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Tenor Saxophonist of the Year
 BY JIM MACNIE

For our portrait of the master at 80, we decided to chat it up with those involved in his highly anticipated, guest-laden birthday bash at the Beacon Theatre on Sept. 10 and a subsequent meet-and-greet session held at a New York bookstore a few nights later. We hear from numerous artists, associates and fans who were there to wish him well, while Rollins himself discusses the success of his big event.

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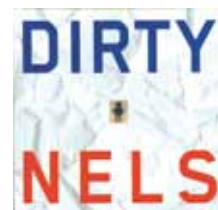
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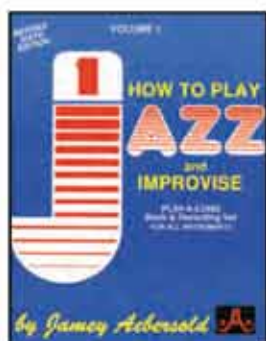
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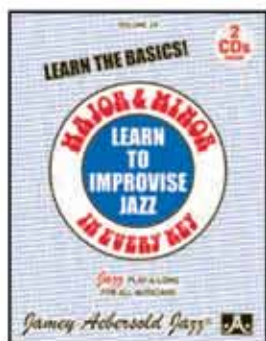
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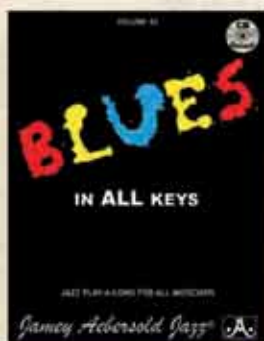
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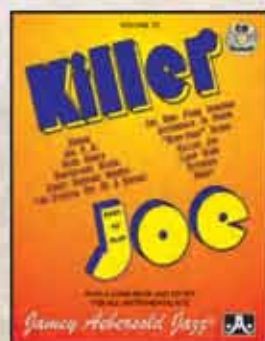
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First Take | BY ED ENRIGHT



Sonny Rollins: No reflections on milestones

Sonny’s Take On Turning 80

Sonny Rollins didn’t have a lot of time to chat this summer. He was occupied—performing on tour with his working band and planning his 80th birthday concert celebration, which took place Sept. 10 at New York’s Beacon Theatre. We wanted to make sure *DownBeat* got a word in with Rollins well in advance of his big day, which writer Jim Macnie covers in fine detail beginning on page 24 of this issue. So, *DownBeat* publisher Frank Alkyer and I came up with a list of questions, which we exchanged with Rollins via email in early August. His responses were short, sweet and 100-percent genuine Newk.

DownBeat: What’s the best thing about being 80 and playing the saxophone?

Sonny Rollins: *Being* 80 and playing the saxophone.

DB: What’s the worst?

Rollins: Being 80 and *not* playing the saxophone.

DB: Looking back at your past performances at the Beacon Theatre, what do you remember most about your experiences there?

Rollins: I remember the acoustics, which were superior to many. It would require a chapter in a book to recall the many experiences I had there.

DB: What differences do you feel in your playing today compared to when you were, say, in your 40s?

Rollins: I don’t listen to myself. The experience of playing is the same for me today as it was when I was 8 years old and I got my alto saxophone.

DB: What makes you happiest about playing today?

Rollins: Everything about playing makes me happy.

DB: After all these years, what does the saxophone mean to you?

Rollins: The saxophone is more like my right arm; it’s that much a part of me.

DB: If it wasn’t the saxophone that called you, what else, do you think, might have been your life’s work?

Rollins: I love watercolors and oils, and drew cartoons as a youngster.

DB: Which musical artists have you been listening to lately? Any players who have really caught your attention?

Rollins: I’m not listening to music, but I enjoy the usual suspects.

DB: Tell us about your plans for later this fall into early 2011.

Rollins: My plans include more of the same, hopefully on a higher plane of performance, including recordings. Obviously, there will be no reflections on milestones.

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Sonny at 80

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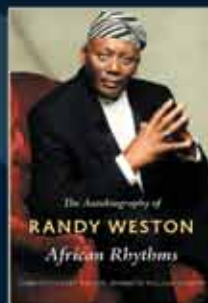


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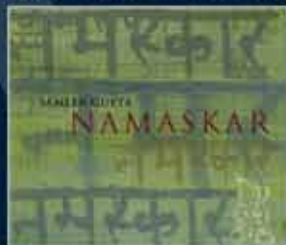
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The **Beat**

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Beantown Blast

Boston big bands celebrated milestone anniversaries in 2010

Followers of big bands in Boston experienced a solid 1985. Aardvark and the New Black Eagle Jazz Band were fixtures on the scene. Orange Then Blue and True Colors sprang to life, as did two more ensembles that held their first public concerts within days of each other in December. A quarter-century later, Either/Orchestra and the Jazz Composers Alliance Orchestra (JCAO) are still the talk of jazz Boston; they've celebrated their silver anniversaries with separate appearances at the Regattabar and releases of new albums: E/O's *Mood Music For Time Travellers* and JCAO's *A Wallflower In The Amazon* (both on Accurate). Also, the local Compaq Big Band marked its 35th anniversary with a late-fall gig at the Hub's other hotel jazz club, Scullers.

"When I started the band, I thought about what I would want to hear if I were in the audience," said E/O saxophonist Russ Gershon. "What are the feelings that I crave from music? I've always selected the repertoire and composed or arranged most of the music, although Curtis Hasselbring and Bob Nieske wrote a lot of great original music for us in the early '90s, and Rick McLaughlin and Joel Yennior have contributed compositions to the new record. I want the musicians to feel free to express themselves while executing compositional music."

About 50 musicians have been in the E/O fold, including John Medeski, Matt Wilson and Miguel Zenón.

Along with Ken Schaphorst and two other composers, Darrell Katz is responsible for starting up the non-profit corporation Jazz Composers



Alliance and its acronymic orchestra. As the only one to stay the course, Katz shares writing duties these days with David Harris, Bob Pilkington, Warren Senders, Jim Hobbs and Norm Zocher.

"Each of us notates, describes and leads the ensemble differently," Katz said. "And in this way, we help each other; each different approach contributes to the evolution of the group, making a group of musicians particularly sensitive to the needs of a diverse group of composers. I do try to avoid getting caught in stylistic traps and am trying to move forward, but it's not on a straight path."

Current band members include Harris, Hobbs, Alan Chase, Bill Lowe and singer Rebecca Shrimpton; alumni include Medeski and Chris Speed.

"Despite the level of education and skill in E/O, we try to go for the jugular as if we were a garage band that could barely play and had to put

it over with pure feeling."

About his composing for the band he noted: "Compositionally, in the beginning I liked startling juxtapositions, jamming ideas together in a way that would create surprises. Over the years I've moved to integrating contrasting ideas more organically, trying to create rich, complex stews rather than surprising salads."

As for developments in the E/O's sound, Gershon asserted, "The biggest evolution can be marked by the Afro-Latinization of the band and the addition of conguero Vicente Lebron in 1998. I think of the band in two eras—before Vicente and with Vicente." Close involvement with Ethiopian sounds and artists the past dozen years, including concerts in northeast Africa, has given E/O what Gershon called "a second identity, an entree into the world-music community."

—Frank-John Hadley

Buddy Collette Made Changes With Quiet Authority

Multi-reedist William “Buddy” Collette, a towering figure in Los Angeles jazz, died Sept. 19 at 89 of complications from a stroke.

A native of Watts, Collette took to the saxophone early. At 12, he induced his classmate Charles Mingus to switch from cello to the bass. Their relationship lasted until Mingus’ death in 1979; Collette inspired Mingus’ respect and soothed his volatile impulses.

Collette led a U.S. Navy orchestra during World War II, and upon his release in 1946 he re-teamed with Mingus, saxophonist Lucky Thompson and trombonist Britt Woodman in a cooperative band, Stars of Swing. He also learned to double on flute, clarinet and alto.

Bandleader Jerry Fielding brought him into the studio orchestra for “You Bet Your Life” with Groucho Marx. It was the first instance of a black player working in a high-profile Hollywood studio band. Collette’s ability to play all the reeds stood him well for studio work for decades. Alto saxophonist Jackie Kelso said, “Buddy made the decision not to travel but to stay in L.A. and raise his children.”

Collette’s flute was showcased in the Chico Hamilton Quintet and the group’s minor hit, “Blue Sands.” After he left the band, Collette referred one of his students, Eric Dolphy, to the Hamilton reed chair.

Active in the amalgamation of the black and white Los Angeles music unions, Collette worked very hard to bring people together—both in and out of music.



Buddy Collette

DOWNBEAT ARCHIVES

“Buddy knew that content of character is far more important than race,” Kelso said. Collette worked tirelessly for music education in the Southern California schools. When his children were grown, Collette took out-of-town work, like conducting for Ella Fitzgerald and Mingus in 1964, and became a presence on the European festival circuit in the ’80s.

Richard Simon played bass in Collette’s band in the early ’80s and led his band after the leader suffered a stroke in 1998.

“Buddy had a quiet authority,” Simon said. “Both as a man and a musician. He occasionally had brilliant students like James [Newton], but he was equally excited by a grade school kid learning to play a C-major scale.” —Kirk Silsbee

Bandleader Roland Vazquez Revisits Studio With Large Ensemble

Roland Vazquez’s new album, *The Visitor* (RVCD), is the bandleader’s first disc in 13 years. Leading his 19-piece big band, this veteran drummer’s six compositions reflect the unity of a group that’s been around since 1991.

“Jazz is secular gospel music,” Vazquez said. “It’s testifying. The purpose of the music is for a tale to be told. I call it Afro-Latin rhythmic chamber jazz, but it’s chamber music; it’s very specific, it’s not party music.” Asked to elaborate further, he says, “The music’s become more serious, the exploration has become more important than the party. Playing music is an abandonment. It always has tears or blood or something in it.”

With a full big band including saxophonists Joel Frahm, Aaron Heick, Dan Willis and Roger Rosenberg, pianist Luis Perdomo and drummer Ignacio Berroa, Vazquez says that *The Visitor* “contains aspects of the unknown. There’s something risky going on here.”

For Vazquez—whose main instrument is



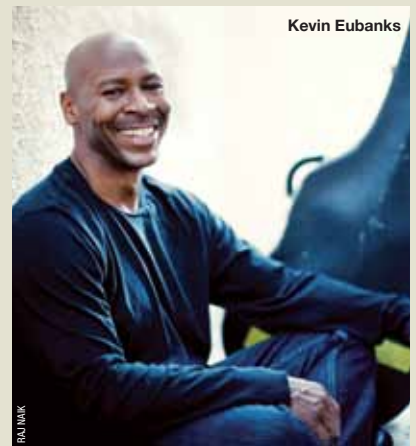
Roland Vazquez

THOMAS NICKELSON

drums and whose inspirations also include the music of Gil Evans, Buddy Rich and Don Ellis as well as James Brown and music soundtracks—his other main gigs have been working with his quintet and writing for other ensembles. That’s not when he’s been busy teaching at residencies from Berklee and Eastman to the Manhattan School of Music and the University of Michigan (along with his wife, composer/performer Susan Botti).

—John Ephland

Riffs ▶



Kevin Eubanks

PAU MAK

Eubanks Signs: Kevin Eubanks has signed to Mack Avenue Records and releases his debut on the label, *Zen Food*, on Nov. 23. This is his first CD release since leaving his 15-year stint leading “The Tonight Show” band this summer. **Details:** mackavenue.com

SF Steps: SFJAZZ has launched its new Giant Steps campaign to invite donors to become founding members of its planned SFJAZZ Center in San Francisco’s Hayes Valley neighborhood. The center is planned to open in the fall of 2012. **Details:** sfjazz.org

Chick Doc: Production work is finishing on a documentary about Chick Webb that will be titled, *The Savoy King: Chick Webb And The Music That Changed America*. The documentary includes interviews with Louie Bellson, Roy Haynes and trumpeter Joe Wilder. **Details:** savoyking.com

Wilson Grant: Trumpeter Sarah Wilson has received an Investing In Artists grant from California’s Center For Cultural Innovation. She will use the award to fund a new writing project that pays tribute to Myra Melford, Laurie Frink and Carla Bley. **Details:** sarahwilsonmusic.com

Swedish Closing: The Swedish government has announced that it will be closing its Rikskonsertser/Concerts Sweden organization as of Dec. 31. Rikskonsertser was formed in 1968 and has helped produce the Swedish Jazz Celebration. **Details:** rikskonsertser.se

RIP, Albertina Walker: Gospel singer Albertina Walker died of respiratory failure in Chicago on Oct. 8. She was 81. A protegee of Mahalia Jackson, Walker co-led The Caravans, who had such hits as “Mary Don’t You Weep,” “Lord Keep Me Day By Day” and “I Won’t Be Back (Sweeping Through The City).” Her behind-the-beat phrasing was particularly influential.



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Billy Martin Releases Personal Instructional Drumming DVD

A fisheye lens functions as a wide-eyed intro into Billy Martin's latest endeavor, a DVD called *Life On Drums* (Vongole). The endless opening shot crawls through a cavernous warehouse, winding up stairwells as an ambiguously abstract soundtrack moans ominously, punctuated by what sounds like the plucking of a string combo. Eventually the sequence reaches its destination—the shaggy-haired drummer best known as the second M in Medeski Martin & Wood, perched over his pared-down kit. It's immediately clear that this isn't your average instructional video. Instead it's more like an art film that just happens to feature a gifted player given to head-scratching percussion profundities. Martin spouts off while hashing out the philosophy of the instrument with his own first instructor, Allen Herman.

"It was really my reaction to those videos where it's all pyrotechnics," Martin said. "One guy in a room with a huge drum kit, going through all these technically flashy exercises. I can't even watch those."

Just as unorthodox is his decision to bring on Herman, a Broadway vet whose significance to Martin is huge, having started him off on a kit back in 1974.

"Allen was the only guy I considered," Martin said. "I knew that we would spend most of the



first day talking and going over all these different topics like I do in my lessons: soloing, visualization, tempo, time, tone/tonality, composition, improvising. I threw those all out at him and we took it from there."

The two talk shop in an honest, unguarded give and take. At one point Herman candidly discusses his hiatus from playing altogether before the film cuts to him methodically working through a solo that's tastefully spare, thoughtful and clearly informed by his studies with rudimentary master Joe Morello. Still, Martin is the real star of the show here, which is established over dozens of solos filmed from various askew angles, interspersed with ruminative dialogue.

It's no accident that *Life On Drums* often

feels more like an art flick than a tutorial.

MMW fans have already witnessed Martin's avocation at work with the haunting black-and-white video for "Amber Gris," in addition to his documentary contributions to last year's *Radiolarians* box set. So it's not surprising to hear names like Jean-Luc Godard and David Lynch rattled off when the percussionist is pressed for points of reference. However, an even bigger influence on this project is probably less obvious: *Dance On Film*, choreographer Martha Graham's seminal mid-century treatise on contemporary dance.

"Something about it informed me—you're in a room with her and she's speaking in a philosophical way, then she introduces her dancers, and they perform. That's the way to do it. I want people to see the movement of a drummer, and to bring the beauty of that out."

Further into the video Martin nods to non-Western traditions, bringing on sparring partners for a few Gamelan workouts, guided by his hand-scrawled "riddim" notations so that any viewer can follow along. When asked why Herman wasn't brought on for a drum-off, Martin points out that the majority of the film is, in fact, a duet between the former teacher and student. "After 36 years we're sitting down together again—it's a beautiful karmic circle." —*Areif Sless-Kitain*



It's a Palmetto Christmas!

Matt Wilson - drums, timpani, jingle bells
 Jeff Lederer - tenor sax, soprano sax, clarinet, bass clarinet, piccolo, toy piano
 Paul Sikivie - bass

"If we were to form a jazz combo, our model would most definitely be Matt Wilson's Christmas Tree-O!" - *The Three Wisemen*

It was a snowy day in May when Matt Wilson, Jeff Lederer and Paul Sikivie gathered at Maggie's Farm recording studio to spread Christmas cheer. The result of that gathering is Matt Wilson's Christmas Tree-O, a collection of everyone's favorite holiday tunes that's destined to be added to holiday music collections all over the globe.

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Fred Hersch - piano
 John Hébert - bass
 Eric McPherson - drums

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"Unflinching...with 'Whirl,' Hersch can build on his firmly established style and versatility." - *NPR All Things Considered*



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Spiral

Dr. Lonnie Smith - Hammond B3
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www.palmetto-records.com



Silke Eberhard

German Saxophonist Silke Eberhard Reimagines Eric Dolphy

Silke Eberhard first picked up the clarinet when she was 11 years old, and three years later she switched to the alto saxophone. Her discovering of jazz was still a few more years away—her point of entry was big band music because it reminded her of the traditional Bavarian brass bands she'd grown up with in the small village of Oggenhausen in the southern part of Germany, near Ulm. "Where I came from there was very little jazz," Eberhard said. "My father had some Glenn Miller records."

Her education proceeded rapidly in her late teens, and within a couple of years she's graduated from absorbing big band music to the work of Eric Dolphy, whose music remained with her ever since. Last year, more than two decades after her initial introduction to the iconic reedist, Eberhard debuted a fascinating new project called Potsa Lotsa (an alternate title of Dolphy's composition "Number Eight"). Recently the quartet—which includes tenor saxophonist Patrick Braun, trumpeter Nikolaus Neuser and trombonist Gerhard Gschlöbl, all of them neighbors now in Berlin—released its debut album, *The Complete Works of Eric Dolphy* (Jazzwerkstatt), a mind-bending double CD that features Eberhard's arresting arrangements of all 26 known Dolphy compositions.

"People always think of him as a bass clarinetist and not an alto saxophonist, and I think more people should know about him," she said. "I wanted to do a special lineup, something different from what Eric Dolphy did. I wanted listeners to be able to hear his music from a different perspective. I thought about many different possibilities—with strings, with a guitar, this or that—and I eventually decided on four horns."

Eberhard had long wanted to present a project focusing on Dolphy's music—she admitted that the comprehensive nature was loosely inspired by Alexander von Schlippenbach's Monk's Casino band, which recorded all 70 of the pianist's tunes—but Potsa Lotsa

is no facile tribute band.

Eberhard created rigorous arrangements for all of the tunes, which, considering the quartet's unusual instrumentation, presented some significant challenges.

"Some tunes fit very well for the lineup and some where not so easy," she said. "'The Baron,' for example, has such a high range that not even one of our instruments could cover the melody, so I had to split it up on all four horns."

Although the band members improvise across the album, the focal point is how Eberhard harnessed Dolphy's quirky compositions into tightly woven expressions of jagged melody and tart harmony. Most of the performances clock in under four minutes, a necessity when dealing with so many tunes.

While Eberhard doesn't get to improvise at great length in Potsa Lotsa, she's been doing so with some other projects in recent years. In 2007 she made an international splash in a duo project with the pianist Aki Takase dedicated to the music of Ornette Coleman—their album *Ornette Coleman Anthology* (Intakt) delivered a slew of striking interpretations that both retained the composer's indomitable spirit while pushing his tunes into unexpected shapes and styles. Eberhard also leads a superb trio that's set to release its second album in January on Jazzwerkstatt. She's joined by the excellent, limber bassist Jan Roder—a member of Die Enttäuschung with whom she's worked steadily since 1996, a year after she moved to Berlin to study at the prestigious Hanns Eisler Academy of Music—and drummer Kay Lübke. In this stellar configuration Eberhard presents her own compositions, flexible and attractive vehicles rooted in hard-swinging post-bop that nevertheless provide her with great expressive freedom.

DB

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Brian Blade Soars At Musically Diverse Chicago Jazz Festival

The Chicago Jazz Festival has always prided itself on the diversity of its programming. This year's three-day festival was no exception. For example, the two closing acts could not have been more different. Henry Threadgill's latest edition of his Zooid band, complete with obtuse arrangements and unconventional uses of conventional instruments, preceded singer Kurt Elling's group. Threadgill's alto sax and flute playing used aleatoric notes and tones, with no obvious musical pegs. His music stood in high contrast to Elling's more pop-oriented jazz, the singer belting out to novel arrangements of everything from The Beatles' "Norwegian Wood" and Stevie Wonder's "Golden Lady" to a surprise closer, a touching, subtle rendition of "In The Wee Small Hours Of The Morning."

There were other examples of contrasting styles, including sets from various high school and college groups to a 75th anniversary show of mainstream jazz from Ramsey Lewis at Millennium Park and Either/Orchestra with a guest vocalist, Ethiopian singer Teshome Mitiku. Brad Mehldau's popular yet idiosyncratic trio jazz played to a packed Petrillo Music Shell main stage. But drummer Brian Blade's Fellowship Band's set on the Jazz on Jackson side stage was the most inspiring of the weekend.

Blade's jazz was enveloping, the music at times surreal when it wasn't just plain soulful, suite-like in its presentation, unannounced from the stage even as the music sought to connect with the clearly engaged audience. Beginning with a completely understated approach, Blade



Brian Blade

MICHAEL JACKSON

using brushes then moving to sticks, his front line sang sweetly with a line that expressed the mood perfectly, Myron Walden (playing alto sax and bass clarinet) and Melvin Butler (on tenor sax) augmented by the band's musically mysterious co-founder, pianist Jon Cowherd.

Dynamics were the order of the day, as practically each song seemed to encapsulate both almost-bedtime quiet moments along with ferocious gospel shouts and atonal shrieks, sweet melody sitting comfortably beside the raw energy that jazz is capable of expressing at a moment's notice. Indeed, for jazz fans, this was an unconventional view of the music splayed through a prism that made you feel like you were on a jour-

ney, and that you could trust the artistic guides on board to take you wherever the music dictated.

The rhythms emanating from this drummer-led band—the music floating between waltzes, 5/4 (via an expansive take on the band's "Crooked Creek") and straight fours—were a catalyst for ongoing experimentation. That's when members weren't splitting off into pairs or playing solo, dropping tempo altogether, playing it rubato or modal style, meditative, perhaps moaning a bit. The music became kind of trance-like, without a beginning or an end, where who played didn't appear randomly but instead felt like a spontaneous presence, loud, all the while peaceful.

—John Ephland

Guelph's Contrasts Yield Rewards

An enduring gem on Canada's cultural landscape, the Guelph Jazz Festival, which ran Sept. 8–12, continues to take programming risks and create combinations of musicians that other North American festivals avoid.

As electronic sampler artist/sound sculptor Bob Ostertag asked the audience after wrapping up a set of improvisations with drummer Jim Black, pianist Sylvie Courvoisier and trumpeter Taylor Ho Bynum: What other festival would give over a prime spot to four musicians who had never played together before?

Experiments being what they are, results vary. So while Black and Courvoisier were continually interesting during their interaction, Ostertag's design for their meeting left Bynum the opportunity to display only a fraction of his wide range of techniques and sounds.

Another first-time grouping—among saxophonist Jane Bunnett (who holds the position as the festival's "improviser in residence"), drum-

mer Andrew Cyrille and bassist Henry Grimes—also seemed trapped into a narrower space than was necessary. Always a resourceful adventurer, Bunnett was clearly looking to stretch boundaries. Her body language and instrumental entreaties invited response, but Grimes appeared locked into a pre-determined path of strident rumbblings on bass and acrid explorations on violin.

Grimes showed much greater flexibility in an early-morning meeting with guitarist Marc Ribot and drummer Chad Taylor. The Sunday morning slot at Guelph has often supplied the festival's highlight. This year, coming after an all-night "nuit blanche" mini-arts festival, the Albert Ayler-inspired trio delivered a loud, woolly set that had Ribot shaping feedback and playing with such vigor that he snapped two strings. Taylor, bouncing back after his late-night set with trumpeter Rob Mazurek, was supple and responsive.

In the same sharply raked, soft-seat venue, another trio—pianist Marilyn Lerner, bassist



Henry Grimes

JOHN FOWLER

Ken Filiano and drummer Lou Grassi—displayed close communication and a heightened sense of dynamics. Based in Toronto, Lerner has made her name playing Cuban-influenced music and Jewish folkloric material, but she's also a hard-hitting pianist who blends melodicism

with propulsive waves of rhythm.

Another pianist with a broad vision, Marilyn Crispell, balanced long-decaying hanging notes with tangled clusters and thorny, percussive runs in her solo recital.

Contrast also abounded in the festival's showcase double-bill, which paired Charles Lloyd's Sangam with The Trio—AACM stalwarts pianist Muhal Richard Abrams, saxophonist Roscoe Mitchell and trombonist George Lewis. Lloyd appeared to be having an off night: His tenor playing was wispy and placed low in the sound mix, and his flute contributions seemed uncharacteristically tentative. He sat for long stretches, leaving tabla virtuoso Zakir Hus-

sain and drummer Eric Harland to trade rhythms and indulge in extended vocal jousts. The result was a high-spirited, highly musical outing, but one that often veered close to self-indulgence. The Trio, on the other hand, sounded as austere as a banker delivering bad news, with Lewis favoring his laptop over his trombone and Abrams playing clenched, icy chords. Eschewing any notion of swing, swagger or strut, the band worked in an exceptionally linear fashion, with each player phrasing vertically and Lewis adding mechanistic sonic effects. While it may not have been music that warmed the soul, there was no denying its depth, commitment and rigid beauty.

—James Hale



Mark Turner (left), Avishai Cohen and Joe Martin

Sounds, Images Honor Ornette Coleman

A highlight of New York's fall season included "Celebrating Ornette Coleman," a fundraiser festival for the Jazz Gallery organized by photographer Jimmy Katz. The event, held Sept. 24–26, featured seven bands and an exhibition of 14 of Katz's images.

When drummer Johnathon Blake launched the final tune of his opening set on night one, he propelled a trio (with tenor saxophonist Wayne Escoffery and bassist Ben Williams) through a freebop line with polyrhythmic thrust, sustaining and developing three interlocking patterns. On the late set, tenor saxophonist Mark Turner presented one of his two recently formed pianoless quartets, emulating the configuration that Coleman deployed when he hit New York in 1959. The six-tune set of Turner originals featured immaculate front-line unisons, elegant bass-drum interaction on odd-meter and swinging structures, and patiently developed thematic solos on which Turner and trumpeter Avishai Cohen addressed the harmonic material openly, often springing from, or building towards, collective dialogue. Cohen channeled the spirit of Booker Little as much as that of Don Cherry, continually varying the shape of his lines, while Turner, with deliberate phrasing and a lustrous tone in all registers, played throughout with poetic, inexorable logic.

On Sunday, drummer Nasheet Waits opened with his Equality quartet. Waits eschewed Coleman repertoire, instead presenting five originals by the members and "Tough Love" by Andrew Hill—perhaps familiarity with the material enabled the pan-generational unit to sustain blue-flame ferocity. Pianist Stanley Cowell spontaneously accessed a stride-to-Cecil Taylor timeline of piano expression, adapting his lines to Waits' abstract expressionist web of beats.

On the late set, Joe Lovano presented a new trio of old friends to play *Super Sonix Suite For Ornette*, a seven-movement opus composed for the occasion in which Lovano organizes motific material referencing Coleman's oeuvre in a manner reminiscent of Sonny Rollins' *Freedom Suite*, while deploying his own sonic palette. They established the template from the jump on Lovano's "Ettentro," stating the complex, surging head with precision and force, then navigating a conversational rubato free section with equilateral grace. Drummer Joey Baron conjured an encyclopedic range of grooves, idioms and drumkit timbre, while bassist Cameron Brown flawlessly grounded the proceedings, introducing the fourth movement with a signifying solo. Vocalist Judi Silvano joined the trio for an encore on "Juniper's Garden."

—Ted Panken

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Warren Wolf ▶▶ *Sinewy Vibes*

After lunch a few blocks from Manhattan's Port Authority terminal, Warren Wolf announced that he would head straight for the gym after returning to Baltimore by bus.

"If you don't do it regularly, you lose your muscle mass and energy," said the vibraphonist, who carries 225 no-fat pounds on his 5-foot, 10-inch frame. "To be honest, I hate going in there, running for 20 minutes and then realizing I have to lift weights for another 40 or 50."

Wolf weighed a mere 170 when he attended Berklee College of Music in 1997, joining a Boston cohort that included such present-day luminaries as Jeremy Pelt, Wayne Escoffery, Kendrick Scott, Walter Scott, Derek Nievergelt and Reuben Rogers, all of whom convened regularly at Wally's, the Cambridge, Mass., jazz bar.

"I had to play without a microphone, and people couldn't hear me," Wolf said. "I had the facility and technique, but not the energy to keep up. I started weightlifting so I could get more power and force."

Earlier in 2010, Wolf recorded for Mack Avenue with alto saxophonist Tim Green and pianist Lawrence Fields, both members of his working group, as well as Pelt, bassist Christian McBride and drummer Greg Hutchinson. Produced by McBride and scheduled for early 2011 release, it's Wolf's fourth date, following a self-produced recording (*Raw* [Wolfpac]) that showcases his drumkit derring-do as much as his vibraphone playing, and two accomplished all-vibes sessions for the Japanese market (*Incredible Jazz Vibes* and *Black Wolf* [M&I]). Mulgrew Miller plays piano on both, and Rodney Whitaker and Jeff Watts complete the rhythm section on the latter—on which Wolf transcends the stiffness that often marks recitals of primarily producer-chosen repertoire with impeccable chops, a surging swing feel, an authoritative command of hardcore jazz vocabulary and a point of view to bedrock each improvisation.

"I'm coming right at you, not a lot of difficult melodies, crazy chords, or odd-metered time signatures," Wolf said. "I can play those—put a piece of music in front of me, I'll play it all day with my heart and soul. But I don't hear that way when I compose. I like to let the audience have a good time and enjoy the music. I like to play really hard, fast and kind of flashy. I like to take it to a whole 'nother level."

Wolf referenced such veteran employers as McBride (since recording with him two years ago on *Kind of Brown*, he's toured with the bassist's quintet), Miller and Bobby Watson. "I sometimes feel older than my generation," he said, noting that over the past decade he's primarily been called



upon to "play straight swing, where when it's time to solo, you come out and show your stuff. I like that style, but I've also played less traditional things." He mentioned a not-yet-released date by guitarist Mike Moreno. "It was more involved than traditional jazz, and I had to change my thinking process—it was about sharing ideas and collective playing, playing rhythms toward the drums, figuring out Aaron Parks' great chords."

Discipline is second nature to Wolf, who grew up in the Baltimore inner city portrayed on the TV shows "Homicide" and "The Wire." His father—a Vietnam veteran, social studies teacher and semi-professional musician whose own father, James Wolf, was a local pianist—put him on a three-hours-a-day practice regimen (one for piano, one for drums, one for vibraphone) from the age of 5 until he left high school. He also took Saturday orchestral percussion lessons at Johns Hopkins University's Peabody Preparatory School.

"It was like a regular job," Wolf said. "I got very good on all three instruments, but playing

all these sonatas and concertos bored me. I didn't start to like music until middle school, when I saw how the audience reacted when I'd solo."

Hearing the debut CD of saxophonist Antonio Hart, who had played with his father as a teenager, crystallized Wolf's attraction to jazz, and he absorbed the idiom as he progressed through high school via records ("I bought everything that came out on Verve and Impulse") and real-time bandstand training ("older guys called my parents to ask if they'd bring me to the clubs").

Out of the spotlight in Baltimore, Wolf is less visible to the general jazz audience than his bona fides would merit. With Mack Avenue's promotional and distribution resources behind him, he hopes to rectify that circumstance.

"I know I'm ready to be leader," he said, noting that his quintet—comprising Green, Fields, bassist Chris Fund and drummer John Lamkin—is ready to go. "It's just a challenge of marketing myself well and placing my music where people can hear it." —Ted Panken



Francois Bourassa ▶▶ *Lyrical Investigations*

One of Montreal's best-kept secrets, pianist Francois Bourassa and his quartet swung through New England to celebrate their 25th anniversary earlier this year.

Known for a robust yet often delicate take on acoustic jazz, Bourassa's band recalls John Coltrane's classic quartet one moment and an Ornette Coleman aggregate the next. Featuring bassist Guy Boisvert, Andre Leroux on saxophones and flute, and newcomer drummer Philippe Melanson, the ensemble essentially carries the message of its leader's compositions.

This latest edition of the quartet can be heard on *Rasstones* (Effendi Records), augmented on selected cuts by African percussionist Aboulaye Kone. And while the percussionist wasn't part of the tour, Bourassa notes, "Sometimes I invite him for a few tunes, because it works. Listening to a CD of Boubacar Traoré gave me the idea of inviting an African djembe player, so a few years ago a friend recommended Aboulaye. I liked the music and the melody on the CD, and it inspired me to write more tunes that are groove-oriented that he can play on."

Other quartet releases, with the drum chair changing hands, include *Indefinite Time* and *Live* (Effendi). With all three albums, Bourassa's pen drives the music, with inventive, selected takes on the music of Thelonious Monk and Herbie Nichols on *Live*. All three albums won the Juno, Felix and Opus awards.

The band's sound includes a unique blend of lyricism with avant garde tendencies.

"I like to keep things very lyrical," Bourassa said. "But I also like to make things more unpredictable, adventurous, mixing contemporary stuff and tradition. Andre is a big fan of John Coltrane; I am too. It's the energy, the modal stuff, so we have a lot of that playing. With Ornette, it's the freedom, the way the open forms and harmonies and melodies are not always pre-organized."

Along with a new album slated for release next June, Bourassa will continue his solo career. He has already performed piano duet concerts with Jean-Michel Pile and his first concerto, written for well-known Canadian percussionist Marie-Josée Simard, *Trois Jazzettes Concertantes Pour Vibraphone Et Marimba*, which also included the Orchestre Symphonique de Trois Rivieres.

