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DOWNBEAT

February 2010

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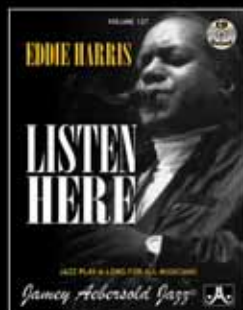
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Myron Walden

28 Buddy Guy *Recharged And Rebuilding* | By Aaron Cohen

Buddy Guy can rock any club—especially his own—with his guitar, and he speaks volumes offstage, too. The blues hero sat down with DownBeat to talk about his plans for the coming year, what he's learned from his mentors and how much he still loves gospel.

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PAUL NATION

Each summer, I usually head out to Chicago's West Side for Wallace's Catfish Corner's weekend blues bashes. Typically, the music is a celebration, and a mixed one at that. One time I saw the guitarist and singer perform Howlin' Wolf's "Killing Floor" as the bassist played a disco line underneath them: Somehow it all worked. Then there was the anonymous vocalist who nailed The Staple Singers' "Let's Do It Again." None of this would be considered standard blues. I also like to take friends to Lee's Unleaded Blues on the city's South Side. Like Wallace's, this warm neighborhood spot also offers an expansive vision of the music mentioned in the club's name. Tyrone Davis, Al Green and Curtis Mayfield's soul songs are a bigger part of the bands' set lists than Chicago blues standards.

That's the way it should be.

This issue of *DownBeat* focuses on blues musicians who believe it's natural to draw on whatever they enjoy—and deserve the same freedom and attention given to their counterparts in jazz. Cover artist Buddy Guy may be considered an elder statesman in this movement. Frank-John Hadley's story on Eric Bibb on page 34 describes a younger musician who's taken up this mandate. As Bibb said, "A lot of musicians are more eclectic than their publicity."

And yet there's a segment of the blues audience that doesn't seem to see things that way. Even after the music's more-than-a-century of developments, a contingent still expects to hear the same shuffles, and same standards. Somehow, this demand is connected to a desire for authenticity, though what that word means in terms of music is anybody's guess. As Don DeMicheal's classic 1969 interview with Muddy Waters and Paul Butterfield on page 42 shows, these sorts of notions go back a ways. Sociologist David Grazian even wrote a book about this subject, *Blue Chicago*, which was published seven years ago and carries the subtitle: "The Search for Authenticity in Urban Blues Clubs."

Grazian's focus was on the then-popular Checkerboard Lounge and tourist-heavy clubs of the city's North Side. Those audiences—like the self-appointed purists whom Guy derides—are largely white. The crowds at Wallace's and Lee's are mostly black. While it's easy to point to some irony in this situation, it's also worth considering that fabricated authenticity and stifling set lists are an international phenomenon. The Chinese government presents concocted ethnic folk songs (that have little to do with what these ethnic groups perform for themselves) in shows for visiting dignitaries. Cuban singer Havana Carbo once told me that she'll throw up if she ever has to perform "Besame Mucho" anymore.

So it should be entirely up to blues musicians themselves to determine what their own music sounds like and what they choose to interpret. And, hopefully, someday, no musician in this city will feel compelled to shout, "Hey, hey, the blues is all right," while being compelled to play "Sweet Home Chicago" yet again.

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One More Drummer-Leader

I enjoyed your article with Matt Wilson, Lewis Nash and Jeff "Tain" Watts about jazz drummers leading their own groups (November '09). The discussion about their predecessors in the jazz world was very interesting and entertaining, not to mention informative. However, I must admit some disappointment that one of my favorite (and most successful, in my humble opinion) jazz drummers was not mentioned. Shelley Manne led some amazing groups, not to mention opening his own club. His "Live At The Blackhawk" recordings are considered some of the best live small group jazz recordings ever made.

Mike Milner
Orilla, Ontario

D'Rivera Neckware

Could you please tell me how to get one of those clarinet ties that Paquito is wearing on the cover of your December '09 issue?

John Barrett
ejohnbarrett@comcast.net

D'Rivera responds: *A few years ago, looking for a Music Minus One recording of Igor Stravinsky's "Histoire Du Soldat," I entered a music store on Broadway called Colony Music. I didn't find what I was looking for, but instead, that clarinet tie was hanging on the wall, like it was waiting for me. Years later that tie ended up on the cover of DownBeat, hanging from my Cuban neck. So that's the "Histoire Du Cravate." It's also sold at wildaboutmusic.com*

Don't Kill The Clubs

In reference to your Justice for Jazz Artists article, I would like to add my observations ("The Beat," January). I joined the American Federation of Musicians in 1958 to become a professional jazz musician. I played all the known and unknown jazz clubs and paid into the union retirement fund. I was confronted with the reality of the fund when I turned 70: Unless you reach a certain amount to be vested, you can kiss retirement goodbye.

I am fortunate to play at Smalls in New York, and now the AFM is trying to shut that down by imposing a financial burden on the club owners. The unions misdirect their good intentions. Just like they helped to kill the big bands and kept bebop from being heard in the '40s (due to its recording ban).

I only have one comment to make to all the musicians who want to play our music: If you are thinking about retirement rather than the creative process of and love for jazz, you better think about doing something else.

Lennie Cujé
Arlington, Va.

Clarification

Due to space limitations, DownBeat was unable to include Slide Hampton's name as the arranger on Dexter Gordon's recording of "Red Top" ("Woodshed," December '09).



Corrections

Guitarist Al Di Meola was accidentally left off the list of runners-up in the 74th Annual DownBeat Readers Poll (December '09). Di Meola received 184 votes in the Guitarist of the Year category, which puts him in fifth place, right between Jim Hall (209 votes) and John Scofield (176).

Jimi Durso was not properly credited for the Louis Armstrong "King Of The Zulus" solo transcription ("Woodshed," October '09).

Author Steven Brower's name was misspelled in the review of his book, *Satchmo: The Wonderful World and Art of Louis Armstrong* ("Reviews," December '09).

DownBeat regrets the errors.

Have a chord or discord? E-mail us at editor@downbeat.com.

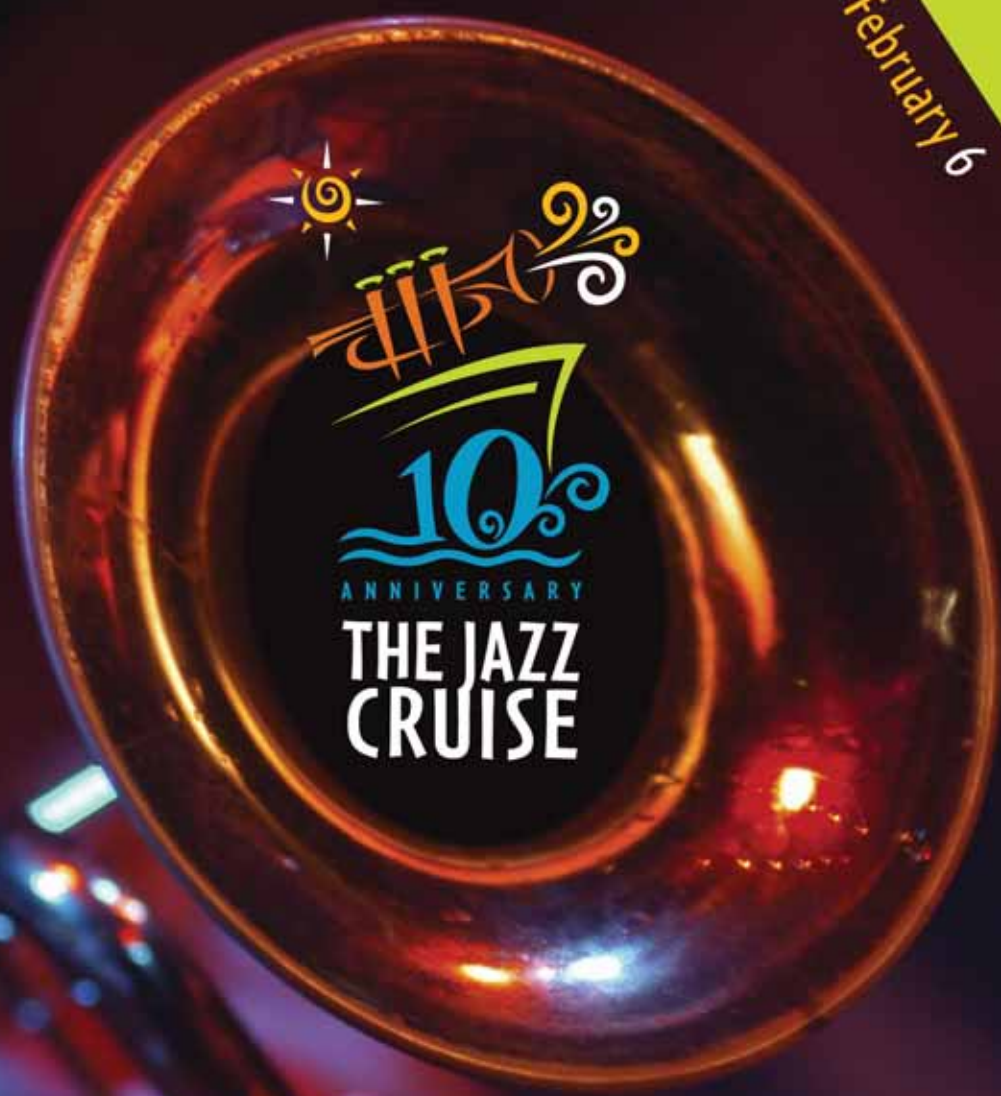
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A New Non-Profit Jazz Label Strives to Make a Difference



Kansas City's Very Own Interprets Masters of Song By Angela Hagenbach

Out of the blue I received a phone call a few years ago from George Klabin, founder of the Rising Jazz Stars Foundation. He was quite taken with my rendition of "Street of Dreams." After much discussion about our mutual love of the music, I needed little encouragement to agree to perform and be featured as a rising jazz star. Eventually, that foundation gave rise to Resonance Records and a recording contract for me.

We released my premier CD, *The Way They Make Me Feel* in fall 2009, a marvelous collection of love songs composed by Henry Mancini, Michel Legrand and Johnny Mandel, who made an impromptu studio visit - an unexpected gift I'll

forever treasure. Full-string arrangements lushly crafted by Germany's Kuno Schmid, challengingly hip arrangements by Tamir Hendelman, the instrumental prowess of eight violinists doubled, and much sought after West Coast musicians, set the stage for my debut. The experience was wonder-full and produced a deep and evocative vocal response from me.

I was born and raised in Kansas City, one of the four cradles of Jazz, a music that thrived in the city's segregated Black business district. Mary Lou Williams recounted that "... It's a heavenly place... fifty or more cabarets rocking on 12th and 18th streets."

The distinctive Kansas City Jazz sound was shaped by such legends as Benny Moten, Lester Young, Big Joe Turner, Jimmy Rushing, Andy Kirk, Julia Lee, Jay McShann, Count Basie, Charlie Parker, and many others. The sound evolved from Ragtime, to a stompin' swingin' blues-based boogie-woogie, to Bebop.

I grew up in the faded glory of this historic district. My artistry is infused with this heritage and these influences permeate my work. Our family's photo album is sprinkled with images from this bygone era, including pictures of my dad finely dressed, hair conked to perfection, sitting on an elaborate oyster shell stage, gleaming alto sax in tow, amid a tux-clad octet in what is rumored to be The Orchard Room on 12th and Vine.

The Kansas City Jazz tradition jams on today, with live jazz any night of the week. Some of my favorite spots include Jardine's Restaurant & Jazz Club and The Blue Room, voted as one of the Top 100 Jazz Clubs in the world, located in The American Jazz Museum, the cornerstone of today's Jazz District. The historic Mutual Musicians Foundation features an all night Saturday jam session still called "12 o'clock Jump", where Mary Lou Williams, Charlie Parker, Count Basie, Coleman Hawkins and others jammed into the night.

I'm pleased to be a member of the Resonance Records family. Committed to creating jazz legacies, Resonance is dedicated to continue the great tradition of Jazz, America's unique musical contribution to the world.

A Message from George Klabin, Founder of Resonance Records and the Rising Jazz Stars Foundation:

Two years ago I set out to create a jazz record label that was different - one that supported the music and the artists with a new vision: to always be about the music first and to create recordings that the artists would be proud of for the rest of their life, to become part of that artist's legacy. We are a non-profit audiophile label dedicated to discovering artists of all ages from all over the world, and also to present and preserve some of the legacy of great recorded classic mainstream jazz.

February is a special time for us as we celebrate Black History Month. Resonance Records is proud to play a part in this month-long celebration with music from some of yesterday's and today's brightest jazz stars. Take vocalist Angela Hagenbach who is a Kansas City trailblazer and a force to be reckoned with. Just listen to her latest release *The Way They Make Me Feel*, and you'll know why. For all you piano jazz lovers, we take great pleasure in presenting the second release of Gene Harris' European Quartet, *Live in London* in 1996, entitled *Another Night in London*, which truly captures Harris at his very best. This album is being released for the first time and is part of our Heirloom series.

We at Resonance Records thank you for your continued support and especially for supporting JAZZ.



Sounding Off On Gene Harris By Eugene Holley Jr.

For five-decades, Michigan-born, self-taught pianist /composer/bandleader Gene Harris (1933-2000) beautifully blended blues, bop, soul, and gospel into his signature sound. As the leader of the legendary trio The Three Sounds, with drummer Bill Dowdy and bassist Andy Simpkins, and as a solo artist with dozens of recordings, Harris was one of the most well-respected and popular pianists of all time.

Harris's artistry is in full effect on the new Resonance Records CD, *Another Night in London*: a cool and combusive live quartet, recorded at Pizza Express in May 1996 with an all-British rhythm section featuring bassist Andrew Cleynert, guitarist Jim Mullen, and Oscar Peterson's former drummer, Martin Drew. *Another Night in London* is the follow-up to the critically acclaimed *Live in London* CD, released in 2008 on the same label.

Another Night in London features the fleet-fingered Harris dropping syncopated science on several standards. "Sweet Georgia Brown," "Georgia on my Mind," and "Lady Be Good," all roll with a driving swing that could rock both the Philharmonic and the juke joint. In contrast, the bossa nova chestnut "Meditation" is given a samba-fied treatment, and "This Masquerade" is an exquisitely sensitive rendering of the Leon Russell/George Benson hit. Writer Don Heckman penned in the CD liner notes, "one can hear...the rich harmonic visions of Art Tatum; the playful articulation of Errol Garner, the propulsive rhythms of Ahmad Jamal. But each of these elements plays only an additive role in interpreting style that is Harris' own..."

Harris' musical and personal evolution is superbly detailed in the new book, *Elegant Soul: The Life and Music of Gene Harris*, by Janie Harris (his wife) and writer Bob Evancho, an offering which chronicles Harris' challenges and triumphs - from boogie-woogie beginnings and encounters with racism, to success with the Three Sounds, work with Ray Brown, Milt Jackson, the Philip Morris Superband, B.B. King, and Harris' final years in Boise, Idaho, home to a jazz festival in his name.

Gene Harris humbly described himself as a "blues player with chops." But as *Another Night in London* aurally illustrates, he was the consummate jazz pianist, and his straight-ahead artistry will always be in vogue.

The Beat

NEWS & VIEWS FROM AROUND THE MUSIC WORLD

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WBGO's Stylish 30th Celebration

WBGO 88.3FM, the leading jazz radio station for the greater New York City area, celebrated its 30th anniversary in style at the Frederick P. Rose Hall in New York on Nov. 3, 2009. The show featured the Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra, singers Ernie Andrews, Freddy Cole and 15-year-old Nikki Yanofsky, as well as vibraphonist Stefon Harris and three members of the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra's saxophone section—Sherman Irby, Ted Nash and Walter

Blanding Jr. Television anchorman Lester Holt and WBGO DJ Gary Walker handled the emcee duties, and the evening swung with great music and special presentations. **1)** Stefon Harris rehearses for his version of "Bag's Groove." **2)** The Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra. **3)** Cephias Bowles, WBGO president, tells attendees about the station's new \$1 million transmitter scheduled to be built in Manhattan. **4)** Jon Faddis, left, shares a back-stage trumpet moment

with the great Snooky Young. **5)** Clarinet virtuoso Paquito D'Rivera receives his Champion of Jazz honor from WBGO DJ Awilda Rivera. **6)** The scat-sational Nikki Yanofsky does her best Ella Fitzgerald tribute with John Clayton smiling on. **7)** WBGO DJ Michael Bourne, right, presents a Champion of Jazz award to DownBeat's Kevin Maher and Frank Alkyer. **8)** Ernie Andrews brings down the house with his rendition of "Just A Lucky So And So."

Riffs



Brubeck Honored: Dave Brubeck became a Kennedy Center Honoree on Dec. 6, 2009. The award was given at a U.S. State Department dinner and included a reception at the White House. **Details:** kennedy-center.org

Harmonica School: Harmonica player/pianist Howard Levy has started offering classes online. The lessons are offered via video segments and are designed for students from beginner to advanced levels. **Details:** howardlevyharmonicaschool.com

Terry, Edwards Grammy: David "Honeyboy" Edwards and Clark Terry will receive the Recording Academy's Special Merit Award for Lifetime Achievement during Grammy week on Jan. 30. **Details:** grammy.com

USA's Jazz Fellows: Trumpeter Hannibal Lokumbe and guitarist Lionel Loueke received fellowship grants from the United States Artists advocacy organization on Dec. 14, 2009. The organization's unrestricted grants are for \$50,000. **Details:** unitedstatesartists.org

Jaco's Beginnings: A new two-disc box set provides new insights into Jaco Pastorius' early development. The collection includes the bassist's first home recordings, examples of early compositions, previously unreleased studio sessions and spoken testimonials from friends and family members. **Details:** jacotheearlyyears.com

RIP, Lüdeke: Dutch reedist and DownBeat correspondent Jaap Lüdeke died of leukemia on Nov. 9, 2009, in his hometown of Nieuw Vennep, The Netherlands. He was 74. Lüdeke played alto saxophone and flute in his own quartet since the mid-'50s. Along with covering jazz in Holland and New York for DownBeat and other publications, he also hosted a music program on Dutch public radio since 1977.

Saxophonist Wall Balances Jazz Performance With Rabbinic Life

Greg Wall surprised himself when he developed an affinity for the music of the Hasidic Jewish tradition in the mid-'80s. By then, the saxophonist and clarinet player was in his early 30s, and had shown no prior interest in his faith or heritage outside of the occasional trip to a delicatessen. The sound not only changed the course of Wall's music, but also his life.

While performing at weddings in Brooklyn's Williamsburg neighborhood, Wall discovered the Hasidic community, a sect whose mystical traditions began during the 18th century in Poland. In 1999 Wall began studying informally and later attended classes devoted to the Talmud, a collection of writings documenting Jewish religious and civil law. In 2006 he became an ordained rabbi after passing a 14-hour final examination in Jerusalem. Since August, Wall has served as rabbi at a neighborhood synagogue on New York's Lower East Side.

"I didn't know anything about my religion," Wall said. "And when I found out about Jewish music, it was the gate back to the Jewish religion."

Wall attributes the beginnings of his spiritual quest to John Coltrane's *A Love Supreme*, which he discovered in the late '70s while attending New England Conservatory of Music. "Coltrane opened a mind that had been closed," Wall said. "When I registered that Coltrane was taking the ideas that were in Jewish prayers, among other sources, that I had been turned off to because of the baggage associated with my Jewish upbringing, I was forced to re-examine Judaism."

Wall, 50, grew up in Framingham, Mass., a Boston suburb. He graduated from New England Conservatory in 1982 and moved the following year to northern New Jersey. By then, Wall's swing-era inspired group, the Bourbon Street Jass Band, had changed its name to the Hi-Tops and had a rising profile after receiving favorable reviews in *The New York Times* and *New York Post*.

The saxophonist is known, particularly on the East Coast, for Hasidic New Wave, a group he leads with trumpeter Frank London. The group formed in 1994 and has recorded several albums for Knitting Factory Records. Wall's other groups include the Later Prophets, which feature original music inspired by the Old Testament's Book of Ezekiel.

Wall's immersion in Jewish music began after London, Wall's classmate at New England Conservatory, answered a classified ad taken out by Yeshiva students around 1984 in *The Village Voice*. The students wanted to form a "world music" band; it turned out to be a Jewish wedding band, and London recruited Wall. "The problem with all the Jewish wedding bands is that the musicians really suck," Wall said.

With this idea, the Yeshiva students recruited trained musicians and taught them the music.

After learning a series of complex arrangements, the group made its debut. "It was awful because we were doing musically interesting stuff, and all they wanted was oompah-oompah-oompah to dance," Wall said. "And basically we had to leave town on a rail."

But Wall and London soon realized the group's drummer and pianist had composed some compelling songs, and the drummer also could sing. The group realized its true calling—not weddings or world music, but original pop music with Hebrew lyrics. The group became known as Kolos, Hebrew for "sounds" or "voices," and found a niche among young people in New York's Orthodox Jewish community.



In the meantime Wall and London learned a repertoire of Orthodox Jewish music and discovered a market for it during weddings in Williamsburg.

"Friday and Saturday night were the big money nights for jazz," Wall said, "and during the nights when everyone was sitting at home we started [performing at weddings]. And we became, after a while, experts at Hasidic music. So we started Hasidic New Wave as a way to [explore] this music that we liked."

London speaks of the unique hybrid Wall has created by combining jazz with various Jewish music traditions.

"The sound that he has on the saxophone is huge," London said. "Part of my love of playing with Greg is to fit the trumpet inside that sound of the big saxophone. You're instantly the Jazz Messengers. Then when applying the knowledge of Jewish music with this knowledge of jazz and this sound, it's all-embracing."

Wall expresses some concern about his image. He is not, by any means, a saxophone-playing rabbi, or any other kind of novelty.

"I'm not a rabbi who plays klezmer music; I'm a jazz musician whose life was transformed," Wall said. "If I hadn't ended up playing for extra money in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, and meeting Hasidim and committed Orthodox Jews, this never would have happened to me."

—Eric Fine

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EUROPEAN SCENE

By Peter Margasak

Jazz's roots in Europe are strong. This column looks at the musicians, labels, venues, institutions and events moving the scene forward "across the pond." For questions, comments and news about European jazz, e-mail europescene@downbeat.com.

Josele Crafts Personal Jazz-Flamenco Connections

Ever since guitarist Paco de Lucía pushed the sounds of new flamenco toward jazz in the '70s, the genre has remained enchanting for many of Spain's most accomplished and adventurous flamenco musicians. In more recent years pianists like Chano Domínguez and Diego Amador have forged more explicit fusions and links between the approaches.

Spanish guitarist Niño Josele (nee Juan José Heredia) certainly belongs on that list. Although he's only in his mid-30s, he's already a veteran who's developed strong partnerships with singers like Enrique Morente and Diego El Cigala, but he consistently hungers for new ideas and techniques, whether it's studying and employing serialism or accompanying pop singers like Alicia Keys or Elton John. Although he's always listened to classical music and jazz, he experienced a turning point early in the last decade after meeting Gonzalez and Bebo Valdés.

"They introduced me to some of the greats of jazz, and one of them was Bill Evans," Josele said. "Bebo played me some wonderful pieces by Evans that fascinated me, and the idea for my CD *Paz* grew from there. That's when I threw myself into learning all about his way of playing and expressing himself, the structures and the improvi-



sations. It was a real challenge for me."

Indeed, it was Josele's *Paz* (Norte, 2006) that fully opened the door for the new sound. Most of the pieces were either written by or closely affiliated with Evans, and Josele ingeniously found ways to reinvent them, retaining their gorgeous melodic introspection and digging into the harmonies without forsaking the indelible sound of his flamenco foundation. While many excursions into jazz turf taken by flamenco guitarists yield rather antiseptic, technically overripe flourishes, Josele is different; he exhibits a sense of restraint and mood in perfect harmony

with Evans' classic work.

Among the stunning solo pieces are fruitful collaborations with American jazz artists like bassist Marc Johnson, saxophonist Joe Lovano and trumpeter Tom Harrell, yet Josele doesn't veer toward glib fusion. He's managed to impart the same elusive qualities on his latest album, *Española* (Warner Music Spain), which apart from a treatment of McCoy Tyner's title track, features all originals.

"I'm not trying to show that I'm flamenco, because I feel flamenco," he said. "I don't know where I want to get when I compose. I let creativity flow as well as the musical influences that I've had over the years. I prefer not to put a label on what I compose, and to let each person classify it according to their own criteria."

Josele declines to predict where he's going with the music, but he's positive about the benefits of working with jazz musicians. "Each day I'm learning from their experience and the energy they bring to the stage," he said. Speaking of fellow flamenco artists exploring jazz he said, "We all want to take flamenco to a level where it's not limited to a minority. Just the opposite, in fact. We want to open it to all kinds of people. Flamenco has a lot to offer."

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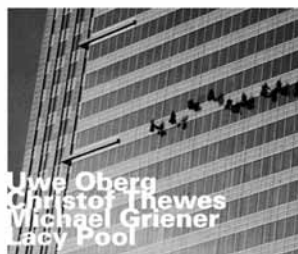
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Wynton Marsalis with Atlanta Symphony Orchestra

Marsalis To Debut 7-Movement *Blues Symphony* In Atlanta

Two years ago, Wynton Marsalis embarked on a new challenge: fuse classical music with jazz, ragtime and gospel. The result is the seven-movement *Blues Symphony*, a co-commission by the Atlanta and Boston symphony orchestras. The composition, which was to have been premiered by the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra during the city's National Black Arts Festival in July 2008, will be heard in full for the first time in the city on Jan 14.

Marsalis' previous classical compositions have been firmly rooted in jazz playing styles. His first symphony, *All Rise*, and the oratorio *Blood On The Fields*, for which he won the 1997 Pulitzer Prize for Music, feature jazz artists and solo sections. *Blues Symphony* is his first long-form work composed exclusively for orchestral musicians.

"The thing that has always interested me is all of the strains of Afro-American and the strains of American music, and how a symphonic orchestra could play inside the consciousness of those styles," Marsalis said.

Composers from Stravinsky to Bernstein have written jazz into their music, and many jazz band leaders have famously dabbled in classical settings. *Blues Symphony* stands out, Marsalis said, because these previous attempts at blending the two genres have been halfhearted. Marsalis' music doesn't present jazz in a classical manner but rather mines decades of traditional American music for fresh symphonic ideas. *Blues Symphony* is intended to combine jazz and classical music as one, with strings laying down walking bass lines and woodwinds navigating thorny, jazz-influenced passages.

While Marsalis has enjoyed success writing for jazz ensembles, *Blues Symphony* has taught him that working through orchestrations and copying symphonic parts is an entirely different compositional beast. He also draws a firm distinction between a symphony and his Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra.

"When you're talking about 70-something instruments, it's not like dealing with 15," Marsalis said. "That's a lot of dots and dashes."

—Jon Ross

Rava Clinches Austrian Award

Trumpeter Enrico Rava has won the European Jazz Prize in this year's Hans Koller Preis. The award, sponsored by the Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, the City of Vienna and other arts organizations in the country, includes 14,500 euros. Other winners include drummer Wolfgang Reisinger, who was named musician of the year, and saxophonist Clemens Salesny, who was named newcomer of the year. The disc *C.O.D.E.*—featuring Max Nagl, Clayton Thomas, Ken Vandermark and Reisinger—was named CD of the year.

The prizes will be awarded on March 27 and 28 at the Porgy & Bess jazz club in Vienna.

—Aaron Cohen



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Photographer Williams Quietly Shattered Barriers

Hank Mobley,
performing at
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Preview
Lounge, 1956



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Monk eating
ice cream,
Chicago, 1961



TED WILLIAMS

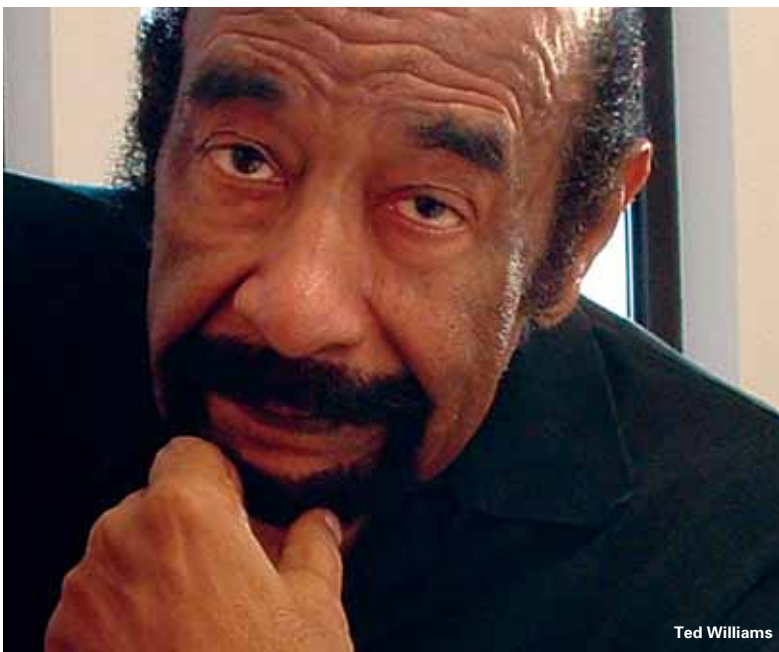
Ted Williams, who shot pictures of more than 300 jazz icons for *DownBeat* and other publications, died of kidney failure in Los Angeles on Oct. 13, 2009. He was 84.

Williams began taking pictures of musicians in 1950, and his library consists of more than 90,000 images. His coverage of the 1958 Newport Jazz Festival ran over several pages in the Aug. 7, 1958, issue of *DownBeat*. He also covered war, sports and foreign culture for such publications as *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Playboy* and *Ebony*.

"In those days, you didn't have to go through publicists and managers," Williams once said of his early years in the business. "So if the guy that owned the club didn't throw you out, you'd just start shooting. Sometimes the musicians knew me by sight, or I talked with them, and then some were kind of like buddies. I was shooting in available light, so a lot of times the artists didn't know I was shooting."

As one of the first African-American photographers to attend Chicago's Institute of Design, Williams studied directly from such lecturers as Ansel Adams and Dorothea Lange. His other achievements include taking part in the exhibit "Images of Music: Classical Through Rock" at New York's Soho Triad Fine Arts Gallery. Prints of Williams' work are available at shopjazz.com.

—Aaron Cohen



Ted Williams

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Self-Affirmations, Surprises Highlight L.A.'s Asian-American Jazz Festival

Strictly speaking, what was billed as the First Annual Asian-American Jazz Festival in Los Angeles, Oct. 30–Nov. 1, 2009, wasn't actually the first, as an unrelated effort took place in 1988. But impresario Paul Im strove to make his the premiere event of its kind. Hong Kong-born Im even hocked his alto saxophone to help finance this spirited three-day event in Little Tokyo, which drew musicians from as far away as Korea. The unspoken dialectic of the far-reaching booking policy opened the issue of what exactly constitutes Asian-American jazz.

Saturday at Café Metropoli, Celia La sang selections from the Great American Songbook, but her new chart on James Taylor's "Fire And Rain" was a pleasant surprise. Tenor saxophonist Hitomi Oba proved a fluid improviser who can swing on material with many temperatures. Her stripped-down trio of bass, drums and Nick DePinna's trombone made for unusual combinations as well as unpredictable structures.

Japan-born, classically trained pianist Matoko Honda was also full of surprises. Improvising on a fisherman's folk song with a piece of glass resting on the middle-register strings, she produced Kurt Weill-like harmonies. A koto augmented her rhythm section and dancer Midori Makino supplied a visual element. Veteran drummer Bert Karl played somber mallets to plucked piano and koto strings in a spacey exchange. Makino reemerged in a black sheath dress to supply flamenco accents to a rolling crescendo closer.

Pianist Bryan Wong's ensemble set used demanding time signatures like 13/8; his elliptical piano and the thoughtful use of space in his arrangements would be at home on ECM. Yet Wong also likes to burn. Kai Kurosawa's electric bass foray on "Eucalyptus" was more than up to the bright tempo.

Sunday's action moved to the auditorium of the Japanese American National Museum. Gary Fukushima's variation on the post-Bill Evans piano trio format revealed prodigious classical training and an elastic sense of time and dynamics. In contrast to the cerebral pianist, Filipino vocalist Mon David was full of passion. He moved between romantic balladeer,

interpreter of Pompano folk melodies and stops-out scat singer, and his intensity was tangible on "Footprints." Pianist Tateng Katindig, big-toned bassist Dominic Thiroux and the protean drummer Abe Lagrimas matched David for intensity. They swung hard yet still touched the heart with tunes like Abbey Lincoln's "Throw It Away."

