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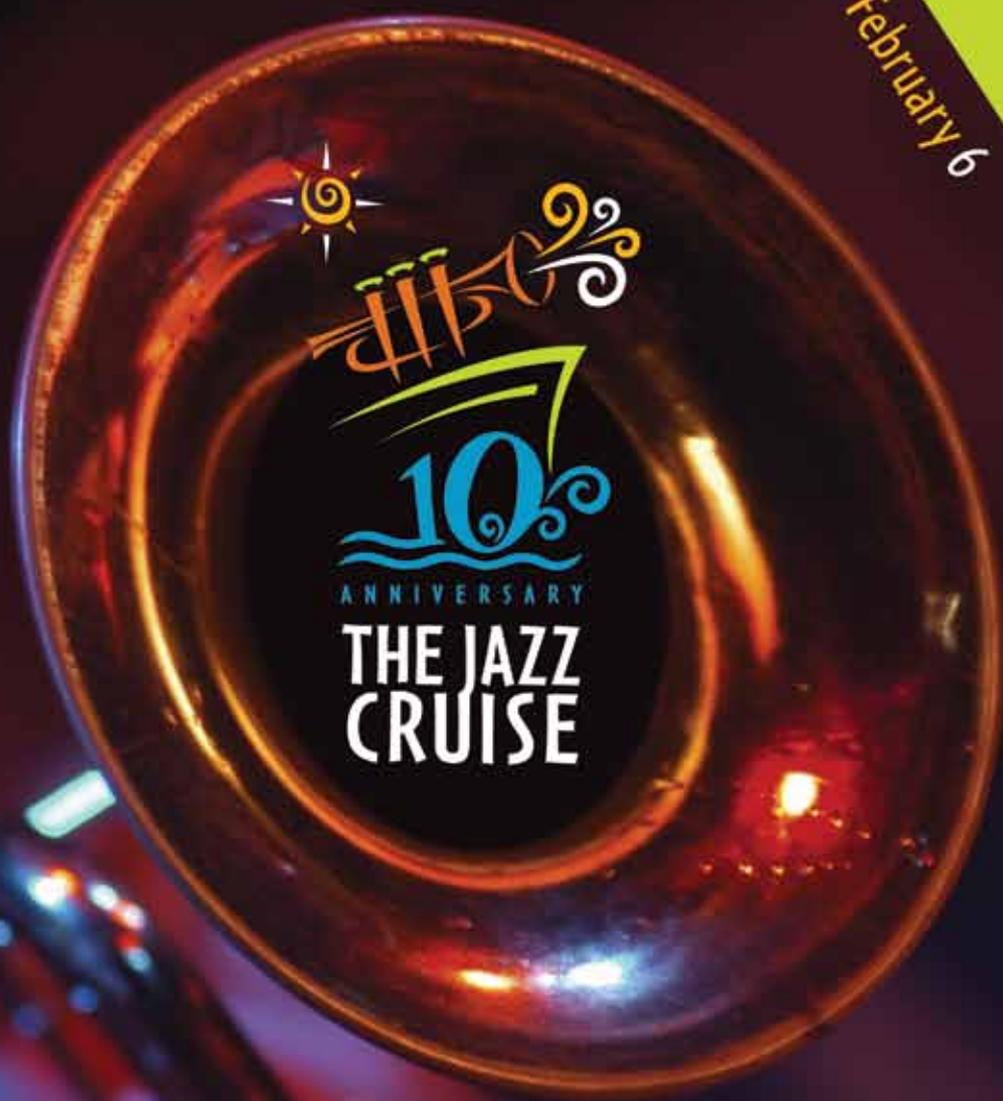
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Production Associate Andy Williams
Bookkeeper Margaret Stevens
Circulation Manager Kelly Grosser

ADVERTISING SALES

Record Companies & Schools
Jennifer Ruban-Gentile
630-941-2030
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Musical Instruments & East Coast Schools
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Classified Advertising Sales
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OFFICES

102 N. Haven Road
Elmhurst, IL 60126-2970
630-941-2030
Fax: 630-941-3210
<http://downbeat.com>
editor@downbeat.com

CUSTOMER SERVICE

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CONTRIBUTORS

Senior Contributors:

Michael Bourne, John McDonough, Howard Mandel

Austin: Michael Point; **Boston:** Fred Bouchard, Frank-John Hadley; **Chicago:** John Corbett, Alain Drouot, Michael Jackson, Peter Margasak, Bill Meyer, Mitch Myers, Paul Natkin, Howard Reich; **Denver:** Norman Provier; **Indiana:** Mark Sheldon; **Iowa:** Will Smith; **Los Angeles:** Earl Gibson, Todd Jenkins, Kirk Sissbee, Chris Walker, Joe Woodard; **Michigan:** John Eghland; **Minneapolis:** Robin James; **Nashville:** Robert Doerschuk; **New Orleans:** Erika Goldring, David Kurian; **New York:** Alan Bergman, Herb Boyd, Bill Douthart, Ira Gitter, Eugene Golgorsky, Norm Harris, D.D. Jackson, Jimmy Katz, Jim Macnie, Ken Micallef, Jennifer Odell, Dan Ouellette, Ted Panken, Richard Seidel, Tom Staudter, Jack Vartoogian, Michael Weintrob, Kevin Whitehead; **North Carolina:** Robin Tolleson; **Philadelphia:** David Adler, Shaun Brady, Eric Fine; **San Francisco:** Mars Breslow, Forrest Bryant, Clayton Cail, Yoshi Kato; **Seattle:** Paul de Barros; **Tampa Bay:** Philip Booth; **Washington, D.C.:** Willard Jenkins, John Murphy, Bill Shoemaker, Michael Wilderman; **Belgium:** Jos Knaepen; **Canada:** Greg Buium, James Hale, Diane Moon; **Denmark:** Jan Persson; **France:** Jean Szlamowicz; **Germany:** Detlev Schilke, Hyou Veiz; **Great Britain:** Brian Prestley; **Japan:** Kiyoshi Koyama; **Portugal:** Antonio Rubio; **Romania:** Virgil Mihauc; **Russia:** Cyril Moshkowi; **South Africa:** Don Albert.

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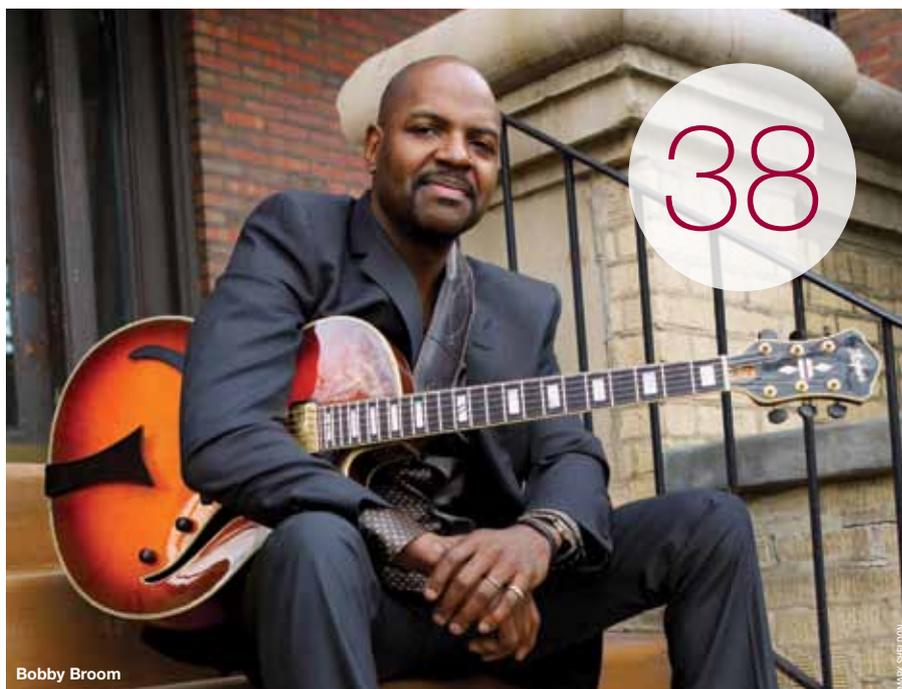
Inside

ON THE COVER

26 **Chick Corea** *Further Explorations of Bill Evans*

BY MARIUS NORDAL

The piano giant joins bassist Eddie Gomez and drummer Paul Motian to mark the 40th anniversary of Bill Evans' death with a special engagement at New York's Blue Note club. The group aims to rekindle the rare kind of trio interplay that Evans established on landmark albums like *Sunday At The Village Vanguard* and *Waltz For Debby*.



Bobby Broom

Cover photography by Lynn Goldsmith. Inset photo of Bill Evans by Jan Persson.

FEATURES

34 **Bill Evans** *Classic Interview: New Intuitions*

BY LEN LYONS // MARCH 11, 1976

38 **Bobby Broom** *Transcending Sideman Status*

BY LLOYD SACHS

42 **Wallace Roney** *Controversy, Frustration, Brilliance*

BY JIM MACNIE

46 **Indie Life**

71 **33rd Annual Student Music Awards**

96 **Jazz Education Hall of Fame & Achievement Awards**



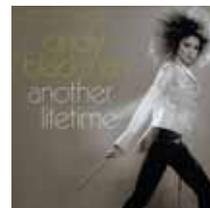
54 Brad Mehldau



62 Frank Kimbrough



57 Nels Cline Singers



54 Cindy Blackman

DEPARTMENTS

- 8 **First Take**
- 10 **Chords & Discords**
- 13 **The Beat**
- 14 **The Question**
- 16 **European Scene**
- 20 **Caught**

- 22 **Players**
Antonio Ciaccia
Ralph Lalama
Catherine Russell
Sharell Cassity
- 51 **Reviews**
- 102 **Toolshed**

- 106 **Master Class**
- 108 **Transcription**
- 110 **Jazz On Campus**
- 114 **Blindfold Test**
Stanley Clarke



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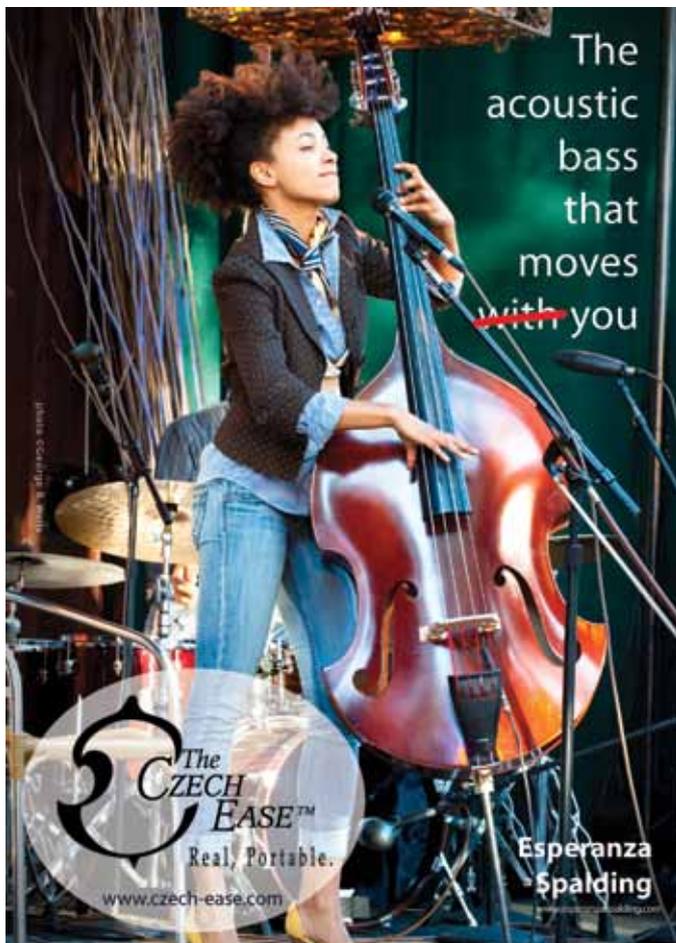


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Bill Evans Remembered

When Bill Evans passed away from a bleeding ulcer and bronchial pneumonia on Sept. 15, 1980, he had more than 50 albums to his name, even though he was only 51 years old. His substantial discography attests to the imaginative diversity, unflagging taste, rigorous introspection, intelligence and consummate craft of a sensitive contemporary musician, one who came to national prominence with Miles Davis on the classic LP *Kind Of Blue* (1959) and went on to become one of the greatest jazz pianists and trio leaders in history.

Evans' obituary, which ran in the December 1980 issue of *DownBeat*, provided a succinct summary of his career and his enormous influence, which is still felt by jazz musicians today—from this year's Student Music Award winners (Page 71) to this month's cover subject, Chick Corea (Page 26), who will honor the man and his craft with a series of special performances in New York this spring.

No byline ran with Evans' *DownBeat* obit, but editors at the time included Charles Carmon, Howard Mandel and John Litweiler. A brief excerpt from the article paints a vivid picture of the pianist, who was two nights into a weeklong engagement with bassist Marc Johnson and drummer Joe LaBarbera prior to his death:

"As his music reflected, Evans was a quiet, thoughtful man. Hunched over the keyboard, his head parallel to his hands, he gave an impression of loneliness, concentration, despair, perhaps tragedy. Rarely displaying open enthusiasm at the piano, he was extremely critical of his own talents. In the mid '70s, his playing took on a new aggressiveness and his personality seemed to blossom with a marriage [to Nanette], the birth of a son [Evan] and adoption of a daughter [Maxine]."

In 1979, Evans told *DownBeat*'s Lee Jeske: "My image seems to be ... the intellectual, serious, romantic, lyric ballad player, and this is certainly one side of myself. But I think I put much more effort, study and development and intensity into just straightahead jazz playing ... swinging, energy, whatever. It seems that people don't dwell on that aspect of my playing very much; it's almost always the romantic, lyric thing, which is fine, but I really like to think of myself as a more total jazz player than that."

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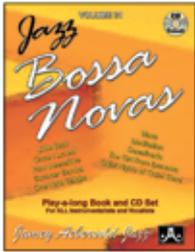
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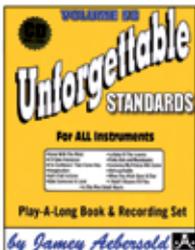


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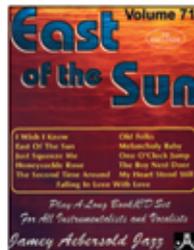


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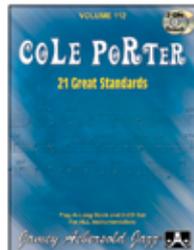
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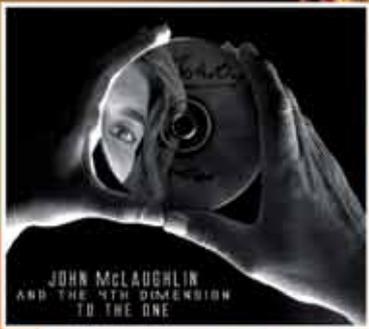


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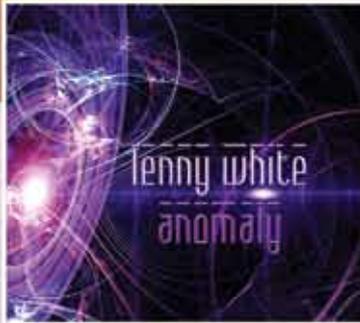


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**JOHN McLAUGHLIN:
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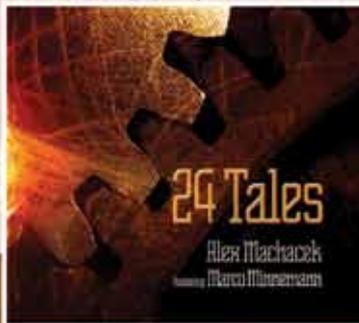


**Lenny White:
Anomaly (2010)**



**Anthony Jackson &
Yiorgos Fakanas:
Interspirit (2010)**

**Alex Machacek:
24 Tales (2010)**



Don't Forget The Words

As a practicing musician, I found J.B. Dyas' recent column, "Methods for Fighting the Epidemic of Tune Illiteracy," both helpful and somewhat infuriating ("Woodshed," May). His four steps are certainly a thorough program for familiarizing yourself with all the melodic, harmonic and structural contours, quirks and transitions of a song. But how can a musician possess any insight into a song, or interpret its sentiment with any sort of credibility, with no knowledge of the lyrics? Sure, this doesn't necessarily apply to instrumentally composed pieces—although those compositions often have a story behind them, the knowledge of which would enrich any performance.

I have been in so many situations in which a musician has a complete knowledge of the chord progression and melody at hand, and yet his or her interpretation is bafflingly wrong-headed with respect to the emotional tenor of the piece. While Dyas' technique may be adequate for generating competent scale-spinning, the difference between merely capable improvisation and transcendence lies in a genuine appreciation of a song's sentiment, and the ability to extend upon that and personalize it. I wish I had a quarter for every time a young musician said to me, "You mean 'Body And Soul' has words?" You'd never know it by following Dyas' advice as presented here.

R.B. MARTIN
SANMARRB2@AOL.COM

Critic Must Know 'Beyond'

It is obvious from John McDonough's review of Mose Allison's *The Way Of The World* ("Reviews," April) that he is unaware of producer Joe Henry's significance. This is another example of one of your lead reviewers knowing little about the "Beyond" music in your banner head. Still, he redeemed himself by giving it four stars. I'll order it immediately, but in the future please just give him "Jazz" CDs to review.

KEITH PENHALLOW
CANBERRA, AUSTRALIA

Clarke/Boland A Big Band Standout

Thanks for your panel's 25 top picks of "Favorite Big Band Albums" (April). I'm sure I wasn't alone among your readers in counting how many LPs or CDs I had in my collection (19). The one glaring omission, in my opinion, was the absence of any work from the criminally underrated Kenny Clarke/Francy Boland Big Band, probably because no single album stands out in their consistently excellent body of swinging work. Their CDs are not easy to find, but anyone who makes the effort will



be rewarded. Suggestion for next year—how about a panel of experts nominating their favorite solo piano recordings?

HARRY BRIGGS
IRVINE, CALIF.

Chicago Memories Via Hooper

It was great to read the review of the sorely overlooked composer/arranger Les Hooper's new CD, *Live At Typhoon* ("Reviews," May). Les has been creatively applying his craft for four decades while flying totally under the radar. Those of us older Chicago natives remember his wonderful charts performed over countless Monday nights in the 1970s by big bands led by Dave Remington and Roger Pemberton at the Wise Fools Pub on the city's North Side. Thank you for exposing Les Hooper to a wider audience.

BILL BENJAMIN
BILTMORE LAKE, N.C.

Research Request

Willard Jenkins is researching the history of jazz venues in the Brooklyn, N.Y. He is interested in communicating with anyone possessing memorabilia, testimony, or other potentially valuable insights and information they'd be willing to share. He can be reached through his Web site, openskyjazz.com.

Correction

■ Recording Academy president Neil Portnow's name was misspelled in a news item in "The Beat" (April).

DOWNBEAT REGRETS THE ERROR.

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The

Inside ▶

- 14 | Riffs
- 14 | The Question
- 16 | European Scene
- 20 | Caught
- 22 | Players

Beat

Gratitude for Coltrane

John McLaughlin and the 4th Dimension incarnate *A Love Supreme*

“When I grew up in the 1960s, the shit was passionate,” John McLaughlin said from his home in Monaco. “Miles was killing. Trane was burning in another way, Cannonball in another way, Sonny Rollins in yet another way. But they all had this deep passion, an engagement with life and with music and with their instrument. I grew up thinking that was normal, and I still do.”

Forty-five years after McLaughlin first heard what would be one of the most profound influences on his life—Coltrane’s groundbreaking *A Love Supreme*—he’s recorded a tribute of sorts to the event for his new *To The One* (Abstract Logix).

“*A Love Supreme* was a pivotal record for me,” the guitarist said. “I got the record in ’65 and it was 1966 before I could hear what he was doing. He almost singlehandedly integrated the spiritual dimension of the human being in jazz music—alone!”

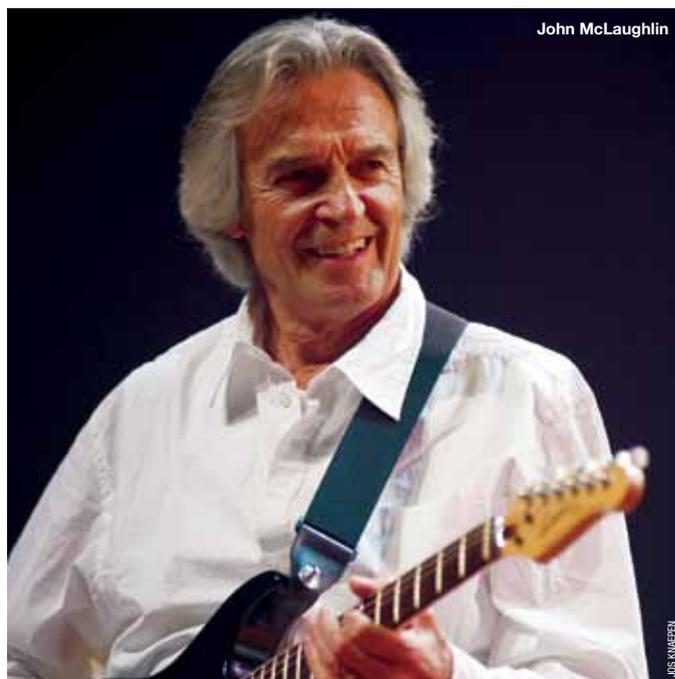
“I was 22 and in a deep fog trying to find my way and some identity,” McLaughlin continued. “If you want to improvise in jazz, you have to have a clear idea of who you are. Otherwise who are you playing? At some point you have to ask, ‘Who am I? What do I have to say? What is my relationship with the universe and the beings that inhabit it?’”

McLaughlin’s *To The One* doesn’t literally cover any Coltrane material or explore *A Love Supreme*’s all acoustic format. Surrounded by his agile 4th Dimension quartet, *To The One* takes a philosophical approach to assimilating the Coltrane masterpiece.

“I am not trying to play Coltrane music,” McLaughlin said. “It’s just a big thank-you to him. It’s almost more of a chronology of my own endeavors in the same path that he was on. He was such an inspiration musically and spiritually.”

Recorded over two days last summer at Solid Sound Studios in Nice, France, *To The One* is prime McLaughlin. His 4th Dimension band—Gary Husband, keyboards and drums; Etienne M’Bappe, electric bass; Mark Mondesir, drums—is easily his most spirited group in years, able to spin on a musical dime at will. With two drummers aboard, McLaughlin’s predilection for complex, flowing, ferocious rhythms is particularly evident.

“John described it as *A Love Supreme* meets Mahavishnu Orchestra,” Husband said. “When we first met in 2005 we played through ‘Impressions’ and other Coltrane tunes. But this was something else. He’d been



thinking about *A Love Supreme* again, particularly the period he discovered it. There are certain likenesses with the modal movement inside of the tunes and it’s John—lots of energy and balls-to-the-wall playing.”

To The One isn’t McLaughlin’s first foray into Coltrane—that would be his 1994 release *After The Rain*, a trio recording with organist Joey DeFrancesco and Coltrane’s longtime drummer, Elvin Jones. Covering multiple Coltrane classics, *After The Rain* was a warm-ish, oddly un-McLaughlin outing, considering the guitarist’s penchant for his need to see “blood on the stage.”

McLaughlin cites the album’s song titles as a chronological documentation of his own life explorations, from the bright tonalities of Latinesque opener “Discovery” and the rolling rhythms and subdued mood of “Special Beings,” to the nearly heavy metal thunder of “The Fine Line” and the synth-swaying closing track “To The One,” which references an old Mahavishnu standard, “Lila’s Dance.” McLaughlin ultimately sees everything in life as inseparable.

“We are all totally inseparable from each other and everything else, for that matter. So for me, everything we do is to the one. I just wanted to have that intention. The intention is what can help the music, that’s all. All music is spiritual. It’s the language of the spirit.” —Ken Micallef



Mayfield Sworn In: National Endowment for the Arts chair Rocco Landesman (left) swore in trumpeter Irvin Mayfield to join the National Council on the Arts—the NEA’s advisory body—at the Nancy Hanks Center in Washington, D.C., on March 26. Mayfield will serve for a six-year term. Details: arts.gov

Concord Buy: Concord Music Group has acquired the Boston-based folk/jazz label Rounder and 3,000 of its masters.

Details: concordmusicgroup.com

Jazzfriends Benefit: The Jazzfriends Festival in Porto Potenza Picena, Italy, is putting together a limited-edition CD to benefit Emergency, an organization that assists war refugee and landmine injury victims. Musicians participating on the disc include pianist Stefano Bollani, flutist Kristian Sensini and the Dams Jazz Orchestra. Details: jazzfriends.it

Chicago Summit: A group of Chicago jazz musicians—including saxophonists Ed Wilkerson and Greg Ward and flutist Nicole Mitchell—will join the instrumental rock band Tortoise for the premiere of a concert-length composition at their city’s Jay Pritzker Pavilion in Millennium Park on July 29 as part of the “Made In Chicago: World Class Jazz” series.

Details: cityofchicago.org

Vaughan Return: Blues guitarist Jimmie Vaughan will release his first disc in nine years, *Blues, Ballads And Favorites* (Shout! Factory), on July 6 and will be touring across North America this summer. Details: shoutfactory.com

RIP, Geraldine Gay. Jazz-influenced gospel pianist Geraldine Gay died in Aurora, Ill., on April 6 after complications from a series of strokes. She was 79. Her distinctive style, which echoed Erroll Garner, was featured alongside her vocalist brother Donald Gay on the 2007 disc *Soulful Sounds* (Sirens Records).

What is an important topic on jazz and contemporary music that should be discussed by panels of writers and artists at jazz festivals and/or conferences?

Haven’t we had enough discourse and open forums on topics such as “Is jazz dead?” and “What is the state of jazz today?” What is a fresh subject that needs to be discussed by a panel of critics, journalists and artists?



Saxophonist Sam Newsome: Have university positions become the new major label record deal for today’s jazz musician? When I moved to New York in the late ’80s/early ’90s, many of my peers—myself included—were either looking to play in the band of someone famous or to get signed by a major record label. Today, since neither is an option, university positions seem to be the “new hustle,” as one of my colleagues likes to put it. Having added teaching jazz studies at a university to the collection of hats that I wear as 21st-century jazz musician, I’d be curious to hear a panel discuss this new trend.

Pianist Geoffrey Keezer: Rather than asking “Is jazz dead?” (because it isn’t), we should look at jazz as a folkloric music in the same way we go to concerts or clubs to hear traditional flamenco, Indian, African, Asian or South American folkloric music. There are artists keeping a so-called “pure/traditional” form alive, and there are artists seeking to evolve the music in their own way by mixing it with current sounds. In a panel, we should be asking, “How is jazz evolving? What are the myriad ways jazz is being kept alive, fresh, current and creative?”



Guitarist Doug Wamble: I would love to have an honest discussion about the music that’s being made today in the jazz world. All of the “Where is jazz going” or “Is jazz dead” panels never contain candor. While I feel somewhat like an outsider these days, I still go hear a lot of jazz. And I am always troubled to go to gigs that are populated overwhelmingly by musicians. The music that is fashionable today is highly complex, which is fine, and math-based, which is also fine. But the audience is shrinking. I’d

love to have a reasoned discussion about the quantifiable shift in music that’s taken place over the last 10 or so years without it resulting in vitriol or hurt feelings.



Saxophonist Greg Osby: My topic would be: Why do festivals and jazz clubs continue to book the same artists over and over again without giving promising

younger artists an opportunity—or at the very least, try presenting some tried-and-true established veterans to do what they do best? A quick glance clearly shows that the same acts are dominating the bookings and lineups. The audiences are stuck with a narrow view of what jazz is truly representative of since the music’s contemporary face is now populated with about only 10 acts that appear in heavy rotation.

Trombonist Josh Roseman: I’d like to see a panel on how musicians can move beyond the “tipping point” where market forces are too easily manipulated or lack the dimension to speak to the broader long-term issues we face—politically, artistically, economically, environmentally. Can we develop a legitimate channel for group action that transcends the power of the marketplace? This isn’t necessarily an economically driven concern, but may speak to our core values.

Saxophonist John Ellis: Maybe we need less panels and more creative venues. Less hand-wringing and more humor. If a panel were to speak to my personal needs, it would have to involve creative sources of funding. Lord knows it’s hard to figure out how to make money in this business. **DB**

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German Pianist Reaches Deep Within For New Tonal Possibilities

From the prepared piano pioneered by Henry Cowell and John Cage to Hiromi's recent and flashy exercises, plenty of musicians have experimented with the peculiar and gripping world of sound that comes from mucking around inside the instrument. Yet with two stunning new albums, Magda Mayas has expanded the language for internal piano music-making.

Mayas was born and raised in Münster, Germany. She became interested in jazz piano as a teenager, and while buying bebop records she also picked up some albums by Cecil Taylor and Alexander von Schlippenbach. Mayas said she then quickly became enamored of free-jazz. In 1999 she began studying piano in Berlin, where her burgeoning interests blossomed.

"When I moved there people were playing free-jazz," Mayas said. "I heard lots of concerts like that and I played with other people using extended technique."

Two years later she moved to Amsterdam where she studied under Misha Mengelberg for a year, and in 2005 she earned a diploma from Berlin's Hochschule für Musik Hanns Eisler under the



tutelage of Georg Gräwe.

Mayas has made a handful of records—including a superb duet with Necks percussionist Tony Buck, *Gold* (Creative Sources)—but she's made a significant artistic leap with her stunning solo debut *Heartland* (Another Timbre). The album's two lengthy pieces showcase the full diapason of her talent, from thunderous rumbles to piercing high-end screeches, from resonant, glowing long tones to abrupt, clattery explosions. Each improvisation flows organically from one episode to the next, with the pianist balancing a keen sense of investigation and on-the-fly compositional logic. A second recording, *Teeming* (Olof Bright), with the French-Lebanese

saxophonist Christine Sehnaoui pushes the sound palette in other directions. Although the listener can certainly differentiate between the reedist and keyboardist, that doesn't mean the actual abstraction of sound bears much relationship to the instrument's expected tones.

While Mayas has been interested by what she could do inside the piano for years, it's only more recently that she's thrown herself into the practice.

"I don't know what I'll do in the future, but from playing the keyboard so much I became more interested in creating sounds inside as well, and in the last couple of years I've really gotten into it," Mayas said. "I don't prepare it because I want to be flexible with the

sounds, so I place objects on the strings or where the tuning points are, or I put gaffer's tape on the strings. I use my fingers and hands a lot. I don't stick stuff between the strings beforehand because I want to be able to get a conventional piano sound when I want it, or to change sounds quickly."

Among her tools are wooden and metal objects, marbles, stones and even children's toys. "I discover new sounds as I play, but I definitely practice with new objects. Sometimes I have a particular sound in mind that I want to create, so I work until I get it, but I do practice so I can repeat certain sounds, more or less."

Mayas also has duo projects with cellists Anthea Caddy and Okkyung Lee, and she has two unusual quartets: one with Buck, trumpeter Peter Evans and bassist Clayton Thomas, and another with Buck, Sehnaoui and guitarist Andy Moor from The Ex.

"I feel like I'm still exploring a lot, and I'm excited about it." **DB**

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Herb Ellis' Virtuosity Heard as Selfless Blues

Herb Ellis, one of the most versatile of late 20th century jazz guitarists, died March 28 of complications from Alzheimer's disease in Los Angeles. He was 89.

Along with Barney Kessel, Ellis was the greatest exponent of the Charlie Christian style of rapid-fire linear playing. He was also a valuable supporting player, first in the celebrated Oscar Peterson Trio of the '50s and then as a studio guitarist.

A native of Farmersville, Texas, Ellis played banjo and harmonica as a youngster. Later, Ellis worked in Charlie Fisk and then Tommy Dorsey's bands. He then formed the Soft Winds with Dorsey alumni pianist Lou Carter and bassist Johnny Frigo. The influential cocktail trio made "Detour Ahead" a jazz standard.

Ellis joined the Peterson Trio in 1953 and it set a new standard for virtuosic interaction. Clarinetist Buddy DeFranco shared the Jazz at the Philharmonic Tours with Ellis, Peterson and

bassist Ray Brown.

"The group had a great understanding among themselves and a great cohesion," DeFranco said. "They were all great soloists, and Herb in particular made it function smoothly because he was so selfless in his playing."

Vibraphonist Terry Gibbs added, "Herb was the best accompanist of all time—he'd come in behind you with with those big, fat chords in all the right places."

Pianist Mike Melvoin recorded several albums with Ellis and Brown and also understood Ellis' role. "I got the sense that Herb was the engine," Melvoin said. "Ray rushed the beat and Herb kept Ray honest."

After he left the trio in 1958, Ellis worked with Ella Fitzgerald and his solo recording picked up while he found serial jobs in television studio orchestras. Gibbs and DeFranco played in small units with Ellis in the '80s. Gibbs said, "He was the juiciest blues player ever."



"Herb wasn't specifically a down-home player, a technical player, a blues player or a rhythm player," DeFranco added. "But he brought all of those things into a group and did it all so effortlessly." —Kirk Silsbee

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Saxophonist Giuseppe Logan Returns To Recording After 40-Year Absence

In 2007 Giuseppe Logan wandered into a Sam Ash music store in Manhattan and asked for a soft reed. The salesman, a musician named Matt Lavelle, guessed the alto saxophonist's identity. Thus began a comeback for Logan, a man in his seventies who by his own count had been institutionalized four times for drug abuse.

