, I sounded bad to myself and I felt very depressed all night."

As illuminating as some of the interviews are, others offer pure delight, such as players like Connie Kay or Philly Joe Jones spinning yarns and talking about formative experiences. With certain figures who work out ideas as they speak, such as John Lewis, the interview transcriptions can make for difficult reading, but by and large these documents are as entertaining and gripping as they are historically valuable.

Time and again Gleason helps an artist explain his essence at a crucial point in his career, capturing a very important moment in time.

DB

Ordering info: yalebooks.com



Jason Palmer/ Cédric Hanriot *City Of Poets*

WHIRLWIND 4687

★★★★½

The case for *City Of Poets* revolves around a French/American jazz exchange program (involving the French-American Cultural Exchange and Mid-Atlantic Arts Foundation), and is also based around Olivier Messiaen's seven modes of limited transposition, as well as American author Dan Simmons' science-fiction series Hyperion Cantos.

American trumpeter Jason Palmer and French pianist/composer Cédric Hanriot have created an "improvisational concept" that takes mainstream jazz styles and links them to literary and artistic archetypes, including the poet, the detective and the soldier. The group's other members—tenor saxophonist Donny McCaslin, bassist Michael Janisch and drummer Clarence Penn—help usher forth their colleagues' ambitious program in this live recording at London's Pizza Express Jazz Club.

Everyone is fully present and in good form on this album, and the live recording gives a real sense of presence. Opener "The Priest's Tale (Mode II)" begins with Penn's tart stick drumming and a touch of funk. The lively waltz is a good platform to introduce the players, especially McCaslin. "The Poet's Tale (Mode V)" features Palmer's fiery yet sweet trumpet and McCaslin's enjoyable low-key runs. The rhythm section playfully works around the duo, goosing the 5/4 vibe with aplomb.

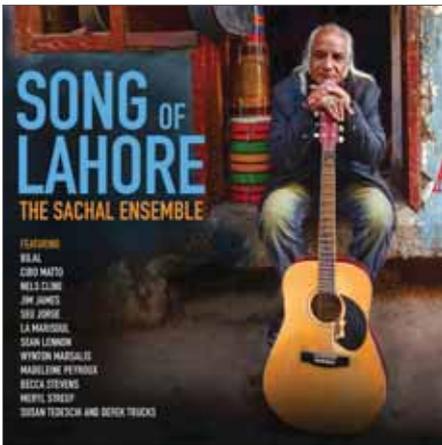
At its best, *City Of Poets* beckons the listener to activate their imagination, challenging them to combine multiple art forms, see characters come alive and invent their own informed storyline.

—John Ephland

City Of Poets: The Priest's Tale (Mode II); The Soldier's Tale (Mode IV); The Poet's Tale (Mode V); The Scholar's Tale (Mode III); The Detective's Tale (Mode VII); The Shrike (Mode I); The Consul's Tale (Mode VI).

Personnel: Jason Palmer, trumpet; Cédric Hanriot, piano; Donny McCaslin, tenor saxophone; Michael Janisch, double-bass; Clarence Penn, drums.

Ordering info: whirlwindrecordings.com



The Sachal Ensemble
Song of Lahore
 UNIVERSAL MUSIC CLASSICS

★★

In the 1960s and '70s, Lahore, Pakistan's second largest city, was the center of the country's film industry. The distinctive sound of Lollywood rivaled Mumbai's Bollywood for its mass appeal. In 1977, a conservative regime enforced Sharia Law and music was outlawed. Musicians were persecuted.

At the turn of the new century, producer Izzat Majeed put together The Sachal Ensemble, a group of aging musicians intent on preserving their culture. With interest in traditional music waning, they experimented with jazz and Western pop.

After an arrangement of the Dave Brubeck/Paul Desmond standard "Take Five" went viral on YouTube, Wynton Marsalis invited them to New York to play with the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra.

Documentary filmmakers followed the group from Lahore to New York and the resulting film, *Song of Lahore*, tells the story of the ensemble's determination to keep playing music in a hostile environment. While they were in New York, they laid down some of the tracks for this album, a collaboration with American jazz, folk, blues and pop artists.

Unhappily, the back-story is more compelling than the music. Most of the tracks present world music tailored for Westerners who don't want to leave their comfort zone. Exceptions include Duke Ellington's "Blue Pepper," which has a solid Pakastani rhythmic foundation and beautiful solos from Marsalis on trumpet and Baqir Abbas on bansuri flute, and "Speak," a piece based on a traditional tune featuring Meryl Streep reading a poem by Faiz Ahmed Faiz.

The folk song "Laila Lo Laila" features Ballu Khan's impressive tabla work and winning vocals from Abbas. But the song's brightest moment is a steamy duel between Mustafa Bahghat's sitar and the electric guitar of Wilco's

Nels Cline.

Bob Marley's "Get Up, Stand Up," with vocals by Cibo Matto, "Man In The Mirror" with Becca Stevens aping Michael Jackson, and a version of "I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel To Be Free" that lacks the force of Nina Simone's rendition are more typical of the sounds on this album.

—j. poet

Song Of Lahore: Blue Pepper (Far East Of The Blues); Shelter From the Storm; Yes We Can Can; Man In The Mirror; Speak; (What's So Funny 'Bout) Peace, Love & Understanding; Sometimes I Feel Like A Motherless Child/Mai Ni; Get Up, Stand Up/Shalamar; The Sound Of Wonder (Dama Dam Mast Qalander); Love's In Need Of Love Today; Laila Lo Laila; I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel To Be Free; Give Me Love (Give Me Peace On Earth). (54:04)

Personnel: Baqir Abbas, bansuri flute, Hammond B-3, vocals; Asad Ali, guitar, vocals; Ballu Khan, tabla, vocals; Najaf Ali, dholak, gara; Rafiq Ahmed, duff, dholak, naal; Nijat Ali, violin, harmonium, vocals, percussion; Mustafa Bahghat, sitar; Saleem Khan, violin; Michael Leonhart, keyboards, percussion; Bill Laurance, clavinet, Hammond B-3; Tim Luntzel, bass; Brian Wolfe, drums, percussion; Dave Eggar, cello; Entcho Todorov, viola; Marika Hughes, cello; Wynton Marsalis, trumpet; Nels Cline, guitar, vocals; Derek Trucks, slide guitar; Sean Lennon (6), Jim James (10), Miho Hatori (8), Yuka Honda (8), Susan Tedeschi (2), Bilal (3), Becca Stevens (4), Meryl Streep (5), Madeleine Peyroux (7), La Marisoul (12), Seu Jorge (13), vocals.