Korea's Prelude trio had a few surprises as well. Front man saxophonist Richard Rho has a touch of standup comic, which offsets pianist Heean Ko's attractive tunes. The pentatonic "Breezin' Up" is like much of Korean music, albeit swinging in six. Charmaine Clamore, another passionate Filipina, took on Jon Hendricks' lyrics to Horace Silver's swinging "Doodlin'" as well as the Lenny Welch version of Buddy Johnson's heart-pounding "Since I Fell For You." She's an exuberant performer, never more so than on her Tagalog words of "jazz-a-pino" matings. "My Funny Brown Valentine" was an added bit of ethnic affirmation.

Japanese piano phenom Hiromi, whose showmanship matches her virtuosity, closed the weekend. Supersonic stride, some outright pounding, a "Minute Waltz" variant, eclecticism gone wild—all went into her kitchen-sink set. Her musical mastery was never in question. Hiromi's taste though, isn't for everyone. Still, she received a long, standing ovation.

As to the definition of Asian-American jazz, the answer seemed to be that it's an evolving proposition, as personal and distinct as each band-leader and soloist.

—Kirk Silsbee



EARL GIBSON

Ann Arbor's Edgefest Stays on Michigan's Nerves

The annual rite of fall in Michigan music comes with Ann Arbor's Edgefest. Celebrating 13 years and running off the beaten tracks, the series that ran Oct. 14–17, 2009, at the Kerrytown Concert House was no exception. Standouts like Roscoe Mitchell hooked up with vocalist Thomas Buckner and keyboardist Stephen Rush, while Marty Ehrlich locked horns with Ned Rothenberg, Michael Attias and Andrew Laster as well as performing with Andrew Bishop's Ballad Age band with Danny Fisher-Lochhead and Sara Schoenbeck.

With a festival theme of "Reeds of Change," perhaps the climax to all this blowing and all things sax came with the show "Reeding: The



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Riot Act," featuring Detroit's Wendell Harrison along with Oluyemi Thomas and Ann Arbor's Piotr Michalowski sporting their respective bass clarinets in a robust trio performance. Soon to follow were upwards of 15 more reed players and, later, percussionist-in-residence Han Bennink for a series of wild, impromptu displays of musical and non-musical energy, all of it encased with urgency and a fair amount of fanfare. At one point, Bennink took over for University of Michigan music professor Ed Sarath and saxophonist Michael Moore to do his own conduction from the stool, plopped down in front of his semi-circle of saxes, the chorus of sounds wailing and warming the

enticed throng that stayed for this hourlong set of mayhem. The opposite of mayhem came with the festival's closing act, Colorado's Hamster Theater, which amazed the Kerrytown audience with its integrated, highly stylized and innovative performances of truly theatrical and obtuse music, written and scored but mainly polyphonically played by most of this sextet of drums, electric bass, accordion, keyboards/trombone and saxes. All that was missing was a visual element to complete the impact of so much stately interplay.

Many other performers shared the collaborative spirit, especially Human Activity. Led by guitarist Brad Shepik, the band's name comes from a commissioned piece he wrote with the full title "Human Activity – Sounding A Response To Climate Change." The music straddled the terrain of free music with mostly more formal, mainstream sounds. Trumpeter Ralph Alessi's fiery trumpet soared above arranged lines by multiple-keyboardist Gary Versace and Shepik on the slowly building "Lima," while a piece like "Blindspot" played with time signatures, no tonal centers, the elastic forms allowing everyone to solo inside more recurring arrangements. Each song referred to one of the Earth's continents, which was as close as the music got to being a kind of pedantic tome on the fate of the planet.

—John Ephland



Chicago's Umbrella Festival Keeps Free-Improv Forays Compact

Chicago's fourth Umbrella Festival of Jazz and Improvised Music, Nov. 6–8, 2009, hosted a wealth of talent at Elastic, The Hideout and the Hungry Brain. Sets were generally kept to 45 minutes and in some cases only went half an hour. Despite enthusiastic receptions there were no encores, which made for compact parcels of music.

At Elastic, Matthew Shipp concluded his solo improvisation a minute shy of allocated set time without checking the watch strung half way up his forearm. Shipp widely extrapolated from standards "What Is This Thing Called Love" and "Someday My Prince Will Come," his elbows working like pistons, a mechanical extension of Elastic's albino baby grand, then shadow boxing, fingers skimming keys with the barest touch, whispering spidery forms throughout the instrument's range.

Last minute guest Roscoe Mitchell, filling in for Bobby Bradford (who underwent minor surgery coincident with the festival), was fully embedded into the program, despite his late inclusion. Performing after Shipp's set, he joined young guns Dave Rempis on saxophones, drummer Frank Rosaly and bassist Junius Paul, counterpointing ostinato riffs on soprano, with Malachi Favors-like stoicism, as the explosive Rempis let off steam.

Some of the latter's alto solos during a nonet set (paying homage to fest favorite Joe McPhee through arrangements of his music by Ken Vandermark) were superb, full of gusto yet betraying erudite detail.

McPhee had a ball, celebrating his 70th birthday on the last night, but there were squarer, but no less hip, pegs in the Umbrella gig-board. Brainiac pianist Guus Janssen's trio with drummer brother Wim and local bassist Anton Hatwich was a surprise. Though his music is quite premeditated (first time I've heard a count-off at an improv concert), Janssen performed flashes of jazz history (Teddy Wilson/Erroll Garner) among persistent tinkering in the belly of the piano and afforded a welcome dose of Dutch wit among the darker hues of the prevailing Chicagoans. The samurai-like intensity of alto saxophonist Akira Sakata, who played fiercely with the enlightened teaming of Jeff Parker, Nate McBride and John Herndon (as well as the United States debut of his regular trio), was also salient in this year's line-up.

The somberly melodic Head With Wings—drummer Quin Kirchner, bassist Jake Vinsel and reedists Charles Gorczynski and Elliot Bergman—was an impressive discovery, and drummer Mike Reed's People, Places & Things proved particularly atmospheric. Dressed in utilitarian jackets with colored armbands to facilitate cueing with coordinated colored paddles, Reed's posse adapted to Mitchell's cameo appearance in the group with an arrangement of AACM drummer Steve McCall's "I'll Be Right Here Waiting." Vibraphonist Jason Adasiewicz proved alternately luminous and brilliantly decisive during this set and in an exchange with cellist Fred Lonberg-Holm during one of Vandermark's McPhee settings.


Other highlights of this smartly curated program—which was also held in conjunction with the Cultural Center's European Jazz meets Chicago evening on Nov. 5—included the gamut of bass clarinet virtuosity from Jason Stein, Hans Koch and Frank Gratowski, plus the Chicago debut of resourceful Lithuanian saxist Liudas Mockunas.

—Michael Jackson

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Eric Revis Visceral Empathy

On Charlie Parker's birthday at New York's Jazz Gallery, bassist Eric Revis, recently back from a summer primarily spent with Kurt Rosenwinkel's Standards trio, assembled a new quartet. The group featured Ken Vandermark, on tenor saxophone and bass clarinet, Jason Moran on piano and drummer Nasheet Waits. Five minutes into the first set, after a section in which the group built from gentle, abstract rubato to all-out blowing, Waits played a rhythm-timbre event from which Revis launched an arco solo. He uncorked a lengthy declamation, chock-a-block with extended techniques, using his right hand to thwack the strings with his bow while plucking them with his left hand, then bowing the areas above and below the bridge to sculpt extravagant shapes and otherworldly timbres.

This set the template for an hour of collective improvisation, in which Revis deployed his huge tone to orchestrate shifting feels more than to complement a linear flow.

"I hope to develop that group and record it," Revis said 10 weeks later over the phone from Seville, Spain, midway through a month-long tour of Europe with Branford Marsalis. He noted that he first encountered Vandermark in Milwaukee, Wis., during the spring while on tour with Waits in a trio with outcat German saxophonist Peter Brötzmann.

"I've seen a lot of situations where collective improvising is like eight monkeys trying to fuck a football—it doesn't work," he said. "But it's beautiful to deal with people who are truly empathetic. You can play silence, and they think, 'OK, at this point, this is what it is.' Not 'now it's my turn,' but 'this needs that.' The challenge is to distill the content, to get to what it actually is. Do something to give it cohesive vibes within a limited amount of time, to whittle down to the bare essence."

Revis had applied this esthetic to a diverse series of engagements throughout the past year, which concluded with a 10-day jaunt in Europe last December with Joey Calderazzo—his partner over the last decade with Marsalis—and Antonio Sanchez. Directly preceding Marsalis' tour was a West Coast run with Tar Baby—a collective unit with Waits, saxophonists J.D. Allen and Stacy Dillard, and pianist Orrin Evans—that itself directly followed a three-week followup with Rosenwinkel at various mid-west and northeast venues.

"Eric is an earthy, rootsy player, but also the amplitude of his harmonic sphere is very large," Rosenwinkel said. "He's very traditional, but also extremely open—I felt quite free playing with him."

Inside-out qualities permeate Revis' most recent release, *Laughter's Necklace Of Tears* (112005), on which his quintet performs a cohesive suite of 10 originals that reference numerous flavors (think Albert Ayler with Gary Peacock circa 1964, the Paul Motian Trio, Thelonious Monk, the Andrew Hill and Eric Dolphy Blue Notes) of '60s speculative harmonic and non-harmonic jazz. Revis transforms them into his own argot with seasonings from classical music, hardcore funk, indie rock and hoedown blues, and caps the recital with a raunchy romp through Thelonious



JACK VARTOOGIAN/FRONTROWPHOTOS

Monk's "Shuffle Boil."

Now 42, Revis traces his predisposition to function in scenes that do not customarily intersect to his formative years. Initially an electric bassist, he developed a "visceral attraction" to Brötzmann in his latter teens, when a colleague in a funk band introduced him to Last Exit, Brötzmann's plugged-in unit. "I was always conscious of Sam Rivers' remark that firm harmonic knowledge helps you freely improvise with much more depth," Revis said. While attending the University of New Orleans from 1990 to 1992, and then in Betty Carter's employ from 1993 to 1995, he "made a concerted effort to develop myself along traditional lines."

"In New Orleans, we played in all these cafes and bars where there was no time to deal with an amp," he said. "That was indispensable in developing a sound. [Banjoist-raconteur] Danny Barker had moved back, and he talked about cats like 'Slow Drag' Pavageau and Pops Foster who shook walls with their sounds. The idea of virtuosity in sound—to have an identifiable sound, to make one note really mean something—is lost today."

"I find tremendous beauty in walking lines," he continued. "It's not a box at all. But that line is the road, though you can make all kinds of moves within it. Playing with Peter or the group at the Gallery, thousands of roads can be explored at all times—it's raw and visceral, and the challenge is to make instantaneous decisions that are logical, not random, when at any moment you may pass out just from sheer effort. I like that."

—Ted Panken



consider myself an expert, by any means, I enjoy experimenting with counterpoint, interweaving lines and harmony.”

The keyboardist goes on to explain that the inclusion of bassoonist Sara Schoenbeck and reedist Mike McGinnis played an indelible role in affording the music a decidedly chamber-music mystique. But Deutsch’s compositional pen didn’t just stop with them; it scripted notes for the rhythm section, too.

“Drummers may notice that there are drum parts on my records,” he said. “My records are sort of poppy from that angle.”

Having played a crucial role in guitarist Charlie Hunter’s trio, Deutsch argues that his experience with that group influenced the sound on *Hush Money*. Deutsch claims that it was Hunter who helped him get his groove back.

“Spending three years with Charlie Hunter was a rebirth, because I had spent most of my 20s, focusing so much on the harmonic language, especially lyricism, and definitely the technical aspect of the playing,” Deutsch said. “When I look back at my musical history, I realize that I may have been a better groove player when I was younger; I was a funkier piano player. With Charlie, I remember, ‘Oh yeah, I used to be really good at that.’”

It’s no surprise that Deutsch also describes himself as “a movie hound who hung out in video stores” while growing up in Washington, D.C. When he attended University of Colorado, he complemented his music studies with courses in film.

“When I was in college, I wrote a paper on sound design using David Lynch’s movies,” Deutsch said. “It was about the mixture of score, soundtrack and sound effect in film and how all of that can be influential to a viewer and create such an intense experience. I love to watch things like Fellini movies, just getting into the visuals and how the music complements the visuals. My music is not so much about a person; it’s about an image.”

—John Murph

The music on keyboardist Erik Deutsch’s *Hush Money* (Hammer & String) inhabits that rare realm where jazz, funk, pop and chamber music coalesce. The bottom end on his compositions such as “Black Flies,” “Dirty Osso Bucco” and “India Rubber” struts with rugged funkiness while ballads such as “Flytrap” and “Get Out While You Can” evoke the diaphanous allure of film scores.

One would think that Deutsch took notes from producer David Axelrod, whose baroque r&b albums from the late ’60s and early ’70s provided source material for left-to-center hip-hop artists such as Madlib, J Dilla and Ali Shaheed Muhammad. Still, Deutsch says that he knows Axelrod only by name, and not his music.

Deutsch does admit, however, that there is a through-compositional vibe that permeates *Hush Money*.

“I do like to write parts for people,” Deutsch said. “Although I don’t



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[JUNE 5/07]



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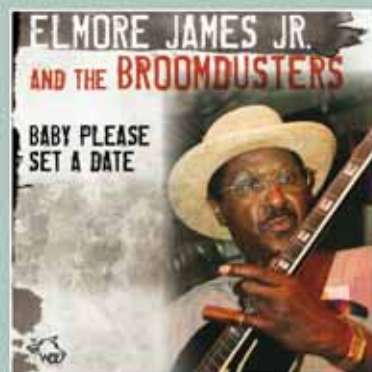


[JULY 6/07]



TINEKE POSTMA The Traveller

The Traveller is award-winning Dutch saxophonist Tineke Postma’s sensational new release showcasing her instrumental virtuosity and flair as a composer at the helm of an all-star quartet, featuring pianist Geri Allen, drummer Terri Lyne Carrington, and bassist Scott Colley.



[JULY 12/07]



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Players

Akira Sakata Free As A Plankton

Sitting comfortably in a posh coffeehouse in the bustling Tokyo ward of Shinjuku, a bubbly Akira Sakata proudly shows the picture of a daphnia he collected during a recent tour of Hokkaido, Japan's northernmost main island, with his Japanese drum-less trio. "It's not easy to travel with a drum set, he said with a chuckle. They're too heavy."

Instead he'd rather carry his microscope.

Alto saxophonist Sakata's passion for both marine biology and jazz goes back to his childhood near Hiroshima, where he was born about six months before the atomic bomb was dropped. He first got exposed to jazz tuning to Voice of America and short-wave radio stations, but the real epiphany occurred watching movies.

"The soundtracks of some French Nouvelle Vague movies had a dangerous feeling I was drawn to," he said. "Then, Bert Stern's *Jazz On A Summer's Day* made a powerful impression on me. I've had an ambivalent and hard-to-explain relationship with the United States. I love jazz and American culture, but witnessing the horror of Hiroshima firsthand made it difficult to embrace your country."

Sakata is mostly known for his invaluable contributions as a member of the free-jazz trio led by pianist Yosuke Yamashita from 1972-'79. Most of the diverse work he's done since has not been available in the U.S., even when longtime friend Bill Laswell manned the controls.

Nowadays, Sakata is enjoying a new lease on life after a 2002 brain hemorrhage almost put an end to his career.

"I lost my ability to play the saxophone and I had to start to learn the instrument again as a beginner," he said. "After three months I was back on the scene, but to this day I am still having some difficulties with tonguing, among other things."

In 2007, he almost turned down a gig with Peter Brötzmann, lest he should not be able to contend with the colossal German saxophonist. But listening to his latest recording *Friendly Pants* (Family Vineyard) one would be hard-pressed to detect any hindrances. The album features Chikamorachi, a group with Darin Gray on bass and Chris Corsano on drums that he has been performing with at the instigation of maverick producer Jim O'Rourke, who relocated to Tokyo a few years ago.

"I'm very happy to play with young musicians because they give me

energy and feed me new ideas," he said. "Moreover, established musicians are scared of me."

The energy displayed on tape is still no indication of what Sakata can unleash on stage. This impression was confirmed at the Umbrella Music Festival in Chicago last November, his first appearance in the Windy City. Whether with Chikamorachi or with an impromptu quartet featuring guitarist Jeff Parker, bass player Nate McBride and drummer Jeff Herndon, Sakata thrust himself into unfettered improvisations that would only subside when he switched to the clarinet. It also underlined the saxophonist's near-obsession with velocity.

"Speed is very important to me because this is the only way I can really express myself," Sakata said.

This regained vigor can also be attributed to a new focus that now makes music the subject of his undivided attention. Over the years, he has written eight books inspired by what he calls his "complicated childhood," penned three more about marine life, acted in films and plays, made a documentary on water fleas, and in the '80s found himself to be the star of a Seiko watches commercial.

"I'm done with writing books and all those things—I want to concentrate on my music," Sakata said. "Jazz died because of entropy, and I need to fight entropy with all my body."

—Alain Drouot



PAUL JACKSON

Ben Perowsky Back Seat Beats

BRIAN GELTNER



For a guy whose early drum heroes included Keith Moon, John Bonham and Mitch Mitchell, Ben Perowsky had explaining to do. Granted, he did go on to study players like Tony Williams and Elvin Jones, adding to his distinctive approach on drums. Listening to Perowsky talk, however, one might get the impression he's as much a producer and arranger as he is a drummer.

Witness his latest two projects, *Esopus Opus* (Skirl) and *Moodswing Orchestra* (El Destructo), albums that place his drums either in a fairly supportive role or put them way back in the mix.

Esopus Opus, featuring reed player Chris Speed, bassist Drew Gress and accordion/keyboardist Ted Reichman, is a hybrid of rock and jazz, offering unique remakes of Jimi Hendrix's "Manic Depression" and George Harrison's "Within You Without You," along with some originals.

"It is a hybrid in that we do covers of some stuff," Perowsky said. "But in terms of the way we are approaching it atmospherically, I am thinking it's a jazz project, whatever jazz is. It's always this ongoing battle of what style and genre are we playing in. We are playing live together, there's walking bass lines, harmony, solos over form, cymbals."

And it's Perowsky's focus on areas like harmony that suggest rhythm and beats take a back seat. The origins of the *Esopus Opus* quartet start with a trio Perowsky had in the '90s.

"We were jumping off from a sax, bass and drums trio, Sonny Rollins trio-type stuff with Elvin," he said. "The quartet is an extension of the trio, where we add harmony to the trio setting, write more with harmony in mind."

Speaking more as a bandleading producer/arranger, Perowsky added, "With the trio there was harmony, it's just more implied, maybe a little less defined, two lines with bass and sax. I wanted to hear more texture, something supporting the melody. The accordion works out great. I didn't want to have a piano player or guitar player with one hand tied behind their back. It's easy for them to drastically change things. The accordion is less dense, it can't lay down these orchestral-type chords. You could say I'm getting my feet wet in the harmony world."

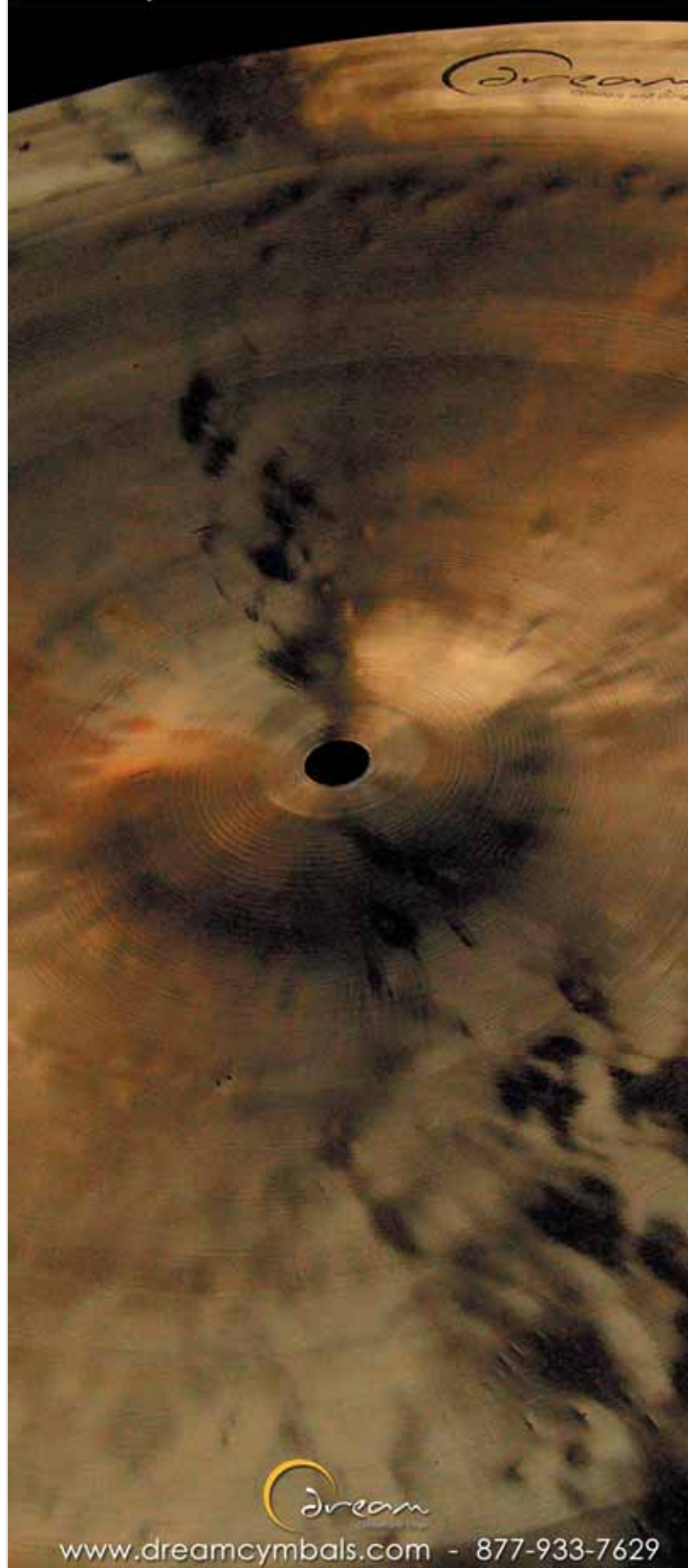
Moodswing Orchestra is an album of produced sounds that reflects an aversion for jazz in favor of ambience, mood.

"These pieces are not vehicles for soloists," Perowsky said. "*Moodswing* is more of a group improv, trying to put the right thing in at the right time. There is collage, and it's not a jazz record in a traditional setting; it is jazz because it was improvised, it's not pop or a rock record, but it's not willy-nilly."

Moodswing is a collection of ambient-groove improvs that find Perowsky doing a lot of cutting and pasting, adding sounds on top. For example, Marcus Rojas' tuba was recorded in a local church, while Pamela Kurstin's theremin and Steve Bernstein's trumpet were recorded in their respective apartments. Perowsky gets into the act not only on drums and bells but with a Pearl Syncussion "It's an analog drum synthesizer, with a warm and fat sound triggered from a pad," he said.

As for Perowsky's role as a drummer on *Moodswing*, "I'm hardly playing at all," he said. "There are no cymbals on that record. This stuff doesn't need cymbals, it doesn't need a washy sound." —John Ephland

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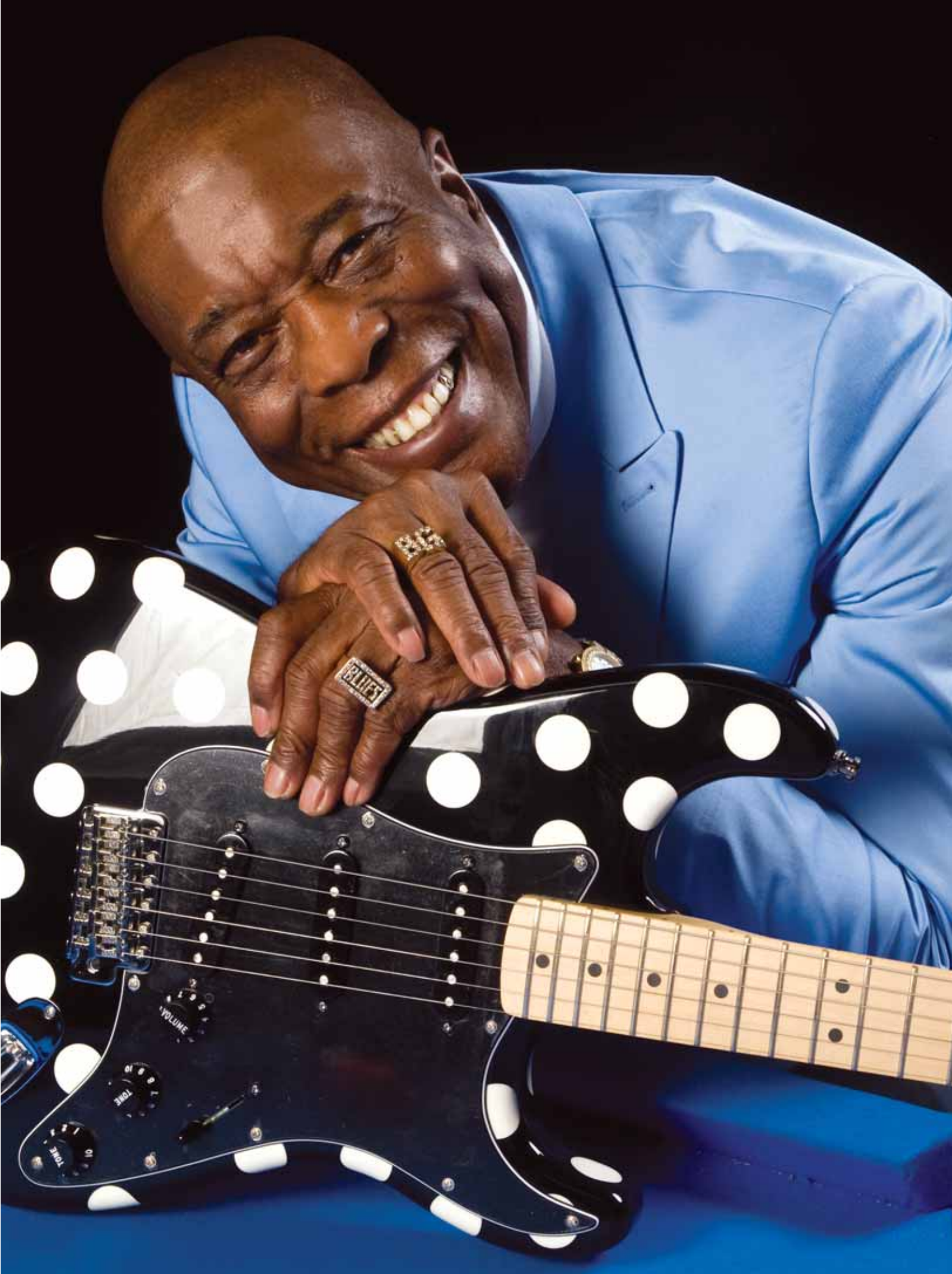
BUDDY GUY

KEEPS THE BLUES EXPANSIVE

By Aaron Cohen // Photos by Paul Natkin

REBUILDING

While Chicago bundles up and hunkers down in the middle of winter, January recharges Buddy Guy. Every year, the blues hero sets this month aside for a series of gigs at his club, Buddy Guy's Legends. These performance nights are billed as intimate, and they do bring him closer to audiences than his usual appearances at theaters and outdoor pavilions. But Guy also makes the venue seem larger than it is, since he never believed that the usual sort of performer/audience, stage/rest-of-the-room divisions actually exist.



This January, like Januaries past, Guy's guitar—voluminous, distorted—and his voice—disarmingly gentle—will envelope the club. As band leader, he'll direct his rhythm section and the audience while playing a custom-made Fender around the stage, at patrons' tables and booths, out on the ice-covered sidewalk and in the washrooms (either one). As a demonstration of physical improvisation, the moves are solidly in the moment yet infused with episodes from way back in the 73-year-old blues hero's personal history.

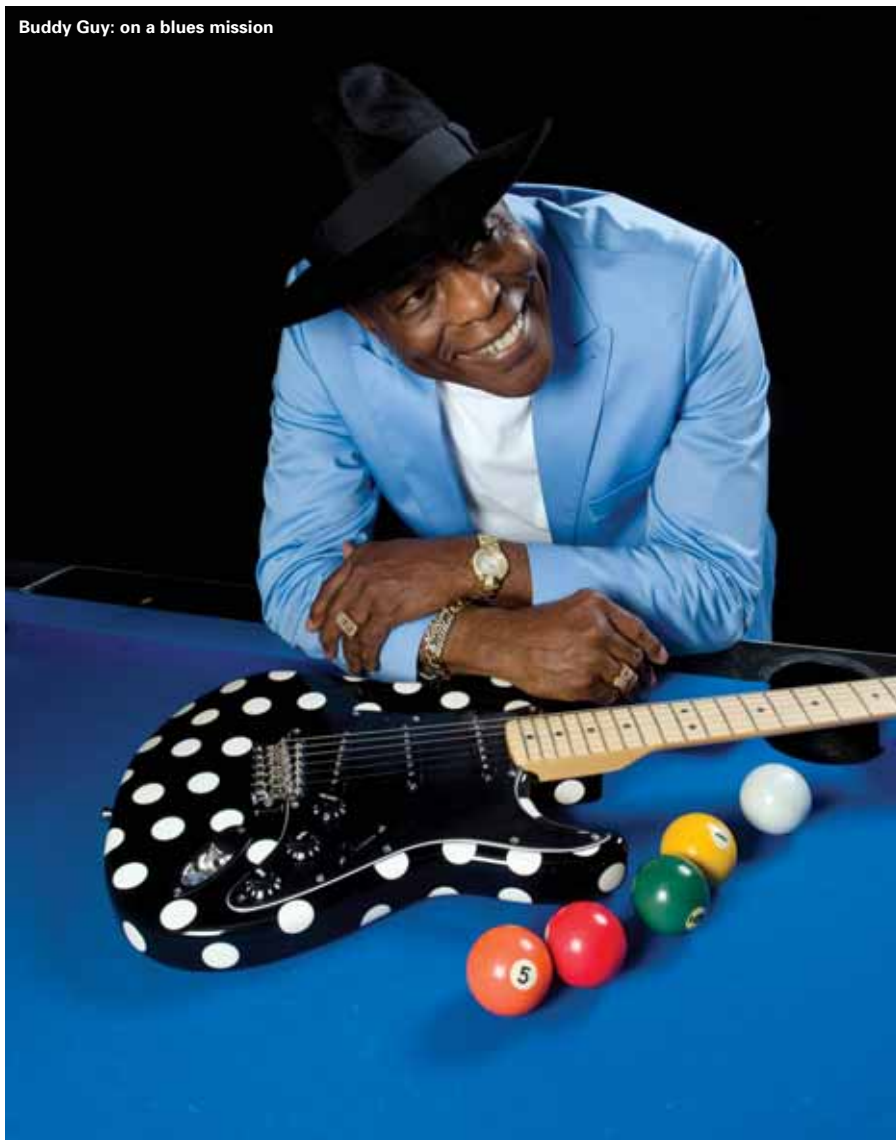
"We used to have the battle of the guitars on Sunday afternoons with the late great Magic Sam, Otis Rush, Matt Murphy," Guy said, as he sat warm and relaxed in his upstairs office at Legends. "The winner would win a bottle of whiskey, and at that time I didn't even drink. They would outplay me in all kinds of ways, but every time they got ready for Buddy Guy, I had to do something different to get some attention."

Two feet of snow on the ground and a 100-foot guitar cable in those pre-wireless years helped Guy beat his friendly rivals. He recalled telling someone to "plug this cord and amplifier in, and bring my guitar to the car in the snow." I came in the door playing solo and I had snow up to the top of my boots. Whoever had the whiskey said, "Give it to him."

Guy hardly raised his voice as he related this story, one of many that marked his path from sharecropping in Lettsworth, La., to international acclaim. That whiskey prize speaks loudly enough: recalling a long-ago community of musicians that he's determined to keep rebuilding; combining technology with showmanship and, perhaps most importantly, Guy's determination—which includes making the most from 24 inches of the cold white stuff.

Nowadays, Guy's tenacity and spirited originality have led to musical accolades along with more palpable bounties, slightly more than 50 years after he cut his first record ("Sit And Cry" on Artistic). His 1993 memoirs (written with Donald E. Wilcock), *Damn Right I've Got The Blues: Buddy Guy And The Blues Roots Of Rock-And-Roll*, narrates the challenges that shaped these scores. There was also his 2005 induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, as that institution cited his ties to Muddy Waters and Howlin' Wolf alongside his influence on Jimi Hendrix and Eric Clapton. Three years after that, Guy released what may be his most personal album, *Skin Deep* (Silvertone), which delves into his thoughts on race and not-so-secret affinity for a deep groove. In a couple months, he'll hit the recording studio again. This spring, he'll move his club in Chicago's South Loop a few blocks north to a building he purchased. The new Legends will be slightly bigger than its present location, enough to fulfill Guy's ongoing mission: keeping the meaning of "blues" expansive and continually showing new generations how much there is to learn throughout a lifetime.

