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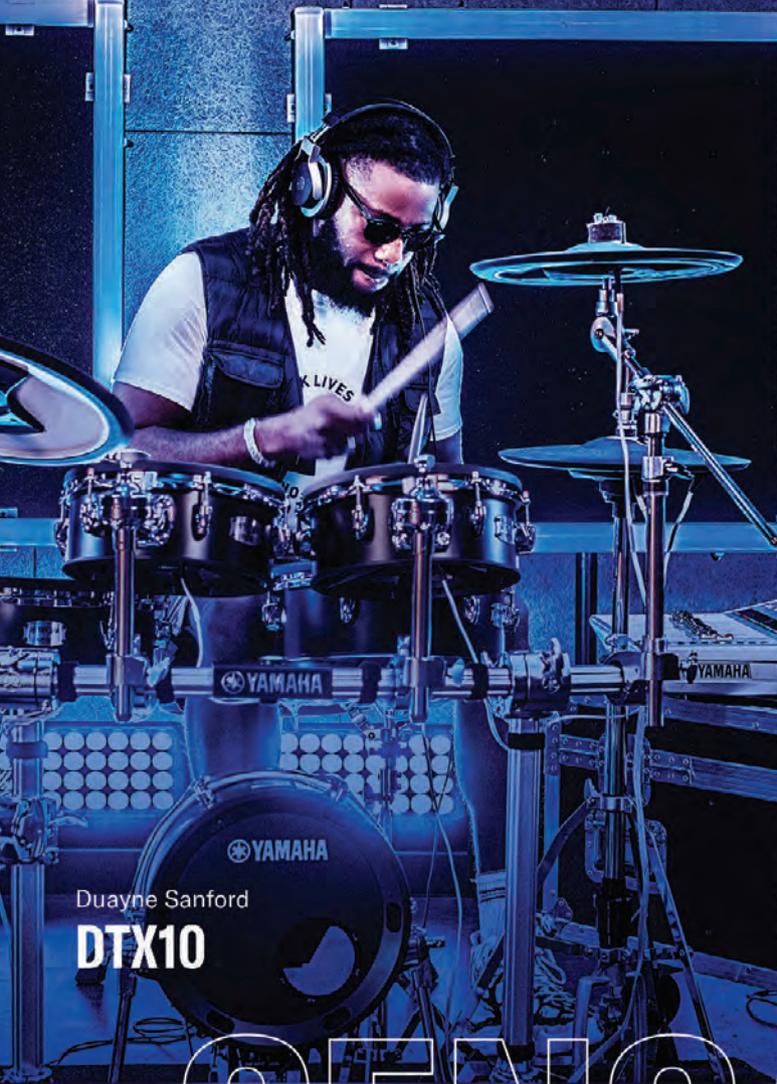
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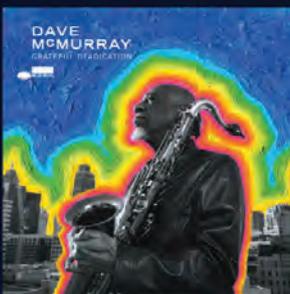
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NOVEMBER 2021

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BY J.D. CONSIDINE

More Music, Joey DeFrancesco's 39th album as a leader, showcases his versatility and his virtuosity as he offers masterful performances not only on tenor saxophone, but also trumpet, piano, keyboard and (of course) organ. He even shows off his vocal chops on the ballad "And If You Please."



Joey DeFrancesco: "I wanted to do this kind of a band for a long time."  
Cover photo by Jim Hesterman

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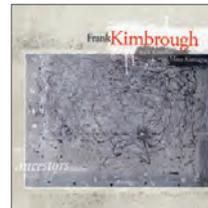
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Matt Wilson

# JOEY DEFRANCESCO

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## NEW RELEASE!

by Sheila Jordan



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## First Take > BY FRANK ALKYER

In a few hours, this stage will welcome musicians for the first time in two years.



## For the Love of Community

SEPT. 24, 2021 — STANDING IN FRONT AN empty stage at the Monterey Fairgrounds, there's still a buzz. A jazz festival about to begin in a few hours, and that's big news.

The Monterey Jazz Festival, one of the greatest events on the annual jazz calendar, is back for its 64th edition after a yearlong postponement due to the pandemic.

Sure it's smaller with fewer stages and shorter hours, but it's mighty — selling out quickly to a limited audience that will allow for proper COVID distancing.

But that's OK. Guaranteed, the cheers will be louder, the toasts will be multiple and the artists will pour music from their souls down the aisles and into the ears, minds and hearts of every fan lucky enough to cop a ticket.

It's back, and this community needs it.

When speaking of community, it should be "communities," plural, because the big tent of jazz has so many layers, nooks and crannies.

First, the city of Monterey, host for the festival, needs it. This fest drives tens of thousands of people and millions of dollars into the local hotels, restaurants and other businesses.

Our artists need it, too. There is no question that our jazz musicians have been deeply affected by the situation at hand. So, many articles in this magazine since last April have pointed toward the challenges of living, creating and overcoming these adversities.

"The last gig I played was Auckland, New Zealand, in early March of 2020," said Pat Metheny (*DownBeat*, October). "And since then, for me and every other musician, on all levels, there hasn't been any work."

That was then. Metheny was scheduled to headline Monterey and tour extensively with his Side-Eye Trio project. Rest assured, he'll bring the house down.

In this issue, Jon Irabagon headed to South Dakota to ride out the pandemic and created two solo saxophone projects (see page 16). It's a sign of the times. We've seen a historic number solo projects come out this year for obvious reasons — like JD Allen's *Queen City* (see *DownBeat*, October) or Ken Vandermark's *A Field Within A Line* (see page 59.)

Finally, our live music community needs this because every event that happens provides a roadmap for others to follow. On that front, it's truly been hit or miss this summer.

The misses? Over the Labor Day weekend, the Chicago Jazz Festival was reduced to a single three-hour show, and the Detroit Jazz Festival valiantly went virtual (see pages 22–23).

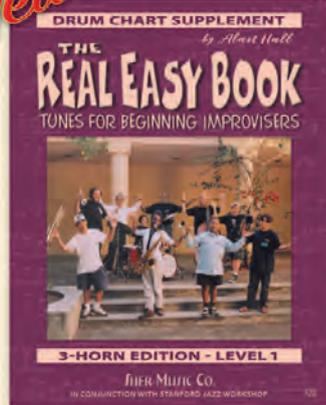
For hits, the DC Jazz Festival, albeit smaller this year, delivered a resounding win for fans, artists and organizers alike (see "DC Fest Triumphs" at [downbeat.com](http://downbeat.com)).

And, in hindsight, one of the most touching hits had to be the fact that the Newport Jazz Festival basked in its seaside glory one more time before the passing of its founder George Wein (see page 15), who produced countless music festivals during his long career.

Tonight will be the first jazz fest this writer has attended since the pandemic began, and there are a few butterflies. It has always been an honor and a privilege to be part of these communities. Missing live music for 18 months means never taking it for granted again. **DB**

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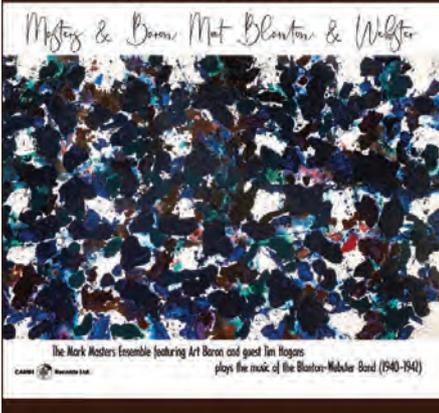
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by Mark Masters



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### DownBeat Hall of Fame ... Discuss

Being a DownBeat reader since the late 1960s, I always follow with interest the results of the yearly polls, especially the nominations to the Hall of Fame. I have no objection to the recent nomination of Booker Little. I heard him at the Five Spot in 1961 and the record is one of my favorites (Eric Dolphy's *At The Five Spot, Vol. 1 and Vol. 2*, with Booker Little, Mal Waldron,

Richard Davis and Eddie Blackwell on New Jazz). But with regard to great trumpet players, I consider it a serious disgrace that the Veterans Committee still hasn't nominated Kenny Dorham. His contribution is immense, an abundance of beautiful music, in various settings, during a very long career. He should not be neglected any longer. In addition I believe that Booker Little may have found his lyrical side from listening to Kenny. Please, please, please, do not forget Kenny Dorham for the Hall of Fame next year!

MAGNUS RINGNER  
GOTHENBURG, SWEDEN

I just voted in this year's Readers Poll. When considering who should be inducted into the Hall of Fame, I read your list of musicians already in there, and was somewhat surprised to see, once again, you have omitted Stan Kenton. He was one of the first musicians to be inducted into the Hall of Fame and should be included in your list.

RICHARD ELSAM  
VIA EMAIL

Just got the Readers' Poll ballot and found that Art Farmer was once again omitted from the list of Hall of Fame candidates. Please explain why you repeatedly overlook this stellar musician. Thank you.

BEN PHILLIPS  
VIA IPHONE

### DownBeat in Czechia

In 1963, I was 17 years old and bought a used DownBeat magazine in a Prague second-hand book store. The bold headline on the cover caught my interest. It said, "Free Jazz Behind Iron Curtain." I wrote a letter to the editors at the address in the magazine and received a free LP of *Jazz Premiere: Washington* by the Paul Winter Sextet. There was a handwritten address on the cover of the LP. Again, I sent a letter to that address and started corresponding with Paul Winter. I received more LPs from him such as *New Jazz On Campus*, *Jazz Behind The Folk Songs* and *Rio*. Winter showed interest performing in Prague. With the letter from Paul Winter, I went to the City Hall of the Prague, the culture department where Zbyněk Mácha was the manager at that time, who occasionally contributed to the music magazine *Melodie*. He laughed at the letter and immediately tried to sell me overpriced jazz LPs, which he officially received as a part of his work from what was then West Germany.

I was disappointed and left. American jazz LPs at that time were rare in Prague. In 1966, I had 25 of them! I liked to lend them to local musicians. I had amazing respect for Bill Evans and John Coltrane. That hasn't changed to this day, but now I recognize not only Pat Metheny, but also Joey Alexander.

In the 1970s, I was buying DownBeat magazines more often in Prague second-hand book shops. I was interested in profiles of musicians, interviews, reviews and mostly in The Blindfold Test. I remember when Miles Davis was answering, some lines were dotted out.

Today, after a thorough reading of DownBeat, I hand it over to the Jaroslav Ježek Conservatory in Prague, where it serves not only teachers, but also students in the local library.

PETR ZVONIČEK  
CZECH TV DRAMATURG AND JAZZ PUBLICIST

### One More Alligator

**Editor's Note:** In our September issue, we presented an insider's guide to albums on Alligator Records for the label's 50th anniversary. Then, we asked for your favorites. This reader offered one more response:

The holidays are not far off, so ... *Genuine House-Rockin' Christmas*. Is it a really fine Christmas album that happens to be blues? Or a kick-ass blues album of really fine Christmas tunes? And does it really matter which?

JOE FRANK  
KENNEBUNKPORT, MAINE

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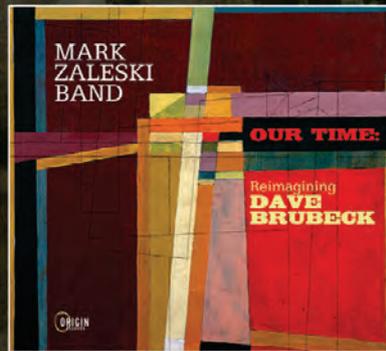
★★★★★ - DownBeat



## CATHY SEGAL-GARCIA

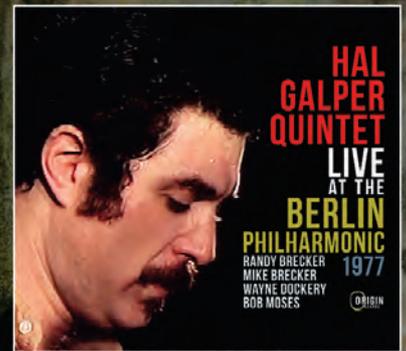
**Social Anthems, Volume 1**

Anthony Wilson / Josh Nelson / Lorca Hart  
Paul Jost / Mon David / Edwin Livingston



## MARK ZALESKI BAND

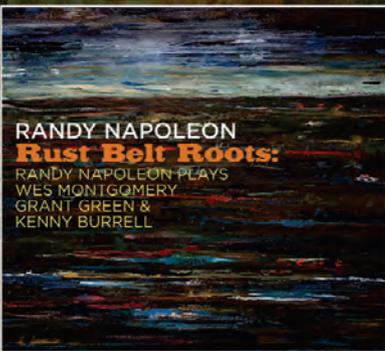
**Our Time: Reimagining  
Dave Brubeck** feat. Glenn Zaleski  
Jon Bean / Mark Cocheo / Michael Mayo



## HAL GALPER QUINTET

**Live at the Berlin Philharmonic '77**

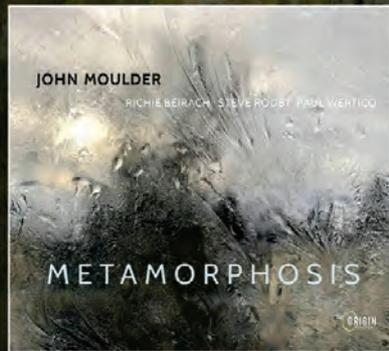
Randy Brecker / Mike Brecker  
Wayne Dockery / Bob Moses



## RANDY NAPOLEON

**Rust Belt Roots**

Xavier Davis / Rodney Whitaker / Quincy Davis  
Rick Roe / Paul Keller / Sean Dobbins



## JOHN MOULDER

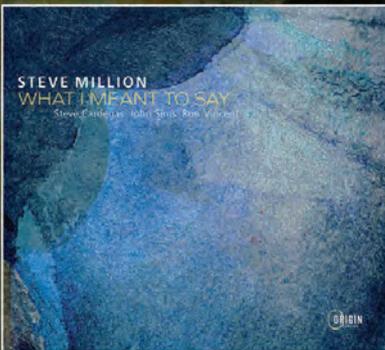
**Metamorphosis**

Richie Beirach / Steve Rodby / Paul Wertico



## KAREN MARGUTH

**Until** feat. David Aus / Gilbert Castellanos  
Dan Feiszli / Brian Hamada / Jon R. Burr



## STEVE MILLION

**What I Meant To Say**

Steve Cardenas / John Sims / Ron Vincent



## JARED HALL

**Seen On The Scene**

Vincent Herring / John Hansen  
Michael Glynn / Matt Jorgensen



## SCOTT REEVES QUINTET

**The Alchemist**

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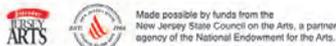
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# The Beat

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## In Memoriam: George Wein (1925–2021)

George Wein, pianist, NEA Jazz Master and recipient of DownBeat's Lifetime Achievement Award, best known for his help in creating world-renowned events like the Newport Jazz Festival and the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival, died Sept. 13, at age 95.

Born in Boston on Oct. 3, 1925, Wein was a jazz fan from an early age and used his passion for the art form to study music and learn the piano. As a teenager, he made regular trips into New York City to catch live performances and, occasionally, get the chance to sit in. As he told Boston University's *Bostonia* magazine, "They would let me play a number and then kick me off the bandstand."

After a stint in the Army during World War II, Wein returned to Boston, where he enrolled in college and spent time performing around the city, helping put together pickup bands to back up touring musicians, and booking shows. That eventually led to him leasing a space and starting Storyville, a jazz club that became the hub for the city's jazz scene, welcoming everyone from Charlie Parker, Billie Holiday and Ella Fitzgerald to its stage. Along the way, he also founded Storyville Records,

which released early recordings by Lee Konitz, Toshiko Akiyoshi and vocalist Teddi King. (Wein's label is not connected to the Danish imprint of the same name.)

In the early 1950s, Wein met Louis and Elaine Lorillard, a wealthy couple from New England whose marriage was, in part, the inspiration for the film *High Society*. Jazz fans both, the Lorillards floated the idea of bringing the music to Newport, Rhode Island, for a summer outdoor festival. With some help from executives at Columbia Records, the inaugural Newport Jazz Festival was held in 1954 with sets by, among others, Holiday, Duke Ellington and Sarah Vaughan. Outside of 2020, when the event was canceled due to the coronavirus pandemic, the festival has been a mainstay of the summer concert calendar ever since.

Wein's involvement with Newport Jazz helped set the course of his career in the arts as he spent the rest of his life establishing festivals and concerts around the world. A few years after working with the Lorillards, he helped found the Newport Folk Festival with Pete and Peggy Seeger and booked a jazz program for the 1958 Brussels World's Fair.

In 1960, Wein started Festival Productions Inc., fully entering the business of concert promotion. The list of events that he was involved with is staggering: the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival, the Playboy Jazz Festival, the Grand Parade du Jazz Festival in France and the Virginia-based Hampton Jazz Festival. "We must have had 20 to 25 festivals a year at the height of what I was doing — we were traveling all the time," he told *Bostonia*'s Jean Hennelly Keith.

And, for good or for ill, Wein also helped establish the precedent of corporate sponsorship, giving brands top-billing in the name of his festivals, starting with a 1968 touring festival called the Schlitz Salute to Jazz.

"That was very rare in those days," Wein said to *Relix*'s Dean Budnick in 2014. "It hardly existed at all, and now, sponsorship is everywhere — every event is sponsored. They call the [New York Mets'] baseball stadium Citi Field. So we pioneered that whole thing."

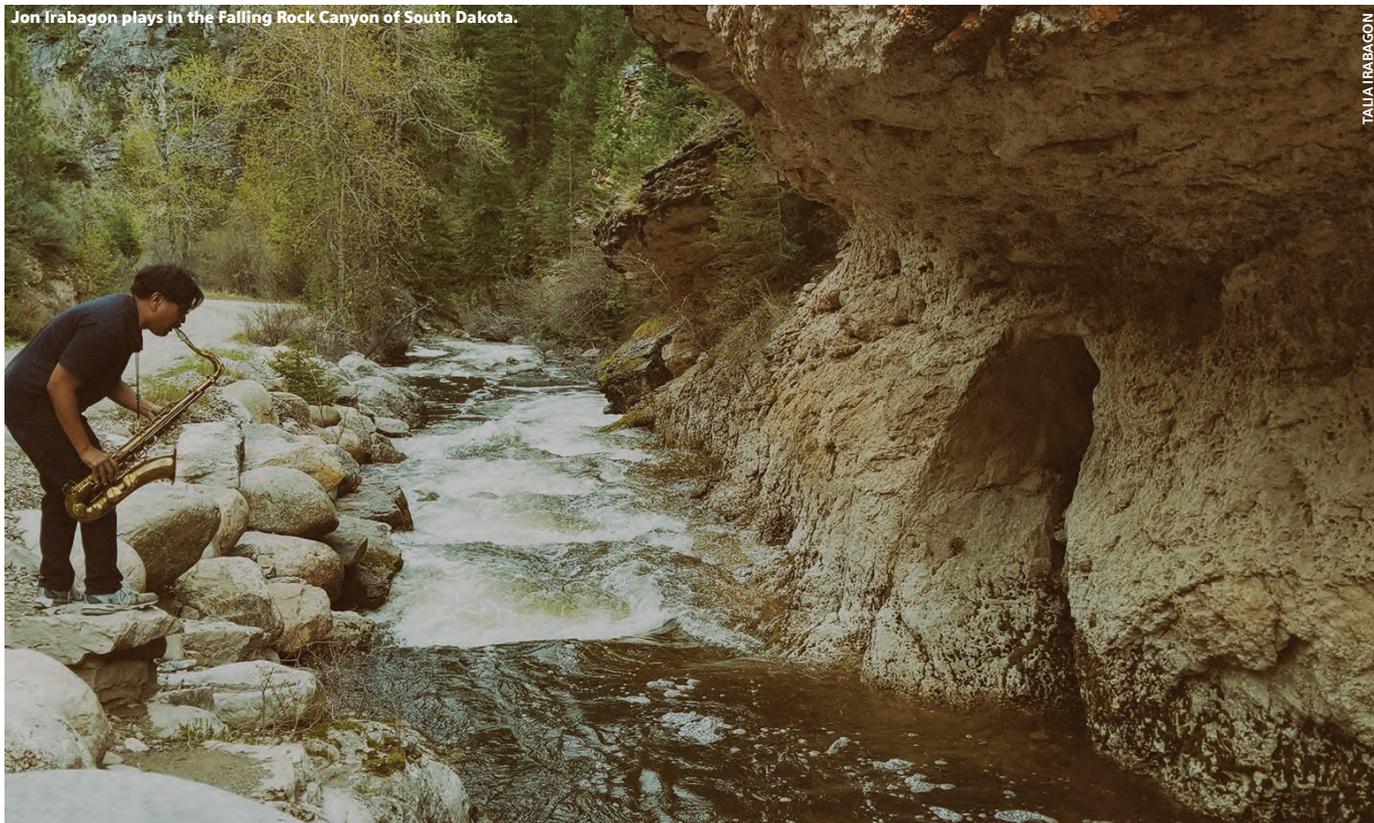
Even as his career as a concert promoter and booker was flourishing, Wein continued to lend his talents as a pianist and vocalist to recordings and live performances. His discography finds his name in the liner notes alongside legends like saxophonist/clarinetist Sidney Bechet, drummer Jo Jones and trumpeter Ruby Braff. In 1955, Wein released his first album as bandleader, *Wein, Women & Song*, for Atlantic, a supple showcase for his light touch on the keyboard. His last recording was 1993's *Swing That Music*. Wein was also a fixture in the lineups for festivals around the world, leading an ever-changing ensemble called the Newport All-Stars through a set of standards. In recent years, that group has included trumpeter Nicholas Payton, bassist Esperanza Spalding, clarinetist Anat Cohen and the late drummer Jimmy Cobb.

After selling Festival Productions, Wein turned his attention to philanthropic work, such as establishing the George and Joyce Wein Professorship in African American Studies at Boston University (his alma mater), and serving as an advisor on the board of directors for organizations like Jazz at Lincoln Center and the Apollo Theatre Foundation.

"That's still the *raison d'être* for where I'm at — the music," Wein told the *San Francisco Chronicle*'s James Sullivan in advance of the 1998 edition of the Newport Folk Festival. "I can't forget that." —Robert Ham

Jon Irabagon plays in the Falling Rock Canyon of South Dakota.

TALIA IRABAGON



# Jon Irabagon's Expansive Solo Projects

**IN THE PANTHEON OF PERFORMERS ON** unaccompanied saxophone, Jon Irabagon has a powerful claim to membership — one based on recorded solo turns on soprano for 2015's *Inaction Is An Action* and mezzo soprano for 2019's *Invisible Horizon* (both on his own Irabagast Records) as well as live sets at more than half a dozen New York venues.

Irabagon, now 42, is adding to that body of work with two solo-tenor projects: an album recorded in the wild and a documentary produced in a black-box performance space. Together, the projects — *Bird With Streams* and *Legacy*, respectively — contribute to a kaleidoscopic picture of an acclaimed improviser working in the riskier reaches of his craft.

On the surface, the projects seem to share little apart from Irabagon's solo saxophone. The album, which landed in July, is a low-fi exercise recorded by a Irabagon who, upon decamping to South Dakota during the pandemic's 2020 peak, grabbed a microphone, a pad, his tenor and little else before embarking on what became eight months of daily exploration in Falling Rock, a canyon amid the Black Hills.

By contrast, the documentary, streaming in October, is a high-gloss affair. Filmed over four, 15-hour days in April — six months after Irabagon left the canyon — it finds him operating under controlled conditions in Ohio's Columbus Dance Theater, surrounded by lighting experts, sound designers and make-up stylists.

The projects draw on different material. The album, on Irabagast, features the music of Charlie Parker. The film, produced by the non-profit A Tribe for Jazz, features Irabagon's tunes.

The approaches also differ. "In the Black Hills," Irabagon explained in an August Zoom call, "it was about my being as expansive as possible: turning every stone over, thinking of every possibility and trying to get there through my horn. The *Legacy* project was more about a distillation — from the Black Hills to the black box to the black hole — being as compact as possible, just trying to get to the essence of each tune."

Ultimately, he added, "the projects are the flip side of the same coin. They both boil down to me trying to be as expressive as possible on the solo instrument."

