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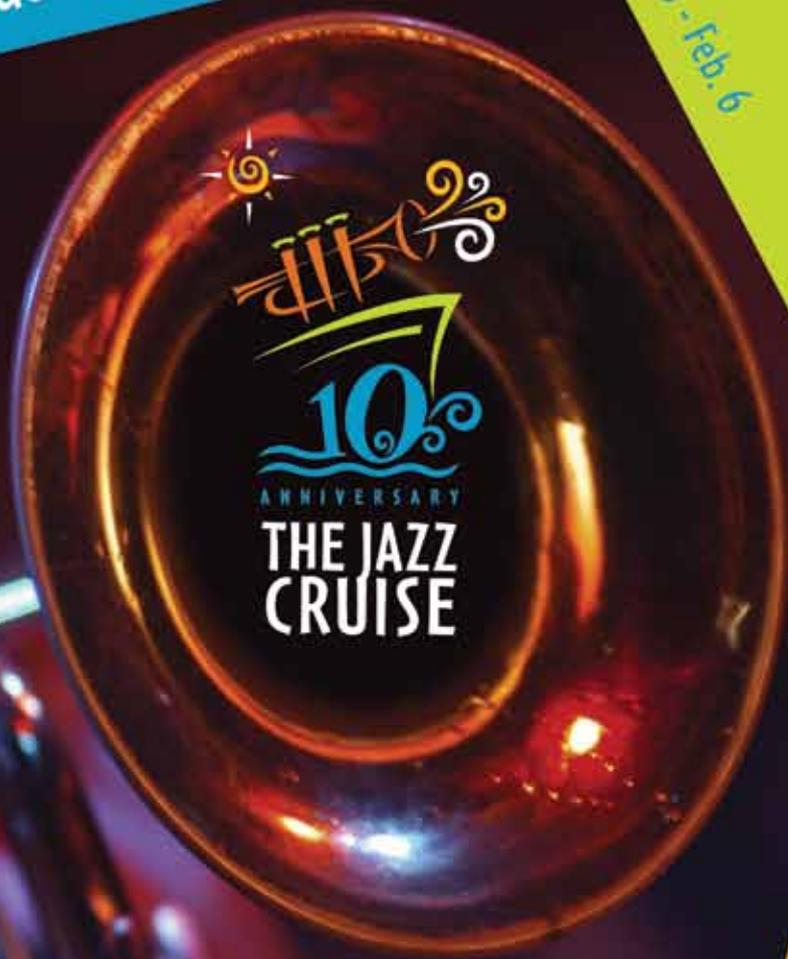
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# JULY 2010

# Inside

## ON THE COVER

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BY DAN OUELLETTE

One of contemporary music's boldest electric bass guitar innovators, Victor Wooten has arguably been the most influential creative explorer on the instrument since Jaco Pastorius. With a penchant for chasing a rainbow of stylistic colors, Wooten has embarked on a quest to speak as many different musical languages as possible and to keep himself wide open to a variety of artistic possibilities.



John Pizzarelli

JIMMY KATZ

Cover photography of Victor Wooten with his Fodera Monarch bass by Jimmy Katz

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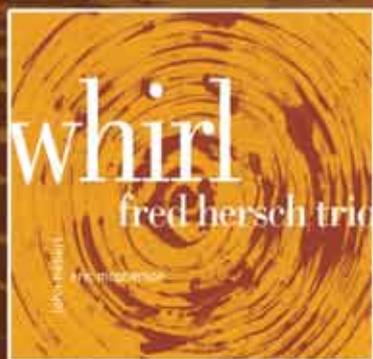


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## First Take | BY DAN OUELLETTE



## Safe On Higher Ground

On the May 5 edition of *The Daily Show With Jon Stewart*, the faux-news host reviewed the previous day's coverage of the BP oil spill inching its way through the Gulf of Mexico toward New Orleans, which he lamented seemed to be cursed by both natural and man-made disasters. He then consoled the audience, "As horrific as the threat posed to the Big Easy is, I take comfort in the fact that we as a nation still have Nashville, also home to one of our great musical traditions ..." just before delivering the visual punch line: news footage of the city's inundation from record-breaking rainfalls and flooded rivers.

For the citizens of Nashville, it was no laughing matter. Large areas of the city were underwater because the Cumberland River crested. The *New York Times* reported on May 7 that the damage included the Grand Ole Opry's stage being two feet underwater as well as the mass destruction of guitars and equipment owned by prominent Nashville musicians at SoundCheck, the 160,000-square-foot storage and rehearsal facility.

A little over a week before, Victor Wooten had been in New York being interviewed for this month's cover story. We spent a considerable time talking about Wooten Woods, his 150-acre Tennessee retreat that has become the home of his 11-year-old Bass/Nature Camp. Part of the property is forested hills, but another part is farmland bordered by the Duck River. That river rose 45 feet, Wooten said in a telephone conversation the day after he had helped neighbors gut the downstairs of their completely flooded house.

As for the camp itself, where 15 students and three instructors were settled in for a music theory weekend, Wooten said that only one building near the river had been submerged. "The main part of the camp was on elevated land away from the river, so it didn't suffer as much damage," he said. "Some of the buildings had water, including the main barn, but we got all the basses and equipment onto higher ground." Classes continued for lack of anything better to do, but soon Wooten decided it was time to "call for a rescue." After a couple of failed attempts (including one rescue motorboat breaking down), all of the campers were taken to safety.

Wooten, who had been walking through water up to his hips to direct the rescue, returned to the camp a few days later. "All the instruments were fine because we had moved them," he said. "My main concern now is how the utilities in the kitchen fared." As for the foreseeable future, in true showmanship fashion, Wooten said that the show will go on. "Once things get back to normal, we'll be back out at Wooten Woods," he said. "The camp will definitely continue."

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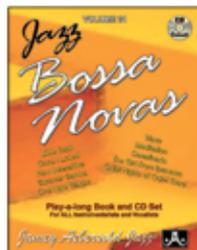


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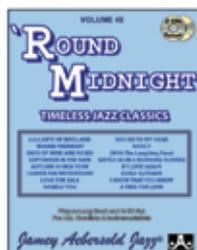


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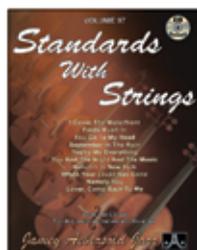
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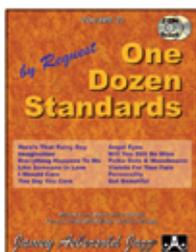
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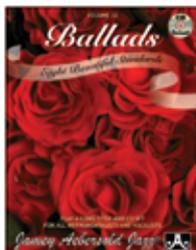


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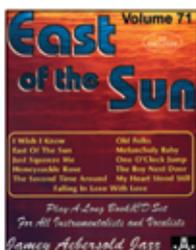
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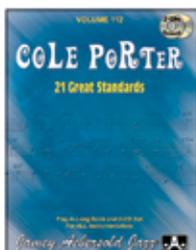


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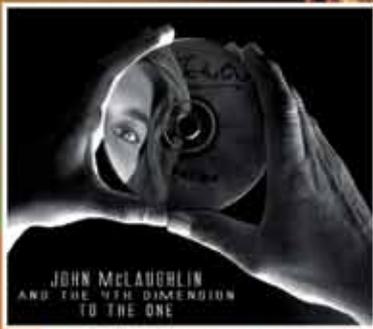


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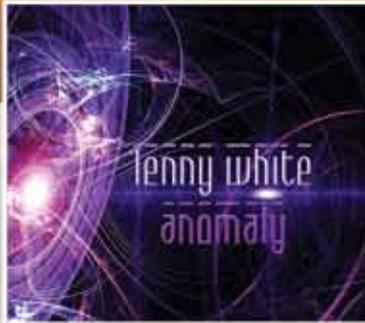


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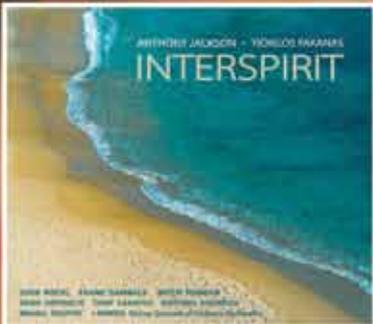
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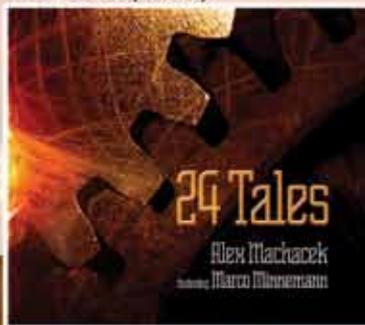


**Lenny White:  
Anomaly (2010)**



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

**Alex Machacek:  
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## *An Educator's Thanks*

When I joined the Booker T. Washington High School For the Performing and Visual Arts in 1983, I immediately realized that the school housed some of the most extraordinary talent in the country. I have always known that by giving these students a chance to show their art on a national stage, someone would notice. You have supplied Jazzfest USA, the annual Education issue, the annual Festival issue, Auditions and for 33 years, the DownBeat Student Music Awards: recognizing and identifying the next generation of jazz leaders for our industry. By allowing the educators around the world an incentive that came way before it was "cool" to be in jazz education, you have been an integral part of the jazz education movement and subsequent growth for all educators and students of the music. Jack, Kevin and John "Butch" Maher, along with some of the same staff still onboard today, laid the groundwork for others to follow.

The Vail Jazz Workshop, The Brubeck Institute, The Monk Institute, The Stanford Summer Residency, The Monterey Jazz Festival, The Grammy Big Band and Grammy Choir along with the new Jazz Education Network all owe you a big thanks for laying the groundwork for what was to come.

Jazz has moved off of the street and resides in the halls of academia. Thanks to you and the path set by the above mentioned, we all had a road map to follow. Thank you for this great honor, Jazz Educator Hall of Fame for 2010. I am very humbled by this award and know deep down that it was DownBeat who allowed us to identify and hear them first before we read about those artists as masters of jazz in your magazine.

BART MARANTZ  
BOOKER T. WASHINGTON HSPVA  
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## *Big Band Rediscoveries*

Thank you for your recent listing of 25 favorite big band recordings (April). The article has led me to some discoveries that I might not have made otherwise, especially Count Basie's *Chairman Of The Board*, Duke Ellington's *Far East Suite* and the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis recordings. I also realized that I had several of the listed recordings in my collection already that I had not played in quite a while. Those were real re-discoveries for me, as well. That list has truly helped deepen my respect for, and appreciation of, this art from.

TIMOTHY VOKES  
DEARBORN, MICH.

Thanks for the "My Favorite Big Band Album" article. I own 12 of the recommendations and immediately ordered five of your recommen-



dations to strengthen my collection of 3,500 CDs. DownBeat is a great resource for updating my collection.

I have been a subscriber for more than 32 years and have loved every issue.

STAN DAVIS  
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## *Thank The Teacher*

As Downbeat Student Music Award winners (June) we would like to thank Professor Brent Wallarab for his invaluable guidance in the process of writing and performing our arrangements. We could not have done it without him!

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## *Corrections*

- The feature on Chick Corea's *Further Explorations of Bill Evans* (June) misstated the anniversary of Evans' death. This year marks the 30th anniversary of Evans' passing.
- Engineer Ron Saint Germain's name was misspelled in the review of the Nels Cline Singers album *Initiate* ("Reviews," June).
- Virginia Valdes should have been credited as the photographer of a Cuong Vu photo ("Woodshed," June).
- Eastman School of Music instructor Bob Sneider's name was misspelled in the Student Music Awards (June).

DOWNBEAT REGRETS THE ERRORS.

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# Beat

## Electric Recharge

*Early studio experiences inspire drummer Lenny White's first disc in 11 years*

In January 1970 Lenny White arrived at Rudy Van Gelder's famed recording studio for the sessions that would produce Freddie Hubbard's *Red Clay*. White had cobbled together a drum kit that included a makeshift bass drum made from a steel oil drum. He played it on Miles Davis' *Bitches Brew* and on recordings by Joe Henderson and Woody Shaw.

"Before the first session began I played the bass drum and Ron Carter said, 'No man, it's too resonant,'" said White, who reluctantly substituted an old bass drum that Van Gelder had in the studio. "For me it sounded highly traumatic. I was recording with my heroes, and I had this horrible bass drum sound. I couldn't listen to [*Red Clay*] for, like, 10 years."

White purchased a new kit by the time he joined Return To Forever for *Hymn Of The Seventh Galaxy* in 1973, and the group went on to become one of the great bands of the jazz-rock era. But White's experiences in recording studios altered the course of his career, and the current results can be heard in his new *Anomaly* (Abstract Logix), his first disc since 1999.

"I started to do a lot of record dates, and there was [often] somebody sitting behind a desk telling me how I should sound, or how I should tune my drums," he said. "And I didn't like that. So I did enough research to know what mics I needed to use [and] how I needed to tune my drums. And so I decided to go on the other side of the glass and be the producer, but also play the instrument."

Stanley Clarke, White's backline partner in Return To Forever, credits White's studio expertise with transforming the group's final album, *Romantic Warrior*, in 1976. "There was an original mix on that record and it wasn't up to par,

and Lenny with another engineer took it to Europe and mixed it over there," Clarke recalled. Because of White's efforts, Clarke said, "that album in a lot of ways defined jazz-rock."

White remained behind the scenes in the years leading up to Return To Forever's 2008 reunion, but plans to increase his visibility after the release of *Anomaly*. Tunes like "We Know" and "Election Day" update the jazz-rock tradition of screaming guitars and straightforward grooves incorporating rock. But White insisted jazz had a strong impact on *Anomaly*.

"If you listen to me play all those beats, it swings," White said. "There's a hidden jazz shuffle behind all of it. I could play a jazz ride [cymbal] on all of those tunes. There's a lot more jazz to jazz-rock than anyone's bothered to acknowledge."

The more restrained "Catlett Out Of The Bag" bears out this statement.

The song began life after drummer Mike Clark invited White to a Brooklyn studio to record a track for Clark's new album. With just an organ player on hand, the two performed the "mop mop" beat Max Roach played as a tribute to Big Sid Catlett.

White also attributes his recent low profile to serious shoulder injuries; the problems began in 2007. White's right shoulder required both arthroscopic surgery and an experimental procedure performed by a doctor in Munich involving 28 separate injections. "I couldn't pick up a pencil," White said. "I couldn't hold my

arm straight out in front of me."

During Return To Forever's tour, White estimates he had recovered only 70 percent of his arm strength, insufficient to complete a single-stroke drum roll. By the time White returned to the road in 2009 with Chick Corea and Stanley Clarke, his right arm had improved significantly.

"The mind is amazing when it works in conjunction with the body, because you find ways to do things that maybe you're physically not capable of."

—Eric Fine



Lenny White

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## German ACT Label, Founder Siegfried Loch Achieve New Milestones with ECHO Honors

German record label ACT has received the first ECHO Jazz award for label of the year. The honor, presented on May 5, was voted on by fans in an online contest.

ECHO Jazz spans 29 additional jury-awarded categories and is an offshoot of Deutsche Phono-Akademie's annual ECHO ceremony, which celebrates German and international musicians in the pop and classical fields.

"ECHO is like the German Grammy," said Siegfried Loch, ACT's founder. "It's been running for many, many years, but there has never been a jazz presentation. For the first time, we had the whole evening just for presenting awards to the best jazz artists."

The win is a coup for Loch, who started the small label in 1992 with the release of Vince Mendoza and Arif Mardin's *Jazzpaña*. This honor also marks Loch's 50th anniversary in the music industry. Sweden's King Carl XVI knighted him for his services to Swedish culture in Germany.

Loch initially thought the award would go to one of the more established jazz labels that has a longer history of hit records, said guitarist Nguyen Lê, who recently released his *Signature*



Siegfried Loch

*Edition 1* on the label. The fact that ACT doesn't have a pervasive sound, he continued, may have helped the label win over the public.

"There's no ACT music style," Lê said. "It's an open sound that can talk to a larger community of people."

Pianist Michael Wollny, who received an ECHO for his album *Wunderkammer*, has developed a bond with his labelmates and the company's

founder. Two ACT artists, drummer Wolfgang Haffner and the Helge Sunde's Ensemble Denada, also won ECHO prizes. The Vijay Iyer Trio received a win for the ACT album *Historicity*.

"There's a strong feeling of the ACT family," Wollny said. "A win is an award for the family, not just the label."

While the pop and classical ceremony has established its cachet in the international music industry, the potential impact of the jazz awards, presented at a separate event, is hard to estimate.

As for Loch, who will turn 70 this summer, he shows no signs of resting on his laurels.

"This is my life," Loch said. "A number of years ago somebody was trying to buy the label, and I said, 'My life is not for sale.'" —Jon Ross

## New Orleans Preservationists Launch Series of Historic Musicians' Autobiographies

While the Jazz and Heritage Foundation celebrates the cultural history of New Orleans, the Historic New Orleans Collection is hard at work documenting it.

The Collection—a research center, publisher and museum dedicated to preserving the history of the Crescent City—released *Unfinished Blues: Memories of a New Orleans Music Man* by Harold Battiste Jr. with Karen Celestan.

The first in a new series of musicians' autobiographies, the book tells the story of one of New Orleans' most influential composers and arrangers, a 79-year-old legend who helped launch the careers of Sam Cooke, Dr. John and Sonny and Cher and founded New Orleans' first African-American owned record label, AFO.

"Mac told me that he had been reading up on this character called Dr. John from the New Orleans Voodoo tradition and wanted to work something around that," Battiste recalled in discussing a section devoted to his work with Mac Rebbenack. He goes on to explain how, with the help of Cher's seamstress and a cast of key re-



Ellis Marsalis (left), David Pulphus and Harold Battiste Jr. in a 1994 performance

cording artists like Jessie Hill, Battiste worked with Rebbenack to create the tongue-in-cheek stage persona that evolved into one of the great music figures in New Orleans' history.

"People want to focus on traditional jazz when they talk about New Orleans music, as if there was a period that existed and is over, but it's actually an integral part of our culture," said HNOG editor Sarah Doerries. "We're not focusing on the rarified Louis Armstrong example. We're hoping to look at artists like Battiste, [Ernie] K. Doe, and other musicians who maybe every music lover in the world doesn't know about, but should." —Jennifer Odell

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**Dr. Bennett:** Tony Bennett received an honorary doctorate of music from New York's Juilliard School at its commencement on May 21. [Details: juilliard.edu](http://juilliard.edu)

**Venice Lineup:** The Venezia Jazz Festival in Venice, Italy, has announced the lineup for its July 23–Aug. 1 event. Artists include Pat Metheny, Norah Jones and Esperanza Spalding.

[Details: venetojazz.com](http://venetojazz.com)

**Teaching Teachers:** Litchfield Jazz Camp in Kent, Ct., has announced a new workshop for training music teachers of all levels on July 20 and 21. Don Braden will conduct the workshops along with saxophonist Claire Daly, drummer Alvin Atkinson and others.

[Details: litchfieldjazzfest.com](http://litchfieldjazzfest.com)

**Coleman Signs:** Saxophonist Steve Coleman has signed with Pi, which is releasing his upcoming album, *Semblances And Affinities*.

[Details: pirecordings.com](http://pirecordings.com)

**Outside Is In:** A new presenting organization, Inside The Whale, has been formed in New York to bring jazz and other improvising artists to rock clubs throughout the city. This spring they booked Ben Perowsky's Moodswing Orchestra in Brooklyn's Southpaw and Allison Miller's Boom Tic Boom at the borough's Littlefield.

[Details: insidethewhale.org](http://insidethewhale.org)

**RIP, McConnell, Lees:** Trombonist Rob McConnell died in Toronto on May 1. He was 75 and had been receiving treatment for liver cancer. McConnell formed the Toronto-based big band Boss Brass in 1968. He recorded more than 30 albums.

Jazz historian and composer Gene Lees died at his home in Ojai, Calif., on April 22. He was 82 and had been struggling with heart disease. Lees had written such books as *Cats Of Any Color: Jazz In Black And White* and edited DownBeat from 1959–'61.

## John Carter/ Bobby Bradford Quartet *Flight For Four*

(1969, FLYING DUTCHMAN)

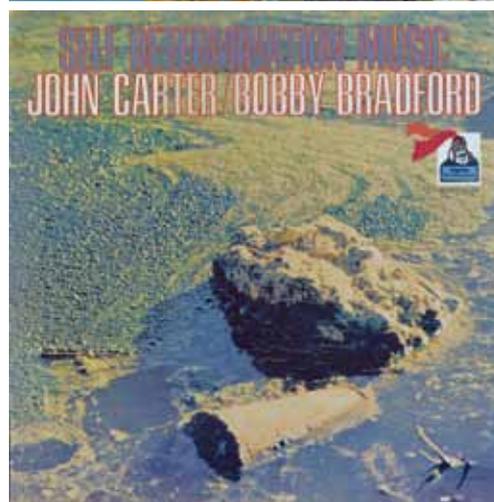
## John Carter/ Bobby Bradford Quartet *Self Determination Music*

(1970, FLYING DUTCHMAN)

Having just written liner notes for the upcoming Mosaic Select release of the great early recordings that John Carter and Bobby Bradford made for the tiny independent Revelation Records in the late '60s, I've been deeply immersed in their two Flying Dutchman LPs. It remains one of the greatest disappointments that these two key records, which bridge the freebop innovations of the Ornette Coleman foursomes of the early '60s with the architectural achievements of the Anthony Braxton quartets in the '70s, remain out of print. Emphasis on creative linearity is the lineage (as it were), and these Carter/Bradford groups should be every bit as much the watershed as those more widely heard artists.

*Flight For Four* was produced by Bob Thiele, whose work for Impulse! had already made him one of the most important producers in new jazz. The quartet features a very strong rhythm section, the same one that made the first Revelation LP, *Seeking*, with Tom Williamson on bass and Bruz Freeman on drums. Freeman, who is the brother of Chicago guitarist George Freeman and tenor saxophonist Von Freeman, is extremely resourceful and able to cover both the more swinging material and the open-ended areas. The leaders, both Texans who, like Coleman, had relocated to Los Angeles, are models of independent interdependence. Carter is best known as a clarinetist. Rightly so, as he revolutionized the instrument, bringing to it a totally fresh, different, non-saxophonic attitude, but finding ways to push the licorice stick harder than other great innovators, like Jimmy Giuffre, had. Bradford continues to be one of the most wonderful trumpet players in creative music, and these are some of his first triumphs, essential listening.

On *Flight For Four*, however, Carter also plays alto and tenor saxophone, and it's a special treat to hear the latter, on which he



excels. Makes you wonder what he'd have done if he had picked up that horn more often. Appropriately, *Self Determination Music* was produced by Carter and Bradford. The cover features an oil slick, no doubt a reference to the 1969 Santa Barbara oil spill (strangely familiar again 41 years later!), but unlike some of the other Flying Dutchman releases—notably Gil Scott-Heron, Angela Davis, or Pete Hamill's *Murder At Kent State University*—the political content is not overt but is infused in the ferociously committed playing.

These two classic records have languished for decades, out of print and difficult to find, apparently the casualty of a dispute over rights to the Flying Dutchman vaults. Sad that such important music could be lost to generations of listeners for such petty reasons. **DB**

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# SFJAZZ Starts Capital Campaign for Permanent Home

San Francisco's SFJAZZ announced on May 5 that it will build a 35,000-square-foot permanent home in the city's Hayes Valley neighborhood. While the organization has launched a capital campaign to raise the needed \$60 million, it has a head start, after receiving \$20 million from an anonymous donor in the Bay Area.

"We're very happy," said SFJAZZ founder and artistic director Randall Kline. "It's taken a lot of planning, a lot of time to get this thing done. We're not where we want to be yet, but to get to this point was quite a victory."

Since SFJAZZ was founded 28 years ago, it has presented its concerts—including the San Francisco Jazz Festival and its own SFJAZZ Collective—in venues throughout the city. The planned SFJAZZ Center will include a 700-seat auditorium, rehearsal studios, digital lab and restaurant. Not only will this mean that the organization will no longer have the challenge of finding available



Architectural rendering of SFJAZZ Center

halls, but it will present concerts in rooms designed for jazz.

"People have in mind that jazz is an acoustic form, but there's rarely a concert where the sound isn't reinforced in some way," Kline said. "So the idea is to have the qualities of a good concert hall. A bit of echo to reflect sound. What acousticians refer to as a wetter sound. Jazz also needs a drier sound for drums, louder, so

there has to be a balance for that where frequencies can be absorbed as much as possible. The natural acoustics of the hall with reinforcement is a complex equation."

Kline adds that another advantage of the permanent center will be that SFJAZZ can expand its educational programs. These include more centralized rehearsal spaces for its high school all-stars program, as well as more rooms for the stu-

dents to work with visiting artists. The digital lab will also include the means to teach student musicians how to best use Sibelius, Pro Tools and other software programs.

"These are ways to digitally create on all levels, from compositional to production," Kline said. "It's ideal for students of all ages to disseminate their art."

Along with the \$20 million donation, the SFJAZZ board has raised an additional \$10 million from its members and is about to approach foundations for support. Kline said that the plan is to break ground on the building within a year and open in the fall of 2012.

"What we're trying to do here is to turn this into something that has a future and can help buoy the possibilities for jazz," Kline said. "This will be a physical presence, a beautiful modern structure. This will be a physical statement that this is a building for jazz, that it deserves a place among the other pillars of culture in this country. It certainly earned it." —Aaron Cohen

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## Tradition, Innovation Demonstrated at New Orleans Jazz Fest

In early May, a Jazz Fest discussion between Ellis Marsalis and Harold Battiste Jr. tackled the issue of innovation in contemporary New Orleans jazz. Even as they decried the fact that local musicians aren't studying the music's innovators closely enough, they acknowledged that self-determination deeply informs the city's rich musical culture.

"New Orleans has a history of blacks living independently. That's why Mardi Gras Indians talk about 'not bowing down,'" summarized poet and WWOZ DJ Kalamu Ya Salam, who led the talk with Marsalis and Battiste. "A slave who has run away from his master can do what he wants to, and that's the legacy of New Orleans. Self-determination has percolated through the culture into the music."

This became evident during this year's New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival, and especially onstage with Troy "Trombone Shorty" Andrews, who played a sweat-soaked set at the fairgrounds and nearly a dozen night shows during the two-week celebration in late April and early May. Andrews' storied career began in the Tremé neighborhood and was honed in jazz clubs and second lines. But the material he performed during Jazz Fest off his new disc, *Backatown*, shares more with funk and rock than it does with jazz. That may in part be why Preservation Hall Band drummer Shannon Powell opened his quartet's set by reminding the Jazz Tent crowd that he's "the real king of the Tremé." Though when vocalist John Boutte later brought the tent's crowd to its feet with his increasingly famous rendition of "Tremé Song," one had to wonder if Powell was milking his longtime nickname for the popular HBO series reference.

Powell lived up to his moniker when an up-tempo, controlled funk jam led by David Torkanowsky's organ segued into a sax solo punctuated by the Mardi Gras Indian-esque slap of his



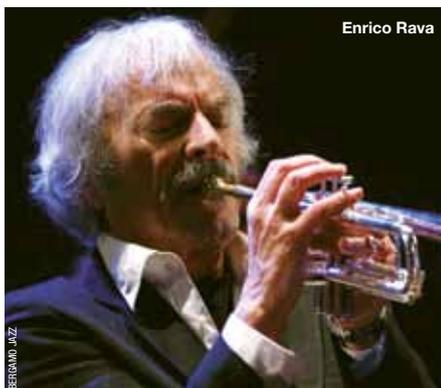
tambourine and bass drum. He rounded out the performance by invoking James Black, another drummer known for his ability to navigate pop and r&b as ably as he could infuse modern jazz with complex time structures and intricate melodies. Throughout the set, Powell showcased his silken vocals and predilection for funky beats against the backdrop of skills he learned decades ago playing church-based brass band music. The performance represented that delicate balance of a style steeped in the study of New Orleans jazz masters on one hand, and the ethic of eschewing expectations in favor of playing in the spirit of musical independence on the other.

Something similar happened on the Heritage Stage, where the Mardi Gras Indian Orchestra twisted the New Orleans music traditions of call-and-response-based Indian chants into a percussion-heavy orchestra complete with strings and feather-clad front men. Unfortunately, what has worked for them as a concept over the past few Fat Tuesdays failed to translate as well to the festival stage. Despite having some of the city's brightest

talent on hand, traditionals like "Indian Red" fell flat as some of the best players onstage got lost in the shuffle of so many competing instruments.

On the other hand, the relatively young TBC Brass Band—which was playing for tips on a Bourbon Street corner before The Roots took an interest in their careers and helped them gain visibility—followed in the footsteps of the Dirty Dozen, Rebirth and the Hot 8 when they mixed second line arrangements of rap and r&b songs like LaVert's "Casanova" with traditional brass numbers and original songs. They played like their lives depended on it.

Rounding out the quotient of great performances from Jazz Fest staples this year was Allen Toussaint, whose Jazzity Project, featuring material from his *Bright Mississippi* disc, wasn't quite as memorable as his all-star mainstage set. With Sam Williams, Theresa Andersson, guitarist Renard Poche and vocalist Debbie Davis in his band, Toussaint kicked out a slew of his classics, including "Mother-In-Law," "Working In The Coal Mine" and "Last Train." —Jennifer Odell



## Inventiveness Endures at Bergamo Festival

Since 1969, the Italian Bergamo Jazz Festival has tried to balance musical genres, leaving the audience sometimes puzzled, yet mostly enthusiastic. In previous years, Uri Caine had been in charge of the program while this year it was under the tutelage of trumpeter Paolo Fresu, who introduced each night himself. The festival ran March 19-21.

There were many side events throughout the city—saxophonist John Surman playing solo at the Chiesa della Maddalena and Italian bands playing in various venues—but the main con-

certs always took place at the beautiful Teatro Donizetti in the evenings. On the first night, Surman on soprano and baritone and accordionist Richard Galliano made the most of their musical encounter despite personal universes that might have seemed at odds. Though somewhat stiff, Surman's phrasing has an original edge and it blends with Galliano's assertiveness. For the second part, Ahmad Jamal's quartet made no mystery of its commitment to rhythmic variety with James Cammack on bass, drummer Herlin Riley on drums and percussionist Manolo Badrena.

The sheer power of Riley's melodic figures soaring against Cammack's lines and Badrena's colors was a dramatic bedrock for Jamal's flurries.

Conversely, the Moscow Art Trio's performance left the feeling that gimmicks had replaced musical intentions. With a set of weird instruments bringing little sonic interest (clavichord and Alp horn), Misha Alperin (piano, vocals, melodica, clavichord), Arkady Shilkloper (French and Alp horn) and Sergey Starostin (vocals and a profusion of folk reeds) went through carefully rehearsed routines, harping on effects rather than musicality. On the other hand, trumpeter Enrico Rava managed to show how one could create atmospheres that were engaging and mysterious through dynamics and a keen sense of space. Trombonist Gianluca Petrella often stole the show in a somewhat over-exuberant manner, but it is always Rava's clean, poetic voice that remains.

The last night featured Omar Sosa and the

SFJAZZ Collective. Sosa started his show by lighting little candles and burning some incense on the piano. That was the only soft point of the concert. In spite of enthusiastic energy, loudness reigned. While one can appreciate the aggressive piano lines, the combination of volume, reverb and gizmos was too overbearing to benefit from Mamani Keita's vocals. This year, SFJAZZ has chosen Horace Silver as a springboard for its inventive arrangements. Stefon Harris shone in Milt Jackson fashion on "Cape Verdean Blues." Miguel Zenón soared with authority on "Lonely Woman." Drummer Eric Harland's unusual rhythmic zest contributed a lot to the collective sound even if his own original "Harlandia" is a bit on the austere side (but a magnificent solo by Robin Eubanks showed that he is one of the trombone greats). Much the same applies to "Collective Presence," pianist Edward Simon's contribution, a darkish tune with some nice ensemble parts.

—Jean Szlamowicz

## Regina Carter Debuts Reverse Thread Band

Regina Carter's recent career highlights have made headlines. After she received a MacArthur Fellowship, the violinist embarked on a makeover in 2008 with a repertoire spotlighting West African music. Starting with her long-time rhythm section of drummer Alvester Garnett and bassist Chris Lightcap, Carter added Yacouba Sissoko, a kora player from Mali, and accordion player Will Holshouser to a band she called Reverse Thread. Carter released the band's self-titled album in May and marked the occasion with a set of nights at Jazz at Lincoln Center's Dizzy's Club Coca-Cola in New York.

At Dizzy's on March 26, the music sometimes lacked a focal point in part because Carter's solo turns often occurred at the back end of the songs. Perhaps the sequencing was deliberate, a means for Carter to respond to her sidemen rather than the conventional protocol.

The 70-minute set included six songs, all but one composed by West African songwriters such as Boubacar Traoré and Habib Koité. The set began with Traoré's "Kanou," which sounded like otherworldly fiddle music or zydeco. Carter and Holshouser played the melody as expected; the arrangement included some counterpoint. Carter's solo shot into her violin's upper register as Garnett bashed away underneath.

Lightcap's unaccompanied bass opened Richard Bona's "Mandingo Street," and Garnett and Holshouser followed. Carter's solo was well worth the wait. It avoided references to any jazz tradition



Regina Carter

and featured lots of repetition. Carter sang wordlessly with her violin during the out chorus, and Garnett and Sissoko joined in.

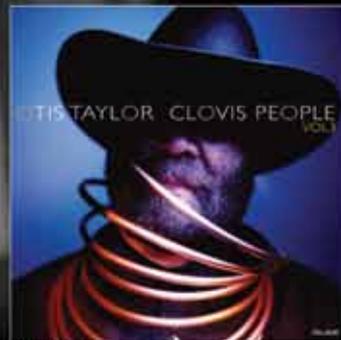
Garnett's "New For N'Awlins" captured the old-time feel of the Crescent City. With Sissoko sitting out, Carter and Holshouser played the melody over Lightcap's walking bass. Holshouser and Lightcap soloed first, and then Carter fell right in step with a swinging solo pitched perfectly to the music. At one point Carter played a quiet, unaccompanied passage. When the rest of the band re-entered the fray Carter played accordingly, matching the volume and intensity. She culled "Zerapiky" from the Madagascar accordion repertoire. To illustrate the song's origins, a field recording was played beforehand and, like "Kanou," Carter's version recalled old-time fiddle music.

Carter closed the set with "Kothbiro," the moodiest song on the album. Sissoko returned to the stage and played the intro. The tight arrangement strongly suggested chamber music and provided an odd finale to a mostly lively set.

—Eric Fine

TELARC

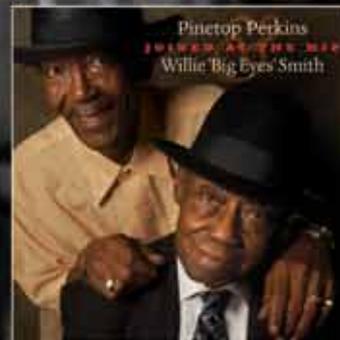
OTIS TAYLOR



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Otis Taylor, the architect of "trance blues," writes his own history on this new recording, his first with a full band in six years. Guests include: Gary Moore (guitar), Chuck Campbell (pedal steel – Campbell Brothers), Cassie Taylor (bass), & Ron Miles (cornet).

PINETOP PERKINS



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Pinetop Perkins and Willie "Big Eyes" Smith - two of the last great Delta bluesmen still performing - have been reunited for this historic recording and a coinciding tour. Best known for playing in the legendary Muddy Waters Band, these icons have worked with virtually every blues musician around. A multiple GRAMMY-Award winner, the 97-year-old Perkins is widely regarded as one of the greatest bluesmen ever.