Logan began playing with Lavelle, who doubles on trumpet and bass clarinet, at bassist Francois Grillot's apartment. He led a group in early 2008 at the Bowery Poetry Club on New York's Lower East Side and released *The Giuseppe Logan Quintet* (Tompkins Square) in February.

"I feel a big relief to be playing again," Logan said. "It's something I love to do and I'm happy."

Logan moved from Philadelphia to New York in the 1960s, performing with Rashied Ali, Archie Shepp, Pharoah Sanders, Don Pullen and Milford Graves. He recorded *The Giuseppe Logan Quartet* (1964) and *More* (1965), for ESP-Disk.

The saxophonist later moved with his wife and children to Norfolk, Va., and stopped playing. Shortly before leaving Norfolk in 2007, he earned enough money from a landscaping job to purchase a saxophone.

Returning to New York, he lived in a Brooklyn shelter and played for tips, first on a subway platform at 34th Street and Sixth Avenue and then at Tompkins Square Park in the East Village, his current neighborhood.

Josh Rosenthal, owner of the Tompkins Square label, recalled seeing Logan last summer at the park. Rosenthal invited the saxophonist to record last September.

Logan also led a quintet at the Philadelphia Art Alliance on April 1. The group included pianist Dave Burrell, who appears on the album.

"With Giuseppe it's always fresh," Burrell said. "[He's] going to do things that no other saxophone player does. Whether it's real breathy and feint or if it comes out strong, you don't know." —Eric Fine

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Arts for Arts' Vision Collaborations Nights Combine Musical, Physical Improvisation

The modern-day potential for the charged art-form confluence of dance and jazz has been well documented—from choreographer Jerome Robbins' "ballet in sneakers," *NY Export: Opus Jazz* (recently revised in film by dancers from the New York City Ballet and shown on PBS's "Great Performances" TV series), to Dave Douglas' 2000 jazz-infused score to the Trisha Brown Dance Company's *El Trilogiy*. But there's risk involved. The layering of the jazz and dance currents can enhance or detract from the creative flow, resulting in a joyous marriage or a disheartening courtship. Both those dispositions were at work in the Seventh Annual Vision Collaborations Nights: Dialogues in Sound, Space, Movement, a four-evening festival presented by Arts for Arts at the 14th Street Y in New York City.

In the second show of the collaborations, on March 4, five pieces were performed with bassist William Parker, violinist Rosie Hertlein and pianist Cooper-Moore, and dancers Djassi Dacosta Johnson, Emily Coates and Miriam Parker. The evening started promisingly with a pas de deux of Cooper-Moore and Johnson, who remarkably had only met that day. After the dancer opened with a soulful solo rendering of "Summertime," with her ballet-meets-blues movement reflecting the lyrics, the pianist entered with a lyrical line that later developed into turbulent fractures and crystalline sprinklings that Johnson effectively echoed in her frenzied-to-joyous dancing. "Forza Sottile And Other Travels" was an instance of dance following the music versus a give-and-take interchange.

While it lacked the pizzazz of the opening number, "Circumstance," with Coates dancing to Hertlein's music, featured a close eye-contact interaction as the two moved together across the stage. Coates skipped whimsically, struck dramatic poses and at times lunged to the violinist's feet. Hertlein bowed playfully and melancholically amidst the chases and coquetry. It was fun stuff, but came off a tad amateurish, unlike the previous encounter.



The "Crow Geometrics" father-daughter meeting of music and dance—with a projected video by Jo-Wood Brown that was indecipherable—was largely disappointing. Parker played a wooden flute and later his bass to set up musical cues for the dancing that featured jerky, slow-motion movement. While Parker plucked raindrop lines and delivered bowed snippets throughout, Miriam's action was halting and featured long poses rather than a fluid rendering of the music—stylistically feeling more like a workshop atmosphere instead of a finished piece of improvisation.

With her disjunctive and unrelaxed movement, Parker was also missing in action (in pockets, literally) on the post-intermission "Encounter, II" piece, which featured all the dancers and musicians. The music was excellent, with its lyrical dreaminess and abstract cubism eliciting a sense of passionate searching. The dancers responded in the free choreography mode of triad, duo and solo reflections. Some of the dancing was awkward, some fluid, with the most riveting performance, again, by Johnson.

The evening ended with a short but fiery free-for-all without dancers, as the musicians engaged in their own unpredictable instrumental conversations. Titled "Trio 2," the improvisation, unencumbered by the need to collaborate across art forms, made for the most potent, inspiring music of the evening.

—Dan Ouellette

Vossa Jazz Festival Brings Nordic Improvisers to New Peaks

The 37th edition of the Vossa Jazz Festival, held March 26–28 in the lovely fjord-country town in western Norway, reasserted its value this year. This festival accentuates the town of Voss' beauty while covering broad stylistic turf in and beyond jazz. Vossa is held in multiple venues around the town, including the Vangskyrkja church in the middle of town.

This year, the most dramatic moments came on Saturday afternoon, as keyboardist Jon Balke reprised his "Extremjazz" project, a symbiotic pact between music, the area's dazzling mountain-to-lake natural splendor and the city's reputation as a mecca for "extreme sports." Last year, Balke led his band down by the lake, but this year, his illustrative and flexible score for a quintet was performed on the snow-covered ski area mountaintop of the Hanguren. Band and audience peered down to the town far below, and the aerial arabesques of parasailers launching from stage right.

Three of the finest Scandinavian jazz artists of the day—from three distinctly varied perspectives, and three different countries—offered up the festival's most memorable shows. On Friday, Finland was representing,



Bobo Stenson

via the fascinating, feisty band Mikko Innanen & Innkvisitio, guided by the strong, free-minded alto saxist, and with keyboardist Seppo Kantonen winning special points for originality. Think Ornette Coleman in a honky tonk, updated and glazed with dry Finnish wit.

On Sunday afternoon in the acoustically blessed Osasalen of the Ole Bull Academy, the city's music school, Swedish pianist Bobo Stenson presented a commanding solo piano performance, teeming with his characteristic blend of introspection, muscular musicality built on jazz-classical vocabulary and his natural openness of spirit.

Another inimitable explorer, Norwegian vocal legend Sidsel Endresen, showed why she exists on a plane all her own in contemporary music. A

modernist with roots in the primordial, Endresen is now almost religiously devoted to true improvisation—of material, vocal/oral technique and form and content—and has worked effectively with kindred spirits like Christian Wallumrød and Humcrush in recent years. Here, she collaborated with versatile saxist Håkon Korstad, who artfully deployed looping effects. Meanwhile, Endresen's unadorned technical feats sometimes

suggested eerie electronics, whether in chopped up time-space snippets or backwards-like sounds and morphing tones.

Charlie Haden's Quartet West opened the festival with the group's crowd-pleasing, mainstreaming sound. On the band's closer, "Lonely Woman," pianist Allan Broadbent ventured into an ornately classical solo, essentially and somewhat oddly Rachmaninoff-ing Ornette Coleman.

A more feel-good aura worked into sets by Andy Sheppard's multi-cultural band and Mike Manieri & Northern Lights, in which the veteran vibist relies on the musical kindness of Norwegian players, including the refreshingly unpredictable keyboardist Bugge Wesseltoft. Capping off the heady weekend with a progressive party sound, the Belgian Flat Earth Society served up its tight, seductively irreverent Zappa-meets-Peter-Gunn-meets-Willem-Brueker big band sound, rattling the walls of the Fraktgodsen.

—Josef Woodard

New Mid-Atlantic Jazz Festival Swings D.C. Suburbs

Saxophonist Paul Carr had his work cut out for him when he produced the inaugural Mid-Atlantic Jazz Festival Feb. 19–21 in Rockville, Md. Carr's challenges included the location, as suburban Washington, D.C., is not exactly a jazz hub.

Carr's reputation helped matters. He has recorded three albums and directs the Jazz Academy of Music in Silver Spring, Md. His proteges include trumpet player Terell Stafford, who gigged with Carr in the early 1990s in Tacoma Park, Md. His efforts also followed a previous Rockville event called the East Coast Jazz Festival, which ran from 1992 to 2006 (Singer Ronnie Wells-Elliston, who founded the festival with her husband Ron Elliston, died in March 2007).

The event took place at the Hilton Rockville Executive Meeting Center, roughly a half-hour outside Washington. As with its predecessor, the Mid-Atlantic Jazz Festival looked to establish a niche as a focal point for area high school jazz programs.

Carr reunited the lineup from his 2008 album *Musically Yours* during the festival's first night. The group featured Stafford, pianist Mulgrew Miller and drummer Lewis Nash. The three musicians presented master classes the following afternoon. Later, pianist Marc Cary's group Focus performed a set that typified New York's younger musicians. The elastic arrangements drew inspiration from Miles Davis' early 1960s quintet and the John Coltrane Quartet.

The gig marked a homecoming for Cary and tenor saxophonist Antoine Roney, who as teenagers attended the nearby Duke Ellington School of the Arts. During the readings of Jackie McLean's "Appointment In Ghana" and "Minor March," Cary moved freely between piano and electric piano and concentrated more on directing the band than soloing.

After Cary's set, Bobby Watson headlined "The Word On Bird," a Charlie Parker tribute that also spotlighted fellow alto players Bruce Williams and Fred Foss. The sextet performed a largely up-tempo set that spotlighted area musicians such as Foss and a piano trio led by bassist Amy Shook. Foss' solo turn on "Cherokee" featured his singing tone, plenty of blue notes and a quote from the 1960s pop song "Downtown." Watson's unaccompanied chorus introducing "Donna Lee" served as the highlight, showing off a technical command that puts this underrated musician and composer in elite company.

—Eric Fine



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Antonio Ciacca ▶▶ *Finding the Ferrari Level*

In 1989, Antonio Ciacca, a lapsed pianist, former semi-professional soccer player and engineering student at Italy's University of Bologna, attended a concert by the Wynton Marsalis Septet and experienced an epiphany.

"It completely reset my mind," said Ciacca, who became Director of Programming at Jazz at Lincoln Center in 2007. "Music before was entertainment—in Italy, people always sing about love, as though there is nothing else to talk about. That night it was clear that music is art. It's like driving a bicycle and then a Ferrari—completely at another level."

On a 41st birthday gig in March at Dizzy's Club Coca-Cola, Ciacca convened a quintet comprising tenor saxophonist Grant Stewart, vibraphonist Joe Locke, bassist David Wong and drummer Francisco Mela to back his new release, *Lagos Blues* (Motéma). He presented a generous selection of standards and originals, marked by fresh reharmonizations, intra-ensemble counterpoint and considerable solo flights. He set the tone on the set-opening "Riverdale" after an abstract intro that referenced Thelonious Monk's "Thelonious." Ciacca directed the flow from the piano bench like a patient center-midfielder, setting up ebullient solos by Stewart and Locke before launching a canny declamation on which he subsumed crisp technique to melodic imperatives, deploying vocabulary that owed more to Monk, Horace Silver, Sonny Clark and Bud Powell than to their '60s successors.

Lagos Blues is a two-tenor date on which Stacy Dillard, who plays on Ciacca's *Rush Life* (Motéma), from 2008, locks horns with veteran Steve Grossman, a Bologna resident since the time Ciacca heard Marsalis, and with whom Ciacca developed a guru-disciple relationship. In 1993, after several years of intense lessons on both the idiomatic syntax and the cultural realities of mainstem American jazz and its core practitioners, Ciacca spent a summer in Detroit, became fascinated with gospel and performed various bebop-oriented gigs with local alto hero Larry Smith.

"It was what Dave Liebman calls 'validation,'" Ciacca said. "You learn a language, then go to a country where people speak the language and they understand you. If you want to sing opera, and go to Parma and are invited to join the choir, you feel you're doing the right thing. Detroit was the opposite feeling from Italy, where I was a complete outsider. Half my colleagues were totally into blowing over changes, which seemed too limiting; the other half claimed that that free music was the European way to play jazz. I was attracted by the relationship between



improvised and written parts—the structure.

"For Steve, a gigantic super-chops piano player with no swing wasn't jazz, so I was trying to swing from day one. I have plenty of harmony with the European classical music. I have plenty of beautiful melody with Neapolitan music and opera. I come from Verdi and Puccini; I can't be really impressed by Cole Porter and Vincent Youmans, who come from that tradition."

Unable to continue his American education because of immigration issues, Ciacca and his wife, Giusa, a musicologist, decided to arrange gigs for such American heroes as Benny Golson, Art Farmer, Lee Konitz and Steve Lacy. In early 2001, Marsalis—who had reconnected with Ciacca several years earlier while touring with Elvin Jones—asked Ciacca to fill three off days on a forthcoming European tour.

"An Italian agent boycotted the gig, so the U.S. agent, to preserve the relationship, followed suit," Ciacca said. "I drove from Bologna to Milan and confronted him backstage. Wynton liked that I was standing up for my ideas." In 2003 he booked and played piano on Marsalis' septet for a one-week tour; during a January 2004 run at the

Village Vanguard with Wess Anderson, Marsalis—facing an imminent tour—put him up for a fortnight.

"Everyone was distracted by the opening of the Rose Theater. I made phone calls to book the people for the show, which was about European soundscapes, and also selected the music—Stravinsky's *Ebony Concerto*, Kurt Weill, George Shearing, Django. Later, when I knew that the Director of Programming position was coming available, I did the application."

With his third JALC season finalized and a forthcoming big band release in the pipeline, it is evident that Ciacca has transitioned his multi-tasking responsibilities from Italy to New York. But his aesthetic bedrock lies in the cultural context—the Renaissance notion that science and art are one from which he emerged.

"I like the constant search for beauty in the Italian tradition," he said. "I still study string theory, and I can spend a month in the Uffizi Gallery looking at the creative process. As human beings, we look everywhere for symmetry—the Golden Mean—because it's easy to perceive."
—Ted Panken

Ralph Lalama ▶ *Suburban Expression*

Saxophonist Ralph Lalama often lets his head, shoulders and arms bounce a bit while walking, like the default bob and bobble of a hipster, as he recently coursed around the edge of an overflow crowd waiting to hear him perform with his quartet, not in a club but in the program wing of the Rye, N.Y., library.

After a brief welcome, Lalama started with “Love Thy Neighbor” off his new quartet CD, *The Audience* (Mighty Quinn). Backed by the three same musicians from the album—guitarist John Hart, bassist Rick Petrone and drummer Joe Corsello—Lalama dug right in, quickly helping to establish the song’s lively rhythm and then floating over it with his characteristically exultant and spirited phrasing, bringing his Sonny Rollins influence to mind.

A few days later, Lalama was still musing about the positive library show. “It was an interesting experience for me from the start,” he said. “Because people were really into the music without really knowing what to expect. It wasn’t a jazz crowd per se, but they were really listening—and enjoying the music. I definitely

focus more when the audience is so obviously digging what we’re playing. Who wouldn’t?”

Lalama moves among many activities with apparent ease. Besides his quartet, now in its third year and initially documented on the 2008 CD *Energy Fields*, he also leads a trio called Bop Juice and is a longstanding member of Joe Lovano’s nonet and large band aggregates. Lovano and Lalama became pals while apprenticing with Woody Herman in the 1970s. Six years ago, Lalama was one of the founding instrumentalists—playing tenor sax, clarinet and flute—in the Westchester Jazz Orchestra, and he has occupied a chair in the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra since 1983, back when it was known as the Mel Lewis Orchestra.

“A few years ago I decided to focus again on my work as a leader, and that has brought me a whole new set of rewards in terms of being able to develop my sound and ideas” Lalama said. “Leading the two groups, I’m back to composing more and finding that I have a lot to say about life through my music.”

Born and raised in West Aliquippa, Pa.,



outside Pittsburgh, Lalama’s parents met on the bandstand. His father was a drummer, and his mother was a singer. Lalama keeps his father’s old drum set in the music room of the house in Yonkers, N.Y., that he shares with his wife, jazz vocalist Nicole Pasternak.

“Nicole and I love being in Yonkers,” Lalama said. “It’s a 12-minute car ride to Harlem, and a half-hour door-to-door to the [Village] Vanguard. You can’t beat that. I’m a city guy, but owning a home means a lot to me. It means privacy and a place to really relax.” —Tom Staudter

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Players ▶

Catherine Russell ▶ *Upbeat Inheritance*

Like the stomping early jazz bands of New Orleans and Chicago, vocalist Catherine Russell puts big-note harmony and downstage pulse in her musical mix. "I like music that makes you want to move," she said. "If it doesn't swing somehow, I don't know where to put my voice because I sing from rhythm first."

Russell's material brings the swing-band beat, but she enhances the bounce with banjo, mandolin, resonator guitar, accordion and even tuba on her new disc, *Inside This Heart Of Mine* (World Village). Russell gets a portion of Ma Rainey's low-country romp with Dan Hicks' or Robert Crumb's cow-circuit roll.

"With bebop, nobody wanted to smile anymore," Russell said. "It was, 'We're gonna do our thing, and you can dig it or you don't have to.'"

So Russell emphasizes an earlier era.

"I decided I'm gonna have people who are audience-friendly and who love swing," she said. "If the tunes aren't fun for people, there's another tune."

On a recent night at Scullers in Boston, Russell shouted Dinah Washington's "My Man's

An Undertaker," while Matt Munisteri bent out bluesy banjo tones and Russell waved her hands from side to side. Her set included songs from Fats Waller, Sam Cooke, Willie Dixon and Besie Smith.

The singer comes to rootsy jazz through her genes. In New Orleans, her father, pianist and bandleader Luis Russell, started picking up dance hall gigs in 1919. Luis worked with King Oliver for three years, and then directed Louis Armstrong's bands during the '30s and '40s. Catherine has photos of Armstrong holding her when she was a child.

Following the advice of her mother, guitarist/bassist Carline Ray, Russell took a music degree from Santa Rosa Junior College. But her fears blocked her. One day she and Ray saw the swing musical *Bubbling Brown Sugar*, and her eyes widened. "I asked myself, 'How old am I going to need to be to just be myself?'"

To overcome her stage fright, she entered and graduated from the American Academy of Dramatic Arts. Since then, she's climbed the ladder by singing backup for Paul Simon, Cindy



Lauper, David Bowie and Steely Dan.

In the past, Russell has covered songs associated with her father, including "I've Got That Thing" and "Back O Town Blues," co-written with Armstrong. On *Inside This Heart Of Mine*, she performs "Slow As Molasses," which her dad performed decades ago. She also delves into the blues on Dixon's "Spoonful."

For Russell, swing is the common denominator. "When we hit a pocket, it moves the air. I'll see toes tapping, fingers snapping and I'll think, 'Yeah, the world can work.'" —Peter Gerler

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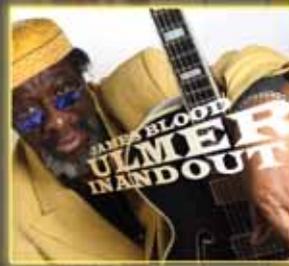


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Founding father of the jazz saxophone Odean Pope has been described as a "tenor terror" by *JazzTimes*. A musician's musician, he attracts some of the most exciting musical minds to collaborate with him, as seen on this CD, whose roster includes James Carter, Jeff "Tain" Watts, Terrell Stafford, Walter Blanding, David Weiss, Lee Smith, and George Burton.

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Sharel Cassity

» Ignoring Restrictions

In January 2008 Sharel Cassity attended a New Year's Day party that would change her life. An alto saxophonist unknown outside New York, Cassity hadn't been invited to the party at bassist John Lee's house in northern New Jersey. Her boyfriend, trombonist Michael Dease, received the invitation, and she went along as his date.

That night Cassity sat in during a jam session and took a solo turn on Dizzy Gillespie's "Be Bop," following trumpeter Roy Hargrove and saxophonist Antonio Hart. She more than acquitted herself. Jimmy Heath and Hargrove would ask Cassity to join their respective big bands. Lee, who directs the Dizzy Gillespie All-Star Big Band, followed suit last year, and also released Cassity's second album, *Relentless*, on his Jazz Legacy Productions imprint.

"You know how they say your life can change in a minute, or change overnight?" Cassity said. "It did that day. From that moment on, that was when everything took off. Since then I've been able to be a part of this legacy and learn from all the greats that are around [the Gillespie] band. It's a blessing."

Cassity grew up in Yukon, Okla., and moved to New York in 2000. By 2007 she had earned jazz performance degrees from the New School for Jazz and Contemporary Music and the Juilliard School. She recorded an independent release while performing with the Diva and Fat Cat big bands and trumpeter Ingrid Jensen. Though hardly insignificant, these gigs fell short of the national spotlight.

To this end, *Relentless* could provide a boost if not a breakthrough. The album recalls the hard bop recordings of the 1960s. Cassity composed six of the eight tracks, and the sidemen include trumpeter Jeremy Pelt, pianist Orrin Evans and drummer E.J. Strickland. In addition to showcasing Cassity's chops, the album demonstrates her talents as an arranger, a knack that has impressed Jimmy Heath and James Moody, her peers in the Gillespie band's reed section.

"Moody dubbed her 'Sectionette,'" Heath said. "Because she's a section player. Sharel has learned a lot about the language of jazz. And she has the ability to speak it. The only thing



she needs is more exposure to speak it to more people. She's always interested in new things and what she's hearing, and in the history of the music. She's great now. But she is always searching, like all of us. The sky's the limit. She's a worker."

While Cassity is among a small number of female horn players in jazz, she attaches little importance to this issue. She enjoys camaraderie wherever she performs; this is especially true in big bands.

"When I was growing up I was always the only girl in the saxophone section," she said. "For some reason I never realized that it was anything different or anything unusual. Actually, it's a strange experience for me playing in Diva [whose membership is restricted to women]. You would think I would feel like I'm at home with all women; but it's so unusual to me. It's definitely a different experience."

Cassity would like to translate the camaraderie of big bands to her own small groups. "When all the cats get together it's like a family," she said. "And I think that's important because the young musicians can learn from the older ones. I wouldn't get that if I weren't in big bands. I'd love to have a small group one day that felt like we were a band, where we trust one another. But I think that takes time and that comes with the group aging, and I haven't had enough work yet as a leader for that to completely come together." —Eric Fine



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Chick Corea Further Explorations of Bill Evans

By Marius Nordal



JAN PERSSON

Bill Evans circa 1964

Chick Corea will mark the 20th anniversary of jazz piano hero Bill Evans' death with a major two-week engagement called "Further Explorations" at New York's Blue Note club from May 4–16. Joined by Eddie Gomez on bass and Paul Motian on drums—both of whom played with the legendary Evans in some of his more popular and influential trios—and special guests John Scofield, Lee Konitz and Hubert Laws, Corea will perform some rarely heard Evans compositions and will also premiere original material written in his spirit. Corea and company aim to rekindle the rare trio interplay that Evans established on landmark albums like *Sunday At The Village Vanguard* and *Waltz For Debby*. Other illustrious guests—many of them Evans alumni—are expected to show up and join in the exploration, which will be filmed for a future documentary release.

This spring, we conducted an email interview with Corea, who has been out on the road performing in a variety of configurations. We asked him to share his reflections on Evans and give a preview of the upcoming Blue Note show. “Further Explorations” will be just one of many serious engagements in a year filled with big gigs for Corea. Also on the agenda for 2010 are solo piano dates, duos with Gary Burton, an extended tour with the Freedom Band (featuring Kenny Garrett, Christian McBride and Roy Haynes), duos with Stefano Bollani, a trio reunion with Haynes and Miroslav Vitous, and a new trio outing with McBride and Brian Blade. As if that weren’t enough, Corea will kick off next year with a gala performance of his own compositions with the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra.

Marius Nordal: *You’ve mastered so many facets of music, ranging from serious composing, complex Latin rhythms, lush harmonies, down-home groove playing and even channeling some Bartok and Scriabin—how were some of the heroes and influences that led you there?*

Chick Corea: Music started for me in our three-room apartment on Everett Avenue in Chelsea, Mass., 1941, where my dad played his 78 r.p.m. vinyl. I got to hear Bird and Diz, the Billy Eckstine big band with Sarah Vaughan and Art Blakey, and later Miles on his first recordings with Bird on the Dial label. My dad, Armando, and his musician friends all tried to play jazz and emulate Miles and Bird.

After I started playing the piano, I got deep into each new Horace Silver recording as it came out; I followed Miles with each of his new releases from ’51 onward and, later, did the best I could transcribing Bud Powell, Wynton Kelly, Red Garland and then later on, Bill Evans, McCoy and Herbie. That was all great ear-training, by the way.

When I finally made it to New York after high school in ’59, I was fortunate to work with many great musicians and bands through the ’60s: Mongo Santamaria, Willie Bobo, Thad Jones and Mel Lewis, Maynard Ferguson, Herbie Mann, Kenny Dorham, Joe Henderson, Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers, Blue Mitchell and Junior Cook—then a big break, working with Sarah Vaughan and Stan Getz with Roy Haynes and Steve Swallow. Shortly after, in ’68, I joined Miles’ quintet with Wayne Shorter, Dave Holland and Tony Williams then Jack DeJohnette.

Of course, then there was the ’70s, ’80s and ’90s, all learning experiences—but maybe that’s for another article.

Nordal: *Bill Evans generally had a gentle, lyrical approach to the piano—you’re often more dynamic, energetic and rhythmic. Did he influence your compositions or concept of touch and sound on the piano when you were developing musically?*

Corea: It was Bill’s sound that I loved as soon as I heard it. He knew how to touch the piano gently and elicit such a beautiful and recognizable tone from the instrument. Up to that time, most jazz pianists were accustomed to playing on inferior instruments: old, out of tune, out of regulation and generally beat up. That was the “club piano.” But Bill was aware of the fine sound that a well-prepared grand could deliver. It’s odd that Art Tatum is the only pianist I know of before Bill that also had that feather-light touch—even though he probably spent his early years playing on really bad instruments.

Bill’s harmonic sense and approach to the standards certainly made a big impression on me. I was more encouraged to produce a beautiful sound on the piano.

Nordal: *Could you describe the times when you met Bill Evans personally?*

Corea: It was just briefly, a few times at the Top Of The Gate, where Bill’s trio would appear in the lounge for weeks on end. Being friends with Eddie Gomez was my intro to Bill. I sat in on Bill’s last set a few times when there was hardly anyone in the club. I played with Eddie and Marty Morell and sometimes Jeremy Steig on flute, when Bill would take a break and hang out at the bar.

I remember after the set one night meeting Bill at the bar and presenting him with a song that I wrote for him titled “Bill Evans.” He

politely accepted the sheet music and we exchanged some social communication. I would like to have gotten to know him better. I remember him being very kind, soft spoken and sharp witted.

Nordal: *I hear that you’re preparing some original material for the Further Explorations concert. Are you channeling your inner Bill Evans in this process? Have you unearthed any unreleased Evans tunes you’re going to play? If so, how in the world did you find them?*

Corea: I have a pretty deep collection of Bill’s recordings and I have found a few tunes, both well known and not so well known, that I will bring up for consideration with the guys. For now, I’ll have to keep my other sources private.

Of course both Eddie and Paul have actually played in some of Bill Evans’ most important and well loved trios, so we’ll be mostly taking this opportunity to simply re-explore some of his greatest and well known pieces. It will be interesting to see how Eddie and Paul respond to them in 2010.

“It was Bill’s sound that I loved as soon as I heard it. He knew how to touch the piano gently and elicit such a beautiful and recognizable tone from the instrument. ... Bill’s harmonic sense and approach to standards certainly made a big impression on me. I was more encouraged to produce a beautiful sound on the piano.”

Nordal: *This Explorations series may be the jazz event of the season. How did this all come into being?*

Corea: My interest in this project began with a basic idea: my desire to play with Eddie and Paul. Eddie is an old friend and has always been a genius rhythm section partner. Paul is a treasure of a musician who I’ve had too little time playing with. I’ve thought about us three as a trio for a long while—so finally, we make it happen. We are reaching out to invite some friends to join us, and that’s being worked out right now.

Nordal: *I always considered you to be one of the three main jazz piano giants of the past 40 years—Herbie Hancock and Keith Jarrett would be the other two, in my opinion. Since you have always had such a strong jazz voice, does it seem strange or awkward to momentarily yield to Evans’ style? Any second thoughts or breaking out in rashes at midnight or anything?*

Corea: As I said earlier, my main interest is the experience of playing trio style with Eddie and Paul. Any “yielding” will be towards finding common ground with these two amazing artists.

Just another thought on the matter of tribute: the concept of “Tribute to...” is commonly used to promote projects where the name of a famous artist is invoked to draw the public’s attention. This kind of promotion can be fine if it is really heartfelt from the performing artists,

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whereas too often it is clearly the idea of the promotion people and not the artists that will be participating. I have always felt that every time I performed a piece of music composed by another or made popular by another, I was paying tribute to that artist. I play “Pannonica” and it’s a tribute to Monk. I play “Oblivion” and it’s a tribute to Bud. I play “On Green Dolphin Street” and it’s a tribute to Miles.

With our Further Explorations project, given Eddie and Paul’s close and deep association with Bill Evans along with my admiration of Bill and his legacy, there will be a natural tribute paid to the great man whether we’re playing our version of Bill’s compositions or playing anything else we choose. We’ve taken the concept of “Explorations”—which is also the title of a Bill Evans album—and applied it respectfully to this special trio project with the intention to do some exploring ourselves.

Nordal: *Over the years, as you’ve played in all the radically different groups and contexts you’ve exposed yourself to, do you find Bill Evans’ influences surfacing in unexpected places?... like maybe in the middle of a screaming arrangement for Return to Forever?*

Corea: Some people say that we’re merely a collection of our experiences and influences. I think that would be short-changing the imagination of an artist. I suppose I could pick apart my or any other musician’s performance and list the things he’s doing that remind me of someone else. This is probably a game we all play from time to time. The positive side of this is that music and art on our planet is a wonderful and ongoing culture—with new ideas being added to that evolution every day.

But to answer your question more directly, there are those times when I will intentionally invoke an emotion or a turn of phrase from one of my heroes. While actually playing, though, I’m not conscious of making decisions like that.

Nordal: *I’ve noticed that even though you, Herbie Hancock and Keith*



Jarrett have all followed various musical paths these past 40 years, you all have one striking feature in common: when relaxing, really dipping into the musical soil and playing old fashioned groove-time and speaking your own language, you all channel Wynton Kelly’s rhythmic feel. Did he come up with some magical, post-1950s groove that blended well with ‘60s modernism?

Corea: Wynton is one of my piano heroes, and he did bring a popping, bluesy groove onto the scene that holds a unique place in our piano culture. He provided an elegant and appropriate accompaniment to Miles’ sophisticated ideas. In fact, all the Miles Davis pianists have carried

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forward the tradition he began. I can even hear Wynton's influence in Bill Evans, and certainly in Herbie's playing.

Wynton Kelly's recordings were so much a part of our household that even my daughter Liana took to transcribing some of his pianisms and actually does a very decent job of sounding like him.

Nordal: *The last "Big Bang" of major jazz activity seemed to end by around 1975. By that I mean that John Coltrane had long since moved us beyond bebop and you and Miles Davis had already helped establish the mature electric jazz movement. Jazz and even pop music seemed to look towards the future. As a creative person, how does it feel now to work in an era where so many only revere the past? Are we really living in an era where most of the original jazz voices are all 60 to 70 years old?*

Corea: That's an interesting question, which probably deserves some extensive discussion amongst those who notice something about the phenomenon you're referring to.

I don't know the answer, but I will give you a perception I have. It reminds me of a question interviewers liked to ask years ago—the "Is jazz dead?" syndrome.

What I personally observe is the continual creativity of artists that I come into contact with everywhere on Earth, young and old. There seems to be no lack of invention, creativity and technical advancement in music and every other art form. I think it takes many decades to be able to make a correct evaluation of the current scene. In present time there's too much noise from the media, too much information—most of which is beyond our grasp—to be able to distill it all so quickly. The other factor is a gradual de-emphasis on individuality in artistic presentations and in our culture in general. These days it's the "Jazz Festival" and the "Tribute to Miles Davis or John Coltrane"—not the work of an individual artist. New music is hard to find in the media.

These are just a few thoughts off the top of my head on the matter. But if one wants to find exciting new forms and new approaches and amazing artists doing their thing, one would have to get off the proverbial "beaten path" and go looking in the small clubs and in musicians' apartments and studios.

Nordal: *I sometimes watch you on YouTube playing some Mozart piano concertos quite beautifully. Is that something you would like to do more of? Is the stress of playing someone else's music note-perfect in front of a huge orchestra worth the effort?*

Corea: Playing Mozart doesn't come nearly as easily as improvising and playing my own music. But playing with an orchestra or a competent chamber ensemble can have an atmosphere so inviting that I just want to try to do something within it. Orchestral and chamber music musicians have learned how to blend their sounds together—and that's a musical point I hold very dear and try to attain myself in every band I play in. So there's a certain comfort in working with orchestral and chamber musicians.

Add to that that all my life I have spent time listening to, reading the scores of and practicing the piano music of certain composers to enhance my knowledge and ability as a composer and a pianist. So I thought that I should involve myself further by actually trying to perform some of this orchestral music. Bobby McFerrin and my wife Gayle both encouraged me along the way to actually take my practice-room work to the stage.

That having been said, my greater goal is to write my own music for chamber orchestras—something which I've attempted a few times with various degrees of success—but a form which I would like to continue to develop.