On *Bird With Streams*, he delivers some wicked bebop-inflected blowing on tunes like "Sippin' At Bells." Elsewhere, he mines his considerable bag of technical tricks: flutter-tonguing with key slaps on "Mohawk," buzzing like a trumpeter into his mouthpiece on "Anthropology," sucking air through his horn on "Moose The Mooche" (an attempt, to mimic the windstorms in the canyon).

In real time, he plays with and against the canyon's ambient sounds. But he was not averse to advancing a narrative in post-production. On the closer, "Quasimodo," his final vamp fades in a rush of water taken from a sound sample. The intent, he said with a smile, was to evoke a legend-

ary flash flood from a purportedly haunted creek in the canyon — a bit of offbeat humor, perhaps, but that fits Irabagon's aesthetic.

*Legacy*, at 40 minutes in length, presents deeply felt re-imaginings of tunes from past albums, opening with a doleful "Dark Horizon." Bathed in misty-colored light, a wide-brimmed hat casting a shadow on his eyes, Irabagon ratchets down what was a high-flying interpretation of the piece on *Invisible Horizon* in the pre-pandemic year. In the end, he said, he lands in a "more somber, focused, quieter place."

"The Music Box Song (For When We're Apart)" presents Irabagon in a similarly restrained light. Written as a gift for his wife, the tune was first recorded by his quartet on 2015's *Behind The Sky*. "With the quartet, it gets to a certain place," he said. "But the tune is so delicate and melancholy that I felt like it would be perfect for a solo tenor saxophone setting."

Whatever the mood, Irabagon largely avoids the grand gesture. But the interpretations all have an urgency to them, none moreso than the film's closer, a new original, "Alliance." It unites the two tenor projects — bringing the capaciousness of the outdoor experience into the black-box environment in a sweeping but succinct statement hinting at fusion grooves, a samba beat and a mystic '60s vibe. The statement will be fleshed out in a quartet version next year.

"I want to expand my direction in every way," he said. —Phillip Lutz



A shot from the official video of "Say Something" from Emma-Jean Thackray's *Yellow*.

# Emma-Jean Thackray Paints the UK *Yellow*

**EMMA-JEAN THACKRAY'S DEBUT ALBUM, *Yellow***, is a surprising synthesis of '70s funk, ethereal orchestral music modeled after Sun Ra and Art Ensemble of Chicago, bits of Eastern mysticism and what DJs in the United Kingdom call "broken beat," a highly syncopated soul style with all the whip-cracking motion of a guillotine.

The 31-year-old English bandleader, multi-instrumentalist (trumpet is her principal instrument), singer, DJ, producer and boss of the Warp Records imprint called Movement, Thackray records musicians in her home studio, then produces everything, including her vocals and instrumentation, through a computer, following the studio-as-instrument model.

How does this Brian Wilson-meets-Geoff Barrow (from Portishead) worker bee amalgamate the diverse styles of *Yellow* though the workstation of her south London home?

"The key is to not try to do that," Thackray said, on her way to headline the We Out Here festival, a coming out party for the U.K.'s vibrant jazz scene. "I just let things come out honestly and truthfully; these genres and artists I've listened to are part of me. When I first played the record out someone said, 'I can really hear all that broken beat.' Really? It's so natural how the music comes out that I'm not aware of the influences."

A product of West Yorkshire brass bands, Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance and The Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama, Thackray is currently the toast of the U.K. jazz scene, though, at times, she feels excluded.

"I'm a bit different to everyone else in the scene," Thackray confessed. "I've always felt a bit like an outsider. Everyone else, maybe they grew up together or went to Saturday music school together. I didn't do any of that. I'm not from London originally. And although I'm obviously friends with everyone, and we play together, I'm still on the periphery because, well, I don't know.

Maybe it's just naturally who I am as a person. That's been the tag put on me, always the weirdo, awkward or peculiar."

Thackray's big-hearted nature fills *Yellow* with a passion and personality rare to any jazz scene. Though some music of the U.K. jazz scene is based on the Caribbean and African diaspora, Thackray readily admits her love of both American hip-hop and jazz trumpeters.

"Miles Davis is the energy for me," Thackray enthused. "I also really like Lester Bowie, Don Cherry and Art Farmer. Certainly, Chet Baker, obviously being a vocalist. Art Farmer is weird, in such a cool way."

*Yellow* is bold and colorful, grabbing you by the scruff of your brain and the seat of your dance floor pants. It's a journey of musical inclusiveness. But among the joy, "Spectre" paints an eerie vista of gloomy strings, pacing chordal solemnity, and a disembodied vocal choir.

"It's about mental illness," Thackray explained. "Whether it's my own or a partner or a friend's. It's about people through illness having the joy sucked out of them and becoming a husk of themselves, not being able to function. You can't communicate because you're indifferent, you're beyond that. You're a ghost. I wanted to bring that metaphor to demonstrate what it's like having mental illness or being around someone and loving someone who is ill. I don't really remember writing it, if that makes sense. It just sort of flew out of me while I was at the keyboard."

While "Spectre" may be dark, *Yellow* as a whole, is overwhelmingly fun and optimistic, a sunny spot amid cloudy London skies.

"I really wanted the album to focus on gratitude and positivity," Thackray said. "You could use a singing bowl to trigger that state, but for me, it's colors and smells, more than anything. I wanted to make the whole record be about that."

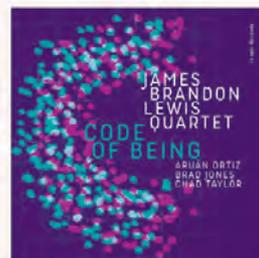
—Ken Micallef

## INTAKT RECORDS



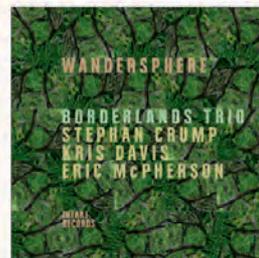
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Eight of the 12 CDs in the box set *Liberation In Swing: Centennial Collection* feature an original Garner composition never released before.

# Garner Dazzles on Centennial Collection

This fall, in partnership with the Mack Avenue Music Group, the Erroll Garner Project has marshaled a holiday-season blockbuster — *Liberation In Swing: Centennial Collection*. The deluxe version is a limited edition of 300 that includes three vinyl LPs of Garner's unreleased 1959 Symphony Hall concert in Boston plus CD versions of the dozen Garner albums recorded by Octave and licensed to various labels between 1961 and 1977.

"We've added one new track to each album while maintaining the original format and sequence of the originals," said Peter Lockhart, senior producer of Octave Recordings, which created the Garner package in partnership with the Mack Avenue label. "Eight of the 12 CDs feature an original Garner composition never released before. And the 10 studio recordings are also collected on separate white vinyl 'Sessions' LPs that are part of the deluxe set." There is also an appropriately sumptuous book of essays and photos.

"Each deluxe set comes with a box of five 45 rpm discs discovered in Earl's archive a couple of years ago," Lockhart said. "They were prepared as disk jockey promotional samples in 1967, but apparently never distributed. We found only 300 sets, which is why the deluxe set is limited." They are not reproductions, he emphasized, but the real thing. When they're gone, they're gone.

For less extravagant budgets, the *Liberation In Swing* package is also available in a standard edition, without the 45 rpm promo samples, for \$149.98. And the *Symphony Hall Concert* is available in abridged form on CD and vinyl for \$11.99 and \$27.98, respectively.

Garner's florid romanticism spoke to popular audiences as directly as his light aerodynamic whimsy swept up jazz listeners. At Columbia Records in the 1950s, he was produced by both Mitch Miller and George Avakian. The elements of his style — the effusively misleading overtures, the lagging just behind the beat — were so particular to him, pianists resisted his influence out of fear of imitation.

Nor was he influenced by his peers, most of whom built a single solo chorus by chorus. Garner packed a beginning, middle and climax into a single chorus, then started all over again. Each was a complete short story. In 1946, Garner placed ninth in the DownBeat Readers Poll. By 1950, he was No. 1. "He found his following," wrote Dan Morgenstern in 1974, "without ever having compromised his art."

Garner's manager, Martha Glaser, helped make him one of the few jazz musicians of the post-World War II period to achieve a level of fame and wealth commensurate with his unique talent. But Glaser's negotiating methods were forged during the labor wars of the 1930s in places like Pittsburgh and Detroit, where the rules of engagement were tough, and money was always job one.

Partnering with Garner in the early '50s, she used that toughness on his behalf, fashioning a pioneering business structure around him and seeing that he received every cent he earned. She formed Octave Publishing to manage his compositions and put him in the care of concert impresario Sol Hurok.

Glaser understood Garner's value and made

certain that anyone she did business with understood it too ... or else. In 1960, she sued Columbia Records, winning a \$265,000 settlement after the label issued what she claimed were unauthorized performances. In that same year she formed Octave Music to produce and license Garner recording projects to partnering labels.

Glaser and Garner were born six months apart in 1921. But Garner died in 1977 at 55, while Glaser lived to nearly 94, passing in 2014. After guiding Garner's career for nearly 25 years, she would spend the next 37 managing his legacy. Always looking for the best terms, she avoided a monogamous label relationship and licensed Octave-produced sessions to MGM, London and even Reprise, none of which had strong jazz brands. After Garner's death in 1977, fewer albums and reissues appeared, often because of ownership ambiguities that she had raised.

By the '80s, all the seminal Columbia sessions produced by Avakian were off the market. Some years later, Mosaic Records tried to mount a complete Columbia set but couldn't get it past Glaser. Garner is the only major jazz icon without the imprimatur of a Mosaic collection.

In the popular arts, reputations, particularly posthumous ones, have a shelf life and demand frequent upkeep and investment. The deeper history sets in, the more time diminishes the value of cultural assets. The recently deceased George Wein summed up the Garner dilemma in his 2003 autobiography *Myself Among Others*: "Garner was a true original. ... For reasons I do not understand, [he] seems to have been forgotten by younger jazz critics and pianists alike."

He was forgotten because the collective memory is as crowded as it is short. A legacy needs strong advocacy.

"I think that's right," said Peter Lockhart, senior producer of Octave Recordings. "And that's the effort we're engaged in now with the Erroll Garner Project, to reinvigorate his musical and cultural legacy." Lockhart is part of a new, more strategic generation of Octave management, which took over when Octave was reformed in 2015 after Glaser's death. Headed by Susan Rosenberg, Glaser's niece and heir to the Garner archive (now housed at the University of Pittsburgh), Octave first partnered with Columbia Records for the release of a restored and "complete" *Concert By The Sea*, the 1956 release that became the largest-selling jazz album in history to that time. The joint Octave-Sony venture came out six years ago as a three-CD box set and doubled the length of the original album.

The sheer size of this new Octave-Mack Avenue collaboration will draw attention to itself and, more importantly, to Erroll Garner. Perhaps, with enough flexibility from the artist's estate, it will jump-start momentum for other reissues — like another Mosaic run at the complete Avakian Columbias — because Garner still dazzles when you can hear him.

—John McDonough

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 Kevin Bene, jazz pedagogy  
 Dylan Pramuk, voice



Greg Ward (left), Sharel Cassidy and Rajiv Halim front the three-alto band Altoizm.

MICHAEL JACKSON

# Altoizm Flying High

**AS THE TRACK AND FIELD OLYMPICS** played out in a stadium full of robots in Tokyo, the alto sax olympics convened for a live audience at the Jazz Showcase in Chicago. Under the banner “Altoizm,” alto saxophonists Greg Ward, Sharel Cassidy and Rajiv Halim — frontrunners in a sextet anchored by pianist/producer Richard Johnson, bassist Jeremiah Hunt and drummer Michael Piolet — were celebrating the release of the first session from Johnson’s custom-built studio, The Jazz Place in Carpentersville, Illinois.

Altoizm was having such a fine time during its residency at the Showcase, the group elected to record there, too. For the final Sunday set, Ward announced, “We’re gonna bring the fire to ya,” and he wasn’t kidding. As if lives depended on it, the band launched into the asymmetrical pulse of “Last Minute,” a theme Johnson conceived as an urgent epilogue to mentor Mulgrew Miller’s blues “Eleventh Hour.”

Heretofore, the group’s front line had been tempered in their fleet, virtuosic improvisations, but Ward (an avid runner outside of jazz) suddenly veered off-track, opting for texture and spiraling altissimo rasp, rather than intricate, inner-gear lines. Cassidy and Halim quickly mirrored, generating tremendous excitement with call-and-response phraseology. Earlier it had been Cassidy calling it, with audacious false-fingered forays on Dexter Gordon’s “Society Red,” parried by Ward with contrasting subtone. Other highlights included a swaggering take on “Wabash,” during which the ensemble robustly blended like a big band. Each saxophonist shone with a choice ballad: Halim rhapsodizing “Skylark” into seamless segue with Ward’s bluesy “Bewitched, Bothered And Bewildered,” capped by Cassidy’s sumptuous “Chelsea Bridge.”

During a break the trio answered a question about what precedents there were for the triple-alto concept.

“Vincent Herring, Phil Woods and Antonio Hart,” brought up Johnson.

“Gary Bartz, Vincent Herring and Bobby Watson,” said Halim.

“I recall Jackie McLean and Phil Woods, both students of Bird, playing together,” Cassidy added. It was she and Halim who first synched on a gig with Johnson and discussed practicing together. “When we talked about an alto group, we all thought of Greg Ward,” said the burly Halim, youngest of the three, who regards Ward and Cassidy as mentors, but matches them note-for-note on the bandstand.

Each saxophonist is an accomplished composer, with high-level curatorial consciousness. Halim contributed “Bébé’s Kids” to the band book, a conflation on the Afro-Cuban 6/8 rhythm and the title of an animated movie from the ’90s about a group of renegade latchkey kids.

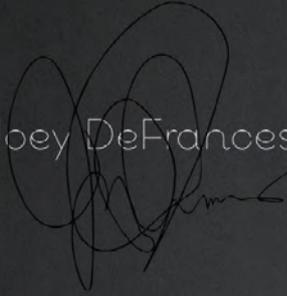
“The haphazard lifestyle of those cartoon characters recalled the environment around which every style of American music has developed,” reflected Halim, “referring to the social, political, economic fight most Black people went through in this country for hundreds of years, definitely since the beginning of jazz.”

Cassidy’s compositions have dual conceits, also. “Cedar Grove” (misspelled as ‘Groove’ on the CD) connects with formative influences Cedar Walton and Roy Hargrove, and is a contrafact over Walton’s “Fantasy In D (Ugetsu).” Her punchy “Thoroughbred” is a fresh line on Benny Golson’s “Stablemates,” penned for her race-ready confrères.

But what of Ward’s tantalizing “The Mighty Mayfly Of Truth,” which hung over a piano ostinato before bursting into a flurry of activity? “The mayfly only lives for a day,” Ward smiled. “It has a lot to get done and all this power to unleash in a short space of time. It’s about being authentic, not faking it. The challenge in the ranks of Altoizm is to retain an individual voice, yet classily fuse the written music. Each does a superb job there, and they play like this is their sole mayfly day.”

—Michael Jackson

Joey DeFrancesco



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Phil Schaap

COURTESY WKCR

### Phil Schaap, Jazz Radio Legend

Jazz radio host and historian Phil Schaap died of cancer on Sept. 6 at age 70. Known for his decades-long career broadcasting jazz on WKCR-FM, the student-run radio station at Columbia University, Schaap shared his extensive knowledge of the art form with listeners. He was devoted to the music of Charlie Parker, which led to the name of his long-running morning show, *Bird Flight*. Schaap won six Grammys for his liner notes and served as curator of Jazz at Lincoln Center, where he created the Swing University program. He was assistant director of the Institute of Jazz Studies' Jazz Oral History Project and archivist for the Savoy Jazz label, and he worked on a variety of reissue projects. He taught at Columbia, Princeton, Rutgers and Juilliard. In 2021, Schaap received the A.B. Spellman NEA Jazz Masters Fellowship for Jazz Advocacy.



Thurston Briscoe, right, with instrumentalist/producer Eric Tait and vocalist Lizz Wright in 2011.

COURTESY WBGO

### Thurston Briscoe, WBGO Executive

Thurston Briscoe, a former radio producer at NPR in Washington, D.C., and executive at WBGO in Newark, New Jersey, died Aug. 16 after a struggle with Alzheimer's disease and throat cancer. He was 74. Beginning in 1976, Briscoe hosted a weekly jazz show on KLCC, an NPR station serving the Eugene, Oregon, region. In 1980, NPR hired him to join the arts unit of the newly created daily show *Morning Edition*. He became associate producer of the NPR performance series *Jazz Alive!* and then returned to *Morning Edition* to head the arts unit. In 1990, Briscoe accepted a job at WBGO, where he worked for 23 years, as program director and then vice president of programming and production. He was executive producer of NPR/WBGO's *JazzSet*, whose host, Branford Marsalis, gave him the affectionate on-air name Thurston Briscoe the Third.



Jerry Bergonzi, left, with Detroit Jazz Festival Artistic Director Chris Collins

# Detroit Jazz Fest: a Virtual Beauty

**DESPITE THE BEST EFFORTS OF THE OF** the dreaded Delta variant, the indefatigable Detroit Jazz Festival heroically pivoted again to an ambitious virtual event this year.

Though the weather outside was perfect during the Labor Day weekend festival, its impressive cast of performers, along with state-of-the-art TV and sound crews, hunkered down indoors instead, capturing 36 broadcast-only performances on stages sponsored by Carhartt, J.P. Morgan Chase, Absopure and festival underwriter Rocket Mortgage.

Alongside clarinet greats Eddie Daniels, Anat Cohen and Detroit's own Wendell Harrison were stellar trumpeters Etienne Charles, Sean Jones and Keyon Harrold.

The bill also included heavyweight saxo-

phonists Kenny Garrett, Jimmy Greene, Chris Potter, Rudresh Mahanthappa, Jerry Bergonzi and David Binney. This was scant surprise since saxophonist Chris Collins, the DJF artistic director, counts himself among them, and played several sets, including his Havana-Detroit collaboration with pianist Omar Sosa.

Omnipresent, in multifarious gowns and guises, was Flint, Michigan's own Dee Dee Bridgewater, the fest's artist-in-residence, who duo-ed with pianist Bill Charlap and served as mentor/MC to her own initiatives. An eponymous all-woman big band — one populated by altoist Sharel Cassity and drummer Shirazette Tinnin — triumphantly roused an all-but-barren ballroom on closing night.

—Photos and story by Michael Jackson



Sean Jones, left, Wendell Patrick and Brinae Ali



Jaribu Shahid and Wendell Harrison



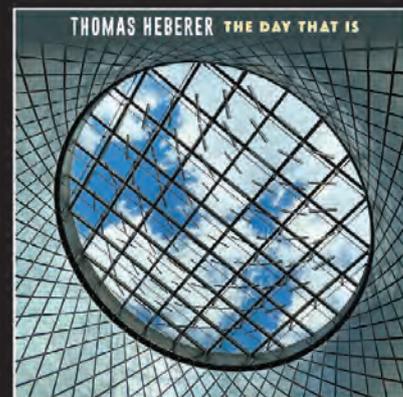
Rudresh Mahanthappa



Kurt Elling



Anat Cohen, right, and Sheryl Bailey



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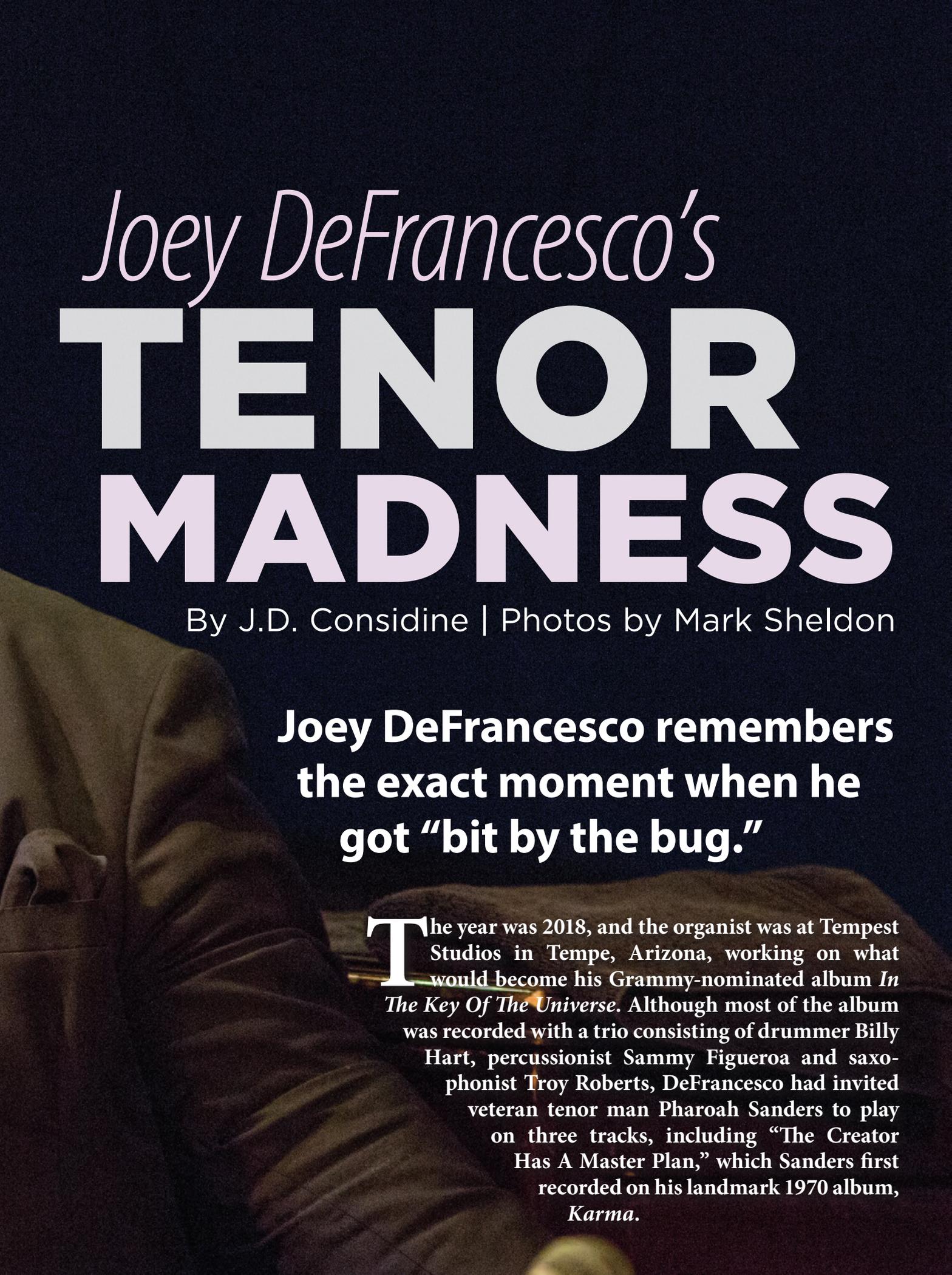
**T**he ability to involve peers who are experiencing life in a similar way makes communication and organization more natural. The **Ember** band is composed of three Brooklyn based jazz musicians and comrades (Caleb Curtis, Vinnie Sperrazza and Noah Garabedian). **No One Is Any One**, shows that the bond and aesthetic that the members have built is solid yet expandable, with the addition of pianist Orrin Evans for a handful of tracks.



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*Joey DeFrancesco's*  
**TENOR  
MADNESS**

By J.D. Considine | Photos by Mark Sheldon

**Joey DeFrancesco remembers  
the exact moment when he  
got “bit by the bug.”**

**T**he year was 2018, and the organist was at Tempest Studios in Tempe, Arizona, working on what would become his Grammy-nominated album *In The Key Of The Universe*. Although most of the album was recorded with a trio consisting of drummer Billy Hart, percussionist Sammy Figueroa and saxophonist Troy Roberts, DeFrancesco had invited veteran tenor man Pharoah Sanders to play on three tracks, including “The Creator Has A Master Plan,” which Sanders first recorded on his landmark 1970 album, *Karma*.



“I was a fan, always a fan, of Pharoah’s,” DeFrancesco said via Zoom from his home in Mississauga, Ontario. “And, I’ve been around great tenor players. I mean, I love George Coleman. I spent a lot of time with him, hearing him play. And I had Troy Roberts in my band for four years. He’s off the charts on saxophone. Ridiculous, you know?”

