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03 | 06

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1999 | 2018

20^o

03. QUA. Wed

21.30

ORQUESTRA DE JAZZ DO HOT CLUBE DE PORTUGAL

Toca a música de António Pinho Vargas
Plays the music of António Pinho Vargas

04. QUI. Thu

21h30 / 23h30

ORQUESTRA ANGRAJAZZ GONZALO RUBALCABA TRIO

05. SEX. Fri

21h30 / 23h30

ANDY SHEPPARD QUARTET BILLY CHILDS QUARTET

06. SAT. Sat

21h30 / 23h30

JAZZMEIA HORN DARCY JAMES ARGUE'S SECRET SOCIETY

DOWNBEAT

AUGUST 2018

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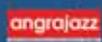
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BLUE NOTE®



KANDACE SPRINGS BLACK ORCHID EP

Singer and pianist **KANDACE SPRINGS** gives a taste of her forthcoming album, featuring new songs produced by drummer **KARRIEM RIGGINS**. Springs delivers inspired covers with her take on The Stylistics' "People Make the World Go Round" and a radiant performance of Roberta Flack's "The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face." Catch her on tour with Daryl Hall & John Oates this summer!



R+R=NOW COLLAGICALLY SPEAKING

R+R=NOW is a collective of boundary-breakers featuring **ROBERT GLASPER, TERRACE MARTIN, CHRISTIAN SCOTT ATUNDE ADJUAH, DERRICK HODGE, TAYLOR MCFERRIN & JUSTIN TYSON**. As Glasper says, R+R=NOW tells "our story from our point of view... It's a very honest, fluid sound that rings of hip-hop, EDM, and jazz."



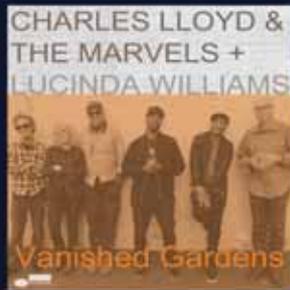
KENNY BARRON QUINTET CONCENTRIC CIRCLES

11-time Grammy-nominated pianist **KENNY BARRON** emerges with his new quintet consisting of drummer **JOHNATHAN BLAKE**, bassist **KIYOSHI KITAGAWA**, saxophonist **DAYNA STEPHENS** and trumpeter **MIKE RODRIGUEZ**. Eight years after becoming an **NEA Jazz Master**, Barron, whom *Jazz Weekly* hailed as "the most lyrical piano player of our time," continues striving for new creative heights.



MARCUS MILLER LAID BLACK

Bassist extraordinaire **MARCUS MILLER** follows up *Afrodeezia*, his expansive exploration of music from the African diaspora, with a return to funk on his vibrant new album *Laid Black*. Marcus brings the party with special guests including **TROMBONE SHORTY, KIRK WHALUM, and TAKE 6**.



CHARLES LLOYD & THE MARVELS + LUCINDA WILLIAMS VANISHED GARDENS

CHARLES LLOYD & The Marvels – **BILL FRISELL, GREG LEISZ, REUBEN ROGERS, and ERIC HARLAND** – add a new dimension by collaborating with revered singer-songwriter **LUCINDA WILLIAMS** to pioneer a new genre of Americana Jazz that draws on the musicians many influences with reimagined versions of Williams' favorites, new Lloyd originals, and covers of **Jimi Hendrix** and **Thelonious Monk**.



ROBERT GLASPER X KAYTRANADA THE ARTSCIENCE REMIXES

3-time GRAMMY-winner Robert Glasper joins forces with producer **KAYTRANADA** on *The ArtScience Remixes*, an 8-track EP that reimagines the songs from Robert Glasper Experiment's acclaimed 2016 album *ArtScience*. The set features cameos by **TALIB KWELI, ALEX ISLEY** and **IMAN OMARI**, and takes the Experiment's trailblazing blend of R&B, Hip-Hip, and Jazz into new sonic realms.

AUGUST 2018

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Jazz Artist, Jazz Group

BY JON GARELICK

Iyer, one of the top pianists of his generation, won two categories in this year's Critics Poll. DownBeat's Jazz Artist of the Year discusses his artistic vision, his approach to improvisation and his role as an educator at Harvard University.



©JIM MARSHALL PHOTOGRAPHY LLC

The album *Both Directions At Once* contains previously unreleased studio recordings by John Coltrane (left), Elvin Jones, Jimmy Garrison and McCoy Tyner.

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Cover photo of Vijay Iyer shot by Jimmy & Dena Katz in Brooklyn on May 5.

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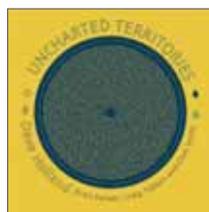
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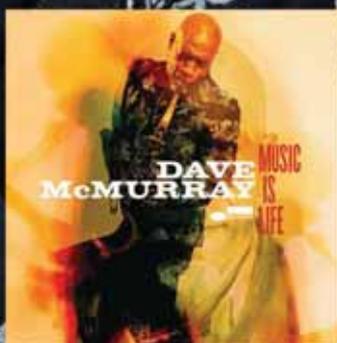
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-Frank Alkyer, Downbeat Magazine



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DOWNBEAT ARCHIVES

DownBeat Hall of Famer Paul Motian has inspired musicians like guitarist Jakob Bro to push boundaries.

Jazz's Ripple Effect

EVERY MUSICIAN NAMED IN THIS YEAR'S DownBeat Critics Poll—the winners, the Rising Stars and hundreds of runners-up—was influenced by the work of his or her predecessors. Sometimes, these musicians are inspired by entire movements within the jazz genre. Other times, it comes down to a particular individual or mentor.

In the case of Jakob Bro, the Danish guitarist who won the Rising Star—Guitar category of this year's poll, that influential individual is the drummer/composer/bandleader Paul Motian (1931–2011), who was posthumously inducted into the DownBeat Hall of Fame in 2012. In his interview with Josef Woodard on page 48 of this issue, Bro discusses how, as a member of Motian's Electric Bebop Band in the early '00s, his experience playing the leader's original tunes helped set him on the path to his own personal development as an improviser and composer.

Motian—who established himself on the New York scene playing with the likes of Bill Evans, Charles Lloyd, Lee Konitz and Keith Jarrett during the 1950s and '60s—didn't start composing in earnest until he was in his 40s and leading his own groups. Starting in 1973 with *Conception Vessel*, his debut album as a leader, Motian gradually built a body of highly original work that is well-suited to improvisation.

Motian was known to share his compositions freely with his fellow musicians. Now, his complete collection of copyrighted songs is officially available in two volumes—*The Compositions*

of Paul Motian—assembled by his archivist and niece, Cynthia McGuirl. The second volume, which contains all of Motian's written works from the years 1990–2011, is highlighted in this month's Gear Box column (see page 92).

Presented in Motian's own script, the collection is a work of art unto itself. McGuirl, a visual artist, notes in her introduction to *Volume 2* that she was struck by the beauty of her uncle's handwriting. "He conveyed a lot with his writing style and notations that would be lost with a mechanized rendering," she wrote. "The connection that will be made between listening to the recordings and seeing the written music is an education that I think is worthwhile. Because Paul's music can be interpreted in an infinite number of individualized ways, I believe this music can help musicians to push their own boundaries."

This year's Critics Poll winners include numerous boundary-pushers—Jazz Artist of the Year Vijay Iyer and Jazz Album of the Year winner (and Female Jazz Vocalist winner) Cécile McLorin Salvant among them.

Entering the DownBeat Hall of Fame this year are jazz legends Benny Golson and Marian McPartland (1918–2013). And Muhal Richard Abrams (1930–2017), one of jazz's groundbreaking improvisers, is honored as Composer of the Year for the brilliant oeuvre he left behind. Like Motian, each of them has produced ripple effects, destined to touch future generations of jazz musicians and guarantee the perpetuation, and continued evolution, of the art form. **DB**



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HOW TO PLAY SOLO JAZZ PIANO

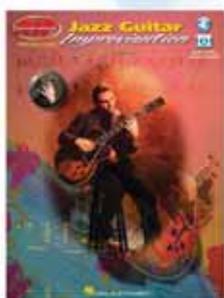
by John Valerio
Often, jazz pianists are called upon to play solo gigs. This book attempts to ease the transition from group to solo jazz piano playing with a step-by-step practical approach to learning and playing standard tunes by dissecting their component parts; melody, harmony and bass. Chapters include: chords & voicings • bass lines • swing tunes • ballads • improvisation. Audio demonstration tracks are provided for download or streaming online.
00147731 Book/Online Audio\$16.99



HAL LEONARD JAZZ BASS METHOD

by Matthew Rybicki
Author Matthew Rybicki guides you through the essential knowledge you need to create your own walking bass lines and improvised solos in the classic jazz style. This

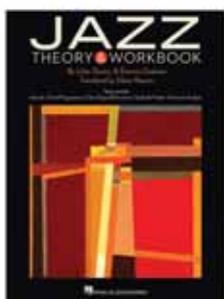
book, with online audio access, uses standard chord progressions and songs to teach you about accompanying and improvising in the style of iconic players. Lessons include: walking basics; chords and scales; blues; rhythm changes; string raking; soloing; technique; chord substitution; and much more!
00150959 Book/Online Audio\$19.99



JAZZ GUITAR IMPROVISATION

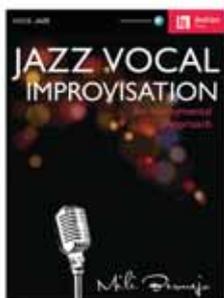
by Sid Jacobs
Musicians Institute Press
Develop your solo skills with this comprehensive method with online audio of 99 full demonstration tracks, plus 16 video lessons available online for download or streaming.

Topics covered include: common jazz phrases; applying scales and arpeggios; common jazz phrases; guide tones, non-chordal tones, fourths; and more. Includes standard notation and tablature. The audio is accessed online using the unique code inside each book and can be streamed or downloaded.
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JAZZ THEORY & WORKBOOK

by Lilian Dericq & Étienne Guéreau • Translated by Eileen Rezwin
Designed for all instrumentalists, this workbook is a great resource for understanding how jazz standards are constructed. It's also perfect for arrangers and composers seeking new writing tools. While some of the musical examples are pianistic, this book is not exclusively for keyboard players. Every new concept is clearly presented and explained, put in context with one or more musical examples, and then consolidated with a set of written exercises.
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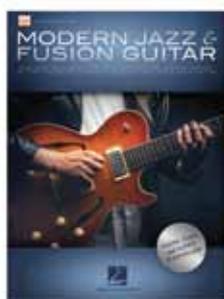
JAZZ VOCAL IMPROVISATION AN INSTRUMENTAL APPROACH

by Mili Bermejo
Berklee Press
Learn to improvise like an instrumentalist! This book will help you hear, understand and apply jazz theory so that you can solo as a complete musician. Each lesson offers a core musical concept related to harmony, melody and rhythm, integrating skills such as conducting and analysis, and reinforcing them with practical exercises. The accompanying audio tracks demonstrate techniques and let you practice improvising with piano accompaniment.
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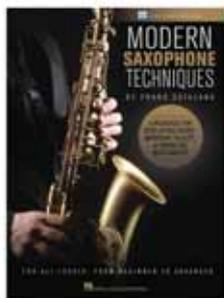
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147 tunes from one of the most influential and groundbreaking jazz artists of the modern generation arranged here for all C instruments in the favored Real Book style. Titles include: April Joy • Better Days Ahead • Bright Size Life • Farmer's Trust • (Go) Get It • H & H • Have You Heard • Jaco • James • Lakes • Last Train Home • Phase Dance • Question & Answer • The Red One • So May It Secretly Begin • Sueno Con Mexico • Uniquity Road • Unity Village • Whittlin' • and more!
00120809 Melody/Lyrics/Chords\$24.99



MODERN JAZZ & FUSION GUITAR MORE THAN 140 VIDEO EXAMPLES!

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Through a blend of European, American jazz and fusion, performer Jostein Gulbrandsen has developed a unique style that is both melodic and harmonically rich. In this book he will teach you to play: lines over dominant seventh chords; lines over minor seventh chords; lines over major seventh chords; major ii-V-I lines; minor ii-V-I lines; motifs; comping and voice-leading; lines by influential guitarists; and more. You'll also learn to play five jazz standards. The book includes online access to video demonstrations.
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by Frank Catalano
Many books present facts, but *Modern Saxophone Techniques* teaches the developing player how to learn. The concepts presented will keep players learning, maturing, and mastering the saxophone in modern times. On the online video, author and virtuoso saxophonist Frank Catalano offers quick tips on many of the topics covered in the book. "In the Band" allows saxophonists to play along on six tunes and studies.
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A Tribute to Egberto Gismonti
Clarinet icon **Eddie Daniels'** tribute to Egberto Gismonti, the legendary Brazilian composer & multi-instrumentalist. *Heart of Brazil* was produced by Resonance's George Klabin and feat. the Grammy-winning Harlem Quartet.

IN CONCERT! Eddie Daniels will perform *Heart of Brazil* in its entirety at the Detroit Jazz Festival on Sunday, Sept. 2, 2018 with the same band heard on the album.

TWO NEVER-BEFORE-ISSUED ALBUMS FROM GUITAR LEGEND
GRANT GREEN



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(1969-1970)

SLICK!
Live at Oil Can Harry's
(1975)

The first official releases of previously unissued **Grant Green** music in over 10 years representing the earliest and latest known live recordings with Green as a leader to date. Both **Funk in France** and **Slick!** include extensive 48-page booklets with rare photos; essays by acclaimed writers **Michael Cuscuna** and **A. Scott Galloway**; interviews with Soulive guitarist **Eric Krasno**, organ icon **Dr. Lonnie Smith** and more!



ANDREAS VARADY
The Quest
The Quest is guitar virtuoso **Andreas Varady's** Resonance debut and his clarion call of an artistic statement. Legendary producer **Quincy Jones** says: "When you hear **Andreas** play, all you can do is listen, because you are simply left without words."

◆◆◆TOP HISTORICAL RESONANCE RELEASES◆◆◆
DOWNBEAT'S 66TH ANNUAL CRITIC'S POLL RESULTS

BILL EVANS <i>Another Time</i>	JACO PASTORIUS <i>Truth, Liberty & Soul</i>	WES MONTGOMERY <i>In Paris</i>
EDDIE DANIELS/ROGER KELLAWAY <i>Just Friends</i>	DAVE LIEBMAN/JOE LOVANO <i>Compassion</i>	

COMING SOON FROM RESONANCE

NEWLY DISCOVERED! ERIC DOLPHY
First official release of previously-unissued studio recordings in over 30 years!
Photo © Chuck Stewart Photography LLC

Chords & Discords



Monika Herzig (left), Jamie Baum, Reut Regev, Amanda Ruzza, Ingrid Jensen, Karina Coll and Leni Stern perform at The New School in New York on April 4.

Applauding Herzig

I was very happy to see the review of Monika Herzig's album *SHEROES* in the July issue. I have been a fan of Monika's work since her days with BeebleBrox and I'm glad this album was on DownBeat's radar.

I've had the good fortune of working with Dr. Herzig and her band a few times in the past and was thrilled to include my jazz students

(most of whom are female) in a clinic with the SHEROES band before opening for them at a gig in Clarksburg, West Virginia. I found Monika and the band members to be incredibly gracious educators and mentors, as well as unbelievable live performers.

JASON P. BARR, M.M.
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF MUSIC
DIRECTOR OF JAZZ AND COMMERCIAL MUSIC
GLENNVILLE STATE COLLEGE
GLENNVILLE, WEST VIRGINIA

Females First

In your June issue, I was disappointed with the placement of the review of Roxy Coss' album *The Future Is Female*. As we all know, this is a pivotal time for gender equality. For this album to not be in The Hot Box (or at least the first review after The Hot Box) just doesn't seem right.

This is an excellent album, and I definitely agree with critic Michael J. West's 4½-star rating.

KEVIN MCINTOSH
STERLING HEIGHTS, MICHIGAN

Minds Were Blown

Stunning! In the Chords & Discords section of the July issue, Mr. Iriana's letter ("Treatment for TDS") really blew my mind. During all the years that I have been listening to jazz, not many things were as clear to my poor mind as the notion that right-wing politics and "our" music ARE mutually exclusive. I'm afraid my view of life is crumbling.

REINHARD SOMMER
GRAZ, AUSTRIA

Who's Insufferable?

In response to John Lieberman's letter ("A Touch of Malaise") in the Chords & Discords section of the July issue: Writing an angry letter because someone has offended you with opposing views is a virtual dictionary definition of "insufferable political whining" and "petulant rhetoric."

In journalist Allen Morrison's article in the June issue ("Apprehend the Greatest Ideas"), he merely interviewed Kurt Elling about the subject of his latest album.

Can't you stand to hear even the slightest criticism of our racist, fraudulent, Russian-installed Emperor? Maybe Fox News or Alex Jones will start a jazz publication, and you'll never have to hear anything you disagree with again.

TONY ALEXANDER
MIAMI

"Thermo" Difficulty

In the Blindfold Test of your January issue, Sean Jones made some interesting comments about the difficulty of playing Freddie Hubbard's "Thermo." He said he didn't think any trumpeter besides Hubbard had ever recorded it. But trumpeters Tim Hagans and Marcus Printup were up for the challenge: They interpreted it on their 1998 Blue Note album, *Hub Songs: The Music Of Freddie Hubbard*.

A. M. GOLDBERG
LONDON, ENGLAND

Correction

■ In the July issue, the European Scene column contained a misspelling of the name Piotr Wyleżół.

DOWNBEAT REGRETS THE ERROR.

Have a Chord or Discord? Email us at editor@downbeat.com or find us on Facebook & Twitter.



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Thu, Nov 8 @ 8PM

Two of the greatest vocalists in jazz – Gregory Porter & 2018 NEA Jazz Master Dianne Reeves – share an evening of song.

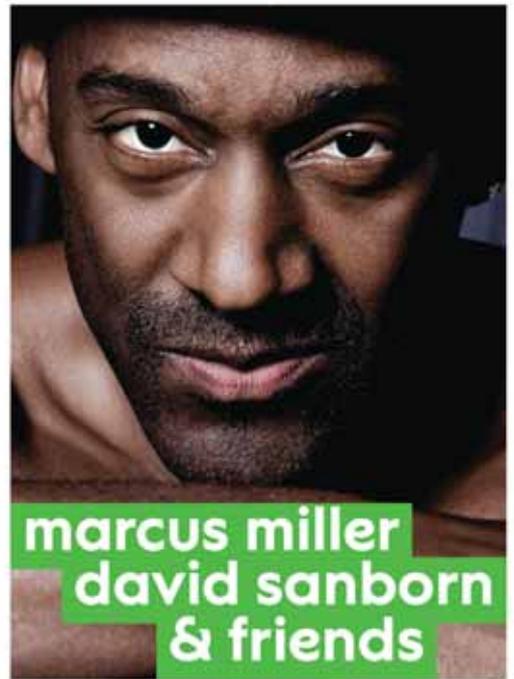


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tito nieves &
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david sanborn
& friends

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BIRDMAN LIVE

Thu, Nov 8 @ 7:30PM

Guitar Passions with Sharon
Isbin, Romero Lubambo &
Stanley Jordan

Fri, Nov 9 @ 7:30PM

Look for the Silver Lining
Tribute to Jerome Kern with
Daryl Sherman

Sat, Nov 10 @ 3PM

Cecil McIorin Salvant
(premiere new work)

Fri, Nov 16 @ 7:30PM

Dorthaan's Place Jazz Brunch
Eric Alexander Quartet

Sun, Nov 18 @ 11AM & 1PM

Sarah Vaughan International
Jazz Vocal Competition

Sun, Nov 18 @ 3PM

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Beat



Nellie McKay plays several instruments on her new album, including piano, ukulele, harmonica and cello.

McKay Pursues Delight

During Nellie McKay's recent performance at the venue SPACE in Evanston, Illinois, her affability was refracted by a harsh, yet humorous, worldview. Accompanying herself on ukulele and piano—with solos that referenced stride and bebop—she cheerfully sang sardonic couplets, such as, "Yeah, I'll have my coffee black/Hey look, we're still in Iraq" (a variation on the lyrics to her recorded version of "Toto Dies"). McKay's sunny tone also updated the caustic 1960s declarations of Frank Zappa and Gene McDaniels. Earnest interpretations of Great American Songbook standards also fit

snugly into her singular perspective.

McKay's new album, *Sister Orchid* (Palmetto), focuses on those standards. But her outwardly warm renditions of songs like "My Romance" contain haunting undercurrents.

"Jazz used to be underground, and it's become family friendly," McKay said with an affectionate laugh. "To me, it's the devil's music, and that's why it appeals. Who wants to be a role model?"

McKay spoke backstage at SPACE, where her mother, Robin Pappas, sat in on the chat. Just as in the performance, McKay blended seeming-

ly disparate topics in a conversation that connected music with its wider social role, including discussion of pianist/singer Blossom Dearie (1924–2009), comedian Dick Gregory (1932–2017), contemporary totalitarianism and film noir. (The album title *Sister Orchid* was inspired by the 1940 gangster movie *Brother Orchid*.)

With the new recording, McKay focuses on classic jazz repertoire—a passion she's held since childhood. A few jazz legends lived near her teenage home in Pennsylvania's Pocono Mountains. Saxophonist Phil Woods offered a couple lessons. And she formed a lasting partnership with another neighbor, the late pianist and vocalist Bob Dorough (1923–2018).

"Bob was a ball of sunshine," said McKay, who sings Dorough's "Small Day Tomorrow" on the new album. "I talked to him just before he went. He always had energy—I always felt feeble next to Bob."

Also as a teen, McKay worked in New York's downtown cabarets and piano bars. She said that the training provided a better education than high school or her semester at the Manhattan School of Music. McKay used these experiences as melodic cues for the satires that shaped her 2004 debut, *Get Away From Me* (Columbia). Its success led to myriad opportunities, including film roles and staging tributes to such diverse personalities as comedian Joan Rivers and environmentalist Rachel Carson. Her version of "Willow Weep For Me," on *Sister Orchid*, first appeared in her homage to transgender pianist Billy Tipton.

McKay plays an array of stringed instruments on the new album, but a sparse piano arrangement highlights her succinct phrasing on "The Nearness Of You."

"I always want to put more on, but Robin was encouraging me to do less, and it became very simple," McKay explained. "But too much is never enough. There are so many delights to try, why would you ever get full?" —Aaron Cohen



Lorraine Gordon (1922–2018)

©JACK VARTOOGIAN/FRONTROWPHOTOS

In Memoriam: Village Vanguard owner **Lorraine Gordon** died June 9 in Manhattan. She was 95. Gordon took over the club in 1989, more than six decades after its founding in 1935, and was named a 2013 NEA Jazz Master for her role as a jazz advocate. The venue was founded and previously run by her second husband, Max Gordon. ... Blues vocalist and guitarist **Eddy Clearwater** died on June 1 in Skokie, Illinois. The cause was heart failure. He was 83. ... New York-bred pianist **Gildo Mahones**, who released the 1963 album *I'm Shooting High* (Prestige) and performed with jazz luminaries such as Lester Young, Art Blakey and Sonny Stitt, died April 27. He was 88. ... Vocalist **Clarence Fountain**, a founding member of the Blind Boys of Alabama who alongside his bandmates garnered five Grammys, died June 3 in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. He was 88. ... Revered guitarist **Philip Tabane**, who helped found the South African ensemble Malombo during the 1970s, died May 18 in Pretoria. Officials in the South African Parliament expressed their condolences to the family.

In New York: Helmed by pianist and artistic director Bill Charlap, the 92Y Jazz in July series is one of New York's longest-running jazz festivals. Between July 17 and 26, events are scheduled that will explore the music of the Prohibition era as well as the work of Hank Jones, Richard Rodgers, Leonard Bernstein and Dizzy Gillespie, among others. **More info:** 92y.org/jazzinjuly

Second Act: Alice Coltrane's 1972 album *Lord Of Lords* sits at the crossroads of her career. Work with her ensembles that included Pharoah Sanders was in the past, and the pianist/harpist had yet to begin recording music at her ashram. But the sense of devotion that drove last year's *World Spirituality Classics 1: The Ecstatic Music of Alice Coltrane Turiyasangitananda* (Luaka Bop) is present on the Superior Viaduct reissue of *Lord*. Here, she collaborates with bassist Charlie Haden, drummer Ben Riley and a 25-piece orchestra. The vinyl reissue is due out July 6. **More info:** superiorviaduct.com

Avant-Garde Flame Kept Alive at FIMAV

THERE IS A COMFORTING AMBIENCE AND routine awaiting the rush of visitors to Victoriaville, Quebec, for Festival International de Musique Actuelle de Victoriaville each May. For an extended weekend, the small city somewhat removed from urban concerns transforms into a haven for freely improvised, experimental and boundary-bounding sounds. But the music heard around town is anything but routine.

Earlier FIMAV editions have revolved around bigger-name artists, regulars like John Zorn and Anthony Braxton, whose striking solo concert last year was recorded for the festival's Victo label. But for this year's model, which ran May 17–20, Michel Levasseur, who's helmed the festival for 34 years, showcased important but not necessarily marquee-powering artists.

The list of 2018 highlights included the Rova Saxophone Quartet; Swedish baritone sax/electronics blitzer Mats Gustafsson; pianist Dave Burrell, who performed in William Parker's group; Japanese artists Phew, Saicobab and Afrirampo; fiery Danish free alto saxophonist Mette Rasmussen; and Charlotte Hug. That latter Swiss performer deftly combined work as a vocalist and violist, while consistently reinventing instrumental and expressive possibilities.

The festival began in a Quebecois way, with the rock-flavored improv blast of David and the Mountain Ensemble, a cross-cultural tapestry from Vancouver-based erhu player Lan Tung and a fascinating opening set by veteran composer/bandleader Walter Boudreau. Following a nostalgic prog opening, Boudreau turned to "Solaris (Incantations VIII-IXh)," a riveting chamber work with the crack Société de Musique Contemporaine du Quebec.

Gustafsson would appear in the festival finale, but also with his trio Fire!, alongside the rock-inclined rhythm section of drummer Andreas Werlin and bassist Johan Berthling (with one riff per song). In addition to Gustafsson's theatrics, saxophonists-on-fire were well represented at FIMAV. The compelling young alto player Rasmussen blended free-blowing wallop with a beguiling sense of melodic form in a trio with rangy tuba player Martin Text and "mixing board" player Toshimaru Nakamura.

The festival's centerpiece came from repeat visitor Rova, celebrating its milestone 40th year. Part of the concert's charm was situational, taking place amid the resonant ambience of an inviting new festival venue, Église Saint-



Mette Rasmussen at Festival International de Musique Actuelle de Victoriaville

MARTIN MORISSETTE/FIMAV

Christophe d'Arthabaska, an ornate 19th-century church. The San Francisco-based troupe (Larry Ochs, Steve Adams, Jon Raskin and Bruce Ackley) is capable of wild, volcanic articulations, but it opted to play to the room here, favoring more delicate interplay.

Later in the festival, music more tied to traditional strains of the jazz genre cropped up with a visit from another FIMAV regular, the thunderous and free-minded bassist Parker. His band—which included saxophonist Rob Brown and drummer Hamid Drake—reserved the strongest spotlight for seasoned pianist Dave Burrell, whose muscular, minimal keyboard approach commanded attention.

The festival concluded—climactically and cathartically—with a bracing wall of sound, noise and fury from the trio of Gustafsson, mystical Japanese noise master Merzbow and young Hungarian drummer Balázs Pándi. In between, the festival's dense and varied program included the reworked Moravian folk project Dálava (with captivating vocalist Ulehla); gripping minimalist/math rock equations from Schnellertollermeier; and three early-afternoon improvised sets in the 19th-century church by Hug, Breton Erwan Keravec on bagpipes and Canadian reedist Lori Freedman, here working and reworking various clarinets.

Considering the breadth of what FIMAV offered, the 34th installment of the festival brimmed with the inspiring bounty of this enlightened Quebecois town. —Josef Woodard



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Scott Reeves Jazz Orchestra

Reeves' Big-Band Balance

IT WASN'T UNTIL TROMBONIST/ALTO flugelhornist Scott Reeves moved to New York City in 1999 that he began to compose and arrange at the level he'd always envisioned.

"I'm either a late bloomer or a slow learner," he joked after the May 12 release concert for *Without A Trace* (Origin), his second big band album, at Smalls. Or maybe he's the best kind of bandleader—one who's learned how to do it all.

To be sure, the qualities that make one a great player often are at odds with those of an exceptional arranger or composer. Soaring in concert often requires a willingness to abandon organized thought and to respond in the moment; conversely, arranging and composing require analysis and introspection.

"Sometimes I almost have to tell my analytical brain to shut up and let me play," Reeves said. "But as a composer, [the analytical brain] is a very useful tool."

In Reeves' case, each of his skills informs the others. The decades he spent playing and arranging for big bands under the direction of Dave Liebman and Bill Mobley taught Reeves how to work within that classic big band sound. But for his own group, the 17-piece Scott Reeves Jazz Orchestra, he wanted to explore the dissonances and unexpected forms of contemporary jazz, emulating large ensembles like those of pianists Jim McNeely and Gil Evans, and fellow trombonist Bob Brookmeyer. The challenge was to find the right balance between tradition and experimentation.

"To take this instrumentation and find something different to do with it—it's a daunting task," said Steve Wilson, the orchestra's featured saxophonist and Reeves' associate for more than three decades. But it's a task that Reeves achieves handily, Wilson added. Reeves arrives at his sound—modern metric ideas, sweetly stacked harmonies that move in surprising directions, atypical musical alliances

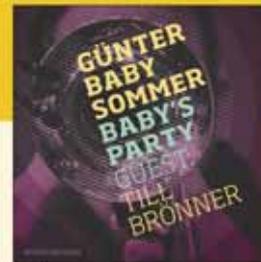
across the different horn sections—by utilizing the full scope of his playing experience. If he can't play it, he doesn't write it.

His new album—a more eclectic mix of tunes than 2016's all-original *Portraits And Places* (Origin)—illustrates the success of this approach. On the opening track, the Kurt Weill standard "Speak Low," Reeves gives a harmonic nod to Bill Evans and his fleet swing version of the tune, even as the Afro-Cuban feel commands the listener's focus. Similarly, on "JuJu," Reeves references two distinct versions of Wayne Shorter's iconic tune, one from the 1964 original and another from Shorter's recent lead sheets; by placing the melody in the trombone line, rather than the saxophone line, Reeves reveals deep, unfamiliar colors in the famous composition. With a lesser arranger, or a lesser band, such departures might not have produced the clean, crisp sound for which Reeves is known.

The title track, "Without A Trace," features vocals, another departure for Reeves as a composer. The song, a mélange of film-noir moodiness and tricky intervals, shows off not only Reeves' way with a sung melody but his mastery of the lyricist's pen. On the album, jazz singer Carolyn Leonhart interprets the tune with impressive precision. No less impressive was the performance of Brazilian vocalist Jamile Staeve at the Smalls gig. Staeve, who recently studied with Reeves at The City College of New York, sang with confidence and sensitivity, sacrificing none of the musical acumen Reeves' charts demand.

This fall Reeves will enter semi-retirement after almost 40 years of university teaching. He plans to use his extra time to practice, rebuild his energy and write new music. How does he view his skills as a composer nowadays? "I'm still working at it," he said, speculating that his best years might yet lie ahead.

—Suzanne Lorge



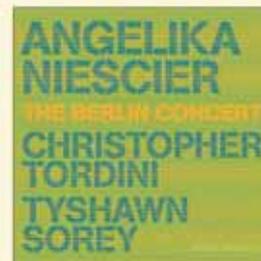
GÜNTER BABY SOMMER BABY'S PARTY
Günter Baby Sommer: Drums, Percussion
Till Brönner: Trumpet, Flugelhorn, Electronics



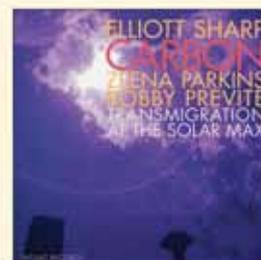
KUKURUZ QUARTET JULIUS EASTMAN – PIANO INTERPRETATIONS
Philip Bartels: Piano · Duri Collenberg: Piano
Simone Keller: Piano · Lukas Rickli: Piano



JOEY BARON – ROBYN SCHULKOWSKY NOW YOU HEAR ME
Joey Baron, Robyn Schulkowsky: Drums, Percussion



ANGELIKA NIESCIER – CHRISTOPHER TORDINI – TYSHAWN SOREY THE BERLIN CONCERT
Angelika Niescier: Saxophone · Christopher Tordini: Bass
Tyshawn Sorey: Drums



ELLIOTT SHARP – ZEENA PARKINS – BOBBY PREVITE TRANSMIGRATION AT THE SOLAR MAX
Elliott Sharp: Guitar · Zeena Parkins: Harp
Bobby Previte: Drums



McCoy Tyner (left) in the studio with John Coltrane

Coltrane's 'Lost' Studio Album Found

"FINDING UNRELEASED JOHN COLTRANE? It's like discovering buried treasure."

That's how Ravi Coltrane, the late jazz icon's saxophone-playing son, feels about the release of *Both Directions At Once: The Lost Album* (Impulse!).

This isn't an air-check, concert performance or collection of outtakes from existing albums. What we have here are 14 studio performances, all recorded on the same day—March 6, 1963—by famed recording engineer Rudy Van Gelder at his Englewood Cliffs,

New Jersey, studio, with the classic lineup of Coltrane on tenor and soprano, McCoy Tyner on piano, Jimmy Garrison on bass and Elvin Jones on drums.

Even better, the song selection offers fresh insight into the way that quartet developed and grew. For instance, there's an early, piano-less take on "Nature Boy" that's quite different in character and approach than the version, recorded almost two years later, that would end up on *The John Coltrane Quartet Plays*.

There are four takes of "Impressions," each of which is strikingly unique in terms of tempo and approach, with Tyner sitting out on the last two. There are three untitled originals, and not only does the set offer "One Up One Down" as a studio recording, it gives us two takes of it.

Basically, this is a Coltrane fan's fantasy come true.

Both Directions At Once will be released in two versions. One will be a seven-track single disc, with one take each of the tunes Coltrane and company cut that day. (Ravi Coltrane and Universal Music's Ken Druker chose the takes and set the order.) There will also be a deluxe edition with a second disc that includes seven alternate takes.

Of course, given how deeply the body of Coltrane recordings has been mined over the last five or six decades, it's worth wondering how an entire album's worth got made and then somehow lost.

The recording session has been noted in several discographies (although incompletely). One of the 14 tracks—a lithe, swinging soprano saxophone rendition of a tune from Franz Lehár's *The Merry Widow*—turned up as "Vilia" on the 1965 Impulse! anthology *The Definitive Jazz Scene, Vol. 3*.

Judging from the liner notes (by Ravi Coltrane and Impulse! Records scholar Ashley Khan), these recordings fell between the cracks for three reasons.

First, Coltrane and company were back at Van Gelder's studio the very next day to record what would become the classic album with singer Johnny Hartman. This was a much more mainstream project and would likely have been seen by the label as a better way to broaden Coltrane's appeal than releasing another instrumental quartet album.

Second, Coltrane's producer at Impulse!, Bob Thiele (1922–'96), was in the habit of recording the saxophonist far more frequently than his label bosses would have liked. "I was always over budget with Coltrane," Thiele said in a 1995 interview quoted in the liner notes. "I was finally told, 'You can't just keep recording this guy. We'll never get these albums out.' Thank God, I did it."

Indeed, if Thiele hadn't followed his instincts, many of the great Coltrane albums that were released after the saxophonist's

death in 1967—for instance, *Sun Ship*, *First Meditations (For Quartet)* and *Interstellar Space*—would never have existed.

But the third reason the tracks on *Both Directions At Once* almost disappeared was corporate stinginess and shortsightedness. After Impulse! moved its operations to the West Coast in 1967, the label's collection of master recordings was put into storage. By the early '70s, ABC's fortunes began to wane, and label executives began to institute cost-cutting "efficiencies," which included disposing of any stored master tapes for recordings that had never been issued. So the masters from these sessions probably were dumped in the garbage.

Luckily, Van Gelder also made session tapes—7-inch mono reels recorded simultaneously with the master tapes—which he gave to the artists. Ravi, whose mother was Alice Coltrane, explained that the source for *Both Directions* was a tape that had been held by the relatives of Juanita Naima Coltrane (John's first wife).

"You'd finish a record date at Rudy Van Gelder's, and he would hand you reel-to-reel tapes for you to review," Ravi said. "The tapes were in the possession of my father's first wife's family. We have many session reels ourselves that made it to John and Alice's home when they got together. But this is a recording from '63, so my father was still with Naima at the time, and her family held on to several of these tapes."

As to why the album wasn't released before his father's death, Ravi said that the session may have been intentionally exploratory.

"The session was recorded the very same week as the Johnny Hartman session, and the band [was about to conclude] a two-week run at Birdland. For me it did feel like, 'OK, well, we're doing a few sessions this week. One of them will maybe get the band warmed up, so why don't we lay down some of the things we have been performing at Birdland all week?' It does feel very much like a live set recorded in a studio."

Part of that may be the amount of space these tracks give Garrison and Jones. For instance, the album-opening "Untitled Original 11383-Take 1" features a rare, driving arco solo by Garrison, while "Nature Boy" relies heavily on the way Jones' shuffling poly-rhythms contrast against Garrison's repeated use of a syncopated anchor based on two dotted quarter notes followed by a quarter note. The two takes of "One Up One Down" both notably feature a shout chorus with Jones.

"You do get to hear the role of the rhythm section a little bit differently," Ravi said. "There's lots of drum solos. There's lots of bass solos. Again, it does take on the character of a live performance."

On a more conventional session, such as the one with Hartman, there would be less space for

the rhythm section to stretch out or show off.

"On those record dates, the arrangements were very, very tight, and if there were any solos at all, it was going to be a saxophone solo and a piano solo," he added. "But on this record, you get a chance to hear the rhythm section really, really interact. Lots of great moments between Elvin and Jimmy Garrison, for sure."

Above all, *Both Directions At Once* provides a snapshot of a great band on the cusp of revolution.

"There are elements of the performance that do hark back to John Coltrane's early days as a blues player and a bebop player," Ravi said, pointing to "Vilia" and the 11-minute "Slow Blues." But there is also material like "One Up One Down," which, he says, "is leaning toward the music that John and the quartet eventually get to, in 1964 and '65, playing more of these open structures. So it's kind of a rare glimpse, to see John with one foot in the past, and one foot in the future."
—J.D. Considine

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VINYL / BY JAMES HALE

The Art of LPs

As collectible, multimedia art objects, few affordable things surpass the long-playing album. And few labels surpass Newvelle Records in carrying out a vision of how to record and package small-group jazz as complete works of art.

From the commissioned recording sessions, engineered by Marc Urselli at New York's East Side Sound, to the distinctive cover art, poetic liner notes and bespoke, heavyweight slipcovers, Newvelle delivers on its promise of quality to subscribers. Each "season" of releases consists of six albums, mailed at two-month intervals.

In an era of streaming music that is, at best, ephemeral, Newvelle—operated by pianist Elan Mehler and Jean-Christophe Morisseau—is bucking the norm and delivering gorgeous collectors' items to vinyl fanciers. At an annual subscription fee of \$400 (plus shipping), the Newvelle sets are not inexpensive, but there's no question that the value is high. And for its third season, Newvelle uses photography by the noted Polish artist Maciej Markowicz, known for his distinctive utilization of large, mobile camera obscuras, and prose by French author Ingrid Astier.

Guitarist Steve Cardenas leads off season three with *Charlie & Paul*, an LP of compositions by two of his former employers: Charlie Haden and Paul Motian. Drummer Matt Wilson, saxophonist Loren Stillman and bassist Thomas Morgan also have close ties to Haden and Motian, and the quartet warmly embraces the music. Stillman, who was a member of both Haden's Liberation Music Orchestra and Motian's *On Broadway* project, is especially moving.