"It was a great challenge, we blend very well," he said of playing with Pile, and their partnership has two more concerts slated for March. What I like is we didn't play over each other. There is a lot of respect. Two pianos can be very busy. We are quite different: he is more technical than me, I am more economical, lyrical."

—John Ephland

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Players ▶

Jason Roebke

▶ *Silent Determination*

Jason Roebke says he loves the anonymity of playing the bass, but there's nothing anonymous about his tough yet empathetic playing. For more than a decade he's become a crucial figure in Chicago's jazz and improvised music scene, routinely imparting a meat-and-potatoes sensibility in groups like the Jeb Bishop Trio, Mike Reed's People, Places and Things, or James Falzone's Klang. But there's nothing ordinary about how his contributions consistently elevate the musicianship around him.

"I enjoy playing music and I don't really have this grand concept," Roebke said. "But I'm not interested in a concept—I'm interested in music."

Roebke began playing the bass in his teens, but thanks to remote surroundings in Kaukauna, Wis., he had limited access to fellow musicians who shared his burgeoning interest in jazz. He began participating in a summer jazz camp in nearby Appleton to better learn the instrument. Before long, his mother was driving him to Madison, where one of his instructors lived, for private lessons. When Roebke started college in 1992 he failed his test at the University of Minnesota, where he had to borrow an upright bass for the exam—he only played an electric model.

"I didn't have a bow, and I didn't even know what rosin was," Roebke said. "I was totally a beginner when it came to playing, which is why I majored in composition." He disliked the environment at the school, with many of his classmates heading home on weekends, and after one semester he transferred to Lawrence University in Appleton.

It wasn't until he attended grad school at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor—where his classmates included reedists Matt Bauder and Colin Stetson—that he found confidence in his ability to improvise. He moved to Chicago in 1999, and he quickly turned up in ad hoc configurations and short-lived ensembles. In 2003 he released his first recording as a leader, a trio session with reedist Aram Shelton and drummer Tim Daisy, *Rapid Croche* (482 Music). He also released several albums with Tigersmilk, a muscular free improvising trio he formed with cornetist Rob Mazurek and drummer Dylan van der Schyff. But Roebke decided to pour his energies into projects where he wasn't responsible for calling rehearsals or booking shows. In the last five years he's become a rock of reedist Jorrit Di-



MICHAEL JACOBSON

jkstra, Keefe Jackson and Jason Stein's groups.

Roebke rejects the term "sideman" as inadequate for his role in these ensembles.

"I only play in bands where I can do whatever I want," he said. "I just challenge myself to apply my own ideas to the situation. The reward is always being surprised and challenged right back by other musician's aesthetics. I find it a great way to find new ways in music."

This past summer Roebke self-released a short but idea-packed solo album, *In The Interval*, which celebrates the stripped-down elements. In fact, following the opening note he leaves in about 30 full seconds of silence before playing again.

"There are silences that are used in a lot of different ways," he said. "At the beginning silence is used as tension, maybe making the listener wonder what and when something will happen next. Toward the end I use silence as a propellant. Having an intense passage go on for a while, dropping in some silence, in my mind, sends the energy even higher."

In between the silence is some furious playing that arrives in various, contrasting contexts, which the bassist conceives as "muting and unmuting a bunch of related but independent tracks that play with competing ideas of fullness and thinness." In one passage Roebke operates one of Michel Waisvisz's crackleboxes, emitting some raw, squealing noise. Elsewhere he wedges objects into the strings to get that buzzing quality of so much great music from the Congo.

—Peter Margasak

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Rebecca Martin ▶▶

Unique Familiars

Rebecca Martin found herself in a familiar position during a most atypical time. The singer-songwriter was holding court in a concert/lecture hall at Stanford University, leading a group with guitarist Steve Cardenas, pianist Larry Goldings and her husband, bassist Larry Grenadier.

The Maine native and her all-star band would perform one of her originals or a standard off her latest album, *When I Was Long Ago* (Sunnyside), before discussing an aspect of songwriting or fielding questions from the audience, which was composed of Stanford Jazz Workshop attendees. The next day, that group would be the students in the Workshop's Jazz Residency Week's inaugural Songwriter track, which she was brought on board to launch.

"Usually when I teach, it's private," Martin said afterwards, by phone from her home in Kingston, N.Y. "So sitting down in front of 15 students who are all there for various reasons, dealing on all different levels of abilities with a real range of influences, was unusual."

For *When I Was Long Ago*, Martin researched the original versions of familiar songs such as "Willow Weep for Me," "For All We Know" and "I Didn't Know What Time It Was," employing seldom-heard original verses and using first—or at least very early—recorded arrangements as inspiration. "It's like discovering you have a long-lost cousin," she said.

"In a million years, I probably wouldn't have sung 'But Not For Me' had I not connected with the verse," she said. "I think that's true with most standards, actually, that when I end up hearing the verses, I just feel an instant connection to both the song and the songwriter."

When I Was Long Ago features herself with Grenadier and Bill McHenry on tenor, alto and soprano saxophones. The format is presented with Grenadier's double bass in the center of the mix flanked by McHenry on the right and her on the left. Martin believes that all old records were made like that, with the listener "hearing" the physical placement of the instrumentalists in the recording studio. "But James Farber, who recorded and mixed the record, doesn't think there's ever been a vocal record that was made



this way," she added.

The idea of doing an album without chordal instruments was suggested by drummer Paul Motian, an occasional past bandleader of Grenadier's with whom Martin has gigged and recorded (Trio 2000's *On Broadway, Vol. 4: Or The Paradox Of Continuity* [Winter & Winter]). Martin's first concert after moving to New York about 20 years ago was Motian's collective trio with saxophonist Joe Lovano and guitarist Bill Frisell at the Knitting Factory. Soon after, she landed a production job at MTV through which she met fellow singer-songwriter Jesse Harris, who would go on to pen Norah Jones' breakthrough hit "Don't Know Why." The pair worked under the moniker Once Blue and released an eponymous album in 1995.

Having started to study jazz back home, she was happy to be introduced to Harris' musical friends, including drummers Kenny Wollesen and Jim Black, bassist Ben Street and guitarist Kurt Rosenwinkel, who would go on to produce her 2008 album *The Growing Season* (Sunnyside).

"Gradually, somehow, I've moved from the world of singer-songwriters more into the jazz community," she said. —Yoshi Kato

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Sonny's BIG Day

The Always-Inventive Tenorman Celebrates Turning 80 In Colossal Fashion At Guest-Laden New York Concert Jam

By Jim Macnie | Photography by John Abbott

It's late afternoon in early September, and Manhattan's Upper West Side is somewhat steamy. The marquee outside the Beacon Theatre looks beautiful, but there's no name on it—some kind of computer glitch. Of course, those milling about need no help discerning which artist is appearing tonight, and the reason they're starting to sweat has nothing to do with the late-summer heat. When Sonny Rollins celebrates his 80th birthday with a guest-laden bash, everyone finds out quick, and if you're one of those procrastinators trying to buy a ticket at the door, you'd best have Armstrong's "SOL Blues" on your iPod. This baby is sold out.

The tenor saxophonist's annual New York shows have become events, great opportunities for fans to take the temperature of Rollins' legendary inventiveness. Zealots are always hoping to see their hero beat his old record in the eloquence department. Sometimes he does, sometimes he doesn't. But he always turns in a performance that finds his passion palpable. That achievement, combined with the extraordinary level of his art even on a so-so day, make the concerts as intriguing as they are joyous.

This evening the 75th Street stage door is a portal for greatness. Roy Haynes strides in and greets pals. Jim Hall, recuperating from back surgery, hobbles by with a cane in his hand and a smile on his face. Writers Stanley Crouch and Bob Blumenthal are mixing it up with the artists gliding through, from Christian McBride to Russell Malone to Kobie Watkins. Photographer John Abbott snaps Bob Cranshaw positioned in front of a Steely Dan poster. Roy Hargrove has a bounce in his step; he's holding his horn and scattering to the music that's coming from the stage. There, Rollins and his ensemble are fine-tuning the sound for the evening's presentation.

The bandleader is alternately wincing and grinning. He's meticulous when it comes to the

way the group projects itself, and as they weave through short bursts of "If I Would Ever Leave You" and "In A Sentimental Mood," he negotiates with his sound man.

It's fascinating to hear Rollins dispatch solo after solo in this somewhat private atmosphere. There are very few throwaway lines here; indeed, one of his extended flurries through an overt blues motif seems more enthralling and refined than anything I've heard from him of late. Like the rehearsals he helmed earlier in the week, this is a little cluster of

pre-gig idea-sharing and temperament-tweaking.

For our portrait of the master at 80, we decided to chat it up with those involved in the celebration. Interspersed herein are descriptions of the evening's musical turns, and quotes from artists, associates and fans not only working with Rollins on his birthday gig, but on his meet-and-greet session at a New York bookstore a few nights later. Sometimes they concern the present, sometimes the past. Birthdays are a time for reflection, after all.

Sonny Rollins: On my actual birthday I was rehearsing strenuously for the show. I'm not much on making a big deal out of that day; I'm not such a social person anymore. But the guys, knowing that I'm like that, brought a birthday cake into the rehearsal. I try to avoid sweets, but this thing they got was fantastically delicious. I had a piece and immediately said, "Wait a minute, I need another piece." Hahaha.

Russell Malone: There are lots of guys who hold

Tenor Saxophone

| | |
|----------------------|------------|
| Sonny Rollins | 441 |
| Joe Lovano | 423 |
| Chris Potter | 386 |
| Wayne Shorter | 363 |
| Joshua Redman | 356 |
| Branford Marsalis | 248 |
| James Moody | 183 |
| Eric Alexander | 178 |
| Charles Lloyd | 151 |
| Yusef Lateef | 149 |
| James Carter | 142 |
| Mark Turner | 141 |
| Donny McCaslin | 118 |
| Marcus Strickland | 116 |
| Houston Person | 108 |

back at rehearsal, saving it. Sonny plays for real, like he's at the gig. It's so interesting to hear his style in an intimate room. How beautiful and how huge it is. He's specific about things he likes to hear. We went over some of his tunes, but for the most part we just played songs. He doesn't play the run-of-the-mill standards; he likes show tunes. "You Were Never Lovelier," "I'm Old Fashioned," "Something To Remember You By"—very interesting material. I knew "Something," I'd played it with Freddy Cole.

Sonny was talking about Lester Young's version of the tune and I'd never heard it, so I went home, checked the record and came back to rehearsal. I played the intro, and Sonny's all, "Oh, I remember that chord progression." It brought tears to his eyes and he started playing like Pres. It was interesting to hear one of the most original voices of the saxophone channeling Pres. He loved Coleman Hawkins, but he loved Lester, too.

Back on stage, guitarist Jim Hall is rolling through the changes to "If Ever I Would Leave You," and Rollins points himself right in his old pal's direction, eyebrows leaping when Hall comes up with a particularly sweet phrase. The feisty samba keeps them both animated, and bassist Cranshaw's bounce brings effervescence to the piece. The three recorded together on one of the saxophonist's most treasured records.

Jim Hall: When Sonny invited me to work on *The Bridge*, I had just moved to New York and I wasn't really doing all that much. I'd been sublet-



ting Dick Katz's apartment on 12th Street, and I think my phone had been shut off. It was funny: I started getting all these little notes in my mailbox. "Jim, I would like to speak with you about music." It was a bit surprising, yeah. I'd known him slightly, saw him in California a couple times, and of course loved his work with Max Roach and Clifford Brown. I was honored, or flabbergasted, really.

One time he came over to the house and we sat down. He placed a little plastic bag on the table, and we faced each other and started talking, and then the bag started to wiggle. I said, "Sonny, what's in that bag?" "Unh," he said, "let's talk about that later." He'd been to a pet shop and had a little chameleon or lizard in there. He eventually showed me, but he wanted to get to the point about music first. Kinda typical of Sonny, actually.

His invitation really got me practicing. Sonny's playing is really compositional, a mix of emotion and intellect. He seems to know exactly where he's going, all the extra meanings the notes might have, and what the notes have in connection with the name of the tune. It didn't take long to figure out what he wanted me to do—that's part of keeping your job. When I worked with Art Farmer, he liked me to use a lot of chords and he would play over it. But with Sonny I quickly got the message that he would lead the way and I'd come up with something behind him.

The soundcheck concludes, and the band heads to dinner. "Get that grub, Roy," someone says to Haynes. The drummer, an unannounced guest, is being judicious over dessert choices. He has his signature sunglasses up on his forehead to help him scrutinize which cake to choose. It's just before showtime; the venue is filling, and anticipation is overtaking the room. Bassist Ron Carter comes down the aisle shaking hands with pals. Music journalists are clustered together near the sound board. Nate Chinen from the New York Times is seated next to me. Jimmy Heath and his wife, Mona, are directly in front of us. The revered saxophonist is three years Rollins' senior. They've been buds forever.

"Excuse me, Mr. Heath, are you going to be one of the special guests tonight?" asks a thirty-something fan to Heath's right.

"He don't need any more saxophonists up there," comes the return. "He can do the job by himself." Rollins and Heath frequently speak on the phone, and occasionally wind up singing to each other. "Erskine Hawkins and Jimmie Lunceford tunes," says the saxophonist with a smile, "we love that stuff."

In an instant the lights lower and the titan arrives, wearing a billowing white tunic and allowing his luminous white afro to billow proudly as well. Boom! His horn sounds reveille, and the group is off and running. Rollins seems a tad more fierce than usual, and his power is threaded with that signature elan. The vamping "Patanjali" and calypso "Global Warming" loosen the band,



Rollins hangs post-concert with Roy Haynes (left), Jimmy Heath (right) and other jazz industry well-wishers.

and Hargrove hits the stage to goose his boss even further. Their "Rain Check" is full of high-flying trade-offs, and Rollins looks especially tickled by the way his young partner animates the room.

Roy Hargrove: I played with him a few years back at Carnegie Hall, and I remember that he's so unpredictable. If you're trading with Sonny Rollins [you can really get a fire started]. His sound is so beautiful, and there's so much history there. It's like standing next to God himself. I was kind of blinded by the whole thing.

Even Hall is coltish during his stretch. Bending over in a chair doesn't preclude the guitarist from snapping back some funky rejoinders that ring like punctuations from an r&b horn section during "If I Ever Leave You." The recent addition of drummer Watkins and percussionist Sammy Figueroa adds grace and urgency to the scene. Rollins lets his long lines enjoy their sprawl, but he also interjects speedy fits of notes that crank up the tension. Those fingers remain fleet.

Sonny Rollins: I want to use speed, but not all the way through a tune. I wouldn't stomp off fast tempos like I used to do with Max Roach. We did a couple records called "B. Quick" and "B. Swift"—those were clocked at unbelievable tempos. We liked to do things like that when some guy we didn't know wanted to sit in with the band. "Oh, the kid wants to play, huh," and then we'd start burning: "Whoooooosh."

A similar energy does seem to be fueling the evening, though. There's a buzz as Rollins' working band heads off to make way for a special trio engagement. Haynes is introduced to a storm of applause, and McBride's grin tells us he's been fervently waiting since last time—2007 at Carnegie Hall—for this particular threesome to again present itself to the public. The drummer and bassist spent the summer touring with Chick Corea. Their connection to each other and to Rol-

lins is obvious from the first notes of "Solitude," which lopes along sweetly until the percussionist brings a tornado to town during a solo that amps up the audience.

Sonny Rollins: Roy is almost incomprehensible. I look back at my relationship with him ... he's been out there so long, playing with everybody—an essential part of everything that's happened. You don't even have to think about the drums with Roy Haynes. He's got it covered. He'll do whatever needs to be done to make whatever music you're playing sound good. I'll tell you, that solo on "Solitude" was something else.

Roy Haynes: Christian's sense of swing reflects who he is. He's a happy young man and he plays happy, with a lot of feeling. That comes out in his music. When you see him, and he greets you, you know it's all true there. You find some people who aren't true, and you can tell it when they talk and when they play—it's more of an acting thing. Christian's music comes from the bottom. There's something old-school about that.

Sonny Rollins: I'd venture to say that playing trio is actually easier [than playing with a larger band]. I haven't done a lot of it recently, because as you get older you don't have as much physical power. Mentally I have the ideas, but physically ... Playing trio you have to have musicians of equal stature. They have to carry their weight. Not fall down. Everyone has to have to have a certain type of concentration. These guys have it.

There's something old-school about Rollins' final guest, too. After wringing some lusty blues from "Sonymoon For Two," the trio drops into a vamp, and the boss verbally invites another longtime acquaintance to the stage. Ornette Coleman's arrival turns the place out, a jaw-dropper for many. As the venerable alto player starts to apply his trademark cries to the tune, his definition of harmolodics presents its breadth. A shriek

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here, a warble there, and an exchange with Rollins that finds the host bending his lines to parallel some of the notions proffered by his new partner. History in the making.

Christian McBride: Yes, [Rollins picked up on some stuff that Coleman was putting down], which I would think is basic musicianship. There are lots of musicians who probably wouldn't be able to pull off something like that. I give credit to both of them. Ornette for obvious reasons—he was able to ground-break a whole new thing in jazz. But Sonny, too, for never letting the fact that he was an icon prevent him from hearing new ideas from other musicians, which I think happens often with musicians of an older generation. They think of the younger guys as just kind of taking from them; they're not particularly listening to younger musicians for inspiration. I've always appreciated Sonny for that.

Sonny Rollins: Did I to try connect with Ornette? Sure, of course. I'm a person who wants everything to come together. [After Coleman took his first solo] I was trying to have a cohesive-sounding interlude with him. He and I used to practice together, so it wasn't like a big thing for me to do that. I love his playing. Any time I hear him it's an eye-opener, ear-opener, however you want to put it. I'm not one of those people who didn't understand his music. I got it from the start. To me that record *Something Else!!!* was a natural evolution. People don't like change, and sometimes they have to be nudged into it. These days most people get Ornette: "OK, I like it." But at first some folks aren't ready to be adventurous, they want to be safe. And life is not safe. I chose ["Sonny Moon"] because it's very open. I was hoping for Ornette to play Ornette, to not have any strictures on him, and I thought that one would be free enough for him to play on yet it would be something from my background.

Christian McBride: I think Sonny nailed it. I think everything he planned in his head for this concert came off. I think he was loose, I think he felt good, and he was in much better spirits than he was at Carnegie Hall, which was a pretty historic show itself. Remember, they had that box office headache at Carnegie that night, the computers went down, and it caused lots of stress; Sonny was a bit distraught. By the time we got to the third song, which was "Mack The Knife," he started to relax a bit and got into this thing with Roy—nice. But at the Beacon, that relaxed vibe was there from the very beginning, and by the time Ornette came out and took that first solo, and Sonny picked up on what he was doing and took another solo? That showed me that Sonny was sustaining lots of energy that night.

Four days after the show, Team Rollins sets up shop at the Barnes & Noble near New York's Ground Zero construction site. (Newkophiles will

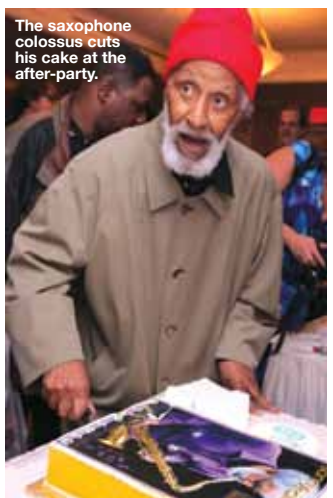
Rollins performs at the Beacon Theatre with Roy Hargrove (left), Jim Hall and Bob Cranshaw.



An onstage handshake between Rollins and surprise guest Ornette Coleman.



The saxophone colossus cuts his cake at the after-party.



recall that Rollins once lived three blocks away, and was at home when the towers collapsed.) About 200 people gathered to hear John Abbott and Bob Blumenthal do a show-and-tell regarding their new collaboration, *Saxophone Colossus: A Portrait Of Sonny Rollins* (Abrams). It's a gem of a book, equally driven by the photographer's remarkable images of the maestro on stage and at home, and thoughtful essays by the writer that take their themes from the five tracks of Rollins' classic 1956 record *Saxophone Colossus*.

Well, perhaps Abbott and Blumenthal were only part of the reason that people showed up. Rollins was also there to sign said tome, and it was an ultra-rare chance for fans to get next to their hero for a few seconds. Record collectors were looking for autographs, students were looking for inspiration and a handful of pros were looking to celebrate one of their key forebears. Joe Lovano, Butch Morris, Patience Higgins, Jimmy Heath and others were on the scene, chatting with the icon and having their books signed, just like civilians. Some folks were dressed sharp; a few less so. Each got a chance to say something to the star. When saxophonist JD Allen sauntered to the desk with his purchase and mentioned his

name for autograph purposes, Rollins made a comment with clout: "Oh, you the tenor man?"

JD Allen: I couldn't pass up an opportunity to shake Mr. Rollins' hand, to be in his presence. I walked around high for 30 minutes after he signed that book. The fact that he had heard of me, said my name—that tripped me out, gave me a little jolt of electricity. It actually made me go home and practice. I picked up the horn, and I knew I had work to do.

I wasn't at the show, but there was a YouTube clip of it that was up for a while. I watched it about 10 times, and thought, "Damn, these cats are still doing it." Some actors do great things early, but later play the same characters over and over, but these guys are still on the edge of trying to find the unknown.

John Abbott (photographer): Sonny knows how to talk to all sorts of people. Could be a wealthy jazz patron, or someone who looks like they're not in good shape. And he's genuine when dealing with each, I know that deeply. I tried to figure out what I like about him so much. It's not because he's a giant of music, and is so

hip; it's because he's a genuinely kind person. It's something he works on. It's part of his fiber. That kind of communication shows heart. Sorta like the way he plays music. Ornette comes out and he kinda speaks Ornette's language. A guy with a borderline personality asks him for an autograph, and he can relate to him for a few minutes, too, instead of saying, "Get out of here."

Sonny Rollins: I remember one particular birthday when I was a kid. I really wanted a pair of chaps. I was in my cowboy phase. One birthday I finally got 'em, and boy, was I happy. Who knows, it might have been the first steps toward the cover of *Way Out West*. That shoot was right in keeping with the music, and of course it was magical; it did a lot to sell the album. Yes, I've seen that new take-off on the *Way Out West* cover [saxophonist Jon Irabagon's CD *Foxy*]. I get a kick out of it, though I can't compete with that model.

Jon Irabagon: Just Rollins' rhythmic concept alone is profound, but add on the melodic invention and aspects of humor and you've got something so formidable—a lifetime of work. What a precedent he has set. Beyond that, I've always respected him for establishing himself in the '50s and then pushing past that in the '60s on *East Broadway Run Down*, experimenting with stuff like playing into the mouthpiece for a long time. This kind of thinking transcends the convention of what "jazz" is. He plays philosophies. And he has a duality, that spirit of pushing forward, but also coming from somewhere. His music has such a searching thing to it.

Sonny Rollins: *East Broadway Run Down* was sort of a foreign album to a lot of people. But when you're a bandleader, you have to follow what you hear. You can't really be concerned with what people say. I remember once I got off the bandstand and was standing by the bar, and this girl was telling her boyfriend, "Well, the only thing I liked about him was *Way Out West*." So I knew I wasn't going to be able to please everybody. I'm a very eclectic musician. They're not going to like everything I do. But I gotta do it.

JD Allen: Eric Revis gave me a copy of *Our Man In Jazz*, and a lot of the material Mr. Rollins was playing was standards, but the freedom he found in that bass and drums context was appealing to me. The material you're given can be opened up, it can be added onto, right? There's room in there. *The Freedom Suite*? I definitely studied it. That's really exhilarating to me.

Jimmy Heath: When he's playing, Sonny emphasizes the fact that "this is my song, I wrote it, boom, I'm going to give it to you, did you get it?" Then he ventures everywhere around the world and then comes back and gives it to you again. He's the only one I know who does that at that magnitude. He's a virtuoso soloist on the saxophone.

It happen to be behind Lovano as he's leaving the store, and on the "down" escalator the saxophonist is chatting with pals about Rollins' spirit. They stroll away into the evening with their books in their hands. On the way home I drop into the Cornelia Street Café, a few blocks north. Irabagon is celebrating the release of *Foxy* with a whirlwind of a trio set, another long *whoooooosh* that careens through several permutations of Newk's "I Told Every Little Star." Idea after idea after

idea. He's wearing a shirt that simply says "Rollins."

Sonny Rollins: I'm really humbled by these guys. I'm happy when the younger cats can get something from what I did. That's how I learned—I listened to Don Byas and all those guys. ... So that gives me a feeling that I'm passing along something valuable, something they can use. JD's glad that I knew him? I'm glad that he knows me!

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Chick's Grand Slam

By John Ephland

How often do you get into DownBeat's Hall of Fame and live to tell about? A rare phenomenon, that's what the now-legendary jazz artist Chick Corea can enjoy from here on out. Not only that, with his win for Jazz Artist of the Year, Electric Keyboardist of the Year and Beyond Album of the Year (with John McLaughlin and the Five Peace Band), Corea may just remember 2010 as one of his best years in music.

Perhaps reflecting a philosophy or approach he's held throughout his career, Corea notes, "I just continue to create music with friends and musicians I love to work with." Then, with tongue firmly placed to one side, he says, "It's such a joy to do that, that I continue happily being searched at airports and agreeably getting on planes that are always too cold for me."

Asked what it feels like to join such a stellar list of previous Hall of Fame winners, Corea, at age 69, can only say, "I simply feel honored and encouraged to keep on creating. I admire everyone on that list. Many are mentors and musical heroes of mine." And then, as if to break the humble solemnity that comes from, say, accepting an honorary doctorate or a lifetime achievement award, the maestro sincerely compliments the readers: "The

judges seem to have very good taste."

Corea seems to revel in the memories of those Hall of Famers he's had the pleasure of encountering down through the years. Almost to the point where their accumulated impact might feel immense, he confides that commenting on these greats might be "hard to answer, since I spent my youth and growing years immersed in learning from them." But recollecting significant memories seems to him a great pleasure. "Reflecting on them would make up most of my autobiography," Corea modestly notes. "I made a solo recording called *Expressions*, in the liners of which I attempted to list the musicians who inspired me through the years. I guess there were 40 or 50 names listed—many who are on the DownBeat Hall of Fame list.

"I can remember listening with my dad, Armando," the Chelsea, Mass., native goes on to say, "to the 78 r.p.m. records he had of the Dizzy Gillespie big band's *Things To Come*, the Billy Eckstine big band with Sarah Vaughan singing, the Charlie Parker quintet with a young Miles [Davis] on trumpet, Bud [Powell] playing with Bird. These were some of the first recordings I ever listened to. With this music I felt excited and

at home right away. In '51, I remember hanging around a Boston record shop with my friends waiting anxiously for the release of Miles' first solo album. When *Dig* came out, I took it home and wore it out listening and trying to learn everything on it. From that point on, I bought every new Miles release, and, through him and the great players he had on his recordings, I continued to learn and be inspired by Horace [Silver], [Thelonious] Monk, Lucky Thompson, Sonny Rollins, John Lewis, Milt Jackson, Kenny Clarke, Lee Konitz, then later on Philly Joe [Jones], [John] Coltrane, Red Garland, Paul Chambers, Cannonball [Adderley], Wynton [Kelly], Bill Evans, and then on to Herbie [Hancock], Tony [Williams], Ron Carter and Wayne [Shorter]. Miles certainly was a source of great creativity."

In another setting, as a collaborator this past spring in New York with producer Bob Belden for his upcoming *Miles Espagnole* project, Corea took time to reminisce about Davis. Speaking of his move to New York City in 1959, he said, "I went to Columbia; I had a scholarship. I lasted a month. And I heard Miles play at Birdland with my horned-rimmed glasses with one lense broken." Relishing such memories, Corea said,

Hall Of Fame

| | |
|--------------------|------------|
| Chick Corea | 552 |
| Ahmad Jamal | 490 |
| B.B. King | 482 |
| Joe Zawinul | 330 |
| Pat Metheny | 310 |
| Ron Carter | 310 |
| Les Paul | 286 |
| Abbey Lincoln | 266 |
| Hank Mobley | 254 |
| John McLaughlin | 240 |
| Al Di Meola | 210 |
| Charlie Haden | 204 |
| Airto Moreira | 198 |
| Bob Brookmeyer | 192 |
| Benny Golson | 178 |
| Lee Konitz | 164 |
| Sonny Stitt | 162 |
| Muddy Waters | 154 |
| Phil Woods | 152 |
| Tito Puente | 152 |

Jazz Artist

| | |
|--------------------|------------|
| Chick Corea | 472 |
| Ahmad Jamal | 458 |
| Pat Metheny | 453 |
| Dave Brubeck | 424 |
| Herbie Hancock | 414 |
| Keith Jarrett | 391 |
| Esperanza Spalding | 360 |
| Dave Holland | 333 |
| Brad Mehldau | 329 |
| Wynton Marsalis | 315 |
| Joe Lovano | 306 |
| Hank Jones | 283 |
| Sonny Rollins | 277 |
| Chris Potter | 270 |
| Vijay Iyer | 268 |
| Diana Krall | 259 |
| Wayne Shorter | 257 |
| Al Di Meola | 239 |
| John McLaughlin | 231 |
| Christian McBride | 216 |

Electric Keyboard

| | |
|--------------------|------------|
| Chick Corea | 691 |
| Herbie Hancock | 642 |
| Craig Taborn | 248 |
| George Duke | 226 |
| Lyle Mays | 215 |
| Hiromi | 175 |
| Uri Caine | 174 |
| John Medeski | 158 |
| Larry Goldings | 150 |
| Robert Glasper | 145 |
| Geoffrey Keezer | 141 |
| Henry Hey | 134 |
| Adam Benjamin | 131 |
| Eddie Palmieri | 121 |
| Jim Beard | 119 |

Beyond Album

| | |
|--|------------|
| Chick Corea/John McLaughlin, Five Peace Band Live (Concord) | 391 |
| Jeff Beck, <i>Emotion & Commotion</i> (Atco) | 327 |
| Norah Jones, <i>Fall</i> (Blue Note) | 272 |
| Béla Fleck, <i>Throw Down Your Heart</i> (Rounder) | 259 |
| Allen Toussaint, <i>Bright Mississippi</i> (Nonesuch) | 234 |
| Tom Waits, <i>Glitter And Doom Live</i> (Anti-) | 231 |
| Erykah Badu, <i>New Amerykah Part One</i> (Motown) | 223 |
| Miguel Zenón, <i>Esta Plena</i> (Marsalis Music) | 223 |
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| James Brown, <i>Live At The Garden—Expanded Edition</i> (Hip-O Select) | 168 |
| Nels Cline Singers, <i>Initiate</i> (Cryptogramophone) | 163 |
| Egberto Gismonti, <i>Saudações</i> (ECM) | 131 |
| Nellie McKay, <i>Normal As Blueberry Pie</i> (Verve) | 111 |
| Caetano Veloso, <i>Zii E Zie</i> (Nonesuch) | 110 |
| Grizzly Bear, <i>Veckatimest</i> (Warp) | 110 |
| Roseanne Cash, <i>The List</i> (Manhattan) | 108 |
| Dirty Projectors, <i>Bitte Orca</i> (Domino) | 103 |



“And, like a dream, gradually I got to play with some of these greats that I grew up with, and eventually got to work with Miles himself. These were the '50s and '60s for me—vibrant times.”

Earlier this year, Corea spent a fair amount of time exploring the legend of one Hall of Famer in particular, Bill Evans (see *DownBeat*, June 2010). Included in this year's activities was a much-celebrated May engagement at New York's Blue Note club. Programming included special guests on different nights, with a core band of former Evans colleagues featur-

ing drummer Paul Motian and bassist Eddie Gomez. Also appearing were artists John Scofield, Hubert Laws, Greg Osby and Joe Lovano.

Looking back, Corea recalls, “I used to frequent George Wein's Storyville in Boston. I saw and heard so much great music there—20 minutes from my apartment in Chelsea across the Mystic River Bridge. One magical night I was sitting in the first row of tables with my friends to see the Miles Davis Sextet! I had to look up to see Trane and Cannonball and Miles standing right over me—Jimmy Cobb and Paul Chambers in the rear. I was so in anticipation of seeing Wynton

Kelly, one of my all-time favorite pianists, and was so disappointed to see [instead] this skinny, young collegiate-looking guy with horn-rimmed glasses walk on and sit at the piano. It was a killing and life-changing performance. But I really kind of ignored the pianist, helped out by the fact that I couldn't hear him very well, either. Well, that was my first encounter with the amazing Bill Evans. How naive to 'miss' that only time I ever saw Bill play with Miles! Well, of course, then I heard *Kind Of Blue* and the other great recordings Bill made with Miles along with his first trios culminating in the trio with Scott LaFaro and Paul Motian. By then I was an avid listener and was being inspired by everything that Bill did.

“Along with Bill's lyric qualities, there was always a quality of exploration,” he says. “He even named one of his recordings *Explorations*. So, in this spirit of exploration, the three of us took a few of Bill's wonderful compositions and added lots of other material to it, changing and adding pieces each night. We even played a piece of Bill's that I transcribed from a recording Bill made on his publisher's ancient tape recorder, kindly given to me by his son Evan. We even used Bill's 'Periscope' as a kind of chaser at the end of each set. Bill has left us a huge body of recordings and compositions ... such a treasure.”

Corea has now won the Electric Keyboard Award the last three years in the Readers Poll (and last year in *DownBeat*'s Critics Poll). When the subject of electric keyboards comes up, Corea takes a look back to those early days when innovation was on the rise. “Electric keyboards and synthesizers came on the scene after the electric guitar and electric bass,” he notes. “They became part of the scene more and more and I was thrown into working with them when Miles wanted me to play them, starting some time around the end of '68.”