Nordal: *For centuries, European masters such as Bach, Mozart and Chopin based their music on dance rhythms of the day. More recently, Louis Armstrong, Charlie Parker, John Coltrane and Bill Evans and other great jazz players also based their styles around 20th century dancehall rhythms. Usually those two- or four-beat swing patterns.*

By 1970, though, pop music had abandoned that swing feel and replaced it with newer dance rhythms and movements based around



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straight eighth notes and electric instruments. You formed *Return to Forever* right on the cusp of this change, and it certainly played a role in helping serious jazz catch up to what a new generation of dancers were doing.

How does it feel to you today to alternate between two musical identities? I refer to playing traditional, harmonically rich, swing-based, Bill Evans-type music contrasted by all the more contemporary eighth-note and Latin music that you're known for?

Corea: The question of styles of music, rhythm and popular dancing can only be resolved in my mind by noticing the constant element: change. By this, I mean society's change, *not* the spirit of the artist. The actual *spirit* of the art and the artist's awareness of aesthetics in life are usually highly developed and stay the same, which make them the real constant here.

I think this sense of spirit is part of every human being, whether it's realized and developed or not. That's why "everybody" loves music and art (eliminating the 2 percent of real Scrooges) whether they are pro, educated in it or not.

I've seen some definitions of "aesthetic," and here's one I like: "Artistic, pleasing to the senses, in good taste, elegant" and so on.

The part that seems right to me is the part about something, anything, being "pleasing to the senses." And this is a totally subjective sense, unique to each individual.

All this is to say that my own tastes are pretty wide, and one part of that desire is wanting to bring something that audiences consider pleasing and aesthetic *today*. I've never considered this wrong or a sellout as some might say because I will always use my own sense of aesthetics to keep it alive. No matter what some young musicians may believe today, jazz didn't stop evolving in 1955.

As a continual student of music and art, I get interested in all the new creations and forms, I always try to bring to audiences what I'm

personally excited about at the moment

This question of "styles" is interesting. Let's talk more later about it.

Nordal: During your 1950s early roots period, Oscar Peterson, Ray Brown, Erroll Garner, Ahmad Jamal and Dave Brubeck won polls and critical acclaim, filled stadiums and generally seemed to "own" the piano or piano trio scene at the time. Recently I was astonished to see that some of the most prominent and influential college jazz history texts today have literally excised most of those names and replaced them with George Russell, Lennie Tristano and Cecil Taylor. That would seem similar to banishing Elvis, Chuck Berry or the Beatles from pop music texts.

Do you think universities, to some extent, might be erasing the common street history of jazz and replacing it with an alternative, academic, fantasy universe?

Corea: I don't have any direct info on this, but it doesn't surprise me. This would be a very good subject for an astute investigative reporter to delve into. I'd buy the book!

Nordal: Finally, with the wide variety of gigs you have coming up this year, how does the Evans tribute fit in with your schedule, and what are your hopes or expectations for the Explorations concerts?

Corea: Balancing my composing and prep time at home for gigs like these and then going out on tours to play them is always the challenge. The Explorations Series concerts here give me a focal point when consulting the muse in my home study, which is something I love to do.

That's where the balancing act really is—in the preparation of each project. Once I get to the rehearsals and gigs, group-life takes over and away we go!

My hope for the concerts is to make great music with two of my favorite musicians and fulfill a dream I've had about this trio combination for a long while. I'm looking forward to two weeks of fun. **DB**

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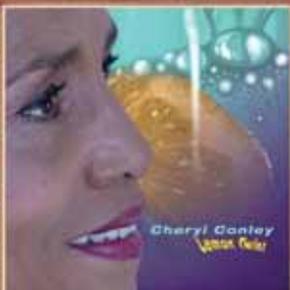
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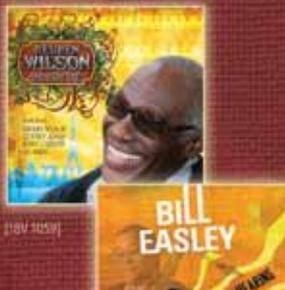
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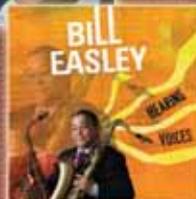
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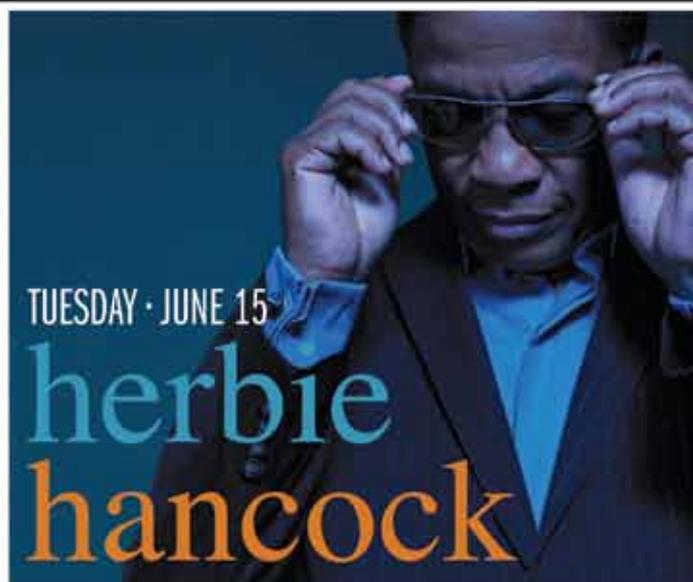
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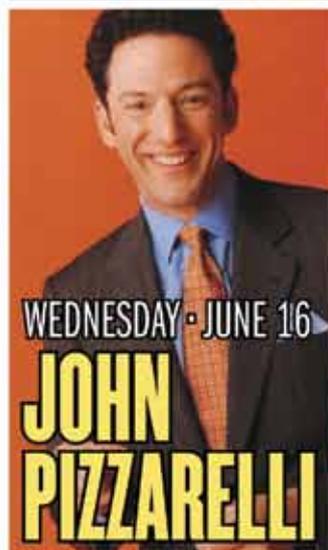
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BILL EVANS

New Intuitions

By Len Lyons // March 11, 1976

A week before playing at the Monterey Jazz Festival this year, Bill Evans became a father for the first time, and the birth of his son (Evan Evans) seems like an apt symbol for the regeneration that has taken place in his music. Of course, the connection is not only symbolic, and Evans readily called attention to the influence of his burgeoning family life on his artistic ability. "I think the most important element is the spiritual content of what you're doing. My personal life has become so happy in the last couple of years," he explained, "getting a whole family thing going, buying a home, becoming a father. All this contributed to my motivation, which is a mysterious element in anybody's life.

"I'm just feeling more alive now, alive in a broader way than just being a musician or an individual on the music scene. When you have children, it seems you're more tied to the future and to everything that's going on in the world."

Anyone who has followed Evans' playing since he first passed through the limelight with Miles Davis' band of the early 1960s can hear the difference in the piano/bass duets (with Eddie Gomez) on his recent album, *Intuition*. The melodic lines are longer, the ideas more definite, the rhythms more forceful. A firmness and musical power has been acquired, which gives weight to the always-present, bucolic lyricism. If Evans used pastels before, he works with more primary colors now.

Len Lyons: From hearing you live and listening to your new albums, I get a strong impression that your playing has developed markedly. Do you feel that way about it?

Bill Evans: There has been development, but the development I'm looking for is right through the middle. I don't try to go to the edges of what I'm doing and spread out that way. I try to go through the middle, the essential quality, and extend that. Consequently, a lot of listeners might not hear any development for a long period of time, but there is inner development going on.

It might have something to do with ideas or the rhythmic displacement of ideas, but that's speaking technically about something I'm not thinking about technically. What I'm trying to

do is say something in the context of my music. What I'm learning how to do is say it with listenable, understandable musical language that gets deeper into meaning. The best example I can think of is what Philly Joe Jones can do with an eight- or four-measure solo. Using the same rudiments that other drummers use, he can do something that makes you say, "Wow! Yeah, what a beautiful way to put those things together, so simply and to say so much."

I'm trying to say strong things, strong ideas. I'm speaking as if it's a technical consideration, but when I'm playing I'm thinking of being in the flow of the music, allowing it to develop over a period of time.

Lyons: To be more specific about my own observation, you seem to be digging in harder. I feel there's more "definiteness."

Evans: Really? I hope that's true. I think it may be true. I play almost everything I play now with conviction and without much equivocation in my feeling about the music. I went through a lot of confidence problems when I was coming up. It seems like you go off in one direction or another and each time you return to yourself you have a little more confidence. Maybe when you have enough experience and get old enough, you have enough courage to really believe in where you're at and realize that it's the only place for you.

Lyons: How did *The Tony Bennett/Bill Evans Album* come about?

Evans: It was one of those things that was in the air for years. I always figured that if Tony would do any of my tunes I'd be overjoyed. In fact he did record "Waltz For Debby" once. Debby's my niece. I wrote that for her when she was three, and she's getting married this year. Tony and I always had a mutual respect and distant acquaintance with each other. It so happens that my manager (Helen Keane) and his (Jack Rollins) are good friends.

It was my idea that we make it only piano (and voice), though it kind of scared me. It seemed to be the best way to get that intimate communication going. It was pretty much off the top of our heads. We picked the tunes and then went in to do them.

Lyons: The voice/piano is very traditional, but,

given all the heavily produced vocal albums that are played, it was very fresh and pure.

Evans: That's exactly what I wanted, but it's very chancy, because a lot of the public wants that big sound—the studio orchestra, highly produced, or over-produced. So I thought we'd go all the way in the other direction, and I think it's timely because a lot of young people are looking for that personal quality. It's been lost in much of the rock and pop music. That big electric sound. It worries me. It seems desperate. The elements are coarse. There's no element of greatness. It makes me worry about the state of the world. What qualifies for greatness now is whatever sells the most records.

Lyons: Well, did you feel the duet album with Bennett succeeded?

Evans: I thought it came off nicely. I haven't done much accompanying or solo playing in the last 20 years, so it worried me a bit. But we got a relaxed, pure feeling going. It couldn't have been much better. The piano, itself, is great. I love Tony's singing.

Lyons: How did you feel about the lyrics to some of those old songs?

Evans: I never listen to lyrics. I'm seldom conscious of them at all. The vocalist might as well be a horn as far as I'm concerned.

Lyons: *Intuition* seems to go in that "personal" direction, too. Without mincing words, I thought it was successful and very accessible. People I know who never listen to jazz seem to love it.

Evans: I'm glad I'm hearing that. I find myself putting it on at home, too, and I don't listen to many of my own records.

Lyons: Following this move toward a personal and a pure sound to its logical conclusion, wouldn't you be due for a solo album—like *Alone*—one that's not overdubbed like *Conversations With Myself*?

Evans: I just haven't played enough solo, but I think it's kind of necessary. If I get my studio set up in my new house, I may be able to work on that. I'd have to prepare for a solo album by playing solo at home. I was talking to Marian McPartland about that after she played solo the other night. It sounded marvelous. She's working a solo gig in New York, so I said, "Now I know why you sound so good solo." It's the best

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practice in the world for a pianist. I wish I could play a solo gig for about a year; but I am interested in the trio, and to keep it together I have to keep it working.

My conception of solo playing is a music that moves—oh, let's say a more rhapsodic conception that has interludes of straight-ahead jazz. It would be a more orchestral conception, moving very freely between keys and moods. In other words, things you can't do with a group. That's the added dimension.

Lyons: I'm wondering if you've lately felt an evolution occurs in your technique. I had an interesting conversation about this with Oscar Peterson recently. We were discussing LeRoi Jones' idea that technique is inseparable from content, implying that a player like Thelonious Monk is not limited technically any more than Oscar is. Peterson insisted that technical dexterity is a purely physical problem. Do you have any ideas about this in terms of your own playing?

Evans: I can tell you that, for me, technique is the ability to translate your ideas into sound through your instrument. Monk does it perfectly, though he is "limited" in the sense that if you put a Mozart sonata in front of him or asked him to play an Oscar Peterson chorus, he couldn't do it. I'd agree, though, that technique is separable from the context of ideas in this sense. In playing a keyboard instrument you should develop a comprehensive technique. This enables you to go in new directions without worrying about your hands.

What you have to remember is that your conception can be limited by a technical approach. Someone who approached the piano the way Oscar Peterson does could never have the conception that Monk has. If you play evenly, attacking notes in a certain way, you wouldn't conceive of making the sound that Monk would make. If you could develop a technique like Peterson's—which is practically unmatched, I guess—and then *forget it!* Tell yourself to try anything you can conceive of. I think a great technique would be to develop an entirely new articulation and make it happen on the piano.

Lyons: Like Cecil Taylor?

Evans: That's an example. Or being able to breathe into the piano, make vocal nuances come through the piano. That's a great technical challenge. The classical tradition never utilized a real vocal utterance. Sometimes there were vocal utterances, but they were translated through a very great architectural tradition in classical music. To really breathe through the piano ... well, Erroll Garner did it some, but in a limited way.

Lyons: Like on a reed instrument?

Evans: Right. This is a comprehensive technique which goes beyond scales and so on. It's expressive technique.

Lyons: Would you call it "touch"?

Evans: No, I wouldn't. Touch seems to connote being very sensitive or tender. I don't mean that this has to be tender. What I'm talking about is a feeling for the keyboard that will allow you to transfer any emotional utterance into it. That's

really what technique is all about. I think that's what LeRoi Jones was talking about. He was right; but Peterson was right from a different standpoint. What Jones might not realize is that this type of direct technique isn't enough today. A musician has to cover more ground than that. That's one of the criticisms of pop and rock music. Kids get into being creative before they've experienced enough on their instrument. You need both. You need a comprehensive, traditional technique.

Lyons: Mechanical?

Evans: You could call it that. Whenever I was practicing technique—which wasn't that often—but if I spent a couple of days playing scales and so on, I found that my playing became a shade more mechanical. What has to happen is that you develop a comprehensive technique and then say, "Forget that. I'm just going to be expressive through the piano."

The more you express yourself through your instrument, the more identifiable your touch becomes, because you're able to put more of yourself, your personal quality, into the instrument. The piano is very mechanical and you're separated from it physically. You can only control it by touching it, striking it and pushing a key down. Playing a wind or a stringed instrument is so much more vocal because of its contact with the player.

So pianists go through long periods where they're putting themselves into their instruments only to a limited degree. There comes a time after pushing very hard against the problem when they suddenly break through. Oscar is right. That's a very physical problem. You have to spend a lot of years at the keyboard before what's inside can get through your hands and into the piano. For years and years that was a constant frustration for me. I wanted to get that expressive thing in, but somehow it didn't happen. I had to spend a lot of years playing, especially Bach, which seemed to help. It gave me control and more contact with tone and things.

When I was about 26—about a year before I went with Miles—that was the first time I had attained a certain degree of expressiveness in my playing. Believe me, I had played a lot of jazz before then. I started when I was 13. I was putting some of the feelings I had into the piano. Of course, having the feelings is another thing.

Lyons: When we last spoke, you had just signed with Fantasy via your relationship with Orrin Keepnews, who had produced your first Riverside recordings. But between the Riverside and Fantasy affiliations there seemed to be a lot of label-hopping. What happened? Did you feel you were getting some bad deals?

Evans: Yeah, kind of. I was talking to Chuck Mangione about that today. We agreed that it was disappointing to be with record companies as jazz artists. You tour, but you don't get backing. They won't help out. There are no displays, no coordinated advertising.

The stint I had with Columbia: I thought I'd finally arrived at a company that had the money

and the interest. Clive Davis and I just didn't hit it off. I never even talked to the man, and he was already directing my career, changing me, making me "creative," "communicative," whatever.

Lyons: And before that was Verve.

Evans: Verve: I was with them for quite a while. Creed (Taylor) was very shrewd and did a lot of good things. He got some commercial success out of jazz artists, which no one else had been able to do: Stan Getz, Wes Montgomery, Jimmy Smith.

Lyons: He's still doing it, it seems.

Evans: He's still doing it, and it's to his credit. I was with him for seven years.

Lyons: I've spoken to a lot of musicians who believe jazz is quite identifiably black-American music in the sense that the innovators and creative forces in the music have been black people. Interestingly, you're often cited as an exception to the rule. How do you feel about this issue, and do you feel you're an innovative force just as Teddy Wilson was in the swing era or Bud Powell in the bop era?

Evans: I think whether I've been innovative is for somebody else to judge, not me. But I think it's sad that these questions come up. There's a sense of the hurt child in the people who want to make this only a black music. They haven't had much so they want to make jazz 100 percent black. Historically, I suppose, the black impetus was primarily responsible for the growth of jazz, but if a white jazz artist comes through, it's just another human being who has grown up loving jazz and playing jazz and can contribute to jazz. It's sad because all that attitude does is to turn that prejudicial thing right around. It makes me a bit angry. I want more responsibility among black people and black musicians to be accurate and to be spiritually intelligent about humanity. Let historians sort out whether it's 67.2 percent black-influenced or 97 percent. To say only black people can play jazz is just as dangerous as saying only white people are intelligent or anything else like that.

Lyons: I hope I didn't present this sentiment in an oversimplified way. The usual point of view is that—in fact—all, or almost all, the innovators have been black.

Evans: An innovator. That's even more ridiculous. Now, there could be an argument in the case of soul music, because the black culture has been separated from the white culture to such an extent that there could be a spiritual content in the black culture lending itself to "soulfulness," which the white culture may have less of. But to say only black musicians can be innovative is so utterly ridiculous I can hardly consider the question.

Lyons: Do you have any aversion—as many musicians do now—to having your music classified as "jazz?"

Evans: Hell, no. I think jazz is the purest tradition in music this country has had. It has never bent to strictly commercial considerations, and so it has made music for its own sake. That's why I'm proud to be part of it.

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Bobby Broom

Transcending Sideman Status

By Lloyd Sachs

No one would mistake it for the Village Vanguard. Located in downtown Evanston, Ill., not far from the Northwestern University campus, Pete Miller's Seafood and Prime Steak is about four-fifths restaurant to one-fifth jazz club. Patrons in the designated jazz lounge, a strip of tables and chairs adjacent to the main dining room, are more attentive to the music than they once were, but they can still talk over performances.

For all that, Pete Miller's has played a significant role in guitarist Bobby Broom's career as the Vanguard has for any number of notables. Jazz clubs are about more than history and ambience. They're also about providing artists with the opportunity to develop. Since settling into a weekly gig at Pete Miller's 13 years ago with his trio, after moving to Chicago from his native New York, Broom has accomplished precisely what he set out to do: transcending the ace sideman status acquired with such luminaries as Sonny Rollins and Dr. John and establishing himself as an elite player in his own right.

"I had agents tell me that I wasn't a

leader, to basically just accept the role of sideman," said the 49-year-old Broom, whose affability shouldn't be confused with easygoingness. Those agents might as well have told him to take up zookeeping. Once he decided he was going to put away the pedals and effects he had employed as a musician-for-hire and devote himself to his own clean, flatpicking, non-blues-based style—characterized by its tensile strength, tonal range and rhythmic as well as melodic invention—there was no turning back.

A brief fill-in stint with Miles Davis' post-*Tutu* group in 1987 sealed his fate. Broom agreed to plug the gap between Hiram Bullock and Foley, because, well, who turned down a chance to play with Miles? But fusion was a bad fit. "I was faking it," he said. "By the fourth gig, I was bored. It was a crazy message for me, but an important one that helped me define who I am and who I am not."

The real Bobby Broom stands tall these days not only in the Pete Miller's group, a Wednesday attraction featuring his longtime bassist Dennis Carroll and young drummer Makaya McCraven, but also the

Deep Blue Organ Trio, a Tuesday staple at Chicago's historic Green Mill formed in the late '90s by drummer Greg Rockingham. It features the great unsung Hammond B-3 artist Chris Foreman. After a long absence, Broom also is back in Sonny Rollins' working band, along with Kobie Watkins, his trio's free-spirited original drummer, who now lives in North Carolina.

Broom's emergence came through a kind of three-step program. He first separated himself from the mainstream with a series of albums featuring smart, boldly assertive reworkings of pop classics including Sly and the Family Stone's "Stand," Derek and the Dominos' "Layla," the Mamas and the Papas' "Monday Monday" and Jimmy Webb's "Wichita Lineman." (The first of these recordings, 2001's *Modern Man*, was a blowing session with Lonnie Smith, Ronnie Cuber and Idris Muhammad.) Some critics say pop songs make for poor jazz vehicles because they lack harmonic possibilities. Broom begs to differ. "Just listen to the harmonic motion in 'Stand,'" he said. "It's 2-5-1, which is very modern, not 3-6-2-5 [the structure of most Great American



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"People made snide remarks about me playing pop tunes," he said. "But what's wrong with helping people in their late teens and early twenties relate to what you're doing? I wanted to connect with that audience, without dumbing down." And without the self-consciousness of Herbie Hancock's much-hyped, not-so-great 1986 album *The New Standard*, which featured songs by Prince, Paul Simon, Peter Gabriel and Nirvana.

Step two in Broom's ascent was *The Way I Play*, a set of classic jazz standards ("Body And Soul," "Airegin," "Donna Lee") documenting the trio with Carroll and Watkins at Pete Miller's. The album was culled from weeks of shows captured by a friend of Broom's on a mini disk recorder. Then, most impressively, came *Bobby Broom Plays For Monk* (Origin), the trio's widely acclaimed 2009 effort. There have been other notable Thelonious Monk tribute albums by guitarists, including Steve Khan's solo work *Evidence* (1980) and Joshua Breakstone's *Let's Call This Monk* (1996), but none have the power, fluency and surprise of this one.

Broom had been thinking of doing a solo tribute himself on which he would recreate performances from Monk's solo piano recordings. But he nixed it, deciding it was "not the right thing to present, to get me what I needed." He had his doubts about doing *Bobby Broom Plays For Monk* as well, and almost dropped the project when he discovered that Peter Bernstein had just released an album of Monk songs—also a guitar, bass and drums album, including several of the tunes Broom had chosen for his record.

He found out about Bernstein's *Monk* while doing online research to make sure that someone else—possibly John Scofield—hadn't beaten his trio to the idea of laying a second line beat on "Bemsha Swing." "It was like someone kicked me in the gut," he said. Prodded by friends and fellow musicians into not letting the Bernstein album deter him from recording his Monk album ("Well, is his gonna be better than yours?" Rollins asked), Broom accepted the challenge. "I remembered being at Berklee [College of Music] with a thousand guitar players out on the street, and how intimidated I was that everyone had a guitar," he said. "I got over that, and I became determined to get over this."

The arrangements for *Bobby Broom Plays For Monk*, which includes a solo guitar treatment of Jerome Kern's "Smoke Gets In Your Eyes," were worked out in the studio. It's a mark of Broom's originality and dedication to the group concept that the album's first solo is by Carroll, whose weighty, considered tones on "Ask Me Now" effectively build walls for the guitarist to scale, and whose ostinato attack on "Evidence" gives that song an unusual clipped urgency. "Bobby is hypersensitive," said Carroll, who has been playing with Broom for nearly 20 years. "He's so attuned to everything, to sound, to volume, to the littlest tremors. He

makes you extra sensitive to everything, too."

Did Rollins offer any insights into the Monk tunes, having played with the man himself? Broom said that though he is more comfortable discussing music with jazz's most towering living figure than he once was, he's still loathe to ask questions about the past. "If an anecdote comes up, that's one thing," he said. "But otherwise, I try to stay in the present."

Spoken or not, Rollins' influence on his protege is profound, as reflected in Broom's commitment to a personal sound, his openness to popular tunes and especially his passion for dissecting melodies. "Every jazz musician wants to play the hippest stuff they can during their solos," said Broom. "But who is still interested in getting something across to the listener while playing the melody of a song?" (His debt to Rollins also can be detected in his naming of *This Is How I Play*, which echoes Rollins' *This Is What I Do*.)

Broom was a 16-year-old prodigy at New York's High School of Music and Art, living on the Upper West Side and performing several nights a week with pianist Al Haig at a 62nd Street club called Gregory's, when Rollins came into his life. The tenorist's guitarist at the time, Aurell Ray, saw Broom play in *Young, Gifted And Broke*, a musical by one of Broom's early champions, Weldon Irvine, at the Billie Holiday Theater in Brooklyn. Ray arranged for Broom to meet and play with Rollins at a rehearsal, after which Rollins asked Broom to go on the road with him. Broom declined, still in high school, but Rollins called him later in 1977 with an invitation to perform with him at Carnegie Hall.

Four years after that momentous occasion, having gone on to study at Berklee, Broom began a six-year stint with Rollins' working band—but not before further establishing himself as an artist who wasn't afraid to look a gift horse in the mouth. After sitting in with Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers, which in pianist James Williams and saxophonist Billy Pierce featured a former and an ongoing member of the Berklee faculty, he was asked to join the starmaking band—as its first-ever regular guitarist—along with Wynton Marsalis. Instead, Broom joined Berklee friends Omar Hakim, Marcus Miller and Bernard Wright in trumpeter Tom Browne's popular crossover band. "I respected those guys as much as I did Wynton," said Broom. "They played good music."

After playing on Browne's hit GRP album *Love Approach*, Broom made his own debut for the young, not-yet-Spyro-Gyrized label. "It was an honest effort," he said of *Clean Sweep*, a sleek blend of jazz and urban soul on which he sang and played a la George Benson (whose "Breezin'," he wrote in a 2007 column for Chicago Jazz Magazine, was one of the five jazz guitar albums that had the strongest effect on him when he was coming up). "We were true to that music. We loved it, pursued it, listened

to it. If I had wanted to, I could have become a smooth jazz star.”

He rejected that possibility as decisively as he rejected young lionhood with Blakey. In 1984, the year he saw the release of his second GRP album, the keyboard-heavy *Livin' For The Beat*, Broom moved to Chicago. “It was basically an ass-backwards move,” he said. “I knew that. Most successful jazz musicians were in New York.” But Broom, who made the move to pursue a relationship, also knew that New York was only a 90-minute flight away. Again emulating Sonny Rollins, who spent some pivotal years living in Chicago early in his career, Broom immersed himself in the Windy City scene, playing with organist Charles Earland, “young, straightahead guys” including Ron Blake and Eric Alexander, a group of young Miles Davis alums called ESP and a band of his own that leaned toward instrumental r&b. He taught at Roosevelt and DePaul universities while maintaining his eastern ties as a member of Kenny Burrell’s Jazz Guitar Band. (His current educational duties include teaching high school students as part of the Ravinia Festival’s Jazz Mentor Program.)

As rewarding as his dual tenure with the Bobby Broom Trio and Deep Blue Organ Trio has been, his 2005 reunion with Rollins was a major boost. “Never in my wildest dreams did I think I would play with Sonny again,” said Broom. When Rollins called to ask Broom to help him with a concert, the tenorist was mourning the death of his wife, Lucille. “I thought maybe he wanted me in some other kind of supportive role as well.

“The question I had when I rejoined,” said Broom, “was whether I would be given the space to play, now that I was strong enough to hold my own, as opposed to 20 years ago. I didn’t want to be relegated to the background. I was trying to break through the glass ceiling of sideman to leader and I didn’t want to lose momentum.” As one gig led to another, Broom got the opportunities to shine that he was looking for. “Bobby is one of my favorite musicians,” said Rollins. “He explains why I like the guitar. He’s got a strong musical sixth sense. That makes a lot of explanations and directions unnecessary.”

As he geared up for the start of a spring tour with Rollins, Broom could take pride in knowing the master hasn’t enjoyed as extensive or meaningful a relationship with a guitarist since Jim Hall in the ’60s—meaning, among other things, that Broom is now part of the story that first grabbed him when he was playing with Al Haig and on occasion another of Charlie Parker’s great pianists, Walter Bishop Jr., at Gregory’s. “The spirit in the music in those men, what they stood for, what they expressed, had such an impact on me,” said Broom. “I became obsessed with the jazz lifestyle, and the folklore and the culture. I wanted to be those guys, only I was born 30 years too late.”

Thirty years later, being Bobby Broom is working out pretty well, too. **DB**



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By Jim Macnie

Fla-da-la-da, fla-da-la-da, fla-da-la-da, fla-da-la-da! The beautiful blare of Wallace Roney's horn is bouncing around his Bloomfield, N.J., living room. *Fla-da-la-da, fla-da-la-da!* "That's Freddie, right?" the trumpeter queries. The subject of iconic brass men and their sounds has bubbled up in the middle of an interview about Roney's rather killing *If Only For One Night* (HighNote), the first of his 15 records as a leader to be cut live. Roney grabs his instrument when one of us mentions Freddie Hubbard's work on Oliver Nelson's *Blues And the Abstract Truth*. In an instant, the tail end of Hubbard's "Stolen Moments" solo is in the air, carefully delineated and blistering with clarity; Roney is in lift-off mode, turning a curt illustration for a journalist into an inspired flurry of sound.

That's par for the course. The trumpeter is one of jazz's thriller-diller instrumentalists, a guy who plots the trajectory of a solo, takes aim at the nexus of technique and transcendence, and lets it rip. His improv on the new disc's "Quadrant" keens with a barrage of notes that swerve through the buoyant funk defining the tune. It's an extended moment that makes you wish you had been at New York's Iridium club the evening of the performance.

The 50-year-old bandleader has had such skills for a long time. "As soon as [he] commenced to swing, the noise level in the club immediately dropped off, and those in the middle of conversations turned their attention to the bandstand," Stanley Crouch once wrote about his

recollections of seeing the young Roney live in 1976. "The passion for jazz was so thorough that the atmosphere inside the club was completely rearranged."

A glimpse of that passion was captured in a photo that sits on a side table in Roney's house. It's a shot of the trumpeter at age 11, with two of his siblings. He's got a smile on his face and he's holding a horn that's almost as long as his torso. His brother is behind a set of toy drums, and his sister is using a broom for a microphone. Roney's precociousness turned a lot of heads early on. "Even back then I was practicing hard to figure out the intricacies of what Lee [Morgan] was doing and what Freddie was doing and what Miles [Davis] was doing," he says, nodding to the picture. "Yeah, some people were flabbergasted that I could play the way I did. That made me feel good. That kept me striving."

Remarkable work has resulted from such diligence: a stint with Art Blakey & the Jazz Messengers, bandstand time with celebrated leaders stretching from Tony Williams to Ornette Coleman to Cedar Walton, and the much ballyhooed association with Davis, who, toward the end of his life, deemed Roney a protege of sorts. The trumpeter has absorbed lessons from each of his encounters, and when he builds his own groups, he knows exactly what he needs from them.

"The first thing is a thorough understanding of the innovations that have already happened. The guys that play with me have to understand everything from Bird and Diz to Miles and Trane

to Ornette's band," he says. "The second thing they need is their own sensibility. You have one drummer who listened to all those artists and has one way of playing 'em. Then you got another drummer who heard them, but has a different take on 'em. What if you marry what Tony [Williams] did with what Elvin [Jones] did here, instead of taking what Jimmy Cobb or Art Blakey did there? And what about putting a little Ed Blackwell or Sunny Murray into it? All of 'em have to be understood, but it all has to come out 'you.' When we play the songs I write or a classic tune, my band knows how to follow when I start to go to certain places—but each of 'em has their own take. I really work with 'em on getting that balance."

You can hear that schooling on the new disc's "Only With You." It's the sound of a working band, a group of individuals that has logged rehearsal hours and stage time in the name of eloquence. Tempos invariably shift, duties are steadily amended and the term "support" is redefined as each new musical episode emerges. Rapport is everything to Roney.

Rashaan Carter has been the bandleader's bassist for a few years now. Chatting on the phone after a West Coast gig, he says that Roney has been an inspirational teacher, not only offering eye-opening tales about elder jazz personalities such as Wayne Shorter and Herbie Hancock (whom the trumpeter worked with in VSOP), but explaining the mechanics of improvisation, and the wealth of ways that a song can be approached.



COURTESY OF CHAMPAGNE TASTING AGENCY

"A lot of what we do at rehearsal is implementing concepts," Carter says. "Wallace will play something for us. We'll examine how it works. We push and pull, introduce ideas and allow lots of creative space for each other to react. I didn't know a lot of this stuff until he dropped it on us. He'll set us in motion and walk upstairs and have us work on it—it's a lab. He's an incredible nurturer; he always wants to push the music to the next level."

One of the moves Roney has made towards that goal is using turntables and samples in his otherwise acoustic music. Ten years ago, on *No Room For Argument*, he brought in Val Jeanty to program samples of spoken word snippets—in this case, cuts of speeches from such philosophical figures as Martin Luther King, Malcolm X and Deepak Chopra. He wanted to use the voices as part of the rhythm, legitimate musical info that would trigger improv possibilities. "Val came up with something cool," he recalls, "and I played my solos off of that. Lenny [White] was brilliant on it; sometimes he was a color man and sometimes he'd drop back and boost the beat." This led to Roney's hiring of DJ Logic, who interacted with the band by cutting material with turntables. At the same time, keyboardist Geri Allen (Roney's ex-wife) brought synthesizers and electric piano to the ensemble. The mix of sounds amended the traditional temperament of the group. The trumpeter says that audiences enjoyed the new spin, but some club managers had a hard time dealing with the change.

"I got so much controversy. New York clubs, out West—I couldn't play nowhere without comments. It was the same band, we were just putting a DJ in it. After [some gigs] my manager said to me, 'Well, they didn't like the turntables.' Then clubs started to want to know which band I was going to bring. And one of the festivals didn't let me on. My manager told me that they said, 'We think it's ridiculous that Wallace is 46 but he's trying to act like he's 26.'"