Buddy Guy: on a blues mission



"You can watch someone and see how they work and run their business," singer Shemekia Copeland said eight days before marrying Guy's bassist, Orlando Wright. "In blues you have to be patient to wait for your time to come around. Buddy's done that—a lot of times people get frustrated and walk away, and that's what he told me not to do."

For Guy's new venture, that business plan includes jazz, which he'll feature in early evening sets on Sundays. It's a music that he's investigated for a long time—going back to his rendition of Bobby Timmons' standard "Moanin'" for Chess in the mid-'60s.

"In Europe, George Benson and I would go on the same stage," Guy said. "Count Basie, Lionel Hampton—we'd be on the same stage a lot of times. George would come by here and we'd jam. Jazz is being treated just like blues: We had a jazz radio station here and it went out. So I'm saying, 'Wait a minute, I got to throw something the other way if I can.'"

That Guy's musical vision remains far more comprehensive than rote 12- and 16-bar shuf-

fles should be as recognized as his signature single-note feedback-driven guitar screams. Live and on disc, he'll cover Otis Redding and Marvin Gaye (including the latter's "Trouble Man" on *Feels Like Rain* in 1993). Over the years, Legends has hosted such singers as Johnny Adams and Syl Johnson, both of whom felt more than comfortable in r&b. At the same time, Guy is also aware that there has always been a number of self-identified purists who expect blues musicians to adhere to set boundaries. Soft-spoken, Guy clearly called out that contingent, in part, for being far removed from the culture that gave rise to the blues.

"Well, that came on us," Guy said about being pegged as a blues, or anything, artist. "[Before that] we didn't have anything written about us, we just had the word of mouth in this circle we had back here. Then the British got it, the whites started coming and the Rolling Stones and Eric Clapton had to tell white America who we were—that's when we started getting questions and answers. Then they started 'Chicago blues.' Then it got to the point it

was Chicago blues, Motown, Memphis. It was called West Side and South Side blues, and I never saw that. I was playing the West Side as much as the South Side. To get a job in one of these blues clubs where they didn't know who you were, you had to do an audition, and they would ask you if you could play these top ten songs on their jukeboxes. You had to play a Fats Domino, Jimmy Reed, Guitar Slim, B.B. King, whoever had a hit record. If you didn't play them, you wouldn't get that gig for \$2 a night. So I had to play Jackie Wilson, Eugene Church's 'Kansas City,' Big Joe Turner. You had to do all that. [You] couldn't be branded as a blues player back then.

A lot of people danced when we played back then," Guy continued. "In the '60s they started branding us as this or that. I still like to do everything. Marvin Gaye did some great songs, James Brown did some great songs. How could you go to a blues club when James Brown was coming out with 'Papa's Got A Brand New Bag'? You had to do that. And then they started taking that from us. I can go out and play my gig right now and do a Marvin Gaye song and they'd accept me. But then they'd say, 'OK, now I want to hear blues.'"

Meanwhile, Guy surrounds himself with colleagues who know that his art is multi-dimensional. His primary collaborator on *Skin Deep*, drummer/producer Tom Hambridge, worked with him in crafting the all-original material on the album. Considering how the title track in particular called for looking beyond such perceptions as race, the music itself had to show more than one face, like adding in veteran r&b bassist Willie Weeks. Hambridge said he always recognized Guy's inclinations.

"Buddy Guy is a legend because he can play anything," Hambridge said. "You're not limited. He's not even thinking in that zone. That's why he can jump onstage with Jeff Beck, they're playing fusion and he just plays what he plays and it fits. He plays Buddy Guy and it works."

Guitarist Derek Trucks, who also worked on *Skin Deep*, adds that a big part of what makes it all work is that in Guy's earlier years collaborating with Junior Wells on such albums as *Hoodoo Man Blues* (Delmark), he experienced how crucial a secondary guitar role should be. It's as important as the sparse staccato attack on Guy's own '60s records for Chess that inspired Hendrix and initially drove Leonard Chess bonkers.

"Back in the day, Buddy knew what part was needed where, and it was so funky, so rhythmic," Trucks said. "Not flashy, not over the top, you really have to listen to it. I don't know anybody else who could, or would, put those notes there. The Chess records had a grime, a sophistication, but also this total gangster street element that's so profound and such a wild combination."

But it's not too wild to lack generosity,

according to Trucks' wife, singer Susan Tedeschi, who also appears on *Skin Deep* and first performed onstage with Guy about a dozen years ago (on a version of his friend Bill Withers' "Use Me"). After she mentions the singer-guitarist charisma that he gleaned from Muddy Waters and B.B. King, Tedeschi adds that Guy can use all that to highlight her own leads.

"He's very dynamic, gets real quiet, and his voice is so rich—it's an extension of his guitar playing," Tedeschi said. "I love singing with

him, because I can sing real pretty and do these little nuances where we'll get real quiet, and then build it up and get real crazy."

This spring, Guy will return to the recording studio with Hambridge. He intends to focus on another avenue of the blues tradition, particularly the lesser-known songs of Jimmy Reed.

"Some of the songs Jimmy played were some of the first rhythm-type stuff I learned," Guy said. "There weren't a lot of lead guitar on his records. I had a horn player who called

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Blues and boogie-woogie pianist Mark Lincoln Braun (Mr. B) learned his craft first-hand from the early masters. On *My Sunday Best*, his fifth album, B is joined by drummer Roy Brooks and bassist Kurt Krahnke.

MR. B MY SUNDAY BEST



it 'lump-de-lump' music. And it was such a good rhythm. I tell people now, we can't play it like that. They were born with that."

In earlier conversations, Guy has said that he'd also like to make a gospel album and is considering adding a gospel song, or spiritual, to his recording this spring. It doesn't take much of a stretch to trace how the blues and gospel are historically intertwined, especially in the time and place where Guy was growing up. His friend King began singing gospel on a Mississippi town corner until he realized he got more coins when he sang blues. For Guy, singing the religious songs would be a way of coming full circle, even though he's also aware of the music's universal role.

"The spiritual groups didn't have instruments," Guy said. "You'd hear the Five Blind Boys and it was just five voices and their feet. Pilgrim Travelers, I could go on and on. Brother Joe May, Mahalia Jackson—she finally got a keyboard player, but it was all just beautiful singing back then. There was an old country church that my mother used to take me to. They couldn't afford a piano; you just had to get together and make the voices do like a big band where all the voices had a part. There was tenor, baritone, alto and the lead singer. That's how we learned voicing the horns and things—that kind of singing made music what it is today."

Although Guy became aware of how those different voices corresponded to horn players' roles later on, he says it took him a while to learn how to best adjust his choices of key while playing lead.

"I play mostly natural keys, but when you play with a lot of horns, you get a better horn voice from flat keys. B.B. King, T-Bone Walker and Albert King taught me that. I made a couple big band records at Chess, but I didn't know all that then. I'm in class every time I talk to B.B., anyway."

Guy's signature derives from blending such lessons with his notion of personal limitations. The resulting fragmented sound reverberates throughout his solos—from such mid-'60s Chess gems as "Stone Crazy" to his upper-register pyrotechnics on, and around, the stage at Legends nowadays.

"When enough audience gets between me and the band and I can hardly hear what the band is doing, I'll play a crazy lick and I'll stop—like it's on purpose," Guy said. "But it's not on purpose. It's where I'm at with the band, and you can hear I should be here, or should be there. Because I don't read music, I play by ear and I got to hear what the band is doing. Or, in the early days, a lot of us played by ourselves. A lot of the great old blues players—Son House, Fred McDowell, Johnny Shines—played by themselves with a rhythm with their thumb and their finger pick. So you have to keep your own rhythm, just had an acoustic guitar player playing for the Saturday night fish fry. John Lee Hooker did that. A lot of people couldn't play with him because you had to watch him—he didn't play four bars. He might play four, six, eight, 12 bars before he made a change, and he came in wherever he wanted. So the way I learned how to play was the same way. I didn't know I'd have a drummer or bass player keeping me in time. You had to keep that yourself, and you played half time, full time, four bars or three bars."

Along with the upcoming recording, Guy will tour for the first few months of the year with King. He declares they're both healthy enough to keep their living blues school up and running. Meanwhile, he's promoting pre-adolescent guitarist Quinn Sullivan: Guy said, "I first met him at 8, and the way he can play guitar and sing the blues, you would think he's 80." He's way ahead of mortality—having lost his friend Koko Taylor and his brother, guitarist Phil Guy, in recent years. But it's also the memory of his mentors that sustains him.

"Every award I get, every one I have ever received should have gone to the people I learned everything I know from," Guy said. "Lightnin' Slim in Baton Rouge was the first one. I saw him for the first time when my dad and I were sharecropping in Lettsworth. Every award I accept should have gone to Big Joe Turner, Gatemouth Brown, Lightnin' Hopkins. All those people playing guitar just for a drink of whiskey and a good looking woman. That was their pay. Every award I ever got should have went to those people. And then if there's anything left, give it to me."

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ERIC BIBB

HAVE GUITAR, WILL JOURNEY

By Frank-John Hadley

For Eric Bibb, an unexpected encounter with a 1930s National Reso-Phonic steel-bodied guitar inspired him to record his strongest album to date. Not long ago, the constantly touring singer-songwriter was in England when a stranger came up to him after a show and asked if he was interested in playing a guitar once owned by the late great country bluesman Booker White.

"I said, Wow, that sounds like a story!" Bibb recalled. "So I asked this wonderful man, 'How'd you end up with this guitar?' Well, in the '60s he had befriended Booker and later sent Booker tapes of his early recordings from the '30s that he'd lost track of. Before he died [in 1977], Booker packed up his guitar and shipped it to this fan as a way of thanking him for all his support." Bibb was shown the guitar at his hotel the next morning. In awe, Bibb cradled the strings and, like White had for decades, made the instrument ring like a bell. "This all unfolded so naturally and easily that I took it as an assignment," he said. Bibb got busy writing a song about that guitar and soon entered the recording studio. The new release, his homage to country blues titans, is titled—what else?—*Booker's Guitar*.

The new Telarc release also affirms Bibb's musical identity. In a career that first got into gear in the mid-1990s, Bibb has enjoyed success at the fluid, uncertain border between folk and blues. "The foundation of my playing and my songwriting is a broad base of roots of American music, Americana in the widest sense," he explained on the phone from St. Thomas in the West Indies. "It's blues, it's country, it's work

songs, it's ragtime, it's spirituals. All of those things are in the hopper." He's an uncommonly good writer, with his songs covered by a stylistically diverse bunch, including Maria Muldaur, Saffire, Eric Burdon, Ruthie Foster, Wilson Pickett and Ralph McTell. "Older folk material has been the template," he asserted. "Even though I write my own newer material, a lot of it is closer to older forms."

Bibb possesses a warmly expressive, unexcitable voice and a fine sense of phrasing. He shines, too, as a guitarist with a quiet and confident approach. "I'm basically an acoustic player. Fingerpicking is the technique where I begin from. I've had some training earlier in classical guitar, and that's helped give me an idea of how versatile the guitar can be." As the complete package, the 50-something musician has something of the versatility of storied 12-string guitarist Leadbelly (who was proficient on blues, reels, field hollers, cowboy songs, etc.), the blues-transcending charm of Mississippi John Hurt and the modern sensibilities of Taj Mahal and Richie Havens.

Bibb's music has been difficult to slap with a label—too folk for some blues arbiters, too pop for certain members of the folk crowd, on and on. Deep down, Bibb knows himself. "I call myself a blues troubadour. That's one short description that I think is not inaccurate. I'm very happy that I've had the chance to have exposure on blues stages and at blues festivals because it gives you a quick-fix home, and even if it's not descriptive in my case, at least it makes it possible to be included in the kind of context that makes some kind of sense." He paused

before adding, "A lot of musicians are more eclectic than their publicity."

As the son of noted folksinger Leon Bibb, he grew up in the Greenwich Village folk scene of the early '60s among Pete Seeger, Odetta, Dave Van Ronk and fresh-faced Bob Dylan. His uncle, a pianist and composer, belonged to another crowd. "I found John Lewis' musical knowledge, his awareness of the classics in blues, in big bands, in bebop, everything, to be amazing and daunting," Bibb said. "He was a teacher really, without having to say a word. His demeanor commanded such great respect for the music. I'd go to his apartment and there would be two grand pianos, a big Stein and a deluxe Baldwin. He was somebody to really admire."

In his late teens, choosing travel over finishing college, Bibb received valuable blues training in Paris from expatriated rock 'n' roll pioneer Mickey Baker. "Mickey was a mentor for me as a guitar player. And I remember him sitting me in his parlor and then shoving me in a room with a tape player and Robert Johnson's *King Of The Delta Blues Singers* cassette. I came out and said, 'Mickey, tell me that's two guitar players!' and he said, 'No!'"

Bibb decided to start up his career elsewhere in Europe, setting up camp in a place he'd visited with his parents as a child. "When I arrived in Sweden in the early '70s, what I found was a vibrant jazz scene and budding blues and world music scenes. Stockholm was a meeting place, a magnet for musicians from all over the world." The Early Bird Records shop there provided him access to "a trove of fantastic pre-war blues discs," and he was "able to dive into some

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obscure stuff and stay with it long enough to become part of what I do in terms of singing and writing."

The many ensuing years of touring and record sessions saw Bibb getting deeper into the music that he loves. With his matchless ease and a poet's sensitivity, he has made *Booker's Guitar* the consummation of his affair of the heart, accompanied only by the superb less-is-more harmonica player Grant Dermody. "Even though it seems like a simple project," Bibb offered, "it was in fact one of the most challenging in that it's taken a long time to get to a point where I felt like I could deliver that kind of music where I was recording almost exclusively with the guitar and vocal in a way that I was satisfied with. It's been my model, the one-man-band blues songster, that whole iconic figure. I've always wanted to emulate my heroes, make a whole lot of music on my own that I felt stood up. And to write newer blues material that harkens back to an older style, an earlier era, was also something that I felt had to take time. I couldn't have just jumped in on this project 20 or even 10 years ago and be pleased the way I am with this album."

Bibb had the good fortune to meet country blues royalty in person: Son House, Robert Pete Williams, Big Joe Williams. And now, through a guitar, Booker White, whose Vocalion 78s of 1940 arguably rival Robert Johnson's body of work in artistry and poignancy. "I felt my strongest card was not one of blues curator who could mimic the exact style guitar-wise of my heroes; my contribution was something else. Once I made peace with that fact, I just decided to have fun." Fresh-sounding originals like "New House" and "Sunrise Blues" carry his delight but also an emotionally charged imperative. "You know, these are stories about real people, a lot of them based on wandering minstrel type of guys that I can strongly identify with, a lot of it dealing with the frustration of being boxed in by a society whose view was oppression. There's a rebelliousness in there. There's some anger in there that I think is appropriate, that probably could never have easily been part of my heroes' artistic expression, so I tried to give them a voice to that. But it's basically about people reaching spiritually for a better life in the real world. It's about a journey."

Bibb plays his compositions, plus the traditional number "Wayfaring Stranger" and blues evangelist Blind Willie Johnson's "Nobody's Fault But Mine," with an understanding of how using the musical language of his progenitors enriches his own journey. "In my own soul-delving," he said, "I've discovered a preacher in me that has more to do with the background of some of my heroes than my middle-class upbringing in New York City's cultured circles—and it surprised me and it surprised my parents. But it's a fact: Emotionally, there's a part of me that identifies with a straight-ahead Baptist preacher. I've always felt that kind of connection, so who knows what it's about." **DB**

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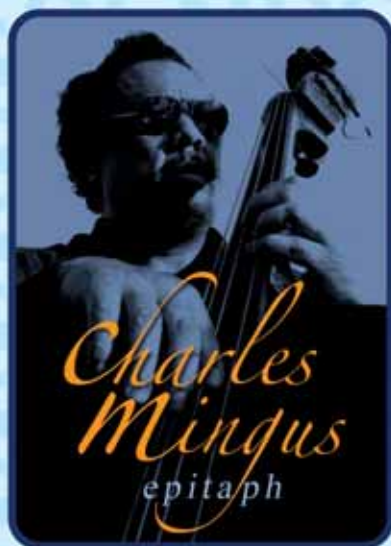
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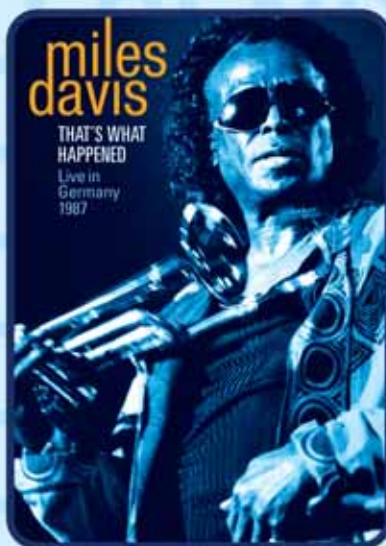
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JOE HENRY

CONNOISSEUR'S BLEND

By Lloyd Sachs

Joe Henry, who knows his wine, was strolling around the Ciccone Vineyard and Winery, a smallish operation run by his father-in-law in northwest Michigan—Suttons Bay to be specific, a quiet upscale town on the Lelanau Peninsula perched on Grand Traverse Bay. He was a long way from his home in southern California, but not so far from the northern Detroit area where he spent his high school years and met his wife, Melanie Ciccone (aka Madonna's sister).

But even surrounded by grape vines, enjoying the early afternoon afterglow of a glass of pinot noir, Henry had coffee on his mind. Prompted just a tad by a caffeinated correspondent, he talked enthusiastically about his espresso machine back in South Pasadena, the shots he pulls for musicians in his basement recording studio and the San Rafael coffee outfit from which he orders his beloved Jaguar blend.

That Henry was discussing espresso in a

wine setting seemed appropriate. A singer and songwriter grounded in pop tradition, he creates excitement through his deep involvement in other genres. The one that brings out the musical connoisseur in him is jazz. His life changed at 15, he said, when a friend played him Thelonious Monk's *Criss-Cross*: "I had never heard anything like it. It was like seeing *8½* [the Fellini film]. I thought whatever this is, I'm going in. I wanted to be part of it." In due course, he dove into Miles Davis and Duke Ellington and Bill Evans, and Ornette Coleman, Don Cherry and John Coltrane, and became encyclopedic on the subject.

If Henry had done nothing but get Coleman to play on his 2001 album *Scar*, his reputation in jazz would be secure. Coleman *never* plays on other people's records. But if some listeners were surprised by the alto saxophonist's appearance on the track "Richard Pryor Addresses A Tearful Nation," to which he contributed an exquisite

and gripping solo, it was less of a shocker for fans who remembered Cherry (and bassist Cecil McBee) playing on Henry's *Astral Weeks*-inspired *Shuffletown* (1990). Henry's albums have since featured Don Byron, Bill Frisell, Marc Ribot, Brian Blade, the Dirty Dozen Brass Band, Anthony Wilson and Ron Miles. His latest effort, *Blood From Stars* (Anti-), opens with a solo piano performance by Jason Moran, whom Henry recruited after being "blown away" by his Monk tribute at New York's Town Hall ("Ten minutes into the show, I had already decided that, somehow, I had to incorporate him into what I was doing," he told a newspaper interviewer), and features rising saxophonist Levon Henry, Joe's 17-year-old son.

And then there are Henry's stalwart efforts as a jazz and blues producer. He instigated and fashioned New Orleans r&b legend Allen Toussaint's brilliant reinvention of himself on *The Bright Mississippi* (2009). The 71-year-old



pianist had never before recorded an instrumental album, much less one of traditional jazz classics. Henry subsequently produced *The Way Of The World*, a forthcoming album by singer and pianist Mose Allison that, with a cast of players including guitarist Wilson, saxophonist Walter Smith III, pedal steel wiz Greg Leisz and Henry's brilliant rhythm section of bassist David Piltch and drummer Jay Bellerose, promises to be unlike anything the 81-year-old Allison has done. "It's very raw," said Bellerose.

Henry, whose non-jazz clients have ranged from Solomon Burke to Ani DiFranco to Harry Belafonte (with whom he's working on an ambitious historical project), employs jazz artists on his own recordings not to spice things up with catchy solos, à la Phil Woods on Steely Dan's "Doctor Wu." He looks to them to expand his sound and enrich his songs, which never turn more than a few degrees

from jazz. "Parker's Mood," one of the highlights of his largely acoustic 2007 album *Civilians*, is a dreamlike reverie of Charlie Parker. "Loves You Madly," from *Tiny Voices* (2004), acknowledges Ellington while plugging into New Orleans march music. "Over Her Shoulder," an instrumental ballad on the new album on which Levon and Ribot duet against a backdrop of spooky electronics, is decidedly Monkish.

In describing his son's approach to the saxophone as "romantic and fractured simultaneously," Henry could be describing his own intellectually spiked songs, with their blend of edgy immediacy and mystery. His earliest influences included Ray Charles, Louis Armstrong and Johnny Cash; listening to them on the radio while growing up in Charlotte, N.C., and Atlanta, he was carried away by the individual power of their voices and the stories they told. By the time he was 13, he was

obsessed with songs and "heavily invested in Bob Dylan's constructed mythology."

Years later, Henry connected the dots between Dylan, the artists who influenced him, and Monk. "I respond to Monk the same way I respond to Woody Guthrie and Leadbelly," he said. "He's like country blues, completely alive and electric, not mannered or genteel. When he plays, it's like he's taking a bite out of a piece of fruit."

The 49-year-old Henry lives in South Pasadena with his family in a landmark Chalet-style house designed for the widow of assassinated President James A. Garfield. Unlike most California houses, it has a basement. Not only that, its basement, which is taken up by the recording studio, has windows. Recording sessions usually take place in a windowless environment. The light coming through Henry's basement windows

feeds the bright, open, congenial atmosphere of his sessions.

"Joe dispels the old romantic myth of art only coming through the suffering of 18-hour days locked in a basement until you turn into cream cheese," said guitarist Ribot, a core member of Henry's working group. "He's a real gentleman. Even when everyone feels the energy of working with a major figure, they're free to propose things."

The trust Henry inspires in musicians was reflected in Ribot's willingness to play cornet on *Blood From Stars*. Since giving up the instrument as a kid—braces forced him to switch to guitar—he had played it professionally only when his former boss Tom Waits had an immediate need for an additional horn. "I have about three minutes of chops," Ribot said with a laugh. But that was enough for him to enliven Henry's "The Man I Keep Hid" with crackling trad school licks.

"It sounds like we sampled an old King Oliver record and fucked with it," said Henry, grinning. "To me, Marc sounds strangely disembodied. Like a foreboding dream. I love it when someone with such an expansive musical mind picks up an instrument they don't play often. It forces them to articulate deep thoughts in a more primitive way."

It's easy to attribute the cinematic quality of

Henry's music, with its washes of emotion, elusive characters and atmospheric sound effects, to his living in the shadow of Hollywood. "I know there is a vibe here unique to this city, and I relish it," he said, describing his studio as "a bit of a movie lot for me, a broad canvas on which I can build and project." But from the time he was a kid, he said, "I heard every song as a movie." His formative experiences in the South, Detroit and New York, where he came of age as a singer-songwriter, left the deepest impressions on him.

The greatest advantage of living where he does, Henry said, is having resources at his disposal that he couldn't afford in New York. Not that he isn't a man of modest means in his cozy studio. Like his mentor T Bone Burnett, who lent his stature to *Shuffletown* when A&M was hesitant to let Henry produce it, Henry likes "papery, floppy kick drums, the overtones of a boxy upright piano, the buzz of bass strings." He's after a naturally ambient sound—or, as he put it, "the sound of our collective humanity—a singer breathing between lines, or Miles' chair squeaking on 'Some Day My Prince Will Come' when he leans back to begin his solo."


The Bright Mississippi was recorded in New York, but with no loss of freedom or fellowship. The musicians sat in a circle around the piano. Toussaint had never played the Jelly Roll Morton, Sidney Bechet and Louis Armstrong

classics Henry picked out for him—or more modern works including Ellington and Strayhorn's "Day Dream" and Monk's "Bright Mississippi." Though Toussaint knew fellow New Orleans native Nicolas Payton, whose father, Walter Payton, was the bassist on many of his projects, he hadn't played with him or the rest of the cast, including Ribot, Byron, Brad Mehldau and Joshua Redman. But having worked previously with Henry on the social club-style album *I Believe To My Soul* (featuring Mavis Staples, Ann Peebles, Billy Preston and Irma Thomas), the Katrina benefit album *Our New Orleans* and *The River In Reverse* (which teamed him with Elvis Costello), Toussaint happily followed the producer's lead.

"There were all these voices telling Allen he shouldn't do the project," said Bellerose. "But Allen saw something in Joe and latched onto him. He saw a great lover of music who conveyed that he was there to help him because he respected him so much."

"Normally, when someone considers me as a musical entity, they think of the New Orleans thing in one way or another," said Toussaint. "Joe heard something different and more sophisticated. I trusted him dearly. The songs he chose were all wonderful songs. I played them without much thought. I know some of these songs are branded as jazz, but I didn't consider that I was

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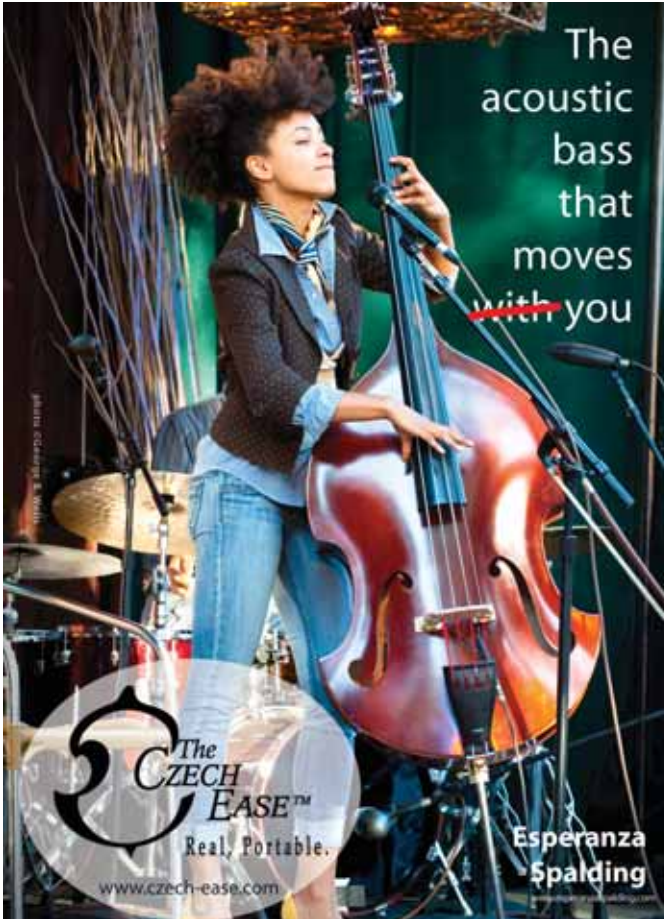
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playing jazz. They were just wonderful songs.”

Henry was determined not to approach *The Bright Mississippi* as a genre exercise or nostalgia trip. He made a point of not using a traditional rhythm section, choosing the brilliantly inventive, texture-minded Bellerose, who is not a jazz drummer, over his old friend Brian Blade, who as Wayne Shorter’s regular trap man decidedly is. Bellerose’s ear-opening modern strokes and his ability to stretch and suspend rhythms feed the album’s fascinating tension between old and new, pop and jazz. “Jay is like a painter,” said Henry. “He’s completely and unfailingly song-oriented.”

To Henry’s bewilderment, many writers and promoters continue to tag him as an alt-country artist, based on a relatively brief period in the early ’90s when he recorded two albums with Minnesota alt-country favorites the Jayhawks. Though *Short Man’s Room* (1992) is held in high esteem by some fans, and *Kindness Of The World* (1993) was an admirable attempt by Henry to tailor his style to the Jayhawks, the partnership didn’t make for the most natural fit. With its dark ambient sound and tricky narratives, *Trampoline* (1996) returned Henry to what he does best. He elevated his game on *Fuse*, an intoxicating mix of ’70s soul effects and jazz swing, hip-hop drums and avant-rock textures.

Then came *Scar*, which yielded Henry’s one big hit via Madonna’s transformation of “Stop” into “Don’t Tell Me,” and unexpectedly brought Coleman into his life. “The evening I spent with Ornette in the studio and the afternoon before at his apartment talking and playing was life-changing for me—musically, and as a point of personal validation,” Henry said. “He treated me like a peer, and I can’t tell you how important that was to me at that moment, and continues to be. Beyond that, his playing exceeded my expectation for what we might achieve together. It’s the most perfect blues he plays on his solo—fractured, stately, wounded and defiant. I felt that once he had played, I could almost throw away the whole lyric, as if so much scaffolding around a building.”

Coleman, said Henry, was visibly moved by the great respect he was shown when he arrived to play on “Richard Pryor Addresses A Tearful Nation” and the freedom he was given to approach the tune however he liked. He recorded many more takes of his solo than was asked of him, determined to capture the special quality of Henry’s intimate, soulfully dusted voice. That’s what drew him to the project.

Henry, for his part, has been moved by the jazz community’s acceptance of him. “I have been shown amazing creative generosity all told, and I can’t begin to account for it, to be honest,” he said. “I think it is mostly because I approach them all with a fully realized idea of what I believe they uniquely have to offer, and with complete respect for their artistry.” **DB**

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Father And Son

An Interview with Muddy Waters and Paul Butterfield

By Don DeMicheal
August 7, 1969

There's only one way for a young man to learn true blues: from older men—black men. This sort of teacher-student relationship is rather common today, or at least it has been since the blues gained such popularity with the seemingly ever-fickle young white audience. One of the most popular of the young blues men is Paul Butterfield. But Butterfield is an old hand at the blues, having drunk from the deep well on Chicago's South Side several years ago. This spring, he and guitarist Michael Bloomfield were reunited with two of their main teachers—singer/guitarist Muddy Waters and pianist Otis Spann (Waters' half-brother and longtime sideman). The reunion took place in the Ter-Mar Recording Studio at Chess Records, and for three nights a rather remarkable recording session rolled from one artistic peak to another. Following the last night, Butterfield, Waters and, later, Spann discussed the session and the ways they learned the blues. What follows is an edited version of the conversation.

DeMicheal: *Paul, when was the first time you sat in with Muddy?*

Butterfield: About 1957.

DeMicheal: *How old were you?*

Butterfield: About 18. The stuff I play now ... my band's got horns and things, and we do a lot of different stuff, 'cause I got guys in my band who can really play—but they can't play that old stuff. It's just a certain thing I came up in, that I learned, and what I was really listening to—and I mean live; I ain't talking about listening to records—was Muddy. Muddy had a real good band then. And Little Walter used to come in and sit in.

Waters: Magic Sam, Otis Rush all those boys used to come and sit in. They all sat in because I'm not the kind of guy who'll hold the bandstand for myself. I'm not like a lot of the older guys who've been in the business for a long time, 'cause I'm not jealous of nobody—you play what you play and I'll put you on my bandstand.

DeMicheal: *How did you get turned on to the*

blues, Paul?

Butterfield: I'll tell you the truth, man. My brother, my family used to play a lot of blues records. Old 78s. They used to listen to people like Muddy, Gene Ammons, Charlie Parker. It was more jazz than blues, but the feeling I got was from blues. So I got it early. There used to be WGES, and they used to play from 11 to 12 o'clock at night nothing but blues. And Nashville, Tenn., John R. used to play nothing but blues. We used to hear it when I was 10 years old. My brother started buying blues singles when I was out playing baseball. I don't know what turned me on, but I just liked that kind of music better than any other kind of music. I like lots of kinds of music. I like Roland Kirk, Stanley Turrentine, Gene Ammons, a whole lot of people. But that was the music that really got me interested in playing.

DeMicheal: *Interested in playing harp?*

Butterfield: Naw, I never thought about playing the harp. I just started playing the harp. I just enjoyed playing it. I didn't have no plan or say, "I'm gonna learn how to play the harp like so and so or learn how to do this or that." I just started playing it. I mess around with any instrument I can get next to. It wasn't, "I want to learn like Little Walter or Sonny Boy Williamson." I just wanted to learn how to play.

Waters: In music of this kind everybody got to be influenced by somebody.

Butterfield: I was influenced a lot by Little Walter, and when I got to play some more, by Sonny Boy, the second. Then a little after that I started getting influenced by Gene Ammons, Stanley Turrentine ...

Waters: After you've mastered your instrument, you can go the way you want to go at that particular time. When I began I was influenced by Son House and Robert Johnson. That doesn't mean you have to be exactly like them, 'cause when you get out there, you learn other people's work and you put more of your own material in it and then you're on your own.

