

GOGO PENGUIN: ART OVER ADVERSITY

DOWNBEAT[®]

Jazz, Blues & Beyond

Shakti
50 YEARS OF
GENRE-BENDING
MUSIC!

JACQUES
SCHWARZ-BART

Classic Blindfold!
Wes Montgomery

Arturo O'Farrill
Benny Green

JULY 2023 U.K. £6.99

\$7.99US \$8.99CAN



07>

DOWNBEAT.COM





AMERICAN PIANISTS AWARDS



CONGRATULATIONS ISAIAH!

Isaiah J. Thompson is the winner of the 2023 American Pianists Awards and the Cole Porter Fellowship in Jazz! He thrilled the audience and jury in performances with Cécile McLorin Salvant and the Buselli-Wallarab Jazz Orchestra at the Gala Finals in Indianapolis, hosted by Bill Charlap.

Isaiah follows a decorated list of past winners including Emmet Cohen (2019), Sullivan Fortner (2015), Aaron Diehl (2011), Dan Tepfer (2007), Adam Birnbaum (2004) and Aaron Parks (2001).

For exceptional concert replays, international touring schedules and registration for our free monthly newsletter, visit:

AMERICANPIANISTS.ORG



WITH
YOU
EVERY
STEP.

Vandoren®

PARIS

www.vandoren.com



CHARLIE PARKER JAZZ FESTIVAL NYC 2023

FREE

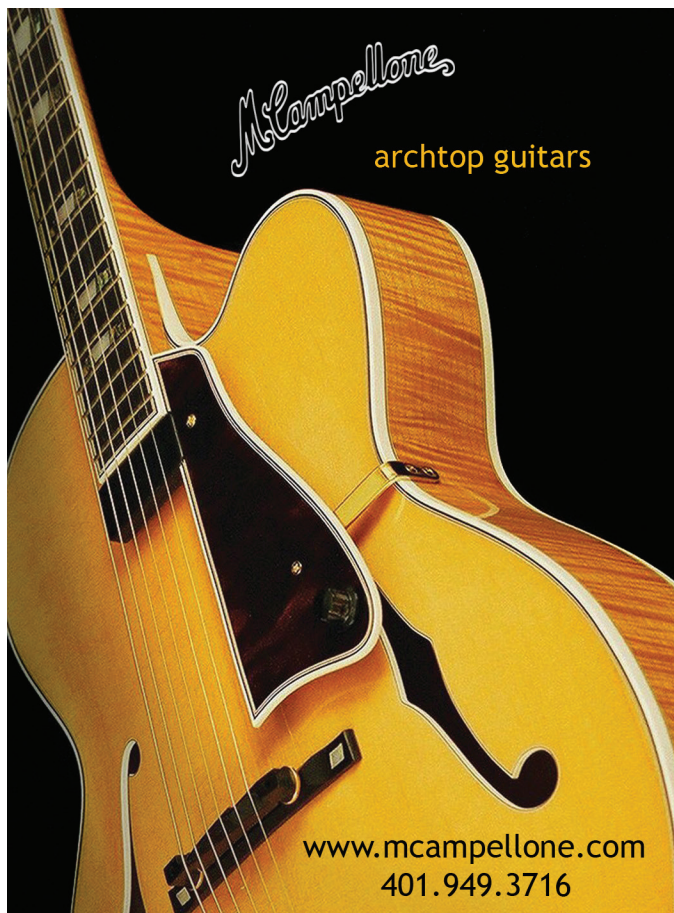
FRIDAY, AUGUST 25
MARCUS GARVEY PARK • 7PM
 ORRIN EVANS AND THE CAPTAIN
 BLACK BIG BAND FT. DIANNE REEVES
 T.K. BLUE
 IN ASSOCIATION WITH JAZZMOBILE

SATURDAY, AUGUST 26
MARCUS GARVEY PARK • 3PM
 THE COOKERS
 ENDEA OWENS AND THE COOKOUT
 NDUZUO MAKHATHINI TRIO
 AKUA ALLRICH AND THE TRIBE

SUNDAY, AUGUST 27
TOMPKINS SQUARE PARK • 3PM
 CHARLES MCPHERSON WITH TERELL STAFFORD
 SOMETHING ELSE! VINCENT HERRING SEPTET
 HERA FT. CHELSEA BARATZ AND ANDROMEDA TURRE
 MICHAEL MAYO

CHARLIEPARKERJAZZFESTIVAL.ORG

SUMMERSTAGE.ORG   SUMMERSTAGENYC   SUMMERSTAGE  NYC SUMMERSTAGE



McCampellone

archtop guitars

www.mccampellone.com
 401.949.3716

DOWNBEAT

JULY 2023

VOLUME 90 / NUMBER 7

President	Kevin Maher
Editor & Publisher	Frank Alkyer
Contributing Editor	Ed Enright
Creative Director	Žaneta Čuntová
Assistant to the Publisher	Sue Mahal
Bookkeeper	Evelyn Hawkins

ADVERTISING SALES

Record Companies & Schools

Jennifer Ruban-Gentile
 Associate Publisher
 630-359-9345
jenr@downbeat.com

Musical Instruments & East Coast Schools

Ritche Deraney
 Vice President of Sales
 201-445-6260
ritched@downbeat.com

Record Companies & Schools

Dan Kulasik
 Advertising Sales Associate
 630-359-9338
dank@downbeat.com

OFFICES

188 W. Industrial Dr., Ste. 310, Elmhurst, IL 60126
 630-941-2030
<http://downbeat.com>
editor@downbeat.com

CUSTOMER SERVICE

877-904-5299 / service@downbeat.com

CONTRIBUTORS

Senior Contributors:

Aaron Cohen, Howard Mandel, John McDonough

Atlanta: Jon Ross; **Boston:** Frank-John Hadley, Allen Morrison; **Chicago:** Alain Drouot, Michael Jackson, Jeff Johnson, Peter Margasak, Bill Meyer, Paul Natkin, Howard Reich; **Indiana:** Mark Sheldon; **Los Angeles:** Earl Gibson, Sean J. O'Connell, Chris Walker, Josef Woodard, Scott Yanow; **Michigan:** John Ephland; **Minneapolis:** Andrea Canter; **Nashville:** Bob Doerschuk; **New Orleans:** Erika Goldring, Jennifer Odell; **New York:** Herb Boyd, Bill Douthart, Philip Freeman, Stephanie Jones, Matthew Kassel, Jimmy Katz, Suzanne Lorge, Phillip Lutz, Jim Macnie, Ken Micallef, Bill Milkowski, Allen Morrison, Dan Ouellette, Ted Panken, Tom Staudter, Jack Vartoogian; **Philadelphia:** Shaun Brady; **Portland:** Robert Ham; **San Francisco:** Yoshi Kato, Denise Sullivan; **Seattle:** Paul de Barros; **Washington, D.C.:** Willard Jenkins, John Murph, Michael Wilderman; **Canada:** J.D. Considine, James Hale; **France:** Jean Szlamowicz; **Germany:** Hyou Vielz; **Great Britain:** Andrew Jones; **Portugal:** José Duarte; **Romania:** Virgil Mihaiu; **Russia:** Cyril Moshkow. **Contributor Emeritus:** Fred Bouchard.

Jack Maher, President 1970-2003
 John Maher, President 1950-1969

SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION: Send orders and address changes to: DOWNBEAT, P.O. Box 11688, St. Paul, MN 55111-0688. Inquiries: U.S.A. and Canada (877) 904-5299; Foreign (651) 251-9682. **CHANGE OF ADDRESS:** Please allow six weeks for your change to become effective. When notifying us of your new address, include current DOWNBEAT label showing old address.

DOWNBEAT (issn 0012-5768) Volume 90, Number 7 is published monthly by Maher Publications, 188 W. Industrial Dr., Ste. 310, Elmhurst, IL 60126. Copyright 2023 Maher Publications. All rights reserved. Trademark registered U.S. Patent Office. Great Britain registered trademark No. 719,407. Periodicals postage paid at Elmhurst, IL and at additional mailing offices. Subscription rates: \$34.95 for one year, \$59.95 for two years. Foreign subscriptions rates: \$56.95 for one year, \$103.95 for two years.

Publisher assumes no responsibility for return of unsolicited manuscripts, photos, or artwork. Nothing may be reprinted in whole or in part without written permission from publisher. MAHER PUBLICATIONS: DOWNBEAT magazine, MUSIC INC. magazine, UpBeat Daily.

POSTMASTER: Send change of address to: DownBeat, P.O. Box 11688, St. Paul, MN 55111-0688. **CABLE ADDRESS:** DownBeat (on sale June 27, 2023) Magazine Publishers Association.



PRINTED
IN
U.S.A.

BLUE NOTE®



HAROLD LÓPEZ-NUSSA
TIMBA A LA AMERICANA

Cuban pianist's Blue Note debut produced by **Michael League** & featuring **Grégoire Maret, Luques Curtis, Bárbaro "Machito" Crespo & Ruy Adrián López-Nussa**.



ARTEMIS
IN REAL TIME

Supergroup returns with dynamic new line-up featuring **Renee Rosnes, Ingrid Jensen, Allison Miller, Noriko Ueda** & new members **Nicole Glover & Alexa Tarantino**.



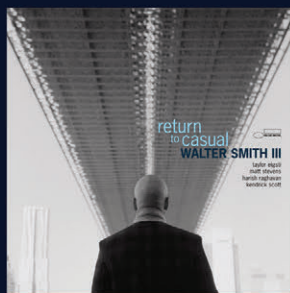
MESHELL NDEGEOCELLO
THE OMNICHORD REAL BOOK

Singer & bassist makes her Blue Note debut with a visionary & deeply jazz-influenced album featuring **Jeff Parker, Jason Moran, Ambrose Akinmusire & Joel Ross**.



DAVE McMURRAY
GRATEFUL DEADICATION 2

Saxophonist reimagines the songs of the **Grateful Dead** with his gritty & soulful Detroit sound joined by special guests **Oteil Burbridge, Bob James & Jamey Johnson**.



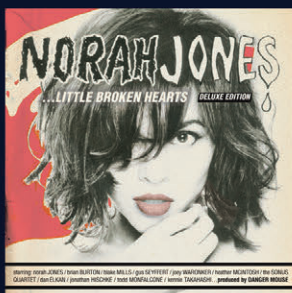
WALTER SMITH III
RETURN TO CASUAL

Saxophonist's striking Blue Note debut features **Matt Stevens, Taylor Eigsti, Harish Raghavan, Kendrick Scott** & special guests **Ambrose Akinmusire & James Francies**.



KENDRICK SCOTT
CORRIDORS

Drummer & composer's 3rd Blue Note album spotlights a new aspect of his expression in a trio setting with saxophonist **Walter Smith III** & bassist **Reuben Rogers**.



NORAH JONES
LITTLE BROKEN HEARTS: DELUXE EDITION

Expanded 3LP/2CD edition of singer's acclaimed 2012 collaboration with **Danger Mouse** includes rare bonus tracks, remixes & a previously unreleased live recording.



tone poet audiophile
VINYL REISSUE SERIES

All-analog **180g vinyl** produced by **Joe Harley**, mastered by **Kevin Gray** from original master tapes, pressed at **RTI**, & packaged in **deluxe gatefold tip-on jackets**.



BLUE NOTE CLASSIC
VINYL REISSUE SERIES

180g vinyl reissues of classics spanning all different eras and styles of Blue Note mastered by **Kevin Gray** from original masters & pressed at **Optimal**.

GET OFFICIAL BLUE NOTE MERCHANDISE AND EXCLUSIVE RELEASES AT
STORE.BLUENOTE.COM

twitter.com/bluenoterecords | BlueNote.com
facebook.com/bluenote
instagram - @bluenoterecords | © Blue Note Records

JULY 2023

Inside >

ON THE COVER

22 Shakti

50 Years of Genre-Bending Music

BY BILL MILKOWSKI

With the release of *This Moment* (Abstract Logix), John McLaughlin and Zakir Hussain are ready to hit the road with Shakti, the pioneering Indo-jazz supergroup they formed back in 1973.

FEATURES

28 GoGo Penguin

Reigniting GoGo Penguin

BY KIRA GRUNENBERG

34 Jacques Schwarz-Bart

Harlem Freedom Suite

BY JOHN MURPH



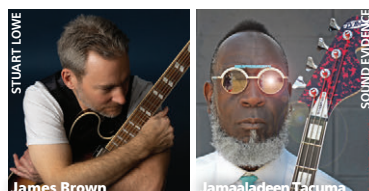
The members of GoGo Penguin — from left, Chris Illingworth, Nick Blacka and Jon Scott — overcame a considerable amount of adversity during the making of *Everything Is Going To Be OK*.

Cover photo by Pepe Gomes

SPECIAL SECTION

53 The NAMM Show Report

GUITAR & BASS SCHOOL



60 Master Class

The 'Grundgestalt' Concept

BY JAMES BROWN

62 Transcription

Jamaladeen Tacuma's Electric Bass Solo on 'Bass In Ya Face'

BY JIMI DURSO



42 Joe Farnsworth



42 Sex Mob



43 Linda May Han Oh



49 Jeremy Pelt

DEPARTMENTS

8 First Take

10 Chords & Discords

13 The Beat

- 13 Arturo O'Farrill, by Suzanne Lorge
- 15 Dan Tepfer, by Gary Fukushima
- 16 Benny Green, by Ted Panken
- 18 Shiri Zorn, by Allen Morrison

19 Hamptons Jazz Festival,

by Dan Ouellette

20 Final Bar, by DownBeat Staff

21 jazzahead!, by Paul de Barros

39 Reviews

65 Jazz On Campus

66 Classic Blindfold Test

Wes Montgomery, by Leonard Feather

CHECK OUT
GERALD'S LATEST EP
G-STREAM 2



AVAILABLE NOW ON:
APPLE MUSIC, AMAZON MUSIC,
SPOTIFY, PANDORA, BANDCAMP,
QOBUZ, DEEZER AND TIDAL
WWW.GERALDALBRIGHT.COM

CANN  **NBALL**

www.cannonballmusic.com

PHOTO CREDIT | BRANDON ALBRIGHT, SNOW DESERT PRODUCTIONS

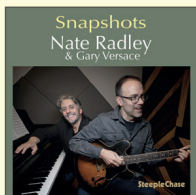
SteepleChase

Complete catalog: www.steeplechase.dk

NEW RELEASES
CD - DOWNLOAD - STREAMING



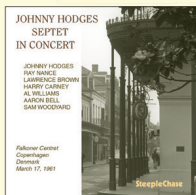
SCCD 31946



SCCD 31947

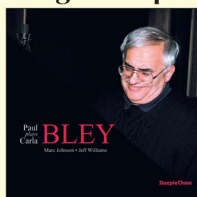


SCCD 33149



SCCD 36507

NEW RELEASES
180g Audiophile Vinyl Edition



G1303

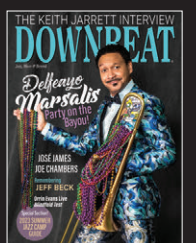


G1004

US distribution: **Stateside**
www.statesidemusic.com - email: info@statesidemusic.com



SUBSCRIBE
877-904-JAZZ



First Take > BY FRANK ALIKYER



Isaiah J. Thompson won the American Pianists Awards for 2023.

Stars Are Born Here

LET'S BE HONEST. WHEN THINKING ABOUT jazz meccas, no one ever says the town of Indianapolis, Indiana.

Now our friends from the Hoosier State might scoff and point to the fact that Indianapolis has been home to some of our most legendary jazz artists — from Wes Montgomery, Freddie Hubbard and Slide Hampton to J.J. Johnson, David Baker and so many more. It's an impressive list from this medium-sized Midwestern city, but jazz mecca? Not so much. (Sorry, Hoosiers!)

Still, every four years on a weekend in April, Indianapolis becomes a focal point of the world's jazz scene. That's when the American Pianists Association, based in this fair city for the past 40 years, hosts the jazz edition of its American Pianists Awards, which has truly become an essential spotlight for new piano talent.

This year's winner, Isaiah J. Thompson, was named a finalist one year ago in this competition where five gifted young artists perform in a variety of formats and do community outreach for the year, building up points as they go, which culminates in the final weekend's festivities.

This year, that final weekend included a community concert at the beautiful Christ Church Cathedral in downtown Indianapolis, two sets in a nightclub trio setting at The Cabaret (a very cool spot) and a grand finale at the Hilbert Circle Theatre where Thompson (and all the finalists) accompanied vocalist Cécile McLorin Salvant in a live performance, then played with the Buselli-Wallarab Jazz Orchestra, a terrific Indy-based big band.

In short, the APA creates a whole network of opportunities for the finalists, which is much different than many other competitions.

"As pianists, we don't get to hang around a lot, and I have gotten to know these pianists even more than I already knew them," Thompson told photographer/writer Mark Sheldon for an online DownBeat article (May 2). "I met some when I was really young at Jazz House Kids, among other things, and it was really wild ... to see how everyone has grown and how we can learn from each other. I have always been overwhelmed by the piano, but it is wonderful to be part of a piano competition, and winning a piano competition is really humbling, actually, and very affirming. So I am just really humble and grateful. APA is doing a great job of representing the music. Jazz is such a noble art form ... and it deserves to be credited in the right way. I am proud of them for supporting jazz and supporting young musicians."

Thompson's win comes with a pretty lofty prize package that totals some \$200,000 — \$50,000 in cash, a record contract with Mack Avenue Records, two years of career assistance and a two-year opportunity as artist-in-residence at the University of Indianapolis.

And what of the other four finalists? You'll be hearing about them, too, so let's put their names on your radar screen: Caelan Cardello, Esteban Castro, Paul Cornish and Thomas Linger. Expect to hear all five artists on a stage near you in the future. Past winners of the competition include Dan Tepfer (read about his most recent album on page 15 of this issue), Aaron Diehl, Sullivan Fortner and Emmet Cohen. All have had great success, with a nice boost from APA.

And if you're wondering what Isaiah J. Thompson is up to next, check out the review of his new album, *The Power Of The Spirit* (Blue Engine), on page 50. The 26-year-old shows he has spirit, and star power, to spare.

DB



EASTMAN

INTRODUCING

Ultimate 52nd Street Sound

With the Precision of DS Mechanism



ETS852

Designed in
collaboration with

Bob Mintzer

Chords & Discords >

**ARKADIA
RECORDS**
"The Artists' Choice"

**NEW
RELEASES**



JD WALTER



T.K. BLUE



**FRIDAY:
LIVE AT THE JAZZ STANDARD**

**JOANNE
BRACKEEN**

ArkadiaRecords.com



**SUBSCRIBE
877-904-JAZZ**



JBL Praise

I thoroughly enjoyed reading the article/interview with James Brandon Lewis in the June issue. I first heard about James in the book *Ugly Beauty* [by author Philip Freeman] and from your 2022 Critics Poll. Both got my attention, but after reading Ammar Kalia's article it was apparent Lewis has been very busy with



recent projects. I was very impressed by Sonny Rollins' comments about James Brandon Lewis. He is now at the top of my "must see list," and I am hoping his Mahalia Jackson tribute tour with the Red Lily Quintet will make it to Chicago. Thank you for educating me on this great musician.

**MARC NEBOZENKO
EVANSTON, ILLINOIS**

Love for Eckroth

"Rachel Eckroth Explores Her Jazz Predilection" (DownBeat, June 2023) really caught my attention because it diagrammed the originalistic mind workings, creativity and brave non-confining jazz world interactions of jazz improviser Rachel Eckroth. [The way] her self-explained intelligent psychodynamics intertwined with her jazz thinking and jazz performance is unique. Ms. Eckroth's habitual jazz attraction, thinking, bias and systemic variety of activities reveal a jazz spirit in search of a home base to flourish within.

Perhaps she would consider Baltimore, the Charmed City, and home to Fort McHenry and "The Star-Spangled Banner," as her home base and contribute to Baltimore's resurgence as a top 10 American city in music, commerce, culture and education.

Let us never forget that John Coltrane's last jazz concert was a Left Bank Jazz Society production in Baltimore, Maryland. That's American jazz history, don't you agree?

**EMZY VEAZY III
VIA EMAIL**

trumpeter Don Ellis, pianist Lalo Schiffrin and critics Nat Hentoff and Ira Gitler.

Summer Festivals and Beyond!

Your 2023 "Summer" Festival Guide included Jazz Cruises in January and February 2024 and an Idaho Jazz Festival in April 2024, but no mention of the Tucson Jazz Festival, which takes place Jan. 10–20, 2024. We're not the biggest city, but Tucson is a great jazz town. Not only do we have a terrific festival, but the University of Arizona offers a great jazz program and high school students participate in the award-winning Tucson Jazz Institute Orchestra. Finally, we have one of the finest jazz clubs in the country, the Century Room at the Hotel Congress, which was omitted from your recent list of best jazz venues. Our desert weather is hot, but Tucson's jazz is very cool. Please consider a mention in future features, or a story on the emergence of Tucson, Arizona, as the Jazz Capital of the Southwest.

**ELLIOT GLICKSMAN
PAST JAZZ FESTIVAL PRESIDENT
TUCSON, ARIZONA**

Max Roach Covered

With an eye on the upcoming centennial of Max Roach, can you share the number of times that Mr. Roach appeared on your covers? Also, can you indicate the months and years of those issues?

**EDDIE DAVIS
VIA EMAIL**

Editor's Note: Mr. Roach appeared eight times on DownBeat's cover: November 2007, November 1998, November 1993, November 1990, October 1985, April 1980, March 17, 1972, and March 20, 1958. He was also the subject of six other major features in the magazine: June 1995, November 1978, March 21, 1968, March 24, 1966, March 25, 1965, and March 30, 1961. He was also a key participant in the March 15, 1962, cover feature, "Racial Prejudice In Jazz," an intense two-part article that included Abbey Lincoln, Roach (her husband at the time),

Corrections & Clarifications

As always, DownBeat regrets all errors that sneak into the magazine:

- In the June issue, we misspelled Catherine Jensen-Hole's name. She is the director of the UMASS Vocal Jazz Ensemble at the University of Massachusetts Amherst.
- In the May issue, a photo from the Iowa City Jazz Festival should have been credited to Andrea Canter. In that issue's festival listings, the Healdsburg Jazz Festival will be celebrating its 25th anniversary June 17–25 in Healdsburg, California.
- In the April issue, an article on Vince Mendoza suggested that vocalist Norma Winstone had passed away. We are happy to be wrong: Winstone is alive and touring throughout Europe this summer at the age of 81.

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

CASIO®



PRIVIA PX-S5000

With its Smart Hybrid Hammer Action keys, incredible sound quality and award-winning slim design, the Privia PX-S5000 delivers piano sound and feel that defies all expectations.



Scan To Learn More

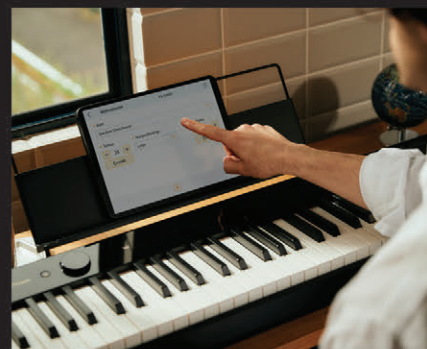
Privia



Enjoy 23 inspiring Tones including a stunning German concert grand with string resonance, damper resonance and subtle mechanical sounds.



Spruce key construction with advanced counterweights and dampening material deliver a rewarding, balanced, and quiet response.



Use the included Bluetooth MIDI & audio adapter to connect to a whole world of devices and software, including the free Casio Music Space app.



BOLD. RESILIENT. POWERFUL. ICONIC. PROUD.

TERENCE BLANCHARD,
FRED A. ERB JAZZ CREATIVE DIRECTOR CHAIR



ANNOUNCING THE
DETROIT SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA'S

2023–2024

Paradise Jazz Series

The 2023–2024 Paradise Jazz series, features an impressive lineup of jazz musicians from Makaya McCraven to Kenny Garrett, Branford Marsalis, and the Paradise Theater Big Band. Join Fred A. Erb Jazz Creative Director Chair Terence Blanchard in this celebration showcasing Detroit's rich musical heritage. Tickets and more information at dso.org/jazz.

2023–2024 PARADISE JAZZ SERIES LINEUP

MAKAYA MCCRAVEN: *IN THESE TIMES*
WITH THE URBAN ART ORCHESTRA
ENDEA OWENS & THE COOKOUT

Friday, Oct 13, 8PM

PARADISE THEATRE
BIG BAND

Friday, Nov 17, 8PM

KENNY
GARRETT

Friday, Feb 23, 8PM

AN EVENING WITH
BRANFORD MARSALIS

Friday, Apr 5, 8PM

TERENCE BLANCHARD
& PONCHO SANCHEZ:
CHANO Y DIZZY

Friday, Apr 19, 8PM

DON
WAS

Friday, May 24, 8PM

ORDER YOUR
TICKETS TODAY
AT [DSO.ORG/JAZZ](https://dso.org/jazz)

JOHN ABBOTT



"In this era of isolationism, hatred and fear, we need this music more than ever," Arturo O'Farrill says of his music and mission.

Arturo O'Farrill: The Trio as Jazz Orchestra

The cover of Arturo O'Farrill's new trio album, *Legacies* (Blue Note), shows a 12-year-old O'Farrill sitting on his father's knee. His legendary father, bandleader Chico O'Farrill (1921–2001), liked to spend hours listening to music of all sorts, often with his son by his side. This is how the younger O'Farrill absorbed his cultural inheritance — one vinyl spin at a time.

"This record is very much about the legacy of music that my father has given to me and that I've given to my offspring [trumpeter Adam

O'Farrill and drummer Zack O'Farrill]," said Arturo in a remote chat with DownBeat from his studio in Los Angeles. "But it is about all of our legacies. This music is really from Mother Africa."

Born in Mexico and raised in the U.S., Arturo's musical line taps deeply into the African heritage of the Americas: His Havana-born father played a key role in the creation of Afro-Cuban jazz, not just as one of its earliest composers, but as one of its most prolific collaborators. Through Chico's

arrangements for high-profile jazz innovators like Machito, Benny Goodman, Count Basie, Dizzie Gillespie and Charlie Parker, the elder O'Farrill asserted an enduring influence on the genre.

In the mid-1990s, Arturo began his own ascent as a Latin jazz master with the formation of the Chico O'Farrill Afro-Cuban Jazz Orchestra, serving as the group's pianist and music director. When his father passed in 2001, Arturo took over as bandleader, later renaming the organization The Afro-Latin

Jazz Orchestra. As the creative force behind this ensemble, Arturo would go on to win multiple Grammys in various Latin jazz categories over the ensuing years.

He had formative musical experiences with other bandleaders as well, most notably Carla Bley. In 1979, she tapped the teenaged pianist to join the Carla Bley Band — a tour

establish the ear's expectation for the rest of the album.

"[Musicians like] Chico Farrell, Duke Ellington, Mozart, Prince, Carla Bley, Randy Weston — the thing they teach us is that there are only three really important ingredients for a musician," he explains. "They are curiosity, to do the things that you want to do, not

conceptual challenge on *Legacies* — Arturo's son Zack, an enormously gifted drummer and percussionist, and bassist Liany Mateo, a recent member of the Afro-Latin Jazz Orchestra — provide just the right amount of ballast for Arturo's improvisational aeronautics. They also exemplify another aspect of Arturo's forward-looking musical perspective: inclusivity.

"I want the orchestra to look like the world that receives its music," he said, by way of example. "So we have yearly auditions now, and that's a bold-faced attempt to diversify our ranks. I want way more women and people of color. And we need it to be intergenerational. I'm looking for that next generation of musicians who are going to make me look bad. And Liany is perfect."

Arturo's effort to integrate his bands reflects positively on his academic work at UCLA, where he serves as professor of global jazz studies and associate dean for equity, diversity and inclusion. There, he finds that today's students are free-thinking, often eschewing many of the previous century's notions of jazz — and this development doesn't bother him.

"Yeah, there's a sense of continuity by studying the [jazz] canon," he said. "But when I play Chico O'Farrill's music, I'm not interested in replicating it. I'm interested in learning from that mind. Think of Duke Ellington, not as a founding father, but as a progressive visionary."

Like his musical predecessors, Arturo's own progressive visions promise to have far-reaching impact — even beyond his teaching and band leading. Most excitingly, he reports, within the next few years the Afro Latin Jazz Alliance, an educational non-profit that he started 15 years ago, will have a new 16,000-square-foot home in the heart of El Barrio in East Harlem called The Afro Latin Music and Arts Center.

"We'll have a 300-seat theater, teaching rooms, a community space and a café in a neighborhood that so richly adorned the world with the genius of Tito Puente," he said.

