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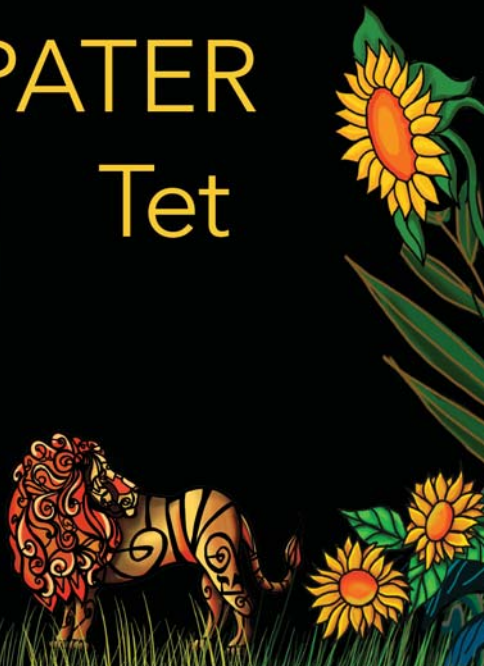
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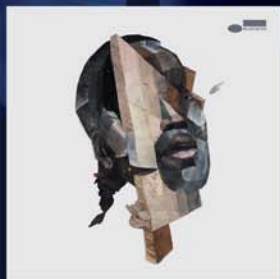


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BLUE NOTE®



KENDRICK SCOTT ORACLE A WALL BECOMES A BRIDGE

Drummer and composer **KENDRICK SCOTT** returns with a 12-track song cycle titled, *A Wall Becomes A Bridge*. Produced by **DERRICK HODGE**, *A Wall* is a musical and metaphorical journey exploring many themes: innocence ("Archangel"), acceptance ("Windows"), and insecurity ("Voices"). Scott is joined by his **ORACLE** band: pianist **TAYLOR EIGSTI**, bassist **JOE SANDERS**, guitarist **MIKE MORENO**, and saxophonist/flutist **JOHN ELLIS**.



JOEL ROSS KINGMAKER

An impressive debut album from an incredible young artist who has been omnipresent on acclaimed recent albums by **MAKAYA MCCRAVEN** (*Universal Beings*), **WALTER SMITH III** (*In Common*), **MARQUIS HILL** (*Modern Flows, Vol. 2*), and **JAMES FRANCIES** (*Flight*). Now Joel carries the Blue Note vibraphone legacy into the future on an album that finds him exploring the formative stuff that made him the man he is, first and foremost, family.



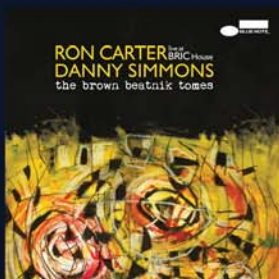
NORAH JONES BEGIN AGAIN

On April 12, nine-time GRAMMY-winning singer-songwriter **NORAH JONES** will release *Begin Again*, a collection of singles that gathers seven eclectic songs that Jones has recorded over the past year with collaborators including **JEFF TWEEDY** and **THOMAS BARTLETT**.



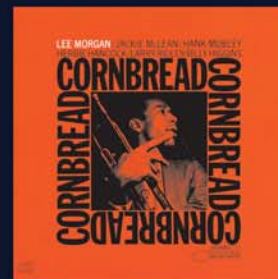
JAMIE CULLUM TALLER

With **10 million albums sold** to date and a successful BBC Radio 2 show, **JAMIE CULLUM** is a celebrated musician with loyal fans in every corner of the globe. His incredible new album *Taller*, is a 10-track journey that shows Jamie revealing a vulnerability and raw truth-telling that is both powerful and intimate. Featuring singles "*Taller*," "*Drink*" and "*The Age of Anxiety*," *Taller* bravely explores subject matter which has personally impacted him, with each song reflecting a desire to grow and learn and explore life for the beautiful muddle it is.



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AUGUST 2019

Inside

ON THE COVER

28 Cécile McLorin Salvant

Jazz Artist, Female Vocalist

BY PHILLIP LUTZ

The vocalist and composer, who topped two categories in the Critics Poll, discusses her recent collaborations with pianist Sullivan Fortner and bandleader Darcy James Argue, as well as her visual artwork.



Cécile McLorin Salvant performs at the 2019 New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival.

28

Cover photo of Cécile McLorin Salvant shot by Erika Goldring at the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival on May 3.

FEATURES

- 32 **Nina Simone, Hall of Fame**
BY GEOFFREY HIMES
- 34 **Scott LaFaro, Hall of Fame**
BY JAMES HALE
- 36 **Joe Williams, Hall of Fame**
BY TED PANKEN
- 38 **Wayne Shorter, Jazz Album**
BY J.D. CONSIDINE
- 39 **John Coltrane, Historical Album**
BY JAMES HALE
- 40 **Top Jazz Albums**
- 42 **Fred Hersch Trio, Jazz Group**
BY MATTHEW KASSEL
- 44 **Top Historical Albums**
- 46 **Shabaka Hutchings**
Rising Star—Jazz Group, Clarinet
BY DAN OUELLETTE
- 48 **Sullivan Fortner**
Rising Star—Jazz Artist, Piano
BY PHILLIP LUTZ
- 49 **Felix Pastorius**
Rising Star—Bass
BY BILL MILKOWSKI
- 50 **Lauren Sevian**
Rising Star—Baritone Saxophone
BY STEPHANIE JONES



75 Lisa Maxwell



76 Santana



80 SFJAZZ Collective



83 Tal Gamlieli Trio

- 52 **Natalie Cressman**
Rising Star—Trombone
BY STEPHANIE JONES
- 53 **Kit Downes**
Rising Star—Keyboard
Rising Star—Organ
BY AMMAR KALIA
- 54 **Sara Serpa**
Rising Star—Female Vocalist
BY SUZANNE LORGE
- 56 **Complete Critics Poll Results**

DEPARTMENTS

- 8 **First Take**
- 10 **Chords & Discords**
- 13 **The Beat**
- 71 **Reviews**
- 90 **Wadada Leo Smith's Art-Scores**
BY BILL MILKOWSKI
- 94 **Pro Session**
BY PETE MCCANN
- 96 **Transcription**
Jon Irabagon
Tenor Sax Solo
- 98 **Toolshed**
- 102 **Jazz On Campus**
- 106 **Blindfold Test**
Javon Jackson



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Billy Boy Arnold (left) and Charlie Musselwhite perform at the Chicago Blues Festival on June 7.

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A Steady Stream of Blues

A STURDY CURRENT OF BLUES MUSIC flows through this issue of *DownBeat*. Part of this was planned, and part of it was coincidental. In our annual Critics Poll, the iconic Buddy Guy topped the Blues Artist or Group category, and his scorching 2018 disc—the aptly titled *The Blues Is Alive And Well* (RCA)—was voted the top blues album.

Our 2019 Hall of Fame inductees include pianist/vocalist Nina Simone and singer Joe Williams, both towering, transcendent figures whose artistry was built with the blues as part of the foundation.

In *The Beat*, readers will find an article on blues singer/guitar slinger Jimmie Vaughan, along with our recap of the 2019 Chicago Blues Festival, which featured an excellent, eclectic mix of rising stars, as well as veterans, such as harmonica wizards Billy Boy Arnold and Charlie Musselwhite.

With heavy hearts, we present a fond farewell to Malcolm John “Mac” Rebennack Jr. (known around the world as Dr. John).

As a boy learning how to play the guitar, Rebennack studied the blues licks of Lightnin’ Hopkins and T-Bone Walker. As an adult, he would craft his own sublime brand of bayou boogie, honoring the New Orleans music traditions from which he sprang, while also putting his own stamp on the music and devising a timeless persona.

Dr. John’s fruitful career yielded an impressive 15 Grammy nominations and six wins. His catalog includes five discs that were nominated in the category Best Contemporary Blues Album: *Trippin’ Live* (1997), *Creole Moon* (2001), *N’awlins: Dis Dat Or D’udda* (2004), *Sippiana Hurricane* (2005) and *Tribal* (2010). Put them

all together, and you’ve got an awesome playlist for a road trip to the Crescent City. Among his Grammy-winning titles were 1992’s *Goin’ Back To New Orleans* (Best Traditional Blues Album), 2008’s *City That Care Forgot* (Best Contemporary Blues Album) and 2012’s *Locked Down* (Best Blues Album). Indeed, the good doctor was on intimate terms with the blues.

In the Chords & Discords section, we’ve got a letter heaping praise on the album *Blues In My Blood* by the agile duo Tiffany Pollack & Eric Johanson. Along with original compositions, the album includes a potent interpretation of Simone’s “Do I Move You?” (An interesting twist is that the reader discovered this satisfying album by reading the advertisements in the Indie Life section of our June issue.)

In the Blindfold Test, Javon Jackson correctly identifies fellow jazz saxophonist Eric Alexander after hearing “Hard Blues,” a track from his superb new album, *Leap Of Faith* (Giant Step Arts). Jackson offers an insightful, thought-provoking response: “This is the blues. It all depends on how you evoke what the blues means to you. Do you want to play the blues like Muddy Waters? Like John Lee Hooker? Like Miles? Like Charlie Parker?”

With the April 1990 issue, *DownBeat* readers saw a new motto appear on the cover of the magazine: Jazz, Blues & Beyond. That issue included David White’s article “Love of the Old—Passion for the New: The New Generation of Blues Musicians.” Is that a topic you’d like to see us revisit in 2019?

Send an email to editor@downbeat.com to share your thoughts about the blues (or any aspect of the magazine). We’re always eager to hear from our loyal readers. Thanks. **DB**



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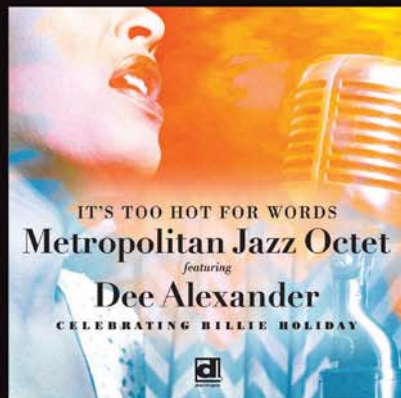
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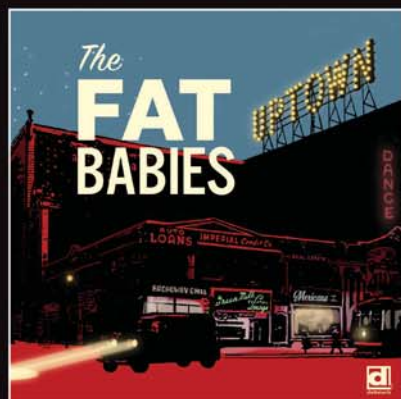
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Perpetual Cooking

This letter is in response to the First Take essay in the May issue, which invited comments on artists whose influences are discernible.

One of my favorite younger tenor saxophonists is Joshua Redman. While Joshua is surely his own man, I pick up two distinct influences in his playing. One is Sonny Rollins. Joshua reminds me of Sonny not only because of the body of trio work both men have produced, but in his improvisations. Joshua's solos seem more based on rhythm and melody, like Sonny. Also, both men share a large, round sound and use the full range of the horn.

The other strong influence I detect is Joe Henderson. Wynton Marsalis once stated that Joe played both "inside and outside" when he improvised. Joshua does this all the time, to my ears. He begins playing close to the melody, and gets more and more abstract as the solo develops.

I had the pleasure of seeing Joshua at the Blue Note a few weeks ago with his quartet, and he just cooked the entire time.

TOM GUILFOYLE
AMBLER, PENNSYLVANIA



Joshua Redman

Vastly Overrated Vinyl

In your July issue, the section We Love Vinyl included three articles on the wonderfulness of vinyl LPs. *Really?*

I grew up with LPs and reel-to-reel tapes, and for decades I wished the audio world could move beyond that. The compact disc promised but didn't really deliver. SACD and other higher-resolution digital formats actually did deliver—or at least they did until record producers decided to over-engineer and over-master that potential sonic advantage.

Here's the real irony: Most modern-day LPs are cut from digital masters that the record companies have no interest in offering to the public in their "native" digital form. Why should they? After all, they can charge a premium for LPs and the public will buy them (no matter how misguided that might be from an audio-quality standpoint). And hipsters—who typically rail against corporate "monsters"—are playing right into their hands. Too bad your writers aren't a bit more insightful.

ROB BERTRANDO
RENO, NEVADA

Pollack & Eric Johanson, who are cousins. My initial reaction to the ad's claim of "their deep, gutsy feel for the blues" was that it was probably just another mundane album. However, I was proven wrong by two extremely talented blues disciples.

In addition to several outstanding original tunes, the cousins—who alternate and share lead vocals—offer up inspired covers of The Rolling Stones' "No Expectations" and Nina Simone's "Do I Move You?" And just when I thought Ms. Pollack was the best new singer I've heard in years, Mr. Johanson followed with vocals that rivaled hers.

But it takes very, very special artists to transform a song I previously never wanted to hear again—Pete Seeger's folk warhorse "If I Had A Hammer"—into a spine-tingling soul-blues classic I can't get enough of.

Thank you to DownBeat for continuing to surprise me with new music I probably wouldn't have otherwise discovered, even if it's sometimes located in unexpected places.

GORDON WEBB
SANTA CLARA, CALIFORNIA

Blues That Move You

I read DownBeat every month in hopes of discovering a great album by a brand-new artist or one that has flown under my radar. Once in a while, I find a true gem.

Lightning struck again in the June issue, but this time it wasn't from a review. It was an ad in the Indie Life section that led to my discovery of *Blues In My Blood* by Tiffany

Correction

■ In the July issue, a review of singer Cathy Segal-Garcia's *Dreamsville* misidentified a member of her trio. The pianist on the recording is Josh Nelson.

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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Inside >

- 14 / Dr. John
- 18 / Damon Locks
- 19 / Patricia Barber
- 21 / Angelika Niescier
- 22 / Mark Walker
- 27 / Chicago Blues Fest

Beat

Bergonzi Shines with 'Seven Rays'

The artist's return was long overdue: When Jerry Bergonzi set foot inside Chicago's Green Mill on Jan. 4, it marked his first visit to the city since a tour with pianist Dave Brubeck 40 years ago. The Boston-based tenor saxophonist brought his longtime ally, drummer Adam Nussbaum (whom he has nicknamed "The Instigator"), in from New York, along with pianist Bill Carrothers and bassist Billy Peterson.

"Jerry has a wonderful sound, feel, vocabulary," Nussbaum enthused. "We have a bond of respect for the masters who came before us. We dip into a shared well."

Many Chicago jazz musicians showed up for Bergonzi's two-night stand at the historic club, including saxophonist Ken Vandermark. "Kenny used to come hear me play in Boston with his dad," said Bergonzi, who maintains a long-term, weekly residency at the Lilypad in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and has been teaching at New England Conservatory since 1995.

During his visit to the Windy City, The Gonz, as he's affectionately known, conducted a workshop at PM Woodwind in nearby Evanston, Illinois, putting his protean tenor prowess on intimate display beside bassist Eric Hochberg. During an investigation of "I Can't Get Started"—a tune the young Bergonzi would play on bass in insalubrious joints in Massachusetts early in his career—the saxophonist demonstrated fiendish rhythmic and harmonic ingenuity, as well as his penchant for dramatic gritty texture, segueing from saxophone to piano, mid-solo, to further explore the form. Later, Bergonzi took to the drum kit, illustrating how he clusters asymmetrical beats to maintain variety in his playing.

Bergonzi, 71, is a musician's musician, yet his highly original and harmonically audacious compositions remain accessible, despite

exploratory blowing, thanks to the various grooves delivered by his accompanists.

Titles to Bergonzi's myriad compositions can occasionally be knowing or throwaway addendums, such as "To Whom It May Not Concern." When asked about "Gecko Plex," an evocative composition from his 2007 album, *Tenorist* (Savant), Bergonzi chuckled, noting that the piece was named by the droll Nussbaum.

Bergonzi's conception resists comparison. His elliptical imagination and a passing syntax occasionally conjure Wayne Shorter, but he's resolutely singular. *The Seven Rays*, his 13th album on Savant, was recorded in 2015 but wasn't officially released until April 12. "Jerry brought us *The Seven Rays* to produce in a short run for him to sell off the bandstand while on tour," explained HighNote/Savant staffer Ray Osnato. "We held it in the can for a bit, releasing his amazing *Spotlight On Standards* [2016] and *Dog Star* [2017] discs before putting out *Rays* on the commercial market."

The "Seven Rays" refer to manifestations of energy, abbreviated by Bergonzi into conditions of "Intention," "Magnetism," "Creation," "Harmony," "Knowledge," "Devotion" and "Order." His sophisticated themes extrapolating these states of being are superbly realized on the album by the young European rhythm section of Carl Winther (piano), Johnny Aman (bass) and Anders Mogensen (drums).

"When I was a teenager," Bergonzi recalled, "I discovered the theological volumes of Alice Bailey, who proselytized, after her predecessor—philosopher Helena Blavatsky—about the Seven Rays. Bailey was an esoteric thinker who devised unconventional ways to explain astrology and other phenomena in the early 20th century."

Notwithstanding his cosmic conceit for the album and its porous soundscape, consummate



MICHAEL JACKSON

Jerry Bergonzi's new album, *The Seven Rays*, was partially inspired by his interest in philosophy.

terra firma skills are on display, particularly on the suitably demanding "5th Ray: Knowledge," on which Bergonzi lock-steps with clear-toned trumpeter Phil Grenadier. "I've been working with Jerry for about 17 years now, and this is my fifth CD under his leadership," Grenadier commented via email. "He's a complete musical master, yet very humble. ... He has a Zen-like approach to life ... a true depth of knowledge about music making. He is still developing, and that is inspiring."

—Michael Jackson



Malcolm John "Mac" Rebennack, aka Dr. John (1941–2019)

Remembering Dr. John

MAC REBENNACK, PIANIST-GUITARIST-VOCALIST, purveyor of funk and voodoo mythology and a true son of New Orleans, died of a heart attack on June 6. He was 77. Better known by his stage name, Dr. John, he was part of the piano lineage coming out of Professor Longhair that included Huey "Piano" Smith, James Booker and Allen Toussaint. A prolific songwriter and charismatic performer, his music was imbued with the rollicking spirit of the Crescent City and its characteristic undulating second-line rhythm.

Born on Nov. 20, 1941, Rebennack grew up in the racially mixed Third Ward, birthplace of Louis Armstrong. The son of Dorothy and Malcolm Rebennack, who owned an appliance store and record shop, he began picking out melodies on the family piano at age 3, and by age 6 had been taught by an aunt to play "Pinetop's Boogie Woogie." After getting his first guitar at age 8, he started copying the blues licks of Lightnin' Hopkins and T-Bone Walker. His first guitar teacher—Walter "Papoose" Nelson,

who played with Professor Longhair and Fats Domino—turned the youngster on to Mickey Baker and Billy Butler.

It was a musician-hustler-junkie named Shank who got Rebennack involved with the narcotics scene as a 13-year-old errand boy. He eventually started using heroin himself in the 11th grade, beginning an addiction that plagued him for decades, until he finally got clean in 1989. After being expelled from school in 1955, Rebennack started gigging around New Orleans with local bands, including The Skyliners, Frankie Ford & The Thunderbirds and Jerry Byrne & The Loafers. He joined the musicians union in 1956 and began recording professionally for Johnny Vincent's Ace Records, working at Cosimo Matassa's fabled J&M Studios on sessions for Eddie Bo, Paul Gayten, Roy Brown, Earl King and Joe Tex.

While making \$60 a week at Ace, he came under the tutelage of saxophonist Alvin "Red" Tyler, who schooled him on the ins and outs of

being an A&R man. "My job was to find the artist, get him hooked up with the company, if he didn't have his own material write it for him, arrange the material, hire the musicians, cut the date, master the date and do all of the work up to the pressing of the record itself," he told Marv Hohman in a 1975 *DownBeat* interview. "The whole thing was my responsibility, even teaching the artist the songs and rehearsing the band ..."

By age 17, he had co-written "Lights Out," a regional hit for Jerry Byrne on the Specialty label. He had his own regional hit, cut in August 1959, with a Bo Diddley-influenced instrumental called "Storm Warning" on Rex Records, and shortly after began touring in rock 'n' roll and r&b package shows that traveled the South.

Rebennack's promising career as a session guitarist and sideman was halted at age 20 when the tip of his finger was shot off in an altercation at a motel in Jacksonville, Florida, in 1961: He happened onto the scene of bandmate Ronnie Barron being pistol-whipped by the motel owner,

who had caught the singer with his wife. “I went to get the gun out of the guy’s hand,” Rebennack wrote in his 1994 autobiography. “We wrestled for it; I thought my left hand was over the handle but I was actually grabbing the barrel. I beat the guy’s hand against the bricks trying to get the gun away from him and the gun went off. I looked down and saw the second finger of my left hand, my fretting hand, hanging by a thread. At the moment I was shot, I saw not just my life but my career pass before my eyes.”

After James Booker taught him how to play organ, Rebennack started hustling gigs at strip joints, dances and jam sessions on Bourbon Street. He was later arrested on drug charges and sentenced to two years in the Federal Correctional Institution, Fort Worth, Texas.

When he was released in 1965, a campaign led by New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison (of Kennedy Assassination conspiracy fame) was underway to clean up the Crescent City by padlocking nightclubs on Bourbon Street. This anti-vice crusade led to a mass exodus of New Orleans musicians to the West Coast.

Settling into Los Angeles, Rebennack became a first-call session musician, playing on albums by Sonny & Cher, Canned Heat, Frank Zappa & The Mothers of Invention, Jackie DeShannon, Harry Nilsson, Stephen Stills and others. For his own first recording as a leader, *Gris-Gris*, released on ATCO Records in January 1968, he adopted the persona of “Dr. John, The Night Tripper,” based partially on the life of a real person: Dr. John Montaine, a Senegalese prince and healer who came to New Orleans from Haiti in the mid-1800s.

A free man of color, this earlier Dr. John kept an assortment of snakes and lizards, along with embalmed scorpions, and animal and human skulls. He also sold gris-gris, or voodoo amulets, that protected the wearer from harm. Feeling a spiritual kinship with him, Rebennack took on the name Dr. John Creaux for the songwriting credits billed to him on *Gris-Gris*. The album became an underground FM radio staple on the strength of hypnotic tracks like “I Walk On Guided Splinters” and other swampy originals like “Gris-Gris Gumbo Ya Ya” and “Danse Kalinda Ba Doom,” all of which registered with the burgeoning hippie audience.

On tour in support of *Gris-Gris*, Rebennack combined New Orleans-style r&b with psychedelic rock and elaborate stage shows, replete with snake dancers, feathered costumes, bone necklaces, amulets and headdresses, voodoo beads and a bag full of glitter he inevitably tossed to his audiences.

His darkly apocalyptic, psychedelic follow-up, *Babylon*, confused some listeners, as did 1970’s *Remedies*, which included the 17-minute “Angola Anthem,” taking up an entire side of the vinyl album while discussing the Louisiana penitentiary. It was Jerry Wexler who suggest-

ed that Rebennack get together with other New Orleans musicians in Los Angeles and record an album of Crescent City classics, resulting in 1972’s rootsy *Dr. John’s Gumbo*, the album that brought worldwide attention to the New Orleans r&b tradition.

That same year, Rebennack played piano and added backing vocals to The Rolling Stones’ *Exile On Main Street*, returning a favor from Mick Jagger, who had appeared on Dr. John’s ambitious 1971 release, *The Sun, Moon & Herbs*—initially intended as a triple-album but eventually reduced to a single LP.

Rebennack’s commercial breakthrough came with 1973’s *In The Right Place*. Produced by Toussaint and backed by The Meters, it included the funky hit single “Right Place, Wrong Time” and the whimsical “Such A Night,” a tune Rebennack played with The Band in Martin Scorsese’s 1978 documentary, *The Last Waltz*.

After moving to New York in 1980, he teamed with Brooklyn-born songwriter Doc Pomus to write songs for B.B. King’s 1981 album, *There Must Be A Better World Somewhere*, to which he contributed keyboards. Two solo piano albums during that period—1981’s *Dr. John Plays Mac Rebennack* and 1983’s *The Brightest Smile In Town*, both for the Baltimore-based Clean Cuts label—showcased his keyboard virtuosity (or his ability to “radiate the 88s,” as he would say in his distinctive raspy-throated growl).

Rebennack’s 1989 album for Warner Bros., *In A Sentimental Mood*, included a Grammy-winning duet with Rickie Lee Jones on “Makin’ Whoopee!,” while 1990’s *Bluesiana Triangle* (Windham Hill) was a summit meeting with saxophonist David “Fathead” Newman and drumming great Art Blakey, who sings on a couple of tracks.

His superb 1992 release, *Goin’ Back To New Orleans* (Warner Bros.), included songs by Jelly Roll Morton, Fats Domino and Huey “Piano” Smith, along with the traditional Mardi Gras Indians anthem “Indian Red” and a nod to New Orleans composer Louis Moreau Gottschalk on “Litanie Des Saints.”

Rebennack’s 2008 album, *City That Care Forgot* (429/Savoy), offered his gritty meditations on Hurricane Katrina and the official response to the disaster that wreaked havoc on his hometown. Around that time, he became a staunch advocate for preserving southern Louisiana’s wetlands.

His most recent studio release was the 2014 Louis Armstrong tribute *Ske-Dat-De-Dat: The Spirit Of Satch* on Concord. An avid student of music history, he previously had recorded tributes to Duke Ellington (2000’s *Duke Elegant* on Blue Note) and songwriter Johnny Mercer (2006’s *Mercernary* on Blue Note).

Among his accolades were six Grammy awards and induction into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in 2011.

—Bill Milkowski

Riffs >



Jazzmeia Horn

EMMANUEL AFOLAN

Horn of Plenty: *Love And Liberation*, Jazzmeia Horn’s follow-up to her 2017 debut, *A Social Hall*, is due out Aug. 23 from Concord Jazz. The vocalist offers up eight originals—as well as a tune by Erykah Badu, among several other covers—in the company of pianist Victor Gould, tenor saxophonist Stacy Dillard and other first-call players.

concordrecords.com

In Rotterdam: The North Sea Jazz Festival returns July 12–14 in Rotterdam, The Netherlands, with artist-in-residence Robert Glasper, who’ll perform a tribute to Miles Davis. Along with the keyboardist, the weekend festival is set to host Diana Krall, Gilberto Gil, Bobo Stenson, Makaya McCraven, Melissa Aldana, Maisha and scores of other performers.

northseajazz.com

Alexander on Verve: Joey Alexander now is a Verve Records artist. The teenaged pianist is set to record a new album for the label—expected in October to coincide with his Carnegie Hall debut—with bassist Larry Grenadier and drummer Kendrick Scott. “I’m humbled to be a part of such a historic label,” Alexander said in a press release. “I’m looking forward to bringing my new music into the world.” Alexander’s four previous releases all were through Motéma, 2018’s *Eclipse* being the pianist’s most recent effort.

vervelabelgroup.com

Final Bar: Drummer Lawrence Leathers was found dead in a Bronx apartment building June 2. According to reports, two suspects have been charged with assault in connection with his death. Leathers was 37. ... **Chris Albertson**, a writer and producer, died April 24 in Manhattan at age 87. He was perhaps best known for his Bessie Smith biography, *Bessie*. He wrote liner notes for the Prestige, Riverside and Columbia labels. ... Singer and guitarist **Leon Redbone**, who performed jazz, blues and Tin Pan Alley standards, died May 30 in Pennsylvania. He was 69.

TRIO OF TRIOS

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Pianist Romain Collin learned to play synth bass before recording *Tiny Lights*.

SHERVIN LAINEZ

Romain Collin’s ‘Tiny Lights’ Projects Audio-Visual Narrative

ROMAIN COLLIN OFTEN RECALLS AN enduring maxim from Terence Blanchard: “All complicated things are created from an interaction among simple things.”

Those words locked in his mind, the pianist set out to create a mixed-media release reflective of a journey toward transcendence. In realizing *Tiny Lights*, Collin embarked on his own short, but vivid, journey toward self-discovery, issuing the record online in three separate installments representing a beginning, middle and end, before the physical album release.

“The story [describes] a process of self-growth in as fearless and committed a way as possible,” he said. “[Writing] music is the same.”

But Collin soon recognized the limits of his existing musical expression. “I discovered that the piano trio, as I had approached it so far, was not a setup that enabled me to express the sounds that I needed,” he said.

Knowing he wanted a trio recording with drums and guitar, Collin called guitarist Matthew Stevens and drummer Obed Calvaire. Contributions from the Prague Philharmonic Orchestra and composer Kazuma Jinnouchi helped texturize the narrative, while Collin attempted to master an instrument he was unfamiliar with: the Moog Taurus synth bass.

The bandleader composed the entire record—including a number of ostinatos shaping the musical narrative—without having ever touched the Taurus. “When I write ostinatos, the idea is never to be repetitive,” he said. “It’s the undercurrent, the driving force.” And Collin soon discovered the collateral impact of integrating a new sound and skill set into his performance. “When I first started playing the synth bass, it made me play the piano in a slightly more organic, less deliberate way,” he said.

What Collin found was freeing. He encountered relief from the pressure of his critical mind,

and experienced renewed intention: “You have to be more accepting of what you play, because it’s almost like something that needed to be played.”

An accomplished film composer, Collin imbued *Tiny Lights* with layers of visual evocation and stimuli. “Every sound has a texture and a color in my brain,” he said. “In this project, I’ve allowed myself to pay attention to it more.”

For the record’s accompanying film series and recorded live performances that Collin posted to Instagram, he collaborated with Spain-based production house Neutrø. But back in the States, Collin met up with filmmaker Matthew Palmer, sharing with him the project idea for *Tiny Lights*. “He said, ‘Man, I really wanna put visuals to this,’” Collin recalled. “So, I sent him the music.”

Despite offering the signposts of a story, Collin relinquished creative control of the visual narrative to Palmer, who produced the video for “Tiny Lights That Move And Speak.”

“He came back to me and said, ‘This is what I’m seeing,’” Collin said, “and that’s exactly what I was seeing as well.”

The visual manifestation of *Tiny Lights* served another purpose for Collin, who came up with the MTV generation: recapturing mainstream audio-visual relationships that have been lost in the digital era. “Before MP3s and downloads, every musician was a multimedia artist,” he said. “They all had dope artwork—a booklet that you can lose yourself in, lyrics that were laid out graphically, pictures—it really gave the artists a chance to present a world bigger than just the music.”

For *Tiny Lights*, the allure of a mixed-media narrative unfolding in the age of insta-culture is what inspired Collin to release the album in three parts. “I’m hoping that that, in and of itself, tells a story,” he said. “If something inhabits you, day and night, how can you not allow it to transpire? You can’t escape that process. And you shouldn’t try.”

—Stephanie Jones

Vaughan Digs into Covers

JIMMIE VAUGHAN HAS HAD HIS SHARE OF star turns, including 11 years at the helm of the blues-rock powerhouse the Fabulous Thunderbirds and collaborating with his famous brother Stevie Ray on *Family Style*, released just a month after his sibling's tragic death in 1990. Nowadays, Vaughan makes music on his own terms.

For his first new studio album in eight years, *Baby, Please Come Home* (Last Music Co.), the singer/guitarist drew on his encyclopedic knowledge of obscure r&b and country tunes, some of which predate his birth 68 years ago. He has stacks of original material, but opted to record only covers this time.

"There's no real reason [for the all-covers album], except that I don't care if I put a record out every year," Vaughan explained by phone in April from his home in Austin, Texas, as he prepared to fly to London for three dates opening for Eric Clapton. "I don't want to just turn out stuff, because I'm supposed to. I'm not a plumber. I don't want it to be just a job."

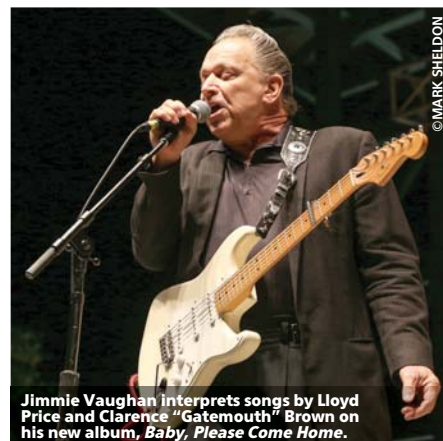
A diverse musical menu that includes blues icon T-Bone Walker's "I'm Still In Love With You," r&b titan Fats Domino's "So Glad" and country icon Lefty Frizzell's "No One To Talk To (But The Blues)" provides a suitable serving plat-

ter for Vaughan's smorgasbord of blues, rock, r&b, country, jazz and Texas swing. "I listen to all that stuff," he said. "It's my world that I live in. I look to [those artists] almost every day. Their lyrics speak to me or remind me of something I went through. This is what I enjoy. There's even some hillbilly songs that I sort of bluesed up."

Vaughan used his touring group to record *Baby, Please Come Home*. With their deep-in-the-pocket groove and punchy horns, these musicians expand on the bandleader's comfort zone onstage and in the studio.

"He has such a unique vision of what he is and what he wants to do, and he does it in a no-B.S. way," organist Mike Flanigin said. "He wants to get to the heart of things and tell his stories. His only consideration is playing the music he wants to play and play it well, and have it consistent with his vision. People probably pitch commercial ideas to him all the time. ... But he just makes the album he wants to make."

As a guitarist, Vaughan often is seen as the antithesis of Stevie Ray, but Flanigin doesn't buy the theory that he eschews pyrotechnics to distinguish himself from his more famous little brother. "I think that contrast gets a little overblown," Flanigin said. "When Jimmie is playing live, he



Jimmie Vaughan interprets songs by Lloyd Price and Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown on his new album, *Baby, Please Come Home*.

©MARK SHELDON

can really rip. That comparison between the flashy Stevie and the reserved Jimmie isn't really valid, in my opinion, because [Jimmie] can really do all that. He's such a master, and it takes such restraint to play what you hear in your head."

Vaughan is in for a busy year. He has a series of West Coast gigs lined up with Buddy Guy and Charlie Musselwhite, and Clapton has booked him for the Crossroads Guitar Festival Sept. 20-21 in Dallas. "I think of Eric as a big brother that I never had, both musically and friendship-wise," Vaughan said. "He's helped me through a lot of tragic stuff, and he's had his own problems." —Jeff Johnson

LONG WAVES

FRANCO AMBROSETTI QUINTET

Franco Ambrosetti
John Scofield
Uri Caine
Jack DeJohnette
Scott Colley

There's a good trumpet player in George Gruntz's band I heard at the Berlin Jazz Festival. He can play his ass off. If I would pick a trumpet player, I would pick Franco. He can play anything, I like him.
~ Miles Davis

I thought this was the most successful thing I've done with Franco. I have a real affinity with Franco's playing. The stuff that he chooses to play, in terms of the lines and the rhythm, feels like home to me.
~ John Scofield

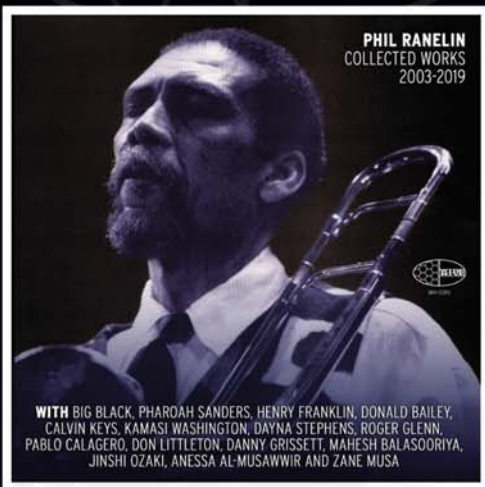
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VINYL / BY JOHN MURPH

In the Style of Mavericks

Fantastical black-nationalist jazz now is back in vogue, thanks to the likes of Shabaka Hutchings, Nicole Mitchell, Christian Scott aTunde Adjuah and Kamasi Washington. Their music vibrates with a heady blend of Afrofuturism, sociopolitical intent and idiomatic hybridism that often incorporates 1960s free-jazz spiritualism, soul music, hip-hop and electronica.

You now can add Chicago's Damon Locks to that distinguished roster.

Chicago long has proved to be a mother-ship for the development of this type of ingenuity: The Windy City is where Herman Poole Blount reinvented himself as Sun Ra during the 1950s; it's where the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians formed in the mid-'60s; it's where AACM member Phil Cohran electrified the kalimba, an instrument that in the hands of Maurice White became a signature sound for Earth, Wind & Fire; and it's where pioneering DJs Steve Hurley, Frankie Knuckles and Chip E. took notes from Sun Ra's "Space Is The Place" mantra, and laid the blueprint for the house music scene in the early 1980s, following the racist and homophobic backlash to disco.

Chicago label International Anthem has been consolidating and curating new offshoots of that multilayered, intersecting musical legacy with CD and vinyl releases of jazz-hybrid mavericks like drummer Makaya McCraven, clarinetist/vocalist Angel Bat Dawid, guitarist Jeff Parker, cornetist Ben Lamar Gay and trumpeter Jaimie Branch.

On his soul-stirring IA release, *Where Future Unfolds*, Locks crafts soundscapes and plays tiny percussion with his 15-piece Black Monument Ensemble, captured live during a 2018 Red Bull Music Festival performance at Chicago's Garfield Park Conservatory. Locks, though, is a wildly imaginative polymath, a visual artist, DJ, sound sculptor and educator—and former bandmate of Fred Armisen as a member of Trenchmouth, a group that issued a handful of albums during the '90s. He's also led The Eternals through LP-length efforts since 2000, melding dub and indie styles.

But his latest effort takes considerable cues from Eddie Gales' *Ghetto Music*, Funkadelic's *America Eats Its Young* and Public Enemy's *Fear Of A Black Planet* as thematic elements of black nationalism, escapism and cultural displacement seep into the music—as do the cyclical acts of destruction and restoration.

That last motif comes loud and clear from the LP's opener, "Statement Of Intent/Black Monument," on which Locks intones, "Knowing what we know now/ The mind searches



Damon Locks

CHRIS HERSHMAN

for reconciliation/ Arches and angles that don't meet/ Materials that bow and shutter/ Tall and broad/ These things cast shadows/ Invaluable structures that buckle as they pivot" amid a buzzing nest of small bells. As Locks continues, accelerating his words with urgency, Dana Hall underscores the incantation with lacerating drum beats that eventually coalesce into a volatile improvisation—all of which could provide the soundtrack for the recent removal of various Confederate statues in the South.

Other explicit evocations concerning protest-fueled annihilation and community rebuilding occur on the disquieting "The Future?," where Dawid's serpentine clarinet passages stretch across a blaring sonic terrain of bombastic drum fills, pinging percussion and gloomy electronic flourishes, and the more optimistic "Rebuild A Nation," which features young singer Rayna Golding leading a small gospel choir atop haunting conga and shaker patterns.

Even with its bare-bones instrumentation of vocals, percussion, drums and sound collage, *Where Future Unfolds* exudes a claustrophobic, anxiety-ridden sensibility—fitting for music that addresses concerns of deep-seated institutionalized racism, and sociopolitical and economic disenfranchisement. Through solemn vocal harmonies, lamenting melodies, and poignant and political lyrics, Locks deftly articulates the weariness black Americans suffer from the enduring Sisyphus syndrome of making incremental strides for equal rights—which all too often are offset by enormous setbacks.

Indeed, tracks like the undulating "Sounds Like Now," the gospel-laden "Solar Power" and the dirge-like "From A Spark To A Fire" can overwhelm in their mournful sentiments and often lumbering tempos. Searing lead single "The Colors That You Bring," with its hip-hop-meets-1970s Motown beat, dramatically sampled strings and Dawid's bass clarinet riffs, is *Where Future Unfolds* at its brightest. Still, the song conjures an image of a rainbow barely piercing through dark, rumbling clouds, fighting for space.

DB

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2019 WIDE HIVE RECORDS

Patricia Barber Expands the Palette



JIMMY & DENA KATZ

Chicago pianist Patricia Barber has issued her first new recording in six years, *Higher*.

FOR FOUR DECADES, CHICAGO PIANIST Patricia Barber has been quietly, but steadily, creating her own unique brand of music.

Higher, the bandleader's first new recording in six years, merges jazz harmonies and rhythms with classical art song and erudite poetry, and features "Angels, Birds And I ..."—an ambitious song cycle—alongside a few jazz standards.

"I was so gratified by the reaction to this record. I have gotten personal letters from composers, conductors and musicians all over the

world, and I do think it gives jazz a larger harmonic palette," Barber said recently.

The eight songs comprised by "Angels, Birds And I ..." are individual stories told in first person about life, death, love, loss and desire. Some are introspective, and others are whimsical and expressed through Barber's diverse harmonic and rhythmic ideas. Before the album's release, though, several of the songs were performed during a 2015 tour by opera singer Renée Fleming—who would stop in to hear Barber perform in Chicago when she was in town: "Renée had an enormous influence on this song cycle," Barber said. "I met her in the middle of it and she gave me confidence and inspiration to continue."

Barber, who spent some of her formative years in Nebraska, began learning piano at the age of 5 from her father, a jazz saxophonist who performed with Glenn Miller's orchestra; her mother was a jazz and blues singer. Later, while studying classical music and psychology at the University of Iowa, Barber came to realize that jazz truly was the music that made her the happiest. So, she returned to Chicago and began gigging at piano bars, slowly working her way up the ladder. And for the past 25 years, Barber's held down a steady Monday-night gig at local venue

The Green Mill. "It gives me a place to try out my compositions and to rework them," Barber explained, while discussing *Higher*. "The regulars have heard all these songs—from their nascent form to polished and ready to record."

In addition to releasing *Higher*, the pianist, 63, recently was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in the visual and performing arts category, an acknowledgment of her sprawling body of work. But, the pianist said, she didn't have any idea that she'd been nominated, and when she opened the congratulatory letter from the academy, she was shocked: "Oh my God," she recalled saying. "So, somebody's been listening."

Barber said she felt affirmed at a Chicago reception for academy members, where the composer mingled with scholars, astrophysicists and artists who welcomed her into the fold. "It was the first time in 37 years I actually looked up," she said. "I really had my head down for a long time—I was working so hard. I am so honored that these people know my music."

But for Barber, hard work driven by a passion to express herself musically always has kept her moving forward, confirming a long-held belief: "If you keep at it, if you have talent, then something's going to develop." —Lily O'Brien

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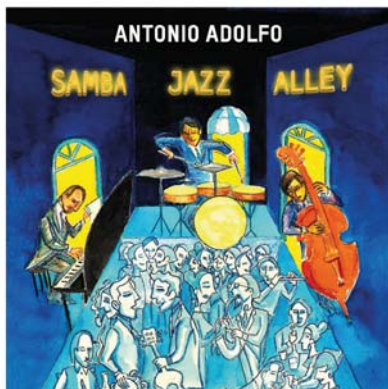
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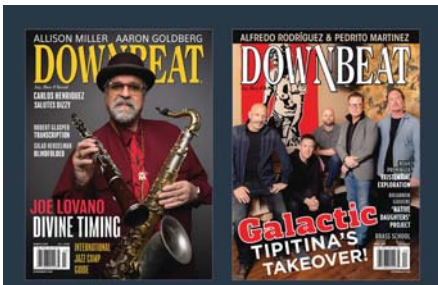
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Drummer Adonis Rose has big plans for the New Orleans Jazz Orchestra's next chapter.

KATIE SIKOVA

New Orleans Jazz Orchestra is Charting a Path Forward

DRUMMER ADONIS ROSE, A FOUNDING member of the Grammy-winning New Orleans Jazz Orchestra, had his work cut out for him when he became the group's artistic director in 2016.

A dark cloud hung over NOJO after Rose's predecessor, trumpeter Irvin Mayfield, was indicted in 2017 on federal charges of money laundering and wire fraud along with NOJO CEO Ronald Markham. The trial, which has been postponed several times, now is scheduled for September. But Rose's preternaturally sunny disposition prevailed later that year, and NOJO followed with several successful concerts. And now, there's the newly issued, joyous comeback album, *Songs: The Music Of Allen Toussaint*.

The late and much beloved Toussaint, an r&b pioneer who died in 2015, became an international ambassador for New Orleans music and seemed like an obvious choice for the reboot. But *Songs* wasn't Rose's original concept.

"We were coming up on the tricentennial of New Orleans, so I wanted to do something to commemorate that," Rose said. But Grammy-winning vocalist Dee Dee Bridgewater, who on the new album puts her own distinctive spin on Irma Thomas' hit version of Toussaint's "It's Raining," had a better idea.

"[Dee Dee] said, 'I've never heard a jazz orchestra perform Allen Toussaint's music,'" Rose recalled. That spark ignited *Songs*, a long-overdue tribute. Though Toussaint worked with others on some of his own big-band arrangements, they never saw the light of day. Rose opted not to use those on *Songs* "because I wanted it to come from me," he said. But Rose wasn't surprised that no other jazz orchestra previously had mined the Toussaint songbook.

"I really don't think an orchestra in L.A. or New York would be as invested in doing the music of Allen Toussaint," Rose said. "We were the people to do that, because we're all from New Orleans, and it's part of our mission to preserve

New Orleans music."

From the infectious street beats that introduce NOJO's second-line take on "Southern Nights," *Songs* is as New Orleans as it gets. And though Rose chose many of Toussaint's biggest hits from his wide-ranging catalog, he refracted *Songs* through NOJO's prism while largely remaining true to the spirit of each piece.

Some tracks, like "Ruler Of My Heart," sung by NOJO house vocalist Nayo Jones, hew fairly close to the original. Others reinvent Toussaint's songs in fresh and surprising ways: "Working In The Coal Mine" becomes a burning instrumental. But *Songs* also invokes Toussaint's personal history with two originals that spring directly from his old Uptown turf. Trumpeter Leon Brown takes listeners on a late-night stroll down "Zimple Street," while percussionist-vocalist Gerald French conjures the mesmerizing chants of Mardi Gras Indians with Rose (bass drum) and Alexey Marti (congas) on "Gert Town."

Now, NOJO is taking Toussaint's music to the world, including dates at the Detroit Jazz Festival on Labor Day weekend and Jazz at Lincoln Center (Dec. 13–14). But the new album is just the beginning of NOJO's next chapter.

"I'm already thinking about the next project," said Rose, who plans to issue a new recording each year. "I want to go in the studio this summer to do a musical-cultural exchange between Brazil and New Orleans. Maybe take some of their music and put some New Orleans flair on it."

Though he wants to imprint NOJO with his own personality, Rose remains laser-focused on the organization's original mission: preserving New Orleans music and educating people about it. "It's bigger than me, it's bigger than anyone in this whole organization," Rose said. "When I think about the transition [from the Mayfield era], I think about the mission and I think about growth. What can we do now, going forward, that we haven't done before?" —Cree McCree

Angelika Niescier Dwells in Possibility

IMPROVISERS CRAFT THEIR EXPRESSION around the question, “What does the music need right now?” And saxophonist-composer Angelika Niescier creates opportunities to explore the answers.

Niescier, who’s based in Cologne, Germany, issued her past two recordings on Swiss imprint Intakt, and with her latest effort, *New York Trio*, the bandleader varies her composition style from one track to the next, using each as a “vessel” through which her ensemble can react more honestly to the music and the moment.

“I was searching for different ways of organizing the material in order to open up different [pathways] for the improvisations,” she said. “I consider the compositions a draft for research, [having] a structure to allow us to start off somewhere and then elevate [the material].”

Putting together a new project, Niescier first considers sound—what she’s hearing in her mind’s ear. And she describes the new recording’s ensemble—longtime collaborator bassist Christopher Tordini, drummer Gerald Cleaver, trumpeter Jonathan Finlayson—as up for anything.

Tordini and Niescier met in 2011, the morning of their first concert together in Germany. The



Saxophonist and bandleader Angelika Niescier has issued three consecutive discs on Intakt. The latest is *New York Trio*.

bassist remembers an immediate connection. “From the first note, it was so easy to make music with Angelika,” he said. “She is a fearless improviser and is always listening and searching.”

From Niescier’s perspective, Tordini is the ideal collaborator for her sound. “He just does the right thing,” she said. “Everything is there—the sound, the punch, but also the ideas and the adventurous thinking.”

Because openness is a force in Niescier’s artistry, her charts dwell in possibility. And while much of her music includes a melodic theme or harmonic outline, Niescier opens *New York Trio* with “The Surge,” which she describes as purely

textural. “It hits, and the free improvisation carries on the main idea from the head,” she said. “The harmonic implications are not outlined in the composition.”

In pushing herself compositionally, Niescier finds she evolves three-dimensionally. And as she begins writing new music, the bandleader reflects on what she calls John Coltrane’s “search for ‘it.’”

“I’m still on it,” she said. “I think I understand it more and more as the throwing of oneself into the music, and really trying to completely be in the moment. That’s the most rewarding—but also the most challenging—thing.”

—Stephanie Jones



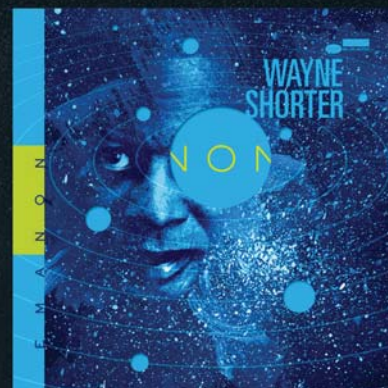
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Walker Displays Rhythmic Refinement



Mark Walker's new leader album is titled *You Get What You Give*.