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Jeb Patton

Comping Rule #1: Make it Feel Good

About eight years ago I started on a journey to uncover some of the mysteries of jazz piano comping. More interested in the actual rhythms and voicings as played by the jazz masters themselves rather than generic voicings, I struggled to slowly transcribe comping from some of my favorite recordings. After years of going through this process and trying to fit what I transcribed with some of the jazz theory I had learned from years studying and playing as a New York jazz musician, I came up with the idea of workbooks designed to help jazz piano students get better at comping.

The basic idea: Comp along with classic jazz records using the exact voicings and rhythms as played by pianists like Bud Powell, Barry Harris, Horace Silver, Tadd Dameron, Red Garland, Sonny Clark, Bobby Timmons, Ahmad Jamal, Wynton Kelly, Hank Jones, Bill Evans, McCoy Tyner and Herbie Hancock—and, at the same time, try to discern what’s going on musically. This became the basis of my two books published by Sher Music: *An Approach to Comping, The Essentials* and *Vol. 2, An Approach to Comping, Advanced Concepts and Techniques*.

In the end, the workbooks serve as a workout routine for pianists—as something to inspire jazz piano students and at the same time put them in the right frame of mind for accompanying. The books were never meant to be how-to guides—that’s something that may be forever elusive. There are too many variables, differing contexts and tastes to ever break down jazz comping into a set of definitive steps.

Still, I am always seeking ways to work on my own comping and challenge students to pay more attention to their comping. From my interviews with Tootie Heath, Renee Rosnes, Harold Mabern and Peter Bernstein (which appear in the back of my workbooks), I was struck by a recurring theme: To be a good accompanist or comper requires a certain sensibility. It calls for someone who derives deep enjoyment from being a supporting member of the group. Often, a player who loves the feeling of accompanying, or someone who can hear him/herself in the background

as part of a bigger musical picture, excels at comping. Being a great comper means providing a groove and a rich harmonic backdrop, and maintaining the perfect balance between reacting, initiating and remaining static—all while remaining sensitive, creative and responsive.

Mulgrew Miller has an incredible YouTube video on this subject. In it, he demonstrates his love of the art of comping and states the importance of practicing comping alone. He then comps several choruses of F blues by himself. It’s a perfect illustration of perhaps the most important rule of comping: “Make it feel good.”

This brings us back to the earlier question: “How?” One thing that can get you started in the right direction is to practice rhythmic phrases taken directly from the language of jazz piano comping. The jazz pianists from the ’40s, ’50s and ’60s were definitely using a shared comping language that is still used today. Moreover, in the language are several rhythms designed to give a dance-like feeling, deepen the groove and make it feel good.

COMPING RHYTHMS

Let’s examine three of these groove-producing rhythms:

- Rhythm 1: The Charleston (C). The Charleston is both a rhythm and a dance craze from the 1920s. The basic rhythm played over a generic boogie-woogie left-hand figure is illustrated in Figure 1. The triplet notation is meant to help with getting the right feel. Practice with a metronome or a drummer playing a shuffle rhythm. Make sure the hands line up rhythmically when practicing the following comping rhythms.

- Rhythm 2: “Bud Powell” (BP). I’m labeling two hits in succession off the beat as “Bud Powell.” In my studies, I discovered that the jazz piano giant favored this comping rhythm as a way to propel the rhythm section. See Figure 2.

- Rhythm 3: “Who Parked the Car” (WPC). This is in honor of my mentor, Paul Jeffrey. In my early days he would often tell me to play this

rhythm if I wasn't sure how to comp behind him. "Who Parked the Car" is analogous to "Oop Bop Sh'bam" from the bebop era. See Figure 3. Interestingly, "Who Parked the Car" is a composite of "Bud Powell" and the Charleston if the rhythms are displaced. We will explore this subject a little later.

For beginners, it's fun to link together the three rhythms in their default positions. For example, you could comp the first four measures of a C blues by linking together BP, C, WPC and a measure of rest. See Figure 4. Now, instead of using triplet notation, the rhythms are written in eighth-note notation to make it easier to read. Instead of counting numbers, you can simply say, in rhythm, "Bud Powell, Charl-ston, Who Parked (the) Car." In this way you're beginning to speak the comping language of jazz. This is also a fun way to introduce jazz to kids. (Note: You can vary the length of each hit. In the beginning it's OK to play everything short. As your comping develops, you'll want to play a mix of long and short notes.)

Get creative. Experiment linking together the three comping rhythms. Feel free to interject a measure of rest. Space is a valuable tool when comping. Then apply the linked phrases to a 12-bar blues.

More advanced students can experiment with displacement. To get started, try each comping rhythm in three-beat phrases. Then apply to a blues, either with a rhythm section or alone with the left-hand boogie-woogie figure.

Figure 5 shows the Charleston in three-beat phrases applied to the first four bars of a blues. Notice how the harmony is anticipated up to a beat early to accommodate the comping rhythm. In *The Essentials* you'll find Horace Silver uses a variation of this cross rhythm for two choruses during "Blowin' The Blues Away."

Figure 6 shows "Bud Powell" in three-beat phrases applied to the first four bars of a blues.

Figure 7 shows "Who Parked the Car" in three-beat phrases applied to the first four bars of a blues.

Now experiment with linking the three comping rhythms, this time using them in their default position or displacing them. This means you can start the Charleston rhythm on any downbeat or upbeat. BP and WPC must start on an upbeat. For example, see Figure 8.

COMPING GAMES

Here are two comping games you can play with a horn player, or using your right hand as the solo voice and comping with your left hand. After each phrase the soloist (or your RH) plays, the comper (or LH) answers with an upbeat, downbeat or comping rhythm.

Rule #1: No overlapping. The comper must wait for the soloist to finish the phrase and the soloist must wait for the comper to finish the comping rhythm.

Rule #2: The reaction time has to be quick. The comper must react

Figure 1: Charleston (C)

Figure 2: Bud Powell (BP)

Figure 3: Who Parked the Car (WPC)

Figure 4

Figure 5

Figure 6

Figure 7

Figure 8

Figure 9: Comping Game 1

Figure 10: Comping Game 2

within two beats from the end of the soloist's phrase.

- **Comping Game 1: On the Beat/Off the Beat.** To accurately play the three rhythms outlined above, it is important to practice downbeats and upbeats, i.e. playing on the beat and off the beat. React to the soloist by answering his/her phrase within two beats with a hit on the beat or off the beat. If the solo phrase ends on the beat, you may play a hit an eighth note, quarter note, dotted quarter note or half note after the end of the phrase; if the solo phrase ends off the beat, you may play a hit a quarter note, dotted quarter note or half note after the end of the phrase. In other

words, do not comp on the downbeat immediately after a solo phrase ending on an upbeat. Figure 9 on the previous page shows an example of this kind of interchange during the first four bars of a blues between RH (soloist) and LH (comper). In this case the solo phrases are short and the reaction time is within one beat. Feel free to vary the lengths of phrases and reaction times.