Arturo admits, with some wonderment, that this kind of social advocacy is a far cry from his initial goal as a young pianist, which was simply "to play as good as Herbie Hancock." He thrills to this career turn.

"Jazz is an ongoing conversation between Europe, Africa, the indigenous people, the Americas, the South Asian world, the Asian world. And in this era of isolationism, hatred and fear, we need this music more than ever," he said. "I'm working tirelessly towards that. In this corner of El Barrio, at least, there will be a sanctuary for people to gather and celebrate an ongoing conversation of diversity, equity and inclusion."

—Suzanne Lorge

'I write groupings, clusters and tonal centers, and I let the improvisers figure their way around it.'

de force of musical imagination — where he stayed until the mid-1980s.

"I can't even begin to tell you how grateful I am to have had my first experience in music be under Carla Bley," Arturo said. "The genius of that American artist is beyond compare."

In a move that seems equal parts salutary and reflexive, Arturo added compositions by these important mentors to the repertoire of the new album: his father's "Pure Emotion," its endearing melody catalyzing an unconstrained exposition for solo piano under Arturo's touch, and Bley's "Utviklingssang," a somber introspection rendered almost cheery by the trio's focused energy.

"Each piece [on the album] was a piece that I've been playing my whole life," he said. "What people don't understand is, I'm known as the Afro-Latin jazz big band person, but every single day, the Steinway beckons me. I go over to the Steinway, I do my scales, my double thirds, my arpeggios. And then I'll improvise on the standards that I've been playing my whole life. For me, this is where I come from."

Even so, the way Arturo hears a standard is not the way that anyone else does. He admits that, like Bley and his father, he never understood "how to stay in one lane." The delightful result of this waywardness is an inordinate amount of freedom in the trio's understanding of Herbie Hancock's "Dolphin Dance," for instance, and a tilt toward omnidirectional piano improvisation on Thelonious Monk's "Well, You Needn't." These two opening tracks

bound by awards or recognition. And integrity, to have the heart to follow through, no matter what. And finally, accuracy. The skill set with which you work. Obviously, you're not born being able to play the piano. That's why I practice every day."

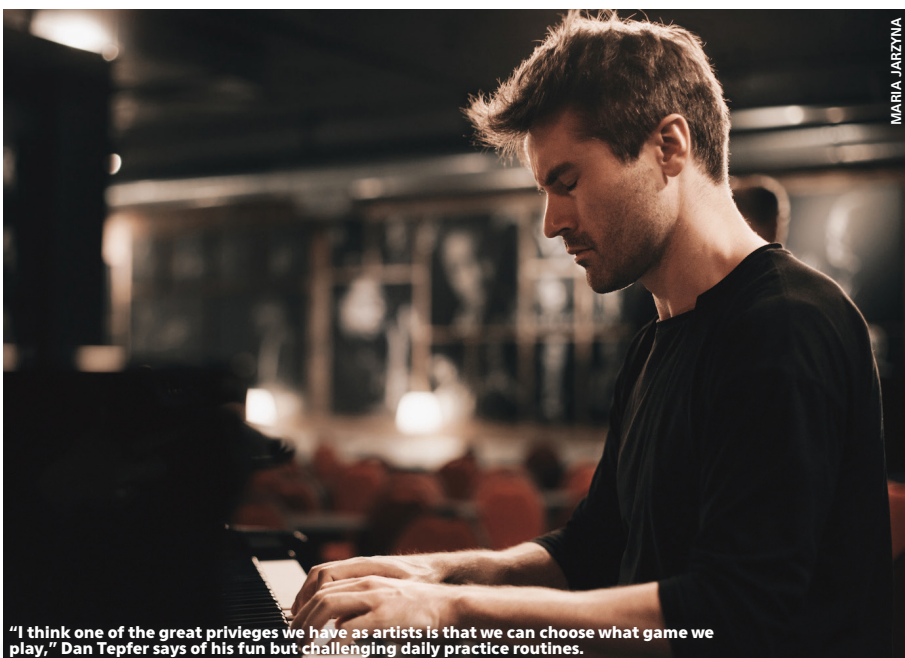
Standards-based practice is just a starting point, however, and Arturo handily sidesteps the pitfalls of the traditionalist's stance — namely, imitation, stagnation, derivative thinking.

"The seeds of modernism are there. Some of the stuff on this record is really forward-looking," he said. "There's a lot of Cecil Taylor in me, a lot of Herbie Nichols. These are modernists. So I'm interpreting 'Darn That Dream' with just a slight edge, if you will."

This edge derives in no small measure from Arturo's singular approach to improvisation. With most players, you hear the shadow of the melody when they extemporize. With O'Farill, you hear the shadow of the orchestra.

"I tend to think orchestrationally," he responded when queried on this observation. "Also, I tend to view harmony more as a relationship of intervals than tonal centers. A lot of the things that I do orchestrationally have their own tonal gravity. So, I don't necessarily play changes, and I don't write changes in my music anymore. I write groupings, clusters and tonal centers, and I let the improvisers figure their way around it."

The remaining trio members facing this



"I think one of the great privileges we have as artists is that we can choose what game we play," Dan Tepfer says of his fun but challenging daily practice routines.

Dan Tepfer Raises His Practice Game

ON JAN. 1, 2023, DAN TEPFER RECORDED A video of himself at the piano, improvising four-voice chords that moved through systematic progressions in the key of C major. Almost daily over the next three-plus months, he video-logged a myriad of fun but challenging musical games with himself, over standards, rhythms, classical pieces, computer programs and apps. On April 24, he recorded his 100th day of practice, starting with the same tonal chordal exercise he did on day 1.

"What I'm documenting in those videos is typically [just] one aspect of my practice," Tepfer explained, over video, while sitting at his piano in the same mood-lit Brooklyn studio where he recorded all those games. A few of them involved Bach's Two-Part Inventions, not surprising considering they were the focus of his latest album, *Inventions/Reinventions* (StorySound), where Tepfer performs all 15 Bach Inventions, interspersed with free improvisations.

Mixing Bach and jazz improvisation is nothing new to Tepfer; he might be the world's foremost authority on it now, 12 years after he audaciously recorded *Goldberg Variations/Variations* (Sunnyside), which many classical pianists consider to be a signature piece of the keyboard repertoire, while adding an improvised vignette to each of the 32 variations. But in order to actually perform them in public, he wanted to have a stronger grasp of not only that formidable piece, but of the music of Bach in general, which led him back to the Inventions.

"I was just looking at them one day and realized they're like a perfect microcosm of how Bach

tells stories in music," he said, explaining that Bach uses a common narrative form in his compositions that is found in literary and dramatic works. "I just started analyzing the harmonies on all of them, in terms of how they work functionally ... and I asked myself if I could improvise [with] that same concept of classical narrative structure, and then maybe I [could] perform the inventions and do free improvisations for the missing keys."

When improvising for the Goldberg Variations, Tepfer creates a spontaneous complement of each variation while adhering mostly to the original harmonic progression in the key of G — essentially blowing over the changes to the Goldberg. "Whereas in the Inventions," Tepfer posited, "I'm not taking any data from Bach. I'm taking this this concept of storytelling in music."

Tepfer sees musical themes as "actors" in the story, and the harmonies as "landscapes." He elaborated: "In a good story, if a character goes geographically somewhere, there's some sense of that place belong[ing] in the same world as the place he was in previously ... and that's true of how Bach is constructing these inventions. The places he goes harmonically are all part of the same landscape. I've found that incredibly helpful with free improvisation." Those improvisations certainly don't sound Bach-like, but like Bach, they suggest a deep harmonic functionality, and a sense of direction and purpose, much like Tepfer's Day One chordal improv practice.

Doing either free tonal improvisation or Bach alone would be hard, let alone doing them together.

er. Seeking and attempting difficult things for the sake of knowledge seems to be a crucial strand in Tepfer's DNA. His father, his grandfather and his uncle were all biologists. "And we always were having these discussions around the table about searching, which is really the core of science ... that feels really genuinely fun for me."

Tepfer himself has a degree in astrophysics from the University of Edinburgh. For his last album, 2019's *Natural Machines* (Sunnyside), Tepfer programmed an AI app to respond in real-time to what he played on his Yamaha Disklavier, essentially allowing him to play spontaneous duets with a machine, sounding like a musical game of ping-pong.

And, just for fun, he programmed a three-dimensional version of the tonal landscape he sees in his head. On the computer it looks like a video game, with mountains, gullies and even ancient temple-looking structures, all representing the interactions of harmonic tonal centers. One can wander through this sonic landscape, simultaneously seeing and hearing the chordal journey unfold. But no matter where one is, the main tonal center, a.k.a. the "key" to the landscape, is visible in a deep well in the center of the map, enticing the sojourners back to its familiar comforts.

Tepfer returns often to his caldera of familial comfort: Paris, where he was raised as the only son of an American couple who had expatriated there. His mother, Rebecca, was an opera singer in the Paris Opera Chorus.

Three-and-a-half years ago, tragically, she was killed in a traffic accident while on a bicycle trip through Crete. Her husband of 50 years, David (Dan Tepfer's father), was with her at the time, and he suffers from traumatic memories of the ordeal.

"My dad and I ... we were close before, but we've gotten much closer, and so I just try to spend as much time with him as I can," said Tepfer. He decided to record *Inventions/Reinventions* in a popular Paris performance space that his parents converted from an old woodworking factory, on a piano that belonged to his grandfather.

Playing over standards was one of the many "games" Tepfer did often during his 100 days of practice. "I mean, that's a beautiful game, too, and it's almost like the more I do my own games, the more fun I have playing that existing game, because it doesn't feel like I'm defining my entire self-worth by how well I can play.

"One of the great privileges we have as artists is that we can choose what game we play. Of course, there's the mainstream jazz piano game. It's a beautiful game. ... And then I realized you don't [always] have to play that game. You can make up your own game." —Gary Fukushima

Footnote: And with that, this author set out to make up his own game, trying to sculpt this article in the same classic narrative fashion as Bach's *Inventions* and Tepfer's *Reinventions*. It was new and challenging and fun.



"I started wanting to record some of my thoughts in writing after my father died in 2008," Benny Green said of his blossoming writing career.

Benny Green's Solo Mastery

BENNY GREEN'S 22ND ALBUM, *SOLO* (Sunnyside), dropped in May, a month after his 60th birthday. The work documents the master pianist in transition. Recorded over two days last December, it's a 40-minute recital comprising two Green originals and choice cuts by pianists Thelonious Monk, Oscar Peterson, Tommy Flanagan, Barry Harris, Horace Silver, Bobby Timmons, McCoy Tyner, Cedar Walton and James Williams. Green's time is rock-steady, his attitude reflective, probing, melody-centric and emotionally transparent, like the five unaccompanied selections he plays on Fender Rhodes on *Solo's* immediate predecessor, *Benny's Crib*.

Both dates diverge dramatically from Green's dozen or so piano trio albums since 1991, when Blue Note released *Greens*, the first of a trilogy by Green's tightly choreographed trio with bassist Christian McBride (then 19) and drummer Carl Allen, then his bandmates with Freddie Hubbard, who Green joined after four years with Betty Carter and two years with Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers. These albums introduced

Green to an international audience, among them numerous Gen-X and Millennial piano luminaries of the future. They were attracted to Green's florid, virtuosic chops; his ridiculously fast lines amalgamating Bud Powell's kineticism and Phineas Newborn's vertiginous parallel octaves; his embrace of blues-infused soul-jazz and heart-on-the-sleeve balladry à la Gene Harris; and his signature American Songbook interpretations that privilege storytelling over abstraction.

Between 1992 and 1997, Green brought his voice to the Ray Brown Trio, raising his profile via six albums and much touring. Oscar Peterson took notice, and gave Green the signal honor of inviting him to make a two-piano album in 1998. Peterson's influence suffuses Green's previous unaccompanied recital, *Green's Blues*, from 2002, a 12-piece program of primarily good old good ones, and albums by a working trio with McBride and guitarist Russell Malone in 1999 and 2000.

Then Green took a decade-long hiatus from the trio format. "During the '90s, I became unwittingly a bit formulaic," he said at his New York

hotel the day before joining McBride, Malone and Cécile McLorin Salvant at a Steinway Hall benefit concert for McBride's Jazz House Kids organization. "I was on a major record label, getting a lot of attention, which I hadn't planned for. I developed a mindset that, whatever I was doing on a record that people liked or was getting airplay, I should make sure I do it on the next record. I wanted to invoke enthusiasm from the audience without really being intent on deepening my content."

Green didn't release his next trio album, *The Source*, until 2010; there followed, in short order, *Magic Beans* and *Live In Santa Cruz*. He presented some two-dozen tunes channeling the inflamed spirit of hardcore bebop, refracting into his own detailed argot the respective vocabularies of heroes like Powell, Elmo Hope, Kenny Drew, Horace Silver, Sonny Clark, and also Walter Bishop Jr. and Walter Davis Jr., who taught him privately during the '80s.

"I wanted to be more of a classicist than some of the more progressive thinkers of my generation — really studying those old records," Green said.

"Many of us were reverential toward our elders. We weren't just going around high-fiving each other. We wanted their honest musical approval."

As the decade progressed, Green increasingly felt that "some elements of leading a trio were becoming cumbersome," he said. "I've wanted to play solo for many years, and my sporadic solo concerts felt so good, I wanted to explore it further. It feels vast, like the ocean and earth and sky conjoined. I get the same sense of connection with the instrument as when I first touched it as a child: the wonderment in my body. I'm not negotiating the vibration of cymbals and drums and the bass, or the bass coming through an amp. It's all me, touching the keys and feeling the physical vibration coming back through the wood."

"It's liberating. I'm the whole orchestra. I can make spontaneous diversions without having to cue anyone or make sure someone else understands or is prepared. Early in the pandemic, I saw it as an opportunity to consider what I was doing that I really enjoyed, as opposed to doing it because the structure was set in place. As I freed myself from filtering what I do through the trio context, I started looking more intently for the songs I most enjoy playing and most fulfill me."

Since lockdown, Green's Facebook feed includes numerous videos of his unaccompanied ruminations on a wide array of songs, and verbatim transcripts of numerous interviews with schoolmates from formative years in Berkeley, California (where he still resides), and collaborators from his four professional decades — including one with pianist-singer Johnny O'Neal, a Messengers predecessor. He'll incorporate these texts in a forthcoming autobiographical memoir, along with eloquent essays about his family, teachers, past employers and pianistic influences.

"I'm shy and a bit of a homebody, and my personality on social media is a kind of alter ego," Green said. "I started wanting to record some of my thoughts in writing after my father died in 2008. While teaching at University of Michigan between 2014 and 2018, I wrote some essays. After I left, I decided to post them, both to share with my community and hone my flow and skills as a writer. That some of my favorite living musicians have read my writing and encouraged my voice gave me confidence towards writing a book. My intention is to acknowledge mentors whom I didn't necessarily think to thank or know how to thank properly while they were here in physical form. It's a catharsis."

"The music I love and feel connected to is of Black American culture, which ethnically I'm not part of, though I've been blessed to be embraced by some of its grandmasters," Green concluded. "I'd like to be a bridge to the ways that my elders shared with people of my generation to musicians who are younger than me, to leave an honest voicing of gratitude as gracefully as I possibly can."

—Ted Panken

NS
DESIGN™

*"I continue to
discover the
versatility of this
instrument and
it continues to
impress me
every day."*

Nick Villalobos

Instrument: NS CR5M Bass

Trio: SIMPLY THREE

SimplyThreeMusic.com

Latest Album: All Amazed

Photo: Leavitt Wells

www.NedSteinberger.com



Shiri Zorn Finds Her Voice

AS BIRTHDAY PRESENTS FOR JAZZ MUSICIANS go, it was a good one. Shiri Zorn, an Israeli-born jazz vocalist who lives and performs in Saratoga Springs, New York, about 30 miles north of the state capital, is an ardent fan of the much-admired singer Tierney Sutton. She sometimes fantasized about meeting her, maybe even taking a lesson from her, but it seemed far-fetched.

"She's been my idol for 15 years now," she said by phone from her home. "[Guitarist] George Muscatello knew that because I've been talking about her for years. And he just went behind my back and contacted her."

Muscatello secretly wrote to ask Sutton if she would give his partner a lesson, as a surprise for her 40th birthday. Not only did Sutton agree to give her a lesson, she took Zorn on as a regular student. Ultimately, she was so enamored with the Israeli-American singer that she offered to

fly to Saratoga from California to co-produce her debut album, *Into Another Land* (CD Baby).

"Shiri is my favorite kind of singer (and human, for that matter) — open-minded, creative and honest," Sutton wrote in an email. "She has enough confidence to look at her own work and fine-tune it. ... She has a wonderful, detached, honest idea of who she is, what she wanted to work on and how I could help her."

Zorn's voice is cool, calm and cerebral, her tone pure. She articulates lyrics with perfect diction and scalpel-like precision. She has found the perfect setting for her gem-like voice in an unusual trio with Muscatello's spare, ghostly tones and the simmering Brazilian beats of percussion master Mauricio Zottarelli.

On an album of quirky originals and meditative, one-of-a-kind renditions of songs like "How Deep Is The Ocean" and Jobim's "Zingaro," they

create a tiny, hermetically sealed world of sound and sensation.

Zorn's scrupulous diction is one of the first things that strikes you when you talk to her. Then you learn that, in addition to singing, she is a language teacher at Skidmore College in Saratoga, teaching undergrads Hebrew, the language she grew up speaking in Israel near Tel Aviv.

"My name means sing in Hebrew, the command form of the word," she said. "I don't know how my parents knew, but they did." She enrolled in Israel's famous Thelma Yellin High School for the Arts, which has spawned such noted jazz stars as Anat Cohen, her brothers Avishai and Yuval, and Gilad Hekselman.

Zorn studied classical voice at Guildhall School of Music in London. "Towards the end of my undergrad studies, a light bulb went off, and I realized that my voice just did not belong in classical music anymore. I found myself listening to other styles, starting with singers who had a connection to classical. The first was Sarah Vaughan, who, in her later years, had this vibrato that almost sounds operatic.

"I never improvised a note before I was 26. I started out as your very square classical musician who has to have everything on the page to be able to make music. All of a sudden, I'm standing in front of a jazz singing teacher. And she says, 'Just sing!' [laughs] And I say, 'What do you mean? Sing what?' That's when this long quest began."

The fact that Zorn's bass-less trio on *Into Another Land* sounds like a complete band is largely due to the ingenuity of guitarist/arranger Muscatello and the synergy he achieves with Zottarelli's intense Brazilian percussion and Zorn herself, who, acting as a third band member, comps sympathetic harmony notes with her voice while the guitarist solos.

Zorn's classical background is something she has in common with Muscatello, her colleague at Skidmore, where he has taught guitar improvisation for 18 years. Before turning to jazz, Muscatello studied classical guitar and was smitten with the works of Cuban modernist composer and guitarist Leo Brouwer, as well as by Bartók, Hancock and Shorter.

"There's a lot of improv on the record," he said. "The fact that it's just solo guitar throughout — no bass player — means I have to be the bass player and the guitarist, which is like classical guitar."

The album "includes everything I love," Muscatello said. "Words, vocals, love stories, solo guitar, improvising, jazz, classical, drums. I feel like, if it were the last record I ever made, it really kinda sums up my life as a guitar player.

"Discovering my own voice was like discovering my authentic self," Zorn mused further. "It can be lonely, daunting work. I was fortunate to have Tierney's patient, compassionate, non-judging guidance. She made me realize that we don't have to walk alone."

—Allen Morrison

BARI

Esprit
BARI
USA



ron@bariwoodwind.com

The Bari "*Esprit*" mouthpiece.

Giving your student the confidence they need to take their playing to the next level! Affordability and a great sound all rolled into one amazing mouthpiece for your aspiring artist!



www.bariwoodwind.com

LIZZIE THOMAS

Duo Encounters

The electrifying new album from NYC stellar vocalist Lizzie Thomas.

This is not your typical duet album



“Her pitch and sense of time are flawless.”

—Scott Yanow, LA Jazz Scene

Featuring

Ron Carter

Russell Malone

Wayne Escoffery

Helio Alves

Noriko Ueda

John Di Martino

Guilherme Monteiro

and more...



LizzieTheJazzSinger.com
DotTimeRecords.com



Claes Brondal, left, and Joel Chriss are expanding jazz in the tony Hamptons as they look forward to the third annual Hamptons Jazz Festival.

Jazz Swings the Hamptons

EIGHTY MILES EAST OF THE WORLD'S JAZZ

capital, the tony South Fork Long Island enclave of the Hamptons has long been known as a summer playground for an abundance of New York celebrities ranging from the film world to pop icons. But within this scene, stereotyped as high-powered executives with mansions who host lavish parties for the exclusive, jazz has carved its niche as a hip, cultured fascination. It has become an unlikely hotbed of jazz activity — from Montauk to Southampton — that remarkably is turning heads and opening ears not just in the primetime summer but yearlong.

The Hamptons Jazz Festival, which enters its third year with more than 40 shows from the end of June through the beginning of September, has largely been helmed by Joel Chriss, a top-tier booking agent, concert promoter and artist manager who retired from the New York life and settled locally. “I’m the artistic director for the whole festival,” the 66-year-old Chriss declares in his spacious home. He has ample support from Denmark-born, Hamptons-based drummer Claes Brondal, who in 2009 founded a popular weekly event called The Jam Sessions.

“When I retired from my J. Chriss & Co. booking agency in 2018, I wanted to create a jazz community that maybe could do a concert series or set up a club,” Chriss says. After finding community at The Jam Session (originally staged at Bay Burger), Chriss was invited to be a board member for the nonprofit The Jam Session Inc.

“Claes had already established a good thing, and I slowly recommended artists,” he says. “But being involved in just The Jam Session didn’t get me up in the morning. I’ve had this idea in my head to do something much bigger.”

It wasn’t long before Chriss floated the idea of putting on a full-fledged jazz festival to the board. “But we needed to get the financial support system,” he said. It arrived when an anonymous businessman fronted the group a large sum in

March 2021 to stage the first festival. But there was a contingency: The fest would start three months later.

“I don’t know how we did it in such a short amount of time, but we pulled it off,” says Chriss, who ponied up some of his own savings. Because of such short notice, there was no time to promote it or get editorial support, but word of the festival got out through social media and Brondal’s rallying cry at The Jam Sessions that now take place every Tuesday in the funky Masonic Temple space in Sag Harbor.

The team put on 40 outdoor shows during the heat of COVID-19 where participants were masked and audience members stood six feet apart.

They didn’t have a lot of time to secure venues, but many major rooms offered space, including Gosman’s Dock in Montauk, the Parrish Art Museum in Water Mill, the Southampton Arts Center and a newly renovated gem of a building, The Church in Sag Harbor. Money was raised for each show, but attendees got in free.

Brondal invites players to the donation-only Jam Sessions each week, including regular Randy Brecker, who lives nearby. Brondal says that Chriss has boosted the entire jazz scene to become a communal gathering. “I compare his arrival to fishing with a rod and then having a trawler with nets come along to scoop up a variety of fish,” he says. “Joel had such access to artists because of his connections. My artistic vision and his access has helped us to fill a cultural void.”

The East End is returning to its roots as a vital scene of live music. Brondal admits that cross-cultural sentiment has been rare in the Hamptons, except, as he told one local reporter, “back in the whaling days where people from all over world walked the streets, dozens of languages were spoken, bringing along customs and traditions, and music.” That scenario is the goal. He’s hoping the festival serves to reunite the East End with today’s wider multicultural movement. —Dan Ouellette



Jordan explored the outer edges of jazz improv for decades.

Kidd Jordan: 1935–2023

Edward “Kidd” Jordan passed away on April 7 in his hometown of New Orleans. He was 87.

The cutting-edge tenor saxophonist and music educator explored the outer edges of jazz improvisation from the 1940s until his passing.

He performed with an array of musicians from well beyond the jazz world, including Lena Horne, Frank Sinatra, Ray Charles, Gladys Knight, Stevie Wonder, Art and Aaron Neville and Fats Domino.

Inside the jazz world, Jordan performed with Cannonball Adderley, Dewey Redman, Archie Shepp, Fred Anderson, Ornette Coleman, Sun Ra, Ellis Marsalis and many others.

Jordan picked up the saxophone in high school, digging into jazz after hearing Charlie Parker and

Lester Young recordings. He continued to study at Southern University in Baton Rouge and later taught there for 34 years. It was at Southern as a student that Jordan met and befriended his future brother-in-law, clarinetist Alvin Batiste.

Jordan maintained a strong connection to Chicago, getting a master’s degree from Millikin University in Decatur, Illinois, and doing post-graduate studies at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. He founded the influential Improvisation Arts Ensemble, a free-blowing, avant-garde force. But even more impressive than his own work might be the students he taught, including Wynton and Branford Marsalis, Donald Harrison Jr., Trombone Shorty and Walter Smith III. **DB**



Berger was voted DownBeat’s Vibraphonist of the Year six times.

Karl Berger: 1935–2023

Musician, composer and educator Karl Berger died on April 9 in Albany, New York. He was 88.

The founder of the Creative Music Studio, Berger collaborated with everyone from John McLaughlin, Don Cherry, Ornette Coleman and Jack DeJohnette to Dave Brubeck, Lee Konitz, Carla Bley, Anthony Braxton and more.

His Creative Music Studio, founded with his wife, singer Ingrid Sertso, was an outgrowth of the couple’s Creative Music Foundation and its mission of musical cross-pollination based on improvisation.

Berger’s distinctive education career led him into professorships and administration roles at Frankfurt University of Music and Performing

Arts and at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth.

Berger was born in 1935 in Heidelberg, Germany. He studied classical piano as a child, but turned to jazz at 14. After working as the house pianist at Cave 54 in Heidelberg in the 1950s, Berger moved to Paris, where he later worked with Cherry on the album *Symphony Of Improvisers*. He went on to make dozens of albums as a leader and sideman and won Vibraphonist of the Year in the DownBeat Critics Poll six times.

His last album was a 2022 trio date with cornetist Kirk Knuffke, bassist Jay Anderson and drummer Matt Wilson called *Heart Is A Melody* (Stunt Records). **DB**



Bankhead was an active member of AACM.

Harrison Bankhead: 1955–2023

Chicago-based bassist Harrison Napoleon Bankhead III passed away at home on April 5. He was 68. Born in Waukegan, Illinois, he began his musical journey in grade school, gravitating to guitar and picking up the bass as a teenager.

Beyond touring and recording with the Harrison Bankhead Quartet, the bassist was an active member of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians playing with

the likes of Fred Anderson, Von Freeman, Roscoe Mitchell, Nicole Mitchell, Ed Wilkerson Avreeal Ra, Ari Brown and many more.

Bankhead’s final album, *Blue Velvet* (Engine Studios), featured the title track dedication to Anderson’s Velvet Lounge in Chicago. Ra, Wilkerson and saxophonist Mars Williams performed on the album. The bassist also played marimba and piano on the album. **DB**



Ingrid Laubrock, left, premieres "Lilith" with band member Dave Adewumi on trumpet.

JENS SCHLEWGER

jazzahead! Conference Reflects Jazz's Eclecticism

JAZZAHEAD!, A HYBRID TRADE FAIR AND artistic showcase held annually at the exhibition center in Bremen, Germany, celebrated its 17th edition in April with some spectacular commissioned works as well as a healthy turnout of 2,800. The festivities began with some dazzling duets by German jazz giants Till Brönner (flugelhorn) and Dieter Ilg (bass). In keeping with the 2023 theme

"building bridges," four German artists living abroad presented commissioned works played by new ensembles formed for the occasion in their adopted homes of the Netherlands, France, Austria and the U.S.

Saxophonist Ingrid Laubrock's premiere of "Lilith," a dark, raucous and smartly developed piece for sextet that included standout solos from

the leader on soprano and tenor, featured chanted phrases that added to the piece's edgy sense of urgency. Tenor saxophonist Daniel Erdmanns' "Couples Therapy" flirted with sentimentality but erupted with earnest passion when cellist Vincent Courtois ripped into a rapturous solo.

Reedman Heinrich von Kalnein and trumpeter Jakob Helling assembled a brassy Austrian-German octet called Alpine Air that bristled with energy and sparkling solos, but their Blood Sweat & Tears-like energy felt out of keeping with forward-looking spirit of the fair. By contrast, drummer Felix Schlarmann's Dutch-German collaboration "Tree House" brimmed with shimmering insight as it nodded to the jaunty township feel of Abdullah Ibrahim's classic ensemble, Ekaya.