ONE REASON THAT REEDIST PAQUITO

D’Rivera likes playing with Mark Walker is that the Grammy-winning drummer “doesn’t play too loud.”

D’Rivera said this with a laugh, but he’s deeply serious about his appreciation of the rhythmic refinement that Walker has brought to their 30 years of collaboration. “Many musicians, especially drummers, lose their energy when you ask them to play soft,” he explained. “Mark can play with the same energy without raising the volume. That’s really hard to find.”

In April, Walker released *You Get What You Give* (Fliposphere), serving as leader for the first time in his decades-long career; D’Rivera adds clarinet to two tracks. “I just felt that it was time to get my own stuff out there—because Oregon is not touring anymore and Paquito is doing more guest-artist work and using [his regular players]

less often,” Walker said.

Walker joined the jazz-meets-world-music band Oregon in 1996, and the following year, the drummer contributed to *Northwest Passage*. Oregon founder Ralph Towner was so taken with Walker’s playing on the album that he asked him to become a member of the ensemble.

At the time, Walker had just started to compose his own material, and the band proved to be a good setting to develop his burgeoning compositional skills. “Ralph has got such a great knowledge of music,” Walker said. “If there’s anything trite about a composition, he’ll flat-out reject it. I call it the ‘Ralph test.’”

Several of Walker’s tunes passed that test, among them the high-octane “Deep Six,” which appeared on the Oregon album *1000 Kilometers* in 2007 and earned Walker a Grammy nomination for Best Instrumental Composition in 2008. That

same year, he won a Grammy as part of D’Rivera’s quintet on *Funk Tango* (Sunnyside), in the category Best Latin Jazz Album.

By then, Walker had been playing Latin music for about 20 years and had become a first-call drummer for D’Rivera. But back in the late 1980s, when Walker had just started playing with prominent Latin musicians, the learning curve was steep. “I was thrown into this world of Afro-Cuban rhythms and didn’t really know any of them,” Walker admitted. “I learned a lot of them from nonpercussionists and worked with a lot of musicians from different places. So, it’s been a crash course in Afro-Latin rhythms over the last 30 years.”

These two disparate influences—Oregon’s jazz/world fusion and D’Rivera’s intense Latin drive—meet up on the new album. “When I wrote these tunes, you could say that I had a foot in each of these two different worlds,” Walker said. “I was trying to combine them, and I wanted the groove to be really strong.”

To pull this off, Walker used two discrete bands with “a really hopping rhythm section,” both recorded at Berklee College of Music, but 12 years apart. The first band, from a 2007 session, features players from another of Walker’s early gigs—the Caribbean Jazz Project—and reflects his first successes as a composer. This group turned out a rendition of “Deep Six” with a stronger bite and a softer swing than the Oregon version, and Walker’s original “What About That,” from *Funk Tango*, which shows off his mastery of Latin grooves and a sweet melodicism that D’Rivera accentuates during solos.

The second band, recorded earlier this year, expressed Walker’s more straight-ahead bebop side—a ferocious take on John Coltrane’s “Moment’s Notice,” for instance, and Walker’s own seductively lilting “Andalusian Sunrise.” The swing sections interspersed throughout the new album and the intricate jazz harmonies over which the soloists improvise are telling: They ground the album resolutely in Walker’s persona as a jazz musician. “I go back to my roots,” he asserted. “I gravitated toward jazz in my teens and I never really left.”

Walker’s next project will explore yet another aspect of his jazz persona—a big band album that recalls his time behind the kit for some excellent European large ensembles. But the first chart, already recorded, indicates anything but a reversal. He wrote the tune, “Walk The Walk,” for Oregon, and he’s thinking about using Latin feels throughout the album, maybe adding steel drums.

Looking forward, the bandleader anticipates a positive experience working with a jazz orchestra again. “A drummer in a big band is always happy,” he said. “It’s like driving a big bus.”

—Suzanne Lorge

An advertisement for Bari Woodwinds, Inc. The background is a lush green jungle with various tropical leaves. In the center, two silver saxophones (alto and tenor) are shown. To their right, a raptor is perched on a branch. The text "BARI" is in a large, bold, green font, with "Bari Woodwinds, Inc." below it. Below that, it says "Release you inner Raptor with Bari Woodwinds!". At the bottom, it lists contact information: "ron@bariwoodwind.com", "dawn@bariwoodwind.com", and "www.bariwoodwind.com". At the very bottom, it says "Available in Alto Sax and Tenor Sax".



Vocalist Joanna Wallfisch has a musical pedigree that reaches back several generations.

Album, Book Chronicle Wallfisch's Bike Journey

WHEN SINGER-SONGWRITER JOANNA

Wallfisch is onstage, one can do nothing but pay attention. During a recent gig at the Blue Whale in Los Angeles, she sang conversationally, her folksy style slightly masking her impressive vocal range. Even so, the supremacy of her performance reflected her pedigree.

Wallfisch's musical heritage stretches back at least three generations. Her great-grandfather was a famous conductor in Russia and Germany, and her grandmother survived Auschwitz as a cellist for the prison camp's orchestra. Both her father and mother are world-renown classical strings players, and one of her brothers is a successful opera singer, while the other is a Hollywood film composer.

"I didn't want to go to school for music," said Wallfisch, who earned a fine arts degree instead, moonlighting as a jazz singer at nearby Ronnie Scott's in her hometown of London. "I saw what it was like through my brothers: It seemed so narrow-minded. I wanted to be many things and I saw them having to be one thing."

After moving to New York, where she worked to maintain a successful jazz career, the pressure to focus on a singular goal resurfaced. Someone told her she needed to be single-minded in order to get anywhere in life as musician, that she needed to forget her "adventuring self" to succeed.

Wallfisch did the exact opposite, booking a 2016 West Coast tour from Portland to Los Angeles, traveling from gig to gig via bicycle. She chronicles the journey on a new album, *Far Away From Any Place Called Home*, with a more literal account in a forthcoming memoir. She calls her project "The Great Song-Cycle Cycle."

Wallfisch initially planned to record this music by herself, but eventually enlisted key-

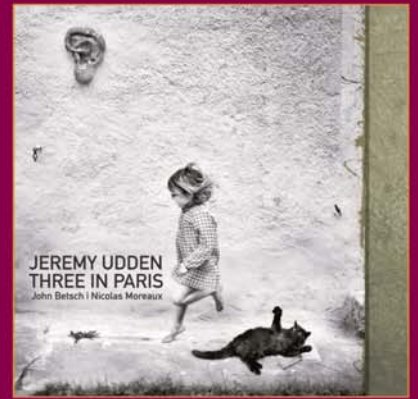
boardist Jesse Elder to assemble a band for the recording sessions. "Joanna's a storyteller," remarked Elder, who, as pianist and music director for Scott Bradlee's Postmodern Jukebox, is familiar with pop and jazz singers crossing over into other genres. "Everything she writes is to service a certain story, a certain picture or scene that she's been through."

On the album, spoken dialogue and audio snippets from the road trip blend into songs about her encounters: a wheelchair-bound woman spinning defiantly into traffic, a camper who was getting his young son drunk on whiskey, a tender late-night conversation with a kindly old gentleman who soon would leave this world, a red plastic dog making its way around the globe.

The songs run the gamut of expression, from uplifting, urgent and raucous to intimate, thoughtful and wistful, with a persistent thread of solitude. "I think loneliness for me is a useful thing," Wallfisch said. "A lot more happens to you, by the nature of you being alone. You're much more flexible, people are more open to you, because you're not with someone." She paused to recite a line from one of her songs: "This romance with loneliness survives on the tails of the wind."

On the album closer, "Final Flight," Wallfisch reaches the geographic end of her journey—the Santa Monica Pier—only to be surprised by overwhelming sadness. "Talking about loneliness, that was the quintessentially most lonely moment," said Wallfisch, who now is based in L.A. "When I stood there, it was real grief ... of having to say goodbye. Say goodbye to the journey, to something in me. I realized at the time I was saying goodbye to New York."

—Gary Fukushima



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The loose and instinctive playing of Lacy has long been a draw for Udden. Udden even studied with the master improviser when Lacy was teaching at the New England Conservatory. After Lacy passed in 2004, Udden performed at a memorial concert that was held in New York City, along with a number of Lacy's friends and collaborators, including the drummer John Betsch.

Over the past few years, Udden also began a collaboration with Paris based bassist Nicolas Moreaux, with whom he recorded *Belleville Project*, which was released in 2015. The two continued to interact and consider new projects. As it turns out, the American born Betsch called Paris home for decades and Moreaux had been performing with him on occasion. The idea of incorporating Betsch into a trio project began to coalesce and would eventually culminate in their new recording, *Three in Paris*.

Betsch has long been a favorite in the world of avant-garde jazz, being the engine behind ensembles led by musicians as diverse as Abdullah Ibrahim, Benny Golson, Dewey Redman, Archie Shepp, Mal Waldron and Henry Threadgill. The drummer had a two-decade affiliation with Lacy, being featured on many of Lacy's fascinating albums. This led to a deep understanding of the saxophonist's unique approach to improvisation.

After reconnecting with Udden, Betsch was thrilled to take part in the new project. When Udden flew to Paris with his wife and young daughter in August 2018, he brought thirty pieces to rehearse, including originals and compositions by Steve Lacy. Though aware of the potential emotional and artistic weight of performing material by Lacy with Betsch, Udden's apprehension proved to be unfounded as Betsch was humble and incredibly supportive. Their single rehearsal was spent finding which tunes worked best and which direction they should take them.



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Ries Unearths a Gem

BACK IN 2005, SAXOPHONIST TIM RIES garnered acclaim for his jazz-fueled interpretations of Rolling Stones music on *The Rolling Stones Project* (Concord), an all-star outing featuring vocalists Sheryl Crow and Norah Jones, guitarists John Scofield and Bill Frisell, keyboardist Larry Goldings and drummer Brian Blade, with guest appearances by the Stones' Keith Richards, Ron Wood and Charlie Watts. Ries upped the ante in 2008 with the two-CD set *The Rolling Stones Project II* (Sunnyside). A kind of global travelogue, it showcased 75 indigenous musicians from Africa, Brazil, Cuba, India, Japan, Portugal and Puerto Rico, and also featured cameo appearances by Mick & The Boys.

As a member of the Stones' touring band since 1999, Ries was uniquely qualified to interpret the tunes he played on a nightly basis in stadiums and amphitheatres around the globe. And yet, he was wary of being pigeonholed as "the guy who does Rolling Stones covers." So, between Stones projects, he went into now-defunct Right Track Studios in Manhattan with Frisell, Goldings, harmonica ace Grégoire Maret, bassists Scott Colley and James Genus, and drumming great Jack DeJohnette to record several of his original pieces. That music remained in the vault for 14 years, until being released on May 11 as *Life Changes* (Ropeadope) to coincide with the Stones' 2019 "No Filter" tour.

"I thought it was time to finally release this project of older material, because I have all this other new music that I need to get to," said Reis, 59. "I'm constantly composing and I have

material now that I couldn't have imagined 14 years ago."

Ries' 10th album as a leader is a highly personal statement. Recorded during an emotionally charged period following his mother's passing, *Life Changes* includes tunes named for his newborn twin daughters, Eliana and Bella, and features appearances by his wife, Juilliard-trained harpist Stacey Shames (on the Celtic-flavored "Eliana's Song," "Stacey's Magic" and the tender "Jasia's Snow Day"), and his 11-year-old daughter, Jasia, who sings on the serene "Bella's Lullaby."

"As a father, it's so precious to hear my daughter singing a lullaby to her little sister," said Ries. "But Jasia, who is now 25 and is involved in acting and singing, said to me, 'Dad, please don't do this. If people hear that, they're not going to know the backstory. They're going to think that's what I sound like.' So, I had her come in and cut new vocals on the track she originally sang over Larry Golding's piano 14 years ago."

The contributions by Frisell, Goldings, Maret and particularly DeJohnette are felt throughout *Life Changes*. As Frisell recalled, "For this session, Tim gathered us all together and set up an atmosphere where everyone could be themselves. For me, that's where the best music happens. When there is trust among the musicians, no one is afraid to make a mistake or to take chances, no one is keeping score. We had never played together as a group before, but I knew everyone had my back, especially Jack. He always lifts things way up and makes



Tim Ries, who frequently tours with the Rolling Stones, has a new leader album, *Life Changes*.

everything better."

DeJohnette, whose interactive touch fuels the proceedings, unleashes on two showcases, "As It Happens" and "Hearing Around Corners."

"Jack played so beautifully and free on both of them," said Ries, who played on the drummer's 2012 release, *Sound Travels* (eOne Music/Golden Beams). "I didn't tell him anything. We just started playing and there was no boxed-in feeling. He's just playing very fluid and so melodically. I wish I could go back in time with the knowledge I have now and play with Jack on that session. Man, 14 years later, I'd play differently now."

Elsewhere on *Life Changes*, DeJohnette enlivens a 13-minute version of "Monk's Dream" and provides seductive grooves on a samba-flavored "For Elis" (Ries' ode to Brazil's legendary singer Elis Regina) and on Gilberto Gil's "Amor Até O Fim," which finds the tenor saxophonist channeling his inner Stan Getz.

Meanwhile, Ries is busy with a couple of other projects, including an appearance in an upcoming documentary with the Budapest-based East Gypsy Band and collaborations with Andalusian pianist David Peña Dorantes and the Cádiz-based flamenco guitarist Keko Baldomero.

"This summer I'll be in Spain for six weeks recording my flamenco-inspired music with a bunch of great flamenco guitarists," he said. "I've been connecting with dancers, singers, guitarists and pianists over there, and it's like being thrown into the fire, like a young jazz musician moving to New York for the first time. The hang is deep, and it's been a really deep learning curve for me."

—Bill Milkowski

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Jazz Currents Surge Along Rhine

THE RHINE CUTS A CROOKED LINE through northwest Germany, arching westward gradually, making it easy to compare the river to the nation's intensifying jazz scene: not straight-ahead, but not fully free.

The Lisa Wulff Quartett opened the 10th edition of Jazzfest Bonn on May 17 with its namesake leader delivering an unaccompanied bass solo, as the band's malleable, funky drummer Silvan Strauss waved a pair of brushes in the air at the Opernhaus.

It's rare that a drummer who's not leading an ensemble so effortlessly becomes a focal point, but Strauss' dexterous polyrhythm-pounding limbs were tough to ignore, even as Wulff's compositions offered ample knotty turns and opportunities for the Hamburg-based troupe to move through straight-ahead and slightly skronky tunes.

Classical vocalist Thomas Quasthoff, who fronted a swinging jazz trio, capped the evening, moving assuredly through transmuted renditions of Tina Turner and Stevie Wonder songs, and offering a stark arrangement of "Summertime," turning the Gershwin standard into something gothically dark.

His banter—well received by the audience—

was in German, but he sang solely in English, hinting at the States' ever-present sway over the music, even as the festival's program sported a bevy of homegrown talent.

For his May 19 set at the venue Pantheon, the final show of JazzFest Bonn's first weekend, bassist Riccardo Del Fra led a quintet through music he described as "not a holiday postcard." His point easily was made on a tune called "Children Walking (Through A Minefield)." The performance largely drew from the Paris-based bandleader's 2018 album *Moving People* and his meticulous writing, not the combustible component parts of his ensemble, each member clearly displaying a keen grip on the material. A piano-bass rendition of "I'm A Fool To Want You"—a piece Del Fra said he frequently performed alongside Chet Baker during the 1980s—was a brief detour before the band returned to music from his latest batch of compositions.

Earlier that day, just north in Cologne, saxophonist Angelika Niescier sat outside a cafe among a gaggle of lounging international journalists and festival programmers, fielding questions. She chatted about Winterjazz, an area festival she said is partially modeled on New York's Winter Jazzfest, explaining that she was thrilled



The Lisa Wulff Quartett performs May 17 at the Opernhaus during JazzFest Bonn.

HEIKE FISCHER

by her experience performing there several years ago.

"The awareness, it's more woven into [New York]," said the bandleader—who has a new album, *New York Trio*, out on Intakt—while discussing the difficulties in increasing listeners' familiarity with the music in Germany's North Rhine-Westphalia region. "I still feel that it's not the same case in Germany. You still have to put the word out and take care of this for every performance."

She concluded optimistically: "It's a gradual process."
—Dave Cantor

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Vocalist Anna-Maria Hefele, of Supersonus, performs at the 25th edition of the INNtöne Jazz Festival in Austria.



© THOMAS RADWIMMER

Austria's INNtöne Jazz Festival Marks 25 Years

AS MANY OF ITS LONGTIME ATTENDEES say, the INNtöne Jazz Festival, now in its 25th year, takes place in the middle of nowhere—the outskirts of the village of Diersbach (population 1,600) in the rolling-hills Innviertel province of Upper Austria. The fest is named after the nearby Inn River, which separates Austria from Germany. This year's sold-out, 18-concert edition (June 7–9) featured a sublime solo piano performance by Abdullah Ibrahim that ended with the maestro singing spirituals as the audience clapped along, as well as a spirited performance by young tubist Theon Cross and his trio.

Founded and run by 59-year-old trombonist/organic farmer Paul Zauner, the festival is nicknamed Jazz am Bauernhof, translated from German as “Jazz on the Farm.” His 38 acres have been in the family for close to 1,000 years and today are used to raise free-roaming pigs and grow corn, wheat and greens. “My father had me driving a tractor when I was 5,” Zauner said. “But when I was young, I had a dream that there was something more than farming for my entire life.”

Festival concerts are held in an acoustically appealing, two-story barn with 800 seats positioned at stage level and in the balcony. This year's edition featured the creative improvisation of Supersonus (aka The European Resonance Ensemble), Sardinia-fueled jazz and vocals led by Italian saxophonist Gavino Murgia, and Austrian pianist David Helbock leading his idiosyncratic, acoustic-electronic trio Random Control.

Led by fiddle player Marco Ambrosini (on a traditional nyckelharpa), Supersonus went on a mystical journey with its unusual instrumentation: harp, harpsichord, jaw harp and overtone singing. There were waves of dynamics, poignant fiddling, coarse bendings and haunting, wordless vocals from Anna-Maria Hefele. It was a chamber music of sorts that moved through trance, dream and tone color changes with ample room

for improvisation.

What started as a typical tenor saxophone-led jaunt turned magical as Murgia swung with adventurous post-bop gusto in his Blast Quartet and then ushered in Tenore Goine di Nuoro, a four-piece a cappella group of which he's a member as a bassu singer. It was a mesmerizing celebration of the traditional language and sacred music of Sardinia, with call-and-response that was meditative and exhilarating at once.

A comedic element pervaded Helbock's ram-bunctious playground of turning jazz standards on their heads with distinctive arrangements executed by his multi-instrumental bandmates: Andreas Broger on woodwinds and Johannes Bär on tuba, French horn, Alpine horn, a pseudo-didgeridoo and two rhythm-making instruments strapped to his knees. Following a South Africa-flavored jaunt through Abdullah Ibrahim's “Africa Marketplace,” the trio imaginatively and whimsically retooled standards (“Blue In Green” and “Watermelon Man”) and Esbjörn Svensson's “Seven Days Of Falling,” creating a carnival of textures (lots of blats and scrapes and tonguing) grounded in Helbock's mischievous pianism. One of the crowd favorites was the hand-whistled, stormy charge into Paul Desmond's “Take Five.” For their second encore and festival finale, Helbock and company played Keith Jarrett's “My Song” with reverence.

INNtöne has remained afloat via ticket sales, some government funds, catering fees and the occasional sponsor. Zauner, who also owns PAO Records, is fine with not charging fees for parking or camping on his land. Some festivalgoers have suggested that he build an amphitheater on the other side of the farmhouse, where his 83-year-old mother lives. He brushes aside such notions. “I'm doing this just the same way,” he asserted. “Getting bigger would not be good for me, soul-wise.”

—Dan Ouellette



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Diverse Lineup Sparks Chicago Blues Fest

IN HIS FIRST YEAR OF PROGRAMMING THE Chicago Blues Festival, Carlos Tortolero and the rest of the fest committee assembled a remarkably diverse lineup. And throughout its 36-year history, this is an event that always has worked best when not hamstrung by adherence to a narrow definition of the blues.

But traditional blues was still a key anchor to the event, as evidenced by a booking June 7 at the Jay Pritzker Pavilion main stage: Charlie Musselwhite with Billy Boy Arnold. The two veteran harmonica players cut their musical teeth about a decade apart in Chicago, with Arnold playing on classic sides by Bo Diddley and the younger Musselwhite woodshedding with Muddy Waters and Howlin' Wolf.

Musselwhite kicked their set into gear with Eddie Taylor's "I'm A Bad Boy," and even at 75, clad in black, with his aluminum briefcase full of blues harps, who would doubt him? Then Arnold emerged onstage, proclaiming, "I'm gonna sing nothing but the blues." The pair swung out on Louis Jordan's "Ain't That Just Like A Woman" and shuffled through Arnold's "What's On The Menu Mama" before Musselwhite brought out Johnny Burgin, previewing their collaboration on Burgin's upcoming Delmark album.

If Arnold, at age 84, defies Father Time, the 90-year-old Jimmy Johnson has reversed the aging process entirely. Johnson, the subject of a video tribute before his set, was the star of last year's blues fest. And if his Pritzker gig this year is any indication, he's established his status as a civic treasure.

Ruthie Foster, who closed the curtain on the fest on June 9, rose to stardom in 2007 with her fifth album, *The Phenomenal Ruthie Foster*. Fans and critics have affirmed the title through countless accolades since. Still, it took several tunes for the audience to warm up to Foster's soul-blues-folk act. The gospel-schooled East Texas native knows when to emote her heart out and when to remain in the pocket. A few catcalls of "We came to party!" were silenced by her powerhouse rendition of Maya Angelou's "Phenomenal Woman" and the reggae-tinged closer, "Real Love."

Other acts ranged further afield from traditional blues fest fare. Dave Alvin and Jimmie Dale Gilmore, whose shared Americana aesthetic has fueled an impressive artistic partnership, conjured Woody Guthrie, as well as Lightnin' Hopkins. Among the Pritzker performers, perhaps the strongest crowd reaction was elicited by Larkin Poe. Sisters Rebecca and Megan Lovell clearly understood the challenge of facing down the purists, with lead singer and rhythm guitarist Rebecca declaring, "We spent a lot of time educating ourselves in the blues." With that, they launched into Son House's "Preachin' Blues," punctuated by an incessant stomp that devolved

into monotony halfway through the set.

A significant booking at the fest was Bombino, a native of Niger with a fascinating backstory. He's surely the only blues fest performer who grew up in the nomadic Tuareg culture, served as Angelina Jolie's African tour guide and lost two band members to soldiers' gunfire. Singing primarily in French, the North African bluesman energized blues pilgrims at the Crossroads stage during his June 7 set.

—Jeff Johnson



Ruthie Foster performs on June 9 at the Chicago Blues Festival.

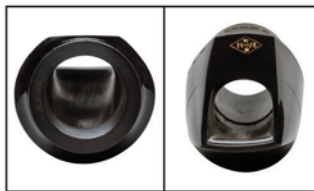
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67TH ANNUAL CRITICS POLL
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The Theater of CÉCILE McLORIN SALVANT

BY PHILLIP LUTZ | PHOTO BY MARK SHELDON

Praised to the skies, Cécile McLorin Salvant has tried to keep her feet on the ground. And little wonder: For Salvant—who this year has earned victories in the DownBeat Critics Poll in the Jazz Artist and Female Vocalist categories, and a third Grammy for Best Jazz Vocal Album for 2018's *The Window* (Mack Avenue)—a certain detachment from the commentary is a matter of self-preservation.

“I don’t want to be in my own muck all the time,” she said. “It’s easier for me not to engage at all.”

But detachment does not mean disinterest. Amid the adulation, the Miami native has, with some frustration, taken note of those who conflate her penchant for vintage material with a predilection for cultural conservatism. In the process, they miss her genius for finding new meaning in old songs.

“Quite a few people see me as sort of a traditionalist or somebody who’s really looking back,” Salvant said. “They

ask why I’m so attracted to songs from the past and less about what I’m dealing with in terms of identity, and what it means to be a human being and what it means to be a woman and those things I’m interested in.”

The past year has found her addressing those concerns by going both smaller (releasing her first duo album, the aforementioned *The Window*, with pianist Sullivan Fortner) and larger (premiering a theatrical song cycle, *Ogresse*, with Darcy James Argue arranging and conducting her compositions for a 13-piece chamber ensemble).



Vocalist Cécile McLorin Salvant says she connects songs from the past with contemporary ideas, issues and concerns.



The collaboration with Fortner began in 2015 when the pianist called her for a one-night gig at Manhattan club Mezzrow. Its impact has proved enduring. “I don’t remember a lot of gigs, but I remember that one,” she said. “I was moved to tears. I’m a super-easy cry in the audience, but when I’m singing, for me to get to that place takes a lot.”

The emotion, she said, reflected the deep connection she found with Fortner, who echoed that sentiment. “The first time I played with her, it was like we were reading each other’s minds,” he said. “It was the first time I felt like I could be me. All of my flaws and insecurities could be completely open and transparent with no judgment. And whatever I did was going to sound OK, because people weren’t coming to hear me; they were coming to hear her.”

“For me, the brilliance with her isn’t so much in the singing as in the way she can make a lyric seem so tangible. She’s all about words. She finds a deeper message behind a lyric. She can transform a song.”

Salvant finds meaning by mining complex and often contradictory emotions, synthesizing those feelings and expressing them in a way that relates directly to her personal reflections. That process plays out across the 17 tracks on *The Window*, not least in the juxtaposition of two tunes that appear in the middle of the program: “J’ai Le Cafard,” a song associated with the 1920s chanteuse Damia (aka Marie-Louise Damien), and “Somewhere,” from *West Side Story*.

On one level, the two tunes conjure opposing moods: “J’ai Le Cafard,” the depths of despair; “Somewhere,” the heights of hope. But in Salvant’s telling, nothing is as simple as it seems: Text and subtext merge, so that moti-

ations bubbling under the surface rise up and, with a sly smile or the sudden swoop of a glissando, are revealed in her performance. Onstage, Salvant’s physical and musical gestures blend seamlessly as she inhabits the characters in her songs.

The songs’ sequencing, she explained, was calculated to accentuate the swirl of conflicting emotions: “In ‘J’ai Le Cafard,’ this woman begins the song saying, ‘No, I’m not drunk,’ which to me is the best opener of any song; it means you’re probably drunk. She goes on to talk about how she’s taking drugs, she’s a prostitute and she dreams about the possibility of having a family and a husband, and wearing beautiful white dresses. But that’s not her life. Her life is pretty dark. And at the end of [the song], she shares suicidal thoughts. ‘I cannot wait for death to come. I know death is looking for me.’ She’s battling a lot of demons, but, regardless, at the end she’s saying to death, ‘Come here.’ She’s not speaking to death with any kind of reverence. She’s speaking down to death.

“‘Somewhere’ is also this vision—this gorgeous, naive, beautiful idea of the perfect plans sung by people who are going to die shortly thereafter. That kind of unwavering hope in the face of impending doom is something I’m so attracted to. It means so much to me, partly because it’s how we get up in the morning. We all know nothing is granted to us, everything is temporary, everything dies. So, that feeling of ‘I’m going to get up and sing a song’—it’s this insane, crazy show of being hopeful for ourselves and humanity and the world. And I need that. I’m such a pessimist and fatalist, looking at how and when it will go wrong.

“You have a kill-me-now song of fatalism and pessimism, even though it’s still kind of

funny. And then you have a song that’s such a leap of faith, even though there is this really dark underbelly to it. It’s balancing out those elements. Even with the jolliest song, there’s always a dark underbelly that can be coaxed out, and the opposite with something that’s super dark and super horrifying: There’s something in it that’s so brutal that you actually have to laugh, and that lightens it.”

Fortner’s choices embrace the complexity, amplifying its effect. On “J’ai Le Cafard,” he abandons the piano for organ, enveloping Salvant in an environment so stereotypically dark and gloomy that it tempers the despair with a hint of Gothic humor. On “Somewhere,” one of three tracks on the album recorded live at the Village Vanguard, his cadenzas fill the spaces with harmonic ambiguities that complicate the lyrics’ message of hope. The interpretation leaves audiences in a pleasurable, if disorienting, state of cognitive dissonance.

A similar state is created by *Ogresse*. The piece—which was performed last fall at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Kennedy Center and the New Jersey Performing Arts Center—is a twisted fairy tale about a traumatized monster who lives in the woods and devours people. The work deals with issues of race and sexuality, illuminating the search for beauty in the grotesque, even as it introduces recipes for human flesh.

“It’s uncomfortable humor,” Argue said. “The audience is not quite sure how to take some of the things. Cécile and I joked about how we were going to alienate her entire fan base. But she’s able to go to all these dark and emotional places and bring audiences with her.”

The project grew out of conversations Salvant and Argue had in 2016. She asked him to arrange songs for an album of unusual material that would use instruments not commonly heard in jazz, including banjo, accordion and marimba, plus strings. By early 2017, she had changed course and, while some of the instruments remained, the concept was broadened into the narrative-driven, one-woman show that became *Ogresse*.

“It’s the hardest thing I’ve had to conduct,” Argue said.

For starters, he said, only one tune remained from the original batch—“Boneyard Dance,” a macabre waltz performed under moonlight—though that song ultimately helped seed the reimagined project. The endeavor also called for Salvant to play a range of characters differentiated musically by variations in the vocal tones and textures she employed, the songs’ keys and their idioms, which ranged from Baroque to swing to bluegrass. Salvant also delivered expository dialogue backed by Brandon Seabrook’s banjo.

“It was an opportunity to just write what I heard,” Salvant said. “My taste in music and art are pretty eclectic, and the fact there were multi-

ple characters allowed me to lean into the eclectic side of me, which I'm trying to do. It hadn't even occurred to me that a lot of things I like can be mixed in. I'm starting to make things play with each other. If you really welcome all the different things that make you and create you as a person, you end up with a pretty mixed group of things. If you flatten all the things you love into one image, it almost doesn't make sense."

By adding dimension to Salvant's profile, *Ogresse* has allowed her to continue the process of transcending the image of a jazz singer. "The genre itself and what it means becomes bigger than the content of the music, in a lot of

of all the things I've done."

Salvant, who turns 30 on Aug. 28, said she wants to take the project to the "next level." That, according to Argue, would include creating a more elaborate lighting design—the current design, adapted to each new venue, has been the main vehicle for realizing stage effects—as well as a true theatrical set, possibly incorporating multimedia elements. "Our goal," he said, "is to make it even more immersive for the audience."

Salvant also hopes to take her recording endeavors to a new level. "Part of my issue with recording in the studio is that it is such a sterile environment," she said. "The only way in

'My music is not about jazz. It doesn't begin and end with the genre itself.'

the ways people talk about me or talk about the music. It can be a little frustrating. My music is not about jazz. It doesn't begin and end with the genre itself. It begins and ends with life and people, and what it means to be alive."

Argue explained that the scope of Salvant's efforts went far beyond the production's musical aspects. "She's wanted for a long time to come out with an original artistic statement that allows her to put more of herself into the work than she can merely as an interpreter of songs. She's the generational interpreter of songs, but she's more than that. She embroidered the gown [for the production], and she illustrated a lyric packet. It's not just the music—it's a very clear, specific vision for every part of it, including the lighting design."

With each new performance, he said, Salvant has grown more precise in her interpretations, as have the musicians in what Argue is calling L'Orchestre L'Ogresse, which embeds the strings of the Mivos Quartet among its members. The reception among critics and audiences has been excellent. While Salvant is not given to victory laps—she acknowledges that she can be her own toughest critic—she was more forgiving in her self-criticism than usual.

"I was relieved that people didn't throw tomatoes at us," she said. "I just wanted it to fly. With all the imperfections in its storyline, I view it with a lot of kindness, which I don't do with a lot of stuff I do. I'm a lot gentler with it. It's such a vulnerable expression of me, the things I've been through, the things I think about. It's the closest thing to sounding like me

the past I've found to fight against that is to have something in the process feel natural and organic. And to me that was, 'Let's record in the same room, and record a bunch of songs—songs that feel strong and that we like.' Themes emerge, you create patterns and weave a narrative. Things connect with each other and the album kind of comes together from that."

Her recording process, she explained, has in no small part been "an afterthought of what was happening onstage," driven by who she was collaborating with at any given time. That pattern fit *The Window*, which grew out of her relationship with Fortner and drew from the 40 or 50 tunes she had been performing with him. "It was a documentary effort," she said. "We were recording a moment—what actually happened—and it was not done with the idea of concept or a fixed idea of what the album was going to be."

But for a future album, perhaps her next, she hopes to take an approach that involves more preplanning and makes greater use of the studio: "It will be, 'OK, I want to record. What am I going to do? Who's going to produce it? Who's going to be on which track?' It will be, 'Let's do something intentional. Let's build something around the recording, instead of recording what's already there.'"

Such an approach was hinted at on 2017's *Dreams And Daggers* (Mack Avenue), her second Grammy-winning album, which deployed a string quartet on some studio tracks. But a large-scale rethink would represent a risk, albeit one she's ready for. It might surprise those familiar with her leaps of musical imagina-

tion and subversive commentary—witness her knowing takes on innuendo-infused blues numbers from the 1920s and sexist tunes from the pre-feminism era—but Salvant feels she frequently has been afraid to take chances.

"I've played it safer than I could and I should and that I can," she said.

One area in which she does not feel she's played it safe is her visual art. "When I draw, I take a lot more risks than with the music," she said, "because there's not pressure. Nobody's paying me to do it. Nobody's waiting for me to do it. If I stopped tomorrow, nobody would cry. Not that they would cry if I stopped singing, but there are bands to pay. There are people invested in this—and we're not even talking about the audience."

Regarding her drawing style—which has some qualities of Naïf Art—she said, "I'm still approaching it as a doodler. It allows me to do so much more: these risks I'm talking about, to deal with ideas so much more blatantly than I would when I'm singing. I know I'm a more visual person than aural person. I don't feel like I have a very strong ear, but I have a strong eye. I'm surer of myself visually."

While Salvant's drawings can be tame—her illustrations for the cover of *The Window* include images of peacocks, an anodyne reference to the album's closing track, Jimmy Rowles' "The Peacocks"—some are indeed blunt. One, for example, shows an outline of a woman on hands and knees with the silhouette of a cat sitting on her back. "That came from the depths of my soul," she said. "A woman on all fours is evocative of a lot of things: the idea of servitude, there's a sexual element to it, there's an animal element to it."

But such drawings, she said, represent a "transitional phase" in her art. A drawing more representative of her current thinking plays with the themes of minstrelsy and animation. Accompanied by the graphically rendered text "Welcome 2 the Minstrel Show 2018," it incorporates phantasmagorical images of blackface that allude to advertising from the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

In their own way, those newer images are just as direct as any of her older ones. They certainly dovetail thematically with issues of cultural appropriation that inform Salvant's interests generally—she has lectured on the adoption of blackface as a form of entertainment—and they are as clear an expression of her aesthetic as her singing. But she's still seeking a satisfying technique for unifying the visual and aural sides of her creative output.

"I've always separated the two," she explained. "But I'm trying to understand how to make things a little bit more porous, to make things flow into each other. Right now, they're not terribly connected. Hopefully, they will be."

DB



Nina Simone mixed jazz and classical, pop tunes and profundity, and wrote politically-themed songs that remain pertinent today.

Nina Simone

TRUTH TELLER

NINA SIMONE'S COURAGE WAS WHAT FIRST STRUCK CASSANDRA WILSON. THE LATTER WAS AN ASPIRING, TWENTY-SOMETHING SINGER IN JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI, WHEN SHE FIRST DISCOVERED HER NORTH CAROLINA-BORN PREDECESSOR. AND IT WASN'T JUST THE COURAGE OF SIMONE'S POLITICAL SONGS; THERE WAS SOMETHING BRAVE ABOUT EVERYTHING SHE SANG, EVEN NUMBERS SUCH AS DUKE ELLINGTON'S "MOOD INDIGO" OR THE GEORGIA SEA ISLANDERS' "SEE LINE WOMAN."

"I was overwhelmed by the strength of her voice," Wilson said. "That voice was a direct hit to your consciousness. It's in your face; you can't move because you're transfixed, so you have to absorb her message. You become a prisoner to it, almost. Even if she hadn't sung 'Mississippi Goddam' or 'Four Women,' you'd have to give her props just for her approach to music."

Simone (1933–2003)—whose accolades include the Recording Academy's Lifetime Achievement Award—is the newest member of the DownBeat Hall of Fame. As a child, she was a classical piano prodigy, but when her application to a Philadelphia conservatory, the Curtis Institute, was rejected—because of her race, she always believed—she rebounded by taking a job as a singer in an Atlantic City barroom.

She sang jazz standards because that's what one did at nightclubs in 1954, but she performed them unlike anyone else. Mixed in with the swinging rhythm and harmonic elasticity of jazz singers were her classical piano training, her bluesy Southern roots and her innate grit. She applied that one-of-a-kind musical recipe to everything she did for the rest of her career.

"I was also trained in the classical world," Wilson said, "so I understand the courage it takes to blend those genres. Jazz purists are purists, and they have strong beliefs about how jazz is supposed to sound. There are also classical purists, and never the twain shall meet. But they have to meet at some point. When they do, we get a broader understanding of what music actually is. It doesn't belong to just one group of people; it's much larger than that."

Simone's debut album, *Little Girl Blue*, contained a version of George Gershwin's "I Loves You, Porgy," that found her correcting the grammar of the title (and thus bolstering the character's dignity) and framing her stately but tender vocal with piano flourishes. It became a top-20 pop hit in 1959 and catapulted her into stardom. She never matched that chart success again, but she had enough momentum to record and tour as long as her health remained.

"It is difficult to retain your standards," she told DownBeat in 1968, "with the pressure of trying to make money, which always has its rules. ... It's hard to walk the tightrope of doing what you think is your best and making money at it. The pressure of show business is on all the time."

Despite that pressure, she continued to push at the boundaries of jazz and popular music. After a white supremacist assassinated civil rights activist Medgar Evers in Jackson, Mississippi, on June 12, 1963, and members of the Ku Klux Klan bombed the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama, on Sept. 15 of that year—killing four children—Simone was inspired to write her most famous protest song, "Mississippi Goddam."

"I shut myself up in a room and that song happened," Simone told author LaShonda Katrice Barnett in the 2007 book *I Got Thunder: Black Women Songwriters on Their Craft*. "At first, I tried to make myself a gun ... I was going to take one of them out and I didn't care who it was. Then Andy

[Stroud], my husband at that time, said to me, 'Nina, you can't kill anyone; you are a musician. Do what you do.' When I sat down, the whole song happened. I never stopped writing until the whole thing was finished."

In the live recording of the song on *Nina Simone In Concert* (1964), she sings, "Picket lines/ Schoolboy cots/ They try to say it's a Communist plot/ All I want is equality/ For my sister, my brother, my people and me." In a spoken aside, she quips, "This is a show tune, but the show hasn't been written for it, yet." Taking that line as a challenge, Christina Ham wrote *Nina Simone: Four Women*, a play that premiered in St. Paul, Minnesota, in 2016, and has been staged in Washington, D.C., Atlanta and Chicago.

"There's no way to encapsulate her whole career without doing dozens of hours of theater," Ham said. "I didn't want to get into the abusive husband and her mental problems; there's no way to do that justice and still do a play focused enough for people to hold onto. Documentaries can do that; there's no need for me to do it, too. I wanted to capture a moment in time, that moment when she changed from an artist to an artist/activist."

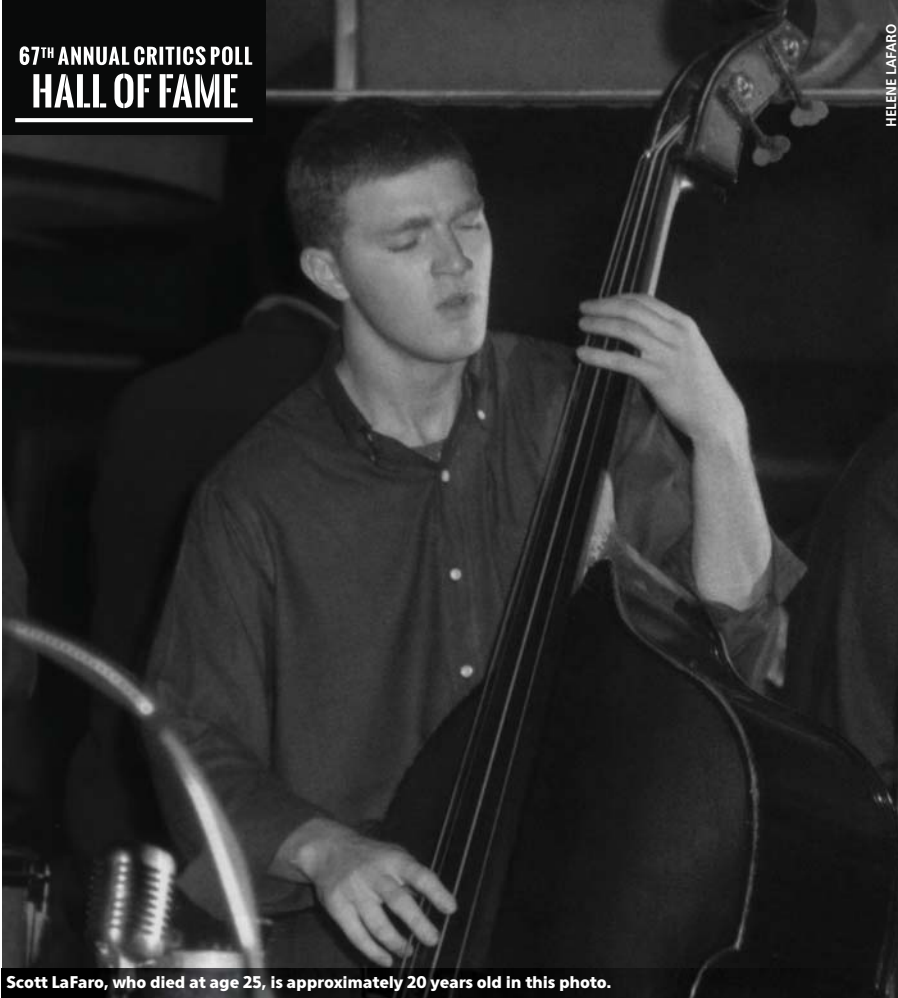
The play is set the rubble-strewn interior of the 16th Street Baptist Church soon after the bombing. The title comes from another Simone composition, "Four Women," which describes women who deal with self-hatred due to the hues of their skin: Aunt Sarah, a worker; Saffronia, the daughter of a white rapist and a black mother; Sweet Thing, a prostitute; and Peaches, a bitter person bent on revenge. In Ham's play, Simone joins three characters who sit in the church pews and bicker over their differences, their similarities and the way forward.

"'Four Women' came to me after conversations I had with black women," Simone told Barnett. "It seemed we were all suffering from self-hatred. We hated our complexions, our hair, our bodies. I realized we had been brainwashed into feeling this way about ourselves by some black men and many white people. I tried to speak to this in the song. And do you know, some black radio stations wouldn't play it."

Angered by racism in her homeland, Simone left the States in 1969 to live in Barbados, Liberia, Switzerland, the Netherlands and finally, France, where she was based for the final 10 years of her life. But she never lost her connection to her younger self, a girl named Eunice Waymon who played piano and sang at the AME church in Tryon, North Carolina. Four artists recently bought her childhood home in Tryon—where she was born—and are restoring it with help from the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

"The moment during this process that has been the most meaningful to me," said New York painter Adam Pendleton, one of the prime movers behind the restoration, "was when the home was declared a National Treasure. At the end of that day, after all the performances and remarks, I looked out at this diverse audience and thought, 'Wow, this really matters. A community can come together because of someone's artistic legacy.'"

—Geoffrey Himes



Scott LaFaro, who died at age 25, is approximately 20 years old in this photo.

Scott LaFaro

BRIEF, ELUSIVE JOY

JUST 25 YEARS OLD ON JULY 6, 1961—THE DATE HIS CAR VEERED OFF A HIGHWAY IN WESTERN NEW YORK STATE, KILLING HIM AND A PASSENGER IN A FIERY CRASH—BASSIST SCOTT LAFARO ALREADY HAD ESTABLISHED HIMSELF AS A REVOLUTIONARY INSTRUMENTALIST.

A member of pianist Bill Evans' trio, LaFaro also had turned heads as a collaborator with Stan Getz, Ornette Coleman and Victor Feldman. A sober, serious young man with a ferocious work ethic, LaFaro seemed destined to become a major force in the music.

A year older than LaFaro, bassist Gary Peacock recalls the first time he heard him, playing with the Lighthouse All-Stars in Southern California in the late 1950s.

"I was blown away—amazed," Peacock recalled. "No one was doing what Scott was doing. His sense of time, his flexibility, speed, endurance: It was all unique."

A native of New Jersey, LaFaro was 18 before he switched to bass from saxophone, making his remaining seven years all the more remarkable. The shift from reeds to strings was necessitated by the admission requirements at Ithaca

College, the same institution that LaFaro's father had attended as a young violinist.

The bass quickly became LaFaro's obsession, and he dropped out to pursue more playing opportunities, including a gig on the road with Buddy Morrow (a Tommy Dorsey protégé). Morrow's big band specialized in blues and r&b—an ideal training ground for a young bassist looking to build his stamina.

In 1956, while the Morrow band was in Los Angeles, LaFaro gave notice so he could join Chet Baker's band. The trumpeter's heroin addiction made LaFaro's stay a short one, and soon the bassist was back in L.A., rooming with fellow bass phenom Charlie Haden and studying informally with veteran bassist Red Mitchell. LaFaro became a regular at The Lighthouse in Hermosa Beach, where Peacock encountered him.

"He was taking a lot of inspiration from

[Anton] Webern when I met him," Peacock said. "That surprised me, because I was coming out of [Béla] Bartók. Scott was clearly outside the mainstream. He had an incredible feel for broken time, and yet he also had a more melodic side. That was so different."

A January 1958 recording, *The Arrival Of Victor Feldman*, caught the ear of influential critics Ralph J. Gleason and Nat Hentoff, who weighed in on the bassist's extraordinary technique. After a short tenure with Stan Kenton's big band in spring 1959, LaFaro landed his best-known gig—as one-third of the groundbreaking trio with Evans and drummer Paul Motian.

While the Evans trio is what comes to mind for most people when LaFaro is mentioned, their relationship was rocky. A bandleader's heroin addiction, again, was the cause. Ironically, LaFaro's other regular gigs were with Getz, whose drug habit also created issues, and Coleman, subbing for a strung-out Haden.

It was with Getz, at Newport, that LaFaro made his last public appearance, on July 2, 1961. He drove to Geneva, New York, to address some family business, and then on July 5, LaFaro traveled west with family friend Frank Ottley to a mutual friend's house in Warsaw. After listening to albums with Rochester-based brothers Chuck and Gap Mangione, LaFaro and Ottley headed home.

Although LaFaro's body was badly burned in the crash, his bass—a Prescott crafted in 1825—while severely damaged, was not irreparable. LaFaro's mother gifted the instrument to Sam Kolstein, who had originally restored it. Both the neck and scroll had been charred in the crash, and four of its six rib sections were damaged.

"Sam Kolstein couldn't bring himself to restore the bass," said Madeleine Crouch, general manager of the Dallas-based International Society of Bassists, which now owns the instrument and lends it to members. "Eventually, his son, Barrie, undertook to restore it for our 1988 convention."

In 2014, Barrie Kolstein donated the instrument to the ISB, and it now is with the Scott LaFaro Archives at Ithaca College. Numerous bassists have borrowed it, including Esperanza Spalding, who played the bass at Cornell University in Ithaca in April.

"People get very emotional when they play it," Crouch said. "There's something about acoustic instruments and the spirituality of their owners that resides in the wood."

"Scott was a very inspirational player," Peacock said. "He raised the bar on what was possible on the bass, and he made players like me ask what was possible. He was serious, but playful. So, we had to question if we could be that serious about playing and yet find the joy that he expressed." —James Hale

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Joe Williams, a native of Georgia, grew up in Chicago.

Joe Williams

PEERLESS TITAN

NO JAZZ SINGER EVER SWUNG QUITE AS HARD AS JOE WILLIAMS (1918-'99), WHO CASSANDRA WILSON ONCE DESCRIBED AS HAVING "BROUGHT THE BLUES FROM THE COUNTRY TO THE CITY."

Williams leapfrogged to international fame during a 1955-'61 tenure with the Count Basie Orchestra, and sustained a high profile as a solo act for the remainder of his life.

In both contexts, the vocalist consistently illuminated the hardcore blues, ballads and jazz songbooks with a suave, velvety, timbrally fluid bass-baritone voice, which he deployed with split-second timing, peerless diction and an actor's sense of intonation and phrasing.