It's not the first time that Roney has been frustrated by the business. The support he received from Miles Davis has positioned him as a stand-in for the icon whenever a tribute event is proposed. The fact that he already has overt echoes of Davis in his horn only bolsters this characterization. Naysayers have occasionally deemed him a clone; but supporters are robust in their opinion that regardless of how influential Davis has been, Roney's playing is individual, immediate and inventive.

"Wallace's story is an Arthur Miller play," says Jeff Levenson, executive vice president of Half Note Records. "It's about being utterly attached to a father figure yet wanting your own voice. The issue is how do you cultivate something and then protect yourself from it when it becomes a Frankenstein monster? That dynamic is fundamental to artistic development: Some guys were never able to break away—look at [alto saxophonist] Frank Morgan."

Francis Davis, who wrote the *If Only For*

One Night liners and thinks the new album is the bandleader's best record thus far, has seen things from both sides. Roney's affiliation with Miles once helped cloud the respected critic to the depth of the trumpeter's skills. "To be honest, early on, I think it did," says Davis. "He was playing in settings like tribute albums or Quintet reunions minus Miles. So in a way [that's how I framed him]. But I think I was wrong. I think it kept me from listening to what was really unique about Wallace Roney. You know how sometimes you listen to the surface and sometimes you listen more deeply? That's what I did."

Roney wonders if a similar perspective hasn't stymied his career trajectory. His own group isn't thriving the way he'd like it to these days, and he believes it's partly due to the way he's embraced Miles' canon. Decades ago it was VSOP with Hancock, Shorter, Williams and Ron Carter. Last year he participated in a *Kind Of Blue* 50th anniversary tour. From a *Birth Of The Cool* revamp to 2008's *Miles From India* project, he's often been on speed-dial when producers are looking for someone to sub for jazz's superhero.

It's a dynamic he'd love to eradicate. Roney has come to abhor the business end of the tribute mentality, even though he loves "playing the hell out of such a great songbook." But in a world where there aren't enough jobs for his working band, it's hard to refuse the lucrative offers that arrive. The gigs that celebrate icons and anniversaries pay a lot better than those his own band gets, says the trumpeter. Not shocking, right? It's the jazz heavyweights—Thelonious Monk, Dizzy Gillespie, John Coltrane—who have the most recognition and resonance. And at the top of the list is Davis. It would be hard for any current bandleader to hold the kind of marketplace sway still claimed by the Dark Prince.

"I'm looking for the day when people stop with the tributes," says Roney. "Want to salute Cannonball [Adderley]? Get someone who comes out of Cannon and let them develop their new music. They call the artists the clones, but it's [the bookers] that are the clones. Every year there are so many tributes to Miles, I'm sick of it. Ever see Miles play a tribute to someone? C'mon, never! If you really want to be in the spirit of Miles Davis, call your festival the Miles Davis Festival and let people play their own stuff."

Seth Abramson, the artistic director for New York's Jazz Standard club, is an industry vet; he books jazz for his room 52 weeks a year.

"Why do festivals and venues go that way? Because it works," he says. "The term 'necessary evil' is probably too extreme, but that's what it feels like. You have two groups: aficionados who challenge themselves by checking out working bands, and the general public who largely follow the brand names. 'Oh look at this, a Miles Davis tribute, let's go!' Guys like Miles and Monk and Dizzy set the music's benchmarks, so I understand why people want to revisit them. But I try to not do [tributes] too often. Plus, any given night I'm presenting an artist doing their own thing, they might just do an icon's tune, anyway,

as part of the standard vocabulary. So that 'learning about the past' dynamic does happen on a regular basis."

Tributes may make good economic sense in the short run, but Roney feels it squanders young talent that needs to be strengthened, and in the long run waylays the growth of bands like his. He wonders if the tributes are better served by staying in what he calls "the subscription halls": Lincoln Center, Carnegie Hall and college theatres—venues where education is a tacit goal and the examination of history is somewhat ex-

"I got so much controversy—I couldn't play nowhere without comments. It was the same band, we were just putting a DJ in it. ... Then clubs started to want to know which band I was going to bring. And one of the festivals didn't let me on. My manager told me that they said, 'We think it's ridiculous that Wallace is 46 but he's trying to act like he's 26.'"

pected. "Or maybe they could take over a club for 30 weeks a year," he goes on, "playing some repertory music—it'd be like a Broadway show or something. [Art] Blakey band in one club, McCoy [Tyner] band in another club. I'm not looking forward to that, but it seems like that's where things are headed."

Roney cites the markets of Boston, New York, Los Angeles and the Great Northwest as being tough for getting positive responses. Gary Bannister, the artistic director of Seattle's Jazz Alley club, wishes he could fill more seats with original tunes played in an acoustic setting by veteran bandleaders, but says it's difficult. "Only a few people come to watch serious jazz bands anymore," he says.

He also knows the power of repertory ensembles. "This may hit too close to home, but I just went through the process of booking Geri Allen," Bannister says. "And I couldn't book her with a trio, because I wasn't confident she could sell enough tickets. But then they came to me with a tribute to Eric Dolphy. It's Oliver Lake, Don Byron, Reggie Workman and Andrew Cyrille with Geri on piano, and I said, 'I'll buy that, sure.' But I don't think I could book Geri alone

under her own name. Each market is different, and it just wouldn't work. [Same with] Wallace. He's played here previously, and we got into a situation where, as a bandleader, he'd come, and we couldn't sell enough tickets. So last time around we just had to say no."

That's a tough road, especially if you're on the artistic end of things. Bannister and Abramson agree that unless you're one of jazz's true stars—Joe Lovano or Chick Corea, for instance—you can only work a club about once a year; any more frequently and sales start to erode. They also agree that an artist's economic strength in one region might not translate to another region. Roney, whose skills may be at their peak of late, has been receiving kudos from critics. In a review of the *Miles From India* show in Manhattan, the New York Times' Nate Chinen described his horn work as teeming "with exacting purpose and un-repressed enthusiasm." Roney says he won't allow his current predicament to make him doubt his purpose or his value.

"I'm not going to apologize for being influenced by Miles. Imagine if the man was alive now, and he read me saying that I was apologizing for being influenced by him." Roney slips into a Milesian whisper: "Wallace ... after all I did for you, and you had to go and play me that way?" No, I'm not going to do that. I come out of him, I'm proud of that—I'm just trying to take it further. If they let me do what I do, we might be able to give people new ideas."

On a piece such as 2000's "NeuBeings," Roney brokers a handful of freewheeling notions (Francis Davis says he'd love to hear Wallace make an avant-garde date). Certain swaths of the piece are open for exploration, African chanting samples bubble underneath the main action and sideways funk makes peace with swinging pulse. The churning rhythm of the new disc's "Quadrant" also speaks to Roney's experimental side. "It's my version of Lifetime playing with James Brown," he chuckles. "Tony would have a different syncopation than Clyde [Stubblefield], you know? It's a potpourri. It's something Tony wouldn't have thought of, the kind of thing that Herbie would do, but he'd have kept it simpler. I'm influenced by my idols, but ultimately I'm looking to create what I *didn't* hear them do."

Bob Belden, who produced the *Miles From India* CD and has worked extensively on Sony/Legacy's Miles Davis reissue campaign, suggests that with creative music, a judicious mix is more potent than the orthodoxy of a genre or style. He calls Roney an "edge-of-your-seat" musician.

"If you want pure bebop, there are many trumpet players who can make your day," Belden wrote in an email. "If you want the unexpected and progressive, then Wallace is your man. [He] takes his music in a straight line: *forward*. He is brave enough to work out musical issues on the stage and in the studio."

And Belden isn't shocked that the trumpeter leaves some people scratching their heads. At the end of the day, he's got one question for them: "Ever try to catch a Ferrari on foot?" **DB**

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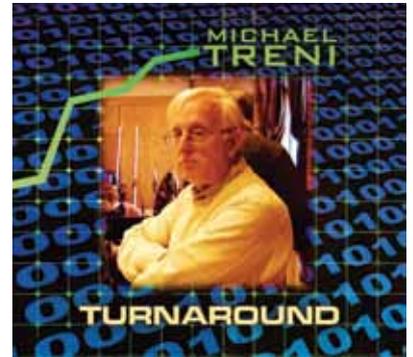
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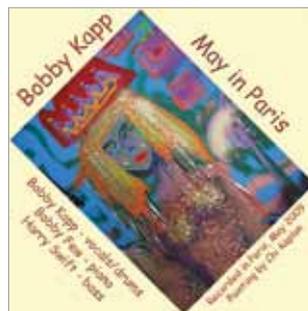


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Chris Jentsch



Guitarist Chris Jentsch Goes Underground to Live Large on Retrospective Series

Two years ago, a homemade birthday present guitarist Chris Jentsch gave to a friend spawned an archival project that reaches back to the early 1990s. The bandleader picked through a decade of unreleased performances for the gift, extracting 14 guitar solos—none of them longer than three-and-a-half minutes. It was Frank Zappa’s *Shut Up ’N Play Yer Guitar* with a personal twist, and just like that, *Strings In Motion* became Volume One of the career-spanning Jentsch Underground series.

Re-packaging history is an integral part of Jentsch’s career, but digging through the archives for inspiration is far from an exercise in nostalgia. In 1999, Jentsch recorded *Miami Suite*, the first entry in a trilogy wedded to the sounds of urban environments. With the addition of *Brooklyn Suite* in 2005 and 2009’s *Cycles Suite*, which were both released on Fleur De Son Classics, Jentsch created a series of long-form compositions rooted in the small combo tunes he wrote as a young musician. The guitarist transformed the original sparse arrangements by transcribing live solos and orchestrating them into expansive works for his 17-person Jentsch Group Large.

Grants and other subsidies facilitate Jentsch’s music. The New York State Council of the Arts commissioned *Cycles Suite*, and an award from the American Composers Forum enabled Jentsch to write and record *Brooklyn Suite*. Jentsch says grant writing is a complicated but necessary process with a few drawbacks that tend to box music into certain categories.

“The winners tend to be educated in a certain kind of way—you get this music that is created by educated people that might be different from more earthy kinds of jazz,” Jentsch said. “Some people smear grant music. Sometimes they feel like it’s needlessly eclectic or too combinatorial of classical and jazz. I can sense that some people feel that kind of music has an ugly sign around its neck.”

Jentsch has a hard time generating popular appeal for a big band full of lesser-known musicians that stays far afield of dance music. So, without grants, the guitarist wouldn’t be able to bring his band together. Unless a huge shift in popularity is on the horizon, scheduling for the Jentsch Group Large is at the mercy of the grant process.

“I’m always writing grants here and there for different ideas and different ensembles,” he said. “If something like that hits, we’ll get the band back together.”

In addition to culling tracks for the Underground project, Jentsch is busying himself with *Fractured Pop*, his first small ensemble album in a decade. The guitarist recorded 10 tracks for the disc in September. The CD, which doesn’t yet have a release date, draws material from the same compositional well that birthed his suites. The majority of the pieces date back to Jentsch’s earliest days as a working musician, tracks that have never been heard in their original form.

“I got diverted with the large ensemble projects,” he said, “and I never wound up releasing a CD for small group doing those songs.”

Jentsch records live in the studio, but he likes to make subsequent trips to the booth to thicken things up using overdubs. He might replace snippets of music to make them more crisp or add acoustic and electric guitar parts to create richer textures. The Underground tunes, which have until now been part of his personal collection, range from a mastered studio sound to “a high-quality bootleg vibe,” he said. Additional Jentsch Underground volumes include material written with his first band, Project X, and alternate live versions of his suites. Plans are to make the entire series available at Jentsch’s Web site and as a digital download through CD Baby. As he said, “Then I could look forward to a check from CD Baby for \$6 every year.” —Jon Ross



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Unconventional Entrepreneurialism

Eric Lewis has reasons for a calisthenic approach to the piano. He prefers to play while standing. Which is physically exerting enough, but there's also the added weight that comes from a set of body armor.

"I just got two forearm guards in the mail yesterday," Lewis said while on tour in California. "It's mostly medieval, and some contemporary Batman type stuff. I'm blending it in with suit jackets."

No question that this choice of onstage attire would be classified as unconventional for a jazz musician, especially one with an impressive pedigree. But Lewis has a solid philosophy and aesthetic underpinning the novel gear.

"It's just about entrepreneurialism," Lewis said. "Sun Ra and those guys tried to get theatrical, and I'm just focusing it in to a martial space. And it's a statement about rigidity, classicism. We've never seen a black guy in King Arthur's court. Black people don't have the same connection to war heroes, let alone European wars of the 1300s. Wearing medieval armor and mixing it in with my suits speaks to a fantasy history, and just speaks to something in me."

Lewis is now aggressively marketing such personal concepts. In 1999, he won the Thelonious Monk International Jazz Piano Competition and logged considerable time working for Wynton Marsalis, Cassandra Wilson and Elvin

Jones. All while hosting jam sessions until late at night in New York clubs. But around 2005, he left that entire circuit, partially out of frustration about not landing a record deal of his own.

"I started reading a lot of psychology books, neuroanatomy books because people called me crazy," Lewis said. "Started reading about what Navy SEALs had to do. If they didn't have their chops correct, they'd get killed. So I wanted to be that intense."

The result of that study is his self-released solo acoustic disc, *ELEW Rockjazz Vol. 1* (elewrockjazz.com). His versions of songs identified with Nirvana, The Killers and the Rolling Stones came about when he decided to change his image, but he found musical connections, too.

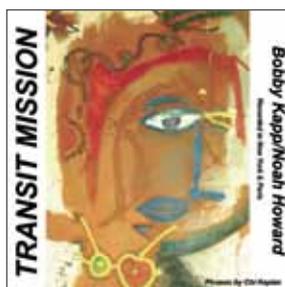
"It's a different language but I could hear correlations to what I was playing with Elvin," Lewis said. "Minors, major flat sixths. I could hear all these harmonic correlations that reminded me of McCoy Tyner, especially when I heard guitars playing fifths."

Perhaps the most unusual reinterpretation on *Rockjazz* is Lynyrd Skynyrd's "Sweet Home Alabama," which is identified with a white segregationist vision of the South. Yet, like with medieval armor, Lewis consciously absorbs it.

"I was in a bar one time and heard it come on and it was groovin' and beautiful in terms of that I-IV-V harmony and I could hear poignan-



cy of vocals," Lewis said. "After seeing the lyrics and reading the about the controversy, it works out. Because since I'm a black guy covering that tune, it's the same thing that Barack Obama speaks to, where things are changing. Rather than being afraid to talk about something, the best way to overcome something is to take control of it and own it." —Aaron Cohen



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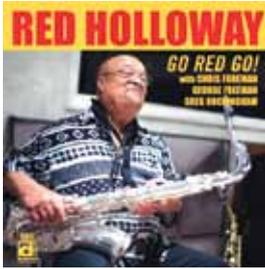
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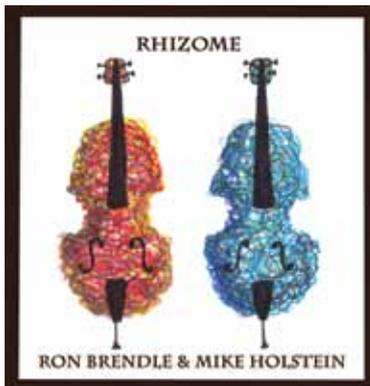
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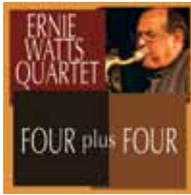


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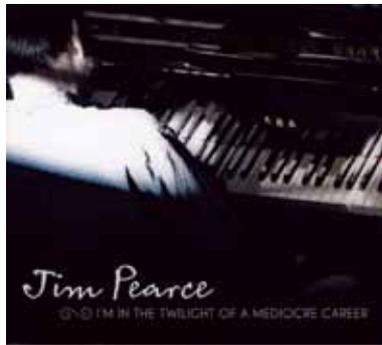
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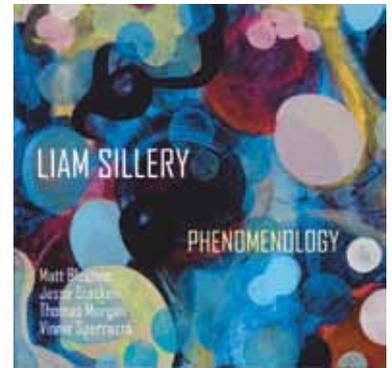


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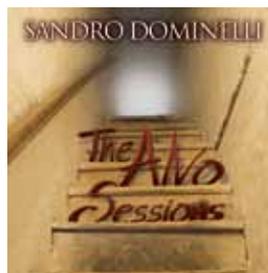
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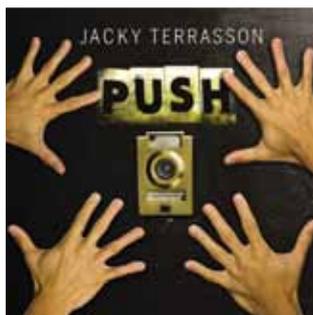
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Inside ▶

- 56 | Jazz
- 58 | Blues
- 63 | Beyond
- 65 | Historical
- 69 | Books

REVIEWS ▶



Jacky Terrasson *Push*

CONCORD JAZZ 31640

★★★★½

Jacky Terrasson douses his notoriously eruptive energy and shape-shifting palette of pianistic techniques with soul sauce on this often thrilling but occasionally capricious debut for Concord Jazz. Gospel, rock and afro-beat grooves—aided and abetted by percussionist Cyro Baptista, harmonicist Gregoire Maret and Terrasson’s own synth flavoring—thread their way through the Parisian-bred pianist’s joyous, mercurial improvisations.

Terrasson gives you the comfortable feeling he can execute whatever idea comes into his head. The catchy opener, embedded with

an eighth-note tick, has a bit of a Keith Jarrett feel and highlights right off the bat Terrasson’s gorgeous touch, clarity of line and command of the keyboard. The gospel pulse reappears at a slower tempo on the thoughtful ballad “My Church,” featuring emotive piano clusters and a beautiful bass solo by Ben Williams. “Say Yeah” updates the churchy mood with a whispered background vocal, acoustic guitar and a scrambling piano solo. The afro-tinged closer, “O Café, O Soleil,” reinforces the celebratory spirit, alternating between 4/4 and 5/4 in a happy, call-and-answer mode, complete with hand claps. But my favorite track on the album comes from quite another church—that of The-
lonious Monk (“Ruby My Dear”).

There’s some good-old-fash-

ioned swing on this album, too. Cole Porter’s “You’d Be So Nice To Come Home To” showcases the delightfully unpredictable fission of Terrasson’s improv, including some sparkling two-handed unisons and minor ninths. “Morning,” with Jacques Schwartz-Bart’s soulful tenor saxophone, swings mid-tempo with a bright outlook.

Some of the other tracks left me scratching my head. Terrasson’s merger of Michael Jackson’s “Beat It” and the classic ballad “Body And Soul”—a tribute to The Gloved One that apparently erupted spontaneously on a gig the week Jackson died—must have made sense in the moment, but I don’t hear how it enhances the spirit of either song. Terrasson’s free-associative ramble through “Round Midnight” cov-

ers so much territory and so many tempos—including a slinky Latin interlude—it sounds more like an inventory than a treatment. And the speed—and I mean speed—of the aptly titled line “Beat Bop” is dazzling, but why include a coda of the players’ exhausted groans of relief when they’ve finished? It was fast. We get it.

This is a strong album, maybe not as consistent as others by Terrasson, but satisfying, nonetheless.

—Paul de Barros

Push: Gaux Girl; Beat It/Body And Soul; Ruby My Dear; Beat Bop; 'Round Midnight; Morning; My Church; Say Yeah; You'd Be So Nice To Come Home To; Carry Me Away; O Café, O Soleil. (56:45)

Personnel: Jacky Terrasson, piano, synthesizers, vocals (8, 11); Ben Williams, acoustic and electric bass (10); Jarnine Williams, drums; Gregoire Maret, harmonica (3, 8); Jacques Schwartz-Bart, tenor saxophone (6); Matthew Stevens, guitar (9); Cyro Baptista, percussion (8, 10, 11).

Ordering info: concordjazz.com

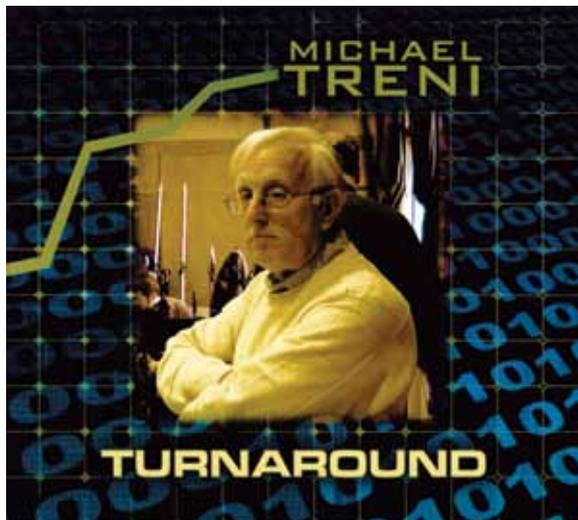
Michael Treni *Turnaround*

BELL PRODUCTION CO.

★★★★½

Michael Treni is a veteran trombonist who left almost no vinyl footprints in his youth, which would have been the '70s and '80s, before deciding there must be a better way to make a living than music and leaving the jazz scene for the business world. In the last few years he's re-emerged with a couple of fine big band CDs of his own music, to redeem his University of Miami training and reclaim some of the position that eluded him decades back. *Turnaround* is his third.

This is an excellent big band by any standard—a musicians' band of the first order; yet, from the listener's viewpoint, not a strikingly distinctive one. The charts cover a range of contemporary musical bases. They are fresh, precisely rendered, but familiar in a general sort of way—from the self-important fanfare of "Lady Mariko," which sounds like the pompous overture to a DeMille epic before settling into restrained soprano vehicle for Frank Elmo, to the brief avant gardishness of "Tenor-Brio," in which the band seems to be tuning up before sliding gracefully into a lightly funky groove. "Blues For



Charlie" is a good medium-slow 12-bar framework in which the band is always at work to good effect supporting the soloists. In terms of traditional big band swing, there's the brisk and bright "Bone Happy." This one floats all five trombones in a procession of fine, well matched solo work. Treni leads the parade, while the supporting saxes make everyone sound well tended. The ensemble writing is especially attractive. "Awhile" is a pen-sive weave of flute and clarinets that evokes the passage of time with a recurring tick-tock motif. The late Gerry Niewood, to whom the album is dedicated, is the main soloist on alto, first with scooping Johnny Hodges-like glissandos, then

later in a more restless and anguished tum full of eager double-time splatters.

The most ubiquitous voice is tenor Jerry Bergonzi, another Berklee veteran who started in the 1970s with Dave Brubeck. His work bristles with the torment and turmoil of a man who has a lot on his chest and wants to get it all said. He comes out of both Sonny Rollins and John Coltrane, two players who seldom lingered in romantic reveries, and neither does Bergonzi. "Tenor-Brio" is his dish, a funky vamp that lets him chew up the scenery with gritty delight.

One odd sidebar: I'm used to musicians explaining their work in terms of inner spiritual quests, but *not* the spirit of Fox News. In a curious liner note, Treni laments the loss of "free market principles," scorns "bailouts" and foresees Obama "managing every aspect of our lives." At least he doesn't demand to see his birth certificate. Coming as the country embraces a 21st century health system, it's a clinker in an otherwise classy collection of notes. A companion DVD covers the session and lets the musicians reflect on the music. —John McDonough

Turnaround: Turnaround; Lady Mariko; Unity; Blues For Charlie; Tender Moments; Tenor-Brio; Bone Happy; Awhile. (72:17)
Personnel: Bill Ash, Kevin Bryan, Vinnie Cutro, Chris Persad (1, 2, 4-8), Mike Ponella (3, 8), trumpets, flugelhorn; Matt Bilyk, Philip Jones, Dave Gibson (1, 2, 4-7), Bob Ferrel (1, 2, 4-7), Steven Austin (3, 8), Conrad Zulaf (3, 8), trombones; Sal Spicola, Roy Nicolosi, Craig Yaremko (1, 2, 4-7), Jerry Bergonzi (1, 2, 4-7), Frank Elmo (1, 2, 4-7), Gerry Niewood (3, 8), Larry Puentes (3, 8), Rich Reiter (3, 8), reeds; Charles Blenzig (1, 2, 4-7), piano; Takashi Otsuka, bass; Ron Vincent, drums. Dave Belmont, Rick Dekovessey, Matthew Nicolosi, Roy Nicolosi, percussion (1, 2, 4-7); Faina Agranov, Ina Berkhin, Susan O'Connor, Jeffrey Szabo, strings (2).
Ordering info: bellproductionco.com

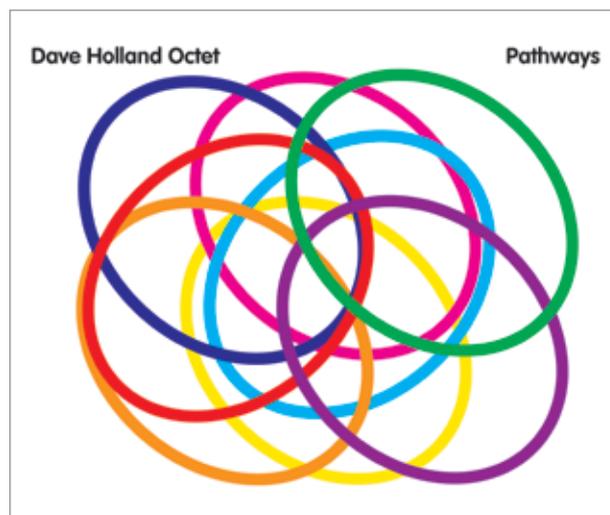
Dave Holland Octet *Pathways*

DARE2 004

★★★★★

Dave Holland gets lots of mileage out of recalibrating his core ensemble. Because his approach is so focused, each shift from quintet to octet, or quartet to big band, sustains the bassist's artistic essence while offering a refreshing spin on its particulars. This live date, recorded at New York's Birdland, finds him working with just enough instruments to provide both the whomp of a large ensemble and the agility of a trio. Whether it's a strong slab of horns planting their collective flag on a melody, or vibraphonist Steve Nelson waxing contemplative, *Pathways* reveals that Holland's music is all about the process of bend and flex.

The bandleader is on record celebrating jazz's conversational thrust. He wants the members of his groups to perpetually interact with each other, and therefore designs charts that provide lots of cross-hatched lines. That kind of architectural zig-zag is what brings thrills to this date. The subtle fugue figure that



starts "Wind Dance" is an apt distillation of such notions. A handful of horns twist their way around each other, enjoying a moment of fluid exchange. As various sections of the band are gradually absorbed into the process, the action is compounded. By the time trumpeter Alex Sipiagin lights off for the territories, the background counterpoint is meaty, indeed.

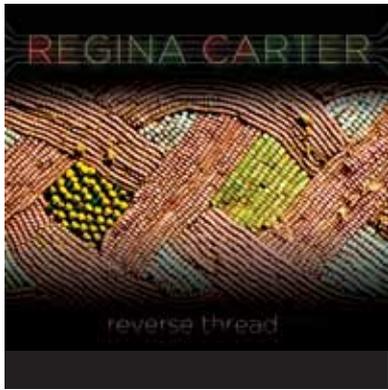
When this tack is bumped into something more expressionistic, its physical vigor is consequential. A splay of horns adds some punc-

tuation to Nelson's searching solo on "Shadow Dance" (which has a "Night In Tunisia" feel). Then they're split and positioned at intersecting angles. Then they pick up a swing gait. Then they allow room for a couple of punchy solos by Antonio Hart and Chris Potter, which are then emboldened by the powers of polyphony. By the end, the 15-minute ride feels cathartic.

The bite-sized melodic vamps that drive much of this program are part of Holland's standard operating procedure. At one point, a few albums ago, they seemed like they'd become a tad tedious. My ears were yearning for more fluid melodies. But more and more, and especially on *Pathways*, their role is obvious; the band uses them as triggers. Each repetition is a chance to bolster tension and broaden options. Cagey stuff, to be sure, and because of the grace the group employs, the kind of music that underscores Holland's rep as a master of subtlety who has no problem bulldozing a bit.

—Jim Macnie

Pathways: Pathways; How's Never?; Sea Of Marmara; Ebb And Flow; Blue Jean; Wind Dance; Shadow Dance. (75:28)
Personnel: Dave Holland, bass; Chris Potter, tenor saxophone; Antonio Hart, alto saxophone; Steve Nelson, vibraphone; Robin Eubanks, trombone; Nate Smith, drums; Gary Smulyan, baritone sax; Alex Sipiagin, trumpet.
Ordering info: daveholland.com



Regina Carter
Reverse Thread

EI ENTERTAINMENT
★★★★

The notion of adapting African traditional music for use in a jazz context is a time-honored one, as a quick flip through the Randy Weston and Don Cherry discographies will attest. Violinist Regina Carter trolled the archives of New York's World Music Institute for material, culling a batch of folk music which she retooled for *Reverse Thread*.

In the context of her recent recordings and the PR hoopla surrounding her use of the Guarneri violin, this might be seen as a gutsy move, something meant to rough up a straight, classically derived vibe. Her choice of kora player Yacouba Sissoko as special guest, too, lends the proceedings an earthier air, and the band—especially the fine bassist Chris Lightcap—certainly adds to the grit. In some ways, it recalls her work with the String Trio of New York, a passage in her biography that has always seemed a bit incongruous with subsequent developments.

There are beautiful moments on *Reverse Thread*. The closing track, “Mwana Talitambula,” lays a simple, lullaby melody over high accordion tones that shimmer like violin harmonics, and “Un Aguinald Pa Regina” has an elegant nuevo tango feel, perfectly suited to Carter’s precision and rhythmic acuity. On “Artistiya,” Lightcap and drummer Alvester Garnett dig into a feisty groove, very Don Cherry, while Carter shows how lowdown and hoedown she can go. If the record sounded more consistently like this, it would be hard to beat. But the problem stems from the adaptation of the material, which is instead subjected to a pretty serious blandification. The texture and crunch of folk music doesn’t survive in captivity too well, as is clearly evident on “Day Dreaming On The Niger” and the fusion-tinted “Full Time.”

—John Corbett

Reverse Thread: Hiwumbe Awumba; Full Time; N’Teri; Artistiya; Un Aguinald Pa Regina; Kothbiro (Intro); Kothbiro; Zeripky; Day Dreaming On The Niger; God Be With You; Kanou; Mwana Talitambula. (57:32)

Personnel: Regina Carter, violin; Yacouba Sissoko, kora; Adam Rogers, guitar; Will Holshouser, Gary Versace, accordion; Chris Lightcap, Mamadou Ba, bass; Alvester Garnett, drums, percussion.
Ordering info: reginacarter.com

The Hot Box

	John McDonough	John Corbett	Jim Macnie	Paul de Barros
Jacky Terrasson <i>Push</i>	★★★	★★★	★★★	★★★½
Michael Treni <i>Turnaround</i>	★★★½	★★½	★★★	★★★
Dave Holland Octet <i>Pathways</i>	★★★★½	★★★★	★★★★	★★★½
Regina Carter <i>Reverse Thread</i>	★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★

Critics' Comments ▶

Jacky Terrasson, *Push*

Sharp playing as usual. But there's some kind of continuity missing from the purposefully varied program. As he switches from Maret's harmonica to Schwarz-Bart's tenor to that guitar during the gaudy up-tempo space romp, variety becomes its own enemy. —Jim Macnie

Heavily invested in the vamp, light in sensibility, sometimes off down blind alleys (the “Beat It/Body And Soul” mash-up, the singing, the not-so-clever recast of “Ruby My Dear”), but elsewhere into something good, *Push* wants to be a few too many different things at once. —John Corbett

An impressive grab-bag of piano virtuosity from meditative to Latin to a high-balling fling through Cole Porter and a bow to Ramsey Lewis’ “In Crowd.” Terrasson’s gerrymanders on the standards are audacious. So is “Beat Bop,” a original bundle of nervous energy with a passing glimpse at Strayhorn’s “Rain Check.” Good Terrasson. —John McDonough

Michael Treni, *Turnaround*

Following the shaky conservative economics metaphor Treni spells out in his didactic notes, a free enterprise system should reward innovative musical thinking. Precious little of that here. Bergonzi is relied upon (and reliable) as soloist, and the band is disciplined and energized. The music is best in earthier moments, like the fine “Blues For Charlie,” not so compelling when the TV/film soundtrack cliches mount. —John Corbett

In a video doc that accompanies this CD, the camaraderie among the players—and their obvious respect for the leader of this date—really makes you want to reach out to Treni, an accomplished though little-known big band writer who left a jazz career in the '80s but clearly never stopped loving the music. But apart from some exciting Jerry Bergonzi tenor sax moments and some tasty woodwind passages, the music feels more typical of a genre—clean, seamless, dramatic big band writing of the '70s with film and television sizzle—than something particularly distinguished within that genre. —Paul de Barros

No question it's on the academic side, but that said, there's a quaint feeling to some of these pieces. As the band does its business, odd melodic turns intersect with the fetching (not flashy) solos. They bolster the sprawling, mildly unfocused arrangements and give soloists, such as the ultra skilled Jerry Bergonzi, plenty to say. —Jim Macnie

Dave Holland Octet, *Pathways*

I like the straightforwardness and muscular density of the ensemble writing on this live set. Not a lot of fancy footwork but lots of meat on the bones. Bari man Gary Smulyan steals the show (with Steve Nelson's marimbas a strong second), but most of the admittedly high-energy soloing feels like notey attachments to the main message. —Paul de Barros

Outstanding mid-size orchestrations, full of percussive jousts and shifting blends, often over churning rhythms. Think Ellington—particularly the *Latin American Suite*. Smulyan swings with a hearty grit. Hart exudes more sweat than muscle, but intensity by the giga-watt. —John McDonough

Inspired live set by this big-little band. Resourceful drummer Nate Smith continues to be most impressive, driving the immaculate arrangements, spurring exciting statements especially from Smulyan and Potter, but also Hart (who doesn't always thrill me). Must have been a hoot in person if it's this hot on disc. —John Corbett

Regina Carter, *Reverse Thread*

A mixture of frisky melodic motifs and more somber broodings that Carter builds into stately, often appealing miniatures. But the folksy quality imposes a formality on much of the music. America's finest jazz violinist might look closer to home for inspiration. —John McDonough

A walk through Africa has helped Carter sound a bit more informal while still creating a wonderfully intricate songbook. When jump-started by pulse, the blend of accordion, bass and violin bring a sweet cosmopolitan air to the folksy pieces, whether essaying joy or melancholy. —Jim Macnie

These African settings suit Carter's fiddling to a tee. The kora and accordion are rapturous reminders of the world/folk feel Don Cherry found with the great group Codona. More, please. And soon! —Paul de Barros



Brad Mehldau *Highway Rider*

NONESUCH 518655

★★★★½

There's an imaginary screenplay—or perhaps imaginary opera—quality to *Highway Rider*, a cohesive, cyclical suite of 15 Brad Mehldau compositions that, as Mehldau hints in his exhaustively expositional program notes, seem to be begging for a lyric. Taking a break from the documentation of his trio and solo interests, Mehldau undertakes an ambitious investigation into conceptual terrain that used to be called “Third Stream,” weaving into his own argot a host of dialects—classical music, contemporary pop orchestration, swinging and

odd-metered jazz, rock, flamenco, the blues—and scoring his conclusions for a strings- and horns-saturated chamber orchestra that interacts in real time with a two-drummer edition of his working trio and saxophone soloist Joshua Redman.