- **Comping Game 2: Charleston, "Bud Powell," "Who Parked the Car."** React to the soloist by answering his/her phrase with one of the three comping rhythms discussed earlier (C, BP or WPC), either displaced or in its default position. Remember, the Charleston rhythm can start on a downbeat or an upbeat; "Bud Powell" and "Who Parked the Car" must start on an upbeat. Figure 10 on the previous page is an example of this kind of interaction between soloist (RH) and comper (LH) during the first four bars of a blues.

Advanced students can play the comping game by mixing the three comping rhythms together with upbeats and downbeats to create an extensive rhythmic palette.

Figure 11: Horace Silver comps behind Miles Davis

The transcription shows a piano accompaniment for a blues piece. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. The score is divided into systems of four bars each, with bar numbers 1, 5, 9, 13, 17, 21, 25, 29, and 33. Chords are indicated above the staff, and rhythmic patterns are indicated below the staff with dashed lines and labels: 'C' for Charleston, 'BP' for Bud Powell, and 'WPC' for Who Parked the Car. The chords include Fm, Dbm9, Gb7, Fm, F13(#9), Bbm(maj7), F#m7, B9, Bbm, Bbm11, Dm9, Dm9 Cmaj9, Cm9, F#7, Bbmaj7, Cm9, F7(#9), Bbmaj9, Bbm9, Bbm9, Eb7(#9), Abmaj7, Gm11, C7, Fm, Dbm9, Gb7, Fm, F13(#9), Bbm(maj7), F#m7, B9, Bbm, Bbm11, Bbm11, Eb7, Abmaj7, Cm7(b5), F7(#9), Bbm, Eb7(#9), Abmaj7, Gm7(b5) C7.

BIG PICTURE

At this time, we need to step back from the rhythmic details and see the bigger picture. The comping transcriptions of the great jazz pianists hold up as satisfying pieces of music in their own right. To the masters, comping is not merely playing chords in rhythm, but rather it's about creating in real time a beautiful, complete and tuneful accompaniment that is well orchestrated and conceived.

This layer in the music should be able to stand on its own as a fully developed musical statement. If you were to mute all of the other tracks except for the piano comping track, it should sound complete. Hank Jones' comping on "Falling In Love With Love" from Kenny Dorham's *Jazz Contrasts* (included in *An Approach to Comping: Vol. 2, Advanced Concepts and Techniques*) immediately comes to mind, and is a shining example of this ideal. I find his comping to be hauntingly beautiful by itself, as a solo piece. When playing it with Joe Magnarelli (as part of the play-along/demo CDs accompanying the workbook), I was surprised how well it fit with any solo Magnarelli played. He was freely improvising as I was reading the transcription. Jones' comping is so strong and correct, it seems to complement any solo played along with it. This also highlights the importance of providing the cushion for the soloist as opposed to focusing only on reacting or initiating.

Finally, as proof that the rhythms studied above actually do come from the post-bop comping tradition, let's examine an actual comping transcription. The first chorus of Horace Silver's comping behind Miles Davis on "Airegin" from the 1957 album *Bags' Groove* on Prestige is illustrated in Figure 11. For clarity, the three rhythms C, BP and WPC are labeled. As you can see, it's chock-full of the Charleston, "Bud Powell" and "Who Parked the Car" comping rhythms. To view the entire transcription, see *An Approach to Comping: The Essentials*.

I strongly recommend playing the transcription along with the record, as it allows you to get inside the music more completely. It's almost like reading Horace Silver's mind and discovering how he feels the rhythm and navigates the changes. All of the subtleties come to light when you do this. You become aware of the time-feel, the touch, the sound of the piano and the sound of the rhythm section. Notice how the music locks up when playing along with Percy Heath and Kenny Clarke. This feeling of swing is something rare these days. It's not about playing hard or playing loud; it's about intensity and feeling. It's hard not to smile—after all, Horace Silver is making the music feel good.

DB

Jeb Patton has toured throughout the United States and abroad as the pianist with the Heath Brothers, Charles McPherson, Jimmy Heath Big Band, the Dizzy Gillespie Alumni Big Band, Sachal Vasandani, Dmitry Baevsky and Roberta Gambarini, as well as with his own trio. Patton has recorded two CDs as a leader: *Shades And Tones* (Cellar Live) in 2015 and *New Strides* (MaxJazz) in 2009. In addition, he has written two books published by Sher Music: *An Approach to Comping: the Essentials* and *An Approach to Comping: Vol. 2, Advanced Concepts and Techniques*.

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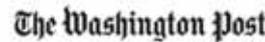
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Bringing the Gospel to Jazz: A Misfit's Theme

I love gospel music. Its haunting tones solicit a response like no other. Somebody shout, "Hallelujah!" Can I get an "Amen"? Wait—before you do, let's explore this a bit more closely.

The gospel feeling found in jazz is heavenly to these ears, but gospel music is quite the paradox. It comprises the musical spirit of a people kidnapped from a beautiful homeland, enslaved, stripped of most of their culture, language, separated from their families and introduced (many forced to convert) to Christianity. Hence the religious term "gospel." Accordingly, before there was "black gospel" music, there was pain and sorrow in the hearts of an oppressed people communicated through the "negro" spiritual. Can you hear the music?

Sonny Stitt said in a 1965 interview with Les Tomkins: "There's no new path to jazz. Jazz is jazz. They can mix the notes up however they want to, but there's no way to change it. They've gained knowledge, sure, but all this came from the servitude of the slaves. They used to be so unhappy they'd go down there and be moaning, and singing songs. That's all they could do. So that's how it started. Spiritual music—that'll never change." (Source: The National Jazz Archive, United Kingdom.)

Of course, brother Sonny was right on the money. These songs, chanted like healing incantations by converted slaves working in plantation fields, were thought to lift the spirit of those laboring. Those spirituals later birthed the blues (an equally sorrowful song) and along came Thomas A. Dorsey, who brought blues and the "negro" spiritual, consummated, to the black church. This sound is what became known as black gospel, with Dorsey credited as its father. While he created neither the spiritual nor the blues, I believe it was his understanding of both that allowed him to fuse the two voices. You see, his father was a minister but his mother was a piano teacher and he learned to play the blues as a young man.

I share this to offer insight into the rich and painful history of African music inspired by oppression in America. Before adding any "technique" to your sound, there should be an understanding deep enough to form a logical if not spiritual connection to its application.

That being said, I'd like to share some concepts of the "black gospel" style and their application to jazz.