BORDERS

## Stephan Crump ▶▶ *Never Can Say Goodbye*

Stephan Crump's favorite way to experience New York City involves strapping his 4-year-old son Maceo into the child's seat of his bike and heading out of their Brooklyn apartment to take in a view of Prospect Park, Coney Island, the Staten Island Ferry, the Brooklyn Bridge and beyond.

And while the shaggy blonde toddler's exuberance probably accounts for much of the satisfaction Crump gets from these journeys, there's also something about seeing his own world from a unique perspective that illuminates his own creative spark.

"The title of the album, 'Reclamation,' comes largely from that experience," Crump said about the new release on Sunnyside from his Rosetta Trio. "It's this sense of reclaiming a different connection to our community, our space and our relationship to the environment."

In the Rosetta Trio—with guitarists Liberty Ellman and Jamie Fox—Crump explores a different connection to concepts like groove and intends to forge new relationships between the listener and the material. Like seeing a city from a bike, rather than walking or driving around it, the music on *Reclamation* is about the act of changing perspective.

For starters, the band's instrumentation casts a shadow of the American folk music tradition on Crump's ethereally pretty compositions.

"He has a straightforward, melodic simplicity that you might associate more with American folk or rock," said pianist Vijay Iyer, who employs Crump in his own trio. "It's true to who he is, and it balances some of the complexities of our band's music."

The unique lineup in Rosetta also means a shift in each instrument's role within the group, which contributes to the delicate balances of sounds that give the new album such an intimate feel. "The whole ensemble has to be a rhythm section simultaneously with being lead and harmonic instruments," Crump said, adding that the result is a "flow of all those roles," which forces the band to express groove without a drummer. It's an unexpected twist that directs ears to listen more closely to the lower registers of the music, like on the track "Shoes, Jump," which involves a sort of controlled soulfulness.

Crump's relationship with New York began when he moved there after college 16 years ago, but his native Memphis is a key player, too. One of the highlights on *Tuckahoe*, his second album as a leader, was the title track, named after the street where he grew up. At the time he wrote it, the tune was meant to be both a tribute and a goodbye to the place where he'd been raised.



"I remember distinctly feeling the music and the art and the creativity in the water and the air and the soil there," Crump said, seated by an electric piano in the Brooklyn apartment he shares with his wife, the singer-songwriter Jen Chapin, and their two sons. On the wall behind him, a panoramic photograph taken by his dad peers off the city's coast, across the Mississippi to the Arkansas flood plain.

"In the past 30 years, we've gotten so far away from that and it doesn't seem like it's a fundamental part of the collective of everyone's lives now. It's more like there are pockets of creativity you can connect with. It's especially difficult for me to experience that when I go home to Memphis because it's a stark representation of that greater trend in our culture."

Realizing he could never really say goodbye to the city, Crump began writing another song about it during one visit when he was feeling acutely connected to that sense of loss. Given this timeline of music and emotions tied to his hometown, it's fitting that "Memphis" is the opening track on *Reclamation*.

"It's sort of a dissolution of the image," he said. "You know—here's the melody, here's the image, here's the piece and then let's just drift away from it and let it vanish."

The Rosetta Trio was born from material Crump had compiled between 2001 and 2005, much of which was fundamentally about his reaction to the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

"We were on our roof when we found out what was going on. We have a beautiful view of downtown. We watched it fall and then just experienced the bottom falling out," he said, drawing a deep breath. "The music that came through at that time was extremely personal and emotional."

He called on his friends Ellman and Fox to help him test out some of what he'd written. Listening back to a recording of the rehearsal, he knew he wanted to make a record immediately, which they did. The compositional beauty and elegance wasn't lost on Crump's peers.

"They have an intimacy and focus, and great subtlety with timbre, texture, counterpoint and balance," Iyer said. "It's a lovely resonance."

Lately, Crump's schedule has been a dizzying feat of masterful tours with Chapin and Iyer, room-packing gigs with guitarist Jim Campilongo's Electric Trio, prestigious invitations such as his 2009 solo performance at the International Society of Bassists, and the ongoing fatherhood duties. Looking ahead, he's working on an expansion of the Rosetta Trio's concept, inspired, again, by place.

—Jennifer Odell

## Kalle Kalima

### ▶▶ A Kubrick Odyssey

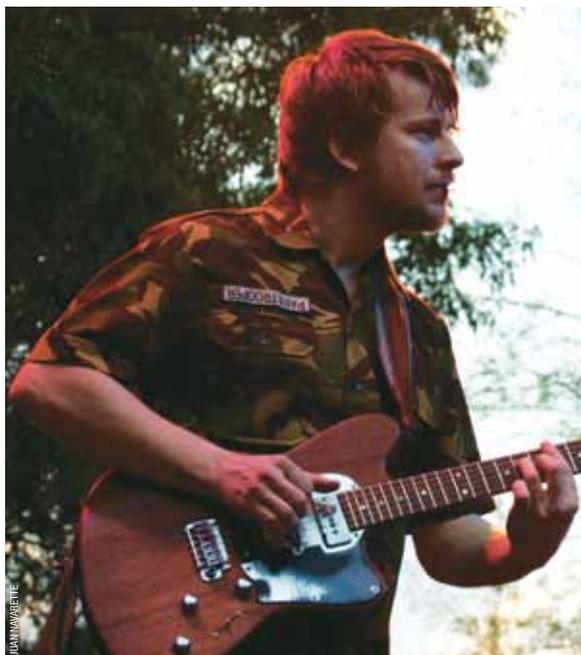
Filmmaker Stanley Kubrick had an uncanny knack for crafting vivid, bizarre but lived-in worlds within each of his films. Picture the snowed-in, mind-warping horrors of the Overlook Hotel in *The Shining*; the dehumanized, sex-and-violence dystopia of *A Clockwork Orange*; the candlelit sensuality of *Barry Lyndon*; or the space-age transcendentalism of *2001: A Space Odyssey*. Finnish guitarist Kalle Kalima had a unique opportunity to step inside those worlds. While killing time on tour in Belgium in November 2006, Kalima happened upon an exhibition of artifacts from Kubrick's films.

"It was incredible," Kalima said over the phone from his Berlin home. "I got so impressed that he basically created whole worlds for his films, so I decided to take an impression of the spaces and places in the films and started thinking, what kind of music would fit in the Korova Milk Bar [from *A Clockwork Orange*], or what kind of music would be playing in the bar at the Overlook Hotel?"

The result is *Some Kubricks Of Blood* (TUM Records), nine tracks inspired by five of the director's films, composed for Kalima's unusual quartet K-18, named for the Finnish equivalent of the X rating. "Kubrick had a lot of stress with his films being considered violent and bad for people," Kalima said. "I think they're psychologically interesting. They're more about the fear of violence and are totally against violence."

Kalima's group includes saxophonist Mikko Innanen, a classmate of the guitarist at Helsinki's Sibelius Academy, and bassist Teppo Hauta-aho, a veteran of jazz and classical ensembles who has played alongside Cecil Taylor, Anthony Braxton and Veli Kujala on quarter-tone accordion—an instrument he invented. Realizing Kubrick's frequent use of contemporary composers like Ligeti and Penderecki in his scores, the guitarist fused the two inspirations into one.

Thus, *2001*'s spaceport lounge is treated to an abstracted, antigravity blues on "Earth Light Room"; "Parris Island" (the site of boot camp in *Full Metal Jacket*) travels from the idyllic peace of its surroundings through the distorted violence of its military indoctrination; and the drug-laced dairy of "Korova Milk Bar" gradually builds from smooth delirium into a bit of, as its



customer Alex would say, the old ultra-violence.

Progressive rock was another source of inspiration for Kalima on this album—if not so much musically, where he draws far more on avant-garde jazz and contemporary classical music, than in the genre's epic concept albums.

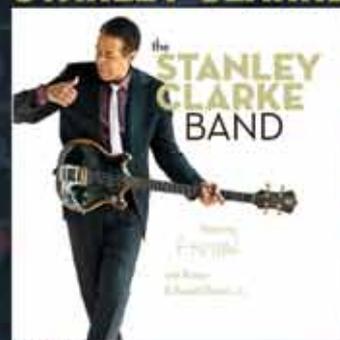
"Sometimes I just take my kids to kindergarten, go to my practice room and start playing," he said. "But in this case I thought it would be really cool to make a whole record with one theme tying it all together. When I was a kid I used to listen to Pink Floyd and all this progressive rock stuff, and they had theme albums. Now for the first time, I've tried it myself."

Kalima's rock influences are more evident in Johnny La Marama, his collective trio with bassist Chris Dahlgren and drummer Eric Schaefer, which combines Naked City collage with Frank Zappa humor. He also leads Klima Kalima, a guitar/bass/drums trio with its own new CD, *Loru* (Enja), on which he triangulates a position somewhere between Wes Montgomery, Marc Ribot and Bill Frisell. With his solo project, Kalle Kalima Pentasonic, the guitarist uses a host of effects and samplers to create a surround-sound experience through five amplifiers arrayed on all sides of his audience.

"I love traditional jazz," Kalima says, "but there are a lot of kids here in Europe who basically just copy American jazz one to one. Which is kind of sad, because it's been done so well already. That's nice if it's just for showing people a beautiful art form, but things have to move and I'd like to come up with elements from avant-rock, improvised jazz and new music and see if anything fresh can be done in this direction. I'm trying to stretch." —Shaun Brady

HEADS UP  
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## STANLEY CLARKE



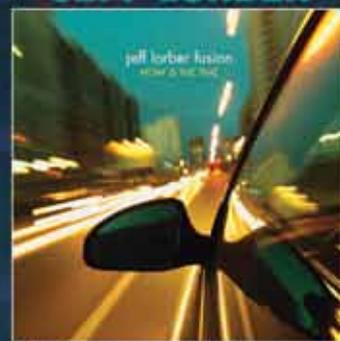
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 10/21 Anthropology - San Diego, CA  
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## Players ▶



### Tom Tallitsch ▶ *Dual Loyalties*

Tom Tallitsch knows how hard it is to be in two places at once. For a dozen years the tenor player has lived in central New Jersey so he can have access to both New York and Philadelphia. He's trying to establish a presence in the former while picking up gigs in the latter.

"It's hard," he said. "You have to be on the scene. So you have to spend your time, just going back and forth. People are more likely to call people who are there all the time. Just back and forth and back and forth, putting hundreds of thousands of miles on my car."

He added, "Every time we would say we're going to move up to New York, I get a flood of work and I'm down in Philly four or five days in a week. If I was living in New York, I would be coming down to Philly to work more than I was in New York."

Tallitsch has played with alto player Richie Cole in Trenton, N.J., and sat in with Pat Martino and Mickey Roker in Philadelphia. He prefers New York, though.

"Up there you can explore anything," Tallitsch said, "and be more open to playing new compositions. I like to write. One thing that's set my bands apart is that we always come out with new compositions."

Tallitsch's third album, *Perspective* (OAJ/Origin), provides a showcase for eight new pieces. Tallitsch's music resists the uniformity of bop in favor of the influences of McCoy Tyner and Wayne Shorter. "Propellerhead" and "Slippery Rock" feature bass vamps. "Conscious Contact" and "Tall Order" mark the recorded debut of Tallitsch's soprano.

"I think it's a great time," Tallitsch said. "We're a hundred years since Sidney Bechet, and there's been a lot of history. And everything's built on that

and everybody's going in different directions."

That dual perspective is reflective in Tallitsch's own music, according to his colleagues.

"A guy like Tom is very much rooted in the past, but he's still very modern," said Philadelphia bassist Madison Rast, who has worked with Tallitsch for more than 10 years. "I think that's a hard line to straddle, and I think he does it very well. Because he doesn't sound dated, but at the same time you can see a lot of his influences."

Tallitsch, 36, grew up in Cleveland and attended the University of Cincinnati's College-Conservatory of Music. He moved to Philadelphia in 1996, where he carved out a niche performing at weddings, lounges and other commercial bookings throughout the metropolitan area.

"You know, just grinding away," Tallitsch said, "working anything that I could." But as Tallitsch picked up more jazz gigs, he found himself at a crossroads. "Even though I did like the money from the commercial gigs," he said, "they would cut into these other dates that I was getting. I decided, OK, I'm just going to focus on my own bands and focus on my own stuff, and really hustle that thing as much as possible."

After Tallitsch's wife, Carrie Ellmore-Tallitsch, had become one of the principal dancers with the Martha Graham dance company in New York, the couple moved to the Trenton area, roughly halfway between Philadelphia and New York.

Tallitsch recouped some of the lost income through teaching, notably at a school for students with autism. "It's taken me a long time to become a good teacher," he said. "You have to listen to what the students want—you have to listen to what they need. Not every student is the same, just like not every gig is the same." —Eric Fine

## Robert Sadin ▶ Medieval Romance

Conductor/arranger Robert Sadin's explorations of 14th century French composer Guillaume de Machaut, *Art Of Love* (Deutsche Grammophon), almost makes its origins sound like a fluke.

"We had neutral territory, we didn't prepare at all—we just showed up with music," Sadin said when asked if he gave the musicians a crash course in 700-year-old music prior to the sessions. "Nobody had any preconceptions. So they didn't bring a specific style or history to it; they were just going to bring all of themselves."

That cast included a host of jazz and international stars, including singers Milton Nascimento, Natalie Merchant and Madeleine Peyroux alongside saxophonists John Ellis and Seamus Blake, trumpeters Graham Haynes and Matt Schulman, Lionel Loueke, Brad Mehldau and percussionist Cyro Baptista.

"Many of these people had extreme levels of fame at some point," Sadin said. "And rather than exploit them for the sake of exploiting, they almost willfully went about their own way. They were all people that I felt a certain kinship with and I felt in

some secret way that they shared a lot of the same feeling about music: They seem to fit together despite their backgrounds being quite different."

With the exception of Merchant, Sadin worked with all of these musicians prior to *Art Of Love*. Cellist Charles Curtis knew Sadin when he was a member of Princeton University's Music Department. In 2002, Curtis and Sadin were working in the studio and they begin playing Machaut's music.

Both men loved David Munrow's 1973 LP *The Art Of Courty Love*, which introduced Machaut's music to a wide contemporary audience. But *The Art Of Courty Love* provided more of a jumping-off point than a boilerplate. In some ways, Sadin's *Art Of Love* resembles the arranger/composer/producer Arif Mardin's solo project, the 1975 LP *Journey*, on which various musicians of different genres concocted a varying yet oddly cohesive statement. In *Art Of Love*, some of the surprising elements come from the improvisations and noticeable African textures.

"I think there was a much greater African presence in Europe than what is immediately rec-



ognized," Sadin said. "I never felt like I was doing a violation. One of the things I felt is that a lot of what became our sense of European classical music is a much later development."

One of the greatest challenges of interpreting Machaut's music also proves to be one of the greatest advantages: Machaut didn't notate any instrumentation.

"I set up a lot of the structures, but the musicians came up with a lot of the improvisations," Sadin said. "I wanted to take these songs and make them sound the way we thought that they should sound."  
—John Murph

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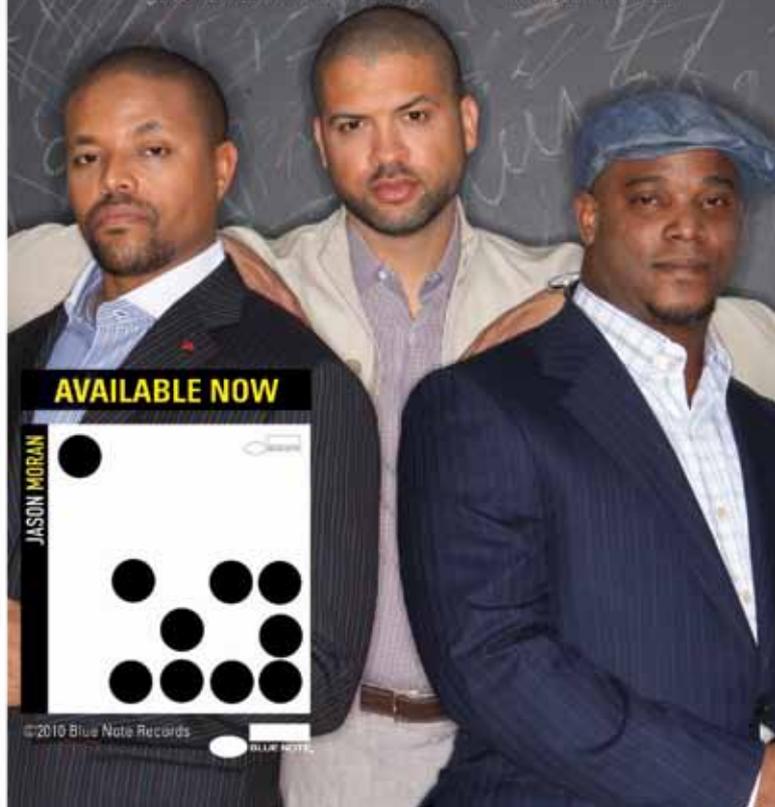
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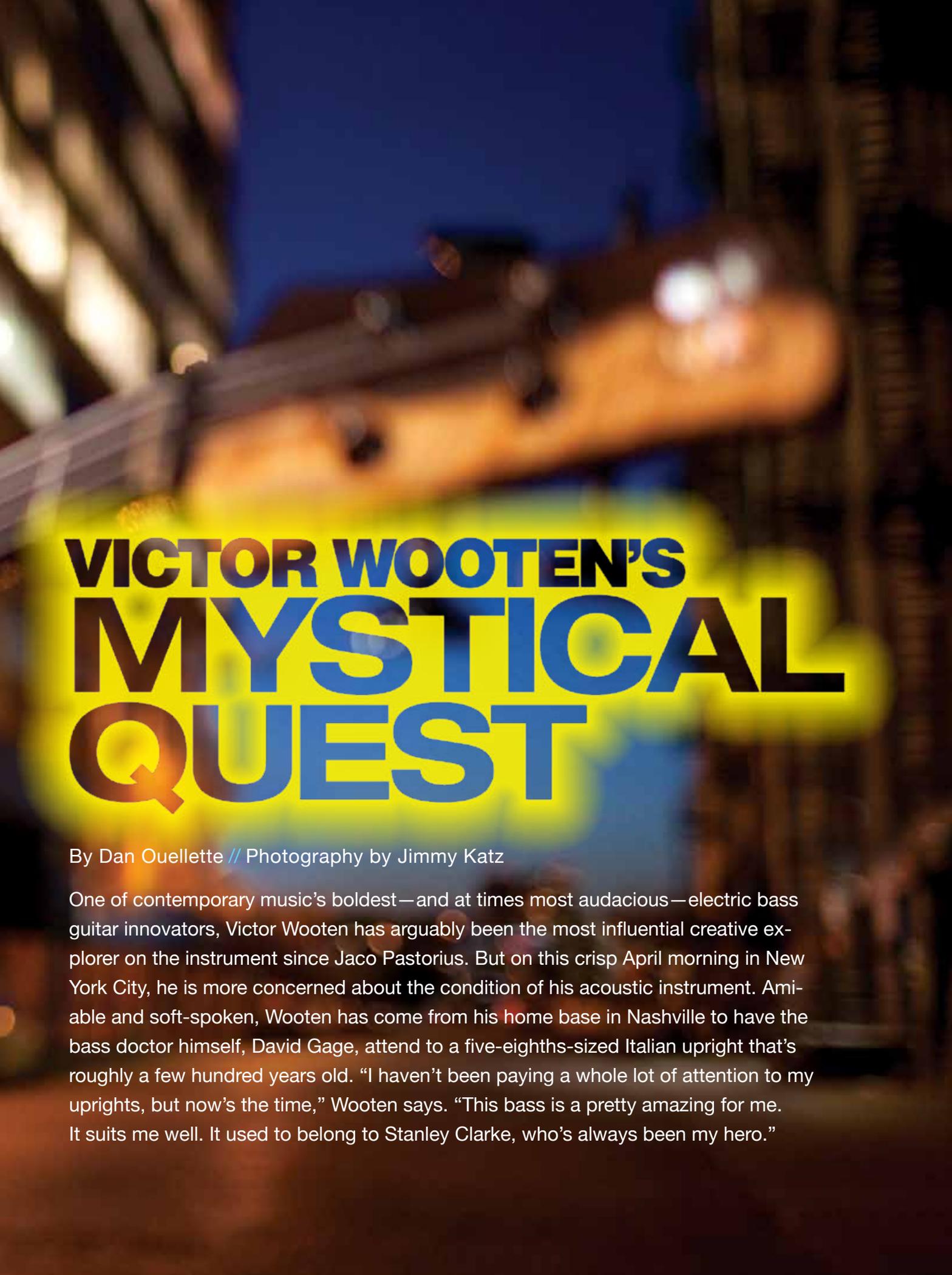


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# VICTOR WOOTEN'S MYSTICAL QUEST

By Dan Ouellette // Photography by Jimmy Katz

One of contemporary music's boldest—and at times most audacious—electric bass guitar innovators, Victor Wooten has arguably been the most influential creative explorer on the instrument since Jaco Pastorius. But on this crisp April morning in New York City, he is more concerned about the condition of his acoustic instrument. Amiable and soft-spoken, Wooten has come from his home base in Nashville to have the bass doctor himself, David Gage, attend to a five-eighths-sized Italian upright that's roughly a few hundred years old. "I haven't been paying a whole lot of attention to my uprights, but now's the time," Wooten says. "This bass is a pretty amazing for me. It suits me well. It used to belong to Stanley Clarke, who's always been my hero."

This is Wooten's first visit to Gage's multistoried Tribeca workshop, which houses an array of acoustic basses stored in rows above the main floor. Best known for his funk-ed-up electric bass virtuosity with Béla Fleck and the Flecktones as well as on his unpredictable slap-to-pluck eclectic solo outings, Wooten usually camps out in Brooklyn at Fodera Guitars when he comes to New York. He's enjoyed a longstanding connection there, beginning with his first Fodera bass guitar, which he bought in 1983, and including the Fodera-built Victor Wooten Yin Yang 4 String inspired by his request in 1995 to have the yin-yang symbol inlaid on one of his older instruments.

So, why the upright bass tune-up? Is Wooten preparing an all-acoustic project? Unlikely. For his eventual follow-up to 2008's *Palmystery* (Heads Up), he has a seed of an idea to do a lighter, sans-funk album similar to Joni Mitchell's jazzy *Shadows And Light*. But that could "take a minute to come to fruition," he cautions.

Well, then, has he grown tired of the bass guitar? Definitely, no. That was his first instrument, after all, foisted into his hands when he was 2 or 3 by his older brothers, who needed a bottom line for the burgeoning five-sibling Wooten Brothers r&b and soul band that covered James Brown, Sly Stone and Curtis Mayfield tunes. With that history, playing electric continues to be the Wooten young'un's calling card.

Or could it be that Wooten, a youthful 43 and a family man with a wife and four children, is beginning to slow down and kick back to four-string upright basics? Hardly. If anything, he's more active than ever. He was the instigator for putting together the three-bass spectacular SMV, with fellow virtuosos Clarke and Marcus Miller, which in 2008 recorded *Thunder* (Heads Up) and toured with a low-toned vengeance.

Given his penchant for chasing after a rainbow of stylistic colors, it's most likely that Wooten is strengthening his bass arsenal on the acoustic tip to continue to stay open to a variety of musical possibilities. Case in point: *Palmystery* (a nod to his jazz fans, he writes on his Web site) runs the gamut of genre fusion with elements of funk, pop, soul, smooth and straight-ahead jazz. "I've always liked my records to be diverse," he says. "You listen to someone's iPod or look at someone's record collection, and you always notice how the music is all over the place. So, it's fine that people can't label me or know exactly where to put me. I learned from being in the Flecktones that that can be a plus because you can become your own category. I want my records to be about music, not a certain type of music. Musically I can speak as many different languages as possible."

So, for example, on *Palmystery*, he plunges into electric bass overdrive on "2 Timers," puts an African vibe to the tune "I Saw God" with

fellow bassist Richard Bona accompanying, delivers the rollicking pop-gospel tune "Miss U" on slide bass flanked by guitarist Albert Lee and pedal steel guitarist Roosevelt Collier, then rocks out with "Left, Right, & Center" powered by three drummers (Dennis Chambers, Will Kennedy, J.D. Blair). "Music is so much bigger than any one style and can encompass many ideas," Wooten says, then adds with a gleam in his eyes, "I like tryin' 'em all."

Wooten recently penned his own novel, *The Music Lesson: A Spiritual Search For Growth Through Music* (Berkley/Penguin). The well-received book is an open window on his mystical philosophy of everything that music encompasses—beyond simply playing the "right notes." Wooten recently completed a seven-CD audio version of the tome.

Writing in the intro to *The Music Lesson*, Wooten recalls the nurturing his mother gave him and his brothers when they were an aspiring band of upstarts: "You are already successful; the rest of the world just doesn't know it yet." Raised in a military family, Victor was born in Idaho (just outside of Boise) and moved shortly thereafter to Oahu, Hawaii. Neither of Wooten's parents played instruments, but music in the household was omnipresent, from James Brown to Mahalia Jackson. When Victor's three older brothers (Regi, eight years his elder; Ron, seven years

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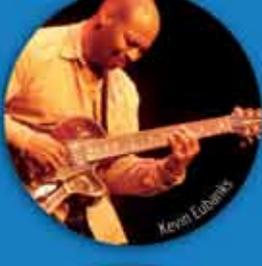
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older; and Rudy, six years older) took an interest in music, mother Wooten was supportive.

"One day they called her at work and told her, 'We've got a band,' and she replied, 'Practice before I get home. I want to hear it,'" says Wooten. "They gave her a concert, which she praised. From then on, every year Santa brought little musical presents." With Regi playing guitar, Ron drums and Rudy saxophone, the fourth Wooten sibling, Joseph (three years older than Victor), was designated the keyboardist. When the final child arrived, he was slotted for the bass chair.

The Wooten kids performed in Hawaii mostly on their front lawn. But when the family moved to Sacramento, Calif., the group started playing concerts at the base NCO Club, local talent shows and battle-of-the-bands nights. During this time, Curtis Mayfield's management heard about the band of brothers and signed them as the opening act for the soul/r&b/funk singer's West Coast dates.

"I turned 6 on that tour," Wooten says. "We opened for Curtis at places like the Oakland Coliseum, and we played there later as openers for War. As kids, we didn't know anything else. Our parents were right there. My dad drove us everywhere and served as a bodyguard, especially at nightclubs where at one show someone started shooting. My mother made all our outfits and booked gigs. Regi took care of all the music."

Wooten says that being in the band was as if

"We encourage our musicians to look into their hearts and begin to know their quest—to see something reaching beyond yourself that music can help you to accomplish. Music is bigger than theory and teachers. Music can affect the world."

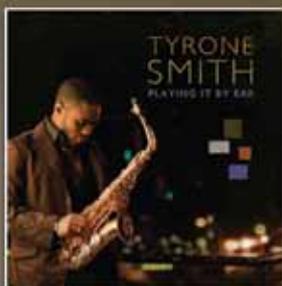
he had six parents to learn from. "I paid attention to what all my brothers were doing, whether it was musically or just how to think," he says. He can't exactly remember his early bass years with the band, but the family filmed the boys in Hawaii, and there was Victor strumming a Mickey Mouse guitar with plastic strings. "It wasn't about the instrument," he says. "It was all about the music. I think it's a mistake that teachers make with young students. They say, this is your instrument, here's how you hold it, etc. So much attention is on the instrument itself and not about the music."

When still a toddler, Victor swung rhythms and wasn't counted on to play particular notes. He was just encouraged to play and observe. (He figures he got his technique of using his thumb as a pick by watching Regi play the guitar, and years later, thanks to listening to Tony Williams and Elvin Jones albums, he realized that the bass as a

rhythm instrument could sound just as powerful as a drum.) When Victor was 4, 12-year-old Regi took two strings off his extra guitar and showed him where to place his fingers. "It was so cool," he says. "I was producing notes and playing songs I already knew. It's like how children learn to talk. They say the word 'milk' for the first time, but they already know what it is. Playing music is organic, just like how a young child learns to talk."

When Victor was 5, the Wooten Brothers, under the guidance of Mayfield's management, were invited to record some demos in the studio. Everyone was excited about the prospects for such a novelty act. But suddenly the project was cancelled. Victor didn't know why until years later when his mother told him that at the same time there were five other young brothers playing music. "We got scrapped and the Jackson 5 didn't," says Wooten with a laugh.

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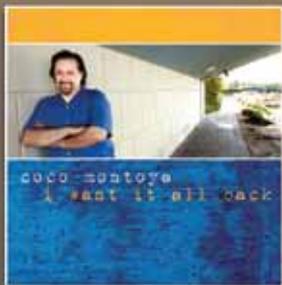


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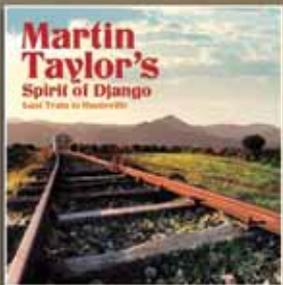


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[P3H 23]



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When Wooten was 8, his family moved to Newport News, Va., where the brothers continued to gig up and down the East Coast, as nearby as Washington, D.C., and as far away as New York and North Carolina. It was the early '70s and fusion was saturating the airwaves: Miles Davis, Mahavishnu Orchestra, Weather Report and Return To Forever. "That's when I got into Stanley Clarke and Jaco," says Wooten, who cites drummer Billy Drummond, who lived around the corner, as the person who schooled him in the new music. "Regi wasn't teaching me bass parts anymore, and I was totally on my own to figure out the bass lines. I started listening closely to all these crazy rhythms with Billy Cobham, Lenny White and Tony Williams in my ears. I bought records and saw these bands at least once a year. I remember picking up the needle over and over again to learn Stanley's solos."

By the time Wooten was 10, he had been playing bass for seven years and was learning both by gigging and emulating, trying to play bass like a horn player would, with melodic lines and breath pauses, and later picking up pointers from rock guitarists of the era like Eddie Van Halen. "I gravitated outside of what was considered normal for my instrument," Wooten says. "I was hearing music, not just the bass. The bass happened to be my instrument, but it had become part of a bigger picture. It was all about the music as a whole."

When Wooten was in the sixth grade, he joined the school orchestra. Figuring a full-sized or three-quarters upright bass would be too overwhelming for his size, he opted to play cello, which is how he learned to read and bow. "It was a blessing in disguise because back then the cello always had more interesting parts to play than the bass," he says. "But when I was in the ninth or 10th grade, there was a statewide orchestra concert and there was no bassist, so I filled in." Around the time he graduated from high school, his mother helped him buy a Juzek three-quarters upright bass that he found in a classified posting. From time to time, Wooten says, he dusts it off and records with it on his own projects and with the Flecktones.

Meanwhile, Drummond recommended the older Wooten brothers for jobs at the Busch Gardens amusement park in nearby Williamsburg, where musicians were hired to perform old country songs during the summer. Roy got a job as a drummer. Later Regi was hired as the bass player, and Joseph came on board as an accordionist. When a slot came open for a bluegrass fiddler, Roy said that Victor could probably handle that because he was a cellist. "They hired me even though I had never played a fiddle before," says Wooten. "So I went to the high school, borrowed a violin, got some records and learned classic fiddle tunes like 'Orange Blossom Special.'"

When the steel guitar job opened up, Regi took that and Victor added the bass to his duties. "It was the first time I had ever played in a band with other people besides my brothers," he says. "It was like learning how to play with a new fam-

ily. And we were playing this real funky, jazzy bluegrass."

That gig sporadically continued from 1981-'87. During that time, Victor picked up a banjo and started playing it, using altered tunings and creating bass-like riffs. A friend commented, "Man, that sounds like Béla Fleck."

Wooten replied, "Who's 'Baylor,' and why does he sound crazy like this?"

The friend got Wooten a copy of a New Grass Revival album with Fleck, and he was "flipped and floored."

In 1988, Wooten visited another friend in

Nashville and immediately met and hung out with the *crème de la crème* of the scene, including bassist Edgar Meyer and violinist Mark O'Connor. While he didn't meet Fleck in person, Wooten's friend arranged for him to have a phone conversation and a listening session. Wooten says Fleck's comment on his playing was that it "sounded like a bass banjo."

Fleck says that he was impressed: "I thought Victor was a great new talent on the bass. I later realized what an empathetic player he was and how he brought good things out in my own playing."

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“We don’t learn the alphabet first, then mix the letters up to make words, and therefore you’ll learn how to speak very well,” he explains. “No, you talk first. Much later you can learn grammar that then will make sense. If we took how music is taught today and apply it to language, most of us wouldn’t learn to speak until we’re in our teens and then we would still not be comfortable with it. A lot of us would just quit trying to speak.”

He has taken his unorthodox approach to teaching music at his Bass/Nature Camp, which launched in 2000 and last year moved to the 150-acre forested and farmland Wooten Woods Re-

treat just outside of Nashville. There, an aspiring bassist can not only learn how to catch a groove but also study how to make fire by rubbing two pieces of wood together (WootenWoods.com).

While Wooten wanted to pursue this line of teaching further, he didn’t come up with his Bass/Nature Camp idea until after he experienced an epiphany thanks to a book Regi gave him, *The Tracker*, by naturalist Tom Brown Jr. It’s about how to track people and animals in natural settings, how to live off the land, how to make fire from sticks and medicine out of pine needles. Wooten got hooked and started taking classes

with Brown in the Pine Barrens of New Jersey. “During the first class, it hit me,” Wooten says. “Tom is calling it nature and awareness, but what he’s also teaching is music. I used my knowledge of music to help me understand what he was talking about. For example, he drew tracks on a board and talked about the different animals. To me it was like reading music. If I drew little stems on the circles he called tracks, the same rules apply.”

In his Bass/Nature Camp, there are four instructors (along with Wooten, fellow bassists Steve Bailey, Anthony Wellington and Chuck Rainey) who teach classes related to the bass and a team that teaches classes about nature and outdoor awareness skills. “Musicians close themselves off from nature,” Wooten says. “We lock ourselves in the woodshed when nature is our best teacher. No one has to tell a tree how to grow or a flower how to point toward the sun, or teach a bird how to sing. They just naturally do it.” Wooten pauses, then adds with a hint of irony in his voice: “But us humans, we’re the smart creatures. We have to study really hard for many, many years to play music, to focus hard, to concentrate. But I believe there’s a natural part of us that knows how to do these things. That natural part is what intrigues me.”

Wooten says that the students who flock to his weeklong camps (60 max, split up for classes in four groups of 15) come to play, and that’s what he emphasizes. “No air-guitar player says that he wants to learn music theory,” says Wooten. “He wants to play. So you keep students with real instruments playing because they enjoy it, then sneak in the music theory later. And because they’re playing so much, the kids learn a whole lot of theory, but it’s based on their experience with the music. And they love it because they’re allowed to approach music freely.”

Initially, Wooten leased a property to hold the camps. Since he bought his own property two years ago, he’s expanded his offerings to annually include two bass camps, a theory weekend, a nature/music camp for any instrument and a jam weekend with guest musicians where the emphasis is on nonstop playing together. “It’s like how babies learn to talk,” he says. “They don’t talk to each other, but to the ‘professionals’—adults who already know the language.”