During a 1995 conversation with bassist Milt Hinton that's posted on YouTube, Williams shared an important insight about the source of the imperatives that animated his aesthetics. "We had to play for dancing every single night, and you had to have it right," he remarked. "It is an exact thing that we do. It is flexible, but that tempo and the time and the feeling that is given is still exact."

Williams' talent was evident on his first

recording, in 1945, on which he addresses "Roll 'Em Pete" with a declamatory projection worthy of Big Joe Turner, who, Williams told DownBeat's Barbara Gardner in 1960, "was my first inspiration to sing the blues during the 1930s." The same session also generated an avuncular "Basin Street Blues," where Williams signifies on Louis Armstrong, whom he saw perform during his Chicago childhood, but also positions himself as an heir to such popular African American swing era balladeers as Billy Eckstine, Dan Grissom, Herb Jeffries and Pha Terrell, as well as Frank Sinatra.

Two years before these recordings, Williams fulfilled the crooner function during a year with vibraphonist Lionel Hampton (Dinah Washington sang the blues numbers), as he had done in Chicago in 1937-'39 with clarinetist Jimmie Noone's large ensemble, and in 1941

with tenor saxophonist Coleman Hawkins' big band. In 1946, Williams sang ballads with Andy Kirk's orchestra. After leaving Kirk, he suffered a down spell—a nervous breakdown, a year of confinement, a job selling cosmetics. But in 1950, Williams returned full-time to music, singing blues and novelty numbers with Chicago band-leader-drummer Red Saunders, for whom Sun Ra arranged. That year, when Basie took a two-week septet engagement in Chicago, Williams sat in on each night's final set.

On Christmas Day 1954, Basie brought him into his "New Testament" Orchestra. They sealed the deal a few months later with *Count Basie Swings, Joe Williams Sings*, which introduced to the canon instant classics like "Every Day (I Have The Blues)," "The Comeback" and "Alright, Okay, You Win."

In 1958, Williams, now an international star, launched his 30-plus album solo career with the definitive "blue ballad" recording, *A Man Ain't Supposed To Cry*. After leaving Basie in 1961, he solidified his fame on numerous projects—a co-led combo with Basie trumpeter Harry "Sweets" Edison; well-wrought studio dates with, among others, Oliver Nelson and the Thad Jones-Mel Lewis Orchestra; and collaborations with George Shearing, Cannonball Adderley and Shirley Horn. Still in fine voice after his 75th birthday, Williams concluded his corpus with *Here's To Life*, a Robert Farnon-directed strings-and-woodwinds date, and *Feel The Spirit*, where he revisited early roots in choir and gospel quartets.

On these late recordings, Williams sings with a power and nuance that masks advancing emphysema. He continued to work steadily, but in early 1999, after an engagement in a smoky venue, he entered a hospital in Las Vegas, where he'd settled. On March 29, in a hallucinatory state, he got dressed and decided to walk home. After several miles, a few blocks from his destination, Williams collapsed and died.

"People who write about the blues and blues singers don't seem to recognize that blues is a psychiatric treatment of a sort," Williams told Gardner in 1964. "People are confused by this fast world in which we live, and what blues, and people who write blues, are doing is just spelling out the problems in modern-day language."

"I like all songs," Williams continued, citing Nat "King" Cole as a supreme ballad practitioner, and Ray Charles, Ethel Waters and Duke Ellington as exemplars of blues expression. "Ellington plays the best blues anybody would want to hear," he said.

Ellington returned the compliment with a eulogistic description in his 1973 memoir, *Musical Is My Mistress*. "He was no imitator of other blues singers, but sang real soul blues on which his perfect enunciation of the words gave the blues a new dimension," Ellington wrote. "All the accents were in the right places and on the right words."

—Ted Panken

**Paul Bley / Gary Peacock / Paul Motian
When Will The Blues Leave**

Paul Bley piano
Gary Peacock double bass
Paul Motian drums

"(This) proves to be a masterpiece of the pianist's discography (...) Phrases of pure poetry, numerous and unforgettable."

Pierre de Chocqueuse, Jazz Magazine

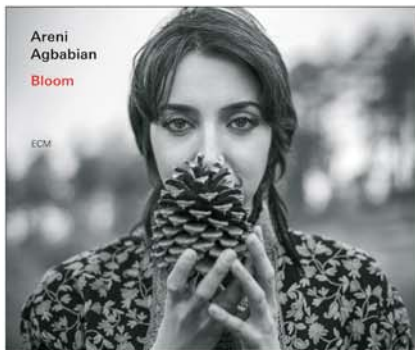


**Areni Agabian
Bloom**

Areni Agabian voice, piano
Nicolas Stocker percussion

"This is not a voice that gets down and dirty: it floats a few inches above the earth on a higher, more rarefied plane, unsullied by the elements... A beguiling collection from a real talent."

John Lewis, Guardian

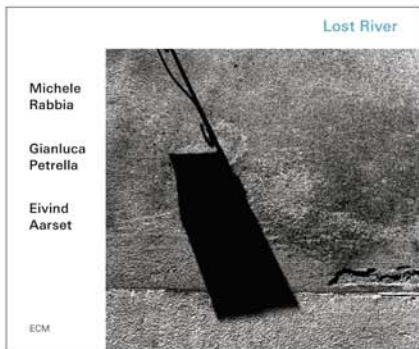
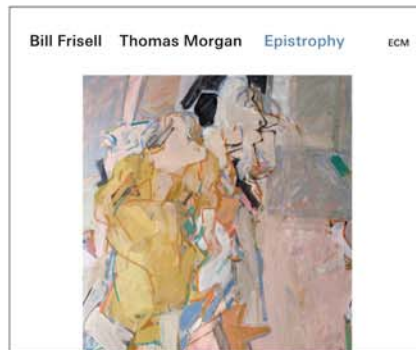


**Bill Frisell / Thomas Morgan
Epistrophy**

Bill Frisell guitar
Thomas Morgan double bass

"*Epistrophy* is a companion to *Small Town*, but it is also an extension of the intimate, communicative union shared by this duo in near symbiosis. Together they create a gold standard for live performance."

Thom Jurek, All Music



**Maria Farantouri / Cihan Türkoğlu
Beyond The Borders**

Maria Farantouri vocals
Cihan Türkoğlu saz, kopuz, vocals
Anja Lechner violoncello
Meri Vardanyan kanon
Christos Barbas ney
Izzet Kızıl percussion

A cast of remarkable musicians interprets both traditional music from Greece, Turkey, Lebanon and Armenia and new songs. In the spirit of the project, the new songs also bridge traditions and idioms and emphasize the potential of shared expression.

**Michele Rabbia / Gianluca Petrella / Eivind Aarset
Lost River**

Michele Rabbia drums, percussion, electronics
Gianluca Petrella trombone, sounds
Eivind Aarset guitar, electronics

An evocative post-ambient, richly textured sonic event, and outstanding beyond-category recording. Spontaneously improvised for the most part, and with mysterious detail flowering inside its soundscapes, *Lost River* keeps revealing new forms.

**Gianluigi Trovesi / Gianni Coscia
La misteriosa musica della Regina Loana**

Gianluigi Trovesi clarinets
Gianni Coscia accordion

This hugely enjoyable and highly inventive album is dedicated to the late Umberto Eco, an ardent champion of this particular duo. As ever, the Italians cast a wide net, playing a variety of songs and improvising most creatively while keeping their dedicatee in view.



Wayne Shorter is collaborating with Esperanza Spalding on an opera, *Iphigenia*, which will be staged in 2020.

Wayne Shorter

EXPLORING THE MULTIVERSE

WAYNE SHORTER IS AT HOME IN LOS ANGELES, TALKING ON THE PHONE ABOUT *EMANON* (BLUE NOTE), WHICH WAS VOTED JAZZ ALBUM OF THE YEAR IN THE DOWNBEAT CRITICS POLL AND EARNED HIM A GRAMMY IN THE CATEGORY BEST JAZZ INSTRUMENTAL ALBUM.

In true Shorter style, the way he talks about the music on this three-disc set is to talk about other things, because for the saxophonist, the act of composing and improvising is by its very nature random and associative.

"I'm talking about a lot of stuff here," he explains, "and that's the way the record sounds."

For Shorter, the notion of providing some sort of linear narrative about the creative process misses the point, in part because the whole idea of *Emanon* is something that exists in several dimensions. Part of that has to do with *Emanon* existing in several dimensions. There's the live performance in London by Shorter's long-standing quartet, which takes up two of the album's three discs. There's also the orchestral part of the program, when the quartet isn't so much accompanied by but nestled within the conductor-less Orpheus Chamber Orchestra. And then there's the parallel narrative found in the 80-page graphic novel included with the deluxe version of album.

The story—which came as a result of Shorter's collaboration with writer Monica Sly and illustrator Randy DuBurke—is about the multiverse: "If you

get the novel itself, you'll see that there's a character in there who looks kind of like—and I can say this, because I didn't draw it—[actor/musician] Idris Elba," Shorter says. "He's multitasking from one universe to another, and waking the residents, the people who reside in these universes. He gets them to wake up.

"The avant-garde and all that stuff seems like it has been designed to shake up things and wake up things. But you can have a quiet time, and the intricateness, like a basket-weave of expressions in sound, can awaken the sleeping giant that we all own, as individuals, of ourselves."

Warming to the aspect of storytelling for *Emanon*, Shorter makes the observation that audiences, as they get pulled into a story, often end up wanting a sequel. "Quite a few people want to see the continuation of many movies and novels," he says. "I work on the basis that there's nothing that's ever finished, and nothing is thrown away. That's why there's a lot of running into brick walls, and no exits, and false doorways. We can go around in circles, and say, 'This is finished,' when it's really not, and move on to something else. But that something

else is just a piece of what was left undone."

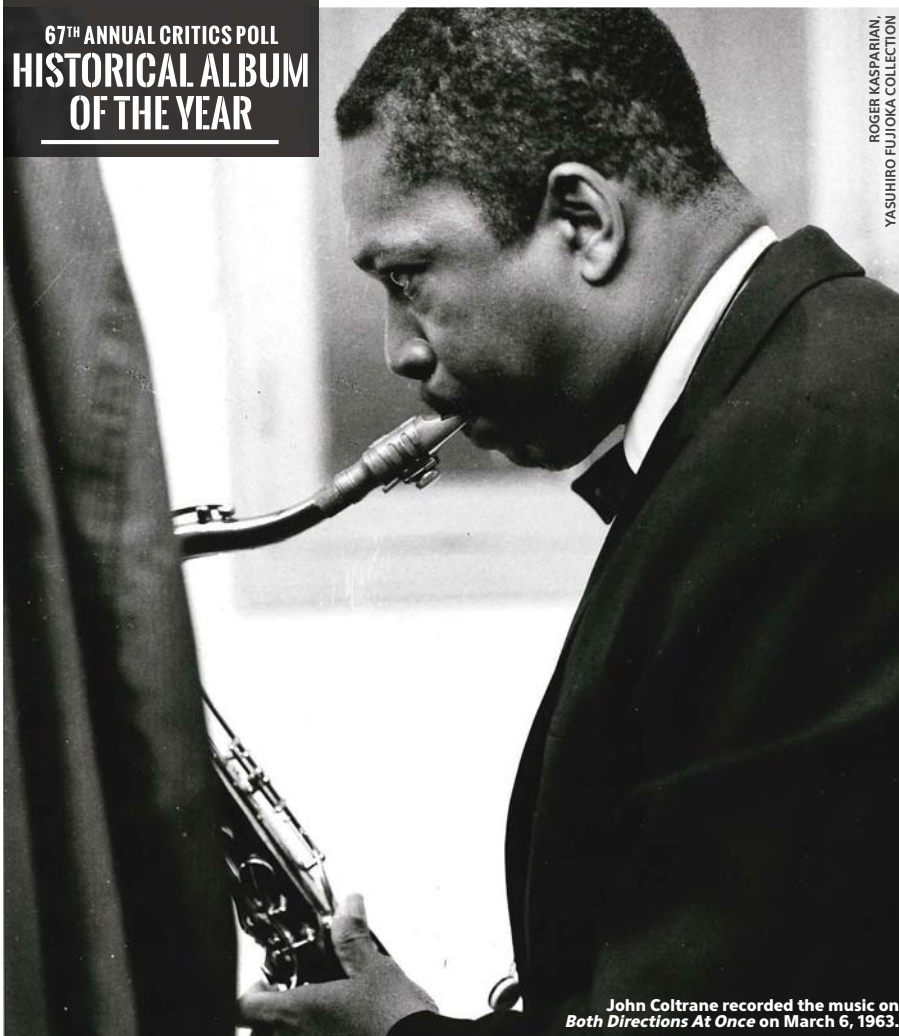
Perhaps the most obvious example of this on *Emanon* is "The Three Marias." Originally recorded on Shorter's 1985 album, *Atlantis*, it turns up in two forms here, first in a lush, woodwind-heavy orchestral version and then as a rangy, discursive quartet performance. All three versions have melodic content in common, but it's not as if these are three different performances of the same piece. Instead, it's as if the composition exists only as a Platonic ideal, with each performance merely being an echo of that ideal, fully real, yet somehow incomplete.

"The next thing, right now, we're working on an opera, myself and Esperanza Spalding," Shorter says. Titled *Iphigenia*—and inspired by Euripides' *Iphigenia in Aulis*—it will have a score by Shorter and a libretto by Spalding, with scenic design by architect Frank Gehry. Penny Woolcock, who staged John Adams' opera *Doctor Atomic*, will direct, with Clark Rundell conducting the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic.

"I like the phrase I saw in a book on opera: 'In opera, anything goes,'" Shorter says, noting that what likely will throw critics about *Iphigenia* is what doesn't go into it. "All the false premises: *Where are the arias? Where's the diva aspect? Wear a tuxedo.* That kind of stuff." He pauses, then dismisses such notions: "Get the hell out of here."

—J.D. Considine

67TH ANNUAL CRITICS POLL
**HISTORICAL ALBUM
OF THE YEAR**



ROGER KASPARIAN,
YASUHIRO FUJIOKA COLLECTION

John Coltrane recorded the music on *Both Directions At Once* on March 6, 1963.

John Coltrane DAZZLING DISCOVERY

FEW JAZZ MUSICIANS HAVE BEEN AS WELL SERVED BY POSTHUMOUS STUDIO RECORDINGS AS JOHN COLTRANE (1926-'67). ALBUMS LIKE *OM* (1968), *SUN SHIP* (1971) AND *INTERSTELLAR SPACE* (1974) ADDED TO THE APPRECIATION OF THE SAXOPHONIST'S MUSIC AND PROVIDED INSIGHTS INTO WHERE HE WAS HEADED AT THE TIME OF HIS PREMATURE DEATH FROM LIVER CANCER.

Who knew that 51 years after Coltrane's death, there still would be more to learn?

The arrival of *Both Directions At Once: The Lost Album* (Impulse!)—recorded with pianist McCoy Tyner, bassist Jimmy Garrison and drummer Elvin Jones on March 6, 1963—was akin to unearthing a time capsule that no one knew had been left for us to discover.

"It has many benefits that 'recovered recordings' often lack—clear fidelity and good production values being the most obvious," said saxophonist Salim Washington, a professor at the

University of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa and the co-author of *Clawing at the Limits of Cool: Miles Davis, John Coltrane and the Greatest Jazz Collaboration Ever*. "Equally important is that these statements capture everyone sounding their best."

Coltrane's quartet was amid a two-week run at Birdland when producer Bob Thiele and engineer Rudy Van Gelder rolled the tape in the latter's New Jersey studio. They captured 90 minutes of spectacular music that closely mirrored one of the band's live sets. As Coltrane's son,

Ravi—who helped compile the tapes, which had been entrusted to his father's first wife—told *DownBeat* last year, Garrison and Jones are featured more prominently than was usual for a studio session.

"The bass and drum solos do reflect gig etiquette," Washington said. "But even if there were not these solos, I would still hear this recording session as being gig-like. It's in the relaxed mastery that the quartet plays with. This is not just Trane's effort, but clearly that of the great quartet."

Washington also hears Coltrane beginning to move into a more lyrical style of playing. As an example, he cites "Untitled Original 11386," which the band plays three times.

"The song is slowed down, which makes the compositional feature toward the end of the melody more poignant," he said. "The emphasis of the melodic and dramatic aspects of the composition drive the equally amazing solos that follow. We are hearing a development of Coltrane as a soprano saxophonist in his ability to drive Elvin's 4/4, or rather to ride along with it."

The use of soprano is of particular interest, Washington noted, because Coltrane seems to be discarding the modal scale/triplet rhythm approach he used on his epochal 1961 recording of "My Favorite Things." "He explores the instrument both in the Elvin Jones Afro-Latin grooves and also the straight four-to-the-floor swing," he said. "Similarly, in the latest version of 'Vilia' [Take 5], Coltrane decides on the soprano, even though the composition is firmly in the swinging standard mode. Interestingly, he employs melodic gestures that are much like those he mastered on the tenor sax."

Changes like this are among the tea leaves that Coltrane fans love to read. The accepted truth of the musician's life is that he was a searcher, constantly moving toward new forms of expression and experiences that would enable him to extend his own spiritual journey. While the months following reedist Eric Dolphy's departure from Coltrane's group in 1962 have been viewed as a period of musical retrenchment—with the highly melodic albums with vocalist Johnny Hartman and Duke Ellington being his most prominent recordings—*Both Directions* shows that Coltrane still was interested in exploring more harmonically knotty forms.

"It adds to what we have known of Trane's development, particularly in the degree to which he led the quartet into seamless play," Washington said about the recordings. "We hear this routinely later in the quartet's development, especially with the suites, such as *Transition*, *First Meditations*, *A Love Supreme* and *Crescent*. Toward the end of the quartet's existence [in 1965] all the recordings have this quality in abundance; we can hear how the Coltrane quartet was entering this space without the unifying feature of a suite, but simply in their ability to realize songs together in an astonishing way." —James Hale

67TH ANNUAL CRITICS POLL

JAZZ ALBUM OF THE YEAR



1. WAYNE SHORTER

Emanon
(BLUE NOTE)

85

Shorter's solo career has been a circuitous adventure, from early Blue Note albums to the brilliant Brazilian project *Native Dancer* and masterful electro-acoustic work. In this millennium, he's steered his quartet with pianist Danilo Pérez, bassist John Patitucci and drummer Brian Blade, and on his ambitious *Emanon*, a three-disc set, the ensemble is joined by the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra. *Emanon* is packaged with a graphic novel, which Shorter helped create with writer Monica Sly and comic book artist Randy DuBurke.



2. CÉCILE MCLORIN SALVANT

The Window

(MACK AVENUE)

71

Salvant might have been weaned on the great jazz singers, but the vocalist on this sophisticated recital owes more to the orderly emotional measurements of musical theater than the nomadic spontaneity of a jazz set. Its songs, mostly covers, are said to address the complexities of love. More specifically, Salvant draws on high-end theater and cabaret songs, delivering them with nuanced dynamics.



3. AMBROSE AKINMUSIRE

Origami Harvest

(BLUE NOTE)

65

Where once violins were drizzled over arrangements like semi-classical ganache, albums like Vijay Iyer's *Mutations* and Fabian Almazan's *Alcanza* have made the notion of a jazz/chamber music cross-pollination more than just some Third Stream pipe dream. And with the daring and original *Origami Harvest*, trumpeter and composer Akinmusire takes jazz string writing to a new plateau.



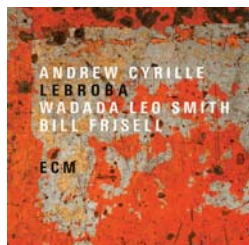
4. KAMASI WASHINGTON

Heaven And Earth

(YOUNG TURKS)

60

Not only has Washington gracefully navigated the pressures of all those "savior of jazz" proclamations since *The Epic*, he's done so without sacrificing his sense of adventure, as evidenced by his dichotomy-laden *Heaven And Earth*. Though it was recorded in just two weeks, some of the material's been in the works for years, which might explain the depth to which he's able to plumb the album's duality.



5. ANDREW CYRILLE

Lebroba

(ECM)

58

Free-jazz drumming icon Cyrille shows no sign of slowing down. At 79, he remains as wide open to the melodic possibilities of his instrument as he was on 1969's *What About?* and 1974's *Dialogue Of The Drums* with Milford Graves. Rather than fronting the proceedings by flaunting his chops, Cyrille underscores *Lebroba* with a combination of grace, Zen-like restraint and authority.



6. MAKAYA MCCRAVEN

Universal Beings

(INTERNATIONAL ANTHEM)

57

It's drummer McCraven's masterful execution of the concept that makes *Universal Beings* so notable. Since the 20th century, folks have been cutting up recordings and repurposing them, Teo Macero being a notable proponent. But the Chicago bandleader was able to capture the right moments alongside artists like harpist Brandee Younger, dice them up and present it all in a listener-friendly package.



7. BRANFORD MARSALIS QUARTET

The Secret Between The Shadow And The Soul

(OKEH/SONY)

54

The Secret Between The Shadow And The Soul is a snapshot of where Marsalis' quartet currently stands: at the top of its game. It's as immediately intimate as it is infinitely expansive, reflecting a deep interconnectedness among players. Bassist Eric Revis wrote the album's more adventurous pieces, and pianist Joey Calderazzo brought in two tunes, too.



8. KENNY BARRON QUINTET

Concentric Circles

(BLUE NOTE)

52

Cohesion and subtlety are basic to pianist Barron's *Concentric Circles*, with moments of particular beauty emerging from its stream of high-minded, yet gratifyingly grounded, play. The title track, a waltz, evokes sweetly sad memories via the head's flugelhorn-tenor or harmony and the horn players' tone-true statements. "Blue Waters" and "I'm Just Sayin'" offer up hip, bluesy snaps.



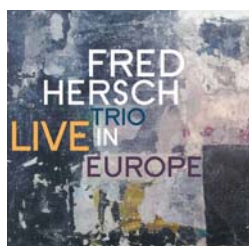
9. CHRISTIAN MCBRIDE

Christian McBride's New Jawn

(MACK AVENUE)

50

When it comes to trailblazing jazz concepts in any setting, McBride always delivers. Enter his latest jawn—a pianoless quartet, born of a New York scene that sates East Coast soul-seekers and purists alike. The bassist faithfully salutes his forebears—Gerry Mulligan, Omette Coleman and the like—but leave it to this next-gen assimilation of bandleaders to take musical liberties.



10. FRED HERSCH TRIO

Live In Europe

(PALMETTO)

44

Hersch's writing sometimes is an open framework for free extemporization, as in the flow of "Snake Maltings" and "Scuttlers," both evoking queasy images of what you might see after turning on the lights at midnight in a kitchen that needs cleaning. The pianist's playing here achieves profundity through minimal means, accompanied by bassist John Hébert and drummer Eric McPherson.

11. CHARLES LLOYD & THE MARVELS + LUCINDA WILLIAMS
Vanished Gardens
(BLUE NOTE)41
12. VIJAY IYER & CRAIG TABORN
The Transitory Poems
(ECM)36
13. THE ART ENSEMBLE OF CHICAGO
We Are On The Edge
(PI)35
14. TYSHAWN SOREY, *Pillars*
(FIREHOUSE 12) 31
15. JOE LOVANO, *Trio Tapestry*
(ECM)28
16. BRAD MEHLDAU, *Seymour Reads The Constitution!*
(NONESUCH)26
17. MYRA MELFORD & SNOWY EGRET, *The Other Side Of Air*
(FIREHOUSE 12)26
18. ALLISON MILLER/CARMEN STAAF, *Science Fair*
(SUNNYSIDE)26
19. JD ALLEN, *Love Stone*
(SAVANT)25
20. DAVE HOLLAND
Uncharted Territories
(DARE2)25

For more of the year's top jazz albums, see page 56.

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Fred Hersch Trio

EVOLVING RAPPORT

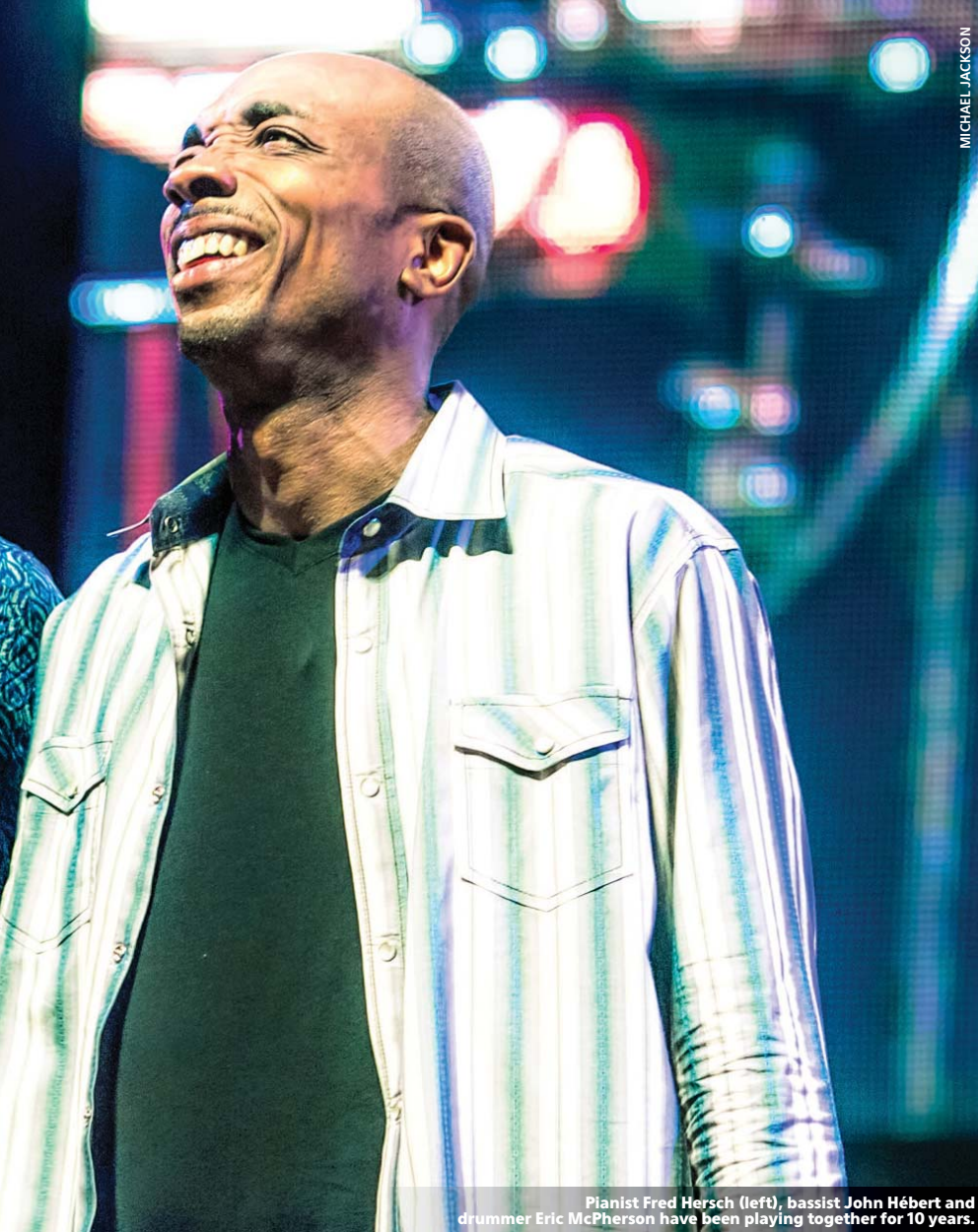
A COUPLE OF IMPROBABILITIES ADD TO THE ALLURE OF THE FRED HERSCH TRIO. THE FIRST IS THAT HERSCH AND HIS BANDMATES, BASSIST JOHN HÉBERT AND DRUMMER ERIC MCPHERSON, HAVE BEEN PLAYING TOGETHER, WITHOUT INTERRUPTION AND WITH GREAT SENSITIVITY, FOR A DECADE. THAT'S A RARE OCCURRENCE IN JAZZ. MOST BANDS SIMPLY DON'T LAST THAT LONG—THANKS TO VARIOUS INDUSTRY MACHINATIONS AND FINANCIAL CONCERNS.

The second is that Hersch, who was diagnosed with AIDS in the early 1980s, never imagined that he would be around long enough to form such an enduring musical connection. “When I was 30, I didn’t think I would live to be 40,” he said matter-of-factly during a phone

interview from his Manhattan loft apartment. “When I was 40, I didn’t think I would live to be 50, and when I was 50 I wasn’t sure about that, either.”

He’s had reasons to be fatalistic, as detailed in his acclaimed 2017 memoir, *Good Things*

Happen Slowly: A Life In and Out of Jazz (Crown Archetype). In 2008, doctors put Hersch into a medically induced coma as a result of pneumonia. Defying the odds, he emerged from two months of unconsciousness determined to get through rehab and return to music as quickly



Pianist Fred Hersch (left), bassist John Hébert and drummer Eric McPherson have been playing together for 10 years.

as possible, assembling a new piano trio in the summer of 2009. The band had its debut performance, somewhat fortuitously, at the Village Vanguard, the setting for two of the trio's six albums, three of which have been nominated for Grammy awards during the past five years.

The trio's success is one measure of Hersch's remarkable comeback since his near-death experience. It's also a testament, as the group has evolved over time, to the power of slow refinement in jazz.

The first time the trio performed, Hersch felt an immediate kinship with Hébert and McPherson, both of whom played in pianist Andrew Hill's last band. Hersch appreciated Hébert's refined style and deep knowledge of harmony. "I felt the sound of the wood," Hersch, 63, recalled. "He's a very special bass player, creatively—the way he uses his instrument, he gets into waves or flows."

During his career, Hersch has led several trios, though none for as long as this one. He admires McPherson's ability to play the drums

intensely without getting to a level that's too loud or overwhelming. "Eric thinks like a percussionist," Hersch said. "He tends to be more of the problem-solver."

The feeling was, of course, mutual. According to McPherson, who previously had toured with saxophonist Jackie McLean, joining Hersch's trio was an opportunity to work within a new dynamic range. For Hersch, the ideal scope of an acoustic piano trio—two influential models, he said, include Ahmad Jamal and Bill Evans—is somewhere between mezzo-piano and mezzo-forte, or moderately soft and moderately loud. There are no extremes, which creates a kind of internal tension that can be mesmerizing.

"There's more of a magnifying glass on what you do," said McPherson, 48.

For Hébert, 47, joining Hersch's group was the fulfillment of an ambition. "Piano trio has always been, for me, the pinnacle of playing jazz bass," said Hébert, who regards Hersch as a mentor. "The bass not only has a time-keeping

or harmonic function, but it also has more of a melodic function."

The trio's primary repertoire consists of Hersch originals, along with some Thelonious Monk compositions and other standards. (Hersch also has written compositions in tribute to his bandmates—"Home Fries" for Hébert, a Louisiana native who enjoys Southern cooking, and "Opener" for McPherson.) The group rehearses about once or twice a year, according to Hersch, and only if it has new tunes to play. For the most part, the trio works things out on stage.

Though the musicians always have taken a nuanced approach to group interplay, the ways in which they respond to one another spontaneously have changed over time. They rarely need to read sheet music anymore, familiar as they are with the tunes, which frees them up to improvise on and deconstruct their own arrangements. As an example, the group has been playing Hersch's composition "Skipping" since 2009. It appears on *Whirl* (Palmetto)—the debut of Hersch's group in this configuration—and on *Live In Europe* (Palmetto), released last year. The original recording, as Hersch puts it, is "more cautious," given its odd meter changes.

"I can sort of hear myself thinking my way through them and not necessarily feeling them," Hersch explained. "The version on *Live In Europe* is pretty great in this sort of insane way. We've stretched that tune and played it so many times that there are so many choices in how we interpret the form and the sections of the tune. It's just so natural now, and it's much brighter and much more fluid."

McPherson echoed that sentiment: "Now that there's a certain comfort level with the material and with each other, more liberties are being taken. So, if something has been played a certain way, now it could come out a whole other way, and not the way that it was always played—and everybody will go with it, because that's the beauty of the situation."

"There's definitely a lot of trust," Hébert said.

Hersch is engaged in a number of projects, but the trio is the main constant in his professional life. In past trios, he said, he was more of a controlling bandleader, but now that he has gotten older—and survived a coma, about which he composed a multimedia piece that had its debut in 2011—he's mellowed a bit. "At this point," he said, "I don't really feel like I have anything to prove."

On July 23–28, the Fred Hersch Trio will play the Village Vanguard, where the group often performs, to celebrate 10 years of teamwork. The musicians have no plans to stop collaborating, though, and all say they're still learning from each other.

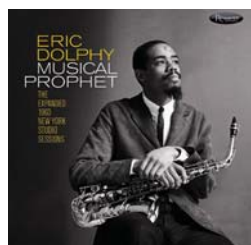
"Things," Hersch said, "are getting better and better for the trio." —Matthew Kassel

67TH ANNUAL CRITICS POLL HISTORICAL ALBUM OF THE YEAR



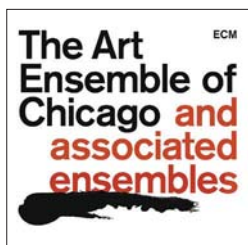
1. JOHN COLTRANE *Both Directions At Once: The Lost Album* (IMPULSE!) **261**

This isn't an air-check, concert recording or collection of outtakes from existing albums. What we have here are in-studio performances by the classic quartet lineup of Coltrane on tenor and soprano saxophones, McCoy Tyner on piano, Jimmy Garrison on bass and Elvin Jones on drums. All of the tracks were recorded at the legendary Rudy Van Gelder's studio in one day—March 6, 1963—and were lost for decades until their release last year.



2. ERIC DOLPHY *Musical Prophet: The Expanded 1963 New York Studio Sessions* (RESONANCE) **220**

From seven-and-a-half hours of tape, flutist and scholar James Newton, working with Resonance's Zev Feldman at the label's studio in Beverly Hills, culled 74 minutes of music that had been released in the '60s as *Conversations* and *Iron Man*, plus 85 minutes of previously unreleased material. The collection includes extensive liner notes and photos.



3. THE ART ENSEMBLE OF CHICAGO *The Art Ensemble Of Chicago And Associated Ensembles* (ECM) **124**

In the 296-page booklet that accompanies the 21-disc *The Art Ensemble Of Chicago And Associated Ensembles*, ECM founder Manfred Eicher says that from the time he launched the label in 1969, it was his desire to work with the collec-



4. BETTY CARTER *The Music Never Stops* (BLUE ENGINE) **73**

The Music Never Stops chronicles one of Jazz at Lincoln Center's early concerts—vocalist Carter in a whirlwind 1992 performance. It's Carter toward the end of her career, at her expressive and technical best. She digs deep into the text of her material: On ballads, she pulls phrases out like taffy to enhance their meaning, and on up-tempo she nails each note with dead-center precision—no matter the speed.



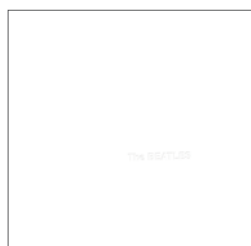
5. ORNETTE COLEMAN *The Atlantic Years* (RHINO) **71**

Early recordings by saxophonist and composer Coleman and his like-minded colleagues sounded like calculated attempts to erase the notion that jazz had rules. This 10-LP collection, which covers the years Coleman recorded for the Atlantic label, brings together those world-changing albums and illustrates how profoundly the avant-garde pioneer changed the way we hear jazz.



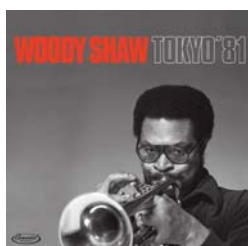
6. THELONIOUS MONK *M Monk* (GEARBOX) **51**

M Monk presents the iconic pianist-composer in a quartet setting with tenor saxophonist Charlie Rouse, bassist John Ore and drummer Frankie Dunlop during a March 5, 1963, gig in Copenhagen. Released by London-based Gearbox on a number of media formats—including a deluxe, limited-edition LP—the album captures a particularly raucous concert, with the band digging deep into Monk repertoire.



7. THE BEATLES *The White Album (Anniversary Edition)* (APPLE CORPS LTD./CAPITOL/UME) **49**

To celebrate the album's 50th anniversary, the surviving members of the band—Paul McCartney and Ringo Starr—worked with George Martin's son, producer Giles Martin, to assemble multiple reissue editions. A new stereo mix and the Esher Demos—27 tracks that the band recorded at George Harrison's bungalow in Esher, Surrey—will leave fans ecstatic.



8. WOODY SHAW *Tokyo '81* (ELEMENTAL) **47**

The album finds Shaw in an expansive mood, stoked by trombonist Steve Turre, pianist Mulgrew Miller, bassist Stafford James and drummer Tony Reedus. This live date opens with an urgent version of "Rosewood," Shaw's signature tune, spotlighting the Shaw-Turre twine. The album switches between Miller's uptempo, shape-shifting "Apex" and more leisurely work on "Song Of Songs."



9. TEDDY WILSON *Classic Brunswick & Columbia Teddy Wilson Sessions 1934-1942* (MOSAIC) **41**

This exploration of Wilson's oeuvre focuses on some of the pianist's earliest work. Across seven discs, Wilson is heard performing in a variety of settings, including solo, jazz trio and big band. Mosaic purposefully left out Wilson's recordings with vocalist Billie Holiday, material that has been issued and reissued ad nauseam.



10. DEXTER GORDON QUARTET *Tokyo 1975* (ELEMENTAL) **34**

This previously unreleased live recording captures Gordon in concert with perhaps his finest, and most consistent, rhythm section. Pianist Kenny Drew, bassist Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen and drummer Albert "Tootie" Heath get right down to business, kicking off the set with "Fried Bananas," a signature Gordon original that first was recorded on his 1969 album *More Power!*

11. ALICE COLTRANE
Lord Of Lords
(SUPERIOR VIADUCT).....33
12. CHARLES MINGUS
*Jazz In Detroit/Strata Concert
Gallery/46 Selden*
(BBE).....31
13. CHARLIE HADEN & BRAD MEHLDAU,
Long Ago And Far Away
(IMPULSE!).....29
14. VARIOUS ARTISTS
Voices Of Mississippi
(DUST-TO-DIGITAL).....26
15. E.S.T. (ESBJÖRN SVENSSON
TRIO), *Live In London*
(ACT).....25
16. GRANT GREEN
*Funk In France: From Paris To
Antibes (1969-1970)*
(RESONANCE).....24
17. MILFORD GRAVES, *Bäbi*
(CORBETT VS. DEMPSEY).....21
18. KEITH JARRETT, *La Fenice*
(ECM).....21
19. DON CHERRY
Home Boy Sister Out
(WEWANTSOUNDS).....20
20. ERROLL GARNER, *Nightconcert*
(MACK AVENUE).....20

For more of the year's top historical albums, see page 57.



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Shabaka Hutchings 'PEAK OF INTENSITY'

WHEN SONS OF KEMET FORMED IN 2011—A PRODUCT OF THE BURGEONING LONDON JAZZ RENAISSANCE—THE VIBRANT QUARTET DREW ATTENTION FOR ITS BODY-MOVING DANCE RHYTHMS AND PROVOCATIVE NONCONFORMITY. HELMED BY SAXOPHONIST/CLARINETIST/CONCEPTUALIST SHABAKA HUTCHINGS, KEMET OPENED NEW COLLECTIVE VISTAS FOR IMPROVISATIONAL, SPONTANEOUS ADVENTURES.

The band breathed new fire with its unorthodox instrumentation: Hutchings on saxophone and clarinet, sharing the front line with a tuba player, complemented by the dialogue of two drummers.

By 2013, the year of the band's debut album, *Burn* (Naim Jazz), the quartet was still relegat-

ed to playing small spaces in the U.K., yet it scored an impressive club date at the Berlin Jazz Festival—and proved to be one of the key revelations of the event. When asked after one Berlin gig when he would be able to bring this excitement across the Atlantic, Hutchings lamented that it was “notoriously hard” to break into the

U.S. jazz scene, where, at the time, he was virtually unknown.

That all began to change after Hutchings ventured Stateside in 2017. Leading another of his bands, Shabaka and The Ancestors, he played at New York's Le Poisson Rouge in 2017. Impulse Records enthusiastically



Reed player Shabaka Hutchings performs with Sons of Kemet.

signed all three of his groups: the Ancestors, who traffic in a U.K.-meets-South Africa aesthetic; the synthesizer-fueled *The Comet Is Coming*, which, in March, released its first album for the label, *Trust In The Liferforce Of The Deep Mystery*; and the fiery Kemet, which last year released its spirited *Your Queen Is A Reptile*.

In a figurative sense, Hutchings now truly has arrived Stateside, with Sons of Kemet topping the category Rising Star–Jazz Group in the Critics Poll, paired with his winning the category Rising Star–Clarinet. It’s an instrument that’s absent from *Reptile*, but often wildly present during concerts.

Also helping raise Hutchings’ international profile was a spotlight-grabbing turn on DJ Gilles Peterson’s 2018 compilation *We Out Here* (Brownswood), on which he played clarinet and bass clarinet on the track “Black Skin, Black Masks.” His connection to reed instruments goes back to his childhood in Barbados, where he studied classical clarinet, “taking it as

far and wide as possible,” until he got hooked on the creative jazz of Don Byron. “I listened to [Byron] all the time, and that was the voice for me,” Hutchings recalled. “When I was in England, I met him, and after gigs he showed me a bunch of stuff. He always made time for me. It was good going through this because his uncategoryable musicianship inspired me to do the same.”

The 35-year-old Hutchings explained that the relationship among band members in Sons of Kemet continues to deepen. “It’s all about energy and enthusiasm,” he said over the phone from his London home. “On a basic level, we have an unspoken agreement that we all hold each other up. It’s trust because we listen to each other in a four-way conversation. It’s intense because we all play from different places and that offers us a lot of freedom to keep up the energy. Our shows are physically and emotionally exhausting because we are going for the peak of intensity.”

Oren Marshall was the original Kemet tuba

player, but in 2013, one of his students at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama, Theon Cross, took over. Hutchings shares a Caribbean music background with Cross, whose parents were born in the region. “That’s been great because we can share those musical inflections of reggae, soca, African,” said Hutchings. “I can write bass lines and Theon knows exactly where I’m going. He’s in the prime of his youth. Every show he gets better and better. And when I’m feeling exhausted, I look at Theon and he inspires me to keep going.”

Cross is also a Critics Poll winner this year, having topped the category Rising Star–Miscellaneous Instrument for his brilliant work on tuba. In a phone conversation, Cross—whose leader debut, *Fyah* (Gearbox), was released in February—said he feels like the anchor in the band.

“It’s great working with Shabaka because people love to dance, so I play rhythmically, and we can all feed each other in that way,” he said. “It can be beautiful with the rhythms and horns and not playing for harmony. If I play dissonantly, Shabaka can go with or against it. I can play bass or the high register or just tonguing. I also tune in with the drummers at certain times, giving them phrases to play off. They take up so much of the sound.”

It was Hutchings’ idea to double up the drums to “not play rhythmically but have a conversation.”

Eddie Hick serves as the newest Kemet drummer. In an email exchange, he said there is a “matrix of conversations happening between all of us.” When it comes to conversing with fellow drummer Tom Skinner, he said, “We can vary our register and timbres to create space for each other or sometimes double on low or high sounds for a different feeling. Everyone is carrying the beat, so there’s a lot of freedom. Each of us has our own ways to break out. We can react and change gear in real time.”

In an email, Skinner wrote that this type of interplay creates a “more personal and spiritual level of conversation in the music.” He added, “We try to tune into the different frequencies and personality traits that have been passed onto us individually through the generations. Through doing this we can access a more intuitive way of communicating with each other collectively.”

While a Shabaka and The Ancestors album will be Hutchings’ next release, he already has begun work on the next Kemet album.

“There’s more composition this time to add orchestration into,” he said. “It will be completely different. A lot of it has to do with these deep-breathing exercises we’ve been doing before shows. We have more oxygen in our blood, so we’ve been more focused on the macro instead of the micro. It’s been a game changer.”

—Dan Ouellette



Sullivan Fortner draws on the history of pianism, from Chopin to Tatum and beyond, while still retaining his own unique voice.

Sullivan Fortner

EMPATHY & INTERPLAY

IN THE WANING DAYS OF JUNE 2017, SULLIVAN FORTNER FOUND HIMSELF HOLED UP IN SEAR SOUND, THE MANHATTAN STUDIO, FACING DOWN EARTH, WIND & FIRE'S 1978 HIT "FANTASY."

The occasion was a recording session for *Moments Preserved*, the pianist's sophomore album on Impulse!, and, as the engineer was adjusting the microphones for the take—a solo turn—he was trying out a rendition that mirrored the rhythmic punch of the original.

But he was getting nowhere—until Ameen Saleem, his bass player and a kindred soul, piped up. "He said, 'That ain't it—for this, you need to completely be Sullivan,'" Fortner recalled over breakfast at his Manhattan home in April.

Saleem, for his part, remembered the moment with clarity: "I told him, 'Play it like an orchestra. Make it epic and dark.'"

And that's what Fortner did. Inspired by the connotations of lost love in the lyrics—"Every man has a place, in his heart there's a space"—

Fortner transformed the piece from an ode to late-'70s funk into a moody fantasia with lush chords and lithe lines that draw on the history of pianism, from Chopin to Tatum and beyond, even as it retains the spirit of the groove-laden original. Along the way, he conjured a narrative that provided catharsis for his own romantic woes.

"I just made up a storyline and played," Fortner said.

For all his smarts (he was high school valedictorian, holds a bachelor's from the Oberlin Conservatory of Music and a master's from the Manhattan School of Music); for all the praise heaped on him (he topped the categories Rising Star–Jazz Artist and Rising Star–Piano in this year's Critics Poll and won the 2015 American Pianists Association's Cole Porter Jazz

Fellowship); and for all the experience gained in close associations with jazz luminaries (prime among them, singer Cécile McLorin Salvant), Fortner, 32, still needs a song to speak to him before he can fully realize its potential.

"For me, it kind of has to, otherwise, it won't digest well," he explained.

Moments Preserved is thus populated by tunes that speak to Fortner, starting with the opening track, "Changing Keys." An animated take on the theme from the TV game show *Wheel of Fortune*, the piece links directly to Fortner's childhood memories at home in the New Orleans suburbs, where, at age 4, he picked out themes from daytime TV on his toy piano. Before "Changing Keys," he had included a theme from *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*, "You Are Special," on his previous album, 2015's *Aria* (Impulse!). Both tunes pay homage to his mother, who first recognized his musical gift.

On his latest album, the pianist honors a high school teacher in the poignant "Elegy For Clyde Kerr Jr.," a New Orleans trumpeter, mentor, friend and, ultimately, bandmate who, Fortner said, taught him to "play with your ears to the audience" and hear the "grand picture," rather than "what you think another musician would want you to play." For that, he added, "Mr. Kerr had a very deep impact on me."

The album also nods to a more recent teacher, pianist Barry Harris, who, in group classes, imparted ideas about harmonic movement, structure and storytelling. In "Pep Talk," a boppish original based on "Rhythm" changes, Fortner's elegant turns of phrase evoke, without imitating, Harris. "It's probably not something he would write," Fortner said of the tune, "but something he would appreciate."

Other pianists' voices echo on the album, too: Thelonious Monk is represented in an exquisitely restrained medley of "Monk's Mood" and "Ask Me Now," and Duke Ellington is summoned in a version of "In A Sentimental Mood" featuring fleeting licks filtered through Fortner's 21st-century sensibility.

Fortner's ability to simultaneously project his own voice and reflect those of others reveals an empathy displayed throughout *Moments Preserved* in the agile interplay with both his trio—Saleem and drummer Jeremy "Bean" Clemons join him on most tracks—and trumpeter Roy Hargrove (1969–2018), who appears on three cuts, including the Monk tune.

But Fortner's empathy might be most clearly expressed elsewhere in his musical life, most vividly in his relationship with Salvant. The level of communication between the two—amply documented in the duo collaboration *The Window* (Mack Avenue)—has been so deep that, on at least one occasion, it brought the singer to tears.

"It felt like he was almost saying the words with me and making them ring or sparkle," Salvant recalled. "It felt wonderful." —Phillip Lutz



Felix Pastorius onstage with Venture in July 2018

Felix Pastorius

PURSUING MULTIPLE PATHS

SEEING FELIX PASTORIUS IN ACTION WITH HIS BAND, THE HIPSTER ASSASSINS, IT'S IMPOSSIBLE NOT TO THINK OF HIS FAMOUS FATHER, JACO PASTORIUS (1951-'87). THE FAMILIAL LIKENESS IS UNCANNY, BUT THE 6-FOOT-6-INCH FELIX IS MUCH TALLER THAN HIS DAD WAS.

He possesses a couple of other distinctive Pastorius traits—double-jointed thumbs, and unusually long fingers that allow for some singular chordal voicings and stretches on the fretboard of his bass. What's different about father and son is that Jaco was a four-string bassist who developed his signature voice on a fretless axe, while Felix plays a six-string, fretted bass. And while Jaco's legacy might have weighed heavily on his son's shoulders early on in his career, Felix, at age 37, has developed his own vocabulary on the instrument and built an impressive career.