Chicago saxophonist Andy Zimmerman follows with a drummerless quartet that includes trumpeter Dave Douglas, pianist Kevin Hays and bassist Matt Penman. *Half Light* includes a strikingly interesting set of 11 compositions, featuring Duke Ellington's seldom-played "Sunset And The Mockingbird" (from *The Queen's Suite*), Hermeto Pascoal's "Montreux" and a song written by label head Mehler. Heavily weighted toward ballads, it offers a relatively rare opportunity to hear Douglas play with breathy tenderness.

For his Newvelle debut, *Close Your Eyes*, guitarist Lionel Loueke brings lithe chops and a musical sensibility tied to his childhood in Benin to a set of jazz standards like Wayne Shorter's "Footprints" and John Coltrane's "Naima." On other artist's recordings, Loueke often reverts to or is requested to play in his signature style. But exploring the nuances of familiar songs, he moves be-



Francisco Mela

yond the expected and reveals new sonic colors and textures. Longtime rhythm-section partners Reuben Rogers and Eric Harland provide equally creative shadings and powerful propulsion on "Blue Monk."

Icelandic bassist Skúli Sverrisson and guitarist Bill Frisell sound like they were made to play together, combining exceptional harmonic depth and simpatico counterpoint on *Strata*. The bassist composed a number of the pieces with Frisell in mind, and they bring out the guitarist's most creative aspects. Frisell has focused so much on Americana lately that it's refreshing to hear him delve into expressively phrased music that does not come along with roots in blues or country.

Cuban drummer Francisco Mela brought his working band—pianist Kris Davis, bassist Gerald Cannon and saxophonist Hery Paz—to the studio for *Ancestros*, an album of free-leaning originals. A thorny player with an especially rich tone on bass clarinet, Paz has the ability to take his solos to unexpected places, which makes him an ideal partner for Davis' unbridled imagination.

In December, Newvelle will wrap up the year with *Fair Weather* by Boston trumpeter Jason Palmer, with pianist Leo Genovese, bassist Joe Martin and drummer Kendrick Scott. The least adventurous of the six albums, *Fair Weather* also seems a bit under-rehearsed, with Genovese seeming like the odd man out in an otherwise-cohesive unit.

Newvelle's business model means that some of the music it releases might one day be available on non-vinyl media when rights revert to the artists, but the attention to fine detail in this set makes it worthwhile for more than the music.

DB

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Vision Fest Offers Bracing Sounds

“THE BAD GUYS, THE EXPLETIVE, BLANKET-Y BLANKS—those guys are busy messing up our lives,” Vision Festival founder Patricia Nicholson Parker said from the stage of Roulette Intermedium in Brooklyn late in May. “We have to create spaces in our lives for sanity, and places where we encourage each other to stand up and not take the bullshit.”

Since 1996, Parker and Arts for Art has produced the Vision Festival, which this year ran May 23–28, as an annual avant-garde event. Its goal, according to the organization: “The promotion and advancement of free-jazz, [which] embodies music, dance, poetry and visual arts.”

This year, the six-day Vision lineup included Archie Shepp, Dave Burrell, Mary Halvorson’s Code Girl, Nasheet Waits Equality, Oliver Lake Big Band and Arts for Art’s Visionary Youth Orchestra!, directed by Jeff Lederer and Jessica Jones.

The festival’s Saturday lineup included Afro Algonquin 2018 featuring Mixashawn Rozie on saxophones, Rick Rozie on bass and Royal Hartigan on drums. Whether intoning Native-American chants, raucously swinging, playing electric mandolin or riffing on classic rock, Rozie was an unstoppable force leading an equally vivacious trio in Roulette’s memorial hall.

After a bracing set by poet Patricia Spears Jones and inventive violinist Jason Kao Hwang, the trio of trumpeter Ambrose Akinmusire, pianist Kris Davis and drummer Tyshawn Sorey offered up a crash course in dynamics, tone and texture. Wearing what looked like French military fatigues circa 1914, Akinmusire led the trio in simple sounds that swelled into thunder clouds of heated interplay. As Sorey rolled on his toms, extracting unusual groans and sighs, Akinmusire created trumpet squalls against Davis’ lush piano palette. As if composing an instant film soundtrack, the trio produced peals of careening unison notes, crescendos of discordant melody and jagged assaults with infrequent gentle passages that rounded the barbed edges.

Drummer Francisco Mora Catlett’s combustible AfroHorn Fellow closed the evening, Afro-Cuban sizzle meeting balmy group improvisation.

Sunday began with a panel discussion, “The Ongoing Struggle for Cultural Equity in NYC Music Communities,” followed by the exultant Frode Gjerstad Trio, accompanied by trombonist Steve Swell. Gerald Cleaver’s quartet took the stage next, brainstorming a swirling brew and reveling in the chaos of the drummer’s emergent groove-grid.

Monday closed out Vision Festival 2018 with performances by Jamie Branch’s Fly or Die, pianist Cooper-Moore, poet and visual artist Julie Ezelle Patton, saxophonist Jemeel Moondoc’s New World Pygmies and the Oliver Lake Big Band.

But the weeklong series clearly was underpinned by Nicholson Parker’s energy and heroic intent at every turn.

—Ken Micallef



Ambrose Akinmusire and Kris Davis perform in New York at the Vision Festival.

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JIMMY KATZ

Buster Williams' new album is titled *Audacity*.

Still on the Upswing

ON HIATUS FROM HIS LONG-RUNNING GIG with singer Nancy Wilson, bassist Buster Williams, then 25, suddenly got an offer to tour the Northwest with Miles Davis. He took the job, of course, and soon found himself swept up in the whirlwind of invention that Davis, Wayne Shorter, Herbie Hancock and Tony Williams were creating onstage in 1967.

"These guys had already created a direction of their own," Williams recently said at the Manhattan club Smoke. "I had to step into that and grasp it very quickly."

But when the trumpeter asked him to stay with the quintet after Williams' five-week hiatus had ended, he declined. The decision, based on the comparative rates of pay, is one that the bassist thinks about to this day.

"If I have any regrets, that might be the only one—that I didn't actually stay with Miles," he said. "But I don't have a real regret about that, either. It's on my résumé, and I learned a lot from Miles when I was with him."

Two years after the Davis tour, Williams joined Hancock's groundbreaking group

Mwandishi, and in 1975, he released his first album as a leader, *Pinnacle*.

At 76, Williams might no longer be roiling the musical landscape in quite the same way. But his writing has, if anything, grown more personal. His sound—brilliantly clear, resonant and vibrant—is as inimitable as ever on Williams' new quartet album, *Audacity* (Smoke Sessions).

Williams' originals reflect a spirit nurtured by decades of Buddhist chanting. "Ariana Anai" and "Briana," each written for a granddaughter, glow with familial love, and the episodic "Triumph" burns with an inner intensity.

"It's got an effect on me when I play it and think about its origins," he said about "Triumph." "I don't know where it came from, but it's expressing something that lives inside of me that exists in hope."

Driven by that sense of hope, *Audacity* is the latest stop on a journey in which the next stop always is unclear. The only certainty, Williams declared, is that "the next one will be better."

The endless refining of Williams' art was a major takeaway for filmmaker Adam Kahan, who has been working on *Bass To Infinity*, a documentary about the bassist, for about two years.

"There's no question he'll do that till he dies," Kahan said. "There's no other option."

Williams, while complimenting Kahan's work, put it another way: "I don't want to finish this life after necessarily completing my mission without having started something new. I'd like to be on the upswing." —Phillip Lutz



HADAS

Drummer Justin Brown's leader album features two keyboardists.

Brown Commits to the Craft

THE ELECTRO-FUNK FUSION ALBUM *Nyeusi* (Biophilia) marks drummer Justin Brown's debut as a bandleader, but he's no newcomer. The 34-year-old has spent about two decades cultivating his reputation as a first-class jazz musician.

By the time he graduated from high school, Brown was a veteran of both the Grammy Band and the Brubeck Institute. He forsook a free ride to The Juilliard School to tour with saxophonist Kenny Garrett and trombonist Josh Roseman. A few years later, he began working regularly in bands led by trumpeter Ambrose Akinmusire and pianist Gerald Clayton, both childhood friends. He was runner-up in the 2012 Thelonious Monk International Drums Competition, and since 2014 he has been the drummer for genre-busting bassist/vocalist Thundercat.

"It's his curiosity and his commitment to the craft," said Akinmusire, explaining why he's worked with Brown for so long. "Every time we play together, he brings something new."

What, then, took so long to record the debut? "I guess my frame of thinking with anything is just patience," said the bicoastal Brown, speak-

ing by phone from the Bay Area. "I was writing songs here and there, and taking the opportunity to perform as a bandleader in places like [New York's] Jazz Gallery. But it was something I didn't want to rush, because I'm still learning throughout the process."

Nyeusi (Swahili for "black") includes 11 original compositions written during the past 10 years. Much of the album—featuring Jason Lindner and Fabian Almazan (both on keyboards), Mark Shim (electronic wind controller) and Burniss Earl Travis (bass)—was recorded in 2015. One of the album's two non-original tracks is a version of Tony Williams' 1971 tune "Circa 45," while the influence of hip-hop is obvious on tunes like "Replenish" and "FYFO," and interludes "Waiting (DUSK)" and "At Peace (DAWN)" skirt the avant-garde.

Just as he exercised patience in completing *Nyeusi*, Brown is in no particular hurry to follow it up. Instead, he said, his next step will be "becoming a better human. I want to help us come together and help one another, you know? A better human and a better musician: I'm just trying to do my part." —Michael J. West

Erroll Garner performs with his trio in Amsterdam in 1964.



Erroll Garner Project Resonates with Sands

THE CAREER OF PIANIST CHRISTIAN Sands, 29, has shifted into high gear since the release of his Mack Avenue Records debut, *Reach*, last year. In May, the label issued his five-song EP, *Reach Further*, featuring three new songs recorded live at L.A. jazz club Blue Whale, along with two unreleased tracks from the *Reach* sessions. The new recording advances his mission of giving “a fresh look at the entire language of jazz.”

In September, Sands will be the musical director of the 2018 Monterey Jazz Festival On Tour group, consisting of singer Cécile McLorin Salvant, vocalist/trumpeter Bria Skonberg, saxophonist Melissa Aldana, bassist Yasushi Nakamura and vocalist/drummer Jamison Ross. Sands also is set to launch a new album this fall.

Additionally, the pianist recently became the creative ambassador of the Erroll Garner Jazz Project, which is releasing its third in a series of archival recordings on Octave Music in partnership with Mack Avenue. Sands served as a co-producer of *Erroll Garner: Nightconcert*, a live November 1964 recording captured at Amsterdam’s Royal Concertgebouw. It features 16 tracks, eight of which are previously unheard interpretations and a newly discovered original, “That Amsterdam Swing.”

“Being creative ambassador is a big honor,” Sands said. “It’s given me a different hat to wear. Aside from being a performer, now I have taken on the role to help shape and execute someone’s creative vision who isn’t here and combine it with my own, all the while staying true to what the artist intended.”

Sands grew up listening to some of Garner’s music and gleaned wisdom from such jazz elders

as Dave Brubeck, Dr. Billy Taylor and Dick Hyman to understand the different stylings he used. But Sands didn’t fully grasp the depth of Garner’s playing until Geri Allen (1957–2017) asked him to be a part of her 60th anniversary presentation of *The Complete Concert By The Sea* at the 2015 Monterey Jazz Festival.

“Geri was our North Star for what we’re doing to build the Garner legacy,” said Peter Lockhart, one of the co-producers on the trilogy of new releases. “At the University of Pittsburgh, where she was teaching, Geri ushered in all the Erroll archives, including 7,000 reels of tape that we’ve digitized and more than a million documents. *Nightconcert* is dedicated to her.”

Sands said the process of working on *Nightconcert* led to numerous surprises. He was impressed by the interplay of Garner and his long-time trio of bassist Eddie Calhoun and drummer Kelly Martin. “They moved so seamlessly,” Sands said. “Wherever Erroll’s mind wanted to go, his bandmates moved right alongside him, as if they all were sharing the same mind.”

Nightconcert features Garner’s idiosyncratic takes on a number of standards, including a version of “My Funny Valentine” that Lockhart said is the best he’s ever heard.

Sands has formed the band High Wire Trio with bassist Luques Curtis and drummer Ulysses Owens Jr. to celebrate the recording, reflecting just how deeply Garner’s music resonates with the bandleader. “He was so spontaneous, but also fearless,” Sands said. “Being involved in the project allows me to explore different ways to express myself and strive for that fearlessness Erroll possessed.”

—Dan Ouellette



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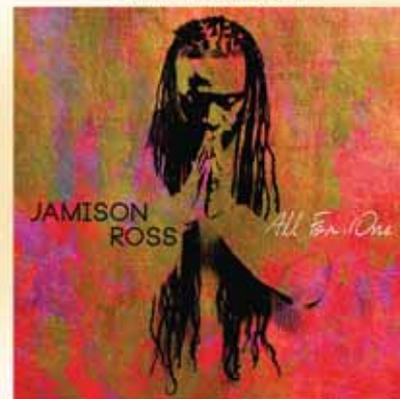
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Cooder 'Spellbound' by Gospel Music

AS A FOLLOW-UP TO 2012'S *ELECTION Special* (Nonesuch)—a biting protest album that critiqued right-wing politics—guitar ace Ry Cooder and his drummer-producer son, Joachim, decided to take a different approach with their new recording, *The Prodigal Son* (Fantasy).

"Joachim warned me: 'Don't get too heavy-handed now. Nobody wants to hear about politics anymore. Let 'em rest a little,'" Cooder said. "So, I thought I'd take that advice seriously."

With its prevalence of gospel tunes by the likes of Blind Willie Johnson, Blind Roosevelt Graves, Alfred Reed and William L. Dawson, along with three potent Cooder originals, *The Prodigal Son* has a more hopeful mood and, in some ways, is a throwback to Cooder classics like 1974's *Paradise And Lunch*, which included a rendition of "Jesus On The Mainline," or his eponymous 1970 debut as a leader, which had the 24-year-old delivering faithful renditions of Reed's "How Can A Poor Man Stand Such Times And Live?" and Johnson's "Dark Was The Night, Cold Was The Ground."

The difference with *The Prodigal Son* is that Cooder, 71, has developed a grittier vocal style that puts him squarely in the Howlin' Wolf zone, while Joachim has concocted some dreamy backgrounds for his father to sing on, including a trance-like version of the Pilgrim Travelers' 1955 tune "Straight Street," a take on "Nobody's Fault But Mine" that Cooder described as "Blind Willie Johnson on Mars," and a shimmering reimagining of the Stanley Brothers' gospel clas-

sic "Harbor Of Love."

"I've been doing this kind of work for a long time—taking older songs and adapting them in some way—but I couldn't have made this particular record back then," said Cooder, who sings and plays slide guitar, resonator and mandolin with rare expressive powers throughout the album. "We didn't have all this gas in the tank back then. We're working with technology that didn't exist in the '70s."

Joachim constructed backing tracks on some tunes by sampling and looping fragments of his father's playing, creating a tonal center for Cooder to sing and play over. "When I hear these things in the headphones, I get ideas," Cooder said. "I don't have to worry about it as an arrangement—it just comes to me. So, I have a freer time doing it this way."

Cooder's infatuation with gospel music and spirituals goes back to his teenage years. "In the early '60s, stuff became available on records that had not been available before," he said. "Santa Monica, where I have always lived, is not a town where you will find storefront Church of God in Christ churches. So, the whole idea of gospel quartet singing is something I never knew existed, until I began to hear it on record. I liked it then, and it's still my favorite kind of music."

A turning point for the budding record collector was hearing a 1952 Folkways LP by Sonny Terry, Brownie McGhee and Coyal McMahan titled *Get On Board: Negro Folksongs By The Folkmasters*. "They do 'In His Care' and 'I Shall Not Be Moved' on there, and it just grabbed me,"

he recalled. "I wanted to hear more of it, understand it a little bit more."

Around the time of his gospel epiphany, the Ash Grove in Los Angeles began booking groups like the Staples Singers and the Chambers Brothers (before they went psychedelic). "It was amazing to hear them singing just eight feet away onstage," Cooder recalled. "When you hear that live for the first time in your life, it's an unbelievable impact. I was just spellbound. It's something that you walk away from going, 'I feel like I'm a different person having heard this.'"

Cooder—who would eventually play the Ash Grove himself in 1963, backing singer Jackie DeShannon as a 16-year-old fingerpicking wunderkind—now credits records for putting him on his current path: "If it hadn't been for record people like Ralph Peer, the Chess brothers and Alan Lomax, then life would've been unbelievably dull, and I would've been sacking groceries somewhere, and probably at this point running a little 7-Eleven down by the airport."

By perpetuating classic roots music, *The Prodigal Son* might grab some young fan the way *Get On Board* grabbed Cooder back in the day.

Cooder's 24-city tour of the States this summer will be followed by a European tour in the fall. Joachim will open each show with his renegade trio, performing tunes from his EP, *Fuchsia Machu Picchu*—which features contributions from his father and a cameo by Vieux Farka Touré, who plays guitar on one track.

—Bill Milkowski

Chicago Blues Fest Honors Delmark Label

JIMMY JOHNSON DOESN'T REVEAL HIS age, as he made abundantly clear June 8 during his afternoon duo set at the 35th annual Chicago Blues Festival. So, let's just say that Johnson is an outstanding singer-guitarist who happens to be 89. He proved that several hours later at Millennium Park's Pritzker Pavilion with a fiery rendition of Magic Sam's "I've Been Down So Long" during a salute to the 65th anniversary of Chicago's Delmark Records.

Introduced by emcee Dick Shurman as "the last man standing" among a generation of post-war Southern bluesmen who called Chicago's West Side home, Johnson stood out during the set among 18 artists who have plied their trade at the venerable Chicago blues and jazz label. Accompanied by the solid, jazz-influenced guitar licks of Dave Specter, who led the backing band with a steady hand, Johnson displayed amazing instrumental dexterity and an emotion-drenched tenor on the Magic Sam number.

Johnson's star turn led directly into "Hoodoo Man Blues," a finale that made good use of most of the musicians who appeared during the program, particularly harmonica player and vocalist Omar Coleman. The iconic song from the 1965 Junior Wells album that put Delmark on the blues map was a welcome

choice, and certainly more fitting than the countless versions of "Sweet Home Chicago" that customarily draw the curtain on such ensemble programs.

Bob Koester, who founded the label as "Delmar," named for a boulevard in St. Louis before moving to Chicago and adding the "k" for his last name, appeared at a morning panel discussion. "It started as a hobby for me," the 85-year-old Koester said. "The blues



Jimmy Johnson performs at the Chicago Blues Festival on June 8.

have been more commercially successful [than jazz] for the label, which surprised the hell out of me." *Hoodoo Man Blues*, along with Magic Sam's 1967 LP *West Side Soul*, remain two of Delmark's enduring treasures.

The evening program expanded on a theme introduced by a recent Delmark's tribute album that honors many of the label's blues stalwarts of the 1960s and '70s. It was released in conjunction with the anniversary and the company's sale in April to a pair of Chicago musician/educators. New owners Julia A. Miller and Elbio Barilari proclaimed their commitment to releasing new music in addition to servicing Delmark's back catalog.

After three days of dicey weather, a thick fog shrouded the downtown skyline, adding to the drama of the June 10 headlining performance by soul-gospel great and civil rights pioneer Mavis Staples, 78. Staples sprinkled favorites from her beloved family band, such as "Respect Yourself," "Freedom Highway" and the closer, "I'll Take You There," with numbers from her latest album, *If All I Was Was Black*, including the defiant "Who Told You That" and the healing "Build A Bridge." She was in particularly fine form for her Chicago homecoming show. —Jeff Johnson

Playboy Fest Spotlights New Talent, Genre Titans

FOR THE FIRST TIME IN ITS 40-YEAR HISTORY, the Playboy Jazz Festival returned to the Hollywood Bowl without its founder, Hugh Hefner, who passed away in September at the age of 91. Apart from a brief tribute delivered by his son, Cooper, it was business as usual for the venerable two-day event at the Hollywood Bowl in Los Angeles.

The festival sometimes can feel like it's jazz in name only; this year, soul singer Anthony Hamilton and venerable funk group Tower of Power closed out Saturday and Sunday, respectively. But before they brought their more mainstream sounds to the stage, Playboy Jazz served up an admirably eclectic lineup, highlighted by forward-thinking young jazz ensembles (Kneebody, Snarky Puppy), living legends (Charles Lloyd, Lee Ritenour) and crowd-pleasing newcomers (pianist Matthew Whitaker).

The lineup was especially strong on rising stars from Latin America and included 26-year-old Havana singer Daymé Arocena, who came across as an Afro-Cuban Ella Fitzgerald, scatting

over her trio's rumbas and cha-cha-chas, and radiating charisma as she exhorted the audience to sing along to her "Don't Unplug My Body."

After an occasionally rambling, but often fascinating, set by tenor saxophonist Charles Lloyd and the Marvels, with Lucinda Williams providing an earthy presence on vocals, Ramsey Lewis took the stage with his quintet. Lewis, who's set to retire at the end of 2018, remains a polarizing figure, viewed by some as a soul-jazz pioneer and others as a pop lightweight. But on Sunday night, none of that mattered, as he delivered a rollicking, age-defying set.

Lewis, 83, seemed uninterested in revisiting his most famous, mid-'60s period, instead focusing on work from the '70s. After opening with "Tequila Mockingbird," the breezy title track from his 1977 album, the pianist teasingly told the audience, "I don't know if you're all ready for this." He then launched into a medley of covers that were his set's highlights: a version of The Stylistics' Philly soul ballad "Betcha By Golly, Wow" and a confidently funky take on Stevie



Daymé Arocena performs June 9 during the Playboy Jazz Festival at the Hollywood Bowl in Los Angeles.

Wonder's "Living For The City." From there, Lewis had the audience in the palm of his hand, leading his excellent band through a variety of styles, from blues to rumba to boogie-woogie.

Lewis' set demonstrated, in convincing fashion, why he's outlasted his critics—an observation that also could be made of the Playboy Jazz Festival itself, which remains a smartly programmed showcase for its titular genre, despite its more pop-minded headliners.

—Anthony Hermann

66TH ANNUAL CRITICS POLL

**JAZZ ARTIST
JAZZ GROUP**

By Jon Garelick | Photo by Jimmy & Dena Katz

VIJAY IYER

COMMUNITIES OF SOUND

THERE'S SOMETHING PARTICULARLY APT ABOUT VIJAY IYER'S ACADEMIC TITLES AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY, WHERE HE'S BEEN TEACHING SINCE 2014: Franklin D. and Florence Rosenblatt Professor of the Arts and Graduate Advisor in Creative Practice and Critical Inquiry. Yes, the endowed chair is nice, but “professor of the arts” and “advisor in creative practice” seem to sum up the man. It’s fitting that the terminology here is not “jazz studies” or “theory and practice,” but rather, “the arts” and “critical inquiry.”

For Iyer—winner of the 2018 DownBeat Critics Poll categories Jazz Artist of the Year and Jazz Group (for his namesake sextet)—jazz doesn’t exist in isolation. Which is another reason why the appointment at Harvard, with its core liberal arts program, suits the 46-year-old pianist’s particular take on jazz, on music, on the arts and on the world. A child of immigrants, and the winner of multiple accolades—including a handful of previous DownBeat Critics Poll wins with his longstanding trio (with bassist Stephan Crump and drummer Marcus Gilmore) and a 2013 MacArthur “Genius” Fellowship—Iyer began his academic career as a scientist. He was a physics and math major as an undergraduate at Yale, and his Ph.D. thesis at the University of California, Berkeley, was titled, “Microstructures of Feel, Macrostructures of Sound: Embodied Cognition in West African and African-American Musics.” So his pedagogical inclination is toward diversity, and his expansive attitude toward jazz is second nature.





'MY STUDENTS ARE UP FOR THE CHALLENGE OF BUILDING SOMETHING THAT HAS NO REAL PRECEDENT.'

"This isn't a school of music," Iyer says, sitting in his basement office in the Harvard Music Building. "There's no performance program. There are courses that involve performance. But I guess it has more in common with how I learned, which was kind of in dialogue with the larger world. ... I don't want to say that nothing good happens in conservatories, but it's a bit removed from the context in which music exists. Music doesn't exist for the conservatory. It exists for people. And so, if you don't have contact with the larger world, then you lose track of what you're doing."

In his courses, Iyer assigns a broad range of reading and writing—"everything from Robin Kelley's biography of [Thelonious] Monk to George Lewis' book about the AACM, to Benjamin Looker's book on the Black Artists' Group, Horace Tapscott's autobiography, and Angela Davis' book on blues women and black feminism." And, depending on where the students' projects take them, Iyer might assign pieces by French post-structural theorists or selections from black studies scholarship.

Students have to audition for Iyer's ensemble workshops, so there is a basic skill level that's required. But, he says, "It's a mixed bag." A good proportion "are young white kids from affluent backgrounds who maybe had a good high school jazz ensemble, but maybe they've never

read a black author or maybe they've never had a black teacher." On the other hand, "I also have a lot of students of color in my classes, mostly children of immigrants, including children of African immigrants. So, they may self-identify as black, but do not have a lot of contact with older African-American culture. So, it's sort of new for a lot of them."

That diversity of backgrounds also shapes the music-making itself. Looking back at his ensemble workshop students of the previous semester, Iyer says, "Some of them were singer-songwriters. Some of them were beat-makers. Some of them situate themselves as jazz musicians. Some of them had classical training. The main thing was that they were all serious and they all had potential collaborative abilities. So, just to get them intensely making work together—and we didn't have to call it anything until it happened, and then we could listen to it and figure out what it was. These students are up for a challenge like that, of building something that has no real precedent. It was really exciting to hear what they came up with."

Along the way, Iyer says, "I often had to disabuse them of a lot of things, a lot of assumptions about what jazz is, and whether it is what they think it is."

And that, according to Iyer, is how real jazz gets made. His students, he explains, "have to

learn how to hear in different ways and learn how to accommodate other perspectives. To me, that's the real tradition ... people kind of coming together from different corners and building something that didn't exist yet. That's how I see the birth of what's called bebop. That's how I see the Harlem Renaissance. That's how I see the creative music movement of the '60s and '70s."

It's not as though all of Iyer's methods would be out of place in a conservatory. "There's a lot of rigor involved," he says, "and rigorous training. There's a lot of rigor involved in just the doing of the music—like, how do you listen to each other? How do you synchronize? We talk about form. We talk about orchestration and texture and kind of give a bit more detail and nuance to what they're doing; so it's not just a beat, even when some of them are making beats on their laptop."

There's also jazz history, though not necessarily a typical historical survey. "Everything I know, and all my wisdom as an artist, comes from being in that world and that space and from all those artists, from Duke Ellington and Thelonious Monk, Cecil Taylor, John Coltrane, Miles Davis, Muhal Richard Abrams, Alice Coltrane, Geri Allen, to name just a handful," Iyer says. But the musical examples might also extend from the jazz canon to Bach and Berg,

or maybe some of the hip-hop and techno artists who have inspired Iyer, like Detroit producer and DJ Robert Hood, the inspiration for the song “Hood,” from the 2015 Iyer trio disc, *Break Stuff* (ECM).

“Basically,” Iyer says, “this is not a ‘great man’ theory of jazz. It’s more of a series of communities, of collective histories. It’s histories of collective action. And it’s also not about styles. It’s about people, which is an important distinction to me.”

The idea of jazz being fostered by diverse communities is central to how Iyer understands the musician’s place in the world.

“What’s been great is that these young artists have been able to remain grounded in a world of ideas and in contact with a community that isn’t just made of other musicians, so then they can actually respond to what’s happening in the world, and they can make the work a pointed response.”

Those responses have been varied. “Last fall, my students put on a concert that was a benefit for Puerto Rico, and they put on another benefit concert for the Boston Area Rape Crisis Center. That was just partly because that was what was in the air at that time, and obviously still is. That kind of work has a very clear context in the campus community or in the city. So, they’re learning how to be artists in the world.” Iyer’s own direct responses have included his 2013 collaboration with poet and DJ/producer Mike Ladd, *Holding It Down: The Veterans’ Dreams Project* (Pi Recordings), part of a trilogy addressing the post-9/11 context of American life. That aesthetic also applies to the award-winning sextet’s 2017 release *Far From Over* (ECM), whose title refers to the never-ending struggle for justice and equal rights. Iyer has described “a resistance in this music, an insistence on dignity and compassion, a refusal to be silenced.”

Far From Over, Iyer’s third release for ECM, is stunning not just for the individual virtuosity of the players, but for its formal daring—which is, in its way, a metaphorical embodiment of the collective vulnerability that Iyer refers to when talking about the music. That’s true for the electric funk grooves of tunes like “Nope” and “End Of The Tunnel,” as well as the expanding form of album closer “Threnody” or the brooding ballad “For Amiri Baraka,” for the late poet.

Though the shifting form of a piece like “Threnody” is enthralling, Iyer downplays its complexity. “The forms aren’t that hard, actually, in the long run,” he says. “I have these forms that are four bars long, but those four bars might be stacked with information. There might be layers of rhythms that it would take you a few days to learn, even if it’s four measures long. So, it’s not necessarily something you can read down, either. But then you kind of get it in your body and then figure out how

to move with it, and then it’s just about creating together with that as a sort of framework.”

The genesis of the sextet dates back to 2011, when Iyer was invited to New York’s River to River Festival and was encouraged to broaden his palette beyond the trio. For that first gig, Rudresh Mahanthappa, from Iyer’s quartet, was on alto, with Graham Haynes on cornet and flugelhorn and Mark Shim on tenor saxophone, as well as Crump and Gilmore. Eventually, Mahanthappa was overtaken with commitments to his own projects, so Iyer turned to longtime collaborator Steve Lehman for the alto chair. For the April 2017 recording

session, another Iyer regular, Tyshawn Sorey, came in on drums. (Iyer has maintained long relationships with both Sorey and Gilmore, having collaborated with the former for 18 years and the latter for 16 years.)

Though the sextet is by necessity more tightly arranged than the trio, Iyer says it offered yet another chance for him to work with musicians “who could bring a creative sensitivity to the music and could deal with intricate forms and kind of push beyond them.”

And, of course, it was—unlike some of his more unclassifiable ensemble arrangements for the string quartet-centered *Mutations* (ECM),

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Iyer (left) sees the sextet format as “iconic” within the jazz genre.

his work with Ladd, or even his otherworldly duo collaborations with trumpeter Wadada Leo Smith—a classic jazz format.

“If you think about the history of that format—*Kind Of Blue*, Andrew Hill’s *Point Of Departure* [1964], or even Herbie Hancock’s *Sextant* [1973]—there’s no shortage of sextet records. It’s kind of an iconic form.”

For his own sextet, Iyer says, “It’s a matter of basically having these three pretty disparate identities as a front line. They converge on these arranged sequences, but each of them can also spin the music in a different direction and each of them has a very strong relationship to the rhythm section.”

Crump and Sorey describe the larger band as requiring more focused roles for each of them than the trio—a responsibility to support the soloists. But still, says Crump, one of the constants in Iyer’s bands is “trying to find ways to crack it open, even in that larger ensemble.”

For his part, Sorey says that the social consciousness that’s a natural part of the music is compounded in the sextet. “Any time I create music, I’m dealing with the time period we’re living in, politically,” he says. With the sextet, though, “The statement of what we’re dealing with politically carries out more because of how relentlessly changed it is.”

The convergence of disparate identities also reflects those classic sextets—think of Miles, Cannonball Adderley and John Coltrane on *Kind Of Blue*, or Kenny Dorham, Eric Dolphy and Joe Henderson on *Point Of Departure*. Lehman and Shim are “the mercurial note-slingers,” says Iyer. “They’re very different from one another, of course, but they have a longtime rapport through Steve’s octet, too.”

And then there’s Haynes as the Miles/Dorham axis of brass lyricism, with a touch of Miles-like electronic effects. “Rhythm is some-

how the center of what each of us does,” says Iyer, “including Graham—of course, being the son of Roy. But he’s also someone who’s traversed these different musical histories. He’s dealt with Gnawa musicians, musicians from Mali and Cameroon, and he did a lot with Indian musicians. So, he’s got this openness, temporally, in the sense that he will really take a long view on things. There’s something incredibly unhurried about his playing, but he can also rip it when he wants to, and his time is super strong.”

By the time the sextet convened for the *Far From Over* recording sessions, Iyer’s challenging compositions had been road-tested at gigs. In the studio, he added a few refinements, like the soli section for the horns on the outro to the album’s opener, the slow-boil anthem “Poles.”

But he was also careful not to over-arrange. “I wanted there to be space for the music to move, and points of reference. *Point Of Departure* is a great example, where, yeah, there are these kinds of signature moments where the arrangement matters. But then there are also these long stretches where you feel like anything could happen.”

Iyer rejects the easy dichotomy between “composition” and “improvisation.”

“I think the sort of dichotomy that we subscribe to is a little false, between what’s written down and what’s spontaneous, because, actually, there could be something that’s not written down that’s still very specific, and that’s worked on. And there also can be things that emerge in the moment that can be quite intricate and have a lot of formal detail in them. A form can emerge. It’s not just preordained.”

He gives as an example “Threnody,” a rich, mood-shifting track on *Far From Over*.

“It has, I guess, what I would call a harmonic rhythm, which is to say that, ‘OK, the chords change every this many beats.’ It’s something

like 10 beats or something. We don’t know what they’re changing to. We just know that that’s when they change, so then a form emerges through that process of changing on time.

“The other thing is that it has a target, which is that eventually we’re going to arrive at A flat, and then we’re going to move between A flat and F, just sort of alternate between those two. When we get there, that’s when the saxophone comes in, and we keep building from there.

“So, we have what’s sculpted as this trajectory. We don’t know the details of how it’s going to happen, but somehow we’re going to get from almost nothing being specified to this very identifiable sequence in the music. It has a certain kick to it, rhythmically. It has identifiable harmony. So it’s sort of like we move from something more ambiguous to something that’s quite resolved. It unfolds as this 8- or 10-minute piece of music, and all of it is very specific and careful, but it’s not written down.”

Iyer’s peripatetic life as a jazz musician and teacher makes for long days. For the Harvard job, he commutes from Harlem, where he lives with his wife, Christina Leslie, a research scientist, and their daughter. By 10:30 a.m. on the day of our interview, he already has met with a pair of students. He and his trio will be playing that night and the following night, two sets each, at Harvard Square’s Regattabar.

True to the form of Iyer’s ever-expanding circle of regulars, the set introduces yet another new player: bassist Nick Dunston, filling in for Crump, who is on tour with his band Rhombal. Iyer introduces this as Dunston’s very first gig with the band, but says he’s ready “to navigate through this music”—adding, “He learned it from my records.”

The trio begins at a ballad tempo, with softly sustained chords and Sorey’s precise swirl and splash of brushes before a heftier groove emerges with an abstracted take on Thelonious Monk’s “Work.” The music expands and contracts, Sorey—a wizard of layered rhythms and timbres—in constant dialogue with Iyer’s movement from repetitive rhythmic figures to rhapsodic outpouring, and a soft, mournful chord that introduces “For Amiri Baraka.” Dunston, meanwhile, holds the core of the beat with inventive patterns and adept shifts to arco work.

Iyer has said that he met Dunston—as well as another new face in the Iyer universe, Jeremy Dutton, a drummer from Houston who will be playing with the trio at the Village Vanguard the following week—through Iyer’s work as director of the Banff International Workshop in Jazz and Creative Music.

“Every now and then, I have to tap one of these guys from there to fill in, and it’s been great, actually, getting to keep tabs on the community through that, and hear what’s coming, hear what’s next, and be part of that, be able to nurture it.”

DB

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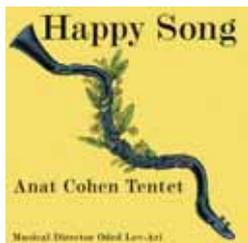
66TH ANNUAL CRITICS POLL

JAZZ ALBUM OF THE YEAR



1. CÉCILE MCLORIN SALVANT *Dreams And Daggers* (MACK AVENUE) **62**

Encompassing an impressive 23 tracks divided between standards and originals, *Dreams And Daggers* represents a new level of ambition for vocalist Cécile McLorin Salvant. With the juxtaposition of strings captured during studio recordings and the grittier ambiance of a live club setting, the album mirrors the complexity of human emotion in all its dimensions.



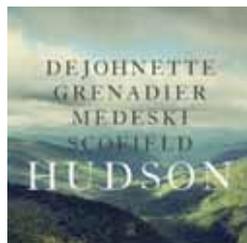
2. ANAT COHEN TENTET *Happy Song* (ANZIC) **61**

Anat Cohen's *Happy Song* is the result of a diverse, remarkably talented cast of players, composers and arrangers. Cohen wrote or co-wrote three of the tracks here, and the musical director for the project was Oded Lev-Ari. Cohen's clarinet work is consistently compelling throughout, whether she's exploring fusion on Lev-Ari's "Trills And Thrills" or unleashing the toe-tapper "Oh Baby."



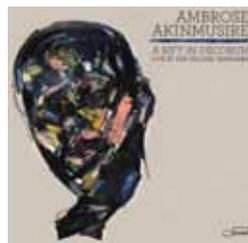
3. CHARLES LLOYD NEW QUARTET *Passin' Thru* (BLUE NOTE) **59**

With *Passin' Thru*-recorded live at the Montreux Jazz Festival and at a theater in Santa Fe, New Mexico—Charles Lloyd celebrates 10 years with his illustrious New Quartet, which features pianist Jason Moran, bassist Reuben Rogers and drummer Eric Harland. Since 2007, this band has reanimated the approach Lloyd first developed with his original troupe during the '60s.



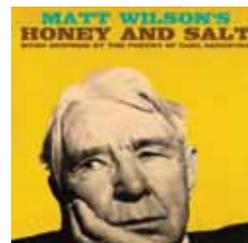
4. DEJOHNETTE/GRENADIER/MEDESKI/SCIOFIELD *Hudson* (MOTÉMA) **56**

It would be easy to dismiss this supergroup as mere boomer nostalgia, but that would overlook just how vigorous and downright pleasurable its debut sounds. Using its common experience in New York's Hudson Valley as a backbone, the quartet explores tunes by Bob Dylan, The Band and Joni Mitchell, as well as original compositions by DeJohnette and Scofield.



5. AMBROSE AKINMUSIRE *A Rift In Decorum: Live At The Village Vanguard* (BLUE NOTE) **46**

Trumpeter Ambrose Akinmusire was once a wunderkind who won the 2007 Thelonious Monk International Trumpet Competition. Now, he's cementing his position as an essential bandleader of his generation. For those still not familiar with his brand of small-group interaction, *Rift* is a reassuring document of a young bandleader fulfilling a rite of passage.



6. MATT WILSON *Honey And Salt* (PALMETTO) **44**

Spoken-word and song have flecked Matt Wilson's work in the past, and with this album, he's actively harked back to his Midwestern roots with a collection of music inspired by Carl Sandburg's poetry. This album not only reminds listeners how whimsical a poet the master truly was, but also how gifted a drummer and arranger Wilson is. The combination of singing and recitation makes for an engaging program.



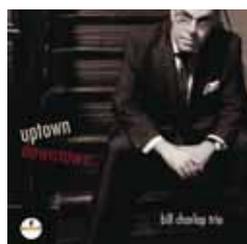
7. JAIMIE BRANCH *Fly Or Die* (INTERNATIONAL ANTHEM) **42**

Listening to "Leaves Of Glass," a track on Jaimie Branch's leader debut, is a truly haunting experience. Her trumpet floats from forlorn melodic meditations to ambient, spectral background noise in the space of about three minutes. Supported by a coterie of Chicago-related performers, *Fly Or Die* glides through the avant-garde, references bebop's heyday and contemplates life's rough patches.



8. FRED HERSCH *Open Book* (PALMETTO) **37**

Pianist Fred Hersch long has been recognized as an extraordinary interpreter of the Thelonious Monk songbook. And the stride-inflected lines of Monk's "Eronel" are related in a dizzying array of variations on Hersch's 11th solo album. Featuring a spate of other interpretations and Hersch's own opus, the 19-minute "Through The Forest," *Open Book* splays open the composer's lavishly evocative practice.