Jazzahead! commissions and showcases reflected the eclecticism and genre fluidity of contemporary European jazz, often mixing folk, world and classical traditions with cheeky improvisation in a way that suggested the early days of the 20th century, when almost any jagged new music that wasn't classical was called "jazz."

Jazzahead! booths resemble little coffee houses or parlors that foster one-on-one meetings between artists, publicists, agents, presenters and the like. The cooperative, community atmosphere at the fair and the concerts is palpable.

Each year, jazzhead! chooses a "partner country." This year, it was Germany itself; next year, it's The Netherlands. —Paul de Barros

**YOUR GATEWAY TO
A NEW WORLD OF TONE**

AXE I/O ONE

A do-it-all audio interface for guitar and bass

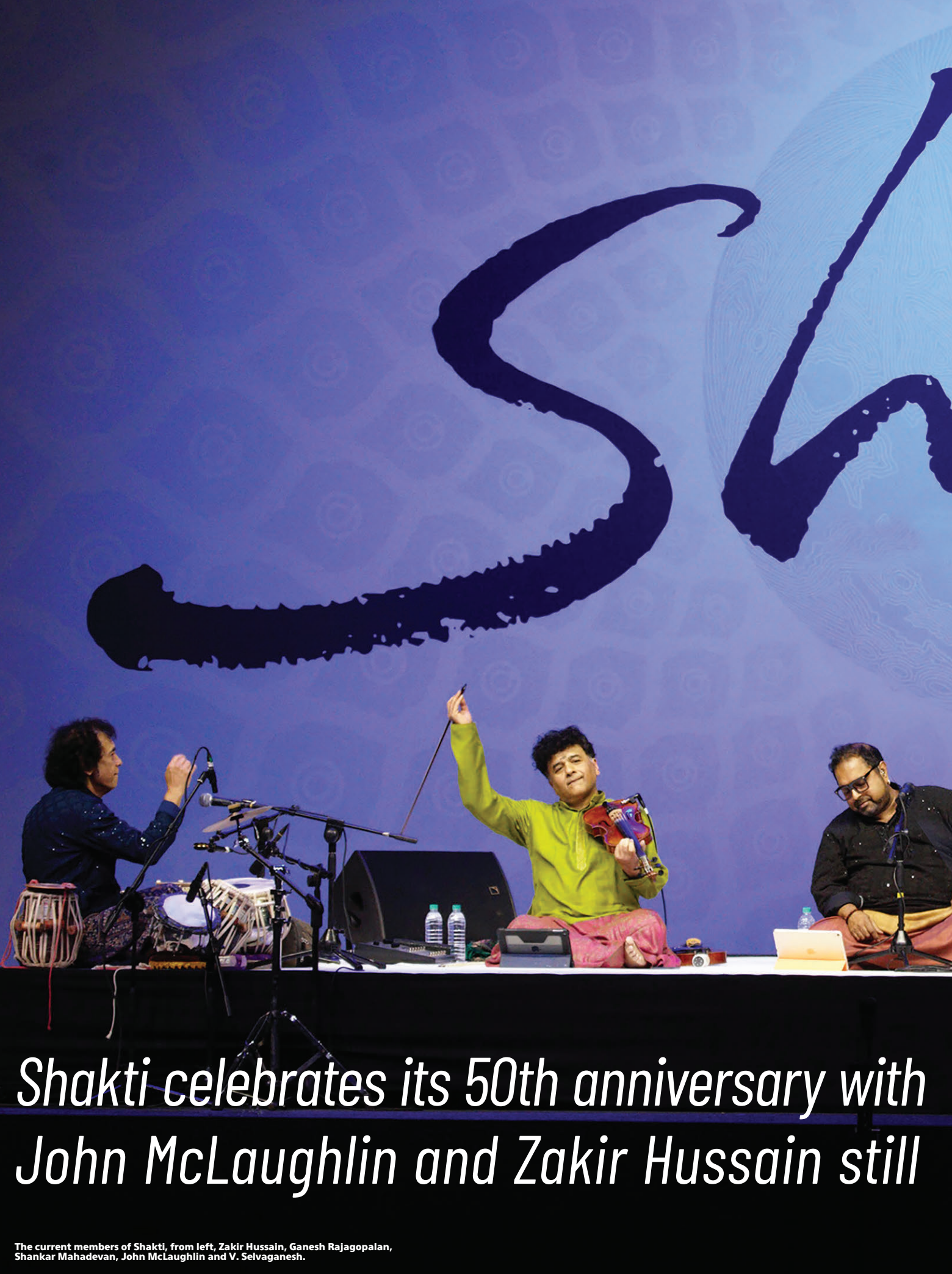
- Z-TONE impedance-adapting input enhances your pickups' true sound
- PURE and JFET input stages go instantly from transparent to vintage tones
- ACTIVE/PASSIVE pickup selector optimizes the signal flow from the start
- Amp Out for reamplification and Tone Modeling
- High-definition 24-bit/192 kHz audio conversion keeps your signal crystal clear
- Class-A mic preamp offers transparent sound for acoustic guitar and vocals
- MIDI in/out and 2 programable inputs for expression and single/double switches
- USB-C bus powered, no external power supply needed
- Includes AmpliTube 5 SE, TONEX SE and Ableton Live Lite



www.ikmultimedia.com/axeioone

IK MULTIMEDIA





Shakti celebrates its 50th anniversary with John McLaughlin and Zakir Hussain still

The current members of Shakti, from left, Zakir Hussain, Ganesh Rajagopalan, Shankar Mahadevan, John McLaughlin and V. Selvaganesh.



*a new album and tour as soulmates
bring it after all these years*

BY BILL MILKOWSKI
PHOTO BY PEPE GOMES

*Shankar
50*



There was a moment in 2017, following what was billed as his farewell tour in the States, that guitar avatar John McLaughlin was ready to pull the plug on touring altogether. An inherited progressive arthritic condition in his right hand was forcing him into semi-retirement. As he had explained to *DownBeat* at the time: “The American tour is it for me, because the situation with my hands is deteriorating. Short of a miracle, I think that’ll probably be it, at least in terms of touring.”

Enter American doctor Joe Dispenza, who helped heal McLaughlin’s arthritic hand through meditation and the power of a “mind-body connection” that has caused spontaneous remission in countless others. “He’s something else,” said the guitar great of Dr. Dispenza. “I had never met him, I just read about his technique. He had his back broken in three places and healed himself. And I said, ‘If he can fix his back in three places, I can fix my hand.’ And I did. I’m still working on it every day, but there’s no swelling, no pain. It’s far out, man!”

McLaughlin rebounded miraculously, recording two albums while sequestered at his home in Monaco during the pandemic — 2020’s *Is That So?* with Shakti mates Shankar Mahadevan on vocals and longtime partner Zakir Hussain on tablas, and 2021’s *Liberation Time* (both records on Abstract Logix). He followed that by celebrating his 80th year with a triumphant 4th Dimension Band tour of Europe in 2022. With the June 30 release of *This Moment* (Abstract Logix), McLaughlin is ready to hit the road once again, this time with Shakti, the pioneering Indo-jazz supergroup he formed with Hussain in 1973.

A new face joining McLaughlin, Hussain and Shakti percussionist V. Selvaganesh on the upcoming Shakti tour (which commences in late June with two nights at London’s Hammersmith Apollo before the American tour kicks off with an engagement in Boston on Aug. 17) is violinist Ganesh Rajagopalan, whose dazzling work throughout *This Moment* recalls the pyrotechnic, pulse-quicken playing of violin virtuoso L. Shankar from the original ’70s group. “We go back, actually, at least 20 years,” said McLaughlin of the one-time child prodigy Rajagopalan, who began performing in public at age 7. “Zakir and I had a gig with Gansesh and his brother Kumaresh just down the coast from me in Cannes, near Antibes. This was about 20 years ago and we’ve been friends ever since.”

“And bringing in Ganesh kind of harkened back to the original Shakti sound with L. Shankar’s violin,” Hussain added. “But with much more of an understanding of the harmonic elements and more like a concoction of our collective experiences over the last 50 years, all boiling down to this. The way we arranged the songs and the breaks and the way it all worked is very different from how we did it in the old Shakti way, where we would arrive in the studio and start playing live and it would be recorded. And then what was recorded was just there. And here we had the ability, the technology and the time to be able to fine-tune stuff that was put on the hard drive. And so it was a collective effort, but none of us were in the same room together. So in that sense, the product is much more carefully sculpted than in the ’70s.”

Violinist Rajagopalan has filled in nicely for

the late Carnatic mandolin master U. Srinivas, a member of the late-’90s iteration of the band dubbed Remember Shakti. Srinivas died in September 2014, at age 45. “When we lost Srinivas, we were really just lost as a band,” said McLaughlin. “And it took a long time for us to pull it together again.”

“It was a terrible shock to all of us,” added Hussain. “And suddenly Shakti just stopped in its tracks. It was impossible at that point for us to be able to even consider doing Shakti without Srinivas. I remember meeting John a little while after he had passed, and we just hugged and cried for such a long time. It was just one of those shocks that we thought that we would never recover from. And over the years some mending has happened, but the ache still exists.”

As a tribute to their late comrade, Shakti opens *This Moment* with a tune called “Shrini’s Dream.” (Shrini was a nickname for Srinivas). “It’s a kind of jazz-funk idea with an Indian motif that we were kind of fooling around with at a rehearsal on our last tour with Srinivas,” said Hussain. “Someone made an iPhone recording of it and then Shrini went home and, lo and behold, he decided to leave us and move on.”

Eight years after Srinivas passed, when McLaughlin, Hussain and Selvaganesh began working on *This Moment*, that original iPhone recording of their rehearsal jam with the mandolinist was found. “The plan then was, ‘OK, let’s do this,’” Hussain recalled. “So we all sat down and worked out our ideas and offered our collective tribute to the young maestro. It is a tribute about our humble reverence to his spirit. Shrini was not of this world. He was an angel, a spirit that just descended in our midst and showed us what being a good spirit is all about, and then decided to move on. We were all touched by his pristine purity, and so we just wanted to begin this album with an acknowledgment of how we felt about him.”

The traditional South Indian kriti “Giriraj Sudha” is also dedicated to the late mandolin master. “We decided we wanted to adapt this famous kriti, which is one that Srinivas like to play a lot,” said Hussain. [A version also appears on Remember Shakti’s 2001 live album *Saturday Night In Bombay*].

And while *This Moment* is being touted as Shakti’s first studio album in 45 years (since 1977’s *Natural Elements*), this was not your typical studio session where engineer and producer sit behind glass in the control room as the musicians play together in the live room. Listening to the remarkably intense, rapid-fire konnakol vocal exchanges between Hussain and Selvaganesh on “Mohaman,” for instance, it is difficult to imagine that they recorded this white-hot jam not sitting next to each other in the same studio but rather 3,000 miles apart. Or that McLaughlin added his signature fleet-fingered, cleanly articulated guitar solos

to “Shrini’s Dream,” “Bending The Rules,” “Karuna” and “Sono Mama” from his home studio in Monaco.

“Working remotely on *Is That So?* spawned the idea that we must do a Shakti album,” said Hussain. “Because it seemed to work, that we could actually do it long distance, so to speak. At that point in our heads it wasn’t yet clear that we actually were approaching 50 years as a group. We just wanted to make a studio album, which Shakti had rarely done. The second and the third Shakti albums in the ’70s were studio products, but before that and after that, all the other Shakti albums were done live. So since we were confined to our respective spaces due to COVID, we thought it might be a good idea to initiate a studio album.”

The rhythm tandem of Shakti began laying down tracks that were simultaneously played from their respective home studios — Hussain in San Francisco, Selvagensh in Chennai, India. “We worked together on a click track and came up with all our parts and how we would interact under the song, with the breaks and all that stuff,” Hussain recalled. “So it was recorded together live but still long distance. And the rest of it was a process of sharing files and putting material on top of existing tracks. Then we as a group would get together on a Zoom or FaceTime call and review it, making suggestions for fixing or adding things or just leaving it as is.”

“Both *Liberation Time* and this album were mixed at a distance,” McLaughlin explained. “The guys didn’t want to mix it in India, they wanted a Western engineer because there’s more attention paid to the percussion in the West. In India, there’s less attention paid to percussion, it’s more about the voice and the other instruments. So I got my favorite engineer, George Murphy, who was in London (at Eastcote Studio). And using this app called Audiomovers attached to his computer, which was running the board in England, he sent me a signal that I was hearing in 24-bit/48kHz with a maximum delay of 90 milliseconds. Meanwhile, Selvaganesh was in Singapore with his headphones on, I’ve got my good studio speakers on in Monaco, Zakir is in San Francisco and George is engineering in London. So we’re mixing in four corners of the world but we’re hearing exactly what the engineer is hearing. So we can say, ‘Hey, George, stop here. There’s not enough of Zakir.’ Or, ‘There’s not enough of the voice.’ Or, ‘Bring this down, turn this up, space this a little bit.’ The technology now is phenomenal.”

Hussain added, “In a recording studio we’d have three days to come up with enough stuff to fill a 60-minute CD. So you rush through and put it all down in a hurry. But each of us being in our home studios because of the pandemic, we had a long time at our disposal to be able to try different things and take our time. So we were able to make this Shakti album be a better look-in as to where we all are as musicians at this point in our lives, with all the influences and inspirations and inputs that we have received as students of the art.”

This Moment, the group’s seventh outing together, captures Shakti once again stretching the boundaries of Hindustani and Carnatic music while injecting Western ideas of harmony into its successful world music formula. “That’s really what I’ve been trying to do since the ’70s,” said McLaughlin. “I studied North Indian flute and later studied South Indian veena with Dr. Ramanathan, who was a visiting scholar in the ethnomusicology department at Wesleyan University in Connecticut, because I wanted a solid foundation in this music. I didn’t want to become a classical Indian musician, actually. I just wanted to know the rules and regulations so I could play with these guys without them having to make a compromise for me. I mean, that’s the worst that can happen is when they have to lower the bar simply because the white boy’s in the band, you know? So I learned and now they can throw any raga, any time signature at me, and I’m a happy guy. And they’ve known this from the beginning.”

Added Hussain, “When John wants to interact with musicians which are somewhat other than the kind of music he grew up with, he takes the time to learn about that music and get comfortable in it. And in that way, he’s paying respect to the music. And that’s so special.”

SAN SUM N JOSE MER N JAZZ FEST W



ANTHONY HAMILTON
PATRICE RUSHEN
GREGORY PORTER
PETE ROCK & THE SOUL BROTHERS
THE SOUL REBELS
VERONICA SWIFT
CIMA FUNK
THE BAD PLUS
SHAYNA STEELE
TELMARY & FRIENDS
W.I.T.C.H.
SUNNY WAR
GRACE KELLY
BENNY BENACK III
VANESSA COLLIER
BLAQUE DYNAMITE
MARACA & ORQUESTA
LA MODERNA TRADICIÓN
AND DOZENS MORE!

AUG
11-13

TICKETS & HOTEL DEALS!

SUMMERFEST.SANJOSEJAZZ.ORG

DOWNBEAT
The Sound of Street

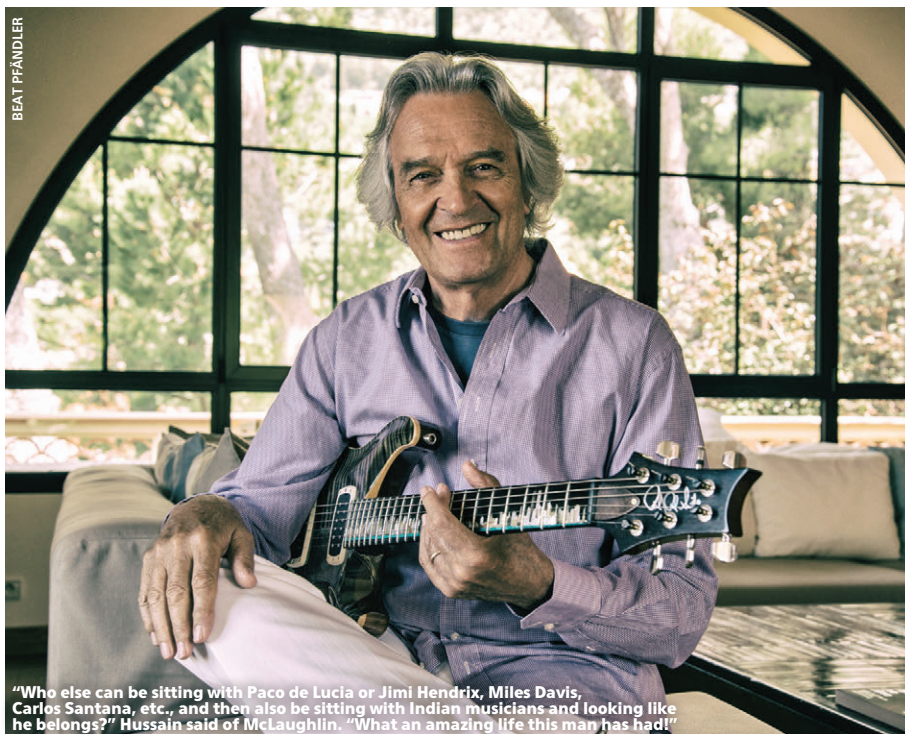
The SOBRATO
Organization

CEFCU
Not a bank. Better.™

VISIT
SANJOSE
CALIFORNIA

the David & Lucile
Packard
FOUNDATION

WILLIAM & FLORA
Hewlett
Foundation



"Who else can be sitting with Paco de Lucia or Jimi Hendrix, Miles Davis, Carlos Santana, etc., and then also be sitting with Indian musicians and looking like he belongs?" Hussain said of McLaughlin. "What an amazing life this man has had!"

At the same time, McLaughlin hasn't let his reverence for North and South Indian musics inhibit his desire to occasionally bend the rules. "From the beginning of Shakti, I wanted to have that Western element of harmony in the music," he said. "I'm a Western musician, and I want to stay a Western musician. All I wanted to do was have the pleasure to play with these guys but bring my side of things into it, which is harmony, which they don't use in Indian classical music. And I want to bring in different harmonies, different scales — Hungarian minor, melodic minor, half-diminished — because they're all related in some way. So I'm bending the rules, which is one of the titles on the album, Shankar's tune. But I want to complement the guys, I want to push them. And you hear it, for example, in Shankar's solo and also Ganesh's solo on 'Bending The Rules.' The tune is in E major, but I'm moving up and changing the chord to A7#9 then bringing it into D, minor, and they're reacting to what I'm doing. These guys in Shakti hear it now, because they know Western music. And so we're able to converse in that way."

McLaughlin's sprightly fandango-flavored tune "Las Palmas," for instance, goes well outside the strict boundaries of Hindustani or Carnatic music by incorporating flamenco styled palmas (rhythmic handclapping) into the fabric of the piece, which sit comfortably and organically right alongside konnakol (vocal syllables in South Indian Carnatic music) and the frantic tablas playing of Hussain. You can even hear a few spirited declarations of "olé" along the way on this tune that put McLaughlin in mind of his other late partner, flamenco gui-

tarist Paco de Lucia. Like other hybrid forms on *This Moment*, as well as other pieces in the Shakti canon, "Las Palmas" is the very definition of world music.

Elsewhere, McLaughlin further bends the rules through his judicious use of guitar synthesizer — triggering the sound of bamboo flute (bansuri) on "Shrini's Dream" and "Bending The Rules," then emulating a string section on the intros to his gentle "Karuna" and Hussain's atmospheric, bluesy meditation "Changay Naino." And his electronica-flavored synth bass groove on "Sono Mama" is something completely different from the original intent of the acoustic Shakti from the '70s. This supergroup has clearly evolved over time and has embraced technology while incorporating other musical forms. And the legacy continues.

It was back in 1973 at Saint Thomas Church in midtown Manhattan that the original edition of Shakti made its first public concert appearance. But McLaughlin and Hussain had actually met three years earlier. "Zakir and I met in New York City during the summer of 1970 at a place in Greenwich Village called the House of Musical Traditions," McLaughlin recalled. "I knew the people there, and I used to go there to check out the sitars and tambouras and other Indian instruments. And I told the proprietor, 'If ever a great Indian musician comes into the store, ask him if he would give a friend of yours a lesson; doesn't matter what instrument.'" A few weeks later, I got a call about this great tabla player who was there and I said, 'Ask him if he'll give me a vocal lesson.' So I went down to this store and Zakir, who was giving a rhythm workshop there, ended up giv-

ing me a vocal lesson. We just hit it off, and we really became pals.

"Then in '72, we actually played together for the first time at Ali Akbar Khan's house in the Bay Area. [Hussain was teaching at the Ali Akbar College of Music in Berkeley at the time.] And it was ridiculously pretentious, when you think about it. I mean, here's the great sarod master Ali Akbar Khan sitting in his own chair at home, and I'm there with acoustic guitar and Zakir says, 'Hey, man, want to jam?' But when you're young you don't care. So we sat down and we played, and I had never felt so instantly free and comfortable and joyful. And Zakir felt it, too. We both felt it. And I think it was from that experience that Shakti was born."

As Hussain recalled of that pivotal experience, "We jammed and it was like we had done this before. It never felt like we had to adjust or tell each other what to do. We just started playing, and it was just so right! And it took another year or two before John could put us all together to form Shakti, because he was still doing the Mahavishnu Orchestra at that time. Then, after we played a concert in New York in 1973, it was clear that there was something brewing here that was out of the ordinary. It was something special. So John arranged another concert in Southampton College on Long Island and people who attended just went nuts. And it was at that point that he floated the idea to us for us to play together as a band and travel.

"I guess he had been considering at that point moving on from Mahavishnu," Hussain continued. "It was a very courageous decision that John took. He gave up a money-making machine like the Mahavishnu Orchestra and put himself in this situation with Shakti where there was no surety that this would survive, that this would even fly, that people would even accept it or understand what was happening. But he did it anyway. And while it did not fly as well as Mahavishnu, it did not lose money. It was doing enough. Still, the powers-that-be at CBS wanted to see platinum and gold albums, which Shakti was not doing. They wanted John to get back to playing electric music, and the contractual obligations finally forced him to move onwards from Shakti. I remember the day when he told us, 'We have to stop this for now,' and he was in tears at that time. And so we didn't actually stop totally. We occasionally got together and played a few concerts here and there, but we did not tour as a band or make any more records until the late '90s when we came back as Remember Shakti."

Selvaganesh, son of the original Shakti ghatam (clay pot) player Vikku Vinayakram, was all of 8 years old when Shakti made its initial tour in 1975-'76. He ultimately became a member of Remember Shakti in the late '90s and has developed into one of the leading kanjira (south Indian frame drum) players of his generation.

He also has his own studio in Chennai, India, where he has done soundtracks for innumerable Bollywood films. "It's been a moment of pride for both John and me to see Selva turn into this successful grown man," said Hussain. "He's a very prolific composer for the South Indian film industry. He even directed a movie [2008's *Vennila Kabadi Kuzhu*]. So he has his fingers in many different pies. He's a very creative young man and a very good sound engineer himself. And so he has brought himself into this modern world with the tools needed to be able to be valued not just for his playing, but for his overall understanding of the craft."

"We're all doing other things," added McLaughlin. "Zakir's got his classical things that he continues to do and he's also doing gigs with his Masters of Percussion group and others [including recent collaborations with banjo legend Bela Fleck, bassist Edgar Meyer and Indian bansuri player Rakesh Chaurasia on *We Speak* (see "Reviews," page 40), jazz giant Charles Lloyd on 2022's *Sacred Thread* with guitarist Julian Lage, Grateful Dead drummer Mickey Hart & Planet Drum on 2022's *In The Groove*, and bassist Dave Holland and saxophonist Chris Potter, collectively known as the Crosscurrents Trio, on 2020's *Good Hope*]. Selva does a lot of percussion concerts with his father, Vikku, and his son, Swaminathan. Ganesh has his own school happening now up in Seattle. And Shankar Mahadevan ... I mean, when you've sold over 200 million albums in India, you know you've got a career happening. So getting us all together was really an act of love on the part of everybody. Because every member in the band has a particularly strong love for Shakti."

"I can't yet digest that it's been 50 years," said Hussain. "We've obviously been in touch with each other and connected and done things over these years; different projects that we've been a part of. And so it's not like we've been totally disconnected from each other. But it's like coming back home after being away. Now I understand how the tribe felt when they finally reached the promised land."

The pioneering world music band continues building bridges through music on its latest release, *This Moment*. "Shakti, obviously, was at the forefront of it way back when, 50 years ago," added Hussain. "And now it is great that it is being welcomed back. And it's just been amazing to be able to perform together, doing two-and-a-half-hour, non-stop concerts. I didn't know that we had it in us to be able to do that, but here we are. And it felt like we just picked up where we left off."

He added, "Shakti has arrived in terms of the awareness of each other's ability to be able to live in each other's house, so to say. With the old Shakti we were playing largely a South Indian-based material and John found his way in it,

amazingly. And I have to say that he's a one-of-a-kind musician. I mean, who else can be sitting with Paco de Lucia or Jimi Hendrix, Miles Davis, Carlos Santana, etc., and then also be sitting with Indian musicians and looking like he belongs? What an amazing life this man has had! The kind of inspiration he has spawned over the years in the world of music is equally influential in America, Europe, India, everywhere. This is something that is so unusual that you don't see that happen with any one musician in that way. John is truly a world musician."

"I'm so excited about this new album," said

McLaughlin. "You know, we're not going to make \$1 million off it, but if you can make back what you invest on a recording, we're all happy. But every record is like a painting. And when I talk to my painter friends, they'll do a new painting and they say, 'Well, if it's my last painting, it's definitely the best thing I can do at this time.' And I think that's what it is with Shakti. It's like a window into all of us and our collective lives and how we are at this time. Because by the time you get to hear us live, things will have changed."

Until then, we have *This Moment*.

DB

You've asked. We've delivered.

A new lineup of Connoisseur Series Meyer Bros. mouthpieces ...

BAND OF BROS.

Soprano, Tenor, Baritone & Alto Mouthpieces for Saxophone

Created to match the sound and personality profile of the popular Meyer Bros. alto sax model these new mouthpieces are designed with incredible control and feature flexible, warm, dark, and powerful sound. The perfect collection to keep an entire sax section sound in company, or for those who play multiple instruments this brings it home.

MEYER
BROS

Seeing and hearing is believing.

★★★★★

jj Babbitt.com
Made in Elkhart, Indiana USA





GoGo Penguin is, from left, drummer Jon Smith, bassist Nick Blacka and pianist Chris Illingworth.

A full-page photograph of two men standing in a studio with warm, orange-toned lighting. The man on the left is wearing a dark jacket over a light-colored t-shirt and jeans. The man on the right is wearing a dark t-shirt, glasses, and dark pants, and is holding a small object in his hands. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

REIGNITING GOGO PENGUIN

BY KIRA GRUNENBERG
PHOTOS BY EMILY DENNISON

**Samuel Clemens once said,
“What is joy without sorrow?
What is success without
failure? What is a win without
a loss? What is health
without illness? You have to
experience each if you are
to appreciate the other.**



"There is a bit of a theme — that it's a sense of optimism and a sense of togetherness," says Blacka of the new GoGo Penguin album.

There is always going to be suffering. It's how you look at your suffering, how you deal with it, that will define you." The author better known as Mark Twain prompts humanity to consider two important facets of life: perspective born from contrast and, more specifically, how humanity faces and navigates through adverse times.

The gentlemen of U.K. trio GoGo Penguin don't reference Twain as a point of inspiration behind the music of *Everything Is Going to Be OK* (XXIM Records), the trio's sixth full-length record and first album with Jon Scott, now the band's drummer. Nonetheless, a prevailing sense of duality surfaces throughout the album. It's understandable, given the cavalcade of changes that pianist Chris Illingworth and bassist Nick Blacka endured in the time leading up to and during the making of the recording. Blacka's mother and brother both passed of cancer within months of one another, and Illingworth's grandmother, too. For these personal experiences then to be juxtaposed with the mutual decision for former drummer Rob Turner to depart GoGo Penguin, the quiet directness of statement-turned-title *Everything Is Going to Be OK* suddenly takes on immense emotional weight — like an anchor helping to stabilize the very question of how the members of GoGo Penguin actually are.

"I'd say things are pretty good, generally —

very, very good," Illingworth says of the band over a Zoom call from his home. "It's been really nice kind of getting back into a good, solid year of touring. We've made the EP [*Between Two Waves*] and an album with Jon [Scott], so it feels as if Jon's always been there now."

Illingworth's response rings with unflinching positivity. Blacka shares Illingworth's contentment but takes a moment to acknowledge some contrasting sentiments, as they, too, bear relevance toward how GoGo Penguin arrived at this milestone.