"Being a bass player and being Jaco Pastorius' son can't be easy, but this guy's got a graceful way of wearing all that," said veteran drummer Mike Clark, who plays alongside Pastorius in the cooperative quartet Venture; the band made its recorded debut in 2018 on *Ropeadope*. "He's just his own guy. He's kind

of a lone wolf and he's quiet. He's kind of chill compared to all the sharks up here in New York. But he can play, there's no doubt."

Born June 9, 1982, Felix seemed destined to become a bassist. At age 11, he and his twin brother, Julius, both playing basses, performed a touching rendition of Jaco's "Continuum" at a 1993 memorial concert for their father held in New York. By 15, Felix began playing around the South Beach area of Miami with former Weather Report percussionist Robert Thomas Jr.'s band, The Bermuda Triangle. "My mom would drive me down there and wait until whatever ungodly hour of the night or morning, and drive me all the way back up to Deerfield Beach, because I was too young to drive at that point," he recalled. A couple years later, the Pastorius twins formed their own band, Way Of The Groove, with Julius switching to drums.

Since 2001, Felix has played with Jeff

Coffin's Mu'tet, a group the saxophonist leads when he's not on the road with the Dave Matthews Band. "Felix has become the bass player I always knew he could be," Coffin said. "He's been fiercely dedicated to whatever he does since I've known him and he puts all of his focus and effort into it. His decision to be a great bass player was a conscious one, I believe. He's always had an incredible feel and time, and everything else worked its way in through experience. I am exceedingly proud of him and thrilled that more people have found out about his incredible musicianship. It was only a matter of time."

It was Victor Wooten, an important mentor in Pastorius' life, who recommended the young bassist for the Mu'tet gig nearly 20 years ago. "I remember when Felix first visited one of my music camps," said Wooten, who encountered the aspiring bassist at his Bass/Nature retreat in the Tennessee woods back in 2001. "I was walking up to a building with my friend, Steve Bailey, and heard what sounded like a newer version of Jaco Pastorius coming from inside. We knew it had to be Felix. The sound was authentic. Felix has been impressing me and raising the bar ever since. He has developed into a complete musician with his own sound."

Pastorius moved to New York during the summer of 2009 and a year later began a weekly Monday night residency at the Zinc Bar with the Hipster Assassins, a dynamic two-bass quintet featuring fellow bassist and longtime friend Mike Bendy, his brother John Bendy on guitar, Chris Ward on saxophone and electronics, and powerhouse drummer Kenny Grohowski. In 2010 and 2011, Pastorius toured in Cindy Blackman Santana's band, Another Lifetime, her tribute to drummer and role model Tony Williams. At the time of this interview at Pastorius' home in Brooklyn, he was preparing for a weeklong residency at Blue Note Tokyo with Blackman Santana's current band.

Pastorius—who had a three-year stint with Yellowjackets, touring with the group and playing on 2013's *A Rise In The Road* (Mack Avenue)—maintains a busy schedule nowadays, performing with the jam band Jazz Is Phish and the hip-hop influenced, experimental jazz band Onyx Collective. And last year, he toured as a member of rapper A\$AP Rocky's band. "It's kind of all over the place, man," Pastorius said of his in-demand status. "I don't have one path. I'm taking whatever comes around and keeping my ears wide open."

Meanwhile, the Hipster Assassins is making a push beyond its home base at the 55 Bar in Greenwich Village. "We're testing the waters," Pastorius said, referring to recent shows in the Northeast and Midwest. "We're just trying to let people know we're willing to leave Manhattan to go play music. We're trying to make something happen."
—Bill Milkowski



Lauren Sevian leads her own ensemble, performs with the group Lioness and is the band director of Jazz at Lincoln Center's Young Women's Jazz Orchestra.

ANNA YATSKEVICH

Lauren Sevian WORKING BEYOND 'BLISS'

HOW DO ACCOMPLISHED ARTISTS FIND NEW WAYS TO EXPAND THEIR SOUND? LAUREN SEVIAN HAS A FEW IDEAS. FREQUENTLY SAYING "YES" TO COLLABORATIVE SITUATIONS AND CREATING OPPORTUNITIES TO PLAY AND COMPOSE, THE BARITONE SAXOPHONIST CONTINUES TO PUSH HER MUSIC IN NEW DIRECTIONS.

Allowing one experience to inform her approach to another, Sevian leads multiple ensembles, lends her voice to the Lioness collective and has helped anchor the Mingus Big Band for more than 15 years. Last summer, Posi-Tone released her sophomore leader album, *Bliss*, a decade after her debut, *Blueprint*. The unintended wait invited self-reflection.

"I was able to see my coming of age," Sevian

explained. "By having that much time pass between the two recordings, there was a significant jump in what I could actually do on the instrument."

In addition to chronicling her growth, *Bliss* documents Sevian's longtime association with bassist Christian McBride. "It's so much fun to play with him," she said. "You give him something, he'll have a couple looks at it and he's cool."

From McBride's perspective, Sevian's become "a staple" of the scene. "I adore her as a person and as a musician," he said. "When you see her on the gig, you automatically know it's going to be great."

Working in countless big-band settings, Sevian has grown to embrace the opportunity to observe certain choices the leader makes—and those the lead alto saxophonist makes—guiding the music, cueing the band and engaging the audience. "I like to observe what's going on, taking cues from other people," she said. "That has informed how I put a set together [as a leader]."

In pursuit of authentic expression, Sevian composes with experiential sensitivity, whether she's writing for—or against—accepted instrumental constructs. "[Sometimes,] it's hard to explain what you're actually doing, musically," she said. "Maybe you can say, 'I'm playing these patterns,' but I'm trying to get on a deeper level."

For Sevian, directing Jazz at Lincoln Center's Young Women's Jazz Orchestra has become deeply meaningful. As a young player coming up, she remembers going to hear the DIVA Jazz Orchestra and being conscious of two separate but connected ideas: This band is incredible; this band is a novelty. "They were playing at such a high level, and [it was] all women," she said. "I didn't even think these things existed. I always felt like I was the token girl in the band."

As YWJO band director, Sevian encourages girls to explore their own their sound. "By starting this program at this age, these girls start to develop an awareness of their personal voice," she said. "A big component is mentorship—not just me mentoring them, but them mentoring each other."

Leading by example helps dictate how Sevian shares her time and artistry, but the music is what moves her. "It's coming from a genuine place," she said. "I'm not saying to myself, 'OK, now I'm going to do this all-female band.'" Accordingly, the artistic partnership she's formed with alto saxophonist Alexa Tarantino emerged naturally, following an immediate connection the two shared on the bandstand.

"When we played together, I [thought], 'I almost can't even hear myself,'" Sevian said. "Our phrasing, our natural nuances are very similar." Sevian considers this kinship to be one of the more compelling attributes of LSAT, her co-led project with Tarantino (who is also a member of Lioness). "Even though we're many years apart, we came together through the music."

Sevian is among those jazz artists today who stretch their sound by interpreting existing vocabulary and creating new modes of expression. "I really want everything I do to mean something," she said. "As you get older, you become more comfortable in your skin and you start to have the attitude that if people accept [your work], cool, and if they don't, that's cool, too."

—Stephanie Jones



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Trombonist and singer Natalie Cressman, a San Francisco native, currently is based in New York.

LAUREN DESBERG

Natalie Cressman THRIVING IN ENDLESS & UNIQUE SETTINGS

NATALIE CRESSMAN'S CAREER IS SOARING DUE TO HER ARTISTIC FLEXIBILITY. AT 28, THE VOCALIST AND WINNER OF THE CATEGORY RISING STAR-TROMBONE HAS COLLABORATED WITH NUMEROUS INDIVIDUALISTS, INCLUDING JAZZ TRUMPETER NICHOLAS PAYTON AND PHISH GUITARIST/VOCALIST TREY ANASTASIO.

Playing in a range of contexts has influenced her views on musical inclusion and expansion. "By being myself in every genre—trying to play the style but also following the aesthetic that I enjoy and the tone that I like on the trombone—I've found my niche," she said.

Her 2019 duo release with guitarist/composer Ian Faquini, *Setting Rays Of Summer* (Cressman Music), explores a Brazilian aesthetic. "I've always loved that marriage between groove music and harmonic depth," she explained.

As a singer, Cressman has developed a unique relationship with her horn. "So much of

what I love is the great storytelling and expression that comes with the human voice," she said. "So, when I play trombone, I try to stay in that mode and not get too caught up in filling the space with too many notes—really trying to be lyrical and melodic."

Faquini is drawn to Cressman's sound, intention and collaborative attitude.

"She has the most beautiful trombone sound," said Faquini, who composed the music for *Setting Rays*. "It doesn't sound like that stereotypical, super-loud brass section trombone sound. It's more like a beautiful voice—a very clean, clear tone. But that's just the technique.

[She also has] amazing note selection and ideas. She really sings with it, more than [playing] horn riffs."

As an improviser, Cressman found herself digging deep to get inside Faquini's harmony. "Generally, the functionality of the harmony is similar to jazz, but his harmonic sense draws from a lot of classical impressionist composers," she said. "He's a protégé of Guinga, who has a very rich sense of harmony—a lot of different extensions and unexpected roots. There's so much to grab on to as an improviser."

Compelled to create, stretch and push, Cressman admitted that it took some time to figure out where her sound truly resonates. "I've never really found my home in just straight-ahead music, because I don't feel like there's room for me to innovate that," she said. "I love playing that kind of music, but for me, original music that takes pieces from many different sources is way more inspiring."

Her parents—vocalist Sandy Cressman and trombonist Jeff Cressman—undoubtedly shaped Cressman's interest in a wide variety of music. And with that legacy comes critical awareness; Cressman moved to New York as a way of mapping her own route through the music.

"I wanted to be judged on my own merits," said Cressman, a native of San Francisco. "I didn't want to just get a leg up by being Sandy and Jeff's daughter in the Bay Area. They provided me many great opportunities, but I really wanted the chance to develop into my own person as a musician."

Despite their apparent differences, Cressman views each new project she engages as similar. "Musicians I've played with, even in a more 'commercial setting,' they're [artists] who have found their own way and become massively successful in providing the unexpected," she said. Anastasio saw a spark of innovation in Cressman the moment he heard her play as a first-year student at Manhattan School of Music.

"Even at that young age, she already had so many crucial elements of her musicianship fully in place—a warm and musical tone, enormous confidence and a huge range," said Anastasio, who, in addition to performing with Phish also leads the Trey Anastasio Band.

"She could play fast, clean runs in the low range without blinking an eye, and sight-read literally any chart that I put in front of her." Regarding the TAB's complex charts, Anastasio quipped, "Natalie eats them for breakfast."

During a recent concert in New Orleans, Cressman unleashed certain ideas she'd been exploring for the past few years, and left the bandstand feeling a sense of power.

"I felt like I had new options," she said. "I felt this confidence to shape it and break it open and make it something different."

—Stephanie Jones



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Kit Downes

ORGANIC SOUNDSCAPES

KIT DOWNES HAS SPENT THE PAST DECADE ESTABLISHING HIMSELF AS ONE OF THE U.K. JAZZ SCENE'S FOREMOST TALENTS ON MULTIPLE KEYBOARD INSTRUMENTS, PLAYING WITH A RANGE OF GROUPS, INCLUDING THE BAND EMPIRICAL AND THE FUSION TRIO TROYKA, AND REGULARLY COLLABORATING WITH DRUMMER SEB ROCHFORD, AS WELL AS SAXOPHONIST TOM CHALLENGER.

Downes' musical beginnings involved another instrument, though: the voice. Singing as a child in a choir in his hometown of Norwich in northeast England, he at one point took part in a piece by contemporary classical composer Arvo Pärt. During a rehearsal with the choir, Downes became fascinated with the organ and its array of sounds.

"I remember the organist playing and voicing in different modes, and that's what got me into improvising," Downes said. Enamored with improvisation, the classical repertoire was soon replaced with jazz and the piano. "My mum suggested I listen to jazz, and she gave me an Oscar Peterson CD. After that, I didn't play the organ much more."

Downes attended the prestigious Purcell Music School before moving to London to study at the Royal Academy of Music, where he now teaches. It has only been in recent years that he's returned to the organ. In fact, things have gone somewhat full circle with his acclaimed solo organ album, *Obsidian*, being released in January on Pärt's longtime label, ECM.

The album includes 10 beguiling tracks of eerie organ voicings and ambient texture that straddle the line between gestural jazz improvisation and the gravitas of a classical orchestration. Because the pipe organ is a site-specific instrument, *Obsidian* is flavored by the three spaces in which it was recorded. The sites were the

cavernous Union Chapel in North London and two Sussex structures: Snape's medieval St. John the Baptist Church and Bromeswell's St. Edmund Church.

"Coming from Norfolk as a kid, it was great to get on the train on the weekends and go around all different churches and learn the different organs with their own registrations," he said. "So, in some ways recording *Obsidian* was a return to that, using the landscape, as well as the indoor setting, for inspiration."

Much of the music also came from earlier improvisations. "I was taking note of the settings and sounds, and sometimes the only starting point would be a certain grouping of organ stops," Downes said. "The chaos of the moment was slightly removed, because I had prepared structures in place—but it still felt pretty chaotic, especially since when you're playing solo, you have to cover a lot of ground."

The exposition of the solo is the perfect setting for Downes' delicate playing, giving space to showcase the intricate voicings so often left for other musicians to bounce off of onstage. Challenger admires Downes' gift for improvisation: "Kit has an incredible work ethic. When you're playing with him, he's working incredibly hard to listen and put in whatever the music demands at that point. He's one of these musicians who really makes things happen, and there's always grounds for a musical conversation

at any given point."

Downes and Challenger's two duo albums—*Wedding Music* (Loop) and *Vyamanikal* (Slip)—are founded on the basis of stretching and manipulating interpretive moments in post-production. The result is works on saxophone, organ, piano and synthesizer where the moments of instantaneous inception and considered return are blurred into one.

"The ongoing musical relationship I have with Tom is the key part of everything I do," Downes said. "He pushes me to be strong in my ideas. We have to each put forward a firm opinion and work democratically to carry the ideas forward."

Part of the strength in these ideas comes from a strange accident Downes had in 2017. "While putting on a sock, I managed to damage a tendon in my left hand, which is ridiculous but true," he said. "In reaction to that, I wrote a piece every day for two months only for my right hand. Through that process, I had to push myself to not repeat the normal themes of my compositions." Writing alone and for nothing more than the exercise of composition belies the studious and serious nature of Downes' approach to music.

"It's that fine-line balance between self and other, which is the really fun thing about being an improviser," he said. "You need to strongly be yourself and also be open to new things, and that's the buzz that keeps us doing it." —Ammar Kalia



Sara Serpa

INSIGHTFUL INVESTIGATIONS

Vocalist Sara Serpa's work has explored how past events influence current human behavior.

VIOLENCE. BRUTALITY. SEGREGATION. EXPLOITATION. THESE ARE THE WORDS THAT SINGER/COMPOSER SARA SERPA USES WHEN SHE TALKS ABOUT THE FAMILY LEGACY THAT SHE INHERITED—A LEGACY THAT HER LATEST MUSICAL PROJECTS TACKLE HEAD-ON.

Serpa's parents were born during the 1940s in Angola, then a Portuguese colony in Africa, and witnessed the atrocities committed against black people there. Later, after they'd moved to Lisbon—where Serpa was born—they participated in public protests against these injustices. Today, Serpa carries on her family's commitment to social just through her art.

"There is an absence of conversations of race in Portugal, even though Portugal has had a relationship with Africa for 500 years and was chiefly responsible for the slave trade," Serpa said. "Having a family that lived [during that colonial period], I always asked a lot of questions about it. Racism is still very present in Portuguese society, but it's not talked about enough."

With one of her latest multimedia works, *Recognition*, Serpa opens up that conversation. The project—a pastiche of clean, melodic compositions, silent Super-8 films from the family archive and texts by African revolutionary thinkers—began in 2017 as part of a program curated by composer John Zorn at The Drawing Room in New York, where Serpa currently is based. By then, Serpa had been singing Zorn's a cappella compositions with vocal quartet Mycale for almost a decade and soon was to release *Close Up* (Clean Feed), her 10th album as a leader/pro-

ducer. *Recognition* represented her first foray into directing and composing a live interdisciplinary piece; she plans to release a recording of the ongoing project in both audio-visual and audio-only formats later this year.

After the *Recognition* premiere, Serpa found that she still had more to say about Europe's historical relationship with Africa and its unacknowledged pain. Earlier this year, she unveiled her second live interdisciplinary performance piece, *Intimate Strangers*, which melds original music with text, images and field recordings. This time she worked with Nigerian author Emmanuel Iduma, taking inspiration from his book *A Stranger's Pose*, a deeply personal account of life across the African continent.

After moving to the States in 2005 to attend Berklee College of Music, and later New England Conservatory of Music, Serpa quickly gained attention for her cool, wordless vocals. Besides Zorn and her Mycale cohort, she soon was working with the likes of pianist Danilo Pérez, saxophonist Greg Osby and two MacArthur Fellows—drummer/composer Tyshawn Sorey and pianist Ran Blake. But it's hardly surprising that Serpa would attract such talents, given the gemlike quality of her instrument—and how she uses it.

"There's something pure and fragile about

her voice," said saxophonist Ingrid Laubrock, who makes up one-third of Serpa's regular trio (with cellist Erik Friedlander). "She uses very little ornamentation, very little vibrato. I love that about it. It's super atypical for jazz singing, and it's quite hard to sing that way. If you don't bend into notes or use a lot of vibrato, you really have to hit the pitch—and that's what she does."

To Laubrock's point, it would be a mistake to underestimate the vocal control that it takes to sing as Serpa does—softly, in straight tone, with dead-on pitch. Add to this challenge Serpa's nuanced compositions, all exposed lines and hidden harmonies, subtle segues between notated and improvised sections, and lots and lots of space, pregnant with meaning. "There's no place to hide," she said, referring to her arrangements.

Not that Serpa is looking to hide anything. She speaks forthrightly not just about racism in her native country, but about sexism in her adopted one: "People talk about the male gaze, but I haven't heard anyone talk about the male listener," she said, lamenting the lack of diversity in jazz. "We've been shaped by the male gaze and by the male listener. So, what happens when that perspective shifts?"

Questions about how we navigate differences in gender, race and nationality remain top of mind for Serpa. "I think about this issue of identity ... and this thinking drives the themes of my work," she explained. "Our past—personal, historical or national—we are all affected by it."

—Suzanne Lorge

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67TH ANNUAL CRITICS POLL COMPLETE RESULTS

We are proud to present the results of the **67th Annual DownBeat International Critics Poll**, which includes **Jazz Album of the Year** (page 40) and **Historical Album of the Year** (page 44).

Hall Of Fame

Nina Simone	122
Anthony Braxton	88
Pharoah Sanders	71
Charles Lloyd	69
Kenny Barron	64
Tomasz Stańko	58
Paul Bley	57
Jack DeJohnette	56
Jimmy Giuffre	54
Jimmy Heath	50
John McLaughlin	47
Shirley Horn	46
Jaki Byard	41
Oliver Nelson	38
Yusef Lateef	37
Bobby Hutcherson	36
Hank Mobley	34
Grant Green	32
Carmen McRae	32
Gunther Schuller	31
Kenny Burrell	30

VETERANS COMMITTEE

Hall Of Fame

Scott LaFaro	67%
Joe Williams	67%

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

Mario Bauzá	55%
Machito	55%
Jay McShann	55%
Les Paul	55%

Jazz Artist

Cécile McLorin Salvant	82
Mary Halvorson	79
Wayne Shorter	68
Fred Hersch	67
Wadada Leo Smith	62
Ambrose Akinmusire	60
Terri Lyne Carrington	58
Charles Lloyd	54
Bill Frisell	49
Christian McBride	41
Vijay Iyer	40
Kamasi Washington	38
Allison Miller	35
Nicole Mitchell	34
Dave Douglas	33



Miguel Zenón, winner of the Alto Saxophone category

Kenny Barron	30
JD Allen	28
Julian Lage	28
Chick Corea	26
Anat Cohen	25
Dave Liebman	25
Jason Moran	25
Henry Threadgill	25

Jazz Album of the Year

Wayne Shorter, Emanon (Blue Note)	85
Cécile McLorin Salvant, <i>The Window</i> (Mack Avenue)	71
Ambrose Akinmusire, <i>Origami Harvest</i> (Blue Note)	65
Kamasi Washington, <i>Heaven And Earth</i> (Young Turks)	60
Andrew Cyrille, <i>Lebroba</i> (ECM) ..	58
Makaya McCraven, <i>Universal Beings</i> (International Anthem) ..	57
Branford Marsalis Quartet, <i>The Secret Between The Shadow And The Soul</i> (Okeh/Sony)	54
Kenny Barron Quintet, <i>Concentric Circles</i> (Blue Note) ..	52
Christian McBride, <i>Christian McBride's New Dawn</i> (Mack Avenue)	50

Fred Hersch Trio, <i>Live In Europe</i> (Palmetto)	44
Charles Lloyd & The Marvels + Lucinda Williams, <i>Vanished Gardens</i> (Blue Note)	41
Vijay Iyer & Craig Taborn, <i>The Transitory Poems</i> (ECM) ...	36
The Art Ensemble Of Chicago, <i>We Are On The Edge</i> (Pi)	35
Tyshawn Sorey, <i>Pillars</i> (Firehouse 12)	31
Joe Lovano, <i>Trio Tapestry</i> (ECM) ..	28
Brad Mehldau, <i>Seymour Reads The Constitution!</i> (Nonesuch) ..	26
Myra Melford & Snowy Egret, <i>The Other Side Of Air</i> (Firehouse 12) ..	26
Allison Miller/Carmen Staaf, <i>Science Fair</i> (Sunnyside)	26
JD Allen, <i>Love Stone</i> (Savant)	25
Dave Holland, <i>Uncharted Territories</i> (Dare2) ...	25
The Nels Cline 4, <i>Currents Constellations</i> (Blue Note)	24
Christian Sands, <i>Facing Dragons</i> (Mack Avenue) ..	24
Joshua Redman, <i>Still Dreaming</i> (Nonesuch)	23
Angel Bat Dawid, <i>The Oracle</i> (International Anthem)	22

Sullivan Fortner, <i>Moments Preserved</i> (Impulse!) ..	22
Lionel Loueke, <i>The Journey</i> (Aparté)	22
Wadada Leo Smith, <i>Rosa Parks: Pure Love. An Oratorio Of Seven Songs</i> (Tum) ...	22
Ralph Alessi, <i>Imaginary Friends</i> (ECM)	21
Nicole Mitchell, <i>Maroon Cloud</i> (FPE)	21
Miguel Zenón, <i>Yo Soy La Tradición</i> (Miel Music)	21
Black Art Jazz Collective, <i>Armor Of Pride</i> (HighNote)	20
Orrin Evans & The Captain Black Big Band, <i>Presence</i> (Smoke Sessions)	20
Harriet Tubman, <i>The Terror End Of Beauty</i> (Sunnyside)	19
Stefon Harris & Blackout, <i>Sonic Creed</i> (Motéma)	19
Ingrid Jensen/Steve Tressler, <i>Invisible Sounds: For Kenny Wheeler</i> (Whirlwind)	19
Catherine Russell, <i>Alone Together</i> (Dot Time)	19
Miho Hazama m_unit, <i>Dancer In Nowhere</i> (Sunnyside)	18



Nicole Mitchell, winner of the Flute category

Allison Miller's Boom Tic Boom, <i>Glitter Wolf</i> (Royal Potato Family).....	17
Aaron Parks, <i>Little Big</i> (Ropeadope).....	17
Elio Villafranca, <i>Cinque</i> (ArtistShare).....	17

Historical Album

John Coltrane, <i>Both Directions At Once: The Lost Album</i> (Impulse!).....	261
Eric Dolphy, <i>Musical Prophet: The Expanded 1963 New York Studio Sessions</i> (Resonance).....	220
The Art Ensemble of Chicago, <i>The Art Ensemble of Chicago And Associated Ensembles</i> (ECM).....	124
Betty Carter, <i>The Music Never Stops</i> (Blue Engine).....	73
Ornette Coleman, <i>The Atlantic Years</i> (Rhino).....	71
Thelonious Monk, <i>Mank</i> (Gearbox).....	51
The Beatles, <i>The White Album (Anniversary Edition)</i> (Apple Corps Ltd./Capitol/UME).....	49
Woody Shaw, <i>Tokyo '81</i> (Elemental).....	47
Teddy Wilson, <i>Classic Brunswick & Columbia Teddy Wilson Sessions 1934–1942</i> (Mosaic).....	41
Dexter Gordon Quartet, <i>Tokyo 1975</i> (Elemental).....	34
Alice Coltrane, <i>Lord Of Lords</i> (Superior Viaduct).....	33
Charles Mingus, <i>Jazz in Detroit/Strata Concert Gallery/46 Selden</i> (BBE).....	31

Charlie Haden & Brad Mehldau, <i>Long Ago And Far Away</i> (Impulse).....	29
Various Artists, <i>Voices Of Mississippi</i> (Dust-to-Digital).....	26
e.s.t. (Esbjorn Svensson Trio), <i>Live In London</i> (ACT).....	25
Grant Green, <i>Funk In France: From Paris To Antibes</i> (1969–1970) (Resonance).....	24
Milford Graves, <i>Bäbi</i> (Corbett vs. Dempsey).....	21
Keith Jarrett, <i>La Fenice</i> (ECM) ..	21
Don Cherry, <i>Home Boy Sister Out</i> (WEWANTSOUNDS).....	20
Erroll Garner, <i>Nightconcert</i> (Mack Avenue).....	20
Don Rendell/Ian Carr Quintet, <i>The Complete Lansdowne Recordings 1965–1969</i> (Jazzman).....	19
Louis Armstrong, <i>Sparks, Nevada 1964!</i> (Dot Time).....	18
Imamu Amiri Baraka, <i>It's Nation Time: African Visionary Music</i> (Motown/UME).....	16
Bob Dorough, <i>But For Now</i> (Enja).....	16
Grant Green, <i>Slick! Live At Oil Can Harry's</i> (Resonance).....	16
Ben Sidran, <i>Ben There, Done That</i> (Sunset Boulevard).....	16
Cecil Taylor, <i>Silent Tongues</i> (ORG Music).....	16

Jazz Group

Fred Hersch Trio.....	83
Charles Lloyd & The Marvels... ..	68
Roy Hargrove Quintet	61
Allison Miller's Boom Tic Boom ..	61
Wayne Shorter Quartet	61

Ambrose Akinmusire Quintet... ..	59
Myra Melford's Snowy Egret....	54
Branford Marsalis Quartet	49
The Cookers.....	42
Vijay Iyer Trio	42
Matthew Shipp Trio	42
Joe Lovano & Dave Douglas' Sound Prints	41
Jane Bunnett & Maqueque.....	40
The Bad Plus.....	37
Nicole Mitchell's Black Earth Ensemble	34
Brad Mehldau Trio.....	33
Julian Lage Group.....	32
JD Allen Trio	30
Christian Scott aTunde Adjuah Quintet.....	30

Big Band

Maria Schneider Orchestra... ..	162
Darcy James Argue's Secret Society.....	99
John Beasley's MONK'estra....	81
Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra.....	72
Orrin Evans' Captain Black Big Band	68
Carla Bley with Charlie Haden's Liberation Music Orchestra	67
Sun Ra Arkestra	67
Satoko Fujii Orchestra	53
Arturo O'Farrill & The Afro-Latin Jazz Orchestra	46
Vanguard Jazz Orchestra.....	43
WDR Big Band.....	41
John Hollenbeck Large Ensemble	38
Mingus Big Band	36
Roy Hargrove Big Band	34
Christian McBride Big Band	33

Gil Evans Orchestra	30
Steven Bernstein's Millennial Territory Orchestra	29
Bobby Sanabria Big Band	29
DIVA Jazz Orchestra	28
Count Basie Orchestra	27
Anthony Brown's Asian American Orchestra	27
Chicago Jazz Orchestra.....	25
Clayton–Hamilton Jazz Orchestra.....	25

Trumpet

Ambrose Akinmusire	183
Wadada Leo Smith	107
Roy Hargrove	89
Ingrid Jensen.....	78
Christian Scott aTunde Adjuah ..	78
Wynton Marsalis	66
Jeremy Pelt	60
Marquis Hill	59
Dave Douglas.....	58
Tomasz Sta ko.....	48
Tom Harrell	47
Sean Jones	47
Ralph Alessi	43
Jonathan Finlayson.....	42
Terence Blanchard	41
Ron Miles	38
Brian Lynch	36
Kirk Knuffke.....	34
Amir ElSaffar	31
Nicholas Payton	29

Trombone

Steve Turre.....	123
Wycliffe Gordon	89
Robin Eubanks.....	82
Trombone Shorty	76



Joe Lovano, winner of the Tenor Saxophone category

Michael Dease	70	Sam Newsome.....	50
Steve Davis	64	Evan Parker.....	49
Delfeayo Marsalis.....	63	Roscoe Mitchell	48
Joe Fiedler.....	61	Sonny Fortune.....	45
Ray Anderson	46	Joshua Redman.....	41
Ku-umba Frank Lacy	43	Tia Fuller	40
Ryan Keberle.....	42	Ingrid Laubrock.....	39
Jeb Bishop.....	40	Chris Potter	36
Jacob Garchik.....	40	Jan Garbarek.....	35
Marshall Gilkes.....	39	James Carter.....	33
Conrad Herwig.....	39	Donny McCaslin.....	33
John Fedchock	35	Kenny Garrett.....	31
Curtis Fuller	32	Joe Lovano	31
Papo Vázquez.....	31		
George Lewis	30		
Curtis Fowlkes.....	29		
Wayne Wallace.....	29		
Gianluca Petrella.....	28		

Soprano Saxophone

Jane Ira Bloom	175
Wayne Shorter	140
Dave Liebman	121
Branford Marsalis.....	99
Ravi Coltrane.....	92
Jane Bunnett.....	79
Anat Cohen	74

Alto Saxophone

Miguel Zenón.....	123
Rudresh Mahanthappa	104
Tia Fuller	90
Steve Coleman.....	89
Gary Bartz	82
Kenny Garrett.....	71
Steve Lehman.....	71
Lee Konitz	60
Henry Threadgill.....	58
Tim Berne.....	56
Jon Irabagon	49
Anthony Braxton.....	43

Darius Jones	37
Bobby Watson	37
Steve Wilson	31
David Binney.....	28
Sherman Irby.....	28
Matana Roberts	28
Greg Abate.....	27
Paquito D’Rivera	26
Antonio Hart	26
Oliver Lake	26
David Sanborn	26
Caroline Davis	25

Tenor Saxophone

Joe Lovano.....	145
Charles Lloyd	112
Branford Marsalis.....	95
Chris Potter	76
Melissa Aldana.....	75
JD Allen.....	73
Wayne Shorter	67
Joshua Redman.....	57
Kamasi Washington.....	56
Ingrid Laubrock.....	54
Donny McCaslin.....	53
Pharoah Sanders	45
James Carter.....	44
Evan Parker.....	41
Jimmy Heath.....	40
Jon Irabagon	35
Noah Preminger.....	35
Eric Alexander.....	33
Jerry Bergonzi	30
Peter Brötzmann.....	27
Mark Turner.....	27

Baritone Saxophone

Gary Smulyan	172
James Carter.....	126
Hamiet Bluiett.....	119
Claire Daly	113
Mats Gustafsson.....	106
Ronnie Cuber.....	94
Scott Robinson.....	68
Colin Stetson.....	67
Ken Vandermark	50
John Surman.....	49
Brian Landrus.....	40
Tim Berne	37
Howard Johnson.....	37
Dave Rempis.....	37
Lisa Parrott.....	25
Vinny Golia	22
Alex Harding.....	21
Patience Higgins.....	21
Chris Cheek	20
Charlie Kohlhase.....	18

Clarinet

Anat Cohen.....	312
Ken Peplowski	101
Paquito D’Rivera	78
Don Byron	75
Ben Goldberg.....	70
Eddie Daniels	62
Evan Christopher	58
Victor Goines.....	49
Marty Ehrlich.....	42
Louis Slavis	37
Ab Baars.....	33
Chris Speed	33

Gianluigi Trovesi	33
David Krakauer	28
Matana Roberts	28
Todd Marcus	26
Ken Vandermark	26
Jeff Lederer	21
Oscar Noriega.....	21
Ned Rothenberg.....	20

Flute

Nicole Mitchell.....	226
Jamie Baum	130
Jane Bunnett.....	113
Hubert Laws.....	113
Charles Lloyd	113
Elena Pinderhughes.....	75
Henry Threadgill.....	70
Roscoe Mitchell	45
Tia Fuller	43
Lew Tabackin	43
Dave Liebman	42
Marty Ehrlich	39
Robert Dick	38
James Newton.....	35
Holly Hofmann	28
Anne Drummond.....	25
Ali Ryerson	25
Douglas Ewart.....	23
Ted Nash	23
T.K. Blue	22
James Spaulding	22

Piano

Kenny Barron.....	135
Fred Hersch.....	104
Chick Corea	79
Vijay Iyer	67
Brad Mehldau	66
Matthew Shipp.....	62
Myra Melford.....	55
Craig Taborn.....	48
Satoko Fujii	45
Herbie Hancock	42
Jason Moran	41
George Cables	38
Bill Charlap	37
Cecil Taylor.....	36
Gerald Clayton	35
Ahmad Jamal	35
Monty Alexander.....	34
Randy Weston.....	34
Cyrus Chestnut	31
Chucho Valdés.....	31

Keyboard

Robert Glasper	158
Chick Corea	119
Herbie Hancock	117
Craig Taborn.....	115
John Medeski.....	72
Jamie Saft	65
Larry Goldings.....	57
Uri Caine	56
Marc Cary.....	54
Jason Lindner	52
Nik Bärtsch.....	48
Henry Butler	44
Hironi	42
Jim Baker	39
Eddie Palmieri	34
Matthew Shipp.....	31

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ROBIN
EUBANKS



Photo: Matt Denison

MICHAEL
DEASE





JIMMY & DENA KATZ

Mary Halvorson, winner of the Guitar category



TERRI LEENSEL

Rhiannon Giddens, winner of the Beyond Artist or Group category



JOHNNY MORENO

Jane Ira Bloom, winner of the Soprano Saxophone category

Wayne Horvitz.....	30
Gary Versace.....	30
Geoffrey Keezer.....	29
Kris Bowers.....	27

Organ

Joey DeFrancesco.....	289
Dr. Lonnie Smith.....	178
Larry Goldings.....	90
Carla Bley.....	68
Jamie Saft.....	64
John Medeski.....	62
Gary Versace.....	60
Brian Charette.....	59
Craig Taborn.....	51
Booker T. Jones.....	47
Mike LeDonne.....	47
Amina Claudine Myers.....	43
Barbara Dennerlein.....	41
Brian Auger.....	40
Pat Bianchi.....	38
Matthew Shipp.....	26
Rhoda Scott.....	24
Jared Gold.....	22
Chris Foreman.....	21
Sam Yahel.....	21

Guitar

Mary Halvorson.....	183
Bill Frisell.....	146
Nels Cline.....	93
Julian Lage.....	90
John Scofield.....	70
Pat Metheny.....	62
Lionel Loueke.....	59
Peter Bernstein.....	43
Russell Malone.....	43
Jakob Bro.....	42
Kurt Rosenwinkel.....	42
Jeff Parker.....	41
Gilad Hekselman.....	40
John McLaughlin.....	37
Marc Ribot.....	35

Rez Abbasi.....	31
Howard Alden.....	30
Romero Lubambo.....	30
Dave Stryker.....	30
Liberty Ellman.....	26
Ben Monder.....	25

Bass

Christian McBride.....	158
Dave Holland.....	118
Ron Carter.....	116
Linda May Han Oh.....	91
Esperanza Spalding.....	79
Michael Formanek.....	65
Stephan Crump.....	58
Larry Grenadier.....	53
William Parker.....	47
Scott Colley.....	43
Thomas Morgan.....	42
Avishai Cohen.....	40
John Patitucci.....	35
Reggie Workman.....	34
Victor Wooten.....	32
Stanley Clarke.....	29
Ben Williams.....	29
Ben Allison.....	28
Omer Avital.....	27
Eric Revis.....	27

Electric Bass

Steve Swallow.....	154
Stanley Clarke.....	124
Marcus Miller.....	85
Esperanza Spalding.....	83
John Patitucci.....	77
Linda May Han Oh.....	69
Thundercat.....	68
Melvin Gibbs.....	58
Matthew Garrison.....	53
Richard Bona.....	52
Tim Lefebvre.....	48
Jamaaladeen Tacuma.....	48
Christian McBride.....	42

Meshell Ndegeocello.....	41
Ingebrigt Håker Flaten.....	39
Tarus Mateen.....	39
James Genus.....	38
Derrick Hodge.....	35

Violin

Regina Carter.....	306
Jenny Scheinman.....	191
Mark Feldman.....	110
Sara Caswell.....	69
Jean-Luc Ponty.....	68
Christian Howes.....	53
Mat Maneri.....	53
Zach Brock.....	49
Eyvind Kang.....	41
Mark O'Connor.....	38
Jason Kao Hwang.....	37
Michal Urbaniak.....	28
John Blake.....	27
Carla Kihlstedt.....	23
Diane Monroe.....	23
Nils Økland.....	20
Mads Tolling.....	18

Drums

Brian Blade.....	146
Jack DeJohnette.....	123
Tyshawn Sorey.....	94
Terri Lyne Carrington.....	86
Andrew Cyrille.....	65
Matt Wilson.....	60
Roy Haynes.....	58
Hamid Drake.....	55
Billy Hart.....	54
Herlin Riley.....	47
Eric Harland.....	46
Johnathan Blake.....	43
Rudy Royston.....	40
Willie Jones III.....	38
Antonio Sanchez.....	38
Cindy Blackman Santana.....	37
Gerald Cleaver.....	34

Joey Baron.....	32
Marcus Gilmore.....	32
Billy Cobham.....	30

Percussion

Hamid Drake.....	145
Zakir Hussain.....	112
Pedrito Martinez.....	106
Cyro Baptista.....	88
Kahil El'Zabar.....	66
Sheila E.....	56
Poncho Sanchez.....	55
Mino Cinelu.....	53
Jerry González.....	53
Han Bennink.....	49
Marilyn Mazur.....	48
Bobby Sanabria.....	45
Airto Moreira.....	42
Giovanni Hidalgo.....	36
Famoudou Don Moye.....	35
Adam Rudolph.....	32
Susie Ibarra.....	31
Ches Smith.....	31
Sammy Figueroa.....	29

Vibraphone

Stefon Harris.....	260
Warren Wolf.....	140
Joe Locke.....	135
Steve Nelson.....	109
Jason Adasiewicz.....	84
Mulatu Astatke.....	65
Chris Dingman.....	50
Jason Marsalis.....	50
Kenny Wollesen.....	50
Karl Berger.....	42
Joe Chambers.....	40
Terry Gibbs.....	33
Khan Jamal.....	29
Behn Gillice.....	28
Gunter Hampel.....	28
Matt Moran.....	28
Orphy Robinson.....	24

Mike Mainieri 21
 Celia Smith 20

Miscellaneous Instrument

Tomeka Reid (cello) 99
 Béla Fleck (banjo) 97
 Anouar Brahem (oud) 82
 Edmar Castaneda
 (Colombian harp) 71
 Jon Batiste (melodica/
 harmonboard) 58
 Akua Dixon (cello) 56
 Scott Robinson
 (bass saxophone) 54
 Rabih Abou-Khalil (oud) 51
 Wycliffe Gordon (tuba) 44
 James Carter (bass saxophone) .. 43
 Grégoire Maret (harmonica) 42
 Erik Friedlander (cello) 41
 Richard Galliano (accordion) 41
 Omer Avital (oud) 39
 Toumani Diabaté (kora) 37
 Gary Versace (accordion) 36
 Chris Thile (mandolin) 32

Female Vocalist

Cécile McLorin Salvant 291
 Dianne Reeves 69
 Dee Dee Bridgewater 67
 Esperanza Spalding 64
 Cyrille Aimée 62
 Jazzmeia Horn 61
 Sheila Jordan 60

Luciana Souza 50
 Cassandra Wilson 48
 Roberta Gambarini 46
 Lizz Wright 46
 Catherine Russell 43
 Kate McGarry 41
 Stacey Kent 38
 Diana Krall 38
 Fay Victor 37
 Norma Winstone 35
 Tierney Sutton 29
 Dominique Eade 28
 René Marie 28
 Claudia Acuña 26
 Gretchen Parlato 24
 Jen Shyu 24

Male Vocalist

Kurt Elling 267
 Gregory Porter 186
 Theo Bleckmann 137
 Tony Bennett 92
 Bobby McFerrin 75
 Andy Bey 68
 Bob Dorough 63
 José James 57
 Giacomo Gates 54
 Freddy Cole 41
 Dwight Trible 37
 James Blood Ulmer 37
 Kenny Washington 32
 Allan Harris 26
 Phil Minton 22
 Jammar Ross 22

Sachal Vasandani 22
 Jaap Blonk 21
 Michael Bublé 19
 Johnny O'Neal 19

Composer

Maria Schneider 90
 Carla Bley 85
 Ambrose Akinmusire 77
 Wayne Shorter 74
 Terence Blanchard 70
 Darcy James Argue 66
 Vijay Iyer 59
 Wadada Leo Smith 55
 Tyshawn Sorey 49
 Myra Melford 42
 Chick Corea 40
 Wynton Marsalis 38
 Bill Frisell 37
 Jason Moran 37
 Satoko Fujii 34
 Benny Golson 33
 Mary Halvorson 33
 Anthony Braxton 32
 Roscoe Mitchell 31

Arranger

Maria Schneider 131
 Carla Bley 113
 Darcy James Argue 88
 Terri Lyne Carrington 57
 Steven Bernstein 55
 John Beasley 53

John Clayton 47
 Billy Childs 45
 Guillermo Klein 44
 Satoko Fujii 38
 Jim McNeely 36
 John Hollenbeck 32
 Amir ElSaffar 31
 Vince Mendoza 30
 Django Bates 29
 Arturo O'Farrill 29
 Robert Glasper 28
 Dave Holland 28
 Christian McBride 27
 Wynton Marsalis 26
 Esperanza Spalding 26
 Miguel Zenón 26
 Ryan Truesdell 25

Record Label

ECM 163
 Blue Note 141
 Pi Recordings 125
 Mack Avenue 98
 Resonance 69
 Sunnyside 57
 Motéma 51
 Nonesuch 39
 HighNote 38
 Intakt 36
 International Anthem
 Recording Co. 36
 Firehouse 12 35
 Clean Feed 33
 Concord 32

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JIMMY & DENA KATZ

Stefon Harris, winner of the Vibraphone category

Impulse!..... 32
 Mosaic..... 32
 Verve..... 32
 ACT 31
 Smoke Sessions Records..... 30
 Brownswood 29
 Columbia Legacy 26
 RareNoise Records..... 25
 Gearbox Records..... 21
 AUM Fidelity..... 19
 Biophilia..... 18
 MoonJune 18

Producer

Manfred Eicher..... 201
 Zev Feldman 123
 Michael Cuscuna 114
 Don Was..... 107
 Terri Lyne Carrington..... 78
 Dave Douglas..... 70
 Robert Glasper..... 61
 John Zorn..... 54
 Bill Laswell 46
 Christian McBride 46
 Flying Lotus..... 43
 Larry Klein 41
 Marc Free 34
 Branford Marsalis..... 32
 Al Pryor..... 31

Blues Artist or Group

Buddy Guy..... 101
 Gary Clark Jr. 90
 Shemekia Copeland..... 60
 Bettye LaVette..... 60
 Taj Mahal 56
 James Blood Ulmer 47
 Taj Mahal & Keb' Mo' 42
 Otis Taylor 42
 John Mayall 35
 Sonny Landreth..... 34
 Joe Bonamassa 26
 Robert Cray 26

Eric Bibb..... 22
 Eric Clapton 22
 Steve Cropper 21
 Marcia Ball 20
 Cedric Burnside 20
 Fantastic Negrito..... 20
 Walter "Wolfman" Washington .. 20
 Ronnie Earl & The Broadcasters .. 19
 Keb' Mo' 19

Blues Album

Buddy Guy, *The Blues Is Alive And Well* (RCA)..... 120
 Fantastic Negrito, *Please Don't Be Dead* (Cooking Vinyl) 64
 B.B. King Blues Band, *The Soul Of The King* (Ruf) 61
 Boz Scaggs, *Out Of The Blues* (Concord) 56
 Maria Muldaur, *Don't You Feel My Leg* (Last Music Co.) 52
 Cedric Burnside, *Benton County Relic* (Single Lock) 45
 Joe Bonamassa, *Redemption* (J&R Adventures) .. 41
 John Mayall, *Nobody Told Me* (Forty Below) 40
 Billy F. Gibbons, *The Big Bad Blues* (Concord) .. 33
 Elvin Bishop's Big Fun Trio, *Something Smells Funny* (Alligator)..... 30
 Eric Bibb, *Global Griot* (Stony Plain) 29
 Rory Block, *A Woman's Soul* (Stony Plain)..... 27
 Walter "Wolfman" Washington, *My Future Is My Past* (Anti-)..... 27
 Sugaray Rayford, *Somebody Save Me* (Forty Below) 24
 Aki Kumar, *Hindi Man Blues* (Little Village Foundation)..... 20
 Lurrie Bell & The Bell Dynasty, *Tribute To Carey Bell* (Delmark) .. 19

Mary Lane, *Travelin' Woman* (Women Of The Blues) 19
 Various Artists, *Chicago Plays The Stones* (Raisin' Music) 18
 Joe Louis Walker, Bruce Katz & Giles Robson, *Journeys To The Heart Of The Blues* (Alligator)... 16
 Barry Goldberg, *In The Groove* (Sunset Blvd.)... 14
 Beth Hart, *Live At The Royal Albert Hall* (Provogue/Mascot).. 14

Beyond Artist or Group

Rhiannon Giddens 64
 Aretha Franklin 60
 Angelique Kidjo 42
 David Byrne..... 40
 Jeff Beck 37
 Tedeschi Trucks Band..... 36
 Anderson .Paak..... 35
 Erykah Badu..... 35
 Kendrick Lamar..... 35
 Laurie Anderson..... 34
 Bob Dylan..... 33
 Janelle Monáe..... 29
 Flying Lotus..... 28
 Mavis Staples..... 28
 Gary Clark Jr. 27
 Björk 26
 Childish Gambino 25
 Robert Glasper Experiment 25
 Rubén Blades..... 24
 Lalah Hathaway 24
 Daymé Arocena 23
 Richard Thompson 23

Beyond Album

Van Morrison & Joey DeFrancesco, *You're Driving Me Crazy* (Sony Legacy) 72
 José James, *Lean On Me* (Blue Note)..... 69
 Janelle Monáe, *Dirty Computer*

(Bad Boy/Atlantic) 62
 Tedeschi Trucks Band, *Signs* (Fantasy)..... 54
 Ry Cooder, *The Prodigal Son* (Fantasy)..... 53
 Gary Clark Jr., *This Land* (Warner Bros.) 43
 Elvis Costello, *Look Now* (Concord)..... 42
 Fatoumata Diawara, *Fenfo-Something To Say* (Shanachie) 41
 Medeski Martin & Wood, *Omnisphere* (Indirecto)..... 39
 Paul Simon, *In The Blue Light* (Legacy) 39
 Paul McCartney, *Egypt Station* (Capitol) 36
 Neneh Cherry, *Broken Politics* (Smalltown Supersound)..... 33
 John Prine, *The Tree Of Forgiveness* (Oh Boy)..... 33
 Punch Brothers, *All Ashore* (Nonesuch)..... 32
 Mavis Staples, *Live In London* (Anti-)..... 31
 Noname, *Room 25* (Self Release) 27
 Solange, *When I Get Home* (Columbia) 25
 Alicia Olatuja, *Intuition: Songs From The Minds Of Women* (Resilience) 24
 Courtney Barnett, *Tell Me How You Really Feel* (Milk/Mom + Pop) .. 23
 Willie Nelson, *My Way* (Legacy) ... 23
 Madeleine Peyroux, *Anthem* (Universal/Decca/Verve)..... 22
 The Carters, *Everything Is Love* (Roc Nation) 21
 Georgia-Anne Muldrow, *Overload* (Brainfeeder) 20
 Kandace Springs, *Indigo* (Blue Note)..... 20



Orlando "Maraca" Valle, winner of the Rising Star—Flute category

★★ Rising Star ★★

Rising Star Jazz Artist

Sullivan Fortner.....	97
Shabaka Hutchings.....	82
Gerald Clayton.....	56
Gilad Hekselman.....	55
David Virelles.....	51
Nubya Garcia.....	48
JD Allen.....	46
Aaron Parks.....	46
Emmet Cohen.....	45
Eric Harland.....	44
Joel Ross.....	44
Amir ElSaffar.....	39
Miho Hazama.....	38
Sean Jones.....	37
Angel Bat Dawid.....	34
Aaron Diehl.....	34
James Francies.....	34
Jon Irabagon.....	34
Darcy James Argue.....	33
Peter Evans.....	33