GOSPEL FORMS

Very much like jazz standards, Thomas Dorsey's gospel sound had a "standard" form derived partly from the traditional blues structure. See Example 1. At the end of this form is a turnaround that has become common to gospel and can be applied to any song that contains a iii-vi-ii-I harmonic structure. Let's use this common turnaround as an example of how to use gospel sensibility in jazz harmony. You may find this most useful in song forms that contain blues or rhythm changes.

First let's play it as written in Example 2.

Notice the turnaround chord changes are kept diatonic to the key. To add a gospel approach to this feel, we substitute as shown in Example 3:

- V/I replaces the iii chord.
- ii/vi for one count and ii/I for one count replaces vi.
- iim7 becomes ii.
- iii/V for one count and ii/V for one count replace V.
- I to IV replaces the I chord and resolves (predictably) in the next measure.

This is the meat, but to truly complete this feel, we need to add a pick-



up measure. In Example 4, we take beats 3 and 4 of the pickup measure and play:

- I/III for one count.
- IVm6 for one count.

Another common variation is to begin on beat 2 of the pickup and add a #IV diminished chord as shown in Example 5:

- I/III for one count.
- ii/IV for one count.
- #IV diminished for one count.

Examples 2–5 show a variety of combinations that can be played to suit the tone of the gospel-infused song. A listen to some gospel recordings will reveal many different variations in meter, rhythm, harmony and tempo, including the use of dominant chords to replace some of the minor ones.

CALL & RESPONSE

Some characteristics of the gospel-infused sound include a "call and response"-styled melody derived from the plantation field songs and later in prison "chain gang" chants. You can find this stylized in the classic compositions "Work Song" by Nat Adderley and "Moanin'" by Bobby Timmons.

I'll use a portion of my original composition "Mt. Olive Hop" to demonstrate this idea. See Example 6.

The first phrase begins with a syncopated "call" with a shorter group response. The second "call" phrase is a variation of the first with the response from the group remaining the same.

I use the same call-and-response pattern (like an escalating field chant) modulated up a minor third, then a whole step from there before breaking off into another staple of the gospel sound, the #IV diminished chord. This typically resolves to I/V, but in this case I begin the turnaround in F, and through another ii-V series we return to the key of C.

Although this is somewhat morphed from its original state, the connections remain clear. The last bar includes a chromatic climb to the V7 chord (as in our previous example) before returning to the beginning of the form, much like the blues form. This same phrase can be found in Thomas Dorsey's gospel composition "Old Ship Of Zion" and in reverse fashion in "It's A Highway To Heaven," which also features a call-and-response format.

ANCESTRAL TRADITION

My first year at the Berklee College of Music, I discovered the music of Timmons. I was immediately drawn to the recognizable sound in his melodies: gospel. Timmons' compositions were said to have been simple in form, and it was said that he did not like the assertion that he only composed "simple" music. He was a misfit of sorts. However, I would counter that he made music in the tradition of his ancestors and left room for improvisation and development.

It's my belief that jazz would not exist in the form it does today if not for black gospel music and its contributors. This may or may not ring true for you. I guess that depends on your particular "jazz leanings" and where you met this "social music" in the first place.

I met her at the Greater Adams Street Church of God By Faith, a Pentecostal (or holiness) congregation where along with God and love, music reigned supreme. I didn't recognize what I heard every Sunday as jazz; to me it was church music. It was Dorsey, Mahalia Jackson, James Cleveland and Daryl Coley. It was the Mississippi Mass Choir and the Georgia Mass Choir. It was the syncopation of Hammond organ, drums and bass. It was the moans of elderly grandmothers who sang about get-

ting to heaven and receiving their reward. It served as my first musical training ground, and I was happy to participate in any capacity.

Later, I came to know this sound as Duke Ellington, Timmons, Jimmy Smith, Gene Harris, Oscar Peterson, Art Tatum, Albert Ammons, Pete Johnson and, much later, Eric Reed and Cyrus Chestnut.

The marriage of jazz and gospel is complicated at best and surely steeped in sorrow. It can encompass pure joy only because of those who toiled ground they could not own and laid the foundation for the song we sing. I envision this music as a vehicle for sharing that story, for passing on this complex history—a history held together by tension from all sides.

I neglected to mention something rather significant: Dorsey's "gospel" music was not received well initially. Ministers did not want it sung in their churches because of its worldly tinge. Dorsey had to organize his own gatherings to share the music in the early days. So it seems he was also a "misfit" ... until he wasn't.

DB

Allentown, New Jersey-based pianist-composer Enoch Smith Jr.'s musical approach is steeped in his ongoing work as a church pianist and the sounds of such late gospel keyboard greats as James Cleveland and Thomas Whitfield. His working quartet is at the core of his latest CD, *Misfits II: Pop* (MisfitMe Music), as well as its predecessor, *Misfits*. He can be contacted at misfitme.com.

Example 1

Example 1 shows piano accompaniment with chords and bass lines. The chords are: G, G7, C, G, G, G, D, G, G7, C, G, G/D, Em, A7, D7, G, C, G.

Example 2

Example 2 shows piano accompaniment with chords and bass lines. The chords are: Em7, Am7, Dm7, G7, Cmaj7.

Example 3

Example 3 shows piano accompaniment with chords and bass lines. The chords are: C/G, Dm/A, Am7, Dm, Em/G, Dm/G, C, F/C, C.

Example 4

Example 4 shows piano accompaniment with chords and bass lines. The chords are: C/E, F#m, C/G, Dm/A, Am7, Dm, Em/G, Dm/G, C, F/C, C.

Example 5

Example 5 shows piano accompaniment with chords and bass lines. The chords are: C/E, F#m, F#m, C/G, Dm/A, Am7, Dm, Em/G, Dm/G, C, F/C, C.

Example 6

Example 6 shows piano accompaniment with chords and bass lines. The chords are: C/E, F#m, C/G, C/E, F#m, C/G, Em/G, Ab, Eb/Bb, Em/G, Ab, Dm/Bb, F#m, G7, C7, F7, Eb7, D7, G7, C7.



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Dr. Lonnie Smith

Dr. Lonnie Smith's Organ Solo on 'And The World Weeps'

“And The World Weeps,” from organist Dr. Lonnie Smith’s 2009 album *Rise Up!* (Palmetto), is a slow march, like a funeral dirge. It’s a heavily emotional song, and deceptively simple. There are only three chords (I, VI and V in Dm) played in an eight-bar sequence. Smith sticks to quarter notes on the roots in his left hand, locking in with the drums and adding to the heaviness of the mood. His improvisation occurs mostly in the low reaches of the keyboard (the entire transcription is written an octave higher than it sounds), which adds to the moodiness.