Butterfield: There ain't no musician in the whole world that isn't influenced by a whole lot of people. They're influenced by anybody they hear that's good.

Waters: That's right. What makes me happy is to see how many kids been influenced by me.

Butterfield: There was a scene in Chicago, Detroit, St. Louis—the Midwest—where guys would say, "I'm gonna get up there and burn this cat." A lot of underneath stuff.

DeMicheal: *Cutting contest.*

Butterfield: Yeah. That mostly came from Chicago. Isn't that true, Muddy?

Waters: Yeah. Years ago—I'd say back in '47 or '8—Little Walter, Jimmy Rodgers and myself, we would go around looking for bands that were playing. We called ourselves the Headcutters, 'cause we'd go in and if we got a chance we were gonna burn 'em. Today, people's not like that. You just get up and play. I'm not like that no more. Just play what you can play, and if the people like it, fine; if they don't, try again next time. But today, Paul, we have some people—I won't call no names—that still got that feeling: want to be the best. You can't be the best; you can just be a good'un.

Butterfield: Just be you.

Waters: And that's it. Whatever you do, try to do it good.

Butterfield: I played this place in California. All these kids came down, and the only thing in their minds was to wipe me out. So I said go ahead and play, and I'll play what I play. Musicians are supposed to be loving each other...

Waters: Together.

Butterfield: ... and giving stuff to each other and making each other feel good. What I'm talking about is music, not just blues. I'm ready to do something that maybe somebody's not gonna dig at all, but if it's music I'm supposed to be sharing it, learning about it. That's the only way you can do it. One of the main reasons why I never really tried to play Little Walter's solos or Sonny Boy's or any other cat's exactly the way it was is that, in the first place, I couldn't.

Waters: Paul, in this field today, if you pick up a harmonica, you got to go through John Lee Williamson [Sonny Boy No. 1], Rice Miller [Sonny Boy No. 2] or Walter Jacobs [Little Walter].

Butterfield: Right.

Waters: Because they set a pattern out here, and there's nobody been born yet that can do too much more stuff to go with it. So if you say I try to play like Son House—sure, I'm glad of that 'cause Son was a great man. Robert Johnson was one of the greatest there's ever been. So that makes me feel proud, 'cause I got my pattern from them. I can't go around it too far because I got to come back around to something in that particular field. Between the three of us, I'm doing Muddy Waters, but because I use a slide, I can't get away from the sound of those two people 'cause they made it popular years and years ago. This sound is 200 or 500 years standing.



Muddy Waters (left) and Paul Butterfield

DeMicheal: *I'm curious to find out if the learning process was similar for the two of you. When you went into playing blues, Muddy, how did you go about learning?*

Waters: I was first blowing harmonica, like Paul here. I had a young boy by the name of Scott Bowhandle playing guitar, and he learned me the little he knew. One night we went to one of these Saturday night fish fries, and Son House was there playing. I was using the bottleneck because most of the Delta people used this bottleneck-style thing. When I heard Son House, I should have broke my bottleneck because this other cat hadn't learned me nothing. Son House played this place for about four weeks in a row, and I was there every night, closer to him than I am to your microphone. You couldn't get me out of that corner, listening to him, what he's doing. Years later, down around 1937, I was very good then, but I hadn't been exposed to the public—I heard this Robert Johnson come out, and he got his teaching from Son House. He had a different thing. Where we'd play it slow, Robert Johnson had it up-tempo. The young idea of it, y'know what I mean? I didn't know Johnson much; I saw him one time in Friars Point, Miss. I knew Son House very, very good.

DeMicheal: *Paul, was your experience similar, only 20–30 years later?*

Butterfield: The people I most listened to were Muddy, Spann, people who were around—Robert Nighthawk was playing, and Wolf was playing, and Magic Sam ... like, Magic Sam is pretty close to my age, and Otis Rush is—but I listened to anybody I could listen to. I used to go out and play with Muddy when I couldn't play

nothing, but he'd let me come up.

DeMicheal: *When I first met you and Mike Bloomfield in 1962 or so, you were both living on Chicago's South Side ...*

Butterfield: Naw, Michael never lived on the South Side. Michael was in rock 'n' roll bands when he was 16, 17 years old. He was from a whole different area, the North Side. I never even worked out of the North Side until I started working at Big John's. Michael really got interested in blues like Muddy and those cats, after he'd been playing in rock 'n' roll show bands.

I never practiced the harp in my life. Never. I would just blow in it. I was blowing some lousy stuff. Just blowing it, drinking wine, getting high and enjoying myself. Nick Gravenites was the first cat to take me down to see you, Muddy, about 1957. We were more interested in getting high, dancing and having ourselves some good times than anything else. I never sat down and tried to figure out what he's doing with this stuff. I just played it. Muddy knows that I used to come down to him and play some nothing stuff but nobody ever said, "Well, man, you're not playing too well."

Waters: But you always had this particular thing, this something that everybody don't have, this thing you're born with, this touch. 'Cause you used to sing a little song and have the joint going pretty good. As soon as you'd walk in, I'd say, "You're on next, man."

DeMicheal: *Now after all these years, you two finally have made a record together.*

Waters: It sure was an enjoyable time for me.

DeMicheal: *How did the record come about?*

Waters: The idea came from my "grandson,"

Marshall Chess.

Chess: Michael was at my house, and he said he'd like to do a record with Muddy and Paul. The title, *Fathers And Sons*, was his idea.

Waters: Is that the name of it? That's a very good title, 'cause I am the daddy, and all these kids are my sons. I feel there are so many kids tracing in my tracks that I'm the father out here.

DeMicheal: *How do you think the session went?*

Waters: I think it was one of the greatest sessions we did since Little Walter's time and Jimmy Rodgers'. We was close to the old sound.

Butterfield: I tell you, man, I think some good things came out of this.

DeMicheal: *When was the last time you two played together?*

Waters: In California. I was playing in a club out there, and Paul was off this particular time, and he came in and sat in with us. It was a beautiful night, but it was nothing like the session. At the session, we was right down to it.

DeMicheal: *You did mostly old things?*

Waters: We did a lot of the things over we did with Little Walter and Jimmy Rodgers and [Edward] Elgin on drums. We tried to get ready for that particular thing, as close as possible. It's about as close as I've been to it since I first recorded it.

Butterfield: Duck Dunn, the bass player, came in from Memphis. I came in from New York. Michael came in from San Francisco. Muddy came up from Texas. Now, I don't have any time off, none, but it was an honor for me to get together with Muddy and have a good time and

play some music.

Waters: One thing, I hope it's not the last time we get together.

Butterfield: Duck Dunn had never played this kind of music, really. And most of the cats haven't been playing this type of music for a long while. It really made me feel good to get back and really be playing some stuff on the harp that was what I came from, the thing that really turned me on to be playing in the first place. Now I'm playing different things, different changes. It made me feel so good to be playing something that wasn't just, "Well, we'll get together and do this recording." We've been enjoying ourselves. Really felt good. ... A lot of it had to do with Muddy's singing. Muddy might not be a young cat anymore, but he's doing it. He still gets an awful good feeling for me for playing. He's the main cat; we're playing with Muddy. It's his feeling, and the way he's doing the stuff is making us feel really good. Feeling is 99 percent of it. If you're not feeling the music, how can you expect the other cats who are playing to really feel it? You doing an article or what?

DeMicheal: I'm gathering material for some articles.

Butterfield: This may be jive, man, so tell me if I'm wrong. If you write an article I hope you write something about human beings, 'cause I love Muddy, and I'm tired of hearing about this

black-and-white bullshit. I want to hear some stuff about human beings. If you want to write an article, man, and getting back into that separation bit, then forget about me. Don't even mention my name, 'cause I don't want to have anything to do with it.

DeMicheal: *This is a conversation, isn't it?*

Butterfield: I'm trying to tell you ...

DeMicheal: *I'm answering your question right there. You're both sitting here talking, right?*

Butterfield: That's just the way I feel about it, y'know? I feel people are trying in this country right now, they're trying to get together, and there's going to be some heavy shit going down. There's some bad stuff with the black people and there's some bad stuff with the white people. A lot of separation; there's a lot of understanding that's got to come down. But I'm just talking about what we're talking about—music, human beings. I love Muddy the way I love my father, my brother. And he's no black cat or white cat or anything; he's just a human being, man. The cat plays some music I respect, and I dig playing with him. These papers come out and say this is black over here and white over there, I don't want nothing to do with it. I'm proud of being a human being and where I'm at.

Waters: I think about the white group the way I think about the black group: if you're good, you're good.

Butterfield: Right.

Waters: If you're trying, you're trying.

Butterfield: Sincere ...

Waters: And that's the way it is. They've come to me thousands of times: "Do you think a white boy can play the blues?" I tell them they can play the blues better than me, but they'll never be able to sing them as good as me. I'm just telling the truth about it. White boy can run a ring around me playing the blues.

Butterfield: Nobody can run a ring around nobody.

Waters: It comes down to I play my way, my style. That's it.

Butterfield: Music has got to do with love, human beings digging each other. That's the only way you can play music; you can't play music with somebody you hate. Every writer who ever writes something on the blues writes some jive. Every article I've ever seen on the blues is from such a narrow viewpoint that it never gets down to what the music is, never gets down to the feeling that's going down. Maybe I shouldn't even be talking about it, but I'm disgusted with all this separation stuff.

[Spann enters.]

DeMicheal: *Otis, how do you feel about the session?*

Spann: I feel the same way my brother feels about it. It was a beautiful session.

Waters: I think it was one of the closest sessions that we had since Little Walter and Jimmy

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Rodgers' time and your time, Otis. 'Cause we did those numbers over again and everybody tried to get close to 'em. It wasn't just playing or just blowing.

Spann: It did remind me of old times. I had more feeling in the session than I've had in a long time. It's a funny thing, the people say the white kids can't play blues, but that's wrong.

Waters: I'll say this: We got to bring a boy child into the world who can sing the blues like a black man. 'Specially my age, that came up through this scene that one day I eat, the next day I don't. Ain't got them kind of blues today. The colored ain't. The black people ain't got it today. Eat every day. Eat good. If you don't give it to 'em, they take it. I was afraid of taking something, afraid of going to jail, but the black man ain't scared to go to jail no more. That's why I say he can't have the blues I had 35 or 40 years ago.

DeMicheal: *Otis, what do you think of the title of the album, Fathers And Sons?*

Spann: Let me be the son.

Waters: A lot of people want to know how Otis got to play the blues so good. They never knowed this particular thing: He used to come to my house and park in front of the door with a bottle of whisky, and I'd sit there and teach this man, tell him exactly what to do.

Spann: That's the truth. Ride around, be day-break before we got home. Sit there talking.

Waters: Telling him what to with the piano when I was singing the blues.

Spann: I don't believe there'll be another musician, up to date, that can follow my brother Muddy singing, because he's a "late" singer. If you don't wait for him, he's not there. He sings behind the beat.

Waters: This is the wonderful thing about the white kids that played on this session, they got that understanding.

Spann: They lay right there and did it. Paul came up on us, and I used to teach Paul. He got it. He knows. He used to be like me. When Muddy taught me, I didn't think nothing about no timing. Pat my feet faster than I play.

Waters: Watch his feet, you will not play nothing.

Spann: That's the truth.

Butterfield: The first record we put out—*Butterfield's Blues Band*—everything was fast as a mother, man. Just pushing everything. We weren't ready to wait for anything, just go. Remember that thing we did for Chess, Muddy? "Walkin' Blues?" The same thing.

Waters: Taking all the feeling out of it.

Butterfield: Yeah, making it real fast. We couldn't help it, I was so energetic.

Waters: I want you to know one thing, he did one blues tonight that was a real killer, man, that blues we did with all the relaxing, take your time and do it. "Mean Disposition." It's a stone killer. It may not sell five records, but, me, I'd buy as much as 10 myself, and I ain't bought a record in years. But what you cats were putting in behind me just can't be beat.

DeMicheal: *Otis, you were saying in the old days you and Paul used to get together. What'd you do?*

Butterfield: Drink wine. Play and get high. That's when you were living in that basement.

DeMicheal: *Does the same sort of thing still go on, guys hanging around wanting to learn the blues?*

Waters: Sure, I could have a hotel room full at all times.

Butterfield: I'm learning from people right now. I hear stuff I'll be learning for the rest of my life. And I bet Muddy's listening to some

people.

Waters: You can look in your 'cyclopedia and history books, but you never finish that music. You can hear somebody playing and make one particular thing and you say I dig that. Then you say I'm going home and get my old guitar and gonna see can I lick this note. If you miss it, then you go back tomorrow night. I used to say to Son House, "Would you play so and so and so?" 'Cause I was trying to get that touch on that thing he did. Bukka White got a thing I been trying to learn for five years, and I ain't learnt it yet.

DB



Windows Wide Open

By Ted Panken

Given the daunting financial challenges even the highest-profile jazzfolk face, it was refreshing to note last summer that alto saxophonist Myron Walden, a hardcore practitioner if there ever was one, was deploying the services of Shore Fire Media, a pricey New York public relations firm, to spread the word about his latest projects.

Over his previous two decades in the music business, Walden—a widely respected musician’s musician with a keening, instantly recognizable voice on his main axe as well as bass clarinet—had operated decidedly below the radar. Now 37, he incubated his ideas during the ’90s at Smalls, where he became a keystone sideman with such contemporaries as Brian Blade, Kurt Rosenwinkel, Jason Lindner and Omer Avital, and developed his own take on the vocabulary and syntax of the more consonant jazz of the decade that immediately preceded his birth. He documented his investigations on four small-label CDs consisting almost entirely of his original pieces, on which he improvised with a concept that triangulated elements from the languages of Charlie Parker and John Coltrane into his own inflamed argot while never losing sight of melodic imperatives.

Now, a series of e-mails from Shore Fire (whose clients include Bruce Springsteen, Ry Cooder, Levon Helm and Tom Jones) spelled out Walden’s forthcoming agenda. After a sabbatical that he devoted to raising his game on the tenor and soprano saxophones and composing pieces suitable for those instruments, Walden would release four albums of original material over the next six months on his new imprint label, Demi Sound. To preview them, he would undertake five Wednesday concerts in September at Manhattan’s Jazz Gallery, featuring a different band each night and donating all of the proceeds to the non-profit venue.

“I wanted to present a scope of who Myron Walden is,” Walden said in mid-October over a late breakfast at the Upper West Side restaurant Sarabeth’s, around the corner from his apartment. By way of describing how his “musical likes and sensibilities” had evolved over the decade, he touched on his two prior recordings, *Higher Ground* and *This Way* (Fresh Sound), both pianoless, postbop recitals on which Walden and front-line tenor saxophone mates Marcus Strickland and Jimmy Greene, respectively, blow with fierce lucidity and intuitive interplay on complexly superimposed harmonic sequences over crisply detailed rhythmic structures from E.J. Strickland.

“I had an awakening after those records,” Walden said. “I was dating my wife, and I wanted to record some music that I’d composed since we met that expressed my emotions for her. Then it dawned on me that I have a knack for composing melodies that touch people. Also, I had written some music for a quintet on which I played alto, but it didn’t feel right. I

realized that I needed another voice to embrace this different feeling that I was hearing.


“Taking up the tenor and soprano opened up different windows for me even when playing alto. I’d schooled my alto sound listening to tenor players, not necessarily to play their language, but to get that sonic presence—to play a note and have it sit, as opposed to being like a laser. But playing tenor made me realize exactly what it is to do that. I had to let go of the alto for a while and immerse myself only on tenor, so as not to sound like an alto player playing tenor—the way my air was moving and my aural perception of the sound.”

The Demi Sound releases, which showcase three previously undocumented groups, offer an exhaustive exposition of the feeling to which Walden referred. *Countrified* features an organ trio of the same name dedicated to, as Walden puts it, “Southern-fried soul meets a little blues and rock ‘n’ roll.” Harmonically fortified quiet storm is the mood on *In This World* and *What We Share*, recorded during sessions in 2006 and 2007. The leader milks each note to its fullest, framing his tenor and soprano sax and bass clarinet with introspective textures conjured by guitarist Mike Moreno, David Bryant on Rhodes, Yasushi Nakamura on bass and Kendrick Scott on drums. For three tracks, the rhythm section comprises keyboardist Jon Cowherd and Chris Thomas, his colleagues in Blade’s Fellowship Band, along with Blade, whose praise-singing esthetic is a key template for the sound palette contained therein.

“The music stems from something other than the technical aspect,” Walden said of these three projects and the unrecorded group Stanley, his homage to the expansively masculine tonal personality of soul tenor icon Stanley Turrentine. “In *Countrified*, I tell the band, ‘I can care less about playing a hip chord. If we play this same F7 for the whole gig, I’m happy—but only if that F7 makes me want to tap my foot, snap my fingers and clap my hands. If you don’t get me to do that, you’re wasting my time.’”

“With [the ensemble] *In This World*, it’s more about melody; it’s not necessarily about dancing—at least not standing up. It’s about how I can express myself in a way that doesn’t throw away 20 years of studying harmony and chords, but also get closer to everyday communication. Some of the compositions are interpretations of songs that I first played with Fellowship. In fact, the first time I rehearsed with the Fellowship Band, I thought, ‘What the hell am I going to play on this?’ I couldn’t find a dominant seventh chord to save my life. The chords moved in a peaceful way; sometimes the chord would stay the same but the bass note moved, and if you weren’t listening that close you almost wouldn’t have noticed. It gives this relaxed sensation.





Sometimes **Dreams** can be dark...

Walden also plays tenor on *Momentum*—and its companion release, *Momentum-Live*—on which a strong quintet comprising Darren Barrett on trumpet, David Bryant on Rhodes, Yasushi Nakamura on bass and Kendrick Scott on drums (Eden Ladin plays acoustic piano and John Davis plays drums on the location date) explores the abstract language of the Wayne Shorter edition of the Miles Davis Quintet circa 1964–1970. He presented this formation on his third Jazz Gallery concert; on the final two, he moved back to alto, stretching out with the Higher Ground quartet and with Apex, an open-form trio with bassist Dwayne Burno and drummer Eric McPherson that played Wednesday nights at Smalls for several years during the '90s.

He opened the latter event with a tune that made reference to a reharmonized “Woody ’n You” in the theme—he broke up some lines in a “Klactoveesedstene” manner, crammed bursts of notes into others, interpolated quotes from “Hot House” and other bebop signposts, transitioned between four on the floor and freebop time feels, all the while following the harmonic track with authority. After concluding a ballad that began with a big rubato statement and then proceeded over a gentle calypsonian groove, he took a minute to reflect on the occasion.

“I’ve known Dwayne and Eric the longest of anyone in those groups,” Walden said, noting that they had met 20 years ago, when he was attending Manhattan’s LaGuardia High School of Music and Art with a peer group that included, in addition to McPherson, such present-day luminaries as Abraham Burton, Walter Blanding, Lindner and bebop guitarist William Ash. Ash heard Walden, then in 10th grade, practicing Charlie Parker tunes, and brought him to Augie’s, then an Upper West Side haunt for New York’s finest young boppers, to hear Birdologist Jesse Davis.

“It floored me; I didn’t think anyone walking could play alto that way,” Walden elaborated in our conversation a fortnight later. “Every Friday and Saturday for the next two years, I was standing at the little bannister that separated the bar from the seating area. Eric and Burno started playing with Jesse, and the way they played together had me in awe. They didn’t need a continuous *boom-boom-boom-boom, ting, ting-a-ding, ting* for the time to be felt. That shaped my vision. I want the hi-hat to be an independent melodic voice, to sing, to vary its pronunciations. The drummer has to master the song and shape it. The bassist has to utilize double-stops and off-beats. You need to understand all the pieces of the puzzle.”

From the very beginning of his musical journey, Walden had relied on himself to launch his own puzzle-solving process. Born in Miami, he’s the first working musician in his family, which moved north to the Bronx in 1984, the year crack cocaine first hit the Fort Apache streets. One day he heard his uncle, “the elder of the household,” responding to the Charlie Parker location recording *One Night In Washington*.

“When my uncle spoke, everyone listened,” Walden recalled. “But when Bird played, he shut up. He cosigned, ‘Go ahead, Bird. I hear you!’ Wait a minute. He don’t listen to anybody. But he’s listening to Bird? I want to do that.”

From that moment on, chasing the Bird became Walden’s primary pursuit. Soon after, he found a way to actualize this aspiration when he overheard his middle school music appreciation teacher talking about what to do with a cache of instruments the school had recently received. “I’m from Florida, so my mannerisms were respectable, and teachers knew I was serious, so I could talk to them,” he said. “I asked if they had any alto saxophones. She said, ‘Why?’ ‘Because I want to play one.’ ‘What do you know about the alto saxophone?’ ‘That’s what Charlie Parker played, and I want to play like Charlie Parker.’”

Walden paused, imitating the teacher’s shocked expression. “She let me take the school’s alto saxophone. A saxophone player in our building gave me an instruction book. I studied it like my life depended on it. In some ways, it did, just because of the ever-present hardships in my neighborhood. I taught myself from scratch—it showed how to put on the reed and the mouthpiece, the fingering, how to blow, how to hold your embouchure. I got good pretty quickly. By ninth grade I could play ‘Gavotte,’ which I performed at my audition. After I played, the teachers asked, ‘How long have you been playing?’ ‘About a year.’ ‘How did you



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learn to play?" "I'm self-taught." They were like, "Oh, my God."

"I think more than my playing, what got me in was my potential, my will, my determination. If you have a choice between a kid who had no teacher but was able to acquire this amount of skill and a kid who was better than me but was taking lessons ... I would have made the same choice."

Walden took full advantage of his opportunity, and in 1993, while attending Manhattan School of Music, he placed his name into the wider conversation with a first place in a Charlie Parker competition held under the auspices of Lincoln Center, earning a guest appearance with Wynton Marsalis and the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra. "I never tried to sound like Charlie Parker, but you could hear the language or the feeling," he said. "When I listened to Bird, it was less about digesting and synthesizing his sound than picking up the flow, the shape of his lines, trying to understand how he constructed them. Even though I learned his tunes, I always played my originals."

After graduation, Walden faced the dilemma of "making a living playing even if I wasn't good enough." He took a job at a food court and quit the second day. A position at Tower Records lasted less than a week. "I was expending so much energy helping other people, I'd get home at 5:30 or 6 and be too tired to practice," he said. "I made an exclusive commitment to music." He found occasional gigs for a band whose personnel included, at various points, Mark Turner, whose extended registral range he emulated, as well as Barrett, Ryan Kisor and Luis Perdomo. The venues included Smalls, which had opened that spring.

"I realized that there was a scene there, and I should make my presence known," he said. "Eventually I got to know other people, and one thing led to another. At first I tried four horns, then three horns, then a quintet for which I hired people like Eddie Henderson, Kevin Hays, Stephen Scott, Greg Hutchinson and Eric Harland. By the time I got my regular night, it was the trio with Dwayne and Eric. We got a small following, and we played my music. For a short period, I played a few standards, but then

I said, 'No, forget this. I want to play my music.'"

Still, it took more than a decade for Walden to allow his musical production to encompass as broad an emotional and sonic range as he presented last September.

"I was doing 'mainstream jazz' or 'classic jazz' for so long that it was a challenge to do something else wholeheartedly," he said. "I owe a lot to my wife, who encouraged me to realize and embrace and allow myself to be who I am." He also credited his motivation to "break the chains and open this window to myself" to his cumulative experience with such musicians as Blade, Rosenwinkel and Dave Douglas. "They are extremely versatile, but really live whatever they do. It's codified, researched, well-felt. That's what I tried to do at the Gallery.

"My impetus was that these are the things that inspire me to play—it's what I love, what I want to hear, what I'm happy doing. But these efforts are also with hopes of having a booking agent book me into festivals with more than one band."

In addition to the moral support, Walden's marriage—his spouse of two years is the CEO of a major healthcare corporation—has given him sufficient economic stability to invest in the development of his career and be more selective in his activity.

"It does afford me the distance to pick and choose," he acknowledged. "But I've learned that this can be a good thing as well as a curse. When you don't have to take gigs, and you say, 'No, I don't want to do that, they're not paying me enough,' you can begin to move away from what the music needs to thrive and flourish. That's something that I experienced. I told my wife, 'I have to have the mindset that I have nothing.' It's difficult to be hungry when you're well-fed. But you need to be hungry enough to go out to the jam sessions, or get together with some cats and just play. When a call comes, you've got to be ready. And the only way to be ready is to be on the gun. Yeah, you can enjoy life, but you've got to put in the time."

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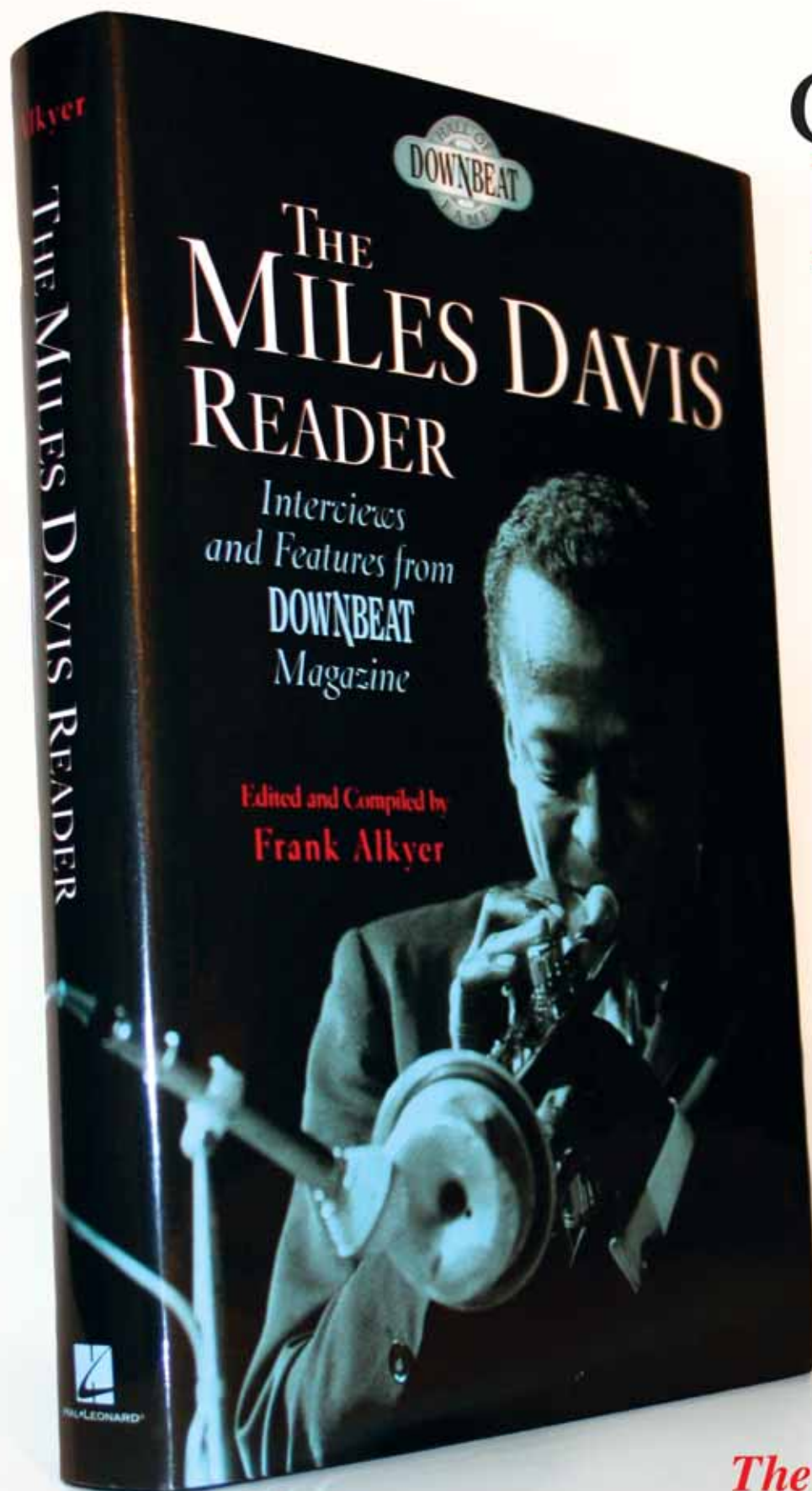
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★★★½

Fifty years ago, Billie Holiday took her leave of this world. Today there are millions who've never heard a Holiday record but who still recognize the brand, the idea, the symbol and what it means—jazz's Judy Garland, America's Edith Piaf and so on. Her life was a collection of curses—gender, drugs, class, race, all colliding within an intuitive artistry that is difficult today to separate from her difficult life.

There is nothing intuitive about Dee Dee Bridgewater's present contribution to the long shelf of Holiday tributes that have accumulated over the years. Twelve years after her homage to the sunlit Ella Fitzgerald, she turns here to the dark side, as it were. Having inhabited Holiday as a character in a much-praised one-woman show 20 years back, she comes armed with abundant credibility here. According to Dan Ouellette's notes, she was drawn deeply into Holiday's sound by the show's end. But here she stands her ground, asserts herself and imposes on some of the material an often caricatured phrasing, almost as if to make a joke of the object of her "love letter."

Consider "Fine And Mellow," one of the few blues Holiday made. Dee Dee shouts and growls "he's the lowest man" with an unnecessary pseudo passion that sounds seriously artificial. A few bars later she assumes a totally different kind of excess as she sings "stripes are really yellow" in a whiny, cackling whimper that makes a contrived mockery of the word "yellow" and then "mellow." Holiday was content to take her lyrics at a far more natural emotional volume. Even in her later years, when some believe she became a self-parody, she never came near the gross excesses Bridgewater indulges in here.

There are many Bridgewaters, however. None may be subtle, but some show more restraint when it comes to putting surplus spin on a syllable. "A Foggy Day" and "Good Morning Heartache" are relatively restrained and the better for it, even if she does occasionally squeeze the lyric just a bit too much; and "All Of Me" gives her plenty of opportunity to throw around her remarkable instrumental virtuosity without jumping any passing sharks. Her dazzling scat pickup from James Carter's soprano solo sounds spontaneously bold, and tells us at the outset that Bridgewater has no intent of doing an imitation of Holiday's vocal methods. The interaction between the singer and Carter is frequently tight, intense and close.

Carter's clarinet has more acid than sugar on "Heartache." Bridgewater opens up "Miss Brown To You" into a good swinger. The choice of material spans the Holiday career but is otherwise fairly standard for a Lady Day tribute—the usual "Lover Man," "Don't Explain," "God Bless The Child" and an intimate and somber "Strange Fruit." But I give extra credit for her going back to "Mother's Son-In-Law," Holiday's first recorded tune from 1933 and one rarely performed these days, even in Billie's name. Bridgewater turns it into a coy little gem, mainly as a duet with bassist Christian McBride.

John McDonough

Eleanora Fagan (1915–1959): To Billie With Love From Dee Dee: Lady Sings The Blues; All Of Me; Good Morning Heartache; Lover Man; You've Changed; Miss Brown To You; Don't Explain; Fine And Mellow; Mother's Son-In-Law; God Bless The Child; A Foggy Day; Strange Fruit. (52:04)

Personnel: Dee Dee Bridgewater, vocals; James Carter, reeds; Edsel Gomez, piano; Christian McBride, bass; Lewis Nash, drums.

» Ordering info: deedeebridgewater.com



MARK HIGASHINO

Keith Jarrett

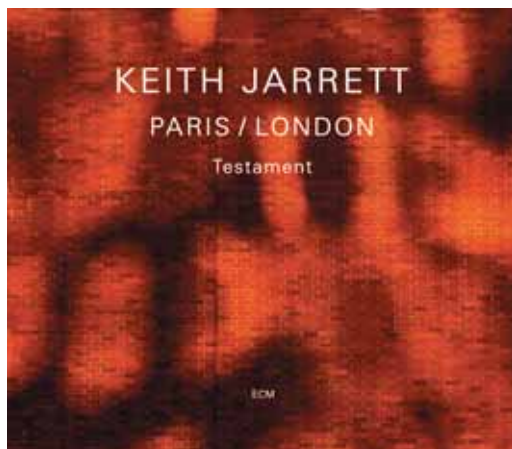
Testament: Paris/London

ECM 2130/31/32

★★★★

Solo concerts by Keith Jarrett, like those of Sonny Rollins, present improvisation as an epic, heroic act, suggesting a species of idealism that seems to have all but vanished from our world. In that sense, they are especially welcome. That said, one also wishes (heresy of heresies!) that Jarrett (and ECM) were more selective in their recorded representations of these concerts—in this case, one in Paris and a very long, not as consistent one in London—three CDs, in all. Because the truth is that while Jarrett often ascends to majestic heights of creative imagination, he can also be downright pedestrian. No amount of moaning and sighing can transform an utterly plain and predictable melody—one that would elicit a shrug, were it played by anyone else (or under different circumstances)—into something brilliant.