As if for emphasis, Corea adds, “I really didn't like the electric pianos at first. I didn't own one of my own and had no time to experiment with them to find pleasing sounds. So I had a rough time making music with these keyboards at first.

“After Miles,” he continues, “when I formed my first band, I had, by then, found a sound that was pleasing to me using a Fender Rhodes. The sound seemed to fit the rhythms and Latino kind of vibe that I was immersed in with Airto [Moreira] and Flora [Purim]. Stanley Clarke had an acoustic bass sound that blended well with the Rhodes, and Joe Farrell's flute and soprano seemed a perfect match for unison melodies with the Rhodes. So that Rhodes sound became a good composing tool for me. All the various Return To Forever bands were created with this electric keyboard sound, later adding in the first experiments with synths.”

In addition to Return To Forever and its recent 25th-anniversary reunion, Corea's Five Peace Band with old friend John McLaughlin—on display with this year's double-CD *Beyond Album of the Year*, the Grammy-winning *Five Peace Band Live*—has been a perfect expres-

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Hall Of Fame

Legends in jazz, blues and beyond can be elected into the DownBeat Hall of Fame by way of the annual Readers Poll (designated by "R"), Critics Poll ("C") or Veterans Committee ("V"). It all started in 1952 with the Readers. The Critics got into the game later, in 1961, and the Veterans Committee began voting in 2008. With this month's addition of Chick Corea, there are currently 125 DownBeat Hall of Famers, listed below in chronological order of their induction.

| | | | |
|------|-----------------------|------|------------------------|
| 1952 | Louis Armstrong R | | Gil Evans C |
| 1953 | Glenn Miller R | 1987 | Lionel Hampton R |
| 1954 | Stan Kenton R | | Johnny Dodds C |
| 1955 | Charlie Parker R | | Thad Jones C |
| 1956 | Duke Ellington R | | Teddy Wilson C |
| 1957 | Benny Goodman R | 1988 | Jaco Pastorius R |
| 1958 | Count Basie R | | Kenny Clarke C |
| 1959 | Lester Young R | 1989 | Woody Shaw R |
| 1960 | Dizzy Gillespie R | | Chet Baker C |
| 1961 | Billie Holiday R | 1990 | Red Rodney R |
| | Coleman Hawkins C | | Mary Lou Williams C |
| 1962 | Miles Davis R | 1991 | Lee Morgan R |
| | Bix Beiderbecke C | | John Carter C |
| 1963 | Thelonious Monk R | 1992 | Maynard Ferguson R |
| | Jelly Roll Morton C | | James P. Johnson C |
| 1964 | Eric Dolphy R | 1993 | Gerry Mulligan R |
| | Art Tatum C | | Ed Blackwell C |
| 1965 | John Coltrane R | 1994 | Dave Brubeck R |
| | Earl Hines C | | Frank Zappa C |
| 1966 | Bud Powell R | 1995 | J.J. Johnson R |
| | Charlie Christian C | | Julius Hemphill C |
| 1967 | Billy Strayhorn R | 1996 | Horace Silver R |
| | Bessie Smith C | | Artie Shaw C |
| 1968 | Wes Montgomery R | 1997 | Nat "King" Cole R |
| | Sidney Bechet C | | Tony Williams C |
| | Fats Waller C | 1998 | Elvin Jones C |
| 1969 | Ornette Coleman R | | Frank Sinatra R |
| | Pee Wee Russell C | 1999 | Betty Carter C |
| | Jack Teagarden C | | Milt Jackson R |
| 1970 | Jimi Hendrix R | 2000 | Lester Bowie C |
| | Johnny Hodges C | | Clark Terry R |
| 1971 | Charles Mingus R | 2001 | Milt Hinton C |
| | Roy Eldridge C | | Joe Henderson R |
| | Django Reinhardt C | 2002 | John Lewis C |
| 1972 | Gene Krupa R | | Antonio Carlos Jobim R |
| | Clifford Brown C | 2003 | Wayne Shorter C |
| 1973 | Sonny Rollins R | | Ray Brown R |
| | Fletcher Henderson C | 2004 | Roy Haynes C |
| 1974 | Buddy Rich R | | McCoy Tyner R |
| | Ben Webster C | 2005 | Steve Lacy C |
| 1975 | Cannonball Adderley R | | Herbie Hancock R |
| | Cecil Taylor C | 2006 | Jackie McLean C |
| 1976 | Woody Herman R | | Jimmy Smith R |
| | King Oliver C | 2007 | Andrew Hill C |
| 1977 | Paul Desmond R | | Michael Brecker R |
| | Benny Carter C | 2008 | Joe Zawinul C |
| 1978 | Joe Venuti R | | Jimmy Blanton V |
| | Rahsaan Roland Kirk C | | Harry Carney V |
| 1979 | Ella Fitzgerald R | | Erroll Garner V |
| | Lennie Tristano C | | Jo Jones V |
| 1980 | Dexter Gordon R | | Jimmie Lunceford V |
| | Max Roach C | | Keith Jarrett R |
| 1981 | Art Blakey R | 2009 | Hank Jones C |
| | Bill Evans C | | Oscar Pettiford V |
| 1982 | Art Pepper R | | Tadd Dameron V |
| | Fats Navarro C | | Freddie Hubbard R |
| 1983 | Stephane Grappelli R | 2010 | Muhai Richard |
| | Albert Ayler C | | Abrams C |
| 1984 | Oscar Peterson R | | Baby Dodds V |
| | Sun Ra C | | Chick Webb V |
| 1985 | Sarah Vaughan R | | Philly Joe Jones V |
| | Zoot Sims C | | Billy Eckstine V |
| 1986 | Stan Getz R | | Chick Corea R |

sion of what Corea has done in a then-and-now fashion, playing both keyboards *and* piano. Asked how that group emerged and what it was like to be playing with McLaughlin again after so many years, Corea says, "This project was another dream realized. John and I had always talked about making music together—our tastes and approach in many ways seemed similar. Finally, I thought to combine musical territories by bringing together musicians who could possibly stretch each other in various directions. I had been working with Christian McBride and Kenny Garrett in other projects; I knew that

John hadn't worked with them before but that John had already made some heady music with Vinnie Colaiuta."

Indeed, one of the hallmarks of the Five Peace Band was the way it stretched beyond being "just" another reunion band of older musicians (e.g., Return To Forever), all of them attempting to reclaim their glory years as a group of collaborators. With Colaiuta in his 50s, Garrett in his 40s and McBride and sub Brian Blade in their 30s, the Five Peace Band reflected Corea's collaborative nature, a feature of his life that, no doubt, has been very appealing to fans and cer-

tainly readers of DownBeat.

Corea's final thoughts reflect a long view taken, and a philosophical approach to being an artist who has stood the test of time. "I try to live my life where I can [view] each performance, each recording, each time I sit down at an instrument to practice, compose or perform ... all as a special opportunity," he concludes. "It's a process, not a single event. There's never an 'end' or an 'arrival.' But each new attempt is special, the next chance to attain the ideal or [get] closer to it. I like the 'process.' I call it life, and I must admit I do have a lot of fun getting involved."

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Maximum Metheny

By Ken Micallef

Do you Dream in color?

With virtually a hundred careers behind him, Pat Metheny has seen and done it all, and he has the Grammy Awards, record sales and global fanbase to prove it. But to hear him tell it, winning the DownBeat Reader's Poll for Album of the Year is especially meaningful.

"I am thrilled that *Orchestrion* got that kind of recognition," Metheny says while prepping the *Orchestrion* orchestra for a Birmingham gig. "Having been a DownBeat subscriber since I was 12, whenever something like that happens, it really affects me. Maybe this time more than ever, because it was unexpected.

"*Orchestrion* is an odd project on so many levels," he continues. "It's very unusual and doesn't really fit with anything because of its unprecedented nature. And yet at the same time I wasn't sure if jazz fans in particular would accept it and embrace it or ignore it. I was shocked when I heard the news. It's very meaningful to me and I really appreciate it."

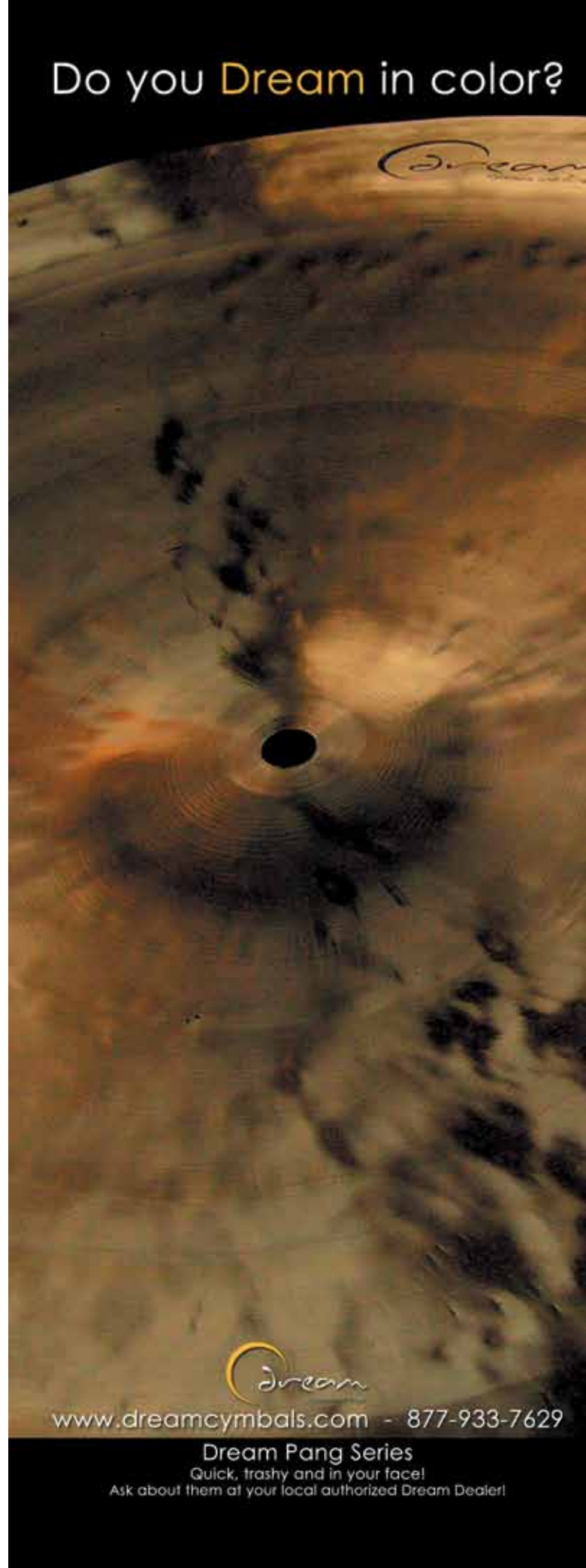


The "oddness" of *Orchestrion* ("Reviews," May 2010) goes beyond its astonishing live performances, which Metheny has toured from the U.S. to Japan to France and back again. While concertgoers are typically stunned to see the guitarist commanding an entire orchestra of instruments seemingly playing themselves, innovations on multiple technical levels have gone into *Orchestrion's* ability to swing and surprise. Far from a static collection of mindless robotic accompanists, the instruments (guitars, keyboards, drums, percussion, "guitar bots" and tuned bottles) have the ability to play both programmed parts and to fully improvise, with every action controlled by the tips of Metheny's string-plucking fingers.

Metheny wrote and conceived *Orchestrion* at his New York apartment (cramming the instruments into a small bedroom), but the heavy lifting was developed by Eric Singer and LEMUR (the League of Electronic Musical Urban Robots) joined to Metheny's mastery of MOTU's Digital Performer, Digidesign Pro Tools, Cycling 74's MAX, Ableton Live and Sibelius. It began with Metheny's love of player pianos and began again

Jazz Album

| | |
|--|------------|
| Pat Metheny, <i>Orchestrion</i> (Nonesuch) | 412 |
| Branford Marsalis Quartet, <i>Metamorphosen</i> (Marsalis) | 330 |
| Dave Holland Octet, <i>Pathways</i> (Dare2) | 294 |
| Keith Jarrett, Testament: <i>Paris/London</i> (ECM) | 281 |
| Brad Mehldau, <i>Highway Rider</i> (Nonesuch) | 279 |
| Joe Lovano Us Five, <i>Folk Art</i> (Blue Note) | 272 |
| Kurt Elling, <i>Dedicated To You</i> (Concord) | 272 |
| Frank Sinatra, <i>Live At The Meadowlands</i> (Concord) | 251 |
| Allen Toussaint, <i>Bright Mississippi</i> (Nonesuch) | 234 |
| Vijay Iyer Trio, <i>Historicity</i> (ACT) | 227 |
| Chris Potter Underground, <i>Ultrahang</i> (ArtistShare) | 218 |
| Bill Frisell, <i>Disfarmer</i> (Nonesuch) | 161 |
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| Rudder, <i>Matorning</i> (Nineteen-Eight) | 122 |
| Tomasz Stanko Quintet, <i>Dark Eyes</i> (ECM) | 119 |
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| Jason Moran & The Bandwagon, <i>Ten</i> (Blue Note) | 106 |
| Darcy James Argue, <i>Infernal Machines</i> (Pi) | 104 |
| Terry Clarke, <i>It's About Time</i> (Blue Music Group) | 102 |
| Abdullah Ibrahim, <i>Senzo</i> (Sunnyside) | 102 |
| Fred Hersch Pocket Orchestra, <i>Live At Jazz Standard</i> (Sunnyside) | 101 |
| Mose Allison, <i>The Way Of The World</i> (Anti-) | 101 |



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Guitar

| | |
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| Pat Metheny | 493 |
| John McLaughlin | 397 |
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| Kurt Rosenwinkel | 360 |
| Jim Hall | 359 |
| Al Di Meola | 302 |
| John Scofield | 259 |
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| Lionel Loueke | 196 |
| Larry Coryell | 182 |
| Adam Rogers | 179 |
| Herb Ellis | 175 |
| Pat Martino | 173 |
| Mike Stern | 171 |
| Ben Monder | 171 |

with his ability to trigger an entire orchestra from his guitar (and a complex web of foot pedals).

"Triggering MIDI events from a guitar has been a challenging engineering problem for 30 years," Metheny explains. "For me, the key to that is the Axon AX 50 USB (TerraTec Electronics). It's the fastest and most accurate guitar-to-MIDI box ever. It's triggering the actual instruments, in conjunction with solenoids, pneumatics and air-based valves that close or open very quickly. Eric Singer (LEMUR) discovered the key to MIDI-controlled voltage, which allowed the control voltage to respond dynamically. That is huge. Once Eric had conquered the problem of dynamics, I could pull the

trigger on *Orchestrion*."

Orchestrion's intricate palette of global and jazz-infused melodies, textural sound pieces, multilayered cross rhythms and improvisation is intensely personal. It's perhaps the purest representation of the Metheny oeuvre since *Bright Size Life*.

"There were two parts to this," Metheny explains. "One: the harder part of making the record. It had to work as music and, obviously, when you're listening to music you don't have any visuals, it just has to work as music. Live, it's got all that going for it plus this big living, breathing thing on stage. It's unlike anything else, too. Jazz guys have always been the guys asking the hard questions of the culture around them and coming up with very personal results. That's what this is ultimately for me.

"It's also the maximum dose of me you can possibly get all in one sitting," he laughs. "It's from a 360-degree perspective, from the conception to the execution to the individual sense of how each part fits together; it's the maximum thing I can offer. I suppose that figures into it, but also in terms of music and improvisation I feel like it's one of the better examples of my thing in action. I'm very proud of the record."

An ongoing misconception regarding *Orchestrion* is that the instruments are in some way preprogrammed and have no real ability to respond, or improvise, in the moment. The *Orchestrion* can play the same thing over and over, like a player piano. But that isn't what interests Metheny.

"I can now play for three hours totally improvised. I will do a second version of this that will be largely improvised. I can expand forms, change tempos, change keys, I can do anything I want. It's impossible to communicate how open-ended this is. There are parts of the performance where I am starting with nothing. I'm building it all up right there in real time. It's not preprogrammed. If you can imagine a gas tank and all the way to the right it's full, it's packed with compositional information. All the way to the left is a blank piece of white paper. Then imagine that I can go anywhere on that spectrum at any time, and it can be completely improvised, completely written, or any shade in between those two. That's what's going on."

Before he begins work on what could become *Orchestrion II*, Metheny will judge a contest for, what else—young inventors—sponsored by the Blue Man Group. Twenty-five middle school finalists will present their musical inventions via video in February 2011, when they will be judged by Metheny and a handpicked panel. Who knows, perhaps some enterprising 15-year-old will invent the next *Orchestrion*. Until then, they've got Metheny's brainchild to wrestle with.

"It's really this new platform, this new palette," Metheny muses. "It's like somebody invented this new kind of paint. It's all the same colors, but it's a completely different fabric, and you just instantly start painting in a different way. At the same time, if you're a good painter, your voice comes out and your style is apparent, and I think that is true with this. People know it's me pretty quickly."

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THE 21ST CENTURY SAXOPHONE

Music In The Key Of Jack

By John Ephland

He's been winning DownBeat's Readers Polls since 2005, breaking good friend and mentor Roy Haynes' four-year streak. One could surmise Jack DeJohnette is garnering the readers' attention not only because of his high-profile work with Keith Jarrett and Gary Peacock in the Standards Trio but because, as he modestly puts it, "I've been doing my own thing."

And to ask DeJohnette to define his "own thing" is to open a can of worms, so to speak. But ask one must. Considering the reasons behind his recent stretch of wins, the 68-year-old DeJohnette points to a list that could make any full-time working musician's head spin. And not content to limit himself to the 21st century, he notes projects today that have roots in decades previous.

"Apart from doing the Keith Jarrett trio for over 25 years, I've been involved in a number of special projects," he says in a gross understatement. "I had the Latin Project that featured Giovanni Hidalgo, Don Byron, Jerome Harris, Edsel Gomez and Luis Quintero." DeJohnette has continued to work with Harris in various settings, and he teamed up this past May with Quintero for Bob Belden's *Miles Espagnole*, a large-scale production celebrating Miles Davis and his connections to Spanish music.

"The past few years, I've done improvisational concerts with Bobby [McFerrin], occasionally including Chick [Corea]. Three or four years ago I had a group called The Intercontinentals, a project with South African singer Si-bongile Khumalo. We did two tours in Europe, one with Danile [Pérez], the other with Billy Childs."

In 2005, a high-profile tribute gig with John Scofield and Larry Goldings surfaced. Nominated for a Grammy, the double-CD *Saudades* sparked interest in Trio Beyond, a band they formed in honor of the late Tony Williams. Two other notable dates emerged with the late Michael Brecker's *Pilgrimage* and Bruce Hornsby's *Camp Meeting* (both 2007).

One of this year's bright spots included yet another big name. "I played with Herbie [Hancock] in June at Carnegie Hall for his 70th birthday," DeJohnette continues, "and in early September did a concert with him at the Hollywood Bowl."

But it seems his current band, the Jack DeJohnette Group, gets much of his attention these days. "The great thing about that band is that I really wanted to get back to playing my music," he says. With a backlog of music written over the past 30 or 40 years, his band seems ideally suited to take on the material. The group features David Fiuczynski on double-neck electric guitar, George Colligan on acoustic piano and electric keyboards, Jerome Harris on electric bass guitar and Rudresh Mahanthappa on alto saxophone. DeJohnette notes, "We're doing new compositions and also compositions from my past, like things from my Special Edition and Gateway Trio days, stuff from Pat Metheny and Herbie Hancock and *Parallel Realities*. And my band's got some new material." Formed in June of last year, the Jack DeJohnette Group has played Europe as well as the Montreal Jazz Festival, and in Seattle and San Francisco. They will be active in 2011 as well.

DeJohnette's recent success in the Readers Poll neatly coincides with the formation of his new Golden Beams label. Maybe there's good karma involved, but every year, starting with the label's first release in 2005 (the Grammy-nominated *Music In The Key Of Om*), the drummer has been voted best drummer in DownBeat. "I formed Golden Beams so I could do what I want to do, and have control of the masters," he says. "I'm very much interested in doing music for people so they can chill out and relax and do yoga." Another prime example of this kind of music soon followed. "I got a Grammy award for Best New Age CD for *Peace Time* last year."

Another important aspect to DeJohnette's talent is how his piano playing and writing impact his drumming and music. Referring to both, he says, "They help me think more orchestrally. Add to that, I've been referred to as being one of the most melodic drummers around. That might have to do with tuning the drums in a melodic way so that every time I play one of the components on my kit, there's always melody happening. I'm always thinking in terms of composition. Playing the piano and writing helps me do that, and to have a better overall sense of what's going on in the music. It also helps me to know how best to complement a composition and the soloist with their improvisation. And the instrumentalists know I can hear everything they're playing and where they're coming from. They have that trust that I will be there supporting them."

In the end, though, the most obvious example of DeJohnette's work comes via the Standards Trio. Speaking of his writing and piano playing, he sees a nice fit. "It works because all three of us have played standards; Gary [Peacock] plays piano, I play piano and we all are familiar with standards. We also know how to shape these pieces and approach them totally fresh. We don't come to the music with a preconceived idea of how we're gonna play them. We just remain open. We just try and stay alert, ready to flow with the music, whichever way it goes."

Along with dates for the Jack DeJohnette Group, 2011 will be another busy year for the drummer. In January, he'll be in France and Monaco with reed player Michel Portal, the two of them having just released a new album that also includes Bojan Z, Lionel Loueke, Ambrose Akinmusire and Scott Colley. In February and March, DeJohnette will be in Australia, New Zealand and Asia playing in tribute to Miles Davis and legendary boxer Jack Johnson with Jason Yarde, Byron Wallen, David Fiuczynski and Jerome Harris. And in July, he'll be in Europe with Keith Jarrett and Gary Peacock.

Referring to more recording projects, DeJohnette adds, "I did a recording date with pianist Luis Perdomo and Drew Gress for Ravi Coltrane's RKM Music label called *Universal Mind* that hasn't been released yet. And I'm planning on doing another new age CD along with a jazz CD with the Jack DeJohnette Group." Asked about why he hadn't been writing much lately, he says of his now two-year-old band, "When you don't have a group to play your music in, you can't realize it. You need to have the band to play the music."

Drums

| | |
|------------------------|------------|
| Jack DeJohnette | 472 |
| Brian Blade | 326 |
| Steve Gadd | 283 |
| Jeff Watts | 202 |
| Jeff Hamilton | 192 |
| Antonio Sanchez | 192 |
| Paul Motian | 170 |
| Lewis Nash | 161 |
| Eric Harland | 149 |
| Joe Morello | 137 |
| Roy Haynes | 136 |
| Bill Stewart | 132 |
| Antonio Sanchez | 132 |
| Matt Wilson | 121 |
| Al Foster | 117 |
| Kenny Washington | 116 |



Clockwise from bottom: Dave Brubeck, Bobby Militello, Michael Moore and Randy Jones



‘The Longest Intermission In My Career’

By John McDonough

Six decades ago the Dave Brubeck Quartet first surfaced in the DownBeat Readers Poll. It was 1950. Three years later it vaulted to the number-one position in the Best Small Group category—in both the Readers Poll and the magazine’s first Critics Poll—overtaking its main competition at the time, the George Shearing Quintet. It was a victory the group would repeat often into the mid-1960s. Then a new generation arrived to rearrange the furniture. But this year something truly remarkable happened. In the game of musical chairs that is the jazz poll, the Brubeck Quartet has scored an unprecedented feat of restoration by retaking that coveted category—57 years after it was first voted the top small group in jazz.

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"The longest intermission in my career," Brubeck said with a big laugh over the group's stunning comeback. "I couldn't believe it. Insanity!" Then he paused. "Better change that word—delight. Especially because for me this group is just great."

But the question is why *now*, especially for a group that has remained substantially intact for 28 years and last year—and through much of the '80s and '90s—did not even register on the poll's radar? One answer could be the attention that's come the quartet's way since the 50th anniversary of its most famous album, *Time Out*, in 2009. Moreover, Brubeck began the year notably last December when he received the Kennedy Center Honors, the highest artistic accolade America has to offer. And the year to come is likely to be a procession of 90th birthday celebrations starting with Legacy's November release of the double-CD anthology *Dave Brubeck: Legacy Of A Legend* and the Dec. 6 television premier of the Turner Classic Movies documentary *Dave Brubeck: In His Own Sweet Way*.

Polls notwithstanding, though, the quartet's audience and drawing power have never sagged. This year, Brubeck says, the group broke a 30-year attendance record at Ottawa and returned to Newport to perform with Wynton Marsalis. Musically, it remains fresh and has never permitted itself to become a captive of its own legend or of nostalgia for the '50s, when the Brubeck brand domesticated contemporary jazz for a mass audience "that never liked jazz before" and became a national pictogram of post-swing "progressive" jazz.

"I just wrote a new arrangement today," Brubeck said, two months before

turning 90. "And it made me laugh when I played it because it made so much sense and had so much surprise in it. I figured, well, I'm not through yet. You wonder if you can keep up the pace you've set for yourself. And I didn't think I could until today. Son of a gun, I thought, everything's going right."

Brubeck still takes pride in never playing a song the same way twice, and alto saxophonist Bobby Militello agrees. "The head of 'Take Five' may sound the same to the crowd," he says, "but past that head, forget it. It's up for grabs. Dave loves to go with the totally unexpected."

Over six decades, however, the Brubeck Quartet's history in the DownBeat polls has presented a striking contrast. In 1953, the year of the group's first big win, DownBeat launched its first Critics Poll. And, indeed, the Brubeck Quartet won top place in both polls. At the end of the year, Brubeck moved from what was then a fashionably obscure jazz label, Fantasy, to the huge Columbia Records operation. And very soon it would be clear that readers and critics were to be at odds over this group. When readers once again voted it number one in 1954, the critics ignored it completely, beguiled instead by the austere formality of the new Modern Jazz Quartet. It was non-negotiable. The Critics Poll would never again concede the quartet its top prize. In August 1955 Down-

Beat invited Brubeck to answer his critics, and he suggested they resented his popularity—"since the Time cover." Now he takes a broader view.

"If I told you what I really believe, I don't think you'd like it," he said. "They often, in some ways, put down my lifestyle. It wasn't like a jazz mu-

Jazz Group

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sician's life style. That's crazy. I've known many great jazz musicians who didn't smoke or drink or raise hell. But I kind of heard that quite a few times."

Despite rare shifts in personnel and occasional diversions into solo piano or symphonic music, the quartet form has generally been Brubeck's anchoring reference point since 1951. When alto saxophonist Paul Desmond departed in 1967, the group became the "Dave Brubeck Trio Featuring Gerry Mulligan"—still a quartet but billed to accommodate Mulligan's co-equal stature. The mid-'70s was the only period Brubeck abandoned the quartet and toured with his sons, Darius, Danny and later Chris, in a Two Generations of Brubeck sextet. But a reunion album and tour with the classic Desmond quartet in 1975-'76 reminded audiences how they liked it best. In 1979 Brubeck signed with Concord Records and announced his return to the quartet form with his album *Back Home*. That same year Randy Jones joined on drums. Bobby Militello arrived three years later on alto. The core of the present group has been together for 28 years—more than a decade longer than the "original" quartet. Bassist Michael Moore joined in 2002.

Brubeck is a man who draws inspiration from familiarity and repays it with loyalty. He's been married to his wife, Iola, for 68 years, has lived in Wilton, Ct., for 50, used the same law office since 1955, and has measured relationships with his musical partners in time spans of Ellingtonian scope: bassist Jack Six for 29 years, Desmond for 17 and drummer Joe Morello for 12. The stability of the present quartet is even more astonishing: drummer Randy Jones for 31 years, Militello for 28 and Moore for eight. "Gerry Mulligan," Brubeck recalls, "once said he came for one night and stayed 10 years."

"Without question," Brubeck thrives on the safety of long relationships, says Militello. "He always looks to go somewhere different, doesn't want to do the same thing over and over. But he wants to stay in the realm of good, solid jazz. After years of knowing him and his material, you adapt to it the way he wants to hear it. That's why he likes to keep guys around for so long."

As the quartet has evolved, not everyone has necessarily been a logical

successor to his predecessor. "I didn't think I'd be comfortable with Jerry Bergonzi," Brubeck recalls of the 1979-'82 group, "because he was so advanced. But sometimes I don't know how I think. And pretty soon I was so comfortable with Jerry, it turned out to be a great move that just happened."

The Brubeck Quartet of today may have outlived most of its early critics, but not the shadow of Paul Desmond. Militello, who came out of Maynard Ferguson's band in the '70s, has not only been an exceptionally strong fit, but has done it without sounding at all like Desmond. "I never tried to capture Desmond's sound," he says, "although he was one of my major influences when I was a kid and I memorized a lot of his solos. But so was Cannonball [Adderley]."

Critics may salute the differences, but even after 28 years they still feel obliged to make the comparisons. It's hard not to. When the first bars of "Take Five" or "Blue Rondo" ignite a roaring wave of deeply programmed recognition, fans may see Militello, but they *hear* Desmond.

Militello understands. It's a proxy role that Bergonzi and even Mulligan had to deal with. "Forever," he says, "the Brubeck Quartet is with Paul Desmond. He was the star. It doesn't diminish anything Dave has accomplished to say that there isn't anyone who wouldn't get compared to what the group was with Paul. And God bless 'em, they should. I've been with Dave almost twice as long as Paul. If this was the '50s, I might have his stature. But in this day with our demographic, I don't expect that. I'm good with that."

It would be easy to play the old Desmond solos and get standing ovations every time, he explains. "But that's show business. And this quartet is not show business. We play the tune, then close our freakin' eyes, and take a chance on our imagination to find a new stream every performance."

They'll have their chance. Brubeck—who at press time was recovering after having a pacemaker installed—is expected to resume touring in November. He and the quartet will finish out the year with a three-night stand at New York's Blue Note this Thanksgiving weekend. "We can't wait to play together," he says.

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Complete Results

Big Band

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| Dave Holland Big Band | 327 |
| Mingus Big Band | 305 |
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| Ravi Coltrane | 202 |
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| Jane Ira Bloom | 156 |
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James Carter



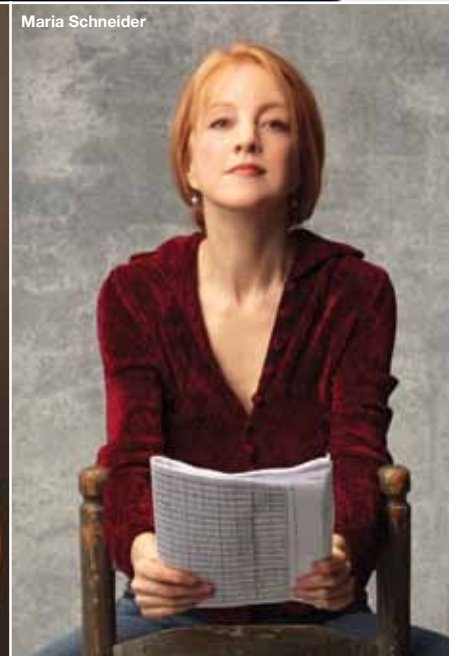
Wynton Marsalis



Christian McBride



Maria Schneider



Robin Eubanks



Kenny Garrett



Béla Fleck



JAN PERSSON

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MYRON WALDEN

"[WALDEN'S NEW RELEASES]...PAINT THE BROADEST PICTURE OF WALDEN'S EXPANSIVE INTERESTS YET;
A DOCUMENT OF ONE OF THE MODERN MAINSTREAM'S MOST
PROVOCATIVE SAXOPHONISTS, COMPOSERS, AND BANDLEADERS."

- JOHN KELMAN, *ALL ABOUT JAZZ*

"MYRON WALDEN...IS SIMULTANEOUSLY THE MOST INSISTENTLY PERSONAL
AND INSTANTLY ACCESSIBLE MUSICIAN OF HIS GENERATION.

...HE FITS NO CATEGORY BECAUSE, AS HE CONTINUOUSLY DEMONSTRATES, 'MY PASSION IS
TOO EXPANSIVE TO BE LIMITED TO ONE STYLE.'"

- NAT HENTOFF, *THE WALL STREET JOURNAL*



NOVEMBER 2009

MYRON WALDEN MOMENTUM

"...UNCANNILY EVOCATIVE OF THE 1960S
MILES DAVIS QUINTET" WITH "A FIRST RATE BAND."

-NATE CHINEN, *THE NEW YORK TIMES*

"MOMENTUM, IS A POTENT MODERN MAINSTREAM SET THAT TAKES TRUMPET ICON
MILES DAVIS' LEGENDARY 1960S QUINTET AS A TOUCHSTONE, BUT ACHIEVES
REVERENCE WITHOUT SACRIFICING ITS OWN VOICE."

- JOHN KELMAN, *ALL ABOUT JAZZ*



MARCH 2010

MYRON WALDEN IN THIS WORLD

"TO FEEL AND WHAT WE SHARE [ARE] SOME OF THE
MOST DEEPLY AFFECTING JAZZ BALLADS I'VE EVER HEARD.

THESE...TWO ROMANTIC SETS...ARE NOT THE CUSTOMARY JAZZ
INTERPRETATIONS OF THE GREAT AMERICAN SONGBOOK AND SIMILAR STANDARDS,
THEY ARE ORIGINAL COMPOSITIONS DRAWN FROM HIS OWN LIFE."

- NAT HENTOFF, *THE WALL STREET JOURNAL*



JULY 2010

MYRON WALDEN COUNTRYFIED

"[WALDEN] ADOPTS A KING CURTIS GUISE, DRIPPING
WITH DOWN-HOME SOUL."