"We overcame a lot of challenges," Blacka says, via a separate Zoom. The band is together but apart, an arrangement that makes for an interesting parallel while talking about the pandemic, still an inevitable subject. "The work everyone did with the COVID thing, that was a really strange time. But [the pandemic] gave us a lot of time to reflect on stuff and take stock of things, realize what we did and didn't want, and now we're in the period after that, which is feeling really positive. But, yeah, there's a lot of life stuff going on for everyone."

Knowing that the trio has been, and continues to contend with, an interconnected set of circumstances that vacillate between triumphant and trying, "You're Stronger Than You Think," the title of *Everything Is Going to Be OK*'s opening track, seems almost like an added mantra that provides support through its subtle

statement of encouragement and its musicality.

A cyclical, sonically crisp and calming motif of plucked-but-muted piano strings presents itself in classic GoGo Penguin fashion. The melody fires nimbly, the phrasing fosters intrigue. The band's tone has developed into a beautifully polished whole; and the piece eventually introduces a dramatic and unexpected element: Blacka playing a Moog Grandmother synthesizer over his upright bass. All of this showcases how GoGo Penguin continues to stretch established bounds, with personal adversity actually serving to spur them on.

"I think [our experiences with loss] have just given us a bit of freedom to think, 'Well, what have we got to lose?'" says Blacka. "Why can't we play a Moog Grandmother synth bass guitar [and] do these kinds of things?"

Hearing new musical ideas so soon on the record might feel slightly shocking, but the immediacy also underscores a sense of freedom and strength — freedom to try new things and strength to follow through even when it might have felt easier for Illingworth and Blacka to stay with what they have known thus far.

"The studio became a sanctuary for us — a nice refuge to get away from all this stuff in real life and then just work on ideas and not be inhibited," Blacka says. "We might have gotten a bit overly self-conscious toward the past couple of albums, so it's nice to ditch that as well."

Certainly, there's no rulebook that says GoGo Penguin needs to adhere to a specific set of sounds, writing styles or thematic approaches. Still, it's understandable, even amid the group embracing new possibilities, that the

a theme — that it's a sense of optimism and a sense of togetherness. So we don't mind those [ideas] being conveyed in some of the music and the titles. I think that's quite important. I think we've just decided to be a lot more honest

very uncertain place, and it's no secret we were really, really excited about it, and it's just getting better and better," says Blacka. "And this record really captures a lot of that. So, yeah, it is quite emotional."

Entering this next chapter absent that prior emotional history, Scott recalls an exchange with Illingworth early in their decision to collaborate that shows just how well Scott's personal mentality toward playing with the band aligned with the emotional place that Illingworth and Blacka wanted to get to for this album.

"When I first came down to play with the band, Chris and I had a little chat afterwards, over a drink," Scott says. "We talked a lot about the reasons for playing music together and I think it's — it's an experience. There's no point in playing music together unless it's better than anything you can do by yourself. I think that links into the feeling that it should be a joyous experience, making music together. That emotion hopefully comes across."

The interplay between emotional connection, musical collaboration and collective growth wasn't some idyllic concept Illingworth and Scott spoke of in abstract. In fact, it wasn't even something that took a long time to coalesce.

"[Nick and Chris], from the beginning,

'The studio became a sanctuary for us — a nice refuge to get away from all this stuff in real life and then just work on ideas and not be inhibited.'

—Nick Blacka

group's long history might prompt an extra moment of consideration around whether or not deviating from established norms felt like the right decision.

"We never wanted to tell people what to think when they listen to our music," Blacka says. "But I think after everything we've gone through with [the new album], there is a bit of

about things as well. You know, just try and be openly quite emotional."

The more one unpacks *Everything Is Going to Be OK*, the easier it becomes to notice just how much GoGo Penguin has given personal emotion more power to guide and shape the band's writing this time around. "Everything started moving in the right direction from a

S E P T 14 - 17

PITTSBURGH 2023
INTERNATIONAL



Presented by Citizens™

PITTSBURGHJAZZFEST.ORG



THURSDAY 9.14

SAMORA PINDERHUGHES

MADISON MCFERRIN

FRIDAY 9.15

JONATHAN BARBER & VISION AHEAD

KEVIN HOWARD • SELECTA

SATURDAY 9.16

JIMMY JAM & TERRY LEWIS • PJ MORTON

ORRIN EVANS • SPANISH HARLEM ORCHESTRA

EMMET COHEN W/ HOUSTON PERSON

CHRISTIE DASHIELL • HOWIE ALEXANDER

SUNDAY 9.17

GREGORY PORTER

KURT ELLING'S SUPER BLUE W/ CHARLIE HUNTER

JOSE JAMES W/ BIG YUKI + BEN WILLIAMS

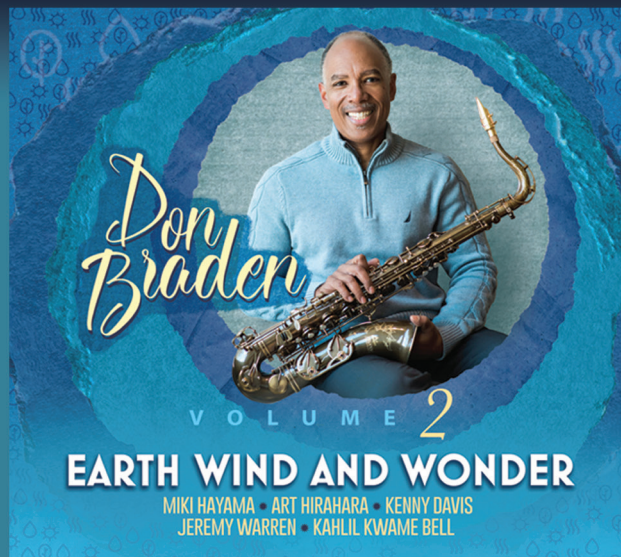
KEYON HARROLD W/ PHAROAAHE MONCH

NICOLAS PAYTON • SOMI • CHELSEA BARATZ



DOWNBEAT
Jazz, Blues & Beyond Since 1934

NEW CD ON **CREATIVE PERSPECTIVE MUSIC**
AVAILABLE JUNE 16, 2023!



DON BRADEN PRESENTS MORE CONTEMPORARY
STANDARDS REPERTOIRE:

**THIS NEW CD FEATURES
MORE UNIQUE MODERN JAZZ
ARRANGEMENTS OF SONGS
BY EARTH, WIND & FIRE
AND STEVIE WONDER.**

Also
check out
the first
*Earth Wind
and Wonder*
CD:



WWW.DONBRADEN.COM

FOR BOOKING: GAILBOYD@GAILBOYD.COM
PROMOTION: LYDIA LIEBMAN PROMOTIONS

DON BRADEN PLAYS ANTIGUA SAXOPHONES, AZUMI, R.S. BERKELEY & SONARE
FLUTES, JODY JAZZ MOUTHPIECES, D'ADDARIO REEDS AND LIGATURES

D'Addario

Antigua
INTERNATIONAL@ANTIGUAWINDS.COM
WWW.ANTIGUAWINDS.COM



WWW.JODYJAZZ.COM

were really open to what I wanted to bring in, and there was never a sense of, 'Rob [Turner's] gone, can you come and be Rob?' It was, 'We've checked out some things you've done, and we think that's the sound that we could use. Let's see how it works together.' I never felt like the guys were trying to shape me into their idea of what the GoGo Penguin drummer should be."

One could be forgiven for feeling somewhat curious about the group's journey toward finding levity and reigniting their spark for music making. Despite tensions nearly driving the band to dissolve, it was the renewed perspective that Blacka and Illingworth found while supporting each other through their trials that brought them closer and inspired new music.

Additionally, both found their relationships with music had changed. For Illingworth, the contrasting experiences of losing his grandmother and the birth of his child were like beacons of clarity around uncertainty and even a touch of guilt that arose as he felt more and more motivation to make changes in his life.

"For a period of time there was no gigging whatsoever," Illingworth says. "There was not even playing music with other people. I actually stopped playing music quite a lot, even on my own. I felt I didn't want that as part of my life for a while. I needed a break from it. And part of me started worrying about that, thinking, 'Is [this] a bad thing? Should I feel [this] way? Surely [music] is supposed to be this really important part of my life.' I realized that it is but so are many other things. And a lot of those things had been pushed to the side and sacrificed and not focused on as much, and family was one of those things. Music means a lot, but family means even more."

Though the specifics of Blacka's challenges differed from Illingworth's, there's a resonance. The pair found themselves looking upward from a low point of intense struggle. Yet, as time and gradual changes kept coming to pass, their vantage points became less detached and more invigorated.

"[I was] sort of in a place of not really understanding why I'm [making music] anymore," says Blacka. "At the same time, I had it hanging over me that my brother had cancer, and I knew that he was going to pass away at some point. So that was another concurrent thing. And then I lost my mum before that. So there's all this stuff going on. But also, Rob [Turner] leaving the band was a huge impact."

"After that," Blacka continues, "it was a case of [Turner's departure being] the big catharsis and then [Chris and I] decided to carry on. That's when the real bond happened with me and Chris, because we really had gone through some stuff together. I started thinking a bit more intently about what music meant, what I wanted out of it, what I actually liked about it still and what I wanted to pursue. I'm starting to rediscover all the things that I love about [music]. There's a real passion in it and a place to be myself, which Chris has supported, and Jon, as well."

Against the incessant tides of change and the unpredictability of the future, the simplicity of the support found in *Everything Is Going to Be OK* is one concrete slice of confidence to which listeners can repeatedly return. As the creators of this musical oasis, the perception of comfort varies between Illingworth, Blacka and Scott. However, GoGo Penguin has just as permanent a reminder as everyone else of where they were and where they ended up. It's in those moments where "OK" doesn't feel close by, that the very reminder of this album's existence can help bring that feeling back into view.

"I think [*Everything Is Going to Be OK*] will always stand out as being very poignant and hugely significant," Blacka says.

"Once [we've] made [an album], it's not for us to listen to. So we make it, and we enjoy it the whole time that we make the album and go through that process. As soon as it comes out, my relationship to listening to it is totally different. It just serves a different function. But we do remember what it's about, why it was made and why we did it that way. And I don't think that will ever change as we go on."

DB

KARRIEM RIGGINS

2023 ROCKET MORTGAGE
ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE

44TH ANNUAL
detroit
Jazz
FESTIVAL

PRESENTED BY
DIRTY DOG
Jazz
CAFÉ 

LABOR DAY WEEKEND

REGINA CARTER
KENNY GARRETT
SAMARA JOY
ALEXA TARANTINO
JOHN SCOFIELD TRIO

To support the largest, free jazz festival in the world and foster the history and development of jazz please text DJFF to 243725. Your contribution is greatly appreciated!

Watch it for free on
www.detroitjazzfest.org

 **YouTube**  **Live**





HARLEM FREEDOM SUITE

BY JOHN MURPH
PHOTO BY STEVE SUSSMAN

Five years ago, Jacques Schwarz-Bart moved away from Harlem, where he had come into his own as a tenor saxophonist, composer and bandleader. On his absorbing new album, *The Harlem Suite* (Ropeadope), he tips his hat to that iconic Upper Manhattan neighborhood that has been an incubator for Black culture for more than a century.

For Schwarz-Bart, Harlem represents a place of freedom. “I’ve never felt compelled to behave or look a certain way while living there,” he said from his current home in Boston, where he teaches at Berklee College of Music. “People in Harlem will just come up and talk to you. They will express whatever is on their minds without wondering about the consequences.”

After living in Brooklyn for two years, Schwarz-Bart moved to Harlem — 116th Street, between 5th Avenue and Malcolm X Boulevard.

"It felt like my people were right there in Harlem," Jacques Schwarz-Bart said of Harlem, the muse for his latest recording.



It was an ideal setting for someone who grew up in Guadeloupe, speaking French and Guadeloupean Creole. Even though Harlem didn't contain a sizeable Guadeloupean community, he lived several blocks from Le Petit Senegal, where immigrants from Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Mali, Gambia and Burkina Faso had established restaurants and businesses. And a couple blocks east from his residence lay the heart of Spanish Harlem.

"I just felt at home in Harlem," he reflected. "I also speak Haitian Creole. So it felt like my people were right there in Harlem."

HARLEM ARRIVAL

Schwarz-Bart moved to New York in 1996 during a fecund creative period in jazz. Post-modern bebop was still booming. But some of the young torchbearers were also integrating that vocabulary into the then-emerging neo-soul and post-Golden Age hip-hop scenes, which coalesced into the influential Soulquarian movement. Others blended modern jazz with various Afro-Latin, Middle Eastern, Afro-Caribbean and West African genres as well as deep house and drum-n-bass.

Fresh from earning his bachelor's of music degree in performance from Berklee College of Music, Schwarz-Bart recalled hanging out with fellow saxophonist Bruce Flowers at Bradley's in Greenwich Village two weeks after moving to the Big Apple. On stage, they saw Roy

Hargrove playing with Chucho Valdés. Moved by the entrancing set, Schwarz-Bart began assembling his tenor saxophone with hopes of joining them on stage.

Flowers quickly pulled the whippersnapper's coattails, warning him that his uninvited guest appearance could result in major backlash. "Bruce told me, 'Please do not do this. You cannot bogart your way on a gig with those major players. You will get blacklisted immediately,'" Schwarz-Bart remembered.

An ambitious Schwarz-Bart balked at Flower's advice, however. Hargrove was playing the last chorus on a song, Schwarz-Bart remembered, when the trumpeter gave him a nod to solo. Because of Schwarz-Bart's looks, which included donning a huge afro at the time, Hargrove thought that he was a friend of Valdés'. In turn, the pianist thought Schwarz-Bart was a friend of Hargrove's. Nevertheless, the bodacious move paid off.

After the gig, Hargrove requested Schwarz-Bart's phone number. Two weeks later, Schwarz-Bart was on the road with him. Soon after, the saxophonist landed solid sideman gigs with other New York-based musicians, including pianists James Hurt and Jason Lindner, drummer Ari Hoenig, guitarist David Gilmore and bassist and singer Meshell Ndegeocello. Schwarz-Bart even joined Hargrove in the Soultronics, the supporting band for soul singer D'Angelo's worldwide 2000 *Voodoo* tour.

Like Hargrove, Schwarz-Bart found equal footing in the nascent neo-soul scene, on which he also collaborated with singers Erykah Badu and Eric Benét. The saxophonist joined forces with Hargrove again for the trumpeter's equally influential RH Factor recording sessions.

"I went to Harlem to seek out my jazz truth. Becoming a jazz musician was a childhood dream of mine, even though I didn't start playing the saxophone until I was 24-year-old," said Schwarz-Bart, before noting that he was a senator's assistant in Paris after graduating from the Paris Institute of Political Studies.

LOFTY COSMOPOLITAN CHILDHOOD

Schwarz-Bart says that he heard little jazz while growing up in Guadeloupe. When his family moved to Pully, Switzerland, he recalls his parents having five jazz albums. One of them was Charles Mingus' 1959 classic *Mingus Ah Um*. That particular record planted the seeds of jazz in a 5-year-old Schwarz-Bart, who would nevertheless grow up to study economics and law.

Still, the jazz seeds flowered. He recalled visiting a family friend in Guadeloupe who used to collect various musical instruments. He saw a saxophone and asked if he could play it. He remembered blowing out inchoate bebop phrases that he heard from his parent's jazz collection.

ANOTHER MOMENT OF TRUTH

Schwarz-Bart's debut album, *Immersion* (Fresh Sound), came out in 1999, a year after he moved to Harlem. But it was while he was in Ndegeocello's group that hisandleading skills truly emerged. It happened serendipitously. According to the saxophonist, Ndegeocello had invited a friend, who played trumpet, to join the horn section. Schwarz-Bart remembers his playing was not up to muster, so he called Ndegeocello out regarding her recruitment.

"I couldn't deal with an amateur getting in the way of my playing on the bandstand," Schwarz-Bart recalled. "Meshell told me, 'If you feel like you're this bad motherfucker, start your own band.'"

The saxophonist interpreted Ndegeocello's statement in two ways. One, it was something to put him in place. The other was for him to rise to the occasion. He chose the latter.

Schwarz-Bart quit all his sideman gigs and concentrated on a demo of original material that evolved into his 2006 sophomore album, *Soné Ka-La* (EmArcy). The album marked a watershed moment because Schwarz-Bart superbly merged indigenous Guadeloupean Gwo ka grooves and textures with modern jazz and neo-soul.

That album also served as a stylistic boilerplate on which he would expand his distinctive cosmopolitan artistic voice.

THE HARLEM SUITE

Even though Schwarz-Bart released seven more intriguing albums since *Soné Ka-La* — many found him exploring various Antillean idioms — he said that the material on *The Harlem Suite* reflects compositions that he'd been working on for nearly the past two decades.

When he initially thought about the com-

Other highlights include “From Gorée To Harlem,” a stunning ballad on which Schwarz-Bart depicts the horrendous transatlantic slave trade of Africans departing Gorée, Senegal, to the Americas. The song also pays tribute to the artists associated with the Harlem Renaissance regarding their ability to tap into their own creative reserves to map out their own identities in the aftermath of U.S. slav-

‘There is still pride and resistance within the Black people in Harlem.’

positions, he said they seemed scattered and unrelated. “But 18 years into this body of work, I looked at these tunes on paper, and I realized that there was a coherent story,” he recalled. “I realized that there was a concept.”

In comparison to his previous works, *The Harlem Suite* is Schwarz-Bart’s most straight-ahead jazz album yet, even though he still incorporates subtle shades of 21st century soul. Recorded in mid-October 2021, he assembled a mighty cadre of musicians consisting of pianists Sullivan Fortner, Grégory Privat and Victor Gould; drummers Terri Lyne Carrington, Marcus Gilmore, Arnaud Doleman; bassists Reggie Washington and Matt Penman; and singers Stephanie McKay and Malika Tirolien.

Schwarz-Bart recalled first calling on Fortner, bassist Or Bareket and drummer Jonathan Barber to run through the charts a few years before going into the studio. Once he heard them play the music and saw their reactions, he knew he had something special.

Fortner said that Schwarz-Bart’s compositions are “self-explanatory.” “The music kind of plays itself,” Fortner said. “Jacques’ compositions aren’t necessarily easy to play, but I don’t remember having to practice long hours to get through them. He writes good vehicles for improvisations.”

Carrington remembered the music sounding “soulful and timeless.” “His melodies tell a story and his writing is very cinematic, capturing the beauty and emotion of the themes and narratives he is working with,” she said.

The Harlem Suite opens with “Sun Salutation,” a modern bop burner on which Schwarz-Bart’s spiraling melodic improvisations pirouettes atop Gilmore and Penman’s fast-paced shuffle with the graceful athleticism of Muhammad Ali in the boxing ring.

ery, the Reconstruction period and the Great Migration. Fortner’s languid piano accompaniment atop Carrington and Penman’s pensive rhythm buoys Schwarz-Bart’s passionate wails and melancholy melodic improvisations, giving the composition a picturesque sensibility.

On the prancing “Time Travel,” Schwarz-Bart sublimely connects Haitian Voodoo Kontredans rhythms with a Cuban tumbao bass line without sacrificing the lithe rhythmic propulsion associated with modern jazz. His saxophone passages writhe and soar gorgeously across the shifting rhythmic bed created by Penman and Gilmore.

Schwarz-Bart’s wife, Stephanie McKay, lights up the sanguine “Look No Further,” an older composition he wrote to celebrate his first tour with Hargrove, and the billowing tribute to an imprisoned friend, “Dreaming Of Freedom,” with her agile and poignant vocals.

The album also includes “Equivox,” Schwarz-Bart’s sly harmonization of John Coltrane’s “Equinox” on which the saxophonist articulates the epochal melody inside a serrated groove, and a gleaming rendition of Herbie Hancock’s “Butterfly,” featuring Tirolien’s sterling lead vocals.

Schwarz-Bart explained that the inclusion of “Butterfly” in *The Harlem Suite* addresses the mixed emotions many people living in Harlem endure as some summon optimism while facing harsh realities. The composition also pays tribute to his homeland, because Guadeloupe is made up of the strips of land that look like the wings of a butterfly.

Instead of trying to recapture the glamour and grit of the Harlem Renaissance or glory years of the Apollo Theatre, Schwarz-Bart offers an engrossing, highly personalized homage to Harlem with *The Harlem Suite*.

Because of its ingenious originals and surprising covers, it bursts with artistic freshness and emotional conviction.

CHANGING TIMES

Like most metropolitan cities and communities across the U.S., Harlem has been experiencing gentrification, which has displaced many longtime people-of-color residents. During Schwarz-Bart’s 18-year stay in the neighborhood, he witnessed the Black community no longer holding the majority in greater Harlem. By 2008, the Black population declined to four in 10 residents. That same year, 22 percent of white households moved to Harlem houses in comparison to 7 percent of Black residents.

The 2020 U.S. Census showed that between 2010 and 2020, the Black population in east, central and west Harlem declined by 10,805 people; the number of Hispanic people dropped by 2,015. In turn, the white residents increased by 18,754.

Schwarz-Bart said that he started noticing the shifting demographics around 2011, with the appearances of boutique organic grocery stores and restaurants. “You started seeing more white people walking around, and looking very comfortable,” he recalled, “which was very much not the case if you weren’t at least brown or Black back in the day.

“When I would walk through Harlem with some white musicians, when I first moved there, I could sense that they were wondering if something was going to go down,” he continued. “But in 2011, I saw more and more white people walk through Harlem without a care in the world. I thought, ‘Oh, we’re officially more into a gentrification territory.’”

Schwarz-Bart saw many friends who lived between 110th and 120th streets get pushed out because of unaffordable housing. When communities undergo such gradual demographic shifts, it impacts cultural imprints. Long-established cultural hubs — from bookstores and record stores to music venues, clothing boutiques and local ethnic restaurants — are frequently replaced by homogenized strips of seemingly interchangeable retail outlets and condos.

Nevertheless, Black and Latino cultures still persevere in Harlem. Clubs such as the Bill’s Place, Minton’s Playhouse, Patrick’s Place and the Red Rooster still attract major talent and sizable audiences, continuing Harlem’s rich jazz legacy.

“Black culture has remained being represented mostly by Black people in Harlem,” Schwarz-Bart said. “I don’t know how long this will be the case. But I still feel like we have a strong hold on the culture within those Harlem neighborhoods. There is still pride and resistance within the Black people in Harlem.” **DB**

JAZZ EDUCATION NETWORK

JAN 3-6TH, 2024
NEW ORLEANS, LA



15TH
ANNUAL CONFERENCE
IT'S ABOUT A
FEELING

JAZZEDNET.ORG

#JEN2024

EARLY BIRD REGISTRATION ENDS SEPT. 30

Reviews

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



Jensen trades her big band for a quartet on her latest outing, *Day Moon*.

G. SCOTT MACLEOD

Christine Jensen *Day Moon*

JUSTIN TIME

★★★★

Christine Jensen is best known as the composer/leader of a fine jazz orchestra, so it's no surprise she brings the mapping sensibility of a composer/arranger to a quartet setting. But she's also a distinctive saxophonist. Jensen's broad, burly, often vibratoless tone jumps out on both alto and soprano, though on the former, especially, she rivals Kenny Garrett for sheer sinew. A spirit of playful joy predominates, but moody, even melancholy, change-ups balance the program.

Jensen's four-part commissioned suite, "Quiescence," lies at the heart of the album. Its mournful first movement, "Lined," pits a

haunting flat-nine interval from the piano as part of a succession of broken chords that resolve dramatically beneath Jensen's gorgeous soprano saxophone solo. The driving "Twenty Twenty Blues" follows, also over a piano pattern, this time with a Latin-ish hitch that gives way to flat-out swing.

The more ecstatic, Brazilian-tinged "Tolos D'Abril" ("April Fools") and catchy, feel-good ditty "Étude de Mars" round out the "Quiescence" suite.

The album opens with the title cut, a yearning piece with a secretive melody that climbs like the pale orb it's named after, with Jensen crafting a dramatic solo over a quick 6 meter. By contrast, pianist Steve Amirault's jaunty, finger-popping "Like In Love" borders on soft-shoe; "Wind Up," also jaunty, delights with a dancing, staccato melody.

Two of the album's strongest cuts feature Jensen and pianist Amirault as a duo. They take a cheerful, gamboling riff on "Balcony Blues" (inspired by Cole Porter's "What Is This Thing Called Love") and drown the room in wet, warm tears on Jimmy Van Heusen's "Here's That Rainy Day."

"Day Moon" closes with the superfluously titled "Girls Can Play the Blues," since by the end of this set there's no arguing the point. But it never hurts to finish with a funky finger-popper.

—Paul de Barros

Day Moon: Day Moon; Lined; Twenty Twenty Blues; Tolos D'Abril; Étude de Mars; Here's That Rainy Day; Wind Up; Balcony Rules; Like In Love; Girls Can Play The Blues. (60:00)

Personnel: Christine Jensen, alto and soprano saxophone; Steve Amirault, piano; Adrian Vedady, bass; Jim Doxas, drums.

Ordering info: justin-time.com

AS WE SPEAK



PRESENTED BY RAKESH CHAURASIA
BELA FLECK • ZAKIR HUSSAIN • EDGAR MEYER

Bela Fleck/Zakir Hussain/Edgar Meyer

As We Speak

THIRTY TIGERS

★★★★★

Indian classical music has survived for millennia as a largely oral tradition passed on through musical family lines. Tabla player Zakir Hussain and bansuri player Rakesh Chaurasia both come from such lineages. At the core of the musicians' artistry lies an improvisational ability so virtuosic as to make Westerners' ears spin — so it takes a unique musician to collaborate on equal footing with these two. On *As We Speak*, banjoist Bela Fleck meets this chal-

lenge, with ready assist from double bassist Edgar Meyer.

The title refers to the players' shared love of improvising — composing in real time. The twist here is the masterful convergence of Indian and Western classical music forms, with a jigger of bluegrass thrown in for good measure.

They accomplish this synergism through varying techniques, such as call and response between banjo and flute, with the bass sometimes providing the pedal/drone ("The B Tune"); a stated motif that leads to melodic extrapolations and freakishly precise unison sections ("Owl's Misfortune"); and an Appalachian melody interpreted variously by bow on string, fluttering flute lines and Indian solfege ("Beast In The Garden").

The title cut — Fleck composed all 12 — closes the album. Hussain takes a percussion break that invigorates the repeated phrases into a harmonically dangling outro. The surprise ending encourages listening to the sudden silence, a sublime pause where just a moment before the musicians were engaged not just in communicating their own traditions, but in absorbing each other's.

—Suzanne Lorge

As We Speak: Motion; The B Tune; Tradewinds Bengali; J Bhair; Rickety Karma; 1980; Owl's Misfortune; Pashto; Hidden Lake; Beast In The Garden; Conundrum; As We Speak. (75:19)

Personnel: Bela Fleck, banjo; Zakir Hussain, tabla; Edgar Meyer, bass; Rakesh Chaurasia, bansuri.

Ordering info: thirtytigers.com

Henry Threadgill Ensemble

The Other One

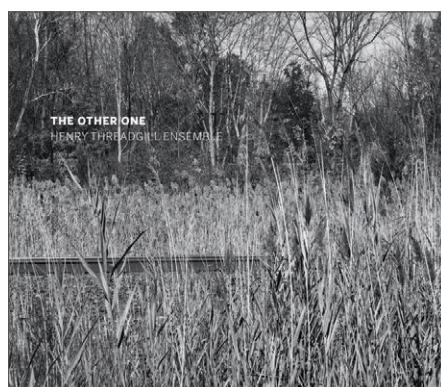
PI

★★★★★

While absorbing 2016's *Old Locks And Irregular Verbs*, a query arose: "How interested am I in Henry Threadgill's music if the maestro isn't part of the band?" It was there again when the second album by his Double Up ensemble arrived two years later. The 79-year-old band leader has enraptured me since I heard Air's "Through A Keyhole Darkly" in the late '70s, but it took a sec to appreciate his comparatively complicated work without his own voice in it.

The Other One has helped clarify my conundrum. Here, too, Threadgill exclusively composes and conducts, yet each task yields the kind of eloquence that's marked his career from the start. You can't help but sniff the eau de Henry in this 12-piece chamber ensemble, because both his pen and perspective define his art as much as his horn work does.

Recorded live at Brooklyn's Roulette, the group interprets a three-part composition, "Of Valence," whose title speaks to the ensemble's deftly executed interplay. During the 2022 multimedia performance, Threadgill's visual references included household items abandoned on



the sidewalks when frightened citizens ditched New York during the pandemic's first few weeks. Action begetting action.