But it's nevertheless a great pleasure to hear Jarrett come back to this format. He is clearly enjoying himself as much as the audience adores him, and his playing is never less than technically brilliant, in some places absolutely stunning. No matter what he plays, Jarrett manages to convey a sense of intention so compelling it's difficult not to be caught up in its comforting momentum.



The song types will be familiar to fans—from introspective explorations to throbbing vamps—though there is a lot more dense, multi-tonal abstraction than usual. The mood, in Paris particularly, is morose and tinged with regret, a feeling occasioned, Jarrett explains in his notes, by the recent breakup of his marriage. Slow, sostenuto melodies rise up from the twisted harmonies, shimmering with nakedly exposed emotion. In the Paris concert, I especially responded to the swimming flurries and ragged tremolos of Part Three, the skittering abstraction and staccato bursts of Part Four, the thematic tenacity and inner voices of Part Five, and the mind-boggling speed and accuracy of Jarrett's two-handed unisons on Part Eight.

After Part Five, Jarrett, seeming to have played himself into good cheer, chuckles to him-

self, then says, "Let's see," as if to say, what can I follow *that* with? A jaunty, bluesy swing feel emerges, and while it goes nowhere as an improvisation, the audience—as always—rewards it with rousing applause.

The London concert starts off dark but moves quickly to a spirited, nicely developed gambol followed by a grace-noted waltz that is vintage Jarrett—pure song—then an astonishing, two-handed excursion that skitters up and down the keyboard so fast you would swear it had been played by two guys. Ditto for sections of the delightful Part Nine, which riffs on a bebop figure, its two lines gradually overlapping. Part Six offers another gorgeous waltz, hymn like, with perfect pillows of harmony for the melody to lay its head on. Eleven suggests a Bill Evans ballad mood, yearning and soaring at once. The real and earnest passion of this piece stands in contrast to Part Eight, which feels decidedly sentimental, even maudlin. Several of the cuts in London get started OK but don't really go anywhere, though sometimes just the mood—as with the bagpipe-ish drone of Part Ten—is satisfying enough.

Jarrett acknowledges in his notes how difficult it is to create, in the moment, music "of lasting value and brand new." It's not always clear here that he achieves that. But often enough.

—Paul de Barros

Testament: Paris, Parts I–VIII; London, Parts I–XII. (2:42:18)

Personnel: Keith Jarrett, piano.

» Ordering info: ecmrecords.com

Jon Gordon

Evolution

ARTIST SHARE 0101

★★★★½

Appreciating Jon Gordon's playing has always been easy. The saxophonist won the 1996 Thelonious Monk Competition because of his architectural lines, imaginative flow and cheery ardor. All of those elements have matured since that time, and these days a new attribute—restless experimentation—helps define his music.

Evolution reads like a suite, placing Gordon in the center of a shifting string of ensembles. As each of the nine pieces presents itself, the boss's duties change a bit. Sometimes he's the lead voice of a brass and reeds nonet. Sometimes he's involved in a duet with Bill Charlap. Sometimes he bolsters fully composed miniatures performed by a string trio. If there's a through line that connects the program, it's the vivid lyricism that spouts from Gordon's horn.



He's always been an evocative craftsman; early studies with Phil Woods seem to have nurtured his blend of pretty and provocative. Proof: There are plenty of moments on this disc that find him staunchly moving the music forward while still holding out a bouquet of roses.

That unique blend is there at the start. After a pithy prelude, Gordon

lets his alto set the mood of the simmering nonet-plus-strings title piece by blowing a swirl of ideas into the air. Its trajectory is keenly coordinated with drummer Mark Ferber's prancing and pushing—a tack that guides all of *Evolution's* large ensemble tracks. "Currents," an album centerpiece, is built on a staircase theme, and it picks up momentum as the various soloists step forward. Trombonist Alan Ferber proves how impressive a measured approach can be. Guitarist Nate Radley and bassist Matt Clohesy take equally thoughtful turns, issuing statements both pithy and precise. Their value is

in their decorum.

Gordon and Charlap have worked alone together previously; their 2001 *Contrasts* illustrates their rapport. The two pieces they share on *Evolution* are named after the saxophonist's sons. Like Weather Report's "Blackthorn Rose" or Lacy/Waldron's "Smada," they bring an elan to what are essentially ruminative performances. The buoyancy comes from within, and both pieces gleam with the playful energy the pair generates.

Ultimately, *Evolution* centers on that kind of spark. The writing isn't the most distinctive you've ever heard, but the group's coordination supports the rich arrangements with true sensitivity. And at the heart of that dynamic, Gordon leads the way—sometimes wistful and often wily.

—Jim Macnie

Evolution: Prelude (Grace); Evolution; Shane; Currents; Bloom; One For Liam; Contemplation; Veil; Individuation. (63:48)

Personnel: Jon Gordon, alto saxophone, soprano saxophone (2, 3, 4), piano (1); Bill Charlap, piano (3, 6); Sara Caswell, Andie Springer, violins (1, 2, 7); Jody Redhage, cello (1, 2, 7); Dave Smith, trumpet (2, 4, 5, 8, 9); John Ellis, tenor saxophone (2, 4, 5, 8, 9); Doug Yates, bass clarinet, (2, 4, 5, 8, 9); Alan Ferber, trombone (2, 4, 5, 8, 9); Nate Radley, guitar (2, 4, 5, 8, 9); Sean Wayland, piano (2, 4, 5, 8, 9); Mark Clohesy, bass (2, 4, 5, 8, 9); Mark Ferber, drums (2, 4, 5, 8, 9); Rogerio Boccato, percussion (2, 4, 5, 8, 9).

» Ordering info: jongordon.artistshare.com

The HOT Box



Matthew Shipp

4D

THIRSTY EAR 57192.2

★★★

Never having been too enthusiastic about pianist Matthew Shipp, I must admit that I'm enjoying him a bit more these days. Might have been the sheer volume of his output, the false cadence of his broken "retirement" at age 38 (shades of Jay-Z, Prince, or any professional prizefighter), or the avalanche of hype that he received 20 years ago, but his music often didn't seem as interesting as what surrounded it.

I'm still not absolutely convinced, but there are things here to enjoy. Shipp's new solo studio release stays mostly in the middle emotional range, never creating much dramatic arc but investigating each track's idea rather exhaustively. Somehow, he manages to maintain tension without resorting to traditional devices. Shipp doesn't seem particularly interested in dynamic variation, and there's a sameness to the touch on each piece. Even on more stately cuts, like his reading of the hymn "What A Friend We Have In Jesus," he's got a plodding energy, though he manhandles the main theme from "Autumn Leaves" somewhat less than he did with the David S. Ware Quartet. Not so the final track, a brutal mauling of "Greensleeves," done in the same pulverizing manner that Ware and company liked in the '90s.

Shipp's own compositions and improvisations continue a line of inquiry that involves modest amounts of counterpoint, darkly dissonant passages, brief repetitive ideas (listen to him unpack one of these on "Equilibrium"), thunderous shades of McCoy Tyner and a healthy avoidance of his earlier habit of hammering on the sustain pedal. It's not a record that jumps out of the speakers, but 4D's highlights certainly repay close attention. —John Corbett

4D: 4D; The Crack In The Piano's Egg; Equilibrium; Teleportation; Dark Matter; Stairs; Jazz Paradox; Blue Web In Space; What Is This Thing Called Love?; Autumn Leaves; Sequence And Variation; Frere Jacques; Prelude To A Kiss; What A Friend We Have In Jesus; Primal Harmonic; Greensleeves. (59:57)

Personnel: Matthew Shipp, piano.

» Ordering info: thirstyear.com

| CDs ≡ | CRITICS » | John McDonough | John Corbett | Jim Macnie | Paul de Barros |
|---|-----------|-------------------|-----------------|---------------|-------------------|
| Dee Dee Bridgewater <i>Eleanora Fagan (1915–1959) ...</i> | | ★★★½ | ★★★★½ | ★★★★½ | ★★ |
| Keith Jarrett <i>Testament: Paris/London</i> | | ★★★★½ | ★★★★ | ★★★★ | ★★★★ |
| Jon Gordon <i>Evolution</i> | | ★★½ | ★★★ | ★★★★½ | ★★★ |
| Matthew Shipp <i>4D</i> | | ★★★ | ★★★ | ★★★★½ | ★★★ |

Critics' Comments

Matthew Shipp, 4D

A churning solo showcase of percussive inflation and spidery, corkscrew switchbacks. It's ethereal ("Teleportation"), smothering ("Frere Jacques") and static ("Stairs") teeter-totters endlessly between two chords), as Shipp eschews form but not coherence, visiting the real world interpreting several standards. Stream of consciousness improvisation. —John McDonough

Mathematical projections suggest there is 90 percent more matter and energy in the universe than we perceive, and Shipp, per his song titles, seems to be operating in that realm of "dark matter." When he's deconstructing bebop or ringing the whole piano with gigantic, abstract clumps and thumps, skitters and dribbles, I'm right there with him. But his rumbling sabotage of familiar tunes loses me entirely. —Paul de Barros

From "Frere Jacques" to "Autumn Leaves" the program helps illustrate the pianist's geniality. But nothing could thwart the singular nature of his keyboard technique, and the real take-away from this recital is the rigorous design sense that Shipp applies to this blend of standards and originals. Novel and memorable. —Jim Macnie

Jon Gordon, Evolution

Masterfully woven, especially the strings and the blends of wordless vocal and reeds, this moody, mysterious, introspective music really soars when Gordon's golden soprano or alto dances with Bill Charlap's piano or Alan Ferber's trombone. But, overall, the album feels a little overthought and academic. —Paul de Barros

"Shane" is a graceful, quietly plaintive thematic muse on soprano. "One For Liam" finds Gordon in lithe and agile form on tenor. Both are duets with Charlap, and probably Gordon's best work in a program of orchestrations that are lovely, well crafted but not especially penetrating or memorable. A good but minor pastiche of moods. —John McDonough

A nicely varied program with mixed results, all very jazz conservatory in feeling. Lovely sweeping alto solos and serious strings, ambitious arrangements that don't always roll along featuring some color choices that are alternately inventive and untoward (unison soprano sax and voice, for instance). —John Corbett

Dee Dee Bridgewater, Eleanora Fagan (1915–1959): To Billie With Love From Dee Dee

If her singing was even a tad more flamboyant, it might be too much. But from her goading Christian McBride on "Mother's Son-In-Law" to almost every iota of scatting she attempts, it's a sweet balance of chops and mood. Vivid, vivid stuff. —Jim Macnie

This variety of ultra-dramatic, theatrical jazz tribute is prone not to work, particularly on record. But having embodied this material for such a long time, Bridgewater completely owns it, in part because she doesn't go for an impersonation, instead approaching Lady Day's songbook in her own over-the-top, Sarah Vaughan-ish way. Thrills and chills from McBride, Carter, et al., as expected. —John Corbett

Bridgewater did well by Ella, but this bold, theatrical re-imagining of Lady Day is overcooked and over the top. What's up with the hyper-inflected words, wide vibrato and melodramatic delivery? Sounds more like Dinah Washington or Della Reese than Billie. —Paul de Barros

Keith Jarrett, Testament: Paris/London

Music like this probably couldn't be made except by someone with messianic self-confidence, which leads Jarrett to present every romantic arpeggio with a monumental sense of import. Perhaps this multi-disc set is particularly noteworthy, out of his many multi-record releases, not only for the personal narrative that accompanies it, but for the startling directness and earthy quality of the raucous third CD. —John Corbett

It seems a bit at odds to use the words "focus" and "range" in a 51-word review, but here, as the maestro sustains the breadth of his sprawling solo vernacular, he also tightens up the design of the pieces themselves. It generates pith and power, and reveals some mind-boggling intricacies. —Jim Macnie

Immersed in the rituals and deportment of classical keyboard, Jarrett meditates on its imperial vocabulary much as Sid Caesar riffed on Shakespeare in mock-Elizabethan flights of double talk. Caesar was brilliantly funny, and Jarrett is often brilliantly inventive. His notes also reveal a talented autobiographer. Stay in touch with that caterer. —John McDonough

Steve Lantner Quartet

Given: Live In

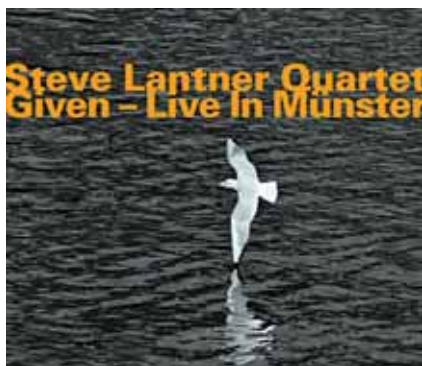
Münster

HATOLOGY 663

★★★★

Pianist Steve Lantner first came to notice playing microtonal music with his mentor Joe Maneri and Maneri's son Mat, but for the past four years his quartet has pursued more open-ended music. His only direction to his band—multi-reedist Allan Chase, bassist Joe Morris and drummer Luther Gray—is to play within a pre-determined intervallic structure. The resulting 47-minute journey dips and soars, gallops headlong and twists back on itself.

The piece gives Chase the opportunity to explore extensively on soprano, alto and baritone saxes. His interlude on alto during the fourth movement represents the highlight of the performance, as he and Lantner evolve a slow, wistful theme for three minutes. Coming on the heels of a taut, expressive solo by Morris—including some near-flamenco fingerwork that reflects his background as a guitarist—this gives the suite a powerful emotional center, which is



contrasted starkly against the long, jittery fifth movement that culminates in an overly long drum solo. Chase switches to baritone for the closing movement, providing additional contrast between his breathy alto voice and the harsh, metallic tone he favors on the larger horn. Lantner is a most gener-

ous leader, allowing himself only a few moments alone in the spotlight, but he fills the harmonic space powerfully behind Chase.

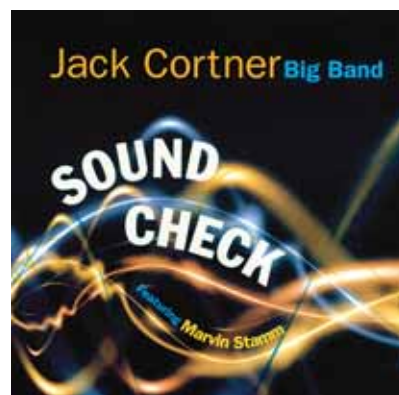
The dynamic range covered in this performance is wide, and the flow of the improvisation follows an interesting path. The band is less distinctive when at full throttle, losing some of its personality beneath the rush of notes of the first, third and sixth movements, but there is enough variation during this three-quarter hour show that the overall impression is of a band that listens hard and thinks fast.

—James Hale

Given: Live In Münster: Parts 1–6. (47:30)

Personnel: Steve Lantner, piano; Allan Chase, alto, baritone and soprano saxophone; Joe Morris, bass; Luther Gray, drums.

» Ordering info: hathut.com



Jack Cortner Big Band

Sound Check

JAZZEDMEDIA 1046

★★★★½

Prior to arranger/composer Jack Cortner's recent *Fast Track* album, few jazz listeners knew his name. The Oberlin graduate went into Broadway show work in the 1960s but often wrote for bands. That album's critical reception affirmed his facility and instincts. With this worthy follow-up, he proves that the approbation was no fluke.

As a jazz orchestrator, there's nothing particularly innovative about Cortner. That's not a pejorative observation. In absence of sonic clouds, free-for-all collective improvs, tricky time signatures or gimmicks, Cortner writes melodically for the horn sections in ways that intersect gracefully and resolve beautifully. His style might be placed somewhere between J.J. Johnson's brass-happy charts and Gary McFarland's rolling swing.

Trumpet ace Marvin Stamm is the featured soloist on this program of mostly standards. He's a steely marvel on bright tempos, maintaining a burnished tone regardless of register and caroming off the band on swingers like "Strike Up The Band." Stamm's stentorian solos contrast nicely with Jon Gordon's loosey-goosey alto on "Cantaloupe Island."

Cortner's own "Sound Check" channels Basie, right down to Jay Berliner's Freddie Greene rhythm guitar. The swirling brass and reeds on "Yesterdays" is a masterful display of craft. Cortner can't quite lift Juan Tizol's "Caravan" out of the "warhorse" column but "Cinema Paradiso Love Theme" (a nice choice) touches emotionally with feathery textures.

—Kirk Silsbee

Sound Check: Strike Up the Band; Speak Low; Sometime Ago; Cantaloupe Island; Sound Check; Yesterdays; Caravan; Cinema Paradiso Love Theme; A La Mode; You And The Night And The Music; It's All Right With Me. (59:20)

Personnel: Marvin Stamm, Bob Millikan, Frank Greene, Dave Gale, Tony Kadleck, Danny Cahn, Bud Burridge, trumpets; Jim Pugh, Keith O'Quinn, Tony Studd, Birch Johnson, trombones; Paul Faulise, bass trombone; Lawrence Feldman, Jerry Dodgion, Jon Gordon, alto saxophones; Dave Tofani, Dennis Anderson, Bob Malach, tenor saxophones; Kenny Berger, baritone saxophone; Jeff Mironov, Jay Berliner, guitar; Bill Mays, piano; Jay Anderson, bass; John Riley, drums.

» Ordering info: jazzedmedia.com

In The Country

Whiteout

RUNE GRAMMOFON 2086

★★★★

When In The Country released its stunning debut album *This Was The Pace Of My Heartbeat* back in 2005, they were celebrated for being the first "jazz" act on the eclectic and daring Norwegian record label Rune Grammofon. But since then this piano trio led by Morten Qvenild has progressively blurred genre distinctions with its music, shaping the contemplative, quietly lyric compositions of its leader in ways that give no play to idiomatic expression. On its third album, *Whiteout*, you can hear jazz language at work—especially in the way Qvenild spreads notes with the patience and sense of space associated with Paul Bley or Keith Jarrett—but these melodic vignettes certainly don't sound like jazz.

The seven meditative pieces here unfold very slowly, each pretty phrase transmuting in minimalistic increments. Sometimes the pianist's lines are altered by just a note or two with each cycle, and sometimes the complementary harmony delivered by guest musician



Andreas Mjøs (the Jaga Jazzist member who plays guitar, vibraphone and marimba over the course of the entire album) changes the complexion of the material. Bassist Roger Arntzen and drummer Pål Hausken provide an unwavering rhythmic platform, playing with an unflinching simplicity that almost sounds more difficult than if they'd opted for ever-shifting grooves.

Qvenild is clearly a pop adherent, singing in a deeply personal, unpolished whisper on "Mother." There are some heavily improvised passages, such as the gorgeous, fragmented exposition that emerges suddenly from the stately grace of "Doves Dance," but a couple of Qvenild's solos are taken a synthesizer that reeks of '80s nostalgia and has a spoiling effect. Still, this is another bold step by In The Country toward a sound that's both instinctual and beautiful, stylistic orthodoxy be damned.

—Peter Margasak

Whiteout: From the Shore; Kungen; Doves Dance; Ursa Major; Dead Water; W.A.R.M.; Mother. (73:56)

Personnel: Morten Qvenild, grand piano, synthesizers, Fender Rhodes, vocals; Roger Arntzen, double-bass, vocals; Pål Hausken: drums, Dynacord Percuter, percussion, vocals; Andreas Mjøs: guitars, vibraphone, programming, percussion.

» Ordering info: runegrammofon.com

Djangomania

In celebration of the 100th birthday anniversary of Django Reinhardt on Jan. 23, Dreyfus Jazz has served up a bounty of Gypsy-jazz-oriented discs by the most renowned guitarists upholding the tradition as well as a 29-year-old Roma who has done his six-string homework.

Various Artists: *Generation Django* (Dreyfus Jazz 369432; 51:38, 53:43) ★★½

In this excellent compilation, Dreyfus Jazz offers 27 tracks on two CDs that run the gamut from the most respected Reinhardt musician scholars (including Biréli Lagrène and Dorado Schmitt) to the upstarts who turn a corner on hot swing. There are guitar duos, trios, quintets (a blazing take on "Les Yeux Noirs," led by Lagrène) and even a rousing 12-guitar romp into "Minor Swing." Revelations include guitarist Adrien Moig, who gives a country steel guitar flavor to "Dinette," accordionist Marcel Loeffler, who goes it solo on "Montagne Ste Geneviève," and gritty-voiced vocalist/guitarist Sanseverino on "La Cigale Et La Fourmi." Less impressive is Reinhardt's late son Babik on a smooth original recorded in 1988. Django Reinhardt himself and Stéphane Grappelli appear on the finale, "Blues For Django And Stéphane."

Biréli Lagrène: *Gipsy Trio* (Dreyfus Jazz 369272; 46:58) ★★★★★ The guitarist most widely considered to be the virtuosic authority on all things Reinhardt, Lagrène plays the maestro's music traditionally and also turns left with a modern tilt, stretching beyond the hot swing songbook. His delivery is muscular in some pockets, delicate in others. On this very good trio album (with Django expert Hono Winterstein on rhythm guitar), Lagrène swings George Harrison's "Something," flames through "Tiger Rag" and pays homage to producer/label owner Francis Dreyfus on the impassioned "Sir F.D." One of the best tracks is "Lighthouse Blues" where Lagrène's guitar lines waft above Diego Imbert's bowed-bass growl.

Dorado Schmitt: *Family* (Dreyfus Jazz 369442; 52:23) ★★★★★ Even though guitarist Dorado Schmitt, a well-regarded Django disciple, leads the way, what makes this family affair swing with special gusto is accordionist Marcel Loeffler's contributions. There is a sprinkling of Reinhardt covers, but the originals carry the day, including the ebullient "Bleu Citron." Top-drawer Schmitt compositions include the lively "David's Swing" and the gracefully swaying "Miro Django."

Luis Salinas: *En Vivo En El Rosedal* (Dreyfus Jazz 369352; 44:50, 70:34) ★★★



Biréli Lagrène:
Reinhardt
transmission

DREYFUS JAZZ

Argentinian Luis Salinas is a fine guitarist at center stage in this two-CD live concert, but his accompaniment suffers, especially with the omnipresent too-smooth keyboard sheen. While he favors the mellow, romantic course, Salinas also gallops on the buoyant "Para Troilo Y Salgán" and delivers fire-in-the-belly guitar runs on the Latin-jazz-influenced original "La Salsalinas." The concert ends with the midtempo "Candombe," then catches fire in the tempo-spiced "Candombe Bis."

Rocky Gresset: *Rocky Gresset* (Dreyfus Jazz 369422; 50:08) ★★½ In his debut CD that owes a debt of gratitude to Reinhardt as well as Wes Montgomery and George Benson, Rocky Gresset makes an auspicious showing. While the song selection feels dated at times, Gresset takes a hot zip through Cole Porter's "Just One Of Those Things," goes smooth-toned on Wes Montgomery's "Jingles" and pays tribute to his Roma hero with a torrid swing through his "Webster." Especially impressive is Gresset's fine rendering of Michel Petrucciani's "Looking Up." Violinist Costel Nitescu contributes to the Django-Stéphane vibe.

Sylvain Luc: *Standards* (Dreyfus Jazz 369462; 42:04/51:14) ★★½ In the most un-Djangoesque offering of the lot, Reinhardt specialist Sylvain Luc delivers a sumptuous, modern-sounding, 24-song, two-CD collection of contemporary and classic standards. The spotlight is on Luc throughout as he uses his plectrum to sketch single-note renditions of a range of material, including a hushed "Laura," peppery "Berimbau," serrated-edged "Shout," playful "Satin Doll" and dreamy "The Lady Wants To Know." Luc ends the show with an unusual doubleheader of the gently baladic "Yesterday" followed by a stark take of "Giant Steps" at bop speed.

DB

Ordering info: dreyfusrecords.com

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Bill Dixon

Tapestries For Small Orchestra

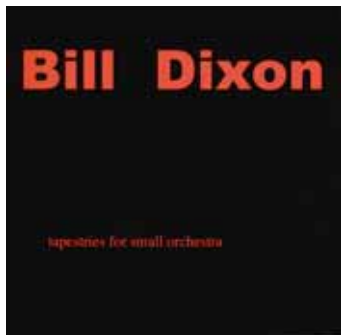
FIREHOUSE 12 04-03-008

★★★★★

Tapestries For Small Orchestra is the most persuasive, comprehensive case for Bill Dixon's iconic status since *November 1981*

(Soul Note) and perhaps even his 1966 landmark orchestra album, *Intents And Purposes* (RCA). The case in chief is presented by Dixon himself, who gives an incisive précis of his esthetic during the course of the 30-minute DVD documentary that accompanies the collection's two CDs. The most illuminating, koan-like clip from the footage shot at the three-day recording session is his insistence that musicians must fully know what they are abstracting to successfully realize the music. Though they tend to last longer than 10 minutes, the eight performances are based on small amounts of composed material honed over hours of rehearsal, a process in which Dixon blends the roles of teacher, conductor and composer. The ensembles in the master takes exude specificity of color, texture and dynamics, which propel the pieces as much as explicit use of harmony and rhythm. Dixon's empathetic, dedicated nonet then builds improvised spaces to his exacting standards; though it occasionally spikes in intensity, the music generally remains compelling through sustained nuanced interplay and delicately negotiated tensions.

This collection is also the best document to date of the impact Dixon has had on subsequent generations of trumpeters. Though Taylor Ho



Bynum, Graham Haynes, Steven Haynes and Rob Mazurek mostly wield cornets throughout the proceedings, their connection to Dixon is palpable, and their fidelity to the parameters of a given composition and Dixon's timbre-driven lexicon yields an ensemble sound that is anything but brass heavy in a traditional sense. Additionally, Mazurek and Graham Haynes' electronics

come along with Dixon's to create additional layers to the music without saturating the subtle shades established by the acoustic instruments. The riveting color palettes are equally dependent on the engaging contributions of cellist Glynis Lomon, bass and contrabass clarinetist Michel Côte, bassist Ken Filiano and percussionist Warren Smith. Filiano and Smith also fuel the collection's more robust passages almost inconspicuously; they focus on moving the ensemble rather than red-lining the intensity.

With *Intents And Purposes* decades out of print and Dixon's substantial Soul Note catalog hitting a nadir, availability-wise, *Tapestries For Small Orchestra* may well become the definitive Bill Dixon recording for a new wave of listeners.

—Bill Shoemaker

***Tapestries For Small Orchestra*:** Disc One: Motorcycle '66; Reflections & Ruminations; Slivers: Sand Dance For Sophia; Phrygian II; Adagio: Slow Mauve Scribbles (56:37). Disc Two: Allusions I; Tapestries; Durations Of Permanence; Innocenza (52:13). DVD: Bill Dixon: Going To The Center (30:57).

Personnel: Bill Dixon, trumpet, electronics; Taylor Ho Bynum, cornet, flugelhorn, bass trumpet, piccolo trumpet; Graham Haynes, cornet, flugelhorn, electronics; Stephen Haynes, trumpet, cornet, flugelhorn; Rob Mazurek, cornet, electronics; Glynis Lomon, violoncello; Michel Côte, contrabass clarinet, bass clarinet; Ken Filiano, bass, electronics; Warren Smith, vibraphone, marimba, drums, tympani, gongs.

» Ordering info: firehouse12.com

Mark Buselli featuring the Buselli-Wallarab Jazz Orchestra

An Old Soul

OWL 00130

★★½

Indeed "old" is the operative word on this posh big band outing that finds trumpeter, arranger and conductor Mark Buselli combing through some nice jazz chestnuts such as "My Shining Hour," "Chelsea Bridge" and "If I Should Lose You," as well as some nostalgic originals such as Tom Molter's "Artificial Bebop" and three originals: "135 B. Chiswick," "An Old Soul" and "Open Up Your Heart."

The arrangements are pleasant, as are the solos and the overall execution. But the overly erudite posture of the material leaves you wanting some rhythmic roughage. There's nothing particularly bad or off-putting about



the material. That said, there's hardly anything particularly interesting that stands out. As exemplary, elegant and clean as the music is, it sounds remarkably antiseptic and easily slips into the background.

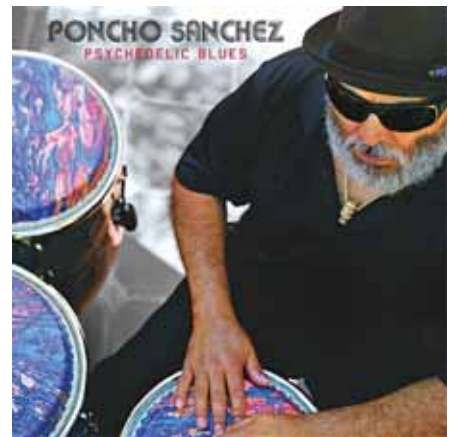
—John Murph

***An Old Soul*:** My Shining Hour; 135 B. Chiswick; If You Never Come To Me;

Angel Eyes; An Old Soul; Chelsea Bridge; Open Up Your Heart; If I Should Lose You; Artificial Bebop; Fables Of Faunus; When I Fall In Love. (63:27)

Personnel: Mark Buselli, arranger, conductor, trumpet, flugelhorn; Tom Meyer, Mike Stricklin, Rob Dixon, Hed Boyd, saxophones/woodwinds; Joey Tartell, Derrick Gardner, Mike Hackett, trumpets, flugelhorns; Celeste Holler, horn; Brent Wallarab, Loy Hetrick, Jason Miller, Richard Dole, trombones; Luke Gillespie, piano; Sandy Williams, guitar; Jack Helsley, acoustic, electric bass; Bryson Kern, drums; Kelleen Strutz, vocals; Man Rizner, David Brooks, Debbie Rodin, Kara Day-Spurlock, Lisa Brooks, Linda Yu-Picard, Chim Mi Kim, Mary Kothman, violins; Amy Brandfonbrener, Kathy Hershberger, violas; Marje Hanna, Nancy Smith, cello; Joe Everett, double bass; Deno Sanders, drums; Kevin Kaiser, percussion.

» Ordering info: owlstudios.com



Poncho Sanchez

Psychedelic Blues

CONCORD PICANTE 31526

★★★

Renowned conguero, percussionist and bandleader Poncho Sanchez does more than keep hope (and tradition) alive; he's practically a one-man Latin wrecking crew.

Sanchez's 26-plus recordings uphold the fevered Latin traditions of Mongo Santamaria and Joe Cuba while extending the genre with modern arrangements, vibrant performances and a contemporary Latin approach. Sanchez's earlier records, particularly *Papa Gato* and *Chile Con Soul*, reveled in pungent grooves, exposing a new generation to the beauty of hard-charging Latin soul. But recently, a business-as-usual approach dominated Sanchez's prolific output.

Psychedelic Blues is billed as a return to his former fiery style, "honoring Sanchez's traditional Latin jazz roots," claims the press release. And after two initial tracks of pop blandness ("Cantaloupe Island," "Crisis"), this is indeed the case. There's a degree of grit, spit and fire that was sorely lacking on recent albums, as if this time the band came to *play*, not just craft slick tunes for radio exposure. Avoiding obvious pop covers, Sanchez and his long-time band crank mambos, montunos and mozambiques in the music of John Coltrane, John Hicks and Horace Silver, along with Sanchez originals. And while the studio environment can never replicate the feel of a live Latin club performance, *Psychedelic Blues* comes close. The band exercises restraint throughout, but the real buzz is in the details: subtly percolating rhythms, intense arrangements, powerful soloing and the ever-present prodding of Sanchez's two-fisted attack.

—Ken Micallef

***Psychedelic Soul*:** Cantaloupe Island; Crisis; Psychedelic Blues; Willie Bobo Medley; Grand Central; Slowly But Surely; Silver's Serenade; The One Ways; Delifonse; Con Sabor Latino. (50:20)

Personnel: Poncho Sanchez, congas, percussion, lead vocals; David Torres, piano, Hammond; Javier Vergara, tenor; Ron Blake, trumpet, flugelhorn; Francisco A. Torres, trombone; Tony Banda, bass; George Ortiz, timbales; Joey De Leon bongos, percussion.

» Ordering info: ponchosanchez.com

Going Global

Blues physicist Albert Einstein postulated that "the most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all true art and science." True enough for the mystery in these recent releases.

Doug Cox & Salil Bhatt: *Slide To Freedom 2* (NorthernBlues 0053; 51:00) ★★★★★½ This exceptional second album, a paragon of consistency from start to end, continues to explore two adventurous musicians' fascination with overlapping lap-style slide guitar instrumentation. Ramkumar Mishra's tabla with Canadian bluesman Cox's Resophonic guitar and Indian classical musician Bhatt's veena-lute unite in the creation of a sound of originality and wonder. Note the tension in the clash of blues timing and Carnatic tabla rhythms.