Both as soloist and composer, Mehldau fulfills his stated imperative to “wrap the instruments around the voice ... keeping the individual personality of the singer in the forefront while still writing richly and imaginatively for the orchestra”; in his own improvisations, cool amid the elegiac maelstrom, he conjures an unending stream of melody, in contrast to Redman's inflamed, equally erudite responses to the ensemble. Helping the leader keep everything in focus is producer Jon Brion, reunited with Mehldau for the first time since *Largo*, the kaleidoscopic 2001 project on which Mehldau began to incorporate an expanded timbral palette into his musical production, and a major stepping stone in his ongoing search for a cogent platform upon which to coalesce polymath interests.

—Ted Panken

Highway Rider: Disc 1—John Boy; Don't Be Sad; At The Toll-booth; Highway Rider; The Falcon Will Fly Again; Now You Must Climb Alone; Walking The Peak (41:17). Disc 2—We'll Cross The River Together; Capriccio; Sky Turning Grey (For Elliott Smith); Into The City; Old West; Come With Me; Always Departing; Always Returning (62:51).

Personnel: Brad Mehldau, piano, pump organ, Yamaha CS-80, orchestral bells; Jeff Ballard: percussion, drums; Joshua Redman, soprano and tenor saxophone; Larry Grenadier: bass; Matt Chamberlain, drums; Dan Coleman, orchestra conductor; The Fleurettes, vocals.

Ordering info: nonesuch.com

Tineke Postma *The Traveller*

ETCETERA NOW/KTD 6003

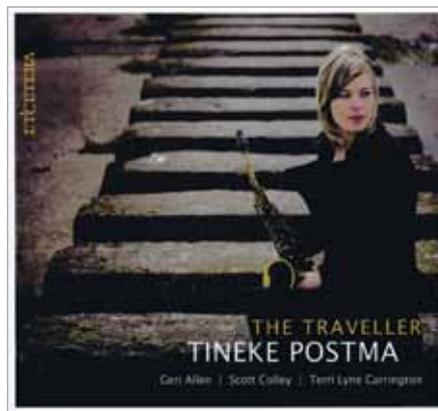
★★★

On her 2007 release *A Journey That Matters*, award-winning Dutch saxophonist Tineke Postma employed a broad scope of influences, instrumentation and composers to achieve what was well received by critics for its fresh phrasing and soaring improvisations.

Her fourth studio album shows the same dexterity on alto and soprano saxophones, but through a more focused lens. Convening the top-notch rhythm section of Geri Allen (piano, Rhodes), Scott Colley (bass) and Terri Lyne Carrington (drums), Postma seems to recall her Manhattan School of Music experience in *The Traveller*, which brims with the unmistakable sounds of some of the New York's most prolific players.

Against that backdrop, Postma's voice is one of controlled emotion, where romantic melodies are balanced by complex changes and an often conversational give-and-take with Colley and Allen. And her use of overdubs on “Song For F” kicks off the album with a sound that's uniquely hers.

As a whole, the album reaches for a soft mood, with soprano vocals provided by Anne Chris in tight unison with Postma on three tracks, including the lyrical opener. The al-



bum's sole cover, “Adagio 13,” is a hauntingly pretty track, informed by the strings for which it was initially written (by Brazilian composer Heitor Villa-Lobos.)

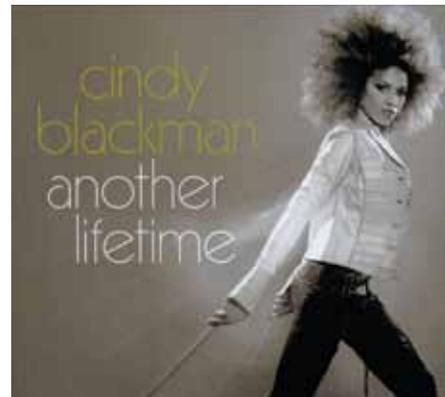
While there's no disputing the beauty, grace and skill at work in tracks like these, the listener may be more completely engaged when she shows her teeth, amping up rhythms and skirting between time signatures on the cluster of faster-paced pieces near the album's end, like “Searching And Finding.”

—Jennifer Odell

The Traveller: Song For F; The Eye Of The Mind; Crazy Stuff; The Line; Adagio 13—Heitor Villa-Lobos; Cabbonal; Motivation; Searching And Finding; YWC. (53:58)

Personnel: Tineke Postma, alto and soprano saxophone; Geri Allen, piano, Rhodes; Scott Colley, bass; Terri Lyne Carrington, drums; Anne Chris, vocals (1, 5, 9).

Ordering info: etcetera-records.com



Cindy Blackman *Another Lifetime*

FOUR QUARTERS 1820

★★★★

As part of a lifelong mission to honor the innovations of drumming master Tony Williams, drummer/composer Cindy Blackman captures the master's fervor on *Another Lifetime*. If anyone is qualified to delve deep into Williams' legacy, it is most certainly Blackman—she has devoted her career (when not sensibly making cash with rocker Lenny Kravitz) to mastering everything but his aura on her many solo recordings and as a drummer for hire.

But *Another Lifetime* is altogether something different, a direct link to 1969, resurrecting the manic intensity of Williams' original *Emergency!* lineup, which included John McLaughlin, here amply reflected in the white hot fury of Mike Stern (his best guitar work in 30 years). Covering *Emergency!*'s “Vashkar,” “Where” and “Beyond Games,” as well as later Williams tracks, Blackman succeeds in her goal that we never forget that he was one of the greatest drummers to ever slam a set of yellow Gretsch.

Throughout, Stern's roiling, ripping, furnace-melting assaults match Blackman's flame-flipping, single stroke fulminating enunciations, the pair ceaselessly measuring out doses of sweat-filled, bruise-raising musical passion. Blackman's “40 Years Of Innovation” is a slow-burn blowout, guitarist Fionn O Lochlainn spinning psychedelic webs. “Vashkar—The Alternate Dimension Theory” offers a master class in Williams' style; “Love Song,” a duet with Joe Lovano, recalls a lost Coltrane/Williams track with a beautiful, almost telepathic mood and remarkable improvisation; “Wildlife” revisits Williams' popular *Believe It!* period with Vernon Reid amping up the distortion.

If imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, Cindy Blackman is Williams' reincarnated sister from another lifetime.

—Ken Micallef

Another Lifetime: Vashkar; Where; Beyond Games; Vashkar Reprise; 40 Years Of Innovation; The Game Theory; Vashkar—The Alternate Dimension Theory; Love Song; And Heaven Welcomed A King; There Comes A Time; Wildlife. (55:28)

Personnel: Cindy Blackman, drums, spoken word; Carlton Holmes, synthesizer; Joe Lovano, tenor sax; Mike Stern, Fionn O Lochlainn, Vernon Reid, guitars; Benny Rietveld, Doug Carn, organ; Carlos Santos, bass; Patrice Rushen, Rhodes, synthesizer.

Ordering info: cindyblackman.com

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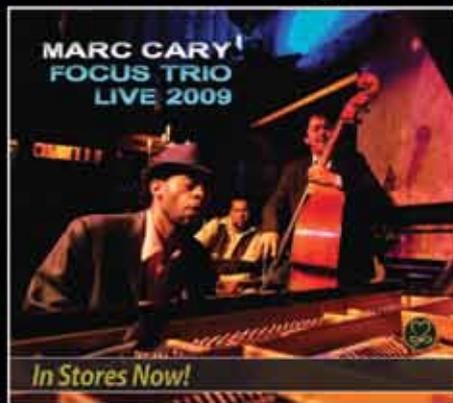


The spectacular recording debut of Allen's internationally renowned quartet with Kenny Davis on bass, Kassa Overall on drums and tap percussionist Maurice Chestnut engages in dazzling rhythmic style. The enhanced CD includes bonus videos of this incendiary group at The Detroit Jazz Festival.

Flying Toward The Sound is Allen's long anticipated solo piano debut which features a concert length suite written during her 2008-9 Guggenheim Fellowship for Music Composition. The Enhanced CD includes art films by reknowned filmmaker Carrie Mae Weems.

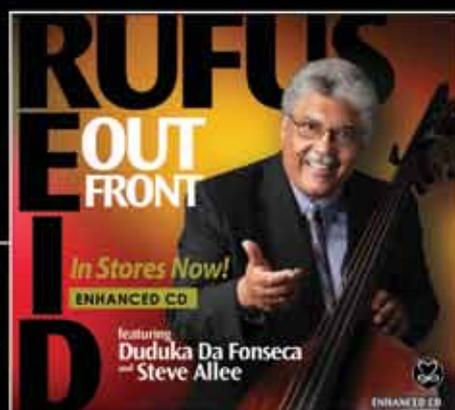


Groundbreaking trio recordings from MARC CARY and RUFUS REID...

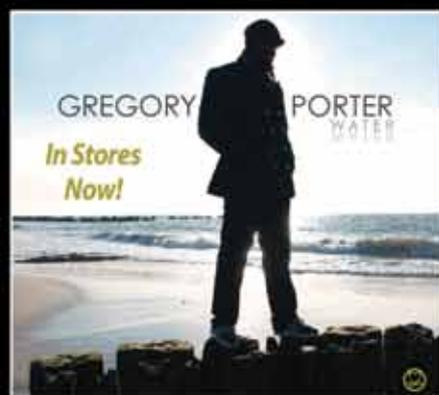


Recorded live at festivals across Europe and the US, the high-energy Focus Trio Live 2009 bears witness to the fiery dynamics of Cary's popular longstanding trio. Cary's romantic and hard-hitting vision of mainstream jazz embraces Indian, African and Native American elements.

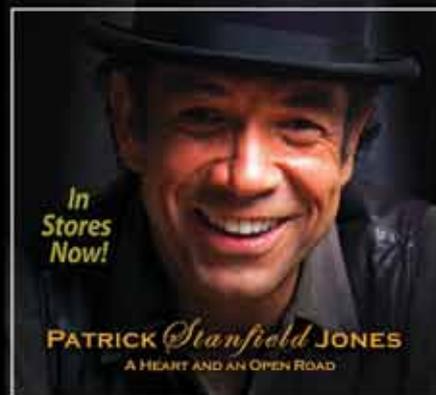
Legendary bassist Rufus Reid unveils the uncanny chemistry of his new trio featuring iconic Brazilian drummer Duduka Da Fonseca and pianist Steve Allee. This exuberant and ultimately compelling set is generating major critical praise as one of the most vibrant trios to emerge in the 21st Century..



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Jones, whose Native-American, Chinese, Caucasian and African bloodlines practically define the American melting pot, paints his vibrant picture of American music with a palate that includes guitar blues and rock, cabaret, folk and jazz. This tour-de-force debut reveals Jones as a unique composer/performer with well-honed musical and theatrical instincts.

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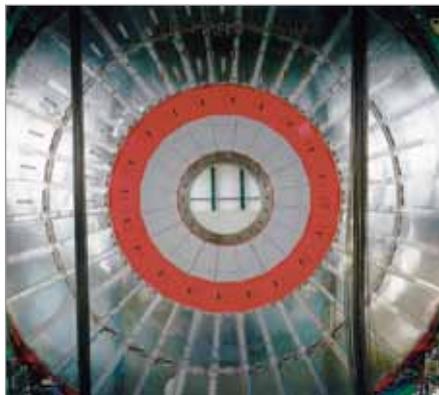
Nels Cline Singers *Initiate*

CRYPTOGRAMOPHONE 143

★★★★½

Coming or going, this double disc treat from the Nels Cline Singers combines live and studio music that typically goes in many directions, with no straight lines in sight. Part of the charm of guitarist Cline is his eclecticism, his love of all things musical. And *Initiate* propels that charm even further. With stalwart bandmates bassist Devin Hoff and drummer Scott Amendola, Cline and his "singers" now have four albums under their collective belt.

For starters, we have disc one, a studio date that combines a brush with electronica before dovetailing into some funky jamming, "Into It" becoming "Floored" and featuring a simple yet serious bass line and backbeat covered with Cline's pretty ugly wah-wahisms and deliciously dirty six-string screeching. "Divining" is just that, a cool, reflective walk, starting with Amendola's wind-chimey percussion, a burly Hoff and an unpredictable Cline playing parallel lines en route to a serene, improvisatory jaunt worthy of early, lyrical Mahavishnu minus the exactitude. That's before they head out for ardent, gently scorched rock territory, extending this modal piece for all its worth. "Divining" is a great visit to hear Cline the varied



guitarist, the inventive creature, economical and very expressive in various ways.

The serious, balls-to-the-wall rock side of the Singers can be heard on "Red Line To Greenland," where engineer Ron Saint flexes his producer muscles, giving us an aural treat from left to right, where everyone is heard to great affect over this nine-minute extravaganza that blows hot then cool. The studio material reflects the band's musical diversity over 13 tracks that range from the folksy, dreamy charm of "Grow Closer" to the avant oddness of the aptly titled "Scissor Saw." (Organist David Witham adds a surprise, otherworldly touch to the percussive waltz "King Queen," augmenting Cline's Santana-esque burn, which has a dicey delicacy.)

The live disc's eight songs (four from previous releases), recorded last fall at Café du Nord in San Francisco, also reflect that irrepressible eclecticism that's a hallmark of this trio. What's amazing about it, though, is how the three are able to almost recreate the same vibe that exists with the studio music, as if the studio were just an extra player. Certainly, the sound quality is a "live" sound, and the energy is greater because you know people are there listening and hearing them play, whether it's the slowly climatic, methodical "Forge" we're hearing, the jazzy free frolic of "Fly Fly" or the return to a missed passing figure (Joe Zawinul) with a reverential, definitive cover of "Boogie Woogie Waltz" (echoing the studio disc's "Mercy"). Still, the greater energy translates into a cozier, more personal exchange, more jazzy without the studio props. Like the album's artwork of the "world's largest machine," the Large Hadron Collider's proton-smasher, *Initiate* runs the risk of a meltdown, but somehow manages to generate the kind of energy that just might keep adventurous music lovers on the edge of their stools.

—John Ephland

Initiate: Disc 1—Into It; Floored; Divining; You Noticed; Red Line To Greenland; Mercy (Supplication); Grow Closer; Scissor/Saw; b86 (Inkblot Nebula); King Queen; Zingiber; Mercy (Procession); Into It (You Turn). (63:58) Disc 2—Forge; Fly Fly; Raze; And Now The Queen; Blues, Too; Thurston Country; Sunken Song; Boogie Woogie Waltz. (71:28)
Ordering info: crypto.tv



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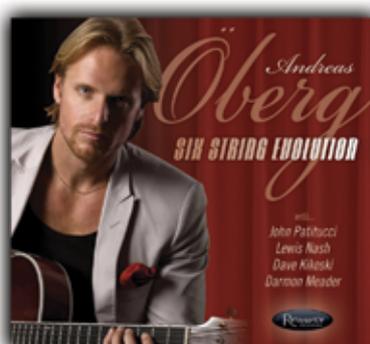
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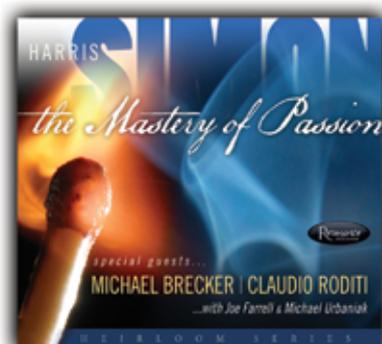
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Organ Kicks

Guitarist Chris Vitarello is as much the star of *Project A (Anzic 6101; 58:41 ★★★★★)* as co-headliners Joel Frahm and Bruce Katz. Vitarello's stinging tone highlights bluesy pieces like "It Ain't Fair," and his shivery slide electrifies a New Orleans-styled "What A Friend We Have In Jesus." The song selection (particularly "Spirit In The Dark" and "Rock Steady"), gospel-influenced organ and horn section on three numbers all set the dials on the time machine for the late '60s, with the band sounding like it's laying its claim to back Aretha Franklin at the Fillmore West. In addition to his Hammond and Wurliitzer keyboards, Katz also contributes some rolling piano to "Maybe I'm A Fool."

Ordering info: anzicrecords.com

Matthew Kaminski prefers a dark, throaty tone from his B3, and *Taking My Time (Chicken Coup 7014; 75:04 ★★★★★)* is full of richly phrased vamps and hard-swinging accompaniment from three different drummers. Kaminski moves easily from the deep funk of Richard "Groove" Holmes' "Sweatin'" to a Latin-tinged version of Brian Wilson's "Caroline, No," but his strength lies in generating momentum on tunes like Lou Donaldson's "Hot Dog" and his own "Flip The Lid." While the support he gets from his three trios and saxophonist E.J. Hughes is solid, his bandmates remain relatively anonymous.

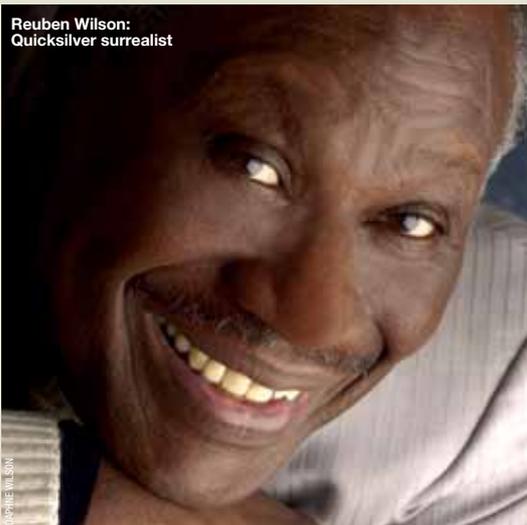
Ordering info: chickencouprecords.com

Joe Farnsworth's crisp drumming sets the mood for a set of sophisticated swing that is heavily influenced by organ giant Charles Earland. Earland was a source of inspiration for both keyboardist Mike LeDonne and saxophonist Eric Alexander, and *The Groover (Savant 2100; 61:56 ★★★★★)* features the kind of genre-hopping heat that was his specialty. LeDonne is more linear than many of his organ-playing peers, and he never loses sight of the goal of stirring listeners.

Ordering info: jazzdepot.com

Recorded live on their home turf in Michigan, Organissimo's fourth recording, *Alive & Kickin'! (Big O 2414; 76:17 ★★★★★)*, demonstrates the trio's stylistic breadth. But their ability to span early Jimmy Smith groove to British prog rock to jam band elasticity also reveals an inability to edit themselves. While these gigs were likely memorable to see live, extended workouts like the 18-minute "Pumpkin Pie" don't translate

Reuben Wilson:
Quicksilver surrealist



well in a sterile listening experience. That said, Jim Alfredson III is a remarkable organist who seamlessly synthesizes several generations of keyboard influences.

Ordering info: organissimo.org

Dedicated to veteran Memphis drummer Tony Reedus, guitarist Dave Stryker's *One For Reedus (SteepleChase 31679; 59:28 ★★★★★½)* covers expansive ground—ranging from Wayne Shorter's hypnotic "Nefertiti" to Gilbert O'Sullivan's mawkish ballad "Alone Again (Naturally)." Stepping into Reedus' shoes after five years is a challenge, but Steve Williams comes out swinging, building a fire under Woody Shaw's "Zoltan" and dancing behind organist Jared Gold's romp on "Make Somebody Happy."

Ordering info: steeplechase.dk

Like Jimmy Smith, organist Reuben Wilson approaches his instrument like it's merely a means to an end. From a quicksilver "Scrapple From The Apple" to a slightly surreal "Streets Of Laredo," Wilson constantly finds interesting ways to express himself on *Azure Te (18th & Vine 1059; 63:41 ★★★★★)*. Saxophonist Kenny Garrett is equally creative in several key guest appearances, including sly Charlie Parker-meets-Johnny Cash quotes on "Laredo."

Ordering info: 18thandvinejazz.com

At the core of the organ trio's popularity is the yin and yang of bright-toned guitar and sternum-moving power of the B3, and Grant Green Jr. and Reuben Wilson are perfect foils on *The Godfathers Of Groove: 3 (18th & Vine 1061; 63:20 ★★★★★½)*. It doesn't hurt to have the estimable Bernard Purdie providing perfect counterpoint on drums. A skittery player who recalls Cornell Dupree more than his father, Green also delivers husky vocals on two overworked pop standards, but the instrumentals justifiably dominate.

DB

Ordering info: 18thandvinejazz.com

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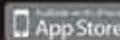
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John Ellis & Double-Wide *Puppets Mischief*

OBLIQSOUND 26
★★★★ ½

John Ellis' sophomore album with Double-Wide sets the pace for a hilarious, lyrical ride with "Okra & Tomatoes," whose almost tongue-in-cheek rhythm calls to mind the sputtering of a motor on an old, rickety carousel.

In fact, the track is an engine for what follows: a series of highly narrative original compositions that conjure up images of carnival grounds and seem to tell the stories of the off-beat characters who inhabit them.

The vibe flows from creepy ("Carousel") to pensive ("Dewey Dah") to triumphant ("This Too Shall Pass"), as the band patiently builds and creatively deconstructs melodic ideas against the backdrop of a steady groove.

And when Ellis shows his New Orleans roots on tracks like "Fauxfessor," the band's full-time Northerners have no trouble stepping up to the balance of soulfulness—which Gregoire Maret seems to bleed—and a smart-alecky silliness that's demanded by Ellis' compositions.

Meanwhile, performances by the swamp-based backbone of Double-Wide border on rhapsodic. Brian Coogan's nimble Hammond work shifts personae like gears, playing the part of the eerie amusement ride one minute and underscoring Ellis' emotional tenor the next, as Matt Perrine's sousaphone holds down a dexterous bottom line.

Ultimately, each artist handles his own part with such individuality that you can almost see the characters develop within the changes, like the superhero represented by Jason Marsalis' staggeringly mathematic drum-and-clap sequence on "Heroes de Accion."

As in any good narrative, the lighthearted moments here are finally played out by their more dramatic counterpoints.

—Jennifer Odell

Puppets Mischief: Okra & Tomatoes; Fauxfessor; Dewey Dah; Puppets Mischief; Carousel; Dublinland Carousel; Chorale; Heroes De Accion; This Too Shall Pass. (61:45)
Personnel: John Ellis, saxophone, bass clarinet; Matt Perrine, sousaphone; Jason Marsalis, drums; Brian Coogan, Organ; Gregoire Maret, harmonica; Alan Ferber, trombone.
Ordering info: obliqsound.com

Blues | BY FRANK-JOHN HADLEY



The Holmes Brothers: Soulfully intertwined

Right and Restless Voices

The Holmes Brothers: *Feed My Soul* (Alligator 4933; 49:43 ★★★) Sure as night follows day, Sherman and Wendell Holmes (now cancer-free) and Popsy Dixon still embrace the same musical vision of intertwined r&b, blues, soul, gospel and '50s rock that has guided them since the band started in 1980. On an album produced by camp follower Joan Osborne, the natural grace of Holmes' music keeps such a high level that it's OK to overlook the wear 'n' tear in Sherman's and Wendell's lead singing. Three-part harmonies, as always, fill the air as heavenly blessings. But for a pure gospel song, they could have done better than their songwriting manager's "Take Me Away."

Ordering info: alligator.com

Peter Karp & Sue Foley: *He Said, She Said* (Blind Pig 5132; 50:03 ★★★) Not the "genius" and "future of the blues" some magazines claim for him, Karp is a journeyman who teams here with veteran blues performer Foley for friendly roots music better suited for coffeehouses than barrooms. In band settings, the pair's vocals, guitars and songs on road life reflect a wry acceptance, more or less, of what's come their way. Adding harmonica and horns, Karp's "Mm Hmm" makes a particularly good impression.

Ordering info: blindpigrecords.com

Catfish Kray Blues Band: *Splash* (Circle 504; 55:39 ★★★) Active in Denver the past three decades, Albert Collins-inspired guitarist Kray stretches the blues genre past the usual array of associations by employing jazz-trained singer Jesse Garland and capable horn soloists. Related to *Wizard Of Oz's* Dorothy and Liza Minnelli, Garland projects her built-in siren in gender-asserting songs borrowed from Shemekia Copeland and Lavay Smith. Kray's most potent lines come on his slow eight-minute slam at the boss, "Quittin' Time Blues." There, too, he effectively masks his singing as a strop-throated rasp.

Ordering info: catfishkrayband.com

Gary Lucas & Dean Bowman: *Chase The Devil* (Knitting Factory 1100; 44:08 ★★★) The curious duo of New York-based singer Bowman and ex-Captain Beefheart guitarist Lucas outpours energy and sincerity in empathic meetings that inscrutably integrate conventional blues with abstract expression on a dozen faith-based songs, including Reverend Gary Davis spirituals and 18th century mystic-poet William Blake's "Jerusalem." Anyone unfamiliar with Bowman may be cowed at first by his great big voice, but by all means hang in there.

Ordering info: knittingfactory.com

Nick Moss: *Privileged* (Blue Bella 1014; 61:31 ★★★) At risk of irritating blues right-wingers, Moss makes a convincing case for the rightness of his decision to swerve from the conventional blues of his first seven albums into the blues-rock realm introduced by young Brits and Americans years ago. On originals, rock songs and makeovers of Chicago blues standards, he sings with confidence and heats up his guitar with enough imagination to transcend mimicry of influencers Jimi Hendrix, Eric Clapton, Duane Allman. "Bolognious Funk" carries on as a blameless guitar bloodbath. Tired song choice: Cream's "Politician."

Ordering info: bluebellarecords.com

Delta Moon: *Hell Bound Train* (Red Parlor 015; 39:49 ★★★) This Atlanta-based roots rock band, a past winner of the International Blues Challenge, has several things going for it. The slide guitars of Tom Gray and Mark Johnson impressively slash or wend through textural thickets of rhythm. Gray's a top-grade songwriter, spinning memorable melodies and lyrics about restlessness and loneliness that he sings with shadowy vividness. Beyond all their bluesy insinuations, Delta Moon shows an unaffected, honest appreciation of the blues canon when hitting all the right notes of the Fred McDowell masterpiece "You Got To Move."

Ordering info: redparlor.com

DB

Absolute Ensemble Absolute Zawinul

SUNNYSIDE 1257

★★★★★

For fans of the late Joe Zawinul's late-period music, *Absolute Zawinul* will surely satisfy. Over eight tracks, it brims with the same kind of energy that typified the keyboardist/composer/bandleader's effervescent style as he came to embrace so-called world music idioms more and more. Perhaps the reason why the Absolute Ensemble's *Absolute Zawinul* sounds so much like its inspiration is because he played a major role in this, his last studio recording.

A tribute album, *Absolute Zawinul* is performed by Estonian-born conductor Kristjan Järvi's aggregate, born in 1993 New York and known for its highly eclectic approaches to all things musical. The idea for the project was hatched in 2004 when Järvi met Zawinul; they ended up performing together as well. The design was to focus on the man and his music as they both existed then, not a greatest hits recreation stretching back to his Weather Report days and beyond. Indeed, Zawinul had more than a hand in its creation, a creation performed not

The *Absolute Zawinul* Project was conceived in 2004 filled with only the greatest admiration: I approached Joe at Birdland; his Jazz club in Vienna in the hope of talking him into a collaboration. It was clear that Joe needed some convincing as 72 years old he wanted to commit to only a few very special projects. Over the next few months I met with Joe at the Hilton (where he resided in Vienna) several times to discuss the possibility. Joe's wish was that the Absolute Zawinul project be about the musician he had become not the musician he was thirty-something years before. He was adamant that he did not want to hear more Birdland arrangements and Weather Report tunes. The collaboration was to explore some of the seven hundred-odd works Zawinul had composed but not yet realized. Joe did want to hear some of his favorite old tunes but in an entirely new way. Absolute arranger Gene Pritsker worked painstakingly to notate the complex and incoherently subtle improvisations Joe had laid down over the years. After over a year of sucking it up to play alongside Joe, what was to become one of the most deeply moving and powerful experiences of our lives certainly for Absolute Ensemble and for all of the people involved in this process. Joe became our lifeline to the spirit that had been somewhere within me waiting to be around yet one never with it. I will never forget the first rehearsal Joe had me play "The Peasant" and after-
Absolute Ensemble
Joe Zawinul
Kristjan Järvi

just with the Ensemble but with members of Zawinul's last Syndicate band.

The music is incredibly varied, evoking musical stories from the titles alone but obviously more from the songs' various incarnations. Arranged by Gene Pritsker with his notation of melodies and Zawinul improvisations, these songs come across as lively classical music, reflecting everything from the composer's vivid, colorful imagination and musical world. "Bimoya"’s joyful bounce, the mysterious allusions with "Great Empire," the soft lines of "Peace," the mesmerizing counter lines with

horns (and banjo) on the dervish-like "The Peasant," the heartfelt, wistful electronics with slowly emerging orchestra with "Ballad For Two Musicians"—these are indications of the variety of moods and settings that can be heard on this disc. There are the familiar world-music rhythmic counterpoints, Zawinul's vocoder/wordless vocals, the blends that come from using both strings and synthesizers.

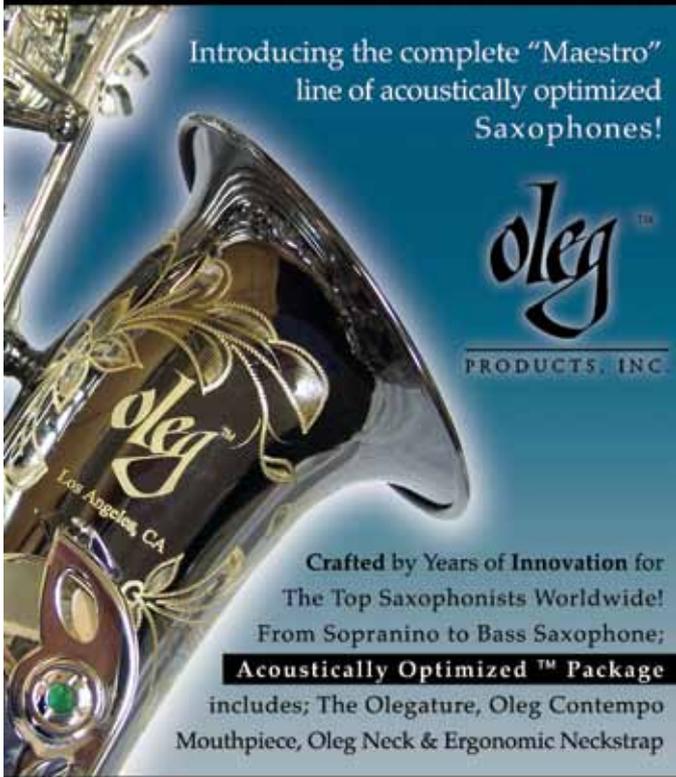
Think of *Absolute Zawinul*, the group's fourth release, as the broad palette for Joe Zawinul's music at the end of his life (his asked-for legacy), a fleshing out what was always there, it seemed, on a grand scale, intimated from the beginning every time he took to dabbling with this keyboard, and then that keyboard, and then yet another. Note: In addition to the music here, there's an 11-minute documentary available on the making of the album.