9. BILL CHARLAP TRIO *Uptown, Downtown* (IMPULSE!) **36**

Making old stuff sound new, underscoring stylistic eloquence and lifting the hood on tradition have been at the center of the Bill Charlap Trio for two decades. *Uptown, Downtown* makes it seem as if the group gets more articulate on each new recording. With bassist Peter Washington and drummer Kenny Washington at his side, the pianist and bandleader puts an original fingerprint on others' sage formulations.



10. CHICK COREA *The Musician* (CONCORD) **35**

Chick Corea is a pianist without peer. From all evidence on *The Musician*, his 2011 monthlong stand at New York's Blue Note Jazz Club for his 70th birthday featured creative revelry every night. This deluxe documentation of Corea's historic engagement—three albums and a 96-minute documentary—is paradoxically a substantive feast that might leave listeners wishing it were just a little less, but still craving more.

11. RON MILES *I Am A Man* (ENJA/YELLOWBIRD).....35

12. STEVE COLEMAN'S NATAL ECLIPSE *Morphogenesis* (PI)34

13. JOHN BEASLEY *MONK'strea, Vol. 2* (MACK AVENUE)33

14. RUDRESH MAHANTHAPPA'S INDO-PAK COALITION *Agrima* (SELF RELEASE) 33

15. TYSHAWN SOREY *Verisimilitude* (PI)33

16. JULIAN LAGE *Modern Lore* (MACK AVENUE)31

17. ROSCOE MITCHELL *Bells For The South Side* (ECM)29

18. MARY HALVORSON *Code Girl* (FIREHOUSE 12)28

19. VIJAY IYER SEXTET *Far From Over* (ECM)28

For more of the year's top jazz albums, see page 52.



BOTH DIRECTIONS AT ONCE

THIS
IS LIKE
FINDING
A NEW ROOM
IN THE GREAT
PYRAMID

THE LOST ALBUM JOHN COLTRANE THE LOST ALBUM



BOTH DIRECTIONS AT ONCE

Photo: Roger Kasparian/ Courtesy of Yasuhiro "Fujii" Fujioka



BENNY GOLSON

By Ted Panken
Photo By Bill Douthart

'ART IS A LIFETIME COMMITMENT'

AS A RECIPIENT OF COUNTLESS ACCOLADES DURING HIS 70 YEARS IN THE MUSIC BUSINESS, BENNY GOLSON MIGHT WELL BE BLASÉ ABOUT HIS ELECTION TO THE DOWNBEAT HALL OF FAME. BUT THE 89-YEAR-OLD TENOR SAXOPHONIST AND COMPOSER CONSIDERS THIS LATEST HONORIFIC A CONSEQUENTIAL MILESTONE.

“I n the beginning, I was much in tune with wanting to be a poll-winner,” Golson said over the phone from his Upper West Side Manhattan apartment. “Then I stopped thinking about it, because I had other goals; what I was actually doing and creating was important. But now I’m overwhelmed. I’m glad it happened before I die. For all these years, DownBeat has been the bible of what jazz is all about, and I’m honored. I’m happy. It makes me feel validated.”

The Hall of Fame designation makes complete sense to Quincy Jones, Golson’s good friend since 1953 and, later in the ’50s, his neighbor in a West 92nd Street apartment building populated by a cohort of night people who inspired Golson’s famous tune “Killer Joe.” “As a composer and a player, Benny is one of the absolute backbones of jazz,” Jones said via email. “He is almost 90, and that cat is still playing! Benny is a mad monster of a musician, and he always has been.”

At the time of our interview in late April, Golson was focusing on a forthcoming 10-day tour of Japan with pianist Mike LeDonne and drummer Carl Allen, two-thirds of his working quartet since the late 1990s along with bassist Buster Williams, for whom Luke Sellick would sub on this occasion. The LeDonne-Williams-Allen trio joins Golson on the aptly titled *Horizon Ahead* (HighNote), a 2016 release that is the most recent of his 40 or so leader albums since *Benny Golson’s*

New York Scene, from 1957. That date featured a nonet version of “Whisper Not,” which Golson also recorded that year with Dizzy Gillespie’s big band. It’s the most enduring staple of an oeuvre that includes such jazz lingua franca works as “I Remember Clifford,” “Along Came Betty,” “Stablemates,” “Blues March,” “Sad To Say” and “Are You Real?”

Horizon Ahead includes three recent Golson songs and one less-traveled gem titled “Domingo,” from a 1957 Blue Note date led by trumpeter Lee Morgan, then Golson’s 19-year-old bandmate with Gillespie and, a year later, his front-line partner with Art Blakey’s Jazz Messengers on the iconic album *Moanin’*, for which Golson served as music director. “It’s one of those tunes that never made it like ‘Whisper Not’ did,” Golson said. “I wrote ‘Whisper Not’ in 20 minutes. I was so plethoric with ideas, I could hardly write it down. Dizzy liked it and recorded it, and now it’s a standard in the jazz repertoire.”

“When you play ‘Whisper Not’ for 20 years, you’ve really got to dig deep to find new things—and we do,” said LeDonne, referencing Golson’s determination to avoid a by-the-numbers attitude to interpreting good-old-good-ones in live performance. “His tunes are all very soulful, with beautiful melodies over highly sophisticated harmonic movement. He’s written so many unbelievably beautiful ballads that people need to investigate, and those ballads are mostly in minor





keys, with a dark, romantic sound. And he's in enthusiastic support of what you're doing all the time. He takes off all the limits. He wants you to go as far as you can with whatever it is you're doing. He is an adventurer, and he loves an adventurous imagination."

"Imagination" is a word that cropped up when Golson uncorked an eloquent declamation on the title of *Horizon Ahead*, which he traced to conversations with two fellow jazz immortals: tenor saxophonist Sonny Rollins and pianist Hank Jones (1918–2010).

"Sonny basically said, 'There's no end to this music we play.' He's right. We musicians don't say, 'I know everything there is to know; there's nothing else to discover.' We know it's just the opposite.

"Hank Jones put it another way. He said, 'The horizon is ahead.' I didn't know what he meant at first. But we're never satisfied. To be satisfied is a caveat that we have to avoid, because then you slow down. You stop stretching out. You stop reaching. It's like falling overboard of a ship. The ship sails over the horizon without you, and you tread water, and you're existing for as long as you can, and then it's over. No, we have to stay on the ship. There's always something to learn, so we've always got something to aim for, to hope for. But of course, we need the talent. We need the one thing that's always axiomatic with the jazz musi-

cian: Imagination. Extrapolations. New ways to do the old things. That's what we do. If there's no imagination to create things that have no prior existence—and that's what improvising is—then you may as well get a job as a parking attendant or a cook. When we go to sleep at night and wake up the next morning, what do we intuitively say to ourselves? 'What can I do better today than I did yesterday?' Age doesn't usually interfere with that, as opposed to an athlete. I tell my audiences: 'Can you imagine an 89-year-old quarterback?' I'm being ridiculous when I say it, of course."

"I like to talk," Golson said, and his oracular soliloquies—delivered with an orotund baritone voice in complete sentences and paragraphs, even chapters, using vocabulary bedrocked in King's English—are a beloved staple of Golson's performances.

Many of those stories appear in Golson's 2016 memoir, *Whisper Not: The Autobiography Of Benny Golson* (Temple University Press), which features a lovingly rendered portrait of the young John Coltrane, his close friend. The book also documents various encounters with Thelonious Monk; eyewitness accounts of trumpet battles between Clifford Brown and Fats Navarro and between Brown and Louis Armstrong; what it was like to play the debut engagement of the Jazztet at the Five Spot opposite Ornette Coleman, when Coleman first hit

New York; and how it felt to be recognized by Duke Ellington, who asked if he wouldn't consider contributing something to the orchestra.

In the book's introduction, Golson compares his journey to that of the hero in Homer's *The Odyssey*, which itself represents a collective consensus of orally related tales. "I'm sure the warrior who invented the Trojan horse ... was too restless to keep his head on the pillow when he got back to Ithaca," Golson writes. "I'll bet that Odysseus—who tricked the Cyclops, faked out Circe, avoided the Sirens, and rafted the hellish seas between Scylla and Charybdis—had one more adventure in him. No truly creative person ever arrives home without immediately beginning to long for the next gig. Art is a lifetime commitment."

Golson's odyssey began in Philadelphia, where he was born in 1929. There he remained until he matriculated at Howard University in 1947. Raised by a single mother, he took classical piano lessons from an early age, barely tolerating his mother's affection for "the low-down dirty blues." His views would evolve. Now, Golson writes, "I hug the blues to my chest the way Whitman hugged the seashore."

"I had the classical thing in my mind, and she's playing Bill Broonzy and Lil Green," Golson reminisced. "When I talked to Sonny, he brought up 'Romance In The Dark.' I said, 'You remember that?' Boy, my mother used to play that thing. And another tune, 'If you feel my legs, you want to feel my thighs, and if you feel my thighs you want to go up high.' I said, 'That's terrible music!' But she was also playing Billie Holiday—'Mean To Me' and 'I'll Get By' and things like that." Another connection to jazz, well-depicted in the memoir, was Golson's Uncle Ralph, a bartender at Minton's Playhouse who allowed his nephew to be a fly on the wall there on periodic visits to Harlem.

Golson's mother bought him a saxophone after he heard Arnett Cobb play "Flying Home" with Lionel Hampton at Philly's Earle Theater in 1943. Two years later, Golson joined his teenage friends Coltrane and Ray Bryant at the Academy of Music to hear a sextet featuring Gillespie, Charlie Parker, saxophonist Don Byas, pianist Al Haig, bassist Slam Stewart and drummer "Big Sid" Catlett.

"I started trying to play bebop for all I was worth," Golson recalled. "I drove my neighbors crazy, because I got my saxophone during the summer, and the windows were open. When John Coltrane joined me, they wanted to kill two people. We were rank amateurs."

Golson credited a course at Howard, "Vocabulary Building," as the starting point of his enviable linguistic skills. "The professor, Mr. Carroll, told the corniest jokes that he thought were just hilarious—but he knew so much about the English language," he said. "The next semester, I was the only one who took him. I

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-Benny Golson

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learned so much about the English language from that guy, and I started to read.”

The mandatory orthodoxies imposed by Howard’s music department circa 1949 were less appealing. Golson left abruptly, launching the apprentice stages of his career, which included stints playing fourth tenor with Jimmy Heath’s excellent Philly-based big band, and subsequent r&b sojourns with singer Bull Moose Jackson and alto saxophone titan Earl Bostic. He acknowledges that his pianistic skills and knowledge of theory gave him a head start, even before he fully understood how to apply his knowledge to the saxophone, to which he initially sought to apply the tonal values exemplified by Byas, Lucky Thompson and Coleman Hawkins.

“Benny could read the music and he had a good sound,” Heath, 91, said. “He was ready to enter the world with what he did, with a lot of determination—and his development was obvious. He’s a very lyrical tenor player who found his voice and established a style.”

Proximity to bebop poet Tadd Dameron during their mutual tenure with Jackson facilitated Golson’s musical vocabulary building. “It amazed me what Tadd could do with a paucity of musicians,” Golson said. “I made it a point to [learn] everything that each instrument is capable of, and the sound you get when you blend them in combination with the other instru-



Benny Golson (left) with Art Farmer and Curtis Fuller circa 1960

DOWNBEAT ARCHIVES

ments. What does the hi-hat mean? What does the ride cymbal mean? ... What does it mean when you’re playing in the middle of the piano? What about the glassy sound in the upper part of the piano? The mutes. Louis Armstrong never played any mute but the straight mute. Dizzy Gillespie used a cup mute. Miles Davis used a Harmon mute. In the Jazztet, sometimes I’d tell [trumpeter] Art Farmer to use a little hat, which looked like a derby, which changes the sound. These things make a difference, and you learn to use them and combine them.”

Golson was asked to comment on the par-

allels between the process of making music and the act of composing. “Anybody can write a tune that reaches the ear,” he began. “But you want to go past the ear and touch the heart—though the head is involved, too. When I write, I go full-throttle, whatever I feel, and hope people understand what I’m saying.”

Inevitably, they do.

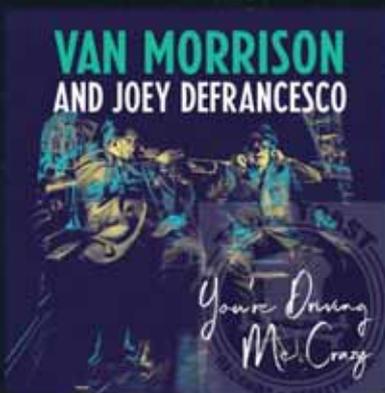
“Benny wanted to be a composer, he wanted to be an arranger, he wanted to be a soloist, he wanted to write for symphonic orchestras and big band—and he did,” Heath reflected. “I’m very proud to be his lifelong friend.” **DB**

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MARIAN McPARTLAND

INVITATION TO LISTEN

AT THE END OF FRANK D. GILROY'S POIGNANT 1985 JAZZ FILM, *THE GIG*, A SEASONED PROFESSIONAL BASS PLAYER BIDS FAREWELL TO A BAND OF WEEKEND WARRIORS HE'S MADE PEACE WITH ON A JOB IN THE CATSKILLS, NOTING AS HE DEPARTS THAT ONE OF HIS NEXT ENGAGEMENTS IS WITH MARIAN MCPARTLAND.

It's a plausible moment. McPartland, one of this year's DownBeat Hall of Fame inductees, was that rare phenomenon: an A-list jazz musician who hired great players, such as bassist Eddie Gomez, but was also enough of a household name in non-jazz households that viewers would get the reference. The reason, of course, was *Marian McPartland's Piano Jazz*, her informative and approachable National Public Radio program, which she hosted from 1979 to 2010. At its peak, her show had 800,000 listeners and was broadcast on more than 250 radio stations. (Re-runs still air on 107 outlets.)

Whether onstage or on the airwaves, McPartland, who would have turned 100 this year (she died in 2013), had a gift for making audiences feel like they had been offered a personal invitation to listen, whether they knew anything about jazz or not.

"The show's appeal often has been described by people as being like they were eavesdropping on a conversation held by two friends," explained Shari Hutchinson, McPartland's longtime producer at Columbia, South Carolina, radio station SCETV, where the show originated.

Her achievements did not go unrecognized. In 1983, her show earned a Peabody award (the highest honor in radio); in 2000, she was named a National Endowment for the Arts Jazz Master; in 2004 she received a Grammy Trustees Award for Lifetime Achievement, and in 2010 she became an Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire. McPartland performed for two U.S. presidents at the White House and, in 1997, for the Supreme Court.

She also left behind a considerable legacy as a player, including 25 albums for Concord

and 40 CDs of *Piano Jazz* sessions on the Jazz Alliance label. Particularly on ballads, her command of complex harmony—inspired in part by the English composer Delius and often compared to Bill Evans—was legendary.

"When we played with her on her 85th birthday, we had a little party for her," recalled George Wein, founder and producer of the Newport Jazz Festival and a respectable pianist himself. "The musicians backstage said she is more advanced in her harmonic structure than all the other piano players put together."

McPartland also possessed a notoriously salty wit. On a tour of the Bill Clinton White House, publicist Helene Greece reported that as they passed the Oval Office, Marian said, "I wonder if that's where she washed out the dress."

Born Margaret Marian Turner on March 20, 1918, in Slough, Berkshire, McPartland was raised near London, where she studied at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama (1935-'38). After several years working in English music halls, she went to Europe with a USO troupe in 1944, where she met and married Chicago jazz cornetist Jimmy McPartland.

After four years in Chicago, working under the stage name Marian Page, McPartland relocated to New York, where she formed a piano trio, eventually landing a career-making gig at the Hickory House, the last of the 52nd Street clubs. During the next decade, she worked in a trio with bassist Bill Crow and future Dave Brubeck drummer Joe Morello, and recorded for Savoy and Capitol. In 1958, she was one of three women pictured in the famous photograph *A Great Day in Harlem*.

In the 1960s and '70s, McPartland reviewed records for DownBeat, started her own label, Halcyon, and became committed to jazz education, headlining the first convention of the National Association of Jazz Educators in 1973. On the recommendation of her longtime friend, composer Alec Wilder, she was invited by South Carolina Public Radio to do *Piano Jazz*. McPartland interviewed and played duets on the show with everyone from Eubie Blake to Cecil Taylor. Bootleg cassettes of her in-depth interview with Evans circulated for years among pianists.

McPartland was an ardent champion of female musicians, whom she regularly featured on her show, encouraging everyone from Joanne Brackeen and Diana Krall to Norah Jones and Grace Kelly. She also left a legacy of excellent songs, including "Ambiance," recorded by the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra, and the lovely ballad "Twilight World," rendered beautifully on *Marian McPartland & Friends: 85 Candles—Live In New York* by another *Piano Jazz* guest, Karrin Allyson.

"Marian was a wonderful combination of being utterly fearless and very open," Allyson said. "She was a pioneer not only for women [jazz] pianists but for all jazz pianists, whether they realize it or not."

McPartland's music lives on. Some of her best albums—*Ambiance*, *Live At The Maybeck Recital Hall* and *Silent Pool*—remain in print, and there are episodes of *Piano Jazz* archived at npr.org.

—Paul de Barros

Paul de Barros is the author of *Shall We Play That One Together?: The Life and Art of Jazz Piano Legend Marian McPartland* (St. Martin's Press, 2012).

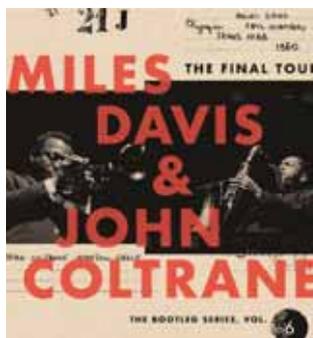


COURTESY OF MARIAN MCPARTLAND

Marian McPartland, circa 1964

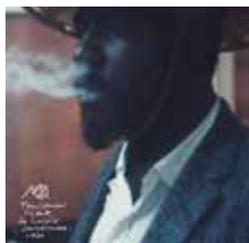
66TH ANNUAL CRITICS POLL

HISTORICAL ALBUM OF THE YEAR



1. MILES DAVIS & JOHN COLTRANE
The Final Tour: The Bootleg Series, Vol. 6
 (COLUMBIA/LEGACY) **195**

Recorded during Davis' 1960 spring tour of Europe, this collection showcases Coltrane's final performances with a band in which he had been an integral member. Coltrane plays hard, twisting melodic concepts and exploring harmonic combinations that would form the foundation of his next phase of musical development.



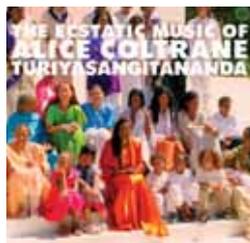
2. THELONIOUS MONK
Les Liaisons Dangereuses 1960
 (SAM) **117**

Recorded at Nola Penthouse Studios in New York on July 27, 1959, the album contains all the Monk music utilized in *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* (a French film by Roger Vadim), as well as some tracks not heard on screen. For the recording, Monk leads tenor saxophonist Charlie Rouse, bassist Sam Jones and drummer Art Taylor, with French tenor saxophonist Barney Wilen joining on three tunes.



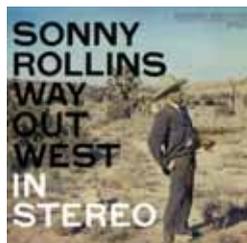
3. BILL EVANS
Another Time: The Hilversum Concert
 (RESONANCE) **106**

This recording of Evans with bassist Eddie Gomez and drummer Jack DeJohnette was captured live at the Netherlands Radio Union Studios in Hilversum on June 22, 1968. It's only the third known recording of this particular trio, which performed together for a six-month period. The music was originally broadcast on the radio program *Jazz in Actie* by Dutch producer Joop de Roo.



4. ALICE COLTRANE
World Spirituality Classics 1: The Ecstatic Music of Alice Coltrane Turiyasangitananda
 (LUAKA BOP) **102**

These historic recordings present the piano, organ- and harp-playing Alice Coltrane as an innovative artist and thinker who continued to challenge herself after retiring from public performance to focus on spiritual practice. The 10 tracks that constitute this collection are assured and communal, forward-thinking and resolute.



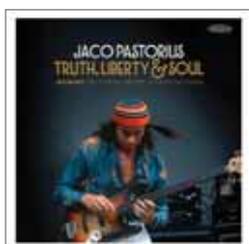
5. SONNY ROLLINS
Way Out West-Deluxe Edition
 (CRAFT) **75**

This Rollins classic, recorded with bassist Ray Brown and drummer Shelly Manne for the Contemporary label in 1957, presents the tenor saxophonist in top form, at the peak of vitality and creativity. The reissued vinyl edition supplements the landmark album with a second LP of previously unreleased bonus material, deluxe packaging and rare photos by William Claxton.



6. ORNETTE COLEMAN
Ornette At 12/Crisis
 (IMPULSE/REAL GONE/UMG) **69**

Two long-out-of-print live albums from 1968-'69 are combined on this single-CD reissue. *Ornette At 12* finds Coleman in a quartet with his young son Denardo, Dewey Redman and Charlie Haden performing in Berkeley, California. *Crisis*, recorded at New York University during an era of riots, assassinations and war, adds frequent Coleman collaborator Don Cherry to the lineup.



7. JACO PASTORIUS
Truth, Liberty & Soul
 (RESONANCE) **64**

This two-CD set captures the bass innovator leading a 22-piece big band on June 27, 1982, at Avery Fisher Hall in New York as part of George Wein's Kool Jazz Festival. The program, culled from the original 24-track tape reels and presented in its entirety, showcases Pastorius' brilliant compositions for large ensemble. A portion of this historic concert previously was broadcast on the NPR program *Jazz Alive!*



8. SONNY CLARK TRIO
The 1960 Time Sessions
 (TOMPkins SQUARE) **53**

This double-LP vinyl set (and digital download) includes eight original album tracks and six alternate takes from a session the pianist recorded three years before his demise at age 31. Remastering has given the sound an intimate new presence, and the music sparkles with lyrical joie de vivre and rhythmic subtlety. Clark is joined by bassist George Duvivier and drummer Max Roach.



9. KEITH JARRETT/GARY PEACOCK/JACK DEJOHNETTE
After The Fall
 (ECM) **51**

This two-disc live album by Jarrett's Standards Trio—recorded on Nov. 14, 1998, at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center—marks the pianist's first public performance after recovering from a bout of chronic fatigue syndrome that befell him in 1996. The trio conjures magic in the moment as they honor familiar jazz repertoire, shining light into neglected corners.



10. THELONIOUS MONK WITH JOHN COLTRANE
The Complete 1957 Riverside Recordings
 (CRAFT) **51**

This three-LP vinyl set celebrates the only recordings of Monk and Coltrane collaborating in the studio. The musicians performed together regularly at New York's Five Spot Cafe in 1957, and their easy rapport reveals itself here on Monk repertoire like "Ruby, My Dear," "Monk's Mood," "Crepuscule With Nellie" and "Nutty," complete with alternate takes.

11. WES MONTGOMERY
In Paris (RESONANCE)46

12. ALBERT AYLER
Copenhagen Live 1964
 (HATOLOGY)44

13. ANTHONY BRAXTON
Sextet (PARKER) 1993
 (FIREHOUSE 12)37

14. ART PEPPER, West Coast Sessions, Vol. 6: Shelly Manne
 (OMNIVORE)36

15. SUN RA
Of Abstract Dreams
 (STRUT)31

16. BOB DYLAN, Trouble No More: The Bootleg Series Vol. 13, 1979-1981
 (COLUMBIA/LEGACY)30

17. OSCAR PETTIFORD
New York City 1955-1958
 (UPTOWN)29

18. EDDIE DANIELS & ROGER KELLAWAY, Just Friends
 (RESONANCE)27

19. LESTER BOWIE
Numbers 1 & 2 (NESSA)25

20. MYRA MELFORD
Alive In The House Of Saints
 (HATOLOGY)25

For more of the year's top historical albums, see page 52.

BLUE NOTE®



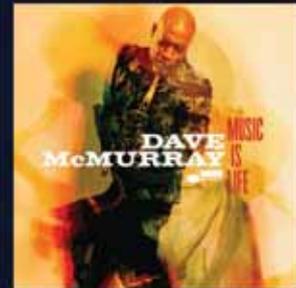
DR. LONNIE SMITH ALL IN MY MIND

The Hammond B-3 organ legend and **NEA Jazz Master** releases a spirited live trio album recorded at the **Jazz Standard** in New York City. *All In My Mind* opens with a powerful rendering of **Wayne Shorter's "JuJu,"** while Smith also takes **Paul Simon's hit "50 Ways to Leave Your Lover"** for a 10-minute joyride.



GOGO PENGUIN A HUMDRUM STAR

One of **New York Times' 12 best bands at SXSW 2017,** the Manchester-based trio conjure richly atmospheric music that draws from their grounding in classical conservatoires and jazz ensembles, while merging acoustic and electronic techniques. Their latest album builds on the momentum of its acclaimed predecessors, the **Mercury Prize-nominated V2.0** and **Man Made Object,** and transports it to new realms.



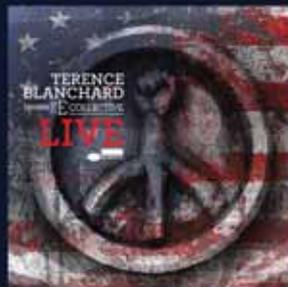
DAVE MCMURRAY MUSIC IS LIFE

On his Blue Note-debut, the Detroit native delivers a cohesive program of modern jazz that bristles with soul. Joined by **IBRAHIM JONES** (bass), **RON OTIS** and **JEFF CANADY** (drums), *Life* consists of 7 originals along with covers of songs by fellow Detroiters – George Clinton's funk anthem "**Atomic Dog**" and the White Stripes' rock hit "**Seven Nation Army.**"



GREGORY PORTER NAT KING COLE & ME

The **GRAMMY-winning** vocalist releases his stunning fifth studio album, a heartfelt tribute to the legendary singer and pianist **Nat King Cole.** With the help of **six-time GRAMMY-winning arranger VINCE MENDOZA,** and the **LONDON STUDIO ORCHESTRA,** Porter revisits some of Cole's most cherished classics such as "**Smile,**" "**L-O-V-E,**" "**Nature Boy,**" and "**The Christmas Song.**"



TERENCE BLANCHARD LIVE (FEAT. THE E-COLLECTIVE)

Following his powerful album *Breathless,* **4-time GRAMMY-winning trumpeter** Terence Blanchard documents his band The E-Collective live in Minneapolis, Cleveland, and Dallas – cities that have been scarred by the tension between law enforcement and unarmed African Americans. Live features keyboardist **FABIAN ALMAZAN,** guitarist **CHARLES ALTURA,** bassist **DAVID GINYARD JR.,** and drummer **OSCAR SEATON**



THE NELS CLINE 4 CURRENTS, CONSTELLATIONS

Following the release of Nels Cline's Blue Note debut *Lovers,* the Wilco guitarist pares it down to **The Nels Cline 4.** The 4 features Cline alongside fellow guitarist **JULIAN LAGE,** bassist **SCOTT COLLEY** and drummer **TOM RAINEY,** on a set of seven originals plus one piece by composer Carla Bley. It's a showcase of Cline's versatility that veers from rollicking rock energy to ballads of serene beauty.

66TH ANNUAL CRITICS POLL

**JAZZ ALBUM
FEMALE
VOCALIST**





CÉCILE MCLORIN SALVANT

CREATING NEW STORIES

WHEN TOLD THAT SHE ONCE AGAIN WAS VOTED THE TOP FEMALE VOCALIST IN THE CRITICS POLL, HARLEM-BASED CÉCILE MCLORIN SALVANT SAID, "I'M GRATEFUL AND SHOCKED. BUT NOW, WHEN I'M TOURING, I'M SEEING PEOPLE WHO COME TO EIGHT OR 10 OF MY SHOWS. I NEVER THOUGHT THESE LONG-TERM RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE AUDIENCE WOULD HAPPEN."

The 28-year-old artist also topped the poll's Jazz Album category for her double album, *Dreams And Daggers* (Mack Avenue). The ambitious, high-art program includes standards performed live at the Village Vanguard, as well as original musical commentary on them, as recorded in the studio with a string quartet in support.

In a phone conversation from her hotel in Milan, Italy, where she was amid a European tour, the singer was exuberant when discussing the success of *Dreams And Daggers*—which she didn't initially envision as a two-disc package. "I didn't know that's the way it was going to happen," she said. "I wasn't thinking CDs, but how all these 21 songs would play out—with folding in the live music and the studio, and telling all the stories with different perspectives."

As for the strings in the studio, Salvant had done some performances with string quartets, and she loved her bassist Paul Sikivie's arrangements. "I wanted to showcase the strings, rather than wait for another album to include them two years later," she said. "I'm not obsessed with the homogeneous. I like the eclectic. It pushes the musicians and the listeners to find and create new links. It's about creating new stories."

Writing and arranging the pieces was an outgrowth of Sikivie's rapport with her, cultivated since 2012.

"One of Cécile's many strengths is a drive to explore different possibilities in phrasing, so I tried not to box her in rhythmically, not to force

her choices," Sikivie said in a separate phone interview. "Another of her strengths is great variety and control of timbre, so I wanted to hear her voice against as many different textures as possible."

Salvant has been labeled as one of the young performers who is ushering in the future of jazz. "That's a high honor, but I don't really see myself in that role," she said. "My music is modern, it's traditional, and it may stretch into the future. I like to explore and I like to play with music in different ways to see how it evolves, how it transforms over time. It's a challenge to take some of those ideas in the old songs and put them in front of the present day."

Salvant's music traverses a range of sentiment, from rapturous to spunky. But an often-overlooked element is a pulsing vein of humor, often revealed onstage.

Her upcoming high-profile gigs include the Newport Jazz Festival on Aug. 5 and the Monterey Jazz Festival on Sept. 22.

Additionally, she is collaborating with big band leader Darcy James Argue on an ambitious song cycle, *Ogress*, which will be premiered at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York on Sept. 28. "I'm writing the music and lyrics and then sending them to Darcy," she explained. "The storyline has different characters that I'll sing. I'm fascinated with French baroque cantatas, where one singer is the narrator and then does all the characters."

Could this be Salvant's next album? "We'll have to see," she replied. "If it's not a fiasco, we will record it." —Dan Ouellette

NICOLE MITCHELL

COMMUNITY LEADER

ONE OF THE MOST STRIKING THINGS ABOUT NICOLE MITCHELL'S TONE IS THE SIZE OF HER SOUND. OTHER FLUTISTS SOMETIMES STRUGGLE TO MAKE THE INSTRUMENT'S LOWER RANGE CUT THROUGH THE WAY THE UPPER REGISTER DOES, BUT MITCHELL EASILY HOLDS HER OWN IN THE FIRST OCTAVE AGAINST TRUMPETS AND SAXOPHONES. ASK HER HOW SHE GETS SUCH A BIG SOUND, AND SHE JUST LAUGHS.

“From years and years of playing with drummers and having no mic,” she said. “All those years you toil away, playing clubs and the microphone doesn’t work and there’s like 50 people on the stage. You learn how to project by necessity.”

Mitchell is more interested in making music than fussing with technique. “Playing the flute, I always wanted just to put it together and play it,” she said by phone from her office at the University of California, Irvine. “Not go through a bunch of exercises and warm-ups, go through my scales and this and that. This is probably different from what other people might say about playing their instrument, but I really try to train myself to just pick it up and play it, and work the kinks out in the meantime, if I have to. Or keep ‘em in.” She chuckled. “Kinks are good.”

That attitude might not endear her to flute teachers, but the results she gets have consistently made her a critical favorite. “There are a lot of amazing flute players out there,” she said, modestly. “It’s a blessing to be put in that category again, and I was really excited about [the Critics Poll win for] my Black Earth Ensemble.”

Topping the category Rising Star–Jazz Group makes a nice anniversary present for the ensemble, which is celebrating 20 years of playing and recording this year. But it also underscores Mitchell’s gifts as a composer and band leader. The Black Earth Ensemble is less a band

than a concept, one that uses a revolving cast of players to realize the variety of Mitchell’s compositions.

“The way I designed it, the instrumentation and the personnel would change according to the project,” she said. “Even in the very beginning, when we were just playing at the Velvet Lounge [in Chicago], every time we played it was with a different configuration. Of course, we had members who have been involved with a lot of projects and have even been on a majority of the recordings. But then, we also have musicians who might be invited into a new project, because of what they bring, and then start doing other things with the group after that.”

“Nicole always tries to foster a community vibe in whatever project she’s doing,” said cellist Tomeka Reid, a BEE regular since 2000. “I’ve always loved the moments of silence we all share before going onstage, standing in a circle, with our eyes closed, holding hands. Sometimes someone would say a few words, like a prayer before a meal. It was always very centering, a feeling of we’re all in this together.”

For the Black Earth Ensemble’s 2017 album, *Mandorla Awakening II: Emerging Worlds* (FPE), Mitchell brought in Kojiro Umezaki on shakuhachi (Japanese flute) and Tatsu Aoki on shamisen and taiko (Japanese lute and drum, respectively). Writing for non-Western instruments is a challenge, Mitchell admitted—“You

don’t go around writing a drum chart for taiko,” she said—but it really adds to the ensemble’s palette.

“Nicole doesn’t make it like there’s some special delineation about [the taiko], either,” Reid said. “It’s just another color or voice added to the ensemble.”

Mitchell also is fond of integrating vocals into her work. On *Mandorla Awakening II*, singer Avery R. Young takes a traditional, if often admonitory, role advancing the work’s lyrical themes, while on the upcoming *Maroon Cloud*, Fay Victor’s singing often is wordless, making her a melodic equal to Mitchell, Reid and pianist Aruán Ortiz.

“I have singers because I’m a closet singer,” Mitchell said. “I don’t really feel comfortable singing things myself, but I’m always writing lyrics.

“And I definitely feel a connection between my voice and the flute,” she continued. “My voice is actually really close in range to the flute, which is unlike a lot of the other flute players who’ve come before me, because they’ve been men for the most part and they have low voices. Also, I don’t have a lot of overtones in my voice, so it’s very close to a sine wave, which makes it even closer to the texture of the flute sound.

“There’s still a lot to discover,” she added. “There’s definitely a lot more to figure out.”

—J.D. Considine



Nicole Mitchell leads the Black Earth Ensemble, winner of the category Rising Star—Jazz Group.

JULIAN LAGE

FOCUSED ON THE SONGS

RECENTLY, JULIAN LAGE FINISHED UP A STINT IN NELS CLINE'S EXCITING QUARTET SUPPORTING *CURRENTS, CONSTELLATIONS* (BLUE NOTE) AT LE POISSON ROUGE IN NEW YORK BEFORE HEADING TO EUROPE FOR A TOUR. CLINE'S LEADER PROJECT FEATURES THE TWO VIRTUOSO GUITARISTS SHARING THE RAW-ENERGY SPOTLIGHT.

"Yes, it was the brawl," this year's Rising Star–Jazz Artist co-winner said with a laugh on the phone while on his way to Burlington, Vermont, to perform at the club Higher Ground with his romantic partner, singer-songwriter Margaret Glaspy. "Nels is a pillar of improvised music. He's one of my dearest friends and collaborators."

In a sweeping switch from the tumult of Cline's band, the 30-year-old Lage now is revved up to tour behind his trio album, *Modern Lore* (Mack Avenue), featuring bassist Scott Colley and drummer (and vibraphonist) Kenny Wollesen. The disc offers toe-tapping, playful grooves in infectious songs that are more akin to Americana simplicity than to a full-fledged, jagged, look-at-me jazz blast. And that's exactly what makes *Modern Lore* such a treat.

Most of the 11 tracks clock in at the three- to four-minute range, there are no extended solos, and the program moves from the quiet and pastoral to the tangled and high-flying with impeccable ease.

"This is a song-based record," Lage said. "The songs are telling a story, and my hope is that listeners experience that. That's why I wanted Jesse Harris to produce. We go back a little way, and he really loves songs. He's built a beautiful life in that world of song, and he's not specifically in that jazz-world exploration. He helped to keep me focusing on the songs."

Lage often listens to other artists' music during a type of research and development phase before going into the studio. In the case of *Modern Lore*, he drenched himself in tunes from decades ago: Bo Diddley, Little Richard and early Jeff Beck. But he also listens to a fair amount of classical and orchestral music, as well as the work of some of his colleagues, including drummer Tom Rainey and pianist Kris Davis, the co-winner of the Rising Star–Jazz Artist category (see page 45). "I see Kris a lot," Lage said. "I'm grateful to be tied with her for this award, but she gets the win, in my opinion."

The bassist in Lage's touring trio, Jorge Roeder, has played regularly with him for 10 years. He has watched the guitarist evolve from a guy playing blues on a Stratocaster to a fully developed, amped-up guitarist on a Nachocaster, built by luthier Nacho Baños, who specializes in vintage Telecaster-style instruments. "Julian had been looking to find a sound that most represents him," Roeder said. "He found his voice with the Nachocaster. He's the consummate improviser, but jazz is only one of his many hats. He also embraces the blues and all kinds of American music."

Cline is another one of Lage's biggest fans. "The musical relationship that has sprung up between Julian and me has been truly profound," he said. "Julian was who I needed to be playing with as a sensitive collaborator, on both a chromatic and modern level. We started touring as a duo and magic would happen every night." The guitarists released an acclaimed duo album, *Room* (Mack Avenue), in 2014.

Lage is planning a solo electric guitar album (he recorded the solo acoustic guitar CD *World's Fair* in 2015), as well as a duo project with bassist Steve Swallow, partially influenced by Dixieland music. He's also excited about the Tzadik album *Insurrection*, recorded with bassist Trevor Dunn (of Mr. Bungle) and guitarist Matt Hollenberg and drummer Kenny Grohowski (both of whom are in Simulacrum). "It's a smoking album," Lage said. "It's my heavy metal project." —Dan Ouellette



Pianist Kris Davis runs the independent label Pyroclastic Records.



KRIS DAVIS

INNOVATIVE VOICE

AFTER ANSWERING AN INTERVIEWER'S QUESTIONS FOR AN HOUR IN AN EMPTY REHEARSAL ROOM AT THE NEW SCHOOL, KRIS DAVIS WAS ASKED TO PLAY A FEW BARS ON A PIANO THAT SAT IN THE CORNER. THE REQUEST, COMING AS A CLUTCH OF ANXIOUS STUDENTS WAITED OUTSIDE THE DOOR, MIGHT HAVE SEEMED A BIT PRESUMPTUOUS.

But Davis was game. Without hesitation, she strode to the instrument and dove into an abbreviated version of a newly written tribute to Cecil Taylor. What emerged was a highly evocative turn that alternately found her negotiating a maze of tricky intervals, dissecting a series of gnarly clusters and scampering cat-like across the keys.

The piece, commissioned by The Jazz Gallery, was finely wrought. At the same time, its cell-like structure readily allowed for extemporaneous expansion. The result was a work that seemed at once fixed and fluid, occupying a nether zone between the calculated and the spontaneous. It is a zone that Davis, 38, has made her own.

The strategy has helped win her accolades, like her co-victory as Rising Star–Jazz Artist in this year's Critics Poll. And it has proved adaptable to a variety of formats, not least the duo—her setting of choice for her most recent

albums, *Duopoly* (2016) and *Octopus* (2018), both released on her Pyroclastic Records label.

"When I hear her, I don't know what's written and what's being created in the moment," said an admiring Bill Frisell, with whom she laid down two haunting tracks on *Duopoly*, "Prairie Eyes" and a free improvisation. Recalling the studio session, the guitarist added, "My memory is that we were not to differentiate between the two pieces. It felt like it was the same atmosphere."

Blurring the line between the notated and the improvised has not always been foremost in Davis' mind. From her early days in Canada through her debut album—*Lifespan* (2004), a sextet effort—she embraced the dual imperatives of comping and blowing.

"I had to go through that phase of learning the language to discover how it was done in the past," she said. "Then I had to figure out: If I want to be an innovator in this music, if I want

to find my voice, how do I go about that?"