- JERRY SHRIVER, *USA TODAY*

"...DRIPPING WITH DOWN-HOME COUNTRY BLUES, GOSPEL AND SOUL, CLEARLY UNDER
THE INFLUENCE OF RAY CHARLES, OTIS REDDING AND JAMES BROWN."

- ED ENRIGHT, *DOWNBEAT*

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HE BRING[S] THE RAW INTENSITY OF
A MISSISSIPPI BLUESMAN TO MODERN JAZZ."

- WILL FRIEDWALD, *THE WALL STREET JOURNAL*



FRED HERSCH

Don't Turn Out The Stars

Text and Photography by Michael Jackson

There is a scene in David Lean's 1965 epic movie *Dr. Zhivago* when Omar Sharif stares at snowflakes on a window of the icebound dacha he will later escape to with Julie Christie. The image comes to mind while listening to Fred Hersch's tune "Snow Is Falling ...," which the pianist composed at the Pennsylvania woods getaway he shares with his life partner, Scott Morgan. Not only is Hersch's piano touch crystalline on the piece—which is included on his recent album *Whirl* (Palmetto)—but so is the thinking behind it. Although all the tracks on *Whirl* have the perfectly balanced formation of a Louis Sullivan architectural motif or a honeycombing confection of mother nature's snowflakes, beyond his compositional conceits Hersch improvises from moment to moment.

"My music can be programmatic, have strong associations," Hersch says. "'Skipping' from *Whirl*, for example, is about just that act, just as the title track derives from my impressions of dancer Suzanne Farrell. But it's not overly worked out. I play phrase to phrase, let one voice lead to another, and before long I've played a chorus."

The ingenious communication between right and left hand in Hersch's playing is deceptively sophisticated, and since he does not give off a bombastic performance style with excess body movement, some may sleep on the brilliance of his conceptions.

Hersch's discography runs past 100 titles at this point, with three of his own works Grammy nominated. The consistency and variety of his output reveal a driven artist with a singular vision that can be traced back to the very beginnings of his career.

Originally from Cincinnati, Hersch studied at Grinnell College in Iowa for a semester (the same school Herbie Hancock, one of Hersch's acknowledged influences, attended) and later attended the New England Conservatory during a storied phase when Jaki Byard and Gunther Schuller were on faculty. But he wasn't one to dwell in academia (despite his later reputation as a mentor), and Hersch moved to New York's Greenwich Village a week after graduating NEC in 1977. He hung out from day one at Bradley's, the intimate jazz spot run by Bradley Cunningham on University Place, eventually securing a week's duo residency there, for which he hired legendary bassist Sam Jones. "I was the first young cat who played there," Hersch remembers. "Sam recommended me to Art Farmer, then I did a forgettable record date with Art and Joe Henderson, and then Joe hired me." Hersch re-

fers to his years backing Henderson whenever the tenor giant was in New York (between 1980 and 1990) as his "graduate school." Once he became established with that association, "The real gigs started rolling in," he says.

Hersch had the wherewithal to involve himself proactively with important progenitors of the music in his formative years, spurred perhaps during lessons and hang sessions with the idiosyncratic piano master Byard at NEC. Hersch pays tribute to Byard with a rendition of the latter's jaunty blues "Mrs. Parker of K.C." on *Whirl* and credits Byard with helping him see the possibilities of solo pianism. Eventually Hersch superseded Byard's teaching post at NEC, where he has taught during three separate periods, up to the present. "I was stepping into big shoes when I replaced him," says Hersch, still relatively young for a veteran at 55. "He was great fun to be with, a wonderful musician and a positive guy. He got me into the older stride pianists, and sometimes I would play in his Apollo Stompers big band while he conducted and played sax."

Hersch credits Farmer for his taste, discerning setlists (including music from Tom MacIntosh, Paul Bley and Billy Strayhorn) and subtle arranging touches—and also for encouraging him to compose. Henderson was laconic but once advised Hersch when he solicited approval for his sporadic habit of laying out during the set: "If you feel it, that's probably right; if you 'think' it, it probably isn't right."

Despite a wealth of sideman experience—encompassing stints with Toots Thielemans, Jane Ira Bloom, Stan Getz, Billy Harper and Gary Burton, plus accompanying singers such as Norma Winstone, Janis Siegel, Luciana Souza and Nancy King (respective recordings with the latter three

receiving Grammy nominations in 1989, 2003 and 2006)—a crucial element in Hersch's oeuvre has been solo play, for which he has become renowned. Perhaps second in number only to Keith Jarrett, Hersch has many solo piano releases to his credit, including tributes to Thelonious Monk, Johnny Mandel and Antonio Carlos Jobim and a couple of superb live sets: one at NEC's Jordan Hall (Nonesuch, 1999), another at Amsterdam's Bimhuis (Palmetto, 2006).

Not unlike one of his classical heroes, Glenn Gould, whom he describes as "intermittently brilliant and frustrating," Hersch houses an innate self-sustaining momentum in his playing, as well as an expansive imagination that manifests without undue force. As Gould insisted that art is not a "momentary ejection of adrenaline" but "the gradual lifelong construction of a state of wonder and serenity," so Hersch commented in *Let Yourself Go*, a recent film about his life directed by Katja Duregger, that if jazz closes in on itself and becomes overly self-referential, it loses its substance: "Jazz can be hip guys playing hip music for other hip guys, and that doesn't work, except for the four thousand hip guys around the world. If you want it to have something to do with life, you have to understand what life is."

These words carry added import for a man whose own existence was held in the balance recently. Hersch, who came out about having contracted AIDS in 1985, experienced a nasty bout with pneumonia in 2008 that forced him into an induced coma for two months and brought him close to death. The dreams Hersch experienced while in his coma are the source for a major new work from the composer, with a multi-media presentation set to debut in May 2011 at the Kasser Theater, Montclair State University, N.J.

Hersch's recovery from the coma was far from instantaneous. "I was totally helpless, couldn't eat anything for eight months, couldn't speak for quite a while since one of my vocal chords was paralyzed by a feeding tube," he said. "I had to undergo extensive physical therapy before I could play—or even walk—again."

Remarkably, Hersch, who managed to overcome an earlier bout with dementia related to his disease, made a full recovery from his pneumonia nightmare. He continues to battle the HIV virus with a monumental diet of pills that he takes with unerring regularity. In the meantime, in tandem with Morgan, he continues as an activist and money-raiser for AIDS awareness and related causes.

Due to the trepidations of his condition, though under control due to effective meds, Hersch claims he doesn't tour internationally as extensively as he might. But he has played almost all the states in the U.S. and has a steady relationship with two top jazz clubs in his hometown, the Jazz Standard and the Village Vanguard.

This spring, DownBeat caught up with Hersch's latest trio at the short-lived Blujazz club in Chicago. Drummer Eric McPherson, who has taken over Nasheet Waits' chair in the group, and bassist John Hébert proved acutely attentive to the pianist's peregrinations. Hersch's Blujazz set included, as it nearly always does, a Monk tune ("I Mean You") and

some Wayne Shorter, in this case "Black Nile" and Hersch's original "Still Here," written with Shorter in mind but now vested with pertinence to Hersch's own survival. Ballads, unsurprisingly, were in abundance, including "The Man I Love" and Hersch's "Close Of The Day," which he composed as part of his expanded work in celebration of Walt Whitman, *Leaves Of Grass* (Palmetto, 2005), plus "Sad Poet," his paean to Jobim. More surprising was a rambunctious take on Ornette Coleman's "Forerunner," plus a conflation of "Lonely Woman" and Bill Evans' favorite set-closer, "Nardis."

Hersch has drawn from a deep well of repertoire over the years. A self-confessed tune freak, he is as likely to take inspiration from the ideas of horn players as pianists. He played a set of tunes associated with Sonny Rollins at a ceremony celebrating the tenor saxophonist's award of the MacDowell Medal over the summer, a brief respite from five weeks' seclusion at the MacDowell artists colony in New Hampshire, where Hersch focused on music to match the visuals and libretto for his *Coma Dreams* project.

Au fait with the work of Egberto Gismonti and a fan of Argentinian classical pianist Martha Argerich, Hersch is also a Joni Mitchell geek. He recorded Mitchell's "My Old Man" years before Herbie Hancock zeroed in on the Mitchell canon and hasn't enough good things to say about the singer. "Nobody sets text like Joni Mitchell, peri-

od," Hersch says. "She is one of the great poets as well as an incredible singer; you get every note, every nuance. She's a goddess, pretty much."

The recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship in composition, Hersch wrote a gorgeously melodic bop contrafact on the changes to "You Stepped Out Of A Dream" in honor of alto saxophonist Lee Konitz, dubbed "Lee's Dream," which can be heard on both the highly creative duo album *This We Know* (Palmetto, 2008) with saxophonist Michael Moore and the quintet outing *Fred Hersch Trio + 2* (Palmetto, 2004). The latter recording features Hersch's then-trio of Waits and bassist Drew Gress augmented with trumpeter Ralph Alessi and saxophonist Tony Malaby. It's a good place to get a handle on Hersch's writing concepts for small group, since the CD contains nine originals drawing inspiration from such musicians as saxophonist/educator Allan Chase and trumpeter Kenny Wheeler. There is the deployment of onomatopoeia, as in the case of "Snow Is Falling ...," with the dancing precipitation of the keys and dripping bass ostinato behind "Rain Waltz," odd-measured blues played in the round, tunes composed of exclusively minor chords or perfect fifths—lots of ideas, all evidence of Hersch's curiosity and ongoing musical research.

Those who bracket Hersch as an incorrigible romantic might be surprised at his dabbles with humor. "Nostalgia" from the 2006 Chesky compilation *Personal Favorites* sounds like Hol-

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land's ICP Orchestra or even Spike Jones, and after all, this is a pianist who appreciates the playfulness of Monk. "Stuttering" from *Fred Hersch Pocket Orchestra Live At The Jazz Standard* (Sunnyside, 2009)—featuring his quartet with Alessi, singer Jo Lawry and percussionist Richie Barshay—could be interpreted as an updating of Monk's clangy, unapologetic metric dicings and free-ranging aesthetic.

Not to overlook a happy partnership with the Jazz Standard (where he selected the piano and has launched his more innovative aggregations, including several high-wire duo invitation series), Hersch has a special relationship with the Vanguard, evidenced by three weeklong bookings there this year alone (in January, July and December). "I was the first pianist booked to play solo there for a whole week," Hersch states with understandable pride.

Bassist Hébert was delighted to accompany him in the hallowed room. "Some of the best moments for me with Fred were during two weeks at the Vanguard, both trio weeks, one with Eric McPherson and the other with Billy Hart," Hébert says. "Standing so close to Fred, nearly playing acoustically, I was able to really hear his touch. Even at his weakest, not having played the piano in weeks, he is able to draw a sound out of the piano that is unique to him.

"There are so many pianists who can 'play' the instrument, but not many who can get a sound out of it, on whatever piano is available, like Fred," Hébert continues. "It goes beyond the great content of what he plays. It is that *sound* I am attracted to. Lush and beautiful, seemingly effortless."

The individuality of Hersch's approach, not grandly posterized, is something blue-chip musicians are more attuned to than the cursory listener. "It's the way Fred phrases and the rhythms that he uses," says pianist Kenny Barron, who identified Hersch in a live DownBeat Blindfold Test presented at this year's Detroit International Jazz Festival. "That's what gets me—how he plays the rhythms in his left hand."

Ambidextrous ability in contrary motion is deftly demonstrated by Hersch to an incredulous student at Western Michigan University in the *Let Yourself Go* DVD; it is something he has taught, by example, at the various academic institutions with which he has been affiliated.

Hersch students who have gone on to acclaim include Brad Mehldau and the Bad Plus' Ethan Iverson. Mehldau's contrapuntal left-hand facility is a feature of his playing that could be attributed to the Hersch influence. After teaching Iverson privately for several years during his time at NYU, Hersch referred him to Sophia Rossoff, his own mentor, now 90 but a continuing source of wisdom and insight.

"I'm sure many of Fred's fans react immediately to his touch, which is connected to the piano, not with just his fingers but his whole body," said Iverson.

Subtle physical responses guide Hersch forward in his improvisations. It's what Jarrett recently termed a kind of "bio feedback" from the hands.

Hersch prefers an analogy to tennis. "It's like Roger Federer when he is in the zone, and unstoppable," Hersch says. "There's nothing between you and 'it,' the game; you are totally connected."

Hersch hasn't regarded himself as an artiste exclusively. For a while he was a "player" or a sideman, and in the pre-MIDI 1980s he ran his own recording studio out of his downtown apartment, invoicing for sessions, making coffee for clients, taking the console apart, even ejecting the odd junky musician from the bathroom.

Nowadays he can pick and choose the nicer

gigs and say "no" when the circumstances aren't right, a great privilege for the jazz professional.

He realizes he lacks the looks, the showbiz acumen, the X-factor to command big outdoor festival stages like Joe Lovano, the Yellowjackets or Esperanza Spalding—or at least he is not snowed with such offers—but Hersch is more than content with the second lease on life that has afforded him a deeper focus on personal and universal essences. He's far from ready for the lights to go out again.

"I certainly feel a lot more grateful than entitled," he says.

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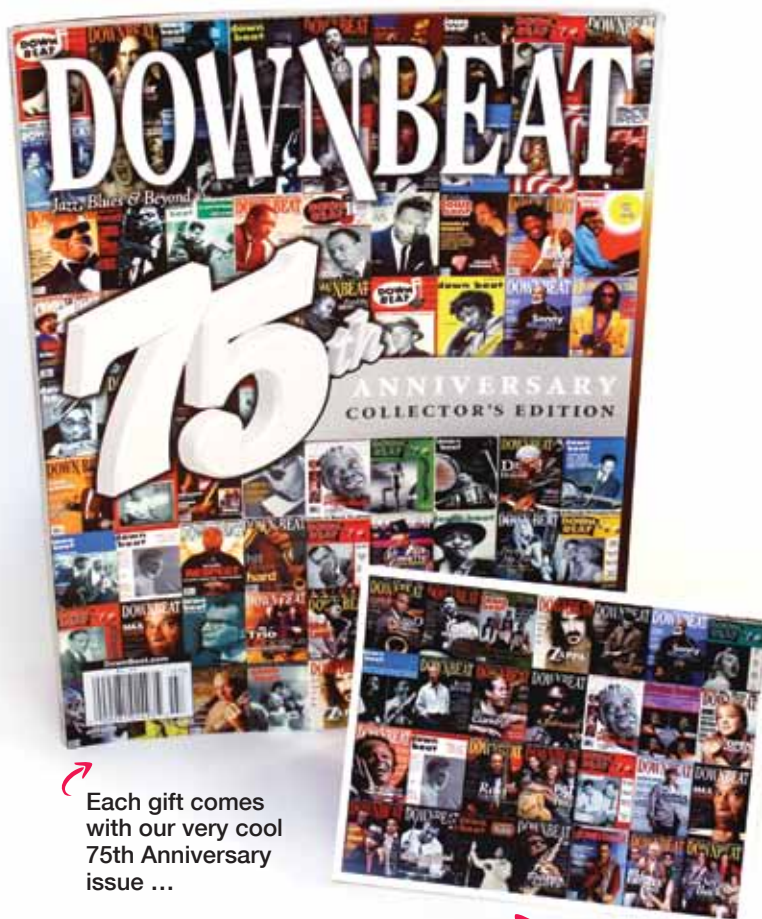
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Holiday Music | Silver Bells All Around

By Frank-John Hadley

Mr. Claus and his hoofed flying friends merrily make their way to rooftops again, lugging a bag of new holiday-music treats.

Matt Wilson's *Christmas Tree-O* (Palmetto 2144; 54:08; ★★★★★) provides Yuletide greetings so eloquent and mind-bending even the nastiest of Scrooges will want to pay attention. The Big Little Drummer Boy and revelers Jeff Lederer on saxes, clarinet, piccolo and toy piano and Paul Sikivie on bass are bold and incisive, witty and serious by turns, responsive to the warm emotional qualities of famous carols and Yule pop pinched from Dr. Seuss, wacky Chipmunks, swing-era bandleader Claude Thornhill and Auntie Genoa Keawe in Hawaii. Wilson also exercises his substantial skill and imagination as an arranger, re-tinseling "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing" and four more.

Ordering info: palmetto-records.com

The German quartet Berlin Voices, with *About Christmas* (hanssler Classic 98.609; 52:01; ★★½), emanates honeyed cheer at the drop of a snowflake. Singing in German and English, they coddle the sweet melodies of seasonal staples ("Joy To The World," for one) and pleasant surprises (old German hymns). These affable Teutons are backed by a decent jazz combo and have smart, respectful arrangers in Americans Peter Eldridge and Darmon Meader (both from New York Voices) and German big-band maven Jorg Achim Ketter.

Ordering info: hanssler-classic.de

The liner notes of the compilation *World Christmas Party* (Putumayo 305; 40:21; ★★½) include a recipe for coquito—spiked Puerto

Rican coconut eggnog. It's the perfect libation to go with the sunny Christmas vibe struck by Jamaican rastaman Jacob Miller, Hawaii ukulele duo Keathiwai, Cape Verdean vocalist Maria de Barros and Latin jazz stalwarts Pancho Sanchez, Ed Calle and Arturo Sandoval. The party fizzles some when crashed by out-of-place r&b sophisticate Charles Brown and banjo player Alison Brown.

Ordering info: putumayo.com

On *Little Town: Carols For Christmas* (self-release; 59:08; ★★½), the North Carolina-based jazz trio of pianist Grant Osborne, bassist Peter Innocenti and drummer Jeff Crouse combines exhilaration, refreshing authenticity, good swinging musicianship and an aura of charm and charity to a program that thankfully doesn't bulk up on over-familiar Xmas songs. Oh sure, "White Christmas" and "Silver Bells," like favorite ornaments decorating the tree each year, are present, but so are unexpected delights "I Heard The Bells On Christmas Day," "Home" and the perfectly acceptable Amy Grant title tune. On the latter two, guest Jeanne Jolly sings confidently.

Ordering info: myspace.com/grantosbornejazz

While never sacrificing intelligence for the sake of entertainment, singer-guitarist Ben Rudnick and his friends live up to their "fun for all" promise for *It's Santa Claus* (Bartlett Ave. 006; 22:01; ★★★★★). The New Englanders demonstrate how "Jingle Bells," "Let It Snow" and six others take on freshness when treated with touches of jazz, rock, rockabilly, folk, Western swing, Tex-Mex and r&b.

Ordering info: benrudnick.com

The widely known a cappella jazz group Take 6 seems genuinely passionate about the melodies and sentiments of their favorite Noel

songs on *The Most Wonderful Time Of The Year* (Heads Up 3158; 33:54; ★★). Everything's too processed and sweet, though; their holiday feast has a main course of candy canes and crunchy nougats.

Ordering info: headsup.com

Track by track on *Merry Christmas!* (Everso 170; 33:06; ★★½), Shelby Lynne's strong, true voice radiates degrees of joy or melancholy. In addition to her exalted singing, rooted in country yet transcending genre, there are small rewards to be had from her studio musicians, like the aching saxophone played by Dave Koz in her sad-hearted song "Xmas" and Ben Peeler's well-crafted bluegrass mandolin and steel guitar contributions to "Christmastime's a Comin'." "Silent Night" and "White Christmas" provide rocky, unimpressive sleigh rides.

Ordering info: eversorecords.com

Essentially a primer in acoustic music from the Blue Ridge Mountains in North Carolina, Martin Moore uses mallets on the strings of his dulcimer and plays acoustic guitar with understated grace and assurance. The lovely *Let Heaven And Nature Sing* (self-release 33:53; ★★½) runs from opener "Joy To The World" through 10 classic carols to the closing "We Wish You A Merry Christmas." The safe song selection is a little hole in his Christmas stocking.

Ordering info: martinmooremusic.com

San Francisco's Sean Smith is aware of but not servile to the gold standard of solo acoustic Christmas guitar albums: John Fahey's *The New Possibility* and *Christmas With John Fahey, Vol. II*. Throughout *Christmas* (Tompkins Square 2486; 39:10; ★★½), Smith shows intelligence, depth and originality in his explications of famous carols and holiday improvisations.

Ordering info: tompkinssquare.com

Holiday Gift Ideas

Stanley Livingston and Michael Erlewine, *Blues In Black & White* (University of Michigan Press)

In the late '60s and early '70s, a legion of musical heroes converged on Ann Arbor, Mich., for the university town's influential blues festival. And when the likes of B.B. King, Lightnin' Hopkins, Otis Rush and Howlin' Wolf took the stage, photographer Stanley Livingston was right there to capture it all in vivid black-and-white. He also caught the contrasts in these performers' personas: Howlin' Wolf's fearsome eyes onstage and the same Wolf chilling with a cup of coffee and chatting it up backstage. Festival volunteer Michael Erlewine's introduction and quotes from some of those legends add important historical perspective to Livingston's dramatic images. Blues fans from every generation will be riveted. Trivia note: In the '60s, Erlewine sang lead in Michigan's The Prime Movers Blues Band, whose drummer James Osterberg would later become known as Iggy Pop.

Ordering info: press.umich.edu



Duke Ellington, *The Complete 1932-1940 Brunswick, Columbia And Master Recordings* (Mosaic)

This 11-disc box set from the irreplaceable archivists at Mosaic shines new light and tells the definitive story of an overlooked chapter in Duke Ellington's bands. These years were the bridge between Ellington's early Cotton Club years and his 1940 accomplishments with the Jimmie Blanton-Ben Webster Band. It was a point when he no longer felt the need to play behind dancers and could devise rich compositions tailored to the strengths of his orchestra. Crucial versions of "Sophisticated Lady," "Stormy Weather," "Solitude" and "In A Sentimental Mood" are included, and featured soloists were clarinetist/saxophonist Barney Bigard, alto saxophonist Johnny Hodges and trumpeter Arthur Whetsel.

Ordering info: mosaicrecords.com



Kermit Ruffins *Happy Talk*

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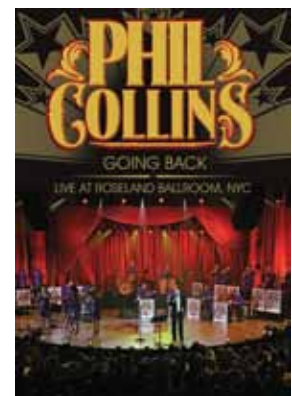
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Miles Davis' *Bitches Brew* 40th Anniversary Collector's Edition (Legacy)

For the 40th anniversary of Miles Davis' landmark late-'60s statement, Legacy has rolled out two different commemorative editions of this album. Both versions include the wealth of bonus material that has become the norm for Davis' Legacy box sets. For *Bitches Brew*, this includes a CD of a previously unissued performance from Tanglewood in August 1970 and a DVD of a newly unearthed set from a year earlier in Copenhagen. But the *Collector's Edition* is the one to buy for the audiophile, or obsessive Davis fan, in your family: It also includes a 180-gram vinyl double-LP gatefold replication of the album, poster and 18-page book.

Ordering info: legacyrecordings.com

Herman Leonard, *Jazz* (Bloomsbury)

For close to seven decades, the images that defined jazz came from the artistry of the late photographer Herman Leonard. While Leonard's death in August, at 87, brought about praise from many of the



legends he shot (including Tony Bennett in *DownBeat's* November issue), the best testimony for his art are the photographs themselves. This beautiful hardcover book includes 300 of his classic black-and-white photos, including images of Charlie Parker, Miles Davis, Duke Ellington, Ella Fitzgerald and more. This collection includes his dynamic performance shots of musicians like Dizzy Gillespie, but also unguarded moments from such legends as Max Roach and Billie Holiday, who trusted him to visually capture the inner strength and beauty that came out in their music. Wynton Marsalis contributed the introduction.

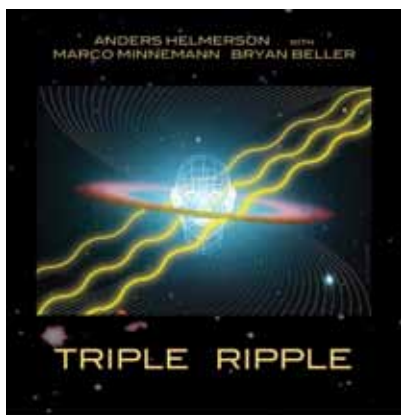
Ordering info: bloomsburyusa.com

Stan Getz, *Quintets: The Clef & Norgran Studio Albums* (Hip-O Select/Verve)

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work, this collection also includes an informative essay by Ashley Kahn.

Ordering Info: hip-oselect.com



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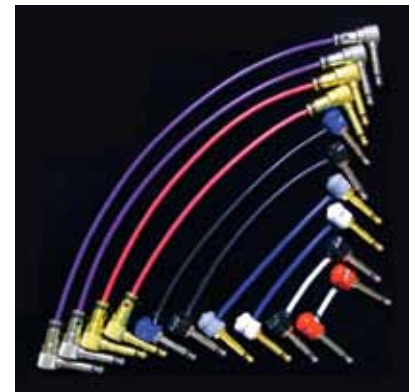


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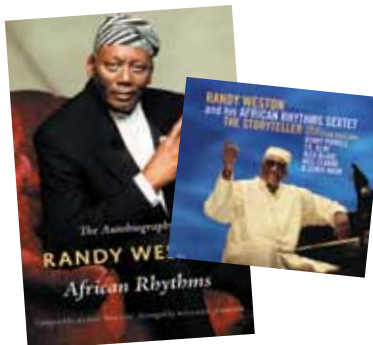


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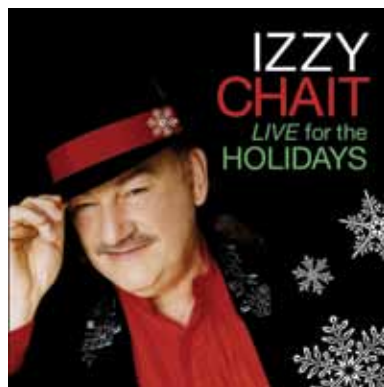


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Holiday Gift Ideas

Dinah Washington, *The Fabulous Miss D! The Keynote, Decca And Mercury Singles 1943-1953* (Hip-O Select/Verve)

From the mid '40s to the early '50s, any cool bar would've had a jukebox full of Dinah Washington's singles, like her definitive "Am I Asking Too Much?" and "Evil Gal Blues." This 4-CD collection of more than 100 of these incredible 78s shows why she was such a powerhouse even before the LP era, and many of these recordings have never previously been compiled in a single package. There's no better way to recreate this era, with the hip young Washington fronting rhythm sections that featured Ray Brown, Wynton Kelly and Jimmy Cobb, or her with the Lionel Hampton Orchestra. The sound has been considerably upgraded, and this set also includes detailed annotation and rare photographs.

Ordering Info: hip-oselect.com



The Record: Contemporary Art And Vinyl (Duke University Press)

Obsessive record collecting and creative modern visual art can go hand in hand—just ask DownBeat's own resident Vinyl Freak John Corbett, who also co-owns the Corbett vs. Dempsey gallery in Chicago. But an exhibit at the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University in Durham, N.C., celebrates records as works of art in and of themselves (the exhibit runs through Feb. 6 and will be at Boston's Institute of Contemporary Art from April 15–Sept. 5). Trevor Schoonmaker edited this fun catalog of the show. The exhibits illustrated here range from Malian photographer Malick Sidibé's shots of West Africans proudly showing off their James Brown records in the 1960s, Christian Marclay's vibrant collages made of reconfigured LPs and different collectors' favorite cover art. Accompanying the images are such essays as University of North Carolina music professor Mark Katz's thoughts on "gramomania" (a 10-dollar word for record buying) and Jeff Chang's essay on DJ culture.

Ordering info: dukeupress.edu



The Jazz Image: Seeing Music through Herman Leonard's Photography By K. Heather Pinson

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Ralph Alessi
Cognitive Dissonance

CAM JAZZ 5038
★★★★★

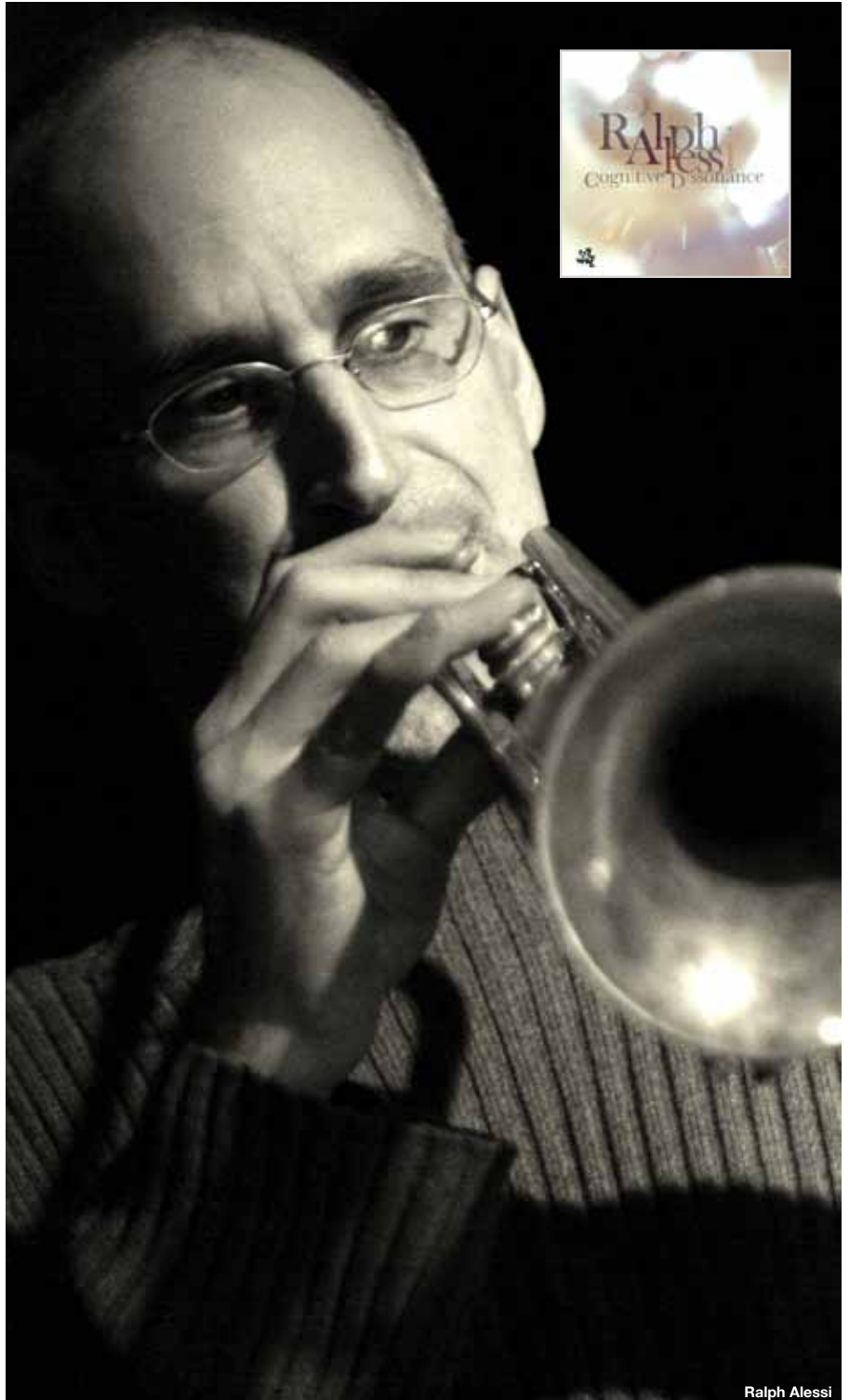
New York trumpeter Ralph Alessi's been quietly pumping out excellent CDs as a leader, six over the last decade. Among other engagements, including working in many other people's bands and projects, in 2001 Alessi started the workshop-based School for Improvisational Music in Brooklyn. He's clearly not a guy without ambitions.

On *Cognitive Dissonance*, which was recorded in 2004 and 2005, Alessi's goal seems to be to make concise statements—only one clocking in at more than five minutes—that travel far in spite of their brevity. His band, as near a dream team as I can conjure, is the same as the rhythm section on his terrific 2002 record *This Against That*. Pianist Jason Moran (recent MacArthur Fellow) and drummer Nasheet Waits are two thirds of Moran's Bandwagon, and they're joined by Drew Gress, whose versatile bass uplifts so many projects these days. No need for other horns with Alessi; his darting, often delicate sound is delightfully articulate, whether in wide open territory (sans Moran) like "Hair Trigger" and "Option" or on funkier cuts, like "Buying, Selling" and "Wait," which recall Moran's rap deconstructions.

Alessi's compositions, perfectly designed for these compact expositions, range from freebop and Thelonious Monk-ish intrigue to some pieces that remind one of his M-BASE involvements ("One Wheeler Will," "Dog Walking"). Moran is, as always, impeccable and ultra-intelligent. Just in the crunchy opening minute of "Better Not To Know," he offers a terse, jagged little prologue, spring-loaded chords setting up and releasing under Alessi's nimble solo. Waits is equally economical, and he works hand in glove with Gress, who's in the right spot without fail. Two duets between Alessi and pianist Andy Milne, including a take on Stevie Wonder's "Same Old Story," alter the mood but not the basic precept.