One of Wooten’s recent students was Keith Moseley, bassist and founding member of the String Cheese Incident. He knew Wooten from the touring circuit, and had read *The Music Lesson*. “Victor is not only an incredibly talented performer and player, but he also has an interesting take on music that connects with the natural and spiritual worlds,” says Moseley, who went online and signed up for the April 13–18 camp this spring. “I figured it would be good for me, to use the camp as a jumpstart for getting back into learning, to brush up on reading and theory. Plus, since I live in Colorado, I thought the nature part of the camp experience would be great.”

As it turned out, not only were the outdoors sessions eye-opening, but Moseley says he got his “butt kicked in the theory classes.” Most importantly, he says that Wooten instilled in him that

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“it wasn’t the notes as much as it was also about the delivery, the feel, the tone, technique, dynamics, listening, space, phrasing.” Moseley appreciated the open sharing encouraged among all the students—ranging, he says, from inexperienced 16-year-olds to a guy in his 60s who played as a hobby—and enjoyed the Friday night concert/jams that featured many of Wooten’s brothers. “It’s impressive how Victor wants to share his life experiences as a teacher.”

Divinity Roxx agrees. She attended Wooten’s first camp in October 2000, inspired by the bassist’s playing, first on record (“I was blown away,” she says, “because I couldn’t believe he was playing without any overdubs”) and later in concert, where she met her hero after the show through Anthony Wellington, the bass tech and bassist No. 2 in the band. “We exchanged e-mails. A month later another friend told me about Vic’s camp, so I went online at 3 in the morning and signed up.”

One of the first things she did at the camp was introduce herself on the bass. “I’m from a hip-hop background and only started playing the bass in college,” she says. “I had been working on developing this rap-and-bass thing incorporated together, so I asked Vic if I could rap and play as my personal statement. He said, ‘If that’s what you do, go for it.’” She caught a groove and made an impressive showing.

Actually, says Wooten, “she blew us all away. She played so amazingly and composed.” But he kept a poker face until after the camp, and then asked her to go on tour with him. “I had been wanting to have a female in the band as well as develop this bass-rap idea,” he says.

Roxx recalls that when Wooten called her, she literally had to sit down on her kitchen floor when she heard his offer. “I was scared out of my mind, but I ended up being on the road with Vic for five years,” she says. “Then Beyoncé held an audition, I got chosen and have been performing in her all-female band since then.”

As for the camp experience, Roxx says that it changed her life. “Vic is who he presents himself to be. What he preaches, he lives,” she says. “He’s been such a huge influence on me. I’ve watched his courageousness and his passion, and I love the fact that he says he’s always learning, too. He told me to go out there and do what’s in my heart. I could sit in a class at a regular school and start by playing scales. That could come later, Vic said, but you must get the feel and rhythm and passion first.”

The main thing about his “school” is that Wooten wants to inspire his students “to become free with music and with life.” He adds, “Does the world need another good bass player? We’ve already got plenty. There has to be something more to music than being able to play a few cool notes. We encourage our musicians to look into their hearts and begin to know their quest—to see something reaching beyond yourself that music can help you to accomplish. Music is bigger than theory and teachers. Music can affect the world.”

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# Claudio Roditi's Gentle Fire

By Jim Macnie

During a performance you usually see Claudio Roditi adjusting a mic to position one of his brass instruments—the trumpeter is particular about the way he sounds on stage. But here at Dizzy's Club Coca-Cola in Manhattan, Roditi's bending over to bring his mouth to the mic, and the results are tickling the packed house. "*Choo-choo-cha-cha, choo-choo-cha-cha,*" he sings, blending in with the shakers of drummer Duduka da Fonseca and the percolations created by the other band members. The Music of Jobim ensemble, co-led by da Fonseca and pianist Helio Alves, stresses rhythm. They're in the middle of a tune's gentle fade-out, and everyone, especially Roditi, is assisting in the syncopated farewell.

Backstage before the show, the musicians were talking about the art of vocalizing and composers who have turned to singing by default. "Several Brazilians have become vocalists because the only way they could have their tunes heard was if they themselves sang them," says the trumpeter. Accordingly, he makes a case for one of his heroes, the songwriter Johnny Alf. Maucha Adnet—a *real* vocalist who's also part of the evening's ensemble—nominates Tom Jobim as a non-singer who nonetheless had a sweet voice. And Toninho Horta pipes up with his choice: "Even Billy Higgins tried to sing!" Everyone laughs.

All this chatter is generated by the fact that

Roditi takes a shot at a vocal on his latest disc, *Simpatico* (Resonance). No, the acclaimed brass player isn't working a new career path; he just enjoys wearing his heart on his sleeve now and again. "Waltz For Joana" is a nice novelty—a heartfelt move.

"I'm no singer," says the 64-year-old. "It's just something I like to do. But it's frustrating. I know I have good intonation on the trumpet, so when my vocal intonation fails, it ticks me off."

There's more laughter as Roditi recalls the first time his singing was appreciated. When he was a lad in Rio de Janeiro, he broke up with a girl, but wooed her back by writing her a tune and cooing it to her over the phone. He can't recall the song—he says he never wrote down his music back then. But he does these days. *Simpatico*, one of more than 20 titles the trumpeter has released since the mid-'80s, is the first to be entirely made up of original pieces. He's been writing for decades, and that process, too, began with a nod to the opposite sex.

"When I was 16 or 17, my main motivation for composing music was to give a gift to my girlfriends—we can't go deeply into that part right now," he says, adding a *heh-heh-heh* laugh. "But if I was seeing a girl, I'd write her something. 'Here, baby, this is for you ...' No wonder Jimmy Heath calls me 'Romantic Roditi.'"

It's a fair bet that the tunes on *Simpatico*, which was made with longtime pals Alves and

da Fonseca, as well as bassist John Lee, guitarist Romero Lubambo and trombonist Michael Dease, are a bit more sophisticated than those early works of seduction. One thing's for sure, each has a singular approach. "Albert And Daisy" is a prancing samba, "Slow Fire" is an orchestral ballad, "Slammin'" is an aggressive ditty that teems with lyrical lines. They're all united by an aesthetic that might be summarized as being cool, calm and collected. Like last year's Grammy-nominated *Brazilliance X 4*, *Simpatico* reminds that while Roditi is an animated soloist, he never lets you see him sweat.

"I think 'lyrical' is a good word," says musician/producer/historian Bill Kirchner. He and Roditi have played together intermittently for decades, and Kirchner recently dedicated a full episode of his weekly "Jazz From the Archives" radio show on WBGO (Newark, N.J.) to the trumpeter's work. "Lots of Brazilian guys were influenced by Gerry Mulligan and Chet Baker; I think that whole West Coast jazz sound is part of who Claudio is. He starts a solo, and it's never like a racehorse out of the gate. He moves slowly and deliberately and paces himself. He's the antithesis of what I call a 'trumpet jock.'"

Roditi doesn't disagree with that notion. He cites Baker and Blue Mitchell as players who fill their music with naturally flowing lines, and knows a similar approach is key to his own work. "It's there, it rubs off. I can't escape the influence

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of the bossa nova that I grew up listening to.”

It’s been there since his childhood in Rio. Roditi turned to the trumpet after hearing a marching band practicing in a school yard behind his home. He went into their music room, and out of all the instruments it was the horn he connected to. Not because of its sound, but because of the way it looked—its physical design. Embracing it, he quickly made strides. As a teen he was involved in some heady local jam sessions. Da Fonseca, who is a few years younger, was one of his mates back then. He says even in those early days Roditi was extremely respected, and played with the best musicians in town.

“Claudio raises the bar when you’re on the bandstand with him,” da Fonseca says. “When you work with someone really good next to you, you get better. It inspires you. Like playing on a soccer team with someone who’s good—you don’t want to mess things up.”

Hitting Boston to attend Berklee College of Music in 1970, it wasn’t long before Roditi’s skills led him to New York. Several masters, including Dizzy Gillespie, James Moody and Paquito D’Rivera, recognized his unique instrumental grammar and put him to work. In a short time he was the hub of a burgeoning Brazilian jazz scene in the Apple. Da Fonseca followed him north, and years later Alves became part of the clique.

“He was the only person I knew when I moved to New York,” says the pianist, “and a pretty good guy to know at that. He introduced me to everyone. Nilson Matta, Romero Lubambo, the whole gang. He helped make all the connections.”

D’Rivera recalls the boost of being flanked by Roditi, but the ever-puckish reed virtuoso was disappointed when his associate pulled a switcheroo on him. “I was getting tired of fighting myself in the front line and needed another instrument with me. I love valve trombone, and Claudio plays that as well. So I hired him, and we did great together. But less than a year later, he sold the trombone! Why did he do that? OK, I admit I had fallen in love with his playing regardless, and even if he had switched to the ocarina or kazoo I would want him to be next to me. But that valve trombone ... Claudio played it like, like ... the best in the world. Ask him for me if he really sold it or did he hide it at home because he didn’t want to carry it!”

Roditi has a slight obsession with brass. He and his wife, Kristen, live in New Jersey these days, but during the mid-’90s they were neighbors of mine in Brooklyn. I was always impressed by the way his instruments were incorporated into the apartment’s design sense. His collection was sizable; from the soft curves of numerous flugelhorns to the elaborate plumbing of rotary-valve trumpets to D’Rivera’s beloved valve ’bone, he had several distinct horns hanging on his wall.

The visual impact of Roditi’s childhood days became relevant again when we recalled how arty his trumpets seemed when grouped together.

“While we were living in Brooklyn, I had some cataracts fixed,” he says. “And I will never forget the sensation two days after the surgery, when they took the patches off. I looked at those horns hanging there in my house, and they all jumped out at me! The cataracts had made everything opaque, and for months I wasn’t seeing my trumpets with any brilliance. I couldn’t believe what they looked like when my eyes were fixed. It was truly exciting.”

Roditi loves to talk horns. These days he even has a piccolo trumpet, a small bore singular-in-sound instrument that’s rough to rein in but rewarding when you do so. *Simpatico*’s “Piccolo Blues” demonstrates that he’s got a good grip on its expressive qualities. The lack of reeds on his

“I suppressed my own voice when I tried to play like others. You just need to let out all your uniqueness. It took me a long time to realize I had a voice. But when I roll the tape back and hear little recordings, things I did 30 or 40 years ago, I recognize I basically had the same voice back then that I do now.”

last two discs is slightly novel as well. Michael Dease plays trombone on *Simpatico*, and the leader says he’s long been enamored of the two instruments working in unison.

“The trombone is very important in the samba tradition. To me it’s the instrument closest to the human voice. The slide creates all kinds of vocal effects, so fluid and sweet. You can do ‘*phewwww*’ or ‘*bwaaaaaahhh*’—go up and down however you want. Michael plays tenor sax, too, and he brings that kind of phrasing to the trombone, which is unique.”

Balancing the poised sound of samba jazz with the frenzied swing of bop has long been a Roditi forte. Yes, his formative years were spent absorbing bossa nova and its offshoots. But he’s often cited Lee Morgan and Clifford Brown as his horn heroes. His 1988 album *Gemini Man* was named after his yen to blend the two approaches. On stage at Dizzy’s he takes one particular solo that kicks up some dust in an otherwise smooth groove tune. Short, sharp bursts are threaded through long lines; syncopated phrases soar high before again veering Earthward. Fans, both onstage and in the audience, recognize the accomplishment. Though Roditi’s playing boasts a warm tone, there’s an obvious sense of attack that arrives whenever he chooses to deploy it. No

wonder D’Rivera deems him a “formidable” bebop soloist.

“There’s always been a certain fire to Claudio’s playing,” says Mark Feldman, owner of Reservoir Records. He’s recorded Roditi as a leader on three separate occasions. “He personifies that type of Brazilian jazz where a real level of intensity is always in play. He usually has this heat [coming from his horn].”

Roditi is proud of his percussive side. As a child he would often tap out beats on the dining room table; it inspired his father to get him a set of bongos. Alves loves the way his pal so deeply embraces the nuances of the Brazilian sound but is able to gracefully shift into the “straightahead” jazz vernacular. “Rhythms can be percussive and *not* be aggressive,” reminds the trumpeter. “You can be percussive and laid back. Understanding the various shadings is important.”

In the last several years Roditi has tried to instill such notions in students he interacts with during visits at various colleges. Teaching master classes, performing with jazz bands, adjudicating competitions—he enjoys the dynamic with talented youngsters, and says he’s learned a thing or two from them as well. Years ago he connected with trumpeter Amir ElSaffar, who, along with saxophonist Hafez Modirzadeh, is responsible for the recent, impressive *Radif Suite* (Pi).

ElSaffar fondly recalls that early meeting. “Claudio gave me a particular piece of advice—it’s kind of trumpety—about how to not lose your chops. Find tiny moments to take the mouthpiece off your face, to let the blood come back. Grab a spot in the solo where you can relax. When I first moved to New York, he invited me to sit in with him at the Museum of Modern Art. It really meant a lot to me. When you’re young and a great player gives you encouraging words, it goes a long way.”

“Amir was in high school,” says Roditi, “but you could tell he was skilled. Nice player. Since then he’s gotten into his Arabic heritage, found a direction, and he turned me on to the trumpeter Samy el Bably, a brass master from Cairo.”

Roditi gets excited when talking about artists discovering their own voices. He recalls his own early days of refining a personal style, and later periods when he simply wanted to “sound like Freddie Hubbard.” His diagnosis for such dilemmas is sharp: Don’t “boycott” yourself. “I suppressed my own voice when I tried to play like others,” he says. “You just need to let out all your uniqueness. It took me a long time to realize I had a voice. But when I roll the tape back and hear little recordings, things I did 30 or 40 years ago, I recognize I basically had the same voice back then that I do now.”

“I recently found the first album I ever played on. It came out on CD after many years, and I had to get it. In the liner notes and pictures they didn’t use our last names. I was referred to as Claudioho, which mean ‘little Claudio.’ When I listen to it, I swear I can hear the basic sound I hear in my current stuff. It’s a little weird, but it’s really nice to recognize your essence.” **DB**

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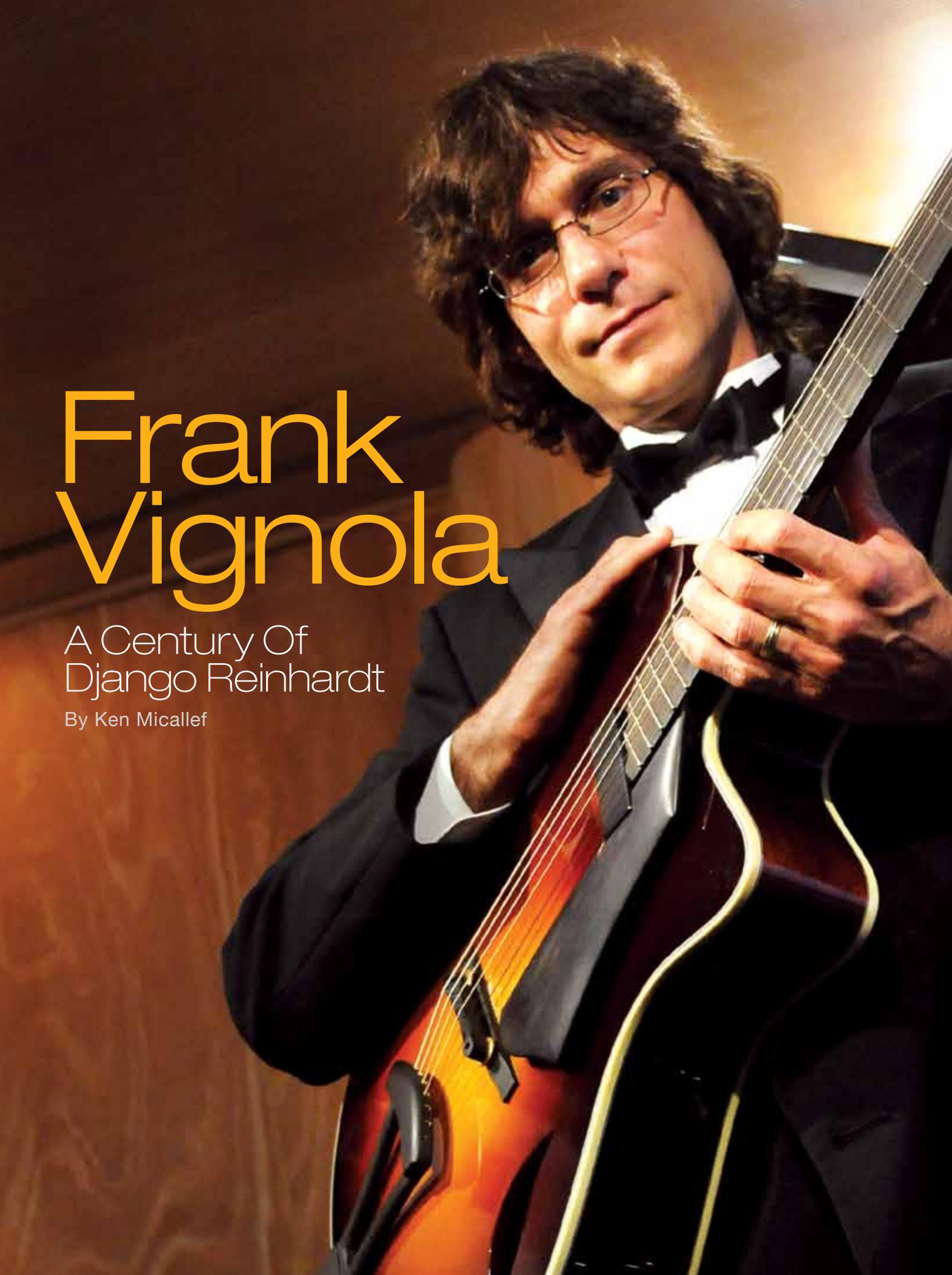
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# Frank Vignola

A Century Of  
Django Reinhardt

By Ken Micallef

On a summer day in 1987, 22-year-old guitarist Frank Vignola put on his best tux and bold attitude, walked into Michael's Pub in New York City and demanded a gig. The then-current cabaret hotspot of the Upper East Side, Michael's Pub was famous for hosting Mel Tormé, and Woody Allen's Monday night clarinet-led jams. Unperturbed by this showbiz royalty, Vignola was about to make pub manager Gil Weist an offer he couldn't (and wouldn't) refuse.

"Weist was a hard-nose kind of guy," Vignola recalls. "I walked up to him and said, 'Would you be interested in a Django Reinhardt tribute set?' Maybe he'd never heard of Django Reinhardt. Most people hadn't at that time. But he asked to hear a tape. I called some guys, recorded a tape and gave it to him. The next day he offers me three weeks; which, after reams of rave press, turned into a 20-week run. The place was packed every night. All of a sudden we were the toast of New York."

Performing with Reinhardt's original lineup of three guitars, bass and violin, Vignola put his childhood Reinhardt obsession to good use (on this, the first gig under his own name) and was soon fielding calls from jazz festival organizers, record labels, and an offer to perform with another hero, Les Paul. Twenty-three years later, Vignola's fascination with the innovative Gypsy guitarist continues on his eighth album, *100 Years Of Django* (Azica Records). Unlike his 2001 straight-up guitar tribute *Blues For A Gypsy*, Vignola wanted his latest release to address Reinhardt, the total musician.

"This time I wanted to honor Django's composing, as well as Django, the guitar player," Vignola explains. "This is an all Django tunes record, and the first in a series of nine CDs that I'll record for Azica. Over nine years we will cover every song that Django ever wrote."

Reinhardt fever has spread cross-country since 2000, when Vignola, as musical director, founded the first Django Reinhardt Festival at Birdland in New York. A huge success, the festival toasted Reinhardt with the talents of Jimmy Rosenberg, George Benson, Biréli Lagrène, John Scofield and Reinhardt's son, Babik. Since then, seemingly every hamlet and village has sprouted its very own Hot Club of (town, city or state), typically playing Reinhardt's repertoire at breakneck tempos and full flash appeal. But Vignola has no interest in competing in the Reinhardt speed-stakes. Sure, he can play fast, but as the duo (with accordionist Julien Labro) and trio (guitarist Vinny Raniolo, bassist Gary Mazzaroppi) performances on *100 Years Of Django* attest, Vignola's goal is to capture the spirit and soul of Django, not the notes on the page.

"I never copied a Django solo; I go the other way," he says. "[As a kid] I would take little riffs that I liked that he would play and try to make them my own. I would hear his vibrato that is so amazing, or the way he would play the melody or the tempo of a tune. I would try to emulate his sound, not copy what he was playing. It's impossible to copy people.

"Some players think Django was only about speed and intensity," he continues. "But he was all about the melody: the way he would play the melody, the way he would end the phrase of a melody, the way he would use a little run to lead up to a melody note. And the way that he accompanied [violinist] Stephane Grappelli was something else I loved. His rhythm guitar playing with Grappelli almost reminded me of a European bluegrass group. He brought really unique songs he had heard via radio or 78s."

Vignola disapproves of the copycat approach, but he's not beyond assimilating a semblance of Reinhardt's velocity.

"I still haven't mastered those crazy runs he would do, those fast chromatic runs, like in 'Swanee River.' He'd lead into the solo with this speedy, lightning-fast chromatic run. I would slow it down from 33 to 16 rpm so it was half-speed. Every note was as clean as a bell. That still challenges me. It makes me happy to hear it, but I don't want to learn it note for note and copy it."

Similarly, Vignola approaches Reinhardt's chordal phrasing with a deeper understanding than many solo-obsessed guitarists.

"Another thing Django made great use of was the diminished tonal center. That gave him his unique sound, using those diminished and flat-nine chords as opposed to the dorian or mixolydian modes. That was used a lot in European music. Bach was the beginning of that kind of improvisation. He would improvise this crazy stuff and write it down later. Bach was one of the first bebop guys."

*100 Years Of Django* is the latest release from the ever-prolific Vignola. Also available is the recent *Just Between Frets* (with guitarist Tommy Immanuel) and *Looking Up* (featuring his regular trio). Rounding out 2010, Vignola also appeared on violinist Mark O'Connor's *Jam Session*, a bluegrass blowout revealing the guitarist's serious comping skills and love of everything from "Mozart to Zappa." But whether it's Reinhardt, Les Paul or Frank Zappa, Vignola is most interested in one thing, first and foremost.

"One has to work on [his] own voice. You listen to Django, and within five seconds you know it's Django. Same with Louis Armstrong or Charlie Parker. You can be influenced by an artist but without sounding like him. You just have to be aware that you need to concentrate on tone; know what you want to sound like. That has to be in your head before you can create your own voice. It's an evolution." **DB**

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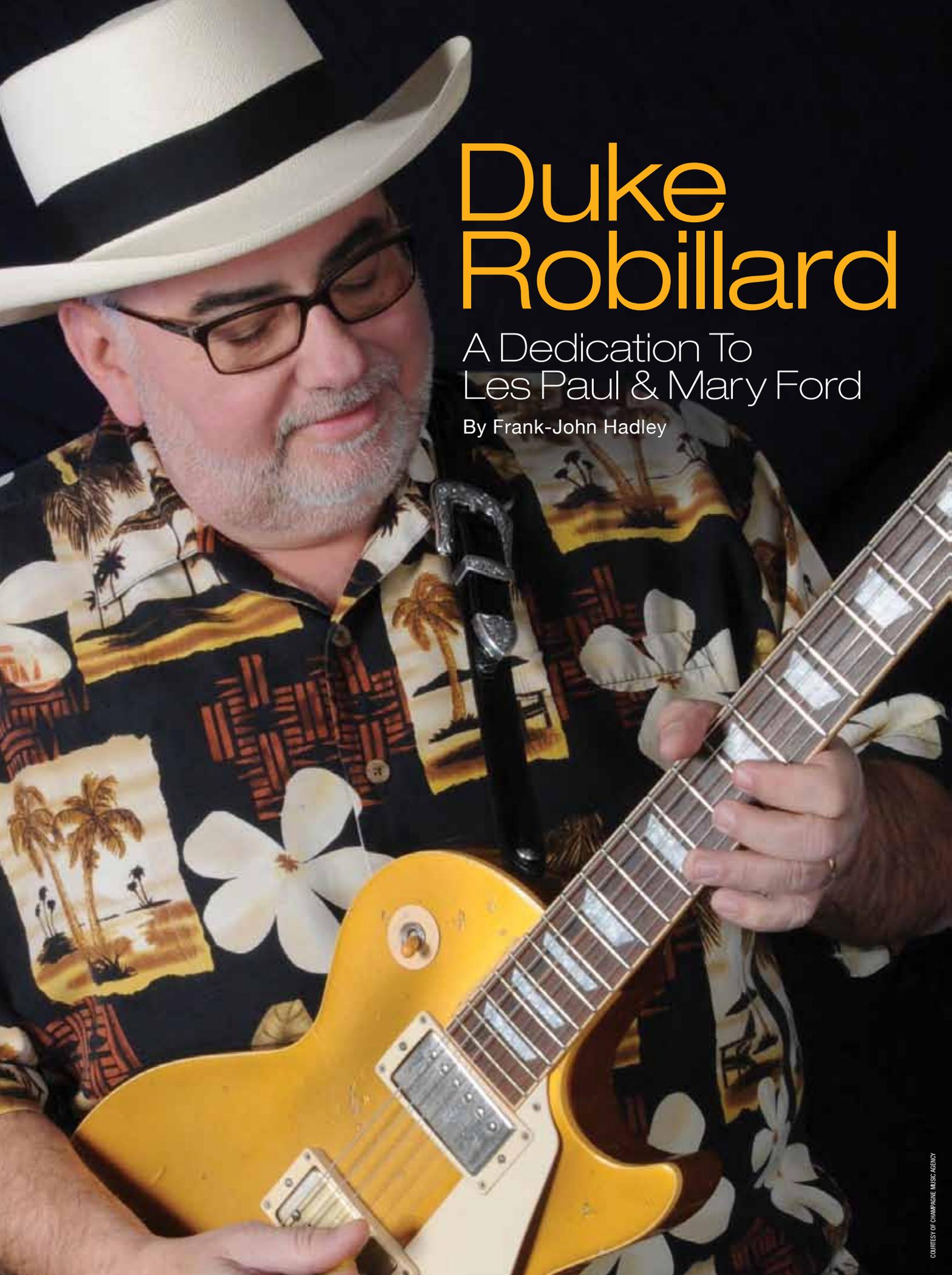
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# Duke Robillard

A Dedication To  
Les Paul & Mary Ford

By Frank-John Hadley

Most everything Duke Robillard has done as a guitarist during the past four-plus decades—two dozen feature albums, thousands of headlining gigs, co-founding Roomful of Blues, Fabulous Thunderbirds membership, quality time with Jay McShann, Jimmy Witherspoon, Ruth Brown, Bob Dylan, Tom Waits, a long list of others—bears witness to his musical intelligence and his dedication to his craft.

The native Rhode Islander's penchant for roaming freely across blues and jazz boundaries has long been a strong point. His versatility, in fact, ranges from respectful samplings of T-Bone Walker (a major inspiration), B. B. King, Albert Collins and Guitar Slim to Charlie Christian (his other main man), Herb Ellis (with whom he made two commendable *Conversations In Swing Guitar* albums), Tiny Grimes and Les Paul. Not only taken with six-string notables, his extended lines often carry the spirit of r&b saxophonist Red Prysock and sometimes Lester Young or a Chicago tenor player like Gene Ammons who mixed swing and bop with an r&b edge.

"For me," said Robillard, at his house in the old mill town of Pawtucket, "it's a matter of listening to music a lot, music from between the '20s and '60s, and not actually practicing somebody's riffs, but actually hearing the music so much it becomes part of my repertoire."

For more than a year now, Robillard has been addressing his healthy infatuation with Les Paul music of the '50s—when Paul, the creator of the solid-body electric guitar and the genius of modern recording, teamed with his wife, Mary Ford, for nationwide celebrity. The new album *Tales From The Tiki Lounge* (on his own recently formed label, Blue Duchess) is his and singer Sunny Crownover's tribute to Les and Mary, though it wasn't originally planned as such, and only last August after Paul passed did Robillard turn the album-in-progress into his fond dedication to the man who meant so much to him.

Robillard, who used two Les Paul model guitars with different style pickups, said, "What I wanted to bring out was Les' melodic playfulness. It's part of my makeup because he's influenced me in that way. I certainly can't play anywhere near the speed he played, but I can cop the feeling of his melodiousness." He paused, then continued. "Les invented the way everybody plays today, especially rock 'n' roll people, because he would do string-bending in a way that hadn't been done before, other than certain blues guitarists. Les added that in with bending whole chords with a whammy bar, getting a whole new palette and having that sparkle to his sound. Before that, nobody had a bright, clean sound like that. So my plan was to pay respect to that."

At some point Robillard must have confronted a central contradiction: how to assume the role of Paul without sounding rankly imitative and compromising his own musical identity. The sixty-ish, professorial-looking guitarist dismissed any conflict. "It's a style I play and love, so being dedicated to it and loving the music is what makes it come alive and be fresh. Technically, there are a lot of people who could have done a record like this, but I think my knowledge of the genres and my love of playing those styles was what really brings the music alive." Sure enough, he dazzles on the Les-and-Mary evergreens "Bye Bye Blues" and "Just One More Chance," as well as "Sway" and other songs not associated with the pair that he reconditions in the fashion of Paul.

Robillard first heard Sunny Crownover, a Texan living outside Boston, by chance two years ago at a Harvard University Extension School concert. Highly impressed, he soon hired her to front the swing-jazz band Sunny & the Joy Boys, which also features the guitarist himself and reedsman Billy Novick.

In preparation for the *Tiki Lounge* sessions, Crownover made a close study of Ford's life and music. Attracted to the purity and clarity of her foremother's voice, this veteran of unheralded jazz and blues groups said she "practiced a lot to learn to emulate [Ford's] restraint in songs that I might be inclined to push harder on." Crownover singled out for praise "I'm Still In Love With You," an original pop-blues by Paul and Ford. "I feel like I'm such a lucky girl to have been able to do that song because Duke's guitar is amazing for what he came up with, so singing around that is like a day at the amusement park."

Robillard thrived during the overdubbing process. "I thought compiling guitars together to build a nice lush background around Sunny's vocal, in the way Les did it, and engineering it myself in my home studio was a project that would be really fun to do. And it was, though it was hard work, too. In fact, the idea of composing all the guitar parts around her voice was really the inspiration for me."

Robillard's respectful approximations of the famous Les Paul "New Sound" share sonic space with something that might surprise anyone not aware of his passion for various styles of music recorded between the '20s and '60s. What's with the *Tiki Lounge* album title and the guitarist joining Mark Teixeira (from his regular touring band, not pro baseball) in playing light Latin percussion?

"I'm a fan of lounge and exotica music of the late '50s and early '60s," he said. "I've collected a lot of those albums. People like Billy May, Nelson Riddle and a lot of top bandleaders made a real atmospheric effect with the orchestra and took a little twist with a popular instrument of the time, bongos. So I went for a retro-vibe in the recording of the album and in the mixing of it." The blues-jazz Renaissance man laughed softly. "I may even do another album in a similar vein, but, of course, I'll do it a little different to make it interesting."

DB

The collage features several elements:
 

- A white oval at the top left with the text "New from".
- The "Blue Bamboo Music" logo in the top right corner.
- An album cover for Woody Witt, featuring Frank Amsterdam, David Craig, and Sebastian Whitsaker.
- A poster for the Carol Morgan Trio, featuring Harvie S and Richie Berosa, with a grid of small images.
- An album cover for Mark Piszczek with the Bamboo Philharmonic.
- An album cover for Coccolamus Bridge.
- A poster for "The Glorious Inner Planet" with a purple and yellow design.
- A white oval at the bottom with the text "Available now at www.bluebamboomusic.com".



# John Pizzarelli

A Tribute To  
Duke Ellington

By Michael Bourne

John Pizzarelli was jamming along with himself. He'd come to Newark, N.J., for a radio interview on WBGO, guitar in hand. As "In A Mellow Tone" swang forth from his new tribute CD to Duke Ellington, *Rockin' In Rhythm* (Telarc), he played a crosscurrent with his own solo, complete with a live *plink-plink-plink* of Basie to mark the end of the tune.

"I played trumpet and guitar when I was growing up," Pizzarelli said. "I'd play the guitar with rock records, and I had a record of Clark Terry, Music Minus One. Side 1 was just Clark with a rhythm section. On the flip side they gave you the music and you got to try and play Clark's licks to 'Blues For Smedley,' 'The Flintstones,' things like that."

John's father, the great guitarist Bucky Pizzarelli, personally knew Clark and a Who's Who of mighty swingers. They'd come to the house in New Jersey, or John and his bassist brother Martin heard them on countless records with their dad. "We'd hear my father play with George Barnes or Les Paul or Zoot Sims or Clark Terry," he remembered. "That's how I got Clark on my *My Blue Heaven* record 20 years ago. My father, he's been my best contractor all these years."

And his best teacher. "I really didn't play the guitar 'til I was 10 or 11," he said. "I played the tenor banjo first. I learned how to get around on that. And then one day there was an old round-hole Gibson steel string guitar on the couch. I picked it up and I'd go, 'Oh, there's B minor.' I'd play along with Elton John records."

When he first tried to study from a guitar book, "I didn't know what any of the chords were, and my father showed me all the little things. I learned, 'Ah, that's what those tic-tac-toe things mean.' I was learning things off records, and my father said, 'Learn the George Barnes part to "Honeysuckle Rose," and at a concert you can come up and play.' I learned by trial-by-fire."

Pizzarelli was opening that night for a week at Birdland, playing with his Swing Seven, his trio with pianist Larry Fuller and his brother, plus frequent drummer Tony Tedesco, a horn section and guest violinist Aaron Weinstein. Don Sebesky arranged the bigger band for *Rockin' In Rhythm*. They've worked together on a half dozen albums in recent years, including an earlier tribute to Ellington. Pizzarelli played and sang on *Joyful Noise*, Sebesky's centennial album for Duke.

"I heard my father play with George Barnes a lot," Pizzarelli said. "That was my first memory of hearing a lot of Ellington. 'Satin Doll' was one of those songs I remember most of all. And the one record that came into the house was *Duke Ellington's Greatest Hits*. I gave it to my brother for

Christmas. There's a picture of Duke on the cover in a camel hair jacket with a boutonniere. It had a lot of music from *Piano In The Background* on it."

Pizzarelli was a teenager when Duke died in 1974. "The closest I got to hear him was with Mercer Ellington in the '70s when I went to the University of Tampa," he said. "My dad got to meet Duke. My dad and George Barnes went up to Duke's apartment. They sat on the floor and played for Duke, and Duke sang the blues while my dad and George Barnes accompanied him. I've asked my father about it, but he just says, 'Yeah ... Duke sang the blues ... 20 minutes.' I keep trying on car rides to get more out of him, but that's all I get."

John's dad plays a beautiful medley of Ellington songs on *So Hard To Forget*, his 2008 album with a string quartet. What's curious for a guitarist celebrating Duke is that Duke almost never played with one. "My father mentions Laurence Lucie with Duke at the very beginning," said John. "Django Reinhardt and Duke played a couple of times. But there was no guitar book in the Ellington band. It's interesting, because all of the dance bands had a guitar. My father could name all of the guitar players in all of the bands. And when he was raised, musically speaking, by his uncles, they said, 'There's three bands you want to play with: Duke Ellington and Count Basie and Benny Goodman.' And then they said, 'Ellington doesn't have a guitar, Basie is always gonna have Freddie Green, so it's Goodman you have a shot with.' And he made it into the Benny Goodman band."