—John Ephland

Absolute Zawinul: Bimoya; Sultan, Great Empire; Peace; Good Day; The Peasant; Ballad For Two Musicians; Ice Pick Willy, (59:52)
Personnel: Kristjan Järvi, conductor; Joe Zawinul, composer, keyboards, vocoder; Gene Pritsker, arranger; Vesselin Gellev, Neela de Fonseka, Eddie Venegas, Gregor Huebner, violin; Edmundo Ramirez, viola; Michael Block, cello; Mat Fieldes, acoustic and electric bass; Jay Elfenbein, acoustic and electric bass; Hayley Melitta Reid, flute, piccolo; Keve Wilson, oboe, English Horn; Michio Suzuki, clarinet, saxophone; Marianne Gythfeldt, clarinet; Martin Kuuskmann, bassoon; Damian Primis, contrabassoon; Charles Porter, trumpet; Ann Ellsworth, horn; Michael Seltzer, trombone; Damian Bassman, drums, percussion; Pablo Rieppi, percussion; John Ostrowski, percussion; Matt Herskowitz, piano, keyboard; Gene Pritsker, electric guitar; Sabine Kabongo, vocals; Alegre Correa, guitar, vocals; Aziz Sahmaoui, percussion, vocals, gumbi; Jorge Bezerra, percussion; Paco Sery, drums, percussion, kalimba; Linley Marthe, electric bass.
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Michael Musillami Trio
Old Tea

PLAYSCAPE 091009
★★★★

Guitarist Michael Musillami, bassist Joe Fonda and drummer George Schuller have long been one of the most tightly knit trios. But on *Old Tea*, they attain a new level of closeness. Recorded following the suicide of the leader's son, the album personifies support system. Drawing positive emotion and bounding energy from each other at a difficult time, the musicians sidestep sentimentality to deliver a moving and sometimes overpowering celebration of "a beautiful, brilliant kid."

Musillami is one of the most accessible thinking-man's guitarists. Whether he's waxing lyrical with his richly resonant sound and sculpted lines or charging into the open field with springing and vaulting rhythmic patterns, there is a soulful immediacy to his playing. His mind's eye is as good as his ear: Named after a special Chinese oolong he and his son enjoyed, the title song unfolds like an aural slide show—scenes from a life—in proceeding from plucky opening through meditative passage to scrappy exchanges between Musillami and Fonda.

The entirety of *Old Tea* plays like an extended suite, maintaining its momentum through regular shifts in pacing and tone. It's a testament to the nearly hourlong album's consummate sense of flow that when it concludes with the spiritually assuring "Three Hundred Plus," featuring Fonda on flute, you may be surprised it's over.

—Lloyd Sachs

Old Tea: Introduction; Old Tea; Shiner At Rocky's; The Binary Smirk (drum interlude); 'King Alok; Kitchen Tribute (collective interlude); Evy-Boy; A True Original; Jameson #30 (bass interlude); Umbrella Top ... That's How I Roll; Three Hundred Plus. (54:32)
Personnel: Michael Musillami, guitar; Joe Fonda, bass, flute; George Schuller, drums.
Ordering info: playscape-recordings.com



Frank Kimbrough
Rumors

PALMETTO 2141
★★★★½

Made on the fly when Frank Kimbrough was offered four hours in a New York studio—the next day—and the pianist was able to round up two of his favorite accompanists, *Rumors* has the free and easy quality you might expect. But even with little time to prepare, Kimbrough, bassist Masa Kamaguchi and drummer Jeff Hirshfield draw from the songs an affecting lived-in quality—the hallmark of musicians who trust as well as know each other on a deep level.

A master at making penetrating statements with small, informal gestures, Kimbrough is in a characteristically reflective state. "TMI," a loosely improvised piece that moves surely but unpredictably towards its destination, as if guided by a liberated GPS, is dappled with a bluesiness passed down by Ornette Coleman through Paul Bley. "Sure As We're Here" processes one of those bright, '60s-defining postbop melodies of Andrew Hill's, while "For Andrew" honors that legend in sparer, devout terms. On the lyrically straightahead "Hope," kissed by Hirshfield's whispery playing, the trio recalls the interactive finery of Bill Evans' legendary threesome.

Mostly, though, *Rumors* finds Kimbrough being Kimbrough. With Kamaguchi's resonant, hard-edged sound and Hirshfield's agile attack, the trio leaves a bold imprint even when the name of the game is underplay.

—Lloyd Sachs

Rumors: Six; TMI; Hope; Rumors; Sure As We're Here; Forsythia; Over; For Andrew. (53:35)
Personnel: Frank Kimbrough, piano; Masa Kamaguchi, double bass; Jeff Hirshfield, drums.
Ordering info: palmetto-records.com



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Vintage African Hypnotists

Central and West African musicians have long harbored deep affinity for the music of Cuba, which took so much of its rhythmic DNA from Africa in the first place. **Africa Boogaloo: The Latinization Of West Africa (Honest Jon's 41; 55:22 ★★★★★)** looks at numerous manifestations of that musical love from the '60s and '70s. There are examples from leading lights like Senegal's Orchestra Baobab, whose mix of Mande tradition and clave grooves left no doubt about its inspiration, and Congo's Franco & OK Jazz, which helped pioneer the popular and important synthesis known as soukous. Some cuts traffic blatantly in Caribbean sounds, like the title track from Le Grand Kalle and Manu Dibango, while others are more integrated.

Ordering info: honestjons.com

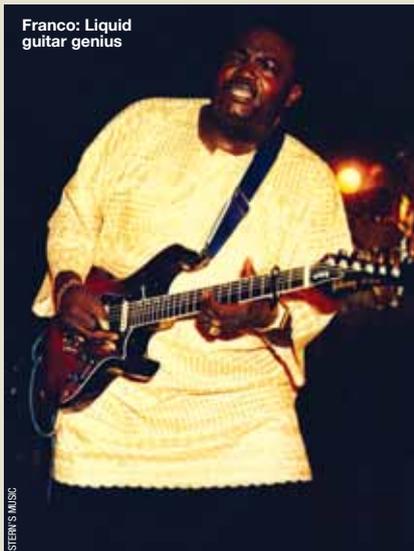
Vintage Baobab recordings have been resurfacing steadily for years, and the excellent **La Belle Epoque (Syllart 361; 73:18/76:09 ★★★★★)** delivers two more superb vintage sessions. The first disc was cut live in 1971 at the club Baobab called its home as they were starting to hit their stride—expanding their Cuban-inspired sounds to include a greater array of African influences, from the Congolese flavors in Barthelemy Attisso's inventive guitar work to the Mande elements in the saxophone playing of Issa Cissokho. Yet the great Adoulaye M'boup's transcendent vocals steal the show. The second disc, cut six years later, captures the group at its peak, surviving M'boup's death three years earlier, and coming back with an even stronger attack.

Ordering info: sternsmusic.com

No country in Africa did more with Cuban influences than the Congo, and brilliant bandleader and guitarist Franco Luambo Makiadi oversaw and contributed to countless changes in Congolese Rumba between the '50s and his death in 1989. **Francophonie Vol. 2 (Sterns 3046-47; 78:04/70:20 ★★★★★)** isn't flawless, as some of Franco's later recordings veered toward formula and chintzy electronics, but this is still another essential portrait of his mighty Le TPOK Jazz. Liquid guitars cascaded over shimmering grooves, with full-blooded horn sections thickening some of the tracks, recorded between 1980-'88. Even toward the end of his life Franco remained a prolific, skilled composer and a startlingly original and resourceful guitarist—on these extended tracks he gets to improvise at length.

Ordering info: sternsmusic.com

New York-Addis-London: The Story Of Ethio Jazz 1965-1975 (Strut 051; 76:56 ★★★★★) surveys the greatest accomplishments of vibist, composer and arranger Mu-



Franco: Liquid guitar genius

STERN'S MUSIC

latu Astatke, the first Ethiopian musician to study in the West and to wed jazz elements with traditional sounds of Addis Ababa. The earliest material here was cut in New York with musicians from Puerto Rico, revealing a heavy Caribbean influence, but after returning home from the U.S. in 1969, Astatke dug into native sounds, developing distinctive pentatonic funk (popularized in the Ethiopiques CD series). He teamed up with producer Ahma Eshete, and together they cut dozens of classic records behind an array of singers and making their own instrumental discs.

Ordering info: strut-records.com

With the fourth stellar reissue of Benin's mighty Orchestre Poly-Rythmo de Cotonou, **Echos Hypnotiques (Analog Africa 66; 78:25 ★★★★★)**, the band's sublime stylistic range is practically sui generis. The first of those records focused on their interest in Cuban sounds, while this latest gem—15 tracks cut for the Albarika Store label between 1969-'79—brings the funk in a serious way. Providing much of the deep propulsion are local vodoun grooves and some of the most searing, psychedelic electric guitar in West African history. As with all of the label's releases, the packaging is first-rate with extensive liner notes and rare photos.

Ordering info: analogafrica.blogspot.com

Ghana Special: Modern Highlife, Afro-Sounds & Ghanaian Blues 1968-'81 (Soundway 16; 68:58/74:20 ★★★★★) serves up a killer complement to this essential label's Ghanaian funk compilations, exhuming a sprawling variety of rhythmically tensile styles with a harder edge. Afrobeat, rock, blues, Afro-Cuban and calypso are palpable, but the real pleasure is the luxurious range—Ghana was one of Africa's first democracies and there's an indelible sense of pride, freedom and discovery bubbling through these joyous tracks. **DB**

Ordering info: soundwayrecords.com



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The ten selections on this CD highlight Aaron and company's poetic and pulsating jazz travels. Save for the labyrinthine performances of Cuban composer Pablo Milanes' Afro-Latin standard "Cancion por La Unidad Latino Americana," the leader's equally Latintinged burner, "The Rules," and the "Love Supreme"-like "Aze's Blues," all of which feature Turner's snaky Warne Marsh-meets-John Coltrane solos, the rest of the CD features Goldberg's terrific triad.

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Giuseppi Logan Quintet *Giuseppi Logan Quintet*

TOMPKINS SQUARE 2325

★★★

Eight years ago, bassist Henry Grimes re-emerged from decades of oblivion and now he's active eminence grise on the free-jazz scene. Following in his footsteps is saxophonist Giuseppi Logan, missing in action for nearly four decades. He cut two bracing albums for ESP-Disk in the mid-'60s—his debut also introduced the world to heavy talents like drummer Milford Graves and pianist Don Pullen—and other than a few sideman dates with Patty Waters and Roswell Rudd, his recording career ceased in 1966; he continued to perform in New York over the next half-decade, but then he virtually vanished.

Logan was rediscovered while busking for change in Tompkins Square Park—which makes this perfect label to release his comeback—in 2008, and while his reappearance hasn't yet been as fruitful as Grimes' return, he is playing again, and he's just released his first record in 45 years. He's joined here by old cohorts Dave Burrell and Warren Smith, along with a couple of younger disciples. The album mixes some new originals with a handful of standards, and the arrangements, which swing elegantly, definitely push the music toward a brisk freebop sound, in contrast to the more metrically radical sound of his earlier work.

The opener, "Steppin'," is clearly an homage to Coltrane's "Giant Steps"; not exactly



the comeback shot you'd expect from such a maverick, and as he nears 75 Logan has some problems with intonation. But there's a heartening tenderness and warmth to his playing—as if the opportunity to make music again has filled him with emotion—that's impossible to deny, and although the group was assembled specifically for the date, there's a strong sense of empathy across the board. The album closes with a strange vocal piece called "Love Me Tonight," where Logan's beaten-down voice evokes a mixture of vulnerability and pathos, but there's something inspiring about his decision to lay it all out, warts and all.

—Peter Margasak

Giuseppi Logan Quintet: Steppin'; Around; Modes; Over The Rainbow; Bop Dues; Blue Moon; Freddie Freeloader; Love Me Tonight. (44:51)

Personnel: Giuseppi Logan, saxophone, piano (6, 8); Dave Burrell, piano; Francois Grillot, bass; Matt Lavelle, trumpet, bass clarinet; Warren Smith, drums.

Ordering info: tompinkssquare.com

Pablo Méndez & Mezcla *I'll See You In Cuba*

ZOHO 201001

★★

Guitarist Pablo Méndez calls his band Mezcla, which in Spanish means mixture, and that's precisely what he delivers on *I'll See You In Cuba*. But unfortunately this mixture often fails to blend, resulting in an album that's more a collage than a cohesive whole.

The album runs the gamut from Irving Berlin to Thelonious Monk to driving Cuban fusion jazz that's reminiscent of Irakere. It starts strong with "Big Brecker," a feature for Orlando Sánchez's frantic tenor soloing over boiling percussion. Had the record continued in this vein it would have killed, but it changes directions often. Berlin's "I'll See You In C.U.B.A." is sung in a cabaret style and sticks out. The short vocals on "El Médico De Los Pianos" and "Round Midnight" are unexpected and seem superfluous.

The album's strongest parts are the solos. Sánchez adds his energetic, raw and edgy tenor to the four pieces he wrote. Trumpeter Máyquel González, who wrote the 11-minute episodic



opus "Homenaje A Afro Cuba," complements Sánchez nicely with a slightly more melodic style, and flautist Magela Herrera shows her ability to build a solo on three cuts. Méndez's solo on "Round Midnight" perfectly fits the tune's context, and percussionist Octavio Rodríguez shines during the

percussion break on "Homenaje." *I'll See You In Cuba* sometimes ventures into smooth Latin fusion territory (such as on "El Médico" and "Chucho's Blues")—not my bag, though some listeners will surely enjoy the album. Méndez and Mezcla's members are great musicians and play well throughout; I just don't understand or agree with some of their musical choices.

—Chris Robinson

I'll See You In Cuba: Big Brecker; ¿Quién Tiene Ritmo?; El Médico De Los Pianos (For Benjamin Trouhaft); I'll See You In C.U.B.A.; Chichoy's Blues; Oslo; Chucho's Blues; Round Midnight; Homenaje A Afro Cuba; Chichoy's 'Son.' (63:18)

Personnel: Pablo Méndez, guitar, vocals; Magela Herrera, flute, vocals, piano (1, 4, 8); Octavio Rodríguez, percussion; Máyquel González, trumpet, flugelhorn; Orlando Sánchez, tenor saxophone, piano (1, 5, 6, 7); Néstor Rodríguez, tenor saxophone (3, 9); Ruy Adrián López-Nussa, drums (1, 3, 6); Oliver Valdés, drums (5, 7); Renier Mendoza, drums (4, 8, 9); Ernesto Hermida, bass (1, 2, 3, 5, 7); José Hermida, bass (4, 6, 8, 9); Alejandro Vargas, piano (9); José Luis Pacheco, piano (7); Roberto García, flugelhorn (9); Samuel Formeli, timbales (2); Julio Noroña, guiro (2); "Las Elías," vocals (2, 3, 8).

Ordering info: zohomusic.com

A Deep Gaze At Bing's Wink

Mosaic Records, which has never been shy about serving the under-served artist, takes its mission to a new level in *The Bing Crosby CBS Radio Recordings (1954-56)* (Mosaic MD7-245; 57:09/56:38/53:48/65:08/56:54/58:39/61:55 ★★★★★). Coming from a company known for its commitment to jazz, this may seem like an anomaly. But Mosaic's instincts were correct. This is perhaps the purest and least adulterated glimpse in decades into the workings of an instinctive but often subtle jazz singer.

Most of the material will be new to the issued Crosby discography. Between Nov. 22, 1954, and Dec. 28, 1956, Crosby adopted an unusually modest, almost spartan, radio format for a star of his stature: no audience, no orchestra, no guest stars. It was just 15 minutes of songs and patter, all pre-recorded and accompanied only by pianist Buddy Cole and his trio. The inspiration may have been the hugely successful five-LP box set issued by Decca in the summer of 1954—*Bing: A Musical Autobiography*—in which Crosby revisited about 50 of his early hits using only the Cole group for support and providing a cozy, anecdotal commentary along the way. The result was a warm, unusually relaxed, fireside intimacy—perfect for radio and precisely the feel Crosby achieved in this series.

Beginning in November 1954 he began stockpiling tunes that could be edited into the programs. Every couple of months he'd bank another dozen or so until after 15 sessions he accumulated the 160 songs in this collection. About 12 tunes from the CBS library were skimmed off for a Decca LP in 1957. Thirty years later, 74 of the songs were issued in England, but sweetened with echo and overdubbed orchestrations. Mosaic offers the complete library with its original simplicity intact.

With so much to record in such a limited time, a format took hold: vocal chorus, a split instrumental interlude, and back to Crosby. Some bear the light footprint of an arrangement; others seem little more than head sketches, though the percussion hijinks on "You're Driving Me Crazy" and "Chinatown" are pure kitsch. The pace was fast, efficient and, according to Gary Giddins' notes, stood still for almost no second takes. That Crosby could knock off as many a 17 titles in one session makes him something akin to an Art Tatum among vocalists. The only sour note is slight



Bing Crosby: Sparse and lively

DOWNBEAT ARCHIVES

but ironic—Cole's tendency to sweeten the mix by overdubbing light organ backgrounds into his otherwise tidy piano accompaniments.

At 51, Crosby's extraordinary baritone rolls over the livelier tempos with a blithe grace. His way of letting a note arch or dip from the natural, bending it sharp or flat, is the subtle work of a pure musician who merely happened to be a singer.

It's an instinct that cuts two ways. On ballads like "I've Got A Crush On You" or "I Can't Get Started," Crosby delivers letter-perfect readings, but never inhabits the sense of emotional rejection the lyrics proscribe. Frank Sinatra could do those songs and make you believe he was singing about himself. But Crosby was too whimsical a performer to let his life be mirrored in a torch song. On the other hand, on lighter material such as "Honeysuckle Rose" or "Avalon" where words count differently, he grabs a note and slides the pitch playfully from one side to the other in the way a jazz musician would manipulate intonation. Or on a simple blues like "I Almost Lost My Mind," he walks through it all with one long, witty wink. The treat in hearing Crosby in such a simple context is that there is nothing to filter or inhibit the ease and soft curves of his phrasing.

For a singer who was still at the top of his game in the '50s, it's curious that Crosby never really found a consistent footing in the LP era. The music here would probably have been too laid-back to compete with the groundbreaking Sinatra-Nelson Riddle productions on Capitol. But now, this body of work does Crosby no less honor that Sinatra's masterworks do him.

DB

Ordering info: mosaicrecords.com



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DECCA B0014138

★★★★★

Hype is a funny thing. Even when an artist sweeps away listeners with endless accolades and the attendant publicity, the undertow can be dangerous, as some people automatically flee from any such approaching tidal wave.

It would be a mistake to react that way to precocious Montreal singer Nikki Yanofsky, who already has a gold-selling live CD/DVD, Juno nominations, and performances at the Vancouver 2010 Olympics and major festivals on her resume. Why? Because Yanofsky, 16, for her debut studio disc demonstrates that she's the real thing, the anti-American Idol—a bona-fide young jazz vocalist with serious technical chops, powerful pipes, dead-on pitch, range that lets her traverse as many octaves as she wants, real musicality, and a genuine feel for scat singing informed by her love for Ella Fitzgerald.

Nikki, produced by pop heavy-hitters Phil Ramone (Ray Charles, Frank Sinatra) and Jesse Harris (Norah Jones), has the singer joined by a high-energy big band for a varied set including several smartly recalibrated standards. For a punchy version of "Take The 'A' Train," she incorporates new lyrics referencing recent Broad-



way musicals, and on a sultry, then zippy "I Got Rhythm," she turns in impressive scatting, including some speedy lines in unison with the sax section. A bluesy groove anchors Yanofsky's soulful belting on "God Bless The Child," which references the Blood, Sweat & Tears version, and a bright take on "On The Sunny Side Of The Street" is book-ended with the muscular riff from Led Zeppelin's "Fool In The Rain."

There are several bids for pop chart success here, including the chugging, r&b-tinted, silky smooth "Cool My Heels" and pretty acoustic ballad "For Another Day," both co-written by Yanofsky with Harris and Ron Sexsmith. But the even money is on a brilliant jazz career. Who needs a crossover hit?
—Philip Booth

Nikki: Take The "A" Train; Never Make It On Time; I Got Rhythm; For Another Day; God Bless The Child; Cool My Heels; You'll Have To Swing It (Mr. Paganini); Bienvenue Dans Ma Vie; First Lady; On The Sunny Side Of The Street/Fool In The Rain; Grey Skies; Try Try Try; Over The Rainbow. (46:32)

Personnel: Nikki Yanofsky, vocals; Larry Goldings, Henry Hey, John Sadowy, Paul Shrofel, piano; Goldings, Hey, Shrofel, Robert Goldfarb, organ; Goldings, glockenspiel; Andy Dacoulis, Jesse Harris, Jim Oblon, Richard White, guitar; Rob Fahie, Zev Katz, Tim Luntzel, bass; Richard Irwin, Geoffrey Lang, Shawn Pelton, drums; Mauro Refosco, percussion, marimba; Jocelyn Couture, Ron DiLauro, Michael Leonhart, trumpet; Leonhart, flugelhorn; Serge Arseneault, Clark Gayton, Dave Grott, trombone; Gayton, tuba, euphonium; Pat Vetter, alto saxophone; Vetter, Richard Beaudet, Chris Cheek, tenor saxophone; Cheek, Jean Frechette, baritone saxophone; Frechette, bass clarinet; Nathalie Bonin, first violin; Valerie Belzile, second violin; Veronique Potvin, viola; Dave Eggar, Christine Giguere, cello.

Ordering info: deccarecords-us.com

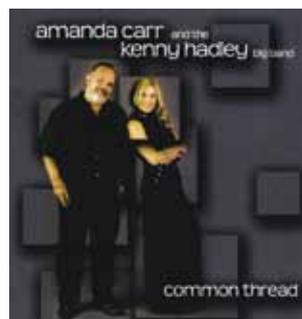
Amanda Carr and the Kenny Hadley Big Band Common Thread

OMS 1226

★★★★½

This Boston-area big band is staffed with fine players and classy arrangers. Adi Yeshaya's chart sets up the opener with a latin feel, breaking to hard swinging bass when the vocal enters, ending with a nicely paced ritard. Hadley is a no-nonsense big band drummer (with a predilection for mallets a la Vernel Fournier); Carr is an understated singer who reminds somewhat of Julie London with the clear diction of Annie Ross, without being as sultry or as bombastic, either.

The songs are cherry-picked by someone with perspective. Although Carr confesses no initial desire to sing standards—"It would be like driving my parents' station wagon"—her singer mother got her hooked after asking her to sub on a big band gig 16 years ago. Subsequently, Carr has worked with the repertory bands of Artie Shaw, Harry James and Glenn Miller, and this is her fifth self-release. Hadley, who revived his big band especially for this date, hired ar-



ranger Richard Lowell—a veteran of Stan Kenton, Buddy Rich and Bob Freedman, who created settings for Diane Reeves and Lena Horne—to frame Carr's voice.

Cute Freedman horn lines dryly respond to Carr's reading of "They All Laughed." Carr's cautionary savvy makes "I Could Have Told You" effecting and plausible; she rarely breaks loose, preferring the insouciant storytelling of a Peggy Lee, though the personal tragedy touched on in the liner notes suggests undercurrents to "The End Of A Love Affair." The band are superbly professional, with a nice feature for trombonist Jeff Galindo and altoist Marc Phaneuf on "Broadway," buoyant bop backdrops on "Just You, Just Me" and juicy old-school tenor solos from Arnie Krakowsky.
—Michael Jackson

Common Thread: It's A Big Wide Wonderful World; They All Laughed; Something Wonderful Happens In Summer; Don'tcha Go 'Way Mad; Time On My Hands; Broadway; I Understand; There's A Small Hotel; Just You, Just Me; I Could Have Told You; The Song Is Ended; I Waited For You; How Am I To Know; No Moon At All; The End Of The Love Affair. (65:53)

Personnel: Kenny Hadley, drums; John Wilkins, guitar; Bronck Suchanek, bass; Dave Chapman, soprano sax, alto sax, clarinet; Mark Pinto, alto sax, flute, clarinet (1, 3, 4, 5, 8-14); Marc Phaneuf, alto sax, flute, clarinet (2, 6, 7, 15); Jerry Vejmla, tenor sax, flute, clarinet; Arnie Krakowsky, tenor sax, clarinet; Ken Reid, baritone sax, bass clarinet; Jeff Galindo, Jon Garniss, George Murphy, Tim Kelly, trombones; Rick Hammett, Lin Biviano; Scott DeOgburn, Pat Stout, trumpets and flugelorns; Amanda Carr, vocals.

Ordering info: originalmusic.com

Brad Dutz Quartet
Whimsical
Excursion Boats

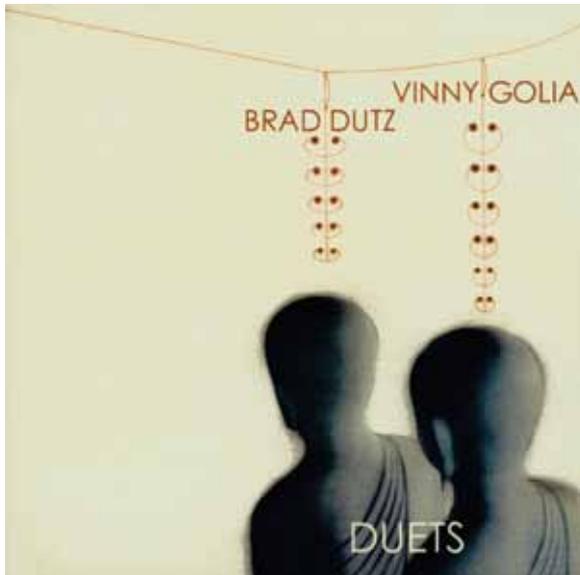
(SELF-RELEASE)
 ★★ ★ 1/2

Brad Dutz & Vinny Golia
Duets

8 WINDS 022
 ★★ ★ 1/2

Dutz is known as a first-call mallet- and hand-percussionist in the Los Angeles recording studios, and for his work in Gordon Goodwin's swinging Big Phat Band. He's also an idiosyncratic composer of long standing who utilizes obscure instruments and unconventional resonant objects in his work. His music is quirky, witty, well considered, intimate and dynamic. While comparisons with Harry Partch will be inevitable, Dutz displays lyricism and—in some places—an almost classical regard for form and order. Harmonic resourcefulness and compositional sweep show that Dutz is a lot more than just a pot-banger.

The quartet album is a fine example of an improvising chamber group. Dutz's writing is



very specific and contrapuntal; he apportions the various instrumental lines and parts so that they interconnect, yet there always seems to be wiggle room within the piece. Dutz knows how to use silence to his advantage. Paul Sherman's oboe typically traces the melodic contour of a given number, yet follow the "secondary" parts with your ear and you'll see how thorough of a writer Dutz is.

If Dutz subordinates his solo profile in the

ensemble disc, he trades epigrams, jocularities, flurries, thrusts and parries in his largely improvised duets with reed omnivore Vinny Golia. These are miniatures, and motifs seem to emerge from the instrumentation. Golia hits some held multiphonics while Dutz tinkers on bowls and variable-pitch drums on "Korea." The bagpipe drone of "Rumors" turns the lead over to the hand drums. The glass marimba shimmer and the bass sax rumble of Dutz's "Vamps" delightfully suggest things otherworldly. If Esquivel, Moondog and Partch had Dutz in their respective bands, 20th Century outsider composition might have been even more intriguing.

—Kirk Silsbee

Whimsical Excursion Boats: Blatant Disregard For Lamb And Pork; Kakogawa 1 Blakiston Owl; Kakogawa 11 Macaque; Datang Makes One Third Of The World's Socks; Kakogawa 5 Kappa; Kakogawa Spidercrab; Tribute To Masakazu Yoshizawa; Kakogawa 3 Lantern Shark; Kakogawa 7 Serow; Intricacy Of Prairie Life; Kakogawa 8 Loggerhead Turtle; Kakogawa 9 Hondo Stoat; Kakogawa 6 Chimera; Whimsical Excursion Boats. (66:10)

Personnel: Jim Sullivan, clarinets; Paul Sherman, oboe, English horn; Rachee Arnold, cello; Brad Dutz, xylo-marimba, slate marimba, vibes.

Ordering info: braddutz.com

Duets: Nine Eight In Hungary; Cap Wearer From Scotland; Tenors In Korea; Swimming Risk In China; Rumors Of Confirmation; Indigent Coriander; Vamps And Interruptions; Sordidly Sustained; Sofia To The Black Sea; Quackery; Swing'in Sam Tribute; Save The Scrap Metal Organ; The Vocalist Failed To Appear; Something About Fish. (68:38)

Personnel: Brad Dutz, vibes, glass marimba, steel drum, bongos, timbale, jungle snare, tar, hadjira, canbouline, waterphone, bowed crotales, tuned gongs, cajon, berimbau, Korean squeeze drum, bones, cymbals, shakers, spinners, whistles, pandeiro, riq, music boxes, Rawcliffe clay bowls, tarine; Vinny Golia, tenor and bass saxophones, saxello, contrabass clarinet, Turkish ney and kaval, flutes, Chinese sheng, Mediterranean bagpipes, djuragaida, shakuhachi.

Ordering info: braddutz.com

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Bassekou Kouyate and Ngoni Ba
I Speak Fula

NEXT AMBIANCE/SUB POP 72001
★★★★½

Mali's Bassekou Kouyate makes going against the grain seem like a piece of cake, but he's been doing it since he was teenager, working as a musician at the storied music club in Bamako's rail station. He's a master of the ngonni, a brittle-sounding



plucked lute that's one of the true predecessors of the banjo. He's spent most of his career as a valued sideman, most notably with kora player Toumani Diabaté, but when he formed his own project he rejected orthodoxy with a lineup led by four different-sized and pitched ngonnis, rounded out by calabash

percussion.

His excellent second album *I Speak Fula* confounds expectations again by turning up

on the famous Seattle indie rock label Sub Pop. Although a number of high-profile guests make cameos—Diabaté, Vieux Farka Toure and Kassy Mady Diabate among them—Ngoni Ba thrives on its own, delivering a rich, kaleidoscopic sound despite its limited instrumental palette, nailing both high-octane dance grooves and cascading, meditative fare.

—Peter Margasak

I Speak Fula: I Speak Fula; Jamana Be Diya; Musow (For Our Women); Torin Torin; Bambugu Blues; Amy; Saro; Ladon; Tineni; Falani; Moustapha. (56:17)

Personnel: Bassekou Kouyate, ngonni solo, ngoniba; Amy Sacko, lead vocals, chorus; Omar Barou Kouyate, medium ngonni; Fousseyni Kouyate, ngoniba; Moussa Bah, ngonni bass; Alou Coulibaly calabash, chorus; Moussa Sissoko yabara, tamani; Kasse Mady Diabaté, vocals (2); Vieux Farka Toure, electric guitar (5, 7); Toumani Diabaté, kora (2, 9); Harouna Samake, kamalengoni (3, 4); Zourmana Tereta, lead vocal, soku (6); Andra Kouyate, chorus, lead vocals (5); Mah Soumano, chorus; Baba Sissoko, dunun (7); Baba Diabaté, dunun (3); Jelimusoba, mpolon (11); Dramane Ze Konate, vocals, mpolon (bonus track).

Ordering info: subpop.com

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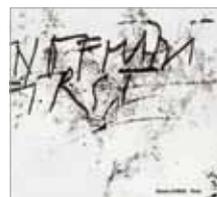
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Dawn of Midi
First

ACCRETIONS ALP 48
★★★★



With a pianist (Amino Belyamani), a bass player (Aakaash Israni) and a drummer (Qasim Naqvi) hailing from Morocco, India and Pakistan, respectively, Dawn of Midi creates expectations. But one would be hard-pressed to find obvious influences from the musical language of those three countries on the trio's intriguing debut. Western music definitely informs their rather uncompromising and abstract music. It should be added that *First* has little to do with a proper jazz piano trio. The only concession made to this format is having the piano assuming the lead role. It would even be more accurate to say that the piano really acts as a pivot and highly contributes to the band's cohesiveness. As both a percussive and string instrument it becomes the natural relay between the bass and the drums.

If the trio can be more easily associated with improvised music or contemporary classical than with jazz, its approach is quite ascetic and disciplined, and the mood is melancholy and pensive. Of course, there are moments of drama and tension-building usually introduced by a repetitious and insistent riff played by Belyamani. At all times there is momentum, and Naqvi's backdrop dominated by clangor, rattling and metallic sounds proves that the status quo is not on the group's agenda. Israni completes the picture with irregular lines or accents conveyed with a sturdy and woody tone. Despite the melodic snippets that come and go, the trio moves organically with a constant focus on shaping the sound—a sound that is alternately crystalline and opaque.

—Alain Drouot

First: Phases In Blue; Laura Lee; Civilization Of Mud And Amber; The Floor; Tale Of Two Worlds; One; Hindu Pedagogy; Annex; No Abhor; In Between. (52:40)

Personnel: Amino Belyamani, piano; Aakaash Israni, bass; Qasim Naqvi, percussion.

Ordering info: accretions.com



Nina Simone: Brilliance and rage

New Light on Nina Simone's Dark Legacy

It's been almost two decades since the release of *I Put A Spell On You*, Nina Simone's autobiographical collaboration with Stephen Cleary. And it's been seven years since her death from cancer. Still, her music and persona continue to fascinate, as evident by the recent release of CD boxed sets and performance DVDs. Nadine Cohodas' new biography, *Princess Noire* (Pantheon), offers yet another mesmerizing entry to Simone's everlasting legacy as the author explores the demons and drama that fuel divahood. Through interviews with family members, friends and other bandmates, the author gathers a wealth of information to portray Simone at her most majestic and malevolent. She also draws upon rare personal interviews, photographs and letters to give the reader a bird's-eye view into Simone's fascinating, if sometimes frightening, world.