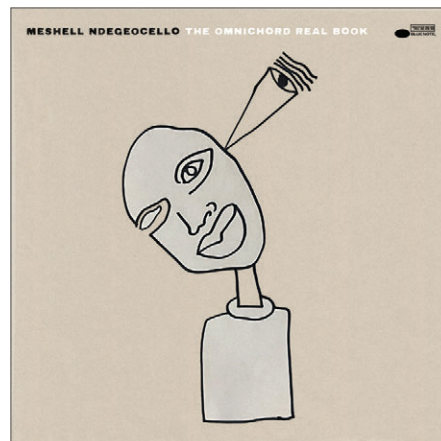
From piano ruminations to string interplay to the drum flourishes to brass propulsion, "Of Valence" delivers a swirl of engaging ideas, conjuring Threadgill nuggets such as "Paille Street" while sussing a new compositional syntax. Call it high drama that knows when to double up on irregular verbs.

—Jim Macnie

The Other One: Of Valence, Movement I; Of Valence Movement II; Of Valence Movement III. (50:36)

Personnel: Henry Threadgill, conductor; Alfredo Colón, alto saxophone; Noah Becker, alto saxophone, clarinet; Peyton Pleninger, tenor saxophone; Craig Weinri; percussion, electronics; Sara Caswell, violin; Stephanie Griffin, viola; Mariel Roberts, Christopher Hoffman, cello; Jose Davila, tuba; David Virelles, piano; Sara Schoenbeck, Adam Cordero, bassoon.

Ordering info: pirecordings.com



Meshell Ndegeocello

The Omnichord Real Book

BLUE NOTE

★★★★★

Introduced in 1981 by the Suzuki Musical Instrument Corp., the Omnichord was conceived as an electronic equivalent to the auto-harp, with buttons for chords, a "harp sensor" for strumming and a built-in rhythm function. Its sound is pleasantly retro, warmer and more intimate than a Casio keyboard but similarly lo-tech, and makes an appropriate sonic touchstone for the Blue Note debut of bassist/singer Meshell Ndegeocello.

After all, the soundscapes conjured on *The Omnichord Real Book* are largely electronic, to the point that drums and drum machines blur together, and it's sometimes hard to distinguish Josh Johnson's saxophone from a synthesizer. But don't take that to mean the music is mindlessly mechanical. Although Ndegeocello favors simple, repeating chord patterns, she takes pains to ensure that the songs are never short on textural, rhythmic or melodic variety.

While there are cameos by Ambrose Akinmusire, Jason Moran, Brandee Younger, Joel Ross and Mark Guiliana, *The Omnichord Real Book* is more "jazz-influenced" than jazz. Akinmusire offers a lean, lovely, half-valved solo on "Burn Progression," but Moran's contribution to "Perceptions" is just piano accompaniment while Younger's sparking arpeggios in "Virgo" are treated as sonic fairy dust. Ndegeocello's focus seems more on the songs than the playing.

—J.D. Considine

The Omnichord Real Book: Georgia Ave; An Invitation; Call The Tune; Good Good; Omnibus; Clear Water; ASR; Gatsby; Towers; Perceptions; THA KING; Virgo; Burn Progression; onelevensixteen; Vuma; The 5th Dimension; Hole In The Bucket; Virgo 3. (72:24)

Personnel: Meshell Ndegeocello, vocals, omnichord, keyboards, bass, key bass; Josh Johnson, saxophone, vocals; Ambrose Akinmusire, trumpet; Jebin Bruni, keyboards, vocal; Cory Henry, piano; Daniel Mintzer, keyboards; Jason Moran, piano; Julius Rodriguez, clavinet, B-3 organ; Farfisa organ; Jake Sherman, keyboards, bass, vocoder; Joel Ross, vibraphone; Brandee Younger, harp; Chris Bruce, guitar, acoustic guitar, vocals, bass; Jeff Parker, guitar; Burniss Travis II, bass; Andrya Ambro, drums; Mark Guiliana, drums; Deantoni Parks, drums; Abe Rounds, drums, percussion, vocals; Hann Benn, choir; Sanford Biggers, vocals; Marsha Deboe, vocals; Jade Hicks, vocals; Justin Hicks, vocals; Joan As Policewoman, vocals; Thandiswa Mazwai, spoken word, vocals; Kenita Miller, vocals.

Ordering info: bluenote.com

The Hot Box

	Critics	Jim Macnie	Suzanne Lorge	J.D. Considine	Paul de Barros
Christine Jensen <i>Day Moon</i>		★★★★	★★★	★★★★½	★★★★
Bleck/Hussain/Meyer <i>As We Speak</i>		★★★★½	★★★★	Recused	★★★★
Henry Threadgill Ensemble <i>The Other One</i>		★★★★	★★★★½	★★★★	★★★★
Meshell Ndegeocello <i>The Omnichord Real Book</i>		★★★★	★★★★½	★★★	★★★

Critics' Comments

Christine Jensen, *Day Moon*

Jensen's new music taps into deep reservoirs of emotion on this introspective collection. Not to worry—there's enough uplift and whimsy in the playing to remedy any unsought melancholy. The welcome catharsis in Jensen's vision expands both ways.

—Suzanne Lorge

She's always had a lyrical side, but here the level of expression clocks higher than previous. That makes for a fun ride, with the group's chemistry underscoring the boss's nuanced twists and turns.

—Jim Macnie

In addition to being a brilliant big band composer, Jensen is also a fine alto saxophonist, with a bright, chewy tone and the sort easy mastery that makes even flashy licks seem conversational.

—J.D. Considine

Béla Fleck/Zakir Hussain/Edgar Meyer, *As We Speak*

World fusion at its best, with an Indian flavor enhanced not only by Hussain's lickety-split palms, but the magnificent bamboo flute work of banjusri player Rakesh Chaurasia. Jazz surprise, bluegrass pluck and Indian grandeur, deftly woven in time.

—Paul de Barros

Three virtuosos stressing their musicianship rather than flaunting their prowess — a win. These intricate pieces get a tad chichi at certain points, but the squad's respect for folk music regains important ground, informality-wise.

—Jim Macnie

[J.D. Considine is recused from reviewing this one. He did some work on the album.]

Henry Threadgill Ensemble, *The Other One*

Even when his music moves in unfamiliar ways, using progressions of intervals instead of chords, Threadgill manages to make his witty chamber jazz swing.

—Paul de Barros

Threadgill's concertizing bridges the divide (such as it is) between classical music and contemporary jazz most unobtrusively. The difference lies in his use of extemporaneous composition, but even these unwritten sections seem knowingly crafted.

—Suzanne Lorge

Threadgill is hardly the first to apply the gravity and instrumentation of chamber music to jazz, but he is one of the few smart enough to rely on string players who improvise just as well as the rest of the ensemble. Invigoratingly intellectual and deeply soulful.

—J.D. Considine

Meshell Ndegeocello, *The Omnichord Real Book*

Impressive cast, but this futuristic stew of relentlessly silvery choruses, spacey reverb and cloying messages rarely coalesces into compelling songs, though the Sly Stone-ish "Clear Water," jangling "Towers," Thandiswa lifted "Vuma" and HawtPlates-shaped "Hole In The Bucket" have some appeal.

—Paul de Barros

Acoustica meets electronica to create an invigorating palette of sound: undiluted African rhythms, washes of synthesized harmonics and assured vocals. Ndegeocello continues to augment our understanding of jazz as a modern musical language.

—Suzanne Lorge

A wise distillation of the diaspora. She crafts her own Ra chant, nods to OutKast, conjures Sly, gets Afrodreamy, cites Ghanaian guitars, and makes me think of Prince at least three times. The victory? It all sounds like pure Meshell.

—Jim Macnie

THE SOUND OF SMOKE





Joe Farnsworth *In What Direction Are You Headed?*

SMOKE SESSIONS

★★★★½

The talent drummer Joe Farnsworth brings to *In What Direction Are You Headed?* alone guarantees superlative music. It also comprises three generations — bassist Robert Hurst is a boomer, Farnsworth and guitarist Kurt Rosenwinkel Gen-Xers, saxophonist Immanuel Wilkins and pianist Julius Rodriguez Gen-Zers. They manage to meet in the same forward-looking space and create something special.

Steve Smith and Vital Information *Time Flies*

WOUNDED BIRD

★★★★

Steve Smith's excursions during the '80s with his fusion juggernaut Vital Information were reissued last year by Wounded Bird as a four-CD set, *The Complete Columbia Recordings*. The current edition of the group, based around the core trio of drummer Smith, pianist Manuel Valera and electric bassist Janet Gwizdala, showcases its versatility and superb musicianship on this potent two-CD set.

The authoritative opener, "Emergence," is a power-precision number reminiscent of Tony Williams Lifetime's *Emergency*, with Manuel Valera doubling on piano and synths. Their swinging piano trio rendition of Bud Powell's "Tempus Fugue-It" highlights Smith's adeptness with brushes before switching to sticks and engaging in torrid exchanges with pianist Valera. Their take on Bud's "Un Poco Loco" is full of thrills, while the intense "Choreography In Six" recalls Dave Weckl's precision drumming alongside bassist Anthony Jackson in pianist Michel Camilo's '80s trio.

Saxophonist George Garzone joins the trio on McCoy Tyner's "Inception" then takes on

The front line of Wilkins and Rosenwinkel is magnificent. Roughly a fourth of Wilkins' "Composition 4" is their gorgeous contrapuntal duo intro. They also create sensitive interplay on Rosenwinkel's "Terra Nova," have a joyfully funky convergence with Rodriguez's Fender Rhodes on the title track and bring an eerie soundscape to "Safe Corners." But their fine work together also applies to what they do separately. The affecting closer, Donny Hathaway's "Someday We'll All Be Free," finds Wilkins beautifully in duet with Rodriguez, followed by a marathon theme and solo from Rosenwinkel against the rhythm section, a solo from Wilkins and one from Rodriguez.

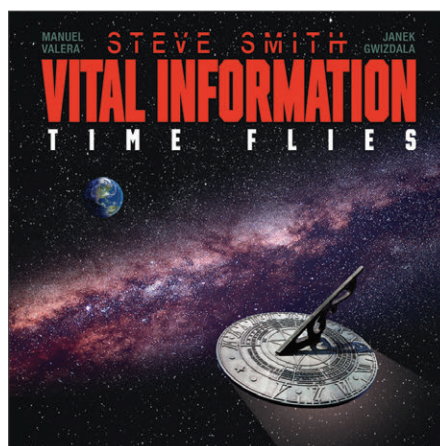
If this sounds as if the rhythm section is secondary or understated, it isn't. Rodriguez is vital; Hurst exudes quiet but palpable authority and Farnsworth plays an extended solo on "Filters" that suggests he's hiding a third arm somewhere. The true zenith of *In What Direction Are You Headed*, however, comes in the lightning bolt that is "Anyone But You," a blast of should-be-impossible fast swing.

—Michael J. West

In What Direction Are You Headed?: Terra Nova; Filters; In What Direction Are You Headed?; Composition 4; Anyone But You; Safe Corners; Bobby No Bags; Someday We'll All Be Free. (61:54)

Personnel: Joe Farnsworth, drums; Immanuel Wilkins, alto saxophone; Kurt Rosenwinkel, guitar; Julius Rodriguez, piano, Fender Rhodes (3); Robert Hurst, bass.

Ordering info: smokesessionsrecords.com



prisoners "What Is This Thing Called Love" and on Trane's "One Down, One Up." Smith displays his masterful command of brushes on a swinging "Darn That Dream." The bonus CD consists of an eight-part suite, "A Prayer For The Generations," a collective improvisation with a nod to Joe Zawinul's "Directions" along the way.

—Bill Milkowski

Time Flies: Emergence; Tempus Fugue-It; Time Flies; Darn That Dream; Un Poco Loco; Self Portrait; Inception; Choreography In Six; No Qualm; Ugly Beauty; What Is This Thing Called Love?; Erdnase; One Down, One Up; A Prayer For The Generations, Parts 1–8. (59:59/53:26)

Personnel: Steve Smith, drums; Manuel Valera, piano, keyboards; Janet Gwizdala, electric bass; Mike Mainieri, vibraphone (9); George Garzone, tenor saxophone (3, 7, 11, 13, 14–21).

Ordering info: vitalinformation.com



Sex Mob *The Hard Way*

CORBETT VS. DEMPSEY

★★★★½

Sex Mob — the quartet of slide trumpet player Steven Bernstein, saxophonist Briggan Krauss, bassist Tony Scherr, and drummer Kenny Wollesen — has always been a band with ideas. But, after more than a quarter century of activity, this might be their weirdest, wildest album yet.

Producer Scotty Hard, who's worked with acts ranging from Medeski, Martin & Wood to Vijay Iyer to avant-noise rap crew New Kingdom to Brazilian funk-rockers Nação Zumbi, is a de facto fifth member here. His electronics and effects take Sex Mob into realms inspired more by hip-hop, dub and Tom Waits' '80s albums than jazz.

The opening "Fletcher Henderdon," in fact, started life as an electronic piece, over which Bernstein and Krauss laid horn melodies. "Banacek," on which Medeski guests, sounds like a potential alternate theme to the obscure 1960s detective show starring George Peppard from which it takes its name, with its thumping beat and "Peter Gunn"-ish horns; Iyer makes a cameo on "You Can Take A Myth," his piano buried under a grotesquely swollen synth bass line and drums that tick and hiss; "Hit The Dirt" adds congas and a stomping hip-hop beat; while "Pepper Pot" is all electronically smeared horns, booming upright bass, the loudest brushed drums ever and metallic clinking sounds bouncing through the stereo field.

The horns have a woozy, warped quality that makes it seem like the ground is shifting beneath your feet, but there's always an anchor. Just don't come in expecting "jazz" and you'll be fine.

—Philip Freeman

The Hard Way: Fletcher Henderdon; King Tang; Banacek; Lawn Mower; You Can Take A Myth; Hit The Dirt; Pepper Pot; Tapestral; Club Pythagorean; Dominion. (50:00)

Personnel: Steven Bernstein, slide trumpet; Briggan Krauss, alto and baritone saxophones, guitar; Tony Scherr, upright and electric bass, guitar; Kenny Wollesen, acoustic and electric drums; Scotty Hard, electronic beats, soundscapes, synth bass; John Medeski, organ; Vijay Iyer, piano; DJ Olive, turntables.

Ordering info: corbettvsdempsey.com



Linda May Han Oh *The Glass Hours*

BIOPHILIA

★★★★★

Bassist Linda May Han Oh resides as one of the most assured, versatile bassists and bandleaders in contemporary jazz, pushing boundaries while firmly ensconced within a mainstream sound. The quintet on her new album is among the most talented she's ever led, but her ability to assign specific roles to those players makes this more than another high-level session. Singer Sara Serpa and tenor saxophonist Mark Turner are both sublimely distinctive

figures who could easily cancel one another out in a less focused setting, but here they thrive, forming an agile front line marked by melodic grace and liquid interaction. Oh's compositions tend to be buoyant and shimmering, but her rhythmic instincts, both as a player and composer, inject a tension that sets the album apart.

"Circles" undercuts the seamless unison lines of Serpa and Turner with a gallivanting propulsion. Serpa delivers lyrics written by Oh for a couple of tunes — on "Antiquity" she paints an unsettling portrait of humans addicted to a steady screen-driven diet that not only isolates us, but prevents us from experiencing real growth as people — otherwise she uses her voice wordlessly, weaving in and out of the arrangements with precision and restraint. She's insanely gifted, and among her greatest skills are the rigor and control she deploys it with.

Oh forms a serious rhythm section with drummer Obed Calvaire and pianist Fabian Almazan, whose judicious use of electronic treatments gives the music an expansive depth without ever disguising its gritty core.

—Peter Margasak

The Glass Hours: Circles; Antiquity; Chimera; Jus Ad Bellum; The Glass Hours; The Imperative; Phosphorous; Respite; The Other Side; Hatching.

Personnel: Linda May Han Oh, acoustic and electric bass, voice; Mark Turner, tenor saxophone; Sara Serpa, voice; Fabian Almazan, piano, effects; Obed Calvaire, drums.

Ordering info: biophilarecords.com

Rudy Royston's *Flatbed Buggy*

GREENLEAF

★★★★★

As the follow-up album by drummer-composer Rudy Royston's quintet Flatbed Buggy to its eponymous 2018 debut, *Day* is a pleasing work structured around "a daily pattern of emotions" the leader experienced during the pandemic. That was a troubling time, but the music here suggests that Royston persevered with good-humored equanimity.

Day takes full advantage of its unique instrumental lineup. Ellis' bass clarinet, Versace's accordion, Roberts' cello and Martin's bass mesh like a flexible net, continuously wafted about or buoyed by Royston's kicky propulsion. He never overwhelms but rather connects to and lifts the others' sounds, establishing an acoustic intimacy that enables these expert players to enjoy yet also stretch their instruments' conventional parameters. They all perform thoughtfully within original, yet seemingly familiar, songs, arranged as artfully as chamber music but with more engaging swing.

Day is expressive but not exactly garrulous. On the surface it's polished lovingly, as if by hand, utterly contemporary although rooted in



American popular music's organic materials. Within its melodies, historic stylistic references abound, including hints of blues, hoe-downs, chanties and hornpipes, French bal-musette, New Orleans second-line marches with Dolphy-esque or Piazzollan solos (as on "Five-Thirty Strut") or spare funk with a nod ("Keep It Moving") to Ornette Coleman's Prime Time. Nice of Royston to take us with him through such a turn of the earth.

—Howard Mandel

Day: Morning; Thank You For This Day; Limeni Village; Look To The Hills; The Mokes; Five-Thirty Strut; Missing You; Keep It Moving; It's Time To Sleep; A.M. Hours. (54:39)

Personnel: Royston, drums; John Ellis, bass clarinet; Hank Roberts, cello; Gary Versace, accordion; Joe Martin, bass.

Ordering info: greenleafmusic.com



Pierre Chambers *Shining Moments*

DASH HOFFMAN

★★★★★

Pierre Chambers is the son of bass player Paul Chambers, famous for his work with Miles Davis, John Coltrane and others. Although the younger Chambers has been performing around Los Angeles for the past 40 years, this is his debut recording as a leader. Encouraged by his friend, and now producer, Cathy Segal-Garcia, Chambers went into the studio to cut an album of familiar tunes, interspaced with his own work as a poet.

The result is impressive. His deep, resonant baritone has a classic feel, with piano and bass arrangements that allow him to stretch out. "It's Only A Paper Moon" gets a swing treatment, with Chambers alternating elongated syllables and staccato phrasing, in the style of a horn player. He slips into his lower register for an intimate reading of "The Nearness Of You" and embellishes the melody of "My Favorite Things," before scatting along with pianist Karen Hammack. Chambers croons "Dear Ann," a song written by his father, in his higher register, against a subtle bossa nova beat laid down by drummer Clayton Cameron and bassist Henry Franklin.

More recent numbers include "Lonely Girl," with flugelhorn asides by Jeff Kaye, Cannonball Adderley's "Work Song" and Mongo Santamaria's "Afro Blue," the latter two with lyrics by Oscar Brown Jr. "Afro Blue" includes solid drum fills by Cameron and a scatted chorus by Chambers, while "Work Song" sports the Wes Montgomery-influenced guitar stylings of Dori Amarilio.

The poems Chambers includes here are also impressive, with the ode to his deceased dad's bass on "My Father" particularly moving.

—j. poet

Shining Moments: Work Song; My Favorite Things; The Nearness Of You; Dear Ann; This Mother; Paper Moon; Lonely Girl; My Shining Hour; The Way You Look Tonight; My Father; Afro Blue. (46:32)

Personnel: Pierre Chambers, vocals; Karen Hammack, piano; Henry Franklin, bass; Clayton Cameron, drums; Jeff Kaye, horns; Dori Amarilio, guitar; Cathy Segal-Garcia, backing vocals.

Ordering info: pierrechambers.com

Quiet Individualism

Fenton Robinson: *Somebody Loan Me A Dime* (Alligator; 43:28 ★★★★★) Singer-guitarist Fenton Robinson, who waxed singles for Houston's Duke Records before settling in Chicago in 1961, saw his first LP released on Bruce Iglauer's label in 1974. Now reissued on remastered vinyl, it casts a lingering spell from start to finish. Such is the quiet power of an expressive individualism that has a comforting sort of intensity. Possessing precise control of a trembly voice well suited for high notes, Robinson sings the lyrics of his signature song "Loan Me A Dime" and other blue-ribbon material (originals and borrowed fare like Larry Davis' "Texas Flood") with a poignant awareness of hard luck and human nature. Robinson's jazzy guitar playing, his touch as firm as his ideas are deliberate, is symptomatic of his reserved personality. Sidemen, conveying motion and force, include jazz keyboardist Bill Heid and rhythm guitarist Mighty Joe Young and four horn players.

Ordering info: alligator.com

Muddy Waters: *Hollywood Blues Summit* (Liberation Hall; 37:17 ★★★★★)

At the dawn of the '70s, Muddy Waters was making good progress at getting Chicago blues noticed by white college kids. There were several Chess albums, including pop chart-breaching *Fathers & Sons* and rock star-strewn *The London Muddy Waters Session*. There were, of course, live performances, too, like one taped in July '71 at Los Angeles' Ash Grove club. Waters and his regular band trotted out warhorses like "Hoochie Coochie Man" and less-known songs with dignified presence. The bandleader sang as a paragon of relaxed mastery, lounging into songs, and his slide guitar unleashed notes that stung like deadly warrior wasps.

Ordering info: liberationhall.com

Leonard "Lowdown" Brown: *Blues Is Calling Me* (Music Maker; 33:23 ★★★★★)

At first, Houston-based Leonard Brown's first album appears to be standard fare from a past-his-prime elder bidding for a national breakout after decades of only regional success. But, hold on. Surprisingly impressive is the strength of accomplishment in vocal and guitar deliveries that boil gently with spirit. He's his own man, even when close to emulation of past singers Johnny Copeland and Robert Ward or fretboard masters B.B. King and T-Bone Walker. Original songs have tonic freshness. "Juke Joint" fuels after-work fun, while "You Gotta Move" confirms that at least part of his soulful nature derives from gospel training. Brown, a keenly observant musician, benefits from solid, unpretentious support by rhythm guitarist Microwave Dave Gallaher and other Alabamians.



Fenton Robinson's debut LP, reissued by Alligator, casts a lingering spell from start to finish.

Ordering info: musicmaker.org

Bruce Katz Band: *Connections* (Dancing Rooster; 56:22 ★★★★★) Pianist-organist Bruce Katz's 11th solo album — the first with Aaron Lieberman on guitar and Liviu Pop on drums — pulses with the enthusiasm he has for blues, jazz, New Orleans r&b, jam band music and personal cross-genre creations. The appeal of Katz also resides in his stellar technique and supernova-like imagination. The melodically ingenious "The Dream" is something different; the former Berklee instructor, playing electric piano and Hammond, mines a spiritual space that he's rarely visited in the studio since years ago with Mighty Sam McClain.

Ordering info: dancingroosterrecords.com

Tracy Nelson: *Life Don't Miss Nobody* (BMG; 46:40 ★★★★★) After more than a decade, Tracy Nelson — one of the finest roots-music singers of the past 60 years — has returned to recording with an outstanding 16th album. Her rich, one-of-a-kind voice is a force to be reckoned with, pinpointing the emotional core in old blues and country music songs of great value by storied figures from Stephen Foster and Hank Williams to Ma Rainey and Sonny Boy Williamson, taking in Allen Toussaint, Willie Dixon, Chuck Berry, Sister Rosetta Tharpe and Doc Pomus on the way. Neither does her instinct and artistry wane on the Latinized title song she wrote with her husband-music partner Mike Dyingier. The album reunites her with friends Marcia Ball and Irma Thomas, Willie Nelson and Charlie Musselwhite. Young new acquaintance Jontavious Willis joins Nelson on "Your Funeral And My Trial."

Ordering info: bmg.com



Yelena Eckemoff *Lonely Man And His Fish*

L&H PRODUCTION

★★★★½

There's a cinematic quality to *Lonely Man And His Fish*, the latest concept album from the prolific pianist-composer Yelena Eckemoff. There is an opening scene where we are introduced to the main characters: an aging musician named Tim and his pet fish, Spark; then conflict, which results in Tim losing his fish; then climax and resolution where the man and beloved pet are reunited.

In a greater sense, it's a story about our longing for connection, capacity to love and our relationship with nature. Each song is an action-packed story that stands on its own but also comes together as cohesive chapters in this simple yet moving parable.

Cornetist Kirk Knuffke's horns express the man's melancholia, hopefulness, remorse and joy over the course of the story, while Masaru Koga's Japanese flutes embody the playful, resilient fish. "Into The Wild" and "Life In The Pond" feature extended solos from Koga, whose whimsical notes turn cerebral and solemn as the group explores the moment when Spark becomes separated from his owner and must learn to live in the wild. Bassist Ben Street provides textural complexity and propulsive lines that strike just the right tone, while Eckemoff's piano pulls the narrative forward with dramatic flourishes.

On "Call Of Friendship," the rhythm section narrates the story of Tim and Spark's happy reunion with drummer Eric Harland playing a simmering backbeat, and Eckemoff and Street painting a crescendoing melody. *Lonely Man And His Fish* is an epic tale, brought to life by the creative synergy and poignant storytelling of Eckemoff and her ensemble. —Ivana Ng

Lonely Man And His Fish: Lonely Man; Pet Store; First Evening At Home; Breakfast For Two; Man And His Fish; Accident; In Hospital; Into The Wild; Life In The Pond; Survivor; Empty House; Song For Spark; Call Of Friendship; Dreaming Together. (62:05)

Personnel: Yelena Eckemoff, piano; Fender Rhodes Suitcase 73, Musser Ampli-celeste; Kirk Knuffke, cornet; Masaru Koga, Japanese flutes; Ben Street, acoustic bass, electric bass; Eric Harland, drums, percussion.

Ordering info: yelenamusic.com



Angel Bat Dawid *Requiem For Jazz* INTERNATIONAL ANTHEM

★★★★

Chicago-based clarinetist, vocalist and composer Angel Bat Dawid avows jazz as quintessentially African-American in this embellished audio from her 12-movement multimedia suite for “Arkestarzz” and “Choruzz,” performed at the 2019 Hyde Park Jazz Festival.

Dawid was inspired by Edward O. Bland’s 1959 film *The Cry of Jazz*, which critiques white jazz fans’ ignorance, pretenses and appropriation of Black culture, punctuated by the new music of the Sun Ra Arkestra, referenced directly here with addition in post-production of current Arkestronauts Marshall Allen, saxo-

phone, and Knoel Scott, percussion.

Requiem is fervent and proud if also at points aggrieved and didactic. When all the elements cohere in dramatic chiaroscuro, *Requiem*’s ritualistic, ceremonial, theatrical, rhetorical and, finally, celebratory aspects reach out to fans of creative music’s ecstatic school.

However, treating jazz as dead begs questions. The “jazz” Bland declared passé 65 years ago comprised commercialized conventions and worn-out clichés soon superseded by modernists like Miles Davis, Ornette Coleman, Cecil Taylor et al.

Requiem righteously requests listeners acknowledge jazz’s roots in Black culture. But isn’t it regressive if melodic complexity, harmonic abstraction and rhythmic dynamism must be downgraded, so nativism and essentialism come to the fore? —Howard Mandel

Requiem For Jazz: Jazz is merely the Negroes cry of joy & suffering; INTROIT—Joy ‘n’ Suff’rin’; Jazz is the musical expression...; KYRIE ELEISON—Lawd Hav’ Mercy; This endless repetition...; DIAS IRE—Chair Around the Spirit; Another restraining factor...; TUBA MIRUM—The Changes; The Negro experiences...; REX TREMENDAE—Futureless Future; The Negro transforms...; Jazz reflects...; CONFUTATIS—Repression; Through Spirituals...; LACRIMOSA—Weeping our Lady of Sorrow; Because Jazz is...; OFFERTORIUM—HOSTIAS—Humility; Only when whites have paid the price...; SANCTUS—Holy, Holy, Holy; The Jazz body is dead...; AGNUS DEI—Jazz is Dead!; LUX AETERNA—Eternal Light/My Rhapsody; Long Tone for Rayna Golding. (56:56)

Personnel: Angel Bat Dawid, clarinet, vocals, composition, arrangements; Dr. Charles Joseph Smith, piano; Jeremiah Hunt, contrabass; Vincent Davis, percussion; Kristian Espinoza, auxiliary instruments; Norman W. Long, electronics; Dr. Adam Zanolini, flute; Hannah Washington, clarinet; Sam Thousand, trumpet; Isaiah Collier, soprano saxophone; Fred Jackson Jr., alto saxophone; Kwesiah, tenor saxophone; Marshall Allen, alto saxophone, EWI; Knoel Scott, percussion; J’Niya Blunt, DaJour Smith, violin; Michelle Manson, viola; Olula, cello; Tramaine Parker, soprano; Monique Golding, alto; Deacon Julian Otis Cooke, tenor; Phillip Armstrong, baritone.