—John Corbett

Cognitive Dissonance: Cognitive Dissonance; Buying, Selling; Dog Walking; Duel; A Plenty; One Wheeler Will; Sir; Goodbye Ruth's; Hair Trigger; Better Not To Know; Sunflower; Same Old Story; Option 8; Wait; Goodbye Ruth's (Slow). (60:30)
Personnel: Ralph Alessi, trumpet; Jason Moran, Andy Milne (7, 12), piano; Drew Gress, bass; Nasheet Waits, drums.
Ordering info: camjazz.com



Ralph Alessi

Mason Brothers *Two Sides One Story*

ARCHIVAL 1583

★★★

Two excellent, Berklee-credentialed musicians make their debut as co-leaders in a symposium of good though somewhat non-descript originals broadly molded in a low-key, fourth-generation, post-Coltrane bop sensibility. You'll recognize it when you hear it because you've heard it often. The music is seasoned with high craft and burnished in a warm radiance, but without the singular glow of an authoritative inner spark. I hear music that inspires respect, not passion.

Now in their mid- to late-30s, Brad and Elliot Mason are late starters. In much earlier times, when Louis Armstrong, Benny Goodman, Charlie Parker and Miles Davis posted the innovations by their 20s, musicians were often pronounced past their prime by 35. But that was when the music was redesigning itself almost as often as Chevy and Ford unveiled their annual makeovers. The specter of imminent obsolescence hung over all musicians then. Today there hasn't been a major revision in the music's language in the Masons' lifetime, so maybe time is of less urgency. Nevertheless, for such accomplished players, they have left surprisingly few



footprints on the recorded scene so far. Their CD output has mostly been in the ranks of the National Youth Jazz Orchestra of London, and that was 15 years ago.

Brad Mason's trumpet voice is cool, full bodied and at ease in the instrument's lyrical mid-to-lower range. He thins out at higher altitudes. On uptempo pieces, he phrases with a controlled, even-handed assurance that falls just short of ferocity, preferring a more circumspect and orderly discretion but seasoned here and there with squeezed half-valve accents. Younger brother Elliot complements with an equally commanding precision, especially apparent on his frequent

double-time trombone flights under meticulous control. Together they make a well-balanced if rather monochromatic front line, particularly on the extensive ensemble passages. Both play open horns throughout. On the one hand, this seals the music in a thematic constancy. On the other, for the sake of a bit more variety in coloration, an occasional muted voicing might be appropriate to disrupt the music's pleasing but creeping blandness.

"The Evil Eye" is slow, darkly dramatic and apprehensive, which gives everyone a chance to brood. "Stage Pints" is a brisk, thinly disguised makeover of "Giant Steps" (an "anagram" they call it) with an engaging overture in which trumpet and drummer Antonio Sanchez play against each other with a nice tension. Mason's trombone bobs up and down the staff with an accomplished exactitude. Chris Potter also makes the first of two appearances, enlivening the level of interest. But his encore on "In The Third Person" produces a level of sparring and interplay with the Masons that delivers the CD's most invigorating and exciting moments, something the music could use more of.

—John McDonough

Two Sides One Story: 24/7; Two Sides, One Story; The Evil Eye; Gone Home; Outside In; Boots; In The Third Person. (68:14)

Personnel: Brad Mason, trumpet, flugelhorn; Elliot Mason, trombone, bass trumpet; Chris Potter (2, 8), saxophone; Joe Locke (5), vibraphone; David Kikoski, piano; Tim Miller (4), guitar; Scott Coley, bass; Antonio Sanchez, drums.

Ordering info: masonbrothersband.com

Cassandra Wilson *Silver Pony*

BLUE NOTE 29752

★★½

This is a half-baked album, not so much in the sense of being unfinished as uneven—exquisite in parts, bland in others. It dovetails live performances from a European tour with studio additions, though every song save the last features muted applause, giving the false impression it was, indeed, all performed live. Wilson's icy sensuality, capriciously oblique attack and sultry, hooting alto—in the tradition of Betty Carter, but unmistakably Wilson—flower fully on the delicious opening track, "Lover Come Back To Me." And how lovely, too, that Wilson begins uptempo (as opposed to her often glacial pace), and double-lovely that she chose Herlin Riley's flickering brushes, Jonathan Batiste's sparkling piano and Reginald Veal's big, woody bass to buoy her along. I like "Silver Moon," too, which apparently grew out of a jam in Seville, with Wilson's child-like, hauntingly whispered, Abbey Lincoln-ish lyric a finely wrought blend of innocence and lasciviousness. Ravi Coltrane's long obbligato enriches the texture considerably. However, the inclusion of a separate, 36-second cut of the instrumental that inspired the tune is a distraction, made even more curious by the fact that it is the title track. (The point of including the atmospheric, three-minute instrumental "A Night



In Seville" eludes me, as well.)

Wilson has been exploring her Mississippi roots, and her reimagining of the blues can be stunning. To wit, here, her redo of Charley Patton's "Pony Blues," in which she quite naturally shifts the gender of the speaker (as well as omitting Patton's unacceptable verse exalting brown-skinned over black-skinned women). Wilson is at her best here, invoking themes of abandonment, loneliness and yearning even as she asserts a desperate yen to do something—anything—to assuage them, in this case, just jump on a Shetland pony and ride—who knows where, or to whom or to what future. Great slide guitar solo here, too, presumably by Marvin Sewell. Wilson's regend-

ering of Muddy Waters' "Forty Days And Forty Nights" continues the desertion theme, but without as well-developed results.

Elsewhere, there's not much to get excited about. Listening to Stevie Wonder's "It's Magic"—all rubato—I finally figured out what it is I don't like about Wilson's super-slow tempos, and that is that she projects a narcissistic luxury in the sound of her own voice. I wanted to shout, "Hey, sing this song for me, not the monitor!" A rocked-up "St. James Infirmary" with too much reverb on the vocal does little to bring that hoary New Orleans classic into the present. Wilson's versions of Luis Bonfá's "A Day In The Life Of A Fool" and the Beatles' "Blackbird" are simply ordinary, though one can easily imagine them—as well as the whole album, for that matter—as pleasant background music for a late-night soiree.

The concluding track, a new romantic ballad called "Sunrise" featuring John Legend, is clearly aimed at adult contemporary radio play, which is fine, as long as it doesn't have to play on my radio. The release of this album was a bit delayed, and I wonder if that means there was some hesitation about whether it was really finished. That's what it feels like to me.

—Paul de Barros

Silver Pony: Lover Come Back To Me; St. James Infirmary; A Night In Seville; Silver Moon; Pony Blues; If It's Magic; Forty Days and Forty Nights; Silver Pony; A Day In The Life Of A Fool; Blackbird; Sunrise. (63:06)

Personnel: Cassandra Wilson, John Legend (11), vocals; Marvin Sewell, electric guitar; Brandon Ross (11), Luke Laird (11), acoustic guitar (11); Reginald Veal, bass; Herlin Riley, drums; Jonathan Batiste, John Legend (11), piano; Lekan Babalola, percussion; Ravi Coltrane, tenor saxophone (4); Helen Gillet, cello, viola (11); Common, spoken word (4); Terence Blanchard, trumpet (4).

Ordering info: bluenote.com



Mary Halvorson Quintet *Saturn Sings*

FIREHOUSE 12 04-01-013

★★★★

I dig music that makes me feel like I've been thrown off a cliff—that free-fall vibe is exhilarating. But a pair of wings can come in handy, too. At some point, controlling the situation is crucial to survival. I bet Mary Halvorson enjoys something similar, because she has certainly mastered that dichotomy on this terrific “horn band” album. *Saturn Sings* is a wisely calibrated affair that finds the inventive guitarist reaching a new level of eloquence by balancing skronk with sweetness.

A string player whose iconoclastic tendencies contain an enviable warmth, Halvorson foreshadowed this current trajectory with 2008's *Dragon's Head*, a fetching trio date filled with unusually lyrical puzzles. And it marked the start of a true band. The grace that bassist John Hébert and drummer Ches Smith bring to Halvorson's tunes is essential to the music's articulation. With the addition of saxophonist Jon Irabagon and trumpeter Jonathan Finlayson, *Saturn Sings* is a decidedly thicker, but even more palatable program. The shards of melody that drive the pieces—somewhat abstruse and mildly cantankerous in their own way—are rendered with interplay both lithe and spry.

Halvorson uses horn harmonies to woo the ear. “Crescent White Singe” finds Irabagon and Finlayson melting into each. “Right Size Too Little” explores the chemistry between tender and tart. “Mile High Like” is a crazed *fauxléro* that lets them enjoy some unison exclamation. Ballads have a special bearing here, and it turns out this a great forum to hear Irabagon's poignant side.

Ultimately, *Saturn Sings* sounds like Halvorson is cracking her own code, making complex tunes express themselves with a bit more ease, and revealing that a punch can be delivered in numerous ways. Pretty effective way to dodge the dreariness of convention if you ask me. —*Jim Macnie*

Saturn Sings: Leak Over Six Five (No. 14); Sequential Tears In It (No. 20); Mile High Like (No. 16); Moon Traps In Seven Rings (No. 17); Sea Seizure (No. 19); Crack In Sky (No. 11); Right Size Too Little (No. 12); Crescent White Singe (No. 13); Cold Mirrors (No. 15); Saturn Sings (No. 18), (66:20)

Personnel: Mary Halvorson, guitar; John Hébert, bass; Ches Smith, drums; Jonathan Finlayson, trumpet; Jon Irabagon, alto saxophone.

Ordering info: firehouse12.com

The Hot Box

| | John McDonough | John Corbett | Jim Macnie | Paul de Barros |
|--|----------------|--------------|------------|----------------|
| Ralph Alessi <i>Cognitive Dissonance</i> | ★★★★ | ★★★★ | ★★★ | ★★★ |
| Mason Brothers <i>Two Sides One Story</i> | ★★★ | ★★★★½ | ★★★ | ★★★ |
| Cassandra Wilson <i>Silver Pony</i> | ★★★★½ | ★★★★½ | ★★★ | ★★½ |
| Mary Halvorson Quintet <i>Saturn Sings</i> | ★★ | ★★★★ | ★★★★ | ★★★★ |

Critics' Comments ▶

Ralph Alessi, *Cognitive Dissonance*

Recently saw the trumpeter address this music on stage, and things were a bit more natural, more lived-in, than these studio spins. But Alessi's got a fetching way with milking his music for the pliability that balances the geometric approach that sometimes marks his work, and thanks to a wonderfully agile rhythm section, this date has many attractions. —*Jim Macnie*

Alessi is one of the most creative, original trumpet players on the scene, but I sometimes found it difficult to connect with this nervous, jangly, interruptive album of get-in-and-get-out tracks. I wish Alessi had dug in longer solos, like he does on “Hair Trigger”; “Sunflower” focused the album's crazy energy nicely. Also dug the mysterious, muted echo of the ballad “Sir,” and “Goodbye Ruth” swung hard. —*Paul de Barros*

Decidedly more cognitive than dissonant, Alessi creates a string of tight, orderly, acerbic originals in his seventh pairing in a decade or so with Moran. Alessi's horn is quick, abrupt and responsive. Result is a brainy, engagingly modern music, but emotionally removed. —*John McDonough*

Mason Brothers, *Two Sides One Story*

Muscular, soulful, lyrical swing in the tradition, the thick brass of trumpet and trombone shimmering richly throughout. Dave Kikoski's sparkling piano is a treat, and Joe Locke on “Outside In”—yeah. Nothing groundbreaking, but enjoyable, in-the-pocket swing. —*Paul de Barros*

It's hard for a disc made by skilled players to sound less than skilled. The young leaders surround themselves with some experienced associates, and that raises the bar quite a bit. But it's also hard for mere skills to blossom into art, and there's still a sizable dollop of academics in the music itself. —*Jim Macnie*

No wonder Wynton Marsalis digs these Brits: They've certainly paid attention to his (terrific) early records. Big guns band, in which Brad and Elliot—both sporting a matte finish to their sound—feel perfectly natural. Doesn't sound much like a debut, more relaxed and comfortable. Mainstream ideas executed with irrepressible drive. Kikoski doesn't slay me, but the Sanchez/Colley team, zowie, that's a slipstream! —*John Corbett*

Cassandra Wilson, *Silver Pony*

A quarter of this CD was on her last, but the redo of “Lover Come Back” pays back that peril. Wilson floats on a carpet of fluttering brushes, while Batiste's elfin piano converses with space. Great musical theater. Lesser material provokes less ingenuity, but leaves a trail of half-whispered sensuality. —*John McDonough*

Wilson long ago established her own sound, almost her own genre. It's often best when it's loose and less calculated, which is how *Silver Pony* rides. Weaving concert and studio sessions together, the latter retain an openness that some of the singer's poppier outings lack, though they also lose focus in spots (“Blackbird”). —*John Corbett*

She's made an art out of the slow simmer, and the live tracks on this disc focus on the churning interplay that her rhythm section brings to so many tunes. But I'd like see her explode a bit more—the way she calibrates drama is one of jazz's better pleasures, and eruption is part of its design. I also find it odd that studio tracks are mixed with the stage stuff here. Mars the flow, ultimately. —*Jim Macnie*

Mary Halvorson Quintet, *Saturn Sings*

Captivating music from this hugely inventive bandleader, a genuinely exciting face on the creative music scene. Shades of Henry Threadgill or Anthony Braxton sneak in, but the writing has great range and originality, and Halvorson's precise, hardscrabble guitar playing is just plain bad-ass. —*John Corbett*

Stiff, mechanical, often jagged and rather sour sounds with a penchant for unexpected autistic tantrums. Abrupt plunges into turmoil make for quirky contrasts but unearned surprise. Irabagon's alto is small, dry and vinegary, the kind of downtown timbre at home in Halvorson's avant lab. Smart, unorthodox mischief an inch deep. —*John McDonough*

Halvorson has quite simply the most original guitar sound since Bill Frisell and Kurt Rosenwinkel. One feels an underlying coherence to everything she does, no matter how goofy, atonal or wonky she gets. I love how she gets tangled up in the *guitarness* of her instrument. “Cold Mirrors” gleams! —*Paul de Barros*

**Oleg Kireyev/
Keith Javors**
Rhyme & Reason

INARHYME 1003
★★★★½

From the hard-bop drive of the title song to the free-time intro on “Springtime,” the quartet led by saxophonist Oleg Kireyev and pianist Keith Javors demonstrates expansive vision and boundless rhythmic variation. Backed by the quicksilver rhythm section of bassist Boris Kozlov and drummer E.J. Strickland, the frontmen often shift directions two or three times in a single tune. The overall impression is of a band with tremendous self-assurance and unlimited imagination.

You’re excused if neither Kireyev nor Javors rings a bell; dwelling for a couple of decades in Eastern Europe and academia respectively, they’ve developed deep chops while remaining under the radar.

A Russian native whose career blossomed while living in Poland in the early ’90s, Kireyev is a resourceful tenor player who isn’t afraid to let his roots show. On the gentle “What Is Love”—one of three pieces he composed—his



whispy tone and lingering passages nod to Lester Young, although it’s clear he’s channeling Lester Young by way of John Coltrane. Trane is a touchstone on “Rhyme And Reason,” as well, and there are hints of Wayne Shorter and Joe Henderson scattered about, too. What sets him apart is his ability to funnel

all those Western influences through his own approach to phrasing, which is romantic and unhurried.

Javors is equally at home in a variety of styles, pulling out some angular, outside runs on the funky “Chinatown” to balance his lyrical playing on his composition “Sierra Nicole’s Bossa.”

Kozlov holds it all together with muscular vamps and ostinatos that remind you why he landed his position in the various latter-day Charles Mingus collectives. —James Hale

Rhyme & Reason: Rhyme And Reason; Sierra Nicole’s Bossa; Springtime; Happenstance; What Is Love; Chinatown. (54:05)
Personnel: Oleg Kireyev, tenor saxophone; Keith Javors, piano; Boris Kozlov, bass; E.J. Strickland, drums.
Ordering info: inarhymercords.com

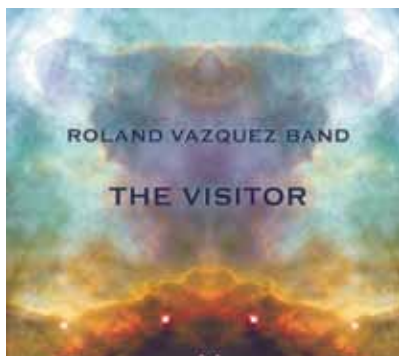
Roland Vazquez
The Visitor

RVD 7007
★★★★½

In the seven compositions that make up this ambitious project, composer-drummer Roland Vazquez applies an orchestral colorist’s ear to a big band’s 13-horn palette, moving in Afro-Cuban time with a foundation of clave, tumbao and montuno.

The result stands up to repeated listening. The star of *The Visitor* is Vazquez’s luminous, precise writing, with an intriguing rhythm section of first-class New York-based players that effectively functions as an orchestra within the orchestra, playing from written-out parts. Vazquez is up front, conducting instead of playing, so for his drummer’s drummer, he calls on Ignacio Berroa, whose insistent hat and cymbal drive the train and provide a grid for the percussive commentary of conguero Samuel Torres and the album’s most frequent soloist, pianist Luis Perdomo. Instead of the more predictable upright, there’s electric bassist James Genus, while electric guitar and vibes make for a welter of orchestral doublings that fuse now with the piano, now with brass and reeds.

The drums seem a little lower in the mix than is usual these days, leaving their kinetic function unimpaired while making more playspace for

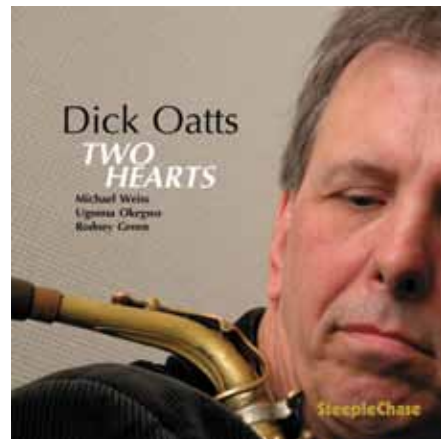


the shifting densities of the horn voicings. The harmony is continually surprising, the structural bag of tricks is deep, and despite the music’s serious mien, the orchestration is playful. The big-group live-miking by Todd Whitelock admirably exploits the sound of one of the few still-extant classic New York

rooms, Clinton Studio A (where Perdomo played his piano parts on the *Kind Of Blue* Steinway D).

All the compositions are by Vazquez, except for an arrangement of “Guarabé” by Clare Fischer, with whom Vazquez played. It feels like a single large work with many smaller parts; with the shortest cut clocking in at eight-and-a-half minutes, the listener may not perceive ends-and-begins. *The Visitor* is one more indication that the present generation of composers and performers has reimagined the orchestra from the rhythm up. Kudos to the Aaron Copland Fund for Music for helping underwrite it. —Ned Sublette

The Visitor: Urantia; Thru A Window; The Visitor; Whirlpool; Sevilla; Guarabé; The Path Of Change. (72:34)
Personnel: Roland Vazquez, composer/conductor; Aaron Heick, Ben Kono, Joel Frahm, Dan Willis, Roger Rosenberg, saxophones/reeds; Jon Owens, Tony Kadleck, James de la Garza, Alex Norris, trumpets/flugelhorns; Keith O’Quinn, Larry Farrell, Tim Albright (1–5), Isrea Butler (6, 7), Jack Schatz, trombones; Luis Perdomo, piano; Pete McCann, guitar; James Genus, electric bass; Ignacio Berroa, drums; Samuel Torres, congas, percussian; Jim Herschman, guitar (4); Christos Rafailides, vibes (1–3); Sean Ritanauer, vibes (4, 5, 7).
Ordering info: rolandvazquez.com



Dick Oatts
Two Hearts

STEEPLECHASE 31694
★★★★½

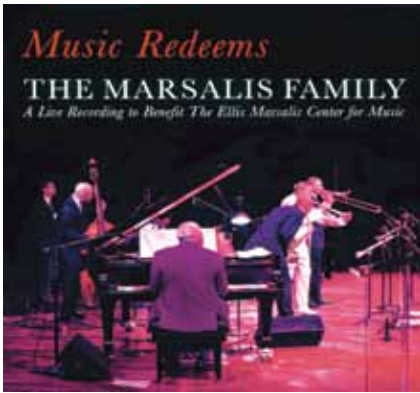
Don’t be put off by the unflattering photograph of Oatts and preponderance of ballads on this release from Nils Winther’s resolutely mainstream Danish label. The concept is hardly progressive, but the quartet plays with perfectly chilled restraint, tempos dangling with the poise of a Calder mobile.

Two Hearts seems to have a palliative agenda, as Oatts plays with extraordinary tenderness throughout. His pinched, exploratory alto sounds a little like Art Pepper, i.e. with Pepper’s facility and prettiness but sans agitated ego.

The program is seamless dinner jazz—no one will get indigestion. What makes it special, beyond the attuned professionalism of the rhythm section and, in particular, Michael Weiss and Ugonna Okegwo’s background motifs on several tracks, is Oatts’ incredibly centered playing. Given former tenure as lead alto in such big bands as the Mel Lewis Orchestra, it’s no surprise his timing is on point, but Oatts seems peculiarly relaxed and in the zone on this session. His rhythmically clipped, if faithful, recitation of the sentimental melodies limits leak of syrup, but it is the conviction of sentiment delivered in the fragile attack, as if Oatts were cradling a sleeping baby in his arms, that cuts through.

Winther may have a remit to include as many favored standards as possible, since each track clocks at just over five minutes with sideman solos minimal, but the formula works here. After the unhurried reading of “Come Sunday” during which Weiss lays out, leaving Oatts to wander on a bed of Green brushes and Wong’s skeletal strumming, Okegwo segues into the session for a dramatic framing of “Yesterdays.” All is so gorgeously recorded, unforced and succinct, and his tone so porcelain, that it’s easy to underestimate the darting acuity of Oatts’ crisp postbop lines. —Michael Jackson

Two Hearts: If I Should Lose You; We’ll Be Together Again; You Don’t Know What Love Is; Come Sunday; Yesterdays; My Foolish Heart; Darn That Dream; Angel Eyes; But Beautiful; Hello Young Lovers. (55:54)
Personnel: Dick Oatts, alto saxophone; Michael Weiss, piano; Ugonna Okegwo, bass (3, 5–10); David Wong, bass (1, 2, 4); Rodney Green, drums.
Ordering info: steeplechase.dk



The Marsalis Family
Music Redeems

MARSALIS MUSIC 0013
★★★

Tributes that involve the honored artist are dicey propositions. On one level, you're predisposed to like them; only a curmudgeon frowns on celebratory affairs that highlight an esteemed musician's accomplishments. Yet such records often carry built-in senses of sentimentality and predictability. And, as an additional safeguard, the performances usually employ creative restraint to ensure that the honoree isn't upstaged.

Technically, *Music Redeems* is not a tribute album. Recorded live on June 15, 2009, at a benefit for New Orleans' Ellis Marsalis Center for Music, it's billed as a rare gathering of the most prominent family in jazz. Even the lone non-instrumentalist Marsalis, photographer Ellis III, appears to deliver a short poem about his father. Yet the son's spoken-word verse—as well as a guest showing by Harry Connick Jr., who shares stories about learning from the Marsalis clan—and the patent focus on Ellis Sr. in effect make the 12-track set a tribute to the latter. At times, the album seems more concerned with museum-quality perfection than free-spirited music-making.

When the ensemble pursues Big Easy fare (the dual-piano romp "Sweet Georgia Brown," the festive swinger "At the House, In Da Pocket," the soulfully percussive "The 2nd Line"), there's no stopping it. "Donna Lee" playfully zigs and zags, Jason Marsalis whistling a melody against which trumpeter Wynton plays counterpoint. The let-downs occur on the slower-paced material and during breaks. Ellis Sr.'s ballad "After" barely breaks a sweat. "Syndrome" speaks with too polite a Southern accent. And the stage banter (better suited for a DVD) derails momentum.

Yes, there could be more heat between the grooves, and a few extra solo turns from Wynton and Branford would've been welcome. But as Ellis III declares in his poem, this isn't about the progeny; it's about the patriarch. —*Bob Gendron*

Music Redeems: Introducing ...The Marsalis Family; Donna Lee; Wynton And Branford Speak; Monkey Puzzle; After; Syndrome; Sweet Georgia Brown; Harry Speaks; Teo; The Man And The Ocean; At The House, In Da Pocket; The 2nd Line. (66:58)
Personnel: Ellis Marsalis, piano; Branford Marsalis, saxophones; Wynton Marsalis, trumpet; Ellis Marsalis III, spoken word; Delfeayo Marsalis, trombone; Jason Marsalis, drums, vibes, and whistling; Harry Connick Jr., piano; Eric Revis, bass; Herlin Riley, drums.
Ordering info: marsalismusic.com

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Jon Irabagon *Foxy*

HOT CUP 102

★★★★

Look past the lithe blonde “fox” in the bikini, past the Sonny Rollins-as-cowboy parody, past the plethora of “oxy” puns ... and things don’t get any less knotty on Jon Irabagon’s fourth recording. Despite the 12 tracks listed, *Foxy* is a 78-minute non-stop tenor sax onslaught that finds Irabagon melding Rollins with Albert Ayler and late-period John Coltrane. It’s a bold move, as both a feat of musical athleticism and extended imagination, but it’s also so arch in places that it hurts.

Even at this relatively early stage of his career, there’s little doubt that Irabagon is a major talent—both his victory in the 2008 Thelonious Monk Institute competition and his work with Mostly Other People Do The Killing have made that clear. Perhaps running changes on blues and popular songs for more than an hour seems the only logical place to go to prove anything beyond that.

The marathon fades up slowly, as if you were coming upon it as you walk into a club. The tempo is bouncing hard—with bassist Peter Brendler walking muscularly and drummer



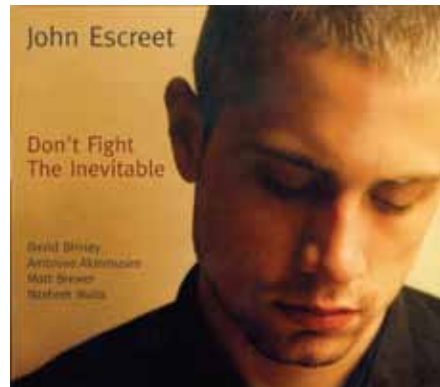
Barry Altschul reminding you what a master he is at creating a percussive tapestry. Bluesy themes emerge and evaporate. Occasionally, as in “Chicken Poxy,” Altschul engages Irabagon in some rhythmic counterplay. It’s not until “Hydroxy” that Brendler stops his forward motion and the music becomes less linear.

“Biloxi” takes on the form of a two-beat stomp—perhaps the most musically compelling period, overall—and the Rollins allusions really start to fly on “Unorthodoxy.”

At that point—about 45 minutes in—the conceit starts to wear a bit thin. After the repetitious screech of “Roxy,” the “radio edit” of “Foxy” begins as a slow drag and then speeds up, and the concluding 10 minutes (“Moxie”) sound like nothing more than a lead-up to the surprise ending.

In the end, it all seems like a very well-crafted comedy recording: expertly done, something you might play to impress someone else. But, something to return to continually like Rollins’ *Way Out West*?
—James Hale

Foxy: Foxy; Proxy; Chicken Poxy; Boxy; Hydroxy; Biloxi; Tsetse; Unorthodoxy; Epoxy; Roxy; Foxy (Radio Edit); Moxie. (78:30)
Personnel: Jon Irabagon, tenor saxophone; Peter Brendler, bass; Barry Altschul, drums.
Ordering info: hotcuprecords.com



John Escreet *Don't Fight The Inevitable*

MYTHOLOGY 0007

★★★★

Young British pianist John Escreet is most skillful at creating a climate with just a few notes. He then sets off on journeys that can tread familiar territory before venturing into more challenging terrain. Indeed, his compositions eschew conventional forms to embrace a freer concept that includes constant tempo and intensity changes. And while they make extensive use of horn unisons, they also elicit some of the most visceral blowing from saxophonist David Binney, who finds a perfect foil in trumpeter Ambrose Akinmusire.

Escreet’s approach to jazz finds its best expression, perhaps, in the homage he pays to Charlie Parker and to the jazz tradition and his decision to cover “Charlie In The Parker,” a composition penned by one of the founders of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians, Muhal Richard Abrams. Moreover, the tune as well as the two duos co-written with David Binney—one an ethereal soundscape pairing Escreet to the saxophonist’s electronics, the other an equally lovely and stirring alto sax/piano duo that ends in a whisper—nicely break down the program and provide a contrast to the pianist’s compositional idiosyncrasies.

Contributing to the success of this engrossing enterprise is the impressive rhythm-section team consisting of bass player Matt Brewer and drummer Nasheet Waits, whose nimbleness is a serious tool to negotiate the unexpected detours with ease and allow the soloists to perform with a great deal of confidence.

Finally, Binney’s sensitive and unpretentious use of electronics is a nice touch that adds elements of strangeness and even humor and reveals another facet of the saxophonist. Escreet has found in Binney a truly valuable collaborator, and the future will tell if the pair can reach even higher levels.
—Alain Drouot

Don't Fight The Inevitable: Civilization On Trial; Don't Fight The Inevitable; Soundscape; Magic Chemical (For The Future); Charlie In The Parker; Trouble And Activity; Gone But Not Forgotten; Avaricious World. (60:58)
Personnel: John Escreet, piano; David Binney, alto saxophone, electronics; Ambrose Akinmusire, trumpet; Matt Brewer, bass; Nasheet Waits, drums.
Ordering info: johnescreet.com

Marc Ribot *Silent Movies*

PI 34

★★★★½

Marc Ribot admits that the title of his contemplative new disc and several compositions within are inspired by his recent live-performance accompaniment to Charlie Chaplin’s 1921 film *The Kid*. Indeed, the inward-leaning music on the eclectic guitarist’s *Silent Movies* evokes scenes real and imagined, be it a solemn visitor walking in the solitary post-midnight haze of a sleeping downtown (“Sous Le Ciel De Paris”) or strangers surveying the fallout after a war-of-the-worlds battle (“Postcard From N.Y.”).

Consisting of brief scores Ribot created for an assortment of existent and fictional films, the record unfolds as a thematic mood piece, moving from one setting to the next. Save for a handful of distant soundscape treatments provided by Keefus Ciancia and the steely feedback employed on “Natalia In E♭ Major,” Ribot opts for graceful delicacy and deliberate pacing. Nothing turns overly busy. At their most complex, songs feature Ribot soloing amidst fingerpicked rhythms or navigating his way through Ciancia’s



white-noise bubbles. Minimalism and tonal decay hold court.

Ribot’s use of space and quiet pauses complements the meditative progressions. He allows individual notes to linger and fade, waiting to strike another until preceding lines begin to dance. “Flicker,” “Delancey Waltz” and “Solaris” are true to

their names; dusty harmonics and casual melodies glimmer with a subtle persuasion. Laden with an old-timey folk feel, it also appears that some of the material stems from Ribot’s experiences guesting on John Mellencamp’s retro-flavored *No Better Than This*. In particular, “Radio” seems to crackle out of a mono speaker constructed of tin and wire.

Vintage acoustics play as much of a role as atmosphere. Performed with few overdubs and recorded utilizing old compressors and a mixing board, *Silent Movies* hails from a bygone era.

—Bob Gendron

Silent Movies: Variation 1; Delancey Waltz; Flicker; Empty; Natalia In E♭ Major; Solaris; Requiem for a Revolution; Fat Man Blues; Bateau; Radio; Postcard From N.Y.; The Kid; Sous Le Ciel De Paris. (60:29)
Personnel: Marc Ribot, guitar, vibraphone; Keefus Ciancia, soundscapes.
Ordering info: pirecordings.com

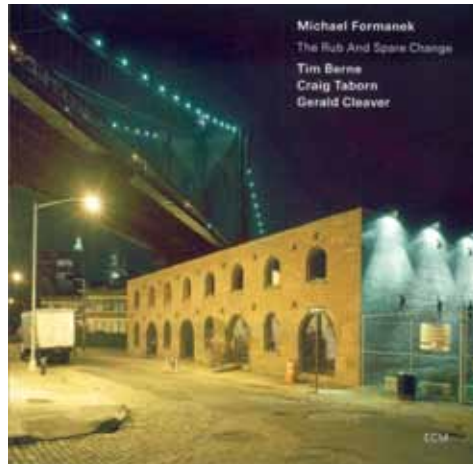
Michael Formanek
The Rub And Spare Change

ECM 14667

★★★★★

What begins as a kind of modal hymn with “Twenty Three Neo”—complete with pianist Craig Taborn’s mildly incessant five-note phrase, bassist/leader Michael Formanek’s quiet and supportive arco playing shadowed by alto saxophonist Tim Berne’s light, lyrical tone and drummer Gerald Cleaver’s soft percussive flurries—serves as an understated, dramatic backdrop to all that follows.

This cool, almost reverent ode gradually (and I mean gradually) becomes a series of very warm exchanges that take the opening forms and, by the time we get to “Too Big To Fail,” offer a complex musical universe full of wonder and suspense. “Twenty Three Neo” (featuring a 23-beat ostinato pattern) remains true to its lyrical form to the end of its eight-and-a-half-minute visitation even as its second ostinato section is seamlessly woven in. From here these longtime collaborators head into the bushes with more playful, aggressive fare, starting with the title cut, a sort of romp with shades of bebop running through its frame, both melodically and rhythmically. Cleaver’s jumpy drums suggest a second line while Berne stays cool but more live-



ly, Taborn lacing his playing with dreamy chordal castoffs, Formanek eventually joining in the fun. “The Rub And Spare Change,” also sporting two sections, starts quickly only to dissolve into a low-keyed workout, both free and formal, the music jumping in and out of boxes, swinging, tonal and atonal, with loads of sonic textures.