The answer, she said, was to move toward "a more linear approach and not so much one in which the harmony structures how the melodies and the improvising would come out."

She began working away from the piano, writing out lines over modes and then shaping the raw material into etudes at the instrument. Gradually, she moved back to a more balanced approach that synthesizes the horizontal and the vertical. The fruits of that approach have become evident.

On *Duopoly*, for example, she facilitates colloquies with musicians who, though like-minded, might not always share with her all the particulars of a language: pianists Angelica Sanchez and Craig Taborn (her sole collaborator on *Octopus*); guitarists Frisell and Julian Lage; woodwind players Tim Berne and Don Byron; drummers Billy Drummond and Marcus Gilmore.

"There's something nice about making music with someone with whom you share an aesthetic," she said. "But there's also something nice about playing with someone from a different world, where you have to find a middle ground."

Increasingly, Davis has found common ground in the community at John Zorn's venue The Stone, where she was in residence for a week last year. On Aug. 1, she will perform Zorn's bagatelles in Lisbon with guitarist Mary Halvorson, bassist Drew Gress and drummer Kenny Wollesen. On Aug. 18, she will be back at the Stone, joining Lage for his week there. (Lage, incidentally, is the other co-winner of the Rising Star–Jazz Artist category in this year's Critics Poll; see page 44.)

From late August through late September, she will play a spate of festivals—in Detroit (with Terri Lyne Carrington and Esperanza Spalding), Chicago (with Eric Revis, Ken Vandermark and Chad Taylor) and Monterey (with Ingrid Jensen and Tia Fuller) before circling back to Chicago for a solo performance in Hyde Park.

As the year winds down, Davis will be expanding her Pyroclastic label, which, two years after its creation, is seeking nonprofit status, as it takes on its first outside artist, pianist Cory Smythe. She will also be involved in a new monthly collaboration between The Jazz Gallery and the School for Improvised Music, where she has been teaching for more than six years.

Meanwhile, Davis will be entering her second year of teaching at both The New School and Princeton University. Glancing at the students waiting outside the door of the New School rehearsal room, she reflected on their journey.

"It's [very] intense for the students," she said. "There's a lot of pressure to get it together to have a life in music." —Phillip Lutz

66TH ANNUAL CRITICS POLL
**RISING STAR
TRUMPET,
ARRANGER**

AMIR ELSAFFAR

By Howard Mandel

DEEPER INTO EXPRESSION

THE DOWNBEAT CRITICS POLL'S RECOGNITION OF TRUMPETER, COMPOSER, SANTUR PLAYER AND MAQAM SINGER AMIR ELSAFFAR AS A RISING STAR-TRUMPET AND RISING STAR-ARRANGER IS TIMELY—AND WELL DESERVED.

Not *Two* (New Amsterdam), his widely hailed 2017 release—recorded in analog, released in multiple formats but intended as two LPs—is his most ambitious work yet, a suite for the 17-piece Rivers of Sound ensemble, building on his *Two Rivers* septet. ElSaffar is thriving as a teacher-in-residence at France's Royaumont Foundation, writing and premiering chamber works throughout Europe, but also gigging from Katowice, Poland (duos with saxophonist Hafez Modirzadeh), to New York City (with flutist Jamie Baum's septet during Winter Jazzfest), and fronting Rivers of Sound in cities across the United States.

ElSaffar continues to advance his overarching idea: that Middle Eastern music—specifically the Iraqi maqam vocal tradition—opens vistas for jazz improvisers and indeed music-makers of all ilk within a sphere of sound that denies division. Highly structured maqam assumes a more complexly refined continuum of tonality than does Western tradition. Microtonality, modality, decorative gestures and free rhythmic practice across cultures worldwide had led ElSaffar to hear all as one. It's worth noting that he's politically aware (album titles like *Crisis* reflect this) and trying to supplant tribalism with universalism, while divisive forces roil the world, particularly the Middle East region, with which he's deeply connected.

Rather than taking political stances,

though, ElSaffar strikes an aesthetic one. His music demonstrates the fluidity and applicability of his insight, employing written and/or improvised material that absorbs, yet transcends, classical and pop music conventions. Jazz and Arab maqam have guided him to embrace and master a more continuous flow of pitch than 12 tones to an octave, with intriguing harmonic implications he eagerly explores.

ElSaffar's innovations don't dominate his music, but flow through it.

Caught by phone during a rare week off, he enthused about his new projects and focus on honing compositional chops. He was appreciative, of course, about his DownBeat wins, but questioned one distinction.

"I'm happy to receive recognition as a Rising Star-Arranger, of course," he said, "but because I'm not arranging standards—the typical work of an arranger, with pre-composed material—I assume votes for me in that category were on the basis of my ability to organize music for ensembles of mixed instrumentation, like Rivers of Sound and *Two Rivers*. I think of 'arranging' in that sense more as orchestrating. The term 'arranger' carries a lot of implications that don't necessarily apply to what I do."

Critics can be forgiven for difficulty differentiating between composing, arranging and orchestrating in ElSaffar's work. His themes and counter-themes often seem like ancient airs vividly voiced—on *Not Two* weaving



together his trumpet, voice and/or santur (hammered dulcimer), ouds, oboe, English horn, saxophones, strings (his sister Dena ElSaffar plays violin), piano, vibes, electric guitar, upright bass, trap drums and various forms of percussion.

Microtonality, modality and decorative devices give his compositions surface singularity, but ElSaffar sets up or scores elaborate polyphony for individualistic participants, such as Jason Adasiewicz, Craig Taborn, Miles Okazaki, Ole Mathisen, J.D. Parran and Nasheet Waits in a manner uncommon, if not unknown in traditional Arab music.

Moreover, *Not Two* is impossible to categorize. It flashes momentary references to spectral composition (“Iftitah”), minimalism (“Penny Explosion”), prepared piano (“Jourjina Over Three”), samba rhythms (“Hijaz 21/8”) and baroque brass (the 16-minute “Shards Of Memory/B Half Flat Fantasy”). Close listening reveals ElSaffar’s broad range, and perhaps the truth of his insight that all music is one.

He recently has expanded on that realization with French-Lebanese rapper Marc Nammour (“It’s the first time I ever worked on a hip-hop project”) and electronics composer Lorenzo Bianchi Hoesch (“He creates his own software and does live processing; it’s an interesting direction, inspiring new ideas”). ElSaffar also has written, performed and plans to record *Interstices*, an hour-plus piece for the Belgian contemporary music octet Ictus: “I’ve used the same musical materials I’ve been developing over the years, but no improvisation per se.”

At the urging of Royaumont’s director, he’s composing a flamenco piece for an ensemble with a vocalist (“Flamenco singing is close to maqam in terms of intonation, and there’s the historical tie through the Moors”) but no guitar (“since the piece goes beyond equal temperament”). And he’s been caught up in writing for combined forces of Rivers of Sound and the New Haven Symphony Orchestra, 27 musicians in all, commissioned by the Yale University and supported by the 2018 International Festival of Arts and Ideas.

ElSaffar credits pianist Cecil Taylor, whose large ensemble he played with in the early 2000s, as his “strongest influence,” acknowledging that “what I write might not immediately strike someone that way.”

Jamie Baum, who consulted with the trumpeter when composing her cross-cultural works on *Bridges*, said, “Amir has certainly come out of jazz, but not jazz only. After he played with me on *In This Life*, which was inspired by South Asian music, while I was writing *Bridges* I conferred with him about the confluences of that and maqam and Jewish music, about how there are common scales and ways to develop pieces from those scales. He knows a lot.

“And Amir’s such a soulful guy,” she con-

tinued. “The first time I heard him sing, I knew I wanted him for ‘Song Without Words,’ which I wrote for my father after he passed away, based on ‘Kol Nidre,’ the Jewish prayer for our Day of Atonement. Whenever I listen to Amir sing that, he brings me to tears.”

ElSaffar was surprised when asked if he explicitly draws on his youthful musical experiences—late-’60s rock, his father’s interest in jazz and blues, his mother’s Bach and Haydn albums, the wedding and corporate dates he played in college, the r&b band

he belonged to, or recording under conductor Daniel Barenboim with members of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra— but like jazz and maqam, they’re irrefutably part of him.

“There are so many different gradations, so many different ways you can play a sound that gets at the emotions,” he said. “Ultimately, that’s what I’m after: how to get deeper into expression.”

Playing trumpet, composing, leading ensembles, working with others, Amir ElSaffar is a rising star and already a brilliant one. **DB**

DON'T
HOLD
BACK

"It doesn't matter how hard you play, these cymbals are never too much for the mics onstage or the crowd in the room."
- Gregory Smith (Drummer)

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JAKOB BRO

UNDERSTATED NUANCE



The time Jakob Bro spent performing with Paul Motian has been integral to his development.

A KEY MOMENT OF THE 2016 COPENHAGEN JAZZ FESTIVAL ARRIVED IN QUIET, BOLD AND DEEP STROKES WHEN GUITARIST JAKOB BRO MET VETERAN DANISH TRUMPETER PALLE MIKKELBORG AND NORWEGIAN DRUMMER JON CHRISTENSEN, ALONGSIDE BRO'S KINDRED SPIRIT BASSIST-ALLY, THOMAS MORGAN.

The setting: the ancient Kastelskirken church in the 17th century Kassellet fortress, an enchanting site for a group sound at once musing, exploratory and reverent. The next day, the quartet took its collaborative songbook into the storied Rainbow Studio in Oslo, Norway, and the result is Bro's acclaimed ECM album, *Returnings*.

Bro, winner of the category Rising Star-Guitar, has been winning fans around the world, thanks to his subtle and often darkly lyrical musical voice. Guitarists can be loud, fast and brash, but players such as Bro and Bill Frisell (with whom Bro has worked and shared an important mentor—the late, great drummer Paul Motian) have waged a veritable revolution of understatement and nuance. At times, Bro can be a minimalist master, but he's also a well-rounded, uncommonly sensitive composer and bandleader.

At 40, Bro is no longer a newcomer, boasting 14 albums—mostly on his own Loveland label, including *Balladeering* (featuring Lee Konitz, Frisell and Motian). A much higher public profile has resulted from his signing with ECM. The label previously released his album *Gefion* in 2015, followed by 2016's *Streams* (featuring his ongoing trio with Morgan and drummer Joey Baron). A new live trio album and U.S. tour are scheduled for later this year.

The soft-spoken Dane humbly said, "I'm still far away from the U.S., somehow. The fact

that DownBeat is even noticing is nice for me to see."

Bro is something of a reluctant guitar hero. He started on trumpet and eased into the guitar, inspired by Jimi Hendrix, studying formally at the Royal Academy of Music in Copenhagen and Berklee College of Music in Boston. He counts among his influences and heroes a variety of jazz instrumentalists—Louis Armstrong, Miles Davis, Charles Mingus and Thelonious Monk—as well as guitar icons Pat Metheny, John Scofield, Jim Hall and John Abercrombie.

The transition from releasing his music independently to working with ECM was a big step, he admitted: "I never listen to myself and say, 'How did I sound? Was that a good guitar solo?' ... Entering with ECM and Manfred wanting me to do a guitar trio, I was thinking, 'Can I figure out what I want to do with this?' But I really learned a lot from that. I'm happy that I waited so long to take that step. I felt proud of [*Gefion*] as a whole, and I also thought, 'Wow, I didn't even know I could play these things.' I had always been writing sketches for Lee Konitz, who would interpret them. All of a sudden, I had to interpret myself."

Bro's relatively late emergence as a leader occurred after close, inspirational contact with veterans. His ECM debut came as a sideman with Motian on 2005's *Garden Of Eden*, leading to a gig with Polish trumpet legend Tomasz Stanko, appearing on 2009's *Dark Eyes* (ECM).

Playing in Motian's Electric Bebop Band in the early '00s was a major catalyst in Bro's musical evolution. "Playing his songs and him saying that he liked my writing really set me on some sort of path," Bro explained. "For a while, I thought the ideas in my writing were obviously coming out of Paul's things, but slowly, that developed into something else."

Bro also was profoundly touched by the legendary elasticity of Motian's time feel, a loose, rubato relationship that has carried over to Bro's trios, both with Christensen and Baron. In that mode, he said, "You don't have to dictate the melodies. They can make their own life. For me, that was a revelation. I never thought about the fact that time is loose, because when playing with Paul, it felt so natural."

That central link to Motian is something he shares with Morgan, who also played in Motian's band and first worked with Bro in 2009. Morgan offered that "Jakob is distinguished by his sense of melody—the kind that transcends genre—and blend, and his way of setting up situations to unfold beautifully and naturally."

Bro currently is composing a choir project, also including Christensen, in addition to steady work with his trio, noting, "It took awhile for me to find a group that I could tour and record with. Joey and Thomas helped me a lot in that sense, because it's a band I enjoy, both socially and musically."

In terms of basking in a sense of having "arrived," though, the still-rising Bro abides by the creative creed of remaining open to exploring and evolving. "I'm still working," he insisted. "I'm still thinking about what I want to do."

—Josef Woodard

66TH ANNUAL CRITICS POLL

**RISEING STAR
TENOR
SAXOPHONE**



©CAROLINE MARDOK

Ingrid Laubrock, who was born in Germany, now is based in Brooklyn.

INGRID LAUBROCK

TRUE IMPROVISER, SERIOUS COMPOSER

AFTER 20 YEARS ON THE LONDON SCENE, WHERE SHE COLLABORATED WITH BRAZILIAN SINGER MÔNICA VASCONCELOS AND WAS A MEMBER OF THE F-IRE COLLECTIVE, SAXOPHONIST INGRID LAUBROCK MOVED TO NEW YORK IN 2009.

Since settling into the Columbia Heights section of Brooklyn, Laubrock has been making an impact on the scene centered around cutting-edge Brooklyn venues like The Owl Music Parlor, Lunático and Roulette, as well as John Zorn's Manhattan performance space, The Stone.

"Moving to New York was an important step," said Laubrock, who topped the category Rising Star-Tenor Saxophone in this year's Critics Poll. "There are so many amazing musicians here, and especially as a composer, I feel I can pretty much write anything and find open-minded and great musicians to realize it."

Laubrock, who studied in London in 1992 with ex-Jazz Messenger Jean Toussaint and in the States during the summer of 1998 with Dave Liebman, described herself as a reluctant composer. "I didn't start until I was 27 or 28 years old," explained the native of Stadtlohn, Germany. "In retrospect, I think that I was nervous about the finality of putting something down on paper and saying, 'This is me.' Then the bug bit and I realized that, like with everything else, you only get better by doing it."

Her composing skills blossomed in New York through her groups Paradoxical Trio (pianist Kris Davis, drummer Tyshawn Sorey), Anti-

House (Davis, guitarist Mary Halvorson, bassist John Hébert, drummer Tom Rainey) and the Ingrid Laubrock Octet (Halvorson, Rainey, pianist Liam Noble, bassist Drew Gress, cellist Ben Davis, accordionist Ted Reichman, trumpeter Tom Arthurs).

"As I was new in New York and it takes time to become part of a scene, I suddenly had more time than I ever had before as an adult," she recalled of her early years in the Big Apple. "That gave me headspace to think about what I did and what I did not want to do. Composing filled those periods."

In addition to Davis, cornetist Taylor Ho Bynum, bassist Stephan Crump (who appears with her and pianist Cory Smythe on the 2017 Intakt release *Planktonic Finales*) and her husband, Rainey (whom she married in 2010), the saxophonist considers Halvorson to be an essential musical ally.

"Mary is one of the first musicians I played with in New York, and I am very grateful for that connection, not only as a musician but also as my friend," Laubrock said. "I had heard of her when living in London, but first listened to her play live with [drummer] Tomas Fujiwara's The Hook Up at Barbès in Brooklyn. I was immediately impressed by her unique way of playing. Her compositions are just as true, personal and creative as her playing. Also, Mary introduced me to Anthony Braxton, who has been the most life-changing musician I have met. So, I owe her big-time for that." [Laubrock was part of Braxton's Diamond Curtain Wall ensemble and his Falling River Music Quartet.]

Rainey and Laubrock—who met in the U.K. at the 2004 Cheltenham Jazz Festival—have an ongoing duo that highlights their conversational exchanges in a purely improvised setting. Their third duet recording, *Buoyancy*, was released in 2016 on the Relative Pitch label.

"Ingrid is rare in the sense that she is a true improviser, as well as a serious composer," Rainey said, "meaning she doesn't just write music that is a vehicle for her to solo over. For Anti-House, she brings a unique compositional perspective, as well as her prowess as an improviser. And for my trio and Sleeptieft [their trio with pianist Noble], she brings a personal sound and spontaneity that is completely her own. Our duo is where we can meet and distill everything else we're involved in musically to a very direct improvisational place."

Next up for Laubrock is *Pieces For Orchestra With Soloists*, an Intakt album slated for release in November. *Pieces* includes two commissioned works: *Vogelfrei*, which was premiered in 2014 at Roulette by Braxton's Tri-Centric Orchestra, and *Contemporary Chaos Practices*, which was premiered at the 2017 Moers Festival by the Cologne-based EOS Chamber Orchestra.

"[Because] the project involves 47 musicians, I count myself lucky to have been able to document both works," she said. —Bill Milkowski

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Geri Allen (1957–2017) topped the Piano category in the Critics Poll.

66TH ANNUAL CRITICS POLL
PIANO

GERI ALLEN

COURAGEOUS EXPLORER

PIANIST GERI ALLEN'S DEATH—FROM CANCER COMPLICATIONS AT AGE 60 ON JUNE 27, 2017—ELICITED AN OUTPOURING OF TRIBUTES, FROM JAZZ ELDERS, HER PEERS AND YOUNGER MUSICIANS SHE TOUCHED. VOTERS IN THIS YEAR'S CRITICS POLL CHOSE TO SHOW THEIR APPRECIATION AS WELL.

A Michigan native who became one of the first to graduate from Howard University with a bachelor of arts degree in jazz studies, Allen turned heads immediately when she moved to New York City in 1982.

"She was the one who pulled together all of the histories, from Mary Lou Williams and Erroll Garner to Cecil Taylor and M-Base," pianist Jason Moran wrote in a tribute to her. "She made the newest language on the piano."

It was as a member of The M-Base Collective—the loose assemblage that includes saxophonist Steve Coleman—that Allen first gained prominence with her language, drawing comparisons to Williams for her stylistic breadth.

Speaking to pianist and jazz journalist Bill King in 1995, Allen said: "[Williams] said she was playing bebop when Charlie Parker was still in short pants. She lived through the 'Fatha' Hines years and the transition of Harlem piano players from [Art] Tatum to Bud [Powell]. ... In her day, everybody wanted to talk to her; she had all the answers."

"Geri Allen was all music," saxophonist Charles Lloyd wrote in tribute. "She transcended labels and gender. She was a poet on

the keyboard and brought a purity of intent, focus and fierce determination to the music she played."

Lloyd was one of many established players who recruited Allen to contribute to their recordings and live performances. With one of these elders, Ornette Coleman, Allen made history, becoming the first keyboardist to work with the iconoclastic altoist in the 48 years since he had formed his first quartet in 1958. Recordings like the two volumes of *Sound Museum* she made with Coleman in 1996 cemented her reputation as a fierce improviser who never settled for predictability.

Allen began to build an academic career in her forties, serving on the faculty of Howard University, New England Conservatory and University of Michigan, where she taught for 10 years. In 2013, she became director of the jazz studies program at University of Pittsburgh, a position she held until her death.

Summarizing Allen's contributions, the veteran author, educator and social rights leader Angela Davis wrote: "[Her] music will always remind us that we do not have to relinquish our cultural anchors in order to engage in courageous explorations. Her brilliance will inspire generations to come." —James Hale

66TH ANNUAL CRITICS POLL

COMPOSER

MUHAL RICHARD

ABRAMS

PURSUING EVERY DIRECTION

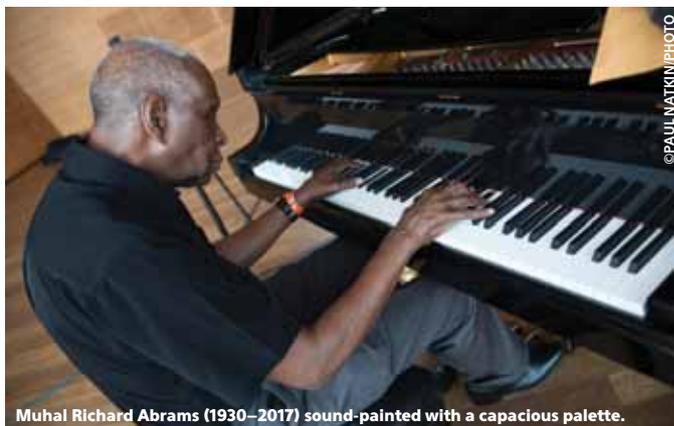
PIANIST MUHAL RICHARD ABRAMS—WHO DIED OCT. 29 AT AGE 87—NEITHER RELEASED NOR RECORDED AN ALBUM DURING THE FINAL YEAR OF HIS LIFE.

But the impact of Abrams' genre-transcending music, documented on more than 30 albums, is remarkably widespread, as implied by his posthumous win in the DownBeat Critics Poll Composer category.

Marty Ehrlich, who played woodwinds on four Abrams albums and recruited the pianist to participate on two of his own projects, elaborated on the composer: "Muhale wrote really challenging music, and you came to it with a lot of hats. You'd be playing some structurally unique chromatic world you'd never quite heard before, followed by a slow Chicago blues, followed by an uptempo, open, bebop-oriented thing ..."

Indeed, Abrams sound-painted with a capacious palette. His pianistic voice referenced ragtime, stride and Serialism. His legacy includes works for piano solos and duos, small combos, string quartets, saxophone quartets, big bands and symphonic orchestras, as well as computer music.

Born and raised in Chicago, Abrams deserved, as Ehrlich put it, "the Nobel Prize for DIY." Self-taught on his instrument, he studied scores, practiced classical piano pieces and assimilated Joseph Schillinger's massive



Muhale Richard Abrams (1930–2017) sound-painted with a capacious palette.

System of Musical Composition. "Schillinger analyzed music as raw material, and learning the possibilities gave you an analytical basis to create anything you want," Abrams said in 2010, upon his induction in the DownBeat Hall of Fame. "But I am the sum product of studying many things."

In 1961, Abrams established a workshop ensemble, the Experimental Band, into which he recruited local aspirants like Roscoe Mitchell, Joseph Jarman, Anthony Braxton, Henry Threadgill, Jack DeJohnette and Malachi Favors. In 1965, he co-founded the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians, in which members could operate within a collaborative infrastructure while developing ideas. Next-generation avatars Steve Coleman and Greg Osby drew deeply from Abrams' well of knowledge. They connected him to eminent Millennials and post-Boomers like Jason Moran, Vijay Iyer, Craig Taborn, Tyshawn Sorey and David Virelles.

In a 2009 interview, Abrams said, "I helped inspire other people to be themselves from my example: 'I am going to be myself; you have the opportunity to be yourself.'" —Ted Panken

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66TH ANNUAL CRITICS POLL

COMPLETE RESULTS

We are proud to present the results of the **66th Annual DownBeat International Critics Poll**, which includes **Jazz Album of the Year (page 30)** and **Historical Album of the Year (page 38)**.

Hall Of Fame

Benny Golson	91
Jack DeJohnette	84
Anthony Braxton	71
John McLaughlin	63
Jon Hendricks	60
Pharoah Sanders	60
George Benson	59
Marian McPartland.....	55
Charles Lloyd	54
Bob Brookmeyer.....	52
Shirley Horn	52
Kenny Barron	46
Dave Holland.....	42
Oliver Nelson.....	41
Sam Rivers.....	41
Kenny Burrell.....	40
George Russell.....	40
Jaki Byard	39
Mel Tormé	36

VETERANS COMMITTEE

Hall Of Fame

Marian McPartland	70%
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Note: Artists must receive at least 66% of the Veterans Committee votes to gain entry. Other artists receiving more than 50% of the votes:

Scott LaFaro.....	58%
Les Paul.....	55%

Jazz Artist

Vijay Iyer	80
Anat Cohen	68
Ambrose Akinmusire.....	65
Charles Lloyd	61
Mary Halvorson.....	59
Christian Scott aTunde Adjuah	59
Wadada Leo Smith	59
Fred Hersch.....	56
Esperanza Spalding	53
Terri Lyne Carrington.....	51
Chick Corea	49
Cécile McLorin Salvant.....	49
John McLaughlin	48
Kamasi Washington	48
Christian McBride	47
Jason Moran	43
Roscoe Mitchell	42
Bill Frisell	41
Robert Glasper.....	40
Henry Threadgill	39



Kurt Elling, winner of the Male Vocalist category

Jazz Album of the Year

Cécile McLorin Salvant, <i>Dreams And Daggers (Mack Avenue)</i> . 62	
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Ambrose Akinmusire, <i>A Rift In Decorum</i> (Blue Note)	46
Matt Wilson, <i>Honey And Salt (Palmetto)</i>	44
Jaimie Branch, <i>Fly Or Die (International Anthem)</i>	42
Fred Hersch, <i>Open Book (Palmetto)</i>	37
Bill Charlap Trio, <i>Uptown, Downtown</i> (Impulse!)	36
Chick Corea, <i>The Musician (Concord)</i>	35
Ron Miles, <i>I Am A Man (Enja/Yellowbird)</i>	35
Steve Coleman's Natal Eclipse, <i>Morphogenesis (Pi)</i>	34
John Beasley, <i>MONK'estra, Vol. 2 (Mack Avenue)</i>	33
Rudresh Mahanthappa's Indo-Pak Coalition, <i>Agrima (Self Release)</i>	33

Tyshawn Sorey, <i>Verisimilitude (Pi)</i>	33
Julian Lage, <i>Modern Lore (Mack Avenue)</i>	31
Roscoe Mitchell, <i>Bells For The South Side</i> (ECM).....	29
Mary Halvorson, <i>Code Girl (Firehouse 12)</i>	28
Vijay Iyer Sextet, <i>Far From Over (ECM)</i>	28
Amir ElSaffar/Rivers Of Sound, <i>Not Two</i> (New Amsterdam).....	27
Jazzmeia Horn, <i>A Social Call (Prestige)</i>	27
Christian Scott aTunde Adjuah, <i>Diaspora</i> (Ropeadope/Stretch)	27
Esperanza Spalding, <i>Exposure (Concord)</i>	27
Nicole Mitchell, <i>Mandorla Awakening II: Emerging Worlds (FPE)</i>	26
Lizz Wright, <i>Grace</i> (Concord)...	26
The Bad Plus, <i>Never Stop II (Legbreaker)</i>	25
Christian Scott aTunde Adjuah, <i>The Emancipation Procrastination</i> (Ropeadope/Stretch).....	25
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Kamasi Washington, <i>Harmony Of Difference</i> (Young Turks)	25
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Linda May Han Oh, <i>Walk Against Wind</i> (Biophilia)	23
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Jamie Saft, <i>Solo A Genova (RareNoise)</i>	21
Wadada Leo Smith, <i>Najwa (Tum)</i>	21
Joshua Abrams, <i>Simultaneity (Eremite)</i>	20
Fabian Almazan & Rhizome, <i>Alcanza</i> (Biophilia)	20
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Henry Threadgill Zooid.....	47

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Maria Schneider won the Arranger category, and the Maria Schneider Orchestra won the Big Band category.



WHIT LANE

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Evan Parker.....	56
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Tia Fuller.....	44
Ingrid Laubrock.....	44
Roscoe Mitchell	44

Tony Malaby	30
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Bobby Watson	45
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Tim Berne.....	36
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Paquito D'Rivera.....	35
Steve Wilson	33
Darius Jones	32
Jaleel Shaw	31

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Charles Lloyd	146
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Chris Potter	100
Kamasi Washington	66
Noah Preminger	63
JD Allen	60
Donny McCaslin.....	60



MATHEU BITTON

Robert Glasper, winner of the Keyboard category



STEVEN SUSSMAN

Rudresh Mahanthappa, winner of the Alto Saxophone category

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Wayne Shorter.....	51
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James Carter.....	42
Jimmy Heath.....	42
Houston Person.....	39
Mark Turner.....	39
Eric Alexander.....	37
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Evan Parker.....	29
Pharoah Sanders.....	27

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Ronnie Cuber.....	83
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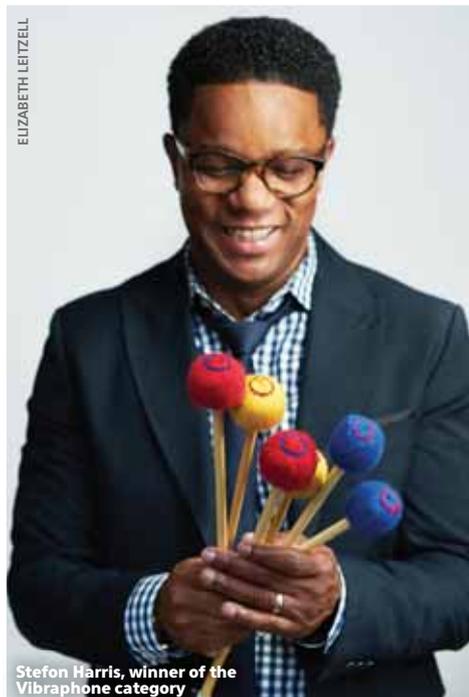
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Taj Mahal (left) and Keb' Mo' won the Blues Album category.

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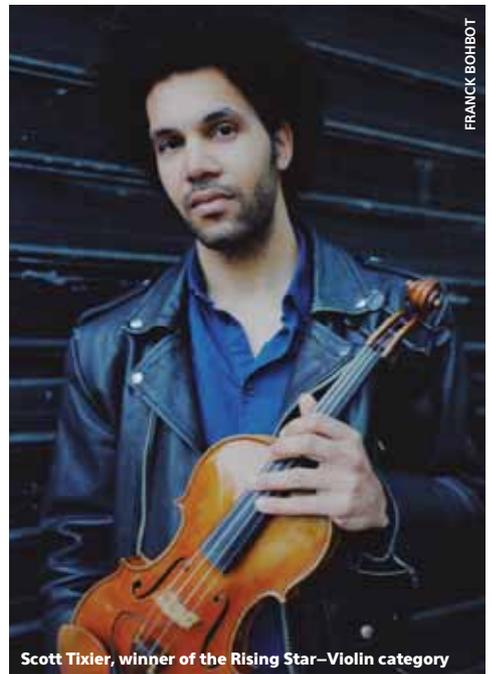
COURTESY OF ARTIST

Rhonda Larson, winner of the Rising Star-Flute category



ELTON ANDERSON

Jamison Ross, winner of the Rising Star-Male Vocalist category



FRANCK BOHROT

Scott Tixler, winner of the Rising Star-Violin category

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ANNA YATSKEVICH

Behn Gillece, winner of the Rising Star–Vibraphone category



BILLY MINTZ

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66TH ANNUAL CRITICS POLL

THE CRITICS

Below are the 142 critics who voted in DownBeat's 66th Annual International Critics Poll and some of the publications to which they have contributed. In the poll, critics distributed up to 10 points among up to three choices (but no more than 5 points per choice) in each of two groups of categories: Established Talent and Rising Stars. (Note: The asterisk [] denotes a Veterans Committee voter.)*

David R. Adler: New York City Jazz Record, JazzTimes

* **Don Albert:** DB

* **Frank Alkyer:** DB

Larry Appelbaum: JazzTimes, WPFW-FM

Glenn Astarita: All About Jazz

Mark R. Bacon: Main Event DC, Insider Louisville

Chris J. Bahnsen: DB

Bradley Bamberger: DB, Listen

Michael Barris: DB

Peter Bastian: Jazzthetik

Eric Berger: DB, St. Louis Magazine, Riverfront Times

Bill Beuttler: DB, JazzTimes, The Boston Globe

Edward Blanco: All About Jazz, WDNA-FM

Ross Boissoneau: Progression, Local Spins, mynorth.com

Fred Bouchard: DB, The Boston Musical Intelligencer

* **Michael Bourne:** DB, WBGO-FM

* **Herb Boyd:** DB, Cineaste, New York Amsterdam News, The Network Journal

Nelson Brill: DB, bostonconcertreviews.com

Stuart Broomer: New York City Jazz Record, Point of Departure, Musicworks

Hilary Brown: DB, Reverb

Andrea Canter: jazzpolice.com

* **Dave Cantor:** DB

Henry Carrigan: DB, Living Blues, No Depression

* **Aaron Cohen:** DB

Thomas Conrad: Stereophile, New York City Jazz Record, JazzTimes, All About Jazz

J.D. Considine: DB

Anthony Dean-Harris: DB, nextbop.com, KRTU-FM

* **Paul de Barros:** DB, The Seattle Times

Coen de Jonge: JazzBulletin NJA, Jazzism

R.J. DeLuke: All About Jazz, Albany Times Union

Bob Doerschuk: DB, Drum!, Acoustic Guitar, USA Today

Laurence Donohue-Greene:

New York City Jazz Record

Alain Drouot: DB

Ken Dryden: New York City Jazz Record, Hot House, All About Jazz

José Duarte: DB, Radio & TV (Portugal)

Shannon J. Effinger: DB, Pitchfork

Jordannah Elizabeth: DB, LA Weekly, New York Amsterdam News, Chicago Reader

* **Ed Enright:** DB

* **John Ephland:** DB, All About Jazz

Steve Feeney: artsfuse.org, broadwayworld.com, Portland Press Herald/Maine Sunday Telegram

David Franklin: Cadence, JazzTimes, Jazz Forum, jazz.com

Philip Freeman: DB, The Wire, Stereogum

Jon Garelick: DB, The Boston Globe, Jazziz, artsfuse.org

Dustin Garlitz: jazztalent.com

Richard Gehr: Rolling Stone, Relix

Andrew Gilbert: San Francisco Chronicle, Bay Area News Group, berkeleyside.com

* **Ted Gioia:** *The History of Jazz*

Kurt Gottschalk: DB, The Wire, New York City Jazz Record, WFHU-FM

Steve Greenlee: JazzTimes

George Grella: DB, The Wire, New York City Jazz Record, The Brooklyn Rail

* **Frank-John Hadley:** DB, X5 Music Group

Carl L. Hager: jazzjazzersjazzing.blogspot.com

* **James Hale:** DB, soundstageexperience.com

Robert Ham: DB, Billboard, Portland Mercury

George W. Harris: Jazz Weekly

Ron Hart: DB, Billboard, Village Voice

Andrey Henkin: New York City Jazz Record

Andy Hermann: DB, NPR Music, Billboard, Los Angeles Magazine

Geoffrey Himes: DB, The

Washington Post, JazzTimes

Rob Hoff: WQLN-FM, JazzErie

Eugene Holley Jr.: DB, Hot House, Publishers Weekly, New Music Box, Chamber Music

C. Andrew Hovan: DB, All About Jazz

Tom Hull: tomhull.com

Tom Ineck: NET Radio, Lincoln Journal Star

Michael Jackson: DB, Jazzwise

Willard Jenkins: DB, The Independent Ear, JazzTimes

Jeff Johnson: DB, Chicago Sun-Times, Chicago Blues Guide

Martin Johnson: The Wall Street Journal

* **Ashley Kahn:** NPR, Mojo, The New York Times

Richard Kamins: steptempest.blogspot.com

George Kanzler: Hot House, New York City Jazz Record

Fred Kaplan: Stereophile, Slate

Matthew Kassel: DB, The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, JazzTimes, Cosmopolitan, Village Voice

Yoshi Kato: DB, San Francisco Chronicle, The Christian Science Monitor

Larry Kelp: KPFA-FM, kpfa.org

Elzy Kolb: Hot House

Jason Koransky: DB

* **Kiyoshi Koyama:** NHK-FM's *Japan Tonight*, Jazz Japan

Jeff Krow: Audiophile Audition

David Kunian: DB, Offbeat, Louisiana Cultural Vistas

Will Layman: popmatters.com, Spectrum Culture

Angelo Leonardi:

All About Jazz Italy

Bruce Lindsay: All About Jazz, Jazz Journal

John Litweiler: Point of Departure, WHKP-FM

Martin Longley: DB, Jazzwise, The Wire, The Brooklyn Rail, All About Jazz, Songlines

Christopher Loudon: JazzTimes

Phillip Lutz: DB

* **Jim Macnie:** DB

* **Howard Mandel:** DB, The New York Times, artsjournal.com/jazzbeyondjazz

* **John McDonough:** DB

Kerlie McDowall: DB, Bethlehem Centre, Friends of Nanaimo Jazz Society

Peter McElhinney:

Style Weekly

* **Michelle Mercer:** DB, NPR Music, NPR's *All Things Considered*, Chamber Music America

Bill Meyer: DB, The Wire, Chicago Reader, Dusted, Magnet

* **Ken Micallef:** DB, Bass Player, Stereophile, Modern Drummer, MIX

Virgil Mihaiu: DB, Steaua/Jazz Context, JAM (Jazz Montenegro)

* **Bill Milkowski:** DB, The Absolute Sound

Ralph A. Miriello: Huffington Post, Notes on Jazz blog

* **Dan Morgenstern:** Jersey Jazz, Journal of Jazz Studies

Allen Morrison: DB, JazzTimes

* **John Murph:** DB, NPR Music, JazzTimes, Jazzwise

Russ Musto: DB, New York City Jazz Record

Michael G. Nastos: Hot House, WCBN-FM, GINBC/Dixon Media Group

Ron Netsky: City Newspaper (Rochester, New York)

Sean J. O'Connell: DB, Los Angeles Times, Playboy, KPCC-FM

* **Jennifer Odell:** DB, Offbeat, Gambit

* **Dan Ouellette:** DB, Billboard, zealnyc.com

* **Ted Panken:** DB

Thierry Peremarti: M&C (le Son Du Monde)

Terry Perkins: DB

j. poet: DB, Magnet, Relix, New Noise, Oakland Magazine

Jeff Potter: DB, Modern Drummer, TDF Stages

Norman Provizor: DB, KUVU/KVJZ

* **Bobby Reed:** DB

* **Howard Reich:**

Chicago Tribune

Tom Reney: New England Public Radio

Simon Rentner: WBGO-FM's *The Checkout*, NPR

Guy Reynard: Freelance

Derk Richardson: The Absolute Sound, KPFA-FM, Peghead Nation, Acoustic Guitar, AFAR Media

Alex Rodriguez: Ethnomusicology Review

* **Gene Santoro:** DB

Phil Schaap: DB, WKCR-FM, Jazz at Lincoln Center

* **Thomas Stauffer:** DB, Croton Gazette

W. Royal Stokes: JJA News, wroyalstokes.com

Laurence Svirchev: misterioso.org

Otakar Svoboda: Czech Radio

* **Jean Szlamowicz:** DB, Spirit of Jazz

Chris Tart: DB, dubera.com

Larry Reni Thomas: ejazznews.com, jazzcorner.com

Mark F. Turner: All About Jazz

Chris Walker: DB, LA Jazz Scene, California Tour & Travel, JazzTimes

Emma Warren: DB

Natalie Weiner: JazzTimes, Billboard

Ken Weiss: Jazz Inside, Cadence

Michael J. West: DB, JazzTimes, The Washington Post, Washington City Paper

* **Kevin Whitehead:** NPR's *Fresh Air*

Carlo Wolff: DB, CAN Journal, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, Cleveland Jewish News

* **Josef Woodard:** DB, Los Angeles Times, Jazziz, Jazz Hot

* **Scott Yanow:** DB, New York City Jazz Record, Jazziz, LA Jazz Scene, Syncopated Times

Izzy Yellen: DB, The Lawrentian

Eli Zeger: VAN Magazine, RBMA Daily, Vinyl Me, Please

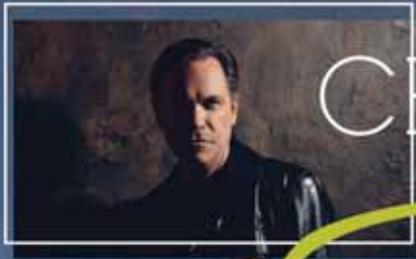
Brian Zimmerman: DB, Jazziz

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REVIEWS >



Saxophonist Kamasi Washington follows up *The Epic*, his 2015 release, with a double-disc set.