“But when Pharoah pulled his horn out in the studio, he was like *this* far from me,” he said, holding his hand about 18 inches from his face. “The bell of the horn was right here,

and he played a G, and it was just — my hair stood up. That sound. I mean, there was always a special feeling every time I’d hear the saxophone, but that just solidified it. After that session, I was just, I want to start playing the saxophone.”

This wasn’t the first time DeFrancesco had come down with tenor madness. “You know, my grandfather was a saxophone player, and he played with the Dorsey Brothers,” he explained. “Joseph, who I’m named after. So there was always some saxophone history

in the family. My father kept his horns, and thank goodness he did, because those were there when I decided I wanted to dabble with the instrument.”

His first fling was in the mid-’90s. “I got a little bit bitten by the bug to want to play tenor,” he said. He went to his dad’s place, and borrowed his grandfather’s tenor. “I pulled it out, and had a natural vibe with it,” he said. “So natural that I got enough courage after practicing for a few days to go to a club in Philly to sit in. And it was a little bit of a lesson. You know what? You’re not ready. You got to go practice,” he laughed. “So it went back in the case for another 25 years.”

This time around, though, DeFrancesco put in some proper woodshedding. “At first, I thought it was going to be a thing that I was going to do and enjoy on my own,” he said. “But I got bit by the bug big time, and I haven’t been able to put it down.” Instead, he changed his game plan.

*More Music*, his 39th album as a leader, showcases both his versatility and his virtuosity, as he offers masterful performances not only on tenor saxophone, but trumpet, piano, keyboard and (of course) organ. He even shows off his vocal chops on the ballad “And If You Please.”

But while *More Music* may be a departure in terms of instrumentation, it’s a return to roots in terms of its sound, happily mining the soulful hard-bop that has long been the bedrock of Philadelphia jazz. It helps that his new trio are all Philadelphians, and deeply invested in the local scene.

DeFrancesco first noticed organist Lucas Brown two decades ago, after catching Brown at his regular Wednesday night gig with the late Philadelphia tenor icon Bootsy Barnes, at Ortleib’s Jazzhaus.

“I remember when Lucas first started playing the organ,” he said, over the phone from Philadelphia. “He was mostly a guitar player and a piano player, but then he started playing organ, and playing really good, very fast. He’s 10 years younger than me, so I was watching him when I was 30, and he was 20.”

What stood out for DeFrancesco wasn’t so much Brown’s chops, but his ideas. In particular, he was struck by Brown’s harmonic concept, and the way it meshed with his rhythmic approach, maintaining the organ trio groove while expanding its vocabulary.

“I wanted to do this kind of a band for a long time,” DeFrancesco said. “And I dabbled a couple different times with other organ players, because I love to play piano and Rhodes, and I wanted to play some chords with my left hand and have somebody take over the bass line.”

But as he got his tenor chops together, the need for another organist in the band became

more pressing. “Trumpet, at least, I could play with one hand, right?” he said. (Indeed, as jazz spectacle, watching DeFrancesco solo on trumpet while comping on organ with his left hand ranks with seeing Rahsaan Roland Kirk play three saxophones at once.)

If DeFrancesco were truly to devote himself to playing both trumpet and tenor, he would need a second organist. But not another Joey DeFrancesco.

“That would be kind of silly, right?” he said. “I wanted somebody who has a lot of harmonic knowledge, who has the versatility to be able to play the tunes I want to play, that could play a good bass [line]. You got to be able to groove, you know?”

Brown met all three criteria, but it was his guitar playing that clinched the deal. “I mean, where are you going to find that: an organ player that really plays the guitar? Not plays *at* the guitar. He actually has a *voice* on guitar, it’s got that sparse kind of thing.

“And it feels great when he plays,” DeFrancesco said. “Every note he plays comes straight from his heart.”

As for a drummer, DeFrancesco had worked with Michael Ode on the 2018 album

*You’re Driving Me Crazy*, a collaboration with singer Van Morrison, and decided to put him together with Brown for a sort of test-drive. “We did we did some gigs, and I felt great,” he said. “It worked out perfectly.” Then it was off to Arizona to cut the album.

“As far as I’m concerned, Philly is really the home of jazz organ,” Brown said. “Without even thinking, you could name five or six world-famous organists from here: Jimmy Smith, Shirley Scott, Joey, Jack McDuff, Don Patterson . . .”

DeFrancesco credits that rich vein to Smith, who he says sparked the city’s jazz organ craze back in the ’60s when he was part of the Don Garner Trio. “Don Garner was a drummer, and also an r&b singer, and he was very popular. They would play in Philly a lot, at weddings and things like that. And Jimmy Smith played at Jimmy McGriff’s sister’s wedding. That’s when McGriff first heard the organ, and got bit by the bug. Then he told his friend Groove Holmes about it. And then Shirley Scott found out about it, and Trudy Pitts. And then it just started. Charles Earland, myself. And Don Patterson wound up in Philly. So, yeah, fill it up. You just got a

rich history for the organ.

“I shouldn’t even be from Philly,” he added. “My family’s from Niagara Falls, New York. My grandparents came to Niagara Falls on both sides, from Europe, years ago. My mom and dad were born in Niagara Falls, they met in Niagara Falls and they had their first two kids in Niagara Falls.” His father, Papa John DeFrancesco, is also a jazz organist, but his bread-and-butter was a job with Boeing, and in the late ’60s, the aircraft company transferred him to Philadelphia. “So I ended up being born in Philadelphia, in the lineage of the town where all the organ players are,” he said, laughing. “It just happened to work out like that.”

Although Scott tended to work with a bass player and a drummer, the typical Philadelphia organ trio consists of organ, guitar and drums, with the bass line carried by the organist’s left hand (or, occasionally, pedals). That bass line is the backbone of what drummer Anwar Marshall describes by phone from Philadelphia as the organ trio’s core rhythmic concept: Steady quarter-note time carried by the bass and the ride cymbal. “Also, there’s letting the organist dictate



John Clayton



Terri Lyne Carrington



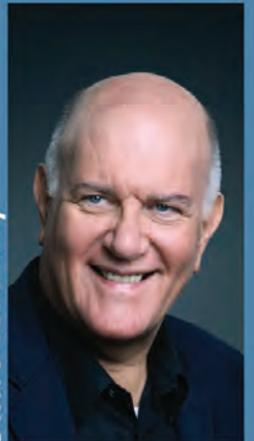
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As jazz spectacle, few artists can match seeing DeFrancesco solo on trumpet while comping on organ with his left hand.

**‘When Pharoah Sanders pulled his horn out in the studio, he was like *this* far from me. The bell of the horn was right here, and he played a G, and it was just — my hair stood up.’**

the dynamic rise and fall of the group, with the rest of the limbs free to respond,” he said. “But that driving, quarter-note feel is definitely the hallmark of that style.”

Marshall, who was brought into the trio after Michael Ode discovered he was already booked for DeFrancesco’s tour dates, has played in a number of organ combos, including a group called Skyline with Brown, and guitarist Ed Cherry’s trio with organist Kyle Koehler. (He also drums with Jazzmeia Horn

and Her Noble Force.)

Playing with DeFrancesco is a bit different than other organ gigs. “Joey told me his concept is that his left hand, and the pedals of course, is modeled after great bass players, and his right hand is sort of like a horn player,” he said. “And obviously he’s also a great horn player in his own right. Now, not to say that he doesn’t come directly from the great organ tradition, because he’s spent a lot of time with great organists. But his concept is

more of like playing with two people instead of one. It’s like a trio with only two people. He’s really got a split brain that way.”

That said, DeFrancesco isn’t just about the melodic line. He sat in for a couple tracks on Terrell Stafford and the Temple University Jazz Ensemble’s Jimmy Heath tribute *Without You, No Me*, and hearing him comp on the band’s arrangement of “Perdido” comes as a real treat, especially since organ comping is not something regularly found on big band recordings.

“That’s true,” he said. “Like on the Jimmy Smith/Oliver Nelson albums [*Bashin’: The Unpredictable Jimmy Smith* and *Hobo Flats*], he didn’t comp at all.

“You know, I’m *biiiiig* on comping. I mean, this probably sounds a little silly, but if somebody is really killing it, I can be happy playing comp and not take a solo all night. Because when you’re comping, it’s not just you’re accompanying [the soloist]. You’re accompanying the whole situation. It’s like a cushion for the soloist. Not to push, but to enhance what they’re doing, and that’s always been a thing of mine.”

It’s also why he tends to be picky about guitar players. “The way most guitar players

comp hasn't evolved enough, harmonically, to be able to play the way Herbie Hancock or McCoy Tyner plays behind something. They were playing modern lines and things on guitar. Wes Montgomery, for example, or George Benson. But their comping wasn't as modern as the lines they're playing.

"Now if we're talking about Count Basie Orchestra, you've got to have Freddie Green playing all four beats, right? But if I'm stretching it harmonically, and you're still doing that? Wow. It's like you've got the emergency brake on while I'm trying to drive."

A better model, to DeFrancesco's way of thinking, would be the way Jim Hall played rhythm, whether with Sonny Rollins' band, or the Art Farmer Quartet, or in duet with Bill Evans.

"Jim Hall never made an organ record, never played on one," he said. "We were going to make a record, but it never worked out. I wanted to make a record with him and Roy Haynes, and it just didn't happen. But he wanted to do it, and that was enough. I was happy that he was interested."

On *More Music*, there are tracks where the three play as a standard organ trio, with DeFrancesco on organ, Brown on guitar, and Ode on drums, and there are tracks where Brown switches to organ while DeFrancesco plays trumpet or tenor. On one tune, "In Times Of Reflection," DeFrancesco alternates between between piano, where he sounds like Oscar Peterson doing Bill Evans, and trumpet with Harmon mute, while Brown plays nylon-string acoustic guitar and what sounds like double bass but is actually a keyboard, the Viscount Legend '70s. "I really enjoyed that one," Brown said.

There are also a couple tracks where both DeFrancesco and Brown solo on organ, and the contrast between them is instructive. "Where To Go," a blues, starts off with DeFrancesco on trumpet and Brown on organ. After the trumpet solo, Brown takes a couple choruses on organ, followed a second organ solo, this one by DeFrancesco. Where the latter is brilliantly prolix, full of fleet-fingered runs and steadily-building intensity, the former is focused more on playful dissonance and rhythmic shading. The difference isn't simply a matter of technique, but of concept.

"Let's be honest," said Brown. "Even if I wanted to play exactly like Joey, I couldn't, because he's a virtuoso. Like, he owns the instrument. [laughs] I have some chops, but when it's compared to that, not really. But Monk was a huge influence on me, so I like angular stuff and playing rhythmically. I'm not spinning out those long bebop lines like Joey is. But it's a nice foil, because the contrast is there."

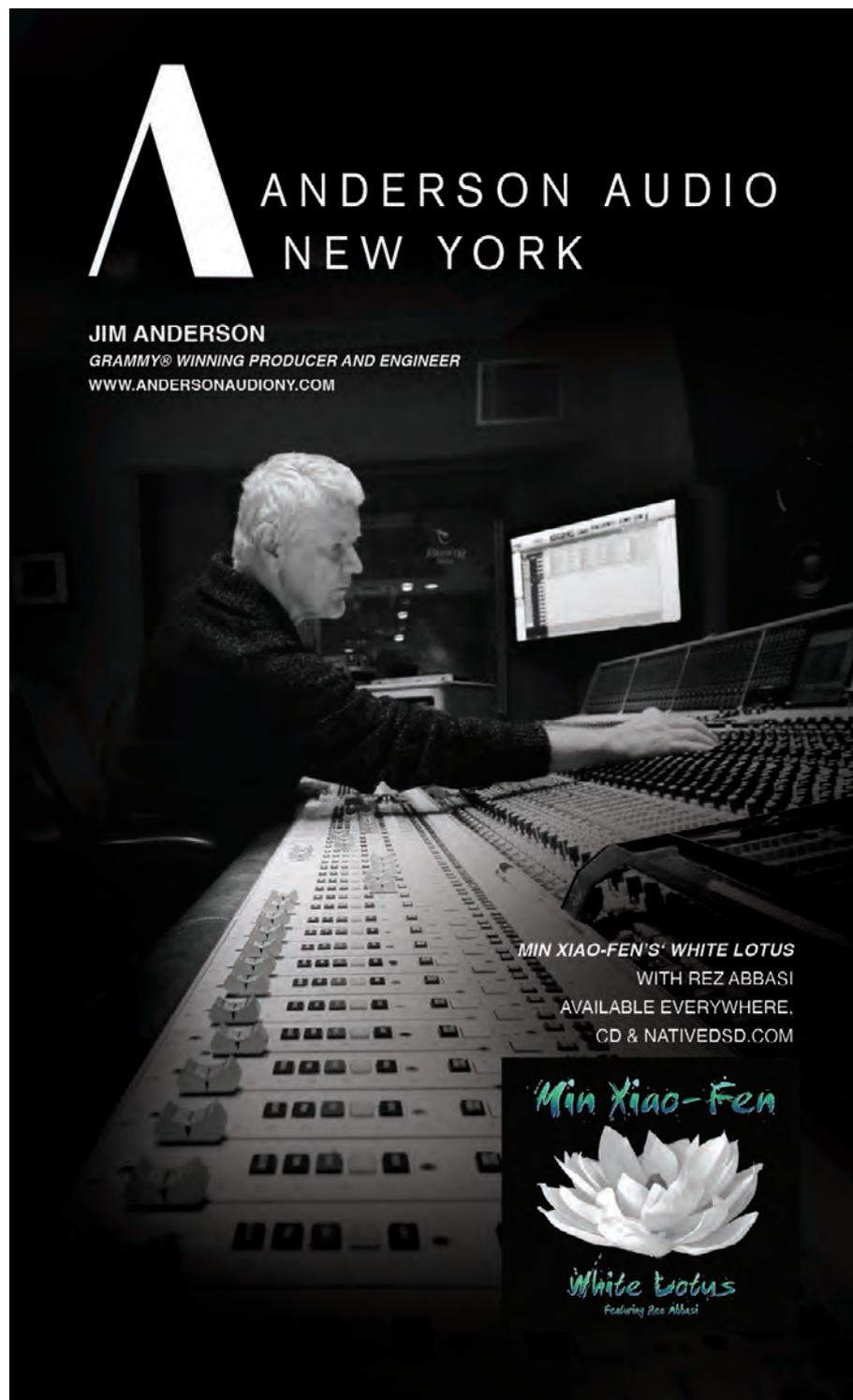
"Whoever is doing the solo is doing their own bass," DeFrancesco said of the organ trade-offs. "Basically, when you give the nod, that means the next beat, the other guy is taking the bass. And don't let there be a space in there, because if you hear a gap, then you'll know that you weren't listening for that. But we didn't even have to fix any of that stuff in the studio. It went down like that."

That aspect continues in the live shows,

where there is usually at least one organ duo each evening.

"Lucas being a great organist, he fits right in. They complement each other very well," Marshall said. "Lucas has clearly spent a considerable amount of time researching Joey's playing. It's like they feed off of each other, and it's really cool."

"Sometimes, after a while, I can't tell who's doing what." **DB**



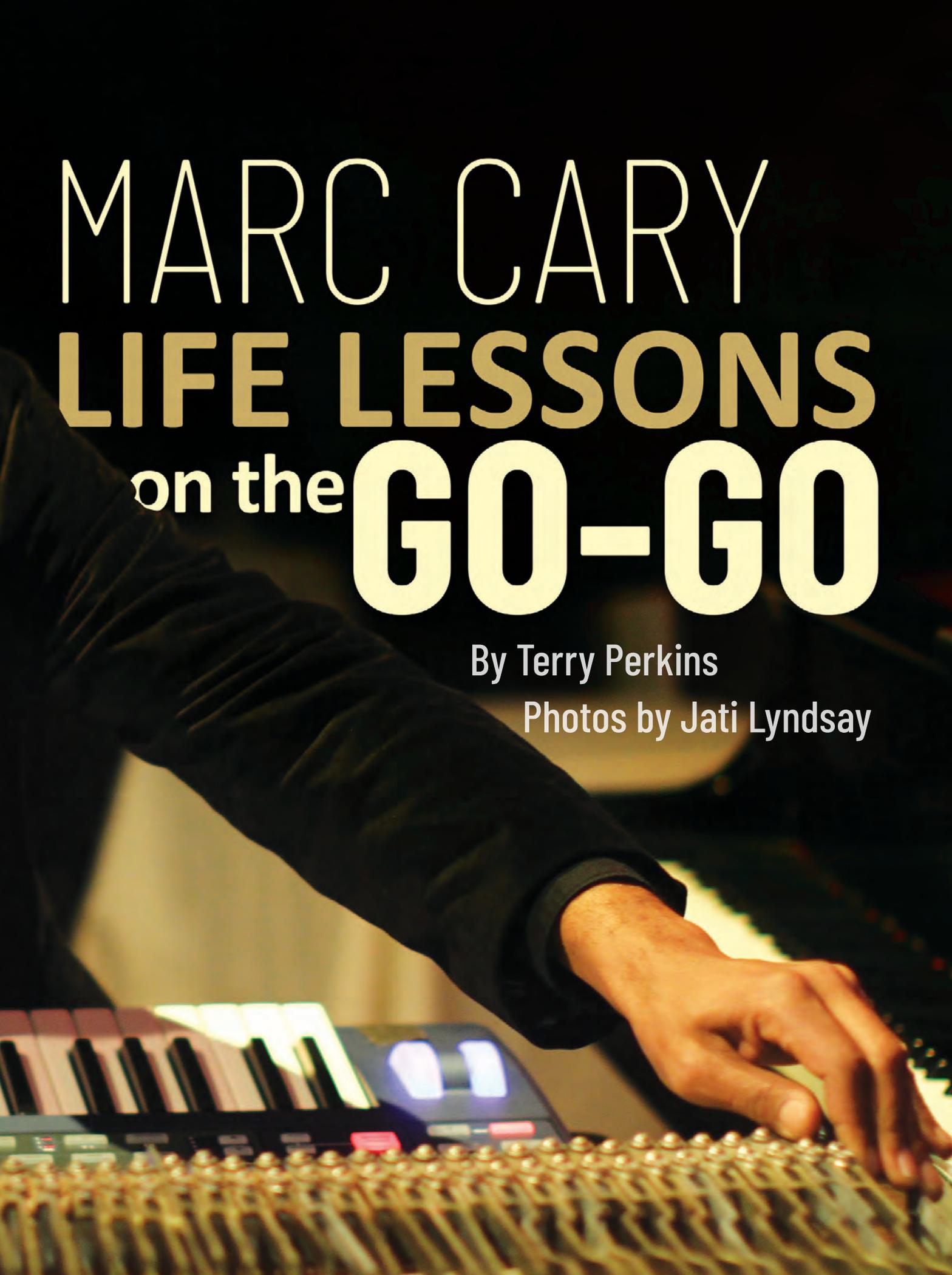
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A close-up photograph of a person's hand resting on a DJ mixer. The hand is positioned over the faders and knobs of the mixer. In the background, a keyboard is visible, and the scene is lit with warm, golden light, suggesting a stage or club environment.

# MARC CARY

## LIFE LESSONS

on the **GO-GO**

By Terry Perkins

Photos by Jati Lyndsay



Cary has learned from the best — Arthur Taylor, Betty Carter and Abbey Lincoln, for starters.

**In the liner notes to *Learning To Listen*, Marc Cary's recently released trio recording with bassist Dan Chmielinski and drummer Diego Joaquin Ramirez, Cary writes: "The songs that have come together on this album serve to describe how we feel about life, the lessons we have gained, and the types of emotions and situations we navigate through as we remain on our journey."**

For Cary, those "life lessons" include growing up in an extended family with a rich musical background, playing his first gigs with bands in Washington, D.C.'s high energy go-go music scene; moving to New York to play piano with Arthur Taylor, Betty Carter, Roy Hargrove and Abbey Lincoln; recording more than a dozen albums as leader; and, teaching at both the Manhattan School of Music and Juilliard.

Recently, *DownBeat* caught up with Cary for an extended interview to discuss the back-

ground of his new trio and the *Learning To Listen* recording process — as well as some of the crucial real-life lessons he learned growing up and throughout his musical career.

"The words in the titles of the songs on this album have probably been part of almost every deep conversation I've had about music and life," Cary explained. "I'm still learning life lessons, but there's a point when you can share them, you know? And say, 'Hey man, these songs are 12 of those lessons.'"

The lessons began at home and with other

family members. Cary's mother played cello and violin, and his great-grandmother, Mae York Smith, played piano to accompany silent films.

"She also played four-hand piano with Eubie Blake, but not in concert," Cary recalled. "A friend of her family was friends with Eubie, and when she came to New York City to study, he was at the house quite often. She was a great pianist, and we were close when I was growing up.

"I can't remember not being in music back then. I played cello first because of my mother, then my great-grandmother would have me try out other instruments to see what I was best at. I went to trumpet next, then to drums, then to piano."

As a teenager, Cary became involved in D.C.'s go-go scene as a member of the High Integrity Band and Show, where some of his instrumental choices were made through intense competition for spots in the band.

"In go-go, you climbed the ladder," he said. "There was always an opening band before the main band took the stage, and the goal was to get in the main band. I remember there was a better trumpet player, so I went to drums. Then there was a better drummer in

the band, so I went to keyboards. That's how I got to the piano."

By the time he was 16, Cary, caught up in the party lifestyle of the scene, dropped out of high school. But after a decision to focus on piano through studying with Eleanor Oxendine and the influential guidance of fellow musician Daniel Whitt, Cary applied to the Duke Ellington School of the Arts. Within that program he played with the Dizzy Gillespie Youth Orchestra.

"That was really the conduit into jazz for me," Cary said. "Being in the Youth Orchestra hooked me up with just about everybody living in jazz. When we celebrated Dizzy Gillespie's 70th anniversary at Wolf Trap, I got to play with Dizzy and meet a whole list of jazz greats. After that, I began to follow them, and I became really attached to the history of the music."

But Cary didn't want to focus solely on playing acoustic piano. In go-go, he became fascinated by the variety and sounds of electronic keyboards, and that interest grew.

"I was listening to Les McCann and George Duke, and they used every keyboard they could [find]," he said. "And Stevie Wonder, of course. So, I was into Fender Rhodes, Wurlitzer, you name it. I've always

been into sound textures and the various wave shapes produced by different synthesizers that create them. I remember when I got a sequencer card and put it in a DX7II. That really opened up a new world for me."

In 1989, Cary moved to New York to try to make his mark on the jazz scene. He sat in at jam sessions, and eventually got gigs substituting for other pianists. One of those gigs led to playing in drummer Art Taylor's Wailers.

"Someone heard me with the Clifford Jordan Big Band when I was sitting in for Ronnie Matthews," he said. "He came up and asked me, 'Has Arthur Taylor heard you?' I told him I didn't know, since I'd never had the pleasure of meeting him. He said he was going to call Arthur about me that night. And sure enough, I got a call from Arthur later that same night.

"He asked where I lived, and I said Harlem. I happened to be two blocks from him, so he summoned me to come to his house now. I didn't have time to prepare and try to figure out what he might call for me to play. I walked in the door and he didn't say much, and we walked down a long hallway to the drum room. He sat at the drums, I sat at the piano. He called "Gingerbread Boy" and we played one chorus. He stopped and said,

'You're in the band.'"

Cary toured with Taylor, played on the album *Mr. A.T.* and was instructed on how to handle himself as a professional musician. But the most important lesson he learned was how to make his piano style fit seamlessly into the rhythm section.

"Arthur taught me how to be part of a proper rhythm section, which is the foundation of what I do," Cary said. "Nobody cares about my solos until they find out I'm a good rhythm player. Piano harmony is all about empathy. You've got to know what chord to put where. A chord has character and personality, and has a sound that moves the room a certain way. When I realized that, I thought, 'Oh, my God, this is one of the biggest parts of the music!'"

When gigs with the Wailers began to drop off, Cary decided it was time to head back home. But on the drive back, he got a call from Tarus Mateen, who was playing bass with Betty Carter at the time.

"Tarus told me, 'Betty wants to meet you,'" Cary said. "So I dropped the load in my U-Haul at my mom's house, went to Tower Records and bought as many Betty Carter records as I could find. I put them in the Walkman, came back up the road, did the

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audition and next thing I knew I was on tour for six weeks of one-nighters with her trio.