Ordering info: northernblues.com

Boo Boo Davis: *Ain't Gotta Dime* (Black & Tan 034; 65:40) ★★★ Five albums into a Chicago blues partnership with Dutch guitarist Jan Mitterdorp and three with drummer John Gerritse, Davis continues to sing and to wail his harmonica with the urgent expressive qualities of a man who grew up in the harsh, poor Delta of the 1940s. On one or two helter-skelter takes in the Utrecht studio, the trio lashes out with ferocious, stomping raunchiness that culminates with "There's A Roach Crawl'n' (Down My Back)."

Ordering info: booboodavis.com

Abaji: *Origine Orients* (Absilone 001; 53:59) ★★★★★½ The main interest of Origine to open-minded listeners lies in virtuosic one-man-band Abaji's presentation of a singular "trans-Mediterranean blues." According to the Lebanon-born musician's album notes, this alchemical meld of Armenian, Syrian, Greek, Turkish, Franco-Lebanese and African-American musical elements addresses emotional states of grace and beauty. His limber voice, ranging from ridiculous Tiny Tim-high to bottom-of-cistern low, is heard in five languages.

Ordering info: abaji.net

Harrison Kennedy: *One Dog Barkin'* (Electro-Fi 3414; 54:11) ★★★★★½ About four decades after his moment of pop-r&b stardom with the Chairmen of the Board, Kennedy has settled into a polished but not too polished style all his own. His voice is one part gospel ecstasy and two parts blues grit, with shadings and twists galore. The false soprano he slips into for "Cry For Mother Africa" and other original songs is plenty effective, and so is his soul-baring cry over romance gone wrong in "What About



Samba Toure: Saharan exuberance

PHILIPPE SANMIGUEL

Forgiving?" With his engaging naturalness, "You're The Difference" satisfies as his salute to a loved one.

Ordering info: electrofi.com

Sugar Blue: *Threshold* (Beeble Music 802; 71:27) ★★★ Usually on tour in Europe, Sugar's long been a harmonica player of effortless fluidity and lyricism (though subject to bouts of overplaying). He rests a good amount of the appeal of his latest album on his singing. Frankly, his ambition exceeds his vocal abilities, but the man offers real displays of feeling. An eclectic writer, Sugar veers from a New Orleans Christmas number ("Noel News") to social-commentary funk ("Stop The War") to a light, jazzy homage to James Cotton ("Cotton Tree") with hot covers of Junior Wells' "Messin' With The Kid" and Elvis Presley-identified "Trouble."

Ordering info: sugar-blue.com

Tinariwen: *Imidiwan-Companions* (World Village 468096; 62:37) ★★★★★ After recording three globally acclaimed albums in a Malian or European studio, singer-guitarist Ibrahim Ag Alhabib and his fellow Berber nomads recorded their new album literally in the great Saharan desert, connecting their deep-grooving blues in unexplainable ways to the arid, desolate beauty of their surroundings. Lyrics sung in Tamashek (English translations provided) lay bare pained human emotion with a hard-hitting vitality. Bonus disc: an interesting 30-minute film directed by Jessy Nottola.

Ordering info: tinariwen.com

Samba Toure: *Songhai Blues: Homage To Ali Farka Toure* (Riverboat 1054; 67:25) ★★★★★ A protégé of the late regal bluesman Ali Farka Toure, Samba Toure creates hypnotic evocations of the Sahara and town life on original songs that feature his alluring

vocals in the richly cadenced Soghnai and Bambara languages. The mood is exuberant, sensuous and charitable, with grooves shaped by his electric guitar, the spry, urgent bass of Oumar Barou Dialto and the other members of his Fondo band. "Tamani," named for the talking drums featured, and a dozen more tunes (most written by Toure) make sure connections to the blues. The adornment of phrases and intonations make this fascinating music his own.

Ordering info: worldmusic.net

Geoff Achison: *One Ticket, One Ride* (Jupiter 2 Records 340.2; 59:05) ★★★★★½ Achison, back home in Australia after two years in Atlanta, has the skill and the smarts to keep his blues-rock and funk well apart from the overindulgent, garden variety sort. He shows himself to be a resourceful vocalist, contorting his tone to sound like no one else, and as a guitarist he has technique and self-discipline. His melodic writing is as assured as his vocals and musicianship, with clever lyrics on finding one's way in a mad-cap world.

Ordering info: geoffachison.com

Mahsa Vahdat & Mighty Sam McClain: *Scents Of Reunion* (Kirkelig Kulturveksted 351; 55:11) ★★★★★ Singers McClain and Vahdat have formed a peculiar but winning alliance with this Norwegian album of "love duets across civilizations." McClain's long been one of our leading soul bluesmen and his emotional authority is irrefutable; he has the rare ability to squeeze every ounce of his being into a line of a song, even when Norwegian poet Erik Hillestad's romantic lyrics are mush. As a foil to McClain's deep, bluesy resonance, Iranian Vahdat's beautiful Farsi singing of words from poet Mohammad Ebrahim Jafari holds a childlike purity.

DB

Ordering info: klkv.no

Joe Morris

Colorfield

ESP 4056

★★★★

Now halfway through his 50s, Joe Morris is utterly secure in his decisions as a composer, improviser, bandleader, bassist and guitarist. But one wonders if his encounter with Anthony Braxton on *Four Improvisations (Duo) 2007* (Clean Feed) caused him to rethink his philosophy about self-documentation. Since its release he has appeared as a leader or equal collaborator on six records, each featuring a different combo operating within a distinct set of esthetic parameters.

The titular school of painting, as well as Cecil Taylor's work in the '60s and '70s with alto saxophonist Jimmy Lyons and drummers Sunny Murray or Andrew Cyrille, inform *Colorfield*. The latter influence is easy to spot. Luther Gray's playing here is all about surge and pulse; Lantner's incremental development of tiny motifs into dense but carefully defined blocks of auditory information reflects a deep



engagement with Taylor's ideas about structure and process; and the acrid blue tinge to Morris' guitar playing at the beginning of "Purple Distant" is a virtual homage to Lyons.

One must dig deeper to locate the music's analogous relationship to painting. While the first thing that hits you about a Rothko canvas is the immensity and totality that the shape and

color exert, what stands out about *Colorfield*'s music is the detailed construction of Morris' intricate single-note figures and Lantner's discursive elaborations. This record asks more of the listener than Morris' comparatively streamlined quartet recordings on Hatology and Aum Fidelity. But just as you'll only perceive a painting's subtle variations of tone and hue after extended contemplation, the closer you listen, the more *Colorfield*'s music deepens, expands and ultimately envelops you. —Bill Meyer

Colorfield: Transparent; Silver Sun; Purple Distant; Bell Orange Curves. (50:05)

Personnel: Joe Morris, guitar; Steve Lantner, piano; Luther Gray, drums.

» Ordering info: espdisk.com

Tom Varner

Heaven And Hell

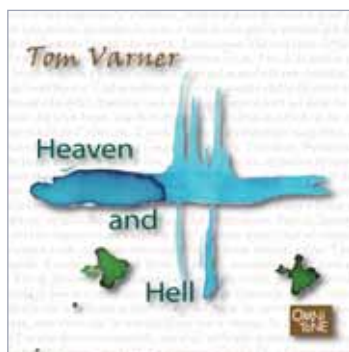
OMNITONE 12210

★★★★

It's usually a good idea to avoid programmatic interpretations of music. The ear of the beholder can be made of tin in detecting intended meanings, assuming there are any. But when a work is

as powerfully rooted in a cultural and political moment as *Heaven And Hell*, French hornist Tom Varner's extended piece for tentet, it's difficult not to assume the images you see in your mind's eye and the emotions you feel are ones the artist is seeing and feeling as well.

Heaven And Hell was largely inspired by 9/11. Varner witnessed the attacks and their aftermath as a New Yorker. Now based in Seattle, where he and a predominately local cast recorded the album (his first in eight years), he is still coming to terms with the tragedy. A mournful uncertainty defines the opening "Overview," with its constrained melody and irregular ensemble patterns. As the music builds to the operatic, Greek chorus-like effects and eerie descending tones of "Structure Down," it draws hope from happier events in Varner's life, notably the adoption of his Vietnamese son and starting a new life in Seattle. But making stirring use of grouped and clustered horns and sparing use of drums,



Varner is nagged by unresolved questions.

For all its darkness, *Heaven And Hell* unfolds with the easygoing, open clarity that is a hallmark of his music, striking a rewarding balance between bold modern jazz harmonies and austere modern classical voicings. Connected by brief pensive interludes, the longer individual composi-

tions unfold deliberately. But there's no lack of peak moments, as witness the lively solos over Phil Sparks' limber walking bass on "Queen Tai" by the brilliant East Coast trumpeter Russ Johnson, the Konitzian altoist Mark Taylor and the virtuosic Varner.

More than ever, Varner's warmly expansive but tough-edged playing rescues the French horn from the "miscellaneous" instrument category. The voice of conscience on *Heaven And Hell*, he also bestows its greatest pleasures.

—Lloyd Sachs

Heaven And Hell: Prelude; Overview; A Moment; The Daily Dance; Bells; The Trilling Clouds; Three Thoughts; Queen Tai; Fields; Birds And Thirds; Low Resolution; Waltz For The Proud Tired Worriers; Searchlight; Structure Down; Postlude: Nine Years Later. (70:02)

Personnel: Tom Varner, French horn; Russ Johnson, trumpet; Chris Stover, trombone; Jesse Canterbury, clarinet; Saul Cline, soprano saxophone; Hans Teuber, soprano saxophone; Mark Taylor, alto saxophone; Eric Barber, tenor saxophone; Jim DeJoie, baritone saxophone; Phil Sparks, bass; Byron Vannoy, drums.

» Ordering info: omnitone.com



Justin Vasquez

Triptych

TRIPTYCH WORKS

★★★

With most self-released debut solo projects, there's no doubt left about the personality of the star player. It's the name of the game. But, as time runs down on a hard-charging version of "Stella By Starlight," listeners may still find themselves wondering if they really know saxophonist Justin Vasquez. Sure, you'll have a better sense of harmonica wizard Grégoire Maret—who gets the lion's share of the playing time on three of the eight pieces—and a deeper appreciation for the solid, buoyant work of pianist Aaron Parks, but just who is Vasquez?

As a composer, the 26-year-old Texan seems to be a devotee of Pat Metheny. He shows a real knack for turning out Metheny-esque tunes that gain a sense of forward momentum from their harmonic structure and rhythmic thrust. Both "Fields"—one of Maret's features—and "End Of The Day" (Maret again) are jaunty tunes that beg to be played loud on the open highway.

As an instrumentalist, Vasquez seems like a different beast. While his clear alto tone is an excellent vehicle for the airy melody lines of his compositions, he has a rougher side, too. On "One & Only," which stands apart for its darker, tougher approach, Vasquez sounds more like Oliver Lake than David Sanborn, stretching his solo into freer territory and shrieking through the climax. On the title track, he has things both ways, doubling Gretchen Parlato's sweet, wordless vocals against his horn and Adam Rogers' guitar in the first movement, and then switching to a more aggressive stance as the tune keeps spiraling upward as if on a mountain road.

There is plenty to savor here, and no doubt that Vasquez can find interesting ways of showcasing his star guests, but it will take at least one more recording to get the full measure of the leader. —James Hale

Triptych: Triptych; Nimbus; Invitation; Fields; One And Only; Red. Green. Blue; End Of The Day; Stella By Starlight. (53:15)

Personnel: Justin Vasquez, alto, soprano saxophone; Aaron Parks, piano; Adam Rogers, acoustic, electric guitar; Orlando Le Fleming, bass; Clarence Penn, drums; Grégoire Maret, harmonica; Gretchen Parlato, voice.

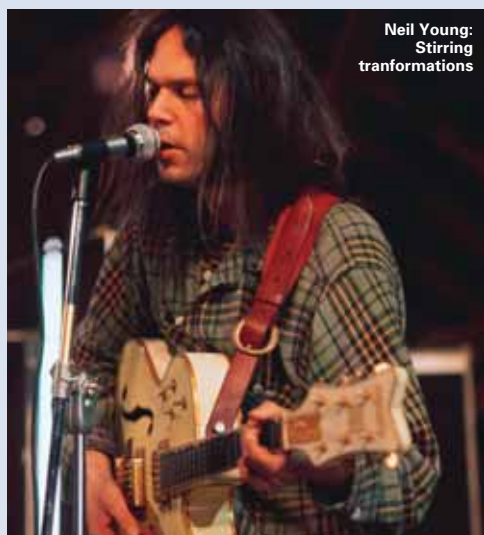
» Ordering info: justinvasquez.com

Harvest For Young Fanatics

There's got to be a metaphor for all the spinning turntables and reel-to-reels that make up lots of the visual elements to **Neil Young: Archives Vol. 1 (1963-1972)** (Reprise 2-511912) ★★★★★. This collection moves from Young's high school years as leader of The Squires on through his Buffalo Springfield, early Crazy Horse and Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young days to his influential late '60s/early '70s solo output, including *After The Gold Rush* and *Harvest*. The DVD and Blu-Ray editions include Young's controversial *Journey Through The Past* movie, until now unavailable since its 1973 theatrical release. The box set reviewed here is the 10-disc DVD version, containing 128 tracks with nearly 60 previously unreleased cuts. Nine of the 10 are multi-media discs with 20 special feature videos, film clips and trailers, and 55 audio interview tracks. There's also a 236-page book and a digital download card to access all the songs. Neilheads will love it; but for others it may be overkill.

Early Years are disc 0 (yes, that's how it's classified) 1963-1965 (48:15) and disc 1 1966-1968 (61:28). Musically, Young goes from surfer dude to folk-rock hippie, the early rock instrumentals and teenie bopper love songs giving way to more substantial material. It's the transition from a wannabe to an artist in the making, Young emerging with his first significant collaborators in Buffalo Springfield, his singing voice maturing toward that now-famous falsetto. It's amusing to hear a bit of the instrumental surf vibe reemerge with the swinging rocker "Kahuna Sunset," and notable how Young started including other musicians and instruments—English horn, harpsichord—with lyrics more complex in nature.

By disc 2 (70:43), *Topanga 1* (1968-1969), Young's music retains a primitive quality. "Cowgirl In The Sand" is another example of this basic, unadorned rock 'n' roll quality complete with more rough-hewn electric-guitar jamming. It's during these years that Young breaks out as an individual artist, with his band Crazy Horse and featuring stronger material, his trademark whine coming into its own. Disc 3 (55:53), *Live At The Riverboat 1969*, gives an inside look at Young the club player, as he reprises songs written for band albums as a solo artist with plenty of banter. Disc 4 (51:20), *Topanga 2*



Neil Young:
Stirring
transformations

WARNER BROTHERS

(1969-1970), straddles *Everybody Knows This Is Nowhere* and *Crazy Horse* with *After The Gold Rush* and *Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young*, balancing powerful songs of sadness and loneliness with upbeat, stirring melodies and lush harmonies.

Disc 5 (43:26), *Neil Young & Crazy Horse: Live At The Fillmore East 1970*, offers another shade of Young, this time the rocker in front of a large crowd. The songs are familiar ones with one new one ("Come On Baby Let's Go Downtown"), played with intensity in a fairly straightforward fashion, Young jamming away, Crazy Horse as backup singers a faint reflection of CSN&Y. Disc 6 (57:42), *Topanga 3* (1970), is one strong song after another. Essentially *After The Gold Rush*, the singing is powerful, the songwriting memorable: "Only Love Can Break Your Heart," "Ohio," "Southern Man," with CSN as well. Disc 7 (67:37), *Live At Massey Hall 1971*, is a jewel, a creative film of Young with his guitars and piano as he travels through a subdued set of his new and now older songs, laced with home movies.

Disc 8 (53:16), *North Country* (1971-1972), goes into *Harvest* territory, starting out with a live solo version of "Heart Of Gold" before heading into one of Young's best albums, the perfect combination of country music with rock. Disc 9 (79:46) is that meandering, interesting *Journey Through The Past*. Footage includes live Buffalo Springfield and CSN&Y, the making of *Harvest* with political thematic elements interspersed. Bundled in the box is a bonus double CD/DVD, *Sugar Mountain* (70:00), another solo show recorded at Canterbury House in Ann Arbor, Mich., in 1968.

DB

Ordering info: neilyoungarchives.com

PATOIS RECORDS

Wayne Wallace



"This is a rollicking triumph of styles and genres that is fun from one end to the other." — James Hale, *Downbeat* ★★★★★ 1/2

Kristina



"Kristina shows why she may possibly be the true successor to Vaughan herself" — Raul da Gama

VW Brothers



"The VW Brothers are one of the San Francisco Bay Area's musical treasures." — Wayne Wallace

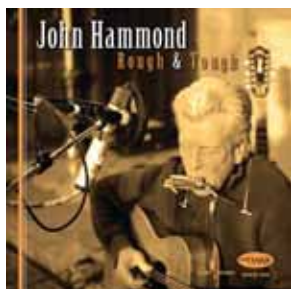
PATOIS
RECORDS

www.patoisrecords.com



John Hammond
Rough & Tough
 CHESKY 346
 ★★★★★

John Mayall
Tough
 EAGLE 201632
 ★★★



No stopping these “tough” blues guys. Almost a half century since their first recordings, Hammond and Mayall keep on making albums at a steady clip; these days their spouses, Marla and Maggie respectively, are credited as producers. On his 57th outing, Mayall appears with his touring band. For his 35th album, and fourth solo, Hammond performs in an empty New York City church.

Hammond’s specialty is an acoustic solo setting; here Marla picked out a program heavy on diamond-hard Chicago blues songs. The success of renditions of classics linked to Muddy Waters, Howlin’ Wolf, Little Walter, Bo Diddley, Tampa Red and Buddy Guy—as well as two originals and a version of friend Tom Waits’ “Get Behind The Mule”—lies in his strong personality as a storyteller, his emotional authority and his musicianship. Benefiting from the Chesky label’s pristine sound reproduction, Hammond uncovers the breaches of romantic love and the allure of the open highway without coming off as an oldies act. He’s a tried-and-true individualist aware of the mythic power of 12-bar music; his singing and playing of guitar and harmonica pose insights wiser and more nuanced than he’s displayed before on tape. Probably no one interprets Wolf with such intense desolation: “No Place To Go.” As an interlude from his serious blues, Hammond has fun visiting the Swing era past with a version of

“Chattanooga Choo-Choo.”

Fit and able at 75, nine years older than Hammond, Mayall weaves a fabric of uneasiness around most of *Tough*; the bulk of the songs concern the fight to locate hope in a dark, dark world. His pinched tenor of a singing voice, long criticized by some, imparts poignancy to serviceable originals and material from writers throughout blues-rock America (Gary Nicholson in

Nashville, Dave Fields in New York, New Englander Jeff Pitchell, Oregon’s Curtis Salgado, Jersey Shore native Walter Trout) and from the remote blues outpost Australia (Peter Harper, Andrew Winton). The white-haired leader of the Bluesbreakers, whose numerous pupils down the years include Eric Clapton, Mick Fleetwood and Jack Bruce, defines his style in the revealingly titled “That Good Old Rockin’ Blues.” Though Mayall’s current band receives passing grades, it’s just not as blues smart and strong as the previous edition with guitarist Buddy Whittington and drummer Joe Yule. Not that any criticism at all will slow the man down, mind you. —*Frank-John Hadley*

Rough & Tough: My Mind Is Ramblin’; Still A Fool; Up The Line; My Time After Awhile; Got To Find My Baby; She’s Tough; Chattanooga Choo Choo; Statesboro Blues; I Can Tell; Get Behind The Mule; No Place To Go; Slick Crown Vic; Come To Find Out; It Hurts Me Too; I Can’t Be Satisfied. (58:33)

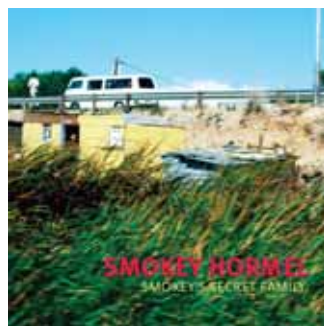
Personnel: John Hammond, steel, 6- and 12-string guitars, harmonica, vocals.

» Ordering info: chesky.com

Tough: Nothing To Do With Love; Just What You’re Looking For; Playing With A Losing Hand; An Eye For An Eye; How Far Down; Train To My Heart; Slow Train To Nowhere; Numbers Down; That Good Old Rockin’ Blues; Tough Times Ahead; The Sum Of Something. (54:49)

Personnel: John Mayall, piano, organ, harmonica, 6- and 12-string guitars, vocals; Rocky Athas, guitar; Greg Rzab, bass guitar; Tom Canning, piano, organ, backing vocals; Jay Davenport, drums; Maggie Mayall, backing vocals.

» Ordering info: eaglerockent.com



Smokey Hormel
Smokey’s Secret Family

AFRO SAMBAS 005

★★★★½

Like Marc Ribot, Smokey Hormel provided killing moments on guitar as a sideman for Tom Waits. And like Ribot, whose Los Cubanitos Postizos performs songs by the late Cuban composer and bandleader Arsenio Rodriguez, Hormel has a serious interest in ethnic roots music. *Smokey’s Secret Family*, named after a wide-ranging group of musicians that has performed in New York for nearly a decade, delves into pre-high life, pre-Soukos, pre-funk African music of the late ’50s and early ’60s. Treated to a disarming homemade sound, the music is equal parts sweetness and distortion, with Hormel’s melodic, rapid-fire guitar lines driving the action.

The sweetness, when fed by the leader’s tanga high notes and Doug Weiselman’s clarinet, can be irresistible. But like Ribot, Hormel, who plays a mess of instruments here, has too active an imagination to rest on any musicological laurels. Striving to bring fresh textures to the mambo and cha-cha as well as related Brazilian forms, he springs offbeat voicings involving bottleneck guitar, pocket theremin, harmonica and tuba. “Acaua,” by the Brazilian cowboy singer Luiz Gonzaga, boasts a bold episodic arrangement that moves from lyrical acoustic opening to dark horns blowing over rumbling foundation to full throttle blues-rock guitar. On “Mokonzi Ya Mboka,” the blend of guitar and Weiselman’s baritone saxophone is potent.

The cast includes Clark Gayton on trombone and tuba, Brazilian percussionists Gilmar Gomes and Mauro Refosco and, on an original ballad that begins tenderly before going happily off the tracks, guitarist Vinicius Cantuaria.

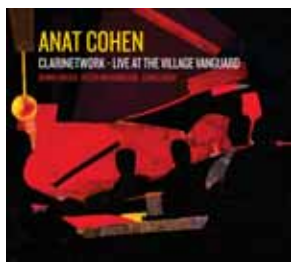
—*Lloyd Sachs*

Smokey’s Secret Family: Cheri Akimi Ngai; Banaketwe; Louise Marie Wa Motema; So Solidao; Acaua; Fiesta Folkloric; El Rhythmo Novelty; Mokonzi Ya Mboka; Likambo Ya Ngana. (31:40)

Personnel: Smokey Hormel, guitars, bass, high 12-string, percussion, harmonica, fiddle, pocket theremin, bass anklung, vocals; Mauro Refosco, percussion, vibes, xylophone, vocals; Gilmar Gomes, percussion, vocals; Doug Weiselman, saxophone, clarinet, mandolin, guitar, vocals; Clark Gayton, tuba and trombone; Jorge Continantino, flute; Jon Birdsong, cornet; Vinicius Cantuaria, guitar.

» Ordering info: smokeyhormel.com

Anat Cohen
Clarinetnetwork–Live At The Village Vanguard
 ANZIC 1203
 ★★★★★



Clarinetist Anat Cohen, a rising star on a notoriously difficult instrument, continues to impress on her latest CD, a live outing recorded with an all-star rhythm section last summer at New York’s Village Vanguard. Inspired by the centennial of Benny Goodman, one of the biggest clarinet stars of all, Cohen and band play a lively set of old-time standards with chops and feeling.

Never short on bluesiness and grit, Cohen clearly knows how to wail, and she has never sounded more nuanced than in the company of pianist Benny Green, bassist Peter Washington and drummer Lewis Nash. She can burn when

she chooses (as on “Sweet Georgia Brown” and “After You’ve Gone”), or she can take her sweet time casting long, bent notes across several bars (“St. James Infirmary,” “Body And Soul”).

Clarinetnetwork–Live At The Village Vanguard proves a formidable followup to last year’s studio album *Notes From The Village*.

For a live recording, the clarinet has a great presence here in relation to the other instruments in the mix—evidence of Cohen’s never-compromised, ever-resonant air column. —*Ed Enright*

Clarinetnetwork–Live At The Village Vanguard: Sweet Georgia Brown; Lullaby Of The Leaves; Band Announcement; St. James Infirmary; After You’ve Gone; St. Louis Blues; Body And Soul; What A Little Moonlight Can Do. (69:31)

Personnel: Anat Cohen, clarinet; Benny Green, piano; Peter Washington, bass; Lewis Nash, drums.

» Ordering info: anzicrecords.com

Harris Eisenstadt

Canada Day

CLEAN FEED 157

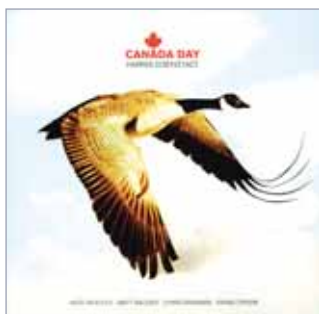
★★★★

Marty Ehrlich Rites Quartet

Things Have Got to Change

CLEAN FEED 150

★★★★



Although native Canadian drummer Harris Eisenstadt named this superb quintet Canada Day because they happened to form on that holiday, it might've been more accurate if he'd chosen a classic Blue Note title from the '60s for the ensemble. As he told writer Clifford Allen, the band's a "love letter to the '60s Miles quintet filtered through '60s Blue Note records," and there's no missing the spirit of that label's most adventurous work rippling through the admirably loose themes the drummer has composed here.

The bandleader is smart enough to allow the strong personalities of his combo to breathe. In fact, the entire group—trumpeter Nate Wooley, tenor saxophonist Matt Bauder, bassist Eivind Opsvik and the up-and-coming vibist Christ Dingman—are unapologetic vanguardists who just happen to have a strong grasp of post-bop fundamentals. On the elegant yet lurching "After An Outdoor Bath," Wooley does an impressive balancing act between his mastery of unpitched, breathy squalls and high-velocity freebop flurries, while on "Ups And Downs" Bauder follows suit, with post-Ben Webster plushness and polyphonic tiptoeing. "Every Day Is Canada Day" is especially good, with Wooley and

Bauder braiding their improvised lines as if they shared a brain. Across the whole album, Dingman shapes elusive chords and shimmering lines that revel in atmospheric ambiguity, coloring and accenting the action without exerting heavy force. Opsvik is the rock, playing elegant lines with precision and warmth, while the drummer clings tightly to the pulse despite lots of acceleration and deceleration.

In addition to having artists produce their own sessions, the Portuguese label Clean Feed is also proactive about arranging others when musicians are near Lisbon. The new record by the Marty Ehrlich Rites Quartet was cut on a stopover on the way back from a music festival off the coast. This dazzling group is steeped heavily in the music of the leader's one-time Black Artists Group cohort Julius Hemphill—they're both from St. Louis. Ehrlich is a long-standing member of Hemphill's sax sextet—he currently leads the group—and he also played with the alto saxophonist's crucial foil, cellist Abdul Wadud. *Things Have Got To Change* is something of an informal Hemphill homage, including a punishing take on the classic "Dogon A.D.," with drummer Pheeroan akLaff pounding out the 11-beat cycle and cellist Erik Friedlander sawing

away at the piece's indelible riff. There are also a couple of superb Hemphill tunes never commercially recorded before (on "Slices Of Light" you can practically hear his tart tone echoing the more full-blooded tone of Ehrlich's alto sax), and the leader's own pithy originals reveal a strong Hemphill influence. He composed the opening "Rites Rhythm" around the hypnotic cello part, filling in the melody once the imperturbable groove was established. But the album's high water mark is the gorgeous ballad "Some Kind Of Prayer," an elaborate, episodic meditation that delivers an almost through-composed complexity during its first half, and wonderfully sensitive, lyric passages by Ehrlich and trumpeter James Zollar during the second half, all of it stoked beautifully by Friedlander's pizz. A real gem.

—Peter Margasak

Canada Day: Don't Gild The Lilly; Halifax; After An Outdoor Bath; And When To Come Back; Keep Casting Rods; Kategeeper; Ups And Downs; Every Day Is Canada Day. (56:21)
Personnel: Nate Wooley, trumpet; Matt Bauder, tenor saxophone; Chris Dingman; Eivind Opsvik, bass; Harris Eisenstadt, drums, composer.

» Ordering info: cleanfeed-records.com

Things Have Got To Change: Rites Rhythms; Dung; Some Kind Of Prayer; On The One; Slices Of Light; Song For Tomorrow; From Strength To Strength; Dogon A.D. (54:38)

Personnel: Marty Ehrlich, alto saxophone; James Zollar, trumpet; Erik Friedlander, cello; Pheeroan akLaff, drums, percussion.

» Ordering info: cleanfeed-records.com

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One Artist, One Label: A Motherload Of Miles

All told, it's as much a business story as a music story. The "repackaging" of the complete Miles Davis Columbia catalog seemed inevitable. After all those years of recombined reissues, newly discovered material, all that keeping-the-flame-alive-for-posterity business. And why not? What could be more fun, sexy, full of possibilities, not to mention culturally responsible than to make sure each and every album was available under one roof, where one had total and immediate access to what many inside and outside the Sony entertainment empire consider some of the greatest music ever made? As the banker Mr. Dawes quipped in the movie *Mary Poppins*: "It fires the imagination!"

Timed to coincide with significant anniversaries for Davis' creme de la creme—*Kind Of Blue*, *Sketches Of Spain*, *In A Silent Way* and *Bitches Brew*—the release of **Miles Davis: The Complete Columbia Album Collection** (Columbia/Legacy 88697524922) is now a reality. At \$365 a pop (an Amazon exclusive), this box brings the perhaps unprecedented legacy of a label's flagship artist to a fitting close. (Or does it?)

The *Complete Columbia Album Collection* is also cultural history that goes way beyond an artist and a label. It's a story with particulars: a trumpeter living in mid-century America who takes the music world by storm from his outpost at the core of an increasingly fringe-like music, helping to maintain its vitality, its relevance to everything that has anything to do with America's ever-changing musical landscape. And yes, it is about the label that signed him through a series of fortuitous events in 1955, thus beginning on a larger stage the saga of an American artist who, for the next 35 years, would challenge and change the musical firmament for generations to come. (The three-month art exhibit "We Want Miles: Jazz Face To Face With Its Legend," which opened in Paris this past October, extended that reach of the artist, who died in 1991.)

It's a nifty package. Quite compact, considering it's 70 CDs worth of music (more than 52 albums)—along with a first-time-ever DVD of live music and an informative, beefy (250 pages) booklet—each album "packaged in Japanese style mini-LP CD and double-CD

jackets, replicating original artwork," according to press materials. The colorful graphics on the box are loaded with those very album-cover images, creating a striking impact. In addition, there's a first-time full rendering of Davis' notable 1970 *Isle Of Wight* concert. And the original album release of the critically acclaimed 1965 Chicago club date *Live At Plugged Nickel*—now with full unedited versions—is included (but not, unfortunately, as part of the now-out-of-print eight-CD set released in 1995). Along with the *Plugged Nickel* and *Isle Of Wight* restorations, of course, there are "rare or previously unreleased bonus tracks" to, in this case, the albums *In Paris Festival International De Jazz May 1949*, *Quiet Nights* and *We Want Miles*, for a total of seven more tracks. Apart from the rest of the *Plugged Nickel* material—because they don't qualify as Miles Davis "albums"—what's not here is music Davis recorded for the label that got bandied about over the years, including his significant contributions to *Legrand Jazz* (by Michel Legrand, also released on Philips, 1958), lengthy pieces written by J.J. Johnson and John Lewis ("Jazz Suite For Brass" and "Three Little Feelings," 1956) and an album with soundtrack music (no longer owned by the label) to the French film *Lift To The Scaffold* (titled *Jazz Track*, 1957).

What jumps out is the tantalizing concert footage from the DVD. It's Davis' best band—with Herbie Hancock, Wayne Shorter, Ron Carter and Tony Williams—recorded in Germany and Sweden in the fall of 1967. Catching them toward the end of the band's

life cycle, the two shows feature a fair amount of overlap (the newer tunes "Agitation," "Footprints," "Gingerbread Boy"), along with equally magical takes on "I Fall In Love Too Easily," "Walkin'" and "Round Midnight." With deft camera work, this revelatory black and white footage captures a band that was both on a tear and incredibly interactive, intuitive and explosive. It was music played at lightning speed with great expression: In the end 11 songs playing like one, a 75-minute quintet sonata.