Rising Star Jazz Group

Sons of Kemet.....	127
Thumbscrew.....	83
Gerald Clayton Trio.....	80
The Comet Is Coming.....	77
Aaron Diehl Trio.....	64
Mostly Other People	
Do The Killing.....	47
Ryan Keberle's Catharsis.....	46
Sean Jones Quintet.....	45
Willie Jones III Sextet.....	44
Black Art Jazz Collective.....	43
Amirtha Kidambi & Elder Ones.....	41
Kendrick Scott Oracle.....	41
Orrin Evans Trio.....	36
Steve Lehman Trio.....	35
Kneebody.....	34
Cuong Vu 4-tet.....	34
Helen Sung Trio.....	32
Shabaka & The Ancestors.....	29
Pedrito Martinez Group.....	26
Omer Avital Quintet.....	25

Lewis Nash Quintet.....	25
The Thing.....	25

Rising Star Big Band

Anat Cohen Tentet.....	226
Ralph Peterson's Gen-Next Big Band.....	80
Ghost Train Orchestra.....	74
Joel Harrison Large Ensemble.....	64
Chicago Jazz Philharmonic.....	62
Ed Palermo Big Band.....	56
Marcus Shelby Jazz Orchestra.....	42
The Dorf.....	35
Vince Giordano's Nighthawks.....	34
Mr. Ho's Orchestrotica.....	31
Diane Moser's Composers Big Band.....	29
Ed Partyka Big Band.....	29
Lucas Pino's No Net Nonet.....	28
Tommy Igoe's Birdland Big Band.....	26
Heritage Orchestra.....	24
Michael Leonhart Orchestra.....	23
Beats & Pieces Big Band.....	22
New Standard Jazz Orchestra.....	22
People's Liberation Big Band.....	22
JC Sanford Orchestra.....	22
Anita Brown Jazz Orchestra.....	20
Monika Roscher Big Band.....	18

Rising Star Trumpet

Adam O'Farrill.....	129
Etienne Charles.....	111
Nate Wooley.....	90
Peter Evans.....	81
Bria Skonberg.....	75
Keyon Harrold.....	73
Mathias Eick.....	71
Josh Evans.....	63
Freddie Hendrix.....	51
Steph Richards.....	44
Laura Jurd.....	42
John Raymond.....	41
Corey Wilkes.....	37
Takuya Kuroda.....	36
Josh Lawrence.....	35
Joshua Berman.....	32
Maurice Brown.....	32
Victor Garcia.....	31
Michael Rodriguez.....	29

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2019
DOWNBEAT
CRITICS POLL &
JAZZ JOURNALISTS
AWARD
Soprano Sax



Aaron Weinstein, winner of the Rising Star—Violin category



Jacob Collier, winner of the Rising Star—Male Vocalist category

Rising Star Trombone

Natalie Cressman 117
 Samuel Blaser 116
 Joe Fiedler 93
 Alan Ferber 77
 Sarah Morrow 69
 Nick Finzer 58
 Chris Crenshaw 51
 Nils Wogram 50
 Ryan Porter 49
 Corey King 39
 Mats Ålekint 34
 Andre Hayward 34
 JC Sanford 34
 Jeff Albert 31
 David Gibson 31
 Ron Westray 31
 Scott Whitfield 28
 Jason Jackson 26
 Ed Partyka 26
 Michael Dessen 22
 Aubrey Logan 22

Rising Soprano Sax

Tineke Postma 124
 Roxy Coss 110
 Michael Blake 108
 Yuval Cohen 91
 Hailey Niswanger 84
 Aurora Nealand 54
 Jasmine Lovell-Smith 42
 Russ Nolan 42
 Jason Robinson 42
 Audrey Welber 34
 John Wojciechowski 26
 Nathaniel Facey 23
 Steven Lugerner 23
 Julio Botti 22
 Javier Giroto 22

Rising Star Alto Sax

Darius Jones 103
 Logan Richardson 68
 Sharel Cassity 60
 Lakecia Benjamin 59
 Greg Ward 58
 Dave Rempis 55

Tineke Postma 53
 Will Vinson 49
 Braxton Cook 45
 Godwin Louis 44
 Tim Green 41
 Angelika Niescier 38
 Mike DiRubbo 37
 Jessica Lurie 31
 Nick Mazarella 31
 Casey Benjamin 29
 Silke Eberhard 29
 Andrew D'Angelo 28
 Hailey Niswanger 28
 Nicole Johänntgen 25

Rising Star Tenor Sax

Dayna Stephens 131
 Nubya Garcia 109
 James Brandon Lewis 97
 Mats Gustafsson 90
 Camille Thurman 69
 Ben Wendel 67
 Abraham Burton 48
 Marius Neset 48
 Bill McHenry 46
 John Ellis 39
 Josephine Davies 34
 Howard Wiley 30
 Rahsaan Barber 29
 Geof Bradfield 28
 Grant Stewart 26
 John Wojciechowski 25
 Russ Nolan 24
 Troy Roberts 23
 Jerome Sabbagh 23
 Brian Settles 23

Rising Star Baritone Sax

Lauren Sevian 99
 Josh Sinton 76
 Charles Evans 69
 Mikko Innanen 65
 Fredrik Ljungkvist 61
 Herwig Gradischnig 60
 Roger Rosenberg 56
 Karen Sharp 56
 Glenn Wilson 49

Linda Fredriksson 47
 Frank Basile 45
 Jason Marshall 38
 Ted Hogarth 35
 Céline Bonacina 33
 Adam Schroeder 25
 Timo Lassy 24
 Jon Raskin 24
 Ben Ellman 23
 Andrew Hadro 23
 Jonah Parzen-Johnson 21

Rising Star Clarinet

Shabaka Hutchings 124
 François Houle 87
 Todd Marcus 67
 Gabriele Mirabassi 62
 Rudi Mahall 57
 Chris Byars 52
 Jesper Thilo 46
 James Falzone 40
 Sam Sadigursky 40
 Ted Hogarth 38
 Aurora Nealand 38
 Jeremiah Cymerman 34
 Mike McGinnis 34
 Harvey Wainapel 34
 Joachim Badenhorst 31
 Tim Laughlin 24
 Avram Fefer 23
 Jason Scott 23
 Nico Gori 20
 Gregory Agid 17

Rising Star Flute

Orlando "Maraca" Valle 117
 Sylvain Leroux 72
 Bart Platteau 65
 Itai Kriss 61
 Magic Malik 60
 Mayu Saeki 55
 Michel Gentile 49
 Steve Adams 37
 Gareth Lockrane 33
 Tom Reese 31
 Ben Kono 30
 Evan Francis 28

Geni Skendo 28
 Jean Derome 25
 Finn Peters 24

Rising Star Piano

Sullivan Fortner 106
 Aaron Diehl 73
 Christian Sands 65
 Emmet Cohen 60
 Fabian Almazan 55
 Nik Bärtsch 54
 Aaron Parks 52
 Stefano Bollani 47
 Matt Mitchell 46
 Ehud Asherie 41
 Benoit Delbecq 38
 James Francies 34
 Helen Sung 31
 Kris Bowers 29
 George Colligan 29
 Yelena Eckemoff 29
 Aaron Goldberg 29
 Taylor Eigsti 26
 Michael Wolny 26
 Elio Villafranca 24

Rising Star Keyboard

Kit Downes 101
 Lawrence Fields 92
 Zaccai Curtis 86
 Marco Benevento 84
 Russ Lossing 71
 Jim Beard 57
 Henry Hey 44
 Scott Kinsey 39
 Matthew Bourne 37
 Jacob Anderskov 33
 Sean Wayland 30
 Adam Benjamin 29
 Thomas Lehn 29
 Elliot Galvin 26
 Oscar Perez 24
 Mamiko Watanabe 21

Rising Star Organ

Kit Downes 128
 Greg Lewis 107

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**VERVE
LABEL GROUP**



Allison Miller, winner of the Rising Star-Drums category



Miles Okazaki, winner of the Rising Star-Guitar category

Akiko Tsuruga.....	102
Gerard Gibbs.....	65
Erik Deutsch.....	62
Alexander Hawkins.....	56
Ben Paterson.....	45
Joe Bagg.....	38
Wayne Peet.....	38
Bobby Sparks.....	36
Atsuko Hashimoto.....	33
Kyle Koehler.....	32
Brian Coogan.....	29
Bill Heid.....	28
Radam Schwartz.....	26
Charlie Wood.....	26
Pete Benson.....	25
Dan Fogel.....	21
Chris Hazelton.....	20

Rising Star Guitar

Miles Okazaki.....	111
Lage Lund.....	99
Paul Bollenback.....	68
Jonathan Kreisberg.....	61
Adam Rogers.....	53
Sheryl Bailey.....	52
Camila Meza.....	45
Brandon Seabrook.....	45
Matthew Stevens.....	44
Mike Moreno.....	43
Wendy Eisenberg.....	38
Hristo Vitchev.....	38
Ava Mendoza.....	37
Will Bernard.....	33
Eric Hofbauer.....	30
Scott DuBois.....	27
Raoul Björkenheim.....	25
Graham Dechter.....	25
Pete McCann.....	24
Amanda Monaco.....	24
Chico Pinheiro.....	23
Yotam Silberstein.....	21

Rising Star Bass

Dezron Douglas.....	84
Reuben Rogers.....	78

Matt Penman.....	60
Ben Street.....	57
Joshua Abrams.....	56
Lisa Mezzacappa.....	54
Hans Glawischnig.....	49
Matt Brewer.....	47
Carlos Henriquez.....	44
Matt Ulery.....	41
Moppa Elliott.....	40
Ingebrigt Håker Flaten.....	40
Mimi Jones.....	40
Rodney Whitaker.....	39
Kris Funn.....	36
David Wong.....	34
Katie Thiroux.....	31
Kyle Eastwood.....	30
François Moutin.....	29
Todd Sickafoose.....	29

Rising Star Electric Bass

Felix Pastorius.....	124
Tal Wilkenfeld.....	111
John Lee.....	57
Kai Eckhardt.....	49
Nate McBride.....	49
James Cammack.....	44
Lisa Dowling.....	41
Matt Lux.....	38
Jeff Denson.....	36
Casey Abrams.....	34
Reed Mathis.....	33
Dominique Di Piazza.....	28
Kaveh Rastegar.....	28
Anders Christensen.....	27
Matt Perrine.....	25
Carlitos Del Puerto.....	23
Mike Pope.....	21
Al McDowell.....	20

Rising Star Violin

Aaron Weinstein.....	72
Tomoko Omura.....	61
Karen Briggs.....	60
Sarah Bernstein.....	56
Marcus Moore.....	56

Susie Hansen.....	54
Jason Anick.....	51
Macie Stewart.....	46
Diane Monroe.....	39
Rob Thomas.....	38
Jesse Zubot.....	37
Elektra Kurtis.....	36
Szilárd Mezei.....	34
Majid Khaliq.....	32
Ola Kvernberg.....	30
Chris Garrick.....	24
Ben Powell.....	24
Nora Germain.....	22

Rising Star Drums

Allison Miller.....	102
Makaya McCraven.....	94
Tomas Fujiwara.....	77
Obed Calvaire.....	74
Justin Faulkner.....	63
Justin Brown.....	52
Jaimeo Brown.....	47
Ulysses Owens Jr.....	45
Dafnis Prieto.....	45
Ches Smith.....	43
Ari Hoenig.....	40
Chris Dave.....	37
Dan Weiss.....	36
Otis Brown III.....	33
Jonathan Barber.....	32
Adam Cruz.....	32
Kate Gentile.....	29
Paal Nilssen-Love.....	29
Terreon Gully.....	28
McClenty Hunter Jr.....	28

Rising Star Percussion

Warren Smith.....	95
Harris Eisenstadt.....	77
Richie Flores.....	71
Peter Apfelbaum.....	69
Steve Kroon.....	62
Daniel Sadownick.....	51
Guilherme Franco.....	48
Jon Wikan.....	44
Okay Temiz.....	41
Lukas Ligeti.....	38
Rogério Boccato.....	32
Michele Rabbia.....	30
Mingo Lewis.....	29
Tupac Mantilla.....	26
Joe Gonzalez.....	25
Kevin Diehl.....	21
Eli Fountain.....	21
Gumbi Ortiz.....	21

Abraham Gomez-Delgado.....	20
Ravish Momin.....	20

Rising Star Vibraphone

Joel Ross.....	165
Mike Dillon.....	71
Jim Hart.....	41
Lewis Wright.....	40
Christopher Dell.....	38
Corey Mwamba.....	38
Tyler Blanton.....	37
Yuhan Su.....	37
Smith Dobson.....	35
Christian Tamburr.....	33
Jon Metzger.....	31
Kjell Nordeson.....	30
John Cocuzzi.....	24
Mike Pinto.....	24
Rolando Morales-Matos.....	23
Tom Beckham.....	22
Peter Schlamb.....	18

Rising Misc. Instrument

Theon Cross (tuba).....	95
Peggy Lee (cello).....	76
Casey Benjamin (vocoder).....	67
Brian Landrus (bass clarinet) ...	59
Brandee Younger (harp).....	59
Vincent Chancey (French horn)....	53
Rudi Mahall (bass clarinet).....	47
Min Xiao-Fen (pipa).....	47
Todd Marcus (bass clarinet).....	40
Vincent Peirani (accordion).....	40
Jason Stein (bass clarinet).....	38
Marcus Rojas (tuba).....	37
Anja Lechner (cello).....	33
Brandon Seabrook (banjo).....	32
Tom Varner (French horn).....	31
Ben Wendel (bassoon).....	31
Okkyung Lee (cello).....	29

Rising Female Vocalist

Sara Serpa.....	52
Amirtha Kidamb.....	50
Angel Bat Dawid.....	48
Champion Fulton.....	48
Sinne Eeg.....	45
Camila Meza.....	43
Thana Alexa.....	42
Amy Cervini.....	41
Fay Victor.....	41
Alicia Hall Moran.....	36
Nellie McKay.....	34
Elina Duni.....	32

Daymé Arocena.....	30
Kat Edmonson.....	30
Sarah Elizabeth Charles.....	27
Charenée Wade.....	27
Nicki Parrott.....	25
Veronica Swift.....	25
Sara Gazarek.....	24

Rising Male Vocalist

Jacob Collier.....	120
Leslie Odom Jr.....	95
João Bosco.....	58
Saalik Ahmad Ziyad.....	55
Jeff Denson.....	45
Casey Abrams.....	44
Jeremy Davenport.....	43
Vincent Gardner.....	42
Milton Suggs.....	41
Pete McGuinness.....	38
Peter Cincotti.....	37
Dean Bowman.....	33
Alan Hampton.....	32
John Proulx.....	26
Frank Senior.....	19
Jamie Davis.....	17
Grzegorz Karnas.....	16

Rising Star Composer

Kamasi Washington.....	111
Makaya McCraven.....	81
Tia Fuller.....	77
Miho Hazama.....	73
Allison Miller.....	70
JD Allen.....	60
Marquis Hill.....	60
Marcus Strickland.....	58
Nik Bärtsch.....	55
Ingrid Laubrock.....	51
Jaimie Branch.....	48
Aaron Parks.....	46
Jonathan Finlayson.....	44
Elio Villafranca.....	43
David Virelles.....	41
Moppa Elliott.....	39
Ethan Iverson.....	33
Walter Smith III.....	32
Edward Simon.....	31
Amirtha Kidambi.....	29
Angel Bat Dawid.....	28
María Grand.....	25

Rising Star Arranger

Kamasi Washington.....	105
Stefon Harris.....	101
Allison Miller.....	83
Makaya McCraven.....	82
Miho Hazama.....	75
Jacob Collier.....	72
Miguel Zenón.....	64
Dafnis Prieto.....	63
Anna Webber.....	55
Antonio Sanchez.....	52
Jonathan Finlayson.....	50
Christian Sands.....	41
Sullivan Fortner.....	40
Adam O’Farrill.....	39
Carlos Henriquez.....	38
Miles Okazaki.....	38
Noah Preminger.....	37

Ulysses Owens Jr.....	35
Helen Sung.....	34

Rising Star Producer

Ambrose Akinmusire.....	140
Seth Rosner & Yulun Wang.....	81
Makaya McCraven.....	71
Tyshawn Sorey.....	71

Ben Allison.....	54
Derrick Hodge.....	54
Willie Jones III.....	51
Myra Melford.....	50
Spike Wilner.....	49
Pedro Costa.....	48
JD Allen.....	46
Liberty Ellman.....	45

FREE

FEATURING

Ambrose Akinmusire Trio featuring Kris Davis and Nasheet Waits
 → Amir ElSaffar’s *Ahwaal* featuring Ksawery Wójcicki, Waclaw Zimpel, Lutosławski Quartet → Angel Bat Dawid’s *Requiem for Jazz*
 → Ari Brown Quintet → Greg Ward’s *Rogue Parade* → Isaiah Collier & The Chosen Few: *The Story of 400 Years* → *Karuna*: Hamid Drake and Adam Rudolph Duet → Orbert Davis Sextet: *In the Spirit*
 → Sylvie Courvoisier & Mary Halvorson Duo → The Alexander/McLean Project → Tia Fuller’s *Diamond Cut* → Willie Jones III Sextet featuring Renee Neufville

PLUS

Andy Oberhausen’s *Breadwinners* → Angelo Hart Trio → Bill McFarland & The Chicago Horns → Bill McKay/Katinka Kleijn Duo
 → Dana Hall’s *spring* → David Boykin: *Abeeku* → DJ Sadie Woods
 → Greg Artry Quartet → Irvin Pierce Quartet → Joey Brink → Juan Pastor’s *Chinchano* → Maggie Brown Group → Marlene Rosenberg Trio → Nick Mazarella Quintet → Noteworthy Jazz Ensemble → Occidental Brothers Dance Band Int’l → Pharez Whitted Band → Project Tool → Richard Johnson (solo) → Sam Trump Quartet → Shanta Nurullah Trio → The Regulators → Trio Mokili

SEPTEMBER 28 & 29

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67TH ANNUAL CRITICS POLL

THE CRITICS

Below are the 150 critics who voted in DownBeat's 67th 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: JazzTimes, Flagpole

***Frank Alkyer:** DB

Larry Appelbaum: JazzTimes, In The Muse, Let's Cool One

Mirian Arbalejo: It Don't Mean A Thing, Cuepoint

Bridget Armwine: Beets and Bebop Media LLC

Glenn R. Astarita: All About Jazz

Mark R. Bacon: Main Event, LEO, NG Music

Chris J. Bahnsen: DB

Michael Barris: DB

Peter Bastian: Jazzthetik

Bill Beuttler: DB, Boston Globe

Edward Blanco: All About Jazz, WDNA

Phillip Booth: DB, Washington Post, JazzTimes, Jazziz, Relix

***Fred Bouchard:** DB, Boston Musical Intelligencer

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

***Herb Boyd:** DB, Amsterdam News, Neworld Review, Network Journal

Shaun Brady: JazzTimes, Philadelphia Inquirer

Rainer Bratfisch: Jazz Podium

Jon Bream: Minneapolis Star Tribune

Marcela Breton: Freelance

Nelson Brill: bostonconcertreviews.com

Paweł Brodowski: Jazz Forum

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

Madeleine Byrne: The Wire

Andrea Canter: jazzpolice.com

***Dave Canter:** DB

James Catchpole: Songlines, Tokyo Jazz Site, Japan Times

Brad Cohan: DB, JazzTimes, Bandcamp Daily

***Aaron Cohen:** DB

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

***J.D. Considine:** DB, JazzTimes

Anthony Dean-Harris: DB,

Nextbop, KRTU San Antonio

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

Coen de Jonge: Jazzism, Jazz Bulletin

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

Bob Doerschuk: DB

Laurence Donohue-Greene: New York City Jazz Record

Alain Drouot: DB, citizenjazz.com

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

José Duarte: jazzportugal.ua.pt, RTP Radio Television Portugal

Tina Edwards: Supreme Standards podcast

Shannon J. Effinger: DB, Jazzwise, Pitchfork, NPR

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***Ed Enright:** DB

***John Ephland:** DB

Steve Feeny: artsfuse.org, Portland Press Herald/Maine Sunday Telegram

David Franklin: JazzTimes, Cadence

Philip Freeman: DB, The Wire, Stereogum

Takao Fujioka: Way Out West

Jon Garelick: DB, Jazziz, Boston Globe

Dustin Garlitz: jazztalent.com

Richard Gehr: DB, Bandcamp, Relix

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

Jonathan Gómez: DB

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Tyran Grillo: DB

Kira Grunenberg: DB, No Depression, Off Your Radar, Throw the Dice and Play Nice

***Frank-John Hadley:** DB

Carl L. Hager: Jazz (Jazzers Jazzing) blog

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

Robert Ham: DB, Paste,

Portland Mercury

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Kazune Hayata: Jazz Life

Chris Heim: KMUW/Global Village

Andrey Henkin: New York City Jazz Record

Andy Hermann: DB, Billboard, Los Angeles Times

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Rob Hoff: WQLN Public Media, JazzErie

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

C. Andrew Hovan: DB, All About Jazz

Tom Hull: tomhull.com

Tom Ineck: Lincoln Journal Star, NET Radio, KZUM Radio

Eric Jackson: WGBH

Michael Jackson: DB, Jazzwise, Chicago SunTimes

***Willard Jenkins:** DB, The Independent Ear, JazzTimes

Catalina Maria Johnson: DB, Billboard, NPR, Remezcla

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Jason Koransky: DB

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Jeff Krow: Audiophile Audition

Will Layman: popmatters.com

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Martin Longley: DB

***Suzanne Lorge:** DB, New York City Jazz Record

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***Jim Macnie:** DB, VEVO

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***John McDonough:** DB, NPR

Kerlie McDowall: DB, Inspired Magazine

Peter McElhinney: Style Weekly

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

***Ken Micallef:** DB, Stereo-ophile, Modern Drummer, JazzTimes

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

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

Ralph A. Miriello: Notes on Jazz blog

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

Allen Morrison: DB, JazzTimes, Jazziz

Brian Morton: DB, Jazz Journal, The Wire

***John Murph:** DB, NPR Music, JazzWise, JazzTimes, Qwest TV

Russ Musto: DB, New York City Jazz Record

Michael G. Nastos: Hot House, WCBN-FM

Ron Netsky: City Newspaper (Rochester, New York)

Jon Newey: Jazzwise

Lily O'Brien: DB, JazzTimes, San Francisco Classical Voice, Marin Arts & Culture

Sean O'Connell: DB, Los Angeles Times, Playboy

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

Adam Olschewski: Jazz Podium

***Dan Ouellette:** DB, Billboard, Qwest TV

***Ted Panken:** DB

Terry Perkins: DB

J. poet: DB, Rock and Roll Globe, Relix, Oakland Magazine

Jeff Potter: DB, Modern Drummer

Alan Ranta: Exclaim!

***Bobby Reed:** DB

***Howard Reich:** Chicago Tribune

Guy Reynard: Freelance

Derk Richardson: The Absolute Sound, Acoustic Guitar, KPFA radio, Peghead Nation, Oakland Magazine

***Gene Santoro:** DB

Phil Schaap: philschaapjazz.com, WKCR

Sebastian Scotney: London Jazz News, Jazzthetik, The Arts Desk

Michele Simms-Burton: DB, DC Metro Arts

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W. Royal Stokes: JJA News, wroyalstokes.com

Denise Sullivan: DB

Otakar Svoboda: Czech Radio

***Jean Szlamowicz:** DB

Larry Reni Thomas: jazzcorner.com, ejazznews.com

Mark Turner: All About Jazz

Chris Walker: DB, JazzTimes, L.A. Jazz Scene, California Tour & Travel

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

Carlo Wolff: DB, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

***Josef Woodard:** DB, Jazziz, Cadence

Takashi Yamamoto: Jazz Perspective

***Scott Yanow:** DB, Jazziz, L.A. Jazz Scene, New York City Jazz Record, Syncopated Times

Izzy Yellen: DB, Chicago Reader

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- 78 / Blues
- 82 / Beyond
- 84 / Historical
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REVIEWS >



Tom Harrell mixes and matches players from his previous ensembles for *Infinity*.

Tom Harrell

Infinity

HIGHNOTE 7321

★★★★

During the past decade, trumpeter and flugelhornist Tom Harrell has turned out about one HighNote album per year as a leader. A quintet of regular players usually serves as the core of these annual offerings, though not without deviations; sometimes he'll double up his instruments, leave off a mainstay (like the piano) or add vocals or guitar.

Shifts in band configurations are endlessly intriguing, of course, but equally compelling is the sinew that binds a musician's oeuvre. In Harrell's case, two opposing forces—an orchestrator's ear for form and a horn player's flair for improvisation—characterize even the simplest of his compositions. Take "Duet" on *Infinity*, a release featuring the bandleader's latest quintet, a guitar-based rhythm section with saxophone and trumpet. At just more than one-and-a-half minutes long, this biphonic musical sketch between

Harrell and tenor saxophonist Mark Turner could just as easily be an outtake from a symphonic performance in a concert hall as from a bebop showdown on the bandstand.

With his more complex pieces, these forces play out just as potently. On "Dublin," the horns sync in duet over a Celtic pedal in Charles Altura's guitar, before breaking out into increasingly intense improvs; the pedal morphs into a lilting chromatic figure that overtakes the band and becomes the theme against which Harrell's final solo—a galloping melodic riff—closes out the tune.

In the middle ground between "Duet" and "Dublin" lie Harrell's more conventionally structured pieces: tunes with clearly articulated motivic ideas that bookend the solo sections ("The Fast," "Coronation," "Blue"). But if Harrell opts for a common strophic form, he's going to shake it up somewhere else. For instance, the heads of these compositions—tuneful, rhythmically dynamic and a little bit tricky—set a high bar for soloists. How to maintain Harrell's alacritous pace without betraying his melodic design?

Harrell works with players he knows well, even if he's mixing and matching from earlier ensembles. Their playing flows holistically from his writing, with only the slightest of shifts between the composed and improvised sections. These natural transitions speak to a solid group rapport, where the soloists have a stake in the compositional act. In their solos, each chooses to play in Harrell's musical language, rather than assert their virtuosic separateness—no small statement.

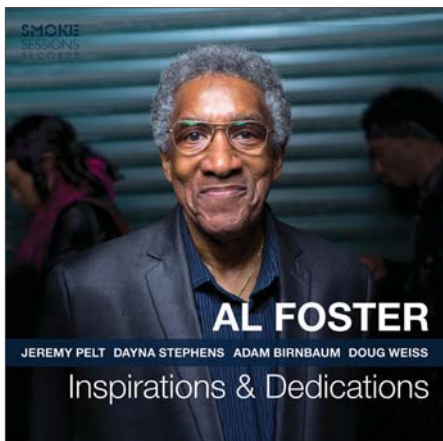
Harrell takes the title of the album from his meditative musings on the endless scope of the universe, a concept reflected on the album cover. At the center of the image's repeating frames stands Harrell with his trumpet—a finite thing, but a conduit of his celestial tone, and a good place to begin such contemplations.

—Suzanne Lorge

Infinity: The Fast; Dublin; Hope; Coronation; Folk Song; Blue; Ground; The Isle; Duet; Taurus. (65:51)

Personnel: Tom Harrell, trumpet, flugelhorn; Mark Turner, tenor saxophone; Charles Altura, electric guitar, acoustic guitar; Ben Street, bass; Johnathan Blake, drums; Adam Cruz, percussion (3).

Ordering info: jazzdepot.com



Al Foster *Inspirations & Dedications* SMOKE SESSIONS 1904

★★★★½

Grandiose programming gambits surely have a grip on jazz record-making at this late date. But there's no lack of admirable new titles that "merely" rely on the thoughtful rendering of tunes—modest affairs that frame depth of interplay, melodic charisma and propulsive grace as key value points. Al Foster's latest, one of a handful he's made as a leader in a half-century-long career, is such a disc, a humble record of tasteful small moments.

Grace Kelly *GO TiME: Live In LA* PAZZ 26-19

★★★

There's a delicate line between retro-chic and threadbare, and this outing undeniably flings toward the latter. Grace Kelly sometimes deploys her estimable alto saxophone prowess amid a thicket of gooeey electric textures and tinny drum beats that harken to early-1980s smooth-jazz without a hint of subversion. Other times, she sings in a kittenish manner while serving listless makeovers of jazz and pop staples.

Recorded live at Los Angeles' Blue Whale nightclub, Kelly's lukewarm performance results in a classic case of squandering talent. It's clear from her biting attack and succinct flourishes that r&b-leaning saxophonists like David Sanborn are her lodestar. Unfortunately, a program of unimaginative covers—The Beatles' "Come Together," Louis Jordan's "Is You Is Or Is You Ain't (My Baby)," Van Morrison's "Crazy Love"—does little to catapult Kelly beyond genuflecting competence. She seems unwilling to advance the lacquered soul-jazz of yesterday into the 21st century. And there hasn't been enough passage of time for this treacly aesthetic to sound fresh again. Even her rendition of Chick Corea's "Spain"—with all its tricky passages—comes off ho-hum.

Except for some mildly interesting trades

The 76-year-old drummer is an esteemed master and a consummate sideman. From Sonny Rollins to Joe Henderson, Foster has rubbed shoulders with jazz royalty. While these new tunes have blossomed from experiences with family and friends, the music's pleasures avail themselves regardless of whether listeners know the characters being referenced.

Equally skilled at bittersweet sambas and animated blues, the quintet is an agile bunch. Trumpeter Jeremy Pelt, saxophonist Dayna Stephens, pianist Adam Birnbaum and bassist Doug Weiss lean on each other, making the most of pithy solos, alert punctuation and focused arrangements that serve a variety of moods. The shift of temperaments between "Simone's Dance," "Our Son" and "Aloysius" illustrates the breadth of music Foster has absorbed in his life. Ditto for the album's bookends, nuggets by his former bosses Herbie Hancock and Miles Davis. Both "Cantaloupe Island" and "Jean-Pierre" are fetching in their playful blend of acknowledgment and gratitude. Dispensing canny twists and turns, as well as creating a cozy vibe, they unite the entire package.

—Jim Macnie

Inspirations & Dedications: Cantaloupe Island; Ooh, What You Do To Me; Simone's Dance; Samba De Michelle; Kierra; Douglas; Brandyn; Our Son; Song For Monique; Jazzon; Bonnie Rose; Aloysius; Jean-Pierre. (55:54)

Personnel: Al Foster, drums; Jeremy Pelt, trumpet; Dayna Stephens, tenor saxophone; Adam Birnbaum, piano; Doug Weiss, bass.

Ordering info: smokesessionsrecords.com



between drummer Ross Pederson and guest tap dancer Sarah Reich on "Is You Is Or Is You Ain't (My Baby)," and Kelly's spirited romp on the Crescent City-flavored "Lemons Make Lemonade," featuring a guest spot by Jon Batiste, her accompanying ensemble lights a low flame.

—John Murph

GO TiME: Live In LA: Unbroken Wings; Is You Is Or Is You Ain't (My Baby); Come Together; Crazy Love; Spain; Unbroken Wings (Remix); Lemons Make Lemonade. (37:17)

Personnel: Grace Kelly, alto saxophone, vocals; Julian Pollack, piano, keyboard, synthesizer; Julia Adamy, electric bass, synth bass, vocals; Ross Pederson, drums, drum pad; Giulio Carmassi, tenor saxophone; Sarah Reich, tap dance (2); Jon Batiste, Harmonboard, vocals (7).

Ordering info: gracekellymusic.com



Brandee Younger *Soul Awakening* SELF RELEASE

★★★★½

Soul Awakening was recorded seven years ago, when classically trained harpist Brandee Younger still was in her 20s. Unsure at first about the project, then distracted by an ascendant career—she's now a festival regular and her music appears in the Beyoncé doc, *Homecoming*—Younger made the choice to release the album now. Though it doesn't showcase her solo chops nearly enough, the album's an evocative sampler of what this eclectic musician has to offer on an instrument with a short list of jazz practitioners.

The transcendental spirit of Alice Coltrane flows through the album like an electric current, from the first celestial arpeggios of producer-bassist Dezzon Douglas' intense opener, "Soulris," to the pulsing Coltrane classic that closes the set, "Blue Nile," where Younger swings and sparkles, creating a koto-like ring by plucking individual high strings with force. Ravi Coltrane is here, too, his buzzing tenor and steadfast focus adding gravity to Younger's beautiful original "Love's Prayer." The harpist also nods to Dorothy Ashby with a smoothed-out rendition of her jaunty, poppish "Games."

Showcasing others—a ferocious Antoine Roney, a dramatic Sean Jones and a sultry Nii, who sings Marvin Gaye's "Save The Children," plus welcome contributions from instrumentalists Chelsea Baratz and Nicole Camacho—could be read as overly modest. But creating such a variety of well-executed jazz, soul and pop environments for fellow musicians also is a confident announcement by an artist who promises to bring new dimensions to her instrument.

—Paul de Barros

Soul Awakening: Soulris; Linda Lee; Love's Prayer; Respected Destroyer; Games; Save The Children; Soul Awakening; Blue Nile. (44:38)

Personnel: Brandee Younger, harp; Ravi Coltrane (1, 3), Chelsea Baratz (2, 4, 7), Antoine Roney (7, 8), tenor saxophone; Stacy Dillard, soprano saxophone (7, 8); Freddie Hendrix (2), Sean Jones (4), trumpet; Corey Wilcox, trombone (4); Nicole Camacho, flute (7); Dezzon Douglas, bass; E. J. Strickland, Chris Beck (1, 3), drums; Nii, vocals (6).

Ordering info: brandeeyounger.com

The Hot Box

Critics	Paul de Barros	Suzanne Lorge	Jim Macnie	John Murph
Tom Harrell <i>Infinity</i>	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★½	★★★★
Al Foster <i>Inspirations & Dedications</i>	★★★★½	★★★★	★★★★½	★★★★½
Grace Kelly <i>GO TIME: Live In LA</i>	★★★	★★★★½	★	★★
Brandee Younger <i>Soul Awakening</i>	★★★★½	★★★	★★★★½	★★★★

Critics' Comments

Tom Harrell, *Infinity*

A throbbing undercurrent runs through this dark set by the most harmonically nuanced trumpet player in jazz, whose phrasing meets the ideal of composition in real time. Altura's acoustic guitar work adds some sweet moments. —Paul de Barros

Exquisite maneuvers dot the land, and with drummer Blake fanning the flames, the group fireworks are perpetual—even during the pretty moments. —Jim Macnie

Fronting a piano-less quintet and sharing the front line with tenor saxophone and guitar, the ever-resourceful Harrell sounds inspired and assured, especially on the suspenseful "Hope" and the surging "Coronation." —John Murph

Al Foster, *Inspirations & Dedications*

A smokin' set in the '60s jazz wheelhouse, leavened by Foster's special brand of diffuse clatter and some warmly personal originals. Pelt's tone and phrasing are a pleasure, as always, though Weiss' bass sometimes sounds thumpy in the mix. —Paul de Barros

This is as much the players' homage to the legendary drummer as it is to Foster's mentors and loved ones. The heart-tugging piano work, the symbiosis between saxophone and trumpet, and the inspiring pulse in the bass resound with passion and respect. —Suzanne Lorge

Whether paying homage to jazz heroes or family members, the veteran drummer and accompanying band bring sublime musicality and lingering melodicism to the fore. —John Murph

Grace Kelly, *GO TIME: Live In LA*

At first blush, it's disappointing to hear this seriously talented young alto saxophonist swerve into smooth territory, but the album's video component reveals Kelly as a charismatic, winning entertainer who brings conviction to an appealing pop palette. Keyboardist Pollack very nearly steals the show. —Paul de Barros

Kelly's latest is as brash and blindingly smart as its Brooklyn counterpart. On this one, the young phenom conquers fresh musical terrain with her electronic take on pop, her prodigious wailing on standards and the heavy house beats of her own originals. —Suzanne Lorge

Almost couldn't get through it. Kelly's pop moves have a hokey tinge, full of cheesy flash and extraneous display. Obviousness is everywhere in this music. —Jim Macnie

Brandee Younger, *Soul Awakening*

Younger's delicate arpeggios limn a modern jazz tableaux of surprising vibrancy. Whether championing an understated groove or augmenting the harmonic texture, Younger could take down giants with her handful of well-plucked strings. —Suzanne Lorge

The dreamy sound of Younger's instrument doesn't dominate these tunes. She chooses aggressive soloists as her squad, and the quality of interplay becomes paramount. —Jim Macnie

Even though *Soul Awakening* was recorded before Younger's 2017 leader debut, it fares much better thanks to stronger production values, song choices and, more significantly, collective friction. Her rendition of Marvin Gaye's "Save The Children" and guest spots from Ravi Coltrane alone earn the disc high marks. —John Murph



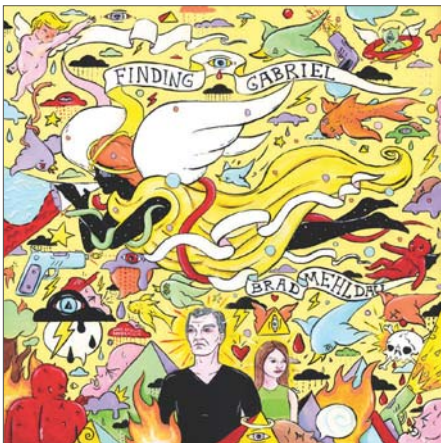
MARY STALLINGS vocals
 EDDIE HENSON trumpet
 VINCENT HERRING saxophones
 DAVID HAZELTINE piano
 DAVID WILLIAMS bass
 JOE FARNSWORTH drums
 DANIEL SADOWNICK percussion



JEREMY PELT trumpet
 DAYNA STEPHENS saxophones
 ADAM BIRNBAUM piano
 DOUG WEISS bass
 AL FOSTER drums



PETER BERNSTEIN guitar
 HAROLD MABERN piano
 JOHN WEBBER bass
 JIMMY COBB drums



Brad Mehldau *Finding Gabriel*

NONESUCH 585867

★★★★★

Brad Mehldau's voice-heavy new album, *Finding Gabriel*, is entirely wordless until "The Prophet Is A Fool," the sixth of nine tracks. "Build that wall," a riled-up crowd yells at a foreboding rally, as Mehldau speaks with a young boy—terse and jarring dialogue. "Who's he?" the boy asks, clearly referring to Trump. "He's just their voice," Mehldau replies. "He speaks for them. They're just scared. They think he makes them stronger."

Having immersed himself in the Bible during

the past several years, Mehldau is feeling particularly righteous. While this track is the album's centerpiece, it isn't central to the record itself. *Finding Gabriel* is perhaps the composer's most stylistically capacious work, and Mehldau layers an immense number of instruments to create dense sound structures that are at once beautiful and unnerving. But voices suffuse *Finding Gabriel*, Becca Stevens and Gabriel Kahane chanting their way through the record. On the first track, "The Garden," the pair sounds like it's making church music as a repeated bass adds foreboding tension. This isn't entirely new terrain for Mehldau, but the album feels more serious than anything he's done before. At the same time, *Finding* sounds kind of airy—to its benefit. One of pianist's defining strengths is that he's capable of producing profound lines with a light and seemingly effortless touch. The album could have been a graceless offering, but in Mehldau's capable hands, it works. —Matthew Kassel

Finding Gabriel: The Garden; Born To Trouble; Striving After Wind; O Ephraim; St. Mark Is Howling In The City Of Night; The Prophet Is A Fool; Make It All Go Away; Deep Water; Proverb Of Ashes; Finding Gabriel. (55:33)

Personnel: Brad Mehldau, piano, synthesizer, keyboard, drums, percussion, vocals; Becca Stevens (1, 3, 5, 7, 8); Gabriel Kahane (1, 3, 5, 8); Kurt Elling (7, 9), vocals; Ambrose Akinmusire, trumpet (1, 6); Michael Thomas, flute (1, 6), alto saxophone (1, 6); Charles Pillow, soprano saxophone (1, 6), alto saxophone (1), bass clarinet (1); Joel Frahm, tenor saxophone (1, 6); Chris Cheek, tenor saxophone (1), baritone saxophone (1, 6); Mark Guiliana, drums, electronic drums (3, 5); Sara Caswell, violin (5, 8); Lois Martin, viola (5, 8); Noah Hoffeld, cello (5, 8); Aaron Nevezie, Korg Kaoss Pad (9).

Ordering info: nonesuch.com

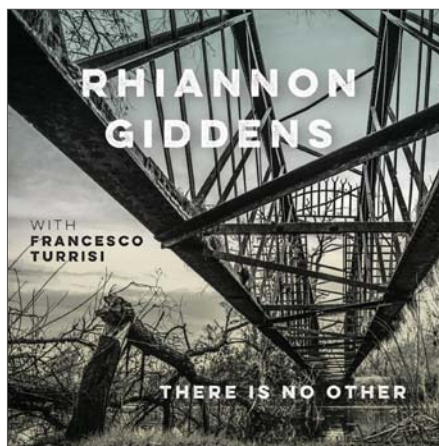
Rhiannon Giddens *There Is No Other*

NONESUCH 591336

★★★★★

Rhiannon Giddens has a laudable ability to shape music that inspires healthy discomfort and thought-expanding contemplation, and *There Is No Other*, her recent recording with multi-instrumentalist Francesco Turrisi, does both.

While Giddens' contributions to the recent collaborative record *Songs Of Our Native Daughters* took a sometimes brutally honest path to shed light on the history of slavery, *There Is No Other* is less overt in exploring cultural inclusion. Striking silences and stripped-down arrangements help Giddens and Turrisi embolden songs' messages by giving them room to breathe. The traditional tune "Little Margaret" relies solely on the sharp slap and long, metallic, buzzing decay of Turrisi's daf drum to propel the song's detailed story. Giddens' originals each exercise melodic subtlety, fostering a meditative atmosphere around the brief, but poignant, lyric lines she's penned. And despite its denser instrumentation and faster tempo, the same can be said for "Pizzica Di San Vito," with vocals hovering around a harmonic minor core, only emphasizing the rhythmic momentum of Giddens' acutely enunciated Salentino dialect.

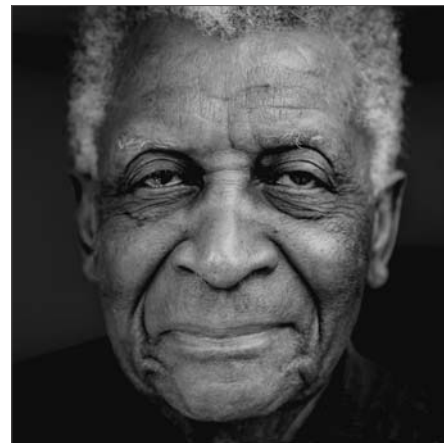


Sounds of instruments less familiar to contemporary listeners—from Giddens' plucks of the minstrel banjo to Turrisi's delicate command of the colascione and tamburello—draw attention for their unexpected timbres. They work alongside the musical and lyrical context to make a deeper impression on anyone who takes the time to listen. —Kira Grunenberg

There Is No Other: Ten Thousand Voices; Gonna Write Me A Letter; Wayfaring Stranger; There Is No Other; Trees On The Mountains; Pizzica Di San Vito; Brown Baby; Briggs' Forró; Little Margaret; Black Swan; I'm On My Way; He Will See You Through. (45:01)

Personnel: Rhiannon Giddens, vocals, banjo, violin, viola; Francesco Turrisi, piano, accordion, percussion, colascione, cello, banjo; Kate Ellis, cello (2, 5, 12), viola (2).

Ordering info: nonesuch.com



Abdullah Ibrahim *The Balance*

GEARBOX 1554

★★★★½

The Balance is South African pianist Abdullah Ibrahim's latest album. And its release comes about 60 years after the founding and quick dissolution of the Johannesburg Jazz Epistles (with Hugh Masekela), the Sharpeville massacre, and Ibrahim's ultimate departure for Europe and America with his wife, the late vocalist and composer Sathima Bea Benjamin.

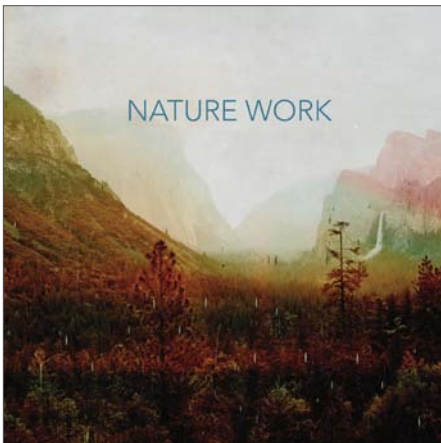
The album spans a wealth of sounds—big band, township music, solo piano—yet the experience is not that of vertical stacking, but rather of horizontal stretching, a settling into elastic possibilities. Several pieces are like small orchestral impressions, textured instrumental paintings of the rhythm and horns: Cleave Guyton Jr.'s lightly vibrating solo flute line on the opening "Dreamtime" is both supported and interrupted by the dark clusters of horns and penetrating piano harmonies. In content and form, Ibrahim lingers between comfort and edge, pressure and ease. "Tonegawa" is a beautiful solo-piano piece—one of three on the album—that constantly moves between enticing, uneasy harmonies and deep resolutions. On pieces with the full ensemble, the pianist lays back; within works colored by tight horn lines, Ibrahim plays the briefest solos, interjects haunting voicings or gently and sparsely marks the changes. "Jabula" is a number of extreme groove with the gentlest shuffle on the drums, rolling horn lines and the intermittent chord placed just at the right moment. Ibrahim introduces "Song For Sathima" and then drops out completely—letting Guyton take the lead in this wailing eulogy—rejoining the band only to find the song's conclusion.

—Tamar Sella

The Balance: Dreamtime; Nisa; Jabula; Tuang Guru; Tonegawa; Song For Sathima; ZB; Skippy; Devotion; The Balance. (37:49)

Personnel: Abdullah Ibrahim, piano; Noah Jackson, bass, cello (3, 10); Alec Dankworth, bass (3, 10); Will Terrill, drums; Cleave Guyton Jr., alto saxophone (2, 3, 6), flute (1, 10), piccolo (4, 8); Lance Bryant, tenor saxophone; Marshall McDonald, baritone saxophone; Andrae Murchison, trombone; Adam Glasser, harmonica (10).

Ordering info: gearboxrecords.com



Nature Work

Nature Work
SUNNYSIDE 1554

★★★★★

Greg Ward and Jason Stein have made themselves integral parts of Chicago's jazz and improvised music community, each moving easily between swing-based expression and free exploration. Alto saxophonist Ward has a strong traditional sweep, imbuing his soulful tone with an ineffable blues cry, while bass clarinetist Stein harnesses his unwieldy axe to straddle post-bop lyricism and rough-hewn searching. They've worked together in drummer Mike Reed's *Flesh & Bone*

project, developing a robust bond and telepathic rapport, and their mutual love for Chicago post-bop sparkles in this superb new quartet.

The indelibility of the themes they composed for *Nature Work* is matched by their savvy in choosing a rhythm section: Bassist Eric Revis is a muscular force that both anchors and propels the grooves, while drummer Jim Black masterfully pushes and pulls against them, injecting his off-kilter time in a way that lends an irresistible tension to a familiar sound. The model is established right out of the gate with Ward's "The Shiver," lurching from a nervy unison horn theme over a galloping rhythm into a slashing swing riff that recalls the brawny grit of late-1950s Chicago post-bop.

Chattering, pointillistic horns and unstable bass and drums coalesce into a nifty churn two minutes into "Porch Time," while the chamber-like fragments that open "Opter Fopter" congeal into a floating West Coast cool. Those shifts in feeling complement other sources of tension on the record, all of which add up to one of the year's most satisfying and electrifying releases—a session rooted in tradition and utterly unhindered by it.

—Peter Margasak

Nature Work: The Shiver; Hem The Jewels; Porch Time; Zenith; Opter Fopter; Cryptic Ripple; Tah Dazzle; South Hempstead; Rise. (59:20)

Personnel: Jason Stein, bass clarinet; Greg Ward, alto saxophone; Eric Revis, bass; Jim Black, drums.

Ordering info: sunnysiderecords.com

Lisa Maxwell

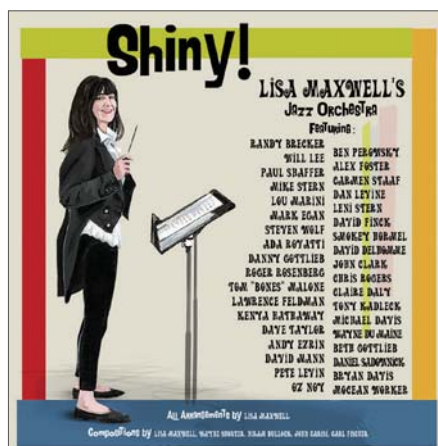
Shiny!
SELF RELEASE

★★★★★

After years working for an impressive variety of outfits, including Guns N' Roses, Carole King and Spinal Tap, this is Lisa Maxwell's first release of her own material and arrangements, and it's an unabashed walk through the music she loves. As well as replicating the high-shine elegance and fizz of Lalo Schiffrin and others, it's a more specific tribute to the late trumpeter Lew Soloff, a friend who offered the fatherly advice that Lisa should get down to putting out her own stuff.

And what exciting stuff it is. "Ludie," which was written in memory of Soloff, is in tight three-quarter time, perfectly weighted and just crying out for use under somebody's credit sequence. "Son Of Creeper" remembers another lost friend, guitarist Hiram Bullock, who's replaced on this arrangement by a rejuvenated Mike Stern, playing some of the most direct and telling solos of his career. "Shiny!" is pure 1970s nostalgia, with Rhodes and clavinet, electric bass and two guitarists.