Kamasi Washington *Heaven And Earth*

YOUNG TURKS 176DA

★★★★½

Not only has Kamasi Washington gracefully navigated the pressures of all those “savior of jazz” proclamations that have dogged him since 2015’s *The Epic* (Brainfeeder), he’s done so without sacrificing his sense of musical adventure, as evidenced by his new, dichotomy-lad-

en *Heaven And Earth*. Though it was recorded in just two weeks with his Next Step band, some of the material here has been in the works for years, which might explain the depth to which he’s able to plumb the album’s duality.

According to Washington, the two-part recording represents “the world as I see it outwardly, the world that I am a part of” and “the world as I see it inwardly, the world that is a part of me.” Both spheres feature musical representations of struggle, love and redemption,

expressed through lush orchestration and a malleable mix of styles, ranging from futuristic post-bop to fusion and folk. There are moments of freneticism and repetition that drag beyond what a piece can sustain, but they’re generally in service of the album’s greater purpose, which, taken as a whole, traces a personal evolution that speaks to larger issues around justice, unity and love.

The opener, an interpretation of Joseph Koo’s “Fists Of Fury” theme to the Bruce Lee film of the same name, sees Washington dismantle the original intro’s nervous energy, nixing the skittering strings in favor of a slower refrain that unites the instruments involved. Later, a stunning Cameron Graves piano solo comes with comping so symbiotic it almost changes the sound of his keys. And when vocalist Dwight Tribble echoes Patrice Quinn as she sings, “Our time as victims is over/We will no longer ask for justice/Instead we will take our retribution,” it’s another vote for the power of unity.

The balance suggested by the album’s title plays out in the music, too. Extended moments of lyricism give way to warp-speed climaxes that resolve in waves of fuzzed-out sound to mollify Washington’s fiery, free solos. By the time the Thundercat-driven “Invincible Youth” signals a shift away from the feistier first half of Disc 1, *Earth*, a cinematic movement has emerged. (A film project connected to the album is said to be forthcoming; visuals also accompanied Washington’s 2017 counterpoint-as-social-commentary EP, *Harmony Of Difference*.)

Heaven And Earth ends by coming full circle with “Will You Sing,” whose choir-sung refrain implores, “If our song will change the world ... will you sing?” It’s a strong flip side to the opener “Fists Of Fury”—and a strong vote for music as a path to peace. —Jennifer Odell

Heaven And Earth: Disc 1 (*Earth*): Fists Of Fury; Can You Hear Him; Hubtones; Connections; Tiffakonkae; The Invincible Youth; Testify; One Of One. (71:10) Disc 2 (*Heaven*): The Space Travelers Lullaby; Vi Lua Vi Sol; Street Fighter Mas; Song For The Fallen; Journey; The Psalmist; Show Us The Way; Will You Sing. (73:37)

Personnel: Kamasi Washington, tenor saxophone; Cameron Graves, piano; Brandon Coleman, keyboards, organ; Miles Mosley, Carlitos Del Puerto, bass; Tony Austin, Robert Miller, Jonathan Pinson, Robert “Sput” Searight, Ronald Bruner Jr., drums; Ryan Porter, trombone; Patrice Quinn, Dwight Tribble, vocals; Dontae Winslow, trumpet; Kahlil Cummings, Allakoi Peete, percussion; Gabe Noel, electric bass; 26-piece orchestra; 13-piece choir.

Ordering info: theyoungturks.co.uk



Stanley Clarke Band *The Message*

MACK AVENUE 1116

★★★

With the recent prominence of artists from the West Coast Get Down, it's fascinating to hear bassist Stanley Clarke channel various facets of his pioneering work in jazz-fusion from the past four decades to create something remarkably contemporary on *The Message*.

Add a few "meow meows" and some daffy love lyrics on "The Rugged Truth," and the song could pass as a new Thundercat tune, particularly in how Clarke plucks out those patented tum-

bling notes during his rapid-fire solo.

It seems as if the resemblance is no coincidence, given that WCGD member Cameron Graves contributes synthesizer to Clarke's new combo. With the age difference between the bassist and the rest of his core band, the ensemble here could have been billed as "(Grand) Children of Forever." Although each member shares composing duties throughout *The Message*, it's evident that all the material pays homage to Clarke's glorious past. The opening cut, "And Ya Know We're Missing You," Clarke's duet with hip-hop veteran Doug E. Fresh, is a throwback to 1979's "I Want To Play For You" and 1988's "If This Bass Could Only Talk," Clarke's collaboration with tap dancer Gregory Hines.

More quintessential than essential, *The Message* is a compelling survey of Clarke's expansive musicality as he refurbishes multiple touchstones. —John Murph

The Message: And Ya Know We're Missing You; After The Cosmic Rain/Dance Of The Planetary Prince; The Rugged Truth; Combat Continuum; The Message; Lost In A World; Alternative Facts; Bach Cello Suite, No. 1 (Prelude); The Legend Of The Abbas And The Sacred Tailor; Enzo's Theme; To Be Alive. (44:48)

Personnel: Stanley Clarke, Alembic bass, talkbox, piccolo bass, bass; Mike Mitchell, drums; Beka Gochiashvili, piano, synthesizer; Cameron Graves, synthesizer; Salar Nader, tabla (2); Doug Webb, tenor saxophone, flute (2, 10, 11); Chuck Findley, trumpet, French horn (2); Michael Thompson, guitar (3, 6); Pat Leonard, synthesizer (5); Steve Blum (4), Skyeler Kole (6), Trevor Wesley (6), vocals; Sofia Sara Clarke, spoken word (6); Dominique Taplin, synthesizer (10); Mark Isham, trumpet (10); Doug E. Fresh, beatbox (1), vocals (11); Ron Stout, trumpet (10); Dwayne Benjamin, trombone (10).

Ordering info: mackavenue.com

Shamie Royston *Beautiful Liar*

SUNNYSIDE 1510

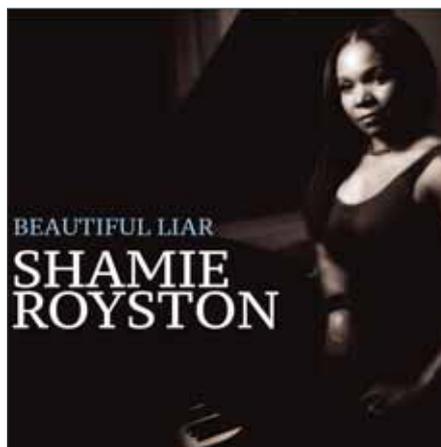
★★★½

On the front cover of 2012's *Portraits*, Shamie Royston peers through a sheer curtain, as if watching an event from afar. Kinda makes sense. The skilled pianist is recognized as an educator as much as she is a bandleader. A Colorado native who enjoyed regional acclaim on the Denver scene before moving East as her opportunities broadened, her name recognition isn't commensurate with her broad range of skills. That might change.

Beautiful Liar's artwork finds her front and center, ready for her close-up, and the music itself parallels that stance: mainstream post-bop with thoughtful interaction and a deep sense of poise. It swings hard and breathes easy.

An indication of her quintet's confidence marks the aptly titled "Push." The rhythm section ignites audacious solos from trumpeter Josh Evans, saxophonist Jaleel Shaw and the pianist herself. Like the best moments by Wynton Marsalis' early fivesome, it's a parade of pithy broadcasts with a devotion to standard structural templates and consummate legibility—a fierce mix.

A yin/yang POV boosts the program's breadth. Turns out Royston waxes soothing as



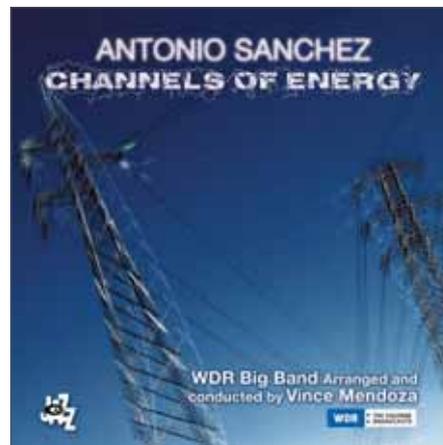
convincingly as she throws punches. There's a spirited calm to the design of "Precious Lullaby (Outro)" and a pastoral vibe to the cascading horn lines of "Uplifted Heart." There's a bit of church in her soul stance as well, and those bluesy intimations, along with a dash of simmering fervor, boost her ballad game.

—Jim Macnie

Beautiful Liar: Sunday Nostalgia; Push; Beautiful Liar; Precious Lullaby; Dissimulate; Lovely Day; Circulo Vicioso; Uplifted Heart; A Tangled Web We Weave; Precious Lullaby (Outro). (52:21)

Personnel: Shamie Royston, piano; Josh Evans, trumpet; Jaleel Shaw, alto, soprano saxophone; Yasushi Nakamura, bass; Rudy Royston, drums.

Ordering info: sunnysiderecords.com



Antonio Sanchez (featuring WDR Big Band) *Channels Of Energy*

CAM JAZZ 7922-5

★★★★½

Longtime Pat Metheny drummer Antonio Sanchez, who wrote the all-percussion soundtrack for the 2014 film *Birdman*, teams up with arranger and conductor Vince Mendoza for a dazzling outing alongside Germany's crack-erjack WDR Big Band. The tunes come from Sanchez's previous albums *New Life* (2013), *Three Times Three* (2015) and *The Meridian Suite* (2015), but Mendoza enlivens and colorizes them with masterful voicings, catchy counter-lines and patient, emotional builds that occasionally recall Maria Schneider's work. Playing his kit like an orchestra and writing for the orchestra like it was a giant drum kit, Sanchez develops asymmetrical, percussive ideas with fluid intelligence, ranging through hypnotic repetitions, punchy swing, dreamy musings and even the free-jazz episode from *Meridian's* "Magnetic Currents" (merged here with the title track).

Joyous details abound, including the ear-tickling bass trombone/muted trumpet timbre on "Nooks And Crannies," Paul Shigihara's poignantly countrified electric guitar on "Nighttime Story," Paul Heller's soulful tenor saxophone on "New Life" and Sanchez's painterly drum solo on the final cut, which twists attractively into tough, dissonant bitonality.

On other albums, Sanchez's jazz-rock feel sometimes can edge toward tightness. Mendoza and the WDR Big Band keep him loose and bring out a flood of emotion. —Paul de Barros

Channels Of Energy: Disc 1: Minotaur; Nooks And Crannies; Nighttime Story; The Real McDaddy. (36:14) Disc 2: New Life; Grids And Patterns; Imaginary Lines; Channels Of Energy. (44:43)

Personnel: Johan Hörlén, Karolina Strassmayer, Pascal Bartoszak, alto saxophone; Olivier Peters, Paul Heller, tenor saxophone; Jens Neufang, baritone saxophone; Wim Both, Rob Bruynen, Andy Haderer, Ruud Breuls, John Marshall, Tom Walsh, Rüdiger Baldauf, Lorenzo Ludemann, Martin Reuthner, Jan Schneider, trumpet; Ludwig Nuss, Shannon Barnett, Andy Hunter, trombone; Mattis Cederberg, bass trombone; Omer Klein, piano; Paul Shigihara, guitar; John Goldsby, bass; Antonio Sanchez, drums; Vince Mendoza, arranger, conductor.

Ordering info: camjazz.com

The Hot Box

Critics	Paul de Barros	Jim Macnie	John Murph	Jennifer Odell
Kamasi Washington <i>Heaven And Earth</i>	★★	★★★	★★★	★★★★½
Stanley Clarke Band <i>The Message</i>	★★½	★★	★★★	★★½
Shamie Royston <i>Beautiful Liar</i>	★★★★½	★★★★½	★★★★½	★★★
Antonio Sanchez <i>Channels Of Energy</i>	★★★★½	★★★★½	★★★	★★★★½

Critics' Comments

Kamasi Washington, *Heaven And Earth*

Washington is a wonderfully soulful tenor saxophonist in the '70s jazz-fusion vein who's worked with Kendrick Lamar. But this project feels over-inflated and far too grand. Lose the choir, reverb, rippling piano and swelling movie themes. Just jam with Thundercat. —Paul de Barros

The bandleader's sprawl of voices and ensemble milks exultation and expressionism, calm and fury. But predictably so. At its weak points it feels formulaic. —Jim Macnie

The fiery tenor saxophonist goes big again with another sizeable offering of melancholic, post-apocalyptic spiritual jazz that can inspire you to grab a Bible—and a sword. —John Murph

Stanley Clarke Band, *The Message*

Funky nods to Prince, a snappy boogaloo with Doug E. Fresh and a keeper solo on the title track can't rescue this grab bag of mixed messages, which features, among other baffling gambits, a theatrical voice-over and a reckless rush through Bach. —Paul de Barros

I'm all for eclecticism, but play that game wrong and you end up with a hodgepodge. That's what happens here; the whirl of stimuli—from beatbox to Bach—devalues the individual elements and waters down the mix. —Jim Macnie

Intricate rhythms, hard-hitting bass funk, inventive rhythm-section exchanges and dreamy atmospheric interludes mostly make up for minor mishaps, like the somewhat dated synth swells that suit the music, if not my taste. —Jennifer Odell

Shamie Royston, *Beautiful Liar*

Royston's latest work reveals a musician of lyrical warmth and technical facility equally at home with hard-bop, rhythmic asymmetry or lyrical romance. It doesn't hurt that her terrific band includes, among others, her husband, drummer Rudy Royston. —Paul de Barros

A solid effort with Royston displaying assuredness as a pianist, composer and bandleader through a set of gleaming 21st-century bop gems. —John Murph

It's the unexpected details of Royston's choices that ultimately elevate this dynamic collection of original material: the understated left-hand rumble she works into the intro of "Sunday Nostalgia," for example, or the way her writing coaxes a simmering groove out of a difficult time signature. —Jennifer Odell

Antonio Sanchez, *Channels Of Energy*

The program is rich with melody, textures and moods. The shifts provide the sense of surprise needed to attract thrill seekers, and the craft of the charts assures a deep legibility carries the day. —Jim Macnie

The drummer joins forces with celebrated arranger Vince Mendoza and the WDR Big Band for a snazzy set of acoustic straight-ahead jazz with discreet fusion tendencies. —John Murph

Sanchez's compositions seem to buzz with as much kinetic energy as his drumming. Arranged for the unfailingly excellent WDR Big Band, this material becomes more lively, giving even the most restrained moments a fresh depth, vibrancy and flow. —Jennifer Odell



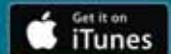
MICHAEL LEONHART ORCHESTRA THE PAINTED LADY SUITE SSC 1519 - IN STORES NOW

The *Painted Lady Suite*, the debut album by the Michael Leonhart Orchestra (MLO) is inspired by the butterfly of the same name. While Leonhart was initially attracted to its flamboyant coloration and wing ornamentation, it was the butterfly's incredible migration, which spans over six generations and 9,000 miles — twice that of the Monarch butterfly, that inspired the trumpeter/composer/bandleader to write his *Painted Lady Suite*.

The *Painted Lady Suite* is broken into two parts with seven movements, which sonically parallel two separate migrations, one over North America into Canada and the other from the Arctic Circle over Europe into Northern Africa. Leonhart assigns different instruments and specific soloists to represent the changing climate and mood of the migration. The sonic migration begins with a mutating 21-bar phrase played by brass and woodwinds blending with violins and bass melodic as the chrysalises are shed and the butterflies take flight. Leonhart says, "While composing the suite, I knew that Donny McCaslin would be one of the featured soloists I would be writing for. Donny is the sonic equivalent of a 1965 Shelby Cobra 427 race car. He has the rare ability to seamlessly build a solo from '0 to 60' in seconds while commanding the listener's focus as 20 plus musicians play full volume behind him." McCaslin's tenor is featured as a wordless narrator as the swarm heads north from Mexico; Sam Sadigursky's tenor takes over as the lead voice as the swarm continues north, supported by Nels Cline's undulating guitar volume swells. The hypnotic beat of the huge swarm flying over Texas is orchestrated for the Dap-Kings rhythm section, utilizing drums, bass and analog electric drum machine. Leonhart's fearless choice of uncommon instrument combinations harkens back to Morricone, Quincy Jones, David Axelrod and Nino Rota. In the second half of the suite, the cold expanse of the Arctic Circle is represented by wordless voice, harmonica and Mancini-esque bass flutes, along with the "buzz wow" muted trombone of Ray Mason and clarion trumpet of Dave Guy...



itunes.com/MichaelLeonhartOrchestra
www.sansydeerecords.com





Adam O'Farrill's Stranger Days *El Maquech*

BIOPHILIA 0011

★★★★

Adam O'Farrill's *Stranger Days* jump into the fire on "Siiva Moiiiva," the opening track of *El Maquech*. After a fanfare from O'Farrill's trumpet and Chad Lefkowitz-Brown's tenor saxophone, Walter Stinson takes a free-form bass solo, settling into a medium-tempo groove.

"Verboten Chant" is another deconstructed melody, and as bass, trumpet and saxophone open the arrangement with frisky harmonic

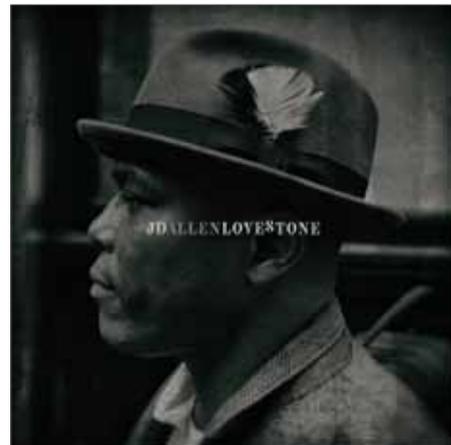
figures, setting up Stinson's extended bass solo, Zack O'Farrill adds some understated snare work. "El Maquech" stays close to its folkloric origin: Zack O'Farrill and Stinson play a waltz-like cadence, while the bandleader and Lefkowitz-Brown swap short phrases, darting around the melody like hummingbirds sipping nectar from aromatic blossoms.

"Get Thee Behind Me Satan," a tune from 1958's *Ella Fitzgerald Sings The Irving Berlin Songbook*, features a solo performance from the bandleader, full of unresolved tension. His melodic statements mimic Fitzgerald's phrasing before brief, dissonant bursts jump into his high register, fading into whispered, sustained notes that convey the breathless struggle of temptation. His solo on "Shall We? (If You Really Must Insist)" is marked by truncated phrases that slide up to his high end, while Zack O'Farrill supplies remarkable asides. His bass drum is a calm heartbeat, while toms and snare skitter around in delirious rhythmic patterns. O'Farrill's trumpet is impressive throughout. His restraint and inventive use of silence gives his playing a subtlety that should keep listeners on the edge of their seats. —*j. poet*

El Maquech: Siiva Moiiiva; Verboten Chant; El Maquech; Erroneous Love; Shall We? (If You Really Must Insist); Get Thee Behind Me Satan; Henry Ford Hospital; Pour Maman. (44:27)

Personnel: Adam O'Farrill, trumpet; Chad Lefkowitz-Brown, tenor saxophone; Walter Stinson, bass; Zack O'Farrill; drums.

Ordering info: biophilarecords.com



JD Allen *Love Stone*

SAVANT 2169

★★★★½

In the long-running debate over whether it's necessary for instrumentalists to know the words to songs they play, tenorman JD Allen has thrown in with Lester Young. "A musician should know the lyrics of the songs he plays," was Prez's opinion, and in the liner notes to *Love Stone*, Allen agrees, if somewhat elliptically: "True confession: playing the melody while knowing the lyrics is like drinking champagne alone and laughing at yourself all night long."

There's a lot of champagne being sipped here, as both Allen and guitarist Liberty Ellman keep the melodic content at the heart of these performances. That's not to say that improvisation gets short shrift—nobody's going to mistake this album for easy listening—only that its execution intrinsically is linked to the melodic ideas of the song being performed. And it ought to be noted that this is hardly the standard set of Great American Songs, as Allen's choices range from the well-worn to such relative oddities as the Appalachian ballad "Come All Ye Fair And Tender Ladies" and the Borodin-derived "Stranger In Paradise."

But the album's deepest pleasures stem from the luxuriant warmth of Allen's horn, not necessarily the songs selected for inclusion. It isn't just that his phrasing is beautifully articulated, ensuring that every pause, emphasis and subtle shading carries the weight of the words he's mentally intoning; his solos, too, take on a sense of speech, as if they somehow were continuing the lyricist's train of thought. As such, the mood of the album is utterly enveloping, conjuring enough emotional intensity to leave the listener hanging on every note (or word).

—*J.D. Considine*

Love Stone: Stranger In Paradise; Until The Real Thing Comes Along; Why Was I Born; You're My Thrill; Come All Ye Fair And Tender Ladies; Put On A Happy Face; Prisoner Of Love; Someday (You'll Want Me To Want You); Gone With The Wind. (44:49)

Personnel: JD Allen, tenor saxophone; Liberty Ellman, guitar; Gregg August, bass; Rudy Royston, drums.

Ordering info: jazzdepot.com

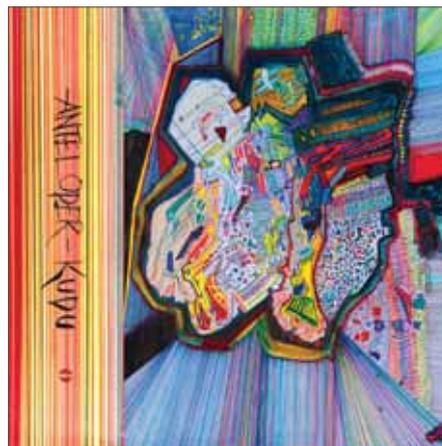
Anteloper *Kudu*

INTERNATIONAL ANTHEM 0018

★★★★½

Anteloper—a duo project of trumpeter Jaimie Branch and drummer Jason Nazary, both doubling on synthesizers—explores gritty acoustic-electronic soundscapes, with the urban sonic edge complemented by plenty of melodic-textural hooks. This isn't "jazz," per se, though it is forward-minded instrumental music made by inventive, jazz-honed improvisers. Branch, boldly expressive on her horn, has ties to the Chicago and New York avant-jazz and indie-rock scenes, crossing from one to the other as a free spirit; her creatively orchestrated debut album, *Fly Or Die* (Imagination Anthem), garnered substantial praise last year. Nazary, a Brooklyn-based producer and instrumentalist, has a track record of melding the synthetic with the organic from free-jazz to art-rock.

The liner notes for *Kudu*, by cornetist and fellow sonic adventurer Rob Mazurek, advise, "Listen with eyes closed and don't move." The album is indeed an enveloping experience, one to be played from end to end for cumulative impact. Yet, there are apt entry points. Opener "Oryx"—after the glitchy atmospheric of its intro and a section with Don Cherry-like fanfares—boasts a back-half melody that has the



pull of a good rock chorus, before Branch's open horn plays on and around the tune, ornamenting it like a singer. The 15-minute swirl of "Ohoneotree Suite" has a psychedelic Doppler effect, as if the listener were riding by a long row of open windows, with snatches of tunes and rhythms bending the ear one after the other, as they leap out and then fade into blurring, dizzying electro-acoustic texture.

—*Bradley Bamberger*

Kudu: Oryx; Fossil Record; Lethal Curve; Ohoneotree Suite; Seclusion Self. (50:04)

Personnel: Jaimie Branch, trumpet, synthesizers; Jason Nazary, drums, synthesizers.

Ordering info: intlanthem.com



Michael Leonhart Orchestra
The Painted Lady Suite

SUNNYSIDE 1519

★★★★½

Michael Leonhart made his auspicious debut as a 21-year-old trumpeter and conceptualist who put a premium on space in his striking compositions for 1995's enigmatic *Aardvark Poses*. He opened his multi-instrumental toolbox on 1998's cinematic-sounding *Glub Club, Vol. 11*, then put his personal spin on

tunes by Monk, Miles, Ellington and Harold Arlen on 2002's intimate duet project, *Slow*. He took a major leap forward as an arranger-conductor for Nels Cline's 2016 Blue Note debut, *Lovers*. Now, he delivers something even more ambitious with his own sprawling Michael Leonhart Orchestra.

Inspired by the butterfly of the same name and its intergenerational 9,000-mile migration, *The Painted Lady Suite* comprises seven movements representing the changing climate and mood throughout the epic trip. The orchestra tracks the path of the butterfly from the evocative opener, "Transformation In The Deserts of Mexico," sparked by an intense Donny McCaslin tenor solo, to the grandiose "The Silent Swarm Over El Paso," underscored by driving percussion and colored by vocal choir, strings, bass harmonica and Cline's reverb-soaked surf guitar. The fluttering, ambient sound clouds of "The Experimental Forest, North Dakota" further illustrate the journey.

The 12/8-fueled "Countdown To Saskatchewan" injects unconventional elements into Leonhart's mellotron motif and his Jon Hassell-ish harmonizer-effected trumpet solo, while "The Arctic Circle" melds Martin Denny's exotica with Ennio

Morricone's spaghetti Western soundtracks. And the punchy "1,500 Feet Above the Sahara (Day)" recalls some of Sam Spence's classic gridiron scores for NFL Films during the 1970s.

Three extra compositions—the march-like "In The Kingdom Of M.Q." (featuring another heroic McCaslin solo), "Music Your Grandparents Would Like" (featuring a fuzz-laden guitar freak-out from Cline) and the trance-like "The Girl From Udaipur"—fill out the conceptually rich, distinctive program.

—Bill Milkowski

The Painted Lady Suite: Transformation In The Deserts Of Mexico; The Silent Swarm Over El Paso; The Experimental Forest, North Dakota; Countdown To Saskatchewan; The Arctic Circle; 1,500 Feet Above The Sahara (Night); 1,500 Feet Above The Sahara (Day); In The Kingdom Of M.Q.; Music Your Grandparents Would Like; The Girl From Udaipur. (58:26)

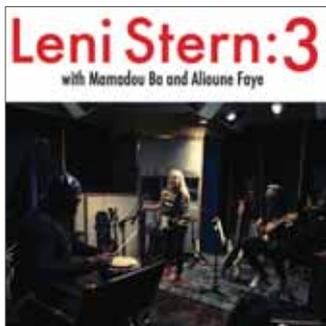
Personnel: Michael Leonhart, trumpet, French horn, mellophonium, bass trumpet, vocals, bass, organ, mellotron, accordion, bass harmonica, bass melodica, pump organ; Daniel Freedman, drums (1, 8, 9, 10); Nick Movshon, drums (2), electric bass (5, 7); Homer Steinweiss, drums (5, 7); Jay Leonhart, bass (1, 8, 10); Joe Martin, bass (6, 9); Nels Cline, guitar; Dave Guy, Andy Bush, Carter Yasutake, Andy Gathercole, trumpet; Taylor Haskins, trumpet, valve trombone; Ray Mason, Mark Patterson, trombone, bass trombone; John Altieri, tuba; Donny McCaslin, tenor saxophone; Sam Sadigursky, tenor saxophone, piccolo flute, flute, alto flute, bass clarinet; Matt Bauder, alto, tenor saxophone; Jason Marshall, alto, baritone saxophone; Cochlea Gastelum, tenor, baritone saxophone; Charles Pillow, bass clarinet, alto flute; Ian Hendrickson-Smith, baritone saxophone; Jon Natchez, clarinet; Aaron Heick, tenor saxophone, English horn, bass flute; Sara Schoenbeck, bassoon; Pauline Kim, violin, viola; Mauro Durante, violin; Erik Friedlander, cello; Carolyn Leonhart, Jamie Leonhart, Milo Leonhart, vocals; Mauro Refosco, Leon Michels, Mauro Durante, percussion.

Ordering info: sunnysiderecords.com

Leni Stern
3

LSR 6

★★★★½



Guitarist Leni Stern's album is called 3 for two reasons. One, it's primarily a trio disc, recorded with her working band of bassist Mamadou Ba and percussionist/multi-instrumentalist Alioune Faye; and two, it's her third album with them, following 2013's *Jell* (LSR) and 2016's *Dakar Suite* (LSR). Like those records, this concise 33-minute album finds Stern exploring unique territory that encompasses blues, jazz, Senegalese and Malian music, and even a little bit of rock.

"Khavare," the album opener, is a sparse instrumental that recalls Tinariwen's desert blues, with Faye's complex percussion underpinning Stern's biting guitar and Ba's liquid bass weaving between the two. "Spell," which features Stern's husband and fellow guitarist, Mike, combines voodoo rhythms with a loping, twanging melody that recalls the Mississippi blues of the late Junior Kimbrough, filtered through Malian music. The album concludes with "Crocodile," a gentle, lilting guitar-and-accordion trek, bracketed by percussion and vocal chants. Stern's own vocals, heard on several tracks and in multiple languages, are gentle, but with a reserved strength. She's not a showboat; she never shreds, but the statements she makes have that much more impact for the restraint. —Philip Freeman

3: Khavare; Barambai; Wakhma; Calabas; Spell; Colombiano; Assiko; Crocodile. (32:36)

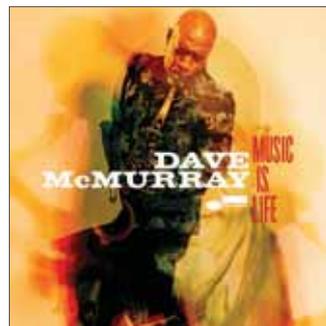
Personnel: Leni Stern, electric guitar, n'goni, vocals; Mamadou Ba, bass; Alioune Faye, sabar, djembe, calabas, vocals; Mike Stern, electric guitar (4, 5); Leo Genovese, synthesizer (4, 6); Gil Goldstein, accordion (2, 8); Muhammed and Princess Louise Faye, vocals (2, 8).

Ordering info: lenistern.com

Dave McMurray
Music Is Life

BLUE NOTE 002824502

★★★★½



Versatile, veteran saxophonist Dave McMurray's opening, open-bored gambit on *Music Is Life*, "Naked Walk," conjures Philadelphiaean Odean Pope blowing over an Eddie Harris groove.

McMurray is a longtime associate of Blue Note honcho Don Was, who said the bandleader "is never trying to impress people with all he knows about music or about his dexterity over the instrument. It's all about honest expressions." McMurray's fruitful association with Was includes appearances on high-profile Was-produced releases, including work by The B-52s, Iggy Pop, The Rolling Stones and Bob Dylan.

McMurray revives his heart-wrench belter "Que Je T'Aime" with Ibrahim Jones' bass taking the organ line from the original. More interesting is "Freedom Ain't Free," which, with its multi-tracked Middle Eastern-sounding horns reflects the influence of the bandleader's time with Algerian Rai supremo Khaled. McMurray's tenor is drill-like over the closing tracks that celebrate his Motor City heritage, and offer McMurray's fearless spirit and gritty virtuosity more than his homages to The White Stripes' "Seven Nation Army" and P-Funk's "Atomic Dog," which lack rhythmic nuance, despite their Detroit cred.

—Michael Jackson

Music Is Life: Naked Walk; Music Is Life (Live It); Seven Nation Army; After The Storm; Freedom Ain't Free; Time #5; Atomic Dog; Paris Rain; Que Je T'aime; Bop City D; Turo's Dream; Detroit Theme/Detroit 3. (48:51)

Personnel: Dave McMurray, tenor, soprano saxophone, keyboards; Ibrahim Jones, bass; Jeff Canady, Ron Otis (10), drums.

Ordering info: bluenote.com

Second City Improvisation

Dave Rempis has been an instigating force in Chicago since 1998, when he joined the Vandermark 5. Apart his robust command of alto, tenor and baritone saxophones, he's a bandleader, a record label proprietor and an inveterate organizer, who has been booking concert series for years.

Last year, he undertook a lengthy solo tour during which he networked and collaborated with organizers and musicians, respectively. So, he's well acquainted with the inner workings of disparate scenes across the States. What makes Chicago's improvised music scene so remarkable, he said, "is that people are generally working together in a collaborative sense to further the music, and not their own individual careers. That's what really makes it stand out from other active 'scenes' that I'm aware of."

But that's not to say that there aren't likeminded figures elsewhere. In March, Rempis invited six of them to play with a cross-section of Chicagoans during a six-day sequence of concerts, dubbed the Exposure Series. And in his recent recordings, listeners can hear how Rempis' energy and intellect animate music made in a variety of settings.

Spectral includes two fellow travelers from the San Francisco Bay area, trumpeter Darren Johnston (Nice Guy Trio, Broken Shadows) and saxophonist Larry Ochs (Rova Saxophone Quartet). **Empty Castles (Aerophonic 016; 51:45 ★★★★★)**, the trio's third recording for Rempis' label, exemplifies the discipline and empathy that are essential to successful free improvisation. The album opens with assertive pops and frail cries that illustrate the players' command of extended techniques. Each utterance is magnified by the reverberant acoustics of the abandoned munitions bunk where the session was recorded—a phenomenon the musicians exploit to obtain a singular sense of space. But every growling multiphonic, isolated note and circular breathing-fueled line blends organically into an exquisitely balanced piece of music so cohesive that it could be orchestrated.

Dodecahedron, by the **Rempis/Daisy Duo (Aerophonic 017; 48:53/75:52 ★★★★★½)**, is a concert recording that reaffirms the saxophonist's enduring creative relationship with drummer Tim Daisy, a partner since the late 1990s. The pair has developed an awareness of each other's styles that borders on instinctive, and the first disc captures the duo's easy exchange



of ideas, which flows inexorably from free-jazz wails to subdued, indigo musings. The second disc, which includes nine passages from improvisations alongside six mostly local musicians, offers further measure of Daisy and Rempis' flexibility. The segments with vibraphonist Jason Adasiewicz and trombonist Steve Swell are by turns atmospheric and forceful, but both exhibit a chamber ensemble's attention to detail. And with electronicist Aaron Zarzutski, keyboardist Jim Baker and bassoonist Katie Young, they map the connections between alien textual exploration and bold lyricism.

Ordering info: aerophonicrecords.com

Rempis/Piet/Daisy's Throw Tomatoes (Astral Spirits 0260; 55:51 ★★★★★) affords the chance to hear the duo play two complete sets with a new guy in town. Former cruise-ship pianist Matt Piet moved to Chicago in 2014 to reboot his creative life, and if the album's title implies apprehension about his reception, the music dispels any doubts. Piet is a persuasive free player who is as comfortable unwinding linear developments in parallel with his partners as he is lodging small, provocative comments into their most elaborate statements.

Ordering info: astralspirits.bandcamp.com

Rummage Out (Clean Feed 465; 37:41 ★★★★★) by **Matt Piet & His Disorganization** pairs Piet and Daisy with the slippery lyricism of cornetist Josh Berman and fleet, muscular inventiveness of alto saxophonist Nick Mazzarella. He walks like a bass player, comps like Alice Coltrane at her most bluesy, and uses tension-building, repetitive figures that free Daisy to indulge in vertiginous, decorative flights of fancy. **DB**

Ordering info: cleanfeed-records.com



McClenty Hunter Jr. *The Groove Hunter*

STRIKEZONE 8816

★★★★

One could take the title of drummer McClenty Hunter Jr.'s debut album as a leader, *The Groove Hunter*, in two ways. Either Hunter is the one chasing the groove to conquer and subdue it, or he himself is the groove. It's a tough call to decide which interpretation is more apt.

First off, the Juilliard-trained Hunter is without question a master of the pocket. On his version of Wayne Shorter's "The Big Push," the bandleader rivets the pulse into the floor while his horn trio—Stacy Dillard on tenor saxophone, Eddie Henderson on trumpet and Donald Harrison on alto saxophone—cycles through the tune's surprising harmonic tensions. Then, on "Sack Full Of Dreams," Hunter's nod to mentor Grady Tate (who popularized the song), he lays back into a soul-inspired feel, leaving guitarist Dave Stryker free to explore the sweeter spots of the melody.

But on his four originals, Hunter reveals a more vulnerable, personal musical self. On these tracks, he favors intros with subdued percussive lines, a conversational tone among the players and swelling dynamics that explode in spirited celebration, before settling back into introspection. Helping Hunter to establish this musical arc are the fleet-fingered pianist Eric Reed and emotive bassist Corcoran Holt, who sink into intense reveries when soloing—especially on the ardent "My Love" and the mellifluous "Give Thanks," respectively.

In the category of above-and-beyond, Hunter brings together Stryker, keyboardist Christian Sands and bassist Eric Wheeler on a stoked version of Stevie Wonder's "That Girl." While Hunter plays a shuffle behind them, these players race on, galvanized by the thrill of the chase. —Suzanne Lorge

The Groove Hunter: Blue Chopsticks; The Big Push; Autumn; That Girl; My Love; Sack Full Of Dreams; I Remember When; Countdown; Give Thanks. (52:00)

Personnel: McClenty Hunter Jr., drums; Eddie Henderson, trumpet (2); Stacy Dillard, tenor, soprano saxophone; Eric Reed, piano; Corcoran Holt, bass; Donald Harrison, alto saxophone (2, 8); Davy Stryker, guitar (4, 6); Eric Wheeler, bass (4, 6, 7); Christian Sands, piano, Fender Rhodes (4, 6, 7).

Ordering info: facebook.com/strikezonejazz



SFJAZZ Collective Live: SFJAZZ Center 2017

SFJAZZ

★★★★

Charged annually with new commissions and reinterpretations of modern classics, this double disc by SFJAZZ Collective leaves little doubt innovation and tradition simultaneously are alive and well on the West Coast.

Alto saxophonist's Miguel Zenón's "Tidal Flow" ripples with horns and vibraphone in sync, then morphs into something more urgent. It's an indicator of the assembled players' breadth, whether on the soaring "Give The Drummer

Nik Bärtsch's Ronin Awase

ECM 2603

★★★★

It's been six years since the last release from Nick Bärtsch's Ronin, but *Awase* is a welcome return to a familiar form.

Ronin belongs to a subset of groove merchants, like the Necks and Dawn of Midi, that move on instinct, rather than relying on riffs. The operating procedure for all three is group augmentation, not solo and variation, precisely repeating patterns over runs and flights of fancy.

Unlike the Necks, however, Ronin works from preconceived themes, and unlike both of those other bands, works with a leader. As such, the band has survived the loss of two members since its last release, *Nik Bärtsch's Ronin Live* (ECM). That album marked the transition from bassist Björn Meyer to Thomy Jordi. The new disc also sees the departure of percussionist Andi Pupato, leaving it a trim piano quartet: subdued drums in the back; grounded four-string electric bass replacing the melodic six-string; and the leader commanding less of the spotlight than on past outings.

The album also sees a composition by someone other than Bärtsch for the first time on a Ronin record. The single-named reedist

Some," penned by vibraphonist Warren Wolf, or "Living The Questions," a transcendent piece composed by tenor saxophonist David Sánchez.

Disc two is devoted to Thelonious Monk, Ornette Coleman and Stevie Wonder. Monk's "Criss Cross" is a pianist's showpiece, and yet, everyone keeps pace with the playful notes, from Matt Penman's restrained bass to drummer Obed Calvaire's locked rhythm. Coleman's "Una Muy Bonita" doesn't fail to please, its sweetness in all the right spots, while "When Will The Blues Leave" is a reminder of what the generous composer left behind. Wonder's repertoire would be a jubilant finish to any show, though the rendition of "Superstition" begins darker than its original intent. But by song's end, it reaches ebullient heights.

Less tribute and more testament to the pliability of Wonder, Coleman and Monk, this iteration of the SFJAZZ Collective showcases an ensemble that stretches from here to there and back again, without ever breaking a sweat.

—Denise Sullivan

Live: SFJAZZ Center 2017: Disc 1: Give The Drummer Some; Venezuela Unida; Tidal Flow; Tune For June; Off Kilter; Perseverance; Soundless Odyssey; Living The Questions. (69:43) Disc 2: Bye-Ya; Criss Cross; Reflections; Una Muy Bonita; School Work; When Will The Blues Leave; Sir Duke, Creepin'; Superstition. (62:22)

Personnel: Miguel Zenón, alto saxophone; David Sánchez, tenor saxophone; Sean Jones, trumpet; Robin Eubanks, trombone; Warren Wolf, vibraphone, marimba; Edward Simon, piano; Matt Penman, bass; Obed Calvaire, drums.