A piece like this wouldn't be complete if some words were not shared on behalf of those studious members of the jazz community overlooked by this collection. Certain figures would be well-known to DownBeat readers. They include Ralph J. Gleason, whose exhaustive liner notes graced (in duplicate) the sluggish, dormant, albeit somewhat grooving *Friday And Saturday Night In Person At The Blackhawk* albums from 1961, not to mention his hep notes for *Bitches Brew* (1969), his Beat-like poetry from *The Sorcerer* (1967) and *E.S.P.* (1965). Get your magnifying glass out for this set if you want to know what Gleason, one of our most interesting, if not most important, music writers during the middle of the century, had to say about Davis at the beginning as well as the end of that tumultuous decade. As with others, Gleason's liner notes are reprinted, but in CD-sized lettering as part of the box's LP-oriented design. Nat Hentoff's notes to *Sketches Of Spain* are equally thorough and Davis himself penned the liners for *Jack Johnson*. At one point, Davis may have taken



Miles Davis: This Is It?

SONY/LEGACY

issue with notes to his albums (think *On The Corner*), but his music was clearly intertwined with what was said about it, and those words became key portals for many a music lover. Then there are the musician/writer types the label once employed to expound on Davis' impact. They include collaborator/genius types like Bill Evans for *Kind Of Blue*, Ron Carter (his notes to the reissue of *My Funny Valentine* are a perfect complement), Bennie Maupin, Dave Liebman, Bob Belden, Gary Bartz, Bobby Previte, Eddie Henderson, Chick Corea and Jack DeJohnette. If we are to take *The Complete Columbia Album Collection* seriously and completely, we have to see it as a cultural statement for the ages, considering the music and the man's magnitude through the well-written word, augmenting the music. Impractical as it may seem, how else could one pay homage without reference to these mighty efforts in the service of the Prince of Darkness?

Most DownBeat readers are quite familiar with what Davis created with, among others, Gil Evans, John Coltrane, Philly Joe Jones, Sam Rivers (*Miles In Tokyo!*), Joe Zawinul, Kenny Garrett and John Scofield, from the *May 1949 Paris Festival* recordings (when Davis was not signed to the label on an album released in 1977) to Davis' last Columbia date, the orchestrally produced *Aura* (1985), an album loaded up with various European musicians, including old flame/guitarist John McLaughlin. There is no star rating for this set because the vast majority of this music has been reviewed multiple times. This release is really more about a story, "a man and his music," for one label and how that music was put together, namely in a "package."

These words are difficult to write with the average music listener in mind, given the access this writer had to Davis and his music over the years. I mean, who gives a hoot if Hentoff isn't "on board," and we get other, "new" scribes Frederic Goaty and Franck Bergerot to, respectively, rehash Davis' life and write clipped, if insightful, informative album notes? Maybe more than a few. It seems to come down to the peripherals in collections like these, where the music almost becomes a given and the way the music is surrounded becomes the story. As mentioned, there's some new stuff here, but it's really about the end of an era and a final product. All told, Legacy is to be commended for putting out what is an impressive box, flexing its archival muscles to show it has the goods.

DB

Ordering info: legacyrecordings.com, amazon.com

Various Artists

Coming Together

INARHYME 1002

★★★★

The American Music Project

On The Bright Side

INARHYME 1001

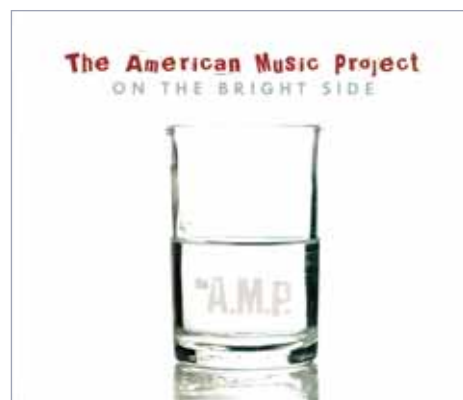
★★★★½

Two releases, same label, both titles designed to address the larger world of music in an attempt to "reach the everyday listener in a way that is artistic yet accessible." Pianist/educator Keith Javors has created Inarhyme Records to showcase a variety of jazz-based music styles, *Coming Together* and *On The Bright Side* offering two distinct examples.

Coming Together is a strong, heartfelt series of performances served up in remembrance to the album's primary composer, the late young Brendan Romanek, whose pen contributed eight of the 11 songs here. A 24-year-old saxophonist who was just getting started, Romanek was on the verge of recording this music himself. Instead, we have personnel in two different bands who had some connection to him, playing primarily straightforward music that does indeed reflect Romanek's talent as a composer. Along with three standards, a Chris Potter-led band splits the date with a Steve Wilson-led band, the rhythm section of Javors, drummer John Davis and bassist Delbert Felix providing solid support, trumpeter/flugelhornist Terrell Stafford performing in tandem with Wilson on four cuts. Both Potter and Wilson, playing soprano/tenor and soprano/alto, respectively, steer the music, Potter kicking things off with a spirited trio rendition of the classic "My Shining Hour," our picture of Davis and Felix firmly established from the git-go.

Coming Together is a nice balance between the urgent and/or funky and the reflective, Romanek's "Dream Behind The Winter," "Full Moon" and "Minion" good examples of tunefulness and instrumental expression in a more balladic, composerly context, Romanek's playful "3 Steps Ahead Of The Spider," the soulful rocker "You'll Never Know," the swinging title track (great solo by Davis) and the whirlwind closing blues "11-02" alternately dishing up some inspired sweat. Lacking distinction at times, Romanek's writing and the bands' playing (Javors' work is an anchor) still are very listenable, leaving one to ponder what might have been.

The American Music Project is more ambitious, making overtures between rap and jazz and bits and drabs in between. The recorded mix is a bit off, with rapper/poet DeJuan "D Priest" Everett too up in it, as if to put his lyrics almost in your face. And while the overture is toward multiple forms of popular music, the gist is pretty much straightforward jazz with hefty portions of



funk, soul and rock to drive it. Javors is back on board here, offering more tasty piano, along with snappy drumming from Alex Brooks, with bassist Dave Zeigler staying close, vocalist Curtis Isom and altoist Dane Bays (along with Priest a major composer presence) filling out the sounds. It's all original music, apart from John Coltrane's "Lonnie's Lament" (with lyrics added by Everett and pressure-cooker playing from Bays), "On The Bright Side" a blend of preacher and encourager. Kudos to them all for making a forthright effort to bring in many aspects of the African American musical vibe, connecting the dots between post-bop and rap (with nods to Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Billie Holiday, Stevie Wonder and Tupac Shakur). *On The Bright Side* attempts to say it all (the forceful rocker "Call It What You Want" a grand summation), melding attitude, a serious backbeat and a hopeful message (an "alternative to the mindless rage of much modern rap music") across all nine tracks.

—John Ephland

Coming Together: My Shining Hour; Dream Behind The Winter; Full Moon; 3 Steps Ahead Of The Spider; Nancy With The Laughing Face; You'll Never Know; Coming Together; The Vibe; Minion; Killing Me Softly With His Song; 11-02. (66:54)

Personnel: Chris Potter, soprano, tenor saxophone (1-6); Steve Wilson, soprano, alto saxophone (7-11); Terrell Stafford, trumpet, flugelhorn (7-9, 11); Keith Javors, piano (2-11); Delbert Felix, bass (1-4, 6-9, 11); John Davis, drums (1-4, 6-9, 11).

On The Bright Side: Welcome; On The Bright Side; Path Of Most Resistance; By The Way; Forever More; Call It What You Want; My Past Is Here To Stay; Lonnie's Lament; On The Bright Side (Reprise). (39:50)

Personnel: DeJuan "D Priest" Everett, rap, poetry; Curtis Isom, vocals; Dane Bays, alto saxophone; Keith Javors, piano; Dave Zeigler, bass; Alex Brooks, drums.

» Ordering info: inarhymerecords.com

Anthony Wilson Trio

Jack Of Hearts

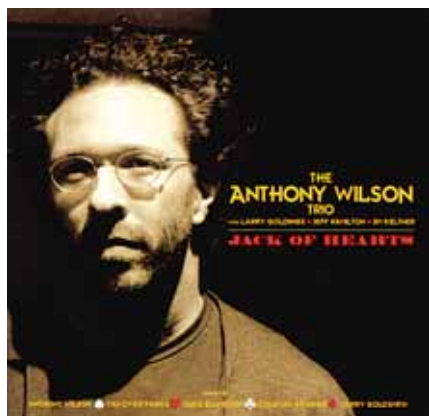
GROOVE NOTE 1046

★★★

Put three top flight players in a room, drop some grits 'n' gravy charts on the stands, count it off and you've got a killer jazz trio, right? Not so fast. Guitarist Anthony Wilson is

best known for accompanying Diana Krall, but he's also recorded a handful of exceptional solo outings, including a recent duo release with Brazilian guitarist Chico Pinheiro, *Nova*. *Jack Of Hearts* moves in the opposite direction, grooving on drowsy organ trio jazz performed by low-key heavy hitters. So low-key in fact, you wonder if someone's nodded off and hit the power switch on his way to the floor.

Wilson runs his Larry Goldings-enabled organ trio through blues bumps ("Mezcal"), 3 a.m. mystery jazz ("Jack Of Hearts"), John Scofield-inspired scrunch ("Hawkeyes"),



movie music ("Theme From 'Chinatown'") and Duke Ellington ("Zweet Zursday"). The music is perfectly polite and professionally acquitted, and the choice of material is spot on. Drummer Jim Keltner is especially creative on "Theme From 'Chinatown'" and "Harajuku," dropping combustibly magical rhythms with a clever combination of ingenuity

and humor. The man is endlessly surprising, creating an original textural palette. But too much of *Jack Of Hearts* is simply asleep at the wheel, lacking fire or true grease. Sure, no one should be chained to yesteryear's notion of what constitutes an organ trio, but isn't "hot jazz" universal?

—Ken Micallef

Jack Of Hearts: Mezcal; Jack Of Hearts; Hawkeyes; Carnegie Blues; Theme From "Chinatown"; Vida Perdida Acabou; Orange Crate Art; Harajuku; Zweet Zursday; Homecoming. (58:40)

Personnel: Anthony Wilson, guitar; Larry Goldings, organ; Jeff Hamilton, Jim Keltner, drums.

» Ordering info: groovenote.com



The Kevin Brady Trio

Zeitgeist

FRESH SOUND 005

★★½

Over the years, the commendable efforts of the label Fresh Sound New Talent have provided some exposure to young musicians who, if deserving, are yet to define their musical vision. *Zeitgeist's* dispersed influences and inconsistencies are a case in point.

Although Irish drummer Kevin Brady cannot be accused of bringing Bill Carrothers with the unique purpose of gaining credibility—the two seem to have developed a solid working relationship—the pianist provides most of the material and the recording definitely bears his mark and displays his most lyrical and romantic side. The most memorable aspects of the first part of the program are Brady's overly busy playing on his "Out Of The Blue" and Carrothers' Russian folk song quotes on his own "That Russian Thing." At midpoint, with the delightfully zany "Waltz Macabre" characterized by the pianist's rhythmic imagination and the drummer's circus rolls, the proceeding take a turn for the better. The title track is a collective effort that suggests that the trio is even more at ease without the constraints of fixed parameters.

As a drummer and a leader, Brady avoids the common mistake of indulging himself and only takes one short solo. The wild card in this trio, however, is bass player Dave Redmond, who's a sensitive musician and understands how to move the music forward without getting in the way, especially while dealing with Carrothers' personal harmonic approach.

In the future, if Brady could curb his sometimes exuberant enthusiasm—interestingly enough, he never does it on slower numbers—and build on the strengths of *Zeitgeist*, he might be worth keeping an eye on. —Alain Drouot

Zeitgeist: Out Of The Blue; That Russian Thing; Home Row; Big Mouth; Waltz Macabre; Zeitgeist; Church Of The Open Air; In The Wheelhouse; Black Nile; Gitchee Gumee. (55:43)

Personnel: Kevin Brady, drums; Bill Carrothers, piano; Dave Redmond, bass.

» Ordering info: freshsoundrecords.com

Yaron Herman Trio

Muse

SUNNYSIDE 1215

★★★½

According to pianist Yaron Herman, *Muse's* compositions share a connection with travel. Indeed, with this new album he embarks on a journey that encompasses many destinations without sacrificing the unity of sound. As an Israeli based in Paris and backed by New Yorkers (Matt Brewer on bass and Gerald Cleaver on drums), international influences are aplenty, but distances haven't prevented those three men from maturing as a band and morphing into an exceptionally tight unit in which they're all closely attuned to each other's gestures and moves.

Herman is an accomplished and versatile musician who knows when and where his weapons will be most effective. His touch is alternately delicate and muscular. On a powerful piece such as "Vertigo," he displays his outstanding technical abilities that can translate into, well, vertiginous lines. Herman has also a penchant for pop tunes, and he is arguably one of the most successful musicians in recent memory at blending pop and jazz sensibilities. This is noticeable not only in the cover of Bjork's "Isobel," but also on his own "Perpetua" or on Brewer's contributions ("Joya," "And The Rain"), which attests to the bassist's knack for finding hooky and hummable melodies. Finally, Herman tackles a couple



of tunes by two Israeli songwriters to pay tribute to his roots and offer unfamiliar music well worth investigating.

The program is bookended by two pieces featuring a string quartet that highlight a classical bend and bring yet another dimension, but fail altogether to leave a strong impression. Despite this reservation, based on Herman's achievements and the material included on *Muse*, it is clear that Herman deserves at least as much credit and exposure as some of his fellow countrymen whose work has been much touted in recent years.

—Alain Drouot

Muse: Muse; Con Alma; Vertigo; Lamidbar; Perpetua; Isobel; Joya; Lu Yehi; Twins; And The Rain; Rina Ballé. (57:05)

Personnel: Yaron Herman, piano; Matt Brewer, bass; Gerald Cleaver, drums.

» Ordering info: sunnysiderecords.com

George Colligan

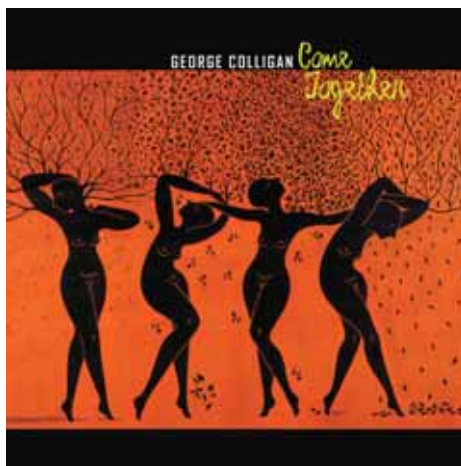
Come Together

SUNNYSIDE 1226

★★★

Come Together fits as a title for Colligan's second trio release on Sunnyside. This combination of Colligan, Russian-born bassist Boris Kozlov and New Orleans drummer Donald Edwards operates smoothly and spiritedly, with everyone coming together not just in arranged passages but in the nuances of their freer interactions.

Colligan is the centerpiece. In his writing as well as his improvising, he bases what he does on thick harmonies that knot at times into prickly dissonances. There isn't much deviation beyond the formula of chords in the left hand and lines with some elaboration in the right. This serves Colligan well on up tunes, on which his emphatic attack can compensate for a tendency toward rhythmic predictability. On ballads, though, a slightly wooden quality can surface—not so much in rubato passages but more so where the tempo locks in. This is apparent especially on "Open Your Heart," where his chords fall almost invariably on the first and third beats except where doubled to quarter notes or slipping briefly into triplets to track a surge in dynamics or the articulation of a motif.



All but two of these tracks are Colligan originals, most of them crafted along well-established concepts of structure: intro, head, solos in sections spiced variably with written turnarounds, out. Not surprisingly, Colligan blows confidently through his own material; his lines on "Venom" weave through the further implications of the changes and play effectively against a five-chord syncopated lick that pops up irregularly—on the eighth bar after the start of his solo, then nine bars in, then seven-and-a-half and so on. Solid as it is, more interesting things happen in the background, starting with

Kozlov's moment in the spotlight at the top and sustaining through his interplay with Edwards, which makes those hiccupping riffs speed smoothly by.

As is often the case, different insights emerge in the covers. When familiar music is interpreted, this allows performers to play off of listener expectations. This can be a creative opportunity or a joke, hip or snide. On the title cut, the group follows both paths, with a snaky groove that draws pretty directly from the seminal Beatles version but elaborated with bitonalities and teasing twitches in tempo, dragging at times to a dead stop, that entertain while also pulling the neat trick of enhancing the familiar character of the material while using it to leap into the album's most inspired explorations. But there's a third option to playing covers, which is more or less to wing it. This is the least illuminating strategy, so when Colligan et al. follow it on "The Shadow Of Your Smile" the impression is confirmed of a trio that's well on its way but likely has most of its journey still ahead of it.

—Robert L. Doerschuk

Come Together: Come Together; Venom; Have No Fear; So Sad I Had To Laugh; Reaction; The Shadow Of Your Smile; Lift; Open Your Heart; To The Wall; Uncharted Territory. (69:05)

Personnel: George Colligan, piano; Boris Kozlov, bass; Donald Edwards, drums.

» Ordering info: sunnysiderecords.com

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Andrew Rathbun

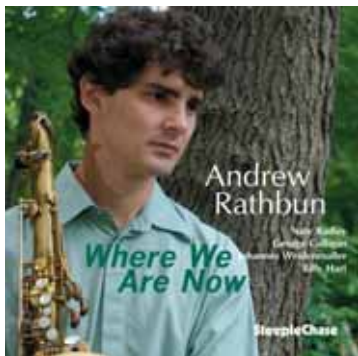
Where We Are Now

STEEPLECHASE 31665

★★★★½

Saxist/composer Rathbun has successfully explored a wide variety of concepts and contexts in his previous work, delving into poetry, politics and unusual instrumental configurations with uniformly intriguing results. The Toronto native, now based in Brooklyn, delivers what is arguably his most straightahead effort with *Where We Are Now*, his ninth recording as a leader, and it serves as a more easily accessible showcase of his ever-evolving talents.

Rathbun's approach on *Where We Are Now* is intelligent without being intellectual, a prime example being the four-part suite dedicated to his son that opens the album. The composition has solid stand-alone sections that combine for a sweeping overview and all the advanced harmonic creations it offers sound inherently developed in service of the music. In similar fashion Rathbun's evocative one-man saxophone choir on the closing "Son Suite IV" provides a subtle reminder of his experimental



leanings while still adhering to the organic logic of the piece.

Rathbun infuses an appealing narrative quality to his solos that is often lacking in such well-structured music. He is especially effective on soprano, where his crisp tonal clarity allows him to articulate deceptively challenging lines with

passionate precision.

Rathbun is joined by frequent collaborators pianist George Colligan and guitarist Nate Radley, and both consistently distinguish themselves with impressive solos. But it is the presence of veteran drummer Billy Hart and his empathic coordination with bassist Johannes Weidenmuller that imbues Rathbun's compositions with a body and soul to more fully realize their potential.

—Michael Point

Where We Are Now: Son Suite I; Son Suite II; Son Suite III; Son Suite IV; Film Under Glass; A Stern; Wheel; Lament; No Longer. (64:56)

Personnel: Andrew Rathbun, tenor and soprano saxophone; Nate Radley, guitar; George Colligan, piano; Johannes Weidenmuller, bass; Billy Hart, drums.

» Ordering info: steeplechase.dk

Yellowjackets

New Morning: The Paris Concert

HEADS UP DVD 7167

★★★

One of the prevailing arguments jazz has over MTV-era pop is that because there is so much musical sophistication and improvisational wonderment, it doesn't need glitzy production to get its artistic message or merit across. In turn, a commercial DVD of a contemporary jazz band certainly should deliver something that hooks you in visually and retains your attention.

For all the intimate multi-camera work that provides a bird's-eye view of Marcus Baylor's intricate drum patterns or keyboardist Russell Ferrante's deliberate fingering, for all of the richness of the color and the framing of the stage and audience, and for all of the top-notch fusion that the Yellowjackets play—this DVD is a bore.

It's certainly no fault of the band. The Yellowjackets are simply doing their thing, delivering poignant post-Weather Report fusion that reconciles funk, South African jazz, bebop and electric fusion. The empathy the group displays, despite the various lineups,



shows an accord that's built on trust and longstanding musical communication. The video production certainly has its charms: the constant glee in Ferrante's smile, the strong, silent-type demeanor of bassist Jimmy Haslip, Baylor's face cringing during some of his heated funk patterns.

But that's hardly enough to keep viewers glued to the screen. None of the members, for better or worse, hams it up like Jaco Pastorius did during Weather Report's halcyon

years, and none of the musicians engages in any hilarious banter with the audience members. From a visual standpoint, only diehard fans or music students looking to watch technique from exceptional musicians will find this remotely engaging. And in this multi-tasking, ADD world, even they might find themselves becoming fidgety about 15 minutes into it.

—John Murph

New Morning: The Paris Concert: Aha; Capetown; Bop Boy; Prayer For Peace; Cross Current; Dewey; With These Hands; Freedomland; Even Song; Downtown; Healing Waters; Evening News. (98:00)

Personnel: Russell Ferrante, piano and keyboards; Marcus Baylor, drums; Jimmy Haslip, bass; Bob Mintzer, tenor saxophone and EWI.

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Linda Oh Trio

Entry

LINDA OH MUSIC

★★★★

Linda Oh, a Chinese-Malaysian bassist raised in Australia and now based in New York, has delivered a stunning debut here, demonstrating ferocious power and a deep sense of composure. She aimed to make a dark-sounding record and she has succeeded marvelously, crafting a warm, woody sound that favors her instrument's bottom range (with chunky lines and fat chords), and enlisting the superb young trumpeter Ambrose Akinmusire to explore the same tonal area of his instrument. Although she's got clear technical skills, this is not a flashy record, and unlike many musicians making their first statement she doesn't try to show off everything in her arsenal. Oh builds her sturdy, attractive melodies by playing thick vamps that recall the steely force of bassists like Dave Holland and Fred Hopkins. The drummer Obed Calvaire reinforces her assured sense of groove, economically inserting tightly coiled, explosive accents that prod and cajole.

On the intro to "Numero Uno," Akinmusire overdubs multiple lines to create a brassy fanfare, but elsewhere the trio puts its faith in the simplicity and clarity of its potent attack. The arrangements spread the action around, framing solos in constantly shifting ways, so that while trumpet is the obvious frontline voice, Oh's gamboling lines are equally gripping—as are her compact, beautifully constructed solos. "Gunnars" fiercely juggles a fast-moving, cycling motif with a slightly chaotic, zigzagging melody, and even on a ballad like "A Year From Now" there's no missing the raw muscle of an ever-shimmering, pensive line. Oh even makes an unlikely cover of "Soul To Squeeze" by the Red Hot Chili Peppers sound like part of the arresting sound. Here's someone to watch.

—Peter Margasak

Entry: Morning Sunset; Patterns; Numero Uno; Fourth Limb; Gunnars; A Year From Now; Before The Music; 201; Soul To Squeeze. (45:55)

Personnel: Linda Oh, bass; Ambrose Akinmusire, trumpet; Obed Calvaire, drums.

» Ordering info: lindaohmusic.com



Holdsworth/ Pasqua/ Haslip/ Wackerman

Blues For Tony

MOONJUNE 029

★★★★

For anyone wondering what guitarist Allan Holdsworth's been up to lately, look no further than *Blues For*

Tony, recorded in 2007 in front of a live audience. Along with keyboardist Alan Pasqua, this tribute is to a former boss, the late drummer Tony Williams. Joining them are two others more than up to the challenge of playing cohesive electric jazz: bassist Jimmy Haslip and drummer Chad Wackerman. For Holdsworth fans, *Blues For Tony* is like red meat, 10 of the 11 cuts across this double disc loaded with guitar playing. For fans of the original band, both Holdsworth and Pasqua's instruments hearken back to the sounds they once created with Williams.

Three songs jump out, essentially remakes of tunes originally heard on Williams' very fine *Believe It* (from 1975, under the band name The New Tony Williams Lifetime). First off, we hear a fairly straight take on Holdsworth's sunny "Fred," Wackerman holding down the fort with lots of fills reminiscent of Williams' later, more heavy-handed style of fusion drumming, the guitarist's trademark tone and attack shining through. Haslip takes Tony Newton's bass role and runs with it, another indication that the Yellowjackets bassist is not only nimble-fingered but very conversant in what approximates a recreation of mid-'70s fusion with a 21st century spin. The other two songs, Pasqua's "Protocosmos" and Newton's "Red Alert," are similarly revisited with close connections to their original performances, "Proto" a rolling waltz that threatens to take its sweet melody lines and turn them into a rockin' raveup only to stay playful, "Red Alert" likewise a tuneful, playful romp.

The rest of the program is a mix of Holdsworth and Pasqua music—the exceptions being Wackerman's lyrical "The Fifth" and the swinging funk (with gentle coda) of "It Must Be Jazz," penned by all four members of this band. Pasqua's moody, mysterious crawling waltz "San Michele" recalls a kind of slow-motion Mahavishnu Orchestra vibe with a forum for an expressive Wackerman to solo over the music, while Pasqua's reflective "To Jaki, George And Thad" is essentially a solo-piano piece showcasing his roots in mainstream jazz (referring to Jaki Byard, George Russell and Thad Jones). The title track is a lively, alternately jazzy and rock-oriented medium-tempo blues, featuring Wackerman's best solo, both musical and aggressive in execution.

Blues For Tony, while not an out-and-out jamband hoedown, is a friendly reminder of that period in the drummer/composer/bandleader's life when his version of jazz-rock had dropped its rough edges, taking on the relatively smoother contours of what is often heard as today's more earnest and very much alive fusion music. Indeed, *Blues For Tony* is also about four musicians who have put their stamp on a music that's stood the test of time, and the scowling of purist jazz critics.

—John Ephland

Blues For Tony: Disc One: Blues For Tony; The Fifth; It Must Be Jazz; Fred; Guitar Intro; Pud Wud. Disc Two: Looking Glass; To Jaki, George And Thad; San Michele; Protocosmos; Red Alert. (52:20/38:06)

Personnel: Allan Holdsworth, guitar; Alan Pasqua, keyboards; Jimmy Haslip, bass guitar; Chad Wackerman, drums.

» Ordering info: moonjune.com

BOOKS

by James Porter



King Records Kept It Raw

The cover of Jon Hartley Fox's *King Of The Queen City* (University of Illinois Press) is a photo of James Brown in concert, tie loosened, hunched over the mic and probably about to get down on bended knee for his "Please Please Please" finale. It's a justifiable image for this narrative about King Records as Brown is likely the one artist

that modern-day music fans will identify with the company, even though there were other stars on the label before him. It has also been erroneously reported that Brown owned the King label; in reality, Brown only owned his own masters. For most of its 30-year existence, King was overseen by Syd Nathan, a white cigar-chomping businessman from Cincinnati.

The firm issued all sorts of records, and even had one toe in the jazz world with its Bethlehem label (whose biggest success was Nina Simone). But, it was the r&b and country fields that established the King legacy. Besides Brown, this Ohio label gifted the r&b scene with Hank Ballard and the Midnighters, Bill Doggett, The Five Royales, Wynonie Harris, Freddy King and scores of others: Country and bluegrass legends like the Stanley Brothers, Hawkshaw Hawkins, Cowboy Copas and Moon Mullican were also a major part of the King dynasty. Fox does a fine, irreverent job of telling the King story in detail, talking with various players in the story and occasionally trawling the vaults for archival quotes, including quite a few from Nathan himself.

While Nathan can be seen, in retrospect, as a patron saint of roots music, the truth remains that he was still a bottom-line businessman. He had the foresight to record c&w and r&b in its rawest, most regional state, but then again, the '50s was a time when raw regionalism (as audiences define it now) actually made the national charts. To that end, Nathan wasn't above cashing in when he could (when Chubby Checker had a massive hit with "The Twist," Nathan reissued Hank Ballard's original with an overdubbed sax, just like Checker's version). Fox paints a portrait of Nathan as a hardscrabble businessman, but he still has his faults, such as initially refusing Brown, who, of course, went on to revolutionize the music world and keep King Records afloat. It should be noted that after 1965, Brown remained nearly its only hit maker until his defection to Polydor in 1971. In essence, King was a one-artist label during that era (which Nathan didn't survive—he died in 1968).

Fox covers this era well, but he could have also talked about the company's last years, under different ownership, until its collapse in 1973 (there is no mention of the Manhattans, who rode out the post-Brown period with a few hits before jumping to CBS and becoming even more popular). This omission is a very small slice of the pie. Otherwise, this is an excellent biography of an independent label that became a major player in the record game.

DB

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Recording On The Verge: Steve Lehman's Home Studio

Alto saxophonist Steve Lehman is the kind of compositional whiz kid who gives high IQ a good name. Speaking from Columbia University's Computer Music Center (CMC), where he is in the school's Doctoral Program in Music Composition, Lehman discusses such advanced concepts as spectral harmony and compound meters like the rest of us play *The Real Book*. Lehman's ambitious eighth album, *Travail, Transformation And Flow (Pi)*, was recorded live at Systems 2 in Brooklyn, but its constantly fluctuating meters and complex arrangements recall the sample, splice and print processes found in electronic music and the French avant garde.

Lehman's tightly knit, highly improvisational music is the result of his study of spectral music with Columbia's Tristan Murail (and his earlier work with Jackie McLean and Anthony Braxton), but his use of Cycling 74's Max/MSP and SPEAR software also contributes to the building blocks of his music. As seen in a video of Lehman's solo concert at New York's The Stone (found at stevelehman.com), where the 30-year-old blows over laptop-generated rhythms strikingly similar to those found on his albums, his software is as important as his hardware.

Unlike Digidesign Pro Tools or Apple's Logic Audio, which are typically used solely as recording/sequencing platforms, Max/MSP and SPEAR allow the composer to explore the computer language of actually *creating* music. Using two Apple PowerBook G4s, keyboard controllers (Korg MicroKONTROL, Korg MicroKORG), foot controller (Behringer FCB 1010), DPA 4061 omnidirectional miniature condenser microphone, M-Audio MobilePre USB, his Selmer Mark VI alto and Super Action 80 Series II soprano saxo-

phone with Max/MSP and SPEAR, Lehman seems on the verge of something new in more ways than one.

"Max/MSP is a computer programming language based on a graphic environment instead of code," Lehman said. "You have terms like 'objects' and 'operators' and small interconnected boxes called patches. You can build an array of connected patches that gives you control over what you're doing. The microphone symbol, for example, is a stock Max object, an A-to-D converter. The mic is getting information and sending it to another object called Fiddle, which parses out a bunch of raw information: the frequency, the incoming pitch, frequency of attack (measured in milliseconds), and it notes every time there's a loud sound. This patch layout would be for one mic basically recording my saxophone. Other screens in Max show my performance layout."

This heady language explains Max's working processes, which are depicted onscreen as an intricate flowchart. Max measures practically every variable of Lehman's horn output, and at the same time, can create complementary, seemingly random rhythms.

"Max/MSP is a perfect platform for doing interactive stuff," Lehman added. "If you want a program that has any kind of demonstrative intelligence and doesn't repeat itself and can react to incoming information, Max is ideal. Its flow chart represents something between a composition and an environment."

Lehman acknowledged that Max/MSP may not be for everyone. Learning its onscreen language—represented by such names as R Attack, R Duration, Random Drum Density, No Drum, Yes Drum, Boucle Bass Drum, all of which control certain variables—requires

more self application than simpler programs like Pro Tools, but the rewards are apparently greater as well.

"Max requires a learning curve," Lehman admitted. "It has great tutorials. But you can't open the box and start making music. If you want to do electronic music that can actually react to information from acoustic instruments—you can't do that in Logic or Ableton Live."

SPEAR (Sinusoidal Partial Editing Analysis and Resynthesis) is an even more eclectic platform (see klngbeil.com).

"You can dump audio files into SPEAR and it will perform sinusoidal analysis: It will break up the sound, isolate each partial and overtone and represent it as a sinewave," he said, using a sample of saxophonist Evan Parker as a demonstration. "You can change the pitch, volume, speed, isolate the overtones and do different things with them in SPEAR. I would either integrate this into a composition or improvise over it. Or I might manipulate it in real time via the G4 through my different controllers."

Though Lehman's home studio is minimal by conventional standards—it's more a compositional tool than a standard home studio—each part of his setup plays a distinct role. Max/MSP and SPEAR handle computer-driven duties, while Lehman's horns and foot controllers require more direct input.

"The foot controller mostly sends MIDI data to Max and Ableton Live," Lehman explained. "So if I want the virtual drummer in Max to start playing, the foot control triggers that, or it can change the timbre. Each of the 10 pedals controls 10 different banks. Bank zero might let me loop everything, another bank might control the virtual soloist, the chordal instruments, predefined compositions, sub compositions for different ways to create spectral chords; another bank is to record myself for playback. Max is great when you're playing solo; I describe it as a musical environment I can move through in real time."