More of that bouncy medium-tempo bebop feel emerges with “Inside The Box.” Here, Formanek, Berne and Taborn ride the lines in sync on the head, the quartet then swinging into the heart of the song, Taborn’s accompaniment suggesting a polyphony as he continues to shadow

Berne until the alto player drops out. “Inside The Box” means, among other things, staying put rhythmically, Formanek’s walking bass the glue as Taborn and Berne roam. Cleaver’s touch is magic, strong yet light, full of jabs and stabs, and with lots of cymbal work. That sometimes pensive, dreamy quality begins to fade halfway through the ominous sounds of the lurching rubato of “Jack’s Last Call,” leading into the low-key fomenting of the 17-minute, three-part “Tonal Suite.” The pulse, the groove remains, and the swing is so elastic, mesmerizing, culminating in some off-kilter funk, no less. “Too Big To Fail” ends things on a (relatively) fiery note, Berne and Taborn playing their instruments as if taking aim on the collective bile that was and is Wall Street.

Indeed, *The Rub And Spare Change* works on you incrementally, to the point where you forget where you started and only know of what you’re hearing at the moment. While they’ve all played together for years, Formanek’s debut for the label (and first as a leader since 1998) features this new band playing six engaging, highly original compositions by a bassist who continues to play his ass off.

—John Epland

The Rub And Spare Change: Twenty Three Neo; The Rub And Spare Change; Inside The Box; Jack’s Last Call; Tonal Suite; Too Big To Fail. (58:09)

Personnel: Michael Formanek, bass; Tim Berne, alto saxophone; Craig Taborn, piano; Gerald Cleaver, drums.
Ordering info: ecmrecords.com



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— Tom Waits



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Accents [ZMR 201010]
On *Accents*, New York born, Rio de Janeiro-based percussionist Scott Feiner is joined by saxophonist Joel Frahm, guitarist Freddie Bryant, and bassist Joe Martin. The sole percussive force of this innovative set is Feiner’s masterfully played pandeiro, a handheld frame drum. “Scott Feiner is a soulful magnet for the fusion of jazz and Brazilian music.” — Kurt Rosenwinkel



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Voices of Today

Freddy Cole remembers Billy Eckstine with a special authority and affection in ***Freddy Cole Sings Mr. B*** (High Note 7214; 60:44 ★★★★★). Working in his usual quartet setting, with tenor saxophonist Houston Person on seven tracks, Cole selects from a list of titles Eckstine recorded but did not necessarily own. This includes a couple of rarely heard tunes (“Tender Is The Night,” “The High And The Mighty”) as well as a pair of scarce Eckstine compositions and some very funny Eckstine lyrics to “Ma, She’s Making Eyes At Me.” Cole’s chamber style is intimate and chatty on the ballads, amiable and swinging as a soft-shoe elsewhere.

Ordering info: jazzdepot.com

Karen Marguth is a spiritual grandchild of hipness highness Annie Ross. ***Karen Marguth*** (self-release 49:56 ★★★★★½) is the work of a singer with a swift, light voice and the mobility and diction to roll over the tongue-twisting speed bumps of a vocalese piece like “Sister Sadie.” When Marguth turns her skills to a properly engineered mating of words and music, she takes off like a Zephyr. Her “Black-bird” medley and “Happy As The Day Is Long” swing fiercely with only bass accompaniment, and she scats with a proper abandon. This is a singer who prefers to trot and sprint, and does it with commanding zest.

Ordering info: karenmarguth.com

Denise Donatelli: *When Lights Are Low* (Savant 2109; 52:46 ★★★★★½) An impressive showcase for Donatelli’s virtuosity and sheer musicianship, which steers the repertoire off the main thoroughfare onto wisely chosen and musically scenic back roads where Benny Carter and Sting cross. Donatelli gets much help from Geoffrey Keezer, who navigates a path of environments from a spare guitar-and-rhythm duo to strings and background vocals. In a desire to build the material, the result is a tendency to over-embroider a bit. But Donatelli slides between the role of singer and musician with the cool acrobatics of an athlete.

Ordering info: jazzdepot.com

Nnenna Freelon: *Homefree* (Concord 31316; 52:27 ★★★★★½) marks the singer’s eighth CD and 15th year with Concord. Her work remains a mix of standards and assorted surprises, both of which run through her fingers like a handful of moist clay into unexpected contours. “Skylark,” accompanied only by bassist Wayne Batchelor, provides the freest, most intimate look at her method as she squeezes, stretches and remolds her vowels into melodies within melodies. Put a backbeat on it, as on “The Lamp Is Low,” and it comes out politely funky with a pinch of gospel. One



Karen Marguth: Commanding zest

COURTESY KAREN MARGUTH

original blues bubbles with sensual imagery, but so has every blues since Bessie Smith.

Ordering info: concordmusicgroup.com

Ran Blake/Christine Correa: *Out Of The Shadows* (RPR 14599; 56:55 ★★★★★½) There is an intensely austere tension pervading these arty duos, enabled by the emotional obliqueness of some of the material and the stern abstraction and discord offered by piano veteran Ran Blake. The title piece and “Deep Song” have rarely been covered and share a somber pensiveness, not easily penetrated. Even more familiar tunes such as “Goodbye,” “Yellow Bird” and “Hi Lili” are probed with such a stark severity, they become abstract theater pieces, shorn of romance and sentiment. As a singer, Correa is much more theater than jazz. Though it is true to its objectives, this is not a work for everybody.

Ordering info: ranblake.com

Kenia Celebrates Dorival Caymmi (Mooka 1030; 50:11 ★★★★★) The songs of Bahian composer Caymmi are not widely known in the U.S., nor is singer Kenia (Acioly), who worked here in the 1980s. She interprets 15 of his tunes in this airy and vivacious collection. The catchy tunes and soft, elegant chug of the rhythms leave much to savor. So does the interpretative grace of Kenia, whose sound offers more texture and less wisp than some Brazilian singers but is still blithely transparent by American pop standards.

Ordering info: mookarecords.com

Barb Jung: *The Men I Love* (Naim 144; 52:17 ★★★★★) Jung’s softly dramatic readings of the post-1960 songbooks of Neil Diamond, Bob Dylan, Paul Simon, David Byrne and others extend new musical light on what we think of as “the originals.” The melodies she works with tend toward an elemental, blue-collar folkiness, but she draws out the stories the words tell with the focus of a fine actress.

Ordering info: naimlabel.com

DB

**Greg Ward's
Fitted Shards
South Side Story**

19/8 RECORDS 1014

★★★★★

**Karl E.H. Seigfried
Portrait Of
Jack Johnson**

IMAGINARY CHICAGO RECORDS 007

★★★★★



range of this Chicago native's South Side saga, the music not always balls-to-the-wall but at times gentle, lyrical, the opening "Segue," much of "All In" and "South Side Story," and the soulful ballad "Like Mozart" laced with moments of relative (and I mean "relative") calm. As the program unfolds, the listener is drawn in, paying closer and closer attention only to have the music suddenly surprise, e.g., the beginning of "Step Forward" followed by its abrupt sonic surges. It's jazz, but it's also cinematic rock, roughhewn, theatrical, "staged" for your undivided attention.

Greg Ward's music is not for the faint of heart. The alto saxophonist's Fitted Shards and much of their *South Side Story* is enough to keep your digestive track in limbo indefinitely. His appearance on Karl E.H. Seigfried's *Portrait Of Jack Johnson* is less ferocious but no less expressive.

Ward's Fitted Shards are the perfect complement to his searing yet singing evocations on alto. And much of *South Side Story* plays like one long suite, the mix of improvisation and arrangements coming at you at a sometimes dizzying pace. Indeed, this is music performed as if by a classical music troupe with more than a few axes to grind, or, in this case, stories to tell. The Shards are keyboardist/guitarist Rob Clearfield, acoustic and electric bassist Jeff Greene and drummer/percussionist Quin Kirchner. Across nine Ward compositions the band expresses the musical and emotional

Ward—whose work also includes his other band, the Greg Ward Sextet, free-jazz via the TBD Improvisation Orchestra as well as the mixed sounds of the Occidental Brothers' West African dance music and the Chicago Afro-Latin Jazz Ensemble—joins Seigfried in another programmatic outing with *Portrait Of Jack Johnson*. This time, however, the playing, while equally virtuosic, is less "operatic," more folksy. The program comes in two sections: *The Boxing Bassist Suite* (three parts) and *Portraits In Jazz* (eight parts). All 11 songs come from bassist/guitarist Seigfried

(also a Chicago native and trained boxer), whose work also includes his own bands and stints with Roscoe Mitchell, George Lewis and Bobby McFerrin, along with eclectic rockers and crossovers like Hawkwind, Soft Machine and Gong. Joined by made-to-order drummer Frank Rosaly, Seigfried and Ward get more room to bow and blow. The boxing suite is not only about Johnson, but two others, who, like Johnson, also played bass: Archie Moore and Ezzard Charles. And the portraits of such inspirations and former mentors as Malachi Favors ("Up From Mississippi"), Thelonious Monk ("Spheroid"), Fred Anderson ("Mr. Anderson") and Roswell Rudd ("Roswell") cover swing, New Orleans street music and funk and rural blues, among other genres. The boxing music is a far-ranging and not all that suggestive set, while the portraits are a delightful, interpretative survey of signatures and styles, all of it engaging and personable, not to mention a showcase for Seigfried's solid grasp of the music's history.

—John Ephland

South Side Story: Segue; All In; Castle Of Ice; Step Forward; Instructions; South Side Story; Like Mozart; University Of Opportunity; Fitted Shards. (61:11)

Personnel: Greg Ward, alto saxophone; Rob Clearfield, keyboards, piano; Jeff Greene, acoustic and electric bass; Quin Kirchner, drums, percussion.

Ordering info: nineteeneight.com

Portrait Of Jack Johnson: Up From Mississippi; Revolver; Spheroid; Accessibility; Rosminah; Mr. Anderson; Roswell; Treat It Gentle. (70:12)

Personnel: Karl E. H. Seigfried, bass, guitar; Greg Ward, alto saxophone; Frank Rosaly, drums.

Ordering info: imaginarychicago.com

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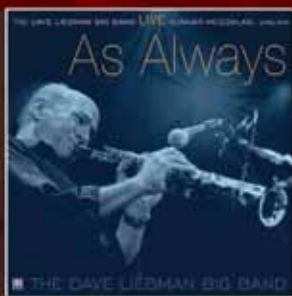
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[OTN 3]

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[MAA 1039]

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[JTR 0544]

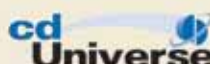
**BRANDI DISTERHEFT
Second Side**

Featuring guest vocalists Holly Cole and Raneé Lee, *Second Side* implements swinging grooves and lush atmospheres, with influences ranging from early-period Joni Mitchell (especially in her approach to lyrics) to Brazilian pop sensation Milton Nascimento ("Twilight Curtain").



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Amina Figarova *Sketches*

BMCD 507
★★★★½

On this intelligent, sensitive and varied set of music, pianist-composer Amina Figarova cuts a smart profile as a leader, with a stylistic stamp at once modern and linked to assorted jazz traditions. Tradition-juggling skill may, in fact, come with the territory (or territories) of her background. Born in Azerbaijan and now based in Rotterdam, with studies at Berklee School of Music during her development stage, Figarova ventures in musical directions that somehow reflect her varied cultural experience. A European harmonic air and general sophistication of bearing mixes with aspects of jazz vocabulary over the course of this fine album's 13 tracks, and her overall painterly way with a tune, arranging and soloing indicate a personal, poetic jazz sensibility at work.

In groupings ranging from solo parts to piano trio to a sextet (including her husband, flutist Bart Platteau), Figarova nicely works out a list of musical problems, inventions and just plain tunes. On the title "Sketches," a 9/8 piano ostinato leads off a sinuous, yearning melody over a restless groove and set of changes. Cooler, slightly melancholic



touches come through in the meditative "Four Steps Into ...," "Caribou Crossing" and the vaguely Chick Corea-esque "Train To Rotterdam." "WHOTSOT" is a taut exercise in syncopated accents in the band, teasing the underlying and impending swing pulse begging to be set loose. Once the song does land in the swing, tenor saxist Marc Mommaas turns out an impressive solo—impulsive and assured, by turns—and the pianist limbers up and around the changes with tasteful, knowing understatement. The going gets slow bluesy on "Back In New Orleans," albeit with transatlantic blue notes in the melody, and tempo shifts meet angular changes in harmony and mood in "Look At That."

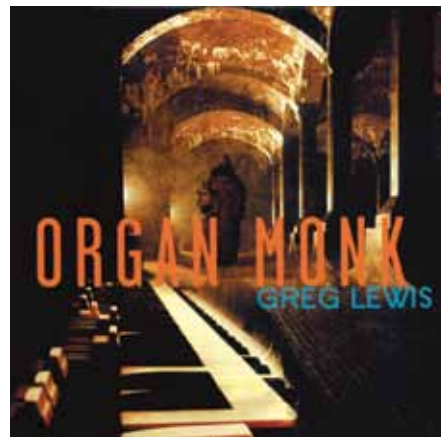
In general, Figarova impresses with subtlety and melodic logic more than blatant fireworks on the album. She and her band lure us into an emotional space where contemplative qualities and wise compositional mapping do the bidding, with burning moments in the margins.

—Josef Woodard

Sketches: Four Steps To ...; Unacceptable; Sketches; Caribou Crossing; Breakfast For The Elephant; WHOTSOT; Back In New Orleans; On The Road; Flight N; Look At That; Train To Rotterdam; Happy Hour; Your Room. (78:19)

Personnel: Amina Figarova, piano; Ernie Hammes, trumpet, flugelhorn; Marc Mommaas, tenor sax; Bart Platteau, flute, B-flat flute d'amor; Jeroen Vierdag, bass; Chris "Buckshot" Strik, drums.

Ordering info: munichrecords.com



Greg Lewis *Organ Monk*

SELF-RELEASE
★★★★

For his first album as a leader, organist Greg Lewis chose 14 Thelonious Monk compositions and finishes the album with his original "Kohl's Here." While a tad on the long side, *Organ Monk* shows Lewis to be a talented and creative musician who knows the B-3 inside-out. Lewis pulls numerous different timbres and colors from his instrument, ranging from standard B-3 fare to the eerie, ghoulish atmospherics on "Criss Cross," which references the Grim Reaper on the album's cover art. He changes the organ's stops halfway through "Locomotion," giving the listener a new sonic tapestry to consider. Lewis often mixes stabling, percussive eighth- and 16th-note lines with dense, layered chords that are right out of the church, and I love how his phrases often end and begin in unexpected places.

Lewis and drummer Cindy Blackman (talk about a thudding bass drum) have a great rapport. Blackman's precise and assertive fills and kicks are perfectly placed and support Lewis' phrasing and accents nicely. Check how they bob and weave around each other at the beginning of "Criss Cross" and how she seems to know exactly where Lewis is headed on the easy swinger "Boo's Birthday." They effectively accentuate the jagged nature of some of Monk's tunes like "Trinkle Tinkle" by approaching them with plenty of rubato. "Locomotion" is given an especially start-stop stuttering treatment. I would like to have heard more from guitarist Ron Jackson, both in the mix (he's sometimes hard to hear when comping) and in terms of soloing. Jackson doesn't solo on every track, and more work like his fine single-note solos on "Coming In The Hudson" and "We See" would have been most welcome.

—Chris Robinson

Organ Monk: Trinkle Tinkle; Jacking; Criss Cross; Light Blue; Played Twice; Boo's Birthday; Coming In The Hudson; Four In One; Locomotion; We See; Monk's Mood; Think Of One; Work; Introduction; Kohl's Here. (67:25)

Personnel: Greg Lewis, organ; Ron Jackson, guitar; Cindy Blackman, drums.

Ordering info: cdbaby.com

Greg Abate *Live In Monterey*

WAVE STREET SESSIONS 0003
★★★★½

Saxophonist Greg Abate's group, featuring pianist Bill Cunliffe, bassist Ray Drummond and drummer Akira Tana, begins *Live In Monterey* (produced by Dr. Herb Wong) with an energetic take of "You And The Night And The Music," which is full of verve and swagger. It straight off tells the listener that this is going to be a solid, swinging straight-ahead set featuring inspired blowing and ensemble work. The rhythm section drives the band hard and makes the shift between Afro-Cuban and swing feels seamlessly. Abate, on alto here, digs in and goes for it, while Cunliffe's left-hand voicings and right-hand single-note runs evoke McCoy Tyner. Drummond, who quotes the tune in his solo, is rock solid, as is Tana, who is about as crisp as they come. The band is extremely tight and the collective intensity of its members, along with their overall approach, suggest they take Coltrane's classic quartet as a model.

Unlike someone who has a similar sound on



all their instruments, Abate's approach on alto and tenor are distinctly different. His alto sound, which recalls Bud Shank's, is big and slightly rough, yet sweet at the same time, while on tenor his style comes closer to Coltrane. Abate is a melodic and inventive player who never seems to run out of fresh ideas, whether he's burning through

the changes on "Bebop" or taking time on the ballads "Oh You Crazy Moon" and his "For The Love Of Life," which is tuneful enough to fit into the Great American Songbook. At 74 minutes, *Live In Monterey* is long, but the varied arrangements, different styles (the bossa-ish take on "Infant Eyes" is tasty) and track sequencing not only make it go by quickly but give the listener a lot to dig into.

—Chris Robinson

Live In Monterey: You And The Night And The Music; Wongs Way; Oh You Crazy Moon; Silveresque; Bebop; For The Love Of Life; Y Blues; Forest Flower; Infant Eyes; In The Stratosphere. (74:33)

Personnel: Greg Abate, alto saxophone (1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10); tenor saxophone (3, 4, 9); Bill Cunliffe, piano; Ray Drummond, bass; Akira Tana, drums.

Ordering info: wavestreetstudios.com

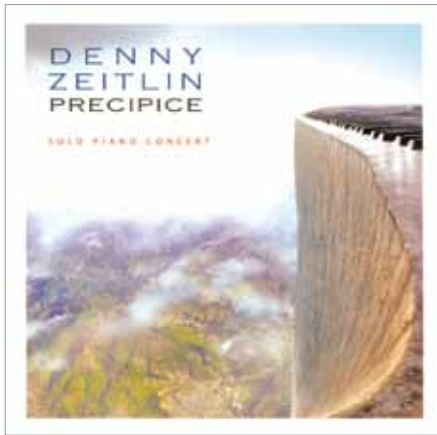
Denny Zeitlin
Precipice: Solo Piano Concert

SUNNYSIDE 1253
 ★★½

While filled with many sublime moments, *Precipice*, recorded live two years ago in Santa Barbara, isn't so much about teetering dangerously over any cliffs as stepping back a bit to take in the safer though often beautiful view.

This approach reflects the imposing level and range of Denny Zeitlin's artistry. He is, essentially, a romantic modernist, whose emotional and adventurous sides complement each other. He marshals plenty of resources to pursue this symbiosis, including complete insight into the language of experimental music in and beyond the jazz canon. This allows him to, for example, enhance the momentum of "On The March" with a few plucks of the piano strings, an episode of minimalist chord repetition and free-tempo meanderings in which the left and right hands seem to be wandering through shadows, attempting to connect.

Drawing from these multiple wells gives Zeitlin's performances a sense of constant linear change. This becomes clearest when we can hear him work with familiar material, as on the opening track—or, confusingly, two tracks,



identically titled, differentiated only as parts one and two and presented as a single performance in three distinct sections. "Free Prelude/What Is This Thing Called Love?/Fifth House" opens with a cryptic allusion to the first four notes of the Cole Porter tune. From here, Zeitlin undertakes a classic free improvisation, not concerned so much with elaborating on the tune or structure as following a thread of impulses. He outlines his ideas patiently, exploiting the resonance of the instrument in quiet passages in the upper register and with emphatic accents in the bass.

Centered more on the performer's process

than the source material, this approach is arguably more self-indulgent than, say, executing variations on written material. Zeitlin, however, excels at this sort of thing, precisely because he does take the time he needs to achieve his eloquent results. Not surprisingly, he does so especially persuasively with ballads. The up-tempo tracks on *Precipice* are compromised somewhat by Zeitlin's treatment of the walking bass as primarily an orchestral element. He applies it on "Deluge" to set up some right-hand explorations; it's more about arrangement than swing. Even on Wayne Shorter's "Oleo," the most uptempo track, Zeitlin's exhilarating hand independence and precise technique astonish without defining any infectious groove. On the other hand, he adorns the reflective "Out Of My Dreams," from "Oklahoma," with lush clusters and bitonal chords while in and out of triple meter, applying rubato tastefully but expressively. Zeitlin's composition "The We Of Us" is equally successful, unfolding from a freely extemporized intro through the beautifully conceived ballad.

—Robert L. Doerschuk

Precipice: Solo Piano Concert: Free Prelude/What Is This Thing Called Love?/Fifth House (Part One); Free Prelude/What Is This Thing Called Love?/Fifth House (Part Two); Out of My Dreams; On The March; The We Of Us; Deluge; Oleo; Love Theme From Invasion Of The Body Snatchers/Pulsar/Precipice. (70:30)
Personnel: Denny Zeitlin, piano.
Ordering info: sunnysiderecords.com

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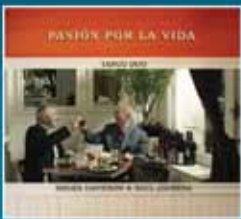
ROGER DAVIDSON QUINTET

Brazilian Love Song [SNB 1018]
 Joined by Brazilian drummer Paulo Braga and percussionist Marivaldo Dos Santos, with the multitalented David Finck on bass and Aaron Helck on alto saxophone, pianist Roger Davidson weaves a multi-hued tapestry of truly moving original music in a variety of Brazilian styles. Produced by Pablo Aslan.



RAÚL JAURENA & HIS TANGO ORCHESTRA

Fuerza Milonguera [SNB 1017]
 On the follow up to his Latin Grammy winner *Te Amo Tango* (SNB 1009), the bandoneonist presents the tango style of his native Uruguay, where this disc was recorded with some of that country's master musicians. Jaurena's orchestra sound with multiple bandoneons is fresh, exciting, and passionate, reaffirming his role as one of the premier tango musicians today. Produced by Pablo Aslan.



ROGER DAVIDSON & RAÚL JAURENA
Pasión por la Vida

"[Pianist] Davidson's passion for tango is evident in this release. Accompanied by Jaurena's vibrant, nostalgic, and sentimental bandoneon, both musicians meld perfectly in rhythm and in melody. The songs are very danceable, and at the same time a pleasure to listen to."
 —Tango Reporter. Produced by Pablo Aslan.



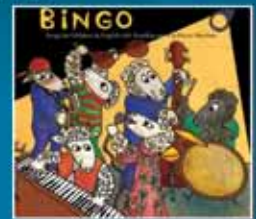
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 —Rex Reed, NY Observer. Produced by David Finck.



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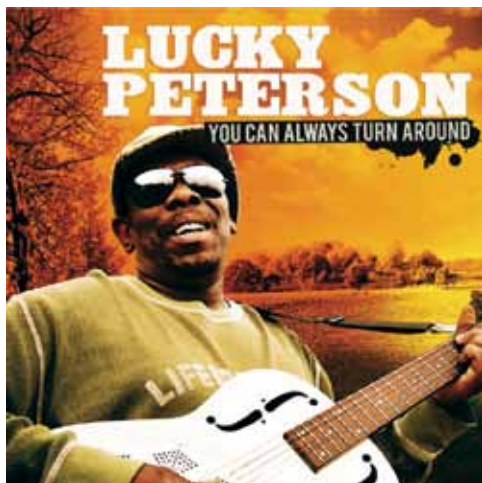
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Lucky Peterson
You Can Always Turn Around

DREYFUS JAZZ 36967
 ★★★★★

Lucky Peterson has been on a wild ride the past four decades. As a boy wonder playing drums and organ, he cut a Willie Dixon-produced hit single that prompted appearances on "Soul Train," "Sesame Street" and several network variety shows. A few years later, Peterson, 17, had a three-year stint as Little Milton's musical director then hooked on with Bobby Bland. Also fluent on guitar, he got a solo career rolling in his mid-20s and carved out a blues style that drew on soul, r&b, hard rock and soul-jazz. From 1984–2003, this son of a Buffalo blues club owner cut 10 feature albums for four different labels, toured all over and did sessions with everyone from Etta James and Joe Louis Walker to Wynton Marsalis and Abbey Lincoln. But drug abuse forced him off the scene.

All of this is mentioned because Peterson, like other superior bluesmen, packs his life experiences into music with utter directness. Now cleaned up and out of rehab, supported by his family and Creator, Peterson returns to the fray with a fresh-start furor, making an album with roots-music friends in Woodstock that is his most riveting since 1990's *Triple Play* (Alligator). He's never before, in the studio at least, sang with such believable expression and easeful authority over varying the timbre



of his strong, rich voice. On good or excellent material selected for him by album co-producer Doug Yoel, Peterson plays guitar, dobro and gospel piano (no B-3 this time) as if he'd found his true focus after so many years.

Infusing his singing with the dignity of a Sunday-morning choir member (his church is back home in Dallas) and the profound ache of a soul man, Peterson attends to the serious business of romance in his stunning, self-liberating version of Ray LaMontagne's "Trouble." Partly in the grip of a dramatic speaking-in-tongues fever, he turns the cryptic Tom Waits song "Trampled Rose" into an unexpected and uncalculated example of devotional music not so much the USA Bible belt as Islamic Morocco and Tunisia circa 1930. For Lucinda Williams' "Atonement," Peterson stabs a red-hot poker into a listener's ear with the alarming, hell-fire urgency of his vocal and hard-rock electric guitar. Songs from the traditional blues canon—"I Believe I'll Dust My Broom," "Death Don't Have No Mercy" and "Statesboro Blues"—startle for the urgent, animated tone the singer builds into the verses. He lightens the mood some delving into his family history on "Four Little Boys," a Guy Davis-like piece concerning his father and grandfather's thoughts on domestic responsibilities. Singing with his wife, Tamara, Peterson has no trouble locating the emotional center of the Martin Luther King-era spiritual "I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel To Be Free." Four more songs, too, signal his terrific sense of uplift. Nothing can slow down Mr. Lucky now, it seems.

—Frank-John Hadley

You Can Always Turn Around: I Believe I'll Dust My Broom; I'm New Here; Statesboro Blues; Trouble; Trampled Rose; Atonement; Why Are People Like That?; Four Little Boys; Death Don't Have No Mercy; I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel To Be Free; Think. (56:40)
Personnel: Lucky Peterson, vocals, dobro, piano, acoustic and electric guitars; Larry Campbell, acoustic and pedal steel guitars, mandolin, dobro; Scott Pettit, bass, shakers, octave mandolin (2); Gary Burke, drums; Tamara Peterson, vocals (8, 10).
Ordering info: disquesdreyfus.com

Russ Lossing
Personal Tonal

FRESH SOUND NEW TALENT 365

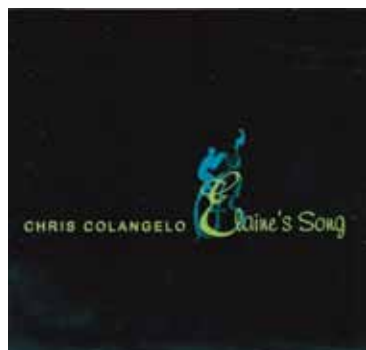
★★★★

For an agent provocateur, pianist Russ Lossing has never hidden his interest in the pretty side of a tune. This quartet program of nuggets and originals stresses the lyricism he's long held dear: whether essaying a romp through Ornette Coleman's "School Days," or directing a spin of his own bent bossa "Turn," he and his team—saxophonist Loren Stillman, bassist John Hébert and drummer Eric McPherson—put micro melodies front and center. This stuff truly sings.

An impressive intra-group connection helps sell the poignancy. Somewhere in the middle of Duke Ellington's "Heaven," perhaps on a two-note Hébert uplift or one of the fetching trills by the leader himself, everything starts to float, and for a sec I believe Stillman gives a smooch to "Lady Of The Lavender Mist," as well. The alignment between the alto player and pianist is deep, and it's that coordination that makes this music flow so naturally, even in abstract moments (such as the heart of "Ley Bay") where collective chatting is the strategy at hand. By the time they're reconstructing Bird on "Scrapple From The Apple," it becomes obvious: Freebop has its graceful side, and even during flashes of frenzy, a well-turned line can carry the day.

—Jim Macnie

Personal Tonal: Personal Tonal; School Days; Turn; Gate C53; Here's That Rainy Day; Plate 80; Ley Bay; Ozart May; Heaven; Scrapple From The Apple. (65:06)
Personnel: Russ Lossing, piano; Loren Stillman, alto saxophone; John Hébert, bass; Eric McPherson, drums.
Ordering info: freshsoundrecords.com



Chris Colangelo
Elaine's Song

C-NOTE RECORDS 001

★★★★½

Indie albums like bassist Chris Colangelo's *Elaine's Song* typically wind up in slush piles at radio stations and editorial offices. Such projects sacrifice potential exposure for artistic purpose. It's a shame because Colangelo and his unheralded

cohorts tackle this hour-long set with conviction.

Colangelo, a Philadelphia-area native, has lived in Los Angeles for 20 years. Though he's backed some high-profile folks—including Thad Jones/Mel Lewis and Les McCann, his four previous albums appear on obscure imprints. On *Elaine's Song*, Colangelo shines as a composer; his seven originals are literate and well-played, with no overlong solos.

"Like Kenny" begins in rubato fashion and quickly develops into a free-form duet between alto player Zane Musa and drummer Steve Hass. After the full band plays the chart, Musa squares off with Benn Clatworthy's tenor for a brief duel. "Watts Important" breaks up the straightahead affair. Clatworthy's concise tenor solo soars into the realm of expressionism before a rugged vamp spotlighting Hass' stick work closes out the tune.

In addition the group turns in strong readings of Steve Swallow's "Falling Grace," which features the rhythm section led by pianist John Beasley, and John Coltrane's "Straight Street," a quartet showcase for Bob Sheppard's attractive tone on soprano.

—Eric Fine

Elaine's Song: The Ubiquitous One; Like Kenny (For Kenny Garrett); Elaine's Song; Green And Blue; Gryffindor's Revenge; Watts Important (for Jeff "Tain" Watts); Falling Grace; Straight Street; From Dark To Light. (60:58)

Personnel: Chris Colangelo, bass; John Beasley, piano; Steve Hass, drums; Bob Sheppard, tenor, soprano saxophones (1, 3, 8, 9); Benn Clatworthy, tenor saxophone, flute (2, 4, 6); Zane Musa, alto saxophone (2).
Ordering Info: chriscolangelo.com

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Wise Men and Deranged Zombies

Dave Spector: *Spectified* (Fret 12; 72:30 ★★★★★) Spector's ninth album confirms his status as one of the few top-tier guitarists. With a breezy yet substantial approach and a deep affection for melody, the Chicagoan often fuses elements of blues and jazz as a large contribution to the immediacy of his instrumental music. "Blues Call" and "Azulado" exist as radiant Latin-tinged poetry, showing his aesthetic allegiance to Kenny Burrell and, in his use of octaves on the melodies, Wes Montgomery. Whether playing his own compositions or revamped classics from King Curtis and Freddie King, Spector exudes authenticity. A related kind of allure and honesty comes from supporting players like drummer Greg Wyster-Pratte and keyboardist Brother John Kattke.

Ordering info: fret12.com

Alabama Mike: *Tailor Made Blues* (Jukehouse 0020; 49:16 ★★★★★) Mike Benjamin is a middle-aged singer from the Deep South who resides in San Francisco. For his second album, he waxes enthusiastically over sensual love and other concerns on an adequate lot of in-house songs (plus Junior Wells' "Hoodoo Man") that run a gamut of styles: Chicago, West Coast and funky blues, modern drone-blues, old-school New Orleans r&b, even retro-soul. Among the first-call sidemen are guitarists Jon Lawton and Scot Brenton.

Ordering info: 9belowproductions.com

The Morlocks: *The Morlocks Play Chess* (popantipop 12; 31:14 ★★★★★) You'd have to time-travel back to a London club in 1964 with the Pretty Things or Downliners onstage to find blues-rock as raw and filthy as it is here. Vocalist Leighton Koizumi gets in your face like the deranged zombie of Bo Diddley or Chuck Berry, and only a seismologist gulping uppers could begin to take measure of the earth-splitting whomp from guitar, bass and drums. These L.A. garage hellions dig the Chess catalog so much it hurts.

Ordering info: popantipop.com

Charlie Musslewhite: *The Well* (Alligator 4939; 67:01 ★★★★★) Musslewhite gives it to us straight on the crown jewel in a discography dating back to the late-'60s. There's an oldfangled inspiration pushing his excellent harmonica work and his relaxed, comfy-as-an-old-coat singing. Lyrics and music he



Dave Spector: Top-tier guitar

wrote connect poignantly with his remarkable long life of ups and downs; his rare bravery even gives vent to thoughts and emotions around the murder of his elderly mother ("Sad And Beautiful World," with the magnificent Mavis Staples). He's a wise man dispensing golden truths.

Ordering info: alligator.com

Piano Red: *The Lost Atlanta Tapes* (Landslide 1039; 68:52 ★★★★★) Performing at Atlanta's Excelsior Mill a year before his death in 1985, Willie Perryman still has enough extroverted "music spirit" to power his quaint vocals and his blues-and-boogie-woogie piano figures on antediluvian songs. The '50s were his glory years, but Red was a trouper right to the end.