Ordering info: intlanthem.bandcamp.com

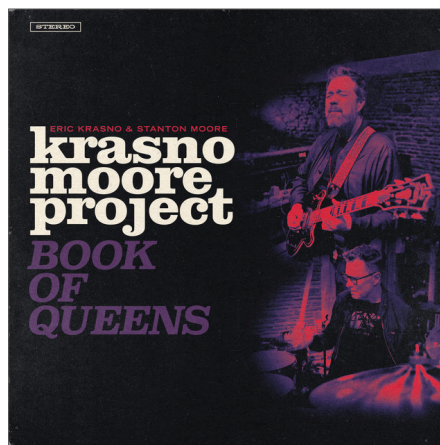
Krasno Moore Project *Book Of Queens* CONCORD JAZZ

★★★★½

With *Book Of Queens*, guitarist Eric Krasno and drummer Stanton Moore come together to pay tribute to the compositional prowess of women. Though they have long known each other, this effort represents their first recorded collaboration. With notable special guests featured on several tracks, it is space to explore the organ trio form, with Eric Finland rounding out the group.

On most of the album’s nine songs, the arrangements hew toward the immediately recognizable. So the effort’s strength here is the chosen repertoire. Aretha Franklin’s “Natural Woman” rests easily alongside Brittney Howard’s “Stay High,” where the group is joined by Cory Henry. Similarly, the late Amy Winehouse’s “You Know I’m No Good” easily coexists with H.E.R.’s “Carried Away” and Kacey Musgraves’ “Slow Burn.”

Krasno and Moore are also sure to bring the legends to bear. On their treatment of Nina Simone’s “I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel To

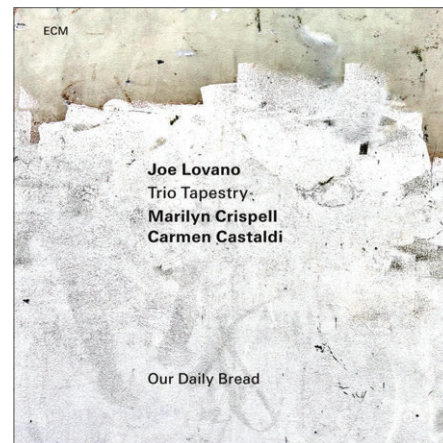


Be Free,” they are joined by Robert Randolph, and with Peggy Lee’s “Fever,” Branford Marsalis joins the proceedings. The trio achieves balance out of an eclectic array of compositional vehicles that allow us to remember what threads together the various experiences of some of music’s most gifted composers. —Joshua Myers

Book Of Queens: You Know I’m No Good; Nobody’s Baby; Slow Burn; Lost Cause; Stay High; Fever; Natural Woman; Carried Away; I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel To Be Free. (35:42)

Personnel: Eric Krasno, guitar; Stanton Moore, drums; Eric Finland, organ, keyboard.

Ordering info: concordjazz.com



Joe Lovano Trio Tapestry *Our Daily Bread* ECM

★★★★

Check “tapestry” in the dictionary and you’ll find something about narrative design in cloth, but also the more metaphoric meaning of “a colorful and complicated situation.” What you don’t always get is a further usage — “life’s rich tapestry” — which uses the unfolding metaphor as the analog to a journey, actual, imaginative, spiritually fraught, that we all go on.

This is the third instalment of the trio’s remarkable exploration of jazz as a spiritual force. The track titles hint at certain explicit religious connotations, but these are seconded to the music, which might take an unprepared listener aback with its relatively calm and unhurried pace.

The hurly-burly of his trio with Bill Frisell and Paul Motian is now long in the past. His guiding spirit here seems to be Charlie Haden, the man who more than anyone in modern jazz represented the still center of a swirling world. It’s his benign and paternal presence that informs not just the track dedicated to him, but all the spaces in the music where a bass might be.

Marilyn Crispell knows how to position silence effectively and imply sounds that aren’t there. She’s effectively the orchestrator here, but it’s Castaldi, a long-time associate, and a man who can invest a single gong tone with meaning, who gives the music its questing, questioning aspect. Not to say that Lovano is only a third wheel on his own album, but here he plays the acolyte and student in the question/answer dynamic.

Does the album free-stand, or does it need some awareness of the earlier *Trio Tapestry* and *Garden Of Expression*? Simple answer to both is, of course it does. Heard singly, it’s superb; heard as the next step in a sequence, it’s even deeper and richer. —Brian Morton

Our Daily Bread: All Twelve; Grace Notes; Le Petit Opportun; Our Daily Bread; One For Charlie; The Power Of Three; Rhythm Spirit; Crystal Ball. (42:14)

Personnel: Joe Lovano, tenor saxophone, tarogato, gongs; Marilyn Crispell, piano; Carmen Castaldi, drums, gong, temple bells.

Ordering info: ecmrecords.com



Michel Petrucciani at Montreux

Archival Snapshots

Forgotten or unknown archival recordings can be like a trove of old family photos. Faces, or expressions, set your memory ablaze, some fashion choices didn't age well and — maybe — a hidden gem.

Just as Jimi Hendrix's half-sister has led an effort to keep his music alive in the marketplace, **Miles Davis'** family is looking for ways to repurpose the late trumpeter's extensive archives. In reality, ***That You Not Dare To Forget (Legacy; 27:30 ★★)*** seems more like some of the exploitative mish-mashes of Hendrix's work that appeared before his family regained control. Short, even by LP standards, this collection is most interesting for the pseudo-“Blindfold Test” it creates: Can you tell Davis from fellow trumpeters Jeremy Pelt, Wallace Roney or Walter White, who all ape his sound here? Did you pick out Olu Dara's contribution, sampled from 2004, or determine what part John Scofield plays? The reward for solving those riddles is the sweet solo by Davis himself on “Bitches Are Back.”

Ordering info: legacyrecordings.com

For three years in the late '60s, drum phenomenon **Les DeMerle** led a big band of young firebrands who were just a step or two out of time. While drummers like Mitch Mitchell and Ginger Baker ruled the day, DeMerle was coming on like a junior Buddy Rich — whipping up a roiling foundation for bandmates like Arnie Lawrence, Marvin Stamm and Randy Brecker. At 21, Brecker is the best known of those present for eight unreleased studio tracks on ***Sound 67 (Origin; 37:59 ★★)***, although rock singer Genya Ravan drops in for three vocal performances, including a painfully ill-fitting, off-key “Alfie.” Her brassy voice is a much better match for a scrappy take of “That's Life.” That performance and a Cannonball Adderley-style “Sticks” are the closest the band came to recording anything radio-friendly, although Brecker's solo on “Raunchy Rita” is an impressive taste of things to come. A band performance from *The Mike Douglas Show* sounds particularly out of pace with the times,

and the muddy TV studio mix does little for the band's layered arrangements. Like a photo of Sammy Davis Jr. in a Nehru jacket and beads, *Sound 67* seems like a time capsule of a particularly odd era in popular culture.

Ordering info: originarts.com

Recorded for Danish television in 1983, during **Dexter Gordon's** final visit to the country, ***Copenhagen Coda (Storyville; 57:01 ★★)*** features the tenor saxophonist's longtime quartet with pianist Kirk Lightsey, bassist David Eubanks and drummer Eddie Gladden in a performance that's longer on style than substance. Laconic as ever, Gordon sounds most at home on a dream-like “More Than You Know” and delivers a gorgeous coda that is the set's highlight, but the song's center section is dominated by a directionless piano solo. Indeed, the band often seems to be comping for Gordon, whose health was anything but stable in the '80s.

Ordering info: storyvillerecords.com

Selected from the late Claude Nobs' personal tapes of **Michel Petrucciani** and spanning four concerts, 1990–'98, ***The Montreux Years (BMG/Montreux; 75:08 ★★★★★)*** provides a broad cross-section of the pianist's extraordinary range. From 1990, Petrucciani leads a quartet, featuring former Miles Davis synthesizer player Adam Holzman. Three years later, he fronted an engaging quintet. He returned to play duets with highly sympathetic bassist Miroslav Vitous in 1996, and led a rangy sextet in 1998, less than six months before his death. Although his 1990 performance has echoes of Davis' post-comeback sound — one eight-minute piece is called “Miles Davis Licks” — it also includes Bruno Martini's “Estate,” which provides Petrucciani with the setting for some stunningly fluid, cascading runs. The three performances from '93 are especially lyrical and energetic, with the pianist flowing across multiple bar lines on long, lithe runs on “Summertime” and a rippling “Take The 'A' Train.”

DB

Ordering info: montreuxjazzshop.com



Adam Larson *With Love, From New York*

OUTSIDE IN

★★★★

British critics greatly admire and envy the ability of their American counterparts to listen to a piano player or horn man and say, “Don't know who that is, but he comes from Pittsburgh/Memphis/wherever.” There's maybe a fine difference and overlap between local accent and regional style.

Adam Larson now completes his trilogy of trio albums — this seems to be a popular format at the moment — with a New York record to go with his previous Chicago and Kansas City entries. Even a limey could make a fist at defining Windy City or K.C. styles, but New York famously is a dense in-gathering of all the tribes, and remarkably Larson captures that sense of hurly-burly, friendly collision, edgier encounters and crosstown traffic in a set that never lets up.

The trio this time is on its toes from the first note of “Aerial Landmasses,” and it's good, but not surprising, to find that four of these originals were composed in collaboration with bandmates. Larson had paid tribute to his own early development on the Chicago leg of this triangular journey. Here, he cuts loose into the unknown a little more, notably on the enigmatic “64 Squares (searching for fish)” and the full-on chase of “Cellular Snacks.” On “Deception,” he attempts and pulls off a tricky harmonic resolution that I still haven't quite worked out.

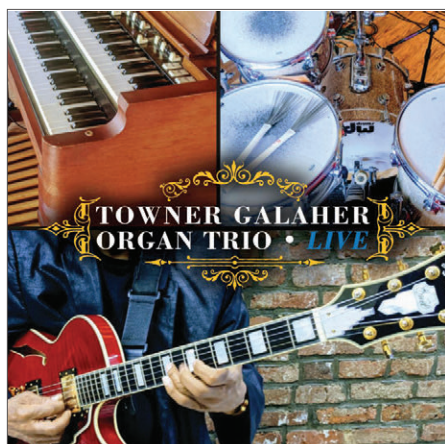
Horn players are generally easier to spot than pianists, and Larson's unusual embouchure, which sometimes delivers an almost shawm-like sound, is like nobody else's. But leaving that aside, if you were presented with this album cold, you might well say, “I don't know who that is but it sounds like the guy comes from ... all over.” And that, rather than regionalism, is the essence of jazz.

—Brian Morton

With Love, From New York: Aerial Landmasses; 64 Squares (searching for fish); Soar; Perspective; Moment Of Clarity; Deception; Cellular Snacks. (37:40)

Personnel: Adam Larson, tenor saxophone; Matt Clohesy, bass; Obed Calvaire, drums.

Ordering info: outsideinmusic.com



Towner Gallaher Organ Trio

Live

RHYTHM ROYALE

★★½

The Drawbars

One Finger Only

COLOR RED

★★★★½

Drummer Towner Gallaher brought his “working” trio into a Connecticut club in the middle of the pandemic, playing live for only a small private gathering there, recording the show for this eventual release. It’s rather clear where Gallaher, organist Lonnie Gasperini and guitarist Marvin Horne draw inspiration from: The ghosts of Jack McDuff, Jimmy McGriff and Jimmy Smith must have floated by for at least a spin or two around the room. Direct homages include McDuff’s “Hot Barbecue” and Smith’s “Mellow Mood,” as well as “Norleans” by Lonnie Smith and “Alligator Boogaloo” by Lou Donaldson. All three musicians reveal through their playing a faithful study of the specific traditions of hard-bop, New Orleans jazz and early soul and funk, and their genuine love for that music is apparent.

However, the execution of said music leaves something to be desired. Perhaps it was the lack of playing during the pandemic, or the fact that they went in cold with no rehearsals, but the overall effect of *Live* is a band that sounds a tad off its game. Melodies are flubbed early and often, and the groove for the most part feels forced rather than relaxed and flowing. Of particular affront is their version of “Lover Man,” where the reverie of the flowing ballad is interrupted by incessant over-the-top rhythmic hits inexplicably maintained through both guitar and organ solos, only becoming looser and more tedious with each repetition. To his credit, Gallaher sports an impressive variety of grooves and beats, but seems to overplay his fills and overlook the hook-up with his bandmates. This would be a fine performance for a casual restaurant gig, but it’s



rough even by live recording standards.

The Hamburg, Germany-based organ trio The Drawbars draws less from the early jazz organ pioneers in favor of more progressive models — perhaps the Doors, or Emerson Lake and Palmer, maybe even Medeski, Martin and Wood. Bandleader David Nesselhauf might not be a life-guard, but he can surf funky bass lines, allowing keyboardist Chris Haertel to use both hands to play organ and electric piano at the same time, creating a unique sonic palette turbocharged by Julian Gutjahr’s precise and funky drumming.

The title track starts out minimalistic-ally mellow, yet still groovy, punctuated by some striking rhythmic hits (those can be so effective when used in moderation). Haertel’s organ in general is unusually distorted, a slightly discomfiting but cool sound. “Intro” sports a tricky bass line against an infectious dance beat, the drums mixed down with a satisfying lo-fi vibe. Of note is the version of “Shout” by Tears for Fears, given an indie-pop treatment that is unquestionably fun, with a moody breakdown section that shows the band at its most artful. “Two-Face” unearths a soul groove à la Marvin Gaye, erupting into a surprising peak of intensity before chilling out again with a spacy Wurlitzer solo.

The varied levels of intensity, textural effects and beats keep *One Finger Only* compelling. There is minimal improvisation, and the solos that do happen seem light on a deep understanding of jazz harmony and vocabulary. But perhaps they shrewdly realize as a crossover band that for many general music lovers, heady jazz solos are the least interesting thing about music.

—Gary Fukushima

Live: One For McGriff; Fever; Willow Weep For Me; Hot Barbecue; Norleans; Lover Man; Keep Talkin’; Alligator Boogaloo; Lonnie’s Funk; I’m Walkin’; North Beach Blues; Little Bit Of This, Little Bit Of That; Mellow Mood; One For McGriff (alternate take). (68:31)

Personnel: Towner Gallaher, drums; Lonnie Gasperini, organ; Marvin Horne, guitar.

Ordering info: amazon.com

One Finger Only: Art Form; Cat Call; Lets Do It Again; Intro; One Finger Only; Shout; Starved; Two Face; Skyline; One Twenty-Five. (45:17)

Personnel: David Nesselhauf, bass; Chris Haertel, keyboards; Julian Gutjahr, drums.

Ordering info: color-red.com

AVAILABLE AT MVDShop.com
+ EVERYWHERE MUSIC IS SOLD



BEN SHER

Samba for Tarsila

ZOHO RECORDS

Ben Sher is a virtuoso and this CD is a marvelous mashup of familiar and feel-good songs fashioned as Brazilian jazz fusion.

ZOHO RECORDS

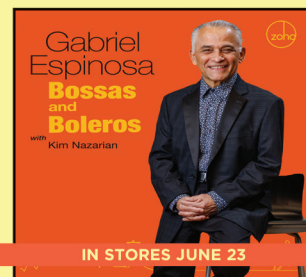


DIMITRI LANDRAIN TRIO

Astor's Place

French pianist Dimitri Landrain presents nine swinging, virtuosic original compositions in a jazz trio setting.

ZOHO RECORDS



GABRIEL ESPINOSA

Bossas & Boleros

On his fourth ZOHO solo release, this composer/singer/bassist celebrates the Bossa and Bolero styles he grew up with in Yucatan.

ZOHO RECORDS



MARION BROWN QUARTET
Mary Ann (Live In Bremen 1969)

A very under recorded artist, this live recording from 1969 gives a new perspective on his genius.

MOOSICUS RECORDS

MVDaudio
A DIVISION OF MVD ENTERTAINMENT GROUP

The World's His Home

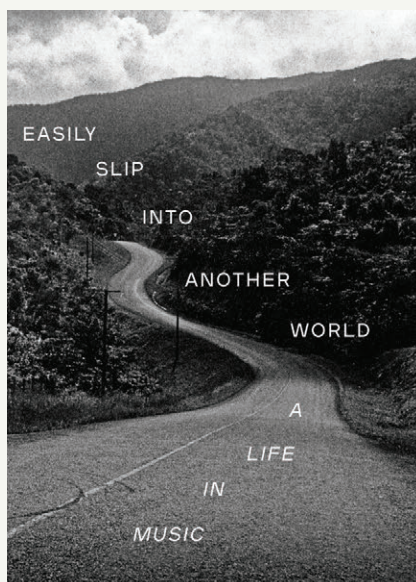
When Henry Threadgill performs, almost every measure of seemingly open improvisation is part of a tightly scripted and purposeful design. Threadgill and co-author Brent Hayes Edwards create a similar journey for his remarkable memoir, ***Easily Slip Into Another World: A Life In Music* (Knopf)**. As the book includes more than one lifetime's worth of startling adventures, Threadgill's vibrant narrative reveals how episodes beyond the concert stage shaped his artistry. So do his surprising asides, as he mentions early on that his book's original title was "Failure Is Everything."

For Threadgill, growing up on Chicago's South Side offered plenty of opportunities to attempt numerous endeavors and grow from each setback. After he failed to uplift the congregation in a Black Sanctified church, he learned about finding the right saxophone for the moment. After he got lost while working in a big band, he became more determined to improve his technique. Not all of his youthful debacles led to tangible successes — a planned invisibility potion yielded outrageous results. Through it all, he continued to reassess his playing and composing.

By the mid 1960s, Threadgill met like-minded locally based musicians at Wilson Junior College and in the neighborhoods. These included Joseph Jarman, Roscoe Mitchell and Anthony Braxton, who were merging their academic classical studies with an affinity for Ornette Coleman. Outside of school, Muhal Richard Abrams encouraged them to feature compositions of their own, all of which emerged as the core tenet of the emerging Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM).

But just as the AACM was beginning, Threadgill found himself serving in the Vietnam War, which he describes in two astonishing chapters with the weighty titles "Democratic Vistas" and "Frame Thy Fearful." Originally assigned to a relatively safe musicians' unit, he wound up in combat, including during the notorious Tet Offensive. Undoubtedly, his experiences also speak for many silent musicians who also served in Southeast Asia. Threadgill fully delves into the war's brutality, insanity and lasting trauma while also telling a few picaresque stories and showing what the experience has lent to his music. Standing guard in the Vietnamese jungle made him acutely aware of the essence of sound, and the indigenous Montagnards of the central highlands showed him their own kinds of percussion.

The Montagnards' gongs inspired



Threadgill's hubkaphone invention, which he brought to his groundbreaking trio Air with drummer Steve McCall and bassist Fred Hopkins during the 1970s. The city impacted him in other ways: Regular blues jam sessions introduced different musical aesthetics and intricacies. Playing in polka bands enhanced his clarinet facility. Threadgill's scores for a local theatrical production led to reworking classic ragtime, which became key to the album *Air Lore*. The AACM instilled a focus on collectives. Still, after a few global forays, Air felt the Midwest was too confining and relocated to New York in 1975.

As Threadgill writes, they were part of a mass migration that drew all kinds of creatives. Manhattan's loft jazz scene was blooming, but he remained just as excited to continue working across diverse idioms. He took part in early post-punk, no wave alongside onstage lunatic James Chance, while on other nights Threadgill brought new ideas to classic Afro-Cuban bandleader Mario Bauzá. The city also provided myriad string and horn players for Threadgill to put together the ebullient Sextett and Very Very Circus.

While Threadgill still resides mainly in Manhattan, his book ultimately declares that his home is the world. Spending a sizable amount of time in Goa, India, gave Threadgill the chance to devise new theories on composition, which are the basis of his recent group Zoid. His descriptions of moving away from the conventions of diatonic harmony are written with clarity and enthusiasm. Those sharp words have been honed after decades of explaining his experiments. He conclusively reflects, "I may have stopped mixing potions, but I haven't stopped those dreams."

DB

Ordering info: aaknopf.com



Kenny Reichert *Deep Breath*

SHIFTING PARADIGM

★★★★½

With his second album, Chicago-based guitarist Kenny Reichert makes a solid and sensitive impression as a distinctive player and composer with wide-ranging idiomatic inklings. Good taste presides throughout, along with thoughtful music-making instincts from the leader and his empathic allies, Tony Barba on saxophones and bass clarinet, bassist John Christensen and drummer Devin Grobka.

The setlist of Reichert originals varies in temperament and stylistic leanings, opening with the sunny sweet "Mirage" and turning left into bittersweet territory on "I've Been Asking A Lot About You," a personal favorite, with a softly haunting descending bridge/coda motif. The band also falls gleefully into the bubbly swing of "Skip" and the unabashedly Thelonious Monk-ish kinetics of "Spears."

The fine, understated singer Alyssa Allgood brings a clarity to "Bashful" and gives voice to a spoken-word text on the introspective, flowingly rubato title track. The band works well with waltz time, as heard on "How's It Going?" and the clarinet feature "Balance."

Spotlighted front-line players Reichert and Barba are strong soloists, doling out inventive improvisations while also demonstrating seamless musical bonding in their joint melodic statements. As a surprising yet gentle denouement — a deep breath, if you will — Reichert closes the set with the probing chord cycle of "Reprise," with his solo guitar laced with delay and ethereal effects otherwise left out of the sonic equation.

Deep Breath is an impressive and breath-conscious outing from the Windy City.

—Josef Woodard

Deep Breath: Mirage; Communion With Nature; Spears; Bashful; Deep Breath; How's It Going?; I've Been Thinking A Lot About You; Skip; Nanjing; Balance; Reprise. (56:22)

Personnel: Kenny Reichert, guitar; Tony Barba, tenor and soprano saxophone, bass clarinet; Alyssa Allgood, vocalist (4, 5); John Christensen, bass; Devin Grobka, drums.

Ordering info: shiftingparadigmrecords.com

Jeremy Pelt *The Art Of Intimacy, Vol. 2: His Muse*

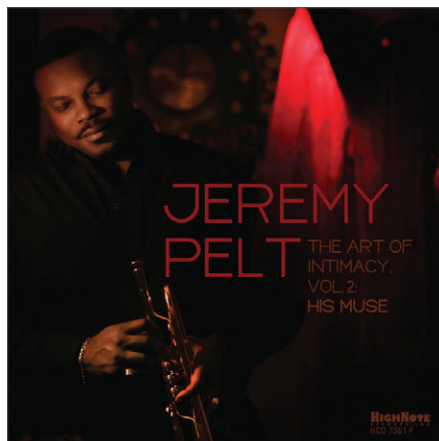
HIGHNOTE

★★★★★

On this second volume of ballads under the title *The Art Of Intimacy*, Jeremy Pelt's deft exploration of standards limns the meanings of closeness.

There are several ways to think of intimacy. The most obvious is, of course, the romantic inflection, and these tunes certainly work toward that. Yet there is also a way to think of intimacy as an enduring and meaningful attempt to get basic with each other, as Toni Cade Bambara once put it. In other words, the simplicity of these compositions allows listeners to get in touch with themselves as we are getting in touch with each other.

Buoyed by a rhythm section of Billy Hart and Buster Williams, Pelt's insistence on delivering the message of "the griots" — the title of his two-volume collection of jazz stories — is also embodied in his choice to remind us to



stay close, to stay held, to be intimate in the most basic ways with the energies that make us human and loved.
—Joshua Myers

The Art Of Intimacy, Vol. 2: His Muse: ...From Whom I Love So Much; Slow Hot Wind; If I Ruled The World; I Can't Escape From You; There'll Be Other Times; Don't Love Me; Blues In Sophistication; Two Different Worlds; When She Makes Music; Two For The Road. (50:51)

Personnel: Jeremy Pelt, trumpet, vocals; Victor Gould, piano; Buster Williams, bass; Billy Hart, drums; Chico Pinheiro, guitar; David O'Rourke, string arrangements.

Ordering info: jazzdepot.com

Rich Ruth *Live At Third Man Records*

THIRD MAN RECORDS

★★★★½

Deep into Rich Ruth's new live album, he tells the audience, cheek half-tongued, "I heard you guys like ambient music." With its thick atmospheric sound washes and emphasis on ensemble mass over individual solos or melodies, Ruth's music does place ambient aesthetics in the house — in a tough love kind of way. But the stylistic recipe also includes generous helpings of prog-rock, jam band and even avant-jazz improv impulses. The music manages to be strangely soothing and pummeling, in a harmless and, yes, ambient direction.

In an unusual case of echoing a recent release in altered form, Ruth's new album is essentially a live recreation of the music from his pandemic-timed personal home studio project from 2020, *I Survived, It's Over*, in a rawer, less studio-polished manifestation. Live, the group crackles — and muses — with the compacted sound sources of distorted-spacey electric guitar, washes and fragmented riffs, drums and synthesizer from the rock camp, and flute, saxophones and pedal steel from other musical corners.

"Taken Back" serves as an open-spirited onramp/prelude to the larger suite, leading into the chugging synth and edgy-toned baritone sax on "Older But No Less Confused," the title of which could refer to pandemic times and other struggles in Ruth's recent life.

A more categorically "ambient" calling card



arrives with the tune "It's The Water," opening with a long, dreamy solo part by pedal steel player TK, his sound colored and textured with distortion and delay.

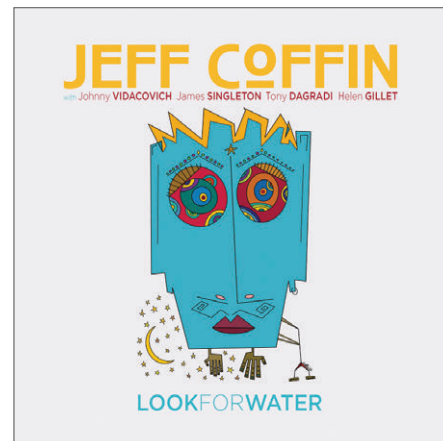
From another expressive angle in the album's mix, "Desensitization & Reprocessing" follows a drone and wail logic, with the character of punk-tinged industrial meditation music — massive yet friendly and wellness — meaning. Such paradoxes are a part of the artistic perspective in Ruth's intriguing new brew. File under many categories at once.

—Josef Woodard

Live At Third Man Records: Taken Back; Older But Not Less Confused; Thou Mayest; Marina; Haynes Manor; Heavy & Earthbound; It's The Water; Desensitization & Reprocessing; Coming Down. (56:22)

Personnel: Michael Ruth, synth, guitar; Sam Que, saxophone, flute; Spencer Cullum, pedal steel; Taylor Floreth, drums; James Green, flugelhorn, aux percussion; Taro Yamazaki, bass

Ordering info: thirdmanrecords.com



Jeff Coffin *Look For Water*

EAR UP

★★½

Ostensibly a love letter to New Orleans, *Look For Water* instead seems to be an album-length experiment. The research question: Can saxophonist Jeff Coffin and his quintet take the plodding-est, least interesting rhythms under the sun and make something lively and engaging out of them? The conclusion: Not really.

Certainly there's a good bit of New Orleans in these rhythms, but in Coffin's chordless, not-free-but-loose context they come out strangely listless. On "New Dawn" and "Half A Baton," bassist James Singleton and drummer Johnny Vidacovich hammer on beats as though literally beating the life out of them. Elsewhere, the musicians seem detached. On the title track, a feature for Coffin's tenor, the leader strives to sound thoughtful and exploratory, but instead sounds bored. "Sweet Magnolias" tries to inject some humor (a boozy melody that's old-timey to the point of parody, à la Ornette Coleman's "Embraceable You"). But by the time one reaches it in the middle of the record, its sluggishness just feels like more of the same.

Compounding the problem is a group of Coffin compositions that aren't very attractive. The melody to "Green Light For Billy Drews" thinks it's more surprising than it actually is; "New Dawn" meanders without arriving anywhere.