"Playing for Betty was demanding. She was about the pureness, the intent of the music and the musicians being 100% involved. You couldn't sleep on the beat, because she could feel it immediately. She had that kind of vibe."

In addition to musical lessons, Cary also learned major life lessons from Carter.

"Betty Carter had her own label — BetCar Records," he said. "So she owned and leased her own music, she booked her own gigs and put out her own press releases. She owned the narrative.

"And that's why we're doing what we're doing now — myself and my wife, Tinku Bhattacharyya. She teaches music entrepreneurship at Manhattan School of Music, and has been working to help older cats like Reggie Workman and Roy Ayers get connected to their royalties and publishing. So that's a lesson to me, to control your own music, and teach that to young musicians coming up."

After leaving Carter's trio, Cary joined Roy Hargrove's quintet, playing on the group's albums *The Vibe* and *Of Kindred Souls*.

"We had a great sound — a sound that we really developed as a group," said Cary. "It was such a benefit to be part of that band, and especially to know Roy while he was with us. It's a great loss for me — and the music. That song of his, "Trust," is on *Learning To Listen*, and it's a song I'll always play."

After recording several albums as a leader, Cary became the pianist and musical arranger for Abbey Lincoln, and worked with her for 12 years. Like Taylor and Carter, Lincoln had a major impact on Cary. He recorded a solo piano album, *For The Love Of Abbey*, in 2013 after she passed away in 2010.

"Abbey Lincoln decided she didn't want to be used, changed her name, cut her hair to wear an afro and talked about society and how to make it better," Cary said. "Like A.T. and Betty, she left an impression on me. That's why I included her songs "Learning To Listen" and "It's Supposed To Be Love" on the new album."

In 2015, with the help of his wife, Cary started the Harlem Sessions project at the Gin Fizz club with the goal of encouraging an ensemble approach to improvisation rather than a focus on solo after solo. In 2018, Harlem Sessions moved to Smoke, where performances were scheduled every Saturday evening. It was during these sessions that Cary put together his new trio with bassist Dan Chmielinski and drummer Diego Joaquin Ramirez — both young musicians who had studied with Cary.

Ramirez came to the U.S. from Ireland in 2009 to study at Berklee, and met Cary at the Betty Carter Jazz Ahead program in D.C.

"Marc was one of my teachers there," Ramirez said. "We really connected and wanted to stay in touch. I moved to New York City and started going to the Harlem Sessions, and went to say hello to him after a show with Terri Lyne Carrington. When we met again, he said, 'Hey, man, you've been on my mind. Let's play.' And we've been playing together ever since."

Chmielinski was attending Juilliard when he found out that Cary would be teaching a course on improvisation.

"Through the class, Marc would invite students to his jam sessions, and I started going," he said. "One day he called and said, 'I'm starting a new trio. We're going to be at Smoke every Saturday night. Do you want to be part of it with Diego and me?' And I told him I was so in! I remember from the first time we played, we clicked immediately. And after playing for almost three years at Smoke together, we've really honed in on the sound and the repertoire."

Recognizing the bond the trio built so quickly, Cary knew

"My dream is to work on a go-go big band for the spring," said Cary.



they would eventually record together.

"I'd been thinking about it for a while," he said. "After the first six months playing, I knew I wanted to record with them. In fact, we've done other recordings, but under the banner of the Harlem Sessions. I finally decided to record as a trio in January 2020. It turned out to be a great decision because of the pandemic."

The two days of sessions went quickly, and most of the resulting tracks were first takes. Cary also had Rivera and Chmielinski each contribute a song.

"There's a lot of trust I have with them," Cary said. "I met each of them in a circumstance where I was the teacher. So there's that dynamic. But that turned into friendship. Now they've become peers — very quickly."

"Marc is all about an honest approach to the music and being honest to how you feel," Ramirez said. "Even though we may play a song several times, there's a different vibe each time. That's real improvisation."

"From the first moment we were in the studio, it felt like a beautiful combination of being free and being an individual in a group situation," Chmielinski added. "It turned out to be a perfect reflection of the vibe we created as a trio at Smoke."

All three musicians are looking forward to getting back and playing together in person, something they haven't been able to do since the recording session. And Cary is already thinking of upcoming recording projects.

"I'm cycling through the possibilities," Cary said. "I'm going to start another solo piano recording any day now. This trio needs to record again soon, and the Focus Trio needs a reunion. But my dream is to work on a go-go big band for the spring. I'm doing all the curating now. I keep thinking about playing bebop over the go-go rhythm — because of that go-go tempo. It's not uptempo, it's half speed and it's got that whip on it from the beat, so it would really pop. Oh, my goodness! And the solos would be meaningful — not somebody trying to go through as fast as they can hitting a couple changes. This is going to be grown-up stuff. I'm looking forward to that."

DB

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An outtake from the cover shoot for the January 1996 cover of DownBeat under the headline "Monsters Meet."



# Michael Brecker

# A TIME FOR

# TYNER...

**Editor's Note:** The following is an exclusive excerpt from Bill Milkowski's new book *Ode to a Tenor Titan: The Life and Times and Music of Michael Brecker* (Backbeat Books, copyright 2021 by Bill Milkowski). This chapter details the very accidental birth of the late saxophonist's working and personal relationship with one of his heroes, McCoy Tyner. **Photos by Terri Bloom.**

Following the release of the Brecker Brothers' *Out Of The Loop* in 1994, Michael Brecker resumed his ubiquitous studio presence with a slew of disparate sessions. He made guest appearances on recordings by Aerosmith (delivering a King Curtis-styled solo on the raunchy rocker "Same Old Song and Dance" from *Box Of Fire*), Bob James (*Restless*) and Jan Hammer (*Drive*). He recreated his chemistry with Mike Stern on the guitarist's seventh album as a leader, *Is What It Is* (particularly on the slamming Dennis Chambers-fueled "Swunk" and the lyrical, uplifting anthem, "A Little Luck") and duetted with David Friesen on Sonny Rollins' "Airegin" and on the angular, hip-foppish "Signs & Wonders" from the bassist's *Two For The Show*. Among numerous other sessions, he reconnected with former Brecker Brother bandmate Steve Khan on the guitarist's *Crossings* and further explored his love of West African music with former Paul Simon tour running buddy Vincent Nguini on the Cameroonian guitarist's *Symphony-Bantu*. He also recorded with his old Indiana University class-

mate and Mrs. Seaman's Sound Band partner Randy Sandke on the trumpeter's *The Chase*.

Perhaps most significant of all of Michael's special guest appearances that year was his historic encounter with legendary pianist McCoy Tyner, a fundamental member of the John Coltrane Quartet that Brecker had worshipped most of his adult life. It happened in January 1994, when the two titans met for the first time on a gig at Yoshi's, the famous jazz club on Claremont Avenue in Oakland. Jason Olaine, who was booking Yoshi's at the time, gives the backstory:

"I had started at Yoshi's as an intern in 1993 and when Todd Barkan [previous booker at Yoshi's and proprietor of the famed 1970s San Francisco club, The Keystone Korner] left the premises, they had no one to take over. And that's how I started booking Yoshi's. Chuck LaPaglia, who was Todd's partner, had already booked McCoy for two weeks in January of '94 to start off the year. We were really struggling financially then and Kaz (Yoshi's owner Kajimura) was going to pull the plug on the place. In fact, I had already gotten my



On their first gig together, Brecker worried he was sounding too much like Joe Henderson.

pink slip in early December '93, saying basically, 'Hey, it's been a good run, but we're out of money. We've already sold the building.' Meanwhile, I went back over our profit-loss statements of all the times that McCoy had played Yoshi's before and discovered that he had only come through for week-long engagements in the past, and none of those broke even. So naturally, I was worried about how he would do over two weeks time. So we had a meeting in September or October and decided we needed to shake up this McCoy run by having special guests each week, because otherwise we were going to take a bath on this thing."

Olaïne's idea was to recruit some guest star for a straight ahead week for the first week of the run and then have some kind of

Afro-Cuban spectacular the second week. "That was basically off the top of my head," he recalled. "I was just riffing, not knowing that McCoy already had a relationship with Afro-Cuban music and had collaborated with Mongo Santamaria and recorded a Latin flavored album (1981's *La Leyenda de la Hora* on Columbia Records). I didn't know any of that at the time I made that suggestion."

After finally recruiting Mongo Santamaria, Paquito D'Rivera, Steve Turre, Claudio Roditi and Orestes Vilató for an all-star Afro-Cuban extravaganza the second week of Tyner's run at Yoshi's, Olaïne then cast about for a special guest for the straight ahead week to kick off the great pianist's two-week engagement at the club. "I had been on the phone a lot with McCoy's managers, Abby

and Paul Hoffer, throwing ideas at them of who McCoy could work with that first week," said Olaïne. "Finally they told me, 'Look, why don't you just talk directly to McCoy,' and gave me his number. So McCoy and I began talking about who we could bring in to the club to play with him, but it was already so late in the game that I was getting really nervous. I mean, we're talking in October and these dates are in January. So I called Joshua Redman and Branford Marsalis and Wayne Shorter, just going down the list of who we could get for that first week. But I kept striking out. And then from some kind of inspiration ... I don't know why ... I thought of Michael Brecker. And I'm like, 'Why didn't I think of Michael earlier? He's perfect!'"

Luckily, Michael was available for the week in question, so Olaïne called Tyner to deliver the good news. "I'm so excited and I say, 'Hey, McCoy, I think we got the right person for the first week. Michael Brecker is available, and I'm sure he'd love to do it.' And McCoy's like, 'Hmmm, I'm not familiar with him.' And I explain that he's really popular, and I start listing off all of Michael's accomplishments — who he's played with and the whole Brecker Brothers story and how he's carrying the tradition forward and all this stuff. And there's this long pause on the phone, and finally McCoy says, 'You know what? I just don't feel comfortable doing that. So I'm afraid we're not going to be able to make it happen.' And I couldn't believe it! I was sitting at my desk with my hand on my head thinking, 'This can't be possible!' And then I kind of casually mentioned, 'You know, McCoy ... he's from Philly.' And he went, 'He's from Philly? Well, in that case, it should be OK then.' And that's how the gig happened."

Olaïne remembered the day of their opening night together at Yoshi's being in the empty club for soundcheck, just hours before Tyner's trio with special guest Michael Brecker would kick off their week-long engagement. "I had never really met Michael before that day," he recalled. "I was a publicist when he came through in '93. I think I said hi to him then, but we didn't have a relationship. So Michael and McCoy meet for the first time in the club on that Tuesday afternoon. Mike comes in as he is, in general — just this really humble, genuine cat — and he says, 'Mr. Tyner, it's such an honor and pleasure to meet you.' And McCoy's like, 'Yeah, great.' And they start the soundcheck. Mike's sitting on a stool up there in the middle of the small stage and I'm the only one in the club. I don't even think our sound guys were there yet. And just before the music started, I remember Mike looking straight ahead at me with this kind of animated expression of

amazement with his mouth open, shaking his head, like, 'I, I, I ... have nothing to say.' It's clear that he can't believe he's up there about to play with the great McCoy Tyner! And then right away they started sound checking on 'Impressions.' And I'm sure that blew

solo break. And he's not there with anybody — there's no road manager, no tour manager, his wife Susan's not there. So it's just me and him hanging backstage by the mixing board during McCoy's solo. And at some point Mike leans over and says to me, 'How

which I thought was fascinating."

It had been a year and a half since the Joe Henderson controversy had erupted, but clearly it still weighed on Michael's mind. Nevertheless, he seemed genuinely thrilled by his time with Tyner at Yoshi's that week in Oakland. "They were hanging out with each other upstairs in the dressing room every night and Mike was asking McCoy all kinds of questions," said Olaine. "They really hit it off. And the club did such incredible business that week and the following week with the Afro-Cuban All-Stars that it kept Yoshi's going. We stayed open and never looked back. And when I found out later that Michael and McCoy made a record together for Impulse!, I was just totally psyched that something had come from that first encounter they had together at the club.

"The record is definitely different than what I remembered from their Yoshi's gig," Olaine continued. "They kind of smoothed out the edges on the record, and they didn't play as much of the Coltrane catalog as they did at that very first meeting. But the record was great and they did a lot of touring together behind that for the next couple of years. So that became a really fruitful relationship for both of them. And I'm just really happy that

**'It's more than the fact that I'm influenced by McCoy and John Coltrane. I think the quartet was the reason I became a musician.'** —*Michael Brecker*

Mike's mind."

That evening was packed, and in fact Yoshi's sold out all week for this first-ever Tyner-Brecker meeting. But Olaine remembers one odd exchange with Michael that opening night during a break that he didn't exactly understand. "They're playing the first set and Mike comes off stage during McCoy's

do I sound,' and I'm like, 'Dude, you sound incredible!' And he's like, 'No, I feel like I'm totally Hend-ing out.' And I look up and I'm like, 'Hending out?' I had never heard that before. And he says, 'You know, playing like Joe Henderson.' I actually thought he was sounding more like Trane, myself. But in his mind, he was sounding like Joe Henderson,

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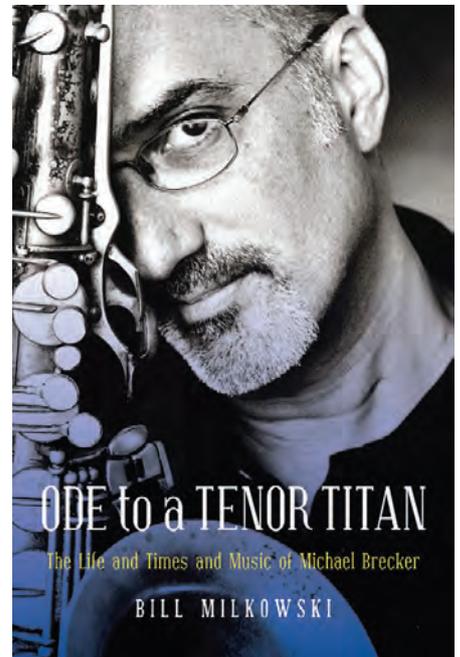
it had its genesis in Oakland ... out of sheer desperation.”

Tyner’s *Infinity* was recorded April 12–15, 1995, at Rudy Van Gelder’s hallowed studio in Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey (where the Coltrane quartet had recorded several classic Impulse! albums). Released on the Impulse! label on Sept. 13, 1995, *Infinity* was not only a highly acclaimed outing, it is also that rare date in Michael’s recorded output at the time where he plays on more than one or two tracks as a guest on somebody else’s album, which had been a solid edict of his agent Darryl Pitt up until then. But of course, this was McCoy Tyner we’re talking about!

Michael rose to the occasion on *Infinity* in the company of Tyner and his working rhythm tandem of bassist Avery Sharpe and drummer Aaron Scott. He holds nothing back on scintillating performances of Thelonious Monk’s swaggering blues “I Mean You” (featuring some fiery exchanges with drummer Scott) and Tyner originals like the modal “Flying High,” the energized, stop-time swinger “Changes” (which had Mike alternately conjuring up King Curtis’ grit and channeling Trane’s sheets of sound) and the lilting 12/8 Afro-gospel number “Happy Days,” inspired by the pianist’s recent trip to Senegal, West Africa. *Infinity* would win a Grammy Award for Best Instrumental Jazz Performance, Group and earn Michael a Grammy in the Best Jazz Instrumental Performance, Soloist category for his absolutely incendiary playing on a rendition of John Coltrane’s “Impressions,” the first tune he had ever played with Tyner during their soundcheck at the Yoshi’s the year before, and one that had become deeply ingrained in Mike’s DNA after 30 years of playing it.

For the January 1996 issue of *DownBeat*, Michael and McCoy posed together for the cover photo with the accompanying headline: “Monsters Meet.” In the story, Mike explained his reaction to being approached by Tyner about doing *Infinity*: “It was something I dreamt about for a long time. It’s hard to explain. For me, it’s more than the fact that I’m influenced by McCoy and John Coltrane. I think the quartet was the reason I became a musician. So when the chance came, of course, I jumped at it. And the only way to characterize it is that it’s the most comfortable I’ve ever felt in any context.”

When asked by writer Martin Johnson if he was fearful of inviting the ghost of Coltrane, Michael replied: “It just so happens that I’m very strongly influenced by John Coltrane. Very much so, too, by Joe Henderson and Sonny Rollins. Those are the three, as far as saxophone players go, dominant forces, the roots of my playing. Then there is other stuff that has grown out of that. But when I get up



**“You know, McCoy ... he’s from Philly.” And he went, “He’s from Philly? Well, in that case, it should be OK then.” And that’s how the gig happened.’ —Jason Olaine**

and play with McCoy, I just play. I don’t think ‘I don’t want to sound like this.’ Harmonically, it has worked out wonderfully. I don’t have to think about it.”

In his *Jazz Times* review of *Infinity* in the April 1996 issue, Owen Cordle wrote: “The tour de force of the album is Coltrane’s ‘Impressions,’ in which Tyner unleashes some of the stabbing lines and chordal intensity of the old days and Brecker blows a furious, Herculean solo from the Coltrane (and his own) book of saxophone technique. This reminds us that Brecker has done more to bring the Coltrane sound and style into the contemporary vocabulary than any other saxophonist.”

DB

For more information on *Ode to a Tenor Titan: The Life and Times and Music of Michael Brecker*, visit [backbeatbooks.com](http://backbeatbooks.com).

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# Nate Smith

# KINFOLK 2

# TAKES FLIGHT

By Phil Freeman Photo by Corey Dewald

Drummer Nate Smith's album *Kinfolk 2: See The Birds* (Edition) is the second volume in a planned trilogy, and while the music has autobiographical overtones and personal meaning, what he's talking about is not blood relations, but the musical family one selects for oneself.

**H**e sees it as “kind of an extension of this idea that Dave Holland planted in my head a long time ago. He said, ‘As you're out here navigating the world as a musician, you will find other musicians — musicians find each other. Your collaborators will find you.’”

Holland is, of course, one of those collaborators. Smith worked with the legendary bassist for almost a decade, in Holland's early 2000s quintet, octet and big band. He can be heard on Holland's albums *Critical Mass* and *Pathways*. At the same time, he was holding down the drum throne in saxophonist Chris Potter's Underground band. With that group, he made *Underground*, *Follow The Red Line—Live At The Village Vanguard*, *Ultrahang* and *Imaginary Cities*, the latter of which featured an expanded group called the Underground Orchestra.







His approach to drums, and music, allows Smith to cover a broad range of styles.

“During that time, my personality — my voice as a drummer — really started to take shape, especially in Chris’s band, because Chris was really hands-off in the way that he approached bringing tunes in,” Smith recalls. “He really wanted me to explore the groove aspect of my playing, but still work in this improvisatory language.”

Holland and Potter both played on the first Kinfolk album, subtitled *Postcards From Everywhere*. He began recording it in January 2014, but it wasn’t released until February 2017, in what Smith describes with a laugh as “a very long and expensive process.” It was worth it, though, as a track from the record — “Home Free (for Peter Joe)” — received two Grammy nominations, for Best Instrumental Composition and Best Arrangement, Instrumental Or A Cappella.

Holland and Potter were guests on *Postcards From Everywhere*, as were guitarist Lionel Loueke and vocalist Gretchen Parlato, but the core band featured Jaleel Shaw on alto and soprano saxes, Kris Bowers on piano and Fender Rhodes, Jeremy Most on guitar and Fima Ephron on bass. “Home Free (for Peter Joe),” the album’s final track, added a string quartet. Smith wrote the arrangement for them.

His approach to the drums, and to music, allows Smith to cover a broad range of styles. Some of the tracks on the Kinfolk albums swing, but a lot of them are built around head-nodding beats derived from hip-hop. Of course, hip-hop was constructed from samples of pop, rock, r&b and funk records from

the ’60s, ’70s and ’80s, which Smith listened to growing up. Born and raised in Chesapeake, Virginia, he was drawn in by sounds from his father’s record collection — “stuff that became smooth jazz, before it was called smooth jazz: Bob James, Grover Washington Jr., David Sanborn, Quincy Jones.” Later, he was drawn to Prince and the Police, and a few years later, Living Colour. He was inspired to take up the drums by his older brother, who also played. “I would watch him play, and then I would try to sort of mimic what he would do.”

Smith attended James Madison University, where he started out as a music major and focused on percussion performance, but half-way through his time there pivoted and got a degree in media arts and design — “which basically meant that I could go to the studio, and learn about recording music in the studio,” he said. “That was the basic reason I switched my degree, because I got more interested in production as college went along.”

In 1996, Smith was chosen for legendary singer Betty Carter’s Jazz Ahead program. “I met Betty through a great trombonist named Andre Hayward,” he recalls. “She heard something special in my playing, and she invited me to New York to participate in the second Jazz Ahead at that time. I met Eric Harland that year, I met Joel Frahm that year, so many great musicians, and I had never been around that many musicians my age who were playing on that high a level. So it was really inspiring to me, and it made me feel like, ‘OK, I need to get real serious about finding my voice as a musician.’

That was life-changing.”

About a year later, Smith was a student at Virginia Commonwealth University, and Holland came to campus as a guest artist. “That would become a much bigger break for me later, but meeting Dave — someone of his level and his renown hearing me playing and saying, ‘Man, I like the way you play’ — it was a huge vote of confidence.”

The late-’80s and early-’90s wave of Black rock bands like Living Colour, Fishbone and 24/7 Spyz, many of them stylistic shapeshifters, was deeply inspiring to the teenage drummer. “I can’t overstate the importance of [Living Colour] and their influence on my playing, particularly [drummer] Will Calhoun. I remember there was something about the way they played live together ... the way that they would open up the solo sections and the things that Will would do with the time and his fills and inserting this kind of triplet feel into this otherwise straight feeling.”

Living Colour guitarist Vernon Reid appears on *See The Birds*, but listeners coming in expecting a wild, shredding solo will be very surprised. His contribution to “Rambo: The Vigilante,” which is driven by a fast, heavy beat somewhere between drum ’n’ bass and fusion, is more like a layer of atmosphere, mingling with waves of synthesizer and Jaleel Shaw’s raw alto saxophone.

“I told him, ‘I want you to create a layer of tension underneath, just a sonic wash of tension.’ That was the word I used. And I left the rest up to him,” Smith recalls. “And I thought



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"George Duke was one of my favorite musicians," Smith says.

that he was gonna give me this shredding, really dissonant, fast-moving thing, but instead he sent me back this interestingly constructed thing that sounded like static, like the sound between radio stations on the dial."

Brittany Howard, a solo artist who first met fame as the singer for the Southern rock band Alabama Shakes, is another guest on *See The Birds*. She sings in a soft, soulful voice on the album closer, "Fly (For Mike)." It's payback of a sort; Smith was the drummer on her solo debut, 2019's *Jaime* (ATO).

Some of the guests recorded in the studio with the core band, while others, like Reid, delivered their parts remotely. Vibraphonist Joel Ross, who appears on the opening "Altitude" and the title track, was an in-person contributor. "We did a session in February 2020, just before everything shut down," Smith recalls. "Joel was in the room, and all of his tracks are cut in real time." The interaction between Ross and Smith on "Altitude" is palpable and joyous. The vibraphonist flits through the room like a living shadow, ornamenting the music before taking a shimmering solo that surrounds Smith's hypnotic melody in a cloud of harmony.

Michael Mayo's wordless vocals provide another welcome surprise, as keyboardist Jon Cowherd and guitarist Brad Allen Williams fill out the mix with some gentle but rock-ish elements. By contrast, "See The Birds" is an airy, lighthearted groove; Mayo's near-falsetto vocals over retro synths and a hard-slapping drum machine recall the work of Thundercat.

Violinist Regina Carter appears on the gen-

tle but emphatic "Collision," beaming in from her home in New Jersey. "I've known Regina since, I think, 2012; we did a tour with Joe Jackson together," Smith recalls. "I really wanted to do something that could feature this lyrical thing she does with the violin. So, I sent her the track, she gave me like five passes of different textures that she played, and we kind of comped them together."

Carter almost seems like a guest vocalist on the track, which begins with gentle toms mixed to sound like a programmed beat. As the piece goes on, multiple layers of violin are heard, until she's in two- and three-part harmony with herself as Smith builds to a heavier, marching beat.

"One of the things that I love about Regina's playing is ... it really sounds like she's singing when she plays," Smith says. "Regina has the biggest ears on the planet. You can play a chord for her, and she'll find all of the prettiest extensions in that chord and play all of the beautiful color tones in that chord."