The next thing to be aware of is how free Smith is with the rhythmic feel. At tempos this slow, it can be quite effective to do as we hear in this improvisation: playing sometimes ahead of the beat, sometimes behind it, and varying how much. The written rhythms should be seen as approximations of what we hear, for even though his left hand is rock-solid, Smith’s right hand floats freely above. For the fast lines, we hear Smith sometimes just cramming a bunch of notes into a beat, producing some odd rhythmic groupings, such as in bars 22, 23 and 25.

Something else Smith does that adds to this sense of rhythmic freedom is ending phrases after the downbeat. When a phrase concludes on the downbeat, it creates a strong sense of resolution, especially on a chord change. By ending phrases later, it produces more of a feeling of delayed resolution, such as in measures 3, 5, 15, 17 and 28. The very end of his solo is a great example, where he lands on a G, the fourth of the chord, on the downbeat, a very unresolved sound. He makes the listener wait until the third beat before he resolves down to the low root, giving us a delayed sense of finality.

Smith also builds the drama by using an old and common technique: He starts out with slower rhythms and a lot of space, and plays faster lines with less frequent rests and fewer held notes as the solo progresses. Just compare the first four measures with the final four.

For melodic material, Smith stays mostly within the D blues scale. This is a particularly effective scale for this progression, as the flat fifth (A \flat /G#) is also the seventh of the \flat VI chord (B \flat). Smith leans on this note the first time this chord appears (measure 3), and favors this pitch

over the A natural when this chord next shows up (measure 11). This makes his lines fit the harmony while still keeping it connected to the D minor tonality of the song.

In other spots, Smith deviates from the blues scale to fit the harmonies, as in bars 5–6, when he leans on the E, the fifth of the A7. He even throws in the third (C#). And the next time the A7 occurs (bar 13), he starts out with those same two notes, differentiating this chord from the D blues scale. As the solo progresses, Smith deviates more frequently from the blues, adding more modal and chromatic ideas. Measures 25–27, beginning his final time through the chord sequence, are a particularly fine example. After starting out with the descending fifth of E and A (which implies an A chord, but playing them against the Dm creates a minor ninth sound), he moves this interval down a whole step to D and G. So even though the tension of the ninth has been resolved to the tonic, the fifth has dropped to

the fourth, leaving it harmonically vague, but setting our ears up for something closer to D aeolian or dorian, rather than the blues scale we've heard so much of.

After moving through C, the top voice of this line drops down to B natural at the end of the bar, but this immediately moves through B \flat on the way to A natural. This chromaticism creates a scalar ambiguity: Is the B natural a passing tone in the D aeolian scale, or is the B \flat a passing tone in the D dorian? Does it even matter?

Smith plays the B–B \flat –A again, leaning on this ambiguity, but makes it stronger by resolving to the A natural after the chord has changed to B \flat 7, creating a strong dissonance. He does resolve this to A \flat (the seventh of the chord) but then continues to G and F, bringing us back to the D blues scale. **DB**

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

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Roland JUNO-DS

High-Performance Workstation

The JUNO-DS is Roland's newest performance workstation, and it comes in 61- and 88-key versions. I had the 88-key version for this review, and it is both light (35 pounds) and sturdy. It features Roland's Ivory Feel-G keyboard, which has a light but pleasant action, and feels very good under the fingers. The JUNO-DS is mostly plastic construction, but still feels very solid, and looks pro. The control panel features a large LCD screen, four knobs and sliders for instant access to common sound design functions and performance parameters, and a set of phrase pads that can be used to trigger songs and samples.

The JUNO-DS features a whole new set of sounds designed for this series, including some really lovely pianos and organs, 30-plus drum kits and the entire 1,000-plus sound set from the JUNO-DI. This brings the onboard sound total to more than 1,200, and users can download new waveforms from the Roland website onto a USB drive and load them in (there are extra memory locations designated for this). You can even load in your own WAV files for playback. The sound set is widely varied and represents high quality across the board. It is made up primarily of bread-and-butter sounds, but there are a few nice surprises, too. This machine is built to make sure that whatever genre you are performing, you have the tools at your fingertips.

This is a performance keyboard, so navigation has been well thought out for quick access. Sounds are divided into categories that are instantly accessible with a single button, and then you can quickly scroll through the sounds. Layering and splitting are set up in easy and intuitive ways, and the panel controls make it simple to adjust levels and mix on the fly. You can layer up to five sounds at once (called a Super Layer), so creating huge pads and sequences is no problem, and you can create multiple zones across the keyboard. There is also a mic input on the back that can process your vocal through internal effects (including pitch correction), alleviating the need for a separate PA on solo gigs—a very nice touch, although it is a quarter-inch input, so get your adapter ready. This input can also be routed through the JUNO-DS's

internal vocoder, which sounds great.

There are lots of other nice performance features included. The four knobs on the front panel can be set to control whatever parameters you wish, and they have three-tier functionality, so you have command over basic filter functions and FX control with the touch of a button. The four sliders are set up to control levels of the zones, the input and phrase pads. The phrase pads are interesting: They can be set to control sequences, drum patterns, the arpeggiator and WAV playback. The pads can control looping, tap tempo, muting and basic record functions, all depending on how you press them.

The JUNO-DS has a built-in pattern sequencer that's great for getting song ideas out quickly. It reminded me a little of the sequencers on the Ensoniq boards of the '80s and '90s in its ease of use. You can also record the arpeggiator into tracks, which is useful for creating interesting textures. The arpeggiator in the JUNO-DS is robust and offers enough options to keep you playing around for hours.

The rear panel also has USB connectivity, and if you hook it up to your computer, the JUNO-DS has built-in DAW control on board. It comes with preset templates for Logic, Cubase and Sonar, but there are user slots that you can configure to the DAW of your choice. It can also function as a USB interface to your computer.

Roland has done a nice job with the JUNO-DS of creating a modern-sounding and modern-feeling workstation synth. It has all the bells and whistles, but at its core, this is a very solid platform for performing almost any style of music. It's extremely portable, even including battery power, without giving up the feel of a professional keyboard. The sounds are very good, as are the sequencer and arpeggiator, and at \$999 for the 88-key version (\$699 for the 61-key), it's worth a look if you're in the market for a workstation. —Chris Neville

rolandus.com





Casio MZ-X500 Music Arranger

Workstation Technology Evolution

The first thing that stands out on Casio's MZ-X500 is the pair of powerful 20-watt speakers sitting at either end of the 61-key workstation. While not quite suitable for a full live-band setting, I can see these studio-quality speakers working well enough that you wouldn't need to use additional amplification in smaller venues and solo settings. While that is what first grabbed my attention, there is much more that this portable professional keyboard can do.