Bucky joins his son on the new album with a solo on "Satin Doll" and rhythm guitar on several other songs. Bucky was also a guest one of the nights at Birdland, and the two generations played exuberant duets. That his father is a master guitarist inspires John, and, especially when he scats in unison with his solos, often at breakneck (or break-finger) tempos, John's chops can be breathtaking. Still, even at 50, John can't know or play all that his 84-year-old father can.

Bucky, his sons and John's wife, singer Jessica Molaskey, sometimes perform together as "The First Family of Cool." Molaskey is a Broadway singer and appeared with John in a short-lived 1997 Broadway show about Johnny Mercer, *Dream*. They've since written a variety of songs together and recorded on each other's albums. Though they both have very active careers, including Molaskey working this year with songwriter Ricky Ian Gordon in a show called *Sycamore Trees*, often as they can they get on stage as a twosome. They'll be at the Kennedy Center June 4, on a California tour in July and at New York's swanky Cafe Carlyle this fall.

Molaskey joined the show opening night at Birdland to sing vocalese lyrics she'd written to "Perdido," a prelude that she and Kurt Elling sing with Pizzarelli on the new album. "I knew the arrangement we do from *Piano In The Background*," said John. "We were going out to a gig in the summer, and she had a tape recorder, and she kept rolling it back. We wanted to think of a story that set up 'Perdido.' I've been friends with Kurt Elling for about three years, and I said, 'Could you do this with us?' As he would say, he 'wiggled out' and we had a great time doing this Lambert, Hendricks and Ross business."

*Rockin' In Rhythm* is also highlighted by something rare nowadays for a John Pizzarelli album: instrumentals. He plays an exquisite "Just Squeeze Me" alone as if a guitar etude, and the band, joined by Aaron Weinstein and saxophonist Harry Allen, romps through "C Jam Blues." They climax with "Cottontail" medleyed with the rhythmically rocking title song.

"When you think of all the tributes I've done—Nat Cole, Frank Sinatra, Jobim, The Beatles, and on the last one, Richard Rodgers—Duke is really the first jazz voice. I could've played instrumentals on the Rodgers record [*With A Song In My Heart*], but for me as a vocalist, I was trying to find good lyrics, and with Rodgers you get Hammerstein and Hart. With these songs of Ellington, I don't have to sing on everything."

Pizzarelli's earliest albums, *I'm Hip—Don't Tell My Father* in 1983 and *Hit That Jive, Jack* in 1985, included songs of the King Cole Trio, and he eventually recorded two whole albums dedicated to Nat, *Dear Mr. Cole* and *P.S. Mr. Cole*. But unlike his idol, who played less and less piano the more and more he sang, Pizzarelli will always keep the guitar in his hands. "The guitar has to come along," he said, strumming. "If I just stand in front of a big band, I look like Groucho Marx." **DB**

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# HENRY THREADGILL

## Boundless Curiosity

By Howard Mandel

Henry Threadgill exuded confidence and impatience when facing four video cameras and a standing-room-only gallery of serious listeners at the Manhattan performance space Roulette last October. With his flute, bass flute, alto saxophone and bass clarinet at hand and the members of his ensemble Zooid—guitarist Liberty Ellman, tuba-and-trombonist Jose Davilla, fretless bass guitarist Stomu Takeishi and traps drummer Elliot Humberto Kavee—stationed around him, he was about to plunge into the premier of music from his first album in eight years, *This Takes Us To, Vol. 1 (Pi)*. The cameras would capture it all for eventual cable broadcast and online viewing via Roulette TV.

Threadgill's gaze was steady, his expression tight-lipped, his posture upright. Advance review copies of *This Takes Us To* had already created a buzz, which is why the aficionados had gathered, wondering, "What is Threadgill up to now?"

For more than 40 years, the Chicago-born reeds specialist has ventured repeatedly beyond established frontiers of composition and improvisation. At age 65 he remains energized, astute and ambitious, ignoring musical conventions and classifications to focus on music itself. He takes nothing for granted, probes the basics and comes up with ideas as startling as his sound. He lives by example, making music to satisfy his own boundless curiosity, though he says, "I play what I hope is spiritual music for the higher aspects of people's existence."

What Threadgill and Zooid (a biological term for an organic cell that moves independently through the body it's within) offered in concert was richly textured group interplay, organized pieces rife with virtuosity and passion—but few familiar touchstones such as obvious melody, chord progressions or head-solo-solo-solo-head structures. The band clearly had a plan, but its goals were elusive, its comforts few, its points resistant to quick assessment. Maybe that was the point.

Each piece began airily, with Davilla's softly burred or limpid tuba tones, Takeishi's fretless bass guitar figures or Ellman's light-fingered plucks and strums underscored by Kavee's loose, louche rhythms. Threadgill, sheet music on a stand before him, concentrated on the activity, ears perked, body sometimes bending to a passage, pleasure occasionally flitting across his face.

The other musicians' gestures—layered but shifting, rather than clearly integrated or synchronized—gradually accumulated. Then Threadgill leapt in on flute or sax with short, insistent phrases, quick runs of adjacent notes or single

pitches urgently repeated. He seemed like an Old Testament prophet decrying vanities and illusions from a windswept plateau. The ensemble flowed in subversion of customary instrumental hierarchy: Sometimes Ellman preceded and sometimes he echoed Threadgill, sometimes he paired with Takeishi or fenced with Davilla or flew off on his own. Kavee mostly maintained a steady pulse, smiling softly as if enraptured by a symphony in his head.

No song titles were announced (too bad: they're brain-teasers) or words said except the players' names. The overall ambiance was mystery, foreboding and confrontation. "I'm not playing to entertain," Threadgill asserted a couple of weeks later, unusually chatty over a latte at an Italian pastry shop near the apartment in New York City's East Village where he's lived since moving from Chicago in the late 1970s. "That means I don't have to play anything pretty, or something that's not challenging you. It can send you out the door, and that's fine, too, because it might stay with you and make you think of something much later. My music's not about your immediate reaction to what I'm doing, but what it's doing for you and to you. That's my hope."

Since emerging in the late '60s as one of the individualistic first-generation members of the AACM (Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians), Threadgill has continuously challenged listeners and also other musicians with his investigations of the structures, practices and implications attending jazz and contemporary composition. He's recorded some 30 albums on major labels and tiny independents, under his own name or, in the '70s and '80s, with the trio Air. He's collaborated on nearly that many with AACM compatriots Muhal Richard Abrams, Roscoe Mitchell and Douglas Ewart, as well as David Murray, Bill Laswell, Kip Hanrahan and the reggae rhythm team Sly Dunbar and Robbie

Shakespeare. He's gained international esteem if not household-name fame or fabulous wealth, about which he doesn't much care.

Far from content or complacent, Threadgill is inherently skeptical. His self-motivated studies have resulted in unusual insights. He's a visionary and seeker, pushing ahead to get to the bottom of things. He hasn't often explained the details of his concept, which he described as akin to serialism, using pitch intervals and freedom in their manipulation instead of single notes in a predetermined and fixed tone row. During a wide-ranging conversation, he cited Edgard Varese, Béla Bartok and Igor Stravinsky as inspirations. They don't negate his identity; he is a jazz musician. "I don't like that term, though. We've lost the meaning of it. So I say I'm doing creative music."

"The kind of music I've been writing for a long time is modular. Like this," he demonstrated, piling two saucers on top of each other, as if crowning checkers pieces. Then he removed the top one and set it on the opposite side of the bottom saucer from where it had been when he'd started. The coasters represented intervals, not chords or episodes of written material.

"See, both modules are still on the table," he said. "This one can be over here, or this one can be over there. That's a form of order. You've got to start with some kind of order, though it doesn't really matter what order. I come into a rehearsal with this first order, which we play, and from there get to work on what's going to be the first arrangement."

"Arranging these intervals is not just a process of moving things around on paper," he said. "It includes interactive, spontaneous collaboration, because ideas come from the musicians about opening up or shortening sections and other processes. But all changes come about from the order of intervals I've brought. We work through it once and then do it again, dropping what we did



and starting all over.

"In other words, first there's *this* set of intervals, then *this* set of intervals, then this set and so on. Everything that happens melodically, harmonically and counterpoint-wise is a result of the intervals, which are in existence for a specified length of time. When the improvisation part comes up, the same process is applied. It creates a gravity field. If you break it by playing something that doesn't fit, you throw confusion into the air.

"I'm doing this so musicians won't play all the contrived stuff that they've been taught and that they've heard in the chord progressions people play all the time. I want my musicians to play spontaneous ideas. The only way to get them to do that is to get past the usual cues. Get rid of them, and there's nothing to depend on. No C7, no D minor mode. All you've got is intervals."

Threadgill sat back, took a question and responded with further explication of his alternatives to standard methodology. He made sense of the sort that's more understandable when its substance is heard than when it's spoken of. His logic and theory are hard to deduce from the music they produce, but the richly detailed, densely active and utterly unpredictable music that Zooid has achieved after a year in private rehearsal following a decade of initial association has compelling drive, suspense that holds one's attention and satisfactions that arrive as surprises.

"There is a system and there is no system," Threadgill maintained. "It's a natural language. It's not some kind of theoretical stuff. It's nothing artificial. The regular language of music is still there. I haven't done anything to get rid of anything—I don't believe in that. Anything that's been very, very good you don't get rid of it. You'd have to be crazy to get rid of what works. You're supposed to find a way to condense it, re-evaluate it, give it a new look and keep its essence so you can come in with new information. It usually takes hundreds of years to come up with something that works: This is a verb in writing, or this is a way to create shadow or perspective in drawing or painting. You keep it, but you find another way to do it. I keep everything."

Everything, for Threadgill, encompasses his history of investigations and transformations. In *Air* with the late drummer Steve McCall and late bassist Fred Hopkins he reconceived customary trio strategies and abstracted pieces by Jelly Roll Morton. On *X-75*, his debut as a leader in 1979, Threadgill had three other winds/reeds experts, four bassists and a vocalist. In 1981 he introduced his seven-piece Sextet (later spelled with a third "t"), counting two traps drummers as one, and eventually added cellist Diedre Murray to pivot between the frontline of reeds/winds, cornet and trombone and the rhythm section. In the mid '80s he began employing tuba players to shore up high, middle and low registers.

He kicked off the '90s with Very Very Circus featuring two electric guitarists and *two* tubaists, to which he added a french horn. He lent himself to Laswell productions that flew in parts by mem-

bers of Parliament/Funkadelic, vibist/arranger Karl Berger, Herbie Hancock, Wayne Shorter, Brazilian songman Carlinhos Brown and the drum band Olodum. He has written for string virtuosos including the AACM's Leroy Jenkins, oud player Simon Shaheen and Chinese pipa player Wu Man, vocalists Cassandra Wilson and Asha Puthli, his own 20-piece Society Situation dance band and the Brooklyn Philharmonic.

Threadgill's music is variously and sometimes simultaneously airy and lowdown, high powered and suspended in time. His voice on alto sax has always been urgent but measured: He doesn't blow streams of notes for volcanic affect. On flute, he articulates rather huskily exactly what he intends to, nothing superfluous. This is a composer-improviser who knows his mind, and plays it. He is capable of daunting complexity, with urban blues at its core.

"Every time I moved from one group to the next, my language was changing," he claimed. "I never wrote music for the Sextet the way I wrote when I was in *Air*—I used completely other abili-

"There is a system and there is no system. It's a natural language. It's not some kind of theoretical stuff. It's nothing artificial. The regular language of music is still there. I haven't done anything to get rid of anything—I don't believe in that."

ties for what I was doing with melody and form. From *Air* until *Make a Move* [his band from the '90s to 2001] is all in the range of major-minor, and it broke over into chromaticism. I didn't get out of that world until *Everybody's Mouth Is A Book* [the first session he completed in 2001]—there are three pieces in that in the new language. *Make a Move* was as far as I could go with major-minor music, then I mixed in chromaticism and whatever else I could think of until I got completely over to where I am now, to a complete language that has nothing to do with that."

Threadgill credits Varese's music for his epiphany about modular development. "I saw a process in what he was doing. He called it folding and enfolding. I was looking at that for about five years, I couldn't get past it. But then one day I was sitting in my house in India [Threadgill has a home in Goa], looking again, and realized there's more you can do with it. He wasn't after what I was after. He got what he wanted by taking one step, where there were actually four or five steps. I don't know if he knew about those steps, I never saw what I'm doing in his music, but everything

I'm doing comes from that one thing he was doing, which was all he *wanted* to do with it. I went, I'll be damned, I've been sitting here five years and it's right in my face. I've been going one-two, when there's one-two-three-four.

"It's funny: Somebody tells you that's a tape recorder. We sit here with it for weeks. Then I say, 'I sure would like to hear the news or the ballgame on that.' You say, 'But it's a tape recorder.' We never even looked to find out if that tape recorder was a radio because we accepted the fact that this was a tape recorder. That's the way everything is.

"We're told that something is something, and we stay there. We never think to erase that definition from our minds and try to see this thing anew. When I did that I discovered what the Europeans said harmony was: any three notes. They didn't say thirds or fourths, they said any three notes. That's what got me started, one of the ideas that helped me to develop this language. That and what I learned from Varese.

"I knew from Varese's music, and Bartok and serialism, that there was another way. A lot of people don't like serialism, but that doesn't matter, because it presents another order. Like if you think that there's only French, then all of a sudden—wait a minute, there's Korean, too? ... I thought, Wait a minute, how many other worlds are out there that are real, that you don't have to contrive?"

Guitarist Ellman first came to grips with this intervallic system as a sideman on *Up Popped The Two Lips*, the second of two sessions Threadgill committed in 2001. Interviewed at a Brooklyn coffee shop, he said his understanding is that "basically every chord has three notes, and the harmony moves among these triads—if you want to call them that. They're more like three-note cells, because of the way the harmony functions. Henry takes the relationships of the intervals between each note in those triads, and he can generate six chords from that family of intervals. Those intervals are also what we use in terms of motion in the harmony and to inform us in our solos. You have to look at these interval sets and use them to help develop your motifs.

"In the past three or four years his compositions have become gradually more and more elaborate, with more pages, more sections and larger sections, also varying in how thematic the music is. He has a lot of different ideas about how to work with melody in terms of expanding or compressing the time, or playing one piece of a melody then jumping to another piece for improvising, then revisiting the next piece of the melody—which may be something the audience hasn't even heard yet, but we musicians know how it's related, so when we come back to it we have a certain energy for how we perform that section."

Does this intervallic framework hamper improvisation?

"No," Ellman said. "Though the forms are very elaborate and the harmonic structure, the rhythmic ideas are very specific to Henry's written music, the intention is still as an improvising performer to interpret that music. When some-

one's soloing, whether it's you or you're accompanying someone, the information you have from your jazz background serves you really well, because you're still interpreting and using your intuition to play what's best. If I'm soloing and I'm using Henry's system on one of Henry's pieces, there's an interval set that I have to reference as if there's a mode that went with the chords in that particular passage. I use that as a guideline, but I don't have to only play that. Perhaps those intervals are featured more, or I use them to start an idea off of a chord tone, but then I can improvise using my ear the way any jazz musician does."

Is playing that way a lot of work?

"To me it's a good combination of the emotion and analytical," Ellman continued. "The groove is always strong, you feel that infectious beat, and I find his melodies to be actually melodic and singable. They're not necessarily simple, but they *are* motivic.

"Henry's said to me he always wants there to be ecstasy in the music, that whatever we're doing we need to reach these points where it's immediate and emotional, raw. That's how to resonate with the listener and yourself—through ecstatic statement. No matter how technical the music may get, it has to have that emotion, that power, in it."

What if you're in the audience and not up to all this theory?

"You can tell what's working," Threadgill himself suggested. "You're not going to understand everything theoretically, but you know it's working, and you say, 'How is it holding together?' You know it is, you heard it. It almost sounded like people were playing free, but they're not. It's freer than playing free. There's so much harmony and counterpoint flying all over the place—isn't there? You can't predict when cycles happen, but we *are* playing cycles—melody, harmony and beat are developing as a result of my process, but we're improvising on form, too.

"There is no such thing as free. There has to be order. There's order in the universe. You can't escape order, and there's no such thing as real freedom. Yes, you get more and more free, but you have to come up with some new laws that allow you to be free, that give you the power to communicate freedom, or else you'll just be repeating yourself in a little while. Every time you get up you're not going to have something different to say. We know about habit. If you use these words, these phrases, that's what you're going to be using until you find something to free you from that, to give you something else."

There is the freedom of the individual Threadgill has discovered and encouraged. There is the message he conveys so determinedly in his music that he has created a method of insuring those who play with him partake of it, too. "It's not necessary for you to do what I do," Threadgill said. "You've got to do what you do, what's necessary for you to do, and what fits you. But you can learn something from what I do that can inform you about what you're doing."

He means to free us to do what *only* we can do. **DB**

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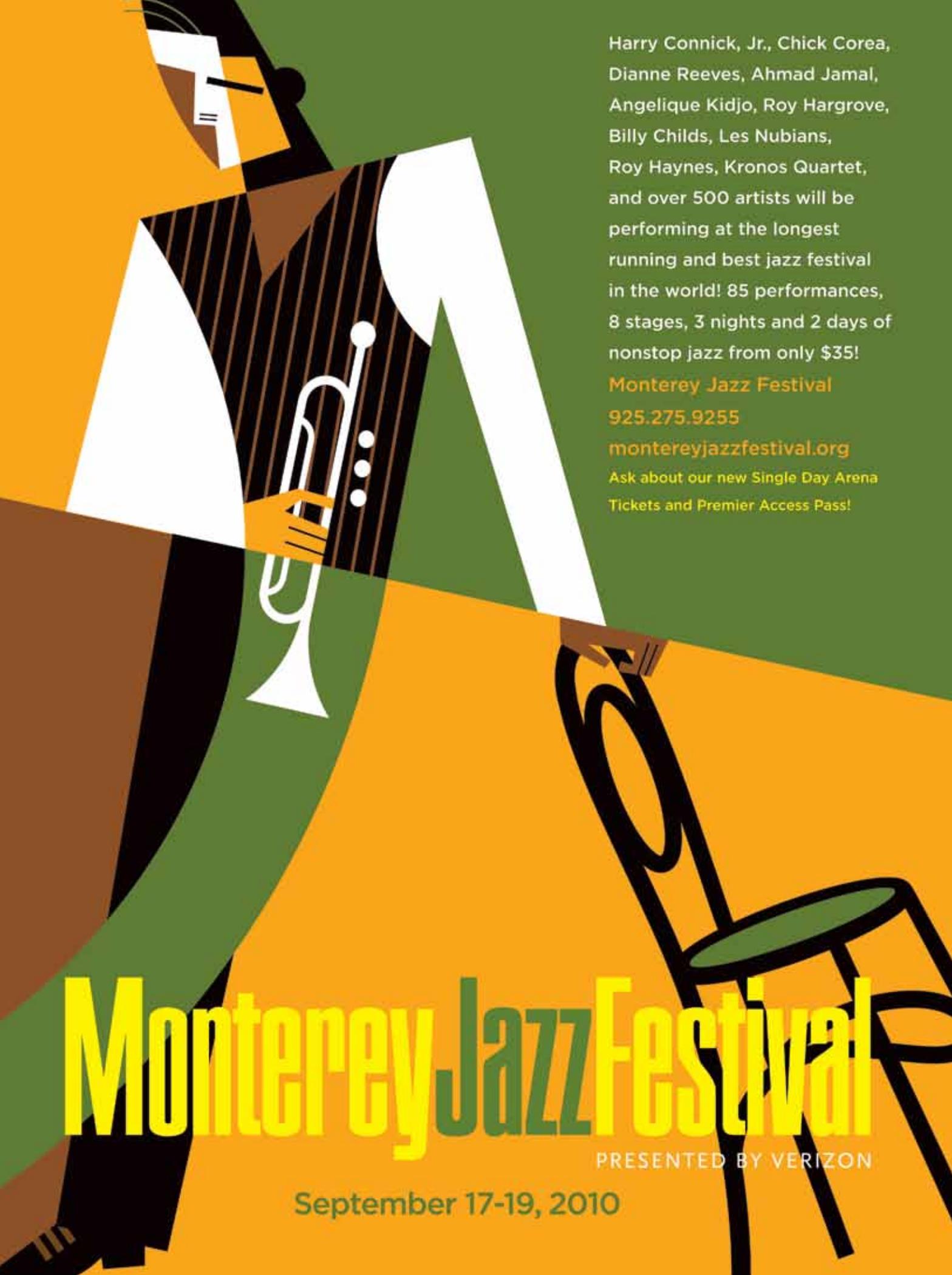
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# REVIEWS ▶

## Jason Moran & The Bandwagon *Ten*

BLUE NOTE 509996 33765 2 4  
★★★★★

What's so compelling about Jason Moran is that he welcomes information from outside his orbit, whether he quite knows what to do with it at first or not. That information has included everything from recorded telephone conversations to snippets of "other" musics—classical, world, vintage jazz, hip hop, etc.

Moran revels in connecting disparate material. On the fetching opener, "Blue Blocks" (part of a gospel suite), he starts with a nicely dragged triplet feel, conjuring solace of church, then leaps from the pew into a wild double-time excursion. Did he catch the spirit? Maybe. On Leonard Bernstein's "Big Stuff," the pianist begins in dapper period mode, then grabs a controlling motif and shakes it like a bulldog with a bone, darting all over the keyboard, accelerating almost out of control. Though this new musical territory has little to do with innocence of the original, somehow his obsession with its lyricism makes it cohere.

"Gangsterism Over 10 Years," the meatiest piece on the album, starts out obsessing over a single note, as the trio explores, with aggressive ferocity, an Americana-ish theme they've worked with for years. Moran's penchant for obsession shows up again on two versions of "Study No. 6," by the great composer of player piano rolls, Conlon Nancarrow. First time out, Moran creates a droll mental space, equal parts caprice and anxiety, with this simple, up-one-scale-down-another exercise. On the second version, he puts his foot to the pedal, letting the series ring together, creating a feeling of wistful distance. That wistfulness reappears on "Pas de Deux—Lines Ballet," which recalls



the sonorous gravity of the opening of a Beethoven sonata. Equally lyrical, surprisingly so, is "Feedback Pt. 2," part of a piece Moran composed for the Monterey Jazz Festival. The composition superimposes dreamy piano over reprocessed bits of Jimi Hendrix's feedback from his famous 1967 Monterey Pop performance.

My favorite track is Moran's nod to one of his biggest influences, Jaki

Byard, on the late pianist's "To Bob Vatel Of Paris." As did Byard, Moran drags vintage piano styles into the present, then rumbles to the brink of free improv.

The album ends with a snatch of Moran's young children vying for attention as he plays and a "ghost track" written by, of all people, blackface entertainer Bert Williams. Its big vaudeville finish reaffirms

that Moran is open to everything, ready to load it on his "bandwagon" and gambol into the unknown.

—Paul de Barros

**Ten:** Blue Blocks; RFK In The Land Of Apartheid; Feedback Pt. 2; Crepuscule With Nellie; Study No. 6; Pas De Deux—Lines Ballet; Study No. 6; Gangsterism Over 10 Years; Big Stuff; Play To Live; The Subtle One; To Bob Vatel Of Paris; Old Babies; Nobody. (64:28)  
**Personnel:** Jason Moran, piano; Tarus Mateen, bass; Nasheet Waits, drums; Jonas and Malcolm Moran, vocals (13).  
**Ordering info:** [bluenote.com](http://bluenote.com)

## Kenny Davis

### Kenny Davis

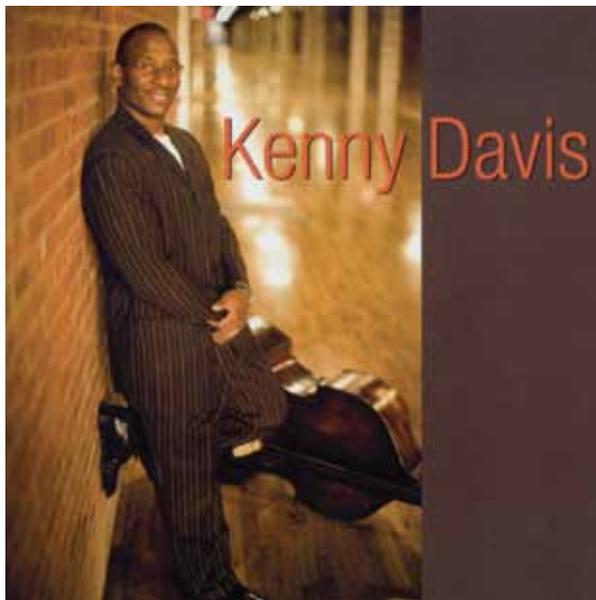
DAKEN RECORDS 001

★★★½

Bassist Kenny Davis hosts an interesting conference of players who rotate in various amalgams to produce a laudable cycle of mostly original pieces that balance solo and structure with a confident hand. Being a bassist, Davis' instinct is to build out from the rhythm, at least where the rhythm is strong. It served Count Basie well, and so it does Davis. But the tempos tend toward the peaceful and reflective, including a bass solo piece and bowed-bass/piano duet. Together, they give ample space in which to appreciate Davis' poised virtuosity. The solo piece, "Before Sunrise" (unrelated to the movie), has a thematic integrity and vision that sustains interests, a rare finding on my part when it comes to extended pizzicato solo.

This leaves the main heat of the CD in three clever tunes largely controlled by neo-hard-boppists Ralph Bowen ("Fearless" and "Attitude") and Javon Jackson, who presides over Stevie Wonder's "Too High" with a lively sweep. "Fearless" alternates time signatures to set off the straight-out 4/4 solos, of which guitarist Dave Gilmore's stands out.

Still, there are a couple of rather petty



things that annoy me about this CD. You'll notice it claims to offer 14 tracks. But four of those 14 ("Journey 1-2-3" and "1st Arrival") are little more than brief orphaned fragments, apparently reclaimed from the cutting room floor, inserted for no discernable purpose and allowed to peter out before anything begins to happen. "Journey" sounds like a good medium tempo line played against a bass ostinato. So why it wasn't left on the burner longer to simmer a bit, especially as Don Byron and Eddie Allen start poking into it, is a mystery.

Granted, less than five minutes of music is at stake here. But if artists or producers are so enamored with their outtakes, let them append them as hidden "bonus" tracks and not pass them off as part of the real work.

Speaking of Byron, two of the three aborted tracks pretend to include guest appearances by the clarinetist. So if you're a fan of Byron and expect to hear him in much context, you'll be baited and switched. Only "What Lies Beyond" delivers a complete performance, and much of that is a wry put-on in which Byron and trumpeter Allen ham it up in a clownish parody—of what, is uncertain—that's a direct descendant of such jazz wit as "Shirt Tail Stomp" (1928), if not "Livery Stable Blues" (1917). Geri Allen redeems much of the piece in its last three or four minutes, pushing the perimeter of

the mainstream with a restless elan, proving that the contemporary "mainstream" can be a fairly permissive waterway these days, with assorted creeks, brooks and rivulets sprouting from its central flow. —John McDonough

**Kenny Davis:** 1st Arrival; Fearless; Deliverance; Too High; Journey (#1), Enviry; Tenderly; Wrapped In Love; Journey (#2); Attitude; Before Sunrise; What Lies Beyond; Journey (#3); Gone Too Soon. (57:57)

**Personnel:** Eddie Allen (3, 12), trumpet; Don Byron (9, 12, 13), clarinet; Javon Jackson (3, 4), Ralph Bowen (2, 6, 7, 9, 10, 13) tenor saxophone; Geri Allen (2-7, 9, 12, 13), Onaja Allan Gumbs (3, 14), piano; David Gilmore (2), guitar; Kenny Davis, bass; Ralph Peterson (2, 3), Billy Kilson (1, 4-12), drums.

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

## Fabrizio Sotti

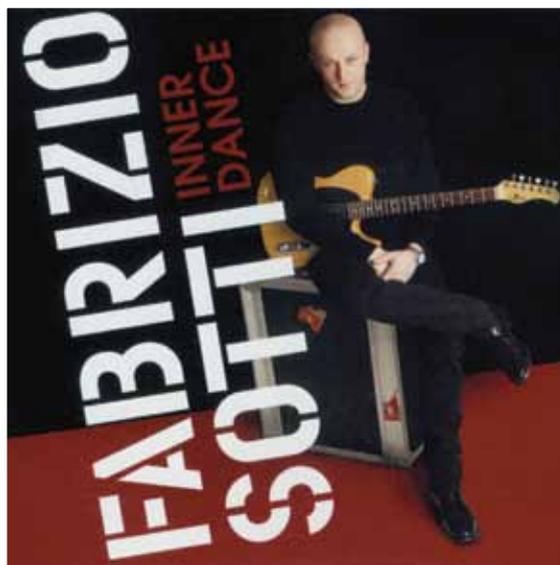
### Inner Dance

E1 2080

★★

The sound of an improviser's instrument—not just the lines played on it—is an essential element of any artistic statement. The bite of Archie Shepp's tenor gave his stormy '60s work even more pique. Hank Jones' lithe piano touch brings grace to his most ardent solos. Guitarist Fabrizio Sotti has a gauzy tone on this new disc; it's processed and creamy, and somewhere along the line, robbed of its potential impact. Though he and his band generate a few sparks as the program plays out, it's hard to feel the true weight of their actions.

At its base, *Inner Dance* is an organ trio record. Most of the tracks are built on the interplay of Sam Barsh's B-3, Victor Jones' drums and the leader's strings. From "Blue Whisper" to "Mr. TM," Sotti's responsible for several pithy blues riffs. On the latter track, his fluid runs nurture the band's momentum while nudging a little flash into the foreground. But a certain punch is absent. It could be that Sotti's



tone—a blend of *Watercolors*-era Metheny and Gramavision-era Scofield—is a tad too close in personality to the rich textures of Barsh's ax. To a degree, they cancel out each other.

The nylon string guitar Sotti uses for a few tracks provides a nice balance to the cushy sound of its electric counterpart, but his ballad writing tilts towards the mawkish. "Kindness

In Your Eyes" is a watery mood piece, and like its plugged-in parallel "Brief Talk," hard to recall once it's gone.

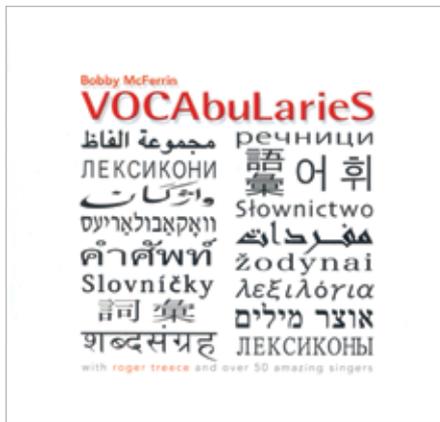
Better are the two guest tracks. Gregoire Maret's harmonica brings a novel texture to the title tune, which is catchy enough to remind you that Sotti's done quite a bit of work with pop musicians. Maret has some Stevie Wonder harp mojo running through him, and his prancing solo echoes the master. There's something schmaltzy about "Amanecer," the romantic piece sung by Claudia Acuña, but the vocalist's emotional heft does help vivify it.

Ultimately, this is a minor album that just drifts along, never really stating its case. There's pleasant group interplay, but its thrust is blunted. The back story is that the session Sotti was scheduled to release was obliterated in a computer hard drive crash. Maybe its replacement should have been more rigorously designed.

—Jim Macnie

**Inner Dance:** Blue Whisper; Kindness In Your Eyes; Inner Dance; I Thought So; Amanecer; Brief Talk; Last Chance; Mr. T.M.; We Are What We Are. (48:55)

**Personnel:** Fabrizio Sotti, electric guitar, nylon string guitar; Sam Barsh, organ; Victor Jones, drums; Mino Cinelu, drums and percussion; Gregoire Maret, harmonica (3); Claudia Acuña, vocals (5).  
**Ordering info:** [e1entertainment.com](http://e1entertainment.com)



## Bobby McFerrin VOCABuLarieS

EMARCY B0014036

★★

The ambitions of this record are many, from its shifting, complex forms—perhaps the biggest surprise—to its enormous cast of singers, hailing from many different arenas of the music world. The point is clearly to celebrate the rich variety of vocal dialects the world has to offer.

The absence of verse-chorus pop music structures is indeed an attractive feature of *VOCABuLarieS*. Sad, then, that the glossy production and bland arrangements have taken away any semblance of real texture and deep difference, in favor of a wholesale homogeneity. Some tracks, like “The Garden,” have the upbeat poppiness of McFerrin’s big hit, “Don’t Worry, Be Happy,” but rather than sporting the plastic-coated Caribbean veneer, this has a sort of ambiguously originated world music vibe.

Here and there, more specific references emerge: Eastern European women’s choirs, Ladysmith Black Mambazo, Carl Orff (hear “Messages” for an evocation of “Carmina Burana,” as if recorded by Mannheim Steamroller for a lost Putamayo album). We rarely hear McFerrin’s trademark vocal percussion; scattering, he sneaks it into the cheery end of “He Ran To The Train,” also at the outset of “Say Ladeo,” with its oversweet r&b lilt. Roger Treece, who worked with McFerrin on the music, contributes “Brief Eternity,” the disc’s closer, which is the most egregious—a sort of continuously morphing Lion King on an unlistenable spiritual quest.

—John Corbett

**VOCABuLarieS:** Baby; Say Ladeo; Waiters; Messages; The Garden; He Ran To The Train; Brief Eternity. (63:54)

**Personnel:** Alex Acuña, percussion (1–6); Donny McCaslin, saxophone (4); Pedro Eustache, woodwinds (3, 4); Roger Treece, percussion, synth programming (1–6); Bobby McFerrin (1–7), Roger Treece (1–7), Lisa Fischer (1–7), Joey Blake (1–6), Kim Nazarian (1–6), Janice Siegel (1, 2, 3, 5, 6), LaTanya Hall (1, 3–6), Luciana Souza (2–6), Albert Hera (3–6), Lauren Kinhan (1, 3, 5, 6), Peter Eldridge (1, 4, 5, 7), Alexandra Montano (2, 4, 7), Andrea Figallo (4, 6, 7), Darrnon Meader (1, 2, 7), Darryl Tooken (3, 5, 6), Dave Worm (3, 4, 6), Katie Campbell (1, 4, 7), Kristina Boerger (1, 4, 7), Amelia Watkins (4, 7), Aubrey Johnson (2, 4), David Root (4, 7), Everett Bradley (3, 5), Fletcher Sheridan (4, 7), Gary Eckert (1, 2), Mark Johnson (4, 7), Michele Eaton (4, 7), Michelle Mailhot Vines (4, 7), Pierre Cook (5, 6), Rhiannon (3, 5), Ryland Angel (4, 7), Sandra Anderson (1, 7), Beth Quist (1), Bonnie Denise Christiansen (2), Cole Davis (7), Curtis King (3), Daniel Abraham DeVeau (7), Darren Percival (2), Datevik Hovanessian (3), David B. Whitworth (3), Elizabeth Farnum (4), Gayla Morgan (4), Josephine Lee (1), Judi Donaghy (1), Kevin Osborne (1), Lincoln Briney (2), Marlon Saunders (5), Michael Steinberger (4), Michele Weir (1), Richard Slade (4), Rosana Eckert (2), Sussan Deyhim (3), Theo Bleckmann (4), Thom Baker (4), vocals.