Perhaps the most surprising guest on *See The Birds*, though, is Stokley Williams, vocalist and studio drummer for the Minnesota-based funk/soul band Mint Condition, who appears on the album's fifth track, the straight-up r&b track "Don't Let Me Get Away." When discussing the song, Smith expands the conversation to explore which aspects of Black music are canonized, and which aren't. "I think that the Black band in general — the idea of the Black band — has become less and less visible in pop culture, period. Regardless of what the band is playing," he says, adding that "soul jazz, r&b jazz, whatever you want to call it, before it was

smooth, before it was called smooth, was largely ... I don't wanna say ignored, but just invisible to mostly white audiences, and I think that does play a part in the fact that we don't recognize it as a part of the canon of jazz history."

More and more in recent years, young jazz artists are coming up who draw as much from '80s Black pop, r&b, soul and funk as from "the tradition." Players like Robert Glasper, Terrace Martin, Thundercat, Chris Dave (who drummed for Mint Condition live in the early '90s) and others in their cohort — including Nate Smith — don't draw the same esthetic lines as players who came before them.

"George Duke was one of my favorite musicians," Smith says, recalling the keyboard wizard who went from Cannonball Adderley's band to Frank Zappa's, produced pop hits and made hyper-dense fusion with Stanley Clarke. "I am really, really sad that I never got a chance to play with him, but I think about him so much right now, because I think about Thundercat and by extension Kendrick Lamar and Flying Lotus and this entire movement that centers this relationship between the instrumentalists and hip-hop, the instrumentalists and the audience. I think about Terrace Martin, I think about all these great instrumentalists — Robert Glasper, even — who are now finding a white audience for their music, but their music is built on this music that came before it, which was largely invisible to white audiences. We're starting to really see this beautiful golden age of music be unearthed, and I think we're seeing that because of musicians who've been influenced by it like me. I'm talking about it now — if you like me, then check out Mint Condition. If you like me, check out George Duke."

That awareness of a historical continuum that might not be "jazz" in the swing/bebop sense but nonetheless manifests Black excellence through instrumental music, is what animates the Kinfolk records for Smith, and it's likely to be present on the third volume, whenever that may arrive.

"The first record is a reflection of the music I absorbed as a child, CTI Records and Quincy and all that soul jazz," he says. "And this record is kind of a bigger reflection of the stuff I was listening to in my teenage years. There's a lot more rock-influenced stuff, a lot more that's funk- or r&b-influenced. And then what I'm hoping for the third Kinfolk record is that it kind of reflects this space I entered in my early twenties, where I'm thinking about music production and what was happening at the time when I was in college, which was the neo-soul movement — not just Maxwell and D'Angelo, but also Jamiroquai and the Brand New Heavies, and there was this period where bands were a thing. And, of course, during that time, Mint Condition was also very popular. So I'll see if I can get Stokley on the next one, too." **DB**

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# Reviews

Masterpiece ★★★★★ Excellent ★★★★ Good ★★★ Fair ★★ Poor ★



## Jazzmeia Horn and Her Noble Force

*Dear Love*  
EMPRESS LEGACY

★★★★

Noble Force is a lovely name for a band and also nicely captures the strength of purpose Jazzmeia Horn brings to her third and most ambitious album to date. We already knew this free spirit with the willowy, knife-edged soprano could sing and scat like the dickens, but who knew she could also write big band arrangements that snap, crackle and groove? And while *Dear Love* suffers from a brief sludgy stretch and some overexuberant high notes, overall, Horn dials in this timely, uplifting spree. Her deft mix of the personal and political recalls Abbey Lincoln and Nina Simone, with a modicum of modern hip-hop and spoken word.

Right from Jason Marshall's opening bari riff on "I Feel You Near," you know you're in

for a soulful, swinging ride, as Horn declaims atmospheric memories of an absent lover. "Be Perfect" is the first of three short tracks with rich, Hi-Lo's-like vocal overdubs that introduce a longer song, the first being Lafayette Harris' deliciously chromatic "He Could Be Perfect." If the Don Raye standard "He's My Guy," executed with joyously rapid walking bass, makes you suspect Basie is in the room, all doubt vanishes with "Let Us (Take Our Time)," which revisits the excruciatingly sexy, slo-mo groove of "Li'l Darlin'." "Back To Me" intros another fun finger-popper, "Lover Come Back To Me," bringing Sarah Vaughan to mind.

The meandering "Money Can't Buy Me Love" (little resemblance to the Beatles) and Yunie Mojica's melodramatic character study "Nia" slow things down, but *Dear Love* regains momentum with the final pairing of vocal intro "Strive" and the inspirational "Strive (To Be)," which, with its brass fanfare and punchy theme, surely is a future showstopper. Ditto for the gorgeous ballad "Where We Are," a

churchy declaration of universal love. Church proper is where you go on "Judah Rise," featuring a dramatic sermon by dramatic Horn's percussively guttural Georgia pastor, Reverend E. J. Robinson, buoyed by a sweet reprise of Marshall's bari.

A CD bonus track offers a Stax-style tag, "Where Is Freedom!?" featuring musical director Sullivan Fortner's screaming organ, as the band leaves us dancing in the street.

—Paul de Barros

**Dear Love:** I Feel You Near; Be Perfect; He Could Be Perfect; He's My Guy; Let Us (Take Our Time); Back To Me; Lover Come Back To Me; Nia; Strive (Vocal Interlude); Strive (To Be); Where We Are; Judah Rise; Where Is Freedom? (bonus track). (62:08)

**Personnel:** Jazzmeia Horn, vocals, arrangements; Freddie Hendrix, Bruce Harris, Josh Evans, trumpet; Dion Tucker, Cory Wilcox, Max Seigel, trombone; Bruce Williams, alto saxophone; Keith Loftis, Anthony Ware, tenor saxophone; Jason Marshall, baritone saxophone; Keith Brown, piano; Sullivan Fortner, organ, musical director; Eric Wheeler, bass; Anwar Marshall, drums; Khalil Bell, percussion; Tia Allen, viola; Chiara Fasi, Eddie Findelsen, violin; Dara Hankins, cello; Reverend E.J. Robinson, spoken word (13).

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**Steven Bernstein's Millennium Territory Orchestra**  
**Tinctures In Time**  
*(Community Music Vol. 1)*  
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 ★★☆☆½

Since its debut in 2006, Steven Bernstein's Millennium Territory Orchestra has largely been a showcase for its leader's arrangements. Sure, the band has its share of standout soloists, but the draw has been Bernstein's ability to recast other people's material, be it Don Redman or Sly Stone or Prince.

**Arturo O'Farrill & the Afro Latin Jazz Ensemble**  
*...dreaming in lions...*  
 BLUE NOTE  
 ★★★★★½

It's a bit of fib to say that I saw dancers gliding while listening to the opening section of the *...dreaming in lions...* suite, but one thing's certain: combined with Arturo O'Farrill's compositional craft, his ensemble's performance skills make it easy to imagine a troupe's expressive maneuvers unfolding. Indeed, these two extended works were written in collaboration with the Malpas Dance Company, and their rendering prompts visions of choreography.

That magic is due to the graceful kinetics of O'Farrill's work. Be it the sweeping Caribbean polyrhythms of "Struggles and Strugglets," or the catchy cascade of "War Bird Man," this powerful music resounds with poise. Arranged with a sage balance, the parade of moods essayed by the 10-member Afro Latin Jazz Ensemble in "Despedida" and "Dreaming Of Lions" is calibrated to introduce myriad blends and various emotions. There's true inspiration in the way the shaker/trumpet/trumpet intro to "How I Love" morphs into a full-band exposition of the theme. And the musicians are locked in tight.

Flutes and muted trumpets twirl, piano and bass duos throw jabs, a Rhodes mixes it up with

*Tinctures In Time*, though, is all Bernstein, with most of the material written in 2019 as he dealt with death and illness among friends and family. Bernstein relies on the transcendent power of groove to tap into energies that are transcendently uplifting.

His charts are often genuinely minimalist, building off short, interlocking phrases to establish rhythmic cross-currents in the manner of Steve Reich or Phillip Glass. In "The Gift," repeating motifs of two to six notes bubble and churn, providing a secondary pulse over Ben Perowsky's second line snare, while "Show Me Your Myth" takes an additive approach, layering propulsive snippets of brass and reeds into a relentless, slow-building groove. Where "Angels Too" showcases a single soloist, others tunes, such as the rambunctious "Satori Slapdown," offer a series of solo spots.

In the end, Bernstein's MTO is less a writer's band than a composer-organized community. It may look like a big band, but it feels like a combo. —J.D. Considine

**Tinctures In Time (Community Music Vol. 1):** Planet B; Quart Of Relativity; Angels; Show Me Your Myth; High Light; The Gift; Satori Slapdown; Angels Too. (38:36)

**Personnel:** Steven Bernstein, trumpet, slide trumpet, flugelhorn; Curtis Fowlkes, trombone; Charlie Burnham, violin; Doug Wiesselman, clarinet, tenor saxophone; Peter Apfelbaum, tenor saxophone; Erik Lawrence, baritone saxophone; Matt Munisteri, guitar, banjo; Ben Allison, bass; Ben Perowsky, drums.

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

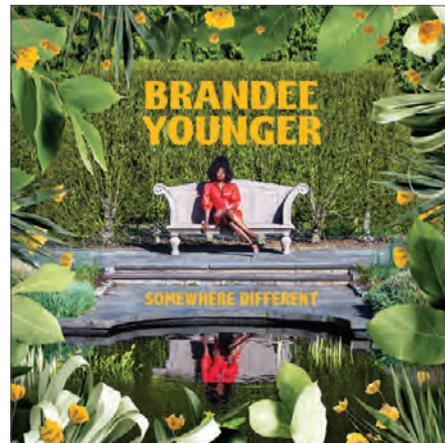


hand-percussion — the band's transitions are remarkably limber. Pulse beats, clave grooves and breezy swing come and go with a fluid feel. With mentors Carla Bley and Chico O'Farrill in the rear-view mirror, and a Borges poem and a Hemingway tale, O'Farrill reaches new heights with his Blue Note debut. —Jim Macnie

**...dreaming in lions...:** Del Mar; Intruso; Beauty Cocoon; Ensayo Silencio; La Llorona; Dreaming In Lions; Scalular; How I Love The Deep; War Bird Man; Struggles and Strugglets; I Wish He Was; Blood in the Water; Dreams So Gold. (65:00)

**Personnel:** Arturo O'Farrill, piano; Zack O'Farrill, drums; Vince Cherico, African percussion, drums; Carlos "Carly" Maldonado, ambient percussion, maracas, marimba; Victor Pablo Garcia Gaetan, ambient percussion, conga, cuica, dumbaq; Jose "BamBam" Rodriguez Platiau, bass; Rafi Malkiel, euphonium, trombone; Adam O'Farrill, flugelhorn, trumpet; Alejandro Aviles, flute, saxophones; Travis Reuter, guitar; Alison Deane, piano (10, 13).

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



**Brandee Younger**  
**Somewhere Different**  
 IMPULSE!  
 ★★☆☆½

With *Somewhere Different*, Brandee Younger makes her much-deserved major-label debut as a leader. Hardly anyone does what she does. Not only is her music an exalted meeting place for European classical and African-American musical forms, but she is one of the few who can, as a practitioner, further the legacy of singular composers like Alice Coltrane and Dorothy Ashby. No small responsibility.

Admittedly, the harp — with its lyrical timbre and arpeggiated vocabulary — shouldn't fit so neatly into jazz combos. But Younger's relentless sense of pulse generates the drive on her smooth-edged compositions, and the evenly titrated drum lines (by Allan Menard and Marcus Gilmore) and grounding bass inflections (by Rashaan Carter, Dezron Douglas and Ron Carter) provide rhythmic ballast.

Thus "Reclamation," the album opener, gambols at an exciting clip, accentuated by synchronized solos between saxophonist Chelsea Baratz and flutist Anne Drummond, and "Spirit U Will," one of two Douglas compositions, allows trumpeter Maurice Brown a similar freedom to extemporize.

You can hear Younger's expertise at syncretism on the title cut, with its classical melodies and sudden detours into synth rhythms; on "Love & Struggle," an all-acoustic interplay of fluttering chords and driving beats; and "Tickled Pink," a graceful air atop a riding groove. Finally, Ron Carter's appearances on "Beautiful Is Black" and the blues-leaning "Olivia Benson," Douglas' second composition, round out the album with satisfying moments of straightforward exultancy. —Suzanne Lorge

**Somewhere Different:** Reclamation; Spirit U Will; Pretend; Somewhere Different; Love & Struggle; Beautiful Is Black; Olivia Benson; Tickled Pink. (43:54)

**Personnel:** Brandee Younger, harp; Maurice Brown, trumpet; Chelsea Baratz, tenor saxophone; Anne Drummond, flute; Tarrion "Tank" Ball, vocals; Dezron Douglas, electric bass; Rashaan Carter, bass, electric bass; Ron Carter, bass; Marcus Gilmore, drums, drum programming; Allan Menard, drums.

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

# The Hot Box

Critics	Paul de Barros	J.D. Considine	Jim Macnie	Suzanne Lorge
<b>Jazzmeia Horn</b> <i>Dear Love</i>	★★★★	★★★★½	★★★½	★★★★½
<b>Steven Bernstein</b> <i>Tinctures In Time</i>	★★★½	★★★½	★★★★	★★★★½
<b>Arturo O’Farrill</b> <i>...dreaming in lions...</i>	★★★★	★★★½	★★★★½	★★★★
<b>Brandee Younger</b> <i>Somewhere Different</i>	★★★½	★★★	★★★	★★★★½

## Critics' Comments

### Jazzmeia Horn and Her Noble Force, *Dear Love*

A persuasive stylist and gifted arranger, Horn is equally blessed as both bandleader and singer, and it's that combination that makes the lyrical content here — particularly her emphasis on positivity and individualism — so empowering. —*J.D. Considine*

If the goal is to demolish genre by waxing omni, this one's a victory. From the remembrances, broadsides, standards and originals, her excursions tell a rich story. —*Jim Macnie*

This album shows off the singer's considerable ingenuity. A cappella vocal arrangements, smart spoken verse, full-throttle horn parts, electrifying scats, soulful heartbreakers — each corner of this record holds a new delight. —*Suzanne Lorge*

### Steven Bernstein's Millennial Territory Orchestra, *Tinctures In Time*

The charmingly wonky and whimsical circus feel of this band persists, but the mood here feels slightly chastened, even funereal, in a bluesy, New Orleans kind of way — no surprise, given the times. "Quart of Relativity" and "Angels" are flat-out gorgeous. —*Paul de Barros*

The arranger's skill set has always been vast, but in the last few years his charts have leveled-up, conveying deep emotions. This affair contains magic. See "High Light" for proof. —*Jim Macnie*

Bernstein's compositions telegraph amiability, with their subtly percussive grooves, warm brass harmonies and bright guitar sections. Beneath these whimsical top notes, however, lie the bittersweet blue undercurrents that inspired this impressive collection. —*Suzanne Lorge*

### Arturo O’Farrill and the Afro Latin Jazz Ensemble, *...dreaming in lions...*

These two suites written in collaboration with the Malpas Dance Company navigate creative new passageways through Afro Latin jazz, with the five-part "Despedida (Farewell)" offering oblique takes on salsa and the longer, stronger "Dreaming In Lions" suite creating an appropriately associative swirl. Love the hocket on "How I Love." —*Paul de Barros*

These two suites are ballet music anyone can dance to, thanks to the viscerally persuasive percussion core of O’Farrill's ensemble. But the melodic lines are equally kinetic, articulating a rhythmic structure clear enough to convey narrative through the music's pulse. —*J.D. Considine*

O’Farrill taps into deep feelings on this epic release. He calibrates that emotion through perspicacious writing and stellar performance — all the better to absorb his aesthetic intent. If that intent is to acknowledge heart-expanding, earthbound beauty, O’Farrill succeeds. —*Suzanne Lorge*

### Brandee Younger, *Somewhere Different*

The brilliant harpist, who in the past has explored the deeply spiritual, lightens things up with an accessible, fun, but uncompromising foray into the language of love. —*Paul de Barros*

From furious fusion workouts to soulful balladry, Younger makes her instrument seem approachably contemporary, while her insightful interplay with Ron Carter shows she's a major jazz talent to boot. —*J.D. Considine*

A fetching blend of dreamy and aggressive (check Mednard on "Reclamation"), the harpist puts her best foot forward on this major label debut, using her gossamer strings to float above engaging pulses. —*Jim Macnie*

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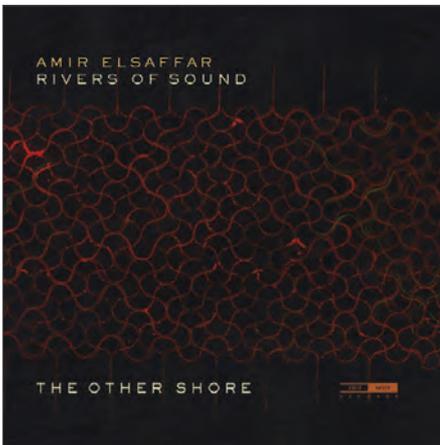
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## Amir ElSaffar Rivers of Sound The Other Shore

OUTHERE

★★★★

Rivers of Sound is an apt, self-fulfilling moniker for the multicultural/multi-contextual large ensemble led by Amir ElSaffar. The Chicago-born, Iraqi-American musician (here on trumpet, santur and voice), offers his second, and finest, recording by this project. There's willful diversity of cultural and ethnic shores touched on, but the fundamental aspect of combining instrumental sonics — currents of sound — is

## Kate McGarry + Keith Ganz Ensemble What To Wear In The Dark

RESILIENCE MUSIC ALLIANCE

★★★★

*What To Wear In The Dark* is a radical and lustrous weave of original music and cover tunes. Vocalist Kate McGarry and her partner, guitarist Keith Ganz, strive to “brighten up the night,” the aim of the first track, the 1930s classic “Dancing In The Dark.” The drive to beat back despair, whether it's the social pressure bearing down in Steely Dan's “Barrytown” or the passing of a lifestyle in the Eagles' “Desperado,” animates this exceptional album.

There are rhythmically upbeat tunes, like Joni Mitchell's ambiguous “Both Sides Now,” Cat Stevens' “On the Road To Find Out,” a funky take on George Harrison's “Here Comes the Sun” and the album's emotional pivot point, a chatty version of Simon and Garfunkel's “The 59th Street Bridge Song (Feelin' Groovy)” that spotlights guest artists Ron Miles' sassy cornet and Gary Versace's velvet piano. The two back McGarry as she takes on Leonard Cohen's “Anthem.” Her voice is balm on “It Happens All the Time In Heaven,” a languorous art song that ends this album in a storm of affection.

Ganz's edits and mixes give space and definition to each instrument as well as McGarry's

critical element in ElSaffar's palette.

Ruminative murmurings pave the way on the opening “Duha” (Dawn), which expands into fervent rhythmic force heard on such other pieces as “Reaching Upwards.” Here, ElSaffar taps Western classical notions of brass ensemble writing and a rugged, ritualistic take on minimalism, spiced by drummer Nasheet Waits' understated double-timing.

The percussive attack of ElSaffar's santur solo in “Concentrics” segues into a wave of large ensemble charts that fuse big band writing with a Middle Eastern harmonic DNA.

On “Lightning Flash,” the warm sound of Jason Adasiewicz's vibes organically interact with oud player Zafer Tawil, then veer toward more idiomatically jazz-hued riffs, closing with ghostly overtones on Naseem Alatrash's cello.

What may sound akin to world-sampler esthetics coheres with ease through ElSaffar's guidance — and offers some deeper message unity through music.

—Josef Woodard

**The Other Shore:** Druha; Transformations; Reaching Upward; Ashaa; Concentric; Lightning Flash; March; Medni (Epilogue). (78:56)

**Personnel:** Amir ElSaffar, trumpet, santur; Jason Adasiewicz, vibraphone; Tareq Abboushi, buzuq; Naseem Alatrash, cello; Fabrizio Cassol, alto saxophone; Carlo De Rosa, bass; Dena El Saffar, violin/joza; John Escreet, piano; Ole Mathisen, tenor saxophone, soprano saxophone; Tim Moore, dumbek, naqqarat, frame drums; Miles Okazaki, guitar; JD Parran, bass saxophone, clarinet; Mohamed Saleh, oboe, English horn; Rajna Swaminathan, mridangam; Zafer Tawil, oud, nay; Nasheet Waits, drums; George Ziadeh, oud.

**Ordering info:** [outthere-music.com/en](http://outthere-music.com/en)



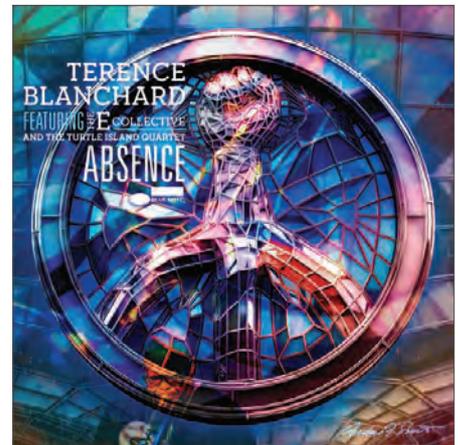
vocals. The flavors of Pat Metheny, Sting, Tom Waits and Peter Gabriel surface occasionally but never subvert the originality here. Recorded over four years, in three different places with varying personnel, *What To Wear In The Dark* sounds born to flow.

—Carlo Wolff

**What To Wear In The Dark:** Dancing In The Dark; Barrytown; Both Sides Now; God Moves On The City; The 59th Street Bridge Song (Feelin' Groovy); Desperado; On The Road To Find Out; Anthem; Here Comes The Sun; It Happens All The Time In Heaven. (61:48)

**Personnel:** Erin Bentlage, vocals; Obed Calvaire, Christian Euman, Clarence Penn, drums; Keith Ganz, guitars, bass; Kate McGarry, vocals; Ron Miles, cornet; James Shipp, brushes, pandeiro; Sean Smith, acoustic bass; Becca Stevens, vocals, charango; Gary Versace, piano, organ, Wurlitzer, accordion; Michelle Willis, vocals, Wurlitzer.

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



## Terence Blanchard Absence

BLUE NOTE

★★½

For decades the music of Wayne Shorter has exerted a profound impact. Perhaps because he's firmly established, Blanchard feels at ease devoting his latest endeavor with the fusion-leaning E-Collective to this singular composer.

The album, which also features the Turtle Island String Quartet, avoids the obvious. There's a smoky reading of “Fall,” famously featured on the Miles Davis classic *Nefertiti*, but otherwise the Shorter tunes are taken from his days with Weather Report, although “Diana” was featured on his collaboration with Brazilian singer Milton Nascimento on *Native Dancer*.

It's a collaborative effort, with compositional contributions from bassist David Ginyard — who eschews any improvisation in the arrangement of his “Envisioned Reflections” — and it's easy to hear Shorter's impact on the churning performances, nearly all slink at a measured pace, subsumed in layers of synthesizers and a relaxed but muscular jazz-rock attack.

On some tunes the Turtle Island String Quartet limn the proceedings with predictable lines, but Blanchard gives them their own extended feature with “Second Wave,” a fluid collision of bluegrass, classical and swing. The leader's “I Dare You,” which references Shorter's definition of jazz as fearless, opens with a string quartet intro and a lick recalling Beethoven's Fifth before morphing into the chugging theme, with its post-Led Zeppelin wallop.

The project conveys the emotional power of Shorter's work, but there's an unfortunate airlessness that prevents the music from soaring like its honoree.

—Peter Margasak

**Absence:** Absence; The Elders; Fall; I Dare You (Intro); I Dare You; Envisioned Reflections (Intro); Envisioned Reflections; The Second Wave; When It Was Now; Dark Horse; Diana; More Elders. (64:51)

**Personnel:** Terence Blanchard, trumpet, synths; Fabian Almazan, piano, synths; Charles Altura, electric guitar; David Ginyard, bass, synths; Oscar Seaton, drums; David Balakrishnan, Gabe Terraccia-no, violin; Benjamin von Gutzeit, viola; Malcolm Parson, cello.

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



## Hiromi *Silver Lining Suite*

TELARC

★★★★½

Hiromi has forged a highly successful career, blending classical piano chops with jazz and rock feels, so a piece for piano and string quartet feels like a logical step. The challenge, of course, is making a true fusion. Are the strings there only for texture and color, or do they play a functional role? Do all the players improvise, or are the strings a static backdrop for the soloist? Is there a real conversation?