Ordering info: sfjazz.org



Sha's "A" falls about midpoint, fitting snugly among Bärtsch's pieces and demonstrating the strength of their groupthink. The album opens with the fleeting "Modul 60," feeling like a prologue before the credits kick in. But once the story gets moving, it's exhilarating.

From start to finish, it's a compelling album, even if not something you're likely to find yourself whistling while walking down the street.

—Kurt Gottschalk

Awase: Modul 60; Modul 58; A; Modul 36; Modul 34; Modul 59. (65:30)

Personnel: Nik Bärtsch, piano; Sha, bass clarinet, alto saxophone; Thomy Jordi, bass; Kaspar Rast, drums.

Ordering info: ecmrecords.com



Dayramir Gonzalez The Grand Concourse

MACHAT

★★★★½

The Grand Course is a tour de force. As writer, arranger, pianist, leader and guiding spirit of this sensational project, Dayramir Gonzalez exhibits complete command.

Most of the uptempo tracks balance complexity and momentum, feeding, rather than making things harder, for each other. It begins with "Smiling," the perfect opener. Gonzalez states the theme at the top, dancing nimbly through myriad meters. The horns punch key points in the rhythm, punctuated by brief solo drum moments. The writing and playing are breathtaking. Three works stand out as homages to love. Each begin with Gonzalez, playing with a reflective blues touch in memory of his late brother Daymeil on "Blood Brothers" and with nuance on "Lovely Time With My Dear." String sections join in on both; they complement his concept, but leave the listener wishing the bandleader might perform alone—a wish that he fulfills on the lovely "Hand And Hand, You And I."

Special mention must be made of the photography and quotations accompanying each song in the liner notes. These words come from Gandhi, Lao Tzu, Brahms, Victor Hugo—a stellar assembly, as are those few young jazz artists who might qualify as Gonzalez's peers.

—Bob Doerschuk

The Grand Concourse: Smiling; Moving Forward; Sencillez; Iyesa Con Miel; Blood Brothers; Camello Tropical; Lovely Time With My Dear; Linear Patterns In Havana; Two Makes The Difference; West Coast Exchange; Hand And Hand, You And I; Situaciones en 12/8. (71:53)

Personnel: Dayramir Gonzalez, piano; Fender Rhodes, synthesizer; Antoine Katz, Alberto Miranda, electric bass; Carlos Mena, Zwiakhe-Duma Bell Le Pere, acoustic bass; Zack Mullings, Keisel Jimenez Leyva, Jay Sawyer, Willy Rodriguez, Raul Pineda, David Rivera, drums; Paulo Stagnaro, congas, batá drums, cajon, guiro, pandeiro; Mauricio Herrera, congas; Mauricio Herrera, batá drums; Yosvany Terri, surdo, cajon, guiro, pandeiro; Marcos Lopez, timbal, congas; Harvis Cuni, trumpet; Oriente Lopez, Kalani Trinidad, flute; Yosvany Terri, alto saxophone, surdo, cajon, guiro, pandeiro; Rio Konishi, alto saxophone; Dean Tsur, alto, tenor saxophone; Edmar Colon, tenor saxophone; Ameya Kalamdani, guitars; Ilmar Lopez Gavilan, Audrey Defreytas Hayes, violin; Tatiana Ferrer, viola, vocals; Jennifer Vincent, cello; Caris Visentin Liebman, oboe; Amparo Edo Biol, French horn; Pedro Martinez, vocals, batá drums; Gregorio Vento, surdo, cajon, guiro, pandeiro; Nadia Washington, Jaclyn Sanchez, vocals.

Ordering info: dayramirgonzalez.com

It Tears Them Up

Philipp Fankhauser, *I'll Be Around* (Sony Music/Funk House Blues 9211; 68:04 ★★★★★) Recording his 15th album at Mississippi's Malaco Records, Philip Fankhauser makes a deep impression on listeners with the nuanced rhythmic phrasing of his caramel-and-charcoal voice, and with single-note guitar lines in the spirit of Booker White. The Swiss musician engages a Southern soul-blues language that in feel and mood matches Grade "A" songs by Dennis Walker, Dan Penn, Johnny Copeland and George Jackson. His own works—actually collaborations with Walker—are equally tuneful. Produced by Walker and Malaco co-founder Wolf Stephenson, Fankhauser constantly draws creative nourishment from the contributions of a choice mix of musicians.

Ordering info: phillipfankhauser.com

James Harman, *Fineprint* (Electro-Fi 3454; 55:54 ★★★★★) Veteran James Harman's stock-in-trade is pinning our ears back with harmonica sounds of revelatory power. That's evident with his latest offering of original songs taped during the past decade in studios or at concerts in his home state, California. While his singing occasionally reveals accumulated wear-and-tear, Harman compensates with individuality and wry insight into what life has to offer. Guitarist-producer Nathan James and other pros stand him in good stead, mixing the usual rhythms with others from Africa and New Orleans.

Ordering info: electrofi.com

Dany Franchi, *Problem Child* (Station House 100; 49:54 ★★★½) Italy turns out good guitarists, and in the pack is Dany Franchi, who's a couple years shy of 30 and sole proprietor of two earlier albums. This time supervised by estimable guitarist Anton Funderburgh in Austin, Texas, he makes progress in developing a style of his own on Stratocaster. Slow-sizzler "Wanna Know" is where he really hits the bottom side of the blues, vaulting craftsmanship into a world of conviction. Franchi's singing is a mix of black pepper and wood smoke, while his writing is decent, even though lyrics on romance turn on commonplace details.

Ordering info: danyfranchi.com

Luke Winslow-King, *Blue Mesa* (Bloodshot 262; 40:00 ★★★★★) Luke Winslow-King, a 35-year-old who spent quality years in New Orleans, has an easeful way with well-thought-out, appealing originals that mingle Robert Cray blues, Memphis soul and rock. At a session in Italy, his rather soft, lusterless voice explicates friendship, the allure of personal independence and, inevitably, conflicted or content-



CHRISTI WILLIAMS

ed romance. Among those helping King to sustain low and moderate heat on his sixth album is Italian guitarist Roberto Luti, once a street performer in New Orleans.

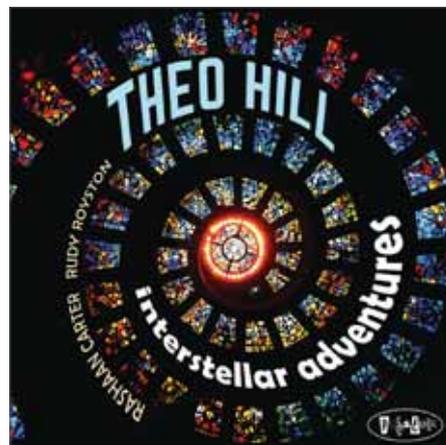
Ordering info: bloodshotrecords.com

Joyann Parker, *Hard To Love* (Hopeless Romantic 1001; 49:26 ★★★½) Following up her 2015 debut, *On The Rocks* (Self Release), Joyann Parker presents a package of originals and serves notice that she's a blues performer to the bone. Bravely risking emotional exposure, this Minneapolis-based singer and multi-instrumentalist shows a penchant for depicting a unique response to the ups and downs of life. The album sweeps through well-titled numbers like "Envy," "Evil Hearted" and "Take My Heart And Run." Parker and company work styles ranging from Chuck Berry and bluesy funk to French Quarter parades and Memphis soul approximations.

Ordering info: joyannparker.com

Late Blossom Blues: *The Journey Of Leo "Bud" Welch* (City Hall 9018; 90:00 ★★★★★) After decades of timber cutting and anonymity in rural Mississippi, Bud Welch (1932–2017) happily lived out his last years as a heralded blues singer and guitarist. Austrian documentarians Wolfgang Almer and Stefan Wolner skillfully filmed his daily interactions (some testy) with novice, erstwhile manager Vencie Varnado, as well as his appearances at American and European clubs and festivals. An engaging character and able musician with a fatal fondness for tobacco, Welch appears to impart his deepest appreciation of life while testifying in a Baptist church and fronting a 1985 gospel band amid footage that accompanies the documentary's closing credits.

Ordering info: lateblossomblues.com



Theo Hill *Interstellar Adventures*

POSI-TONE 8183

★★★★½

Several critics have cited pianist Theo Hill as a rising star, and in one way that's apropos given *Interstellar Adventures* being the title of his latest release, his second on the Posi-Tone label. But "rising" needs to be updated nowadays, and even more so after this trio date with bassist Rashaan Carter and drummer Rudy Royston.

The songs on *Interstellar Adventures*, particularly "Cyclic Episode" (a Sam Rivers tune off the 1965 album *Fuchsia Swing Song*) and "Gyre," fall comfortably between Hill's impressionistic collages of sound, often delivered with a bell-like sonority, and the unremitting furious passages that can leave a listener breathless. On "The Comet," Hill's trio reaches the launching pad and soars into space with Royston at the throttle.

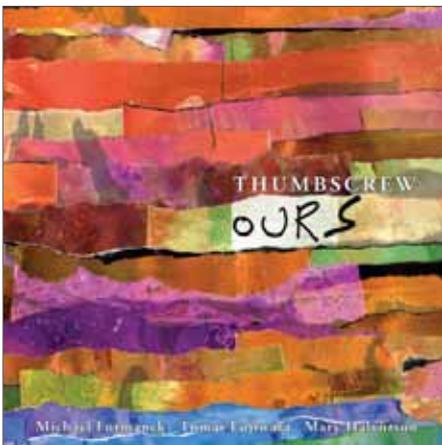
The ensemble's clearly in orbit on "Retrograde," and Carter's bass has a pulsing oscillation that surfaces again with good notice on "For Those Who Do." On these occasions, Hill is content to let his cohort apply the groove, while he teases out scintillating fragments, before presenting longer, more invigorating portraits from one end of the keyboard to the other. There's an inviting warmth to his ballads, although the arrival of a steadily propulsive left-hand is more than welcome. On "Revelations" and "Enchanted Forest," the bandleader evokes a celeste tonality (or is that celestial), and it's clear that the rising star has fully ascended.

There currently is much talk about Afrofuturism, mostly generated by the box office smash *Black Panther*, and Hill's cosmic flights might be the film's musical counterpart.

—Herb Boyd

Interstellar Adventures: *Interstellar Adventures*; *Black Comedy*; *Retrograde*; *Cyclic Episode*; *The Comet*; *Gyre*; *Thorn Of A White Rose*; *Revelations*; *For Those Who Do*; *Enchanted Forest*. (50:36)
Personnel: Theo Hill, acoustic, electric piano; Rashaan Carter, acoustic, electric bass; Rudy Royston, drums.

Ordering info: posi-tone.com



Thumbscrew *Ours*

CUNEIFORM RUNE 439

★★★½

Theirs

CUNEIFORM RUNE 441

★★★★

Mary Halvorson's approach to playing guitar long has felt like she was trying to untangle some great mystery, searching for the right combination of notes and tones that might unlock a secret chamber within her instrument. And on

Thumbscrew's latest albums—a conjoined pair of releases, featuring one set of original material and another of covers—she seems to be getting closer than ever to cracking the code.

Halvorson performs her most impressive calculations on *Theirs*, the collection that finds the guitarist, drummer Tomas Fujiwara and bassist Michael Formanek interpreting the work of Wayne Shorter, Stanley Cowell and Jacob Do Bandolim, among others. The trio sticks to the melodic core of these often-unorthodox standards, but clearly delights in zooming in on what's on the lead sheets, until it's all been turned to fractals.

The trio's take on Brooks Bowman's otherwise swaying ballad "East Of The Sun" is chaotic, with each player spilling out phrases and warped notes in crumbling heaps. A softly shuffling run through Evelyn Danzig's 1949 "Scarlet Ribbons (For Her Hair)" becomes watery and hallucinogenic through Halvorson's judicious use of effects and Fujiwara's swimming brushwork. Even more straightforward interpretations, like their sparkling version of Bandolim's "Benzinho," are spiked with little moments that fall out of focus or exploratory flare-ups that bristle and surprise.

The companion album, *Ours*, finds the trio exploring even more varied territory. The nine compositions—with each musician contributing

three pieces—run an impressive gamut, from Formanek's pitch-shifting, almost grunge-like "Cruel Heartless Bastards" to Fujiwara's more austere work that makes great use of silence and the shimmering resonance of his cymbals.

Halvorson's pieces on *Ours* aim for a quiet complexity. "Thumbprint" is built up humbly with a sashaying rhythm and a catchy hook, both of which slowly are exploded and rearranged. The tempo kicks up and the three skitter around like frightened animals, looking to escape from a perceived threat. "Smoketree" follows a similar formula—just with a lot less manic energy.

As a conceptual pairing, it makes sense to have these two recordings arrive in the world together. More than that, *Theirs* and *Ours* perfectly encapsulate the rare chemistry that these players have found together, and the musical conflagrations that can emerge when artists find likeminded souls with whom to collaborate.

—Robert Ham

Ours: Snarling Joys; Saturn Way; Cruel Heartless Bastards; Smoketree; Thumbprint; One Day; Rising Snow; Words That Rhyme With Spangle (Angle Bangle Dangle Jangle Mangle Mangle Strangle Tangle Wangle wrangle); Unconditional. (55:54)

Theirs: Stablenates; Benzinho; House Party Starting; The Peacocks; East Of The Sun; Scarlet Ribbons (For Her Hair); Buen Amigo; Dance Cadaverous; Effi; Weer Is Een Dag Voorbij. (45:57)

Personnel: Mary Halvorson, guitar; Michael Formanek, bass; Tomas Fujiwara, drums.

Ordering info: cuneiformrecords.com

Scott Clark *ToNow*

CLEAN FEED 478

★★★★

In November 2016, police clad in riot gear turned water cannons on activists assembled beneath a freezing North Dakota night; grainy video captured the confrontation. That evening was just one of the conflicts around the proposed Dakota Access Pipeline.

On Scott Clark's newest album, part of a planned suite that began with 2016's *Bury My Heart* (Clean Feed), the Virginia drummer and composer wrestles with the legacy of that evening, as well as the ongoing struggle of native people in the United States. It's a steep challenge, one that *ToNow* grapples with passionately. "Plains" opens with broiling drums and brass squalls, before settling into a brooding atmosphere. Bob Miller's melodic trumpet solo explores the quiet expanse, locating a fragile beauty before the composition assumes a more anxious disposition; a blanket of ambient distortion yields a searing guitar solo by Alan Parker. When the group coalesces behind it, into a single, thumping organism, *ToNow* hits a distinctive stride.

Before recording the album, Clark sent photos and links detailing the Standing Rock protest to his band. The group's search to find ways of articulating its complicated emotional and political significance provides guidance, shepherding the communal playing back on track, even when it wanders.

—Andrew Jones



David Helbock's *Random Control* *Tour D'Horizon*

ACT 9869

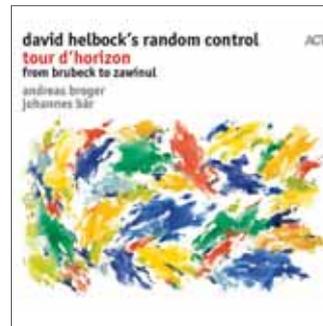
★★★½

David Helbock's 18 albums as a leader position the 34-year-old pianist as a creative thinker unafraid to put his stamp on the works of jazz masters past, while furthering his own distinctive catalog. The Austrian's *Tour D'Horizon* exemplifies his approach, a covers album wherein the pianist pays tribute to his influences.

It might be easy to dismiss the album purely for its well-worn material: Joe Zawinul's "Mercy, Mercy, Mercy," Paul Desmond's "Take Five," Duke Ellington's "In A Sentimental Mood." But the trio upends the "less is more" attitude by cleverly rearranging each composition with a minimalist slant that plays to the group's strengths.

The music of Joaquin Rodrigo via Miles Davis appears in the trio's version of "Concierto De Aranjuez (Adagio)," given a lush, if Spartan, treatment of brushed harpsichord, plucked piano strings, low-note grumbles and raspy flute. But that only serves as introduction to Chick Corea's "Spain," its trademark melody performed by sympathetic piano and soprano saxophone, then upended with beatbox flute, Steve Reichian piano rhythms and, of course, the carnival-like bridge. *Tour D'Horizon* surprises at every turn, a measured feast for the senses.

—Ken Micallef



ToNow: Plains; Stand; Red, White, Yellow; Cantapeta Creek. (49:12)

Personnel: Scott Clark, drums; Cameron Ralston, bass; Jason Scott, saxophone; Bob Miller, trumpet; Alan Parker, guitar; Tobin Summerfield, guitar.

Ordering info: cleanfeed-records.com

Tour D'Horizon: African Marketplace; Seven Days Of Falling; Concierto De Aranjuez (Adagio); Spain; In A Sentimental Mood; Mercy, Mercy, Mercy; Blue In Green; Watermelon Man; My Song; Utviklings-sang; Bolivia; Take Five. (50:08)

Personnel: David Helbock, piano, electronics, percussion; Andreas Broger, saxophones, clarinets, reed instruments; Johannes Bär, tuba, trumpet, brass instruments.

Ordering info: actmusic.com

Roni Ben-Hur/ Harvie S

Introspection

JAZZHEADS 1230

★★★★

Guitarist Roni Ben-Hur is an established jazz figurehead with a keen sensitivity to his personnel and a limber, near-effortless fluidity. On *Introspection*—where he's joined by a savvy outfit comprising bassist Harvie S and drummer Tim Horner—his trio revisits a batch of lesser-known compositions, bringing mindfulness and nuance to the forefront on a set of 10 tunes.

Much as the name suggests, *Introspection* offers an almost autobiographical, inward look at Ben-Hur and Harvie S' collective musical evolution—lyrical and nuanced soloists, astute and mindful accompanists. Add Horner's timely diligence to the mix, and the album breathes some organic vitality into almost-lost jazz works. But as Ben-Hur and Harvie S provide scintillating back-and-forth, minimalism is the ultimate form of artistry here. Certainly, moments of near-perplexing virtuosity exist—Ben-Hur's harmonic prowess on super-vibey, Brazilian-style B-sides and a tasty, throwback to his bebop upbringing. From Harvie S' swinging solo fanfare to Ben-Hur's lightning-fast, touch-sensitive runs—under Horner's watchful, understated brushes—the chemistry found on the album is a unique, uncompromising force to behold.

—Hilary Brown

Introspection: Prá Machucar Meu Coração; Serenity; Conception; Introspection; Dexia; Focus; Blood Count; Nobody Else But Me; Repetition; Asiatic Raes. (50:37)

Personnel: Roni Ben-Hur, guitar; Harvie S, bass; Tim Horner, drums.

Ordering info: jazzheads.com



Angelika Niescier

The Berlin Concert

INTAKT 305

★★★★

Saxophonist Angelika Niescier helms a trio bursting with possibilities on *The Berlin Concert*, a recording that extends her artistic vision. This set from the 2017 Berlin Jazz Festival features a pared-down version of the band featured on Niescier's previous opus, 2016's *NYC Five* (Intakt). Joining her here are bassist Christopher Tordini and drummer Tyshawn Sorey, two pillars of the New York scene.

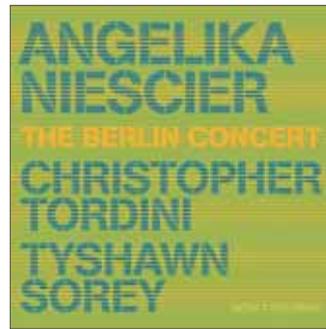
The four original compositions actually are simple melodic lines that serve as springboards for improvisation. The set here opens with "Kundry," a burner that shines a proper light on each of its protagonists. Niescier uses the full range of her instrument and gets quite passionate, almost reaching a breaking point on occasions. Instead of keeping time, Tordini plays variations on the melody or just states it, while Sorey demonstrates once again why he is one of the genre's most in-demand drummers. His mastery of dynamics does marvels, propelling Niescier forward, without drowning her out. *The Berlin Concert* closes with "The Surge," inserting a sense of urgency and taking the band into a free mode of performance. Niescier lets loose, and Sorey is in an explosive mode. Miles away from his solid conceptual and abstract work, it is a delight to hear him at his most visceral.

—Alain Drouot

The Berlin Concert: Kundry; Like Sheep, Looking Up; 5.8; The Surge. (40:07)

Personnel: Angelika Niescier, alto saxophone; Christopher Tordini, bass; Tyshawn Sorey, drums.

Ordering info: intaktrec.ch



Andrea Brachfeld

If Not Now, When?

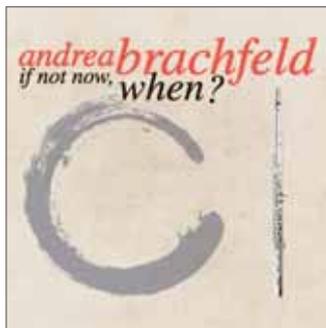
JAZZHEADS 1229

★★★★½

Andrea Brachfeld, a veteran jazz flutist with impeccable technique, chooses a more fulfilling path than mere virtuosity on her new disc. *If Not Now, When?* focuses just as much on her generosity as a bandleader and compositional skills.

As Brachfeld mentions in the liner notes, she's known pianist Bill O'Connell since they began playing in New York during the 1970s. She's known the other musicians in this quartet for almost as long. That familial cohesion comes through in the aptly titled "Creating Space": Bassist Harvie S sets an ominously inviting tone, which drummer Jason Tiemann answers through light cymbal hits. But the composition that yields the most surprising turns is the 10-minute "Deeply I Live." This ballad is formed of different interwoven parts with Harvie S and Tiemann's solos building things up and then dramatically turning everything around midway. Brachfeld dexterously weaves through all of these changes while also tying the initially contrasting passages together. The group itself also foregrounds plenty of the bandleader's other strengths, like when everyone pushes her into different intervals on the brisk "The Listening Song." And since Brachfeld knows when to let a fine groove play itself out, she adds the right kind of bluesy vibe to "Amazing Grace."

—Aaron Cohen



Marc Sinan/ Oguz Büyükberber

White

ECM 2558

★★★★½

Guitarist Marc Sinan, who in the past has combined German, Turkish and Armenian musics, has been collaborating with clarinetist Oguz Büyükberber for about a decade. The pair's latest work together, *White*, is split between its "Upon Nothingness" pieces, largely composed by Sinan, and a "There" sequence, written by Büyükberber, each of these being interleaved to create an unfolding conversation.

The crackle of vintage 1916 recordings infiltrates the "Upon Nothingness" sections, a series of field recordings that document the folk singing of Armenian prisoners of war. Sinan and Büyükberber engage in a sparse dialogue, the latter issuing some of his darkest, mournful phrases on bass clarinet.

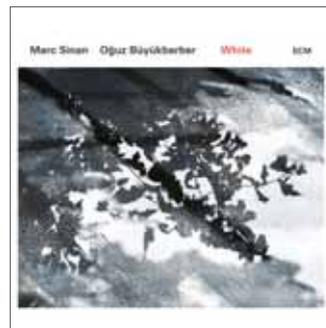
The card pack is shuffled with "There I," these earlier tracks being somewhat brief. Later, they expand, and the "Upon Nothingness" passages seem to be truncated. A mirage of a guitar forest spreads to the horizon on "Upon Nothingness, White," imprinting a ghostly after-image. The pair's highly expressive phrases diverge, but periodically arrive at a striking juncture, either by chance or design, their every note and gesture a sonic delicacy.

—Martin Longley

If Not Now, When?: The Listening Song; Steppin'; Creating Space; The Silence; Anima Mea; Movers And Shakers; Deeply I Live; Moving Forward; The Opening; Amazing Grace. (65:45)

Personnel: Andrea Brachfeld, flutes; Bill O'Connell, piano; Harvie S, bass; Jason Tiemann, drums.

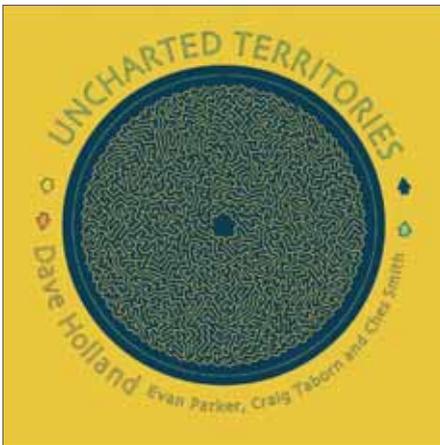
Ordering info: jazzheads.com



White: Upon Nothingness, Yellow; There I; Upon Nothingness, Blue; There II; Upon Nothingness, Green; There III; There IV; There V; Upon Nothingness, White; Upon Nothingness, Red. (40:18)

Personnel: Marc Sinan, guitar, electronics; Oguz Büyükberber, clarinet, bass clarinet, electronics.

Ordering info: ecmrecords.com



Dave Holland *Uncharted Territories*

DARE 2 010

★★★★

On this triple-vinyl set (or two-CD alternative), bassist Dave Holland returns to the improvising freedom of his early years, a period in the late 1960s and early '70s, when he worked with Chick Corea's Circle and the Spontaneous Music Ensemble. On *Uncharted Territories*, Holland rekindles that SME collaboration with saxophonist Evan Parker, alongside a pair of younger Americans, keyboardist Craig Taborn and percussionist Ches Smith.

The results linger between free improvisation and what used to be more popularly termed "Third Stream." Parker occasionally moves toward his trademark spiraling, but just as often paints a tonally rounded tenor picture, exploring lyrically rich routes. When Smith switches to hard kit-drumming, and Taborn sits out, the results can sound remarkably close to Parker's trio with Barry Guy and Paul Lytton. The joy of having 23 tracks is that just as many approaches are available, from soft, tentative transparency to agitated, emphatic spikiness.

"QT12" offers a free-jazz scamper, all hands full-tilt, whereas "Organ-Vibes W1" involves a delicate gathering of tones, Taborn highlighting the percussiveness of his keys, Smith producing an eerie shimmer that would be at home on a soundtrack to one of Roger Corman's old Edgar Allan Poe movies. During the course of these sessions, it's exciting to hear Holland move back toward abstraction, but it's equally desirable to find Parker in a jazzier setting. —Martin Longley

Uncharted Territories: Thought On Earth; Piano-Bass-Percussion T1; Q&A; Tenor-Bass W3; QT12; Duo Bass Tenor W3; QW2; Tenor-Piano-Bass T2; Organ-Vibes W1; Bass-Percussion; Tenor-Piano-Percussion T1; QT13; Tenor-Bass-Percussion T2; Piano-Percussion W3; QT5; Tenor-Bass W1; Piano-Bass-Percussion T2; Unsteady As She Goes; Bass-Percussion T1; QW5; Tenor-Bass-Percussion T1; Tenor-Bass W3; QW1. (65:19/65:49)

Personnel: Dave Holland, bass; Evan Parker, tenor saxophone; Craig Taborn, keyboards, electronics; Ches Smith, drums, percussion, vibraphone.

Ordering info: daveholland.com/dare2

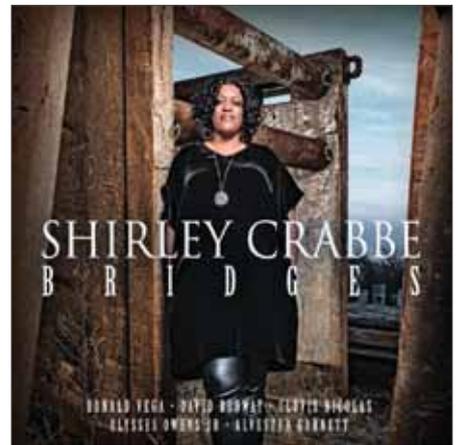
Shirley Crabbe *Bridges*

MAISONG MUSIC AND ENTERTAINMENT 2018

★★★

A record lined with jazz standards and sporting conventional instrumentation might lead to presumptions of familiarity when contemplating *Bridges*. But Shirley Crabbe reminds lovers of the Great American Songbook that performance and emotive projection can imbue the most ubiquitous of jazz tunes with fresh excitement.

Apart from being a strong vocalist, Crabbe takes the message of each work and retains the integral emotional direction, while dressing each in a mellifluous approach. Every cut's bright, clean and expressive in style—qualities springing from Crabbe's initial pursuit of opera. And though lyrical complexity comes second to traditional songcraft, listeners can revel in the artistic intricacy of the seasoned musicianship spotlighted during *Bridges'*

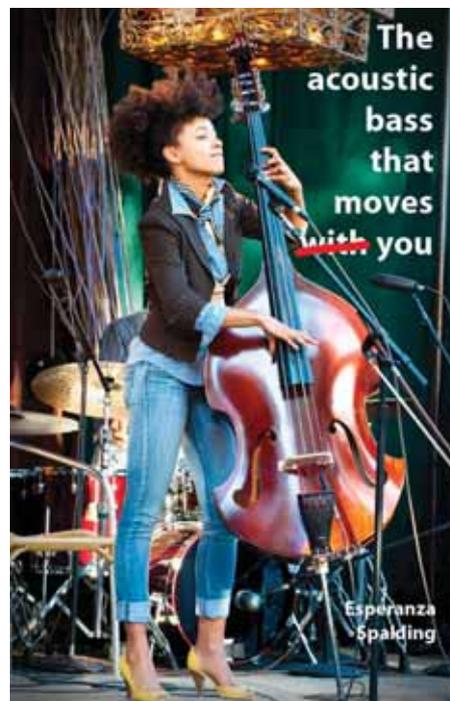


instrumental interludes. —Kira Grunenberg

Bridges: Isn't This A Lovely Day; Taking A Chance On Love; Bridges; The Bridge; I Didn't Know What Time It Was; Promise Me; The Windmills Of Your Mind; And So It Goes; Thief In The Night; Blessed Assurance. (48:54)

Personnel: Shirley Crabbe, vocals; David Budway, piano (1, 8, 9); Donald Vega, piano; Clovis Nicolas, bass; Alvester Garnett, drums (2, 10); Ulyses Owens Jr., drums; Brandon Lee, trumpet; Chris Cardona, violin; Sean Carney, violin; Todd Low, viola; Stephanie Cummins, cello.

Ordering Info: shirleycrabbe.com



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Jerry Garcia (left) performs with future Grateful Dead lyricist Robert Hunter during the fall of 1962.

The Dead, Forged in Folk

One of the most influential and versatile improvisers of the late 20th century, Grateful Dead guitarist **Jerry Garcia** filtered traditional American music through a sensibility that could be as disciplined and studied as it was open-eared and loose.

Spawning a virtual school of players, the Dead's approach itself has become a recognizable mode of American music making, from the group's songbook to Garcia's preferred scales, from a vocabulary of jam tricks, down to the conversational relationship between instruments.

The illuminating *Before The Dead* (Round Records JGFR1016; 42:00/64:52/42:41/71:33 ★★★½) shines light on Garcia's earliest music—1961 to 1964—most often remembered as his “bluegrass period” for his virtuosic banjo playing. But the four-CD/five-LP collection reveals a far richer picture. Later in the decade, the Dead would veer from style to style, with Garcia as chief architect of their sound, and *Before The Dead* spotlights an equally restless young player integrating musical information at a breathtaking clip.

While many of these recordings have circulated among collectors in fuller form, *Before The Dead* is the first official release for nearly all of the music collected here. More importantly, it provides a few crucial missing pieces and a sequencing that clearly illustrates how an 18-year-old high school dropout named Jerry Garcia came to pick up an acoustic guitar and set himself in motion.

Opening with a never-heard 1961 tape, recorded at a birthday party, Garcia plays in a duo with future Dead lyricist Robert Hunter on bass. Drawing from the Kingston Trio and Pete Seeger, the performance is filled with the pleasant good cheer of the Kingstons. Barely a month later, Garcia already is digging into the more scholarly New Lost City Ramblers corner of the folk revival.

As the meticulous liner notes detail, Garcia also was plugged into the emerging national social network of pickers from practically his first strum. No casual player, the nearly four hours of music uncover a musician filled with ambition and energy. By a year after the earliest recording, Garcia had turned to banjo. That, too, became a progression, from the ghostly frailings of the Sleepy Hollow Hog Stompers, recorded in June 1962, to the shredding Bill Keith style he'd accentuated by the time of the Black Mountain Boys in 1964. The sequence would result in Garcia's instantly recognizable electric guitar playing with the Dead, each note articulated with a banjoist's precision.

Far more than the story of a banjo player, *Before The Dead* documents Garcia's quest to become a complete musician. He fills numerous roles, playing mandolin with his wife, Sara, in 1963 and leading the band as a rhythm guitar player.

Garcia's autodidactic scholarliness even would send him on a cross-country tape-trading quest, leading him to the feet of bluegrass king Bill Monroe. But, by the next year, the rigor of bluegrass would be trumped by Garcia's desire for more fun, always his most specific desire and creative aspiration.

Months after the last recording on *Before The Dead* came the decidedly non-chops-oriented Mother McCree's Jug Champions with Bob Weir and Ron “Pigpen” McKernan. Less than a year later, they transformed into the Rolling Stones-loving Warlocks. And by the end of 1965, they became The Grateful Dead. Garcia never again would play acoustic instruments with such single-minded focus, but he would continue to charge headlong into his next music. **DB**

Ordering info: jerrygarcia.com



Alexander von Schlippenbach Globe Unity Orchestra *Globe Unity (50 Years)*

INTAKT 298

★★★★½

Can you pay tribute to a 50-year-old innovation and still be innovative? That's the question hanging over this anniversary performance by German pianist Alexander von Schlippenbach and his free-jazz big band, the Globe Unity Orchestra. When he debuted the project in 1966, its sheer size—13 players in all—made even Ornette Coleman's infamous double quartet sound structured by comparison.

Where the 1966 performance crackled with a youthful sense of discovery, the pleasures in hearing the orchestra work in 2016 lie mostly in picking out moments of individual virtuosity. And the Jazzfest Berlin audience saved its most rapturous applause for a rare moment of lone instrumentation, Evan Parker's screeching saxophone, which flashes like a fish leaping out of whitewater, then plunges back into chaos.

At times, when a quorum of players are testing their lung capacity to its fullest, *Globe Unity (50 Years)* feels like that moment when you lose your balance leaning back in a chair, then catch yourself. But many of the performance's most interesting moments happen in subtler ways: when the brass players use their valves to create textural elements, wheezing and sighing over von Schlippenbach's blocky, atonal chords. Maybe free-jazz feels less revolutionary in 2018 than it did in 1966, but there still are sonic possibilities in jazz's traditional instruments yet to be fully explored.

—Andy Hermann

Globe Unity (50 Years): Globe Unity Orchestra (50 Years). (44:03)

Personnel: Alexander von Schlippenbach, piano; Henrik Walsdorff, alto saxophone; Ernst-Ludwig Petrowsky, alto saxophone, clarinet, flute; Daniele D'Agaro, tenor saxophone, clarinet; Gerd Dudek, soprano, tenor saxophones, clarinet, flute; Evan Parker, tenor saxophone; Rudi Mahall, bass clarinet; Axel Dörner, trumpet; Tomasz Stanko, trumpet; Ryan Carniaux, trumpet; Christof Thewes, trombone; Wolter Wierbos, trombone; Gerhard Gschlössl, trombone; Carl Ludwig Hübsch, tuba; Paul Lovens, drums; Paul Lytton, drums.

Ordering info: intaktrec.com

Frode Gjerstad Trio + Steve Swell

Bop Stop
CLEAN FEED 470
★★★★

The creative music scene in Norway deservedly is celebrated for its depth and transcendence of generic boundaries, with an ever-growing community of musicians who've developed in the country's sophisticated music conservatories. But the music can err on the side of good taste, with tender-footed musicians hesitant to get down in the trenches of white-knuckled improvisation. In that regard, alto saxophonist Frode Gjerstad is a paragon, a veteran free-jazz advocate and freewheeling blower who's never forsaken his post-bop routes.

For this live recording, his working trio is joined by garrulous New York trombonist Steve Swell. On the title track, which erupts from a frenzy of notes strummed by bassist Jon Rune Strøm, the front line dances over the ferocious grooves. The musicians move in and out of the action at will, forging a protean attack, deeply agile and sleek. The pieces all contain moments of conversational repose and intense fury, and nothing indicates how locked in the group is like "Post Stop," where a galloping groove collapses in a hilarious rip-snort conclusion. Live recordings of free improvisation inevitably lack some of the heat produced in the moment, but *Bop Stop* expresses that spark to great effect.

—Peter Margasak



Bop Stop: Bop Stop; Stop Bop; Pop Bop; Post Stop. (52:23)

Personnel: Frode Gjerstad, alto saxophone; Steve Swell, trombone; Jon Rune Strøm, bass; Paul Niilsen-Love, drums, percussion.

Ordering info: cleanfeed-records.com

Franco Ambrosetti

Cheers
ENJA 9655
★★★★

Listening to *Cheers*, the latest album from Swiss flugelhorn player Franco Ambrosetti, is a melancholic experience. There's no avoiding the fact that the 76-year-old artist has lost the punch and clarity of his playing as he's slid into his autumn years.

Gone are the fluid runs and pointillist use of dissonance found on his '80s masterpieces, replaced by smearing tones and an inescapable sharpness.

These are forgivable sins when taking into account his stature in the jazz world. When Ambrosetti is given spare accompaniment, as with the closing rendition of "Body And Soul" that finds him joined by just bass and drums, his playing has the quaint charm of later Chet Baker recordings with sparks of his old self blazing out. It's when he's working in tandem with other horn players, like alto saxophonist Greg Osby, that there's a clear struggle to keep up as they work through the main melody.

While the hitch in Ambrosetti's step can't be ignored, he still deserves respect for his efforts to keep stoking the creative fires—and for offering up some measure of hope for members of jazz's old guard that they, too, still can thrive.

—Robert Ham



Cheers: Autumn Leaves; No Sillia, No Party; I'm Glad There Is You; Bye Bye Blackbird; Drums Corrida; Someday My Prince Will Come; The Smart Went Crazy; Midnight Voyage; Body And Soul. (67:08)

Personnel: Franco Ambrosetti, flugelhorn; Kenny Barron, piano; Buster Williams, bass; Jack DeJohnette, drums; Greg Osby, alto saxophone; Randy Brecker, trumpet; Terri Lyne Carrington, drums; John Scofield, guitar; Antonio Faraò, piano; Dado Moroni, piano; Uri Caine, piano; Gianluca Ambrosetti, soprano saxophone.

Ordering info: enjarecords.com

Kait Dunton

trioKAIT 2
REAL & IMAGINED 005
★★★★½

Onetime Snarky Puppy pianist Kait Dunton revives her eponymous trio-KAIT with electric bassist Cooper Appelt and drummer Jake Reed for an artfully rendered follow-up to 2015's self-titled debut.

Where most recordings begin with takeoff, "Re-Entry" opens with the smoothest of landings. Such piano-centered tunes are the trio's lifeblood, anchored by Dunton's dynamic rhythm section. Whether igniting her art through the filter of a wah-wah-infused Rhodes on "OCD" or exploring the funkier side of her Wurlitzer on "J&J's," Dunton brings a Technicolor sensibility to everything she touches. Though such tracks represent her first forays into synthesizer tessellations, her comfort level is such that it'd be difficult to figure her as an exclusively acoustic musician in the past. Despite a penchant for head-nodding arrangements, Dunton conveys the value of self-reflection on tunes like "Pure Imagination" (originally a tune from *Willy Wonka & The Chocolate Factory*), before sending listeners flying at last in the whimsical "Thanks And Goodnight."

This is music devoid of pretension that, despite the album's starry cover, is decidedly earthbound in its creature comforts. —Tyran Grillo



trioKAIT 2: Re-Entry; OCD; Nude; The Hunch; Thematic; Title Track; J&J's; Frontier; Pure Imagination; Inner Space; Outlude; Alkibo; Thanks And Goodnight. (54:21)

Personnel: Kait Dunton, piano; Fender Rhodes, Wurlitzer electric piano, OB-6 analog synthesizer; Cooper Appelt; electric bass; Jake Reed; drums.

Ordering info: kaitdunton.com

Janning Trumann

Be Here, Gone And Nowhere
TANGIBLE
★★½

Young German trombonist Janning Trumann is unquestionably the leader of this instrumental session. When the support includes vibraphone, bass and drums, it's easy to rise above the mellow hum of the rhythm section.