During the '60s and '70s, it was often Simone's petulant demeanor that characterized her performances—sometimes upstaging her brilliance as a pianist, singer and songwriter even though she was turning out soon-to-be classics such as "Mississippi Goddam" and "To Be Young, Gifted And Black." Clearly, she was enraged at the Birmingham, Ala., church bombing and the assassination of civil rights leader Medgar Evers. The more she delved into the civil rights movement of the '60s—inspired in part by her friendship with Lorraine Hansberry, James Baldwin, Stokely Carmichael (whom she married) and Langston

Hughes—the more her rage and self-righteousness consumed her art to the point of personal and professional sabotage.

Before she became the world-renowned Nina Simone, she was an aspiring young musician from Tryon, N.C., named Eunice Waymon, who harbored high aspirations to become a classical pianist, but was shut down by the establishment, possibly because of racism. When watered those seeds became a self-determination that quickly flowered into arrogance and megalomania.

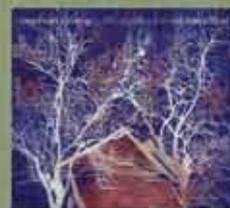
Cohodas' portrayal of Simone, at times, comes off as un-empathic. Nevertheless, it also delivers a stern cautionary tale toward the end with regards to prolonged untreated mental illness and artistry in black America.

Still, Simone had a worthy discography to somewhat justify her bizarre antics in the name of "genius," a sizable one that will remind music lovers of her undisputed talents. Cohodas makes a noble attempt at focusing on the music, but the book gets lopsided as it tilts too much into the melodrama. And even during those parts, Cohodas gives the details but seems reluctant herself to dig deeper to discover the source of those demons.

For fans of Simone, this book might leave a bitter taste, because Cohodas' portrayal of her isn't gentle. Nevertheless, it's provocative enough to make one want to revisit Simone's crucial music of the '60s and '70s.

DB

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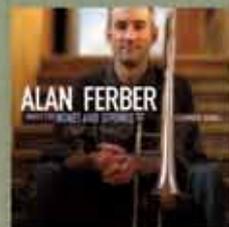


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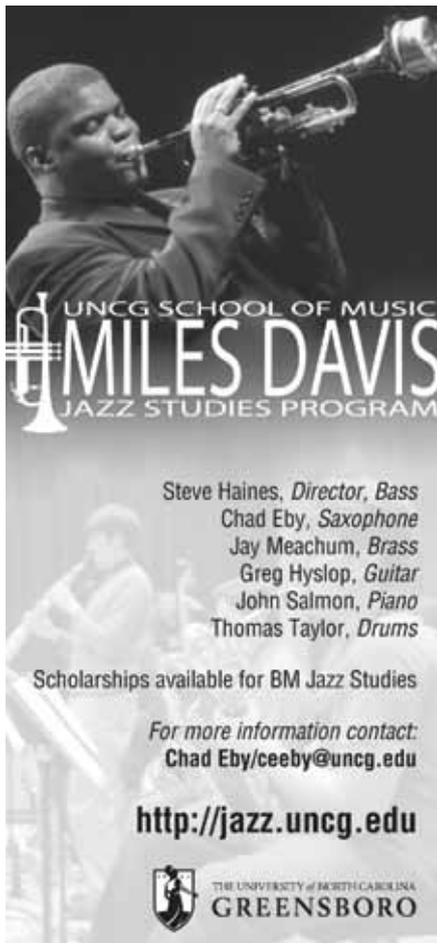
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The winners of this year's Jazz Soloist award have one thing in common: making their music their own. When asked for influences, common answers were Bill Evans, John Coltrane and Kenny Garrett. But when it comes down to it, these inspirations are just that—inspirations—for these young musicians to play to their own beats.

University of Northern Colorado doctoral student Ben Haugland said that while he has been influenced by many different artists, including Wynton Kelly and Chick Corea, he never tries to sound like anyone else at the piano.

"I'm not trying to emulate anyone in particular," Haugland said. "When you gather ideas from so many different sources and apply your own experiences, personality and creativity, there's no way your going to sound just like another artist."

For high school senior Elijah Shiffer, an alto sax player at Pre-College Manhattan School of Music, jazz provides a window to his inner self. When Shiffer solos, he uses different melodic shapes, rhythms and dynamics to create "an image of a place or occurrence."

"I attended David Liebman's Summer Jazz Workshop for two years, where I learned about the different possibilities of chromatic melodies and harmonies," Shiffer said. "I see chromaticism as a technique to help convey more subtle and specific expressions than could be created using tonal harmony. I use music as a tool for expressing my innermost feelings and ideas, and all these techniques help to expand my ability to express myself." Shiffer, who aspires to be a professional musician and composer, applies these same techniques when composing for ensembles and big bands.

Kevin Sun plays tenor sax in both the Wind Ensemble and Jazz Ensemble at Montgomery High School in Skillman, N.J. He, too, aspires to be an expressive improviser.

"I always try to create a sense of a story-like arc in my solos—a gradual development and elaboration upon thematic material that also evolves as a response to what the rhythm section is playing," Sun said. "To that end, I have been studying a system of hexatonic scales developed by my teacher, Felipe Salles, to increase my flexibility in hearing more angular lines and melodic phrases that incorporate wider intervals and more interesting dissonances than those found in typical bebop and post-bop phrasing."

Andrew Freedman, a senior at the Los Angeles High School for the Arts, is making his piano solos his own by working on achiev-



Ben Haugland



Graham Keir



Kevin Sun

ing motivic development.

"I am really sticking to an idea and developing that idea," Freedman said. "I also want to shed playing over the bar line. Bill Evans made that one of his major goals in his playing: to feel comfortable playing anywhere in a bar and ending anywhere in a bar."

Graham Keir, a senior at Eastman School of Music in Rochester, N.Y., says he wants his solos to be "the most gratifying experience for the listener." The guitarist aims to build and climax his compositions in a way that the listeners can anticipate without losing the element of surprise.

Keir has also been focusing on developing a more dissonant harmonic vocabulary. "I am now trying to incorporate more 'out' harmonic vocabulary by studying improvisers like Lennie Tristano in order to add tension and release that will propel the solos forward and add interest," Keir said. "The most important thing for me, however, has been time, feel and inflections. I want the listener to easily understand everything that I am trying to do."

Elmhurst (Ill.) College senior Adam Frank has been focusing on utilizing different tonalities when soloing on saxophone.

"Lately, I've been working on understanding the different tonalities within a specific tune, whether they are major, melodic minor, or harmonic minor," Frank said. "This is helping a lot to develop my ear and kind of gets me away from concentrating too hard on hitting every single chord change. My goal is to be more melodic."

Improvisation is possibly the most effective way to create a unique voice in music. Benjamin Lusher, a senior at The Master's School in Dobbs Ferry, N.Y., finds that it helps him connect to his audience.

"My main goal as a musician and as an improviser is to be completely in the moment," Lusher said. "I feel that striving to be totally spontaneous and to be truly improvising makes the music more fun, more interesting and more emotionally connected both to myself and the listeners."

Flutist Jose Valentino Ruiz, currently pursuing a master's degree in classical music at University of South Florida, is curious about how the great historical composers were inspired to try new things and why certain compositions have become more significant over time. "As I learn this, I can apply it in an improvisatory setting," Ruiz said. "In my solos, I try to embrace people, so that they simultaneously hear the tradition of the past, the ideas of the present and maybe a novel impression for the future."
—Katie Kailus

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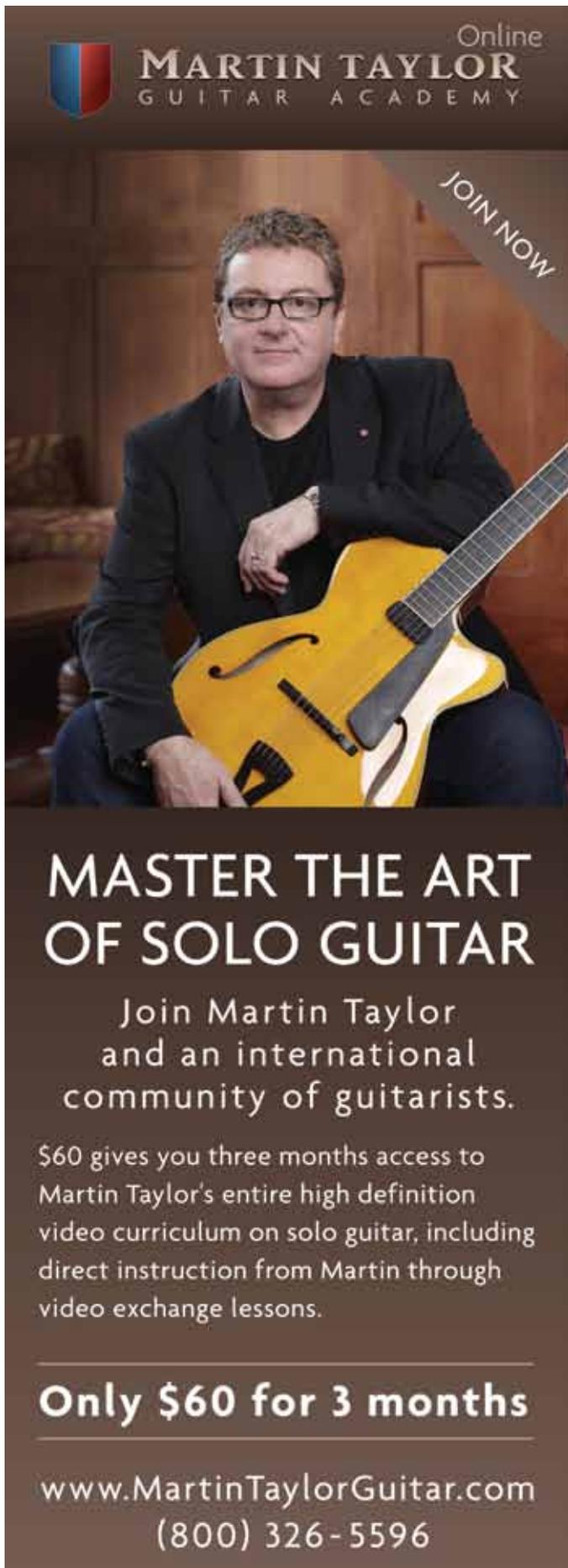
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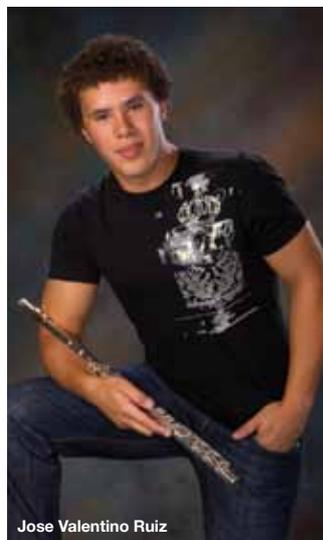
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▶ PAGE 86

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33RD ANNUAL STUDENT MUSIC AWARDS | JAZZ GROUP WINNERS



Small Group Interplay

Working as a group can be challenging at times, but the winners in this year's Jazz Group/Combo category meld well together and consequently have turned out some sophisticated, tasteful music. Winning ensemble members claim to have learned the value of teamwork, whether it is in the practice studio or on stage.

Jonathan Beshay is the leader and tenor saxophonist for his hard-bop group, The Jon Beshay Sextet. "Everyone in this group has contributed in some way or another, whether by writing originals or arrangements, by offering ideas during rehearsals or helping book the band for a gig," he said. Such camaraderie has helped members of this Michigan State University-based sextet grow as musicians.

"During the time that we have been together, my own arranging skills have improved greatly," Beshay noted. "Having a group such as this is a great opportunity to get immediate feedback on compositions and arrangements. The group members have also contributed their own originals and arrangements. As we have played together, the group have become much looser and relaxed. Group members have taken much more initiative on the bandstand since we first started playing together."

The group's faculty director, Diego Rivera, agrees that the members, most of whom are junior undergrads, have learned and grown during their time as a band.

"This group has shown tremendous progress as individuals as well as a collective en-

semble," Rivera said. "All the members have taken my jazz musicianship course. I have heard these students take concepts covered from lessons, classes and other ensembles and incorporate them into their ensemble. Their advancing knowledge of jazz is reflected in their compositions, arrangements, improvisations and overall group sound."

Fantasy V, a quintet out of The Brubeck Institute at the University of the Pacific in Stockton, Calif., has had a similar experience.

"As the year went on, each of the members continued to write more and more music, so our group sound and improvisational approach developed accordingly," said Chad Lefkowitz-Brown, tenor and alto sax player for the group, which plays an extensive amount of original compositions and has performed at the Detroit Jazz Festival. "Because we have the opportunity to rehearse and play together every day, we've become incredibly comfortable playing as a group, and we are able to create some really wonderful music together," Lefkowitz-Brown said.

Fantasy V director Joe Gilman has seen an improvement in the group's composition skills, one aspect that he says he has worked on with the group and seen them develop in.

"The students come into the Brubeck Fellowship playing at an advanced level already, especially for their age group," Gilman said. "Some of them have experience with composition, but others are new to that process."



I have found that the best strategy for this group is to expose them to music and concepts outside of their normal reference.”

The Vanguard Combo, a sextet out of the University of Northern Colorado, performs original compositions and arrangements penned by the group members. Writing and arranging for sextet can be tough, but the members have found ways to make it work.

“The group’s conception of time, rhythm and style has developed through intensive listening and study of the great masters of the music,” said James White, the group’s director. “Rehearsal time is spent exploring student compositions and arrangements, working on group interplay, playing in odd meters and strengthening our overall sense of groove.”

Marty Kenney, bassist for The Vanguard Combo, agrees.

“We’ve picked up on a lot of each other’s musical personalities, and we’ve started to develop into a very interactive group,” Kenney said. “As far as I’m concerned, I’m just trying to hold down some steady time with the bass.”

Grad student Chris Smith, drummer for The Vanguard Combo, said he feels the chemistry between the players and their ambitious attitude towards the group make it something rare for an academic ensemble.

“Everyone is a good person and a great musician, which makes for a very exciting creative experience.”
—Katie Kailus

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▶ PAGE 90

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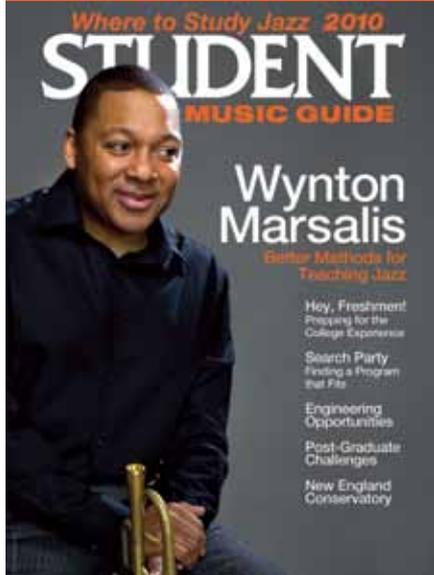
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Inspiration Strikes

When Jazzmeia Horn listens to a song, she doesn't want to just jam to a good tune, she wants to be emotionally moved.

"When [John Coltrane] swings, it feels so good," Horn said. "It's like the feeling you get when a certain spot on your back itches that you can't reach and someone is kind enough to scratch it for you. Or the feeling you get after coming home to rest after a long day. Sometimes you just have to cry. Trane does that to me."

Like many aspiring vocalists, Horn, a freshman at the New School for Jazz and Contemporary Music in New York, incorporates the techniques of her jazz influences into her singing style.

"The vocalist who inspires me the most is Sarah Vaughan," Horn said. "Listening to her sing opens my mind up to brighter ideas, even if I've listened to the tune more than a thousand times. Each time is something new and

begins a cycle of ideas that feed off of each other. I even try to emulate her style and tone with practicing and find myself naturally emulating her on stage."

Horn performs in the New School's Blues Ensemble, R&B Ensemble and one of the Vocal Rhythm Sections. She has been working on storytelling in her solos and has looked to Coltrane and his narrative abilities as a role model.

"One of the most important things that I try to accomplish while soloing is to tell a story," Horn said. "The way I'm feeling at the time is what I try to get across to the listener."

Horn said she sometimes turns away from vocal role models and looks to horn players for improvisational inspiration. "I like to listen to Charlie Parker, John Coltrane, Miles Davis, Branford Marsalis, Cannonball Adderley, Wycliffe Gordon and Louis Armstrong," she said.

Benjamin Lusher also finds inspiration among some of jazz's most classic voices.

"I have been heavily influenced by Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughan and Frank Sinatra," said Lusher, a senior at The Masters School in Dobbs Ferry, N.Y. "I have also been influenced by Mel Tormé, for the sheer beauty of his voice, Carmen McRae, for her amazing phrasing and Bobby McFerrin for his absolute control of his voice and astonishing improvisational ability."

Camille Avery



California State University Long Beach grad student Ann Pedersen frequently looked to Ella Fitzgerald when she was younger for vocal inspiration. Since then, she has widened her horizons.

"I learn the best from listening," Pedersen said. "Maybe when I was younger I took the Ella route, but now I feel like my sound is a melting pot of everyone I have ever had the pleasure of listening to or singing with."

Pedersen has also found inspiration from artists who are outside the realm of jazz.

"Artists I have been listening to lately for inspiration aren't from the jazz idiom, but certainly pack a punch and provide a wonderful listening and learning experience," Pedersen said. "I found a great deal of inspiration from the soundtrack of the film *A Mighty Wind*. The music was so well written and well performed, while still not taking itself too seriously. I am also a fan of Sondre Lerche, The Gabe Dixon Band and, of course, the Beatles."

Camille Avery, a senior at ArtsWest School in Eagle, Idaho, also finds inspiration in artists outside of the jazz world.

"Camille's influences are many, and she enjoys everyone from Billie Holiday, Ella Fitzgerald, Carmen McRae, Nancy King and Dee Dee Bridgewater to more contemporary artists like Joni Mitchell and Eva Cassidy," said Jeff Baker, director of vocal music at ArtsWest.

—Katie Kailus

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Gene Knific



Luke Marantz

Student Professionals

The Blues/Pop/Rock Soloist winners in this year's Student Music Awards have shown that they are more than just student musicians. With resumes that include regular gigs, multiple awards and concerts at prestigious venues, these young instrumentalists are well on their way to becoming seasoned professionals.

Take drummer Ryan Andrews, a Western Michigan University senior who has already played Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center, and who has been invited by professor Steven Zegree to accompany the World Youth Choir in Hong Kong and Sweden. Andrews has played in the Western Michigan University Drum Choir and the vocal jazz group Gold Company, with whom he has performed in New York and Toronto. "I've also had the opportunity to be able to work with artists like Fred Hersch, Stefon Harris, Billy Childs, Jamey Haddad and Billy Drewes in workshops, performances and recording situations," he said.

Howard University graduate student Brent Birkhead is no stranger to the gigging world. The saxophonist's Web site calendar is filled with upcoming shows.

"I perform three to four times a week in several bands, playing with a variety of musicians," Birkhead said. Along with gigging regularly, Birkhead plays in six school ensembles where he gets the opportunity to solo, including the Howard University Jazz Ensemble, Howard University Concert Band, Saxophone Ensemble, Flutes of Howard,

Howard University Jazztet and the Howard Orchestra.

Gene Knific, a senior at Portage Northern High School in Portage, Mich., plays regular piano jobs around his hometown. "I have the opportunity to gig relatively regularly with either my own groups or others," Knific said. "The venue I play at most regularly is called the Union Cabaret and Grill in Kalamazoo, Mich."

Besides being a working musician, Knific is also a decorated one, having won a number of accolades. "Gene has won three DownBeat Student Music Awards and best performance at several collegiate-based high school festivals," said Tom Knific, music professor at Western Michigan University. "He has also won a number of substantial awards and grants for study."

Keyboardist Luke Marantz, a senior at Booker T. Washington High School for the Performing and Visual Arts in Dallas, has his hands full as well. While juggling school and homework, he balances his music career, which includes performing in two ensembles and playing regular gigs at local clubs and music halls.

"I have done and continue to play background music at restaurants, homes and other spaces," Marantz said. "I am very thankful for all of the opportunities I have had, as I have found that it is on gigs playing with older and younger musicians alike that I tend to learn the most about both music and about the business."
—Katie Kailus

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33RD ANNUAL STUDENT MUSIC AWARDS | JAZZ EDUCATION HALL OF FAME

Bart Marantz

Since Bart Marantz began working as a teacher and Director of Jazz Studies at the Booker T. Washington High School for the Performing and Visual Arts (BTWHSPVA) in Dallas in 1986, the school has won 214 DownBeat Student Music Awards—remarkable for such a modestly sized program, one that this year included a total of 225 music students.

Under Marantz's direction, BTWHSPVA's jazz studies program has produced 15 albums, and 10 graduates have been signed to major labels as leaders (including trumpeter Roy Hargrove, vocalist Erykah Badu, drummer Aaron Comess and pianist/vocalist Norah Jones). To enhance their educational experience, Marantz has taken his student ensembles to numerous jazz festivals and led them in high-profile performances across the country.

"With a small program, we have done amazing things," said Marantz, who at 60 enters DownBeat's Jazz Education Hall of Fame with much of his career still ahead of him. "It has nothing to do with the teachers. It's the commitment from these young artists that spurs us on to raise funds and get them on national stages where they are checked out by top panels and then are recruited to music conservatories and very special opportunities for college. That's where the 'draft' takes place."

In addition to occasionally traveling outside Dallas as a Selmer trumpet clinician, Marantz spends considerable time as a faculty member for the Dave Brubeck Jazz Institute's Summer Jazz Colony.

"I love to travel a lot," he said. "It refreshes me. I'm around other colleagues, or, in the case of last weekend, NEA Jazz Masters and Grammy winners like David Baker and Bob Mintzer," he said. "It's inspiring, and there's a lot of energy that I bring back into the classroom with me from those experiences."

Marantz is more than generous with his teaching chops. He has gone as far as Russia and Africa to share his experience and expertise with overseas educators and students who lack the resources available in the United States.

Marantz has also been a contributing author to several texts, including the recently released *Jazz Ensemble Companion* (Rowman & Littlefield Education) and *Teaching Jazz: A Course Of Study*, and he has written numerous articles for periodicals serving the music education community. In 1989 he was selected as one of 15 artists to be part of the book



Selected Trumpet Master Classes.

There is no end in sight for Marantz's career as a jazz educator. "I'm not done yet—I've got a lot to do," he said, revealing an admiration for educators who remain active well into their eighties. "I see myself staying at Booker T. Washington HSPVA for a while, and then looking to become more involved as a full-time contributor to either the Monk Institute or the Brubeck Institute."

Two of Marantz's DB-winning students include his sons—saxophonist Matt (currently studying at the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz) and keyboardist Luke (who attends New England Conservatory of Music)—both of whom attended BTWHSPVA. A devout family man who describes his wife, Sara, as "an incredible supporter" in his life, Marantz places a high value on his relationships with others in the jazz community who are committed to sustaining the music.

"To be honored by DownBeat is the ultimate," said Marantz, noting that he bought his first issue of the magazine in 1964 at age 14. "It's more than an honor; it's a dream that came true. On the other hand, I'm a coach. Coaches have ideas, and they can present their ideas to young artists, but it's the artist who runs with the message. I'm riding the wings of all the kids who come through here. They won these 214 DB awards. I might have pushed a button to record them or had them perform at IAJE to a standing ovation, but they presented the product. It's beyond an honor and very special, but it's all about them. It is the culmination of a career." —Ed Enright

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Bob Lark

Bob Lark makes no bones about his teaching style.

"It's almost like that of a parent—one arm around the child, the other pushing them in the back," Lark said. "You want to be warm, understanding and nurturing, but at the same time you want to push them and not just coddle them."

As the Director of Jazz Studies at DePaul University in Chicago, Lark teaches trumpet as well as courses in jazz pedagogy and directs the DePaul Jazz Ensemble and the Phil Woods Ensemble. While under his direction, the DePaul Jazz Ensemble has received numerous DownBeat Student Music awards and has recorded albums with such jazz artists as Phil Woods, Slide Hampton, Clark Terry, Louie Bellson, Bob Brookmeyer, Tom Harrell, Frank Wess, Jim McNeely and Bobby Shew.

"I encourage my students to lis-



ten to any and everything," Lark said. "I especially like the Thad Jones–Mel Lewis Orchestra, though."

An Ohio State grad, Lark received both his Masters of Music Education and Doctorate of Musical Arts in Performance degrees at the University of North Texas. Along with teaching, he gigs regularly and has released five CDs.

Lark, 51, expects nothing short of excellence from his students. "My theory when instructing my ensem-

ble is to demand perfection and settle on excellence," Lark said. "When playing any music, there should be a clear foreground and a clear background. [Students] need to figure out their individual parts and how their sections relate to that."

And what is Lark's number-one rule when teaching? "Play to make each other sound good," Lark said. "That may mean that we play softer dynamically to make sure the lead voice comes forward; that may mean we play stronger dynamically to better support someone. It could mean a number of things, but it's the number-one rule." —Katie Kallus

Bob Sinicrope

Roughly every two years, Bob Sinicrope takes his jazz students from Milton (Mass.) Academy college preparatory to South Africa on the spring break trip of their lives. It may not be Cancun or Myrtle Beach, but the experience is something they

will remember forever. During the weeklong trip, students get the opportunity to perform in concerts and participate in workshops and jam sessions with local students while traveling from town to town.

"As a participant on two of those tours, I can say that they were two of the most rewarding experiences of my life," wrote Jason Yeager, a former student of Sinicrope's, in a testimonial regarding his teacher. "For the first time, I was given the opportunity to play music in a foreign country and experience



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what touring and playing concerts nearly every day is like.”

Sinicrope, 60, has been taking his jazz students abroad since 1991, and the trips are made possible thanks to his efforts and dedication. Sinicrope starts organizing fundraising a year in advance to ensure that the trip is affordable for all students who are eligible to attend. He arranges the itinerary, books the concerts, reserves the hotels and makes arrangements for transportation on his own—all while teaching full-time and performing.

As the founder of the Milton Academy Jazz Program in 1974, Sinicrope is a one-man jazz department instructing all of the jazz programs. His students have performed at prestigious venues, including the White House and national jazz education conferences.

Sinicrope says his teaching style is to keep things informal and give everyone a chance. “I try to keep my classes similar to a com-

bo rehearsal,” Sinicrope said. “We don’t audition for our groups, and we try to offer opportunities for anyone interested in learning about jazz to participate.” —Katie Kailus

Fred Sturm

Fred Sturm does it all—teaches, conducts, composes and arranges. As the Director of Jazz and Improvisational Music at Lawrence University in Appleton, Wis., Sturm thinks of art as “the intersection of craft and creativity.”

“That intersection presents a constant balancing act for me as a jazz teacher,” Sturm said. “A disciplined and respectful assimilation of craft, language and vocabulary can’t overshadow the pursuit of a student’s individual creative voice and vice-versa. I want to help my students discover who they are as young jazz performers, composers and teachers, but I can’t let them lose sight of the great traditions es-



established in our history.”

Sturm recently welcomed vocalist Bobby McFerrin to the Lawrence campus to perform a suite of 19 pieces called *Migrations*, which Sturm wrote three years ago.

His compositions and arrangements have been performed by jazz ensembles, symphony orchestras, wind ensembles and chamber groups worldwide, and have featured artists such as Wynton Marsalis, Bob Brookmeyer, Gary Burton, Clark Terry and Phil Woods.

Among all the hats Sturm wears

as a musician, teaching seems to fit him best. “Whether I’m coaching an ensemble, teaching a class, or working individually with a student, we talk a lot about making music with passion and emotion,” Sturm said. “I don’t want to play, write, or teach without a fire in my belly, and I try to inspire my students to do the same.”

Sturm, 59, also strives to promote “ownership” among students in trying to get them to engage as an integral part of the group when performing. “I strive for a joyful, upbeat, rapidly paced, disciplined and mutually respectful rehearsal environment,” Sturm said. “No stars, no drones—or, better yet, all stars, all drones. I love the process and continual discovery of taking a work from the first rehearsal to concert fruition, and I do the bulk of my pedagogical work on the front end of that process. By the time we get to the performance, I’m the least important person on the stage.”

—Katie Kailus

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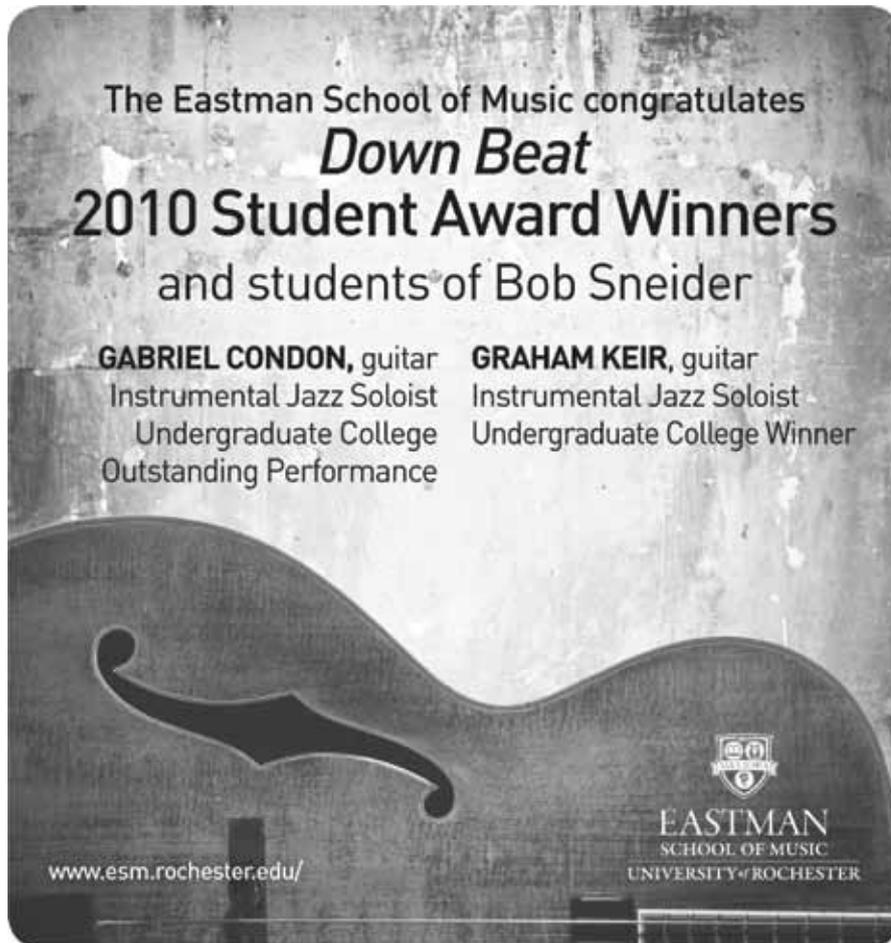
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Bob Belden: Saxophonist, composer, bandleader and producer of new albums and reissues.

Janice Borla: Vocalist; Director of Vocal Jazz at North Central College; vocal jazz camp founder.

Orbert Davis: Trumpeter/clinician; professor at University of Illinois, Chicago.

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The YAS-875EXW responds and projects like a vintage professional alto, thanks its wide open bore, drawn tone holes and custom handmade G1 neck. Designed for stylistic flexibility, this alto is a serious instrument that will definitely appeal to professional classical and jazz players alike.

In addition to its tonal depth and power, the YAS-875EXW is built for precision and speed. The model I played featured a low, well balanced key action that was tight and consistent up and down the instrument. I felt a sense of exactness as I played each note, which helped me play uptempo passages with improved accuracy; the perfect positioning of each key made a better bopper out of me and even boosted my confidence while improvising.

The white alto plays so well in tune, it might take some getting used to. Seriously, old habits die hard, and players like me who are used to compensating for pitch on sweet old saxes might take a while to adjust. With the YAS-875EXW, the intonation-conscious saxophonist won't have to try so hard.

You won't have to put extra effort into making the horn's lowest notes sound good, either. Low B-flat, B, C and C-sharp spoke and sustained with ease, and they transitioned with none of the drastic changes in tone (honking) usually associated with that range of the sax. Right- and left-hand key rollers for those notes felt great under the fingers.

Other enhancements on the YAS-875EXW include an accentuated bend in the low B-flat key, a new neck receiver, an improved ball-joint octave mechanism and larger, flatter key pearls. Under the white lacquer, it has a French bass neck, body and one-piece bell, and the keys are fashioned from yellow brass. The sax features blue steel needle springs, waterproof leather and wool felt pads with pastic tone boosters, an adjustable plastic thumb hook and an auxiliary high F-sharp key.

The YAS-875EXW joins two other saxes already in the Custom EX series, the silver YAS-875EXS and the black lacquered YAS-875EXB. If you want a high-end alto that you can use every day, take one for a ride before before they all get scooped up. As my sax section buddy Bruce Gibson said to me after an on-the-gig trial run: This pretty lady can sing. —*Ed Enright*

Ordering information: yamaha.com



Realist SoundClip

Upright Pickup Solution

When David Gage and Ned Steinberger introduced their original Realist bass transducer, it rapidly became the choice among upright bassists who appreciated the pickup's natural acoustic tone. Now the two have teamed up once again to deliver the SoundClip, a great-sounding transducer that uses a clamp design to attach to any bass in seconds.