Jazz history offers a graveyard of bad

answers to such questions and Hiromi has come up with at least a few good ones. In general, her strings have a percussive force and romantic sweep that feels quite in keeping with jazz, as she ushers us through the emotions she has experienced during the pandemic: fear, anxiety, yearning, confusion and, ultimately, joy and triumph. Cellist Wataru Mukai often provides a walking bass line for Hiromi's churning piano and the string players also create percussive accompaniments. On the movement "Unknown," pizzicato and an edgy, angular arco pattern help create the anxious mood. On "Fortitude," the lush strings go far beyond the usual sweetener. Unfortunately, during many stretches Hiromi is, indeed, just a jazz pianist on a flying carpet of strings. But overall this is a credible and uplifting piece.

Three of the other tunes — familiar from earlier albums — also integrate piano and strings well: the powerfully yearning "Someday"; the hand-wringing "11:49PM"; and the galloping "Jumpstart," which features a pretty jazzy violin solo. By contrast, "Uncertainty" is saccharine and the speedy tango "Ribero Del Duero" is overly showy. —Paul de Barros

**Silver Lining Suite:** Silver Lining Suite: Isolation, The Unknown, Drifters, Fortitude, Uncertainty, Someday, Jumpstart, 11:49PM; Ribera Del Duero. (66:17)

**Personnel:** Hiromi, piano; Tatsuo Nishie, Sohei Birmann, violin; Meguna Naka, viola; Wataru Mukai, cello.

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

## Eric Bibb *Dear America*

PROVOGUE

★★★★★

When labeled a "bluesman," Eric Bibb is a square peg in a round hole. A New York native who's lived in Sweden for decades, Bibb knows country blues inside out, but he's also well-versed in folk and Black religious music. Bibb, the son of folksinger-activist-actor Leon Bibb and nephew of MJQ pianist John Lewis, has staked his place in the vast world of roots music.

Expressing truth and social justice comes naturally to Bibb; his genteel voice throughout *Dear America* reveals a moral scrutiny that is instructive. "Born Of A Woman" finds him empathetic to mistreated women; his polite urgency contrasts with the take-no-crap fire of London-based gospel singer Shaneeka Simon. For "Emmett's Ghost," Bibb reflects on the lasting horror of the 1950s lynching of Emmett Till; Ron Carter's string bass deepens the melancholic mood.

In addition to Simon and Carter, other guests making satisfying contributions are Mississippi-raised vocalist Lisa Miles ("One-Ness Of Love"), deft blues guitarist Eric Gales from Memphis ("Whole World's Got The Blues") and church steel guitar specialist Chuck Campbell ("Different Picture"). Particularly



important to the success of the album is Glen Scott, an English colleague of Bibb's the past 15 years with dexterity as a multi-instrumentalist, singer and a producer. —Frank-John Hadley

**Dear America:** Whole Lotta Lovin'; Born Of A Woman; Whole World's Got The Blues; Dear America; Different Picture; Tell Yourself; Emmett's Ghost; White & Black; Along The Way; Talkin' 'Bout A Train (Part 1); Talkin' 'Bout A Train (Part 2); Love's Kingdom; One-Ness Of Love. (52:31)

**Personnel:** Eric Bibb, vocals, acoustic guitar, guitalele (3), acoustic baritone guitar (13), handclaps; Glen Scott, keyboards, drums, percussion, programming, bass, Wurlitzer, synths, piano, Hammond organ, electric and acoustic guitar, guitalele, handclaps, foot stomps, vocoder, flutes, lead (12) and backing vocals; Ron Carter, acoustic bass (1, 7); Chuck Campbell, pedal steel guitar (5); Andre De Lang, vocals (8); Lisa Mills, lead vocals (13); Shaneeka Simon, lead vocals (2), background vocals (3, 4, 5, 11); Christer Lyssarides, mandola (4); Big Daddy Wilson, backing vocals (4) and more.

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

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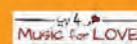


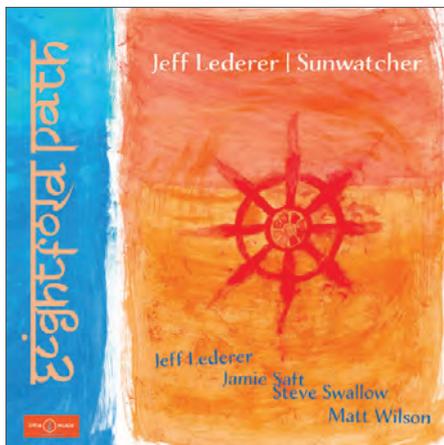
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**Jeff Lederer**  
*Eightfold Path*  
LITTLE (I) MUSIC  
★★★★

**Mary LaRose**  
*Out Here*  
LITTLE (I) MUSIC  
★★★★

The wildly creative team of tenor saxophonist-clarinetist Jeff Lederer and his wife of 30 years, vocalist Mary LaRose, has enjoyed an ongoing collaboration going back to

LaRose's 1999 debut, *Walking Woman*.

Lederer, a longtime member of the Matt Wilson Quartet, debuted as a leader with 2011's *Sunwatcher*, a spirited outing that included tributes to Albert Ayler and Alice Coltrane, reflecting the spiritually minded free-jazz of the '60s. Continuing to explore spiritual undercurrents, Lederer delves into the Buddhist teachings of dharma on *Eightfold Path*. Essentially a reunion of that Sunwatcher quartet with one legendary bassist (Steve Swallow) subbing for another (Buster Williams), *Eightfold Path* finds the intrepid explorer once again joined by keyboardist Jamie Saft and drummer Wilson, walking a razor's edge between composition and group improvisation.

A collection of first takes recorded outside during the pandemic in the yard of Saft's home studio, it travels from the lurching bombast of the organ-fueled "Right Concentration" to the raucous swinger "Right Speech."

The adventurous LaRose has previously put words to compositions by Thelonious Monk, Charles Mingus, Ornette Coleman and Anthony Braxton. This time out, she presents a whole album of Dolphy material, including a funky-edgy wordless vocal take on "Gazzelloni" and brilliant vocalese interpretations of "245," "GW" and "Out To Lunch." Joined by husband Lederer on tenor saxophone and bass clarinet (their intimate duet on "Love Me" casts her alternately as seductress and playful dance partner), Tomeka Reid on cello, Patricia Brennan on vibraphone, Nick Dunston on bass and Matt Wilson on drums, LaRose sails through this material with the panache of a Sheila Jordan or Eddie Jefferson.

—Bill Milkowski

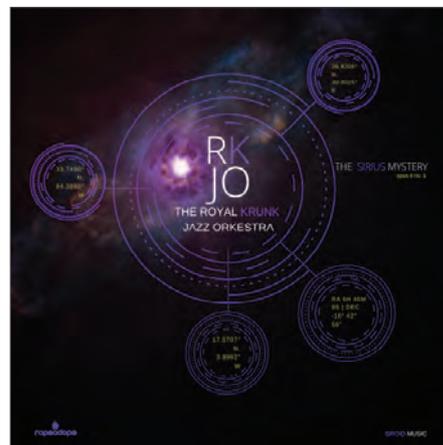
**Eightfold Path:** Right Concentration; Right Speech; Right Effort; Right Action; Right Resolve; Right View; Right Livelihood; Right Mindfulness. (47:06)

**Personnel:** Jeff Lederer, tenor saxophone; Jamie Saft, piano, organ; Steve Swallow, bass; Matt Wilson, drums.

**Out Here:** Gazzelloni; 245; Out There; Music Matador; GW; Serene; Out To Lunch; Love Me; Warm Canto. (62:26)

**Personnel:** Mary LaRose, vocals, lyrics; Jeff Lederer, clarinet, bass clarinet, saxophones; Tomeka Reid, cello; Patricia Brennan, vibraphone; Nick Dunston, bass; Matt Wilson, drums.

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



**Russell Gunn & The Royal Krunk Jazz Orchestra**  
*The Sirius Mystery*  
ROPEADOPE  
★★★★

Trumpeter Russell Gunn has created a complex, grandiose and perplexing album in *The Sirius Mystery* as composer, arranger, orchestrator and producer, playing not a note. It's the third of a series he began in 2018 with *Get It How You Live*, second in a trilogy started with *Pyramids* in 2019, and employs the collage-like orchestral concept he's developed since his breakthrough *Ethnomusicology* volumes launched in 1999. Wynton Marsalis blows his butt off, unleashed and fiery, on "The Dogon," and trumpeter Melvin Jones adds a heroic, golden solo on "The Nummo Fish."

Gunn's Atlanta-based large ensemble threads intricate settings, richly voiced episodes and dramatic counterpoint through theatrical narration referring to African history and Afro-futuristic fantasies. Two drummers on separate channels provide flow despite change-ups; ringing cymbals and clattering percussion top the mix, which includes what seem to be clips of African girls singing from field recordings. Heavenly voices float through, as do blues riffs and a chorus of breaths; soundtrack-like themes morph into wild synth rides or explode in collective improvisation.

*The Sirius Mystery* isn't clearly revealed or resolved, but it's fun to hear. —Howard Mandel

**The Sirius Mystery:** Sirius B—The Unseen Absolute (Intro); The Dogon—Primordial Permanence; Amma's Egg—The Structure Of Matter; The Nummo Fish—Natory Astronauts; (Bonus Track) Amma's Egg—The Structure Of Matter (Alternate Version). (43:25)

**Personnel:** Russell Gunn, composition, arrangements, orchestrations, conductor; Wynton Marsalis, Lee King, Melvin Jones, Terence Harper, trumpets; Dashill Smith, trumpet, vocals, bass clarinet; Diane Farris, Dashill Smith, vocals; Derrick Jackson, Derrick White, Will Williams, Tom Gibson, trombones; Mike Burton, Marquinn Mason, alto saxophones; Mike Walton, Fareed Mahluli, tenor saxophone; Jamel Mitchell, baritone saxophone; Rasheeda Ali, flute; Phil Davis, keyboards; Kevin Bales, piano; Tres Gilbert, bass; Lil John Roberts, Terreon Gully, drums; Rod Harris Jr., guitar; Ali Barr, percussion. Additional musicians, from original small group session: Louis Heriveaux, piano; Brian Hogans, alto saxophone; Morgan Guerin, EWI; Darren English, trumpet; Delbert Felix, bass; Kebbi Williams, tenor saxophone.

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



## Gonzalo Rubalcaba *Skyline*

5PASSION RECORDS

★★★★½

Gonzalo Rubalcaba's *Skyline* is the first of three planned trio albums. It offers a mixture of Cuban standards and original pieces from bandmates and legends Ron Carter and Jack DeJohnette. For Rubalcaba, this music was a return to the places he encountered more than 20 years ago when he first immigrated from Cuba. The tunes reimaged here recall what he asserts in the liner notes was his "real school, [his] portal to a different relationship with American music." Yet, the music is a mature rendering of the art of piano trio. On the DeJohnette tune "Silver Hollow," Rubalcaba tugs at the emotional registers with touch. Then there are the bright and moving lines of "Ahmad The Terrible," a song DeJohnette wrote for Ahmad Jamal, a rendition befitting its namesake.

On both, the trio hews close enough to the originals to evoke nostalgia, but offers surprising new directions. Amid the straight-ahead interpretations of the Cuban standards, "Lagrimas Negras" and "Novia Mia," the album closes with an unplanned improvisation, "RonJackRuba," recorded unbeknownst to the group. There might be no more fitting end than the blues for three musicians that have already given us so much, yet still continue to give.

—Joshua Myers

**Skylight:** Lagrimas Negras; Gypsy; Silver Hollow; Promenade; Novia Mia; A Quiet Place; Ahmad The Terrible; Siempre Maria; RonJackRuba. (60:34)

**Personnel:** Gonzalo Rubalcaba, piano; Ron Carter, bass; Jack DeJohnette, drums.

**Ordering info:** [5passion.com](http://5passion.com)



## Lucy Yeghiazaryan/ Vanisha Gould *In Her Words*

LA RESERVE RECORDS

★★★★★

Armenian-born Lucy Yeghiazaryan crafts melodies with an exquisitely tempered, full-bodied voice tailor-made for illuminating the great torch songs of a bygone era, while Southern California native Vanisha Gould spins colorful narration from her songs with a conversational style seared with sauciness. These two seem from different universes, yet they have a rich jazz tapestry tucked deep into their distinct voices. They also share the experiences (for better and for worse) of being a woman.

*In Her Words* is a conversation, alternating anecdotes from their lives like two friends over lunch. Here, the shared plate is an unconventional string quartet of violin, cello, bass and guitar, with Yeghiazaryan and Gould feeding off the band's energetic sensitivity in their own ways.

Gould's modern folk ballads overflow with words that tell short stories, as in the restless "Gypsy Feet." Yeghiazaryan's ballads are tender stuff, including a knockout rendition of "My Man," a tragic ode to an abusive lover, simultaneously an homage to Billie Holiday.

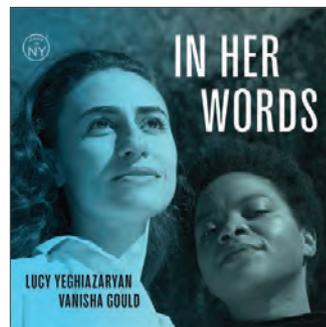
The contrast between the singers is striking throughout, even as we begin to hear how these two women from opposite ends of the world are, in the end, coming from the same place.

—Gary Fukushima

**In Her Words:** The Game; Gypsy Feet; Nobody's Heart; Hey Baby; Look This Way; Gone Again; Trapped In This Room; My Man; Interlude; Love Isn't Everything; Cute Boy; Moments Like This. (33:51)

**Personnel:** Lucy Yeghiazaryan, Vanisha Gould, vocals; Richard Cortez, vocals (4); Eric Zolan, guitar; Dan Pappalardo, bass; Ludovica Burton, violin; Kate Victor, cello (1–3, 6–8, 10, 12).

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



## Kirk Lightsey *I Will Never Stop Loving You*

JOJO RECORDS

★★★★½

Pianist Kirk Lightsey, who has been based in Paris since 2000, first recorded in 1962 with George Bohanon, played with Chet Baker in 1965, and toured with Dexter Gordon during 1979–'83. He really came into his own in 1982–'83 with a pair of solo records for Sunnyside: *Lightsey 1* and *Lightsey 2*. Four of the seven songs from those dates are revisited on his recent *I Will Never Stop Loving You*.

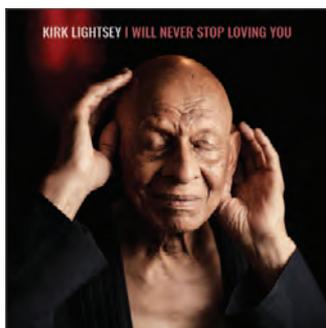
In fact, all seven selections on this set had been recorded by the pianist by 1991, so it is fair to say that he was quite familiar with the material. He begins with a thoughtful and mostly out-of-tempo treatment of the title cut, one of his most memorable originals. Lightsey has always had an affinity for Wayne Shorter songs and he includes three of them on this set, including a playful version of "Fee-Fi-Fo-Fum" that has him work in some light stride piano.

Tony Williams' "Pee Wee," Shorter's "Infant Eyes" and Phil Woods' "Goodbye Mr. Evans" are given similar treatment. Even "Giant Steps" is taken at a fairly relaxed tempo before the all-too-brief recital concludes with Shorter's jazz waltz "Wild Flower." Lightsey is quietly creative throughout these friendly explorations, which often sound as if the pianist was having warm conversations with old friends. —Scott Yanow

**I'll Never Stop Loving You:** I'll Never Stop Loving You; Fee-Fi-Fo-Fum; Pee Wee; Infant Eyes; Goodbye Mr. Evans; Giant Steps; Wild Flower. (36:29)

**Personnel:** Kirk Lightsey, piano.

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



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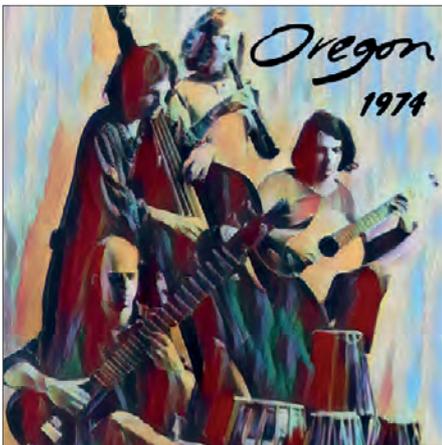
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## Oregon 1974

MOOSICUS RECORDS

★★★★½

Fifty years on, Oregon's music remains as singular. Other bands have tried variations on the fusion of avant-garde jazz with Indian, European classical and folk; none have done it with the same ingenuity or creative energy. Despite this, Oregon's studio recordings (even classics like 1972's *Music From Another Present Era*) could be ponderous. The group's live albums, on the other hand, made up for that — the double-disc 1974 perhaps most of all.

## Frank Kimbrough Ancestors

SUNNYSIDE

★★★★½

Coming on the heels of 2018's audacious and irrepressibly swinging six-CD set *Monk's Dreams: The Complete Compositions of Thelonious Monk* (Sunnyside), the late pianist's posthumously released *Ancestors*, a serene trio outing with bassist Masa Yamaguchi and cornetist Kirk Knuffke, represents another spectrum of his broad musical expression.

There's an intimate, ECM-ish quality to crystalline numbers like the droning, raga-flavored opener "Waiting In Santander," the delicate and atmospheric "November" and the ethereal "Air." The sedate title track is a meditation on Kimbrough's southern roots, while the spacious "Eyes," an intuitive duet between cornet and piano percussion, breaks the tranquil spell. The playfully off-kilter and slightly dissonant "Jimmy G," a tribute to Jimmy Giuffre, is perhaps the only thing here that follows in the spirit of Kimbrough's *Monk* set.

The noirish "Beginning" shifts subtly from dark to light, while "Over" recalls the pianist's interactive collaboration with Yamaguchi and drummer-composer Paul Motian on his 2006 Palmetto album *Play*.

Knuffke, a true spirit voice throughout this

That spark is all the more remarkable because the band, recorded here in a concert broadcast live on Radio Bremen, stretches out. The 14-minute-plus "Dark Spirit" is more than double the length on 1973's *Distant Hills*. Yet where the studio version has dulled to a soporific by its six-minute terminus, 1974's rendition is just warming up with Ralph Towner's guitar and Collin Walcott's sitar pushing each other to repeated crests.

Oregon can still get meditative. The concert-closing "Silence Of A Candle" is a chill-out feature for sitar; "Embarking," a tune they never recorded otherwise, has a droning quality and raga-like passagework from Towner and oboist Paul McCandless. At the same time, though, "Embarking" is the first appearance of Walcott's trap kit, and his brushwork provides a fresh snap to the tune.

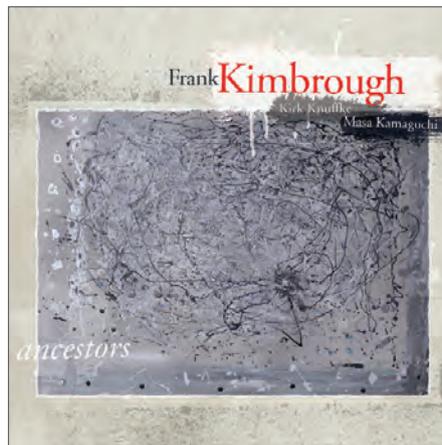
Meanwhile, the gorgeous "Ogden Road" captures the full gamut: mellow beginning, jazzy build-up, raga line, African polyrhythm, folk-rock peak, free piano improv, chamber-classical resolution.

It, and 1974 overall, is a definitive Oregon performance.

—Michael J. West

**1974:** Brujo; Ghost Beads; Dark Spirit; Ogden Road; Distant Hills; Embarking; Raven's Wood; Canyon Song; The Silence Of A Candle. (104:50)  
**Personnel:** Ralph Towner, classical and 12-string guitars, piano; Paul McCandless, oboe, English horn; Glen Moore, bass; Collin Walcott, sitar, tabla, drums.

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



session, elevates with his uncommonly expressive playing, particularly evident on his improv duo with Kimbrough on "Solid," and also on "Union Square," the only tune where Kimbrough lays out. The program concludes lyrically with Maryanne de Prophetis' "All These Years," a darkly hued number that Kimbrough frequently played in concert.

Introspective, peaceful and decidedly personal, this collection of largely first takes is pure magic.

—Bill Milkowski

**Ancestors:** Waiting In Santander; Air; November; Ancestors; Eyes; Jimmy G; Beginning; Union Square; Over; Solid; All Years. (72:00)  
**Personnel:** Frank Kimbrough, piano; Kirk Knuffke, cornet; Masa Yamaguchi, bass.

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



## Eliane Elias Mirror Mirror

CANDID RECORDS

★★★★

The chemistry between Eliane Elias, Chucho Valdés and Chick Corea on *Mirror Mirror* is an artistic marvel. Each individual's style is fascinating enough to tempt meticulous analysis, but the album's contextual background encourages an experiential than theory-minded ear.

Elias and Corea discussed collaborating repeatedly before this record came together and the two finished their sessions not long before Corea's passing in February. The need to find another player to compile a full album of music brought Valdés into the picture; his presence gives *Mirror Mirror* its multidimensional musical blend. The fluid transitions between Elias' alternating duets with both pianists highlight both how tastefully the album's repertoire was mixed/produced and how carefully the track listing was discerned.

"Armando's Rhumba" draws listeners in with infallible swings between rapid, scale-patterned passages and slower breaks lined with astutely placed accidentals, adding spark to the piece. Elias and Valdés demonstrate on "Corazón Partío" how music about heart-break doesn't need a despondent melody or sluggish tempo. A saddened sentiment radiates more subtly, through phrases with half-resolved chords, revealing disappointment without loss of emotional resolve. Corea's duet with Elias on "There Will Never Be Another You" offers sprightly energy for the closer. However, the piece serves as the finale well. The song coincides with two truths, beautiful and painful, while offering melodically uplifting character that feels comforting in its compositional directness, particularly when juxtaposed against the nebulous grief that's mixed into the making of this album.

—Kira Grunenber

**Mirror Mirror:** Armando's Rhumba; Esta Tarde Vi Llover; Blue Bossa; Corazón Partío; Mirror Mirror; Sabor A Mi; There Will Never Be Another You. (47:50)

**Personnel:** Eliane Elias, Chick Corea (1, 3, 5, 7), Chucho Valdés (2, 4, 6), piano.

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

## BadBadNotGood Talk Memory

XL RECORDINGS/  
INNOVATIVE LEISURE  
★★★★½

In the five years since the Canadian group BadBadNotGood released its last album, there have been changes. Original keyboardist Matthew Tavares departed, dividing the duties on keys between Chester Hansen (primarily the group's bassist) and Leland Whitty (primarily the group's reedist). Rounded out by Alexander Sowinski on drums, the trio is still new school iconoclastic with a slightly different angle.

With *Talk Memory*, BBNG has constructed an album closer to the vein of jazz than the genre roads they travel as producers for others. Yet, they maintain their congenial approach, working with Arthur Verocai adding string arrangements or Karriem Riggins doubling up on drums or the texture of Brandee Younger's harp. It lands these fellas as still accomplished composers and even tighter performers.

It all works because as much as BadBadNotGood has received hype over the years for morphing jazz, they've remained energetic practitioners of the genre. *Talk Memory* is proof. —Anthony Dean-Harris

**Talk Memory:** Signal From The Noise; Unfolding (Momentum 73); City Of Mirrors; Beside April; Love Proceeding; Open Channels; Timid, Intimidating; Beside April (Reprise); Talk Meaning. (46:38)

**Personnel:** Leland Whitty, soprano and tenor saxophones, flute, guitar, bass (3, 6), electric and acoustic piano, synthesizers; Chester Hansen, bass, guitar (3), electric and acoustic piano, organ, synthesizers; Alex Sowinski, drums and percussion; Laraaji, ambient electric zither (2); Karriem Riggins, percussion (4); Brandee Younger, harp (9); Terrace Martin, alto saxophone (9); Arthur Verocai, string arrangements (3–5, 8, 9); Andre Cunha Rego, Clovis Pereira Filho, Ubiratã Rodrigues, Wagner Rodrigues, Nikolay Sapoundjiev, William Isaac, violin (3–5, 8, 9); Emilia Valova, Lisiane de los Santos, David Chew, cello (3–5, 8, 9); Samuel Passos, Victor Botene, viola (3–5, 8, 9); Nic Jodoin, tape effects.