Billed as a "music arranger," the MZ-X500 is part of Casio's new flagship MZ-X series (which also includes the slightly paired-down MZ-X300). It represents a major evolution in workstation technology. Some quick highlights: a 5.3-inch color LCD touch-screen, 1,100 preset tones, 330 rhythm patterns, tone-wheel organ, MIDI and audio recorders, multi-pads for sampling, loop playback, articulation (with aftertouch for some nice effects), and full USB support for MIDI/audio import and export.

This instrument seems to be designed for a couple different types of consumers. First, I can see the one-person band getting a lot of mileage out of the rhythm and auto-accompaniment features, which sound great and offer a huge assortment of styles and sounds. Second, for the more casual or budding musician, this keyboard offers quite an array of fun and potentially educational features. As a jazz pianist and educator, I can see many applications in both "learning by doing" and more traditional pedagogy. That being said, this keyboard also makes it quite fun to jam and/or compose. While the keyboard's piano-style touch is light, I was able to adjust my playing without experiencing any limitations.

The MZ-X500 covers a good swath of modern sonic territory. While one might miss the ability to fully customize certain patches, that is not the domain of this type of instrument. Instead, one is free to explore in these categories: Piano, Organ, Guitar/Bass, Strings, Brass/Reed/Pipe, Synth, Ethnic and Various (General MIDI sounds and drums). The grand piano sounds are quite realistic and full. The 128-note polyphony really shines on the vibes and strings. While I didn't care for some of the "wah" settings, the electric pianos and clavichords are decent. Casio spent extra time on the organ setting, including nine physical drawbars (yeah!) and toggles for slow/fast Leslie speed as well as second and third harmonics. While all of this is appreciated and well done, don't expect it to replace a Hammond. The synth and bass sounds deserve credit for a nice sampling of modern and traditional sounds, and all can be experienced with good depth thanks to the hefty built-in speakers.

In the rhythms department, the MZ-X500 has a huge assortment of

everything from standard rock and pop grooves to modern dance-floor pounders. The jazz settings are nice and include the necessary 5/4 option for Dave Brubeck fans. Also included are a huge assortment of ethnic rhythms covering Latin, European, Middle Eastern and Asian styles. On the modern tip, house and related styles are present, as well as some down-tempo and hip-hop. It seems like Casio really did its research.

A welcome addition to the instrument are 16 MPC-type multi-pads that are touch-sensitive and also respond to aftertouch. They can be used to play samples, chord progressions, user-created phrases and articulations that affect the current sound being played from the keyboard. For instance, while playing a trumpet sound, a pad can be assigned to articulate slurs and dives or other difficult-to-perform nuances.

Auto accompaniment is the bread-and-butter for this type of instrument, and Casio has done some great work updating these features to make them quite powerful and musical (this is not your grandma's home organ). Things mostly work as you'd expect here with two intro buttons, four variations/fill-ins, break (which stops the current bar and starts back on the 1—a great time to hit some multi-pad samples), fade in/out (no more riding the volume knob) and two ending variations. The "Accomp" button toggles the harmonic accompaniment that will follow left-hand chords or single notes. There is quite a bit of depth to this that goes well beyond the scope of this review. Casio has done a good job of keeping things simple, yet with the ability to go deep when needed.

A few other noteworthy features are the 17-track MIDI recorder, which should get you past any limitations to the auto accompaniment engine. Also unique to this model is HEX mode, which allows you to stack up to six tones into one ensemble sound. This can be used, for instance, to create thick stabs that could then be sampled to a multi-pad or just played live. Also, with a USB flash drive, one can easily make audio recordings of their compositions/performances.

Casio has certainly upped the ante in the world of music arrangers. The MZ-X500 delivers in all the requisite areas and beyond. For someone who spends a lot of time in a dark, basement studio, it was a joy to pick the keyboard up (with one arm—it weighs only 16.8 pounds) and make music in other, more inspiring places. Both pros and students will benefit from the extensive rhythm and tone options. And the ability to create your own compositions and then export to a flash drive is a huge plus.

—Rick Gehrenbeck

casiomusicgear.com

Vandoren V16S+ Alto Mouthpiece

Small Chamber Design Re-imagined

Vandoren has created a new design for its small-chamber V16 alto saxophone mouthpiece. The V16S+ model takes the place of the existing V16S model.

According to Vandoren product specialist Michael Fenoglio, when comparing the S+ to the original small chamber design, the inside shape allows for smoother airflow and improved projection. Players can achieve a tone that has more body, depth and color. The S+ chamber design also allows the mouthpiece to be used with a wider range of reed strengths.

I tried the V16S+ alto mouthpiece in the practice room using Vandoren Java (red box) #2½ and #3 reeds with a gold Vandoren M/O ligature. I took a liking to the setup immediately. The tones coming from my Mark VI alto were rich and responsive in all registers. Low notes spoke with ease, whether I was wailing in a loud, aggressive manner or cooling out down at the subtone level. The altissimo range was clear and responsive, especially with the harder reed.

The real test came playing lead alto with a big band in an outdoor setting. I chose a size 6 tip opening (the V16S+ is available in sizes 5–9) and paired it with a #2½ reed, which proved to be a comfortable combination. The tone quality was warm, and intonation was dependable at all volume levels. The V16S+ projected well in shout choruses and solos, and it blended nicely with the rest of the sax section. Articulation felt relaxed and responsive. The mouthpiece facilitated effortless inflections in tone and pitch.

The V16S+ is an outstanding alto saxophone mouthpiece. If you are already using a V16S, you might find that you like the new S+ design even better.

—Bruce Gibson

vandoren.com



1. Keyboard Studies

Pianists and keyboard players can sink their chops into three new instructional publications from Hal Leonard. *25 Great Piano Solos* by Huw White provides note-for-note transcriptions of improvisations by jazz icons Duke Ellington, Chick Corea, Bill Evans, Oscar Peterson and many more, along with lessons on how to play them. The book's audio portion contains full-band demo tracks and accompaniment-only tracks for each solo. Songs include "All Of You," "Caravan," "Freddie Freeloader," "Have You Met Miss Jones?," "If I Were A Bell," "In Walked Bud," "Night And Day" and others. *Hal Leonard Jazz Piano Method* by Mark Davis is designed for anyone interested in playing jazz piano—from the novice to the more advanced player. The book includes fun progressions and licks, and the accompanying audio includes demonstrations of all written examples. Topics include essential theory, chords and voicings, improvisation ideas, structure and forms, scales and modes, rhythm basics, interpreting a lead sheet and playing solos. *Hal Leonard Blues Keyboard Method* by Marty Sammon is a guide to traditional and modern blues keyboard playing, with rhythm and soloing concepts for piano and organ. Players can build their blues vocabulary with ideas for ensemble playing; intros, turnarounds, licks and endings; piano and organ accompaniment; and phrasing and soloing. halleonard.com