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

# The Hot Box

	John McDonough	John Corbett	Jim Macnie	Paul de Barros
<b>Jason Moran &amp; The Bandwagon</b> <i>Ten</i>	★★★★	★★★★½	★★★★	★★★★
<b>Kenny Davis</b> <i>Kenny Davis</i>	★★★½	★★★½	★★★	★★★
<b>Bobby McFerrin</b> <i>VOCABuLarieS</i>	★★★½	★★	★★★	★★★
<b>Fabrizio Sotti</b> <i>Inner Dance</i>	★★½	★★	★★	★★½

## Critics' Comments ▶

### Jason Moran & The Bandwagon, *Ten*

His Bandwagon music has been thoughtful from the get-go, but there have been moments when it wasn't as playful as it could be. Here, in a much-touted “concept-free” outing, is a nexus of the two approaches. A wise trio working a book that sounds effervescent even when it's pondering big questions. Love the Byard piece.

—Jim Macnie

Part retrospective perhaps but all in the moment, these performances swell and shrink according to their own thermal laws, from atomized lyrical whispers to dense, swirling whirlpools and percussive shouts, e.g. “Bob Vatel.” For no special reason, a wonderful “Nobody” is hidden behind a wanton fragment of paternal pride called “Old Babies.”

—John McDonough

No finer piano trio currently stalks the earth. Historically and intellectually resourceful (nods to Conlon Nancarrow and Bert Williams feel as natural as the Jaki Byard tune) but also sparkingly intuitive, inventive, spontaneous, even when tinkering with something they've been working on for a decade (“Gangsterism Over 10 Years”). Unassailably brilliant.

—John Corbett

### Kenny Davis, *Kenny Davis*

Revolving cast of illustrious players, satisfying and coherent disc. More than a sideman stepping up, it rings with the confidence of a leader. Davis' devilish bass deserves to be spotlighted, but there's much else to mention—from Geri Allen's intelligent support and Ralph Peterson's magic carpet ride to the beautiful studio sound and the neat take on Stevie Wonder.

—John Corbett

Davis extracts a gorgeous, meaty sound from his bass and plays with enviable facility and focus. He shines on the snappy, pianoless “Altitude,” the moving arco meditation “Before Sunrise” and the prayerful elegy “Gone Too Soon.” The album overall is workmanlike, with few extraordinary moments.

—Paul de Barros

A somewhat novel album. The pithy tracks give it the feel of a pop disc—it really covers a lot of ground—though such curtness makes it seem like there are potentially explosive opportunities that aren't taken advantage of. The producer's sheen feels weird, too. Yet the attraction of the playing itself is undeniable.

—Jim Macnie

### Bobby McFerrin, *VOCABuLarieS*

From a mind-numbing procession of overdubs comes a choral work that would be pretty impressive even if you *didn't* know how it was done. More a construction project than a performance, the multilingual outcome is full of the Third World exotica of vintage Les Baxter.

—John McDonough

Absolutely impressive from a technical standpoint. The dynamic of the myriad voices swooping and swishing is unique, and its breadth—from the Amen Corner to doo-wop sidewalks to Soweto mines—is wide. But it's a record that does seem to spill on and on and on.

—Jim Macnie

It's difficult to separate Bobby McFerrin's relentlessly cheerful outlook from his musical genius. I'm awed by the intricacy, seamless beauty and aural-spatial scope of these sumptuous, multi-kulti vocal choir pieces, written by Roger Treece and cleverly based on McFerrin's improvisations. But their churchy, New Age messages are so off-putting I know I'll never listen to this music again.

—Paul de Barros

### Fabrizio Sotti, *Inner Dance*

Wes Montgomery fluidity and soul meet the spidery echo of the '70s on this B-3/guitar outing, which swings mightily, has a tender moment with “Brief Talk” but often splashes in shallow water.

—Paul de Barros

Aside from some outbursts of solid-body/flamencoid speed and a trademark trill, Sotti's guitar playing is accurate and unremarkable. The laid-back Barsh creates interest here and there, though there's not too much for him to gnaw on in the uninspired program.

—John Corbett

Sotti, an excellent guitarist, comes closest to a true jazz sensibility on “Mr. T.M.” and “I Thought So.” “Blues Whisper” is also moderately interesting. The rest, while quite lovely in setting softly lit atmospherics, is rather languid and calls little attention to itself.

—John McDonough

## Dual Identity

### Dual Identity

CLEAN FEED 172

★★★★★

You'd never guess from the sound that this album was recorded live, at the 2009 Braga Jazz Festival. Studio quality (thanks to Joao Ferraz) in a live setting with well-played music can create a nice disorientation. And a nice disorientation is just what we have here with *Dual Identity*, the double-alto band featuring Rudresh Mahanthappa and Steve Lehman ably cajoled by guitarist Liberty Ellman, bassist Matt Brewer and Damion Reid on drums. Formed in 2004, this self-titled album is their debut for Clean Feed.

With hints of Tim Berne's jagged rock esthetic, *Dual Identity* has a push/pull quality to it that refuses to dissipate. "The General" combines the saxophones as both protagonists and antic upsetters on this start-and-stop medium-tempo excursion. Reid's snare drum provides the percussive pivot points, serving as a kind of backbeat floatation device. Likewise on the modal crunch



of "Foster Brothers," a song that combines more jagged edges intermingling theme, melody and improvisation across a flexible meter. From here, the band saunters into a dreamy rubato with "SMS," Ellman's guitar shadowing the horns' airy intro before setting out with some edgy strum 'n' pluck soloing, eventually leading to more locked-horn playing (one foreground, one background) wrapped up with a gradually emerging pulse.

The music on *Dual Identity* swings because its taut veneer (slightly aggressive, angular) is consistently transformed by a more

supple, relaxed delivery. "Post-Modern Pharaohs" continues the astringent vibe but does it by using repeated patterns over a rhythmic form that requires a naturalness in order to make the complex arrangement of solos and progressions not only listenable but full of feeling. And while the writing does present a kind of sameness to much of the material (exceptions include the lyrical "SMS" and, especially, the song-like "Katchu"), the double-alto front line is far from sounding redundant. This is because both Mahanthappa and Lehman know each other's moves from time well spent together, providing contrasting styles inside this tightly wound jazz esthetic (hear the ferocious "Dual Identities"). Tempered heat, *Dual Identity* presents five guys, one vibe, a multiplicity of integrated sounds.

—John Ephland

**Dual Identity:** The General; Foster Brothers; SMS; Post-Modern Pharaohs; Extensions Of Extensions Of; Katchu; Circus; Resonance Ballad; Rudreshm; 1010; Dual Identities. (73:33)

**Personnel:** Rudresh Mahanthappa, Steve Lehman, alto saxophone; Matt Brewer, bass; Damion Reid, drums.

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



## Aaron Goldberg

### Home

SUNNYSIDE 1232

★★★★★

If you missed pianist Aaron Goldberg's impressive *Worlds* (2006) or were unmoved by it, the album at hand should win you over. It takes the temperature of an exceptional 35-year-old virtuoso who thrives on engagement.

Goldberg always shines within the unit. His pared-down introspection on the ballad "Luiza" is held and bolstered by Reuben Rogers' well-placed bass notes and drummer Eric Harland's pointed stick work. A spare piano-bass ostinato on "Aze's Blazes" allows the peppery Harland to play against it at length. When tenor saxophonist Mark Turner joins the fray on three cuts, he's an instant equal partner to this triumvirate.

Goldberg has heard Keith Jarrett, both the composer of sunny melodies ("Canción") and the lyrical prober ("Homeland"). That's not all he's heard. On the ferociously percussive "Shed," Goldberg matches drummer Eric Harland in figures and force. Velocity is a big part of the Goldberg Trio esthetic; a race-you-to-the-finish "I Mean You" is just about as fast as you ever want to hear that tune. Again, treble runs and snare tattoos feed off of each other. Only after a strong rhythm intro do we realize the tune's a clever reworking of "Isn't She Lovely."

"A Time For Love" is the closer. Aside from some discreet bass and mallets, it's all Goldberg. He takes it slow and tender, with an enviable sensitivity in the touch. It's the kind of awe-inspiring performance reserved for cathedrals or closing sets. In either setting, it's a moving statement. —Kirk Silsbee

**Home:** Canción Pos La Unidad Latinoamericana; Shed; Homeland; I Mean You; The Rules; Luiza; Isn't She Lovely; The Sound of Snow; Aze's Blazes; A Time For Love. (58:40)

**Personnel:** Aaron Goldberg, piano; Reuben Rogers, bass; Eric Harland, drums; Mark Turner, tenor saxophone (1, 5, 9).

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

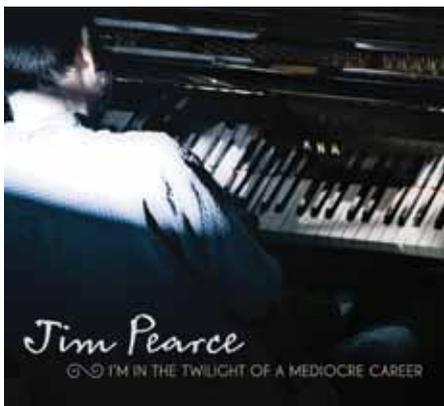
## Jim Pearce

### I'm In The Twilight Of A Mediocre Career

OAK AVENUE PUBLISHING 001

★★★★½

Like other quirkily original pianist/songwriters Bob Dorough, Dave Frishberg and Mose Allison, Jim Pearce has a character voice, in his case closest in timbre to Kermit the Frog. Pearce sounds particularly like Dorough on the fade of "I Hates To Leave Ya But I Gots To Went," the one song that's too clever for its clogs. The title track is predictably close to the knuckle charting a jazz career: "Fifty dollar gigs, Oh I've had my share/ Back in the day, I even had hair/ So write your request on the back of a tin/ I'll play that old song over and over again." Waltz time adds sing-song acquiescence to the realm of mediocrity, "Don't ride to gigs in a limo, man/ I drive myself in a broken-down van/ Playing for folks as they chew on food/ Soft, deep pan



music for setting the mood." After all, as Pearce shrugs, we all make choices: "My mother said, 'Be an engineer/ I didn't listen/ So I wound up here.'"

Pearce has done TV work, and you can imagine success on *Sesame Street* with his anthropoidal romance "Sasquatch Is Falling In Love." Aside from novelty songs, half the tracks are instrumental originals, from the moderately boppish "Noodlearity" (memorable arco cameo from Herman Burney, full of personality); the reflective whim-

sy "Here I Am Dreaming Rainbows"; a cuica-fueled dabble with South America, "Almost To Brazil"; more 3/4 sailing on "Just Another Spring Song" (with saxman Eric South on flute); plus solo stride on the closer, "Happy Keys." Pearce is a deft, uncomplicated soloist (he digs a little deeper on "Refried And Bona Fide") and the band are attentively attuned to easy-listening mode.

Given the CD title, three stars would be entirely apropos, however we'll add a half star for Pearce's lack of pretension and estimable refusal to work "for food, exposure or beer."

—Michael Jackson

**I'm In The Twilight Of A Mediocre Career:** Let's Run Away; I'm In The Twilight Of A Mediocre Career; Noodlearity; Hear I Am Dreaming Rainbows; It Just Isn't Fair; Almost To Brazil; I Hates To Leave You But I Gots To Went; Just Another Spring Song; Refried And Bona Fide; Sasquatch Is Falling In Love; Happy Keys. (54:21)

**Personnel:** Jim Pearce, piano, vocals (1, 2, 5, 7, 10); Herman Burney, bass; Paul Fallat, drums; Eric South, saxophone, flute; Joe Grandsen, trumpet; Ken Gregory, guitar, (3, 10), background vocals (7); Robert Dickson, bass (5); Rafael Pereira, percussion (6).

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

**Orrin Evans**  
*Faith In Action*

POSI-TONE 8058  
★★★★

“Don’t Call Me Wally,” the three-minute marvel that opens the latest album by the consistently beguiling, elusive pianist Orrin Evans, is a veritable symphony of motion, a wonderfully jagged chunk of Thelonious Monk-like puckishness and rhythmic restlessness. It also happens to swing like mad. Evans, bassist Luques Curtis, and, especially, drummer Nasheet Waits ferry the piece through endless shifts, as each player alters melodic patterns and grooves every couple of bars, forcing their quick-thinking partners to quickly adapt. While the music belongs to New York’s mainstream vanguard, there’s something about it that makes me think of the prankishness of Amsterdam’s Misha Mengelberg and Han Bennink. This opening piece, an Evans original, might be the most perfect and satisfying piece of music I’ve heard this year.



Luckily, the rest of the album is almost as good and just as rigorous. This beautifully recorded session captures his muscular, angular side as well as his tender character better than anything he’s ever done. That he’s able to accomplish this while paying homage to one of his former mentors—saxophonist Bobby Watson, who penned half of the tracks here—indicates the pianist’s ability to get inside any piece of music and remake it his own.

—Peter Margasak

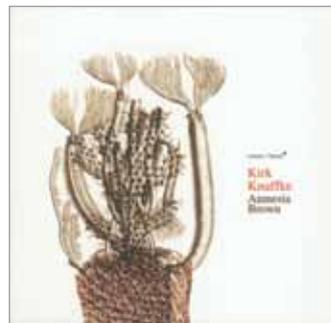
**Faith In Action:** Don’t Call Me Wally; Faith In Action; Wheel Within A Wheel; Appointment In Milano; Matthews Song; Beatitudes; MAT-Matt; Love Remains; Two Steppin With Dawn; Why Not. (55:36)  
**Personnel:** Orrin Evans, piano; Luques Curtis, bass; Nasheet Waits, drums; Rocky Bryant, drums (3); Gene Jackson, drums (5, 9).  
**Ordering info:** [posi-tone.com](http://posi-tone.com)

**Kirk Knuffke**  
*Amnesia Brown*

CLEAN FEED 167  
★★★★

Over the last couple of years, New York trumpeter Kirk Knuffke has quietly emerged as one of the most exciting and flexible hommen on the scene. On *Amnesia Brown* he pushes his music in yet another compelling direction. Joined by two of his cohorts in the Nublu Orchestra, Doug Wieselmann and Kenny Wollesen, Knuffke shapes 16 pithy originals with an insistent accent on variety and concision.

When Wieselmann plays clarinet there’s a bracing polyphony to the proceedings, from the astringent harmonies and multi-linear improvising on the title track to the Ornette Coleman-ish interactions on “Practical Sampling.” But when he picks up the electric guitar he dramatically alters the complexion of the music, giving it greater muscle, intensity and motion; he’s not a virtuoso on the instrument, shaping textured arpeggios, sharply barbed runs and tangled chords, but they give Knuffke plenty



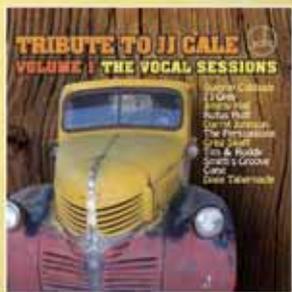
to chew upon. Despite the shifting landscapes, Knuffke maintains impressive restraint, shaping richly melodic solos that usually hover within his instrument’s midrange, both tonally and emotionally. Yet while he plays it cool, that doesn’t mean his performances are conservative; his lines are marked by tricky rhythmic schemes, unexpected loop-de-loops and curlicues, and sudden blurts. Wollesen does an excellent job pushing it all along. —Peter Margasak

**Amnesia Brown:** How It Goes; Double; Level; Amnesia Brown; 2nd; Red Bag; Leadbelly; Practical Sampling; Hears It; Totem; Need; Fix It; Charlie; High-Pants Bob; Narrative; Please Help, Please Give; Anne. (53:11)  
**Personnel:** Kirk Knuffke, trumpet; Doug Wieselmann, clarinet, guitar; Kenny Wollesen, drums.  
**Ordering info:** [cleanfeed-records.com](http://cleanfeed-records.com)

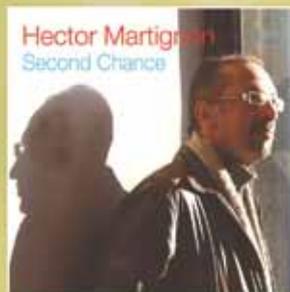


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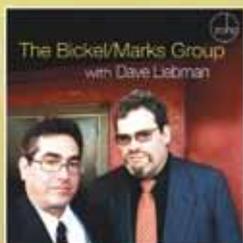
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**TRIBUTE TO JJ CALE**  
**Vol. 1: The Vocal Sessions** [ZMR 201007]  
This Tribute recording recasts Oklahoma-born songwriter JJ Cale’s songs across a range of Roots music styles – from the contemporary electric blues of Jimmy Hall and Swamp Cabbage to the arena-sized classic blues rock of Rufus Huff to the gospel-tinged a capella soul of The Persuasions.



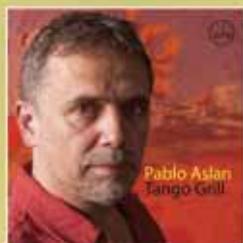
**HECTOR MARTIGNON**  
**Second Chance** [ZMR 201004]  
On *Second Chance*, his second ZOH0 release, Colombian-born, New York based pianist Hector Martignon presents his current, hot young Latin Jazz quintet, with special guest Edmar Castaneda on Colombian harp. Martignon’s first ZOH0 release *Refugee* was nominated for a GRAMMY in 2008!



**THE BICKEL / MARKS GROUP**  
**with Dave Liebman**  
Featuring Dave Liebman, soprano & tenor sax. “This crew knows how to hit it out the park, making this one seriously auspicious debut. If you like straight ahead jazz that’s right on the money throughout, you’ll have a hard time keeping your ears away from this. Well done.” — *Midwest Record*



**JON GOLD**  
**Brazil Confidential**  
Featuring Anat Cohen and Harvie S. “A breezy, delightful set of Brazil flavored jazz/funk lite that just feels like closing up the home office Friday afternoon and putting the smart phone on vibrate ... Clearly an adult instrumental winner that’ll keep you coming back for more.” — *Midwest Record*



**PABLO ASLAN**  
**Tango Grill**  
“Bassist Aslan melded strains of tango and post-bop jazz into a new genre. Bandonion player Nestor Marconi, trumpeter Gustavo Bergalli, percussionist Daniel Piazzolla (Astor Piazzolla’s grandson) are present on *Tango Grill*, a luscious new album for ZOH0 that’s one of the year’s most beguiling.” — *Hot House*



**NILSON MATTA'S BRAZILIAN VOYAGE**  
**Copacabana**  
Matta’s Brazilian Voyage: *Copacabana* is a voyage across the beautiful landscape that is Brazilian jazz ... an invitation to hear Brazil, the beauty of its landscape and the heart and soul of its people ... embrace this music, this country and this CD. — *Jazzreview.com*

## Pharez Whitted *Transient Journey*

OWL 114  
★★★★½

Pharez Whitted, director of jazz at Chicago State University, has been stalwart in Chicago since relocating from Indianapolis, playing in saxophonist Ari Brown's knock-out sextet, for example. This is a comeback for Whitted the leader, since on mid-'90s releases on MoJazz he felt compromised by commercial motives.

The tuff 'n' tender trumpeter strides between complexity and communication; tight breaks and rhythmic kicks in this ensemble are primed, Jazz Messengers-style, to get across. Guitarist Bobby Broom, who co-produced and sounds particularly warm in the punchy mix, joins the top-shelf Windy City rhythm team of Dennis Carroll and Ron Perrillo and Indianapolisites Greg Artry and Eddie Bayard. Bayard is a gritty, Joe Henderson-like tenorist; Artry a choppy, energetic drummer. It's surprising to hear



pianist Perrillo plugged in on the opener; he roadmaps in close sync with bassist Carroll, but gets in a contoured solo. Noticeably, Whitted offers Bayard first taste and he duly obeys all punctuations.

Whitted comes from a family full of musicians, and "Brother Thomas" and "Plicky" go out to siblings. The former tune has a swaggering bluesy lilt appended with a chromatic phrase that spills into a gorgeously articulated Broom solo; the latter has an asymmetrically hinged bass riff that propels a connected foray from the leader (who

credits family friend David Baker for schooling him in musical grammar). Bayard's tone is slightly hoarse, but he is tenacious and insists on completing a nice descending phrase, then injects a bit of Ben Webster behind Whitted on the balmy ballad "Sunset On The Gaza."

Some themes don't win me over as much as they should. "Monkish" is perhaps not refracted

enough, but gives the soloists a workout. "Until Tomorrow Comes" is a gentle flugelhorn glide preceding tributes to the current POTUS, "Yes We Can," and the funky, exuberant "Our Man Barack," which sets Obama up like a superhero, and after all, he is, isn't he?

—Michael Jackson

**Transient Journey:** The Truth Seeker; Transient Journey; Brother Thomas; Monkish; Plicky; Sunset On The Gaza; OS Who; Until Tomorrow Comes; Our Man Barack; Soul Mates; Yes We Can. (68:86)

**Personnel:** Pharez Whitted, trumpet, flugelhorn; Eddie Bayard, tenor and soprano saxophone; Bobby Broom, guitar; Ron Perrillo, piano, keyboards; Dennis Carroll, bass; Greg Artry, drums.

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



## Roberto Fonseca *Akokan*

JUSTIN TIME 8555  
★★★★★

On his second release for Enja/Justin Time, pianist Roberto Fonseca, out of Havana, offers a cohesive suite of compositions, primarily his own, informed by a host of the flavors that make up Cuba's 21st century musical palette.

Linked to the Cuban music timeline both by professional association with Buena Vista Social Clubbers Ibrahim Ferrer, Omara Portuondo and Cachaito López, and by extended family ties (his mother's first husband was piano icon Chucho Valdés), Fonseca, 34, projects both the deep lyricism he imbibed from his tenure with the elders, and also the uber-chops—he has a force-of-nature left hand—that we associate with such Cuban virtuosos as Valdés and Gonzalo Rubalcaba. More formalist than form-stretcher, more conceptualist than risk-taker, Fonseca's pop sensibility comes through in the way he subsumes technique to narrative imperatives, grounding his improvisations in the elegant structures of his tunes, which flow logically one into the other in terms of pace and mood and proportion.

Speaking of pop, vocalists Mayra Andrade and Raul augment the proceedings—the former veritably inhabits "Seite Potencias," while Midón's "Cuando Una Madre Llama A Su Hijo," the album-closer, seems tacked on and extraneous.

—Ted Panken

## Moreland & Arbuckle *Flood*

TELARC 31909  
★★★★½

Few blues-oriented musicians in their twenties and thirties get the chance to record for an established independent label. The best of the bunch may be a trio from the blues-barren prairies of Kansas. Collaborators since 2001, guitarist Aaron Moreland and singer-harmonica player Dustin Arbuckle are joined by drummer Brad Horner and others on an album that will get them the wider attention they've deserved since self-releasing their enjoyable *1861* album two years ago.

Chicago blues credentials are validated with energized injections of tonic freshness into Little Walter's "Hate To See You Go" and the traditional song "Legend Of John Henry" (the latter recorded at a gig in a Wichita barroom). Arbuckle's Chicago-style harp has attack-dog



viciousness while, in contrast, his temperate singing has character and expressive qualities. Also on the South Side, they retain something of the feeling of the masters on their song "Don't Wake Me" when Arbuckle lays bare the extent of his sleep-deprived agitation over "lovin' my baby right" and Moreland fires up his Elmore James-style slide guitar. Not enough guitar, really—a decent piano solo by Moreland's uncle doesn't fit.

With the pained sincerity of an uprooted Gulf Coast musician, Arbuckle addresses the emotional toll of a recent destructive flood in southeast Kansas on a blues titled "18 Counties." Other M&A originals get passing grades, as well. "Can't Get Clear" and "In The Morning I'll Be Gone" drone about libido as convincingly as anything out of Mississippi Hill country these days, while the country blues "Red Moon Rising" has sharp imagery in its lyrics, poignant singing and crisp harmonica and acoustic guitar commentaries. No blues entropy, no roots rot. Plenty of life fills Moreland & Arbuckle's music.

—Frank-John Hadley

**Flood:** Hate To See You Go; Legend Of John Henry; Before The Flood; 18 Counties; Your Man Won't Even Know; Don't Wake Me; Bound And Determined; Can't Get Clear; Can't Get Clear; Can't Leave Well Enough Alone; In The Morning I'll Be Gone; What You Gonna Do; Red Moon Rising; Can't Get Clear-Banjo Version. (48:26)

**Personnel:** Aaron Moreland, electric, parlor, resonator and cigar box guitars, banjo; Dustin Arbuckle, vocals, harmonica; Brad Horner, drums, backing vocals; Tom Page, guitar (9); Michael Moreland, keyboards; Trevor Stewart, Chapman Stick, (3); Dave Spindle, bass.

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

**Akokan:** Fragmento De Misa; Lo Que Me Hace Vivir; Drume Negrita; Seite Potencias (Bu Karter); Bulgarian; Cuando Uno Crece; Lento Y Despacito; Como En Las Peliculas; Pequenos Viajes; La Flor Que No Cuida; El Ritmo De Tus Hombrros; Everyone Deserves A Second Chance. (55:51)

**Personnel:** Roberto Fonseca: piano, voice; Javier Zalba: flute (10), clarinet (3, 5), baritone saxophone (11); Omar Gonzalez: bass (1-8, 10-12); Ramés Rodríguez: drums (1-8, 10-12); Joel Hierrezuelo: percussion (1, 5, 7, 11, 12); Mayra Andrade: vocal (4); Raul Midón, guitar, vocal (13).

**Ordering info:** [justin-time.com](http://justin-time.com)

## Total Soloism

Solo performance is a paradox. It requires cojones, heightened self confidence and physical conditioning yet is as much about vulnerability and ritual self-sacrifice. Though a blatant form of outward artistic expression, it is peculiarly demanding of the intellect, a Cartesian musing, with the horn functioning as a brain tap.

Veteran clarinetist Mort Weiss is convinced in the liner notes to *Raising The Bar* (SMS Jazz; 65:20 ★★★★★) that “no one has ever done a solo jazz album on any horn.” As a traditional player whose choices for improvisational framework include “Tea For Two” and “As Time Goes By,” Weiss may have hardboiled ideas about what constitutes “jazz,” but he lays it down that “this album represents the best performance I can give emotionally, technically, mentally and physically.” Weiss’ 17 faithful-enough, but tour-de-force, extrapolations from such vintage themes (plus a couple originals) are indeed a remarkable achievement: Great tone and great mercurial technique completely belie his 75 years and decades of inactivity as a musician. So impassioned is Weiss that he tells us what the deal is in a gruffly, sincere voiceover on “My Way.”

Ordering info: [info@smsjazz.com](mailto:info@smsjazz.com)

David S. Ware, conjuring Ornette Coleman sped up, on saxello and stritch, caps his live show at New York’s Abrons Art Center for *Saturnian (Solo Saxophones, Volume 1)* (AUM Fidelity 060; 38:05 ★★★★★) similarly, with thanks to those who supported him during his recent health crisis. The stakes are high for Ware, too, but he seems more preternaturally in tune with the metaphysical reverberations of solo inquiry: “The freedom allows you to witness and solidify what is passing through. There’s a voice inside each saxophone, expressing different orders of Being.” Ware, more admirer of the cosmos than solipist (his peregrinations are named after Saturn’s moons), is worth quoting further: “When you listen, learn to open your third ear. Listen for the voice inside the music. It will expand who you think you are.” That last advice is as apropos to listener as performer. It is uniquely demanding to follow the unbroken thread of an individual profoundly ensconced in blinkered personal pursuit.

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

Another veteran performer, tenor saxist Ernie Krivda, cannot evacuate the bluesy yearning in his sound, no matter how harmonically and conceptually rigorous are his dozen quite superb improvisations from 2007, *November Man* (CIMP 373; 67:60 ★★★★★½). Though Krivda was glad to free himself from an Art Tatum-type approach to

Sam Newsome: stunning investigations



the saxophone, the indefatigable virtuosity of his explorations—recalling Warne Marsh in their discipline and relentless sense of forward motion—is an intense, rewarding experience.

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

After dabbling with resonances from John Coltrane and Miles Davis and enveloping his processed saxophone sound in cavernous reverb, Brooklyn-based Johnny Butler turns a polyphony of overdubbed horns (triggered by laptop) into Fritz Lang’s Metropolis machine on “Glitch” from *Solo* (Self-release; 23:02 ★★½). Although such loop-chasing was trailblazed by UK bari saxist John Surman 20-some years ago (pre-laptops), it’s still permissible.

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

Sam Newsome has focused exclusively on the soprano saxophone and last year documented solo moments in Avatar studios. His *Blue Soliloquy* (Self-released; 52:00 ★★★★★) is another admirable addition to the solo canon, surgically investigating the propensities of the instrument for quarter-tone colorations, mimicking Hindustani and Japanese flutes, Tuvan throat singing, Doppler effects (swaying the horn) and, with pitched-slap tonguing, the African thumb piano. In helpful accompanying notes, Newsome talks of his debt to Steve Lacy’s minimalist composition and impressionists Debussy and Ravel. Despite a calculating approach, Newsome avoids losing his soul in the machine, and there is a particularly stunning high-register addendum to the circular breathing of the Lacy-esque “Blue Beijing.” Newsome wins out on the star rating, not for nonpareil chops or even unprecedented innovation, but for his succinct survey of the world outside, as well as the world within. **DB**

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



### DAVID WEISS & POINT OF DEPARTURE / SNUCK IN

SSC 1256 / In Stores June 22

DAVID WEISS Trumpet  
J.D. ALLEN Tenor Sax  
NIR FELDER Guitar  
MATT CLOHESY Bass  
JAMIRE WILLIAMS Drums

The Point of Departure Quintet is re-examining some of the most innovative music of the late 1960’s, some of it neglected, some, perhaps, never quite as developed as it could have been as things seemed to move at a pace during that period that left some music from being fully realized as musicians quickly moved on to the next new thing. Among the composers being re-examined and re-imagined are Andrew Hill, Tony Williams, and Herbie Hancock.

## TAYLOR HASKINS



### TAYLOR HASKINS AMERICAN DREAM

SSC 1262 / In Stores June 8

TAYLOR HASKINS trumpet  
BEN MONDER guitar  
BEN STREET guitar  
JEFF HIRSHFIELD drums

American Dream portrays the mindset of many of this generation’s young Americans. On this recording, trumpeter/composer Taylor Haskins broaches topics contrasting the idealistic and realistic United States through his descriptive compositions, and arrangements of modern American classics by Neil Young, The Foo Fighters, and Tom Waits.



[www.sunnysiderecords.com](http://www.sunnysiderecords.com)

DAVID WEISS & POINT OF DEPARTURE

**The Norrbotten  
Big Band**  
*The Avatar Sessions*

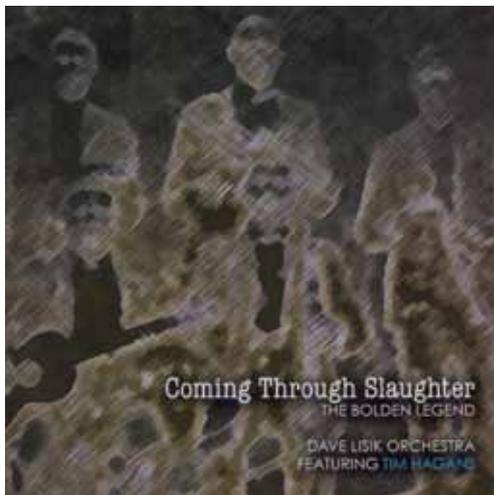
FUZZY MUSIC 017  
★★★★½

**Dave Lisik  
Orchestra**  
*Coming Through  
Slaughter: The  
Bolden Legend*

GALLOPING COW 111  
★★★★½

Trumpeter Tim Hagans seems especially at home in the environs of the big band, whether serving as the artistic director of Sweden's Norrbotten Big Band as he has for the past 14 years, or lending his coloristic sweep to leaders as diverse as Stan Kenton, Maria Schneider, or Thad Jones.

Hagans is at the helm on *The Avatar Sessions*, leading the Norrbotten Big Band through seven original compositions that demonstrate his impressive compositional range. The album was named for the 53rd Street studio where the album was recorded and not for James Cameron's recent ultra-blockbuster, but while there are no 10-foot-tall blue creatures sitting in with the band there is nonetheless an impression of alien cultures finding har-



mony, with a European eclecticism brought to bear on an urban Manhattan sensibility.

That concept is at the forefront on the album's hyper-bop opener, "Buckeyes," which Hagans posits as an imagined conversation between Ornette Coleman and Joe Lovano at the Blue Note but which evokes Dizzy-in-translation just as easily as the witty "Palt Seanuts." Both tunes benefit from the combustible swing of drummer Peter Erskine, Hagans' former colleague in the Kenton Orchestra.

The CD is well-stocked with such marquee-value guests, including saxophonists George Garzone and

Dave Liebman, whose soprano floats plaintively through the spare ballad "Here With Me"; Randy Brecker, who is completely at home in the slinky funk-fusion number "Boo"; and Rufus Reid, whose plank-thick bass sound is given a brassy concerto setting on "Rufus At Gilly's."

Hagans steps back to featured soloist for the Dave Lisik Orchestra's *Coming Through Slaughter*, a 10-move-

ment suite inspired by Michael Ondaatje's novel depicting legendary New Orleans cornet player Buddy Bolden. With no extant recordings to draw from, composer/trumpeter Lisik would have been unable to base his music on Bolden's, and in fact opts not to suggest the period or setting, instead progressing in a decidedly modern, even tense fashion through the drama of Bolden's tragic life story.

In concentrating so heavily on narrative, Lisik often seems to be striving for a cumulative effect rather than a set of music that stands wholly on its own, akin to a film soundtrack that can be an emo-

tional experience on its own but is still incomplete sans images. There is thus an almost monotonously agitated focus on the dark side of its subject's history, somewhat compensated for by the strong soloists Lisik enlists—Hagans, of course, whose playing occasionally takes a sidelong glance at Bolden's New Orleans milieu; Matt Wilson, whose painterly drumming helps immeasurably in setting each scene; and especially Donny McCaslin, whose brawny tenor is particularly well-suited to the harsh curves of the composer's densest passages.

—Shaun Brady

**The Avatar Sessions:** The Music Of Tim Hagans; Buckeyes; Boo; Box Of Connoli; Here With Me; Palt Seanuts; Rufus At Gilly's; Song For Mirka. (63:47)

**Personnel:** Norrbotten Big Band with guest musicians Tim Hagans, trumpet; Peter Erskine, drums; Dave Liebman, soprano saxophone; George Garzone, tenor saxophone; Randy Brecker, trumpet; Rufus Reid, bass.

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

**Coming Through Slaughter:** Coming Through Slaughter; Cricket Noises And Cricket Music; The Drawings Of Audubon; Whistling In The Way Of Bolden; Auditorium Of Enemies; The Horror Of Noise; Suicide Of The Hands; In Exile; The Parade—Part 1; The Parade—Part 2; Epilogue; Bleach Out To Grey. (68:26)

**Personnel:** Tim Hagans, trumpet, flugelhorn; Donny McCaslin, tenor and soprano saxophones; Luis Bonilla, trombone; Joey Tartell, Marlin McKay, Ryan Irboden, Dave Lisik, trumpet, flugelhorn; Jack Cooper, Gary Topper, alto saxophone, flute, clarinet; Art Edmaiston, Dustin Laurenzi, Mike Krepper, tenor saxophone, clarinet; Tom Link, baritone saxophone, bass clarinet, tenor saxophone; Anthony Williams, Tony Garcia, John Grodrian, trombone; David Dick, bass trombone; Chris Vivilo, tuba; Jeff Nelson, Dan Phillips, horn; Corey Christiansen, guitar; Amy Rempel, piano; Jeremy Allen, bass; Joe Galvin, cajon, hand percussion; Matt Wilson, drums.