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



## Trineice Robinson All Or Nothing

4RM  
★★★★½

Trineice Robinson's voice is redolent with power. She displays a forceful authority on such standards as the album's title cut and others associated with Marvin Gaye, Natalie Cole and, most impressively, with Mahalia Jackson. Particularly daring is "Come Sunday," where only the most intrepid vocalist would attempt Jackson's version of Duke Ellington's gospel classic.

But the real treat is Robinson's own composition "If This Is Love," which morphs smoothly into Ray Noble's "The Very Thought Of You." To some extent, the selection of tunes is reflective of Robinson's thoughtful and thorough background as a musicologist and teacher. Also a gifted performer, some of those lessons are brilliantly enunciated when she scats furiously with Don Braden's saxophone.

Whenever she blends her voice with pianist Cyrus Chestnut's sure-fingered interpretations the results are stunning. On "Let It Shine," there is a shout-out to Fannie Lou Hamer that once again signals her insightful social consciousness and deep immersion in the African American religious experience. —Herb Boyd



**All Or Nothing:** All or Nothing At All; Footprints; What's Going On; Come Sunday; If This Is Love/The Very Thought Of You; You Taught My Heart How To Sing; La Costa; You Know Who (I Mean You); Save Your Love For Me; Let It Shine; This Little Light Of Mine. (49:35)

**Personnel:** Trineice Robinson, vocals; Laura Simone Martin, Lindsay Martin, background vocals; Don Braden, tenor saxophone, alto saxophone, flute; Cyrus Chestnut, piano; Kenny Davis, bass; Vince Ector, drums; Phil Orr, piano (7); Ian Kaufman, trombone; John Meko, trumpet; Nils Mossblad, tenor saxophone; Kahlil Kwame Bell, percussion; Joe "Stretch" Vinson, guitar.

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

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## Brasuka A Vida Com Paixão

OUTSIDE IN MUSIC

★★★★

Brasuka's lead vocalist and keyboard player, Rosana Eckert, says the sextet's international flavor is due in part to members from Cuba, Uruguay and Puerto Rico. The Dallas-based band has been together for 10 years but, since they all have teaching jobs, planning gigs and rehearsals is problematic. Everyone in the band contributed compositions and production to the album, making this debut delightful.

Free-flowing arrangements and superb

## Brandon Goldberg In Good Time

SELF RELEASE

★★★★

This piano prodigy, who recently scored a hat-trick in winning all three categories in the junior-high division of DownBeat's annual Student Music Awards, should be commended for recording his sophomore album well before his sophomore year of high school. But call it anything but sophomore, for Goldberg, at 15, is already in possession of gifts many fail to ever acquire: an unassailable technique, advanced harmonic understanding, a deep sense of swing and, most impressively, a clarity and plethora of ideas executed to near-perfection.

The young artist has been given every chance to succeed with well-seasoned sidemen, led by the late, great drummer-mentor Ralph Peterson, with bassist Luques Curtis, saxophonist Stacy Dillard and trumpeter Josh Evans. Of course, any teenage basketball player might fare well if inserted into the starting five of the Los Angeles Lakers, yet Goldberg shoots from the hip with creativity and confidence as he comps assertively behind the horns, spars rhythmically with Peterson and even takes a few dangerous but enthralling risks. His original works affirm the hard-bop tradition of Peterson's mentor Art Blakey, especially the uptempo burner "Ninety-

musicianship make it difficult to pick a favorite track. Notable moments include "Deusa Do Meu Carnaval," a samba that opens with the band singing smooth harmonies to accent the melody, then ramps up into a free-flowing, percussion-heavy jam, featuring Daniel Pardo's flute and melodica and the band's exuberant scat singing. "A Vida Com Paixão" rides a reggae pulse, provided by Eckert's piano and Tom Burchill's electric guitar.

The subtle rhythm of "Marakandombe" combines Uruguayan candombe and maracatu, a percussion-driven, African-influenced music from Northeastern Brazil. Eckert sings a lilting scat hook, over a cadence provided by the band's clapping hands, cowbells and congas, highlighted by a metallic guitar solo from Burchill. The album closes with a rock arrangement of "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band." It's energetic, but doesn't quite fit with the complex international rhythms that make up the rest of the album. —*j. poet*

**A Vida Com Paixão:** Samba Jiji; A Vida Com Paixão; Road To Hermeto; Marakandombe; Deusa Do Meu Carnaval; Reina's Song; Praia Felix; La Higuera; Confundido; Sgt. Peppers Lonely Hearts Club Band. (47:44)

**Personnel:** Rosana Eckert, vocals, keyboards, production; Ricardo Bozas, percussion, production; Denny Robinson, keyboards, piano, vocals, production; Tom Burchill, acoustic and electric guitar, production; Brian Warthen, bass, percussion, production; Jose Aponte, drums, percussion, production; Daniel Pardo, flutes, melodica, production; Drew Zarembe, flute, tenor saxophone; Jeff Robbins, tenor saxophone.

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



Six," where Goldberg's virtuosity shines.

If any criticism is to be levied, it might be that Goldberg draws too much on past and current masters. But given how many in his age group are posting bad copycat renditions of hip-hop dance moves on TikTok, we should feel some charity toward the youngster, along with anticipation of an impending realization of his true, artistic self. —Gary Fukushima

**In Good Time:** Authority; Circles; Time; Nefertiti; Monk's Dream; Stella By Starlight; El Procrastinador; Someone To Watch Over Me; Ninety-Six; Send In The Clowns. (106:47)

**Personnel:** Brandon Goldberg, piano; Ralph Peterson, drums; Josh Evans, trumpet; Stacy Dillard, tenor saxophone; Antoine Drye, trumpet (10).

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



## Carlos Henriquez The South Bronx Story

TIGER TURN

★★★★

Bronx-born novelist Jerome Charyn has a line that might help here: "Stillborn love notes provide small satisfaction." Carlos Henriquez, who launched on the scene half a decade ago with *The Bronx Pyramid*, has delivered a full-on love letter, the kind that stands at the foot of your stairs and yells its passion up at you. Charyn saw his Bronx as a place of "monstrosities" and petty hoodlums. The new Bronx is a meeting place of boisterous tradition and "improvement," tragedy and optimism, and while the story of Robert Moses and the Cross Bronx Expressway may be of mainly local concern, the music is big, a better word than universal here.

Listening to Henriquez, on this new record, it is harder than ever to avoid comparison with Charles Mingus. The interwoven soneo on "Moses On The Cross," the passionate evocation of activist "Mama Lorraine" Montenegro, co-founder of United Bronx Parents, and of Cornell "Black Benji" Benjamin who tried to forge peace among the Bronx gangs: These merge into a complex composite portrait of the district, a place coming alive in music and singing its poignant, defiant songs. Henriquez had shown his grasp of idiom in his tribute *Dizzy Con Clave*, but here he takes a step beyond homage and into large-scale composition, Mingus-like in reach and barely contained energy, brimming with the humor that the other great bassist sometimes hid too far from sight. As the opening track asserts, this is people music, human and humane, flawed only in the sense that we all are, never the same music twice. Walk these streets with Henriquez and his crew. It's a trip. —Brian Morton

**The South Bronx Story:** The South Bronx; Hydrants Love All; Boro Of Fire; Moses On The Cross; Mama Lorraine; Soy Humano; Black (Benji); Guajeo de Papi; Fort Apache; Hip Hop Conclave. (62:00)

**Personnel:** Michael Rodriguez, Terell Stafford, trumpet; Marshall Gilkes, trombone; Melissa Aidana, saxophones; Jeremy Bosch, flute, vocal; Robert Rodriguez, piano; Carlos Henriquez, bass; Obed Calvaire, drums; Anthony Almonte, congas.

Ordering info: [fanlink.to/thesouthbronxstory](http://fanlink.to/thesouthbronxstory)



**Charlie Ballantine**  
*Reflections/Introspection: The Music Of Thelonious Monk*  
 GREEN MIND RECORDS

★★★★½

Unfolding with a dreamy version of “Reflections,” Indianapolis guitarist Charlie Ballantine’s *Reflections/Introspection: The Music Of Thelonious Monk* is a collection of Monk standards, played with a touch of ginger and layered with enough reverb to tickle any surf guitar enthusiast’s fancy.

“Bemsha Swing” captures a suggestion of a swaying island groove transmitted through the drumming of Chris Parker, in fact, according to KUVU: “Bemsha comes from the word ‘Bimshire’ or ‘little Bimshire,’ a nickname for Barbados, where [the song’s co-writer] Denzil Best’s family originated.”

Ballantine’s version of “Ugly Beauty” captures the lovely lilting swing of the original, but somehow misses the off-kilter dissonance encoded in Monk’s masterwork (i.e., the prized crooked smile). Meanwhile, his “Green Chimneys” softens the angularity of the original, perhaps bearing more similarity to Wynton Marsalis’ interpretation of the tune. “Pannonica,” on the other hand, is a fitting tribute to the baroness who served as the cut’s namesake. It’s a romantic, though brief, love call in the mode of Monk’s revisitation laid down on *Thelonious Alone In San Francisco*.

Compared with Ballantine’s 2018 tribute album *Life Is Brief: The Music Of Bob Dylan*, this record lacks a certain punch (“The Times They Are a-Changin’” is worth the price of admission there), but with such heavy hitting material and apt musicianship, it’s hard to stray into mediocrity. Consequently, this album is a lengthy yet lean pleaser. —Ayana Contreras

**Reflections/Introspection:** Reflections; Bemsha Swing; Off Minor; Ugly Beauty; Raise Four; Bemsha Swing (Alternate); Pannonica (solo); Brilliant Corners; Green Chimneys; Introspection; Evidence; Ask Me Now; Monk’s Dream; Brilliant Corners (Alternate); Let’s Cool One. (79:47)

**Personnel:** Charlie Ballantine, guitar; Chris Parker, drums (1–6); Jesse Whitman, bass (1–6, 8–15); Amanda Gardier, saxophone, (8–15); Cassius Goens III, drums (8–15).

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

**Ken Vandermark**  
*The Field Within A Line*

CORBETT VS. DEMPSEY

★★★★★

Chicagoan saxophonist Ken Vandermark has established himself as an important figure in “outside” jazz. But the operative “O”-word, often misunderstood or confining, engages dimensions and references beyond simpler descriptions, a point embodied in Vandermark’s striking new solo album. It kicks off the Corbett vs. Dempsey label’s Black Cross Solo Series, linked to artwork by famed Chicago-born artist Christopher Wool.

*The Field Within A Line* implies larger statements and concepts through small and subtle gestures. The dozen pieces here convey a breadth beyond the solo context’s leanness of means. Vandermark is in no rush to fill spaces, instead embracing them, making each count.

The album’s short-ish pieces pay tribute to artistic heroes from music (including avant-garde Anthony Braxton and Coleman Hawkins on “No Other Suit”), but more often in the fields of fine art and cinema. For example, a pained figuration seeps through his ode to painter Francis Bacon (“Counter Space”). A deceptive liveness lines his bass clarinet ode to poetic directors Robert Bresson and Abbas Kiarostami (“Another Household Word”).



Closer to home turf, he blows a bluesy haiku on “Shared Testament,” honoring Chicago saxist/trumpeter Joe McPhee and his own jazz scribe father, Stu Vandermark. The outsider comes in out of the cold, in heartfelt homage mode. —Josef Woodard

**The Field Within A Line:** Feet On Main (for Robert Frank & Gordon Parks); Imagine The Paper (for Philip Guston & Dieter Roth); Arcade Of Persuasive Language (for Samuel Beckett & Thomas Bernhard); Portable Nowhere (for Robert Irwin & Richard Serra); Shared Testament (for Joe McPhee & Stu Vandermark); End The Giraffe Lottery (for Chris Marker & Agnes Varda); Counter Space (for Francis Bacon & Kerry James Marshall); Every Waiting Room (for Chantal Akerman & Pina Bausch); No Other Suit (for Anthony Braxton & Coleman Hawkins); Another Household Word (for Robert Bresson & Abbas Kiarostami); Capture Chaos (for Tarsila do Amaral & Hélio Oiticica); Looking Back At Looking Forward (for Ola Trzaska and Marek Winarski). (49:05)

**Personnel:** Ken Vandermark, saxophones, clarinet.

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

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## Gospel's Diversity Endures

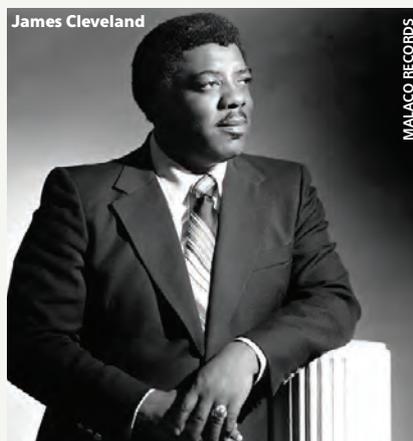
A couple of years ago, audiences who had never set foot in a Baptist or Sanctified church saw gospel giant **James Cleveland** appear on screen. His role in crafting Aretha Franklin's 1972 album *Amazing Grace* album was a highlight of the 2018 performance film; Cleveland's own music shows why singers like the Queen of Soul relied on him.

Cleveland's records constitute **The King Of Gospel Music: The Life And Music Of Reverend James Cleveland (Malaco; ★★★½ 66:47/75:55/76:48/78:50)**. This comprehensive set highlights his nearly 40-year career within an authoritative 100-page book by music historian Robert Marovich. The collection's title is no overstatement. As a composer, vocalist and organizer Cleveland led gospel's transformation from quartet-style harmonies to today's globally popular choirs. Along the way, he also nurtured many top soloists.

While Cleveland's career was seeped in gospel, this collection and Marovich's account detail how much his music flowed back and forth among blues, jazz and pop since his childhood on Chicago's South Side. Born in 1931, he grew up near Mahalia Jackson and was a fan of the other vocalists who thrived in 1940s churches, including The Roberta Martin Singers. By his late teens, Cleveland was singing and writing for the artists he admired. This set begins with his first recording fronting The Gospelaires at 19 on "Oh What A Time." His raspy baritone sounded uncanny (although Cleveland marveled that some compared it to Louis Armstrong). But his best early work came a few years later with The Caravans. On "What Kind Of Man Is This" and "The Solid Rock" his impeccable timing and dynamics send the message with the same assurance as his more extroverted counterparts' vocal flights. He also knew how to build the right groove: His 1957 "That's Why I Love Him So" brought Ray Charles' jubilant hit back to the church.

After spending time in Detroit with C.L. Franklin (and mentoring the minister's daughter, Aretha), Cleveland settled in California and focused on mass choirs during the 1960s. He could make these ensembles move with the ease of small bands, which has become the template for contemporary gospel. But his songs were crucial, so was the way his voice leads the choir to move mountains on the 1963 anthem, "Peace Be Still." That ability continued serving the songs up until his death in 1991.

Two other new albums show that while the raw sound of traditional gospel might not be highlighted in modern mega



churches or on major media, its emotional pull continues, especially in the South.

**Elder Jack Ward**, who has been singing since the early 1960s, is one example of this music's vitality. Recently, he released his solo debut album, **Already Made (Bible & Tire; ★★★½ 33:56)**, which showcases his landmark compositions and upbeat delivery. Sometimes he focuses on gradually leading in through relaxed tempos ("God's Love") but he sounds equally convincing on such church rockers as "The Way Is Already Made." He also knows how to hold his range in reserve and maximize pauses on "Lord I'm In Your Care." The relatively brief album's small group harmonies and Will Sexton's tasteful blues-based guitar lines echo earlier gospel eras but Ward updates it all on his own soft-spoken terms.

The Bible & Tire company is documenting regional takes on Black religious music including the compilation **Sacred Soul Of North Carolina (Bible & Tire; ★★★ 69:59)** along with a documentary in collaboration with Music Maker Foundation. These performers, many of whom are family groups, frequently stay within venerable vocal quartet styles handed down for generations. Communal joy runs throughout every raucous call and response. They also draw on funk and soul, such as the slow jam that shapes Big James Barrett & The Golden Jubilees' "Use Me Lord." Marvin Earl "Blind Butch" Cox delivers an appropriately rough solo take on Cleveland's "No Ways Tired." But the most striking moments are on such sparsely arranged performances as The Glorifying Vines Sisters' "Tell It All To Jesus" and Faith & Harmony's "Victory."

Such minimalism may seem distant from Cleveland's work, but attests to how gospel's diversity inspires and endures. **DB**

Ordering info: [malaco.com](http://malaco.com); [bibleandtire.com](http://bibleandtire.com)



### Francisco Mela feat. Matthew Shipp and William Parker *Music Frees Our Souls Vol. 1* 577 RECORDS

★★★★½

Francisco Mela is a Cuban-born drummer who has recorded with pianists Aruán Ortiz, Kenny Barron and Leo Genovese, and saxophonists Joe Lovano and Melissa Aldana, among others. Albums he's released under his own name have featured Jason Moran, Mark Turner, Lionel Loueke and Esperanza Spalding. His approach to rhythm is highly adventurous but deeply swinging, incorporating ideas from throughout the Latin diaspora while also paying tribute to bebop and fusion. He often displays an extraordinarily light touch, as if he'd rather provide gentle encouragement to the other musicians than batter them into submission.

This is Mela's second release for the 577 label in 2021, following *MPT Trio Vol. 1*, with saxophonist Hery Paz and guitarist Juanma Trujillo. Thanks mostly to the scorching guitar, that disc had a sort of "free rock" feel, with jagged melodies giving way to expansive improvisations and occasional outbursts of drum thunder. *Music Frees Our Souls Vol. 1*, on the other hand (and we should all hope for subsequent volumes from both these ensembles), is a free-jazz piano trio date with a surprising gentleness at its heart. On the surface, it may remind some listeners of pianist Matthew Shipp's 1996 album *Prism*, with bassist William Parker and drummer Whit Dickey. As on that release, the skittering rhythm allows Shipp's rumbling, clanging piano to anchor the music, with Parker's bass as Zenlike moderating voice. But Mela's solo introduction to "Infinite Consciousness" manifests explosive power, and as the track rolls out, he drops bomb after bomb.

—Philip Freeman

**Music Frees Our Souls Vol. 1:** Light Of Mind; Dark Light; Infinite Consciousness. (41:24)

**Personnel:** Francisco Mela, drums; Matthew Shipp, piano; William Parker, bass.

Ordering info: [577records.com](http://577records.com)



## David Sanford Big Band Featuring Hugh Ragin *A Prayer For Lester Bowie*

GREENLEAF MUSIC

★★★★½

If there was only one reason to pray for the late Lester Bowie, it would be to give thanks. Not only did the trumpeter's often-sardonic playing impart multiple dimensions of delight; the stylistic breadth of his work showed anyone listening how to combine art and entertainment with commitment and non-hierarchical inclusivity.

David Sanford's latest album, named after a piece written by Art Ensemble associate mem-

ber Hugh Ragin, doesn't sound much like Bowie's, but it is similarly welcoming. This is both a strength and occasional deficit.

Sanford, a long-time educator, composer and conductor, is equally adept at leading his big band through a streamlined, swinging performance of Dizzy Gillespie's "Dizzy Atmosphere" as guiding the ensemble between dark atmospheric and polytonal blues on "Subtraf."

The live-in-the-studio recording captures his music's dynamic range, which encompasses subtle tenderness and enthusiastic overload. The ensemble's exquisite rendition of shifting colors throughout "Woman in Shadows" is as satisfying as the quick-stepping duet between conguero Theo Moore and trombonist Jim Messbauer on "Full Immersion."

Detours into a riffing rock feel a tad cartoonish. But if Bowie were on hand to comment, he'd probably suggest to just wait for the next tune to come along. —Bill Meyer

**A Prayer For Lester Bowie:** Full Immersion; Subtraf; Woman In Shadows; Popit; A Prayer For Lester Bowie; Dizzy Atmosphere; Soldier And The CEO; V-Reel. (69:18)

**Personnel:** David Sanford, conductor (1–4, 6–8); Hugh Ragin, trumpet, conduction (5); Ted Levine, alto saxophone; Kelley Hart-Jenkins, alto saxophones; Anna Webber, tenor saxophone (1, 2, 7, 8); Marc Phaneuf, tenor saxophone (3–6); Geoff Vidal, tenor saxophone; Brad Hubbard, baritone saxophone; Brad Goode, trumpet (1–7); Tony Kadleck, trumpet (8); Tim Leopold, Wayne J. du Maine, Thomas Bergeron, trumpets; Mike Christianson, Jim Messbauer, trombones; Ben Herrington, trombone (1, 2, 4, 6–8); Mike Seltzer, tenor trombone (3, 5); Steven Gehring, bass trombone; Raymond Stewart, tuba; Dave Fabris, electric guitar; Geoff Burtson, piano; Dave Phillips, electric and acoustic bass; Mark Raynes, drums; Theo Moore, percussion.

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

## Becca Stevens & The Secret Trio

GROUNDUP MUSIC

★★★★★

The story of vocalist and guitarist Becca Stevens' collaboration with Balkan chamber music group The Secret Trio is one that encapsulates the jazz ethos of free-flowing improvisation. Having been deeply moved by the chance encounter of the trio's performance at the GroundUp Festival, Stevens was determined to work with the instrumentalists to create a record that would combine their disparate musical traditions through the unifying principle of shared emotional responses.

The result is a deftly arranged and charmingly subtle collection of 10 compositions, parsing the trio's woodwind and string combinations through Stevens' propensity for folk-jazz songwriting.

Opener "Flow In My Tears" sets the tone, showcasing Stevens' warm vocals against the backdrop of Ismail Lumanovski's tender clarinet lines.

Tamer Pınarbaşı's accompaniment on the fiendishly complicated, harp-like kanun is also artfully highlighted throughout the record, producing a melancholy cascade on "Pathways," as well as a sprightly bounce on "Lucian."

Stevens and The Secret Trio's collaboration



produces a fresh sound that also honors its roots. On standout tracks "Eleven Roses" and "California," for instance, Stevens' guitar seamlessly melds with Ara Dinkjian's oud and Pınarbaşı's kanun, while her vocal interweaves in harmony with Lumanovski's clarinet, to produce a melismatic communion. It is a meditative exhalation brought about only by the meeting of kindred musical minds. —Ammar Kalia

**Becca Stevens & The Secret Trio:** Flow In My Tears; Bring It Back; We Were Wrong; California; Eleven Roses; Lucian; Pathways; Maria; Lullaby For The Sun; The Eye; For You The Night Is Still. (37:08)

**Personnel:** Becca Stevens, guitar and vocals; Ara Dinkjian, oud; Ismail Lumanovski, clarinet; Tamer Pınarbaşı, kanun.

**Ordering info:** [store.groundupmusic.net](http://store.groundupmusic.net)



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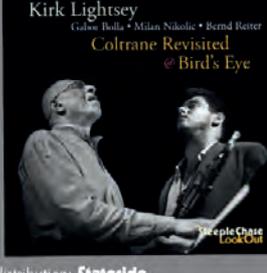
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JAMIE MILNER



Reggie Quinerly

# Transitioning to a New Scene

The 2020s are off to a roaring start. Among other things, grappling with the impact of a global pandemic has forced us to change the way we document, perform and teach this beloved art form. It's also prompted many of us to rethink where we live while doing it.

Every week, I read new social media posts and text messages from fellow musicians announcing that they are moving to new cities. And I can relate to those notes, as it's been nearly a year since I sent my own. In October 2020, after spending all of my adult life in the New York area, I uprooted my career and my family to explore new opportunities on the other side of the country in Los Angeles.

Making such a huge shift, amid so much uncertainty, felt like a recipe for disaster. Then, a quick glance into my history books reminded me that this kind of change is nothing new.

It was just 100 years ago, as the 1920s were getting off to an equally turbulent start, that another great migration of musicians shifted the course of jazz and popular music as we know it. Some moved to new cities for safety. Others were drawn to the promise of joining new communities with like-minded artists. Whatever their reasons, from the most popular to the least known, they all had to deal with the unsettling experience of being a new cat on the scene.