With music this intricate, a good demo comes in handy. And while Lehman's musicians (drummer Tyshawyn Sorey, bassist Drew Guess, tenor player Mark Shim, trombonist Tim Albright, trumpeter Jonathan Finlayson, vibraphonist Chris Dingman and tuba player Jose Davila) work from charts in the studio, Lehman also gives them laptop demos to aid in the learning process.

"Sometimes I will give MIDI realizations or sequenced versions of the pieces to the musicians just so they can hear how the different parts line up. If there is something particularly complex rhythmically, the very precise computer execution of those rhythms can be really helpful. And I use it as a soloist to practice getting comfortable and to internalize unusual forms and unusual metric changes. Having a sequenced realization is almost essential."

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Anywhere, Anytime, Anyplace: Bluey Maunick's Home Studio

In this modern era, when the power of a laptop outfitted with Digidesign Pro Tools and a few software plug-ins can dwarf an older hardware-based studio, it's easy to record anywhere, anytime, anyplace.

"We were touring Germany," Incognito's Jean-Paul (aka "Bluey") Maunick recalled, "when we spotted a small studio in this sleepy town." Known for their soulful funk/fusion epics, including the latest, *Tales From The Beach*, Incognito frequently records live on the road—or anywhere they can power up an Apple MacBook Pro.

"We'd already done the beer drinking," Maunick continues. "We were ready to *do* something. I saw this sign saying 'Recording Studio' on a little house. So we went in and put this idea down that I had in my head. They didn't have a drum set, so we programmed the click, and the bass player and I recorded this track with guitar and bass. Then we laid some vocals on top, and it ended up being the title track of the album, 'Tales From The Beach.' And we left it in that format, just added horns the next day because the studio had another free day. It was a proper studio with Pro Tools."

Incognito's approach epitomizes a growing trend wherein "old world" gear comfortably coexists with "new world" software-based skills. As young musicians discover the tube warmth, tape compression and general humanity of '70s hardware construction, their productions have often taken on greater slam, appeal and ear-friendly sweetness. Maunick has understood this for years. Back in London, he maintains a professional Pro Tools HD Accel HD2 based setup, augmented by such vintage analog pieces as a Neve 8078 console, 3M M79 2-inch 16-track tape machine, EMT 240 plate reverb, Drawmer 1960 stereo compressor/limiter, Urei 1176LN compressors, Telefunken R-F-T AK47, M16 MkII and Neumann U47 and M269c microphones and an ancient Crybaby Wah-Wah pedal for his Fender Stratocaster. The system is entirely mobile, ready to accompany

PRO SESSION
by Ken Micallef



Bluey Maunick

Incognito across town or across the globe.

"*Tales From The Beach* was recorded and produced in Italy, London, Germany, and mixed in Indonesia," Maunick explained. "I record now on my journeys. This setup constitutes my mixing and home studio rig. We move around with it. We might find a nice villa in the hills in Italy and we move it all in there and record an album. That is how we began *Tales From The Beach*."

And while Maunick's setup also includes newer pieces from AKG, Sennheiser, Apogee and Manley, there is no doubting where his loyalties lie—and their ultimate influence on his music.

"With computers you have great software that can really emulate the classic analog gear," Maunick said. "But I've found that when you are in a hands-on situation and you can actually feel something, you can twist a knob or push a fader and it responds, it is very hard for digital gear to speak to you. You've got to search for it. We record a lot of our stuff live, and doing that you just want to push a fader or crank up the valve on your guitar amp. We like to have stuff that is hands-on. And we can tell the difference because Incognito has been around for 30 years. We began our recording career with

lovely valve equipment and tape. We can tell the difference, and it does matter.

"The new generation doesn't know the difference," he continued. "And their ears don't even [hear it]; they find it quite shocking that you would want something that sounds more dull than bright. It may be duller, but it breathes. So it speaks to us in a different way."

Tales From The Beach is a study in recording contrasts. Maunick used every approach possible, including live stage performances, off-the-cuff tracks recorded in Germany, hotel demos and studio jams—even combining files from the various band members' MacBook home setups.

"On 'When The Sun Comes Down,'" Maunick explained, "I recorded the original idea on the tour bus. The drums and bass were programmed by Richard Bull. Those two elements maintained their heavily programmed identity. The keyboards, too. Then we overdubbed the vocals and horns in the studio, and I repeated my original guitar riff. On the opposite tip, a song like 'N.O.T.' was recorded entirely live with all of us in the main room, even the brass. We cut some takes and that was it, all live. Even the lead vocal is live; it went down in the booth with background vocals cut afterward."

Incognito's trademark funk/dance/fusion fills *Tales From The Beach*, their 18th album. The group has always maintained a delicate balance between dance floor grooves and Maunick's clever, jazz-based chordal approach, such albums as 1992's *Tribes Vibes + Scribes* (including international hit "Colibri") and 2004's *Adventures In Black Sunshine* earning them a worldwide audience. Incognito's productions have been studied at Berklee College of Music; their sassy horn charts and soulful vocals recall everyone from r&b heroes to jazz funk favorites. Incognito is truly an "everyman" band.

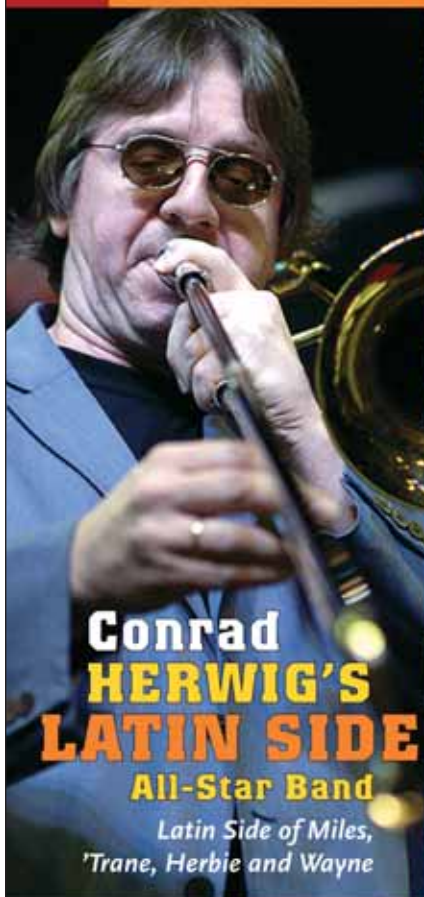
"I discovered [John] Coltrane and [Charlie] Parker though jazz/funk, the dance music of the time," Maunick said. "Roy Ayers, Donald Byrd, Earth, Wind & Fire, the Mizell Brothers, David Axelrod, Lalo Shifirin's *Enter The Dragon*, all those soundtracks with a lot of experimentation—it all influenced us."

Although he leads a band that maintains a sharp technological edge, Maunick is surprisingly ignorant of basic consumer technology. He doesn't own a cell phone. He runs his Strat and Gibson 335 guitars through an ancient, 1960s-era Selmer tube amp. He often plays guitar in his bare feet.

"The band calls me 'the analog man living in the digital world,'" he laughed. "I don't even have a mobile phone. But I am the glue, I know what everything does. The band needs a free spirit, somebody who isn't caught up with the gear, someone who doesn't need to stare at the computer screen."

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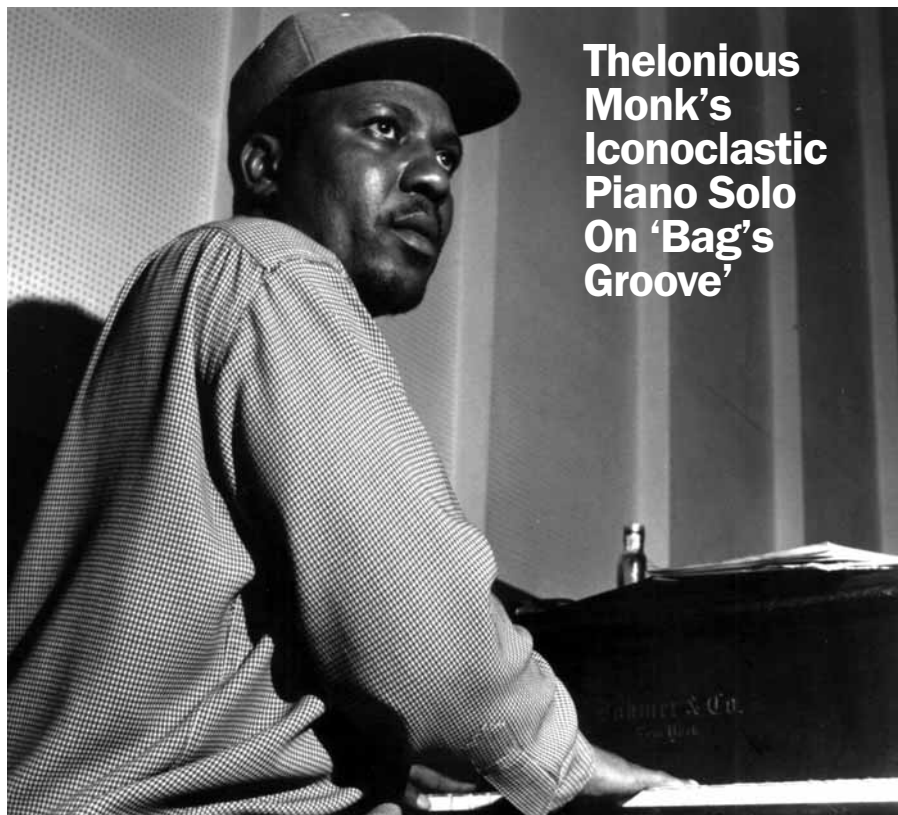
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SOLO
by Jimi Durso



Thelonious Monk's Iconoclastic Piano Solo On 'Bag's Groove'

Recorded Dec. 24, 1954, for the album of the same name, pianist Thelonious Monk's solos on both takes of "Bag's Groove" are shining examples of his idiosyncrasies. Presented here are the first four choruses from Monk's solo on the first take. The track was written by vibraphonist Milt Jackson, and is also a great example of just what Monk could do with a simple F blues.

First, look at the way Monk constructs his solo, each chorus going further than the previous. He starts with a very simple two-note idea (the fifth and root, like the melody from Duke Ellington's "C Jam Blues"), waiting until the eighth and ninth measures to add two additional notes. The second chorus has more activity, both rhythmically and melodically. The third chorus starts with even more rhythmic activity, with the introduction of 16th-note rhythms, not yet explored in this solo. Also there are denser chord voicings in the final two measures. This leads into the fourth chorus, which is entirely block chords. After this Monk brings the energy back down by returning to single-note lines akin to his second chorus for his next chorus (not printed).

Now let's look at some specific aspects of Monk's approach. His left hand is used very sparsely, and not at all in the second chorus. It's as if he was saving this texture for the climax in the fourth chorus, where it joins his right hand. The voicings in his left hand are not very dense, just one or two notes. He also has no problem

playing roots and fifths in his left hand, instead of playing other tones that would define the chord and thicken the harmony, as many other jazz pianists would.

Rhythmically, Monk bases many of his ideas off of quarter-note triplets. What's fascinating is how rarely he starts them on the 1 and 3, as they are most often played (measure 43 being the only example). We see the quarter-note triplet idea extended over the bar line in measures 20–21 and 32–33, and leading to the fourth and third beats in measures 33 and 34. After this Monk pushes the idea further, playing what are basically quarter-note triplets starting on upbeats in measures 34 (over the bar line into 35), 39–40, 40–41, 44 and 46. These licks have been written as variations of eighth-note triplets for easier reading.

There are also some dissonances that are characteristically Monk. He starts with the Gb introduced in measure 8 and reappearing in 10. As the $\flat 9$ of the F7 and the $\flat 5$ of the C7 , this tone has its place in jazz, but after all the roots and fifths in the previous measures this tone is like a blast of cold water. But even more "out" is the E-natural first played in measure 19. As the major seventh, this note has no place in a blues, especially on the I chord. But Monk keeps returning to it. We hear it again in measures 23, 26, 27, 29 and 30 (where it is the $\#11$ on the Bb7), as well as in the chord section in bars 35–38, and in measure 46, where it finally

FRANCIS WOLFF/MOSAIK IMAGES

shows up as the major third of the V chord, as if this was what Monk has been leading to for the past 27 measures. It's also interesting how the E-natural becomes an interior voice in measures 37 and 38, creating a counterpoint to the half-step melody above.

Another "Monkism" is his use of sixths. He plays a string of them melodically in measures 18–22, traveling up and down scales in sixths. (The melody to Monk's composition "Misterioso" is based on this same technique.) It provides a country-like effect, similar to yodeling. Later, starting in bar 36, Monk plays sixths harmonically in his right hand, harmonizing the top

voice with notes a sixth below. It's the same idea with the notes played together rather than one at a time. Up through bar 39, it's interesting that he resolves his melodies to sixths that are variations of an F chord (third and root in bar 36, fifth and third in 37–39), and the chromatic chord one-half step down Monk plays leading to these imply E major chords. So by this point Monk is not just playing the individual E note that is so dissonant, he's implying an E chord, which is even more out.

DB

Jimi Durso is a guitarist and bassist in the New York area. He can be reached at jimidurso.com.

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Zoom Q3 Recorder: From Your Pocket to YouTube

Building on the success of its hand-held digital recorders, Zoom has introduced the Q3 Handy Video Recorder, which combines video recording with high-quality stereo audio. With a compact design, point-and-shoot simplicity and USB connectivity, the Q3 could be a very handy tool for musicians who want to record anything from live performances and rehearsals to interviews and master classes.

The Q3 is Zoom's first video recorder and a logical next step for the company, which in 2007 gained a strong foothold in the portable digital recorder market with the introduction of the H2 and later the H4 and H4n products.

The first thing that you notice about the Q3 Handy Recorder is its simplicity, fitting comfortably in your hand with just a few basic buttons. After installing the two AA batteries and powering up, a simple touch of the "record" button was all it took to make my first video. The on-board 2.4-inch color LCD is very sharp and quite effective for monitoring or playback, and the Q3's four-way navigation pad provides zoom and volume functions. The Zoom records video at 640 x 480 dpi and the quality of the video is acceptable,

but definitely not great. As with all digital video, low light recordings are particularly problematic, and with no on-board video settings or adjustments, what you see is what you get.

The strength of the Q3 is in its audio quality. It uses the same X-Y pattern stereo condenser microphones found in the H4n. The Q3 can record sound at various quality settings from compressed MP3 up to full 24-bit at 96kHz in audio-only mode and 24-bit/48kHz in video mode. Downloading your video and audio to a computer is a snap using the built-in USB connector and bundled HandyShare software, which provides basic editing and even direct uploading of your files to the web.

The Q3 comes with a 2 GB SD card for up to one hour of video recording time; it will accept up to 32 GB SDHC cards for 16 hours of movie making.

Despite its average picture quality, the Zoom Q3 is a solid choice for those looking for a professional audio recorder with the added benefits of video capture.

—Keith Baumann

» Ordering info: samsontech.com



Blue Chip: Slick Pick, Great Grip

Guitar players are always searching for ways to improve tone and increase their technical ability on the instrument.

The folks at Blue Chip Picks may have a product that can help with both, offering a line of handmade picks that produce amazingly clear tone and glide across the strings with effortless ease.

The search for the perfect pick has been an ongoing saga for many years among musicians. Picks made from tortoise shell were highly popular due to their warm and clean tone. These picks eventually became illegal due to the endangered status of the hawksbill tortoise, and the search for an acceptable substitute has had manufactures trying everything from custom plastic resins to stone, wood

and even animal horn. It's interesting that one of the biggest breakthroughs in pick technology actually came from a machinist who was not even in the business. "I

had been machining this composite material for 10 years that costs \$4,800 for a 10"x10" square," said Matthew Goins, Blue Chip president. "One day I noticed an

employee shaping a tortoise pick in the

shop and a discussion led to the idea of forming a pick from the composite." Goins took his prototype to several music festivals and quickly found out that he had something truly special.

Not only was the tone great, but the material has a self-lubricating quality that reduces friction

allowing for faster and more precise playing. Goins worked for two years to refine his picks. "I wanted to raise the bar for pick design," he said. "Everything is precision-machined with CNC equipment to extremely tight tolerances and then hand-beveled and polished. Blue Chip offers picks in several shapes and thicknesses, the newest design being a jazz model shaped much like the Dunlop Jazz 3 pick." Goins also offers a thumbpick.

I was quite impressed with the picks' performance and found that they did indeed allow me to play faster lines with less effort. Although quite slick on the strings, the composite material is very easy to grip with no slippage at all. In addition, the Blue Chips produce no pick noise and are incredibly durable with no signs of wear, even after several months of intensive use. Bottom line is that this is a groundbreaking product and well worth the \$35 for the discerning player.

—Keith Baumann

» Ordering info: bluechippick.net



Blue Microphones Encore Series: Studio To Stage

Blue Microphones are so ubiquitous in recording studios, that you could forget they've only been around since 1995. Blue's initial focus was on high-end Class A studio mics marked by transparent sound and unique design. The company has since introduced a slew of studio mics that are application-specific, and across the board has been able to maintain a high standard of quality and innovation. In recent years, Blue has ventured into the home market with less expensive mics, and even into the USB microphone market, always with interesting, and usually positive, results. Now Blue has thrown its hat into the live performance ring.

The new Encore series mics are designed primarily for stage, although they can be used for studio applications where one might normally

use another stage dynamic microphone—say, miking a snare. There are three in the series so far, aptly named 100, 200 and 300. The 300 was not yet available for review, but I got my hands on the other two.

The first thing that strikes you about these mics is their sturdy construction. They have a pleasant heft, if a little on the heavy side, and their barrels are etched with a gripping surface that I found comfortable. There's a nice laser-etched ring between the barrel and the grill, and they have a unique grill styling, with a ring around it (a la Saturn) that you'll have to make your own decision about, but it definitely fits in with Blue's tradition of unusual design. The screen worked well, and deflected

pops with aplomb.

The 100 is a classic dynamic, and performed well, although I thought it could have used a little more gain. It definitely had more definition than other mics in this range, and I thought the highs were pleasing as well. The 200 is an active dynamic capsule, so it requires phantom power. The 200 has plenty of gain, and sounded clearer to me, although the specs are pretty similar between the two. The 300 is a live condenser.

I tested them for feedback issues against some mics at a local club, and they performed very well—better than any of the other contenders—and anyone who plays a lot of live shows can tell you that this is one of the most important things you ask of your mics. And while they both have the same "proximity effect" that all dynamic mics exhibit, wherein the closer you get to the capsule the more bass response the mic puts out, I found it to be less tubby than on other mics. I liked the sound of them both, but considering the low price, I would probably opt for the 200, unless you frequently use a board that does not supply phantom power.

It seems that Blue has introduced some real contenders into the live space, and at \$99 for the 100, and \$149 for the 200, they are well worth a look.

—Chris Neville



Theo Wanne Durga: Large-Chamber Mouthpiece Power

Master mouthpiece creator Theo Wanne has developed the Durga saxophone mouthpiece, a high-powered version of his True Large Chamber design.

The Durga features a long, high baffle and a very large chamber that transitions into a smaller chamber. This complex design allows for a fat, full sound with a powerful edge that's bright without being too thin.

I tried the Durga on my vintage King Zephyr baritone sax, using a medium-soft reed, and it brought out the instrument's natural brassy timbre while allowing for a huge, round sound that you just don't get with other bari mouthpieces. It took some extra effort at first, as the Durga will take pretty much whatever air you put into it, but once I got a feel for this piece I was thrilled with the response and the way it suited my embouchure. Despite its modern design and overtone-rich sound, the Durga was versatile enough to work in vastly different playing conditions. I was able to cut through the mix in a loud r&b group and blended perfectly with the sax section in a mellow, swinging big band.

If you're having trouble getting a good contemporary sound on bari, tenor or alto, give the Durga a try. It could change your game for the better.

—Ed Enright



Encore 100 (left) and 200

» Ordering info: bluemic.com

» Ordering info: theowanne.com

1 Strum Those Keys

The Strum Electric GS-1 from Applied Acoustics is a guitar track plug-in that includes a collection of classic, single coil- and humbucker-fitted guitars, a two-channel amplifier with spring reverb, a speaker cabinet and effects in a preset library. The Strum Electric GS-1 automatically voices chords played on the keyboard as a guitarist would play them on a fretboard. MSRP: \$229.

More info: applied-acoustics.com

2 Studio Gear Emulation

Universal Audio has introduced the 4K Channel Strip, an exacting circuit emulation of the SSL 4000 G+ console with the Type E "black knob" four-band EQ, and the companion 4K Buss Compressor, which offers a simple control set and transparent compression characteristics. Each of the 4K series plug-ins includes a 14-day demo. MSRP: 4K Channel Strip, \$249; Buss Compressor, \$199.

More info: uaudio.com

3 Behavior Modeled

Waves Audio has introduced the Hybrid line of plug-ins. The H-Comp Hybrid compressor combines the modeled behavior of transformers, tubes and transistors with the precision of modern technology. The H-Delay delivers vintage sounds, such as slap-back echo and ping-pong delay, as well as PCM42-style effects controlled by an intuitive user interface.

More info: waves.com

4 Sweet FX Suite

Novation has released a suite of five VST/AU effects plug-ins: chorus, delay, tremolo, phaser and filter effect featuring overdrive. Each plug-in offers an upgrade. Five filter types, three different octave slopes and a crunchy overdrive let the filter plug-in deliver a variety of dynamic filter modulation effects.

More info: focusrite.com

5 Reverb Generator

The X-Verb from Solid State Logic is a reverb generator based on SSL algorithms. This approach generates sonic results with the lowest possible latencies, allowing dynamic access to the detail parameters of the early reflection and reverb structure. The Morph feature allows MIDI-controllable crossfading from one reverb preset to another. MSRP: \$379.

More info: solid-state-logic.com



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Danilo Pérez (left) teaching Andrew Burglass and Matthew Halpin

Berklee Goes Global With New Institute

The first thing that comes to mind about Berklee College of Music may be super-fast tempos or a mastery of sight reading. But the faculty behind the new Berklee Global Jazz Institute, which debuts in January at the Boston school, emphasize the culture, history and politics that continue to impact music traditions throughout the world.

Berklee president Roger Brown said it isn't a case of Berklee shifting its focus. Rather, the Boston school is refreshing the curriculum with new international ideas.

"The Berklee Global Jazz Institute is a recognition that you don't create exciting new music on chops alone," Brown said. "There's something deeper and profound about the music that has to do with inspiration and emotion, and connecting in a very deep way with people. And we need to make sure that there is a place that honors that and supports students who really want to explore new directions, new ideas, new voices and new concepts. We're trying to get at a creative incubator of new musical ideas. The history of jazz is about reinvention, and about always pushing the envelope and always coming up with new ideas, and not repeating yourself."

The Berklee Global Jazz Institute—under the supervision of pianist Danilo Pérez, who serves as artistic director, and saxophonist Marco Pignataro, the program's managing director—will limit its enrollment to 14 students. These students will remain in the program for one to two years, while earning up to 30 credits. The program's official launch is January's Panama Jazz Festival.

In addition to improvisation and performing in ensembles, the curriculum focuses on building connections among music, art, dance and literature. Such classes include faculty from Berklee's liberal arts departments. The other instructors participating in the program include

Joe Lovano, George Garzone, John Patitucci, Terri Lynn Carrington, Jamey Haddad and Ben Street, who teach master classes and also privately. Berklee will look to establish exchange programs overseas with schools such as the Paris Conservatoire and Siena Jazz Foundation in Tuscany, Italy.

Pignataro also serves on the faculty at the Conservatory of Music of Puerto Rico, where he directs the jazz and Caribbean music program. He calls the Berklee program an effort to reform the current jazz education model.

"We're insisting on a more humanistic point of view," Pignataro said. "If you think about it, conservatories are putting out [an] endless number of incredibly proficient musicians who don't say anything. They play their instruments incredibly, but there's no expression."

Pérez speaks of the social impact musicians can have. In his native Panama, he has established the Panama Jazz Festival, and also a foundation providing arts education and scholarships for children and young people.

"Music has a social power and can affect communities," Pérez said. "We're encouraging the student to be more active in the world not just as a performer, but also as a citizen. And in the process they learn more about themselves [and] about humanity, and that will be [expressed] in their music."

Roger Brown said the Berklee Global Jazz Institute reflects a trend at the college. It includes a class focusing on turntables for DJs and a future program dealing with American roots music.

"You will see a trend in all academic institutions trying to understand that complicated idea of defining and quantifying creativity," Brown said. "Where do new ideas come from? How do we promote their development?" —Eric Fine

School Notes



Steve Wiest

Double Nomination: The University of North Texas One O'Clock Lab Band's *Lab 2009* disc has been nominated for a Grammy in the best large jazz ensemble album category. Its director, Steve Wiest, has been nominated for a best instrumental composition award for his "Ice-Nine" from that disc. **Details:** unt.edu

Hines' Educational Gift: The bulk of Earl "Fatha" Hines' estate will be donated to the University of California, Berkeley, to provide music instruction to low-income students. The campus library will also receive his papers, compositions and other memorabilia. Hines had served as a Regents' Lecturer in music at the school.

Details: berkeley.edu

Pre-Open Win: Oberlin College's Litoff Building, which will be the home of its jazz studies department, has received the American Institute of Architects' Western Mountain Region 2009 Honor Award for Unbuilt Work. The building will open in May. **Details:** oberlin.edu

JALC Multi-Talent Search: New York's Jazz at Lincoln Center is celebrating the 15th anniversary of its Essentially Ellington High School Jazz Band Program with new initiatives. Writing contests have been added to the competition, and students are invited to submit entries in the non-fiction essay or fictional short story categories. Students, band directors and fans are also encouraged to share their experiences with the program for a compilation to be presented during the May 8–10 event. Competition recordings are due Jan. 29, and writing contest essays are due Feb. 5. **Details:** jalc.org/ee15

Jazz Buffs: The University of Memphis Southern Comfort Jazz Orchestra has released a new CD, *Out Of The Bluffs*. Jack Cooper directs the ensemble. **Details:** memphis.edu

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At the 42nd annual Monterey Jazz Festival in Monterey, Calif., keyboardist George Duke, whose music cuts across all the jazz subgenres, appeared in the live DownBeat Blindfold Test on Sept. 19 in front of 500 people in Dizzy's Den. Saying that he's "not an opinionated guy, but I've got to tell the truth," Duke weighed in on an eclectic playlist.

Cannonball Adderley

"Dizzy's Business" (from *The Cannonball Adderley Sextet In New York*, Riverside/Concord, 2008, rec'd 1962) Adderley, alto saxophone; Nat Adderley, cornet; Yusef Lateef, tenor saxophone; Joe Zawinul, piano; Sam Jones, bass; Louis Hayes, drums.

That's Cannonball Adderley, and that's one of my favorite periods. I worked with Cannonball in the early '70s. This was from the '60s when he made a series of albums in New York, San Francisco, Chicago and Europe. His sextet is like a big band in a small package. I love that band. Yusef Lateef was amazing on flute and saxophone. When I first began playing the synthesizer, I tried to play the way Yusef played the blues with the flute. I wanted to play like that, but you can't bend notes on a piano. Once I found out about the synth, I was trying to play like Yusef. 5 stars.

Ledisi

"You And Me" (from *Lost & Found*, Verve Forecast, 2007) Ledisi, vocals; Rex Rideout, keyboards and programming; Errol Cooney, guitar; Kenny Knight, organ; Dwayne Smith, bass.

That's kind of funky. I heard this song on the radio a lot in L.A. I think this is Ledisi, who I worked with before on a Christmas album. She's a fantastic artist just like a lot of young singers like Jill Scott. In their own way they're keeping the spirit of jazz alive for the youth who don't know who Dizzy Gillespie is and could probably care less. But I'd like to hear them dig a little deeper and come up with something where they don't all sound the same. It's not always the artist's issue, but a record company's, which is a business. Ledisi has the ability to be free, but it takes a lot of chutzpa to follow one's creative heart. I'll give Ledisi 5 stars because she's one of the most talented artists in that school.

Frank Zappa

"The Grand Wazoo (Think It Over)" (from *Zappa Wazoo*, Vauter Native Records, 2008, rec'd live 1972) Zappa, guitar; various artists in Mothers of Invention orchestra, including Bruce Fowler, trombone; Jim Gordon, electric drums.

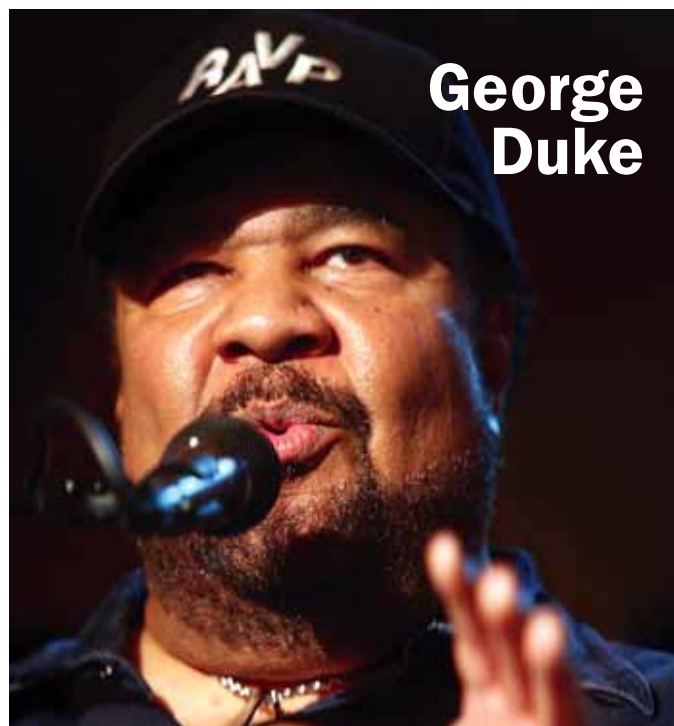
This is a Zappa tune, and it's probably by one of those bands out there that either play Frank's music or are influenced by it. When the tune went into the big band, whooh! It reminded me of some of the things I used to do with Zappa. I started with him in '69, then left in '72 to play with Cannonball. I rejoined Frank in '73 and left the band in '76. That was a great period.

So this is actually Frank? This is not one of his better efforts. But I have to thank him. I wouldn't be here today without him—and Cannonball. Frank always gave me little tidbits of advice. He told me, "George, you need to play the synthesizer." I told him, no, but he bought one for me anyway. He told me, "Put it on your Fender Rhodes and maybe you'll bump it by mistake and a sound will come out of it." Sure enough, I bumped it one day. Hmmmmmm. That's when I found out you could bend a note on a keyboard. I said, OK, Yusef, here I come.

Robert Glasper

"All Matter" (from *Double Booked*, Blue Note, 2009) Glasper, piano; Derrick Hodge, electric bass; Chris Dave, drums; Bilal, vocals.

It's interesting. It sounds like several songs in one. It's music that's daring on a certain level, especially conceptually because it's not geared for playing on the radio. The singer is pretty good. At first I thought it might be John Legend—the timbre of his voice. But I never heard him do anything like this. The piano player is good, stretching out here and there. But I



didn't like that snare drum. I have to say that this is not my cup of tea, but anyone who has the gumption to do something on the outside instead of staying in the inside, I say, go for it. Even if I don't like it, I err on the side of giving it up for them. 4 stars.

Herbie Hancock

"Fat Mama" (from *Herbie Hancock: The Complete Warner Bros. Recordings*, from *Fat Albert Rotunda*, Warner Bros., 1994, rec'd 1969) Hancock, piano; Joe Henderson, alto flute, tenor saxophone; Johnny Coles, trumpet; Garnett Brown, trombone; Buster Williams, bass; Albert "Tootie" Heath, drums.

I know that tune, but I can't place it. It sounds like one of those old Quincy Jones records. The piano player sounds like a lot of different piano players, so I can't guess. It could be Greg Phillinganes. But it's definitely not a Bill Evans or Herbie Hancock or McCoy Tyner. He doesn't stand out, but it could be that the tune required him to play a certain way, so you have to change what you can do. It is Herbie? For a minute I thought I heard him with that ding-a-ling sound. I love you, Herbie, but I couldn't really hear you in this. Oh, it's Bill Cosby's *Fat Albert Rotunda*? Well, that makes sense, Herbie had to do certain things. It's all about the context. You play what's required of you—because it's important for your pocketbook. As for Herbie, fortunately he went on to do a lot of great things.

Hank Jones

"Handful Of Keys" (from *Handful Of Keys: The Music Of Thomas "Fats" Waller*, Verve, 1992) Jones, piano.

I wish I could play like that. That's another discipline. I can only hint at it, but I can't really play it. I've heard this song before, but I haven't made a study of that era. From a weird standpoint, it sounded like Fats Waller playing without talking. I could hear the grumbling in the background. It's Hank Jones? They really got that sound, and Hank is a lot closer to that time than me. Hank is an amazing pianist, just like many from the time he was coming up. I've got to get this album. **DB**

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

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