If any of this suggests that Maxwell just likes to rock out and groove, the original "Hello, Wayne?" offers a brilliant intro to a subtle, understanding arrangement of Wayne Shorter's



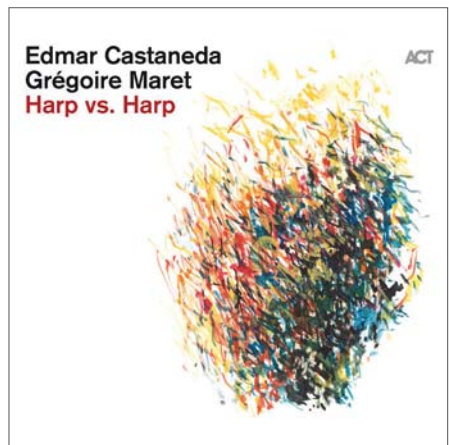
"Beauty And The Beast," again done with deep conviction and authority. A striking record—one that might be overdue, given its quality.

—Brian Morton

Shiny!: Shiny!; Son Of Creeper; Ludie; We'll Be Together Again; Hello, Wayne?; Beauty And The Beast; Israel; The Craw; Shiny! Remix. (55:38)

Personnel: Lawrence Feldman, Alex Foster, Lou Marini, Ada Rovatti, David Mann, Roger Rosenberg, Claire Daly, woodwinds; Randy Brecker, Tony Kadleck, Chris Rogers, Wayne Du Maine, Bryan Davis, trumpet; Tom "Bones" Malone, Dan Levine, Michael Davis, Dave Taylor, trombone; John Clark, French horn; Lisa Maxwell, Carmen Staaf, Andy Ezrin, piano; Beth Gottlieb, vibraphone; Paul Shaffer, Pete Levin, David Delhomme, keyboards; Mike Stern, Oz Noy, Leni Stern, Smokey Hornel, guitar; Will Lee, bass, percussion, vocals; Mark Egan, David Finck, bass; Danny Gottlieb, Steven Wolf, Ben Perowsky, drums; Daniel Sadownick, percussion; Kenya Hathaway, vocals.

Ordering info: lisamaxwellmusic.com



Edmar Castaneda
Grégoire Maret
Harp vs. Harp

ACT

Edmar Castaneda/ Grégoire Maret

Harp Vs. Harp
ACT 9044

★★★

This gimmicky concept shouldn't work, but it does. Edmar Castaneda, a flashy Columbian harpist, and Grégoire Maret, a virtuoso Swiss harmonica player, aren't really battling here. As in any duo setting, they're heavily reliant upon each other's heightened responses, each showing an unrivaled command of their instrument. The two harps—a literal stringed piece of furniture and a wheezy backpocket slang iteration—hum across eight tunes. The Maret-penned opener, "Blueserinho," eases in on his densely filtered breath, exhaling chords as Castaneda sets the tempo, both players quickly displaying a wealth of technique managing to hang on to an elemental funk.

Castaneda's "No Fear" features another addition to the befuddling instrumentation parade: Béla Fleck's banjo. Fleck and Castaneda double up at times, while Fleck fills the space with an arpeggiated stride. A few tracks on, Castaneda and Maret pay homage to another unorthodox duo album, bassist Charlie Haden and guitarist Pat Metheny's *Beyond The Missouri Sky (Short Stories)*. "Our Spanish Love Song," Haden's composition, has a less-Spanish-inflected vibe here, as Castaneda plays both the Haden and Metheny roles, adding deep bass notes in spaces between strums, a slow-moving low end spelling out the tune's simplicity. "Manhã De Carnaval" closes the set, Maret all little flourishes and bent notes, even as both artists peacefully fill the space without bogging it down with unnecessarily complicated instrumental feats. The two harpists dance in and out with no particular urgency, the unhurried vibe carried through the record to its conclusion.

—Sean J. O'Connell

Harp Vs. Harp: Blueserinho; Acts; No Fear; Hope; Romance De Barrio; Santa Morena; Our Spanish Love Song; Manhã De Carnaval. (46:03)

Personnel: Edmar Castaneda, harp; Grégoire Maret, harmonica; Andrea Tierra, vocals; Béla Fleck (3), banjo.

Ordering info: actmusic.com

Accolades and Leader Debuts



Remy Le Boeuf (seated) has released his debut as a leader, *Light As A Word*.

The past is prologue when it comes to precocious, teenaged pianist **Brandon Goldberg**, who during the past two years has taken top honors in several DownBeat Student Music Awards categories. A development perhaps surpassing these accomplishments is the release of his debut album, *Let's Play* (Self Release; 44:51 ★★★★★).

"McCoy"—Goldberg's work that won the Original Composition—Small Ensemble category in the Junior High School division this year—sizzles with Tyner-like speed, flair and intricacy. Even more impressive is his take on Thelonious Monk's "Well, You Needn't," which under Goldberg's adroit and nimble fingers evokes Bud Powell. It's this kind of maturity and proficiency that pervades *Let's Play*, and never more accessible as on "Dolphin Dance." The trio's treatment is a familiar one, but there's a distinct warmth and jubilation that's unique, and listeners can feel the group's camaraderie—Ben Wolfe's measured beats on bass, Donald Edwards' unobtrusive ripples on drums and guest Marcus Strickland's sweet lyricism on saxophone—and Goldberg's amazing grasp of the tune's melody and harmony. Goldberg is still a student in progress, but his jazz IQ is phenomenal and the prodigy seemingly has become prodigious.

Ordering info: brandongoldbergplano.com

Goldberg's unaccompanied take on "In A Sentimental Mood" is a pleasant and tuneful segue to any of the solo tracks on **Luke Marantz's** inaugural release, *Embers* (Afterworld; 39:07 ★★★★★).

Other than Rodgers and Hammerstein's "This Nearly Was Mine," the music is Marantz's and the tunes vary little in length or impressionistic quality. In fact, the compositions here are more like tone poems, atmospheric sketches from a longer work made to stand alone. Besides his study of music, Marantz also is a visual artist and his music seems to be something of an extension of that practice. The title tune, "Embers," is of-

fered in four iterations, each of them slowly emerging narratives with minimal drama. "Lonely Cowboy Postlude," which opens the second side of the LP, is perfectly titled, making it easy to envision the spacey vistas of Western landscapes, replete with ever-receding horizons. Marantz has a delicate, but precise, touch at the keyboard, and the little swing that erupts quickly evaporates into a misty vapor of sound and images. He's a performer who paints at the keyboard with musicality, and we all can hope that future results are more than the black-and-white image on the album's cover.

Ordering info: lukemarantz.com

Like Goldberg and Marantz, **Remy Le Boeuf** is dispatching his debut leader album. Unlike the others, though, Le Boeuf leads his ensemble on alto saxophone and displays an expansive vocabulary of musical references; they fly with an unrestrained brilliance on *Light As A Word* (Outside In 1914; 41:26 ★★★★★).

"Mirrors In Your Eyes" is an exemplar of the session, and for nearly five minutes, listeners are caught in a lilting swirl of Le Boeuf's alto and Walter Smith III's tenor. "Full Circle," a cut a bit earlier in the program, is just that—360 degrees of heat with a feverish rhythm section fueled by pianist Aaron Parks, bassist Matt Brewer, guitarist Charles Altura and drummer Peter Kronreif. Beautiful, too, is the blend of Parks and Le Boeuf on "Union," where the interaction is both immediate and poignant; a similarly expressive layer of sound gently tumbles out of "The Melancholy Architecture Of Storms."

Le Boeuf has a remarkable command of his horn, capable of blowing straight-ahead frissons of bop and offering delightful helpings of tunes redolent of the blues. He can etch those dark bravura moments and just as fast give listeners bright passages of intimacy that are, well, light as a word.

Ordering info: outsideinmusic.com



Santana *Africa Speaks* CONCORD 00926

★★★★★

Since playing Olatunji's "Jingo" on his 1969 debut, guitarist Carlos Santana has dug deep into the sounds and rhythms of the African continent, and on this potent outing, he digs deeper than ever. His most inspired, most fully realized album since 1970's *Abraxas*, *Africa Speaks* is not only a forum for searing licks; it also serves as a showcase for Spanish singer-poet-lyricist Buika, who delivers an uncommon intensity, taking these heightened jams to a more exalted level. She melds that singular quality with Santana's incendiary guitar work, pushing the leader to some ecstatic heights in their call-and-response exchanges.

From the anthemic opener to the mesmerizing 12/8 closer, "Candombe Cumbele," with its allusions to Mongo Santamaria's "Afro Blue," Santana holds nothing back here. Combining Albert King-influenced string bending with his own unique brand of speed picking, the septuagenarian guitarist plays with as much zeal and abandon as he exhibited on the Woodstock stage back in 1969; credit producer Rick Rubin with pumping up the volume and letting Santana wail with impunity.

Guitaristic highlights include an organ-fueled "Batonga," a slowly building "Yo Me Lo Merezco" (which carries all the emotional uplift of Jimi Hendrix's "Bold As Love"), the wah-wah inflected scorcher "Blue Skies," the funky Afrobeat number "Paraisos Quemados" and the Turkish-Moroccan flavored "Los Invisibles." Buika casts a spell on every track, her earthy vocal presence resonating, galvanizing *Africa Speaks*.

—Bill Milkowski

Africa Speaks: Africa Speaks; Batonga; Oye Este Mi Canto; Yo Me Lo Merezco; Blue Skies; Paraisos Quemados; Breaking Down The Door; Los Invisibles; Luna Hechicera; Bembele; Candombe Cumbele. (64:04)

Personnel: Carlos Santana, guitar, percussion, vocals; Benny Rietveld, bass; Cindy Blackman Santana, drums; Karl Perazzo, percussion; David K. Mathews, Salvador Santana (7), keyboards; Buika, Laura Mvula (5), Andy Vargas, vocals; Tommy Anthony (6), guitar; Ray Greene, vocals, trombone (7).

Ordering info: concordrecords.com



Wayne Wallace
Latin Jazz Quintet
The Rhythm Of Invention

PATOIS 023

★★★★

Moy Eng/Wayne Wallace
The Blue Hour

PATOIS 026

★★★★½

Two disparate and likable recordings feature trombonist Wayne Wallace. *The Rhythm Of Invention* finds his Latin Jazz Quintet deliv-

ering robust arrangements that juxtapose strings and traditional brass- and rhythm-oriented Latin elements. On vocalist Moy Eng's eclectic *The Blue Hour*, Wallace is arranger, co-producer and co-composer. Both efforts are hybrids, seeking to expand upon expected musical vocabulary.

On *Rhythm*, Wallace allows stylistically differing tunes to cohabit easily. He revamps "All The Things You Are," and gives us a mash-up of "So What" and "Softly As In A Morning Sunrise" on a tune called "So Softly." Other highlights include Bix Beiderbecke's "In A Mist," here rebuilt to feature Wallace's soulful horn and Murray Low's florid piano. But the centerpiece of *Rhythm* is its title track, an extended blend of hip-hop, bebop and Latin music that celebrates jazz by incorporating a 1970 recording of Indiana University educator David Baker and a contemporary bookend by Wallace's son-in-law Akida Thomas discussing the genre.

While both albums share musicians, *The Blue Hour* is more diverse, if not as cohesive. Eng's voice, husky and sultry, is wonderful, whether upbeat on "Filthy Gorgeous," insinuating on "You Put A Spell On Him" or rueful on "Thursdays In May," the album's swoon-worthy finale. Part travelogue, part emotional exploration, *The Blue Hour* is a deeply felt

experiment in unconventional musical storytelling. Eng's lyrics often speak to her heritage as a Chinese-American, and Wallace has couched them in sumptuous arrangements that span rock, chamber music and more.

While the pacing could be varied a bit, the ambition and range are unmistakable. The tunes Eng launches with a spoken story would play well in a club, and she knows how to tell her tales of wanderlust, deploying rock, pop and jazz for the desired effect. —Carlo Wolff

The Rhythm Of Invention: Vamamos Pa'l Monte; Take 5; All The Things You Are; So Softly; The Rhythm Of Invention; In A Mist; El Arroyo; Se Me Cayó El Veinte; Atardecer Matancero (Evening In Matanzas); Mi Descarga. (61:45)

Personnel: Wayne Wallace, Miró Sobrer, Matthew Waterman, Sean Weber, trombone; David Belove, bass; Eugene Chulkov, Niki Fukada, Maria Romero, Daniel Stein, Dayren Santamaria, violin; Mary Fetting, flute, soprano saxophone, alto saxophone, bass clarinet; Erik Jekabson, John Worley, trumpet; Brennan Johns, bass trombone; Kelly Knox, Monica Scott, cello; Masaru Koga, tenor saxophone; Murray Low, piano; Melecio Magdaluyo, baritone saxophone; Colin Douglas, drums, percussion; Michael Spiro, percussion; Edith Szendrey, Rose Wollman, viola; Akida Thomas, vocals.

The Blue Hour: Filthy Gorgeous; Sleepless In Paris; You Put A Spell On Him; I Love A Girl Who Parties; Hong Kong; Wild Plum; Magnolia Light; Alpha Girl; A New York Moment; Thursdays In May. (50:24)

Personnel: Wayne Wallace, trombone; Moy Eng, vocals; David Belove, Yuki Nagase, Marc Van Wageningen, bass; Eugene Chulkov, Niki Fukada, violin; Deszou Claiborne, Colin Douglas, Akira Tana, drums; Mary Fetting, alto saxophone, flute; Joe Gilman, Murray Low, Frank Martin, piano, keyboard; Erik Jekabson, John Worley, trumpet; Tommy Kessecker, vibraphone; Melecio Magdaluyo, alto saxophone, tenor saxophone, baritone saxophone; Monica Scott, cello; Michael Spiro, percussion; Rick Vandivier, guitar, dobro; John Witala, bass.

Ordering info: patoisrecords.net

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Beginnings and Endings

Johnny Shines, *The Blues Came Falling Down—Live 1973* (Omnivore/Nighthawk 328; 79:33 ★★★★★½) Shines—known primarily for “running the road” with Robert Johnson, but an Olympian in his own right—made recordings for the ages. There are his essential Chicago blues sides on J.O.B. from 1952–’53; outstanding solo acoustic country blues albums from the Advent, Biograph, Rounder and Testament labels appeared in the period between his “rediscovery” in 1965 and a stroke in 1980. Now, 27 years after his death in 1992, along comes a formerly unavailable document of a 1973 concert at Washington University in St. Louis. Shines, 58 at the time of the recording, so well-developed in his singing, guitar work and songwriting skills, is meticulous in disclosing degrees of downcast or uplifting expression. His uncanny ablutionary power pervades 13 originals and four obligatory Johnson songs, as well as tunes associated with Blind Willie Johnson, and Sleepy John Estes and Hammie Nixon.

Ordering info: omnivorerecordings.com

Christone “Kingfish” Ingram, *Kingfish* (Alligator 4990; 51:31 ★★★★★½) Alligator has every right to be excited about releasing the first album by this cherubic 20-year-old from Clarksdale, Mississippi. Ingram leaves it all in the studio. His guitar strives to encompass the kind of catharsis that marked the work of past label exemplars Michael Burks and Luther Allison, and his vocals are on their way to having emotional heft. Going to Nashville and recording with producer-drummer Tom Hambridge might have resulted in a safe cruise-control session, but no. Hambridge is temperamentally attuned to Ingram’s edgier impulses, and real heart went into their shared songwriting. Buddy Guy, featured on “Fresh Out,” vouches for Ingram’s infinite promise.

Ordering info: alligator.com

Nancy Wright, *Alive & Blue* (Direct Hit/VizzTone 112; 77:01 ★★★★★½) One night last winter in San Francisco venue The Saloon, Wright was at her most entertaining. Her tenor saxophone was both crack-of-dawn fresh and old as truth, as it drew sustenance from the blues, jazz, r&b and soul traditions. She handles herself decently as a singer of tender strength, too. Ex-Tower of Power guitarist Jeff Tamelier and three more of the Bay Area’s finest pull in the same direction as Wright. They play together in a soulful manner, whether offering a gender-switching version of Bobby Bland’s “I Don’t Want No Man” (now “Woman”), Lazy Lester’s “Sugar Coated Love” or one of Wright’s fun instrumentals, like “Jo-Jo.”

Ordering info: vizztone.com

King Louie Organ Trio, *It’s About Time* (Shoug; 63:30 ★★★★★) B-3 specialist Louis



Nancy Wright

KURT JOHNSON

Pain, tenor saxophonist Renato Caranto and drummer Edwin Coleman III appear bent on fulfilling some kind of mission. They’re out to prove that their blues grooves are the result of authentic feeling and a matured discipline in improvisational spontaneity. These exceptional Northwest musicians, performing mostly Pain compositions, enjoy a special rapport—in fact, Pain and Caranto have worked together in clubs for two decades. Ex-Tower of Power guitarist Bruce Conte supplies additional sparks of artistic invention on six of the eight “trio” tracks. Another five cuts of more jazz-oriented music, making up the last third of the album, place Pain and Caranto with guitarist Dan Faehle and well-respected drummer Mel Brown; there’s no dip in quality.

Ordering info: louispain.com

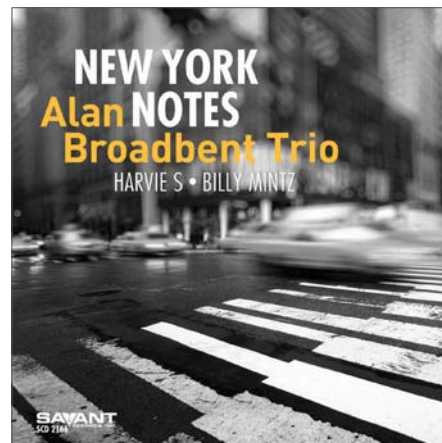
Kelly’s Lot, *Can’t Take My Soul* (Self Release; 49:58 ★★★★★) Southern Californian Kelly Zirbes’ singing on songs she’s composed with guitarist Perry Robertson for her 14th album since forming a band in the early 1990s indicates a stronger sense of self-assurance than before. She’s terrifically comfortable in her own skin, laying down firm rules, before tossing a life preserver to an angry, misguided lover. Three other songs, the ones with French lyrics or accordion, succeed best as assertions of her Francophilia.

Ordering info: kellyslot.com

Kenny Wayne Shepherd Band, *The Traveler* (Concord 00973; 46:16 ★★★★★) Twenty-five years down the road, Shepherd is a modern blues franchise unto himself with garlands of awards. His latest studio effort finds his instrumental confidence again at a high level. The 42-year-old gives no quarter: rocket-launched rounds of high-explosive guitar virtuosity rain on satisfactory originals and covers of old Buffalo Springfield and Joe Walsh songs.

Ordering info: concord.com

DB



Alan Broadbent Trio *New York Notes*

SAVANT 2166

★★★★★

This album illustrates a recurring ritual among jazz musicians: Friends get together to play tunes, read through original compositions and stretch out over the changes. And this trio’s bond remains sturdy, despite spanning decades. New Zealand-born pianist Alan Broadbent first met bassist Harvie S at Berklee, and played with drummer Billy Mintz when they both were young men making their mark on Los Angeles in the ’80s.

Broadbent’s linear and chordal concept is informed by Bud Powell, Bill Evans, George Shearing and Lennie Tristano, Broadbent’s teacher in college. Included on *New York Notes* are homages to Tristano (“317 East 32nd Street”) and Evans (“Minority”), as well as several Broadbent originals, his “Clifford Notes” sounding like it could have been written by the namesake trumpeter himself.

But Broadbent’s bonafides as a poet, mastering both the languages of bebop composition and improvisation, are apparent. His solos extend for chorus after chorus, winnowing cleanly through difficult progressions with a steely confidence. The trio sound draws more from Tristano than Evans, with bass and drums staying home, pulsing forward with military-grade discipline. Broadbent is so intent on staying within the bebop aesthetic, one might assume he’s merely a brilliant, throwback pianist. That’d be a mistake, though, considering Broadbent’s contributions to Charlie Haden’s Quartet West, his immaculate string orchestrations and his work on albums by singers like Natalie Cole and Diana Krall. This album is but one lustrous side of this multifaceted musician, revealing only Broadbent’s artistic integrity in real-time, submitting to demands of the music.

—Gary Fukushima

New York Notes: Clifford Notes; Minority; I Fall In Love Too Easily; Continuity; Crazeology; On A Misty Night; Waltz Prelude; 317 East 32nd Street; Fine And Dandy. (62:18)

Personnel: Alan Broadbent, piano; Harvie S, bass; Billy Mintz, drums.

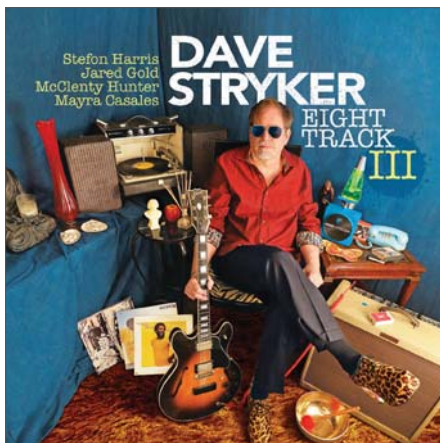
Ordering info: jazzdepot.com

Dave Stryker
Eight Track III
 STRIKEZONE 8818
 ★★★★★

Jazz can range from deep, dark and edgy to easy and light, and guitarist Dave Stryker clearly has mastered the latter. With dozens of recordings as a leader in his portfolio, Stryker has added a pleasing new notch on his musical belt with his latest recording, *Eight Track III*, an album featuring reworked versions of popular songs from the late '60s through the early '80s.

Throwing in tasty alt-chords and harmonies, and reworking the rhythms and syncopations in unexpected places makes these updated arrangements seem like wholly new works. Stryker's signature silky tone and dexterity on the guitar are pervasive throughout the nine tunes here, and there's excellent solo work from organist Jared Gold and vibraphonist Stefon Harris, ranging from edgy and totally out-there to sparse, contained and elegant.

Stryker's take on "Papa Was A Rollin' Stone" is particularly hip. The organ in the background conveys a lush, mysterious, slightly spooky undertone that jibes harmoniously with the staccato beat of the drums and bass, creating an enthralling soundscape that Stryker dives into, picking out the song's familiar melody lines, which are doubled by the vibes. Steely Dan's off-



beat hit "Pretzel Logic," with its easy, swinging groove, is at once bluesy, jazzy and cool, while Stevie Wonder's "Too High" is transformed into a fast, syncopated swing, with harmonies and rhythms orbiting out into the cosmos.

Eight Track III embodies creativity as it's applied to new American classics, hitting on pleasant grooves that make them engaging and enjoyable to listen to—again. —Lily O'Brien

Eight Track III: Move On Up; Papa Was A Rollin' Stone; Pretzel Logic; Too High; We've Only Just Begun; This Guy's In Love With You; Everybody Loves The Sunshine; After The Dance; Joy Inside My Tears. (51:51)

Personnel: Dave Stryker, guitar; Stefon Harris, vibraphone; Jared Gold, organ; McClenty Hunter, drums; Mayra Casales (2, 3, 6–9), percussion.

Ordering info: davestryker.com



Tuomo Uusitalo
Stories From Here And There
 FRESH SOUND NEW TALENT 575
 ★★★★★

Listening to *Stories From Here And There*—a work from New York-based pianist Tuomo Uusitalo that's heavily indebted to the cool/post-bop epoch—is akin to drinking a decent glass of wine that doesn't quite bowl you over upfront. Close attention, though, reveals a greater complexity.

Uusitalo has a way with melody, but he's not afraid to pound a bit; the upbeat take on Irving

Berlin's "Best Thing For You (Would Be Me)" is a strong showcase for both tendencies. The band is joined for about half the album by saxophonist Chris Cheek, who often gooses his compatriots further out on a limb with some well-placed blue notes. The ensemble's take on Thelonious Monk's "Boo Boo's Birthday," otherwise a tad genteel, is elevated by Cheek's nudging, his subtle rudeness yielding a more engaging end result.

The best moments on *Stories From Here And There* find Uusitalo taking major steps to refine his compositional voice: "Altitude 5003 Ft.," in particular, is a fine, free-wheeling ballad, and one that gives drummer Itay Morchi plenty of room to dance around the beat, tease the edges and blurt out punctuation. More steps in this direction surely would be welcomed.

Though it might benefit from more risk taking, *Stories* is still a fine way to pass the time. It's unlikely to change a life, but perfectly capable of changing a mood for the better. To close where we opened: It's pretty tasty, but it helps to let it rest on the back of your tongue for a bit.

—Dustin Kratovich

Stories From Here And There: Be Good Or Be Gone; Poem No. 4 (In And Out Of The Frame); Best Thing For You (Would Be Me); Altitude 5003 Ft.; Boo Boo's Birthday; Between Things; Solitude; Many Mornings; Bouncin' With Bud; Poem No. 8 (Crepuscule); Tonight You Belong To Me. (36:32)

Personnel: Tuomo Uusitalo, piano; Myles Sloniker, bass; Itay Morchi, drums; Chris Cheek, tenor saxophone.

Ordering info: freshsoundrecords.com



SFJAZZ Collective

The Music Of Antônio Carlos Jobim & Original Compositions

SFJAZZ
★★★★½

This double album suffers from a surfeit of riches. It's somehow meant to represent the SFJAZZ brand, waving the organization's aesthetic flag as the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra does Jazz at Lincoln Center's. Such circumstances are demanding, but the challenge is met.

Alto saxophonist Miguel Zenón, whose phrases cut with a honed edge, is featured plen-

Joanna Duda

Keen

ALPAKA 008
★★★★

For Polish pianist, composer and producer Joanna Duda, the world is full of noise. Even in silence, there is music to be made and texture to manipulate. On her debut solo album, *Keen*, the listener steps into this cavernous, sonic world—one of reverb-laden piano keys that sound like footsteps, clanging electronics that simulate automated alerts that bombard us and rolling snatches of strings overlapping like conversations in a crowded room. You emerge from this brief 30-minute record disorientated by the chaos and unsure of its meaning.

Keen is by nature fragmentary. With the longest track running at almost six minutes and the shortest at 49 seconds, the record melds into one continuous stream of sparse motifs and enigmatic instrumentation, abruptly cutting off before allowing the listener to get too attached. While highlights include the cascading flamenco-esque "Agnus," the opening harpsichord on "Marc" and the thumping techno rhythm of the title track, ultimately nothing coheres.

Duda certainly has a deft ear for layering sounds to create a cinematic sense of space, crafting an anxiety-inducing arpeggiated synth for

ty in his final outing with the collective he helped launch in 2004, but so are all seven other members, each with spotlight bits that utilize their distinctions. The ensemble readings of Antônio Carlos Jobim's memorable melodies are virtuosic, as are soli and intergroup interactions. Still, as a continuous listening experience it's a bit much. The 20 tracks run more than two hours, with the whole cast almost always fully engaged. Reflection or repose are rare, new ideas proliferate and focus is diffuse. Treating "Waters Of March" with Cuban chanting and percussion is novel, but does it serve the song? "One Note Samba" is stress-tested by the arrangement's polyphonic and rhythmic deconstruction, but to what end?

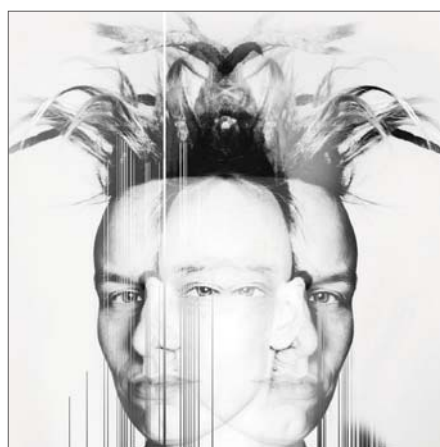
By definition, SFJAZZ Collective is a show band. It projects high performance standards, as well as teamwork, promoting personal ambitions, as well as pan-cultural inclusion. The performances are thrilling, but as a recording, it might be best appreciated a few tracks at a time.

—Howard Mandel

The Music Of Antônio Carlos Jobim & Original Compositions: Disc One: Waters Of March; One Note Samba; Retrato Em Branco E Preto; The Girl From Ipanema; Garoto; Inútil Paisagem; Corcovado; Chega De Saudade; A Felicidade; How Insensitive; Amparo (Olha Maria); Ligia. Disc Two: Insight; MZ's World; Variations; Infinito; Another Side; Unseen Worlds; It Takes A Village; Sketch. (67:36/60:11)

Personnel: Miguel Zenón, alto saxophone; David Sánchez, tenor saxophone; Etienne Charles, trumpet; Robin Eubanks, trombone; Warren Wolf, vibraphone; Edward Simon, piano; Matt Brewer, bass; Obed Calvaire, drums.

Ordering info: sfjazz.org



closing track "When" and an eerie nocturnal quality on "Fugue." Yet, each of these compositions is merely evocative, lacking the clarity to move beyond just interesting the listener through novelty and refusing to conjure a real sense of this imagined space. Stepping into Duda's mind on *Keen* is a trip, indeed, but one that could benefit from a greater calm and perspective among the chaos—time for silence to balance out the noise.

—Ammar Kalia

Keen: Marc; Agnus; Fugue; Menuet; Stnk; Kibo; Choinka; Keen; When. (30:18)

Personnel: Joanna Duda, piano, synthesizer, harpsichord, programming.

Ordering info: alpakarecords.pl



Fred Hersch & The WDR Big Band

Begin Again

PALMETTO 2195
★★★★

Fred Hersch has been especially reflective these past few years as he releases different presentations of his personal history. Two years ago, he published his intense memoir, *Good Things Happen Slowly: A Life In And Out Of Jazz*, and now he digs back into early compositions and presents them in bold colors alongside The WDR Big Band for *Begin Again*.

A spirited dialogue shapes the title track, the one piece here that previously hadn't been recorded. Throughout its rhythmic changes and building dynamics, Hersch's lyrical tone and drummer Hans Dekker's deceptively light approach form a stunning contrast to the orchestra's weightier movements. Hersch's time-feel also accentuates "Havana," which doesn't make any obvious Cuban statements, although echoes of *danzón* subtly filter through. As Hersch delves back to his early-1980s "Rain Waltz," his repeated motifs co-direct the combined horns' upward movement. On the haunting "Out Someplace (Blues For Matthew Shepard)," Hersch and the ensemble use stark silent passages, ominously building to the scream honoring hate-crime victim's memory.

Begin Again ends with "The Orb (For Scott)," an ode that Hersch wrote for the theatrical production *My Coma Dreams*—a work about transcending a near-death experience. He performed it solo on 2017's *{open book}*, and the new revisit conveys a similar sense of inner calm. But as the WDR woodwinds sweep in to fill the spaces that his hesitations create, Hersch sounds assured that he'll never walk alone.

—Aaron Cohen

Begin Again: Begin Again; Song Without Words; #2: Ballad; Havana; Out Someplace (Blues For Matthew Shepard); Pastorale; Rain Waltz; The Big Easy; Forward Motion; The Orb (For Scott). (55:49)

Personnel: Fred Hersch, piano; Paul Shigihara, guitar; John Goldsby, bass; Hans Dekker, drums; Johan Hörlén, Karolina Strassmayer, alto saxophone; Olivier Peters, Paul Heller, tenor saxophone; Jens Neufang, baritone saxophone; Ludvig Nuss, Andrea Andreoli, Andy Hunter, trombone; Mattis Cederberg, bass trombone, tuba; Wim Both, Rod Bruynen, Andy Haderer, Ruud Breuls, trumpet.

Ordering info: palmetto-records.com



Alex Koo/Mark Turner/Ralph Alessi
appleblueseagreen
 CLEVER TREE 201901
 ★★★★★

Mark Turner/Gary Foster
Mark Turner Meets Gary Foster
 CAPRI 74156
 ★★★

Mark Turner’s widespread influence has extended the reach of the unique pianist/didact Lennie Tristano into new generations. And the live *Mark Turner Meets Gary Foster* celebrates the Tristano school in nearly every respect.

Alto saxophonist Foster is another Tristano disciple, and most of the repertoire on the double-disc summit is either composed by the pianist or his saxophonist acolytes, Lee Konitz and Warne Marsh. Those horn players have significant impact on the playing, too, especially on tunes like “Lennie’s Pennies” and “Subconscious-Lee,” where Turner and Foster channel their intricate interplay. The pair also evokes Tristano’s “pure improvisation” motto. On the other hand, both performers seem to have learned Tristano’s lessons all too well.

The tenor often reaches high enough, and the alto low enough, that on tracks like “What’s New?,” it’s hard to tell which soloist is which. If their distinctions get lost, though, bassist Putter Smith’s is quite apparent, to a fault. His lines are creative, cohesive and cursed with the irritating sound of bass-direct miking.

Fortunately, *appleblueseagreen* is stunningly original. There’s no homage to get lost in, and the compositions all are by the young pianist/drummer Alex Koo. There also aren’t similar-sounding instruments: Koo and Turner are joined by monster trumpeter Ralph Alessi,

who hails from a separate world altogether.

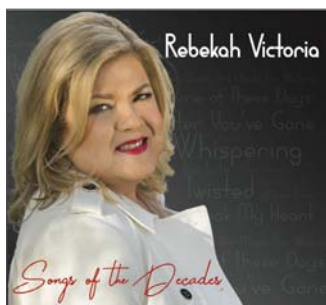
That said, the three instrumentalists attain something like a classical manner and articulation. Not unexpected on an album that features three self-described “Etudes,” although each is a solo piece by Koo with increasingly fraught harmonic structures. That stately approach doesn’t constrain them, instead leading the trio to interesting places. The trudging chamber music of “Ghost Parade” pulls apart into dissonant collective improvisations that change shape and feel with head-spinning frequency.

Curiously, the mannerly playing falls by the wayside at the album’s center—on the short, funky “Bodily Fluids,” which ends without resolution. That’s OK: The point was made well before the ending, anyway. A Tristano-school pastiche is nice, but it’s in more open territory that Turner shines brightest.

—Michael J. West

appleblueseagreen: enuD; Dune; Funeral March; Ghost Parade; Etude No. 1 “Mirror, Mirror, On The Wall”; Dormilon; Bodily Fluids; Etude No. 2 “The Gaze”; The Lone Wanderer; Etude No. 3; Apples Are Blue But The Sea Is Green; Freedom Pilot. (49:22)
Personnel: Alex Koo, piano, keyboard, drums; Mark Turner, tenor saxophone; Ralph Alessi, trumpet.
Mark Turner Meets Gary Foster: Disc One: Background Music; Teef; Lennie’s Pennies; Come Rain Or Come Shine. Disc Two: 317 East 32nd Street; What’s New?; Subconscious-Lee. (51:55/35:18)
Personnel: Mark Turner, tenor saxophone; Gary Foster, alto saxophone; Putter Smith, bass; Joe LaBarbera, drums.
Ordering info: clevertreerecords.com; caprirecords.com

Rebekah Victoria
Songs Of The Decades
 PATOIS 024
 ★★★



The late, great August Wilson wrote a play emblematic of each decade of the 20th century. Vocalist Rebekah Victoria angles at a similar feat with her *Songs Of The Decades*, evoking Tin Pan Alley in the process. And from “Some of These Days” (1910) to “Unbreak My Heart” (1996), Victoria applies a fresh patina to old chestnuts.

Bessie Smith and Ella Fitzgerald come to mind on her version of “After You’ve Gone,” but her swing here is vintage ’20s, thanks to trombonist Wayne Wallace—who arranged the music on *Songs*. And Mary Fetti’s clarinet has just the right tone and flavor for that dynamic period.

There is a collective gloss on “The Song Is You,” but Victoria has a few surprises in store when she lowers her voice, rather than hitting the expected high note. She can clearly hit them, though, as she does in the song’s final moments. What is consistently true about Victoria is her musicality—something showcased on the final bars of “Whispering” as it morphs into “Groovin’ High.”

—Herb Boyd

Songs Of The Decades: Some Of These Days; Whispering/Groovin’ High; After You’ve Gone; Twist-ed; Unbreak My Heart; These Boots Are Made For Walkin’; It’s Too Late; The Song Is You; Opus One/Undecided; I Hope I Never. (52:10)

Personnel: Rebekah Victoria, Kenny Washington (2, 4), vocals; Akira Tana, Colin Douglas, Deszon Claiborne, drums; John Wiitala, bass; David Belove, Marc Van Wageningen, electric bass; Rick Vandiver, guitar; Tommy Kesecker, vibraphone; Dave Martell, tuba; Mary Fetti, clarinet, alto saxophone, flute; Frank Martin, Murray Low, Joe Gilman, piano, keyboard; Michael Spiro, percussion; Erik Jekabson, John Worley, trumpet; Melecio Magdaluyo, alto saxophone, tenor saxophone, baritone saxophone; Wayne Wallace, trombone; Eugene Chukhlov (9, 10), Niki Fukada (9, 10), violin; Edith Szendrey, viola (9, 10); Monica Scott, cello (9, 10).

Ordering info: patoisrecords.net

WHAT A TERRIFIC PIECE OF BUSINESS THIS AMP IS!
 - JOHN PIZZARELLI

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Contemporary Distractions

Since their formation almost two decades ago, synth-pop optimists **Hot Chip** have been known for their blend of singer Alexis Taylor's euphoric falsetto with a rumbling, club-focused backing from multi-instrumentalist Joe Goddard. On the group's seventh album, ***A Bath Full Of Ecstasy* (Domino 375XM; 48:36 ★★★★★)**, Hot Chip doesn't disappoint. Collaborating with external producers for the first time (Philippe Zdar, who previously has worked with David Bowie, and Rodaidh McDonald, who has worked with Sampha and The xx), the record is a smoothed-out, concise ride with highlights coming in the form of the title track's lilting vocoder and the pulsating keys on "Spell." Seven albums in, the group still sounds as fresh as on its first outing.

Ordering info: dominomusic.com

Another longtime staple of the dance-pop arena is producer **Mark Ronson**, who delivers his latest solo album, ***Late Night Feelings* (RCA; 43:08 ★★★★★)**. A self-described collection of "sad bangers," Ronson takes the myriad experiences of his time producing for the likes of Amy Winehouse and Adele, and distills each generic trope into a surprisingly coherent collection of infectious, earworming tracks. The title cut plays like a comedown version of Calvin Harris' mega-hit, "One Kiss," while the Miley Cyrus-featuring "Nothing Breaks Like A Heart" deftly riffs on the recent country music resurgence exemplified by the likes of Kacey Musgraves and the Ronson-produced *Joanne* by Lady Gaga.

Ordering info: rcarecords.com

Away from Ronson's L.A. production polish is the lo-fi DIY aesthetic of **Mega Bog**, the musical moniker of Erin Birgy. Channeling '60s sunshine psychedelia, as well as the vocal irreverence of cult folkster Nick Drake, Birgy's fifth LP as Mega Bog, ***Dolphine (Paradise Of Bachelors 049; 41:12 ★★★)***, is a charming but ultimately fragmented listen, failing to capitalize on her talent as a guitarist and the melodic simplicity of her songwriting. Starting strong with the synth-driven "For The Old World," Birgy loses momentum on the spoken-word moments of "Left Door" and the dissonant "Spit In The Eye Of The Fire King," getting distracted by the lyricism of her own storytelling.

Ordering info: paradiseofbachelors.com

Guitarist **JJ Whitefield** releases his first album under his own name after having spent the past two decades spearheading a funk revival with his band Poets Of Rhythm, as well as producing with Afro-funk pioneer Ebo Taylor. On ***Brother All Alone* (Kryptox 010; 39:41 ★★★★★)**,



INDIGO SPARKE

Mega Bog

Whitefield achieves a rich blend of kraty synth and guitar fuzz with funk rhythms and chromatic jazz melodies. Opener "Seven Seas" highlights Whitefield's clean, Grant Green-esque guitar, while tracks like "White Queen" and "Metrosex" move into more raucous and abrasive territory, showcasing the breadth of Whitefield's musical experience.

Ordering info: kryptox.org

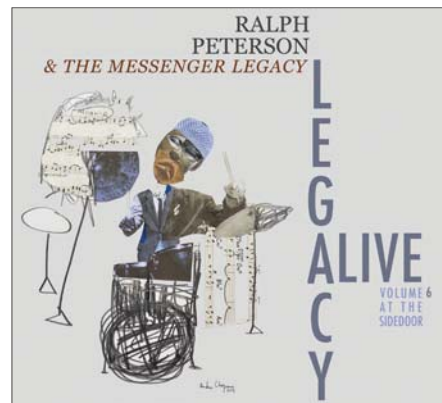
While Whitefield's record plays with mutable time signatures and an unpredictable energy, the third record from Glaswegian producer Tom Scholefield, aka **Konx-Om-Pax**, keeps the groove focused on a four-to-the-floor. Moving away from the dark textures of his first two rave-influenced records, on ***Ways Of Seeing (Planet Mu ZIQ404; 44:05 ★★★★★½)*** Scholefield channels the trap of West Coast producers like Lunice on "LA Melody," ambient house on "Säule Acid" and infectious Italo-disco on "I'm For Real." Scholefield produces a near-perfect record of dancefloor positivity to abate the otherwise unrelenting gloom blanketing 21st-century life.

Ordering info: planet.mu

Reveling in that gloom, meanwhile, is experimental electronic producer Oliver Ho, aka **Broken English Club**. Releasing ***White Rats II (L.I.E.S. 136; 46:15 ★★★★★)***, the second installment in a trilogy, Ho's latest is focused and assured in its mixture of teeth-rattling techno and euphoric rave. While the record might be an unrelenting listen, it comes into its own on the dancefloor, producing blanket textures of rhythm and pounding subs for the DJ to mix at will, and for the crowd to lose themselves in. This is a record that can only and must only be listened to loud.

DB

Ordering info: liesrecords.com



Ralph Peterson & The Messenger Legacy *Legacy Alive: Volume 6 At The Sidedoor*

ONYX PRODUCTIONS 009

★★★★★

Opening the second disc of Ralph Peterson & The Messenger Legacy's tribute to Art Blakey is the sound of measured beating on a tom as time ticks away on the hi-hat.

For Peterson's tribute, the drummer gathered fellow alumni of Blakey's band, brought them to a small club in Connecticut and set to work. The result is a collection packed with the kind of explosiveness that can be elusive in a studio session, but occurs organically in intimate live settings. Across 11 mostly uptempo compositions made famous by Blakey, the playing is immediate and affecting, coursing with a vitality that has to do with the club's friendly confines and the band's affection for the material.

While drum solos might set the tone for a few of the pieces—on "Caravan," Peterson establishes a back-of-the-beat pace that transitions to frenetic swing—the tunes are in the end all about collaboration. On alto saxophone, Bobby Watson lends an authoritative swagger to the music, while pianist Geoffrey Keezer thrills during a percussive solo turn on "A La Mode." The majority of the tunes on *Legacy Alive* fail to slow below a simmer, and on "My One And Only Love," tenorist Bill Pierce begins with rapid-fire arpeggios, exploring the space, pushing through chromatiscisms to the theme, played with a syrupy thickness as the rhythm section enters.

This double-disc set proves that the passage of time has done nothing to mute the passion with which Peterson, or the rest of the Messengers alumni, approach the music made under Blakey's encouraging downbeat.

—Jon Ross

Legacy Alive: Volume 6 At The Sidedoor: Disc One: A La Mode; Wheel Within A Wheel; The Core; My One And Only Love; 3 Blind Mice; Blues March. Disc Two: In Case You Missed It; Along Came Betty; Children Of The Night; That Ole Feeling; Caravan. (58:55/46:56)

Personnel: Ralph Peterson, drums; Bobby Watson, alto saxophone; Bill Pierce, tenor saxophone; Brian Lynch, trumpet; Essiet Essiet, bass; Geoffrey Keezer, piano.

Ordering info: ralphpetersonmusic.com



JC Sanford's Triocracy *Pyramid Scheme*

SHIFTING PARADIGM 146

★★★★½

Trombonist JC Sanford's new ensemble is not for everyone. The lack of a rhythm section immediately will deter plenty of listeners who might come expecting moody drones or cerebral quacking and squawking. Neither are to be found here. In fact, Triocracy's music is reminiscent of the World Saxophone Quartet or WSQ member Julius Hemphill's sextet.

Pyramid Scheme sets its tone early with "Rip Tide," a piece built on a three-note unison fan-

fare, repeated three times, followed by a slowly unfolding harmonic dance, each horn turning slowly in its own space. Eventually, staccato outbursts from all three players lead to a jabbering mock debate, each player attempting to drown out their bandmates without ever erupting into a full-on scream. The next piece, a version of Billy Joel's "And So It Goes," is more elegiac and processional, like something you'd hear sung at a funeral for a beloved schoolteacher. Despite there being no rhythm instruments, the music manages to maintain a powerful pulse at times: "Everything We've Always Wanted" has an almost Duke Ellington-like sway, and in its latter half, "Manic" features a churning low end from the trombone and baritone saxophone that might remind listeners of Mats Gustafsson's work. Even when the players choose to tootle and coo, as on mellow pieces like the chamber-folkish version of "Sarabande," things are never boring. And while the three short improvisations here initially might seem like technical exercises, given titles like "Something Chordal (Improvisation 4)," they don't feel that way. —Philip Freeman

Pyramid Scheme: Rip Tide; And So It Goes; Pyramid Scheme; That's All There Is; Everything We've Always Wanted; Manic; Quick Change (Improvisation 5); Sarabande; Outlaster; Something Chordal (Improvisation 4); Time Parameters (Improvisation 3); Bagheera's Dance; You And I. (43:59)

Personnel: JC Sanford, trombone; Andy Laster, alto saxophone, baritone saxophone, clarinet; Chris Bacas, tenor saxophone, soprano saxophone, clarinet.

Ordering info: shiftingparadigmrecords.com

Holly Cole *Holly*

SHANACHIE 5468

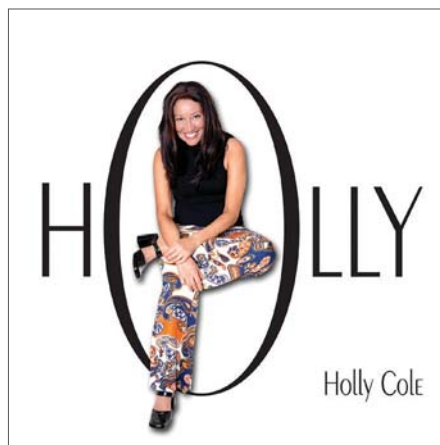
★★★★

If you know Holly Cole from her Sondheim interpretations, this album will be a delight.

On *Holly*, Cole displays an adroitness at delivering standards from the Great American Songbook, and opens with "I'm Beginning To See The Light," the vocalist flowing with excellent phrasing as trombonist Wycliffe Gordon adds a conversational quality to the work. The standard is followed with "Your Mind Is On Vacation," as Cole and her band emit an r&b vibe. A number of tunes also find the singer delivering with a lounge-like quality: nothing too exciting or too banal, either.

The treats on the album, though, come from Larry Goldings on organ and piano. For "Teach Me Tonight," his chording adds depth, color and body. And when Goldings (on piano) accompanies Cole for ballad "It Could Happen To You," the marriage of the bandleader's singing and Golding's playing adds up to more than most duos can summon.

But the real engine of the recording revs up on "Ain't That A Kick In The Head," opening with Davide DiRenzo on drums and David Piltch on bass, before Cole slides in with her vocal line.



Concluding with "Lazy Afternoon," it becomes evident that Cole sounds best singing ballads accompanied by Ed Cherry on guitar, who overlays a West Coast vibe, as the vocalist rounds out another sturdy leader date.

—Michele L. Simms-Burton

Holly: I'm Beginning To See The Light; Your Mind Is On Vacation; I Was Doing All Right; It Could Happen To You; Ain't That A Kick In The Head; Teach Me Tonight; We've Got A World That Swings; They Can't Take That Away From Me; Everybody Loves Somebody Sometime; I Could Write A Book; Lazy Afternoon. (38:23)

Personnel: Holly Cole, vocals; Larry Goldings, piano, Hammond B-3 organ; Wycliffe Gordon, trombone, vocals; Ed Cherry, guitar; Aaron Davis, piano; Fender Rhodes; Scott Robinson, tenor saxophone; John Johnson (5), flute; Ben Street, David Piltch (2, 5, 9), bass; Justin Faulkner, Davide DiRenzo (2, 5), drums.

Ordering info: shanachie.com



Tal Gamlieli Trio Meets Dayna Stephens *Change Of Heart*

JAZZTRIBES 1906003

★★★★½

The concept behind *Change Of Heart* is a remarkably simple one. According to the proof of concept written by saxophonist Dayna Stephens and bassist Tal Gamlieli, the idea was to "compose new music for peace ... without actually mentioning the word 'peace.'" Instead, the two players wrote material that offers a ray of calm and beauty for our fractious times. Though they'd be forgiven for writing seven songs of anger and distress, the mood of the album is a soothing one, even when Stephens is winding out a spangled solo using an electronic wind instrument on "Check Point."