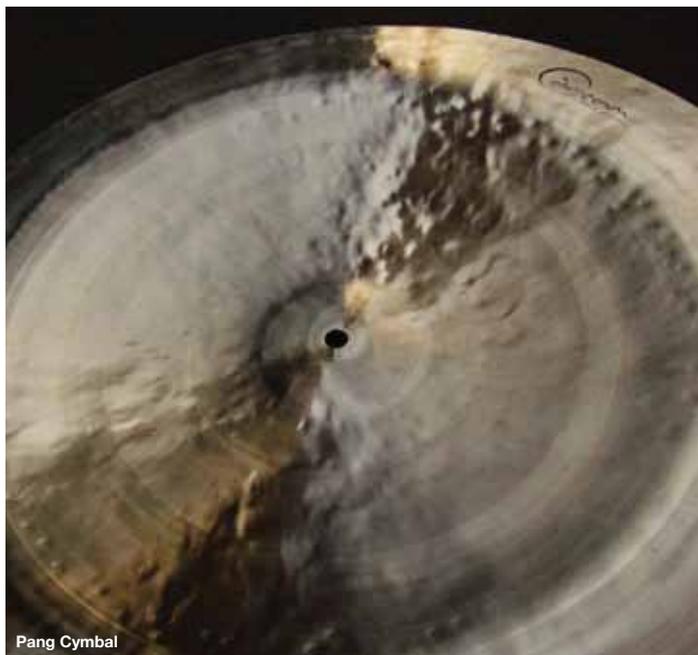
No doubt, the original Realist is a great pickup. It consists of a thin piezo element housed in a copper shell, which is placed under the foot of the bridge on the bass side. The transducer amplifies the vibrations of instrument's bridge and wood top, resulting in a very natural sound. The ultra thin design also means that its installation has almost no impact on the bass's original acoustic sound.

Gage and Steinberger felt there was a need for a new pickup that was removable and did not require permanent mounting. "A non-invasive system that can be quickly switched between instruments is something that bassists have been requesting for years," said Sam Finlay, Realist sales and marketing director. "We also wanted to provide a consistent amplification system for professional musicians who often rent basses when traveling."

The new pickup's design is a C-clamp milled out of solid brass and manufactured entirely in the USA. Installation is extremely simple, requiring only a quick tightening of a thumb-screw to attach it to the bass side of the instrument's bridge. An input jack for a quarter-inch cable is built into the housing along with a volume knob. The use of a variable weight system allows the user to actually alter the overall mass of the clamp, which affects the acoustic tone of the bass, an ingenious way to fine-tune the color of the amplified sound.

I was able to install the SoundClip in seconds, and it sounded great. It took a little experimentation to zero in on the best location for the clamp, which for my bass was just above the thumb-wheel on the bridge. I was amazed at how effective the adjustable weights are as an EQ for achieving the perfect sound. With its innovative design, true portability and superior tone, there is nothing not to love about the Realist SoundClip. —*Keith Baumann*

Ordering info: realistacoustic.com



Pang Cymbal

Dream Dark Matter, Pang Cymbals New Sonic Colors

The raw and powerful Dark Matter ride cymbals and the new Pang china cymbals expand the sonic palette of hand-made product lines available from Dream.

The Dark Matter Energy rides feature a “burned” finish, giving them a raw, blackened look that is visually striking (unfortunately, it can come off on your hands). They are created from a proprietary process where the cymbals are fired more than once during their birth cycle; the extreme stresses and heat from this process create a cymbal that is so dramatically changed on a molecular level that it takes months of aging to mature. The surface features various types of hand-hammering and medium-tight lathing; the bell is unlathed.

Ultra-precise stick definition and a very dry, dark sound are strong points with the Dark Matter cymbal. The bell is loud and cutting, piercing through any amplification you can throw at it. For as dry and heavy as they are, the cymbals are surprisingly crashable, producing a loud, long sustain. The Dark Matter rides are available in 20-inch and 22-inch sizes.

The Pang line offers a wide array of colors. Sizes available include 16-, 18-, 20- and 22-inch diameters, plus a 10-inch splash. Designed to blend elements of a traditional china type with that of a vintage-style swish, the Pangs feature abundant hand hammering and a medium-tight lathing pattern. A reverse bell makes them easier to play as a crash with the flange side down. The fast and responsive Pang Splash produces a trashy, sharp, pitch-bending sound that reminded me of a Peking opera gong. The 20-inch Pang is more versatile. It is extremely dark, trashy, loud and complex when used as a crash. Flange side up, you can ride on it, but control is required. It can easily overwhelm in a low-volume situation.

Dream has branched out from the norm with these new cymbals. Dark Matter rides are better suited for high-volume situations, but they still offer some complexity of sound. The Pang Splash is truly unique—I’ve never heard anything quite like it—and the 20-inch Pang offers a nice combination of an effects crash with ride capabilities.

—Ryan Bennett

Ordering info: dreamcymbals.com

DV-CHI Tenor Sax Mouthpiece *Windy City Timbres*

Jody Espina of JodyJazz continues to advance his DV line of metal sax mouthpieces, which feature the company’s patented “second day window” right above the bore. Now, JodyJazz introduces the DVChicago (DV-CHI) mouthpiece for tenor saxophone, a silver-plated model that combines properties of the company’s DV and DV-NY series and adds new design modifications that increase your ability to manipulate tone.

Named for the rough-and-tumble tone favored by some of Chicago’s toughest jazz and blues tenormen, the DV-CHI has a unique baffle/chamber design that produces a robust, well-rounded sound that’s darker than the JodyJazz DV but considerably brighter than the DV-NY. Whether playing second tenor in a big band or blowing rowdy New Orleans-style r&b solos, you can push the DV-CHI hard without having to worry about its limitations. When I play-tested the DV-CHI, it gave me the same power I’ve experienced with the regular DV in the past, but with a broader tonal spectrum. I found that at any given point in a performance, I had more choices available to me. The effortless response of the DV-CHI allowed me to save my chops while making the horn sound especially solid and robust on the low end.

The DV-CHI blows so freely, JodyJazz recommends using a slightly harder reed than normal to compensate. “In my opinion, it’s the efficiency of vibration that makes them so free-blowing,” Espina said. “That’s achieved by a combination of thin side and tip rails, and the baffle and facing curve combination. The overall design elements work in harmony to let the reed really vibrate.” Espina also suggested trying a slightly more open tip than you’re used to. The DV-CHI is available in the following sizes: 7 (.101), 7* (.108) and 8 (.116).

As part of an introductory promotion, the DV-CHI tenor mouthpiece currently comes with one of JodyJazz’s new Ring ligatures. The Ring fits all DV series mouthpieces and is available in blackened brass, silver-plated brass and gold-plated brass versions. In a few months, the company will begin shipping its entire DV line with a Rico H ligature.

—Ed Enright

Ordering info: jodyjazz.com



{1} RIBBONS IN THE SKY

Cloud Mics' JRS-34 series of ribbon microphones combines the attributes of vintage and modern technologies for vocalists and instrumentalists. The active JRS-34 requires phantom power and has an output level compatible with virtually any modern preamp. It features a black, non-reflective powder coat finish and is accented with a silver logo. The passive JRS-34-P, which is grey with nickel screens and a silver logo, requires a high-gain preamp with more than 60dB of gain. A special edition chrome model, the JRS-34-SPE, is offered with either active or passive circuitry. All models are fully RoHS compliant with the exception of the chrome; users can expect output performance gains of 20 dB with active circuitry. Each mic comes with a handcrafted wooden box for proper storage and safe transport.

More info: cloudmicrophones.com

{2} HERCULEAN STRENGTH

The Hercules MSB001 combo bag by KMC Music protects and transports heavy mic, speaker and guitar stands. Made from industrial-grade nylon, the MSB001 features heavy-duty zipper pulls, shoulder straps and handles designed for comfort and ease.

More info: kmcmusic.com

{3} KEYBOARD VOICINGS

The VP-7 vocal processor from Roland creates vocal effects with a variety of PCM-based vocal sounds or with Roland's Vocal Designer technology. For keyboardists who want vocal backing tracks without singing into a mic, the compact VP-7 creates four human voice sounds: female choir, boys choir, Gregorian choirs and jazz scat. Keyboardists who sing can easily blend the VP-7's sounds with their own voice. The VP-7 sets up quickly on top of keyboards, and its simple interface features quick-access buttons and knobs to control effects like ambience and mute function.

More info: roland.com



{4} EXTRA KICK

Heil Sound has introduced the PR 48 large diaphragm dynamic microphone for kick drum. The mic features a 1.5-inch diameter element and is mounted in a vulcanized double shock mount, which offers isolation within a cast metal housing. A low-pass filter sets the -3 dB hinge points at 30 Hz and 8 kHz with a +10 dB peak from 50-80 Hz. The response rolls off at 8 kHz, which helps control unwanted top-end noise inside the drum while keeping frequencies critical to kick drum harmonics created when beaters meet drum heads.

More info: heilsound.com

{5} STEPPED-UP STOMP

Zoom offers a variety of new features on its G2Nu and G2.1Nu, which incorporate the tone and functionality of the company's G2 guitar effects pedals with recent engineering innovations. Both pedals feature 100 preset guitar sounds. Twenty types of guitar amps and stomp boxes offer finely tuned sonic qualities, including gain settings and harmonic character. The pedals can also operate as audio interfaces, letting users record directly to a computer via built-in USB ports.

More info: samsontech.com



{6} PORTABLE PRODUCTION APP

Akai Professional has introduced the iPK25 keyboard controller and the SynthStation Studio production app, both for iPhone and iPod Touch. The two products work together to transform handheld devices into portable production studios for mobile music creation. The app gives musicians the power to create and save sequences and complete songs using built-in Akai synthesizer sounds and drum kits; the 25-key, velocity-sensitive iPK25 controller features a built-in dock for the iPhone or iPod Touch.

More info: akaipro.com



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ZOOM

Jazz Phrasing For Key- And Button-Pushers

Have you ever heard the old adage: “It’s not *what* you play, but *how* you play it”? Well, the *what* you play while you are improvising is choosing the right notes, licks, patterns, etc. But the *how* you play is the soul, emotion, and most importantly playing with correct style, which comes down to phrasing and articulation. I’ve discovered that a majority of articulation patterns can be broken down into four categories. These patterns I like to call the “Basic,” “Turnaround,” “Cannonball” and “Coltrane.” They are especially relevant for saxophonists and trumpeters (the “key- and button-pushers” who have to align their fingers with the tongue), but the concepts can be applied to any instrument.

In phrasing jazz eighth notes, it’s actually the articulation in combination with the jazz feel that really makes a line swing. In cells of eighth notes, a line is usually being phrased/articulated by twos or threes. Example 1 is the Basic jazz articulation: phrasing in cells of twos by tonguing upbeats and slurring into downbeats. When using this articulation pattern, make sure the note that you slur into does not get cut off by the tongue coming back up too early to articulate the next upbeat. If this occurs, your phrasing will sound “ricky-tick.” Jazz eighth note phrasing is a legato articulation. Movement from one note to the next must match up perfectly with the application of a legato tongue on notes that are to be articulated.

Example 2 is what I call the Turnaround jazz articulation. Here you tongue downbeats and slur into upbeats (turned around from the Basic jazz articulation). The Turnaround articulation is shape-oriented and usually applied when the upbeats are lower in pitch than the surrounding downbeats. When the Turnaround articulation is applied to this particular shape, it gives the upbeats a bit of a ghosted note effect. This effect occurs because you are articulating (accenting) downbeats that are higher in pitch than the surrounding upbeats.

Example 3 is the Cannonball jazz articulation, phrasing in cells of threes. With this pattern, you have two notes that are tongued consecutively (downbeat/upbeat of beats 1 and/or 3). To make this pattern sound smooth, you have to make sure that the downbeats you tongue are tenuto and attached to the upbeats that you articulate.

Example 4, the Coltrane articulation, is another phrasing cell by threes. It’s a lot like the Cannonball pattern, but displaced by two eighth notes. Much like the Turnaround jazz articulation, the Coltrane pattern is usually applied when a certain shape occurs in the line. Like the Cannonball pattern, you have two notes that are tongued consecutively (downbeat/upbeat of beats 2 and/or 4). Make sure your articulations are smooth.

As tempo increases, the straighter your eighth

Example 1: “Basic” Jazz Articulation



Example 2: “Turnaround” Jazz Articulation



Example 3: “Cannonball” Jazz Articulation



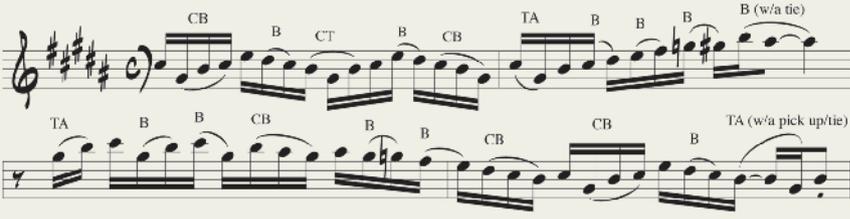
Example 4: “Coltrane” Jazz Articulation



Example 5



Example 6



notes must become. At fast bebop tempos (quarter note equaling 200–300+), eighth notes are basically played straight, and it’s the phrasing/articulation that makes them sound in the correct style.

Look at Example 5. This is an excerpt from a fast bebop solo. You can see that every four-note cell can be analyzed with either the Basic (B), Turnaround (TA), Cannonball (CB) or Coltrane (CT) articulation patterns.

You can also apply the four articulation pat-

terns to cells of 16th notes. The 16th notes can be thought of as fast/straight eighth notes and articulated as such. Look at Example 6. This is an excerpt from a funky straight-eighth-note solo. Once again, the articulation of every note can be justified by one of the four articulation patterns. **DB**

MILES OSLAND IS CURRENTLY DIRECTOR OF JAZZ STUDIES AND PROFESSOR OF SAXOPHONE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY. HE TRAVELS THE GLOBE AS A SELMER (PARIS) PERFORMING ARTIST AND ENDORSES RICO REEDS.

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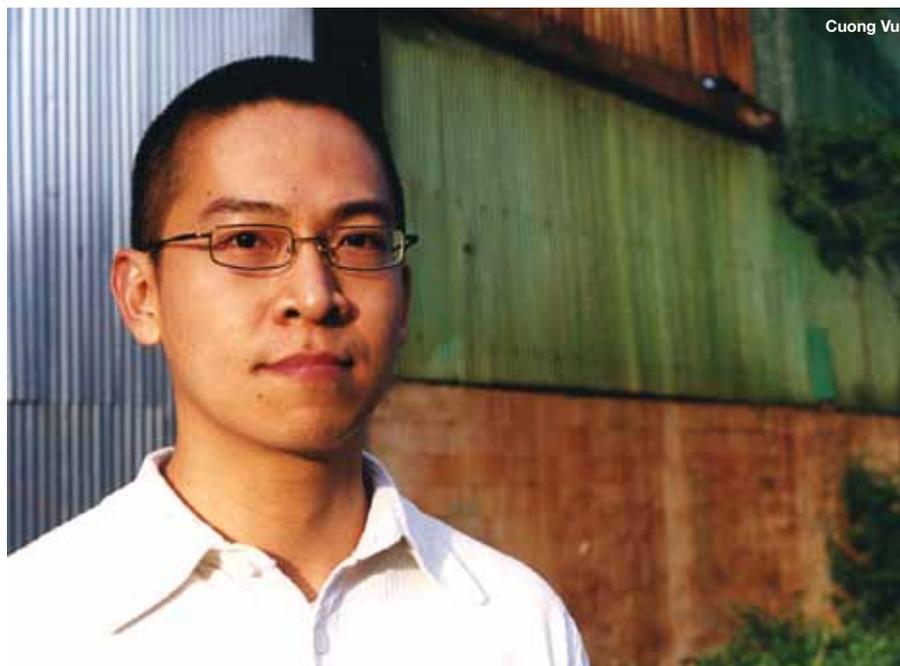
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Cuong Vu's Trumpet Solo On 'Chitter Chatter'

Though mainly known for his work with Pat Metheny, trumpeter Cuong Vu has also put out a number of albums as a leader. From 2005's *It's Mostly Residual*, "Chitter Chatter" is one of Vu's originals. It opens with a rubato, atmospheric improvisation, and Vu starts soloing when it breaks into a groove.

The groove is a fast 5/4 romp, more of a rock 'n' roll groove than jazz, with straight eighth notes and an eight-bar diatonic chord progression (all the chords exist within the G major scale). Vu's soloing is a schizophrenic blend of rock and jazz. There are strings of scalar lines that run up and down G major, sometimes with a seeming lack of concern for the underlying harmony, juxtaposed with some heavy chromaticism.

There is intelligence to Vu's madness. He tends to put the longer chromatic lines in the later parts of phrases, usually in the third or fourth measure of a four-bar phrase, as in bars 16, 20 and 21, 25 and 41. Measure 47 is the one instance where Vu puts a long chromatic line in the second measure.

And the chromaticism itself isn't random. Vu generally uses non-scale tones to get to scale tones, either as passing tones (E# in 16 and 47, D# in 26, E♭ in 47, B♭ in 50, C# in 61), neighbor notes (F in 16, 25, 47 and 69, C# in 27, F and D# in 41), or approach notes (D# in 12 and 21, F in measure 37). A quite effective use is when Vu approaches a scale tone with the chromatic notes on either side of it, like the E♭ and C# before the D on the downbeat of measure 17.

There are similar occurrences in measures 21 (F and D# leading to E), 25 (E♭ and C# before the D on beat 3) and across the bar line to 43 (F to D# to E). He uses the same motif but with the scale tone a half step away, like G# (A♭) to F# to G in measures 20 and 37, and D♭ to B to C in measure 53.

There are other, more rock-oriented motifs that recur and help to tie his solo together. The repetitive A to G riff introduced in measure 6 reappears in measure 23 and then again in extended form toward the end of his solo, in measures 58 and 59. Another is the melodic approach to the emphasized E on the C chord and then descending down to the A on the D chord, as in measures 18 and 19, where it appears in its simplest form. The idea is developed in measures 34 and 35, and again in measures 62 and 63, where it heralds the close of his solo on the long D vamp, which also ends the song.

One last thing worth mentioning is how freely Vu navigates the 5/4 time signature. The odd meter doesn't prevent him from phrasing over bar lines or using syncopations. Observe the licks of offbeat accents in measures 29 and 39-40. Also look at how he so often plays not just over the bar line, but over the beginnings of phrases, as in measures 10, 14, 22, 26, 30, 42, 46, 58 and 62. His phrasing is so free, and the rhythm section so solid, one could miss the fact that it's not 4/4. **DB**

JIMI DURSO IS A GUITARIST AND BASSIST IN THE NEW YORK AREA. HE CAN BE REACHED AT JIMIDURSO.COM.

6:05

Chords: C, D, G, Am

6

10

14

18

22

26

30

34

38

42

46

50

54

58

62

66

70

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Bob Brookmeyer (left) with Universität Für Musik jazz orchestra



Moran Joins NEC: Pianist Jason Moran has joined the faculty at Boston's New England Conservatory of Music. He will begin teaching in the fall.

Details: necmusic.edu

Taylor Lessons: Guitarist Martin Taylor has teamed up with ArtistWorks to launch the online Martin Taylor Guitar Academy. The site will provide Taylor's courses via high-definition interactive video. Details: martintaylorguitar.com

Down Under Win: The New Zealand School of Music's big band has won its country's Jazz Tui award for the disc *Run For Cover*. Rodger Fox directs the ensemble. Details: nzsm.ac.nz

Ellington Premiere: The University of Texas Jazz Orchestra and Huston-Tillotson University Concert Choir in Austin has released *Queenie Pie*, a recording of their premiere performance of the Duke Ellington opera. Carmen Bradford is the featured guest and Robert DeSimone directed the ensemble.

Details: music.uctexas.edu

New Ruffles: Students at Berklee College of Music in Boston have released *Birds Of A Feather* on the school's label, Jazz Revelation Records. The disc includes original compositions from Berklee's 11 student bandleaders and is the label's seventh release. Details: berklee.edu

Percussion Summer: The Los Angeles Music Academy in Pasadena, Calif., will host a drummers' workshop for students ages 14 and up on June 28–July 2. Instructors include Peter Erskine and Alex Acuña. Details: lamicademy.edu

Litchfield Lineup: Drummer Matt Wilson has been named artist-in-residence for this summer's Litchfield, Ct., Jazz Camp. Guitarist Pat Martino and trombonist Delfeayo Marsalis will also hold workshops at the camp, which runs July 11–Aug. 6. Details: litchfieldjazzcamp.com

University at Austria's Edge Moves to Mainstream of Jazz Education

Trombonist Ed Partyka sees the new face of jazz education not in New York or Chicago, but in a medium-sized city near the borders of Slovenia and Hungary. Partyka is chair of the jazz department at Universität für Musik und Darstellende Kunst Graz in Austria, where 100 students from 20 countries are pursuing four-year jazz performance degrees. These musicians are taking advantage of classes taught by professional recording artists and, with Vienna and other major cities a short drive away, abundant performance opportunities. And the tuition is cheap.

Around 60 percent of the school's population comes from outside the country, but the trombonist, a Chicago native who moved to Europe after college in 1990, would like to see more involvement from the United States. He's betting that quality instruction and the low enrollment cost will trump any Yankee fears about classes taught in German.

"Most of the European countries believe that a student or any citizen has the right to education," he said. "The astronomical tuitions that you see in America do not exist here because they're all state universities."

To supplement the work of the 10 professors and numerous staff, school officials welcome musicians like Fred Hersch, Toshiko Akiyoshi and John Hollenbeck for a few weeks each year to coach ensembles, teach lessons and give concerts. Bob Brookmeyer, who knows Partyka through the New Art Orchestra, spent a month last year working with young musicians in Graz. He also helped record the recent *Klangdebuts* 36 CD that highlights two of the school's ensembles. While in Austria, Brookmeyer noted the students' work ethic and their ability to take advantage of rich musical surroundings.

"It goes without saying that there's a long artistic history and acceptance of jazz [in Europe]. The radio station is one of the main employers of composers and musicians," Brookmeyer said.

"The smallest German town will have one or two symphonies and an opera company."

European jazz might be a bit unknown to stateside high school graduates hoping to pursue music studies in college. A bias rooted in the notion that only U.S.-based artists can properly play this art form is turning some high-schoolers away from educational opportunities abroad, Partyka said.

"A lot of the European musicians have a hard time getting established in the States," he said. "I'm sure there is also a certain amount of prejudice from Americans thinking, 'Well, what can a European school teach me about jazz?'"

Dena DeRose, one of five American professors in the program, is teaching 17 private vocalists this semester. Course material instills a firm knowledge of historical jazz with a healthy dose of the modern jazz lexicon. When she's not teaching, DeRose spends some of her time giving master classes at other European performing arts institutions, schools that, she said, are not as comprehensive in the history of the music.

Studying in Graz carries with it a little culture shock. In addition to the foreign language, U.S. college students find that their European counterparts are a little older, starting school in their early twenties instead of at 18. There also is a stereotype that European students are less motivated than their American counterparts, but professors are working to dispel that notion.

"That's how it used to be here," DeRose said. "We've overhauled the curriculum and really fine-tuned it. In the last five years, it's had this steady rising momentum into being a really hardcore jazz school."

Brookmeyer thinks the next big jazz hub will be in Europe and that budding artists from overseas have as many opportunities as stateside players. While European schools still rely on American professors for some musical knowledge, he said, this school is a step toward bringing a new level of recognition to European jazz. —Jon Ross

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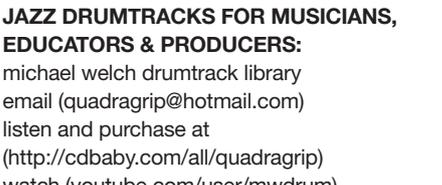
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Stanley Clarke

After focusing on television and film scoring for much of the last decade, bassist Stanley Clarke has re-entered the fray with the reconstituted Return to Forever, the electric bass trio SMV (with Marcus Miller and Victor Wooten) on *Thunder*, his own *Jazz In The Garden* with Hiromi and Lenny White and the new *The Stanley Clarke Band Featuring Hiromi With Ruslan & Roland Bruner Jr.* (Heads Up). He also recently sat for his first Blindfold Test since the 1970s.

Christian McBride

“The Wizard Of Montara” (from *Vertical Vision*, Warner Bros., 2003) McBride, acoustic and electric bass; Ron Blake, tenor saxophone; Geoffrey Keezer, piano, keyboards; Terreon Gully, drums; Daniel Sadownick, percussion.

The composition was good, and the bass player was swinging. The drummer sounded young—could have swung a little more. But there was no lack of enthusiasm. Was that a bow solo in the middle or an electric bass? I wasn’t sure whether it was something processed—it was nice. Also, there was something that I’d say sounded almost like a ring modulator, which is unusual for straightahead music—that was refreshing. Different. It was spirited. When I listen to straightahead music, the most important thing is that it swings, and this was a good 3½ stars.

Ben Wolfe

“Jackie Mac” (from *No Strangers Here*, MaxJazz 2008) Wolfe, bass; Marcus Strickland, tenor saxophone; Jesse Mills, Cyrus Beroukhim, violin; Kenji Bunch, viola; Wolfram Koessel, cello; Luis Perdomo, piano; Greg Hutchinson, drums.

I liked it. These guys sound like they’ve swung a lot in their lives—they don’t sound young to me. But then, who knows? I liked the string attempt there; always like it when I can hear something refreshing in swing music. A cool composition. I liked the whole tone aspect. The bass player played some beautiful notes. 3½ stars.

John Patitucci

“Messaien’s Gumbo” (from *Remembrance*, Concord, 2009) Patitucci, six-string electric bass; Joe Lovano, tenor saxophone; Brian Blade, drums.

The bassist was playing the six-string bass really nice. When it went into the real upper register I thought it was John Patitucci. Everyone seemed comfortable with that way of swinging. The drummer was excellent. I liked that there was a lot of space in the tune, that it was based off a melodic bassline. Matter of fact, I still hear that bassline ringing in my head. Very creative. 3½ stars.

Manuel Valera

“I Fall In Love Too Easily” (from *Currents*, MaxJazz, 2009) Valera, piano; James Genus, bass; Ernesto Simpson, drums.

I love the tune, and their arrangement. The bass player was excellent—you could tell he’s studied well. They all had great command of their instruments, and played very lyrical. That’s jazz to me. Even though these guys have a lot of technique, a lot of knowledge in the chords and harmonically, they’re patient players. That’s hard to do during recordings. 4½ stars.

Alain Pérez

“Donna Lee (Doña Líos)” (from *En El Aire*, Ayva, 2005) Pérez, bass, vocals, djembe; Iván Lewis, piano; Kiki Ferrer, drums; Pepe Espinosa, congas; Carlos Sarduy, trumpet; Román Filiu, alto saxophone; Inoidel Gonzales, tenor saxophone.

At first I thought it was Victor Bailey, because he likes to play the heads on those kind of tunes, but on the bass solo I knew it wasn’t Victor. Then I thought it might be a tribute record to Jaco [Pastorius], since “Donna



JOS KAMFEN

Lee” is a tune he used to do, but then I thought not—a little too much percussion. I liked the arrangement. The bass player was excellent. It takes a lot of command to play that head. But on the solo, I wasn’t sure whether he was playing on the same tune or not. 3½ stars.

Miroslav Vitous

“Surfing With Michel” (from *Remembering Weather Report*, ECM, 2009) Vitous, bass; Michel Portal, bass clarinet.

It reminded me of a melody that Wayne Shorter would write. At first I thought it was Bennie Maupin, but then I didn’t. I liked the combination of bass clarinet and the bass. I thought they did a great job of taking that four-note—or maybe it was eight or nine notes—motif and spinning it around and doing something with it. Their objectives were clear. At first I thought it was Miroslav, but then, it didn’t sound like his bass. 4 stars. That was Miroslav? He changed his bass.

Ari Roland

“Damonasco” (from *New Music*, Smalls Records, 2009) Roland, bass; Chris Byars, alto saxophone; Sacha Perry, piano; Keith Balla, drums.

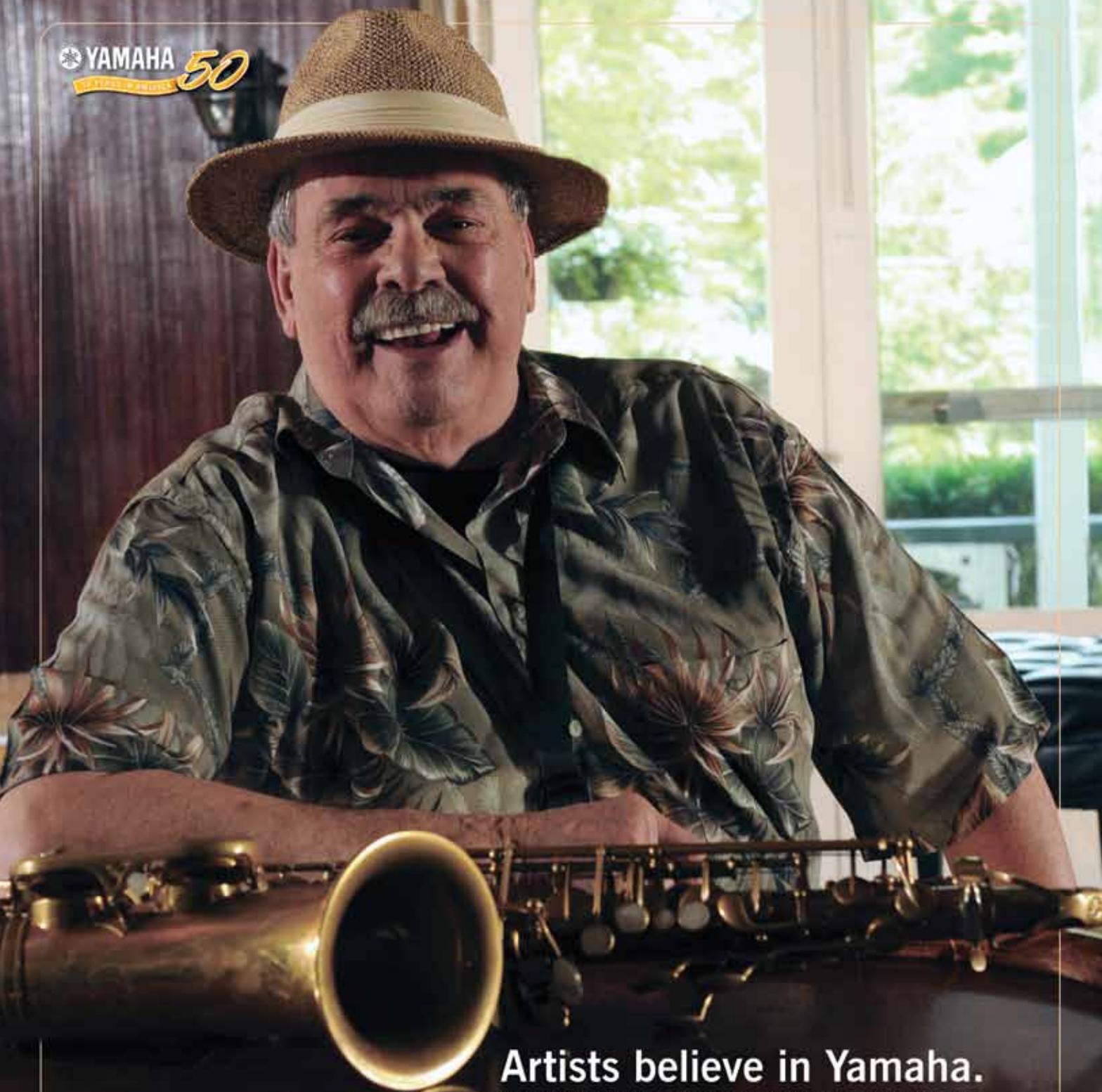
Bebop. I loved it. The tune sounded like a composite of a lot of different things. I can tell by the sound that it was recorded recently. Sometimes the engineers haven’t done their research on the way the drums should sound in bebop. The snare almost sounded like a drum machine snare. I liked the fours, and everybody played them, including the bass player, which usually doesn’t happen. The saxophone player was excellent—the first couple of notes, I thought he was Lee Konitz. Then I wondered if Eddie Gomez was on bass, but the bowing didn’t sound like Eddie. It sounded like he used a German bow. You could tell that he had it together. These guys are diehards, because everything is exactly like those old records. It’s in a box, there are things you do, and if you do these other things, it’s not bebop. That’s a helluva discipline. 4 stars.

Ron Carter

“Stardust” (from *Stardust*, Blue Note, 2001) Carter, bass; Sir Roland Hanna, piano. That’s Ron Carter. 5 stars. Ron is an innovator, the most important bass player of the last 50 years. Probably 99.9 percent of the bassists out here today play stuff from Ron. As this solo bore out, Ron is a great storyteller. It’s brilliant. Who was the piano player? Roland Hanna? Killing. **DB**

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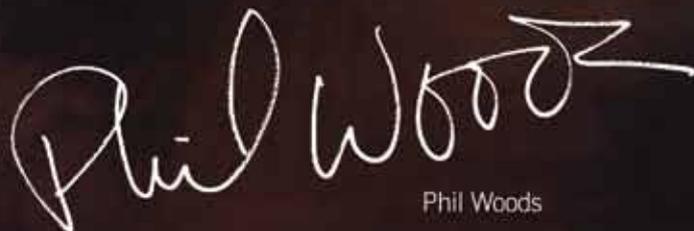
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