The collection of instruments, though, makes for an uncommon sound that's capable of great warmth. But without the occasional slap of auditory violence, *Be Here, Gone And Nowhere* can lull listeners into a haze.

The album presents a dreamy landscape stitched together by Trumann's long tones and Dierk Peters' prodding vibraphone, an instrumental landscape that's sparse, but not without rewards. More often than not, Peters serves as a counterpoint to Trumann's solos, eliciting pops and dissonance more akin to a horn section than chordal support. On "Dingman," bassist Drew Gress exhibits a nimble and melodious voice, and the band finds a groove three-quarters of the way through a tune that flexes mightily, but briefly. Gress' solo on "Feel" eases into a stately realm that becomes more serene with each measure, pushed elegantly into a placid bed of leaves by drummer Jochen Rueckert's brushstrokes.

—Sean J. O'Connell



Be Here, Gone And Nowhere: Permanent Proposal; Dingman; Rose; Clara; Trillmann; Siren; Feel; Where; Snow Patrol. (46:52)

Personnel: Janning Trumann, trombone; Dierk Peters, vibraphone; Drew Gress, bass; Jochen Rueckert, drums.

Ordering info: janningtrummann.com

Peterson Peerless at the Keyboard

Besides being simply wonderful music imbued with upbeat, enduring life, the five-disc set **Oscar Peterson Plays (Verve 06007 5380361; 73:39/78:51/72:08/76:05/79:48 ★★★★★)** serves both as a primer and an advanced class for anyone who touches a piano, cares for swing and melody or is drawn to the canonical 20th-century American songbook.

Its 113 tracks, almost all less than four minutes long, originally were issued in a series of 10 10-inch albums, each devoted to the popular airs of great songwriters: Cole Porter, Irving Berlin, George Gershwin, Duke Ellington, Jerome Kern, Richard Rodgers, Vincent Youmans, Harry Warren, Harold Arlen and Jimmy McHugh. Finally remastered, they're now available, two composers to a disc, in a double-jewel box with succinct liner notes by Martin Chilton and the original covers—a David Stone Martin drawing given 10 different monochrome overlays.

Hearing Peterson at this peak, from 1951 to '54 when he wasn't yet 30 years old, but already a proven and prolific star due to his remarkable talents and the career-advancing support of producer Norman Granz, is revelatory. The pianist's virtuosity, delivered so casually, is on full display—as is his remarkable speed and accuracy, implacable touch and seemingly effortless, immaculate rhythmic sense. But so are other qualities less associated with his reputation. Even prior to his death at 82 in 2008, snarks carped about Peterson as an exemplary technician with limited feeling. These recordings disprove that notion. Here, he is a delightful artist in possession of seemingly limitless imagination, wit and spontaneous lyricism. He abjures formulas, excelling instead at stirring single note runs, intervallic leaps, gorgeously harmonized block chords, quiet flourishes, sweeps and a surprising narrative flow.

Peterson likely is benefiting from the close and creative relationships he struck up with guitarists Barney Kessel and Herb Ellis, and perfectly supple bassist Ray Brown. A drummer, Alvin Stoller, appears only once, using brushes on "Just One Of Those Things." Stoller's fine, but unnecessary; the trio's self-sufficient.

Kessel appeals as the spicier guitarist, his syncopated comping and linear solos connecting Western Swing and Charlie Christian-like figures to bebop, his aggressive responses to Peterson's calls ("Strike Up The Band") egging the pianist on. But Ellis, who took over in late '53 and is heard on the Warren, McHugh and Ar-



Oscar Peterson

PICTORIAL PRESS/CACHE AGENCY

len material, is no slouch.

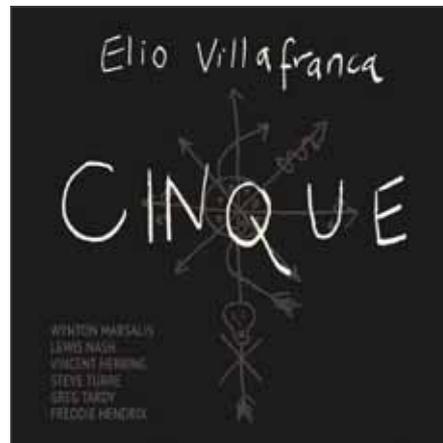
The sophistication of both repertoire and performance is at a level seldom aspired to today. All these tunes were popular during the post-World War II era and accepted as contemporary, though some ("Alexander's Ragtime Band") dated from three decades earlier. Listeners across generations were familiar with the melodies; many arrangers had tried to refresh them, so it was imperative Peterson and company do something special. Classy, yet cheeky, intimacy was a smart sound to sell.

Highlights abound, and every listener will find their own. I'll mention the ache Peterson brings out of Porter's "I've Got You Under My Skin," sequenced before a racy "Love For Sale"; the bright "Blue Skies" and dreamy "Cheek To Cheek"; all of album two's Gershwin and Ellington numbers; Kern's "A Fine Romance," redolent of Fred Astaire, and the contrarily sprightly "Ol' Man River"; and Rodgers' "Johnny One Note" and "Lover," in which each trio member takes a telling break. Peterson pirouettes through Youman's warhorse "Tea For Two" and gets shy admitting "Sometimes I'm Happy." "I've Got A Right To Sing The Blues" bores him—one dud in 113 tracks—but he romps on "It's Only A Paper Moon."

Peterson infrequently is florid, on ballads sometimes sentimental, but he undeniably represents the apotheosis of a legacy passed from Morton to Ellington to Hines to Wilson and Tatum and Nat "King" Cole. With such a pianist ascendant, others, such as Thelonious Monk and Cecil Taylor, had to reconceive the instrument for their own purposes. Yet, throughout *Oscar Plays*, established virtues prevail. Standards prove their mettle and Peterson shows—without showing off—that he was a jazz pianist second to none.

DB

Ordering info: vervelabelgroup.com



Elio Villafranca *Cinque*

ARTISTSHARE ASO161

★★★★½

Pianist/composer Elio Villafranca is the latest in a decades-long line of Cuban musicians who has integrated African, European and Pan-American musical concepts. His two-disc set is a compelling and complex dedication to *Cinque*, the Sierra Leonean who led a bloody revolt aboard the Cuban-bound, slave ship *Amistad* in 1839 and later was freed by John Quincy Adams.

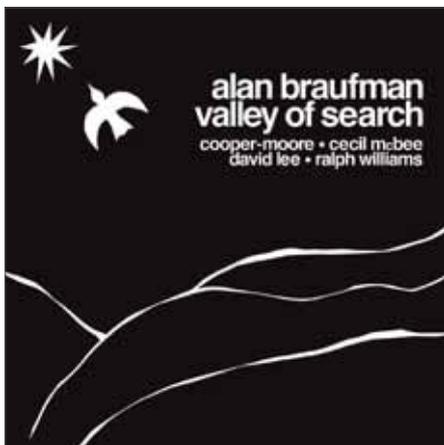
The ensemble here primarily consists of Villafranca's group, The Jass Syncopaters. With a pianistic style that echoes Duke Ellington and McCoy Tyner, the bandleader narrates *Cinque's* story with references to the Haitian Revolution and the free Maroon colonies of runaway slaves. And it's all augmented by Villafranca's field recordings of Cuban/Congo-derived conga and palo mayombe chants and rhythms, along with other Afro-derived music from Haiti, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic and New Orleans, melded with the jazz language. Special guest Wynton Marsalis' Crescent City cries on the processional pulsations of "La Burla De Los Congos (Part II)," Greg Tardy's tenor madness on "Madre Agua (Part III)" and Leyla McCalla's Vodou-vamped vocals on "Mèsy Bondye" are but a few examples of how Villafranca's opus depicts the Dark Continent illuminating the Americas.

—Eugene Holley Jr.

Cinque: Disc 1: Mov. I: El Rey Del Congo "The King Of The Congo"; Narration 1; *Cinque* + Narration 2 (Part I); The Capture (Part II); Canto Gangá De Despedida; Narration 3; Trouble Waters (Part III); Mov. II: Rezo Congo; Maluagda (Part I); La Burla De Los Congos (Part II); Tambor Yuka/Saludo Gangá; Madre Agua (Part III); Mov. III: Indigo + Narration 4 (Part I); New Sky (Part II); Narration 5; The First Colony (Part II); Kongo. (52:50) Disc 2: Mov. IV: The Night At Bwa Kay Man (Part I); Palo Muerte—Lore; Kafou Ceremony; Narration 6; The Night Of Fire (Part II); Medley Of Congo Songs; Mèsy Bondye; Mov. V: Paseo (Part I); Conga Y Comparsa (Part II); Live Congo; Canto Gangá a Yegbè De Despedida; Congo Story; Canto Congo A Capella—Maluagda; Palo De Muerto. (41:26)

Personnel: Elio Villafranca, piano, percussion; Ricky Rodriguez, acoustic bass; Lewis Nash, drums; Arturo Stabile, Miguel Valdes, Jonathan Troncoso, Nelson Mateo Gonzales; Freddie Hendrix, Wynton Marsalis (Disc 1: 10; Disc 2: 1), trumpets; Steve Turre, trombone, bass trombone, conch shells; Vincent Herring, alto and soprano saxophone, flute; Greg Tardy, tenor saxophone, clarinet; Todd Marcus, bass clarinet; Leyla McCalla, vocals, (Disc 2: 7); Don Vappie, banjo, (Disc 2: 7); Alexander LaSalle, vocals, (Disc 1: 4, 8, 10); Alexander Waterman, cello (Disc 1: 2, 7, 9); Roberta Brenza, coros (Disc 2: 9).

Ordering info: artistshare.com



Alan Braufman *Valley Of Search*

VALLEY OF SEARCH 001

★★★★½

Valley Of Search might have been the first and last recording of its kind. The 1975 album was perhaps the final moment of reconciliation between the rapidly diverging sides of John Coltrane's musical legacy—a unity of the modal, Eastern-influenced spiritual jazz with the intense free-form—that never again would occupy the same strain of music. But it also was among the early signals of the nascent Manhattan loft scene,

being recorded in the Canal Street storefront where multi-reedist Alan Braufman and pianist Gene Ashton (b.k.a. Cooper-Moore) lived.

Valley Of Search is the only album made under Braufman's leadership, and ranks as Ashton's first recording—nearly forgotten, but now ripe for rediscovery.

The modalism and spiritualism of the album are obvious from the instant the music begins. Ashton's dulcimer establishes an unaccompanied ostinato drone on "Rainbow Warriors" and quickly is joined by bassist Cecil McBee playing arco figures drawn from the Indian violin tradition, and solemn percussion from David Lee and Ralph Williams. Their mesmerizing playing segues into "Chant," on which Braufman joins them on flute and Ashton switches to piano, and recites a Baha'i prayer. Although Ashton's delivery alternates between resembling a Zen koan and a gospel preacher, the feel is of a meditation.

Throughout the album, Lee subtly is gaining steam on the trap kit, while Williams' percussive textures—rattles, bells—slowly gather into an avalanche. Just after the halfway point of the eight-minute "Chant," Braufman veers hard into sheets-of-sound territory, emitting long shrieks that Lee and Williams follow, while McBee and Ashton hang suspended between freedom and their previously formulated structure.

It's that unique blend of metamorphosis

and tension that makes *Valley Of Search* move—especially the work on Ashton and McBee's end. Braufman's pull-along of Lee and Williams becomes a recurring pattern, which led to the percussionists actively working against the bass and piano's pulses; they fight back with relish. As Braufman yelps on "Love Is For Real," Ashton modifies, but doesn't abandon, his riffs, even turning the transformed version into a solo, when the saxophone dies down. As for McBee, who gets his own bass showpiece on "Miracles," his lines don't spontaneously change shape so much as they develop motivically. The effect is nearly subliminal: On "Little Nabil's March," his four-to-the-bar reduces itself to a forebeat, then adds a syncopated accent and gradually returns to hitting every bit, now with the syncopation in tow.

Originally the second release on the India Navigation label, *Valley Of Search* was extraordinary work, but too underground to get the attention and ears it deserved. It's not too late: More than 40 years later, it's still chance-taking, jaw-dropping music. —Michael J. West

Valley Of Search: Rainbow Warriors; Chant; Thankfulness; Love Is For Real; Forshadow; Miracle; Ark Of Salvation; Little Nabil's March; Destiny. (43:10)

Personnel: Alan Braufman, alto saxophone, flute, pipe horn; Gene Ashton, piano, dulcimer; Cecil McBee, bass; David Lee, drums; Ralph Williams, percussion.

Ordering info: valleyofsearch.com

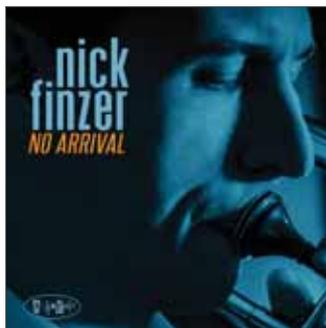
Nick Finzer *No Arrival*

POSI-TONE 8182

★★★★

Smooth compositional transitions and joyous swinging harmonies emanate from Nick Finzer's *No Arrival*. The New York trombonist's vibe is upbeat and relaxed on five original compositions set among some standard fare with a contemporary twist.

The 30-year-old Finzer shapes melodies on the album in a polished, charismatic manner with arranging that summons intricate summits. The introductory "Rinse And Repeat" dances sunbeam-like with happy-go-lucky Latin ambiance. After reedist Lucas Pino's fiery feature, guitarist Alex Wintz nails his solo, leading back to swooping unison piano and guitar, gliding in-between horns. "Tomorrow Next Year," a burner for sizzling solo trombone and starry soaring saxophone, shows off cooking uptempo melodic lines. Gershwin's "Soon" waltz is gentle, with well-crafted development, featuring outstanding lyrical piano accompaniment from Victor Gould. *No Arrival's* finale, Billy Strayhorn's "A Flower Is A Lovesome Thing," is a modernized nod to the swing era. With restraint and respect for the elegance of Strayhorn, Finzer chooses sensitivity and space over flash, and brings melody forward, concluding with admiration for the tradition, honoring the genre's legacy. —Kerlie McDowall



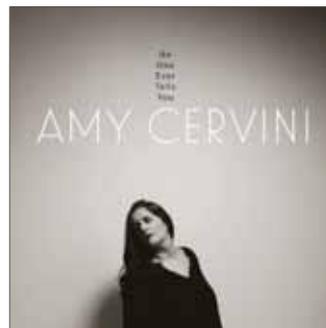
Amy Cervini *No One Ever Tells You*

ANZIC 0062

★★★★

Amy Cervini, a top-notch jazz singer who also is a member of vocal group Duchess, recently released *No One Ever Tells You*, a follow-up to 2013's *Jazz Country* (Anzic). She has an appealing voice, displaying plenty of versatility throughout her recordings in both range and style.

This disc finds the singer joined by a colorful quartet that includes guitarist Jesse Lewis and pianist Michael Cabe, and organist Gary Versace guests on four selections. The first three numbers here—"I Don't Know," Lyle Lovett's "God Will" and the title track—set the standard for the project. Versace's organ is quite effective on the former two numbers, and Cervini is heard at her most expressive. She particularly digs into "I Don't Know," which deals with a slow recovery from despair, and "No One Ever Tells You," which discusses not being properly prepared for life. After a swinging version of the 1930s obscurity "Please Be Kind," Cervini takes listeners back to the 1920s for "A Good Man Is Hard To Find." Lewis' rockish guitar on that song is a bit jarring, but his playing on "Bye-Bye Country Boy" works better, inspiring some particularly passionate singing. —Scott Yanow



No Arrival: Rinse And Repeat; Never Enough; Maria; Tomorrow Next Year; Soon; No Arrival; Pyramid; Only This, Only Now; The Greatest Romance Ever Sold; A Flower Is A Lovesome Thing. (58:28)

Personnel: Nick Finzer, trombone; Lucas Pino, tenor saxophone, bass clarinet; Victor Gould, piano; Alex Wintz, guitar; Dave Baron, bass; Jimmy Macbride, drums.

Ordering info: posi-tone.com

No One Ever Tells You: I Don't Know; God Will; No One Ever Tells You; The Surrey With The Fringe On Top; Please Be Kind; A Good Man Is Hard To Find; You Know Who; Bye-Bye Country Boy; One For My Baby; Hit The Road Jack. (49:49)

Personnel: Amy Cervini, vocals; Jesse Lewis, guitar; Michael Cabe, piano; Matt Aronoff, bass; Jared Schonig, drums; Gary Versace, organ (1, 2, 8, 9).

Ordering info: anzicrecords.com

Further Development

His open ear makes Nate Chinen's *Playing Changes: Jazz For The New Century* (Pantheon) exciting reading. While it primarily will appeal to the jazerati, the book's scope should delight musicians and readers of all kinds, steering them to nightclubs and record stores to engage with this increasingly polymorphous form of music.

The genre's physicality comes through vividly in Chinen's descriptions of musicians at work, like this glimpse of Jim Black, the drummer in trumpeter Dave Douglas' Tiny Bell Trio: "Black, who like [guitarist Brad] Shepik hailed from Seattle, was a sound and sight to behold: He piloted his drum kit like a sputtering jalopy, with a rack tom cranked taut as a timbale and a kick drum loosened so much that it produced a splat."

Chinen's formula is thematic chapters, laced with musicians in conversation, analyses of their recordings and a concluding discography. The author's ear is open to scenes and players mostly from New York, Seattle, Los Angeles, London and Beijing. His book purposefully is a universal celebration of an "ongoing story [that] might best be understood as a climate: volatile, variable, subject to unseen forces outside anyone's direct control."

According to Chinen, a long-time jazz critic who left the New York Times in 2017 and now is director of editorial content at Newark, New Jersey, public radio station WGBO, *Playing Changes* was four years in the making. It includes interviews dating back about 20 years with influential figures like saxophonist Steve Coleman and pianist Jason Moran, as well as a tour of Beijing's jazz scene, and commentary on the institutionalization of jazz in academia and competitions. He also offers insights into players and events spanning the abstractions of guitarist Mary Halvorson and the sweaty brilliance of the tour D'Angelo mounted behind his 2000 album, *Voodoo*. Neither range nor appetite is an issue for Chinen.

"How do you make this kind of narrative experience bring to life certain characters and complex stories, not just tick off a bunch of recordings?" Chinen recently said about a critical question at the heart of his work on the book.

Since the 1990s, when he began to listen to jazz seriously, the way music is produced and distributed has gone through major changes, he said, obliquely referencing the title of his book, a pun on musicians working through chord progressions. "You're talking about this period of incredible upheaval in technology and culture ... a real push and pull when it comes to the definition of jazz," he said. That exciting turbulence affected the



writing of his book—in a good way—when Los Angeles saxophonist Kamasi Washington was embraced in popular culture.

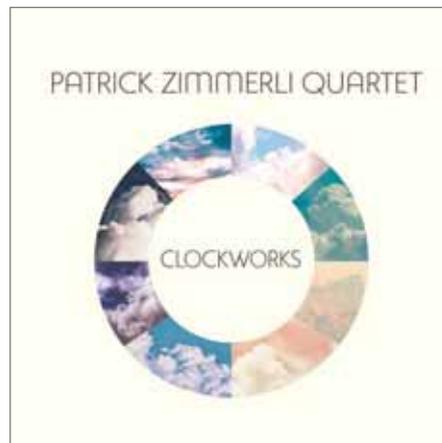
"When the mainstream press rallies around someone like him, kind of a 'savior of jazz,' I felt that deserved careful consideration," Chinen said. "It was a real sort of gift, because I was already wrestling with this idea of resurrection and how to tell that story in a way that wasn't a rehash; Wynton [Marsalis] has been covered quite a bit, and I didn't want to start my book with him."

The book builds impressively, if not altogether chronologically, tying together Duke Ellington and Kendrick Lamar in a jazz-related continuum designed to familiarize the reader with music not yet part of the canon.

Chinen wanted his profiles to say something about the state of music, with each one an effort "to get out from under the weight of precedent. Look at all the connections," he said, citing "Changing Sames," a chapter linking vocalist D'Angelo to trumpeter Roy Hargrove, pianist Bernard Wright and fusion jammers Snarky Puppy. Robert Glasper, the influential keyboardist whose woozy *Black Radio* (Blue Note) created a crossover stir six years ago, might have warranted a chapter, but, Chinen said, "I liked the idea about slotting him into this chapter, which is more about the idea of pulse."

Consumer-friendly and intellectually provocative, *Playing Changes* suggests jazz, with multiplicity at the heart of its continually evolving aesthetic, has a future as bright as its past. **DB**

Ordering info: penguinrandomhouse.com



Patrick Zimmerli Quartet *Clockworks*

SONGLINES 1625

★★★★

"What percentage of the age of the universe is a human lifespan?" asks saxophonist Patrick Zimmerli in the liner notes of his 13th leader album, *Clockworks*.

It's a deep question for a deep album. And while its answer might be in the cosmos, the time Zimmerli, pianist Ethan Iverson and drummer John Hollenbeck have spent together offers insight into what drives the gears of this remarkable studio recording. That bassist Christopher Tordini—who doesn't have that sort of history with the other players here—falls so smoothly into the ensemble is a testament to the organic nature of this 11-song suite.

True to its title, *Clockworks* moves like a well-wound Rolex, an arc of improvised flourishes and written melodies that undulates between movements of linear, metric and harmonic variations, and limber exploratory themes like "Pendulum" and "Wind-Up." That latter track arguably is the quintessential example of the suite's chronology-minded concept, especially in the implementation of polyrhythms that make it sound more like a double-duo than a quartet.

Having worked together for more than 25 years, the harmony among Zimmerli, Hollenbeck and Iverson is undeniable and serves as the invincible engine driving the spirit of these performances. In his note, Zimmerli explains that *Clockworks* is "an attempt to give time the kind of satisfying shape it so often lacks."

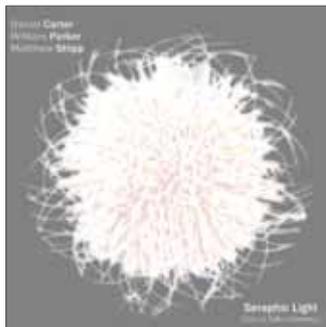
From the sound of this record, Dali himself couldn't have painted a more appropriate portrait. —Ron Hart

Clockworks: A Scattering Of Stars (Distension Variation); Pendulum; Metric Variation; Waltz Of The Polyrhythmic Palindrome; Linear Variation; The Center Of The Clock; Entropic Variation; Boogaloo Of The Polyrhythmic Palindrome; Harmonic Variation; Windup; A Scattering Of Stars (Theme). (53:52)

Personnel: Patrick Zimmerli, tenor saxophone; Ethan Iverson, piano; Christopher Tordini, bass; John Hollenbeck, drums.

Ordering info: songlines.com

**Daniel Carter/
William Parker/
Matthew Shipp**
Seraphic Light
AUM FIDELITY 106
★★★★

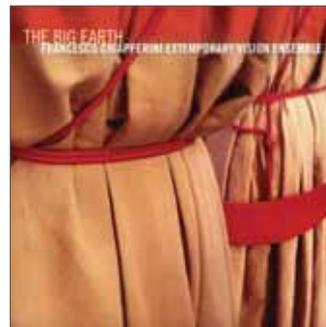


In varying combinations, Matthew Shipp, William Parker and Daniel Carter have been playing alongside one another since the 1980s. And their rapport imbues most records where any two of them appear together with an intuitive cohesion that frees all involved to fearlessly improvise. Still, that doesn't mean their aesthetics are in complete alignment. Shipp and Parker's team-ups tend to exude heaviness; Carter is all about the light.

Although Carter's a veteran of countless pass-the-hat free-jazz gigs, his own playing rarely is aggressive. His clarinet melodies on this 2017 live recording glide over the slowly braiding lines of his partners near the end of "Seraphic Light, Part I," and the brief alto saxophone phrases that launch "Part II" seem even more airborne. As often as not, Parker and Shipp play around, rather than with, Carter, as evidenced by a moment about 18 minutes into the album's first section. But this isn't a problem; the musical affinity here is strong enough that they complement each other without drawing attention to how the pieces hold together. The spaces between them are as significant as anything they actually play. —Bill Meyer

Seraphic Light: Seraphic Light, Part I; Seraphic Light, Part II; Seraphic Light, Part III. (55:17)
Personnel: Daniel Carter, flute, trumpet, clarinet, tenor, alto and soprano saxophones; William Parker, bass; Matthew Shipp, piano.
Ordering info: aumfidelity.com

Francesco Chiapperini
Extemporary
Vision Ensemble
The Big Earth
RUDI 1037
★★★★



Italian multi-instrumentalist Francesco Chiapperini takes a 12-piece version of his Extemporary Vision Ensemble into the studio for *The Big Earth*. And this time out, the album's dedicated to a place and concept: Puglia (the heel of Italy's boot) and the history of Southern Italian band music. There's a lot of joy and a little mystery in the music here, bringing to mind outdoor carnivals and, occasionally, darker side streets.

Chiapperini absolutely soars on clarinet during the recurring "Gatti" theme. He's also a generous bandleader, and his ensemble gets plenty of room to shine. Pianist Simone Quatrana is solid throughout, but especially on "La Merc D'Palm"; drummers Filippo Monico and Filippo Sala rarely let the momentum flag, and are given their chance to shine on the third appearance of the "Gatti" theme. It's an infectious and joyous 70 minutes that even might prompt booking a journey to the boot-heel of Italy.

—Kurt Gottschalk

The Big Earth: Palmieri; La Merc D'Palm; Tramonto Tragico; Gatti; Palmieralzer; U Conzasiegge; La Segg Aggstat; Gatti (Reprise); Canigatti; La Varc Du Pescator; Il Pescatore; Gatti (Reprise); Gattigull; Fantozzi. (72:12)
Personnel: Francesco Chiapperini, clarinet; Andrea "Jimmy" Catagnoli, alto saxophone; Gianluca Elia, tenor saxophone; Eloisa Manera, violin; Vito Emanuele Galante, Marco Galetta, trumpet; Andrea Baronchelli, trombone, tuba; Simone Quatrana, piano; Luca Pissavini, cello; Andrea Grossi, bass; Filippo Sala, drums; Filippo Monico, drums, percussion.
Ordering info: rudirecords.com

Kristjan Randalu
Absence
ECM 2586
★★★★



Pianist Kristjan Randalu's ECM debut slips seamlessly into the imprint's MO. But some of the original compositions here spit more fire than one might expect from the tide-less mass of water printed on black-and-white album cover.

The 40-year-old Estonian pianist is joined by American guitarist Ben Monder and drummer Markku Ounaskari, a Finn, for *Absence*. And a swell of ideas neatly are bundled up by the trio's responsive timing.

"Forecast" builds into a storm, but opens with nary a cloud in the sky. After a short introduction, Randalu ushers in the others with a bit of muscle. But there's plenty of ethereal humming to be found here as well. Monder bends clouds on "Lumi II," but by tune's end, the band is in full frenetic-arpeggiation mode, with Randalu skittering nimbly across the keyboard.

The bandleader is a pillar of stability. He clearly is capable of breathtaking displays of technique and showmanship, but employs challenging runs with a noble conservatism, while Ounaskari rarely interrupts and always is right in step. By album's end, the titular track drifts into that bleak black-and-white swell, absent the vivaciousness of the session's start. —Sean J. O'Connell

Absence: Forecast; Lumi I; Sis; Lumi II; Escapism; Adaption I; Adaption II; Partly Clouded; Absence. (48:11)
Personnel: Kristjan Randalu, piano; Ben Monder, guitar; Markku Ounaskari, drums.
Ordering info: ecmrecords.com

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Mark Wade

4 Things They Don't Tell You About Playing the Double Bass

Congratulations—you've decided to play the double bass. It's a wonderful instrument that can bring you an incredible level of fulfillment and enjoyment. There are, however, a couple of things you might want to know about playing the bass that not everybody talks about. Every instrument has its quirks and pitfalls, and the double bass is no exception; identifying the issues endemic to the instrument is the first step in managing and overcoming them. I can think of four major challenges you will need to address in order to achieve success on the double bass.

You won't hear all the notes you play. Come again? How can you expect to play music if you can't hear all the notes you play? Welcome to life on the low

end of the sonic spectrum. The bass, especially when it's plucked with the fingers as it usually is in jazz, is one of the quietest instruments traditionally found in jazz—it lacks the power and volume of an instrument like the saxophone or the drums. Simply put, the louder an instrument is, the easier it is to hear it. Couple that with the fact that notes that are lower in frequency have a harder time separating themselves from the overall fabric of the music in many circumstances.

Things get even more complicated when we have to compete with instruments like the lower-pitched drums in the drum kit and the lower part of the piano. Both instruments live in the same sonic space and have the ability to overpower the bass in terms of volume and timbre. This is a challenging thing to deal with wheth-

er you're playing in a purely acoustic setting or whether you're playing with amplification.

So, what's to be done about this? The first thing is to understand that there will be times when your notes will not have all the clarity you normally would have, if you were playing by yourself in the practice room. Most of the time, as bass players, we are in the role of accompanist, and that means we are there to support and not to stick out. In those moments when you feel you're getting buried by the other instruments, it's important to remember not to panic. The natural instinct is to start pulling harder on the strings and gripping the instrument more tightly. It's best just to ride it out and stay relaxed and calm on the instrument. Pulling harder, squeezing harder and forcing the issue in general usu-

ally just leads to a loss of control and intonation.

There are a few technical tricks you can use. Picking closer to the tip of your fingers, rather than the side of the fingers, tends to create a slightly thinner sound that can cut through the texture. Also, moving your hand a little closer to the bridge will brighten and tighten the sound for a little bit more clarity. Keep in mind that if you are a player who likes to play with gut or synthetic gut-style strings, your sound is naturally going to be a bit more diffuse, as opposed to playing with steel strings, which will have a better chance of cutting through.

Some basses naturally have a very warm and round sound, while others can be a bit more “punching” in quality. Knowing about your gear and your setup can help you put yourself in a position where you’re most comfortable dealing with this issue. Sometimes, the notes we play are “felt” more than they are heard. It’s just part of the beauty of playing the double bass. It’s true that playing through an amplifier can help with this issue, but it also presents the bassist with a whole new set of challenges.

For an instrument that is acoustic, you’re going to spend a lot of time dealing with electronics. Amplification and sound reinforcement are realities of modern music today. Unless you’re playing the smallest and most intimate of venues, chances are you’re going to need to play with some kind of amplification. As acoustic bass players, we practice for hours and hours to develop our sound. It’s that beautiful, resonant sound of the instrument that caused most of us to fall in love with it in the first place. The minute we plug our instrument into an amplifier, however, the game changes.

While playing through an amp can solve the problem of not having enough volume for your bass, there has not yet been invented a system that perfectly replicates the tone of an acoustic bass through an amplifier. Because we spend so much time performing through an amplifier, it is just as important to learn how to get a good sound through an amp as it is to get a good sound acoustically on your bass. After all, most of the time, people are going to be hearing you play while you’re performing at a concert and not at home in your bedroom. The better your sound is through an amp, the more likely people are to hire you, since they don’t want to listen to an unattractive bass sound any more than you do.

The good news is that technology finally is catching up to the acoustic bass. It seems that every day there are new companies that are improving all of the different electronic gadgets we use to help us get closer to a sound that truly represents the instrument. Some people prefer to use a combination of a pickup, microphone and preamp to give themselves the widest range of possibilities for dialing in a good sound. The advantage of this is that you are better able to

adapt to the sound of each individual room you play in. Other people prefer a simpler setup with a pickup that works best for them along with an amp that is paired to match. Whatever your combination of gear, it’s always a good idea to try out a lot of different options to see what sounds best on your individual bass and what responds the best to your style of play.

If you’re new to be playing through an amp, or if you have new gear to play with, it’s a good idea to practice at home through your amplifier for a period of time, so that you know how to best manage your sound on the gig. Remember that volume doesn’t always equal clarity. Often the best way to be heard on the gig is knowing which frequencies on the amp to either boost or cut. Sometimes, turning down the bass frequencies might add more clarity. Other times, it’s about raising the high-mid frequencies. The more you know about how your amp works and responds, the better you’ll be able to make those decisions on the fly during a gig.

Getting to the gig is half the battle. The bass is a large instrument, and no matter how you choose to transport it, it’s always going to be difficult. However, there are also a few less obvious issues to contend with. If you’re able to drive to gigs, there’s still the issue of getting your bass and amp in and out of the club. Are there a lot of steps? Maybe buying that 40-pound amplifier that gives you an amazing sound suddenly doesn’t seem like such a good idea. Keep an eye on weight and portability of the gear that you buy. Maybe you live in the city and rely on public transportation to get to your gig. Which bus lines can you fit on, and which ones don’t have room? Which entrance to which subway can you get your bass into, and which ones will it not fit through? These are all questions you want to address before you find yourself coming home from a gig at 1 a.m.

Then there’s the question of playing out of town. If you have to fly to a gig, just how are you planning to get your bass there? Sure, there is the possibility of borrowing an instrument at your destination, but there’s never any way to know what kind of instrument you’re going to get. There are a number of companies that make travel-sized basses that are popular with a number of players. Some have bodies that are cut down, so that they fit in a case that’s a little bit larger than a cello. Others make a regular full-size bass with a detachable neck that allows it to fold up into a smaller, more manageable size. Even with these travel options, you have to think about just how big of a suitcase you can drag around along with what is still a rather cumbersome object.

Learning to physically address the instrument will take years. I remember attending a college master class with the veteran jazz double bassist Dave Holland. One of the other

bass players in the audience was Martin Wind, a great player in his own right. Wind asked Holland what his approach to standing with the instrument was. I remember hearing a few other people around us snickering at the question, thinking that it was a trivial thing to ask someone like Dave Holland. Holland gave a very thoughtful and serious answer about his different approaches to his weight distribution and posture as he held the instrument. That’s because any serious player knows that just to stand with the instrument with the minimal amount of tension in your body is something that takes years and years of constant practice and attention.

Learning to play the double bass is not about finding a comfortable position to play from and being set for life. It is a constant journey of developing your body awareness, so that you can move freely anywhere on the instrument as the music calls for it. It’s about finding greater positions of leverage on the instrument that allow you to use less brute force and be more efficient in your movements. The more effort you spend trying to hold the instrument up and keep it stable, the less time and effort you can spend actually playing music on it. Finding that position of leverage is about experimenting with how high or low you set your endpin along with an awareness of where you’re holding tension in your body. Is your back tight because you are trying to counter the weight of the bass leaning into you? Do you raise one shoulder more than another to get your right or left hand in a more comfortable position? Could you achieve the same effect by relaxing a certain combination of muscles in one or both arms?

Your ability to play time, create a vibe and interact creatively with the band all directly are impacted by how relaxed and in control you are on the instrument. The best players are always experimenting with how they address the double bass, with the goal of finding every possible advantage in translating the music from what they hear in their head to what you hear them play.

If all of the above seems like a lot to deal with, don’t worry—you’re in good company. These are all issues that every bass player has to reckon with. It’s helpful to talk with other players about how they deal with these issues and share experiences—you just might find someone who has come up with a solution to a problem you’re having. Just remember that with effort and concentration, you can make plenty of amazing music on the double bass, in spite of the many challenges it presents.

DB

Mark Wade has been an active bassist on the New York scene for more than 20 years. He is also a jazz faculty member at Lehigh University. Wade was voted one of the top 10 bassists of 2016 in *DownBeat*’s 81st Annual Readers Poll. His new album, *Moving Day*, is available in Europe on Edition 46 Records and worldwide on his label Mark Wade Music. To find out more about Wade’s music and his upcoming performances, and to continue the conversation about the double bass, visit his website: markwademusicny.com.



CALIXTO JUNIOR FOTOGRAFIA

Sandy Cressman

Vocal Phrasing in Brazilian Jazz

As a North American-born musician who found her voice in the music of Brazil, I've been on a mission to learn the details of what makes the phrasing of this music so beautiful and appealing. I have been fortunate, living in the San Francisco Bay Area, to cross paths with and learn from musicians like Marcos Silva, Jasnam Daya Singh (Weber Iago), Jovino Santos Neto, Celso Alberti, Guinga, Spok (Inaldo Cavalcante de Albuquerque) and Hermeto Pascoal—all of whom either are based here or teach at California Brazil Camp in nearby Cazadero. Workshops with these musicians, trips to Brazil to hear great musicians in intimate concert settings and the priceless experience of performing several times in Recife's Carnaval with the SpokFrevo Orquestra have rounded out my experience, and stoked my continuing desire

to learn the subtleties of this compelling music.

But a lot of what I learned was from my virtual teachers: the great singers whose recordings I studied. These include Elis Regina, Joyce Moreno, João Gilberto, Gilberto Gil and more. I had to not only emulate these great vocalists but also analyze what makes their phrasing so different, and so distinctive, from my initial instincts of phrasing coming from a background in American jazz. In this article, I will share a bit of what I have learned during 20 years of obsession with and devotion to the music of Brazil.

First of all, it's important to note a few things about Brazilian vocal tone and treatment of melody. In the genres of Brazilian music that have found their way into the realm of jazz, the use of vibrato is minimal: straight tone, maybe with a bit of vibrato at the end of a phrase. The range

of tonal color and clarity varies, from the breathy tone of João Gilberto and the raspy sound of Leny Andrade to the pure clarity of Joyce Moreno or Gal Costa.

Another important factor is the poetry of the lyrics, and how vocal phrasing becomes a vehicle to express their meaning and beauty. Contrast this with the jazz tradition of turning a standard's melody inside-out, stretching the boundaries of phrasing and playing the melody against the rhythm in ways that sometimes disregard the meaning of the lyrics. In Brazilian music, there is a tradition of prioritizing the lyrics and the combination of melody and harmony that the composer created, leading to less ambitious improvisation/experimentation with the melody.

Many jazz vocalists begin to explore Brazilian music by adding some bossa nova songs by the likes of Antonio Carlos Jobim or Baden Powell to their repertoire. Beyond the common knowledge that these tunes are sung with straight eighth notes, as opposed to swing, in order to really understand, appreciate and interpret songs from the bossa nova era, we need to go one step back and explore samba.

Samba has its rhythmic roots in the Afro-Brazilian batucadas (structured percussion jams) played by slaves and their descendants in an area of Rio de Janeiro called Praça Onze during the mid-to-late 1800s. In the early part of the 20th century, a group of musicians got together there to discuss music and write songs, fusing European melodic and harmonic content with African rhythms. Out of this came the samba as we know it today. Samba is played in large groups called escolas de samba in Carnaval parades or in groups consisting of percussion, rhythm section and horns; and in smaller ensembles of guitar, cavaco (a small, four-string Brazilian guitar), percussion and vocals.

Samba is felt and written in 2/4, with the main pulse of one closed tone and one open tone played by the large surdo drums. Sixteenth notes are played by shakers (ganza), overlaid with syncopated patterns played by the tamborim (a small hand drum played with a stick), as well as by the pandeiro (which resembles a tambourine), the caixa (snare drum) and the cuica (which makes a syncopated squeak). Small groups playing samba retained these rhythms, with the surdo pulse played by a bass or by the bass notes of the guitar comping pattern; the guitar, cavaco or piano playing the tamborim rhythms; and the drum kit playing a composite of the rhythms played in the batucada. For an authentic example of the samba feel, check out Paulinho da Viola's song "Foi Um Rio Que Passou Em Minha Vida."

A few things are crucial to note when phrasing

a samba melody. Feel the 16th-note subdivisions (see Figure 1), and notice that most samba melodies employ a rhythmic figure consisting of a 16th note followed by an eighth note followed by another 16th note (sometimes called the “fork”). Often, you’ll find several forks tied together (see Figure 2), creating anticipations of the downbeats (eighth notes) by a 16th note. This often creates syncopation over the bar lines. Figure 3 shows a melody played on the eighth notes versus the 16th-note anticipations (from “Como Eu Quero Cantar” by Sandy Cressman, Dani Gurgel and Debora Gurgel). These syncopations are not hit hard, but they definitely groove with the subdivisions underneath.