Ordering info: landsliderecords.com

Stevie Ray Vaughan: *Couldn't Stand The Weather* (Epic/Legacy 88697; 79:00/75:54 ★★★★★) If we kept a list of superlative white guitarists in blues, the late Vaughan has to be at or near the top. The Texan goes down a storm on the latest reissuing of his second album, first released in 1984, now with 16 outtakes (almost all worth your time) added to the well-celebrated program (including slow blues "Tin Pan Alley" and a nuclear-fission makeover of Hendrix's "Voodoo Child"). The package now has a second disc that debuts a torrid set with his Double Trouble band at Montreal's Spectrum the same year. In studio and onstage, he morphs pitch-bending into a visceral art form. Incidentally, this roadhouse veteran sings quite well. **DB**

Ordering info: legacyrecordings.com

John McNeil/Bill McHenry
Chill Morn He Climb Jenny

SUNNYSIDE 1268

★★★★

Rebecca Martin
When I Was Long Ago

SUNNYSIDE 1255

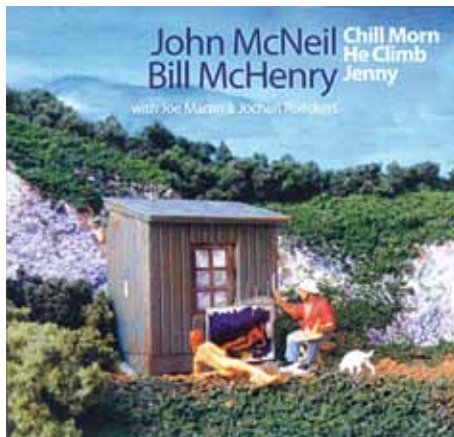
★★★★

These two albums have more in common than strange, seemingly meaningless titles (*Chill Morn He Climb Jenny* is an anagram, we are told). For one, they both include very interpretative, personable renderings of standards. The other, more obvious link is saxophonist Bill McHenry. In both cases, fans of McHenry won't be disappointed. And while he shares the bill and is a supporting cast member, respectively here, McHenry practically steals the show from veteran trumpet ace John McNeil even as he keeps company with the evocative singer Rebecca Martin. In both cases, based on the performances each of these leaders deliver, McHenry's playing continues to be no mean feat.

Chill Morn is a live date, recorded at New York's intimate Cornelia Street Café. Joining the two big Macs are bassist Joe Martin and drummer Jochen Ruekert. As a quartet, their musical empathy comes across from the git-go. "Moonlight In Vermont" starts things off at a crawl, and stays that way. McHenry begins his Newk-inspired forays first, followed by McNeil, whose tart, soft-then-jagged playing mixes mournfulness with bright colors, McHenry's bluesy, any-which-way-but-loose treatments covering the song at both ends (and a refreshing break from technique for technique's sake).

There's a kind of Ornette Coleman/Don Cherry feel to this set, McHenry's Sonny Rollins tenor a stand-in for Coleman's alto. The feel is basically light, and swinging for most of the show, Russ Freeman's "Batter Up" and "Bea's Flat" prime examples of what this band can do when the mood is bright and the tempo brisk (Freeman and Chet Baker are channeled as well). With charts that tend to be spare, you can tell these guys put a premium on blowing, and in all directions. Each song seems to end of its own momentum more than because of pre-arranged formats. Another standard, "Aren't You Glad You're You," moves beyond its affect-less melody with an infectious mid-tempo swing and McHenry's loosey-goosey meandering horn, which reinvents the song and takes it out. Miles Davis' "No Blues" ends everything, but in a typically random kind of way, the swing both relaxed and open, McHenry talking over the tune with a "showbiz touch." *Chill Morn* is McNeil and McHenry's second outing, a followup to 2008's *Rediscovery*, the boys a musical item, on and off, for over six years now, seemingly dedicated to creating their own library of "forgotten tunes."

Martin's *When I Was Long Ago* isn't a live date, but feels like it, the trio's takes on the material generally quiet, the pace measured and



relaxed. McHenry's tenor sings on one channel, Martin's slightly gruff yet oh-so-tender voicings to the other side. In the middle is bassist Larry Grenadier (returning from her 2008 release *The Growing Season*), all three sounding naturally balanced, thanks, in part, to James Farber's work behind the glass. Like *Chill Morn*, everyone has their place, the music played by a unit and not a collection of personalities. Across 11 songs, singer/songwriter Martin avoids the pen on this, her eighth recording. The lighter-than-air feel is buoyed by her ease with going it alone, in duet with Grenadier as on Billy Strayhorn's "Lush Life," or as a trio, each player speaking individually but as one, too ("For All We Know" and "But Not For Me" prime examples). Martin cites former boss Paul Motian as a major influence in this regard. And while it still seems quaint to hear younger singers cover the lyrics to some of these songs, written so long ago, the task of reinvention (and keeping it all fresh) is one Martin is more than up to. Maybe it has something to do with her singing, who she's with, or that she's an established songwriter in her own right. One thing is clear: Everyone here feels and sounds right at home, more than welcome. —John Ephland

Chill Morn He Climb Jenny: Moonlight In Vermont; Batter Up; Aren't You Glad You're You; Maid In Mexico; Bea's Flat; Three And One; Carioca; Wells Fargo; No Blues (Pirancing). (66:37)
Personnel: John McNeil, trumpet; Bill McHenry, tenor saxophone; Joe Martin, bass; Jochen Ruekert, drums.

When I Was Long Ago: For All We Know; But Not For Me; Lush Life; No Moon At All; Charlie Sings ...; Cheer Up Charlie; Low Key Lightly (Lucky In Love); Wrap Your Troubles In Dreams; Someone To Watch Over Me; I Didn't Know What Time It Was; Willow Weep For Me. (46:23)
Personnel: Rebecca Martin, vocals; Bill McHenry, tenor saxophone; Larry Grenadier, bass.
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CRYPTOGRAMPHONE 142
★★★★½

Talk about packaging. Guitarist/composer Nels Cline's two-CD *Dirty Baby* takes the cake, along with the main course and appetizers. They're all here in this little box of music and views, which includes two 40-page booklets and a three-sided cardboard foldout with another booklet of equal size inside *that*. There are liner notes by Cline, lots of art work (postmodern) to go along with song titles and photographs of the extended cast of the two large ensembles on board. Cline has teamed up with poet/producer David Breskin to "recontextualize" artist Ed Ruscha's "censor strip" paintings. And, actually, *Dirty Baby* is the "little brother" of something much bigger with the same music but larger reproductions of Ruscha's works and 66 written and spoken-word ghazals (or poetic forms that contain rhyming couplets and a refrain).

For fans of Cline, *Dirty Baby* is a real treat. For others new to his esthetic ilk, it's bound to challenge your ears and eyes. Not that it's all cries and



shrieks. Cline's music is too varied for that. After all, much of "Side A" includes not only industrial free-jazz (a new term, I think) but some very soothing, guitar-based chordal music more this side of John Fahey as well as some funky electronica of sorts and modified grunge rock. The music is created to go

from acoustic to electric to signify a "progression" from primitive to settled, technological America. Producer Breskin came up with the idea to have two groups for the paintings, represented by the two discs. "Side A" goes with Ruscha's Silhouettes, while his truly abstract Cityscapes sidle up with "Side B." "Side A" is structured in six "parts," "Side B" made up of 33 "nanopieces." But with any coupling of music and visual art, much is left to the listener/viewer to decide, interpret or discern. Certainly, both "sides" of music can be heard as stand-alones, but when heard that way, there is a sense that the sounds point to something beyond themselves. In fact, it's a huge leap, one Cline himself seemed somewhat cautious about attempting (the cover art to the box that you see with this

review is not wholly representative). And the vignettes (running from just under a half-minute to just over three-and-a-half minutes) that make up the nanopieces are as varied as they come, with titles and styles that run the gamut ... sort of like America itself. There's some classical/soundtrack-type music with "In God We Trust," a little jazz with "Hey You Want To Sleep With The Fishes?" some more industrial noise followed by a faux gamelan-like excursion followed by what sounds like a distant ocean shore with "Be Cautious Else We Be Bangin On You," while "I'm Going To Leave More Notes And I'm Going To Kick More Ass" is a tantalizing 47-second mix of heavy rock alternating with a dab of ethnic percussion (the titles here match up with the titles of the pictures, so there's more of a literal attempt to follow the art). The music on "Side B," in general, is driven by the paintings' "violent or otherwise threatening language." Having said that, however, one may not come away with a true sense of foreboding, the variety and ingenuity of Cline's orchestrations and writing overall likely to create more a sense of curiosity than one of dread.

And speaking of orchestration, the instrumentalists and instruments utilized, no surprise, are equally varied. Those negotiating the complex scores of composed and improvised music are listed below in smaller type, but include Cline's brother Alex on percussion, Scott Amendola (on percussion, drums, loops/electronics), bassist/guitarist Devin Hoff and keyboardist Jon Brion. Special mention should also be made of Nels' special Quintronic Drum Buddy, surfacing who knows where on *Dirty Baby*.

All in all, *Dirty Baby* is riotous fun, an orgy of sound, design and (mostly) muted color. For music fans, it's another excuse to enjoy all things Nels eclectic, from Duke Ellington to Air to Morton Feldman, an artsy-fartsy, John Zorn-y, bombastic and pretty much pastiche-oriented, otherworldly take on this Land of the Free and Home of the Brave.

—John Ephland

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Dirty Baby: Side A: Part I; Part II; Part III; Part IV; Part V; Part VI (42:02). Side B: In God We Trust; Hi There, My Old Friend; If I Was You I'd Do Just Like I Tell You To Do; Do As I Say Or ...; No Mercy; Do As Told Or Suffer; Agree To Terms Or Prepare Yourself For A Blast Furnace; Your A Dead Man; Hey You Wnat To Sleep With The Fishes?; A Columbian Necklace For You; Note We Have Already Got Rid Of Several Like You; Be Cautious Else We Be Bangin On You; You Won't Know When You Won't Know Where You Won't Know Who And You Won't Know Why; It's Payback Time; I'm Going To Leave More Notes And I'm Going To Kick More Ass; You Cross Me I Wanna See Blood; I Heard You Moved To Pahrump, Nevada; Little Snitches Like You End Up In Dumpsters All Across Town; I'll Be Getting Out Soon And I Haven't Forgotten Your Testimony Put Me In Here; You Talk You Get Killed; Don't Let The Information Be Known To Any Person Or You Die; Don't Threaten Me With Your Threats; I Just Might Act Ugly If You Talk; When I'm Released I'm Smoking A Straight Line To You—Got Me?; Want To Get To Know My Boiling Point?; You Dirty Rotten Bitch; You Will Eat Hot Lead; I Can't Take It No More; I Might Just Act Ugly If You Get Up On That Stand And Say Something Unpleasant To My Ears; I Thought I Told You That We Won't Stop; I Will Wipe Yo Off The Face Of This Earth; Give Up The Gold Or Give Up Your Life; You And I Are In Disagreement (51:33).

Personnel: Side A: Nels Cline, electric and acoustic guitars, effects, Megamouth, Quintronic Drum Buddy; Bill Barrett, chromatic harmonica; Wayne Peet, organ; Jon Brion, electric piano, EMS Synthi, voice; Jeremy Drake, electric and acoustic guitars, banjo, ukulele; Glenn Taylor, pedla steel guitar; Devin Hoff, contrabass, bass guitar; Scott Amendola, drumset, percussion, loops/electronics; Danny Frankel, percussion, 1/2 drumset; Ed Ruscha, acrylic, oil, canvas, museum board paper, raw linen. Side B: Nels Cline, electric and acoustic guitars, lap steel, cigarbox guitar, effects; Vinny Golia, flutes, clarinets, saxophones; Dan Clucas, trumpet, flutes; Jeff Gauthier, violin; Jessica Catron, cello; Drake, electric and acoustic guitars; Hoff, contrabass, bass guitar, cigarbox guitar; Brad Dutz, vibraphone, xylophones, frame drum, bongos; Amendola, drumset, percussion, loops/electronics; Alex Cline, percussion; Ruscha, bleach, acrylic, oil, rayon-covered board, linen-covered board, raw linen, canvas.

Ordering info: cryptogramphone.com

Global Flutters and Blasts

Despite working together for more than a decade, **Teem** (Either/OAR 4; 40:31 ★★★★★) is Olivia Block and Kyle Bruckmann's first duo project. The disc was conducted over a five-year span but with only one joint recording session (Bruckmann moved to the San Francisco Bay Area in 2003, and Block lives in Chicago). At the heart of the four-part suite is Block's immaculate field recordings, which often cast nature as an ominous, harrowing presence, combined with Bruckmann's massed double reed lines (ranging from upper-register multi-phonics to rugged acoustical beating). Yet there's much more going on. Clatter and scrapes derived from highly amplified, unidentifiable sources give the music a bracing tactility, and a meticulous sound mix suggests three-dimensionality. The constantly changing array of foreground activity and subtly morphing environments produce a gripping suspense that complements the stunning tonal palette.

Ordering info: and-oar.org

The swoop of new sounds and rapid squiggling patterns echo early tape music on Berlin-based British composer Helena Gough's **Mikroklimata** (Entr'acte 91; 36:41 ★★★★★). But Gough creates her stunning work on a computer, shaping an array of heavily processed sources—from bassist George Cremaschi's and trumpeter Peter Evans' live playing to field recordings—like abstract building blocks. She's referred to the swift, surprising arrival of new sounds and rhythmic motifs as "edges," and, indeed, there is an improvisational, front-like quality to every new influx, dispensing or dissolving its predecessor. Despite the seemingly restless shifts, deliberate, recurring patterns in the varying waves underline Gough's compositional logic.

Ordering info: entracte.co.uk

A key figure in Japan's improvised music scene for more than a decade, Toshimaru Nakamura has built a stunning world of sound from just his paradoxical "no-input mixing board," a virtual feedback loop machine. On **Egrets** (Samadhisound 017; 43:56 ★★★★★) he transforms his high-frequency minimalism into something softer, more contemplative and almost pretty without diminishing his rigor; he also adds a little of his own electric guitar. He turns naked electronic tones into striated riches that hover, flutter and scrape. There are also some bracing duets; on "Semi" acoustic guitarist Tetuzi Akiyama shares highly refined finger-picked tangles that seem to glow within Nakamura's ghostly resonance.

Ordering info: samadhisound.com

Marina Rosenfeld and George Lewis see the music on **Sour Mash** (Innova 228; 46:36



Toshimaru Nakamura: Electronic riches

COURTESY TOSHIMARU NAKAMURA

★★★★) as a tool more than a finished work. The heart of the project is a pair of pieces that each developed on their own. The goal of the collaboration was to make a vinyl record containing both pieces that could be used by turntablists to create something new from the record, putting the life of the *Sour Mash* in other hands. Rosenfeld is also a respected turntable artist, while Lewis is known best as a trombonist and computer musician, but improvisational impulses drive the electronic collages here. The CD version of *Sour Mash* also contains the superimposed version of the individual works.

Ordering info: innova.mu

The mangled translation of Italian composer Osvaldo Coluccino's academic-speak in the liner notes for **Neuma Q** (Die Schachtel C04; 42:05 ★★★★★) doesn't offer much help with understanding his music, but the actual sounds function well enough on their own. These electronic soundscapes suggest a spacey strain of ambient drift and gentle drone, using a minimum of layering, which allows the rapidly evolving squiggles, hums, high frequency squelches and swoops. Still, I'm guessing there's some theoretical underpinning to the work—if only it was coherent to an English-speaker.

Ordering info: dieschachtel.com

The monumental 5-CD box set **Necro Acoustic** (Pica Disk 019: 30:57; 53:29; 67:42; 58:10; 54:54 ★★★★★) presents a sprawling bounty of rare, previously unreleased and new music from Chicago's Kevin Drumm, with work that brazenly blurs lines between noise and free improvisation. Using shifting combinations of electric guitar, computer, analog synthesizers and oscillators, Drumm creates loud, visceral sound worlds that fortify sheer force with a stunning level of detail; some pieces are spasmodically violent, disguising textural richness under relentless motion, while others deliver an almost 3-D spatiality, like kinetic sonic sculpture.

Ordering info: lassemarhaug.no/picadisk



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DANIEL PIAZZOLLA: drums

Around 1970, my friend Alberto Romeu played for me that Astor Piazzolla LP that sealed forever my love for the Tango and the sublime bandoneón, it's most emblematic instrument. Already established in NYC since 1980, my both personal and working relationships with Pablo Zinger, Carlos Franzetti, Jorge Datto, Diego Urcola, Pablo Ziegler, Raul Jaurena, Lalo Schiffrin and so many other Argentine and Uruguayan musicians make the present recording sort of the natural result of this long and happy relation. Jazz is the most representative product of a multinational and polycultural society like America: so there was no better place to make this recording, other than at Jazz at Lincoln Center, and no one better than Pablo Aslan to put together this old dream of mine of a genuine Tango Jazz recording.



Paquito Records www.paquitorecords.com



Sandro Albert Quartet *Vertical*

DAYWOOD DRIVE 1008

★★★★½

While the sonic factors of Sandro Albert's fat, clean-toned guitar and Rodrigo Ursala's flute—the twin melodic front-line voices in Albert's quartet—might seem, on paper and on the ears, like something in a mellow tone, don't let the timbral considerations fool you. As heard on *Vertical*, the exciting and supple outing with the Brazilian-born guitarist's quartet, also with the rightly sensitive and propulsive rhythm section of bassist Michael O'Brien and young/mature-beyond-his-years drummer Richie Barshay, the "mellow" voices navigate the leader's fast, intricate compositional designs and restless twists in structure.

Then again, Albert's Brazilian musical heritage may figure into the equation, given that various strains of Brazilian music have effectively balanced musical sophistication and density with uncommon naturalness and sensuality of spirit. In that vein, Albert celebrates complexity and vibrant energies and melodies, concurrently. "Elastic Nature," a sensually pulsating groove lined with syncopated asides and harmonic detours, may be the closest thing to a personal statement of purpose. The leader's love of melodic math problem-solving is revealed in titles such as "Vertical," "Right Angles" and "Zigzag," but Albert is a more straight-lined, balladic softy, as well, on "My Little Girl's Lullaby" (sounding almost like a Thelonious Monk ballad) and the unabashedly sweet and tuneful closer, "I Can See You From Here," so simply stated, it seems almost startling in the company of his brainier mazes earlier in the mix. Brazilian themes appear more directly in "JW's Baiao (Dedicated To Jimmy Wyble)" and the friendly, knotty fugal samba of "Obrigado Villa." Albert takes an impressive, tasteful solo guitar turn on the ironically named "Take Your Pick," its lovely maze done up fingerstyle. *Vertical* is, in fact, multi-directional, and dizzying and lovely, by turns, sometimes within the same track.

—Josef Woodard

Vertical: Some Days; Vertical; Elastic Nature; Where I Belong; JW's Baiao (Dedicated To Jimmy Wyble); Obrigado Villa; Waiting for Victoria; Right Angles; My Little Girl's Lullaby; Zigzag; Take Your Pick; The Medusa; I Can See From Here. (51:08)

Personnel: Sandro Albert, guitar; Rodrigo Ursala, flutes; Michael O'Brien, bass; Richie Barshay, drums.
Ordering info: daywooddrive.com

Ryan Cohan *Another Look*

MOTÉMA 45

★★★★½

There is little to fault the performances of Cohan and his group on *Another Look*. His compositions are well crafted, his arrangements impeccably conceived. As a player, he possesses clarity of concept and a knack for expressing himself economically and with admirable verve.

Neither is there much to distinguish these tracks beyond their apparent professional execution. What's missing is idiosyncrasy: It's easier to hear where each member of the band drew his influence, much harder to identify any element that broadcasts his own unique identity.

The dominant feel of this outfit, and Cohan in particular, is post hard-bop seasoned where appropriate with a Latin touch. This is solid but well-trodden ground, and while there's plenty to admire, for example, in Cohan's unaccompanied "(Intro) Song To My Grandfather," that character that brands the most outstanding instrumentalists doesn't rise to the surface. This is a hard thing to quantify; harder still is the impression on the opening track, "Monk'n Around," that while everyone plays with a buoyant, sprightly energy, particularly in a delectable out-of-tempo ascending lick that Cohan unleashes in the middle of his solo, much of their work seems to focus on adhering to the canon rather than adding something personal to it.

None of this applies to "Caravan," one of the two covers on *Another Look*. Here, too, Cohan kicks it off alone, this time with a spare rumination in F that morphs gradually into a montuno

John Fedchock NY Sextet *Live At The Red Sea Jazz Festival*

CAPRI RECORDS 74102

★★★★½

Trombonist/bandleader John Fedchock was fortunate to record his New York Sextet's performance at the Red Sea Jazz Festival in Eliat, Israel, and so are we. A veteran of Woody Herman's '80s groups where he served as leader, soloist and musical director, Fedchock has led his own big bands for almost two decades. Drawing players from his larger groups for this swinging affair, Fedchock has organized an impressive small-group showcase.

Besides Fedchock's own burnished trombone sound, pianist Allen Farnham, tenor saxophonist Walt Weiskopf and trumpeter Scott Wendholt all provide worthwhile solos and are solid ensemble players. The group performs four Fedchock originals, a Tom Harrell piece and Duke Ellington's "Caravan." The lengthy opening tune, "This Just In," shows the group in sync,



sounding cool and confident despite playing in 90-degree heat. Bassist David Finck and drummer Dave Ratajczak consistently provide smooth, flowing undercurrents that allow the other band members to shine.

Fedchock himself thrives as a soloist in this setting, and his compositions are well arranged and uniformly strong. Harrell's "Moon Alley" is

a smart choice for a cover tune, and everybody gets a chance to step forward and blow convincingly. "Elvin's Empire" is Fedchock's tribute to drummer Elvin Jones—it's a brooding mid-tempo composition with a classic feel that's a throwback to the '60s. "Caravan" was chosen in lieu of the festival's desert surroundings, and it fits nicely within the sextet's aesthetic. Here's hoping Fedchock can keep this group out on the road so their impressive rapport can evolve even further.

—Mitch Myers

Live At The Red Sea Jazz Festival: This Just In; That's All Right; Elvin's Empire; Moon Alley; Caravan; Not So New Blues. (61:49)

Personnel: John Fedchock, trombone; Scott Wendholt, trumpet, flugelhorn; Walt Weiskopf, tenor saxophone; Allen Farnham, piano; David Finck, bass; Dave Ratajczak, drums.
Ordering info: caprirecords.com

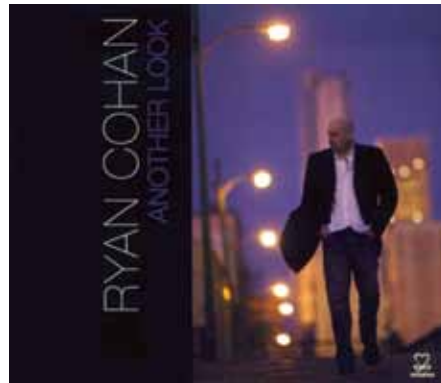


figure. The band jumps in and then stops just as suddenly on a jagged C over C-sharp. That sound alone suggests the opening note of the familiar tune, which takes off with a steamy Latin feel.

Mention should be made of Steve Kroon. There are moments where his contributions on percussion seem a little superfluous. On the title cut, something he plays that sounds like a squeaking door either provides some nice color or distracts from what everybody is doing, depending on your predilection. More often, though, Kroon adds delightfully to the mix. On "This Or That," his rustling chimes and woodblock clops subtly change the sonic lighting around what the soloists and rhythm section are laying down.

On balance, *Another Look* is deftly executed, often witty and fresh.

—Robert L. Doerschuk

Another Look: Monk'n Around; Joshua; You & Me; This Or That; Caravan; (Intro) Gentle Souls; Gentle Souls; Another Look; (Intro) Song For My Grandfather; Song For My Grandfather; Steppin' Up. (65:59)

Personnel: Ryan Cohan, piano; Joe Locke, vibes; Geof Bradfield, tenor and soprano saxophones, bass clarinet; Lorin Cohen, bass; Kobie Watkins, drums; Steve Kroon, percussion.
Ordering info: motema.com



Bobby Bradford (left) and John Carter: Defying regionalism

MOSAIC RECORDS

California Revolutionaries

By rights, the New Art Jazz Ensemble and subsequent groups led by multi-reedist John Carter and trumpeter Bobby Bradford should be as well known for their work in the late '60s and early '70s as the Art Ensemble Of Chicago. The proof is on *The Complete Revelation Sessions* (Mosaic Select 36; 73:18/72:44/47:23 ★★★★★). But, regionalism was still alive and well in that era, and free-blowing improvisers in Los Angeles might as well have been on the other side of the world for all the attention they got in New York City or the jazz community beyond. As a result, Carter and Bradford continued to work day jobs as public school teachers, and their music was relegated to small labels like Flying Dutchman and Revelation, an L.A.-based label. Even worse, a stunning set of duets and solo improvisations went unreleased until now.

Recording sessions from early 1969, which contributed to the band's Revelation debut—*Seeking*—and produced an additional four tracks, show the quartet operating under the influence of Ornette Coleman. Bradford had preceded Don Cherry in the trumpet chair of Coleman's mid-'50s band, and Carter's relationship with Coleman dated back to their shared hometown of Fort Worth, Texas.

Given that history, it's no surprise to hear Carter and Bradford playing unison lines on "In The Vineyard" that weave and wobble in and out of sync, while bassist Tom Williamson and drummer Bruz Freeman walk in uncertain time behind them. Carter is clearly still more connected to bop than Coleman sounded on his breakthrough recordings, and his alto often sounds like Charlie Parker filtered through Coleman. Carter introduces his clarinet on the rapid-fire "Sticks And Stones," and again the lines he and Bradford trade sound as much like Parker and Dizzy Gillespie as Coleman and Cherry. What's very clear is that Carter is taking the clarinet into a whole new realm—one as revolutionary for the time as Jimmy Giuffre's exploration of the horn's lower

region. Carter's playing has the warmth inherent in the instrument, but the speed he brings into play and his ability to use the full range with varying attacks are exceptional.

In November 1971 and April 1972, Carter and Bradford were back in the studio, and by that time they had added a piano and started using other bassists and drummers. Three tracks find the duo backed by 19-year-old Ndugu Leon Chancler, who demonstrates on Bradford's "Rosevita's Dance" that he can alternate a crisp ride feel with freer playing. Bradford's own playing sounds transformed from the earlier sessions, as though the new rhythm section has allowed him to shake free of whatever bop conventions remained. Bassist Louis Spears brings a more contemporary sound to the group, sliding through phrases with the grace and power of Malachi Favors. Unfortunately, the sound on these sessions is no match for the earlier recordings, and the band loses some of its power with a noisier, less direct soundstage. Added to this is the fact that the masters for the band's second Revelation recording—*Secrets*—were lost, requiring that the digital recordings be made from a vinyl pressing.

But, no amount of sonic interference can dull the brilliance of "Circle" and "In A Pretty Place," two long, free-flowing pieces that showcase Carter's clarinet and illustrate the exceptional chemistry between him and Bradford.

"And She Speaks" is the collection's tour de force—a 17-minute lesson in why Carter is considered the precursor to contemporary clarinetists like Ab Baars and François Houle. Making leaps that cover the entire horn, from its woody bottom to its acidic top, he finds cracks between notes that make his instrument sound momentarily like it's being electronically processed. The aptly named "Scramble" brings the session to a close with a showy summation of what Carter and Bradford had achieved in their time together.

DB

Ordering info: mosaicrecords.com

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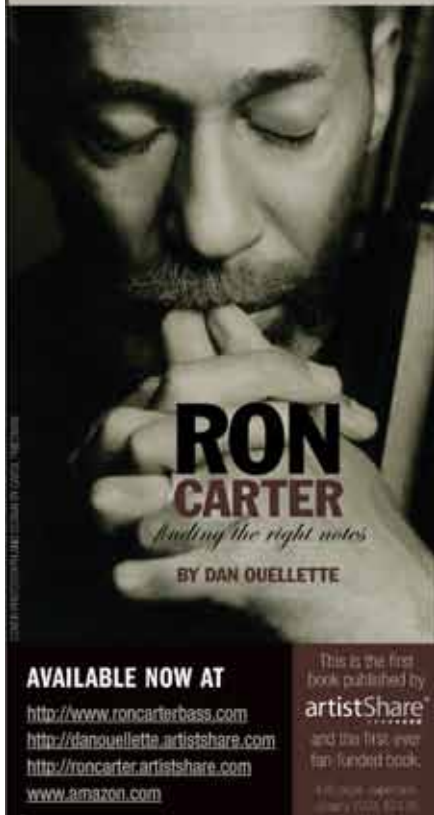
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Written by Dan Ouellette, *Ron Carter: Finding the Right Notes* has received international praise. *All About Jazz*—New York noted that “Carter’s history is jazz’s history, making this book a must for all jazz fans,” while saxophonist Benny Golson heralds the book as “a treasure.” Jazz journalist Gary Giddins says, “Every musical artist as candid and thoughtful as Ron Carter should have a writer as empathic and efficient as Dan Ouellette to help him tell his story.” Nominated by Jazz Journalism Association’s Jazz Awards for best book, *Finding the Right Notes* is in its second printing and now also available as a Kindle e-book through Amazon.com.

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Dave Bennett *Clarinet Is King*

ARBORS 19409

★★★★½

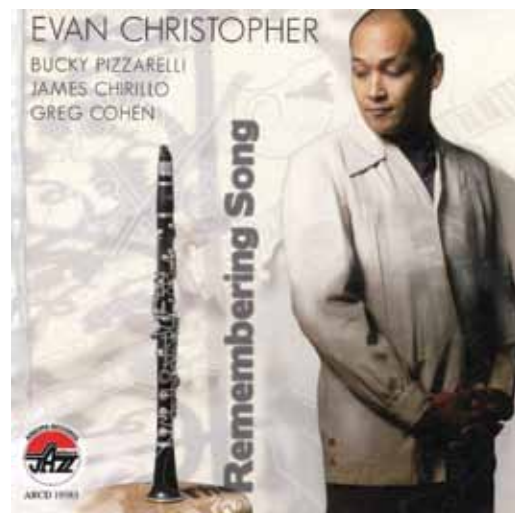
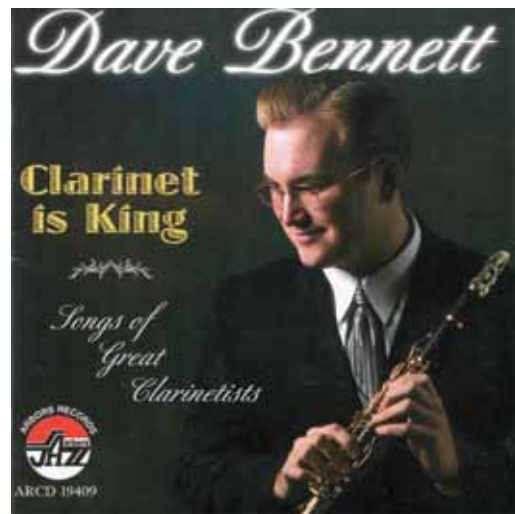
Evan Christopher *The Remembering Song*

ARBORS 19383

★★★★★

Twenty-six-year-old, Michigan-based Dave Bennett is a multi-instrumentalist who plays Jerry Lee Lewis-style piano and guitar in a rockabilly band one minute, then turns his hand to the clarinet. Though I can’t vouch for his talents in the former milieu, he is seriously entrenched in the swing era clarinet aesthetic of Benny Goodman, Barney Bigard, Artie Shaw and Pete Fountain (who endorses Bennett in liners here). The first two tracks begin inauspiciously despite Bennett’s lovely tone and a few playful curlicue phrases on the hackneyed Acker Bilk vehicle “Stranger On The Shore” (which is treated as a lilting country ballad), but when we hit the uptempo chopsbuster “Dizzy Spells,” we realize Bennett and his band hold a lot in reserve. Drummer Peter Siers’ brushes whisk hard, bassist Paul Keller swings mightily and pianist Tad Weed goes to town with joyous, chiming, percussively ambidextrous playing. Bennett parades virtuoso skills with impeccable breathing and articulation. “China Boy” is taken even faster, but the clarinet never misses its mark, sounding off with a gregarious scoop. Weed lets fly with another cracking foray feeding into Keller’s fiercely strutting solo. Clearly well-rounded pastiche artists, the rhythm section builds a fine second-line groove for “You Are My Sunshine,” but the closing track seals the deal for this, Bennett’s sophomore CD for Arbors. Artie Shaw’s signature “Nightmare” is given a chillingly brilliant revamp, Bennett’s chaste liquorice stick wandering nervously on a misty heath at midnight, stalked by hissing cymbals, doleful ostinato bass and skeletal piano.

As superbly disciplined as Bennett is and how impressive his high-note delivery, Evan Christopher’s tone sounds richer still (nice job, Jim Czak and Bill Moss at NOLA studios), and the band on *The Remembering Song* is hard to fault with seasoned vets Bucky Pizzarelli, James Chirillo and Greg Cohen aboard. The drummerless, twin-guitar concept opens the pores of the music, allowing the clarinet’s chalumeau and gorgeous midrange to ooze out of the speakers. Sidney Bechet is Christopher’s man, and Bechet’s warmth and intensity of purpose is transferred here in the leader’s originals, the ballad “You Gotta Treat It Gentle” an overt nod to Bechet. Chirillo craftily shadows the playful, woozy head to “The Wrath Of Grapes,” Christopher’s tribute



to Bacchanal, a joint in New Orleans, and kicks into a quixotic tango groove midway through the beautifully relaxed rendering of “Way Down Yonder . . .” The latter, along with the bounce through Jelly Roll Morton’s “My Home Is In A Southern Town” and “Dear Old Southland,” which precedes a whistled sendoff from Christopher, are standout tracks. The web-like contrapuntal interplay of “Southland,” with each instrument going about its thing with respect to the whole, is a treat, with several clever turns on the rhythmic axis (the dependable Cohen) leading to a cunning chromatic foray through several keys and an exultant, bluesy fadeout.