Even with a historical precedent, it can be a little daunting to give up the familiarity of home for an unknown experience in a new place. But moving to a new city also creates an exciting opportunity to reassess and rechart your personal and professional trajectory. How does one make the most of that opportunity? A year into this journey, I'm still figuring it out. But it seems to mean the following.

## Get a Sense of the Scene

The first few weeks or months after moving to a new place are best spent with your senses wide open. What is the scene known for? What inspires people to create, and what are they creating? How does it resonate with you? What feels different and inspiring? What feels different and uninspiring? This might seem obvious, especially if you're familiar with the city through prior gigs and existing networks. Still, I've found that every scene has a nuanced local culture, grounded in a rich history, that you can never fully appreciate through the lens of someone who is just passing through.

It's equally important to learn about how business is done on the scene. While it's true that a gig is a gig no matter where you go, each place has subtle but important variations in its standards of professionalism. Start visiting shows and frequenting venues that have a his-

tory of presenting music congruent to yours. Every scene is filled with cliques and concentric circles often based on musical sensibilities. Attempt to understand the connections between the various groups. Pay close attention on every gig, and you'll soon learn which behaviors are in expected and respected in that region.

### Set Measurable Goals

Once you've had a chance to draw insight and inspiration from the scene, you can start to define what you want to accomplish and set a timeline for yourself. What does success look like for you? What does your ideal schedule look like? How many nights a week do you want to be working, teaching, traveling and possibly establishing connections? Are there types of gigs you previously did that you want to reestablish in this setting? Do you see something missing from the scene? If so, where, how and with whom can you create it?

I recommend getting as specific as possible in your goal setting. Establishing loose timelines also helps you stay focused while remaining flexible when factors beyond your control require you to pivot. As you pursue your goals, you're going to experience successes and setbacks. Take time to reflect on what you're learning. Every occurrence is a form of feedback. Use it to help sharpen your personal vision and your plan of action.

### Invest in Relationships

Now that you've spent time observing the scene and setting goals, the last step is to start building your community. While the work of recovering from a global pandemic has limited our opportunities to connect in-person, we can still leverage a broad range of virtual and hybrid formats.

Consider reaching out to leaders at academic or performance arts institutions and requesting an informational interview. Join a local union or professional association to take part in their networking events. And where it's safe to do so, connect with other artists by showing up at jam sessions and shows.

No matter who you meet or where you meet them, ask as many questions as possible. Every professional relationship starts with a personal connection, and the best way to build personal connection is to lead with genuine curiosity. As you learn more about each person, don't be afraid to reciprocate by telling them about who you are, what you do and what you're trying to do. Stating your interests is not the same thing as begging for favors. In fact, people are more inclined to help when they have a sense of what you're trying to accomplish.

Note that this is only the start of the relationship-building. Solidifying those connections often depends on your ability to show up.

This means treating every interaction and any opportunity with respect and professionalism. Take gigs, for example. Playing your instrument on a high level is important, but never underestimate time-tested details like arriving to gigs early, being organized, dependable and musically prepared before the downbeat. The musicians who most often get the call back from the bandleader are the ones who are musically flexible, respectful and a pleasure to be around. Providing a balance of supportive musicianship with a highly personal interpretation in the context of the music is what resonates with everyone on the bandstand. These are the type of interactions that leave a lasting impression.

### Stay the Course

Being new on any scene can often produce a range of emotions, but in addition to studying the scene, setting goals and understanding people skills, remember to remain dedicated to giving your best efforts to every situation. Understand that getting settled in takes time, and even when you are making all the right moves it can still take a while before things go the way you envision them. It's easy to keep going when people are constantly singing your praises, but the real journey of self-discovery is finding reward in becoming the best version of yourself day after day.

Practice patience and trust the process. Each setting is a new opportunity to hone your skills while also highlighting the qualities that make you unique. Embrace those differences. Place yourself in learning environments where you are constantly challenging your outlook and expanding your abilities. Share the knowledge of your experiences and remain humble at the prospect of learning more. Find ways to motivate your personal growth and development without comparing yourself to others. The combination and implementation of these tools will determine how you contribute to any new scene.

Through it all, remain true to your core values. Consistency is key, and success is a mindset.

DB

Reggie Quinerly has played with such leading artists as Wynton and Branford Marsalis, Joe Lovano, Chico and Von Freeman and Greg Osby. He has also collaborated on albums with Tim Warfield, Christian Sands, Orrin Evans and Melanie Charles, among others. Quinerly grew up in the rich musical environment of Houston, Texas. After graduating from the High School for Performing and Visual Arts, he ventured to the East Coast — more specifically, the Mannes School of Music at New School University — where he studied with great drummers: Jimmy Cobb, Ralph Peterson Jr., Lewis Nash and Kenny Washington. After honing his chops on the New York scene, Quinerly returned to school and earned a master's degree in Jazz Studies at The Juilliard School, where he currently teaches Music History in the Extension Division. In the summer of 2019 he joined the faculty at Hunter College, one of the constituent colleges of the City University of New York. As a lecturer he has toured throughout Europe and Asia while also presenting master classes at Tulane University (New Orleans) and The Cultural Arts Center of Galicia, Spain. As a bandleader, Quinerly has released four recordings, including his most recent CD, *New York Nowhere*. For more info, visit [reggiequinerly.com](http://reggiequinerly.com).



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Jeff "Tain" Watts



# Jeff 'Tain' Watts' Drumming on 'Housed From Edward'

The Branford Marsalis 1989 album *Trio Jeepy* (Sony Legacy) opens up with a hard-swinging blues titled "Housed From Edward." In the absence of a pianist, veteran bassist Milt Hinton and then up-and-coming drummer Jeff "Tain" Watts provide excellent melodic support, exchanging both simple and complex ideas with Marsalis on tenor saxophone.

Although Watts has earned a reputation as a fine modern drummer, his acute understanding of the historic contributions of Baby Dodds, Zutty Singleton, Kenny Clarke and Papa Jo Jones echoes throughout his playing on this tune. He also applies the following technical concepts: 1) primary use of only one cymbal and hi-hat; 2) emulation of piano accompaniment on snare and bass drums; 3) scant

usage of toms — only as additional colors; and 4) varying of cymbal stroke in relation to bass pulse.

Hinton establishes his position as the central swing factor immediately and walks ridiculously melodic bass lines that Watts latches onto and complements throughout. Marsalis builds his solo by embellishing upon the melody and slowly developing one idea after another. Many of these ideas are lyrical extensions of themes implied by both Hinton and Watts.

Let's take a closer look at some of these melodic themes that Watts plays on this track in the four examples transcribed here.

## Example 1 (bars 25–48)

Notice that the ride cymbal pattern is irregular, but the time still has forward motion

because the snare and hi-hat parts are steady and constant. As you can see, this excerpt is from measures 25 to 48, so it's still near the beginning of the tune and the energy is continuing to build. "Tain" is playing simple time-keeping ideas in this section, making space for the melodic playing of Marsalis. In measures 29–36 of this excerpt, Watts is simply playing a rim knock on beat 4 of every measure, stomping the hi-hat consistently on beats 2 and 4, and keeping things interesting by changing up his ride cymbal pattern. He then plays all eighth notes in measure 36 to help build into and mark the next chorus at time-stamp 1:27. In order to build energy along with Marsalis, Watts adds another rim knock on beat 2 and plays more eighth notes on the ride cymbal in the last chorus of the excerpt. He is playing a

drummer's version of harmony in this example by helping build energy and mark the form. Though he isn't playing super busy ideas, the energy is definitely building. Sometimes the simple ideas are all you need to be effective.

### Example 2 (bars 69–92)

In this example, Watts begins to unleash the energy he has been building to this point. In measures 70–72, he uses a displaced quarter note triplet pattern on the snare drum as a send-off device into the energetic, space-filling conversation between drums and saxophone. He mainly utilizes the triplet to ground all his rhythmic and harmonic decisions between the snare, bass and toms while keeping his ride pattern and hi-hat pattern relatively constant throughout. The note placements between snare, bass and toms are extremely well calculated and thought out. The bass drum and snare drum have a back-and-forth relationship, responding to each other and playing off one another, often replacing each other in a fun and interesting way (bars 82, 84, 85 and 88). Though there is minimal use of toms, Watts' tom placement is very melodic in nature and is

used to accentuate his melodic phrases and to complement Marsalis.

### Example 3 (bars 101–124)

In this section, Watts begins to show off his music mastery in a very daring way. The most important technique of note in this example is his use of rhythmic displacement while playing in an Elvin Jones-inspired triplet style to spice up the harmony. Beginning on beat 3 of measure 106, he takes the standard triplet language and moves the pattern forward by an eighth-note triplet, creating a different permutation of the pattern. I find it interesting that he does not choose to begin or resolve this rhythmic and harmonic device at the top of the form or even at the beginning or end of a four-bar phrase. He instead chooses to begin this device on beat 3 of measure 10 within the 12-bar blues form and resolves it on beat 1 of measure 8 within the 12-bar blues form. He then explodes out of this section with a nonuplet across the drums into big crashes on beats 1 and 4 of measure 121 and beat 3 of measure 122. All while Watts has displaced the triplet pattern forward by an eighth-note triplet, Hinton keeps rock-solid time and

is unfazed by this daring move.

### Example 4 (bars 157–180)

Branford Marsalis finishes with his solo and drops out, leaving only bass and drums to keep the forward momentum. This is where Watts takes over as the main melodic instrument and plays simple but effective melodic phrases across the drums while Hinton keeps solid quarter-note time underneath. In the first chorus of this example, Watts uses the snare and crashing on the ride cymbal as the main melodic voices, then switches to the use of the snare and toms as the melodic voices in the second chorus. He plays with the and-4-and-1 rhythm as his main melodic theme and moves it to and-3-and-4 in measure 175, and even plays it as a quarter-note triplet phrase in measure 179 but inverts the pitches of the drums.

DB

Craig Buckner is Independent Drum Lab's newest addition. The Chicago native stepped into his role with the Kalamazoo, Michigan, drum company after graduating earlier this year from DePaul University with a master's degree in jazz studies. Buckner taught private lessons throughout his college career and continues to work with students remotely. Visit the Craig Buckner Drums channel on YouTube, where you can also view a full play-through of this transcription.

#### Example 1

#### Example 3

#### Example 2

#### Example 4

## Tama PE1445 Peter Erskine Jazz Snare

### *Whispers, Shouts, Focus & Snap*

The PE1445 Peter Erskine Jazz Snare by Tama is a 14- by 4.5-inch drum made of spruce and maple. Built in Tama's Japan factory, the snare is designed to cover a wide dynamic range, from whispers to shouts, with focus and snap. The sensitivity provided by the snare's shallow depth is balanced by an eight-lug design that supports a low fundamental body of sound. A sticker bearing Erskine's signature is placed on the inside of every shell. With a street price of about \$500, it's the company's most affordable signature snare drum.

The shell of the PE1445 combines four plies of maple with two inner plies of spruce, for a total thickness of 6mm. "Sonically, the maple gives you a nice solid crack for a snare drum, but also has some body to it," said John Palmer, sales strategist for Tama. "And the spruce gives a little bit of mid-range and warmer body tone. Combining those two, you get the snap and crack of the maple and a bit of that extended depth on the spruce."

The PE1445 features 2.3mm steel sound arc hoops. "The flange bends in toward the center of the drum rather than away from the center of the drum," Palmer said. "It's not as focused as a die-cast hoop, but it's more focused than a triple-flange hoop."

On the snare shell, a sound focus ring on the inside of the hoop functions like a reinforcement hoop. It's located on the batter side of the shell only. "It gives you a little extra structural integrity, but it also thickens up or focuses the sound," Palmer said. "Having it only on the top allows the



drum to have really good snare response but also gives you some thickness to the tone, so it cuts down the overtones for a punchier sound."

The PE1445's relatively shallow 4.5-inch depth allows it to be extra sensitive and speak quickly. "It will be very fast and accurate — even with a very light touch it's gonna really respond" Palmer said. "It's hard to get that and also the louder dynamic and the snap and the fullness of the drum without choking out. That's the challenge of a drum like this. That's where Peter added the sound focus ring, because he wanted a drum where he could lay in the backbeats and have the drum sound really full and fat."

—Ed Enright

[tama.com](http://tama.com)

## Yamaha DTX6 Series Electronic Drum Kits

### *New Samples, Easy Modification, More Advanced Series on the Horizon*

The DTX6 series electronic drum kits from Yamaha provides drummers of every level with a solution for quiet practice, rehearsal, recording and teaching. Improving upon the company's DTX502 series of electronic drum kits, the DTX6 series offers new professionally sampled sounds and effects recorded in renowned studios. Six new models include the DTX6K and DTX6K-X; DTX6K2 and DTX6K2-X; and DTX6K3 and DTX6K3-X.

When used with the DTX-PRO module, which has a powerful Kit Modifier function, the DTX6 series kits deliver high-resolution sounds and gives drummers plenty of control. With a turn of a knob, players can alter sounds dynamically with EQ effects including ambience and compression.

The DTX-PRO module has room for 230 kits, with more than 30 preset kits and 200 user kits, as well as more than 400 new voices equaling thousands of sound possibilities. Improvements to the module include expanded polyphony, from 32 notes on previous modules to 256 on the DTX-PRO, and lightning-fast triggering speed.

"It's a great module, with incredible sounds all recorded in professional studios with actually drummers playing actual kits," said Matt Rudin, Yamaha's marketing manager for drums. "Even the ambience on the kits is actual ambience; any ambience you hear up to the halfway point on that knob was all recorded in those studios. Then, as you go past 50 percent, it gets into our proprietary high-tech digital effects ambience. It's all really well thought-out and sounds amazing."

The DTX-PRO also offers more trigger jacks. "You've got 10 trigger

jacks with the ability to add 14 pads with splitters," Rudin said. "With these kits you can really bump them up if you want to add on. Or, if you want to scale back and do a hybrid acoustic-electronic kit, it gives you a lot of options as a jazz drummer."

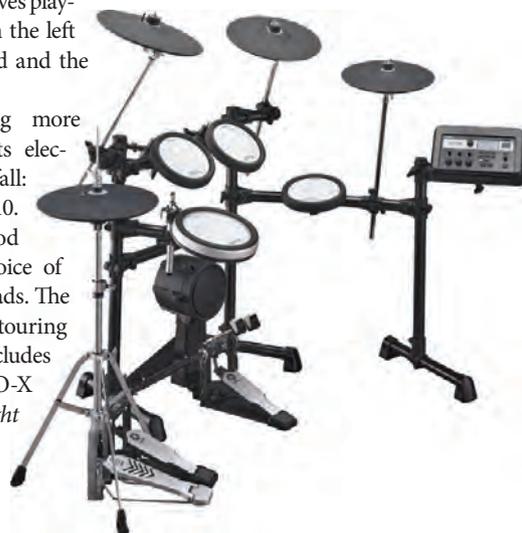
The DTX6K2-X and DTX6K3-X models come equipped with the new RS8 rack, top-of-the-line PCY135 cymbals and a newly designed 7.5-inch kick drum tower. The DTX6K-X and DTX6K2-X include single-zone pads on the toms, while the DTX6K3-X has multi-zone pads across the board.

The new RS8 rack gives players more open space on the left side for the hi-hat stand and the double bass pedal.

Yamaha is adding more advanced models to its electronic drums line this fall: the DTX8 and the DTX10.

Both come with real wood drum shells and a choice of two-ply mesh or TCS pads. The DTX10, geared toward touring and recording pros, includes the step-up DTX-PRO-X module. —Ed Enright

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The Mercury Double Bass Drum Pedal from ddrum is a durable, double-chain drive pedal with smooth bearings and a hemispherical cam to allow for any style of playing, from feather-light intricacy to a full-on, aggressive attack. The heavy-duty Mercury hardware line is precision-cast using strong alloys for consistent, reliable performance. The secondary pedal uses the same motion technology. The Mercury includes two-way felt and plastic beaters. The subtly textured footboard and heel plate offer detailed Art Deco surfaces with a proper amount of friction. The aluminum universal joint connecting the two pedals can be set up and tightened easily with a standard drum key.

More info: [ddrum.com](http://ddrum.com)



### 2. Pans by Hand

Following the success of its steel tongue drum series, Amahi has introduced a hand-pan drum to its percussion line. The SD9 24-inch handpan drum is constructed of a high-quality, nitrogen steel material and tuned in D-minor with nine notes. With a meditative sound, the instrument can be played with the hands and fingers to produce soft and warm tones. A backpack-style carrying bag is also included.

More info: [amahiukuleles.com](http://amahiukuleles.com)



### 3. eDrum Expansion

The Efnote eDrum Company has added two models to its lineup of eDrums that expand upon the two models introduced earlier this year. Efnote 3 and Efnote 5 began shipping in early 2021, and now Artesia Pro has added the Efnote 3X and Efnote 5X. All four models offer a true playing experience with superior physical touch.

More info: [artesia-pro.com](http://artesia-pro.com)



### 4. Quiet Rides & Crashes

TRX has launched a limited-edition, four-piece set of CRX AIR series low-volume cymbals with a custom sky-blue finish. Combining great performance with an appealing design, the set includes a 14-inch hi-hat, a 20-inch ride, an 18-inch crash-ride and a 16-inch crash, along with a cymbal bag. The CRX AIR series is great for practice rooms and teaching studios.

More info: [trxcymbals.com](http://trxcymbals.com)



### 5. Get on the Beat

Evans has introduced the limited-edition Barney Beats RealFeel Practice Pad, which features the iconic Evans Drumheads Barney Beats logo. The gummed rubber material is slightly thicker than on Evans' standard pads, providing a more responsive sound and feel.

More info: [daddario.com](http://daddario.com)



### 6. Cart Your Kit

Gator Frameworks' latest line of Utility Carts includes two models: a Standard model with non-pneumatic wheels and an All-Terrain model with rugged rear tires meant for travel over gravel, grass and uneven ground. The new Utility Carts haul gear safely, hold up to 500 pounds and are constructed of a welded steel frame.

More info: [gatorframeworks.com](http://gatorframeworks.com)



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## Matt Wilson

Matt Wilson's 14th album, *Hug!*, issued last year on Palmetto, upholds the 57-year-old drummer's reputation as a master navigator of a broad spectrum of improvisational and compositional strategies, animated with unflinching warmth, humor and virtuosic execution. This was Wilson's second Blindfold Test. He awarded 5 stars to each selection.

### Ulysses Owens Jr. Big Band

"Two Bass Hit" (*Soul Conversations*, Outside in, 2021) Owens, drums; Walter Cano, Benny Benack III, Summer Camargo, Giveton Gelin, trumpets; Alexa Tarantino, Erena Terakubo, Diego Rivera, Daniel Dickinson, Andrew Gutaszkas, saxophones; Michael Dease, Eric Miller, Gina Benalcazar, Wyatt Forhan, trombones; Takeshi Ohbayashi, piano; Yasushi Nakamura, bass.

Swinging! I noticed the cross-sticking on the 2 and 4. Great time feel. Great cymbal melody, great forward motion on the ride. I dig the glide. It's interesting to hear "Two Bass Hit" with a Basie-ish/Ellingtonian vibe. It's a New York band — a sort of ushered energy that feels it can erupt at any given time, which it does. The shifts within the flow are great. The improvising was amazing, and the writing beautifully welcomed each of those sections. I love the drummer's interpretation of Philly Joe Jones' seminal solo — the call-and-response with the open and closed hi-hat; the development of the idea with the bass drum; playing the blues; singing on the cymbals. It reminds me of Sam Woodyard and Louie Bellson.

### Rudy Royston

"Roadside Flowers" (*Flatbed Buggy*, Greenleaf Music, 2018) Royston, drums; John Ellis, tenor saxophone; Gary Versace, accordion; Hank Roberts, cello; Joe Martin, bass.

Gorgeous. I love the depths and weights of the sound. I like the weave of the velocity differences — something slow-moving, something fast-moving with it. It's Rudy Royston with Gary Versace and John Ellis. Rudy and I are of the same ilk in our desire to immerse ourselves in different things and surround ourselves with different personalities — all great spirits.

### Gonzalo Rubalcaba

"Silver Hollow" (*Skyline*, 5Pasion, 2021) Rubalcaba, piano; Ron Carter, bass; Jack DeJohnette, drums.

The intro invites the listener to "come on in," use your imagination, be what Dewey Redman called "the ear of the behearer." It's Jack DeJohnette's "Silver Hollow," a song I've always loved. I love the pianist's sound and presence. I'm trying to identify the drummer by honing in on the ride-cymbal melody, which is very clear; it shows a willingness to be part of the fabric of the total sound — as Ornette Coleman would say, "interacting without interrupting." Everyone is hugging the song with empathy. Very egoless. You can tell the performance is in the moment. There's a concept, arranged just enough to give them an area to go to. 5-plus stars.

### Will Vinson/Gilad Hekselman/Antonio Sánchez

"Northbound" (*Trio Grande*, Whirlwind, 2019) Sánchez, drums; Vinson, soprano and tenor saxophone; Hekselman, guitar.

It's great to hear the freedom: three people being independent but also moving together within a frame. Beautiful saxophone sound. The drummer is fantastic. The muffled floor tom makes me think of Antonio Sánchez. The music is making me move, pulling me into different places. Such a cool dance. I like these little cells within it of tension and release, but there's also a big-picture tension and release at times.

### Cindy Blackman

"Circles" (*Code Red*, Muse, 1992) Blackman, drums; Wallace Roney, trumpet; Steve Coleman, alto saxophone; Kenny Barron, piano; Lonnie Plaxico, bass.

Right out of the chute! Somebody likes Tony Williams. Is this Ralph



Peterson? [drum solo] Ferocious. Cindy Blackman? She's so great! Spirit with a capital "IT"! I love her rock playing, too.

### Vinnie Colaiuta/Bill Cunliffe/John Patitucci

"We See" (*Trio*, Le Coq, 2021) Colaiuta, drums; Cunliffe, piano; Patitucci, bass.

Monk's "We See." The bass sound is so woody, so big. I love the drummer's commitment to the groove, that they stayed with the second-line feel. It's a composed way of approaching the song, and the musicians brought it to life. My favorite part was the modulation at the bridge.

### Dafnis Prieto Big Band

"Two For One" (*Back To The Sunset*, Dafnison, 2017) Prieto, drums; Peter Apfelbaum, tenor saxophone solo; Chris Cheek, baritone saxophone solo; Nathan Eklund, trumpet solo; Michael Thomas, alto saxophone solo; Manuel Valera, piano solo.

Dafnis' big band. He's an amazing artist. He's taken great ingredients and made a great soup. It's not math. It's so beautiful, the eruptions and then the flow of it all. Astonishingly great! You hear how he hears all his rhythms as big melodies.

### Dan Weiss

"Elvin" (*Sixteen: Drummers Suite*, Pi, 2016) Weiss, drums; Thomas Morgan, bass; Jacob Sacks, piano; Matt Mitchell, keyboards; Stephen Cellucci, percussion; Katie Andrews, harp; Anna Webber, flutes; David Binney, Miguel Zenon, alto saxophone; Ohad Talmor, tenor saxophone; Jacob Garchik, trombone, tuba; Ben Gerstein, trombone; Judith Berkson, Lana Is, Jen Shyu, vocals.

Another great sonic landscape. The drummer is surrounded by these different things, but still has the ride cymbal. Every time I'd settle into hearing something, something new was added — the bass trombone coming in, the harp, then the handclaps (I love where the claps sat). It's like great Thai food where you taste the whole, but if you concentrate you can discern each flavor and how they create one. Initially I thought this would lean toward a dry drum-bass groove, but then it opened up, like a bunch of flowers blossoming.

### Gerry Gibbs Thrasher Dream Trio

"4 AM" (*Songs For My Father*, Whaling City, 2021) Gibbs, drums; Geoffrey Keezer, piano; Christian McBride, bass.

Beautiful solo on brushes. The drummer has the snares on (I play brushes with the snares off), which dries up the drum quite a bit. The bassist is fantastic playing the melody, and I love the sections where bass and piano dialogue. You can hear that the drummer and pianist love playing with each other. The pianist is making Gershwin's "I Got Rhythm" changes sound alive and real. 5 stars for the artistry of hearing people put their personalities on something familiar.

DB

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

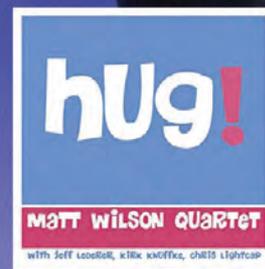


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