At the same time, the album's calm is a knowing imposture. The lustrous glow the band creates barely shades the elements of tumult kicking throughout. Closing track "At Least 37th Cousins" lets Stephens roll and sway beautifully, while drummer Amir Bar Akiva and pianist Chai Bar David sputter and backfire underneath. The main melody of "Common Ancestors" threatens to slip into "Somewhere Over The Rainbow" before the band pulls the thread and lets it unravel into a ragged beauty.

Every step of the journey is matched by Gamlieli's liquid bass work. He's a broker of understanding between the three other players on the album, connecting Stephens' front-facing playing to the cracked elements of Bar Akiva and Bar David, and vice versa. Listening to him play off of and sometimes against the rest of the ensemble is what gives *Change Of Heart* its fuel—and its bold thread of idealism. What impact on the global community the record might have remains to be seen, but the music feels like it can move mountains. —Robert Ham

Change Of Heart: Change Of Heart; Common Ancestors; Check Point; Just An Ordinary Girl; U R Me Blues; Familiar Melody; At Least 37th Cousins. (53:17)

Personnel: Tal Gamlieli, bass; Dayna Stephens, saxophone, EWI; Chai Bar David, piano, Rhodes; Amir Bar Akiva, drums.

Ordering info: jazztribes.net

Documenting NOLA Jazz Fest

Whether you're a longtime devotee or a first-time attendee of the annual New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival, every day is a juggling act. Irma Thomas or Dr. John? Terence Blanchard or BeauSoleil?

With a dozen stages and tents spread out across 145 acres at the New Orleans Fair Grounds Race Course, charting a course involves intricate calculations to hit your personal sweet spot on any given day of the seven-day musical marathon (an eighth day was added in 2019).

So, imagine the daunting task of mining five decades of musical gold and choosing which live recordings to enshrine on the five discs in the Smithsonian Folkways box set that commemorates the festival's 50th anniversary: **Jazz Fest: The New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival (40250; 61:35/59:25/67:29/53:33/60:53 ★★★★★)**. Against all odds, the five producers of this crash course in the immersive Jazz Fest experience managed to pull it off.

For openers, they decided to jettison the numerous visiting rock stars and jazz titans who've played Jazz Fest over the years and focus on the festival's *raison d'être*: the deep, tangled roots of New Orleans music and a diverse roster of Louisiana artists, which still constitute the bulk of the festival's bookings each year.

Technical problems forced the omission of some early performances—if they were recorded at all—by iconic artists, like the late James Booker, while licensing issues kept other tracks on ice. That still left a wealth of material, most of it previously unreleased, for Jazz Fest lovers to feast on.

Designed to replicate the experience of wandering around the fairgrounds, and peppered with loudspeaker sound bites like rain alerts, the collection opens with "Indian Red," a Mardi Gras Indian chant that invokes the festival's earliest roots.

Mixing it up is the name of the game, though, and every disc has standout tracks. Unlike attending the actual festival, listeners can have it all.

In one of those only-at-Jazz-Fest pairings, Champion Jack Dupree, returning to New Orleans after 30 years in Europe, teamed up with Allen Toussaint in 1990 for an epic "Rub A Little Boogie" keyboard jam that's a highlight of disc one, and one of the most engaging tracks in the set. Equally stellar is John Boutté's disc-one closer, "Louisiana 1927," which brought the crowd to tears when he invoked "six feet of water in the Lower Nine" at the first post-Katrina Fest in 2006.

Chock full of standouts, from Toussaint's joyous "Yes We Can Can" (2009) to Irma Thomas's Toussaint-penned hit "Ruler Of My Heart" (1976), disc two reaches its apotheosis with Professor Longhair's quintessential Mardi Gras mambo, "Big Chief" (1974), recorded at the Professor Longhair Fire Benefit at The Warehouse.



The Dirty Dozen Brass Band's raucous "Blackbird Special" (2004) kicks off a genre-hopping disc three, which ranges from Germaine Bazzle's scatty reinvention of "Secret Love" (1993) to a four-track closing set in the Gospel Tent, including Irma Thomas' soulful rendition of "Old Rugged Cross" (2007).

Cajun and Zydeco artists hit a virtual *fais do-do stage* on disc four, where Buckwheat Zydeco is "Hard To Stop" (2003), Boozoo Chavis has a "Paper In My Shoe" (2000) and BeauSoleil fiddles a lovely "Recherche d'Acadie" waltz (1999). The Neville Brothers wax into full rave-up mode on "Yellow Moon" (2001) and bluesman John Campbell slides and growls his way through an epic "When The Levee Breaks" (1993).

The Funky Meters' burning "Fire On The Bayou" (2010) launches disc five, where musical shape-shifter Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown versions Duke Ellington's "Take The 'A' Train" (2000), and bounce star Big Freedia bobs her way through "N.O. Bounce" (2016). Ending Jazz Fest on a high note, as they did for many years, the Neville Brothers bring it all back home with "Amazing Grace/One Love" (2001).

Not all 50 tracks collected here are essential listening, and veteran festers might quibble about some of the work that's either included or omitted. But taken as a whole, this handsomely packaged set, full of photos and archival notes, will help devotees recapture the magic of Jazz Fest until next year rolls around.

DB

Ordering info: folkways.si.edu



Timo Lassy & Teppo Mäkynen

Timo Lassy & Teppo Mäkynen

WE JAZZ 14

★★★★★

The word "fallow" can conjure images of dust and ruin—of atrophy. However, the process of leaving fields fallow acts as a means of restoration and renewal. In the hands of Finnish jazz duo Timo Lassy & Teppo Mäkynen, "Fallow," the first song on their self-titled album, keenly represents potential as it introduces the listener to the eclectic blossoms of musical ideas at work across the 13-song record.

Lassy and Mäkynen's saxophone-percussion duo could come off sounding hollow with no harmonic accompaniment, but the two make simple sound simply divine. The tracks—most clocking in around three minutes—are complete ideas, boiling down extended jazz solo forms into enthralling, engaging tone poems that move from modal to free and touch on electronics. Lassy, an active bandleader in Finland, blows deep from the diaphragm, and on tracks like "Kobi" and the two parts of "Liberty," he sounds like he's trying to canvas the entire ear with the forceful, broad sound that explodes from the bell of his horn. Mäkynen, whether laying down a club-worthy backbeat on "Dark Cyan" or pushing a more tom-driven attack for "Goldenrod," doesn't crowd or compete with Lassy and never acts simply as timekeeper. The two are equal voices, weaving improvisations and licks together as a collective. "Liberty (Part 2)" exemplifies this vision of equality: As the pair launch into early-Impulse! Coltrane aerobics, they constantly push against each other, propelling the other forward by friction, neither letting up until they drop their instruments in finality and contentment.

—Jackson Sinnenberg

Timo Lassy & Teppo Mäkynen: Fallow; Goldenrod; Liberty (Part 1); Catawba; Resolution Blue; Liberty (Part 2); Aero; Kobi; Nyanza; Telemagenta; Firebrick; Dark Cyan; Heliotrope. (39:12)

Personnel: Timo Lassy, tenor saxophone; Teppo Mäkynen, drums.

Ordering info: wejazz.fi



Serena Fisseau & Vincent Peirani *So Quiet*

ACT 9884
★★★★

A vocalist matched with the right accompanist can work magic on any repertoire. And that's exactly what Serena Fisseau and accordionist Vincent Peirani do on *So Quiet* across 14 interpretations of well-traveled songs from various traditions, each intended for children's listening.

Fisseau has made her career in France as a singer for tykes, and her multi-instrumentalist

husband, Peirani, is an award-winning player. Nevertheless, it takes a measure of confidence to tackle versions of the world's most recorded songs, whether it's "What A Wonderful World," "Over The Rainbow" or something on the pop spectrum, like Lennon and McCartney's "And I Love Her." Fisseau and Peirani just wrest charm from well-worn works.

"La Javanaise," originally by Serge Gainsbourg, is swoon-worthy as the duo channels the playfulness of an early '60s *chanson*. Widening the scope to Brazil, Fisseau and Peirani turn in lovely versions of Caetano Veloso's "Alguem Cantando" and Antônio Carlos Jobim's "Luiza." With a lightness of spirit to all they touch, the pair creates interesting juxtapositions, thanks to Peirani's quirky choices and Fisseau's rich vocals; he goes positively wild with Burt Bacharach's "Close To You," while she plays it fairly Karen Carpenter-straight.

With songs sung to perfection by Fisseau and augmented by Peirani's light touch, *So Quiet* brims with effective intimacy that anyone in the mood for quiet will appreciate, regardless of age.
—Denise Sullivan

So Quiet: Bengawan Solo; La Javanaise; What A Wonderful World; Close To You; La Tendresse; La Bourdigue; Bintang Kecil; Malandrinha; Luiza; Alguem Cantando; Small Song; And I Love Her; 3 Petites Notes De Musique; Over The Rainbow. (46:09)

Personnel: Serena Fisseau, vocals, body percussion; Vincent Peirani, accordion, accordina, Wurliitzer, piano, plastic bags, music box, vocals.

Ordering info: actmusic.com

Francesca Prihasti *Adriana*

SELF RELEASE
★★★★

Indonesian-born, New York-based pianist and composer Francesca Prihasti has traveled the distance from the Sydney Conservatorium of Music to New York University, landing some stellar players to accompany her along the way. For her third outing, *Adriana*, Prihasti has assembled a fine ensemble for an essentially mellow set of original compositions.

With bassist Drew Gress and drummer Josh Roberts keeping time, Prihasti's piano melodies are punctuated with precise and pungent lines delivered by trombonist Alan Ferber, trumpeter Michael Rodriguez and reedist Dave Pietro. Guitarist Nic Vardanega, a frequent Prihasti collaborator, adds nice slices of guitar, whether on the sleek and urban modern fusion of "Johnny" or on the contrasting breezy and pastoral "Verano."

The cool-toned "Time Traveller" gives Pietro the spotlight. But the title song is a serious, somewhat somber affair, until Rodriguez's horn flies into orbit, circling the piano-and-guitar conversation. "Stargazer" is a peaceful ballad with Prihasti leading the melody from the bench and Ferber taking



his turn. "The Wind Chimes" also showcase Pietro and Ferber in tandem, and in solo spots.

While *Adriana* is cool and laidback, suitable for a summer night, Prihasti has primed herself and her band to play under bigger lights: Could be time for a label to support her tireless and generous self-released work.
—Denise Sullivan

Adriana: Johnny; Time Traveller; Stargazer; Verano; Adriana; The Wind Chimes; The Emperor. (45:09)

Personnel: Francesca Prihasti, piano; Drew Gress, bass; Dave Pietro, alto saxophone, soprano saxophone; Alan Ferber, trombone; Mike Rodriguez, trumpet, flugelhorn; Nic Vardanega, guitar; Josh Roberts, drums.

Ordering info: francescaprihasti.com.au



Kuba Wiecek Trio *Multitasking*

POLSKIE NAGRANIA 7620001
★★★★½

Multitasking, the second album from saxophonist Kuba Wiecek, evokes the disorientation—both joyful and frustrating—of walking through a poorly curated modern art exhibition. The pieces hang together nicely, but without explanation, and the placards that accompany each work are hundreds of words long—and mention Hegel.

Wiecek, 24, already has built a reputation for himself in his native Poland, where his last album won Jazz Debut of the Year from Polish Radio Channel Three. Certainly, his chops are impressive, but *Multitasking* offers tracks that are more ideas than songs; they're still compelling and catchy, and always meticulously constructed.

Rather than explore, The Kuba Wiecek Trio realizes songs. Most are less than four minutes, and folksy melodies—as on opener "SUGARboost"—abound. Drummer Łukasz Zyta kicks things off with a huge, bouncing march, Wiecek joining with a knotty, vaguely Cyrillic refrain that increases in complexity as the tempo ramps up in velocity. "Tacos In LA" tears through ideas and tempo changes, but it's pinned down by a recurring, treacherous melody that's fast to insinuate itself into your brain. "Jazz Masala" experiments with a vocal performance meant to imitate a specific percussive instrument. Excepting its formal inventiveness, and the song's melody being one of the record's prettiest, it's probably the most annoying thing committed to tape this year. The closing title track encapsulates the entire album's spirit, opening with a smart, bopish melodic statement, which a judicious, lo-fi drum-n-bass rhythm section sends skittering. When the tune ends, it's not clear exactly what happened, but it felt smart and getting there was pretty amusing.
—Andrew Jones

Multitasking: SUGARboost; Tacos In LA; Me & My Present Reason; Niszczycielskie Buldozery; Jazz Robots; Jazz Masala; Eden; Wspomnienia starego kowala i jego los; The Day Off; Multitasking. (39:11)

Personnel: Kuba Wiecek, alto saxophone, electronics; Michal Baranski, bass; electric bass, voice; Łukasz Zyta, drums; glockenspiel; Marcin Masecki, synthesizer (5).

Ordering info: polskienagrania.com.pl



**Zhenya Strigalev/
Federico Dannemann**
The Change

RAINY DAYS
★★★★

The Change follows in the footsteps of 2018's *Blues For Maggie*. With a different rhythm section, it deepens the collaboration saxophonist Zhenya Strigalev has been entertaining with guitarist Federico Dannemann, who this time gets to share writing duties.

The goal is still to present music with a broad appeal, this time with a greater emphasis on funk. However, the tunes sound barer and more spon-

**The Pete McGuinness
Jazz Orchestra**
Along For The Ride

SUMMIT 747
★★★★★

In his third outing with this dynamic crew of New Yorkers, trombonist-arranger Pete McGuinness has his way with some familiar tunes, while introducing four stellar originals.

The collection kicks off in ebullient fashion with "Put On A Happy Face," a tune that's given a new suit of clothes here through McGuinness' inventive interplay among horns, bass and Scott Neumann's lively, understated drumming. With the spirited opener, McGuinness instantly identifies himself as an arranger with an active imagination and an urge to swing. His "Old Roads" carries a tinge of melancholy and features a highly expressive flugelhorn solo from Chris Rogers. A playful take on Nat Adderley's "Jive Samba" serves as an earthy launching pad for robust solos by trombonist Matt Haviland and baritone saxophone ace Dave Riekenberg, while his suite-like "Aftermath," a showcase for Dave Pietro's soprano saxophone, bears the stamp of Bob Brookmeyer.

As a vocalist, McGuinness has a warm, inviting tone and natural ease of phrasing. He showcases some persuasive scatting on Michel

taneous, as some of the superfluous embellishments and effects have been shed. The sinuous and protean "Pulse" shows the band at its most effective and features some jittery saxophone and jagged guitar to spice things up. On the hypnotic Ethiopian-style "Boo," Strigalev unveils his most wild and unbridled side. The band seems on a roll, delivering one uplifting melody after another, surfing on hard beats and moving forward with ease and gusto. Then, at midpoint, the whole affair takes a turn for the worse.

With "Speed Up," Strigalev's playing becomes formulaic, and the quartet's crowd-pleasing tendencies become too obvious. The musicians seem to be running out of ideas, and the inclusion of an unnecessary drum solo underlines the issue. The band follows with the title-track—penned and sung by Dannemann—for a 180-degree change in mood. It's not a bad rock ballad, far from it, but it feels out of place. As for "Total Silence," the tune overstays its welcome, and the reggae detour is another questionable choice. Fortunately, the band pulls itself together and gets back on track with the closer, "Pank." Relying on a powerful drive, it remedies the previous missteps, allowing the quartet to end on a high note.—*Alain Drouot*

The Change: Algo Rhythm; Pulse; Boo; Coquille Du Terre; Speed Up; The Change; Total Silence; Pank. (53:34)

Personnel: Zhenya Strigalev, alto, saxophone, soprano saxophone, vocals; Federico Dannemann, guitar, vocals; Luques Curtis, bass; Obed Calvaire, drums.

Ordering info: rainydaysrecords.ru



Legrand's "You Must Believe In Spring," while channeling his inner Chet Baker on "May I Come In." The flag-waving closer, "One For The Maestro," is a Basie-esque swinger that also pays homage to McGuinness' high school band director, Bill Stanley.
—*Bill Milkowski*

Along For The Ride: Put On A Happy Face; You Must Believe In Spring; Old Roads; Point Of Departure; Aftermath; May I Come In; Jive Samba; Who Cares; One For The Maestro. (71:58)

Personnel: Pete McGuinness, trombone, vocals; Mike Holober, piano; Andy Eulau, bass; Scott Neumann, drums; Jon Owens, Tony Kadleck, Bill Mobley, trumpet; Chris Rogers, trumpet, flugelhorn; Dave Riekenberg, baritone saxophone; Tom Christensen, Rob Middleton, tenor saxophone; Dave Pietro, Mark Phaneuf, alto saxophone; Jeff Nelson, bass trombone; Matt Haviland, Bruce Eidem, Mark Patterson, trombone; Paul Meyers (8), guitar.

Ordering info: summitrecords.com



Rajna Swaminathan
Of Agency And Abstraction
BIOPHILIA 0013

★★★★

Rajna Swaminathan first learned the mrudangam—a two-headed drum that expresses the rhythms of southern Indian carnatic music—from one of her father's teachers. And in addition to her developing knowledge of that classical music, Swaminathan began exploring her interest in jazz. So, in 2011, she formed RAJAS, an ensemble of New York collaborators that encompasses her various musical interests. Along with leading the ensemble, though, she's worked with theater and dance troupes, while also pursuing a doctorate in Vijay Iyer's Creative Practice & Critical Inquiry program at Harvard University.

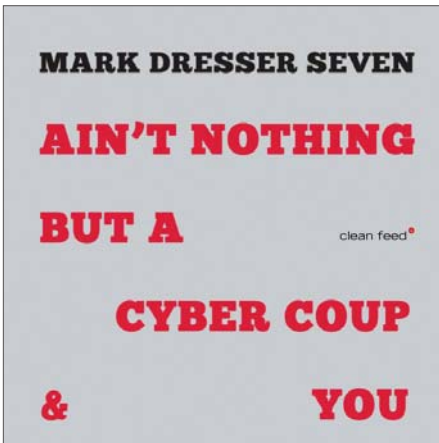
The title of Swaminathan's debut, *Of Agency And Abstraction*, frames her work as a reaction against structure and a sublimation of form that transmutes source material. While she's clearly departed from the carnatic tradition, it remains an evident source of rhythmic and melodic inspiration for themes like the one that violinist Anjna Swaminathan develops on "Rush." While she solos, guitarist Miles Okazaki shadows her, putting a brisk swing under her voluminous lines. Then he steps forward; the tune's curves flatten and lines break, turning the music into something that's as fascinating as it is difficult to define.

While there are plenty of passages where the playing takes wing, others feel more diligent than poetic. Swaminathan's choice to recruit trumpeter Amir ElSaffar on several tracks offers clues about her ambitions. But it's taken him years to figure out how to combine jazz with Iraqi maqams in ways that can't be reduced to binary equations. Swaminathan still has a way to go before her music reaches such a level.
—*Bill Meyer*

Of Agency And Abstraction: Offering; Peregrination; Vigil; Departures; Ripple Effect; Communitas; Retrograde; Chasing The Gradient; Rush; Vagabonds; Tangled Hierarchy; Yathi. (71:36)

Personnel: Rajna Swaminathan, mrudangam, vocals; Maria Grand, tenor saxophone; Stephan Crump, bass; Anjna Swaminathan, violin; Miles Okazaki, guitar; Ganavya Doraiswamy (4–5, 8, 10), vocals; Amir ElSaffar (4–7), trumpet.

Ordering info: biophilarecords.com



Mark Dresser Seven *Ain't Nothing But A Cyber Coup & You*

CLEAN FEED 510

★★★★

The labyrinthine and free-floating dynamics shaped by the Mark Dresser Seven further stamp the bandleader's indelible mark on creative music.

Dresser's dense and colorful layering characterize the shapeshifting *Ain't Nothing But A Cyber Coup & You*, the title an "attempt to give acerbic levity to our national reality-horror-show ..."

A copacetic feel lights up the program, as

Aimee Nolte *Looking For The Answers*

SELF RELEASE

★★★

Aimee Nolte's voice is beautiful, sonorous and reflective on her latest album, *Looking For The Answers*. The singer arranged and produced every track on the album, lending a consistent aesthetic and laid-back vibe to most of the cuts here.

What separates Nolte from other vocalists and composers is the poetry and storytelling quality of her compositions, with lyrics reminiscent of Joni Mitchell—just minus Mitchell's playfulness. "Save Me One Last Time" speaks to the bandleader's seriousness as a lyricist when the theme of lost love is addressed: "If I keep on falling, I'll be lost forever/ Save me one last time."

Nolte exhibits her jazz chops on "Bye Bye Blackbird," when she pleasantly scats as John Clayton accompanies her on bass.

Despite instrumentalists coming and going track to track, *Looking* is pretty even-keeled listen. Doug Webb and John Reilly on woodwinds round out "The Loveliest Girl" and "Save Me One Last Time," respectively. And drummer James Yoshizawa delivers throughout the recording with a soft, but steady, attention to

does the mind-bendingly knotty configurations and explosive momentum found throughout the set's six lengthy pieces and five solo bass interludes. The unpredictable time signatures—as heard on the combustible and chugging title track—might dizzy the senses, but a freewheeling, airy and infectious sensibility provide a constant state of bliss. The expansive, utopian landscapes Dresser sculpts swing with Mingusian abandon as the jazz titan's exuberant big-band spirit finds itself channeled on "Let Them Eat Paper Towels" and the jaw-dropping album opener, the 12-minute "Black Arthur's Bounce (In Memory Of Arthur Blythe)." The otherworldly back-and-forth interplay—Nicole Mitchell's flute solos are especially spine-tingling—powered by Jim Black's polyrhythmic, rock-informed heavy hitting and Dresser's thick and mellifluous plucks are rousing and revelatory.

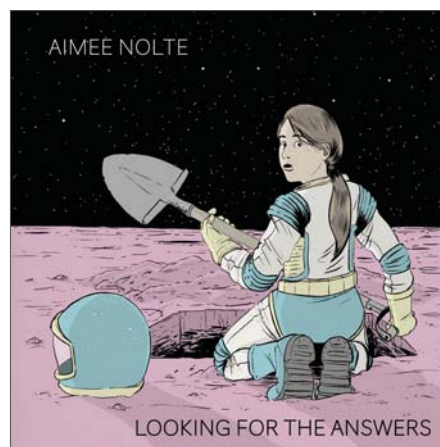
Toeing the line of straightahead jazz, classical music and the avant-garde—complete with a hopeful message—*Ain't Nothing But A Cyber Coup & You* is a sublime tonic for these times of tumult.

—Brad Cohan

Ain't Nothing But A Cyber Coup & You: Black Arthur's Bounce (In Memory Of Arthur Blythe); Pre-Gloom; Gloaming; Pre-Maria; Let Them Eat Paper Towels; Far; Embodied In Seoul; Pre-Coup; Ain't Nothing But A Cyber Coup & You; Song Time; Butch's Balm (In Memory Of Butch Lacy). (62:42)

Personnel: Mark Dresser, bass; McLagan Tines; Nicole Mitchell, flute, alto flute, piccolo; Marty Ehrlich, clarinet, bass clarinet, alto saxophone; Keir Gogwilt, violin; Michael Dessen, trombone; Joshua White, piano; Jim Black, drums, percussion.

Ordering info: cleanfeed-records.com



maintaining the rhythm, making his performances inconspicuous, until the listener realizes that his reliability helps drive the entire album.

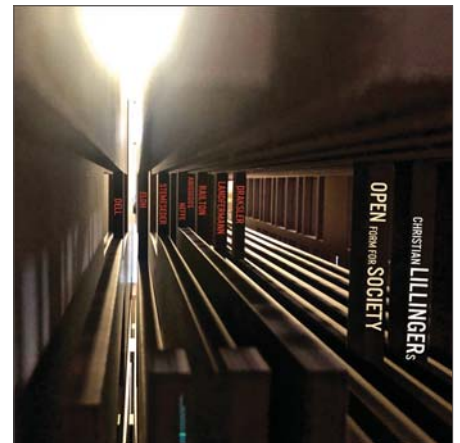
"For A While" closes things out with Nolte on piano, sans vocals, letting listeners take in the bandleader's full abilities at the keyboard while she paints a chromatic ballad that's sure to delight.

—Michele L. Simms-Burton

Looking For The Answers: The Loveliest Girl; Looking For The Answers; Falling Snow; This One Hurts; I Gotta Get; Save Me One Last Time; Bye Bye Blackbird; All Too Soon; So In Love; You Should've; For A While. (50:49)

Personnel: Aimee Nolte, vocals, piano, organ, synth bass; James Yoshizawa, drums; John Clayton (7), Bruce Lett, bass; Mike Scott (2, 3, 5, 10), Jason Neubauer (1), guitar; Doug Webb, John Reilly, woodwinds.

Ordering info: aimeenolte.com



Christian Lillinger *Open Form For Society*

PLAIST 004

★★★★

Open Form For Society is the name of German drummer Christian Lillinger's audacious new project that integrates mid-20th century sound elements with contemporary rhythmic and production approaches.

The nonet counts no horns in its ranks, but multiple strings, mallets and keyboards, which offer a broad and very specific selection of textures to Lillinger. "Piece For Up & Grand-Piano And Ringmodulator" opens the album with a burst of distortion reminiscent of Stockhausen's electronic music, and then shifts to layers of soft marimba resonance and woolly synthetic noise.

The bandleader's drums don't even make an appearance until the second track, "Aorta," on which quick piano, vibraphone and alternately filtered and unfiltered beats twist around each other like strands of DNA. The breakneck rhythmic barrage is reminiscent of 1990s drum 'n' bass, but Lillinger doesn't stay in one mode for long. His drums reinforce an insistent tattoo that gets passed between piano, marimbaphone and synth on "Titan," and then engage in an intricate dance with the basses and electronics on "Sisyphos (CMS)," changing cadence measure by measure. And on "Mocking" the ensemble bounces between grooves, evoking the sound of a needle skipping across a record.

The music was fashioned through a lengthy process of solitary composition, collective improvisation, studio workshoping and post-production. But the point of all that work is to clear away anything extraneous, so that nothing gets in the way of perceiving the music's intricate dynamics.

—Bill Meyer

Open Form For Society: Piece For Up & Grand-Piano And Ringmodulator; Aorta; Thür; Titan; Basel; Sisyphos (CMS); Überwindung; Laktat; Mocking; Toro Koma; Sog; Triangular; Kfka; Excerpts Of Open Form For A Society (Improvisations). (76:40)

Personnel: Christian Lillinger, drums; Antonis Anissegos, Kaja Drakser, piano; Elias Stemeseder, synthesizer, piano; Christopher Dell, vibraphone; Roland Neffe, marimbaphone, vibraphone, glockenspiel; Lucy Railton, violoncello; Petter Eldh, Robert Landfermann, bass.

Ordering info: plaist-music.com

Mostly Mirth in the Studio

Usually dedicated to quietly getting the job done, recording engineers can emerge from sessions with telling perspectives on how the music worked, or how the musicians worked with each other. That sort of insight deserves more attention.

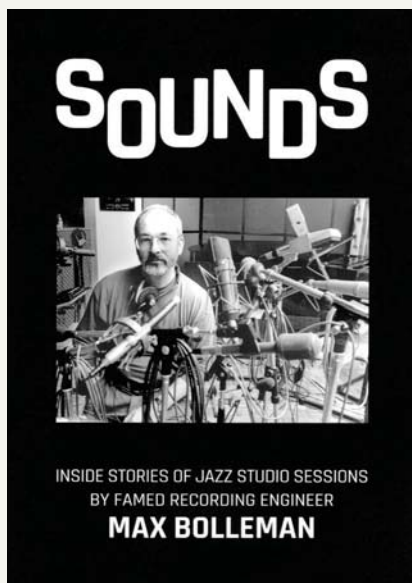
Engineers' memories can yield engaging books, and the late Geoff Emerick's tales of working with The Beatles in his memoir, *Here, There and Everywhere*, serves as ample proof. Dutch jazz engineer **Max Bolleman's** self-published *Sounds* also contains a valuable understanding of the process inherent in the art of creation, along with blunt assessments of the people who create it.

Bolleman's experiences are considerable, and he describes his past with a mix of confidence and endearing self-deprecation. Using his earnings as an optician, this former drummer built a studio in the Dutch village of Monster during the early 1980s. For the next 25 years, he recorded jazz legends, upcoming stars, blues singers and a handful of eccentrics in that smallish room—as well as in more expensive New York facilities. Making these records—mostly for the Timeless and Criss Cross labels—gave him a clear vantage point as he helped veteran musicians record what would be their final statements, while a new generation started to find their own voices.

Some of the most salient chapters in *Sounds* come when Bolleman conveys technical knowledge set within his own sense of wonder that some towering figures in the music believed in him as much as he admired them. This comes across vividly when he recorded Elvin Jones for Javon Jackson's *Me And Mr. Jones* in 1991 (with a 19-year-old bassist Christian McBride in tow). He describes how Jones' placement of his foot on the bass drum pedal distinguished his sound, but also proved challenging for situating studio microphones. At the same time, the engineer also learned to accept the softness of his cymbal, while Jones played straight through the skin of his snare. In a charming bit of appreciation, Jones hoisted Bolleman up and gave him a piggy back ride around the studio.

Bolleman also served as a valuable witness when trumpeters Tom Harrell and Dizzy Gillespie recorded together for *Dizzy Gillespie Meets Phil Woods Quintet* in 1986. The all-around mutual appreciation among these musicians is described with palpable warmth.

With Bolleman's expertise, he was able to easily transition from the familiar ground of traditional jazz to different aesthetics and experiences. He was awestruck at how blues



singer Percy Mayfield's stunning voice belied his slight physical stature toward the end of his life in the early 1980s. Based not far from Amsterdam, he also got swept into the Dutch free-jazz scene's determined absurdity when he recorded the Willem Breuker Kollektief during the late 1980s and early '90s. Bolleman became adept at recording the band's unusual tuning, its own take on miscellaneous instruments—alarm clocks, gun shots, sirens—and the time everyone in the ensemble decided just to refer to each other as "Dick."

Sounds, though, falters when Bolleman dismisses some musical giants with short repudiations: Woody Shaw was one of the most profound trumpeters of his generation, but only his difficult personality is described in a few pages about a 1985 recording with the Tone Jansa Quartet. Similarly, Bolleman's irresponsible conclusion regarding a living musician's substance abuse might be honest, but this potentially damaging anecdote should have been cut altogether. Bolleman also uses an unfortunately patronizing tone in discussing Dr. Lonnie Smith.

While Robert Rhoden did an admirable job of translating Bolleman's text into English, some amusing stories might have been more comical in the original Dutch. Still, the humor in Bolleman's use of understatement and direct reporting usually succeeds. He knows there's no reason to go overboard on adjectives when a paragraph begins: "In 1985, American sax player Paul Stocker entered my studio with two little monkeys in his coat pocket." **DB**

Ordering info: mijnbestseller.nl/shop

Swiss Jazz Orchestra & Guillermo Klein

Swiss Jazz Orchestra & Guillermo Klein

SUNNYSIDE 1552

★★★½

Founded in Bern, Switzerland, during 2003, with a mission to perform new works by visiting artists and composers, the Swiss Jazz Orchestra and keyboardist Guillermo Klein seem to be ideally matched, their album the outgrowth of a steady and unique collaboration that spans continents and styles.

A frequent visitor to Bern, Argentine-born Klein wrote (or tailored) these pieces with the ensemble in mind, gleaning inspiration from the area, local landmarks and Albert Einstein, who was a resident of the city during the early 20th century. "Patent Office (Ibernia)" seems like a soundtrack to the scientist's work environment, echoing the sounds of registering trademarks while a great mind worked overtime to develop the theory of relativity. "Inside Zytglogge" evokes the frenetic energy of the namesake clocktower, while "Zytglogge II" is a more somber take on the structure, perhaps owing to its history as a prison.

From the counter rhythms of "Córdoba" to the album's closer, "Lepo," which straddles Latin jazz and fusion sounds, the compositions across *Swiss Jazz Orchestra & Guillermo Klein* form a cohesive whole. In particular, the Copelandesque ensemble piece "Hymn" demonstrates the ensemble's vibrancy and its feel for Klein's material, even though the tune's beauty is in its particular brand of subtlety.

—Denise Sullivan

Swiss Jazz Orchestra & Guillermo Klein: Córdoba; Riqueza Abandonada; Agua (Para Mantener); Manuel; Paredón; Patent Office (Ibernia); Machine & Emile; ... A Los Enemigos Del Sol; Es Infinita; Inside Zytglogge; Zytglogge II; Hymn; Lepo. (68:04)

Personnel: Guillermo Klein, Fender Rhodes; Adrian Pflugshaupt, alto saxophone, soprano saxophone, flute; Reto Suhner, alto saxophone, soprano saxophone, clarinet, flute; Cédric Gschwind, tenor saxophone, clarinet, flute; Jürg Bucher, tenor saxophone, clarinet, bass clarinet; Matthias Tschopp, baritone saxophone, bass clarinet; Dave Blaser, Johannes Walter, Lukas Thoeni, Thomas Kruchel, trumpet, flugelhorn; Vincent Lachat, Stefan Schlegel, Andreas Tschopp, trombone; Jan Schreiner, tuba; Samuel Leibold, guitar; Philip Henzi, piano; Lorenz Beyeler, bass; Rico Baumann, drums.

Ordering info: sunnysiderecords.com



Matt Mitchell Phalanx Ambassadors

PI 181

★★★★

The lack of horns in pianist Matt Mitchell's five-piece ensemble brings with it a certain attenuation—or at least that perception. It does not, however, lack intensity. The band cooks, and what's more, it cooks on some tangled, challenging ripples. But the softer tone colors—piano, bass, vibes, guitar, drums—don't let the listener off easy.

The first clue is the group's convoluted rhythmic forms. Drummer Kate Gentile lays out a polyrhythmic line on "Stretch Goal" that's

impossible to follow right out of the gate; that Mitchell, bassist Kim Cass and guitarist Miles Okazaki essentially hum along does not help. Inscrutable rhythms recur on "Taut Pry" and "Be Irreparable," when Okazaki, Mitchell and vibraphonist Patricia Brennan, respectively, play heads that actively oppose the pulses. If that's not warning enough, the many layers of counterpoint on "Phasic Haze Ramps," the album's 16-minute centerpiece, drive the point home. It begins with a collective improvisation, spontaneous patterns and rhythmic motifs lobbed between Mitchell and Brennan on one hand, Cass and Gentile on the other, with Okazaki drifting in between. Two minutes in, their lines converge before dissolving into improv again.

Studded with tidbits for the focused ear, *Phalanx Ambassadors* isn't always worth the assay; "Stretch Goal," for one, is more work than reward. But moments like the funky breakdown on "Zoom Romp" or faint woodwind-like backgrounds from Brennan and Okazaki on "Mind Aortal Cicatrix" repay the effort. There are some kinks to work out, but Mitchell is on to something.

—Michael J. West

Phalanx Ambassadors: Stretch Goal; Taut Pry; Zoom Romp; Phasic Haze Ramps; SSGG; Be Irreparable; Mind Aortal Cicatrix. (45:36)

Personnel: Matt Mitchell, piano, synthesizer; Kim Cass, bass; Kate Gentile, drums, percussion; Patricia Brennan, vibraphone, marimba; Miles Okazaki, guitar.

Ordering info: pirecordings.com

Nancy Kelly Remembering Mark Murphy

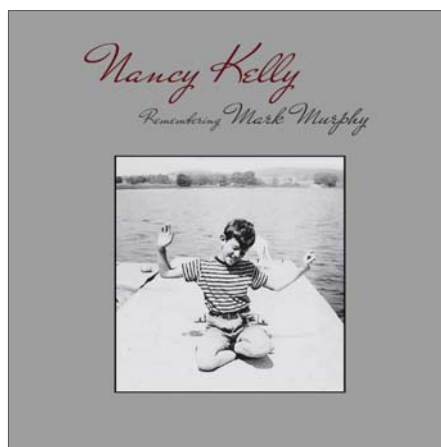
SUBCAT 001-19

★★★★

Mark Murphy was one of the most innovative, groundbreaking singers in the jazz world. A friend and mentor to Nancy Kelly, he passed away in 2015, and the singer's latest recording, *Remembering Mark Murphy*, is a heartfelt tribute to their friendship and his contributions to the genre.

Kelly's voice has an easy, swinging, mellow quality on this recording, as well as on her five previous albums. But unlike Murphy, she doesn't stray too far out, try to push boundaries or take chances.

She does break out a bit, though, on Oliver Nelson's "Stolen Moments," a tune Murphy wrote lyrics to. After playing lightly with the tune's syncopated melody, she really swings it with an expressive, rhythmic, free-spirited scat. In contrast is the deeply sentimental "Song For The Geese." Kelly's wistful vocals float over a rich, shimmering soundscape that enhances the melancholy feel of the lyric, and John DeMartino's piano solo flows like a glittering waterfall of notes. A hip, tight arrangement of Freddie Hubbard's "On The Red Clay," sung by Kelly in a clipped, staccato tone, is embellished with an exuberant



trumpet solo courtesy of Randy Brecker.

Remembering Mark Murphy isn't a groundbreaking or trendsetting recording. But it is a touching and thoughtfully conceived album meant to celebrate the career of a jazz luminary.

—Lily O'Brien

Remembering Mark Murphy: Empty Faces (Vera Cruz); Song For The Geese; Again; I'm Glad There Is You; On The Red Clay; Night Mood (Lembra); Stolen Moments; Body And Soul; Sunday In New York; This Could Be The Start Of Something Big. (51:09)

Personnel: Nancy Kelly, vocals; John DiMartino, piano, synthesizer; Randy Brecker, trumpet, flugelhorn; Bobby Militello, soprano saxophone, alto saxophone, flute; Paul Bollenback, guitar (3, 6, 9); Paul Meyers, acoustic guitar, (1, 2); Ed Howard, electric bass, acoustic bass; Peter Mack, bass, (10); Carmen Intorre Jr., drums; Steve Brown, guitar, conga (10).

Ordering info: subcat.net



THOSE WHO PLAY
THEM, KNOW.

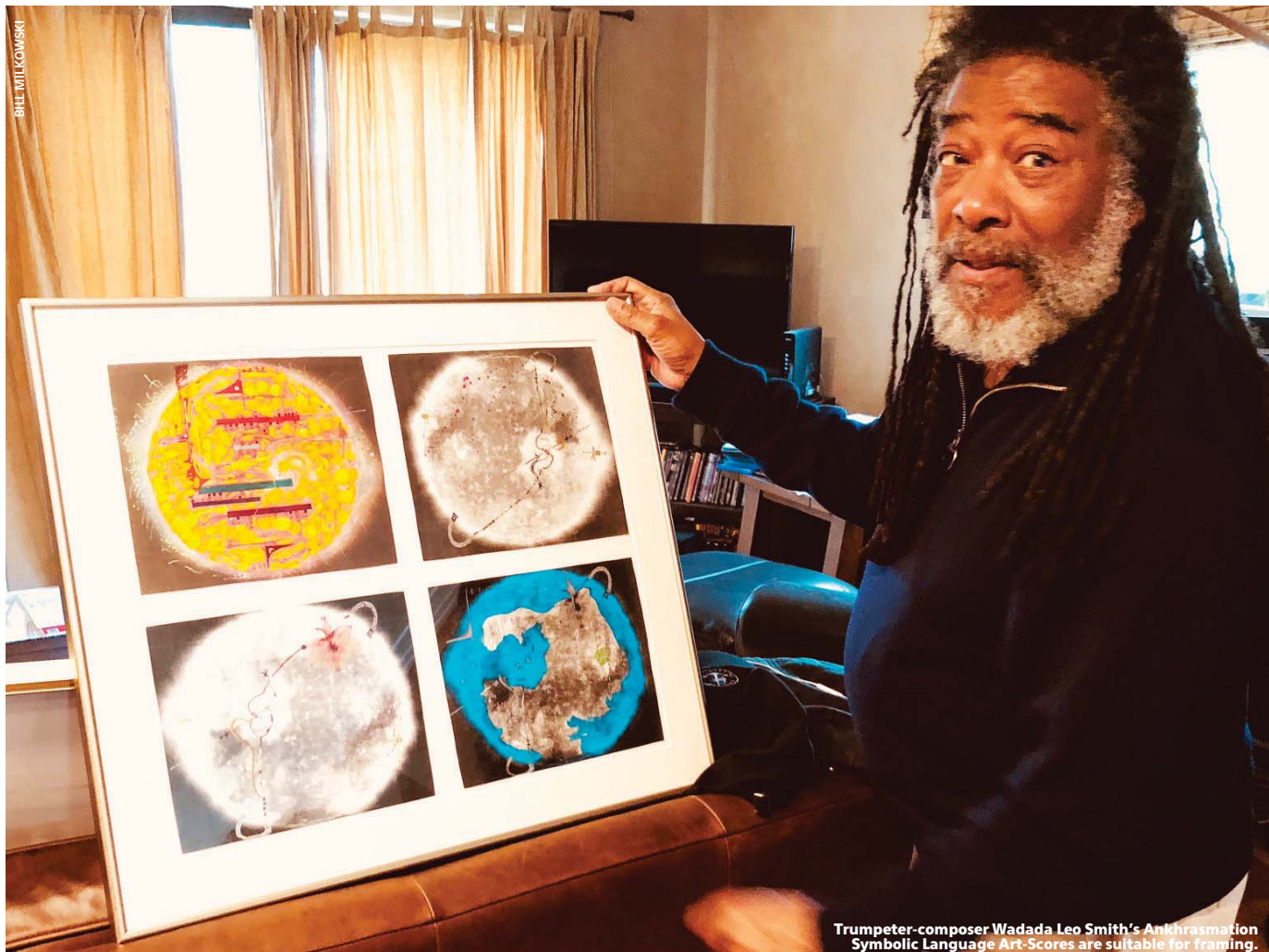
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Trumpeter-composer Wadada Leo Smith's *Ankhrasmation Symbolic Language Art-Scores* are suitable for framing.

Wadada Leo Smith's *Ankhrasmation Symbolic Language Art-Scores*

There was a moment back in 1965 when Wadada Leo Smith had a major breakthrough in how he envisioned organizing music. Up until that point, the trumpeter-composer-music theorist had been working with traditional notation. But a new idea came to him—he prefers to say that he discovered it, rather than suggest that he created it—touching off a quest that continues to this day.

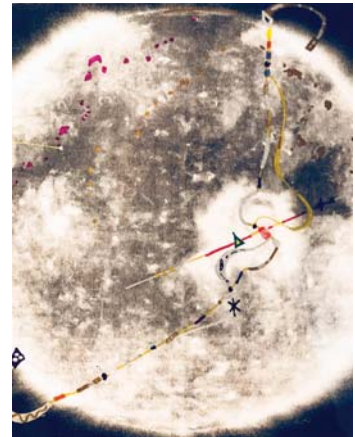
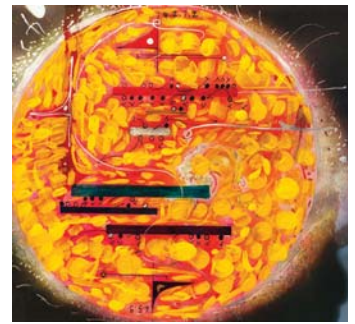
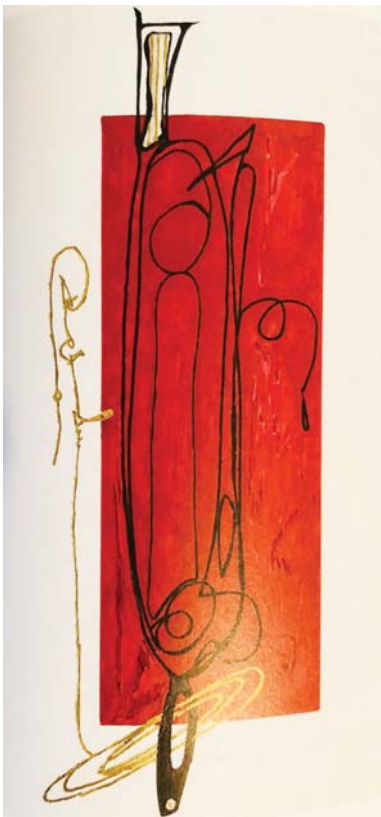
“I started looking for something I felt I needed to find, something that would match my inner feelings,” Smith recalled 52 years later. “I didn’t have a name for it; I just started to spontaneously draw things. I was searching for an image that could help me understand how to relate to those feelings and what

to do with it after I got it. And then I did hard research, going to libraries and looking through scores and books, trying to make sure that what I had drawn last week wasn’t there. And if I had found something similar to it, then, of course, I would’ve balled it up and threw it away because that would mean I was on the wrong track.”

Smith didn’t find anything that was remotely connected to his initial pen-and-ink drawings. The flashpoint came on his 1967 composition “The Bell,” a piece later performed for the first time on Anthony Braxton’s 1968 album, *3 Compositions Of New Jazz*, the alto saxophonist’s debut for the Chicago-based Delmark label. While that piece began

with traditional notation symbols—musical clef, quarter notes, whole notes, dotted eighth notes on the staff—the far-right side of that score introduced some unrecognizable symbols (see image 1 on page 92) that would form the basis of a bold new musical language that Smith has cultivated over the decades.

“I sat down to write some music and this thing just came out at the end of the piece. I wasn’t looking for anything at that moment, but it came to me. So that means that my intuitive self was still working while I’m actually doing my normal business of trying to write a piece of music. So this thing popped at the end and I thought, ‘What can I do with that?’ So I drew a box around it on the score and later



PHOTOGRAPHED BY BILL MILKOWSKI

Examples of Smith's current visual scores, done in a 3D notational system that resembles paintings. Several such pieces have been displayed in art galleries.

tried to explain it to the people in the ensemble, so that they could see that it was a special area and that maybe we can do something different with it."

That moment in the studio with Braxton, Muhal Richard Abrams and Leroy Jenkins marked the birth of a new musical language. "We recorded this piece, and then when we went to the booth to listen to the playback, when I heard this, I had a revelation. It showed me what this was, and I called them 'rhythm units,' and it showed me how to use them. It solidified the fact that in a rhythm unit, the sonic part of it is equal to silence. So this session ended up triggering in me a meaning which I could attach to this. It was the perfect forum for me to understand what it meant. It actually happened in real time, and it's been growing organically ever since then."

Smith's systemic musical language, which he dubbed "Ankhrasmatation," would manifest on four recordings through the 1970s for his own Kabell label, culminating in 1979's *Solo Music: Ahkreationvention*. From obscure dots and odd shapes on the page in pen-and-ink denoting velocity and density of notes and the amount of silence following each note, he gradually began incorporating colors into his scores. Early examples resembled a kind of subway map, a guide that only a few players could follow. And as Smith's vision evolved, the canvas began expanding, quite literally, until he arrived at three-dimensional acryl-

ic paintings with a complex system of tones and hues—directives for players regarding the notes and the use of space in between. Several of his Ankhrasmatation Symbolic Language Art-Scores were framed and put on display as art pieces, though the composer maintains that they exist only as musical scores. The Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago presented the first comprehensive exhibition of Smith's Ankhrasmatation scores in October 2015. The following year, his scores were also featured in exhibitions at the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles, the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts in Michigan and the Kadist gallery in San Francisco. In April of this year, Smith put his Ankhrasmatation Symbolic Language Art-Scores on display during his annual Create Festival in New Haven, Connecticut, where he has resided since 2015.

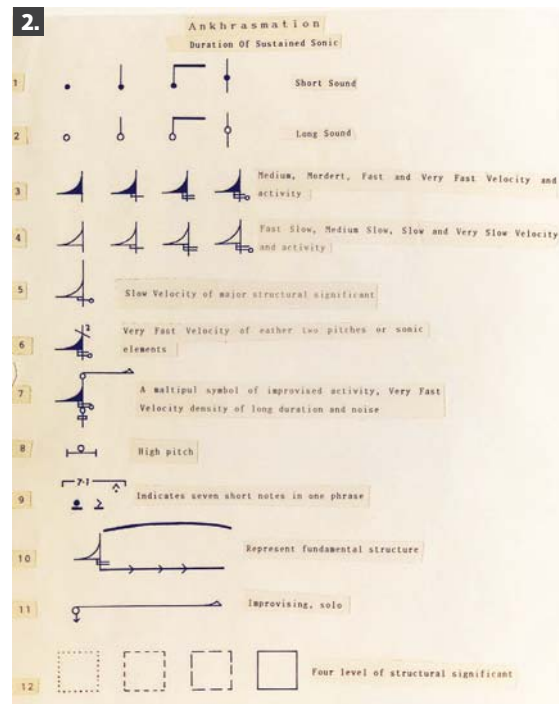
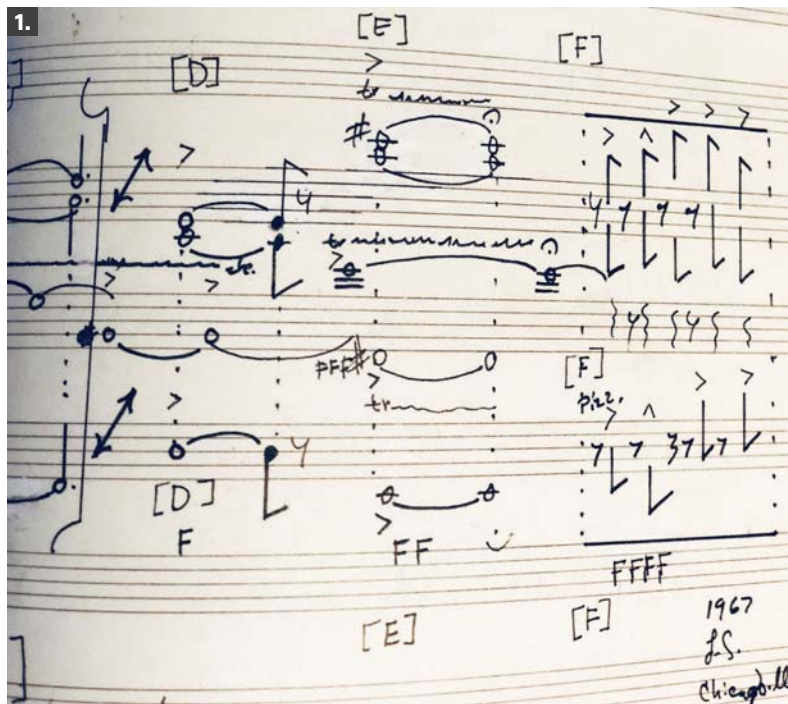
A visit to Smith's New Haven home, where several of his visual scores are stored, can be a totally mind-blowing experience for the uninitiated. "My mind's blown, too," laughed the avant-garde icon, who was one of three finalists for the 2013 Pulitzer Prize for his civil rights opus *Ten Freedom Summers*, released as a four-CD set on Cuneiform. "Only the blown minds can see!"