1

2

2. Virtual Pianism

Synthogy Ivory II VR is a portable synthesizer unit whose detailed piano sample sets are paired with the Ivory II virtual piano engine. It allows virtual piano sounds to be played at full resolution with no sonic compromises. Synthogy Ivory II VR features a front panel interface that gives players access to all presets and major controls. Additional control of the interface is available through Wi-Fi or a hardwired ethernet device such as a tablet, laptop, smartphone or desktop.

vixano.com

3. Analog Synth Module

Analogue Solutions' Nyborg-24 is a Moog-style, four-pole, 24dB/octave, low-pass-filter-equipped standalone monophonic synthesizer module. It features real analog voice and modulation circuits and is hand-built using real transistors and op-amps. Its circuitry is based on distinctive-sounding designs dating back to the late 1970s. analoguesolutions.com



3

4. Steppin' Out

Yamaha has introduced an easy-to-install "keytar" attachment for the company's line of reface mobile mini keyboards, which includes four different models with built-in speakers and 37 HQ-mini keys. The keytar attachment lets keyboard players step out from behind their stage rig. It clamps onto both sides of the keyboard and includes buttons to snap on a strap.

usa.yamaha.com



4



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ANDREW CONDE/ST. FRANCIS XAVIER UNIVERSITY

Music Department Chair Kevin Brunkhorst (left) jams with Mike Stern during the superstar guitarist's visit to the St. Francis Xavier University campus.

StFX Focuses on Solid Foundation

A PICTURESQUE CANADIAN TOWN OF about 5,000 people, Antigonish, Nova Scotia, is about as far from the jazz mainstream as you can get in North America. Despite its remote location, the town is home to a thriving jazz program that will turn 40 next year.

Founded in 1853 as a Catholic college, St. Francis Xavier University (called StFX by one and all) now offers jazz studies that contribute to three bachelor of arts degrees, a bachelor of music and a two-year diploma program. Music Department Chair Kevin Brunkhorst refers to the jazz program as both “artisanal” and “old-school.”

“We believe in mentorship and positive attention,” said Brunkhorst, a native of Iowa who has been at the university for 12 years. “We still believe you’ve got to learn how to play your instrument—learn voice-leading, harmony, all that basic stuff. A lot of the faculty came up that way through the University of North Texas jazz program. My personal philosophy is that it’s possible to get way too creative and ignore the foundation. We don’t do that.”

Brunkhorst refers to the program as an “oasis that has a lot of unity,” and fellow UNT alumnus Paul Tynan talks about the program—which has up to 85 students each year—in terms of family.

“As soon as the new students come in, the older ones take them under their wings,” said Tynan, who teaches trumpet, jazz history and arranging. “We spend a lot of time hanging and playing together.”

Part of that is a function of being in a small north Atlantic coast town. Local playing opportunities off-campus are few, so students and faculty have to create their own scene.

“One of the best things about teaching here

is the opportunity to collaborate with students,” Tynan said. “I’ve hired third- and fourth-year students to play with me in Halifax. It’s great to stand up on the bandstand with them. That helps us celebrate their advancement through the program.”

The environment gets more energized when guest artists arrive six or eight times a year for master classes. Among those who have participated in recent years are Dave Liebman, Mike Stern, Joey Baron, Cyrille Aimée, Tim Hagans, Jimmy Cobb and Andy LaVerne.

“One of the advantages of our location and size is that students get a lot of personal interaction with those guests, and that just adds to the overall learning experience,” Tynan added.

The program accepts about half of those who apply, a high rate that Brunkhorst said reflects his philosophy that promising students can flourish with the right kind of attention.

“Ambition and motivation are the first things I look for when I’m assessing applicants,” Brunkhorst said. “Because about half of our students come from Atlantic Canada, we get a lot of young musicians who haven’t had really intensive high school music instruction.”

“We’ll target a student’s weaknesses,” Tynan said. “We spend a lot of time detailing courses for specific students to give them what they need.”

Brunkhorst said his overall goal is two-fold: “I want graduates to be able to accept any gig without having to rely on a couple of *Real Books*. Second, I want them to be able to create something from nothing—to get a gig, whether it’s a wedding reception or a gallery opening, and lead a band. Write some tunes or arrange something. If they go out the door with those skills, we’ve done our job.” —James Hale



JIMMY KATZ

Rudresh Mahanthappa

Princeton Appointment: Princeton University’s Department of Music has appointed saxophonist-composer Rudresh Mahanthappa as director of jazz. He starts in his new position as the Anthony H. P. Lee ’79 Senior Lecturer in Jazz Studies at the beginning of the fall term, succeeding Program in Jazz Studies founder Dr. Anthony D.J. Branker. Anchored by the 17-piece Concert Jazz Ensemble, the program is host to an array of smaller groups including a Jazz Composers Collective, Jazz Vocal Collective and Crossing Borders Improvisational Music Ensemble.

princeton.edu

Beantown Dual Degree: Harvard College and Berklee College of Music have formalized a partnership to offer a five-year dual degree that will enable students to earn a Bachelor of Arts at Harvard and a Master of Music or a Master of Arts at Berklee starting in fall 2017. To get into the program, students must be accepted to both Harvard and Berklee independently, as well as complete an audition and interview with Berklee. Harvard undergraduates may also apply to the program as transfer students during their freshman or sophomore years. berklee.edu; harvard.edu

My Generation: Monterey Jazz Festival has selected the 21 members of its 2016 Next Generation Jazz Orchestra, a high school all-star big band featuring some of the best student jazz musicians in the country. After touring Japan in late July and early August, the orchestra is scheduled to perform two gigs on Sept. 15: the 10th Jazz Legends Gala honoring Quincy Jones in Pebble Beach, California, as well as a free Concert for Kids at the Monterey County Fairgrounds. The orchestra will appear on the Jimmy Lyons main stage at the 59th Monterey Jazz Festival on Sept. 18 with 2016 Artist-In-Residence Terri Lyne Carrington. montereyjazzfestival.org

Keynote Kirk: Saxophonist Kirk Whalum has been selected as the keynote speaker for the Jazz Education Network Conference JENet Session, to be held on Jan. 5, 2017. The conference runs Jan. 4–7 in New Orleans.