Yet one track on *Look For Water* is truly thrilling. The closer, "Luminosity," is all fire and imagination, with a march-based rhythm that shows how much excitement still lives in that Crescent City "big four" beat. The difference is that "Luminosity" features New Orleanian cellist Helen Gillet, with whom Coffin has successfully collaborated in the past (on 2021's *Let It Shine*). More of her, please! —Michael J. West

Look For Water: Toy Piano; Green Light For Billy Drews; New Dawn; Look For Water; Sweet Magnolias; Half A Baton; Milford; Yusef; Luminosity. (52:14)

Personnel: Jeff Coffin, soprano and tenor saxophones; Tony Dagradi, tenor saxophone; James Singleton, bass; Johnny Vidacovich, drums; Helen Gillet, cello (9).

Ordering info: earuprecords.com



Martin Wind, visions of the Sonny Rollins pianoless trio.

A New & Independent Era

The days when a few record labels were responsible for nearly all of the significant jazz recordings are long gone — particularly in America, where most of the larger labels neglect jazz altogether, indies headed by creative jazz artists rule.

On **Shawn Maxwell's *Story At Eleven* (Independent Release; 39:50 ★★★★★)**, his 11th album as a leader, the alto saxophonist is joined by keyboardist Collin Clauson, electric bassist Michael Barton and drummer Greg Essig to perform an original four-part suite. In the first three sections, a repetitive phrase played by one of the musicians serves as that movement's foundation. "Appointment With..." features a colorful keyboard solo and a Maxwell improvisation that hints at Kenny Garrett. "Internal Rift" is built off a drum pattern that inspires some wailing alto, while "Near Surrender" includes three themes that explore a variety of fresh ideas. The concluding "Answer & Arrival" may seem the most conventional until one notices the time signatures (evolving from 13/4 to 11/4 and 3/4).

Ordering info: shawnmaxwell.com

Baltimore trumpeter **Erin Connelly** makes her recording debut as a leader on ***Fruitful* (Independent Release; 42:46 ★★★★★)**. Her quartet with tenor and soprano saxophonist Derrick Michaels, bassist Zach Swanson and drummer Tony Martucci perform three free improvisations. Because Connelly, who was inspired early on by Chet Baker, has a laidback and thoughtful approach, the music takes its time to unfold and is often quite lyrical. The first of the three improvs, "Apicity," begins as mostly harmonized long tones by the horns, staying ensemble-oriented as the musicians exchange the lead along the way even though they are uncertain exactly where the music is heading. Most successful is "Lone," which has the trumpeter in the spotlight, setting a mournful mood that conveys loneliness before things cheer up a bit.

Ordering info: erinconnellytrumpet.com

The Le Boeuf Brothers' *Hush* (SoundSpore; 67:15 ★★½) is purposely a quiet affair as the siblings aimed to create a latter-day *Kind Of Blue* program of thoughtful originals. The quintet, consisting of pianist Pascal Le Boeuf (who is often the lead voice), the cool-toned altoist Remy Le Boeuf, tenor saxophonist Dayna Stephens, bassist Linda May Han Oh and drummer Christian Euman performs atmospheric originals that are a bit cinematic, emphasize ensembles and long melody statements, and are occasionally tedious. The lack of mood and tempo variation results in a program that rarely rises above the level of high-quality background music.

Ordering info: leboeufbrothers.com

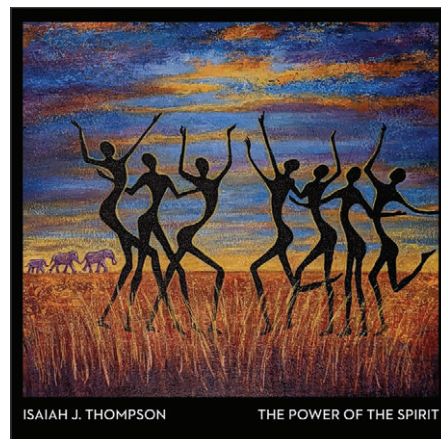
Aberdeen is a large group (16–17 pieces) that falls into the "beyond" category. On ***Held Together* (Independent Release; 32:38 ★★★★★)**, the orchestra performs its inventive renditions of traditional folk songs from other countries (including Mongolia and Malaysia) plus two songs co-written by Trombone Shorty and three originals from its leader and arranger, Brian Plautz. While there are a few relatively short solos, the emphasis is on dense ensembles that, due to the inclusion of two or three guitarists, are generally rockish.

Ordering info: aberddeen.band

Bassist **Martin Wind's *Gravity* (Laika, 63:48 ★★★★★)** brings back the sound of Sonny Rollins' pianoless trios of the late 1950s, not only in the instrumentation (which includes tenor saxophonist Peter Weniger and drummer Jonas Burgwinkel) but in the melodic approach of Weniger. Their swinging version of Johnny Mandel's "El Cajon" has Weniger sounding as inventive as Rollins of that era, although on other selections his own musical personality shines through. Other bright moments include "Still Friends" (a well disguised "Just Friends"), a ballad version of Beethoven's "Pathétique," the danceable bass lines on "Another Beer, Please" and the relaxed tango feel of "Tuyo."

Ordering info: martinwind.com

OLUF APOLD



Isaiah J. Thompson *The Power Of The Spirit*

BLUE ENGINE

★★★★½

Pianist Isaiah J. Thompson is on a roll. He joined the John Pizzerelli Trio for the guitarist's most recent album, *Stage And Screen* (which received a 4.5-star review in the June issue of *DownBeat*), and subsequent tour. He captured top honors in the American Pianists Association's jazz pianist competition in April, which amounts to \$200,000 in cash and prizes. Just a month before, he released *The Power Of The Spirit*, his debut leader recording on Blue Engine Records.

The hype that surrounds Thompson is well-deserved. His musicianship is fleet, powerful and rock-solid. His artistry is soulful. When "The IT Department" kicks off this seven-tune set of originals recorded live at Dizzy's Club in New York, listeners will know exactly where Thompson is coming from — the church. With a quartet that includes Julian Lee on tenor saxophone, Philip Norris on bass, and TJ Reddick and Domo Branch sharing drum duties, and Thompson and company deliver the goods — be it on the medium-tempo groove of "The Soul Messenger," the high-speed chase of "For Phineas" or the quiet jam of "Tales Of The Elephant And Butterfly." Those first four tunes on the recording set up what makes a great live album. When you hear them, you wish you were there. The 26-year-old Thompson has all — the heart, skill and swagger of a budding superstar.

The set closes with "The Power Of The Spirit," and Thompson makes sure the music is befitting the title. It's a tune that surely left listeners wanting more that night at Dizzy's. Luckily, we can all enjoy the set again and again now.

—Frank Alkyer

The Power Of The Spirit: Welcome; The IT Department; For Phineas (Intro); For Phineas; Tales Of The Elephant And Butterfly; Good Intentions (learn our names and say them right); Thank You Betsy; The Power Of The Spirit. (76:17)

Personnel: Isaiah J. Thompson, piano; Julian Lee, tenor saxophone; Philip Norris, bass; TJ Reddick, drums (2, 3, 9); Domo Branch, drums (5–8).

Ordering info: blueenginerecords.org

People of Earth

People Of Earth

TRUTH REVOLUTION

★★★★½

People of Earth's self-titled album offers snapshots of life on Earth through the lens of New York City: past, present and future.

The set opens with "Chiku," a traditional salsa (the sort that exploded in 1970s New York). It's a rallying cry, but only the tip of the iceberg that the New York-based collective has to offer.

The follow-up track, "Shoulda Known" is rooted in mambo, and introduces stabs of dark, textured synths and even a hip-hop hook. The song even bears a whisper of 1980s freestyle as it unfolds. To illustrate the diversity of this set, the group offers a cooking version of Leonard Bernstein's "Mambo" from *West Side Story* alongside the soulful cut "Wolf Mother," a number that almost feels like something that would have been highlighted on the James Mtume-scored 1990's TV show *New York Undercover*.

The idea of a group composed of citizens of the world performing an eclectic fusion of Latin sounds feels like less of a lofty mission than a gift to the rest of the people of the world.

—Ayana Contreras

People Of Earth: Chiku; Shoulda Known; La Mejor Mujer; Piloto; Te Devoro; Mambo; Wolf Mother; Un Ratito; La Coda. (45:53)

Personnel: Ivan Llanes, Joana Elena Obieta, Ayamey Bell, vocals; Raul Rios, Rachel Therrien, trumpet; Malec Heermans, Kalun Leung, Achilles Liarmakopoulos, trombone; Ahmed Alom Vega, Carolina Calvache, keyboards; Ian Stewart, bass; Gabriel Globus-Hoenich, Victor Pablo Garcia Gaetan, Keisel Jimenez, percussion, drums; Jahim Jiménez, punteador (4); José Fabián Rosa Santos, requinto, guacharo (4); Armando Rentas, seguidor (4); Marcos Costa, vocals (5); Bryan Davis, trumpet (6).

Ordering info: trstore.bandcamp.com



Donny McCaslin

I Want More

EDITION

★★★

Reedist Donny McCaslin was a vital part of the band that played behind David Bowie on his superb swan-song *Blackstar* in 2015, helping craft its moody, rich texture. The collaboration had a profound effect, as nearly everything he's done since has pushed toward a rock aesthetic, never more than with *I Want More*. The leader's compositions, including a few written with his bandmates, recall the sound of '80s new wave — Simple Minds, Tears for Fears, Thompson Twins — tweaked with a supersaturated aggression. The production and arrangements are built for pop, not jazz.

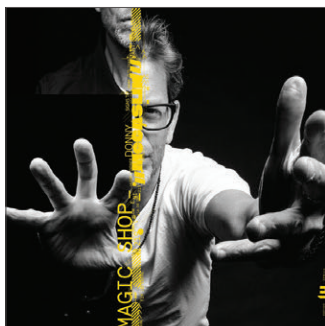
The leader's band brings plenty of heat. Drummer Mark Guiliana and bassist Tim Lefebvre sculpt massive grooves, while keyboardist Jason Lindner plies thick layers of color. There is nothing subtle, clobbering the listener with its dense attack. The aptly titled "Body Blow" leaves nothing to chance with its relentless onslaught. The performances are technically impressive, but the end result is cold and simplistic. This band achieved magic with Bowie. On its own, the quartet is just a machine.

—Peter Margasak

I Want More: Stria; Fly My Spaceship; Hold Me Tight; Body Blow; Big Screen; Turbo; Landsdown: I Want More. (43:00)

Personnel: Donny McCaslin, tenor saxophone, flute, alto flute; Jason Lindner: synthesizers, Wuritzer piano, electronics; Tim Lefebvre, bass, keyboards; Mark Guiliana, drums; Chris Bullock, bass flute (3); Jannek Zechner, keyboards (3); Sara Caswell, violin (5, 7); Joyce Hammann, violin (5, 7); Lois Martin, viola (5, 7); Joyce Redhage Ferber, cello (5, 7).

Ordering info: editionrecords.com



SHER MUSIC Co.

New!

The PRACTICE NOTEBOOKS of MICHAEL BRECKER



For all treble clef instruments

SHER MUSIC Co.

- Beautifully engraved version of his hand-written notebooks – over 700 entries!
- 35 years of Michael Brecker's musical inspirations at your fingertips!

See SherMusic.com for details



Realist Sound

for all of your violins or violas, whenever you need it.

The Violin

SoundClip:

a clip-on pick-up that raises the bar for clip-on pick-ups.

Available from fine music shops.

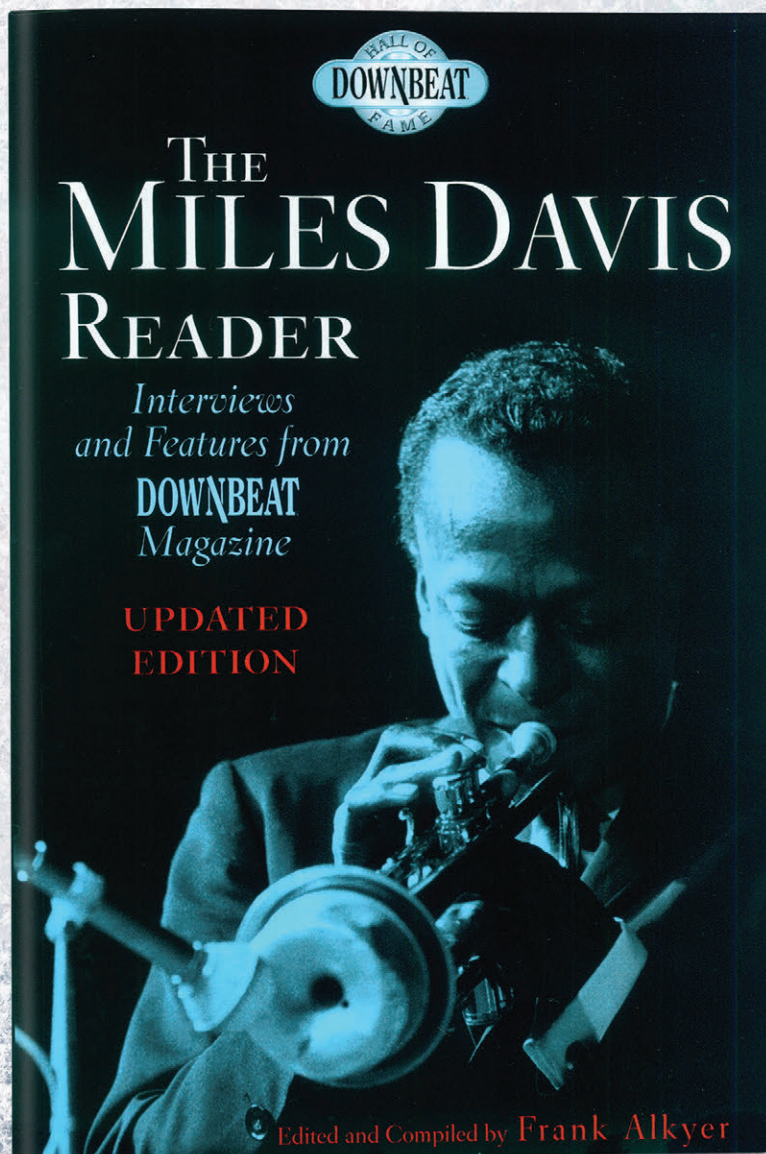
The Realist SoundClip

facebook.com/realistacoustic



More MILES!

DownBeat's Miles Davis Reader is now available in paperback with more photos, more articles and more reviews. It has 50-plus years of Miles coverage as it happened—ripped from the pages of DownBeat magazine.



The perfect gift for
a loved one...or for you!



Just scan the QR code or
go to downbeat.com/Miles



BEST OF THE 2023 NAMM SHOW

Reporting by Ed Enright and Katie Kailus

The NAMM Show was an especially vibrant experience this year, as the global music industry's annual showcase for new instruments and gear returned for a second successful post-COVID gathering. Held April 13-15 at the Anaheim Convention Center in California, the trade show welcomed a cast of VIP artists and bands who descended upon the exhibit areas, gave product demonstrations and took part in daytime talks, after-hours concerts and award ceremonies. In the following pages, DownBeat presents the best of The 2023 NAMM Show.

On exhibit at NAMM, clockwise, from top left: Saxophonists Eric Marienthal, Jerry Vivino and Danny Janklow kick off this year's VandoJam sponsored by Vandoren; The Commanders Jazz Ensemble, from the U.S. Air Force Band of the Golden West, gives a daytime concert on the Yamaha Grand Plaza Stage (photo: Getty Images for NAMM); lead vocalist and guitarist Scotty Morris performs during Big Bad Voodoo Daddy's Concert on the Grand (photo: Getty Images for NAMM); rock icon John Fogerty accepts NAMM's Music For Life Award (photo: Ryan Kotrlík); singer-songwriter and noted producer Brandi Carlile leads a TEC Tracks session (photo: Getty Images for NAMM); "beatbox" saxophonist Derek Brown makes an appearance at the P. Mauriat exhibit (photo: courtesy P. Mauriat).





VANDOREN SYNTHETIC CLARINET REED

Vandoren has released its first synthetic reed for B-flat clarinet: the VK1, made from a proprietary composite material developed in the south of France. This material and design reproduces the physical and acoustical behavior of a cane reed to imitate the natural tonal qualities of cane regardless of weather, altitude or other potentially challenging playing conditions. vandoren.fr/en

P. MAURIAT ANNIVERSARY SAXES

The P. Mauriat 20th Anniversary Rolled Tone Hole Alto and Tenor Saxophones feature a black finish, gold-lacquer keys and bell, special edition case and custom engraving, and a Kirk Whalum Black Neck on the tenor. Featuring rolled tone-hole construction, a larger bore ratio and enlarged bell design, the PMXA-67RBX20 Alto Saxophone and the PMXT-66RBX20 Tenor Saxophones are free-blowing instruments with a stable low register, omnidirectional sound and superior aesthetic design.

pmauriatmusic.com



VICTORY MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS MAJOR REVELATION

Victory Musical Instruments' Revelation series saxophones provide players with an ergonomic design and are available in four finishes: gold lacquer, gold-plated, silver-plated and a special edition silver-plated with rose gold keys and a sterling silver neck. The special edition model also comes with two neck options for alto, tenor and straight soprano models, offering players a broad range of tonal versatility. victorymusical.com



JODYJAZZ HARD-RUBBER ALTO DV

JodyJazz's DV HR series alto mouthpiece is the company's first hard-rubber model to feature the patented DV design. The DV secondary window design adds mid and low harmonics to the sound of the new DV HR Alto, so players can cut through when they need it, but still play a pretty ballad. The result is a harmonious invention that provides ease of playing. The new DV HR Alto is available in size 5, 6, 7 and 8 tip openings. jodyjazz.com



YAMAHA IMPROVED COLOR, COMPLEXITY

Yamaha's YBL-835 Xeno bass trombone replaces the YBL-830 Xeno model. It features improved color and complexity in the sound, with yellow brass and gold brass bell material options and a detachable bell option. The horns help players put more air into the instrument and get a more robust sound. usa.yamaha.com



JJ BABBITT BROTHERS IN TONE

The new Meyer Bros. mouthpieces for soprano, tenor and baritone saxophones serve as an expansion of the famous Meyer Bros. alto sax mouthpiece and constitute a new collection in JJ Babbitt's Connoisseur Series. The Meyer Bros.

Band of Bros. soprano, tenor and baritone mouthpieces are designed to match the sound and personality profile of the existing alto sax model offering musicians control with flexible, warm, dark and powerful sound. Meyer worked hand-in-hand with artist partner Mike Smith to create the new line. jjbabbitt.com



EASTMAN WINDS REVAMPED 52ND STREET BARI

The Eastman 52nd Street Baritone Saxophone comes unlacquered for a vintage appearance. The revamped instrument is exceptionally responsive in all registers and produces a big sound with precise intonation. A larger bell and rolled-style tone holes contribute to the vintage tonal qualities. The new model has a high F# key, low A, 52nd Street engraving, "S" neck and a deluxe case with wheels. eastmanwinds.com





ROSWELL MINI K47X

Roswell Pro Audio added the Mini K47x to its Mini K Mic line. Utilizing different capsules and custom-designed circuits, the Mini K line includes the Mini K47 and Mini K87 transformer-less designs, as well as the Mini K67x and now the Mini K47x transformer-coupled designs. On quiet sources, the K47x sounds like the Mini K47. On moderate to louder sources, the K47x circuit is pushed into gentle saturation, which adds harmonic complexity and richness to the sound of the mic. roswellproaudio.com

BEYERDYNAMIC M SERIES REDESIGN

Beyerdynamic has given its M series mics a design refresh. Merging tradition with technology, the new design keeps to the mics' core principles and retains the sound quality of the M series, but gains a new aesthetic that's in line with other Beyerdynamic products. The new mics will follow a uniform design language and product naming strategy across the series. north-america.beyerdynamic.com



TASCAM SONICVIEW RECORDING MIXERS

Sonicview is a new line of Tascam digital recording and mixing consoles with multi-environment touch screens. Each Sonicview console (models 24XP, 16XP and SB-16D) features a newly developed Class 1 HDIA mic preamp, 96kHz/54-bit float internal processing, a FPGA mixer engine and 32-bit ADC. tascam.com



NEUMANN INTERFACE FOR HOME & STUDIO

Neumann's first-ever audio interface, the MT 48, features USB and ADAT connectivity, as well as a user interface that's optimized for ease of use in both pro studio and home studio applications. With a dynamic range of 136dB (A) and mic preamps with up to 78dB gain, the MT 48 interface also features four analog inputs and eight analog output channels and is expandable via ADAT and AES67. en-de.neumann.com

YAMAHA DM3 SERIES

Yamaha's new DM3 series digital mixing console give users the ability to do more with a compact digital console. The DM3 series aims to break compact mixer stereotypes by offering excellent sound quality, fast setup, intuitive operation and professional-level features for live sound, streaming and live or home recording and music production. usa.yamaha.com



SHURE CLEAN, CONSISTENT SIGNALS

Shure's GLX-D+ Dual Band Wireless System provides a solution for guitarists, bassists, vocalists and presenters. The system operates in 2.4GHz and now 5.8GHz, providing a consistent signal by automatically scanning for and selecting the cleanest frequencies. The GLX-D+ Dual Band avoids interference and ensures dropouts won't stop the show. shure.com



WARM AUDIO TUBE MIC PREAMP

The WA-MPX is a reproduction of a vintage tape-machine tube preamp known for its analog warmth. It delivers 300 volts and 90dB of tube gain to produce a timeless sound that elite audio engineers still seek today. With true-to-original circuit design and selectable tape saturation, the WA-MPX reproduces all the analog tone of the original to bring a vintage vibe to your recordings. warmaudio.com



DEXIBELL POLISHED APPEARANCE

Dexibell's Vivo H10 Dark Red Polished Piano series is a new addition to its line of upright and mini-grand digital pianos. The Vivo H10 digital piano series combines advanced technology with Italian design, making it a suitable choice for musicians looking for both style and substance. The Vivo H10 piano series features a dark red polished finish, reminiscent of Italy's iconic sports car brands, and offers a range of technological features, including Dexibell's patented True 2 Life technology, which captures the small nuances and details of acoustic piano sounds. dexibell.com



KAWAI ANNIVERSARY UPGRADES

Kawai has added two new digital pianos, the CA401 and CA501, making a total of four models in the company's Concert Artist series lineup. The new models have received substantial upgrades over the previous models, the CA49 and CA59. They include the new "Competition Grand" piano sample, which is recorded from the pianist's perspective, providing a cleaner, crisper, more authentic concert grand experience. In addition, both models now have Bluetooth MIDI V5 and Bluetooth audio V5. kawalus.com



NORD STREAMLINED SYNTH

The Nord Stage 4 features a new panel design with dedicated LED faders for each layer, providing an improved overview and more flexibility when creating sounds and performing live. The new preset library is packed with ready-to-use piano, synth and organ sounds for quick and smooth patch creation.

The layer scene lets players seamlessly switch between two different sound setups at the touch of a button. nordkeyboards.com

YAMAHA SMART & WELL-CONNECTED

Yamaha's P-S500 digital piano changes the way players learn and enjoy the piano, using advancements in technology and design to help aspiring pianists achieve their musical goals. The P-S500 is equipped with Stream Lights technology, which uses red and blue lights above each key to show the pianist which notes to play and when to play them. This feature helps users learn how to play and practice entire songs using both hands without ever having to know how to read music. usa.yamaha.com



GATOR FRAMEWORKS PRO SUSTAIN PEDAL

Gator Frameworks has created a traditional-style sustain pedal designed specifically for keyboards and electronic pianos. The new pedal offers professional musicians a compact and practical solution that provides genuine mechanical tension, mimicking the feel of slight resistance that players get with a traditional acoustic piano's damper pedal. gatorcases.com



1V/OCT EURORACK MODULE

The Centre is a flagship Eurorack module made by 1V/Oct from Hong Kong. The Centre is modular, packing more than 20 modules into one module that can be configured in multiple ways with external or internal patching. Features include a wavetable oscillator with stereo output, multiple VCOs and LFOs, shape-based LFOs with arbitrary shapes and included shape editor, envelope generators, filters, random note generator and quantizer with support for Scala scale file format, and lo-fi delay and lo-fi FDN reverb effects. 1vocat.com



MARTIN SATIN FINISH

The Martin D-18 Satin dreadnought guitar is built to the same specifications as the company's standard D-18 model, known for its projective tone and strong bass, but it comes in a satin-finish top, back and sides. The top includes an aging toner and is also available with an amberburst. The D-18 Satin is crafted with mahogany back and sides, so players will still get plenty of volume and pick up some bright trebles and punchy midrange tones. The scalloped bracing on this model contributes volume and a fuller sound than non-scalloped bracing. martinguitar.com

D'ANGELICO ARCHTOP HISTORY IN A THINLINE

Designed in collaboration with New York jazz guitarist Mark Whitfield, the Excel SS Soho from D'Angelico features a fully hollow body and single Kent Armstrong "Jazzy Joe" floating mini-humbucker. The guitar offers warm low-end as well as articulate mid-range, and a slim C-shape neck and 16-inch fingerboard radius make fast lines more manageable. Grover Super-Super-Rotomatic locking tuners, Jescar fretwire and a Stairstep tailpiece bring a timeless vibe. A laminated spruce top featuring a Dark Cherry Burst finish pays homage to Whitfield's all-time favorite jazz boxes while striking a balance between tradition and modern. dangelicoguitars.com



IK MULTIMEDIA GUITAR/BASS INTERFACE

IK Multimedia's AXE I/O ONE guitar interface is a do-it-all interface for guitar and bass players. AXE I/O ONE sports IK's Z-TONE impedance control, JFET input for warm, tube-like sound, dedicated amp out for practicing or reamping, pickup selector, and external volume/wah pedal or switch controller inputs. The AXE I/O ONE includes AmpliTube and TONEX software with access to thousands of presets, amps and pedal rig tones on ToneNET for a complete digital studio rig. ikmultimedia.com



TAYLOR PREMIUM FEEL & SOUND

Taylor Guitars' 814ce is the latest addition to the brand's Builder's Edition collection. This Builder's Edition model enhances the performance virtues of Taylor's 814ce, with an emphasis on premium feel and sound. The guitar features a solid Adirondack spruce top paired with solid Indian rosewood back and sides for a rich-sounding, versatile tone suitable for players of all styles. taylorguitars.com

EASTMAN SHAKESPEAREAN SOLIDBODY

Eastman's Juliet LA is the latest addition to the brand's solidbody series that also includes the Romeo LA. Juliet LA has all the signatures of Eastman's Juliet series, including an original offset design by Eastman head designer, Otto D'Ambrosio, and a lightweight, solid, one-piece okoume body that's sculpted for comfort and playability. This is complemented by an inlaid pickguard to highlight the guitar's carved curves and paired with the accoutrements of Romeo LA. The guitar is finished in Celestine Blue Truetone Gloss. eastmanguitars.com



PETERSON TUNERS MINI TUNER PEDAL

Peterson Tuners' new StrobeStomp Mini delivers the same 0.1 cent tuning accuracy of all Peterson Strobe Tuners in a mini pedal tuner format. Featuring a high-definition LCD strobe display with variable LED color backlight, the tuner includes a pop-less, true bypass mode and a buffered output mode. The StrobeStomp Mini features more than 80 exclusive, on-board sweetened tunings and guided tunings. petersontuners.com

DRUMS



LUDWIG NEUSONIC'S NEW ERA

Ludwig's Neusonic series has been given a major upgrade. Designed for the working drummer, Neusonic now offers improved tone, upgraded drum finishes, updated shell construction, more Rapid Tom sizes and new finishes. The shell is seven-ply crossover design made up of a four-ply maple exterior and three-ply cherry interior measuring at 5.5 mm thick — a design that produces full-range tuning and optimizes sustain. ludwig-drums.com



ON-STAGE QUIETER CYMBALS

On-Stage's LVCP5000 Low-Volume Cymbals are designed for quiet practice and performance in controlled volume settings. The cymbals reduce volume by nearly 70% compared to standard cymbals. Crafted from stainless steel, the LVCP5000 set features a pair of 14-inch hi-hats, a 16-inch crash, an 18-inch crash and a 20-inch ride. on-stage.com



DPA MICROPHONES DRUM MIC KIT

The DDK4000 is a drum microphone kit that includes DPA's 4055 Kick Drum Mic, as well as the new 2012 Cardioid and a stereo pair of the new 2015 Wide Cardioid. The DDK4000 also includes three of DPA's 4099 Core Instrument Mics. dpamicrophones.com

TAMA STELLAR CONFIGURATIONS

The Tama Stagestar series is a complete drum set package available in a variety of configurations and finishes. Designed to be affordably priced with high-quality components, each Stagestar kit comes with an Omni-ball tom holder as well as double-braced hardware for increased stability. tama.com



AVATAR ACCURATE STRIKING RESPONSE

Avatar's A71 electronic drum kit provides high-speed, equalized sound and more accurate striking response. The kit contains 467 sounds and 30 default drum kits. For each drum and cymbal, drummers can set the volume, sensibility, curve, mask time, "retrig" level and anti-cross. The kit also offers a variety of features on the sound module, such as recording, replay, review and loop. hxm-music.com



DDRUM UPGRADED SHELL PACKS

Ddrum has upgraded its Dominion Birch series, with reimagined shell-pack configurations, new hardware and fresh finishes. Featuring four-piece, five-piece and six-piece sets, the Dominion Birch series offers drummers of any genre a strong foundation for tonal quality, thanks to the dynamic sound of the classic birch shells. A splash of design sophistication gives the Dominion Birch series a distinct appearance. ddrum.com

TOCA

ANNIVERSARY MARGARITAS

Toca Percussion is celebrating its 30th anniversary with Limited Edition Margarita Congas and Bongos. The instruments feature luminescent shells adorned with anodized hardware, topped with white Remo Nuskyn heads.