Born on Dec. 18, 1941, in Leland, Mississippi, near the birthplaces of blues greats Albert King and Little Milton, Smith became involved with Delta blues at age 13,

performing with his stepfather, bluesman Alex Wallace. He received his formal music education from the U.S. military band program in 1963, the Sherwood School of Music from 1967 to '69 and Wesleyan University from 1975 to '76. A prolific composer who has released more than 50 albums as a leader on labels including ECM, Moers, Black Saint, Tzadik, Pi Recordings, TUM, Leo and Cuneiform, Smith has been a tirelessly creative, eternally searching spirit for more than 50 years. His motto, of sorts, is emblazoned on his website (wadadaleosmith.com): "What we discover is right in front of us, and also enclosed inside of our hearts, just waiting for us to realize and accept our presence on this planet. What defines all of us as human beings is the inspiration and knowledge to make coherent choices, informed through science, art, and authentic spiritual practice to develop a genuine care for others and the world we live in."

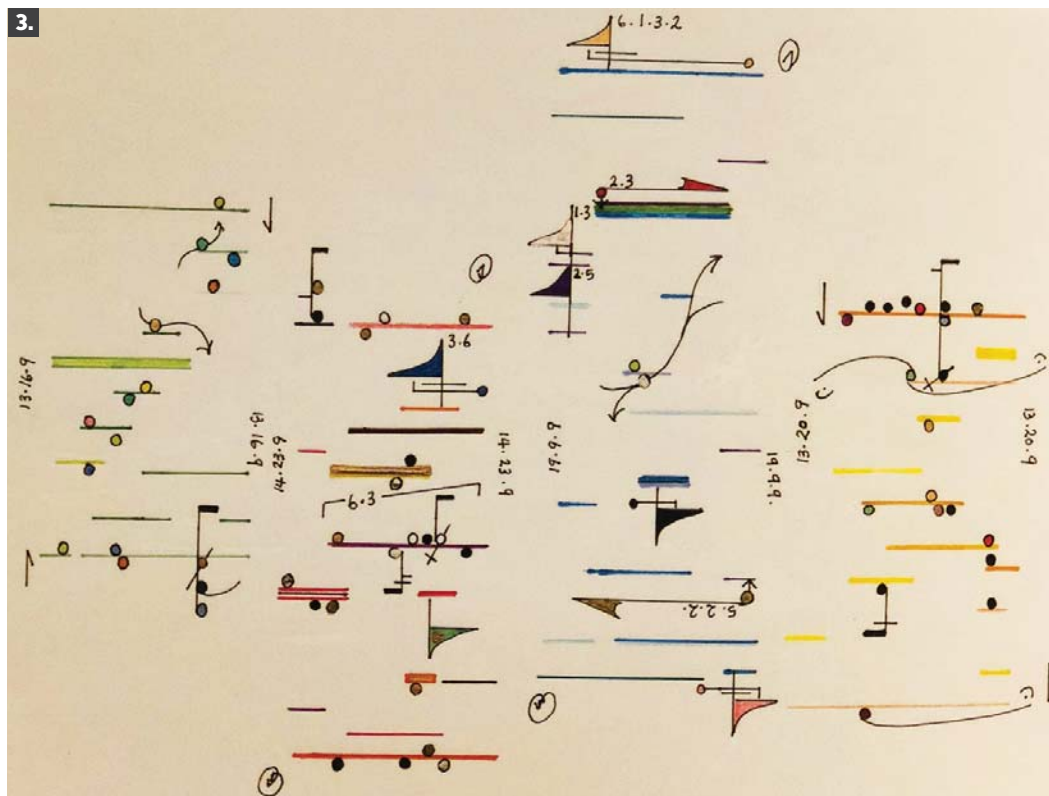
Regarding his striking visual scores, which he unveiled to a curious visitor, Smith said, "I am a visual artist but I make a distinction between a painting and a score. And I actually say that a score is more valuable than a painting because it exists on two levels: visual and audio. And the audio part of it can be done with only certain musicians who can actually read the score. So it can be played multiple times and it still represents that one artwork.

"A lot of people define them as graphic



The evolution of Wadada Leo Smith's Ankhrasmation Symbolic Language Art-Scores:

1. The first instance of Smith's new form of music notation can be seen on the right side of this manuscript page from his 1967 composition "The Bell."
2. A chart outlining the notational system for Smith's Ankhrasmation Symbolic Language Art-Scores.
3. Colors are introduced to Smith's system.
4. A specific piece of music retaining some of the notation symbols Smith developed.
5. Smith's more recent notations embrace a three-dimensional approach.



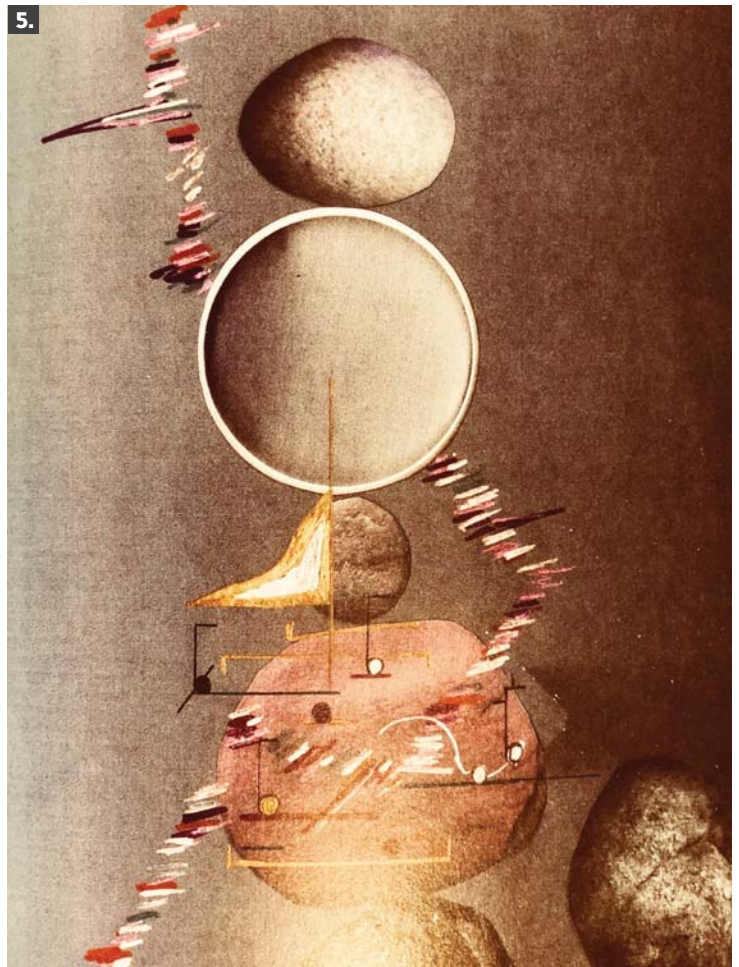
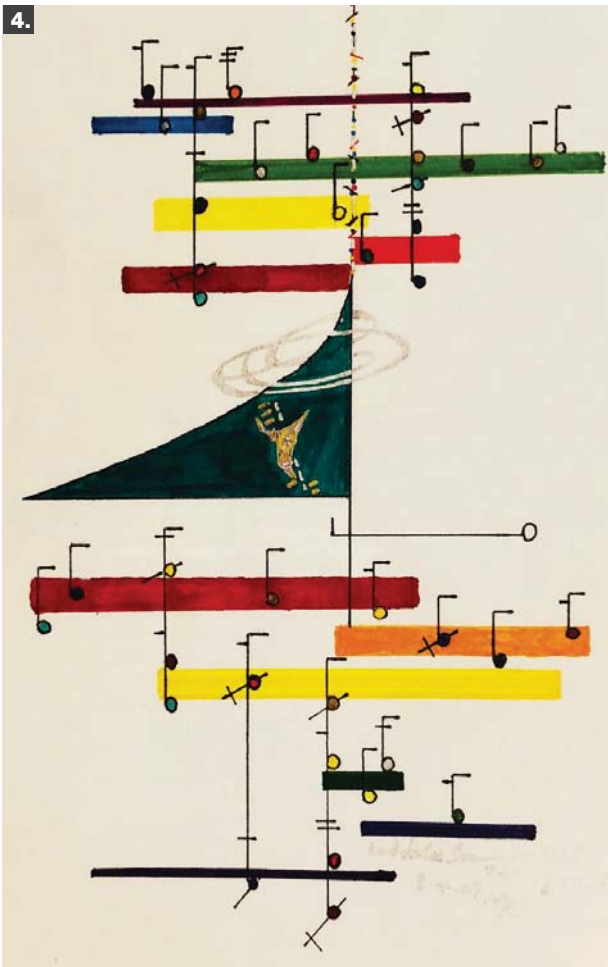
scores," he continued. "I do not. I define mine as a language score. And I didn't create it; I discovered it. And I discovered it through meditation and inspiration and a desire to find something that would be able to express what I felt as a composer. And the beautiful thing about it is ... and that's how I know it's a discovery ... it continues to grow."

The evolution of Smith's visual scores from pen-and-ink to full-color acrylic paint-

ings is like the difference between stark cave paintings and Salvador Dali's surrealist works. "There has been a transition," he explained. "The original scores depicted velocity units broken into four sets. And each one has a certain way of how you think about the amount of materials inside of them. So we're dealing with density and space and ratios."

By 1972, with the injection of color into his scores, Smith's idea had morphed into a

more codified language. By 2010, he began working with acrylics and xerox-manipulations of his paintings, making incremental leaps until finally arriving at the astounding mixed-media, three-panel scores that now hang in galleries as pieces of art. Some of Smith's images were triggered by studying *The Egyptian Book of the Dead* and books of hieroglyphics, but the exact meaning of his visual scores remains a mystery to all but a select few.



PHOTOGRAPHED BY BILL MILKOWSKI

“You construct the meaning based on your explanation of what that is,” he explains in cryptic, shamanistic fashion. “And the same thing with the players. Each player has to construct an invisible meaning of their routing through this. And the routing that they construct is based off of two things: their own research and their own articulation of it. And neither one of them is allowed to be shared with anybody in the ensemble. All the research and all the routing that people do is personal stuff, and they are asked to keep it to themselves, because I don’t want them to influence the performance. If you have three people reading a score and one tells his or her version to somebody else, then you only have two people there. I want three unique interpretations of the score. Every single part of this language is open to personal interpretation. Once a person learns one velocity set, one rhythm unit, they are able to play an Ankhration score. And, of course, their knowledge becomes wider and wider through experience.”

Currently, only a handful of musicians on the planet can successfully negotiate one of Smith’s visual scores. Four of them constitute the RedKoral Quartet (violinists Shalini Vijayan and Mona Tian, violist Andrew

McIntosh and cellist Ashley Walters), which appeared on Smith’s 2019 release, *Rosa Parks: Pure Love* (TUM), and also performed that seven-piece oratorio April 26–28 at The Kitchen in New York.

“The most adept performance of these Ankhration scores is by my string quartet RedKoral,” Smith said. “They’ve been playing my music from 12 to 15 years. Three of them I knew when they were students at CalArts, but not a single one studied with me. But because I started to have my music played around L.A., they began to play in ensembles that performed my music. And gradually I began to bring them into this stuff and show them how it goes.

“The biggest transformation for them was the performance of *Ten Freedom Summers*. It’s six-and-a-half hours of music live, and the recording was four-and-a-half hours. We did eight days of rehearsal, plus three days of performance, one day off and then two days of recording. So those people grew tremendously over those two weeks. It was total immersion. And now they play this perfectly. There are other ensembles that have varying degrees of possibilities, but they’re nowhere near as adept as this RedKoral string quartet. They speak this language fluently.”

Others like pianist Eunhye Jeong and experimental electronics sound designer Velibor Pedevski (aka Hardedge), both of whom performed at the 2019 Create Festival, have become adept at interpreting Smith’s musical language. “Velibor and I often joke and say, “This language is for all the aliens that are coming from the new planets.” When it’s suggested that one day a group of Martian musicians might be playing Smith’s visual scores, his eyes brightened and he said with a wide grin, “Yes, yes, yes, yes!”

Smith currently is working on a book of this language in collaboration with Nina Sun Eidsheim, a former student and author of *Sensing Sound: Singing and Listening as Vibrational Practice* (Duke University Press), which radically re-envisioning how we think about sound, music and listening.

“We’re doing a comprehensive book that is scholarly based, poetically based and creatively based, and will have a definitive definition of all of this stuff.”

DB

Wadada Leo Smith and Vijay Iyer will perform music from their 2016 duo album, *A Cosmic Rhythm With Each Stroke*, at the ECM Records at 50 celebration at Jazz at Lincoln Center on Nov. 2. Smith will also perform “Tastalun (Tribute To Lester Bowie And Kenny Wheeler),” a solo-trumpet-plus-soundtrack piece that first appeared on his 1979 ECM album, *Divine Love*.



DENNIS CONNORS PHOTOGRAPHY

How To Develop a Motif While Improvising

Modern jazz educators typically bombard students with exercises to practice making changes, scales to play over chords, extended arpeggios to memorize, traditional jazz licks to try, quotes from other melodies to incorporate, solo transcriptions to write, instructional videos to watch and so forth. With so many different things to think about, it can be a challenge to find the time to develop an interesting and melodically rewarding solo.

A small melodic motif—a short succession of notes producing a single impression—can be a valuable tool to add to your improviser toolbox. In my three decades of teaching improvisation, I always show my students how to incorporate motivic development into their solos. I often start with a short three- or four-

note melodic motif.

The set of changes I will be using to demonstrate this concept is from “All The Things You Are,” a frequently played jazz standard. Let’s take a look at Motif A, a three-note motif shown on the opposite page. The notes happen to be the seventh, root and fifth of an A_b major chord, and A_b is the tonal key center of the tune. This motif, which is commonly referred to as a “shape,” is an ascending half step and perfect fifth. This shape happens to be the bass line of the intro presented in retrograde inversion. The first motif can be played in a total of five additional variations (see Motif A Variations).

For now, let’s stick with the initial motif and use it over the first eight measures of “All The Things You Are” (see Example 1).

Note that the interval of the fifth can change from perfect to diminished to correspond to the changes, as in measures 3, 7 and 8. Also, it should be noted that the motif can start on various nonchord tones, as in measures 3, 4, 5 and 6. The first notes of the motif in these measures are called approach notes (i.e. notes below or above a chord tone).

Example 2 shows the same motif developed rhythmically and phrased like a solo. Now, go back and play this motif in the other five variations of Motif A. Just one small motif has an infinite number of ways you can use it, simply by changing the direction of notes, the rhythm that you use to play the notes and the chord tones to which you want to apply the motif.

Before moving on to the next two exam-

ples, take a look at Motif B, another three-note motif. The intervallic structure of this motif is a descending perfect fourth and a whole step. Again, there are five variations (see Motif B Variations). In measure 3 of Example 3, the intervallic structure adjusts for the harmony as the second changes to a half-step. Also, measures 5, 6 and 7 give us an additional melodic element by playing the motif in ascending minor thirds, and the motif in measure 6 emphasizes upper extensions of the G7 chord (flat 9, sharp 5 and sharp 11).

Example 4 is a fleshing out of Motif B using jazz rhythms and one possible way to phrase this shape.

Motif C is a four-note motif that happens to be the first four notes of a half-whole diminished scale. I tend to use this one a lot, and it has a significant number of uses over many types of chords, especially the dominant seventh. With this four-note motif, we now have 23 additional variations of the same notes. Motif C Variations shows just a few examples of these.

Let's use Motif C on the changes in Example 5. The first note of the motif acts as an approach note to a chord tone, which gives us some great color tones. Note that the arrival tone in measure 3 of Example 5 is the sharp 9 of the E \flat 7 chord, and the last second of the motif is a major second between measures 3 and 4 to accommodate the A \flat 7.

Example 6 is one possible way you could use this motif with bebop phrasing.

Think of the three- and four-note motifs as the Swiss Army knife in your improviser toolbox. It's always challenging to add something new to your improvising lexicon, but as with any new idea, it will take some time to get this concept under your fingers.

I've been working at this concept for decades, and it never bores me. Often I will take a small motif from the melody of whatever tune I am working on and see how long I can solo using a shape, bending and twisting it to fit the harmony, or using it chromatically to get to a cadence. Try to use a motif over eight bars, and gradually work up to a full chorus.

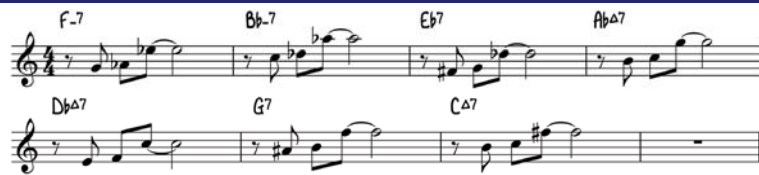
As with any new concept, it's always best to listen to what the jazz masters have done. Think of how important John Coltrane's four-note motif (tonic, second, third and fifth of a major scale) was when he played it over many of the chords in "Giant Steps." Listen to Lee Konitz and Warne Marsh take a small shape and twist it over a standard set of changes. Thelonious Monk often used motifs from the whole-tone scale in his improvisations. Every great player knows how to manipulate a small shape and use it during their solos. Motivic development is an incredibly useful tool in composition, so why not extend the concept into your own improvisation? The possibilities are endless. **DB**

Guitarist Pete McCann has been an integral part of the New York jazz scene for more than 25 years. Last year he released his sixth recording as a leader, *Pay For It On The Other Side* (McCannic Music). A sought-after sideman, McCann has played guitar on more than 100 recordings. He has performed and/or recorded with Kenny Wheeler, Dave Liebman, Lee Konitz, Patti Austin, Brian Blade, Grace Kelly, Bobby Previte, the Mahavishnu Project and the Maria Schneider Orchestra. As a commercial recording artist, he has worked on projects for CNN, BBC, *Sesame Street* and IBM. McCann received a bachelor of music degree from the University of North Texas and has taught at New York University, The New School, City College of New York and the Maine Jazz Camp. Visit him online at petemccann.com.

Motif A Motif A Variations



Example 1



Example 2



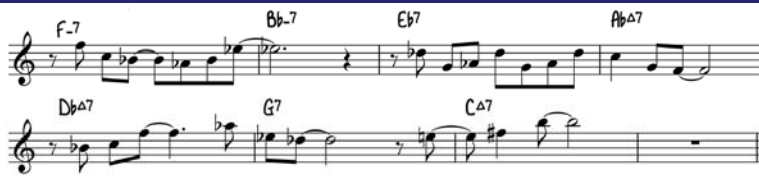
Motif B Motif B Variations



Example 3



Example 4



Motif C Motif C Variations



Example 5



Example 6





Jon Irabagon

Jon Irabagon's Tenor Saxophone Solo on 'Emotional Physics/The Things'

On “Emotional Physics/The Things,” from Jon Irabagon’s 2018 album *Dr. Quixotic’s Traveling Exotics* (Irabagast), the tenor saxophonist plays his solo over the chord changes to “All The Things You Are.” To make this familiar progression more interesting, he’s added an extra half-measure to every four-bar phrase. The 36-bar form with its nine four-bar phrases is the main tripping point for most musicians when learning this standard, but in this situation, it’s the equivalent of a 40-and-a-half-bar form. This makes the form long enough that we are only able to present the first chorus here, presented in concert key and transposed one octave up.

Irabagon opens up with a four-note group:

the R-2-3-5 of the Fm chord, which resolves conveniently on the root of the next chord on the downbeat of the next measure. His use of four-note groups gets much more creative from here.

Measure 6 also exhibits a R-2-3-5 group, but Irabagon is playing an E \flat group on an A \flat maj7 chord. This does emphasize the upper parts of the A \flat chord (R-2-3-5 of E \flat equals 5-6-7-9 of A \flat), so it doesn’t sound “out.” But because four-note groups so clearly define harmonies, it doesn’t sound like an A \flat maj13; it sounds like an E \flat chord superimposed onto an A \flat chord.

The second half of bar 7 is more outside. Starting with the “and” of 2, we hear the same four-note group in D major. This doesn’t fit the

harmony at all (G7). It is the V of the underlying G7, which could make it work as a secondary dominant, but Irabagon never resolves it to the G. (Also, notice that from bar 6, he’s playing these groups descending from E \flat to D, subtly leading toward the C major that’s approaching.)

After a chromatic descending line, the next bar also shows something equally ingenious. From beat 3 there is a R-3-4-5 group on Em, which is the 3-5-6-7 of the Cmaj7. But if we start from the “and” of 3, it’s a R-2-3-5 on G, which is the 5-6-7-9 of Cmaj7. He’s overlapping four-note groups. On the same chord, the second half of measure 9 is a descending group (5-3-2-R) on Dm, the second of C. It’s like he’s playing a chord progres-

sion in C over the C chord.

So far, aside of that very first lick, he hasn't played any groups on the root of the chord. A sort of exception happens crossing the bar line from measures 40 to 41. It's R-2-3-5 in root position again, but it starts on B natural (since it's on a B minor chord) and ends with D \flat and F, fitting the B \flat minor chord. The group has been altered to fit the harmony as it crosses the bar line, making it sound like it's not even a four-note group. Also worth noting: The second half of this measure (bar 41) has another four-note group on the fifth, which also reappears again in bar 43, once more on the V of the A \flat maj7. This measure ends with another R-2-3-5 in root position, just like how he started this solo. That this is the final chord before the turnaround provides a sense of completeness to this chorus.

And what about those 2/4 measures? Those could trip someone up, especially on a chord progression that most of us could solo on in our sleep. Since the half-bars are just continuations of the previous chord, for the most part Irabagon just blasts through them, continuing strings of eighth notes on the way to

the next chord (as in measures 5, 15, 20, 35 and 40). He pulls this off so smoothly that the listener could almost miss the fact that there are two extra beats per phrase.

The exceptions to this are equally telling. Bar 10 is one such case, where Irabagon lands on the first beat of the measure, resolving to the fifth of the chord. This calls attention to the half-bar. Bar 25 he leaves silent, but since this silence extends through the following bar (and came from a half note), it once again obscures the extra two beats.

And the oddest one is measure 30, where Irabagon resolves quite strongly to the fifth on the second beat of the measure. This would make the odd phrase sound more awkward, except that he continues the syncopation into the next measure, once again making the half-measure less noticeable. The entire band does a great job playing through these bars, so even though Irabagon has warped a well-heeled standard, the alterations don't sound awkward. **DB**

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

THE PLAYERS HAVE SPOKEN

(In joyful, colorful language we can't repeat here.)



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-David Sanborn
Six Time Grammy Award Winner



Photograph by Melanie Futorian

Bari Woodwind Raptor Mouthpiece

Effortless Playability, Heavy Metal Power

Bari Woodwind has added a new line of metal saxophone mouthpieces called the Raptor, currently available for alto and tenor. Having previously play-tested Bari's Infinity line of saxophone mouthpieces, I looked forward to checking out the Raptor, which benefits from CNC machining and boasts effortless playability, remarkable response through all registers and great projection.

My time with the Raptor tenor saxophone mouthpiece (size 8 tip opening)—the heaviest tenor mouthpiece I've ever held—was rewarding and revealing. It sports a gleaming finish of rhodium, a type of metal plating that protects it from being scratched or tarnished and enhances tonal color.

I first play-tested the Raptor on my primary gigging instrument, a Selmer Mark VI tenor, outfitted with a Rovner 1RL alto ligature and a #2½ Vandoren Java (Red Box) reed. Playing the Raptor, I felt confident in its response at all volume levels. Soft tones and subtones in the low range were very easy to control. My altissimo range spoke with strength and accuracy. Tone quality was rich, whether pushing a large volume of air or playing more delicate passages. Articulation was extremely comfortable.

The Raptor is a very free-blowing mouthpiece that gives a full sound using minimal exertion and rewards increased air flow with wonderful projection. It was very relaxing to play it in both big band and small group performance situations. When playing in a loud rock band, the

Raptor produced a desirable sizzle and gave my horn the capacity to match the sonic intensity of the intimidating electric instruments and amps surrounding me on stage.

For an additional play-test back in the practice room, I tried the Raptor on my vintage Conn Chu Berry tenor, which responded in a manner similar to that of the Mark VI. When I added a synthetic reed to the setup, the Chu Berry projected with a level of power that I didn't think a tenor was capable of producing. Newly inspired by my experience with the Raptor, I might bring this old classic horn out of semi-retirement for my next rock band performance.

Available in size 6* (.095), 7 (.100), 7* (.105), 8 (.110) and *8 (.115) tip openings, Bari Woodwind's Raptor mouthpieces are recommended for serious players looking for a responsive mouthpiece with tremendous power. —Bruce Gibson

bariwoodwind.com



Fender American Acoustasonic Telecaster

Acoustic Power, Electric Ease

When Leo Fender introduced his first solid-body designs in the late 1940s, he revolutionized the industry. With the Telecaster and later the Stratocaster, Fender quickly became a leader in the world of electrified instruments, setting the benchmark for many others to follow. Although the Fender name has become synonymous with electric instruments, the company also has been offering acoustic guitars since 1963.

In 1989, Fender offered up its first “hybrid” acoustic-electric model, the Santa Rosa. Striving to create an acoustic sound with an electric feel, Fender went on to produce several hybrids over the years. Now, the company has unveiled its latest entry into the acoustic-electric arena: the Acoustasonic Telecaster, an American-made slim-bodied, fully-hollow guitar capable of alternating between rich acoustic tones and twanging electric sounds at the flip of a switch.

The Acoustasonic is Fender's most innovative acoustic-electric hybrid to date. With a goal of creating a truly modern acoustic guitar, the process began with a unique body design that utilizes a 1.75-inch thin body and custom-tuned sound port to maximize acoustic resonance. Fender refers to this as its Stringed Instrument Resonance System. Mahogany is used for the body and neck, with Lutz spruce for the top, which further adds to the acoustic vibe of this guitar. The body shape and headstock design definitely borrow from the Telecaster, but it weighs in at less than 5 pounds, making it extremely comfortable to hold. The beveled arm contour is another nice touch that adds to the instrument's playability.

As cool as the design is, it's the electronics that really make this guitar sing, and there is a significant amount of technology that has gone into the Acoustasonic Telecaster. The guitar has both an under-saddle piezo built in to the bridge and a magnetic bridge pickup mounted into the top. These two systems, along with a Z-Axis body pickup and powerful DSP effects, make up the Acoustasonic's Acoustic Engine. In order to design a state-of-the-art pickup system, Fender enlisted the help of Fishman, which also provided the acoustic guitar modeling images.

With so much going on under the hood, the Acoustasonic is surprisingly simple to use with a nicely streamlined set of controls. To keep things simple, Fender uses a five-way selector switch combined with a blend knob to access the 10 onboard voices. Each switch position can call up a voice pair, two separate images that can be selected by rotating the blend knob fully to the left for one or fully right for the other. The voice pairs even can be blended together by partially rotating the knob. According to Fender, a lot of care went into selecting the best voice combinations: rosewood dreadnaught/rosewood auditorium; maple small body/mahogany dreadnaught; sitka spruce/rosewood dreadnaught; mahogany dreadnaught/Fender electric; and Fender clean electric/Fender fat electric.

The Acoustasonic features a preamp powered by a USB rechargeable internal battery that will run for 20 hours; an indicator light will warn you when it is down to 1 hour. I ran the guitar through several acoustic amps, direct to a P.A. via an acoustic preamp and also through a standard electric guitar amp. I felt the best sound came from the acoustic preamp, which really projected the acoustic guitar images. The choice of images, along with blending options, provides a ton of options for the player. Overall, the acoustic images are very close to the sound of a plugged-in piezo-equipped guitar, as opposed to the true acoustic sound of an acoustic through a microphone. However, it does sound quite convincing and there are many who actually prefer this type of tone on stage. I found that having a good EQ can really help in fine-tuning the tone. Acoustic amps work quite well with the Acoustasonic, and it sounds great when connected to a full P.A. system. Playing through a standard tube amp works fairly well, too, but the acoustic sound is a bit thinner and not as convincing as with the direct preamp or acoustic amp; the electric Telecaster tones, however, came through much more clearly in a tube-amp configuration. The choice between amp types comes down to what is more important to your sound, the acoustic or electric.

The Acoustasonic Telecaster comes equipped with phosphor bronze strings. Changing to a different string type also can have a significant impact on overall tone and feel.

The American Acoustasonic Telecaster is a highly versatile guitar that can straddle the line between acoustic and electric and will fit into a variety of musical scenarios.—Keith Baumann

fender.com

Powell Sonaré PS-905

Graceful Warmth, Crisp Response

For the flute player whose skills have progressed past the potential of their first instrument, the cost of an advanced flute is often a daunting hurdle to overcome. More than 15 years ago Powell Flutes, known for its professional level instruments, introduced the Sonaré model, providing an affordable solution by offering an instrument that placed a professional Powell headjoint atop an intermediate flute body. The latest Sonaré flute, the PS-905, is the first model in the series that Powell singles out as “professional.”

The PS-905 is a hand-finished instrument that features a sterling silver body with a French open-hole design, pointed arms, 10-karat white gold springs and a 9-karat Aurumite barrel. A major highlight of the flute is its sterling silver hand-cut Powell Signature II K Style headjoint, which combines the 9-karat Aurumite lip plate from the Powell Philharmonic headjoint with Powell's Signature series cut.

The PS-905 uses Straubinger Phoenix pads. With better quality, stability and sealing than simple felt pads, Straubinger Phoenix pads are not only more economical than traditional Straubinger pads, they also function well for players with a harder touch.

Powell's 9-karat Aurumite is a patented combination of an outer layer of rose gold and an inner layer of sterling silver. The PS-905's solid-silver headjoint, with its Aurumite lip plate and crown, is an attractive design topping the Aurumite barrel and solid-silver body. The instrument makes a compelling aesthetic statement even before it's played.

I performed on the Sonaré PS-905 in a variety of situations to get a feel for how it would respond in different musical contexts.

In a duo configuration with a keyboard player, I performed arrangements of Vivaldi, Telemann, Stamitz and Bach. The flute, in tune across the registers, responded with a graceful warmth when warranted, and a crisp response when required.

On another gig, I played jazz standards (and an occasional pop hit) with a jazz quartet. The flute didn't balk when pushed for more volume or more texture, and could soar when soaring seemed suitable. The PS-905's key mechanism proved to be well-fit, fine and fluid throughout.

So much of a flute's sound is shaped by the headjoint. While I was happy with the PS-905's power, projection and response, I discovered that I personally preferred playing the instrument with the headjoint I normally use, an older Powell 2100 Q.

Every flute, even within the same make and model, plays differently. And every headjoint, even within the same make and model, plays differently. If you're looking to purchase a more sophisticated flute, then you would be well advised to try several different instruments, and different headjoints, and find what works best for you. The good news is there are many wonderful professional and semi-professional flutes available for players to audition. Powell, with its new Sonaré PS-905, has created another fine candidate. It might be just what you are looking for. (Options to consider include C or B foot, inline G or offset G, split E mechanism, C# trill mechanism and full Aurumite headjoint.) —Michael Levin

powellflutes.com



1. Studio in a Mic

Antelope Audio's Edge Go is a studio-grade, large-diaphragm condenser USB microphone that includes precise software emulations of many of the world's most iconic mics and studio effects processors. To start recording, simply plug the Edge Go directly into a Mac or PC and launch the included software application. No preamp is required.

More info: antelopeaudio.com

2. Flexible Reference Monitors

Dynaudio's Core series of high-end professional reference speakers include Core 7 (a two-way monitor) and Core 59 (a three-way monitor). Both models feature analog and digital inputs and support up to 24-bit/192kHz signals. The Core series is designed for flexible positioning, with four indentations on each side and a set of Dynaudio-developed pads to fit them.

More info: dynaudio.com

3. Bright, Immense Crash

Paiste's 2002 Extreme Crash cymbals feature a bright attack and resolve into a warm, immense crash that cuts through the sound of the ensemble. Particular attention was paid to making the cymbals durable through the application of specially developed design and construction principles. Paiste's 2002 Extreme Crash cymbals are available in 18-, 19- and 20-inch sizes.

More info: paiste.com

4. Class A Tube Tone

The Supro Blues King 12 combo amplifier captures the vintage Supra tone of the 1950s and '60s. Its single-ended Class A tube-power amp provides the raw tonal characteristics and touch sensitivity of mid-century combos while delivering a full 15 watts of 6L6 tube power. Front-end gain in the Supro Blues King 12 is supplied by a 12AX7 tube preamp and a FET-driven fat boost function.

More info: suprousa.com

5. 10-inch Djembe

Gon Bops has added a 10-inch djembe model to its Mariano line. Like the company's 12-inch djembe, the 10-inch version is crafted from durian wood for extreme lightness and strength, with a compact top ring that's designed to fit snugly to the player's body. The instrument delivers strong bass and high, cutting slaps.

More info: gonbops.com

6. Pedalboard Solution

The Super Switcher from Electro-Harmonix offers a solution for guitarists who are tired of tap-dancing around their pedalboards to access various effects during live performance. It moves all of the player's pedals to the front row while delivering one-button control. Ideal for guitarists using the four-cable method, the Super Switcher makes it easy to properly route effects that should go in front of an amp and those that work best as part of an effects loop. Users can efficiently organize presets into banks that are easy to recall.

More info: ehx.com





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Lawson Roof (foreground) and other music majors at The School for Music Vocations perform during a May 10 recital.

SMV AT SWCC

Self-Reliance the Goal for Students at SMV

IN JAZZ DEPARTMENTS AT UNIVERSITIES throughout the United States, administrators face a big challenge: how to impart the realities of the contemporary music business to students while still covering the core curriculum of a performance program. The School for Music Vocations at Southwestern Community College in Creston, Iowa, has been covering that ground for 27 years, grooming its graduates to be complete musicians who are able to merge genres, manage their own careers and function confidently in the studio.

The school and its two-year, skills-based program were the brainchild of veteran choral conductor and music educator Phil Mattson, who led it for 18 years. Mattson believed that music students needed to focus on self-discipline first, and that broad musical skills and understanding relationships were the keys to success. As a result, SMV has achieved great results channeling its graduates into highly competitive, four-year programs.

“We’re like a boot camp,” said Dr. Jeremy Fox, who now leads the program. “A lot of our students go on to institutions like the Frost School of Music, Western Michigan University and California State University, Long Beach, and they kick butt.”

Fox said one important sign of the program’s success is the fact that its placement track record is high, despite not maintaining so-called articulation agreements (formal transfer partnerships) with other institutions.

“Our students are our best form of outreach,” Fox said. “They leave here with a ton of jazz harmony experience, the ability to play both jazz and classical pieces, recording studio skills

and knowledge of how to run a rehearsal.”

“Because our curriculum is skills-based, our students are constantly demonstrating what they are learning in the classroom,” said faculty member Lucas Mattson, who followed in his father’s footsteps by specializing in vocal jazz and arranging.

Mattson said SMV’s 30 to 35 students learn to be accountable to themselves, something they achieve by delivering about 40 performances each year.

“Add to [the frequent performances] the fact that our students’ class load is almost entirely music related, and you get a system that quickly moves students to become self-reliant musicians,” Mattson said.

The program, which grants an associate of applied arts degree in professional music, offers a total of 69 credits for courses that include music theory, jazz piano, studio engineering and conducting.

SMV also distinguishes itself by bringing jazz and classical together. “Our students get the best of both worlds with a curriculum split 50/50,” Mattson said. “They learn the technique of classical music, and they get to immerse themselves in the complex harmony of jazz. Learning both genres gives our students a broad base of skills that cross-pollinate and create a more diverse and marketable musician.”

After two years of mixing Ravel and Brubeck, and spending all their class time immersed in music, Fox said SMV graduates are ready to face the modern realities of a life in music, whether they head into a four-year program or out into the world: “We give them a running start.”

—James Hale



JIMMY KATZ

Ethan Iverson is among the NEC faculty members who will pay tribute to pianist Cecil Taylor on Oct. 18.

50 Years of Jazz Ed: New England Conservatory is celebrating the 50th anniversary of its Jazz Studies department. To commemorate the anniversary of the first fully accredited jazz program at a music conservatory, NEC will host Jazz50, a yearlong series of concerts and events featuring many of the school’s distinguished jazz alumni, faculty, students and special guests. Events in Boston will include concerts by the NEC Jazz Orchestra with Alan Pasqua and Antonio Sanchez (Oct. 17); a tribute to NEC alumnus and pianist Cecil Taylor (1929–2018), featuring Matthew Shipp, Bruce Brubaker, Dan Tepfer, Ran Blake, Ethan Iverson and Joe Morris (Oct. 18); and a residency (Nov. 3–7) and concert (Nov. 7) by Luciana Souza. Festivities also will include concerts in New York in 2020: Fred Hersch, Donny McCaslin, Billy Hart and Cecil McBee at Jazz Standard (March 19); Hersch and Dominique Eade at Jazz Standard (March 20); and Darcy James Argue’s Secret Society and the NEC Alumni Big Band at the Sheen Center (March 21). necmusic.edu

Broom to NIU: Guitarist Bobby Broom has been appointed assistant professor of music at Northern Illinois University School of Music. He will teach jazz guitar and improvisation in the school’s Jazz Studies program. Broom holds a master’s degree in jazz pedagogy from Northwestern University, and has taught at the University of Hartford’s Hart School of Music, DePaul University, North Park University and Chicago’s American Conservatory of Music. niu.edu/music

Dr. Wilson: During its June 2 commencement exercises, Knox College in Galesburg, Illinois, granted an honorary doctorate degree to jazz drummer and bandleader Matt Wilson. A native of Knoxville, Illinois, Wilson has released 13 albums as a leader and was named 2018 Musician of the Year by the Jazz Journalists Association. He has led workshops and master classes around the world and is a member of the faculty at the New School, SUNY Purchase, San Francisco Conservatory, Sarah Lawrence College and Prins Claus Conservatory in Groningen, Holland. knox.edu

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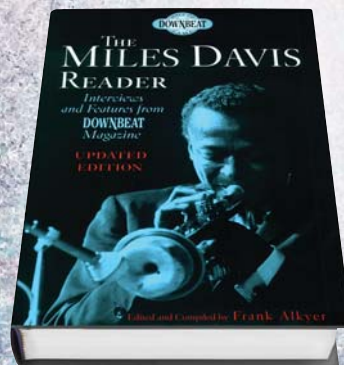
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Javon Jackson

While fulfilling his duties as director of jazz studies at the Hartt School at the University of Hartford, tenor saxophonist Javon Jackson—whose c.v. includes consequential tenures with Art Blakey, Freddie Hubbard and Elvin Jones—continues to lead multiple ensembles. *For You* (Solid Jackson) is his 20th album as a leader.

Ralph Peterson & The Messenger Legacy

"Children Of The Night" (*Legacy Alive: Volume 6 At The Sidedoor*, Onyx, 2019) Bill Pierce, tenor saxophone; Brian Lynch, trumpet; Bobby Watson, alto saxophone; Geoffrey Keezer, piano; Essiet Okun Essiet, bass; Peterson, drums.

Wayne Shorter's "Children Of The Night." Beautifully played, beautiful arrangement, dynamics and interpretation. That's Billy Pierce, who has been a big influence in my musical life and a major part of my development as a human being. I know him from his tone, phraseology, attack, the way he goes after the eighth notes. He plays in the spirit of all of the great tenor saxophone masters: Sonny Rollins, Wayne Shorter, John Coltrane, Coleman Hawkins. The trumpeter was Brian Lynch. Ralph Peterson played magnificently; so did Geoff Keezer. 50 stars.

Branford Marsalis Quartet

"Cianna" (*The Secret Between The Shadow And The Soul*, Okeh, 2019) Marsalis, tenor saxophone; Joey Calderazzo, piano; Eric Revis, bass; Justin Faulkner, drums.

Organic, by which I mean a sense of soul—and not pretentious. Beautiful melody. It's definitely a band: They have to know each other to achieve what they did with the melody in the beginning and the end. It's Branford. I met him as a senior in high school. I aspired to play with Art Blakey, and he came over to my house and met my parents, and encouraged them to let me go to Berklee. Branford has the innate ability, no matter what situation he's in, to incorporate the music around him and blend with the individuals he's playing with, as opposed to bringing a preconceived notion of what he wants to do. He's like a chameleon, but you always know it's him. 50 stars.

Marcus Strickland

"Timing" (*People Of The Sun*, Blue Note, 2019) Strickland, tenor saxophone, bass clarinet; Mitch Henry, keyboards, organ; Kyle Miles, bass; Charles Haynes, drums; Weedie Braimah, congas.

Psychedelic comes to mind—testing the boundaries. The drummer sounded magnificent, reaching, playing different things in a way that propelled the music and gave the song some energy, because it's off a groove or a certain sound that doesn't move. The saxophonist sounded great. A curious person, but with feeling. Was it Joshua Redman? It felt good, high level, something I wouldn't mind seeing unfold live. 5 stars.

Joey DeFrancesco + The People

"A Change Is Gonna Come" (*Project Freedom*, Mack Avenue, 2017) DeFrancesco, organ; Troy Roberts, tenor saxophone; Dan Wilson, guitar; Jason Brown, drums.

Refreshing. That style of music is not heard a lot today. It makes me think of individuals like King Curtis, David "Fathead" Newman, Hank Crawford, Cornell Dupree, Richard Tee—that kind of soul, real Sunday morning gospel playing. Everyone played in that spirit. The tenor player played the style like he's at home. Big sound. Soulful. Was Joey the organ player? He seems to get better and better. More than 5 stars.

James Carter

"Playful—Fast (With Swing)" (*Caribbean Rhapsody*, EmArcy, 2011) Carter, tenor saxophone; Roberto Sierra, composer; Sinfonia Varsovia Orchestra.

James Carter. It's great to see a jazz saxophonist showcased in this fash-



ion. He started in what seemed to be a classical, through-composed kind of piece, then took it to the blues, and then a beautiful a cappella cadenza, where he set up the band and brought them in. Stupendous. I'd pay to see that. James is fearless, one of the best—he gets around the saxophone so well. He's a wizard. He adapted his style to fit into what was written. 50 stars.

Melissa Aldana

"Elsewhere" (*Visions*, Motema, 2019) Aldana, tenor saxophone; Joel Ross, vibraphone; Sam Harris, piano; Pablo Menares, bass; Tommy Crane, drums.

Superb. I enjoyed the drummer's role in the development, starting from one place and taking the listener on a journey from section to section until the huge crescendo. I don't recognize the saxophonist, but it was very high-quality playing, especially for a situation where it was necessary to be aggressive to fill the space, or build toward the next chapter.

Good sound. Textures. Creativity. Harmonic stuff that engages me as a musician and saxophonist. At points, it reminded me of Joshua Redman's influence; at some points it reminded me more of Mark Turner. 46.7 stars at least.

Eric Alexander

"Hard Blues" (*Leap Of Faith*, Giant Step Arts, 2019) Alexander, tenor saxophone; Doug Weiss, bass; Johnathan Blake, drums.

Are you familiar with the records Elvin Jones did with George Coleman? That's the place this took me to. The bassist's time is exquisite. Is it Eric Alexander? This is the blues. It all depends on how you evoke what the blues means to you. Do you want to play the blues like Muddy Waters? Like John Lee Hooker? Like Miles? Like Charlie Parker? This felt great; it reminded me of George Coleman's spirit. Inspiring.

Willie Jones III

"Peace" (*My Point Is...*, WJ3, 2017) Ralph Moore, tenor saxophone; Eric Reed, piano; Buster Williams, bass; Jones, drums.

Ralph Moore. An incredible saxophonist I've known almost as long as I've been in New York, which is a while. I know his sound, and he does things I recognize—his tone, phrasing, attack. I think it was Eric Reed on piano. Seriously dedicated guy, as comprehensive a pianist as is out there from his generation. Starting from Eric's introduction, there was space, a sense of calm. There were other things that were challenging, but still within the space of trying to create this warm, beautiful place, which speaks to the title of Horace Silver's song. 50 stars.

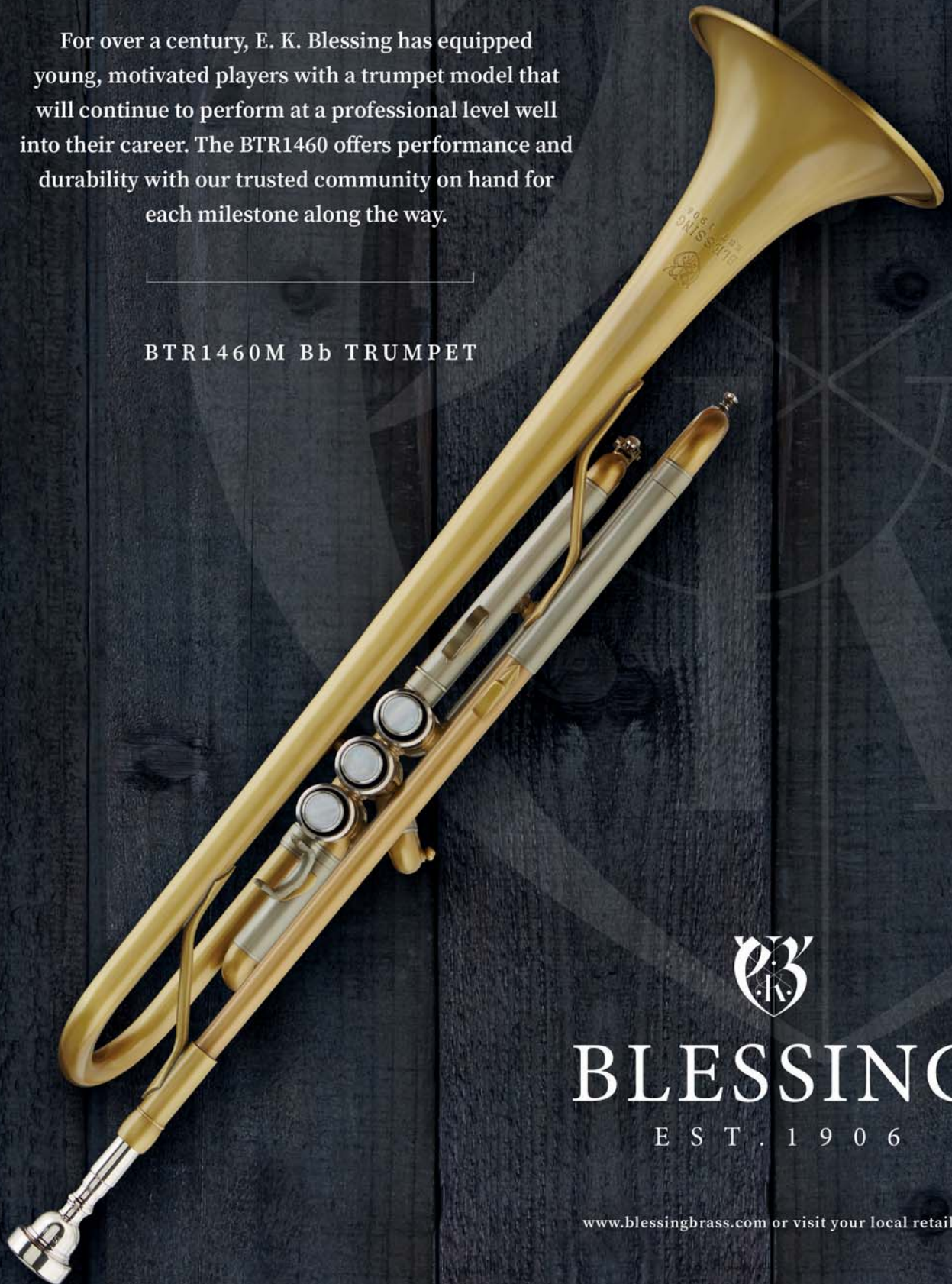
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