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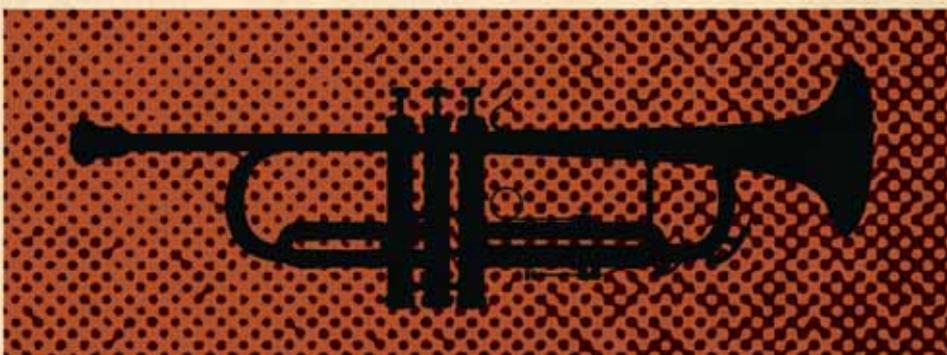


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George Coleman

This is the first Blindfold Test for tenor saxophonist George Coleman, whose April release, *The Master Speaks* (Smoke Sessions), marks the 2015 NEA Jazz Master's first leader album since 1998. Coleman's distinguished c.v. includes substantial gigs and classic recordings with Max Roach, Slide Hampton, Miles Davis and Elvin Jones, and a slew of quartet dates that showcase his harmonic acumen, mercurial phrasing and muscular yet fluid tone.

Houston Person

"The Second Time Around" (*Something Personal*, High Note, 2015) Person, tenor saxophone; Steve Nelson, vibraphone; John DiMartino, piano; Ray Drummond, bass; Lewis Nash, drums.

Sounds like Houston. He's got quite a repertoire. "The Second Time Around." I've never played it, but I know it. Houston is very melodic, very expressive, and has a robust tone. He doesn't play a lot of notes, but the ones he plays are good. He always has good players accompanying him. Is Steve Nelson on vibes? 3.75 stars. Houston normally plays in the low register, with that great, mellow sound, but here he started in the upper register, which was nice.

Three's Company

"Dark Eyes" (*We'll Be Together Again*, Chesky, 2016) Javon Jackson, tenor saxophone; Ron Carter, bass; Billy Drummond, drums.

Harry Allen? Sounds like A minor, the way he played it. Is this one of the younger players? Whoever it is has a great sound, good technique and good harmonic direction. 3½ stars.

Kenny Garrett

"Beyond The Wall" (*Beyond The Wall*, Nonesuch, 2006) Garrett, alto saxophone; Pharoah Sanders, tenor saxophone; Mulgrew Miller, keyboards; Robert Hurst, bass; Brian Blade, drums.

The piano player has great technique. Is the alto player Mike DiRubbo? Oh, I recognize Pharoah, so that's Kenny Garrett; I knew Pharoah and Kenny had played together. To be frank, I haven't heard a lot of Kenny, but he's a good player. Pharoah is always somewhat on the outside, but whatever he plays, he keeps things in perspective. I liked the tune—good harmonically, not really complex. 4 stars.

JD Allen

"Tell The Truth, Shame The Devil" (*Americana: Musings On Jazz And Blues*, Savant, 2016) Allen, tenor saxophone; Glenn August, bass; Rudy Royston, drums.

Saxophone, bass and drums can bore me. I've played in bands with no piano—Slide Hampton's Octet and Elvin's band—so I'm familiar with that. But I like something that defines the music, and a harmonic instrument like a guitar or a piano does that better. Of course, a player like Sonny Rollins can make that situation work, because he has so much harmonic power and knows what to do. It's the blues, and the saxophone player plays it well. I'd like to hear more movement, more swinging, but I wouldn't put it down. 3½ stars.

Sonny Rollins

"Sonny, Please" (*Sonny, Please*, Duxy, 2005) Rollins, tenor saxophone; Clifton Anderson, trombone; Bobby Broom, guitar; Bob Cranshaw, electric bass; Steve Jordan, drums; Kimati Dinizulu, percussion.

I'm not too interested in this one. Take it off. That was Sonny Rollins? Put it back on! I would never have guessed. I should know Sonny. I hear him now, but I didn't before. Anything Sonny plays has musical merit. I like hearing him in a setting like "St. Thomas" with Tommy Flanagan—swinging, playing fast and all that. He's playing free on this thing. I might play free if the situation calls for it, just like



George Coleman

STEVEN SUSSMAN

I did with Miles Davis. One night! But that's not my forte. I'm a very harmonically inclined person and a swinging person. 4 stars because it's Sonny.

Archie Shepp Attica Blues Orchestra

"The Cry Of My People" (*I Hear The Sound*, Arch, 2013) Shepp, tenor saxophone; Ambrose Akinmusire, trumpet; Amina Claudine Myers, piano; Daryl Hall, bass; Famoudou Don Moye, drums; voices, big band and string orchestra.

The trumpet player is good, but didn't play in a style that I could identify his potential. I have no idea who the saxophone player is. I'm mildly impressed, but not overwhelmingly. 3 stars. [after] Archie's cool. I might not like some of the things those guys do, but I always respect them.

Joe Lovano

"Ghost Of A Chance" (*Trio Fascination*, Blue Note, 1997) Lovano, tenor saxophone; Dave Holland, bass; Elvin Jones, drums.

"Ghost Of A Chance." He's got that breathy thing, reminiscent of how some of the older guys played back in the day. I don't know who it is. They're in the key of C. He just played a high F-sharp. 3½ stars. [after] Joe's a good player. I figured the drummer might be Elvin. He'll swing you to death on sticks, but when he plays brushes you don't miss the beat.

Reeds and Deeds

"Amsterdam After Dark" (*Tenor Time*, Criss Cross Jazz, 2011) Grant Stewart, Eric Alexander, tenor saxophones; David Hazeltine, piano; John Webber, bass; Joe Farnsworth, drums.

[Second saxophone solo.] That's Eric. Was Grant Stewart first? He played a great solo. Hazeltine on piano? It's good to hear other people play your compositions. It doesn't happen a lot for me. Is this Joe? John Webber. Those are my boys. Everybody played great. The arrangement shows a lot of imagination. The two tenors sound bigger than they actually are—there's a nice blend, and they play good lines. Grant is one of my favorite saxophone players, coming out of Sonny's bag. Eric is impeccable. He was great when I met him, and he's blossomed through the years. 5 stars, not just because it's my tune, but the musicianship and the two tenors. **DB**

The "Blindfold Test" is a listening test that challenges the featured artist to discuss and identify the music and musicians who performed on selected recordings. The artist is then asked to rate each tune using a 5-star system. No information is given to the artist prior to the test.

A black and white photograph of jazz saxophonist Greg Osby. He is wearing a dark pinstriped suit, a black fedora, and sunglasses. He is sitting on a rough stone ledge, leaning forward and playing a silver alto saxophone. The background is a cloudy sky. A thin white diagonal line runs across the image from the top left to the bottom right.

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