The fork rhythm is sung in a laid-back manner that sounds almost like eighth-note triplets. Some Brazilian lead sheets are written with some forks and some triplets, and samba singers often mix the two. Singers often phrase with even more 16th-note anticipations than you will find in written music. The 16th-note subdivisions in samba have a pattern of accents that create a unique feel, and there is lightness of singing syncopations over this groove, in contrast to the heavier articulation of Afro-Cuban/salsa melodies and horn sections. The classic samba songs have fairly diatonic melodies and simple chord progressions. In the genres *música popular brasileira* (MPB) and samba jazz, the samba rhythms appear in compositions that have more complex chord progressions and melodies.

To get an idea of classic samba phrasing, listen to Ismael Silva or Beth Carvalho singing “Se Você Jurar.” Or, in a more MPB context, check out Elis Regina, Joyce Moreno, Djavan or Gilberto Gil. Notice how the 16th-note anticipations of the singers often sync up with the comping patterns of the guitar or piano.

In the late 1950s, when a group of young musicians fused their knowledge of European classical music and American jazz with the rhythms of samba, the bossa nova was born. Bossa nova (which translates to “new way”) describes an era as much as a genre of music. Composers got together to share their new songs and create new ways of playing the “levada” (or groove) on the guitar—which was a reduction of the samba groove played at slower tempos.

Bossa nova reflects the marriage of samba with the harmonic and melodic content of jazz. Bossa nova singers alternate between singing almost conversationally, interpreting beautiful poetry, seemingly floating over the groove and connecting every once in a while to the 16th-note subdivisions, especially on the last 16th note of beat 2. Listen to João Gilberto singing “Insensatez”: He seems to float over the groove, and then connects with the last 16th of the bar on the final syllable of the lyrics “cuidado,” “delicado” and “desalmado.”

To sing a bossa nova with true Brazilian flavor, practice awareness of the 16th-note

Figure 1: Samba groove with “fork” syncopation

Figure 2: Samba with tied-together “forks”

Figure 1: Samba groove with “fork” syncopation. The notation shows a 2/4 time signature. The top staff is labeled 'Surdo Pulse' with 'Closed' and 'Open' patterns. The middle staff is 'Sixteenth Note subdivisions' with 'Ganza(shaker)'. The bottom staff is 'The Fork' with the rhythmic pattern '1 e & a 2 e & a' repeated. Figure 2: Samba with tied-together “forks”. The notation shows the same 'The Fork' pattern but with some notes tied across bar lines, labeled 'Forks tied together'.

Figure 3: Melody played on eighth notes versus 16th-note anticipations

Figure 3: Melody played on eighth notes versus 16th-note anticipations. The notation shows two versions of the melody for the song 'Como Eu Quero Cantar'. The top version is 'Melody without sixteenth note anticipations' with lyrics 'Um eu - fo - ri - a ca - da be - la man - há - - - - - Ao'. The bottom version is 'Melody with sixteenth note anticipations, “forks” tied together' with lyrics 'Um eu - fo - ri - a ca - da be - la man - há - - - - - Ao sol'. The bottom version shows the melody starting with a 16th-note anticipation. Copyright 2015 Sandrinha Musica and Da Pá Virada from the CD 'Entre Amigos' Cressman Music 2017.

Figure 4: Baião melody example

Figure 4: Baião melody example. The notation shows a 2/4 time signature. The top staff is the melody with lyrics 'Ba da be ya da da day ee eh'. The middle staff is 'Perc. 1' with 'Triangle, Muted(x) and Open'. The bottom staff is 'Perc. 2' with 'Zabumba/Bass Drum'. Copyright 2016 Sandrinha Musica and Real Angle Music from the CD 'Entre Amigos' Cressman Music 2017.

subdivisions by counting “one-e-and-a, two-e-and-a” along with a favorite recording, noticing where the vocalist floats and where they connect with 16th-note syncopations. I recommend listening to a lot of recordings of the singers listed at the end of this article, and also checking out Brazilian fake books (known as “songbooks”), such as those published by Almir Chediak. Compare the way the original melody is written with the way great singers phrase. It is important to note that the rhythms of Brazilian melodies were created for the rhythm of the Portuguese language, so I recommend studying some

Portuguese with a native Brazilian or even with an app like Duolingo. This will make your pronunciation, elision of syllables and conversational phrasing sound more authentic.

Beyond samba and bossa nova, several other genres of Brazilian music have found their way into the Brazilian jazz repertoire.

In choro, a small group style that originated in the late 1800s, you will find the “fork” rhythm and eighth-note triplets, but most of the syncopation happens within the quarter note, and not as often across beats and bar lines.

Some MPB and Brazilian jazz tunes incor-

porate the baião groove from the sertão (the interior of the northeast of Brazil), which has underlying rhythmic accents that differ from samba, bossa nova and choro. (Figure 4 on the previous page shows a baião melody example from “Para Hermeto,” by Cressman and Jovino Santos Neto.) Although the 16th-note subdivisions still are present (as played by the triangle), the phrasing of melodies over the baião groove doesn’t use as many “forks” and the syncopation is more on the eighth notes.

Besides the baião, the northeastern rhythms of frevo and maracatu also have made their way into Brazilian jazz compositions and arrangements. These genres also have unique rhythmic accents, and the melodies and syncopations are more eighth-note-oriented.

As vocalists explore singing in the various genres discussed above, they should take note of the underlying rhythms of each one and study the phrasing of vocalists in the repertoire of each genre, noting the differences of syncopation and feel. I hope you will all check out the treasure trove of the vocal music of Brazil in all of its beauty. **DB**

San Francisco-based vocalist Sandy Cressman made a name for herself as a devotee of Brazil’s greatest contemporary composers, interpreting songs by such post-bossa masters as Milton Nascimento, Hermeto Pascoal, Gilberto Gil and Filó Machado on her first two albums (*Homenagem Brasileira* and *Brasil-Sempre No Coração*) and onstage in the United States, Europe and Brazil. In 2017, Cressman released *Entre Amigos* (Cressman Music), which features original songs created with some of the Brazilian musicians she has met during her musical travels, including the celebrated Frevo composer/bandleader Spok, guitarist Ian Faquini, pianist/composer Jovino Santos Neto and pianist Antonio Adolfo. Cressman is an adjunct professor at the California Jazz Conservatory in Berkeley.

RECOMMENDED VOCAL RECORDINGS

Samba: Beth Carvalho, “Se Você Jurar” from *40 Anos De Carreira*; Paulinho da Viola, “Foi Um Rio Que Passou Em Minha Vida” from *Identidade*

Samba in MPB: Elis Regina, “Amor Até o Fim” from *Os Sonhos Mais Lindos*

Bossa nova: João Gilberto, “Insensatez” from *The Legendary João Gilberto*; Antonio Carlos Jobim and Elis Regina, *Elis & Tom*.

Choro: Marisa Monte/Paulinho da Viola, “Carinhoso” from *O Mistério Do Samba*; Tatiana Parra/Andrés Beeuwsaert, “Carinhoso” from *Aqui*

Baião: Luiz Gonzaga, “Que Nem Jiló” from *Despedida*.

Frevo in MPB context: Dori Caymmi, “Ninho De Vespia” from *Brasílian Serenata*

Maracatu: Alceu Valença, “Maracatu” from *Amigo Da Arte*; Sandy Cressman/Dani Gurgel, introduction of “Como Eu Quero Cantar” from *Entre Amigos*

Singing over various grooves: Elis Regina, *Essa Mulher*.

Other singers to check out: Rosa Passos, Joyce Moreno, Mônica Salmaso, Luciana Souza, Gal Costa, Ivan Lins, Milton Nascimento, Djavan, Edu Lobo, Nana Caymmi, Leila Pinheiro, Emílio Santiago

OTHER RESOURCES

- *The Brazilian Sound* (Temple University Press), by Chris McGowan and Ricardo Pessanha.
- *Phrasing In Brazilian Music* (Advance Music), by Antonio Adolfo.
- Songbooks (Lumiar Editora) produced by Almir Chediak for various composers and genres.
- California Brazil Camp: Aug. 19-25, Aug. 26-Sept. 1, 2018, in Cazadero, California (calbrazilcamp.com)
- Cressman’s favorite CDs list: cressmanmusic.com/favoritedisks.cfm

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Rudresh Mahanthappa's Alto Saxophone Solo on 'Snap'

Rudresh Mahanthappa's Indo-Pak Coalition has taken the concept of the saxophone trio in a new direction. Much like the saxophone trio formats pioneered by Sonny Rollins, the Indo-Pak Coalition—which features Mahanthappa on alto saxophone, Rez Abbasi on electric guitar and Dan Weiss on percussion—achieves a great amount of melodic, harmonic, rhythmic and timbral freedom. On the band's newest album, *Agrima*, each instrumentalist

utilizes the clarity of the trio to add unique colors to the ensemble's sound.

"Snap," the second track on the album, is an inventive display of the band's enormous range of expression. Between the various sections of the melody, Mahanthappa improvises with sparse, short phrases, and sometimes utilizes electronic effects to create a free, ethereal sound. The open quality of the trio allows Mahanthappa to explore new roles for the alto saxophone.

Most of "Snap" is played over a concert D pedal note, or B on the alto saxophone. The melody is based on the core raga that all South Indian ragas are based around. Mahanthappa describes it as the South Indian equivalent of the Western major scale. In jazz nomenclature, the raga could be described as a major scale with flatted second and flatted sixth scale degrees. However, Mahanthappa emphasizes that ragas do not function in the same way scales function in Western music.

Each note of a raga is approached and embellished in very specific ways.

The first half of Mahanthappa's solo is strongly centered around the raga. His use of rhythm, dynamics and articulation are fantastic examples of extracting many creative ideas out of a small amount of harmonic material.

The transcribed excerpt presented here begins at 3:29, approximately halfway through Mahanthappa's solo. At this point, he begins moving away from the raga more often. The first phrase sounds mostly free and atonal, but he resolves back to the B at the end of the line.

In measure 1, Mahanthappa plays a perfect-fourth pattern that moves to an A major triad. By measure 2, he mostly plays notes from the raga. In measures 3–5, he is playing entirely within the A \flat major pentatonic scale, which shares three notes with the raga. In measure 6, he chromatically encloses the B pedal note with C and B \flat , both of which are contained in the A \flat major pentatonic scale and the raga. When he resolves back to B, he moves from B \flat to B "quarter flat" to B natural. (Mahanthappa frequently uses quarter tones in his music.) This phrase seamlessly weaves between atonality, the raga and A \flat major pentatonic. This harmonic freedom is one of the most astounding characteristics of Mahanthappa's improvisation.

In measures 17–22, Mahanthappa plays an entire phrase using only the raga. The first half of the phrase features rhythmic intensity that drives toward a climactic resolution on the downbeat of measure 20. Mahanthappa resolves to B and plays one of the bass-line rhythms for two bars. The phrase ends on a held C, one half step above the B pedal. The unresolved dissonance contrasts the finality of the previous resolution, as if to indicate that the solo is not over yet.

The phrase in measures 23–29 begins with the raga. In measure 25, Mahanthappa outlines an F7 chord for two beats. In the third beat, the line begins to outline an A \flat 7 chord, and by measure 27, he plays A \flat major pentatonic exclusively, until returning to the raga and resolving to B again in measure 29. The ascending minor-third relationships between the tonicized key centers gives the atonal phrase structure and forward motion.

Mahanthappa demonstrates mastery of extended techniques in this solo. In measure 28, he uses an alternate fingering for A \flat . (It sounds like the "articulated" low-C# spatula key was used to play the initial A \flat , and the second A \flat was fingered as a low C# with the octave key.) This technique gives the repeated A \flat a different timbre than the traditional A \flat fingering. In measures 30 and 31, Mahanthappa uses a "sub-tongue" tech-

nique (indicated by "x" noteheads) where the tongue touches the tip of the reed, but a muffled note still sounds.

In measures 38 and 39, Mahanthappa uses the paradiddle drum rudiment as a melodic device in his playing, alternating between middle B and low B in measure 38 and low D# and middle B in measure 39.

In the final phrase of the excerpt, beginning in measure 43, Mahanthappa plays a phrase entirely in triplets, which is quite fast at the approximately 260bpm tempo. The shape of the phrase emphasizes three-note groupings. The first triplet group is an E diminished triad in second inversion,

and the second triplet group is an A minor triad in first inversion. By the time he gets to the third triplet set at the beginning of measure 44, Mahanthappa emphasizes the note groupings through range. The first and third beats of the measure are in the middle range, and the second and fourth beats are in a lower range. Measures 45 and 46 use mostly linear motion, and Mahanthappa resolves the phrase using a chromatic enclosure of the B pedal note. **DB**

Kirby Davis is a saxophone performance major at the University of Kentucky. He studies with Miles Osland and recently was awarded second place in the North American Saxophone Alliance (NASA) Collegiate Jazz Solo Competition.



Universal Audio OX Amp Top Box

Dialed-in Studio Guitar Sounds

The new OX Amp Top Box from Universal Audio combines a premier reactive load box with a world-class digital amp and the company's Dynamic Speaker Modeling. Suitable for use on stage or in the recording studio, it's UA's first hardware product designed specifically for the guitar market.

OX is composed of two individual components: the analog load box and the digital modeling section. On the analog side, OX works in conjunction with your tube amp, providing the ability to control your speaker volume, while still driving your amp at optimum saturation levels. The digital end offers cabinet and microphone modeling that allows you to produce studio-quality guitar recordings directly out of the box.

A load box takes the place of your tube amplifier's speaker. You simply connect your amp's speaker output to the input of the load box, and the output of the load box is sent back to your speaker. The load box has an attenuator that controls the volume of the returning signal.

Tube amps react to how hard you drive them, and an amp set to a lower level will sound much different when cranked. But with the load box connected, you can adjust your amp for the desired sound and dial back the overall volume to a more comfortable level, while still retaining the same tonal characteristics and dynamics—including speaker breakup, drive and cone cry.

Although the speaker output is pure analog amp tone, the digital component of OX offers additional line outs that feature the DSP modeling

function. OX has six selectable onboard "rigs" that offer a variety of cabinets, microphone and effects emulations to create studio-quality recordings. OX also provides a "room" control to dial in the exact amount of ambience. The six selectable rig models provide plenty of great options, and the sound is amazing. This functionality alone might be enough for some users to justify the unit's \$1,299 price tag, but the OX box bursts with possibilities when paired up with the OX software app.

The app requires a Wi-Fi connection and runs on Mac or iPad. (No Windows or Android version is available at this time.) Once connected, you are presented with a host of additional rig options, plus the ability to customize and create your own rig presets. You also can use the app to customize the six rigs that are available from the unit's hardware box.

OX has two quarter-inch line/monitor outs that can feed either a mixing board or monitors for live playing; they also can be connected to a DAW for direct recording. In addition, there is a headphone out for monitoring or silent practicing. OX also has a digital out that supports a fixed sampling rate of 44.1kHz. Depending on whether you have a combo amp or a separate head, be aware that you might need to purchase special cables to make the proper connections to OX.

Considering Universal Audio's reputation as a leader in both analog hardware and digital software, it's no surprise that the OX Amp Top Box hits the mark in both of these categories.

—Keith Baumann

uaudio.com

Evans UV1 Bass Heads

Durable Coating, Full Tone, Quick Rebound

Evans Drumheads by D'Addario Percussion has released UV1 coated bass heads, which complement the company's UV1 single-ply coated snare heads and tom heads. Available in a range of sizes from 16 inches to 26 inches, the standard UV1 bass head is similar to the snare and tom heads in dynamic response and durability, but it has a collar especially designed to fit bass drums. This is an ideal head for players who seek a bright attack and want their bass drum to match the sonority of their snare

and toms. The heads' ultraviolet-cured textured coating—slightly heavier than a sprayed-on coating and resistant to chipping, fading and stick marks—eliminates just enough overtones to give the bass drum a full and deep tone, allowing it to be played with minimal damping.

Evans' UV EQ4 version of the bass drum head adds an internal 10-mil overtone control ring around the circumference. It still has plenty of sustain, but the attack is less bright than the standard UV1. The UV EMAD

version is the same as the standard UV1 but adds two different sizes of felt tone rings (for more or less dampening), held in place by an externally adhered bracket around the circumference of the head. This bass head has increased punch and attack with minimal sustain.

All UV1 heads have the textured coating only on the playing surface. The collar is not coated, which makes it slightly thinner and more flexible. It allows the collar to conform to the shape of the drum's bearing edge. This makes the drum easier to tune, expands the tuning range and helps it stay in tune—a great move by Evans.

When playing UV1 heads, you feel and hear the sensation of playing single-ply coated heads that sound bright and are responsive to the touch with a quick rebound. When playing horizontal brush strokes, the textured coated surface creates an even sound. The grit of the surface isn't as rough as a sprayed-on texture, so you feel less resistance. It also isn't as loud as a fresh head with the sprayed-on surface. But unlike a sprayed-on texture that quickly wears off and leaves you with nothing but smoothness, the UV1 texture stays the same for the life of the head.

The UV1 is an extremely durable head that can outlast other single-ply heads many times over. After playing full UV1 setups on two different kits on multiple gigs, I didn't see any signs of wear. The surface still looked new, with no flaking, dents or stretching. Playing the bass drum heads with felt beaters and no patch did not produce any visible dents. I eventually noticed some discoloration of the surface, so I would recommend using a patch where the beater strikes the head.

Evans UV1 heads are a great choice on just about any type of drum—modern, vintage, even slightly oversized. The heads include the company's Level 360 Technology, whereby collars are extended between the flesh hoop and the playing surface to enhance contact with the bearing edge of the drum.

Kudos to Evans for adapting to the needs of players and creating a drumhead that caters to the ever-changing needs of the drumming community. —Steve Hawk

daddario.com



Antigua Pro-One Alto

Cryogenic Treatment, Classic Antique Finish

Antigua Winds has released a cryogenically treated version of its Pro-One AS6200 professional alto saxophone in Classic Antique finish.

According to Antigua's Michael Summers, feedback on recent Pro-One prototypes that received cryogenic treatment—a process that involves subjecting the instrument to extremely low temperatures—was tremendous. The treatment helps to relieve residual stresses that form within the saxophone's brass body and neck during manufacturing. It also creates a tighter, more uniform molecular structure that allows for a more even and consistent vibration throughout the instrument, resulting in clearer tone and improved response.

Like the original Pro-One alto released in Vintage Lacquer finish in 2011, the new AS6200 is constructed using brass with a high copper content, resulting in a heavy horn with vibrant response and plenty of tonal flexibility. Innovative design features include a hybrid setup where the horn's five lowest toneholes—low B flat, B, C, C sharp and E flat—are rolled, and the rest of the toneholes are straight.

I play-tested the cryogenically treated Pro-One alto in Classic Antique finish using a hard-rubber Claude Lakey mouthpiece, a hard-rubber Bari Woodwinds Infinity mouthpiece and a metal Yanagisawa mouthpiece. I was able to produce an exceptionally warm tone quality using the hard-rubber pieces, and I immediately noticed how sweet and responsive the horn was in its lower range. Switching to the metal setup, the Pro-One's altissimo range really came to life. Articulation and intonation felt comfortable on each mouthpiece.

The next test for the Pro-One came playing lead alto in a big band setting. The keys felt nimble and comfortable from the start—I was able to tear through fast passages with accuracy and enjoyed easy response during subtone passages. Moving between the lowest note fingerings felt especially solid, and there was no flutter whatsoever in the low-C-sharp key. I found I had plenty of lead-playing power when I outfitted the Pro-One with the metal mouthpiece; hard-rubber pieces would be great choices for big band sectional playing.

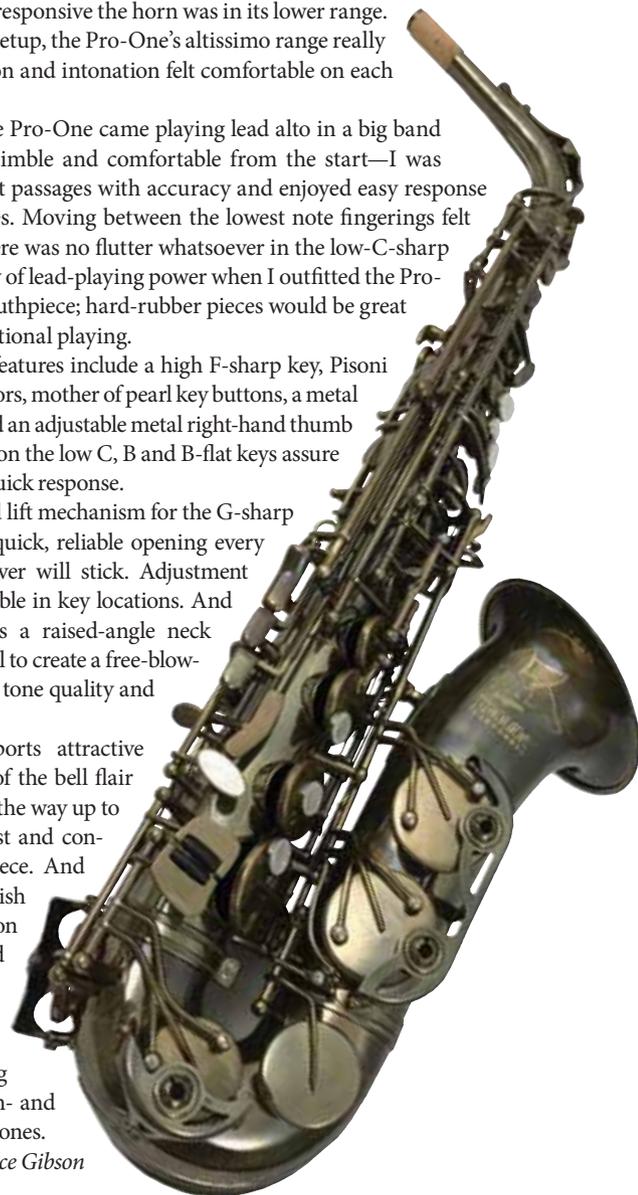
Other professional features include a high F-sharp key, Pisoni pads with metal resonators, mother of pearl key buttons, a metal left-hand thumb rest and an adjustable metal right-hand thumb hook. Trident key arms on the low C, B and B-flat keys assure proper pad closing for quick response.

A uniquely designed lift mechanism for the G-sharp pad effectively insures quick, reliable opening every time—this G sharp never will stick. Adjustment screws are easily accessible in key locations. And the instrument features a raised-angle neck designed by Peter Ponzol to create a free-blowing feeling and enhance tone quality and response.

The instrument sports attractive engraving from inside of the bell flair around the bow and all the way up to the left-hand thumb rest and continuing on the neck piece. And the Classic Antique finish is a cool cosmetic option that brings to mind many of the great-playing professional horns that were in production decades ago during the golden era of French- and American-made saxophones.

—Bruce Gibson

antiguawinds.com



1

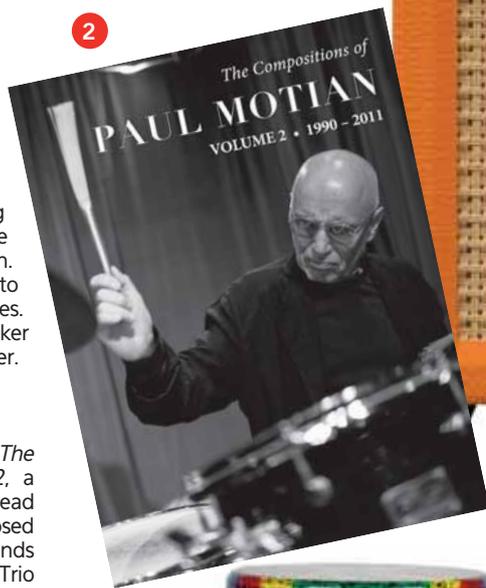


1. Mini-Combo

The Crush Mini from Orange Amplification is a portable mini-combo that features an all-analog approach to guitar tone. The unit's front panel provides access to full tonal control with gain, shape and volume knobs. Backing off the gain and increasing the volume results in British crunch, while pushing the gain gives you searing high gain. The shape control cuts or boosts the mids to achieve everything from fat to scooped tones. The Crush Mini comes with an 8-ohm speaker output, headphone output and built-in tuner.

More info: orangeamps.com

2



2. More Motian Lead Sheets

The Paul Motian Archive has released *The Compositions of Paul Motian, Volume 2*, a spiral-bound collection of 49 handwritten lead sheets to tunes the late drummer composed during the years 1990–2011. Motian's bands from that period included the Paul Motian Trio (with Bill Frisell and Joe Lovano), the Electric Bebop Band, Paul Motian Band and Trio 2000. *The Compositions of Paul Motian, Volume 1*, released in 2016, contained 64 Motian lead sheets written during the years 1973–'89. Both collections were assembled by Cynthia McGuire, Motian's niece and archivist.

More info: paulmotianarchive.com

3



3. Hybrid Drum

Toca's Lightweight Djembes feature a hybrid design that combines elements of a doumbek with those of a djembe. The sculpted shell is made of an ultra-light synthetic that reduces the weight of the drum without sacrificing tone, resonance or durability. Available in 9-, 10- and 12-inch sizes, each Lightweight Djembe is topped with a pre-stretched synthetic head.

More info: tocapercussion.com

4



4. Lip Service

The OmniGuard from Silverstein Works is a lip protector for all wind-instrument musicians. Made with biomedical-grade material, the OmniGuard is the solution to sore lips and gums for players who dedicate long hours to practice and performance. The braces-compatible, reusable product easily molds to the necessary shape and dimensions of the player's lower teeth for a snug and proper fit. Dual packs of OmniGuard for lower and upper teeth are available for players who use a double-lip embouchure. More info: silversteinworks.com

5. Sound Enhancer

The lefreQue consists of two scientifically engineered metal plates—held in place by a knotted band—that act as a sound bridge between the connection points on woodwind or brass instruments. It is designed to repair sound breaches that naturally occur at such points, resulting in purer overtones, more accurate tuning, clearer response, extended dynamics and improved projection. Distributed in the U.S. by Iowa-based West Music, the lefreQue is available in various sizes and materials, including brass, red brass, silver-plated, gold-plated, solid silver and solid gold.

More info: westmusic.com/b/lefreque; lefreque.com

5





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The Plummer Jazz Quintet performs with Indiana University professor/trumpeter John Raymond (right). The band includes Clay Wulbrecht (left), Jake Jezioro, Barclay Moffitt, Sam Bryson and Amanda Gardier.

IU Jazz Embraces Change

ONE MEASURE OF A MUSIC PROGRAM'S strength is how well it alters course to remain relevant.

The 50-year-old jazz studies baccalaureate program at Indiana University's Jacobs School of Music in Bloomington continues to grow and evolve in order to meet the needs of millennial musicians. One approach has been to recruit new faculty members, including bassist Todd Coolman, trumpeter John Raymond and saxophonist Walter Smith III.

"This has really been an injection of new energy for us," said Tom Walsh, who has been chair of the program for five years and who first joined the Jacobs School in 1997.

It was a decision partially driven by tragic loss. In 2015, Steve Zegree, the renowned jazz vocal teacher who directed the IU Singing Hoosiers, died at age 61. The following year, David Baker, who founded the program and served as chair until 2013, died at the age of 84. Although retired as chair, Baker had continued to carry a course load and interact with students.

During Baker's tenure, the program nurtured musicians like Michael and Randy Brecker, Peter Erskine and Chris Botti. Under Walsh's direction, the faculty has added acclaimed recording artists who are also talented educators—such as guitarist Dave Stryker and trombonist Wayne Wallace—to carry on Baker's tradition.

"Improvisational music starts with a desire and curiosity for musical growth," Wallace said. "My main goal as an academic is to help students find and develop their musical voices by nurturing their natural instincts."

"One thing we're doing is putting more emphasis on composition," Walsh said. "We're finding ways to for students to showcase more of

their original music, as well as creating an environment for students to collaborate more."

Additional emphasis also is being placed on exploring a wide range of styles and genres.

In recent years, the school has built a recording studio, added two rehearsal rooms and introduced a music entrepreneurship element. Currently, there are two full-time advisors to help students with issues like copyright law and developing a marketing plan.

"We [help] students to think more strategically about how to build a career in music," Walsh said. "We're encouraging them to take a DIY approach, showing them things like how to run a studio. At the same time, we want to be careful not to create *too* much anxiety about what the future holds. One of the great things about music is that things happen organically."

One challenge facing administrators at the Jacobs School is how to expand the focus on business, while maintaining a conservatory program that demands a considerable amount of students' time. "We're having discussions across the school about this," Walsh said. "How do we strike a balance?"

The jazz program has expanded beyond IU's Bloomington campus to create a relationship with the University of Music and Performing Arts in Graz, Austria. This year during spring break, IU's Plummer Combos traveled to Graz to study and perform.

As he looks to the future, Walsh is confident that the IU program can build on its strong foundation. "We give our students a thorough grounding in the fundamentals," he said. "The challenge is that music continues to evolve, and we have to continue to stay relevant. We're not going to abandon the history, but we're embracing the future."

—James Hale

Esperanza Spalding at Berklee College of Music



DAVID GREEN

Such an Honor: More than 1,000 graduates received degrees at Berklee College of Music's May 12 commencement. Berklee presented honorary doctor of music degrees to Nile Rodgers, Rosanne Cash and **Esperanza Spalding**, a 2005 graduate of the college who delivered the commencement address. "We are artists, so everything that we live, practice and study prepares us to share and tell the truth," Spalding said. ... The Juilliard School presented **Ron Carter** with an honorary degree on May 18. The commencement speaker was Wynton Marsalis, who told graduates, "Your art can be the vaccine for the types of self-involved hysterias that have so often stained human history." Marsalis studied trumpet at Juilliard and has been the director of Juilliard Jazz since 2014. ... New England Conservatory presented **Herbie Hancock** with an honorary doctorate on May 20. ... Brown University presented **Sting** with an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree on May 27. berklee.edu

Cool Camp: About 90 high school students plan to attend the 14th annual Grammy Camp at USC's Thornton School of Music in Los Angeles on July 17–21. "The program gives young people the opportunity to study with music industry professionals—including some Grammy-winning creators—and to collaborate with their peers, resulting in a genuine learning experience about life in the music industry," said Neil Portnow, president/CEO of the Recording Academy and chair of the Grammy Museum Board.

grammyintheschools.com

Bern Films: George Wein has donated a copy of *The Jazz and Blues Artbox* to the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture (part of the New York Public Library system). The set documents 230 concerts and 96 interviews filmed between 1983 and 2002 at Switzerland's International Jazz Festival Bern. nypl.org/locations/schomburg

Music in Class: The Grammy Museum named Lois MacMillan, of South Middle School in Grants Pass, Oregon, the recipient of the 2018 Jane Ortnor Education Award. The award honors K–12 academic teachers who use music in the classroom as a powerful educational tool.

grammymuseum.org/janeortnereducationaward

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Marcus Printup

A mainstay of the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra trumpet section since 1993, Marcus Printup has recorded 14 leader dates—most recently *Youngbloods*, his ninth for SteepleChase.

Nate Wooley

"Hesitation" (*Dance To The Early Music*, Clean Feed, 2015) Wooley, trumpet; Josh Sinton, bass clarinet; Matt Moran, vibraphone; Eivind Opsvik, bass; Harris Eisenstadt, drums.

"Hesitation"—not Wynton's version from the early '80s, which is the only one I've heard. This is freer within the form. Dave Douglas and Chris Potter? I'm stumped. Whoever it is, the trumpeter is on top of their game, with a lot of chops, and so free—it's as though there's nothing he can't do on the horn. 4 stars.

Brian Lynch

"Sweet Love Of Mine" (*Madera Latino*, Hollistic, 2017) Lynch, trumpet, arranger; Michael Rodriguez, trumpet; Zaccai Curtis, piano; Luques Curtis, bass; Obed Calvaire, drums; Little Johnny Rivero, congas.

Two trumpets. Is the first trumpet Mike Rodriguez? Mike is one of my favorite cats. I love his sound and his fingers. His ideas are fantastic. He recently did a few tours with the orchestra, and I had a ball playing with him. The other trumpet player sounds fantastic. He's on the tip of my tongue. They're complementing each other. Fantastic orchestration on the shout chorus at the end, and they maintained the vibe of the style throughout. 4.25 stars.

Andrew Rathbun Large Ensemble

"Two Islands II" (*Atwood Suites*, Origin, 2017) Rathbun, composer; Tim Hagans, flugelhorn soloist; Seneca Black, Matt Holman, Dave Smith, Russ Johnson, trumpet, flugelhorn; John O'Gallagher, Ben Kono, Quinsin Nachoff, Dan Pratt, Carl Maraghi, woodwinds; Alan Ferber, Mike Fahie, JC Sanford, trombones; Chris Olness, bass trombone; Jeremy Siskind, piano; David Ambrosio, bass; Bill Stewart, drums.

Ingrid Jensen? Dave Douglas? I love how it starts, like a classical sonata, and then goes into a Gil Evans chorale-type thing, then the rhythm comes in. It's brilliant. The trumpet player was weaving in and out, establishing a mood. This cat was singing. I liked the very end of that opening part, when he or she ends up on that high A. It's a little "wavery," but that grit lets you know there's a human being behind it. When things are too clean, it sounds like a computer. 4 stars.

[after] Of course it was Tim. After our Freddie Hubbard tribute album [*Hub Songs*] 20 years ago, we did a two-week tour; by the end, I was playing like him and he was playing a bit like me.

Tom Harrell

"View" (*Something Gold, Something Blue*, High Note, 2016) Harrell, Ambrose Akinmure, trumpets; Charles Altura, guitar; Ugonna Okegwo, bass; Johnathan Blake, drums. Ambrose. Oh, two trumpet players. I met Ambrose when he was 15 or 16, playing kind of like Freddie Hubbard. He's evolved into a giant. The other cat sounds great, too. I was thinking Marquis Hill, but Marquis is different. I love the tune. It's minimal, but they're making thousands of chords within the improvisation. I play Duke Ellington and lots of other great standard compositions; hearing how inventive these young cats are makes me want to learn something else. [after] That's Tom Harrell? I haven't heard him play like this. His fingers are so nimble and his ideas are so fresh. 4.5 stars.

Caroline Davis

"Penelope" (*Heart Tonic*, Sunnyside, 2018) Davis, alto saxophone; Marquis Hill, trumpet; Julian Shore, piano; Tamir Shmerling, bass; Jay Sawyer, drums.

That's Marquis. I know his warm sound. The sparse rhythm that the



drum, bass and piano are playing gives the improviser a lot of freedom to create and be nimble on top. I love how Marquis plays interludes between the solos, which adds so much flavor, life and personality to the music. Who's the alto player? Caroline Davis? I don't know her. She's killing. For the composition and the vibe of the song, 4.5 stars.

Marquis is one of those young cats who inspire me to find my voice. His note choices are damn near perfect; his solos are full of soul and spontaneity.

Ingrid & Christine Jensen

"Duo Space"/"Old Time" (*Infinitude*, Whirlwind, 2016) Ingrid Jensen, trumpet, effects; Christine Jensen, tenor saxophone; Ben Monder, guitar; Fraser Hollins, acoustic bass; Jon Wilan, drums.

Ingrid Jensen. She goes from the low range to the high range so easily—something that nobody has but her. I know she's been experimenting with electronic effects. She has a lot of Miles in her playing, but she sounds like herself. It's great to hear her dig in like this. 4 stars.

Terence Blanchard

"Tit For Tat Nocturne" (*The Comedian*, Blue Note, 2017) Blanchard, trumpet; Kenny Barron, piano; David Pulphus, bass; Carl Allen, drums.

Terence Blanchard. I love how he bends notes, which I do playing certain styles; some of that came from hearing him do it when I was younger. That's a great example of the 12/8 bluesy style of playing. 4.5 stars.

I love the way Terence slips and slides around. And he plays the trumpet like he's singing. You hear elements of Miles Davis and all this history in his playing, and he's been able to transform that into film and into the mainstream without sacrificing any integrity.

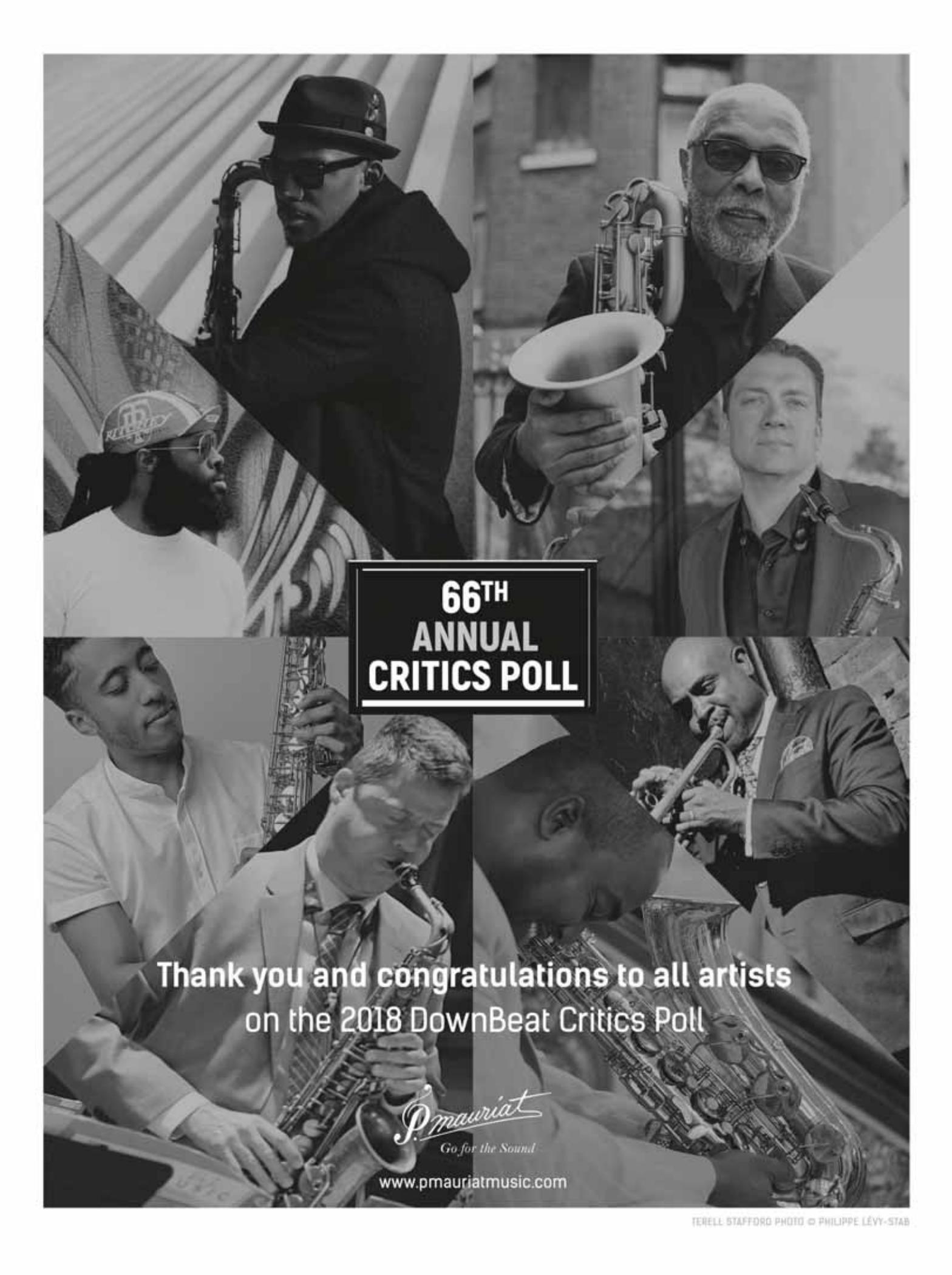
Ron Miles

"I Am A Man" (*I Am A Man*, Enja, 2017) Miles, cornet; Bill Frisell, electric guitar; Jason Moran, piano; Thomas Morgan, bass; Brian Blade, drums.

That sounds like the same key as this Ron Miles song, "Just Married." It is Ron! Ron's playing always takes you on a journey—his compositions, his band. That's Bill Frisell. Was that Brian Blade? I missed the piano player. It's Jason? That makes sense. There are so many themes within that one cut, and everything fits like a puzzle. 4.5 stars.

DB

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



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