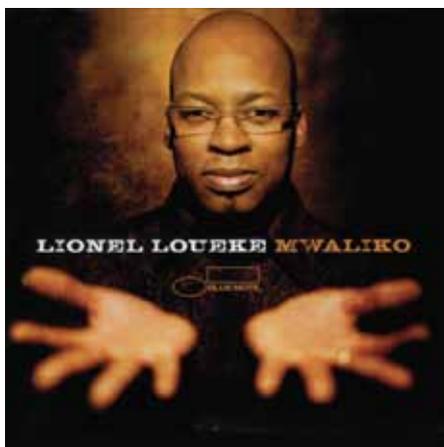
Ordering info: [gallopingcowmusic.com](http://gallopingcowmusic.com)

**Lionel Loueke**  
*Mwaliko*

BLUE NOTE 5099966  
★★★★

When Lionel Loueke's first album, *Karibu*, was favorably reviewed in these pages in 2008, the descriptive term "Afro-jazz" was tagged to the music played by the Beninese guitarist and his rhythm section (and his guests Herbie Hancock and Wayne Shorter). His second release, *Mwaliko*, offers even more hybridized options, such as Afropop-jazz, African pop-jazz-folk, Afro-Brazilian jazz.

Enough already. What matters is that this favorite of DownBeat Critics Poll voters is an outstanding musician versed in authentic jazz, samba and the indigenous music of his homeland. He's also that special someone whose music can be charming and light enough to find favor with a far-ranging audience.



Here, in duos and trios, he collaborates with two West African compatriots, an up-and-coming drummer and a voice-and-bass wonderworker whose future in jazz and pop is as bright as the guitarist's.

Loueke and international singing star Angelique Kidjo connect very well. His complicated melodic-rhythmic virtuosity and her colorful, high-flying vocalese hallmark

the Cameroonian pop song "Ami O" and the traditional number "Vi Ma Yon." The former uplifts the spirit, lacking only Hugh Masekela's wonderful horn. On "Vi Ma Yon," they bring cleverly expressed exhilaration to a song about the importance of children to family life. Just two tunes, for a total of seven minutes, is a mere appetizer.

Collaborating on another two, Esperanza Spalding unveils some of the workings of her creative imagination. She sings and plays a different bass line at the same time as Loueke seconds her with vocal and guitar wizardry of his own. They fascinatingly mix discipline and spontaneity for nine quick minutes—we're shortchanged again.

Originally from Cameroon, singer-bassist Richard Bona adds his trademark geniality to "Wishes," which Loueke composed for him, and to the closer "Hide Life," an-

other original. Both well-played duets are models of pleasantness. This time, nine minutes is quite enough, thanks.

Then there's drummer Marcus Gilmore, who joins Loueke for a suspenseful peek-a-boo, stop-and-go version of Shorter's "Nefertiti." Roy Haynes' grandson should have stuck around the studio and contributed more.

Loueke's Berklee-born trio, with Italian bass player Massimo Biolcati and Hungarian drummer Ferenc Nemeth, generates jazz grooves in Loueke's "Griot," Nemeth's "L. L." and Biolcati's "Shazoo." Impressive technique everywhere, with "Griots" further benefiting from Loueke's delightful singing. In all, a good, but frustrating, album.

—Frank-John Hadley

**Mwaliko:** Ami O; Griot; Twins; Wishes; Flying; Intro To L. L.; L. L.; Nefertiti; Vi Ma Yon; Shazoo; Dangbe; Hide Life. (49:22)

**Personnel:** Lionel Loueke, guitar; Angelique Kidjo, vocal (1, 9); Esperanza Spalding, bass, vocal (3, 5); Richard Bona, bass, vocal (4, 12); Massimo Biolcati, bass (2, 7, 10); Ferenc Nemeth (2, 7, 10); Marcus Gilmore (8), drums.

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

**Jeff Lashway**  
*Reunion*

RANDOM ACT RECORDS 1001

★★★

The title *Reunion* probably stems from a fact noted in the album's publicity materials, that pianist Lashway has worked previously with Vinnie Colaiuta. Certainly his path has also crossed with some or most of the other participants. However, the Colaiuta connection is the only one mentioned in the literature—and he is only identified as having played on one track, the brisk and bracing opener. John Jenkins is listed in the credits as playing drums as well, presumably or inferentially on all the other tracks.

That opening tune, by the way, is "Get To The Gate," on which Colaiuta plays an unaccompanied intro and later solos; this arrangement, plus the drummer's precision and drive, confirm the showpiece intention of this chart. The fluency of everyone's playing reflects the swing band discipline shared by



the group. (Lashway played in the last Maynard Ferguson ensemble.) One cannot emerge from that kind of background without strong reading, an ability to sound as if you've already done a thousand dates with the others on the session, an ability to improvise adventurously without any sense of effort—in other words, it's primarily about the collective more than the individual.

And so it is throughout *Reunion*. The leader works generally from a sophisticated, slightly funk-inflected foundation. He phrases

confidently, though there are moments—about 1:50 into "Get To The Gate," for example—where faster tempos seem to push him to the edge of losing the groove. His playing follows logical, well-informed though not especially distinctive lines; on "Doxy," he builds his patterns behind Frank Basile's bari solo into a harmonic and rhythmic motif for his own solos. But his forte lies more

with arrangement, as in the breaks, interesting rhythm conceptions and ornamentations in his accompaniment to Jim Rotondi on "The Touch Of Your Lips." This backup from the piano allows the trumpeter to bring out the tune through gorgeous tone and nuanced articulation. The same applies to Lashway's work on "The Quintessence"; though less preconceived than those on "The Touch Of Your Lips," his chords follow and support Jeff Rupert's tenor solo, with Richard Drexler holding back

enough on bass so that every note he does play is effective as well as honey-rich to the ear.

The high point is likely "For Nola," a meditation on Hurricane Katrina. Though noble, this idea is hardly new, but Lashway does present three distinctive perspectives in a rendition of "Louisiana 1927," with stark gospel-like changes behind Jimmy Hall's reading of the somewhat politically corrected Randy Newman lyric, followed by an eloquently disturbing solo piano statement of "Do You Know What It Means To Miss New Orleans?" From its shadows a parade-ground drum rises, bringing with it a brass-band romp through "Bourbon Street Parade." The segues aren't subtle, but the feelings stirred by this triptych are still intense.

—Robert L. Doerschuk

**Reunion:** Get To The Gate; Doxy; Down Here On The Ground; The Touch Of Your Lips; The Quintessence; Sweetbop; For Nola (Louisiana 1927, Do You Know What It Means To Miss New Orleans, Bourbon Street Parade); One By One; Gingerbread Boy; Ategin. (67:20)

**Personnel:** Jeff Lashway, piano; Jim Rotondi, trumpet; John Allred, trombone; Frank Basile, baritone saxophone; Jeff Rupert, tenor saxophone; Richard Drexler, bass; Todd Coolman, bass; John Jenkins, drums; Vinnie Colaiuta, drums; Jimmy Hall, vocals.

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

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2

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**John Abercrombie**  
*Wait Till You See Her*

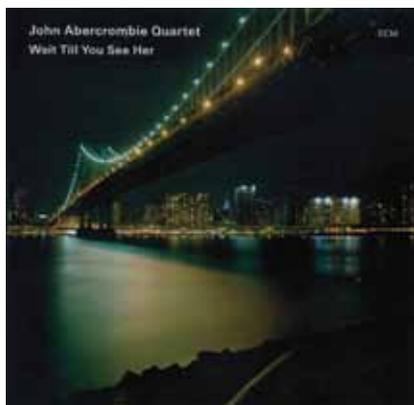
ECM 2102

★★★★

**Sylvia Courvoisier/  
Mark Feldman  
Quartet**  
*To Fly To Steal*

INTAKT 168

★★★★



A study in contrast, violinist Mark Feldman and bassist Thomas Morgan are central figures to the music on both of these discs. The contrast is more about the two albums than Feldman to Morgan, who, it seems, are like kindred spirits, able to float and dive and stay immersed in these two divergent forms of jazz and improvised music.

In the case of *To Fly To Steal*, it is pianist Sylvia Courvoisier and Feldman leading the charge (and charge they do) with Morgan and drummer Gerry Hemingway providing impeccable rhythmic and percussive support (each with game-changing solos). Of the seven tunes, Feldman and Courvoisier contribute four (two each) while the remaining three are credited to the ensemble. In each case, the music alternates between active engagement and a kind of roughhouse counterpoint, as with Courvoisier's slyly elegant and flamboyant "Messiaenesque"

and Feldman's sometimes riotous "The Good Life," and the more delicate interchanges that occur with songs like "Whispering Glades" and "Coastlines" leading into the title track. Feldman's evocative string work, both seemingly random and almost classical, works well against Courvoisier's knack for jackhammer juxtapositions and her likewise penchant for a lighter touch. In the case of both Feldman and Morgan, *To Fly To Steal* presents a picture of the veteran and the young upstart, both comfortable with nuance and cadences that prefer to hang out on the edges. Four all members, it becomes, in liner notician John Corbett's words, "a fecund space," where they can all "take chances and know the others will be there with them."

*Wait Till You See Her* continues an Abercrombian tradition of mostly gentle but also restless releases that bathe the ear but leave one to ponder how much bubbling is going on beneath the sur-

**Arturo Stable Quintet**  
*Call*

ORIGEN RECORDS

★★★★½

The days have long passed when mention of Latin percussion triggered an assumption, at least in certain latitudes, that the music it flavored would be sassy, brassy and hot. Among younger percussionists, Arturo Stable is especially equipped to dispel what's left of these preconceptions, and he does so throughout *Call* with exceptional taste.

Rather than drive the groove like a whip snapped against the beat, Stable plays within the heart of the music, adding character at every tempo. This point is made clear in the title track, which kicks off the album: Though the dense, two-handed chords of pianist Aruan Ortiz and Javier Vercher's emotionally concentrated treatment of the melody on tenor sax evoke the spirits of McCoy Tyner and John Coltrane, a more delicate spirit rises in the brief passage that precedes



their entrance. Here, Stable and violinist Ian Izquierdo introduce that same theme in an open setting, just the minor motif played with heartbreaking expression and buoyed on a trickle of rhythm.

That Coltrane influence permeates much of what Vercher plays, sometimes to the point of impairing more than empowering our perception of originality in his sound. These echoes play mainly around the edges of his phrasing, in the way he turns occasional notes or pinches the tone when he pushes into his upper register. Stable's writing, though, pairs well with Vercher's playing, in its dynamic balance of room to blow free and tightly written accompaniment. On "Goodbye To Eternity," for example, a two-bar, heavily voiced piano figure repeats with minor variation behind the Vercher's extemporizations, which bookend a middle section during which Stable uses the repetitiveness of this riff to stretch considerably through his own solo.

face. For Feldman and Morgan, it is an opportunity to enjoy their at-homeness with Abercrombie's more soothing approaches. For Feldman, a longtime colleague of the guitarist, it may be one of his better outings. While "Sad Song" opens with calm, "Line-Up" presents a more restless band, which also includes drummer Joey Baron, who can play it snappy and tart as he does on "Line-Up" or almost absent as with "Sad

Song." Feldman and Morgan guide this music in different ways. For Morgan, it's the right impulse at the right time, rhythmically, slow and steady or unconventionally supportive. Feldman's lyrical mastery of the violin shows through on the title track, and his kinship with Abercrombie can make them sound like two wings of the same bird.

Of the eight tunes here, seven are by Abercrombie. So, if you want a current good look into this veteran master of the (mostly) electric guitar, *Wait Till You See Her* is a great place to start.

—John Ephland

**Wait Till You See Her:** Sad Song; Line-Up; Wait Till You See Her; Trio; I've Overlooked Before; Anniversary Waltz; Out Of Town; Chic Of Arab; (57:11)

**Personnel:** John Abercrombie, guitar; Mark Feldman, violin; Thomas Morgan, bass; Joey Baron, drums.

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

**To Fly To Steal:** Messiaenesque; Whispering Glades; The Good Life; Five Senses Of Keen; Fire, Fist and Bestial Wail; Coastlines; To Fly To Steal. (62:08)

**Personnel:** Sylvia Courvoisier, piano; Mark Feldman, violin; Thomas Morgan, bass; Gerry Hemingway, drums.

**Ordering info:** [intaktrec.ch](http://intaktrec.ch)

Even on this medium-up tempo, though, the percussion comes across as thoughtful, if not tempered by a primarily intellectual temperament. On the ballad "Old Memories," Stable plays very sparsely, with little resonance; that trickle of rhythm dissolves here into a mist in which each conga tap is an isolated incident, with silence becoming the main ingredient in the texture of similarly pared-down piano and bass. The same applies ever more so on the free-tempo "Landscape Of Luz," during which Stable plays only to raise and lower the intensity or sits out altogether.

Only on the final selection, "Anthem," does Stable position himself in the spotlight. But here, too, his gently propulsive performance is all about creating a full ensemble impression and supporting the long, intriguingly harmonized melody. Clearly a facile and imaginative rhythm-a-tist, Stable also demonstrates impressive compositional chops and above all a superbly rounded musicianship throughout *Call*. It's a title—and an album—that invites positive response.

—Robert L. Doerschuk

**Call:** Call; Goodbye To Eternity; Zabana; Crack Attack; Old Memories; Danz Sol; Landscape Of Luz; Spider Web; African Sunrise; Anthem. (44:35)

**Personnel:** Arturo Stable, percussion; Aruan Ortiz, piano; Edward Perez, bass; Javier Vercher, horns, woodwinds; Ian Izquierdo, violin; Francisco Mela, drums.

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

## Pablo Aslan Tango Grill

ZOHO 201003  
★★★★

Pablo Aslan, an Argentine bassist living

in New York, has been on a mission to preserve and present classic tango, while infusing it with musicians and ideas from his adopted hometown's jazz scene. It's a tough trick to pull off: Jazz thrives on improvisation, tango avoids it.

On this disc, Aslan brought jazz and tango musicians to Argentina to perform his new arrangements of standards and lesser-known tunes, mainly from the '20s and '30s. The results are beautiful, as the rules imposed on the players make their improvisations more about nuance than blowing. Often times, the impact is made through the tension that Aslan builds with violinist Ramiro Gallo and bandoneon player Nestor Marconi on pieces like "La Ultima Cita." Yet Aslan also provides openings for trumpeter Gustavo Bergalli to say a great deal, like in his muted opening lines on "Sin Palabras."

—Aaron Cohen

**Tango Grill:** El Amanecer; Viejo Smoking; El Marne; La Payanca; Sin Palabras; Rencor; El Flete; Dandy; La Ultima Cita; Divina; La Trampera. (59:01)

**Personnel:** Pablo Aslan, bass; Nestor Marconi, bandoneon (1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 9, 11); Nicolas Ledesma, piano (1, 3-5, 7-10); Abel Rogantini, piano (2, 6, 11); Ramiro Gallo, violin (1, 3-5, 7-11); Gustavo Bergalli, trumpet (2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11); Daniel Piazzolla, drums (2, 3, 5, 6, 11).

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

## Graham Dechter Right On Time

CAPRI 74096  
★★★★

Graham Dechter's young career is off

to an auspicious start. A guitarist from Los Angeles who has already established himself as a member of the Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra, he makes a strong CD debut covering a range of familiar and lesser-known standards.

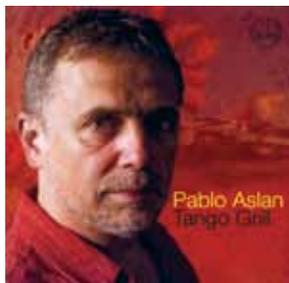
Joining Dechter in the straightahead quartet setting of *Right On Time* are big-bandmates Jeff Hamilton on drums, John Clayton on bass and Tamir Hendelman on piano. The music combines a powerful and confident sense of swing, thoughtful small-group arrangements, warm guitar tone and tasteful blowing. For his first recording as a leader, Dechter couldn't ask for a finer group of "sidemen" to work with; he has clearly earned their support.

—Ed Enright

**Right On Time:** Low Down; Wave; The Nearness Of You; I Ain't Got Nothin' But The Blues; Broadway; Right On Time (Db Tune); Squatty Roo; With Every Breath I Take; Lined With A Groove; In A Mellow Tone. (59:39)

**Personnel:** Graham Dechter, guitar; Tamir Hendelman, piano; John Clayton, bass; Jeff Hamilton, drums.

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



## Blues | BY FRANK-JOHN HADLEY



Otis Taylor: dark compassion

## Where All-Stars and Lowlifes Gather

**Otis Taylor: Clovis People, Vol. 3 (Telarc 31849; 49:52 ★★★★★)** Like a modern-day Blind Lemon Jefferson, Taylor sings with evocative power so formidable that one can feel the tense darkness animating the dozen songs of his latest release. Risk-taking listeners are made privy to his moral and aesthetic preoccupations, to the drift of his haunted imagination. Peer into a dark hole of grief over the playground murder of a child ("Little Willie"), identify with sad romantic goodbyes ("She's Ice In The Desert") and encounter the grave desperation of an adulterer ("Rain So Hard"). With honesty and tough compassion, Taylor cauterizes emotional wounds through trance-grooves set by bass, drums, Malian percussion, pedal steel guitar, organ, violin, cello, even jazz cornet and theremin. His overseas friend Gary Moore provides top-grade lead guitar solos, but guitarist Jon Paul Johnson just clutters up "Little Willie." Taylor's vibrant, difficult blues remains fascinating, yet never entirely fathomable.

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

**Terry Blerish: Terry Blerish (self-released; 39:05 ★★★★★)** Toronto-based singer-guitarist Blerish is like the ideal fifth starter on a pitching staff. He goes about his work with confidence and efficiency, not concerned about his lack of recognition south of Ontario. Not beholden to a particular blues style, this veteran writes good bluesy songs that even reference antecedents like '70s white-soul and toned-down, dreamy Jeff Beck and Jimi Hendrix. "I Don't Need No" is an outstanding merger of personal expression and lyricism with expert craftsmanship. His reliable sidekicks include organist Garth Hudson of the Band.

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

**Joe Price: Rain Or Shine (Blues Acres #2; 33:39 ★★★★★)** Somewhere between traditional and unconventional, this seasoned low-wan singer-guitarist sounds fully involved with controlling the tension in his plain-spoken "ruff

and tumble" blues. Neither showy nor too self-effacing, he applies his metal tube to strings in mostly solo performances, adding his talented guitar-playing wife, Vicki, on three songs.

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

**Coco Montoya: I Want It All Back (Ruf 1153; 53:46 ★★)** Produced by Keb' Mo' in hopes of a commercial breakout, guitar hero Montoya relies on the attractive qualities of his vocals to get across the pleasantness of tunes from populist tunesmiths like David Steen and Jackson Browne. Harmonica player Rod Piazza and his wife, Honey, on piano help rustle up a blues feeling for "Fannie Mae," a song staler than last month's bread.

Ordering info: [rufrecords.de](http://rufrecords.de)

**Nick Curran & The Lowlifes: Reform School Girl (Eclecto Groove 509; 39:20 ★★½)** Ex-Fabulous T-Birds guitarist Curran's main achievement here is approximating the mayhem of young Little Richard and other r&b hysterics of the Eisenhower and JFK years. The last revival as over the top as Curran's was in the early-'80s when Barence Whitfield, a more maniacal screamer and deeper versed in degenerate r&b history, crawled around on sticky barroom floors.

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

**Various Artists: Dr. Boogie Presents Rarities From The Bob Hite Vaults (Sub Rosa 271; 50:43 ★★★★★)** Canned Heat co-founder Hite had a priceless blues and r&b record collection, but sometime after his death in 1981 it was plundered like a pharaoh's tomb. His drummer, Fito De La Parra, managed to save some 78s from the wolves, and 19 songs surface here, all but one from the 1950s. The general tenor of these period pieces is excitement, involving the well-known (Elmore and Etta James, Otis Rush, several more), collector's favorites (Eddie Hope, Chuck Higgins), the forgotten (Mad Mel Sebastian, the Hot Shots) and a ringer (Bill Haley). **DB**

Ordering info: [subrosa.net](http://subrosa.net)

## Garaj Mahal *More Mr. Nice Guy*

OWL STUDIOS 00135  
★★★★

## Garaj Mahal & Fareed Haque *Discovery*

TUNECORE 2009  
★★★★½



The 10-year-old Garaj Mahal band is a fun outfit to follow, full of catchy melodies, funky rhythmic twists, an organic blend of East and West pop-jazz. Except for the *konnakol* (vocalized rhythms), a tune like “Witch Doctor” borrows more from the funk than anything mysterious, but the way the instruments are played suggest we are on a different continent, if not continents. “Witch Doctor”’s melody line does have an Eastern labyrinthine flavor but it’s answered by some snappy backbeat and earthy attitude.

Headed up by bassist Kai Eckhardt, guitarist Fareed Haque (who doubles and triples on sitar and banjo) and keyboardist Eric Levy, new member Sean “The Rick” Rickman plays the drums and adds the vocals that help give the music an overt Indian feel when they aren’t out and out soulful pop (“What My Friends Say”). *More Mr. Nice Guy* reflects that patient working out of East and West that’s been a problem for similar projects by other bands. Again, the music has an organic feel and keeps coming at you with surprising twists and turns, like when the electronica of “Faster Than The Speed Of Time” melts into the soulful strut-turn-upteat-fusion-zinger-

and-back-again of “Tachyonics,” Haque’s guitar a kind of Eric Gale-meets-George Benson, his quiet tone perfect for this catchy little number. And Levy’s mix of electric keyboards en route to a poignant acoustic piano solo adds more variety, Eckhardt’s fluent basswork combining with Rickman’s strong yet light touch to create a plethora of beats and rhythms.

What keeps *More Mr. Nice Guy* going is the variety, with thoughtful arrangements, sonic diversity and authentic instrumental deliveries, each song contrasting with the one that came before it. As with “Tachyonics,” “The Long Form” is just such a showcase, where everyone gets into the act, both tunes clocking in at eight and almost 11 minutes, respectively. Cliche-free (“Frankly Frankie Ford” at nine minutes features Haque’s “attempt at writing something American, country, anthemic and mysterious,” the funk laced with his banjo, no less), *More Mr. Nice Guy* is an intercontinental original.

*Discovery* (available on iTunes and at the Moog Music website) is Garaj Mahal with the Moog Guitar technology, the traditional dancing with the unconventional. Not that it’s all hyper-

electronic (Haque evokes George Benson’s light, jazzy touch on “Philly Electronic” and his soft-focused cover of Monk’s “Round Midnight” is more Tal Farlow or Barney Kessel than Frank Zappa), and Haque’s love of rock guitar (and all its edgier sounds) with a serious backbeat bursts out on “Never Give Up,” the material never slipping into musical mannerisms. Heard back to back, both albums are like variations on each other, *Discovery* full of as many surprises across its 12 (slightly less developed) tunes, the only thing absent being an obvious East/West bent. Everyone is here, but mostly it’s Haque and “Moog synth wiz” Levy, who gets into the act remixing and overdubbing Moog guitar parts. With a detailed analysis online ([moogmusic.com/moog-guitar](http://moogmusic.com/moog-guitar)) of what went into the project, *Discovery* is not in the least gimmicky. And while some of it kind of dovetails into simple experiments or dance/trance-type music (e.g., the disco-fied “Artorius”), the result, overall, is a natural expression of creative instrumental and studio gamesmanship.

—John Ephland

**More Mr. Nice Guy:** Witch Doctor; Faster Than The Speed Of Time; Tachyonics; The Long Form; Today; Frankly Frankie Ford; What My Friends Say; Chester The Pester; Alison’s Pony. (64:09)  
**Personnel:** Fareed Haque, guitars, sitar, banjo; Kai Eckhardt, bass; Eric Levy, keyboards; Sean Rickman, drums.  
**Ordering info:** [owlstudios.com](http://owlstudios.com)

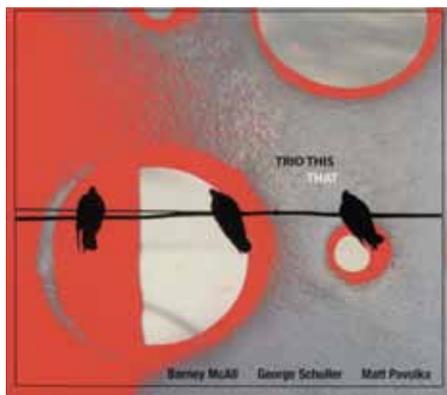
**Discovery:** DC Swing; Philly Electronic; Never Give Up; Sea To Sky; Make A Hippy Happy; It Goes Up Your Nose; Artorius; Moog Improv #; Largo From Concerto In D, RV 234; Of A Simple Mind; Bobolink; Round Midnight. (60:39)  
**Personnel:** Fareed Haque, Moog Guitar; Eric Levy, electric piano, Moog synthesizers; Kai Eckhardt, bass; Sean Rickman, drums.  
**Ordering info:** [moogmusic.com/mooguitar](http://moogmusic.com/mooguitar)

## Trio This *That*

GM RECORDINGS 3050  
★★★★

Composition and performance balance beautifully throughout this collection of originals and a few covers. Pianist Barney McAll does most of the writing, with a thoroughness that defines the parameters he allows himself and his colleagues for working within it. Put another way, there is plenty of extemporization within these structures, but in the pianist’s songs specifically it serves rather than takes off from the writing.

It follows that some of the freest soloing takes place on the covers. McAll opens Geoffrey Shaw’s “Langham” with an unaccompanied episode that outlines the changes with a combination of simplicity and solemnity bordering on severity. When the trio follows with a medium waltz groove, the



piano stays restrained, with hardly a note superfluous to McAll’s delineation of the tune. However, freed from having to make decisions about how minimally to spell out each chord, bassist Matt Pavolka is able to go a little further in his solo verse, which deepens the mood while stretching the melodic material.

Drummer George Schuller contributes two tracks to *That*, both of them a little less fully arranged than McAll’s, with rhythmic elements playing a prominent conceptual role. “Nice Exit” kicks off with a Morse Code-like pulse, played together by McAll and Pavolka; as Schuller enters in the background, we’re led again into waltz time, with the drums having absorbed the urgency of that opening motif enough to lay back and still swing. Similarly, while his “Lava Lamp” is nicely conceived, it comes with plenty of room for McAll

to voice the changes sparsely or fill them with bristling clusters, the bass gets ample space to solo too, and above all the drums define and sustain a languorous atmosphere throughout.

By comparison, the tracks written by McAll are delineated into complex series of sections; even on “Ten Days Of Silence,” which is as much emptiness as substance, the improvisation flows through written passages like water through fissures in stone. “Where It Stops, Nobody Knows” is the most succinct statement on the album, a nearly five-minute piece filled with interesting pianistic details and a sense of steady movement through ever-changing scenery. Then, just when one might expect the blowing to begin, it’s over and the listener is left not with any sense of missing anything but with satisfaction at having been slightly but delightfully surprised—nearly as surprised and delighted as when a hint of “Come Sunday” is whispered in McAll’s lovely tribute, “Duke.”

—Robert L. Doerschuk

**That:** Pug Nose; Where It Stops, Nobody Knows; Flashback; Langham; Lava Lamp; Duke; Nice Exit; Dreamsville; Get That Soul; Ten Days Of Silence. (62:12)  
**Personnel:** Barney McAll, piano, “chucky”; Matt Pavolka, bass; George Schuller, drums, bells.  
**Ordering info:** [gmrecordings.com](http://gmrecordings.com)

## Lost & Found Soul

**James Brown: *Live At The Garden—Expanded Edition* (Hip-O Select 0012928; 69:08/66:26 ★★★★★½)** Brown's 1967 concert album, taped at the Latin Casino nightclub in Cherry Hill, N. J., is as superb as his better-known *Live At The Apollo* from 1962. The original mono record appears with the addition of two intros, nine songs, a comedy routine and three takes of a taped-in-the-empty-Casino future hit single, "Let Yourself Go." Brown's one-in-an-octillion voice burns like an unstoppable rhythmic firestorm, possibly at its most thrilling on "It's A Man's Man's Man's World." Throughout two discs, the Pee Wee Ellis-directed band achieves levels of ecstasy with chicken-scratch guitars, fractured bass lines, horn riffs, cannonading funk drums (especially Clyde Stubblefield) and strings. Though nearly inaudible, Ron Carter plays on "Come Rain Or Come Shine."

Ordering info: [hip-oselect.com](http://hip-oselect.com)

**Lou Bond: *Lou Bond (Light In The Attic 049; 43:49; ★★★★★½)*** Supported by the hushed Memphis Symphony Orchestra, muted horns and restrained soul studio men, hard-luck singer-songwriter Bond articulates, in his limber, personal voice, the hopes he has for societal change and for holding onto love in the seven pop/folk/r&b songs of this obscure Stax release that flopped when issued in 1974. His generally unhurried, dreamy way shows a man of courage and of considerable sensitivity to beauty in music—never outdated, that.

Ordering info: [lightintheattic.net](http://lightintheattic.net)

**Various Artists: *Good To The Last Drop (Fantastic Voyage 019; 66:23 ★★★★★)*** In the 1960s and '70s, the Ember label in England licensed soul and r&b sides from Detroit's GM Records and other stateside companies—23 non-hit obscurities surface here, most worth hearing. Dee Edwards can really sing ("Hurt A Little Everyday" soars) and the Casinos, a blue-eyed soul vocal group, beat the house doing "That's The Way." Motown songwriter/producer Mickey Stevenson's singing on "Here I Am" makes one wonder why his solo career flopped, and the forgotten Brothers Grimm are a real find for the goofball garage-soul fun of "Looky Looky." Claptrap includes a Johnny Otis disco number.

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

**Various Artists: *Eccentric Soul: Smart's Palace* (Numero Group 027; 68:46 ★★★★★)**



James Brown: one in an octillion

DOWNBEAT ARCHIVES

From 1963 to 1975, Smart's Palace was the place in Wichita, Kan., to work up a cold sweat dancing the boogaloo, tighten-up or bump to sizzling bands in a James Brown bag or another hip soul style. Several of these bands, including the Smart Brothers and the atrociously named Chocolate Snow, cut their voices and funk loose in the recording studio for obscure 45s. This entertaining collection has only a couple stinkers among its 19 tracks.

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

**Wheedle's Groove: *Kearney Barton (Light In The Attic 043; 37:24 ★★★★★½)*** Veterans of the Seattle funk-soul scene of the 1960s and early '70s return to recording in their sacred roost—sound engineer Kearney Barton's Audio Recording. The gang's wit and exuberance match or come close to what they offered in the old days, with everyone from singer Ural Thomas and drummer Robbie Hill to B-3 magicians Greg Davison and Calvin Law slathering on the grease. All nine tunes (mixed by beatmeister Dynomite D) satisfy, but the one that really sticks is the extreme makeover of Soundgarden's "Jesus Christ Pose"—dig the strength and clarity of Pastor Pat Wright's singing as she slams shady television preachers.

Ordering info: [lightintheattic.net](http://lightintheattic.net)

**Ann Peebles: *I Can't Stand The Rain (Charly 1035 DVD; 99:00 ★★★★★)*** Peebles' smoke-and-honey voice is in good form at a competently filmed Belgian festival in 1996, more than 20 years after her Hi heyday. Her biggest smash single not only gives its name to the DVD but also serves as the focal number of the 43-minute concert and the reason for two extras—an intimate "unplugged" studio version and an accounting of all the pop and soul artists who've covered the famous song. **DB**

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

## Coming Through Slaughter

THE BOLDEN LEGEND

DAVE LISIK ORCHESTRA  
FEATURING TIM HAGANS

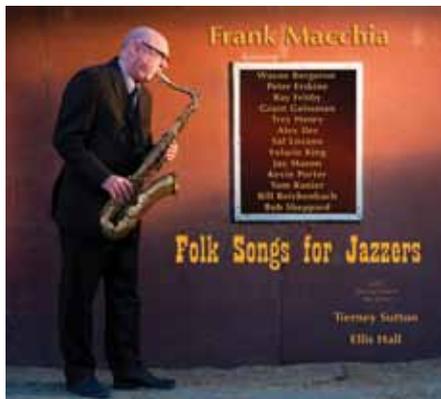


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 Galloping Cow Music



## Frank Macchia *Folk Songs For Jazzers*

CACOPHONY INC. FMC516

★★★★

Every once in a while a novelty album transcends its concept, corny or otherwise. Frank Macchia's *Folk Songs For Jazzers* is one such recording. The West Coast reed player appears to follow the examples of John Coltrane ("Greensleeves") and Sonny Rollins (*Way Out West*)—and perhaps Aaron Copland and Dvorak, while leading a 13-piece big band through more than an hour's worth of vintage American songs. Whether or not you like such fare will have little bearing.

Macchia owns a lengthy big band resume, as both a performer and composer/arranger, and it shows. The arrangements showcase a full complement of instruments, spanning bass sax and English horn to electric guitar and electric bass. These arrangements, the solos and even the vocals convincingly reinvent the repertoire.

Singer Tierney Sutton and guitarist Grant Geissman transform "Red River Valley" into a sexy and sophisticated number that even hardened purists will appreciate. The introduction to "Oh, Susanna" evokes Oliver Nelson's "Stolen Moments." Bob Sheppard's strong tenor solo highlights "Polly Wolly Doodle," a chart imbued with lots of humor. And the arrangement of "Kumbaya" recasts the hackneyed campfire song as a credible avant-garde work.

The first-rate sidemen include former Weather Report drummer Peter Erskine and Geissman, Chuck Mangione's guitarist at the height of the flugelhorn player's fame. It just goes to show that you can't judge a band solely by its repertoire. The best music can come from unlikely source material.

—Eric Fine

**Folk Songs For Jazzers:** I've Been Working On The Railroad; Red River Valley; Skip To My Lou; Oh, Susanna; Did You Ever See A Lassie?; Polly Wolly Doodle; Tom Dooley; The Arkansas Traveler; Amazing Grace; The Erie Canal; Hush, Little Baby; The Blue Tail Fly; Kumbaya; On Top Of Old Smokey. (78:58)

**Personnel:** Frank Macchia, tenor sax, flutes, piccolo, clarinets; Sal Lozano, alto sax, piccolo, flutes, clarinets; Bob Sheppard, soprano and tenor saxes, piccolo, flutes, clarinets; Jay Mason, baritone and bass saxes, piccolo, flutes, clarinets, English horn; Wayne Bergeron, trumpet, flugelhorn; Alex Iles, trombone, baritone, tuba; Kevin Porter, trombone, bass trombone, baritone, tuba; Bill Reichenbach, trombone, bass trombone, baritone, tuba; Tom Ranier, piano, electric piano; Grant Geissman, guitar, banjo; Trey Henry, upright, electric basses; Peter Erskine, drums; Ray Frisby, vibraphone, bongos, percussion; Tierney Sutton, vocals (2); Ellis Hall, vocals (9).