The drums have 28-inch tall, seamless fiberglass shells. The bigger belly shape produces deeper bass tones and crisper, clearer highs. tocapercussion.com



Summer Style





STUART LOWE

The "Grundgestalt" concept has provided a methodology for much of James Brown's work as a composer.

The 'Grundgestalt' Concept

Repeating & Transforming a Melodic Fragment Into a Complete, Organic Original Composition

My jazz compositions have often drawn influence from my experience in classical music. Forms such as fugue, sonata-allegro and theme-and-variations of the Western European music tradition have always fascinated me and inspired my own work as a jazz composer. I have a particular interest in how composers such as Bach or Beethoven demonstrated their craft of organically developing a single or small group of melodic ideas to form an entire piece.

This article will provide a brief analysis of two original compositions, illustrating their structure, motivic development and reference to the concept known as "Grundgestalt" or "Basic Shape" as described by Arnold Schoenberg that can be found in the work of many composers including Beethoven, Schubert, Duke Ellington and Kenny Wheeler.

Musicologist Edward Green makes a comparison between Ellington and Beethoven in his 2008 paper *"It Don't Mean a Thing If It Ain't Got That Grundgestalt!"—Ellington from a Motivic Perspective*. Rather than focusing on orchestration, Green discusses how Ellington used motivic development in compositions such as "Ko-ko" and "Far East Suite."

"In Schoenberg's conception of this term, the 'organic musical growth' of the Grundgestalt idea largely differed from what we ordinarily think of as 'motivic develop-

ment,'" Green comments. "There is less reliance on techniques of simple sequence and fragmentation; instead, a nuanced and flexible understanding of how one musical shape (Gestalt) can, with unlimited elasticity, evolve from another."

'Toronto Folk Song'

Written for my debut recording, *First Dance* (1998), "Toronto Folk Song" has a medium Latin feel and is organized in a common A1-A2-B-A3 form not unlike many standard jazz tunes. The opening theme shown in Example 1 begins with a straightahead melodic sequence in A minor that flows to a natural conclusion where a repeated and reoccurring 7/4 vamp (4/4 + 3/4) provides a melodic resting point. Example 2 shows how at the end of A2 there is a modulation to the relative major key. This movement from the home key to a closely related yet distinct new key is a structural tactic common in baroque and classical music and is epitomized in sonata-allegro form.

The "B" section or bridge (see Example 3) is an example of how a flexible recycling of motivic cells can be used to provide a new section while remaining connected to the opening material. Here, the upward melodic shape of the "A" section is retained while the rhythmic values are altered to provide contrast and variety. Whole notes, quarter notes and eighth notes are reordered by "Interversion," a tech-

nique introduced by musical analyst Rudolph Reti. The dramatic key change C7sus-E_bm7 is also important in achieving divergence.

Example 4 shows the ending of the bridge and how the melodic "cell" from the beginning is repeated and slightly altered to build suspense in anticipation of the recapitulation of "A." Musical "cells" were discussed by Third Stream composer Gunther Schuller as a basic melodic/rhythmic/harmonic structure in composition.

'Song Within the Story'

Written for my 2022 album of the same name, this composition exhibits the fundamental idea of Grundgestalt and is cast in four sections marked "A," "B," "C" and "D." The musical motifs or cells introduced in "A" provide the melodic material for the rest of the composition.

"Song Within The Story" song structure consists of (see Example 5):

- "A" section (bars 1-12): 12-bar, blues-like structure in D minor.
- Link passage (bars 13-18): modulating to E major.
- "B" section (bars 19-28): E major
- Link passage (bars 29-34): modulating to D_b major.
- "C" Section (bars 35-46): D_b major.
- "D" Section (bars 47-66): D_b pedal with chord change.

Section "A" consist of three imitative phrases similar to the AAB form found in the blues. In this case, the main theme is constructed using "A" (main theme), "A" (main theme variant) and "B" (commentary). Each phrase grows in length with the third "commentary" sentence being the longest. The underlying harmony makes use of the minor chord cliché found in the standard tune "Cry Me A River."

This traditional harmonic progression is expanded here to include a Dm13 chord (Cmaj7/D) with the melody being the 13th. In addition to recycling its basic melodic shape, "Song Within The Story" features the following devices: dramatic key change, modal alteration, rhythmic manipulation, reharmonization and improvised passages.

The six-bar link passage inserted between "A" and "B" (bars 13-18) and again in between "B" and "C" (bars 29-34) sections serves as modulating sequences similar in function to those found in contrapuntal music from the Baroque era (fugues). These two parts feature 6/8 and 2/4 time signatures and vary the basic shape using inversion and the dotted-quarter value suggested by the recurring three eighth-

note pickup in the main theme.

In section “B,” a dramatic key change occurs where the main theme is reharmonized in E major with some changes to its intervallic structure. Here the original theme evolves with the aforementioned elasticity, keeping the essence of the original melody albeit styling different harmonic and rhythmic apparel. Metric interest is achieved with the internal breakdown of 7/8 alternating between a division of 3–4 and 4–3, providing forward motion and adding to the transformation.

Another key change occurs at “C,” where in the final statement of the main theme is in D \flat major. The melody retains its original melodic shape and chord structure but is transformed from minor to major using modal alteration. Measures of 4/4 are combined with 7/8, providing added rhythmic interest.

The final section of the piece (“D”) consists of chords changes over a pedal point with instructions for the players to ad lib, and solo over chord changes. This improvised section serves to continue the D \flat major tonality established at “C” and offers contrast in the sense that a purely improvised melody is required. The duality of using both predetermined and improvised passages within the “head” section of a jazz composition can be witnessed in the music of many jazz composers including Charles Mingus, Graham Collier and Bob Brookmeyer. **DB**

James Brown is a Canadian guitarist, composer and educator. Marrying his background in classical performing and composing with jazz, he has created a unique musical space for himself. Brown has recorded four CDs of original music. His full-scale composition *The Mosley Street Suite* was premiered at Koerner Hall in August 2021, and his fourth studio album, *Song Within The Story* (featuring Clark Johnston, Anthony Michelli and Mike Murley), was released on NGP Records in March 2022. Brown has a master's degree in composition from York University and is currently on faculty at The Oscar Peterson School of Music in Toronto. Visit him online at jamesbrown.ca.

Example 1

Medium latin
♩ = 110

A $Am(ma7)$ $Fm(ma7)$ Dm^{11} Em^{11}

1. E/F $F\#7$ $G7(sus4)$ $Am(ma7)$ $Fma7$

Example 2

2. E/F $F\#7$ $Bbm7$ C/B $C7(sus4)$ **B**

Example 3

B $Ebm7$ $Dbm7(b6)$

Example 4

(4 before A3) $Dm7(b6)$ $D/F\#$ $Gm(ma7)$ $G\#7$ **A3**

Example 5

Song Within the Story

medium latin ♩ = 180

James Brown © 2019

A Dm $Dm(b6)$ Dm^6 $Dm(b6)$ Dm $Dm(b6)$ Dm^6 $Dm(b6)$

5 Dm $Dm(b6)$ Dm^6 $Cma7/D$ Dm^6 $Dm(b6)$ Dm $Dm(ma7\#11)$

9 $Dm(ma7\#11)$ Dm $Bbm7$ Ab Eb/G

15 $Gbm7$ $Dbm7/F$

B 19 $Ema7(sus4)$

23 $Ema7(sus4)$ $A/C\#$ $B/D\#$ $Ema7(sus4)$

27 $Ema7(sus4)$ $A/C\#$ $B/D\#$ $Gm7$ F C/E

31 $Ebm7$ Bb/D

C 35 $Db(sus4)$

39 $Dbm7$ $Db(\#5)$ Db^6 $Db(\#5)$ $Dbm7$ $Db(\#5)$ Db^6 $Db(\#5)$

43 $Dbm7$ $Db(\#5)$ Db^6 Cb/Db Db^6 $Db(\#5)$ $Dbm7$ Eb/Db

D 47 $Gbm7/Db$ Db $Dbm7$ Cb/Db Eb/Db

53 $Db(sus4)$ *ad lib (solo over changes)* Db C/Db Cb/Db Gb/Db Db $Dbm7$ Cb/Db

58 Eb/Db Db *to solos next page*

coda ending only

62 Eb/Db *repeat ad lib* Db



Jamaaladeen Tacuma's 60 bars of bass virtuosity.

Jamaaladeen Tacuma's Electric Bass Solo on 'Bass In Ya Face'

Bass In Ya Face," from Jamaaladeen Tacuma's 1991 album *Boss Of The Bass* (Gramavision), is a medium-tempo, hip-hop groove in E minor that basically serves as an opportunity for Tacuma to wail — and it's totally worth it. It's almost 60 bars of flat-out bass virtuosity, but blended with sheer musicality.

The first descending 16th-note-triplet lick is not actually part of the bass track that is doing the soloing, but I've included it anyhow since it's so hip. The actual bass solo commences in bar 2, and is played through an octaver effect, which adds a thickness to his sound and also lets it cut a bit better over the arrangement. Bass is an octave-transposed instrument, but since Tacuma spends most of his time in the upper reaches of the instrument, starting from the second measure I've presented the solo 8va, which means for bassists it's an octave higher than notated, but for everyone else it appears at pitch.

That first lick also sets up the feel, and we hear Tacuma referencing those 16th-note triplets in a number of places. Bars 22–23 and 47–49 are some spots where it's made quite clear, but there is quite a bit of switching between the triplet figures and straight 16th notes (as in measures 7, 11, 14 and 37–39). He even adds in some eighth-note triplets in bars 17, 39–40, 44–46 and 50. Switching from syncoated 16ths to triplets to 16ths and triplets

again, as he does in bars 43–46, is no small feat, especially as he does it so fluidly.

Also, how about that descending chromatic lick in bars 41–43? The notes are all three 16ths apart, so it's a different kind of 3-against-4. This runs through the first two bars, resolves on beat 4, and then Tacuma picks it up again in the middle of measure 43.

Aiding in the fluidity is Tacuma's use of ornaments, and he varies those. We hear slides, and not just between notes as in measures 4 and 15 (where we hear slides of not just steps, but fourths) but also slides into the beginnings of phrases, which Tacuma exhibits in bars 6, 7, 14 and 19, making it a sort of motif for the early part of his improvisation. We also have a fall-off slide at the end of a phrase in bar 25. Sliding down from a note can be an effective means of ending a phrase, but due to that, it has become fairly common. It speaks to Tacuma's musicality that he doesn't overuse this (possible) cliché, but that he doesn't avoid it, either. Everything has its place when used judiciously.

We also hear a lot of hammer-ons and pull-offs. These ornaments create a legato effect, and can also be a means of producing speed. Again showing his musicality, Tacuma doesn't just use these techniques for shredding, as evidenced by the fact that the opening salvo and corresponding triplet licks in bar 47–49 are all plucked. Tacuma's use of idio-

syncratic bass guitar techniques would appear to be completely about sound.

And then there are the bends. Bent strings are ubiquitous in guitar soloing, but bending a bass string? And not just a half-step. This improvisation starts out with a whole-step bend, and Tacuma holds it for longer than a measure. By the way, the solo concludes with the same bend, held for almost as long.

There's also the bass guitar technique of "slapping," made popular in the '80s and revitalized by such luminaries as Victor Wooten. Part of this technique is snapping the strings with the right-hand fingers so they slap against the fingerboard to create an aggressive twanging effect. I've indicated this with an accent mark, and we hear it in bars 30, 35–36, 50, 52 and 55–57. Tacuma doesn't overuse this technique, treating it more as an effect to create timbral variation to serve his musical vision.

Tacuma's note choices in this improvisation are mainly based on the E minor pentatonic and E blues scales, but what I find compelling is how Tacuma uses this as a basis but deviates from it. Not enough to ruin the rock 'n' roll vibe, but just enough to prevent it from becoming cliché (and give it a bit of a jazz flavor).

And he doesn't just add in the modal notes. Typically, when implying modes off pentatonics, the second is the note to add (since it exists in both the dorian and aeolian modes). It's a fairly safe note to add, and we do hear some F#'s in bars 4, 12 and 33, but we also get some F naturals in measures 34 and 56. He also uses both the sixth (6, 10, 19, 31, 34–35, 38, 53) and minor sixth (5, 32), and in bar 54 he uses both. Since it's possible to use any of these tones, rather than choosing a pair and making it sound modal, Tacuma has decided to use them all and blur the distinction. To my ear, those non-blues-scale notes sound more like decorations of the scale rather than means of defining a mode. Also, Tacuma has a tendency to use the C# in conjunction with D and A notes, implying a IV chord.

You might have noticed that I've skipped over two sections containing non-blues-scale notes: bars 22–23 and 47–49. In both instances, Tacuma takes a motif and moves it chromatically. This presents notes outside the key/scale, but since it's the same intervallic idea moved around, we hear it as related. Moving a lick chromatically like this makes it sound less scalar while retaining the pentatonic attitude. **DB**

Jimi Durso is a guitarist and bassist based in the New York area. He recently released an album of Indian classical music played on the string bass, titled *Border Of Hiranyaloka*. Find out more at jimidurso.bandcamp.com.

$\text{♩} = 100$

1:44

5

8

12

15

19

22

24

29

32

35

38

41

44

47

49

51

54

57



VICTORY
MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

Play the winning choice



LIMITED EDITION
REVELATION SERIES
SAXOPHONES



www.victorymusical.com

DB Music Shop >

For Rates: call (630) 941-2030. All ads are prepaid, no agency commission. Check, money order, and all major credit cards are accepted. **Deadline:** Ad copy and full payment must arrive 2 months prior to DB cover date. **Send your advertisement by MAIL:** DownBeat Classifieds, 188 W. Industrial Drive, Ste. 310, Elmhurst, Illinois, 60126, **EMAIL:** dank@downbeat.com.

ALBUMS & VIDEOS

WE BUY OLD RECORDS!
WE MAKE HOUSE CALLS ANYWHERE IN THE USA
CALL US TOLL FREE
888-993-4673

 LP's, 45s, 78 & 12"
 No Collection is too Large!

JAZZ DVD'S / VIDEO

Concerts, documentaries, movies, TV,
 DVDs, Videotapes, Laserdiscs

We take requests at:
service@jazzwestdvd.com

JAZZWEST,
 BOX 842 (DB), Ashland, OR 97520
 (541) 482-5529 www.jazzwestdvd.com

INSTRUMENTS & ACCESSORIES

Stateside
www.statesidemusic.com
WHOLESALE/RETAIL IMPORT JAZZ SPECIALIST
 Timeless (Denmark)
 Sundance/stunt (Denmark)
 DME (Denmark)
 ILK (Denmark)
 Nordic Music Society (Denmark)
 Music for Dreams (Denmark)
 DA Music (Germany)
 RED Records (Italy)
 Philology (Italy)
 Video Arts (Japan)
Steeplechase (Denmark) and more...!
Email info@statesidemusic.com
for full mail-order catalog

 **pm woodwind**
www.pmwoodwind.com
 847-869-7049
Chicago's Best Store for Saxophones
 & all other Woodwinds. Great Selection. Expert Repair.

LESSONS

JAMEY AEBERSOLD JAZZ

World famous play-a-longs, books,
 CDs, and DVDs for every improvising
 musician from novice to pro.

jazzbooks.com

OVER 2,000 PRACTICE TRACKS
STREAMING.JAZZBOOKS.COM

ONLINE JAZZ LESSONS.

Study all styles & aspects of jazz
 improvisation and saxophone with

Jeff Harrington,
Berklee Professor, MIT
Affiliated Artist, Harvard
University MLSP Instructor.

www.jeffharrington.com
 Email: lessons@jeffharrington.com.
 617-332-0176.

DB Buyers Guide >

American Pianist Association ... 2 americanpianists.org	DownBeat 52,59 downbeat.com	P. Mauriat..... 67 pmauriatmusic.com
Arkadia Records 10 arkadiarecords.com	Eastman Winds 9 eastmanwinds.com	Pittsburgh
Bari Woodwind 18 bariwoodwind.com	IK Multimedia..... 21 ikmultimedia.com	Jazz Festival..... 31 pittsburghjazzfest.org
Blue Note Records 5 bluenote.com	JEN – Jazz Education	San Jose Jazz
Cannonball Music..... 7 cannonballmusic.com	Network..... 38 jazzednet.org	Summer Fest..... 25 summerfest.sanjosejazz.org
Casio 11 casiomusicgear.com	JJ Babbitt 27 jjbabbitt.com	Sher Music 51 shermusic.com
Charlie Parker Jazz Festival 4 cityparksfoundation.org/ charlieparker	JodyJazz 68 jodyjazz.com	Smoke Sessions..... 41 smokesessionsrecords.com
Creative Perspective Music ... 32 donbraden.com	Lizzie Thomas..... 19 lizziethejazzsinger.com	SteepleChase
Detroit Jazz Festival 33 detroitjazzfest.com	Mark Campellone 4 mcampellone.com	Productions 8 steeplechase.dk
Detroit Symphony Orchestra.. 12 dso.org/jazz	MVD Entertainment Group.... 47 mvdshop.com	The Realist 51 realistacoustic.com
	NS Design 17 thinkns.com	Vandoren..... 3 dansr.com
		Victory..... 63 victorymusical.com

Interlochen jazz students with Joshua Lawrence, center right, and Anthony Kidd, center left.



Interlochen Academy Bolsters Jazz Studies

FROM ITS FOUNDING IN 1928 AS THE SUMMER home of the National High School Orchestra, the Interlochen Center for the Arts in northern Michigan has established a reputation as one of the top music education summer camps for young classical musicians. That classical focus continued with the founding of the Interlochen Arts Academy, a performing arts high school, in 1962.

But thanks to efforts by both teachers and students at Interlochen over several decades, jazz studies has become an official major at the academy. By the late 1960s, an unofficial ensemble called the Studio Orchestra — led by faculty member David Sporny and included Interlochen students and future jazz musicians Peter Erskine and Chris Brubeck — began to rehearse, perform concerts and gain acclaim at college jazz festivals. In 1972, Interlochen's Summer Camps added jazz electives, and after Bill Sears became director of jazz studies in 1987, a jazz performance core curriculum was in place.

Interlochen added a jazz studies major in the 2020–'21 academic year, the same year that Sears retired after a distinguished 34-year career at the school. Jazz trumpeter Joshua Lawrence came one as the new director of jazz studies.

Lawrence earned his bachelor of arts degree from Philadelphia's University of the Arts and a 2021 master's from the Juilliard School. He studied with the legendary Barry Harris at Lincoln Center. He taught at University of the Arts, Drexel, Kimble Center, Bronx Charter School for the Arts, Bronx Lab School and

served as a teaching fellow at Juilliard. Lawrence has also recorded five albums on the Posi-Tone label as a leader, as well as two with the Fresh Cut Orchestra on Ropeadope Records. He has performed and recorded with the Captain Black Big Band, and backed artists as varied as Seal, Erykah Badu and Tarbaby.

Lawrence's approach to strengthening Interlochen's commitment to jazz is based on his own varied experiences as a student, teacher and professional jazz musician.

"When I got the job, I wanted to make sure that the program was less about me and more about the young musicians here," he said. "That's when I came up with the idea of a village council. Honestly, the idea originally came from my time with Orrin Evans in Captain Black, and he's someone who has been a mentor to me for the last 12 years. Orrin talked about the idea of a village of musicians all working together to get to a great musical place. So I decided to talk to a group of musicians I respected as artists to help me visualize a program that came from a place of mentorship and checking out the music in detail to make it worked. I talked to Orrin, Wynton Marsalis, Ben Wolfe, Roxy Coss, Ingrid Jenson, Anthony Kidd — a lot of people. Thanks to their input, I was able to come up with the basic philosophy of a program that felt organic — and less academic, honestly."

Lawrence also emphasized the importance of keeping his "village" of musicians involved in the Interlochen program by bringing them in as guest artists who connect to students directly.

"It's important for students to understand that jazz music comes through mentorship," Lawrence said. "And that begins with our jazz history courses. It's not about me teaching — it's focused on the narratives of other musicians. The core book for the first semester is Art Taylor's *Notes and Tones*, and his interviews with [everyone from] bop legends to avant-garde pioneers. There's also discussion in his interviews about the word 'jazz' and what it means — positively and negatively. The second semester, we bring it up to today with Jeremy Pelt's *Griot*."

In refining Interlochen's jazz improv classes, Lawrence called on his experience with Harris at Lincoln Center, where he learned Afro-Cuban bembé rhythms and traditions.

"I'm teaching improv by channeling my inner Barry Harris," he explained, "teaching them the repertoire by understanding the relationship between functional harmony and scale theory — but more importantly, making sure they understand what the rhythmic conception is supposed to be. It's about hearing it, understanding it and immediately applying it on your instrument."

For Interlochen's jazz combo classes, Lawrence follows the approach from in his University of the Arts classes, which focused on the music of a specific artists each semester.

"This semester, we're focusing on the music of Horace Silver, he said. "We have two combos, and one is doing the music on his *Cape Verdean Blues* album and the other is working on tunes from *Horacscope*. And we do it without charts. They're learning their parts as well as exactly what the other instruments are doing."

According to Lawrence, the number of students in Interlochen's jazz major program is growing. "We had 15 jazz majors my first year and 20 this year," he said, "and we're hoping to grow again next year. We'll be graduating 10 seniors in May, but we've had numerous applicants, and our summer program is fertile for recruitment."

Now that Lawrence has settled into his role, he's looking forward to finding opportunities to get out and play music with the musicians he's been recording with recently. In March, he and his quintet, along with select jazz students from Interlochen, performed at Dizzy's at Lincoln Center to coincide with the releases of Lawrence's album *And That Too* (Posi-Tone).

"When I first came here, I had to figure out the rhythm of the place and discover where those spots for touring would fit in," Lawrence explained. "Dizzy's [was] a nice kickoff to getting out and playing again and making that a part of what I do. And that's also how you attract students."

—Terry Perkins

Wes Montgomery

Editor's Note: We started this issue talking about Indianapolis. Let's finish it with this classic *Blindfold Test* featuring that city's favorite son, the wondrous guitarist Wes Montgomery — who proved to be a tough grader in the June 29, 1967, edition of *DownBeat*.

George Benson

"Benny's Back" (*The George Benson Cookbook*, Columbia) Bennie Green, trombone; Lonnie Smith, organ; Benson, guitar, composer; no bass listed.

It has a fresh sound. ... The organ seems like it's in the background — doesn't seem like it's up front with the other instruments. Seems like it lost a little bit of the fire at the end. But naturally, the guitar solo was out of sight! It sounded like George Benson. I think it rates three stars, anyway.

Sounded like Al Grey on trombone, but I'm not sure. The group sounded like it was baritone, organ, trombone, guitar, electric bass and drums. You know, I think the electric bass is getting more popular; it's moving out of rock 'n' roll into jazz.

I liked the line very much — it sounded fresh, excited. Sounded like Georgie Benson's line — probably his tune.

Roland Kirk

"Making Love Afterhours" (*Here Comes The Whistlerman*, Atlantic) Kirk, flute, tenor saxophone, manzello and strich.

Wow! First it sounded like Roland Kirk and his group. ... I don't know the personnel.

It's a funny thing about Roland Kirk — if you had two other men, with two horns identical like he's playing, and let the two men play the same parts he's playing, and let him play the two horns, it's still a different sound. It's a different approach even with the horns. It's amazing.

Anyway, I see he's got him one to go for the pop market. It's good, very good, but I think if you're speaking of jazz, you have to rate it as such, and it's not that jazzy. So, therefore, I'll have to mark him down for three stars. It's a good track, but it appeals to the current market, which I'll give him credit for doing. He's still getting into it, even in that direction.

Joe Pass

"Sometime Ago" (*Simplicity*, World Pacific) Pass, guitar; S. Mihanovich, composer.

I don't know who that was ... but it was beautiful. In fact, I couldn't concentrate on who it might be because of listening to it! It's beautiful. I like all of it — I like the lines, I like the phrases, the guitar player has beautiful tone, he phrases good, and everybody's sort of, like, together. It's really together; I'd give that four stars right away.

Grant Green

"Brazil" (*The Latin Bit*, Blue Note) Green, guitar; Johnnie Acea, piano.

Of course, from the style, right away I can tell it was Grant Green. ... The piano player sounded like, had a taste of, Horace Parlan — I'm not sure. I don't know the other fellows. The fire the tune started out with — I don't think the background came up to it. It was lacking fire in the middle section — I mean to compete with Grant. Other than that, they picked a nice tune, nice rhythm for it, so I would give it three stars.

Stanley Turrentine

"A Taste Of Honey" (*Jay Ride*, Blue Note) Turrentine, tenor saxophone; Kenny Burrell, guitar; Oliver Nelson, arranger, conductor.

Sounded like Stanley Turrentine with an Oliver Nelson arrangement to me — which is the current thing that's happening now, that's begun to



GILLES PETARD/REDFERNS

"It's beautiful," Montgomery said of Joe Pass' "Sometime Ago."

be the bag; big band and soloist. And for that, I think it's a good arrangement. Nice direction, nice rhythm, exciting.

It's on the blues side, though. For that, I'd take Joe Henderson. I dig his kind of bag because it's in the more jazz-er bag. Stanley's in the sort of more blues-er type bag, which you can understand — it's selling records. I have to give them three stars for effort. ... Sill sounded like Oliver Nelson.

Gabor Szabo

"Walk On By" (*Gypsy '66*, Impulse) Szabo, guitars.

That's Gabor Szabo ... I can tell right away. He's got a unique style. It's different. ... Of course, I didn't think that particular number was too exciting. I've heard him a lot more exciting. The rhythm section didn't have enough bottom in it, and it seemed like there was drive missing. For the soloist, Gabor, I would give him three stars, maybe three-and-a-half, but I would put down two for this particular side. The tune? Yeah! "Walk On By."

Howard Roberts

"Cute" (*Something's Cookin'*, Capitol) Roberts, guitar, arranger; Jack Marshall, co-arranger.

I think that was Howard Roberts on guitar. Very good arrangement. I don't know who the arranger was, but it sounded good — just wasn't long enough. The arrangement has a point of building up, like it's going to stretch out, but it doesn't. That was a nice cut, very nice cut. I think it deserves four stars.

How could I tell it was Howard Roberts? By the runs he makes. He makes a lot of clean runs. Not only because they're clean, but they have a little different texture. And he sort of mixes it up: He'll play a subtle line, then the next line will be a double line, come back to the subtle line, then he'll mix the chords next. It's a nice pattern.

Leonard Feather: Can you think of any albums you'd give five stars to?

Wes Montgomery: Well, I've heard a couple of things, but I don't know what the names of the albums are or the artists on them. That's pretty weird — can't think of any five-star records!

Oh, this new thing by Miles, *Miles Smiles*? Now that's a beautiful thing. He's beginning to change his things all the time, but he hasn't gone all out, and Wayne Shorter's playing a little different. ... It's nice. Joe Henderson's got a new thing I think would be five stars, too. I think it's *Mode For Joe* — he and McCoy Tyner, Elvin Jones and Richard Davis. **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.

KIRK WHALUM

PLAYS THE PMXT-66RCL WITH THE KIRK WHALUM
SIGNATURE EDITION SUPER VI NECK.

P. Mauriat
Go for the Sound



www.pmauriatmusic.com

*The Greatest **HARD RUBBER** Mouthpiece You'll Ever Play*



Patented
DV Design +
The Warmth & Feel
of Hard Rubber

Introducing the DV HR Alto, the first hard rubber mouthpiece to feature the patented DV design. The DV HR is very free blowing, with all the power you will ever need, along with that big bottom for which the DVs are famous.

**DV HR
Alto**

*If you play Alto Saxophone
you've got to try this mouthpiece!*