Ordering info: [frankmacchia.net](http://frankmacchia.net)

## Abdullah Ibrahim & WDR Big Band Cologne *Bombella*

SUNNYSIDE 1251

★★★★

## Omar Sosa & NDR Big Band *Ceremony*

OTA RECORDS 1021

★★★★

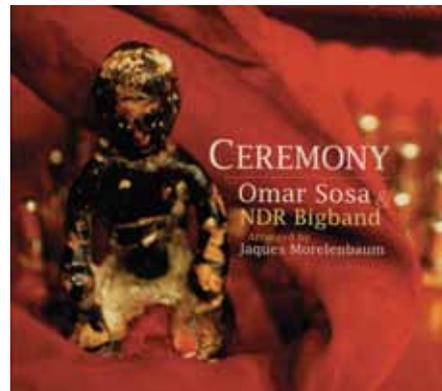
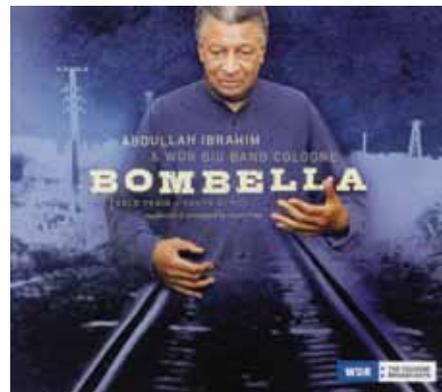
Two pianists, born three decades apart, variously melding Afro-Cuban and pan-African traditions with American jazz, as performed by celebrated big bands based in Germany: *Bombella*, from Abdullah Ibrahim and the WDR Big Band Cologne, and *Ceremony*, by Omar Sosa and the Hamburg-based NDR Big Band, both are defined by major, ambitious compositions and arrangements, and an intriguing dichotomy: an ability to come off as alternately intimate and practically symphonic. These rhythms and textures resonate, in a manner that's often surprising and sometimes provocative.

The South Africa native formerly known as Dollar Brand, working with arrangements by the WDR's Steve Gray (who passed away last year), offers tributes to people and places that have influenced his life and work, beginning with the gorgeous sax-led ballad "Song For Sathima," a nod to his longtime wife, the jazz singer Sathima Bea Benjamin. A musical hero is saluted on "I Mean You/For Monk," with an exuberant reading of the familiar melody bolstered by rambunctious solo turns by guitarist Paul Shigihara and tenor saxophonist Paul Heller; "For Monk" has the leader going it alone, and then joined by the band for a zig-zagging melody. "Mandela" is a bluesy, bouncy, flute-led tribute, while the shimmering trombone-fronted "For Lawrence Brown (Remembrance)" is a salute to the late Ellington 'bone player.

Ibrahim, 75, evokes terrain from his home country with the crystalline solo-piano declarations of the opening "Green Kalahari"; the slow-grooving, steadily churning "District Six (Trance Circle Dance)," referencing the area in Cape Town where non-white residents were forcibly removed by the apartheid government in 1965; the hard-driving "Bombella," named for a train that took South African workers to gold and diamond mines; "Excursions (Masters And Muses)"; and the closing, multi-segmented "African River." Many of these tunes appeared on earlier Ibrahim recordings; here they've been given makeovers extreme in their grace and beauty.

Sosa, leading an eight-piece, percussion-heavy rhythm section and joined by Brazilian arranger Jaques Morelenbaum, who has worked with the likes of Antonio Carlos Jobim and Caetano Veloso, also offers sweeping sonorities, with musical colors reflecting his native Cuba.

*Ceremony*, its titles reflecting the composer's belief in the religion and rituals of Santería, is a loosely connected suite of densely packed compositions, beginning with the cymbal swells, simmering percussion, instrumental swirls and muted



trumpet of the opening "Llegada Con Elegba." Morelenbaum has a knack for creatively cross-connecting multiple lines and figures, as demonstrated on "Chango En Esmeraldas," featuring Sosa and guitarist Roland Cabezas; and the airy "Yemaya En Agua Larga" and buoyant "Cha Con Marimba," both which make good use of Sosa's marimba work.

Sosa also shines on the somber "Luz En El Cielo," which opens with Fiete Felsch's fine alto sax flight over brass choir; the hyper "Mi Tradicion"; the moody "Carambaba," burnished with Frank Delle's bass clarinet and Morelenbaum's cello; and the rising-and-falling "Monkuru." As with much of Sosa's work, there's never a dull moment.

—Philip Booth

**Bombella:** Green Kalahari; Song For Sathima; Mandela; District Six (Trance Circle Dance); Bombella; Meditation—Joan Capetown Flower (Emerald Bay); I Mean You/For Monk; For Lawrence Brown (Remembrance); Excursions (Masters And Muses); African River. (74:31)

**Personnel:** Abdullah Ibrahim, piano; Paul Shigihara, guitar; John Goldsby, bass; Hans Dekker, drums; Andy Haderer, Wim Both, Rob Bruynen, John Marshall, Klaus Osterloh, trumpet; Ludwig Nuss, Dave Horler, Bert Laukamp, trombone; Mattis Cederberg, bass trombone; Heiner Wiberry, Karolina Strassmayer, alto saxophone, flute and clarinet; Olivier Peters, Paul Heller, tenor saxophone, flute and clarinet; Jens Neufang, baritone saxophone, flute and clarinet.

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

**Ceremony:** Llegada Con Elegba; Chango En Esmeraldas; Danzon De Tus Ojos; Yemaya En Agua Larga; Luz En El Cielo; Cha Con Marimba; Mi Tradicion; Carambaba; Monkuru; Salida Con Elegba. (62:24)

**Personnel:** Omar Sosa, vibraphone, marimba, percussion; Stephan Diez, Roland Cabezas, guitar; Lucas Lindholm, bass; Childo Tomas, electric bass; Julio Barreto, drums; Marcio Dotor, percussion set; Marcos Iukan, Bata drums, congas, Cajon de rumba, guiro; Michael Spiro, Bata drums, congas, chekere, timbale. Thorsten Benkenstein, Ingolf Burkhardt, Claus Stotter, Reiner Winterschladen, Stephan Meinberg (6, 7, 9), Torsten Maab (6), trumpets and flugelhorns; Dan Gottschall, Klaus Heidenreich, Stefan Lottermann, Gunter Bolman (6, 7, 9), Jon Welch (6, 7, 9), trombone; Ingo Lahme, bass trombone, tuba; Fiete Felsch, alto and soprano saxophone, flute, clarinet; Peter Bolte, alto saxophone, flute; Christof Lauer, tenor and soprano saxophone, clarinet; Lutz Buchner, tenor and soprano saxophone, clarinet; Frank Delle, baritone saxophone, bass clarinet.

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

## Freedoms Rediscovered

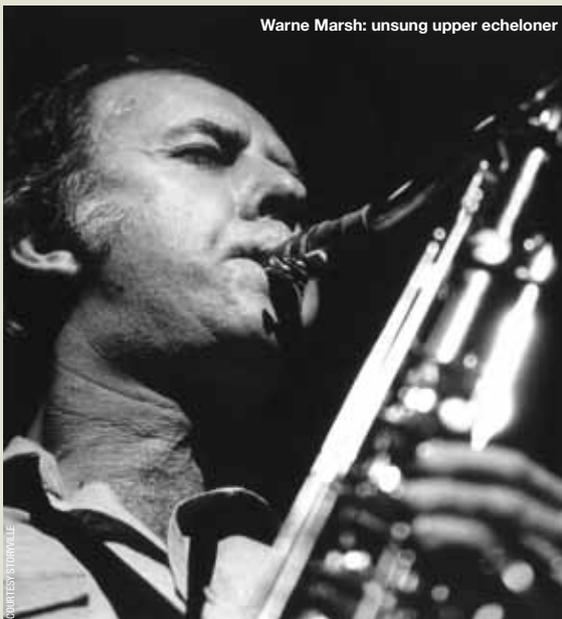
During the first week of December 1975, saxophonist Warne Marsh, then 48 years old and based in Los Angeles, wrapped up a three-week, 14-gig sojourn through Scandinavia—his first trip across the Atlantic—at Copenhagen's Café Montmartre, joined for the first time in a decade by his musical doppelgänger, Lee Konitz.

This encounter would launch the final, 18-month installment of a joined-at-the-hip musical relationship that began in November 1948, when Marsh—who 20 months earlier had commuted to Manhattan for lessons from his

New Jersey Army base for lessons with Lennie Tristano, Konitz's guru since 1945—landed in New York after a cross-country road trip with the Buddy Rich Big Band with the intention of picking up where he'd left off. Within seven months, Marsh and Konitz would introduce "free-jazz" to the world on Tristano's sextet recording "Intuition." Circa 1975, Marsh was, as Safford Chamberlain titled his excellent biography, "an unsung cat," with most of his recorded oeuvre out of print. A small cohort of cognoscenti revered him for his singular mastery of swinging stream-of-consciousness linear improvising on the language established by Charlie Parker and Lester Young. But he was beginning to emerge from well-kept-secret status on steady gigs with Supersax, the popular Parker tribute band dedicated to playing five-part harmony arrangements of Parker's solos.

The Dec. 3-5 concerts, captured with excellent sound, make up the initial 14 tracks of **Two Not One (Storyville, 77:02/76:16/77:23/68:00 ★★★★★½)**. Marsh and Konitz are somewhat hemmed in by the busy comping and clichéd solos of pianist Ole-Kock Hansen and the relentless, clattery 4/4 of drummers Alex Riel and Svend Erik Norregard. Bass master Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen keeps the flow on-point, and the performances are replete with vertiginous unisons, ingenious counterpoint and no small measure of soloistic derring-do (for example, Marsh's walk-the-tightrope, barline-smashing declamation on Tristano's "Wow," in which the time continually teeters on the precipice but unflinchingly lands on the one).

Piggybacking on their Montmartre success, Marsh and Konitz padded their itinerary with three weeks of hastily arranged gigs in Holland, Belgium, Norway and Britain with a swinging, nuance-sensitive British rhythm section—gui-



Warne Marsh: unsung upper echeloner

COURTESY OF DOWNVILLE

tarist Dave Cliff, bassist Peter Ind and drummer Al Levitt, each a Tristanoite. After two weeks on the road, this unit played the Montmartre on Dec. 27, generating 11 tracks for LP that have a more creative quality—one of the numerous highlights is Konitz's solo on "Kary's Dance," on which the altoist navigates the changes with an outer-partials sensibility evocative of Ornette Coleman at his most ferocious.

Marsh spent the next two days in the studio, recording 23 tracks, 11 on Dec. 28 in quartet with Cliff, Pedersen and Levitt, and another 12 on Dec. 29 in trio with Pedersen and Levitt. In what was undoubtedly a convene-and-hit context, Marsh, bolstered by Pedersen's surging harmonic excellence, eschews Tristano's complex lines and signifies on the broader timeline of tenor saxophone expression, including tips of the hat to Lester Young ("Blues In G-Flat" is a variant on Young's 1939 "Pound Cake" solo), Parker on alto ("Confirmation"), Parker on tenor ("Little Willie Leaps") and Ben Webster ("You Don't Know What Love Is" and "Every Time We Say Goodbye"). These sessions rank in the upper echelons of the tenor saxophone canon.

From this point until shortly before his death in 1987, Marsh would frequently perform in northern Europe, including an April 1980 engagement at Stockholm's Fasching Club in duo with expat bassist Red Mitchell (they had previously recorded together on *Music For Prancing* in 1957) that produced 22 tracks, reissued as **Big Two (Storyville 1038406; 55:14/56:55 ★★★★★)**. Mitchell had no peer among bassists at generating melodic counterpoint, and an attitude of open dialogue and inquiry—not to mention heady instrumental prowess—permeates the proceedings. **DB**

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

## CUNEIFORM RECORDS

### THE CLAUDIA QUINTET with GARY VERSACE Royal Toast



The greatly anticipated fifth release by this sensational 'jazz and beyond' ensemble. Led by twice Grammy-nominated drummer/composer John Hollenbeck, with Drew Gress (bass), Matt Moran (vibes), Ted Reichman (accordion), Chris Speed (tenor sax, clarinet) and Gary Versace (piano).

### IDEAL BREAD Transmit - Vol. 2 of The Music of Steve Lacy



Josh Sinton (baritone saxophone), Kirk Knuffke (trumpet), Reuben Radding (bass) and Tomas Fujiwara (drums) perform the idiosyncratic (and underplayed) compositions of Steve Lacy.

### SOFT MACHINE NDR Jazz Workshop, 1973 (CD + DVD)



Soft Machine were one of the greatest UK avant/jazz-rock bands of all time. This previously unreleased, beautifully filmed show features Mike Ratledge (electric piano, organ), Karl Jenkins (oboe, saxes), Roy Babbington (bass) and John Marshall (drums) joined by Art Themen (saxes) and Gary Boyle (electric guitar).

### CURLEW A Beautiful Western Saddle / The Hardwood (CD + DVD)



During the mid 80s/early 90s, not enough people seemed to realize that the best live band in the USA was Curlew. *ABWS* features guest vocalist Amy Denio singing songs based on the poems of Paul Haines (*Escalator Over the Hill*). It's coupled with a bonus DVD of their live concert video as well as an hour of never-before seen footage.

### MATS/MORGAN BAND The Music Or The Money? (2 x CDs)

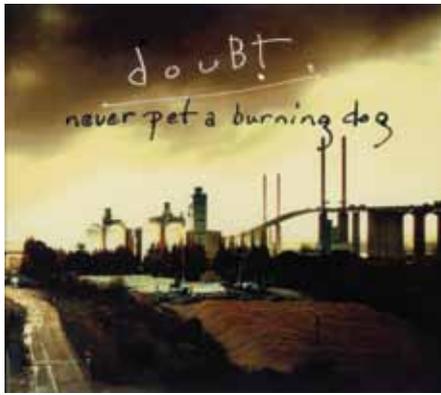


Keyboardist/vocalist Mats Öberg and drummer Morgan Ågren have been playing together for nearly 30 years. They were 'discovered' at a very young age by Frank Zappa. This is their hard to find second album and includes over 45' of unreleased material.

For soundclips and further information: [www.cuneiformrecords.com](http://www.cuneiformrecords.com)

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**douBt**  
*Never Pet A Burning Dog*

MOONJUNE 032  
★★★★

On its debut CD *Never Pet A Burning Dog*, douBt dishes up what amounts to a curious blend of free electric jazz-rock with a flair for composition ... and a bent for unregulated rhythmic impulses. What holds it all together is the band's sound. Eight of the nine songs are originals, and the talent on board makes for a song cycle where the unique writing seems queued for each of its members. It also doesn't hurt that the music was performed live in the studio with only first takes, suggesting these guys can read each other like maps. Essentially a trio (legendary singer/bassist Richard Sinclair appears on three cuts), they're all products of the European music scene: electric guitarist Michel Delville and keyboardist Alex Maguire define the band's sound with their pens and instruments along with New York City ex-pat drummer Tony Bianco also contributing two strong numbers.

From the serenity of the lyrical, lilting "Corale Di San Luca" to the hallucinatory muted grunge guitar crawling around vibrant flute calls (who's that?) and rambling, speed-metal drumming with "Beppe's Shelter"; to the space and anti-gravity of "Passing Cloud" (spiked with a winding, slightly off-kilter melody line that floats with ethereal vocals); not to mention a bit of heavy metal, post-punk guitar with "Cosmic Surgery," *Burning Dog* has something for ... well, just about anyone with itchy ears and an appetite for fetching experimentation.

DouBt's take on Terje Rypdal's "Over Birkerot" is a telling frame of reference for this reviewer. Covering Rypdal's ominous theme statement and weighty guitar lines, Delville then helps the song veer off from being an out-and-out rocker akin to the original (recorded in 1975) and more a search for the heart of "Birkerot," circa 2010, with multi-layered rhythmic pulses, unwieldy guitar lines with reverb reminiscent of Rypdal and atmospheric, kaleidoscopic keyboards that send the music airborne.

—John Ephland

**Never Pet A Burning Dog:** Corale Di San Luca; Laughter; Over Birkerot; Sea; Passing Cloud; Cosmic Surgery; Aeon; Beppe's Shelter. (52:59)  
**Personnel:** Alex Maguire, Fender Rhodes, Hammond organ, melotron, synthesizer; Michael Delville, electric guitar, Roland GR-09; Tony Bianco, drums; Richard Sinclair, vocals (1, 5), bass guitar (1, 2).  
**Ordering info:** [moonjune.com](http://moonjune.com)

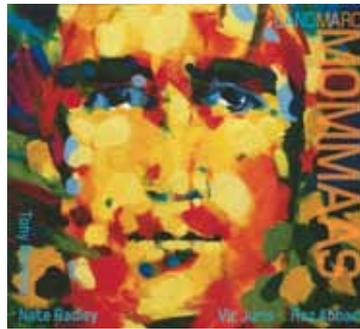
**Marc Mommaas**  
*Landmarc*

SUNNYSIDE 1249  
★★★★½

The eponymous opener is an undulatory onslaught full of metrical shift, the gamut of notes and intervals, a kaleidoscopic palette. Dutch-born Marc Mommaas has studied with Joe Lovano and has something of Lovano's ability to hover around the beat taking darting forays, though his approach rounds edges, loses grit.

This is an unusual band with two guitarists, no bass. Mommaas says the group is about the "independence of time with the ... purpose of widening the gates towards a deeper form of interaction and storyline development." Certainly he's tight with Nat Radley, whose guitar closely shadows Mommaas' lines, a strong feature of the sound. Three tracks feature Juris and two have Rez Abbasi on guitar or electric sitar, mainly in a contrapuntal supporting role. Tony Moreno, who has played regularly in duo with Mommaas, is appropriately nifty with brushes on "Brush On Canvas" (Mommaas' father is a visual artist). "Folksong" (inspired by Keith Jarrett's "My Song") brings out the beautifully poised, rhapsodic side of Mommaas' tenor.

Not sure what "Legend" is about until the latter half, when Mommaas' delicately balanced



elements gel under a grounding guitar figure. "Little One" (dedicated to Mommaas' daughter) comes into focus like a welcome mirage after the lovely intro from Radley: It's a hushed oasis, Mommaas' tenor a damask throw, Moreno's cymbals shimmering sand dunes.

The duo history with Moreno is again evident at the beginning of "Patience," the title a message to the listener who will need much such to absorb the rich tapestry of melodic contour. All land in a place, then lift off again; Mommaas swoops and glides like a seabird. Radley gets emphatic and the tenor ends with Middle Eastern-sounding quarter tones, betraying exotic lagoons within the saxophonist's listening. "Cassavetes Caravan" is another slow build; we wait for the plot to unfold while Mommaas noses into every nook, muddying his tone momentarily; then we build again, the leader this time underpinning a cascade of guitar and sitar. "ASAP" puts in mind Stan Getz's "Focus" where he is chasing the rabbit. It is the burner we have been awaiting, yet still riddled with detail and subtleties.

—Michael Jackson

**Landmarc:** Landmarc; Folksong; Brush On Canvas; Legend; Little One; Orbit; Patience; Cassavetes Caravan; ASAP. (52:55)  
**Personnel:** Marc Mommaas, tenor saxophone; Tony Moreno, drums; Nate Radley, electric guitar; Vic Juris, electric guitar; Rez Abbasi, electric guitar, electric sitar.  
**Ordering info:** [sunnysiderecords.com](http://sunnysiderecords.com)

**Tia Fuller**  
*Decisive Steps*

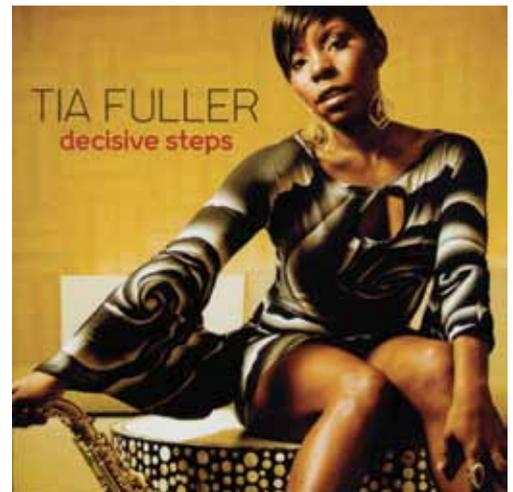
MACK AVENUE RECORDS 1043  
★★★★½

Alto player Tia Fuller is no stranger to the perks of stardom, having toured with r&b superstar Beyoncé since 2006. Fuller's jazz career, though, remains a work in progress. Her third album, *Decisive Steps*, spotlights an all-female band alongside several guests, notably bassist Christian McBride and trumpeter Sean Jones.

Does the approach work? To Fuller's credit, not dramatically so: Her solo turns remain uniformly inspired throughout the 10-song set. Fuller comes out of the gate strong on "Decisive Steps" and "Windsor," both of which suggest a 1960s influence, and on "Ebb & Flow," a funky vehicle stoked by McBride's electric bass and Jones, a former bandmate who provides a worthy foil.

The set spotlights Fuller's all-out style and singing tone. The only real blemish is Fuller's tame treatment of the ballad "I Can't Get Started," where her solo sounds strangely abbreviated and Shamie Royston's Fender Rhodes sounds out of place.

But Fuller rediscovers her mettle on "Kissed By The Sun," a vehicle for her impassioned so-



prano that stands as one of the album's highlights. Ditto for "Shades Of McBride" and the songbook standard "My Shining Hour," both straightahead cookers. Perhaps next time out, Fuller will be free to shine on her own.

—Eric Fine

**Decisive Steps:** Decisive Steps; Windsor; Ebb & Flow; I Can't Get Started; Kissed By The Sun; Steppin'; Shades Of McBride; Clear Mind; Night Glow; My Shining Hour. (55:45)  
**Personnel:** Tia Fuller, alto and soprano saxophones, flute; Shamie Royston, piano, Fender Rhodes; Miriam Sullivan, upright bass; Kim Thompson, drums; Sean Jones, trumpet (2, 3, 5), flugelhorn (9); Christian McBride, electric bass (3), upright bass (4, 7); Warren Wolfe, vibraphone (4, 7, 8); Maurice Chestnut, tap dancer (6).  
**Ordering info:** [mackavenue.com](http://mackavenue.com)

## Biographer Goes Wide In Tracking McTell's South

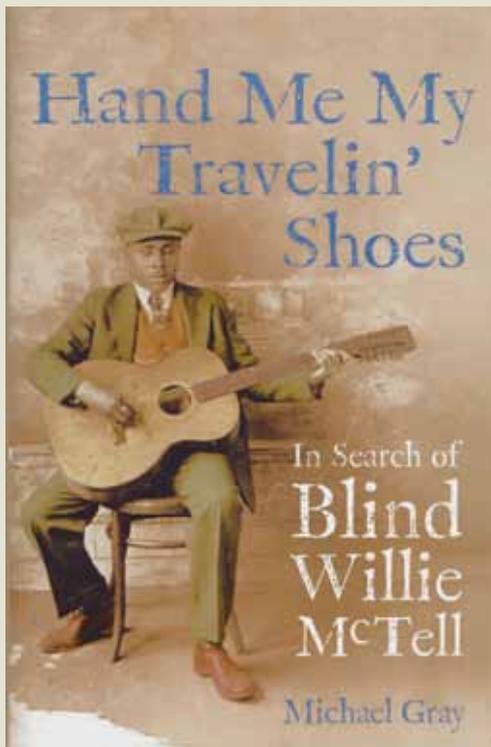
So crucial is the element of place to *Hand Me My Travelin' Shoes: In Search of Blind Willie McTell* (Chicago Review Press) that author Michael Gray serves as a tour guide, in addition to his expected role as biographer. After briefly introducing McTell, Gray is off to the blues singer's home state of Georgia. He travels through remote communities outside Augusta, Savannah and Atlanta, and evokes the vacant buildings and omnipresent fast-food restaurants that pockmark the landscape.

This isn't surprising. Gray is a travel writer by trade, while his previous books chronicle Bob Dylan, Elvis Presley and Frank Zappa. McTell recorded to some acclaim in the 1920s and 1930s for Victor and Columbia, but only intermittently after the Depression; he died in 1959. McTell's country blues recordings received exposure in the 1960s during the folk revival, and again after the Allman Brothers Band immortalized his song "Statesboro Blues" on the album *At Fillmore East* (1971). More recently, Dylan recorded a tribute song, "Blind Willie McTell," and the White Stripes covered "Southern Can Is Mine" on *De Stijl*.

*Hand Me My Travelin' Shoes*, originally published in 2007 in England, combines Gray's not incongruous passions for music and travel. In Gray's hands, however, such an approach is too eclectic. In tracing McTell's great-grandfather back to the Civil War, for example, Gray recounts Robert E. Lee's surrender to Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox Court House in Virginia. For all its importance, this meeting had no more bearing on McTell than it did on the rest of the South. The book works best when Gray reins in his penchant for history and other digressions.

Gray chronicles, in great detail, his quest of reconstructing the blues singer's life. Culling information from courthouse records, census reports, newspapers and telephone directories, Gray grapples with misspelled names and dates that have been approximated if not altogether fudged. Even the name on McTell's headstone at one time had been incorrect, leaving in doubt the location of his grave.

In spite of such obstacles, the book includes the demographics of the various towns in which McTell lived or passed through; descriptions of houses and churches, gardens and graveyards, highways and back roads and railroad lines; and a sprawling cast of McTell's many relatives and even their relatives, in ad-



dition to anyone else Gray happens to turn up. But the transcriptions of Gray's interviews border on oral histories; this overabundance of information undermines the focus. As a consequence, McTell sometimes becomes peripheral to his own story.

Gray is occasionally caustic. In one town, he writes, "Baptist and Methodist churches compete for pomposity and size." He expresses even less affinity for the folks who inhabit such communities: "The stage yokel is stunted, pasty, quiet, polite, and slow-minded: trailer trash to the point of caricature." Gray's tone probably reflects his outrage over the South's history of racism and segregation. He provides graphic accounts of the lynchings, burnings and beatings attributed to white mobs and hate groups such as the Ku Klux Klan. "In Georgia, between 1882 and the 1960s," he writes, "almost 500 black people were lynched and immeasurable numbers tortured."

Possibly, Gray's objectives changed during the course of his research. What began perhaps as a biography developed into not just the pursuit of McTell's ghost, but also of the many others that crossed its path. This all-inclusiveness conveys what Gray calls "the story of getting the story." It also creates a dark allegory about the South. Regardless, Gray should have pared down much of this hodgepodge. It would have allowed McTell to remain in the spotlight, while better illuminating the murky thesis. **DB**

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

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3

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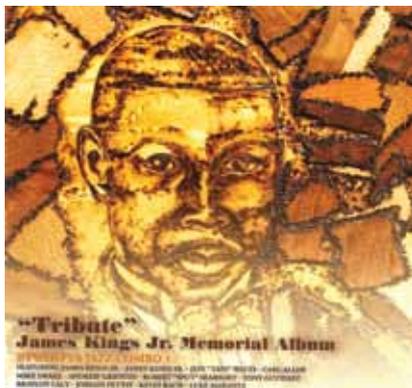
Brand new album by one of the most original guitarists in jazz today, 3 explores interaction between Micic's musical roots in Serbia and his extensive knowledge of jazz.

"Micic is bringing an intriguing new perspective to the jazz guitar."  
LA TIMES

**BTWHSPVA  
Jazz Combo 1  
Tribute:  
James Kings  
Jr. Memorial  
Album**

(SELF-RELEASE)  
★★★

On the evening of March 28, 2008, gifted 18-year-old drummer James Kings Jr. was struck and killed by a hit-and-run driver on a Dallas street. His loss was immediately felt by his classmates at Booker T. Washington High School, particularly by Jazz Combo 1, a talented group (under the direction of Bart Marantz) that has received



multiple Grammy, Down-Beat and NFAA awards.

*Tribute's* opening track, "Solar," shows Kings' talent in full flower, the young drummer's clear sticking, flowing ideas and rapid-fire commentary recalling a young Tony Williams or Bill Stewart. Mixing intricate hi-hat patterns with crisp cymbal rhythms, Kings swung with a great sense

of purpose, on a streamlined bed of air. *Tribute* documents the memorial concert that followed later that year, featuring drummers Jeff "Tain" Watts and Carl Allen with Jazz Combo 1, also accompanied by the group's other drummers,

past and present.

Performing standards and original compositions, Jazz Combo 1 proves their mettle for a band of what are essentially teenagers, showing considerable maturity in soloing skills, accompaniment chops and overall musicality. If these students constitute the future of jazz, all is well. Given the nature of the memorial, there is a slight cast of sadness over the music, particularly felt on "Maiden Voyage" and "Someday My Prince Will Come." The CD closes with Carl Allen's solo, "March On James, March On," a somber elegy in rhythm.

—Ken Micallef

**Tribute:** James Kings Jr. Memorial Album: Solar; Maiden Voyage; Someday My Prince Will Come; Jasmine Pearls; Softly As In A Morning Sunrise; Beautiful Spirit; Isotope; J.D.K.; King James; What A Wonderful World; March On James, March On.

**Personnel:** James Kings Jr., Jeff "Tain" Watts, Carl Allen, Mike Drake, Andrew Griffith, Robert "Sput" Searight, Tony Gutierrez, drums; Luke Marantz, piano; Jordan Pettay, alto sax; Kevin Bach, Braylon Lacy, bass; James Kings Sr., vocals/piano.

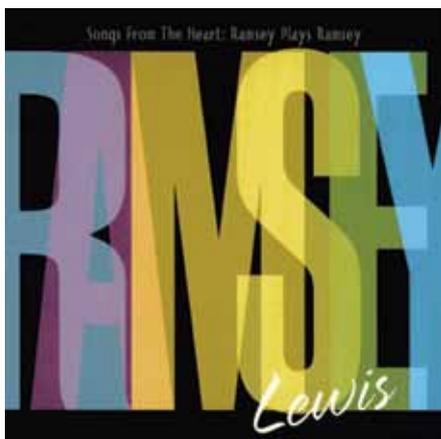
**Ordering info:** [btwhspsta.org/jazz.htm](http://btwhspsta.org/jazz.htm)

**Ramsey Lewis  
Songs From The Heart:  
Ramsey Plays Ramsey**

CONCORD JAZZ 31313  
★★½

To mark his debut release on Concord Jazz, Lewis presents a selection of his own tunes, recently composed. *Songs From The Heart* demonstrates that Lewis' skills as a writer are solid and steady, if not illuminated by the inspiration he displays consistently as a player.

None of these dozen tracks is haphazardly conceived. Many of them grow from promising motifs: "Exhilaration" begins with a two-whole-tone episode, imaginatively voiced, grounded and infused with expression by Larry Gray's bowed bass. However, this devolves quickly into an unaccompanied bass improvisation, which in turn leads to a blues-changes piano solo, which Lewis plays with taste and understatement. Here and there, he alters his right-hand line or harks briefly to the opening, but for all intents and purposes we're back to the three-chord basics. The intro remains set aside,



neglected as a compositional element and only revisited as a recap at the end.

The point is not to pick on "Exhilaration" or any of these previously unrecorded works. The best of them create a positive impression, among them "The Glow Of Her Charm," one of the album's three solo piano moments. Lewis caresses this gently crafted piece with love and sensitivity, altering tempo and dynam-

ics, bristling harmonies and silences that pause like held breath, all of which centers around an elegant figure in thirds before resolving on an unadorned major triad. In fact, everything here reflects Lewis' knack for wafting a steamy, positive blues feel through compositions that are sophisticated and even complex and yet eminently listenable.

What, then, is the problem? There are two: First, in part because these arrangements leave lots of room for the band to interact, the groove sometimes becomes just a little elusive; a stumbling coda nearly derails the train that the trio had ridden through "To Know Her Is to Love Her." And, for all the craft these songs display, nothing much lingers beyond the final chords. As an artist, Lewis has much to say; he just says it better when other hands help build his platform.

—Robert L. Doerschuk

**Songs From The Heart:** Ramsey Plays Ramsey: To Know Her Is To Love Her; Touching, Feeling, Knowing; Clouds In Reverie; The Spark; Conversation; The Way She Smiles; Exhilaration; The Glow Of Her Charm; Rendezvous; Long Before She Knew; Sharing Her Journey; Watercolors. (74:44)

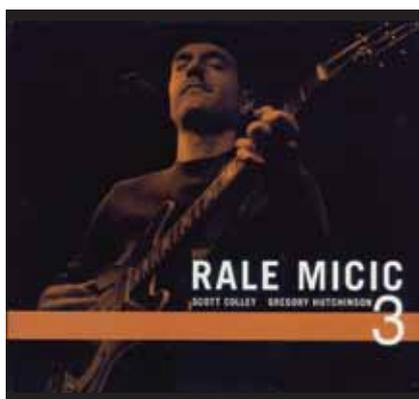
**Personnel:** Ramsey Lewis, piano; Larry Gray, bass; Leon Joyce, drums.

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

**Rale Micic  
3**

CTA 008  
★★★

This is the third release on CTA for the Serbian-born guitarist Rale Micic. Now based in New York City, Micic gets strong support on 3 from bassist Scott Colley and drummer Gregory Hutchinson. And 3 is a good place to get a shot of Micic's talent not only as a hollow-bodied guitarist but composer as well (eight of the 10 tracks here are his).



Starting off with his riff-based, slightly samba-ized "Dealin'," the mood is calm, somewhat pensive, with no flashy technique on display (3 is anything but flashy). "The World Doesn't End" continues the quiet, intimate pace, this time the modal structure coaxed along with a gentle swing and Micic's even mix of single notes and chords recalling a simpler Pat Metheny in a

similar vein. And while 3 is essentially a trio album, Micic does use additional musicians at the end of his popular "Serbiology," giving the music a slightly

Balkan feel with traditional Serbian percussion instruments (the tarabuka and tapan), and an additional acoustic guitar on 3's best cut, his wistful, almost folksy ballad "Pannonia."

The two covers, Cole Porter's "I Love You" and "The Night Has A Thousand Eyes" (sounding a lot like Porter's "Love For Sale"), become opportunities to hear how Micic takes a couple of American standards and translates them into his more composed, modest style of playing, Hutchinson and Colley always playing behind and under the guitarist. There are no fireworks here, just solid, straightforward swinging.

—John Ephland

**3:** Dealin'; The World Doesn't End; I Love You; Serbiology; Pannonia; Naive Art; Three Of A Kind; Thirty Three; The Night Has A Thousand Eyes; Gybanitza. (56:51)

**Personnel:** Rale Micic, guitar; Scott Colley, bass; Gregory Hutchinson, drums.

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



**Jeff Beck**  
*Emotion & Commotion*

ATCO R2 523695  
★★★★½

How can you make a comeback without going away? While it's been seven years since the last CD by Jeff Beck, the legendary guitarist has been plenty busy all along, and following a knock-out performance at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame anniversary show, JB has returned to the spotlight. Besides that, Beck has finally recorded a new masterpiece, exemplifying his many talents and showing the maturity of a seasoned professional.

*Emotion & Commotion* displays Beck as an ever progressive, thinking guitarist, drawing inspiration from a number of different fronts. The disc has a consistent, unified sound despite jumping from breakout blues-rock to jazz standards, classical numbers and hosting a 64-piece orchestra. It opens with a startlingly fresh instrumental rendition of Jeff Buckley's "Corpus Christi Carol" and segues into some extremely hard-hitting rock-jazz fusion with "Hammerhead." Beck's guitar playing is amazing throughout, and he still shows himself to be the consummate improviser—tackling the vintage composition "Somewhere Over The Rainbow" and making it his own.

Accompanied by a modest number of talented musicians including drummer Vinnie Colaiuta and bassist Tal Wilkenfeld, Beck breaks up his instrumental orientation with some marvelous (female) guest singers. Joss Stone rips it up on "I Put A Spell On You," Imelda May adds just the right amount of melancholy to the old chestnut "Lilac Wine," and opera singer Oliva Safe helps close things out with "Elegy For Dunkirk." A rousing success on almost every level, this classic collection will bear up to repeated listening for years to come.  
—Mitch Myers

**Emotion & Commotion:** Corpus Christi Carol; Hammerhead; Never Alone; Somewhere Over The Rainbow; I Put A Spell On You; Serene; Lilac Wine; Nessun Dorma; There's No Other Me; Elegy For Dunkirk. (40:19)

**Personnel:** Jeff Beck, guitar; Jason Rebello, keyboards (2, 3, 6, 9), programming (3, 6, 9); Pete Murray, keyboards (1, 5, 7, 8, 10), orchestral arrangements (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10); Alessia Mattalia (2), Vinnie Colaiuta (3, 6, 9), drums; Tal Wilkenfeld, bass (2, 3, 6, 9); Joss Stone (5, 9), Imelda May (7), Oliva Safe (6, 10), vocals; Luis Jardim, percussion (3, 6); Steve Sidwell, conductor (4, 5); Olive Deamer, drums (5); Pino Palladino, bass (5); Steve Lipson; producer, engineer, programming (9).

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

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Photo by Steven Sussman

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## JamHub, MyMix & JamLink *Ensemble Enablers*

There is no doubt that technology has had a major impact on the music industry, changing the way we create, record and even listen to our sounds. Now new products from JamHub, Movek and JamLink are actually changing the way we collaborate and rehearse with fellow musicians by offering the ability to network with other players electronically and opening up a whole new world of possibilities.

The JamHub silent rehearsal studio solves the problem of bands practicing where volume is an issue. “I had a friend with a son in a band who was limited to practicing only one hour per week,” said Steve Skilling, founder and inventor of JamHub. “As a musician, I realized how frustrating that must be, and that inspired me to develop the JamHub.”

As the name implies, the device provides a central hub for multiple players to plug in to and jam. The hub contains individual stations for each musician to connect to—between five and seven onboard depending on which model you purchase. Inputs for both 1/4-inch and XLR cables are available for each station. The controls are basic and simple with stacked knobs to adjust input gain, headphone volume output and stereo pan for each user. Once connected, you can utilize the monitor section on your “pod” to create a personalized headphone mix for yourself. JamHub also provides a SoleMix remote, which allows players such as drummers who are not within close proximity of the hub to adjust their settings from a distance.

Although JamHub will take an instrument as a direct input, it is highly recommended that you use onboard effects and/or amp modeling to achieve a satisfactory tone in the mix. In fact, the onboard effects cannot be applied to the 1/4-

inch input and only work on the XLR channels. Another option is to use the line out or headphone out of your favorite amplifier to connect to the hub.

As expected, a guitar or bass sounded thin and brittle when connecting right into the hub. However, running through a nice multi-effects unit, I was able to get much better results. Not including any signal processing capabilities in the JamHub was a very deliberate decision made by the company. “Price point was extremely important to us, and to keep the cost down we left the modeling and processing to the musician,” Skilling said. The XLR input can be used for connecting vocalists, miked drums or acoustic instruments, and has a basic array of effects and phantom power available. JamHub also includes a recording section, which provides the ability to generate a separate mix for recording your session. In addition, the top-level TourBus model includes an SD card recorder built in.

Although JamHub is not a high-end audio product and its sonic quality is not the best, it does provide a practical and affordable solution for allowing musicians to practice and jam as

often as they like.

MyMix from Movek is billed as a networked personal mixing and recording system, and although it definitely delivers on both, I found it to be much more than that. Of the three products, MyMix is definitely the most professional as well as the most expensive. It consists of a single device that can communicate with up to seven other MyMixes by connecting them all to a standard 100mbps Ethernet hub. Each device contains two input channels that can take either 1/4-inch or XLR inputs. Once connected, your channels show up on the unit’s LCD screen. If other MyMix users are on the network, their channels will also be available on your screen.

MyMix allows you to fine-tune and customize nearly every aspect of your session with the ability to name your channels, adjust levels and set stereo panning (it even contains a four-band parametric EQ).

Once selected, all settings can be stored as custom profiles for quick recall at a later time. The MyMix screen is large and easy to read, and the unit uses a jog wheel and selector buttons for easy access to all functions. “We wanted it simple to use so it would keep musicians in the creative mindset,” said Movek’s Josh Bartunek.

The audio quality of MyMix is impressive, head and shoulders above the rest. It is also the only device that sounded really good when plugging instruments directly into it. The onboard effects are very usable, and the vocal tones from a decent mic are smooth and warm. Not only does MyMix sound great, it offers 24-bit multi-track SD card recording of your session at the touch of a button.

In addition to its ability to provide silent rehearsal capabilities, MyMix is great for personal monitoring applications on stage or in the studio. Simply run a line out of your



rig into a MyMix, put on your headphones or in-ear monitors and you will have total control over how you hear yourself and others on the network.

Like JamHub and MyMix, JamLink from MusicianLink also allows musicians to connect, but with a kicker. Using the Internet, players can collaborate with each other in real time from up to 500 miles away. The JamLink device is basically an interface box that connects via Ethernet to a standard network hub. It also requires a high-speed Internet connection such as a cable modem. The unit contains a 1/4-inch input for an instrument and two 1/8-inch jacks for headphones and a talkback microphone. JamLink recommends using a gaming headphone, which has a hands-free mic built-in.

Setting up JamLink is incredibly simple. After making the necessary connections, you must register at the MusicianLink Web site to access other JamLink members. You can then connect to up to four users at a time. An onscreen mixer provides control over the session with adjustments for volume, panning and sampling rate. As with JamHub, JamLink requires some outboard signal processing in order to achieve satisfactory tone on your instrument. A microphone is also essential for communicating with other players.

Overall, I was impressed with the JamLink experience. After connecting to a fellow musician, we were indeed able to play music together with virtually no discernable delay or latency issues. Although we did encounter occasional static, fine-tuning of the settings kept the pops to a minimum.

—Keith Baumann

Ordering info: [jamhub.com](http://jamhub.com); [mymixaudio.com](http://mymixaudio.com); [musicianlink.com](http://musicianlink.com)



## NS Design NXT5 Electric Upright Bass

### *Tight & Resonant*

NS Design keeps coming at bassists with new options in their EUB (Electric Upright Bass) line. The original was the U.S.-made EU model, which was terrific but a bit pricey. Then came the more affordable Czech-made CR model. The budget-conscious WAV bass, made in China, came out not too long ago and became a high-demand item with a street price of under \$1,000. The newest offering from NS Design is the NXT5 five-string bass, similar to the WAV but constructed in the Czech Republic using higher-quality woods.

The NXT5 comes with a maple neck and body and ebony fingerboard instead of the WAV's beechwood neck and body and rosewood fingerboard. It feels tighter and more resonant than the WAV. The test bass featured a nice amber burst matte finish with the grain showing through, making it resemble the

company's more expensive CR models.

The NXT5 features the all-piezo Polar pickup system. Controls are minimal: volume, tone, and a switch to go back and forth from pizzicato mode and arco/percussive-plucked-sound mode. This pickup system is passive, so no 9-volts are required. If you don't have a suitable amp, you may need an outboard pre-amp with EQ to really dial in your tone. Despite its simplicity, this pickup system gives the player a good deal of tonal flexibility. Within moments of plugging it in, I dialed up a great Eddie Gomez-like growly tone, and then with the flip of a switch and some treble roll-off achieved a Latin jazz-appropriate "baby bass"-like sound. I found the arco setting provided a nice, more traditional-sounding swing bass "thump." You can also experiment with strings to suit your taste, as it will accommodate most long-scale double bass strings.

The neck and fingerboard of the NXT5 feel great. Playing an electric upright can be a bit disorienting, but dot markers

helped immediately with navigation (no, I didn't feel like I was cheating). The NXT5 has very even tone and volume from string to string, even the low B. The extra width of the five-string neck was pretty easy to adapt to. Bowing was fun, though it took a while to get used to, but the nicely rounded fingerboard made bowing across the five strings relatively easy. I could see this being a good show/pit bass.

Like the WAV, the NXT5 comes standard with a collapsible tripod stand and gig bag. The tripod is easy to set up and completely stable. The gig bag holds the bass and tripod, and it has external pockets for a bow and cables.

With the NXT5, NS design has improved upon an already successful model. With high-quality Czech workmanship and better woods, this bass is still a bargain, going for only \$300–\$400 more than the WAV. Nothing can replace the "dog house," but if your musical situation works with an EUB, you need to give the NXT5 bass a try. —Jon Paul

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

## Los Cabos Brushes

### *Clean Sweeping*

Los Cabos Drumsticks has unveiled two new brushes.

The Standard model is a medium gauge, retractable wire brush with a soft rubber handle. At full extension, the brush offers a 4-inch fan, which produces full snare playing and bright cymbal voicings.

The Clean Sweep is a non-retractable nylon brush with a wooden handle, suitable for drummers who are looking for a softer brush tone with greater depth.

MSRP: Standard, \$19.50; Clean Sweep, \$16.10.

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



# Toolshed | GEAR BOX

## [1] GUITAR CRADLE

The Grabbit by Hamilton Stands is a cradle-design guitar stand with a super-safe locking system. It features a patent-pending grabbing mechanism that holds the instrument securely until you gently push the guitar neck back to instantly release it from the stand. The Grabbit is priced at \$35.99.

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

## [2] SHARPER IMAGES

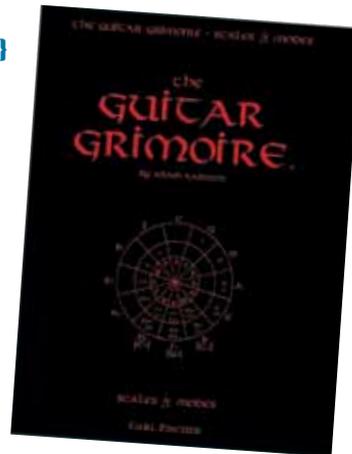
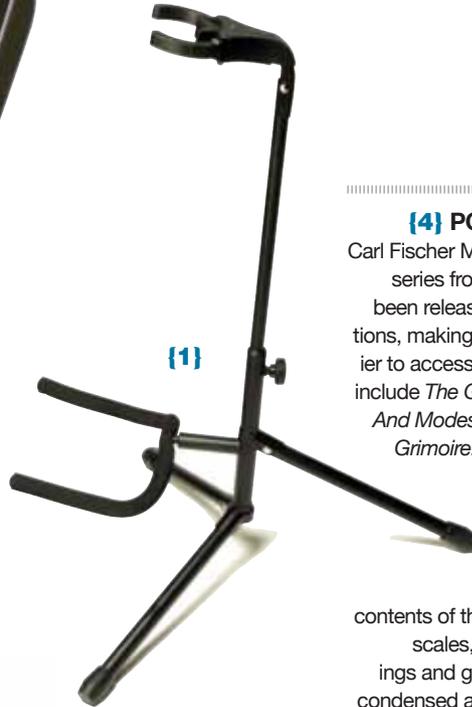
The Fishman Aura Spectrum DI instrument pre-amp combines a direct box with acoustic imaging technology that restores the pristine sound of a studio-miked instrument to undersaddle and soundhole pickups. It features 128 preloaded images of popular acoustic instruments, a three-band EQ, automatic feedback suppression with up to three notches, an effects loop and a built-in chromatic tuner with bypass/mute, one-knob compressor, volume, blend and image controls. The Aura Spectrum DI also features 16 user-configurable image locations that are loaded from the Aura image gallery program via USB interface. It ships with Aura Image Gallery III software, which gives players free access to a library of more than 700 images for acoustic guitar, mandolin, violin, resophonic guitar, bouzouki and ukulele.

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

## [3] VOLUME UNDERFOOT

Dunlop's new Volume Pedal is housed in a durable aluminum chassis that's just the right size for stability underfoot. The pedal is slightly curved for ergonomics, and the non-slip tread keeps the guitarist's foot in place. Dunlop's Steel Band Drive creates a low-friction environment, so the pedal won't break down or go limp with wear. Users can dial in the feel that's ideal for them.

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



[4]

[3]

[6]

## [4] POCKET GRIMOIRE

Carl Fischer Music's Guitar Grimoire series from Adam Kadmon has been released in pocket-size editions, making the magic within easier to access on the go. The books include *The Guitar Grimoire: Scales And Modes Vol. 1* and *The Guitar Grimoire: Chords And Voicings Vol. 2*. Small enough to fit inside a guitar case, both volumes contain the complete contents of the originals—including scales, modes, chords, voicings and graphic diagrams—in a condensed and rearranged format.

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

## [5] ON THE CASE

Madarozzo has introduced the MA-W series of more than 40 different hardshell guitar cases designed by Martin Ritter. The cases feature multi-ply wood shell construction, black vinyl exterior with white thread trim, white fashion trims, embossed Madarozzo logo, chrome hardware and black moulded handles. They are designed to fit dreadnought, classic, electric and electric bass guitars, A- and F-style mandolins, four- and five-string banjos, V-shaped electric guitars and semi-acoustic guitars.

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

## [6] TUNER TUNEUPS

Seiko has upgraded and relaunched three of its tuners. The SAT100 guitar and bass tuner has been replaced by the SAT 101, while the SAT501 chromatic and STX2 clip-on tuners feature improved interfaces and various electronic upgrades, all at the same price as their predecessors. MSRP: SAT101, \$26.95; SAT501, \$36.95; STX2, \$65.95.

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



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## Warming Up, Warming Down:

### An Essential Part of a Good Trumpet Routine

In 1970, at age 20, I left a two-year stint on the road to pursue a college degree at Indiana University, where I had heard about a trumpet teacher named Bill Adam. On my first day at IU, I heard something I had never heard before. It was the glorious sound of three trumpet players practicing their warm-up routines together. I entered the room where they were practicing and introduced myself. “Bart Marantz from Miami, Florida,” I said. “Oh, hi, I’m Charlie Davis,” “I’m Larry Hall” and “I’m Jerry Hey” were the replies.

If you know about trumpeters, then you know that these three musicians have become the leaders of today on the instrument. But, at the time, they were all students of Mr. Adam’s, learning that the fundamentals of trumpet begin with a solid warm-up routine. As they continued their warm-up, I could hear their sound was centered and that each pitch was in tune with clarity and direction. In my own subsequent lessons with Mr. Adam, I was also introduced to the importance of warming up and warming down. I learned that a balance must be maintained between the human body and the trumpet, one that will allow you to execute even the most difficult passages and play multiple gigs in a day.

When warming up, bear in mind a fundamental concept: rest as long as you play. In order to build strength, the muscles that have been strained and stressed during play must be rested long enough to allow the blood to return. If the exercise lasts one minute, then rest for one minute. Remember, you are trying to build—not tear down. Also, always warm down after you play. This will help complete the relaxation that your muscles require.

I would like to share with you the following exercises, some of which are variations on Schlossberg, Arbans and Caruso from the studio of Mr. Adam (now retired professor of trumpet at Indiana University). Start with whole notes from the center of the staff, always balancing by returning to a low pitch after playing one in a higher register. Work your way through the seven positions, utilizing a slow tempo so that you can concentrate on the center of your sound and pitch with accuracy. When done correctly and with consistency, the results will be very positive. **DB**

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Exercise 1: Play four counts, then rest four counts. Maintain a full sound, always trying to center the pitch.

Exercise 2: Play this through all the half-steps down to low F#.

Exercise 3: Play through all the half-step series going down through the seven valve positions. Keep the “ah” and “ee” feeling in the throat as you ascend and descend.

Exercise 4: An expansion of Exercise 3. Transpose to all descending keys through low F#.

**Exercise 5:** This dominant seventh exercise needs plenty of support and air. Transpose to all half-steps in the seven positions descending to low F#.

Musical notation for Exercise 5, consisting of two staves. The first staff starts with a treble clef, a 3/4 time signature, and a key signature of one flat. It contains a sequence of notes with dynamic markings: *f*, *f*, *ff*, and *f*. The second staff continues the sequence with similar dynamic markings. A 'Rest' instruction is placed above the final note of the first staff.

**Exercise 6:** Play slowly, centering on sound and pitch. This exercise should be played in all keys to the octave.

Musical notation for Exercise 6, consisting of two staves. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 60. The music features a long, sustained note with a slur over it, and vocal-like syllables 'EE AH' written below the notes. The first staff starts with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. The second staff continues the exercise with similar syllables and dynamics.

**Exercise 7a:** Leave the mouthpiece on the emboucher for the entire time and breathe through your nose only.

Musical notation for Exercise 7a, consisting of two staves. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 72. The music features a series of rapid, slurred notes with a dynamic marking of *ff*. The first staff starts with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. The second staff continues the exercise with similar dynamics.

**Exercise 7b:** Play this exercise up and down from middle C to the octave and back down, ending on high C.

Musical notation for Exercise 7b, consisting of a single staff. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 72. The music features a series of rapid, slurred notes with a dynamic marking of *ff*, moving up and down the scale. The staff starts with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. A 'Rest' instruction is placed above the final note.

**Exercise 8:** This warm-down exercise should be used at the end of any playing session to relax the facial muscles and set them for the next performance.

Musical notation for Exercise 8, consisting of two staves. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 60. The music features a series of slow, sustained notes with a dynamic marking of *f*. The first staff starts with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. The second staff continues the exercise with similar dynamics.

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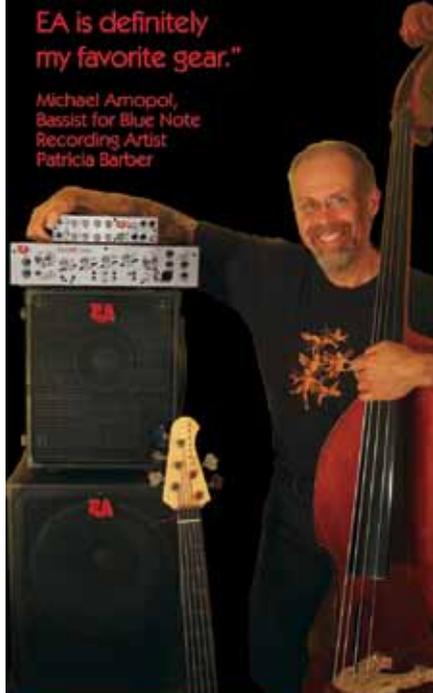
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### Slide Hampton's Trombone Solo On 'My Blues'



In 1969, jazz trombonist and composer Slide Hampton moved to Europe. Soon after his arrival, he teamed up with expatriate saxophonist Dexter Gordon to record the sextet album *A Day In Copenhagen*. "My Blues," one of three original tunes by Hampton from the album, showcases his ability as a melodic improviser as he blows over seven choruses of the blues, five of which are transcribed here.

Hampton's first solo chorus is based on a simple four-note motif (starting in measure 1) derived from the song's melody. He augments the motif and includes a pickup note and enclosure the second time around (m. 2), creating a short melodic sequence. In measure 3 he plays this same motif transposed up one half-step while also shortening it rhythmically. In measures 5–8, he develops it further by repeating the motif four times in ascending fourths every three beats, creating a hemiola. While these four-note cells don't function in conventional ways over the chord changes, they create a coherent melodic sequence with a dissonant sound. The first chorus ends with harmonic generalization, as Hampton uses an F dominant bebop scale including a #11 (m. 9–10), a bluesy D $\flat$  chromatic passing tone (m. 10) and a diatonic lick (m. 10–11), leaving off on an F that conversationally connects to the same F four beats later (m. 11–12).

Hampton frequently incorporates "blue notes" ( $\flat 3$  and  $\flat 7$ ) that aren't necessarily reflected in the chord he's playing over (m. 10, 14–15, 73–74, 83). In measure 16, there is a conversational connection that starts off a long phrase in B $\flat$  dorian, ending in a 7-3 resolution anticipating the chord change (m. 18–19). The motif from the first chorus then appears again one half-step higher than it originally did, followed by a pair of nearly identical super locrian licks (m. 22, 24) that are interrupted by a fragmented blues scale (m. 23), bringing us into the third chorus with another 7-3 resolution (m. 25).

The third chorus continues with another example of harmonic generalization, this time using

a long B $\flat$  minor pentatonic line that ends up anticipating the chord change to E $\flat$ 7 (m. 26–28). Hampton then shifts to a similar line, using B $\flat$  dorian instead (m. 29–30). He quickly uses an ascending diminished scale (m. 31–32) before anticipating and then playing the popular "Cry Me A River" descending super locrian lick (m. 33–34).

Hampton starts a simple repeated figure two beats before the next chorus begins, harmonically generalizing while using over-the-barline phrasing (m. 36–38). In measures 39–40 he uses another repetitive figure, this time descending while outlining part of a B $\flat$  mixolydian scale on beats 1 and 3, and ending with a  $\flat 13-9$  resolution and another B $\flat$  minor pentatonic lick. A portion of the lick from measure 41 is repeated and embellished in measure 42. The chorus then ends with a pair of melodic sequences, each of which features two long phrases (an antecedent and consequent phrase) that use B $\flat$  minor pentatonic. These sequences (m. 43–47, 48–50) bring us into the fifth chorus.

Hampton plays a whole-tone scale starting on F# that brings us into the change to E $\flat$ 7 (m. 51–52). This is followed by yet another harmonically generalized long phrase in B $\flat$  dorian ending with a small portion of a G mixolydian scale with a  $\flat 9$  leading into the Cm7 chord (m. 53–56). The last long phrase of this chorus ends with a simple diatonic repetitive phrase that reinforces the tonic sound (m. 57–59).

What is perhaps most interesting about this solo is Hampton's juxtaposition of dissonant material with simple tonic-oriented resolutions. At times, it seems as if he disregards the chord changes in order to complete a rhythmic or melodic idea. But whatever his intent, these highly dissonant passages are almost always followed by a relatively simple resolution of some kind. **DB**

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1 B $\flat$ 7 2 E $\flat$ 7 3 B $\flat$ 7 4 B $\flat$ 7  
 5 E $\flat$ 7 6 F7 7 B $\flat$ 7 8 D m7 G7  
 9 C m7 10 F7 11 B $\flat$ 7 12 C m7 F7  
 13 B $\flat$ 7 14 E $\flat$ 7 15 B $\flat$ 7 16 B $\flat$ 7  
 17 E $\flat$ 7 18 B $\flat$ 7 19 D m7 G7  
 21 C m7 22 F7 23 B $\flat$ 7 24 C m7 F7  
 25 B $\flat$ 7 26 E $\flat$ 7 27 B $\flat$ 7 28 B $\flat$ 7  
 29 E $\flat$ 7 30 B $\flat$ 7 31 D m7 G7  
 33 C m7 34 F7 35 B $\flat$ 7 36 C m7 F7  
 37 B $\flat$ 7 38 E $\flat$ 7 39 B $\flat$ 7 40 B $\flat$ 7  
 41 E $\flat$ 7 42 B $\flat$ 7 43 D m7 G7  
 45 C m7 46 F7 47 B $\flat$ 7 48 C m7 F7  
 49 B $\flat$ 7 50 E $\flat$ 7 51 B $\flat$ 7 52 C $\flat$ 7  
 53 E $\flat$ 7 54 B $\flat$ 7 55 D m7 G7  
 57 C m7 58 F7 59 B $\flat$ 7 60 C m7 F7

*solo continues*

### Arkestral Archive Finds Earthly Home at Berklee College

Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick opened his speech at Boston's Berklee College of Music's newly renovated Haviland Street Building with a simultaneously serious and light-hearted remark that was perfect for the spring evening dedication ceremony: "Never has the emptying of an attic been so appreciated."

Berklee President Roger Brown was the recipient of boxes from the governor's suburban home that contained hundreds of photographs, music scores, scripts of musical plays, reel-to-reel tapes and record albums from his father, saxophonist Pat Patrick. These items documented his life and cultural environment from the 1950s on to the 1990s.

"The story of Pat Patrick and the Sun Ra Arkestra is an important one for our students to know," Brown said. "The band was dedicated to their own artistry and creativity, and not commercial pursuits. Deval Patrick, by dedicating his father's collection to the Berklee Africana Studies Archive, further legitimizes the center as a place for students, and scholars, to learn about the history that can support and inform their own career goals, especially when they may not seem to swim in the mainstream."

Bill Banfield, professor of Liberal Arts and Africana Studies, has helped organize the new Laurdine Kenneth (Pat) Patrick Jr. Collection and understands its educational value.



Bill Banfield (left) shows the Pat Patrick Collection to Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick

"In addition to Patrick being this great musician, it's interesting to learn who he worked with," Banfield said. "Sun Ra for over 25 years, Mongo Santamaria, Ellington, Monk, Coltrane—because it gives you insight not only to how he plays but how he plays with other people. So the archive is set up to reflect his story in that way. When you see it live you get the feeling of a musician's narrative and how that narrative becomes an even bigger narrative when connected to all these other musicians."

Baritone saxophonist Allan Chase, who wrote a master's thesis on Sun Ra, was among the eight faculty members present at the dedication that spiritedly performed "Saturn," "Planet Earth" and other tricky interstellar Ra songs in remembrance of Patrick, who died in 1991. "Pat was sort of a

chameleon," he observed, "a very versatile and excellent player who could participate fully in a lot of different situations. He co-wrote a song that was a rock 'n' roll hit [Georgie Fame's "Yeh, Yeh"], and he was one of the first people to play avant-garde saxophone."

At Berklee, Governor Patrick talked about his father's absenteeism as a parent, his flawed earth-mindedness versus his successful flights of jazz creativity.

"My father's first love was his music. As a child I resented that. As an adult I have come to appreciate that his love of the music is the explanation for the excellence of his music, and that he sacrificed everything in pursuit of his first love. So it means a lot to me that he is appreciated as much as he is here at Berklee." —Frank-John Hadley

### Oberlin Honors Cosby Couple, Wonder at New Building Unveiling

Oberlin College and Conservatory in Oberlin, Ohio, celebrated the completion of its new Bernard and Judith Kohl building on April 30 and May 1, as its established jazz alumnae mingled with its current faculty and students. Bill Cosby and his wife, Camille, received the college's Doctorate of Humanities degree, and Stevie Wonder also received Oberlin's Doctorate of Music degree.

The Kohl building is the college's new home for jazz studies, music history and music theory. Along with its state-of-the-art practice rooms and faculty offices, it also has an analog and digital recording studio. Kohl's basement will contain the James and Susan Neumann collection of more than 100,000 jazz recordings along with posters, books and memorabilia.

At the building's dedication ceremony, Dean David Stull added that it's the largest building devoted to jazz education in the country. He also credited the chair of jazz studies at Oberlin, Wen-



Stevie Wonder

dell Logan, for the school's dedication to the music. Logan passed the praise along to a chunk of the audience.

"This beautiful building is something that reflects the students we have here," Logan said. "It is a soulful building and we added some more soul to it."

As Cosby received his degree, he urged the assembled students to "sit at the feet of your professors of music, some happen to be friends of mine. The history of jazz will free you up."

Upon receiving his degree, Wonder applauded Oberlin as "the first northern college to accept African Americans. It's a rich culture that I have the honor to be a part of—and I don't take that lightly."

The following night's concert included the Oberlin Jazz Ensemble and such Oberlin alumnae as pianist Stanley Cowell and saxophonist/author James McBride. Wonder played a brief set with the school's faculty—including saxophonist Gary Bartz, trumpeter Marcus Belgrave and trombonist Robin Eubanks—guesting on "Superstition." —Aaron Cohen



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## Lionel Loueke

Although guitarist Lionel Loueke only entered the public eye less than a decade ago, he has earned peer esteem for re-imagining his instrument as a phantasmagoric, real-time Afro-Western orchestra, as is evident in *Mwaliko* (Blue Note). This is his first Blindfold Test.

### Mike Moreno

"I Have A Dream" (from *Third Wish*, CrissCross, 2008) Moreno, electric guitar; Kevin Hays, piano; Doug Weiss, bass; Kendrick Scott, drums.

Definitely someone from my generation. I hear a Kurt Rosenwinkel influence, but I think it's Mike Moreno. Mike is one of the great players of his generation, with his sound—lyrical and warm. I love it. The drummer caught my attention, not only in the feel, but the unique drumset tuning. It's Kendrick Scott. 4 stars.

### Pat Metheny

"Let's Move" (from *Day Trip*, Nonesuch, 2008) Metheny, electric guitar; Christian McBride, bass; Antonio Sanchez, drums.

Pat Metheny. That's a hard tune—just the head is hard to play! I knew Pat has a great sense of melody as well as great chops, but I didn't know his chops were this huge! That bass player has crazy technique that I don't often hear, especially from acoustic bassists. I think it's Christian McBride, just from that ability to play so fast and so precisely. I also recognized Antonio Sanchez from the sound of the drumset, and the clarity and precision of his playing. 5 stars.

### Gateway

"How's Never" (from *Homecoming*, ECM, 1994) John Abercrombie, guitar; Dave Holland, bass; Jack DeJohnette, drums.

That's Dave Holland playing that odd-metered bassline; not many other bass players can do that. It's John Abercrombie. I recognize him because of how much he uses the chorus pedal and his phrases—he has a long sustain sound. He plays very legato, but at the same time, every time he picks a note, it's very percussive. 5 stars.

### Béla Fleck

"Mariam," (from *Throw Down Your Heart: Tales From The Acoustic Planet, Vol. 3, Africa Sessions*, Rounder, 2009) Fleck, banjo; Djelmady Tounkara, guitar; Alou Coulibazy, calabash.

Are most of the musicians from Mali? I hear the calabash sound. I don't know if the guitar player is African. Could it be Leni Stern? A beautiful piece. Almost everyone plays that style of guitar in Mali. The other string instrument reminds me of n'goni, though it sounds more like a banjo. 3 stars.

### Biréli Lagrène

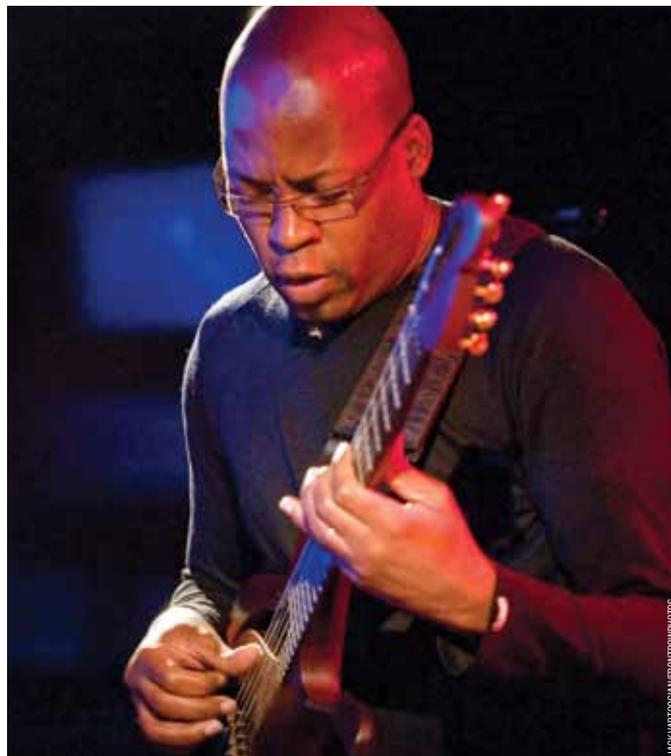
"Sur La Croisette" (from *Solo: To Bi Or Not To Bi*, Dreyfus, 2006) Lagrène, acoustic guitar.

Whoa! Somebody with a big influence of Django Reinhardt. I'm probably wrong, but Biréli Lagrène is the person I know who plays with that energy and freedom. Biréli has not only the great technique, but the flowing ideas. There's always something coming. I like the spontaneity. I don't hear the phrase coming, whether it's going to be short or long. And I like the sound from the fingers on the strings—very intense. 5 stars.

### Lage Lund

"Quiet Now" (from *Early Songs*, Criss Cross, 2008) Lund, guitar; Danny Grissett, piano; Orlando LeFleming, bass; Kendrick Scott, drums.

The tone of the guitar really touched me. It reminds me a bit of Biréli Lagrène, though I have some doubts. It also reminds me of Adam Rog-



ers. Neither of them? I like the tune, and I love the player. The sound has a lot of medium range, which I like. At first, it felt like he was playing with his fingers, so I heard those notes very close to the piano. Later on, of course, I heard he was playing the pick. Great technique. Great sound. Great feel. 4 stars.

### Marc Ribot

"Fiesta En El Solar" (from *Marc Ribot Y Los Cubanos Postizos*, Atlantic, 1998) Ribot, guitar; Anthony Coleman, keyboards; Brad Jones, bass; Roberto Rodriguez, drums; E.J. Rodriguez, percussion.

That sounds like an African guitar player, like from Congo or Zaire. Well, the rhythm section does not play like Africans. Santana? No, it's not Santana's sound. It's not Ali Farka Toure. The sound of the guitar makes me think it's African, but it doesn't make sense that an African would play with that rhythm section. Also, it's a tres. I don't know any Africans who play tres. So the guitar player is probably Cuban. Nothing sticks to me, telling me a strong personality is playing. 3 stars.

### Julian Lage

"Clarity" (from *Sounding Point*, EmArcy, 2009) Lage, acoustic guitar; Ben Roseth, saxophone; Aristedes Rivas, cello; Jorge Roeder, bass; Tupac Mantilla, percussion.

This piece is beautiful; the arrangement is outstanding. The guitar player has a big Pat Metheny influence, but not cliched, not doing Pat's licks. I can hear the melodic sense. He also gets close to that Jim Hall sound with the mic in front of the hollow-body guitar. I can only think of the young guitar player who played with Gary Burton—Julian Lage. 5 stars for the arrangement; 4 for the whole thing.

### Nguyen Lê

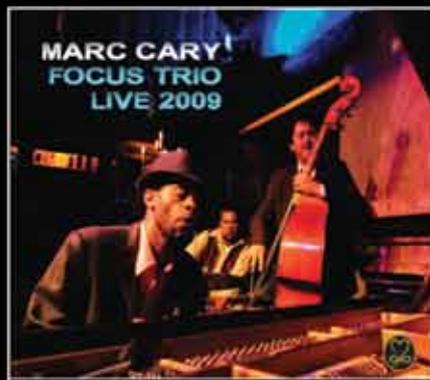
"Stranieri" (from *Homescape*, ACT, 2007) Lê, electric guitar; Paolo Fresu, trumpet.

It sounds like a band from Europe—the trumpet, the effects on it and the groove reminds me of Erik Truffaz. I heard a bit of Indian sound in the guitar at first, and thought about John McLaughlin, but then I realized it wasn't. It sounded like three musicians. I like the groove and the ambiance. 3 stars.

DB

THE "BLINDFOLD TEST" IS A LISTENING TEST THAT CHALLENGES THE FEATURED ARTIST TO DISCUSS AND IDENTIFY THE MUSIC AND MUSICIANS WHO PERFORMED ON SELECTED RECORDINGS. THE ARTIST IS THEN ASKED TO RATE EACH TUNE USING A 5-STAR SYSTEM. NO INFORMATION IS GIVEN TO THE ARTIST PRIOR TO THE TEST.

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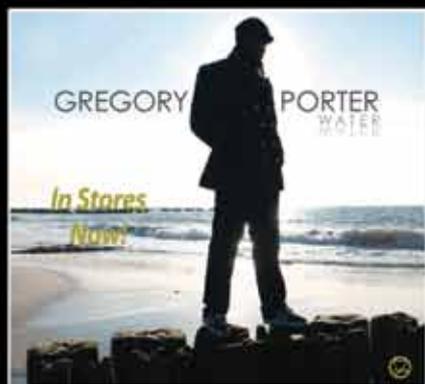
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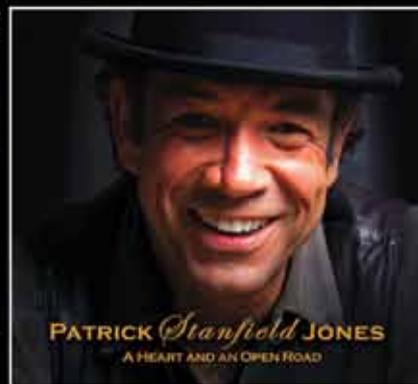
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