Christopher’s approach is laid-back but deeply swinging and unerringly logical, his sound dark-chocolate-and-cigar.

If you thought the clarinet was dead, think again.

—Michael Jackson

Clarinet Is King: Begin The Beguine; Stranger On The Shore; Dizzy Spells; St. James Infirmary; You Are My Sunshine; Nobody Knows The Trouble I’ve Seen; Wire Brush Stomp; Where Or When; China Boy; Mood Indigo; Oh Lady Be Good; Nightmare. (55:87)
Personnel: Dave Bennett, clarinet; Tad Weed, piano; Paul Keller, bass; Peter Siers, drums.

The Remembering Song: The Remembering Song—Prelude; The Wrath Of Grapes; Way Down Yonder In New Orleans; The River By The Road; The Remembering Song (Interlude); Mojo Blues; You Gotta Treat It Gentle; My Home Is A Southern Town; Serenade; The Remembering Song; Waltz For All Souls; Dear Old Southland. (57:80)
Personnel: Evan Christopher, clarinet; Bucky Pizzarelli, acoustic guitar; James Chirillo, electric guitar; Greg Cohen, bass.
Ordering info: arborsrecords.com



Chico Pinheiro
There's A Storm Inside

SUNNYSIDE 1267
★★★★

Along with established singers like Mark Murphy, Andy Bey, Kurt Elling, Dennis Rowland and newcomers like John Proulx and Sachal Vasandani, add Chico Pinheiro to the small but potent cadre of male vocalists who try their best to offset the avalanche of females. Pinheiro's voice is slight but expressive and exceptionally musical. Think of early Chet Baker with a Portuguese accent—and more warmth—and you've got an idea of Pinheiro the singer. He displays nonchalant grace on slow tempos ("Our Love Is Here To Stay") and nimble aplomb on demanding themes ("Boca De Siri" and "Fior De Fogo" and "Sertão Wi Fi" among them). His feeling is intimate and his intonation is superb.

He's also a songwriter of worth; Pinheiro's listed as the first name on most of the selections here. The sound and the style would've made him a bossa nova frontrunner in the mid-1960s. Yet the retro patina is not what pervades. His tasty guitar work exemplifies musical sophistication that masks itself in folksiness, never drawing attention to it. Ballads, rhythm tunes of many stripes and an all-skate cooker ("Buritizais") show Pinheiro's material range. Of these, the introspective instrumental waltz "Valse No. 8" glides beautifully with Nailor Azevedo's pliant clarinet work and Gilson Peranzetta's light-touch string chart.

Pinheiro graciously gives a couple of featured vocals to Luciana Alves and Dianne Reeves. The former enchants with her ethereal soprano, and the latter's burnished contralto has more colors than the turning leaves of autumn. It's a nice touch of noblesse oblige on Pinheiro's part, consistent with the taste displayed throughout. —*Kirk Silsbee*

There's A Storm Inside: Our Love Is Here To Stay; Boca De Siri; There's A Storm Inside; Mamulengo; Recriando A Criação; Flor De Fogo; A Sul Do Teu Olhar; Sertão Wi Fi; Um Filme; As; Valsa No. 8; Buritizais. (56:14)
Personnel: Chico Pinheiro, acoustic and electric guitars, vocals; Bob Mintzer, clarinet, tenor saxophone (4, 6, 10); Nailor Azevedo, clarinet (11); Lula Alencar, accordion (8); Paolo Calasans, piano, Fender Rhodes; Fabio Torres, piano; Paulo Pauleli, acoustic bass; Marcelo Mariano, electric bass; Marco Bosco, percussion; Edu Ribeiro, drums; Dianne Reeves, vocals (3, 10, 12); Luciana Alves, vocals (5, 7); Zé Pitoko, zabumba, vocal (8); Marcos Spirito, ganza; Gilson Peranzetta, string arrangements (3, 8).
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Collection Displays Critic Howard Reich's Local, Global Scope

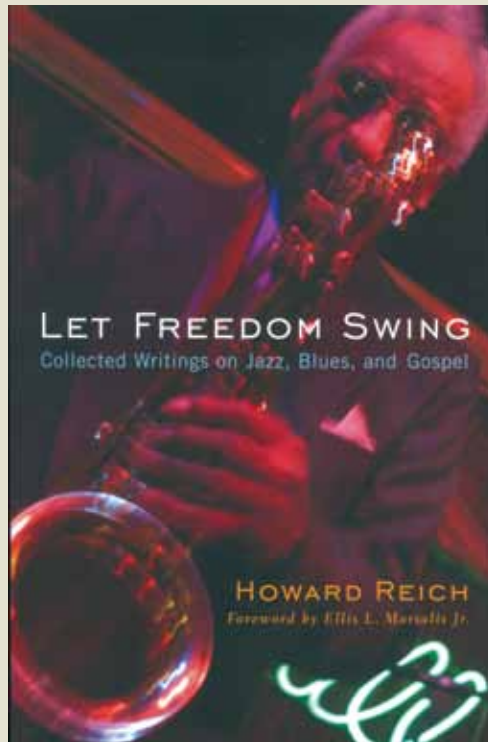
A compilation of critic Howard Reich's work for the Chicago Tribune and DownBeat, *Let Freedom Swing: Collected Writings On Jazz, Blues And Gospel* (Northwestern University Press) features profiles, reviews and extended pieces going back to 1989. The title of this impressively comprehensive and thoughtfully sequenced collection may suggest a book just about the long history of jazz, but its beginning reveals its wide scope. Reich starts with a look into gospel's Chicago origins and includes explorations of the blues as well as of Cuban and Panamanian musical traditions. In addition to travels to Latin America, he also reported from other datelines including post-Katrina New Orleans, New York and Paris.

The chronologically/stylistically/geographically diverse writings are divided into 14 sections, each like an individual disc. In addition to genre- and country-specific sections, others focus on iconic artists (Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, George Gershwin, Frank Sinatra); local micro-scenes (such as the unique St. John Coltrane African Orthodox Church in San Francisco and big bands amid the Japanese-American internment camps of World War II); and profiles on "rising star" and veteran Chicago-based musicians.

From vocalist Patricia Barber to saxophonists Fred Anderson, Von Freeman and Ken Vandermark to the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians, Reich has covered many Chicago musicians and institutions that have since merited international recognition. He's no fanatical hometown-booster, though, as shown in his frank remarks about vocalist Kurt Elling.

As a box set can revisit earlier material, *Let Freedom Swing* offers followups. Gospel pioneer Thomas Dorsey is introduced within the first few pages; a remembrance of him is the final of six appreciations in the closing, "Farewells: Final Parting from the Masters" section. He previews a reconstruction of Ellington's "lost musical" *My People* and then reviews the one-time performance in the very next pages.

In addition to being a critic and a reporter, Reich has keen storytelling instincts, which make for consistently compelling prose. He vividly documents the struggles and triumphs both public and private of the



likes of vocalist Dee Dee Bridgewater and ragtime pianist Reginald Robinson. And his interviews with some of the greats—Sinatra, Ornette Coleman, Lena Horne—give the reader vicarious access to history.

On the stylistic front, the publication date of each piece is revealed after the final paragraph, often followed by a post-script update. Not knowing up front when each story originally ran gives longer-term fans, musicians and students a chance to reflect and test memories: What year did Wynton Marsalis become the first jazz musician to be awarded a Pulitzer Prize? (1997) When did Ken Burns' historic (and controversial) Jazz mini-series first run? (January 2001).

The Armstrong section, entitled "Musings on Satchmo: Behind the Famous Façade (in Two Parts)," explored recently discovered, diary-like reel-to-reel tapes. Reading first-hand accounts of the seminal art and entertainment legend's personal experiences with racism, reflections on his own career and thoughts on the eternal art-versus-commerce debate, one gets a look into the actual person behind the jovial public figure. Because the two-part series originally ran in the Tribune, Armstrong's cursing is understandably censored. But one minor quibble with the book is that knowing what the jazz legend originally said would have gone a click deeper in revealing an even more human side to the seemingly G-rated public figure.

DB

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JSR / MOTEMA ITHAMARA KOORAX #9 FEMALE SINGER DOWNBEAT 2010 READERS POLL



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— Daniella Thompson, *Musica Brasileira*

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"Ithamara sounds heavenly in her breathy vocals, at times exhibiting an adorable laziness in her phrasing... The performers honor João Gilberto with probably one of the best tributes he will ever receive."

— Eglidio Leitão, *musicabrasileira.org*

To read the complete reviews, please visit:
ithamarakoorax.blogspot.com | ithamara@koorax.com

Peterson StrobeClip, Planet Waves Tru-Strobe *True Tuning Accuracy Meets Digital Convenience*

Digital electronic tuners are a standard piece of gear for musicians, and the market is literally flooded with options. Electronic strobe tuning devices were actually first introduced in the mid 1930s for use in movie soundtrack recording and gained popularity in the 1970s when adopted by touring rock 'n' roll acts. Although extremely accurate, these early mechanical strobes were bulky, expensive and out of reach to most players. Digital technology has resulted in the availability of mass-produced instrument tuners that offer compact form factors and affordable price tags, but lack the sensitivity of the strobes. Hoping to bridge this gap, two companies, Peterson and Planet Waves, have introduced products that combine the latest digital technology with true strobe accuracy.

The Peterson StrobeClip is a groundbreaking product. Not only is it the world's first clip-on strobe tuner, it is also the first clip-on to contain the company's proprietary "sweetened" tuning offsets. Peterson has been in the tuner business since 1948, and many of its mechanical strobe devices are still in use today. In 2001, Peterson revolutionized the industry when it introduced the VS-1 Virtual Strobe, which used an LCD display to digitally emulate a mechanical strobe wheel. This paved the way for a line of smaller and less expensive strobe tuners. The VS-1 also introduced the concept of "sweetening," which actually offsets the pitches of certain guitar strings to ensure that an instrument will sound in tune with itself as opposed to the "equal temperament" calibration on most tuners. "Equal temperament tuning is not applicable to all instruments and should not be used with



them," said John Norris, Peterson sales manager. "We believe you should be able to just tune and play, and not tune, then tweak and play. Our tuners are pre-tweaked with sweetening."

The StrobeClip is accurate to 1/10 of a cent—without a doubt the most accurate clip-on tuner on the market. Due to its high sensitivity, it may take a little time to master, but it is well worth the effort. The tuner contains sweeteners for a wide variety of instruments and tunings, which are selectable via the menu buttons. The backlight display shows a digital spinning strobe wheel, which stops when the desired pitch is achieved and can be swiveled in nearly any direction for easy viewing on any instrument. The StrobeClip accommodates the Buzz Feiten Tuning System and has a menu setting to simplify tuning when using a capo on your axe.

Ordering info: petersontuners.com



The Planet Waves Tru-Strobe, available as a desktop or pedal version, is a rugged die-cast tuner that utilizes a strobe to achieve tuning within 1/10-cent accuracy. Operation is straightforward: Simply plug in, click or stomp to activate, and the display shows the note as a spinning graphic that comes to a halt when the string is at pitch. The Tru-Strobe uses a high-contrast back-lit display that is easily readable in darkness and bright-light situations, and the tuner's true bypass wiring ensures that you do not encounter any signal loss when running your instrument through it. Other features include six modes for drop tunings. Like the StrobeClip, it also supports the Buzz Feiten System. —Keith Baumann

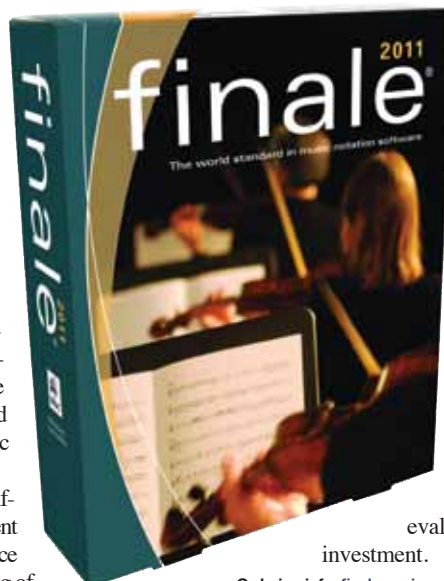
Ordering info: planetwaves.com

Finale 2011 Upgrade *A Year Older, A Bit Wiser*

Since its introduction in 1988, Finale has been one of the premier choices for computer notation software. Over the last 23 years the product has continued to evolve, continually adding new features and streamlining its user interface. Finale 2011 is MakeMusic's latest release, and although I would not classify it as a major upgrade, there are some nice enhancements that may make it worth a look.

Users of Finale 2010 will find the 2011 interface to be extremely familiar with no drastic alterations to the program's basic layout and main tool palette. The most significant enhancements are in Finale's staff handling, page layout and lyrics tool. These are all areas that have received user criticism over the years, and I commend MakeMusic for listening to its customers.

Lyrics entry and editing have always been frustratingly difficult in Finale, but there have been vast improvements in recent versions. The 2011 upgrade seriously enhances the intelligence of the program, making proper alignment, display and printing of



lyrics better than ever. Working with staves is another area that has been improved by making selecting, positioning, hiding and setting of measure attributes much more efficient. For guitarists, Finale can now instantly add or remove capo chords to a layout. There are also some new additions to the font and Garritan sound libraries, plus a newly included set of education worksheets and flashcards for use in the classroom.

Finale 2011 does contain some very useful and highly requested enhancements, particularly in the lyrics department. Considering its aggressive yearly upgrade cycle, current users will need to evaluate whether this latest version is worth the investment.

—Keith Baumann

Ordering info: finalemusic.com

LA Sax Bad Aax Black Alto, Tenor *Big-Lipped Projection*

Saxophonists might remember LA Sax as the maker of flashy, trendy, colorfully lacquered horns that were popular with professional smooth-jazz instrumentals and fashion-conscious novices during the 1990s. The brand eventually languished, as all fads do, partly due to the fact that other saxophone manufacturers discovered cheaper methods of achieving the same visual effect.

The LA Sax brand has re-emerged under the leadership of industry veteran Dennis Bamber, who used to own The Woodwind and The Brasswind, a large mail-order supplier of horns and accessories based in Indiana. The company's new designs still have striking visual appeal, but in a classy, vintage-looking sense. Best of all, the horns actually *play*, unlike the original models marketed by LA Sax a decade ago.

The Bad Aax Black alto and tenor from LA Sax feature a dark finish and extensive, highly detailed engraving on the body tube, bow and bell that complements their vintage sound and highly improved mechanics. Built from a cupronickel brass alloy, both models have a large bell lip that enhances both tone and power. Other features include a high F# key, front F harmonic key, tone-booster pads, ribbed construction and double-pad cup arms. All of the key touches sport beautiful abalone buttons that add another dimension of elegance to these axes.

Response was outstanding on these horns. The alto was particularly sweet, with an altissimo that popped with unexpected facility (never has a high G been so easy to nail). Low notes were dead-on as well. Intonation was solid up and down the horns, their dark, burnished tone only slightly brighter than, say, a Selmer VI. The left-hand palm-key placement takes a little getting used to, though: I kept accidentally bumping the high D key, which is located much lower on the horn (especially on the alto model) than what I'm used to.

Like many of the ever-improving saxophones currently being made in China, the price is right on the LA Sax Bad Aax Black alto and tenor, especially when compared to the cost of traditional pro and step-up models on the new and used markets.

—Ed Enright

Ordering info: lasaxophone.com



Roberto's Winds *The Sax Setup Source*

Roberto's Winds has created a new ligature design for hard rubber saxophone mouthpieces: a one-piece, screwless band carved from a solid block of exotic wood (dark ebony or cocobolo). The wood resonates at a frequency very close to that of reed cane, allowing saxophonists to produce tonal colors previously unattainable in a metal, plastic or leather ligature. Attack, articulation and dynamic ranged are all subtly enhanced when the RW ligatures are used in conjunction with reeds and mouthpieces that suit your playing style.

The ebony ligature is designed for players who want a dark sound with a thick core, as it accentuates the low and mid frequencies. The cocobolo ligature, which resonates a little more



Lebayle LR alto sax mouthpiece



RW saxophone ligatures

freely, is for saxophonists seeking a brighter, livelier sound. Both come in slightly different diameter sizes so they fit snugly around the reed and mouthpiece with a simple push-and-twist of the ligature ring.

Among other professional-quality sax gear available from Roberto's Winds are Lebayle custom mouthpieces, manufactured in France. I tried a hard rubber Lebayle LR model for tenor, as well as a wood Lebayle LR alto mouthpiece. Featuring an extra large chamber with a slight rollover baffle, both of these computer-de-

signed, hand-finished pieces are capable of creating a big, dark sound reminiscent of vintage Otto Link of Hollywood Dukoff models.

Roberto's also offers its own brand of RW saxophone reeds, which are made in France by Rigotti and are definitely worth checking out if you're concerned with consistency of hardness, playability and depth of tone. High in quality and affordable, they easily rival the big-name brands of reeds popular among today's professional players.

—Ed Enright

Ordering info: robertoswinds.com

{1} CONCERT CHAMBER

Conn-Selmer has released the Selmer Paris SD20 mouthpieces for alto and tenor saxophones. The hard-rubber mouthpieces feature a round chamber and a traditional facing, which provides players with balance and flexibility. Designed with the concert saxophonist in mind, the round chamber is reminiscent of early Selmer Soloist mouthpieces.

More info: conn-selmer.com



{1}

{2} DEFINED DESIGN

Shure has added the KSM42—a side-address, cardioid condenser microphone for vocal recording—to its KSM microphone line. With a tailored frequency response and extensive internal and external pop filtering, the single-pattern, dual-diaphragm design of the KSM42 offers a wide dynamic range and smooth proximity control for studio applications.

More info: shure.com



{2}

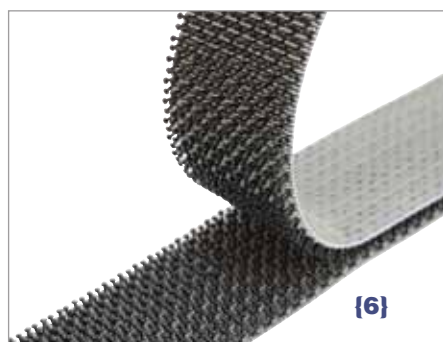
{3} FIT FOR A KING

Musicorp has expanded its Percussion Plus drum thrones with two new models: the 4000T and 4400T. The 4000T is a heavy-duty drum throne with a double-braced tripod base; the 4400T version adds a swivel post and thick, padded saddle seat with cast mount. Both thrones are height-adjustable from 18–23 inches and feature a chrome finish and durable rubber feet.

More info: musicorp.com



{3}
4400T



{6}



{4}

{5}



{4} AFFORDABLE IN-EAR MONITOR

Rock On Audio has developed an inexpensive method of accessing an in-ear mix. The new Rock On system features two products: the Rockbox Limiter, an in-ear monitor headphone amp with output limiting, and the Rockon Cable, an instrument cable that provides signal flow for both the instrument and an in-ear monitor mix.

More info: rockonaudio.com

{5} SYNTHETIC GUTS

D'Addario recently reconfigured its Zyex strings with a new generation of synthetic material for the release of Zyex bass strings. The core configuration gives musicians greater control over the finer nuances of their tone. Zyex strings maintain a warm, rich, gut-like tone quality while remaining in tune under extreme climate conditions.

More info: daddario.com

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BY CHASE BAIRD

Harmonic Grounding *A New Perspective On Chromatic Improvisation*

The notion of chromatic music, or "playing outside," is certainly not a new phenomenon to jazz musicians. As a saxophonist, I have long had a fascination with the approaches employed by innovators like John Coltrane, Wayne Shorter and Michael Brecker. This, in part, stems from the progressive edge and the enhanced sense of "color" that chromatic music provides. In recent years, I have taken steps towards developing an original approach to chromatic composition and improvisation. This approach has come to be called "harmonic grounding."

Harmonic grounding developed around the interval of the fifth. The fifth is the second most consonant interval to the octave, as it is the first interval in the overtone series to utilize a pitch different from the fundamental. It is "grounded" by its close proximity to the fundamental. In 12-tone even temperament, an ascending melodic line of progressive fifths will pass through all 12 tones and eventually return to its origin, completing what we know as the "circle of fifths" (see *Example 1*). This unique property makes the fifth integral to Western chromatic music.

If we arrange an ascending series of notes in fifth intervals, we can observe an interesting phenomenon. The first seven notes of this ascending fifth pattern will represent the notes of the Lydian mode. *Example 2* is an ascending fifth pattern beginning and ending at G natural. Note that the first seven notes constitute the G Lydian scale.

Because the Lydian scale contains an inner structure of fifth intervals, it does not contain any truly dissonant notes that require resolution. Rather, each note has a unique sonority and can be emphasized. This makes it an optimum choice for modal music and, consequently, composers such as Shorter and Joe Henderson intentionally use Lydian as a singular event with no resolution.

Now, if we continue to explore the ascending fifth pattern/chord, we note that the next note beyond the #11 is one half-step from the root pitch, in this case a G# in relationship to the fundamental G. However, its aesthetic quality sounds remarkably different as a #15 "grounded" by the fifths below than it would as a half-step. We can continue with the progressive fifth intervals and reach the #19, #23, etc.

This scenario also reveals another interesting phenomenon. A fifth interval provides the



outer two notes for a triadic chord. Thus, if progressive fifths will eventually return to their origin, progressive triads will as well. *Example 3* is an example of this principle beginning with a G major triad. It can be done in any key, beginning with either a major or minor triad, as they are complementary in this pattern. The fifths are highlighted in ***bold and italics***.

This principle can be extended to outline a scale of a similar nature (see *Example 4*). The chord tones from above are in ***bold and italics***.

How can we apply this in a melodic or harmonic situation? The scales and chords outlined above allow the composer or improviser to integrate any chromatic pitch at any time, insofar as it is "grounded" by a structure of fifth intervals. In harmonic grounding, the musician can view key centers as *points of entry* to chromatics. This requires a radical shift in perspective. The musician can now use any of the chords or scales in *Examples 2-4* to move chromatically and can ascend (or even descend) into adjacent key signatures.

In addition to fifth intervals, I like to integrate the next most consonant, or "grounded," interval in the overtone series, the major third, into my improvisations. By introducing a major third in relationship to several fifths, we can create a "grounded" context for a note that would otherwise be highly dissonant. I like to think in four-note groupings made up of three fifths and one third. *Example 5* shows some "grounded" groupings that could be played over a Gmaj7#11

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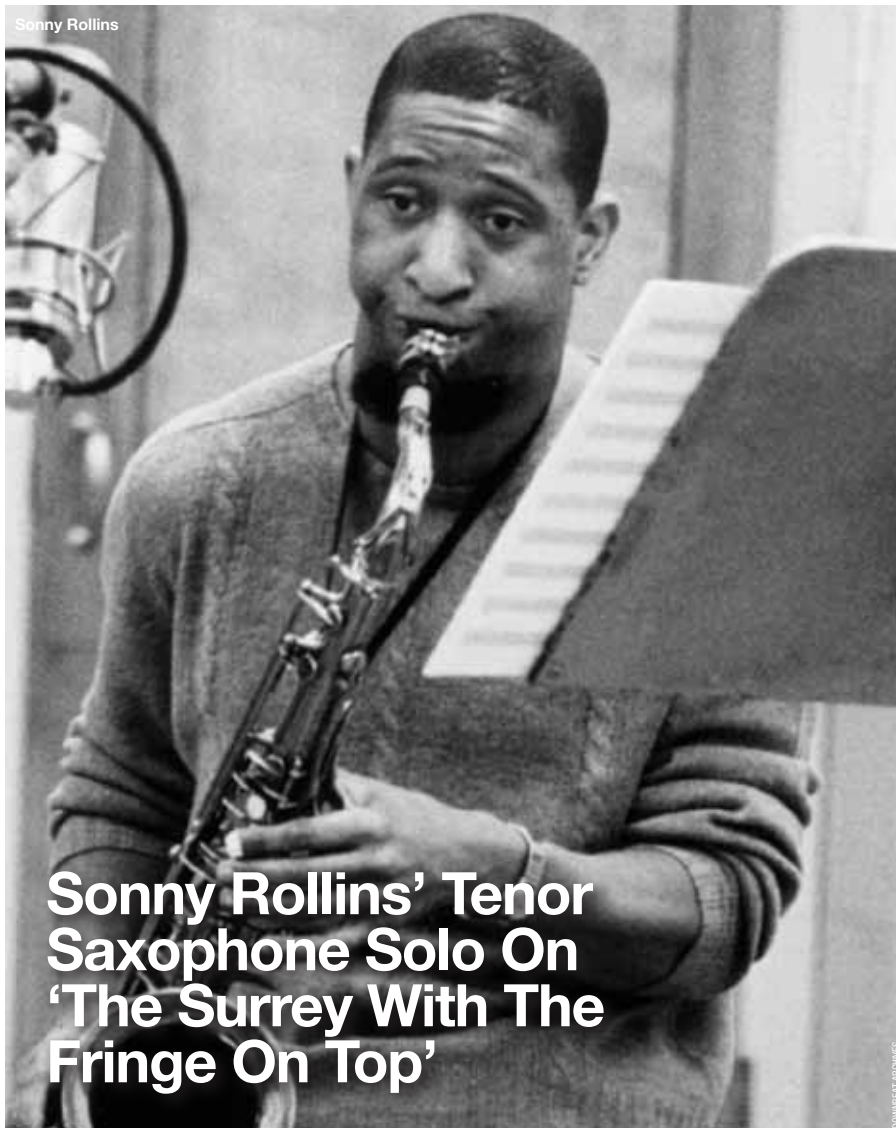
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BY JIMI DURSO

Sonny Rollins



Sonny Rollins' Tenor Saxophone Solo On 'The Surrey With The Fringe On Top'

In 1957, for his album *Newk's Time*, tenor saxophonist Sonny Rollins recorded Rodgers and Hammerstein's "The Surrey With The Fringe On Top" as a duet with drummer Philly Joe Jones. Performing with no chord accompaniment or bassline provides a soloist with certain freedoms but also presents some unique challenges, such as how to delineate the form and make the chord changes clear. Rollins certainly rose to the occasion. Transcribed here are his last two choruses before he and Jones start trading fours.

The chords written on top represent the standard changes to this song. One way Rollins makes it clear what harmony he's hearing is through the use of arpeggios, such as the Gm7 ascending 16th-note arpeggio in measure 57, which reappears with a triplet rhythm in measure 60. There's also the B \flat triad preceded by

its major seventh at the ends of measures 15 and 43, in both cases leading to the Gm7. The descending Cm in measure 61 is particularly effective considering there was the E natural and C in the previous measure helping make the C7 sound clear. This arpeggio really brings out the harmony and helps indicate where in the tune we are.

More interesting, though, are the arpeggios Rollins plays that are not the underlying harmony. There are a lot of G minor and G minor sevenths on the long B \flat sections (perhaps Rollins is hearing it as B \flat 6). Right from measure 1 of this transcription, Rollins plays a series of ascending thirds from G to A (Gm9) and then resolves on the B \flat root. In the very next measure, a descending Dm (the top of B \flat maj7) leads to a descending Gm. And the ascending Cm chords in measure 11 both times resolve to B \flat maj7 chord

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tones. Perhaps the most interesting example of this use of arpeggios that don't match the standard changes occurs in measure 37—Rollins plays a B diminished seventh chord where the original tune resolves to the tonic. This sets up a strong resolution to the B \flat maj7 in the first measure of his final chorus.

Rollins also has a tendency to put F#s at the end of the B \flat major sections (measures 6, 7, 14, 30, 42) and even on the Gm chord that follows (16, 44). Rollins seems to be implying the D7 that would set up the Gm chord.

Rollins also incorporates the melody into his solo. The first A of the melody starts, ends and leans on the fifth of the key. Rollins ends his first two phrases on F, the fifth of the key (measures 3 and 9) and also in the second A at measure 13. He does this again in the next chorus at measures 39 and 49. There are also spots

where Rollins quotes small chunks of the melody, as in measures 25–27. In 50–53, leading to the bridge, Rollins plays the same melodic figure the melody uses before the bridge. Although he changes the rhythmic values, it's still clearly the melody, which makes it obvious that we're heading into the B section. At 67, Rollins uses the same rhythm as the melody, and even the same notes, but inverts them. So instead of ascending from C to D to E \flat , Rollins does the opposite. This quote, with the introduction of these longer tones which continue in the following measures, not only provide contrast to the rhythmic density of the rest of his solo, but also cue Jones that Rollins is wrapping up his solo and is ready to trade.

DB

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

Oregon Arts Magnet School Makes Jazz Central To Its Mission

As arts classes in public schools across the country face an anxious future, a magnet school in Beaverton, Ore., is reaffirming music's importance in education. Jazz is central to its mission.

The Arts and Communication Magnet Academy (ACMA) serves about 600 students in grades 6 through 12 in this town about seven miles west of Portland. Its programs include an emphasis on music, dance, theater and visual art as part of regular academic disciplines. Principal Michael Johnson said the school opened as an alternative high school in 1992, and then focused on arts education and added a middle school in the late '90s. Its program has already been widely acclaimed, including being recognized as a "Magnet School Of Merit" by the Magnet Schools of America Association in 2001. U.S. News and World Report ranked ACMA as Oregon's best public high school six years later.

"Our mission is quite simple," said ACMA principal Michael Johnson. "We believe that the arts are foundational to a complete learning experience, so we strive for our students to achieve excellence in core subjects and the arts."

Johnson said that a jazz program had been in place at ACMA for three years when he arrived in 2004. Today, about 10 percent of the students are involved in jazz. Trumpeter Conte Bennett was hired in 2008 to teach the music and run its bands. Last year, his ensembles won awards at the Lionel Hampton Jazz Festival student competition at the University of Idaho.

"I was a freelance trumpet player, toured worldwide," Bennett said. "I had originally intended to get a college gig, and this job came open. I looked into it and liked the way the school is set up. The kids are here because they want to be, and so the attitude is much different than other high schools. I was impressed by that."

Bennett said that he does "try to train the students like they're actually at college, so if they play a gig, they'll understand different styles and have a place to start." But, at the same time, he knows that for younger students "it's natural to be scared to step out on the high wire and improvise." So he has different levels of bands while also mixing up



Conte Bennett teaching at ACMA

KEVIN BELS/WORTH

different styles, with a basis in Duke Ellington, but also including Latin music and funk.

"My intention is to make everybody a solid player on their instruments," Bennett said. "To keep building a solid program where we're all learning how to improvise, and just trying to keep the big band standard as high as we can no matter who's here. Hopefully we get improvisation as part of the curriculum, as right now we have someone teach it once a week. The goal is to offer a class in improv and everybody takes it."

ACMA is not immune to the budgetary woes facing public school districts. Johnson said that his school's annual budget is \$2.5 million a year, which is roughly the same as a non-specialized school of its size in this area. He adds that the budget is a challenge, as "arts programs by their very nature are expensive." The school would like to expand to accommodate 250 more students and maintain its new performance building. The jazz band has been part of their own fundraising.

"We do a lot of performances, and the community loves it," Bennett said. "We get a great reaction. What shocks people the most is how good these kids play. Every event we've done, whether we get a donation or not, people have been impressed. I don't take credit for that, they practice very hard; It's their life, not just a class they go to."

—Aaron Cohen



PAUL CONTESE/TCU

Texas Christian University Jazz Ensemble

TCU Tour: The Texas Christian University Jazz Ensemble, under Curt Wilson's direction, will perform at Cuba's Havana International Jazz Festival, Dec. 15–20. TCU's jazz band has released a new 2-CD set, *Limelight* (Sea Breeze). The discs include compositions by TCU faculty and standards. **Details:** tcu.edu

Canadian Program: Grant MacEwan University in Edmonton, Alberta, has launched a new Jazz and Contemporary Popular Music program. The four-year Bachelor of Music program is the first post-secondary degree combining jazz and contemporary popular music in Western Canada.

Details: macewan.ca/music

String Camp: Violinist Mark O'Connor will host the Berklee Summer String Program at the Berklee College of Music campus in Boston June 27–July 1. O'Connor will be on hand for sessions and clinics throughout the week before hosting a string camp at East Tennessee State University.

Details: berklee.edu/summer

Business Lessons: The Manhattan School of Music has launched its Center for Music Entrepreneurship. The center's intention is to offer undergraduate and graduate classes for all students, rather than as a separate degree.

Details: msmny.edu

Erskine's Minnesota: Peter Erskine will collaborate with the Minnesota State University Moorhead big band in the spring of 2011. **Details:** mnstate.edu

'Jupiter' In New York: Five bands from the New School For Jazz And Contemporary Music performed their interpretation of John Coltrane's "Jupiter" at New York's High Line Park in September and October. The groups performed the piece in different locations across the length of the park in a collaboration with visual artist Demetrius Oliver and the New York chapter of the Amateur Astronomers Association.

Details: newschool.edu

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Uri Caine

At the North Sea Jazz Festival in 2009, pianist/keyboardist Uri Caine appeared before an audience in the NRC Jazz Café “Talking Jazz” venue for the festival’s live DownBeat Blindfold Test.

McCoy Tyner

“Passion Dance” (from *Guitars*, Half Note/McCoy Tyner Music, 2008) Tyner, piano; Marc Ribot, guitar; Ron Carter, bass; Jack DeJohnette, drums.

That was McCoy Tyner playing “Passion Dance.” The original version on Blue Note with Joe Henderson obsessed me when I was young. It opened up for me and other young pianists a whole new way of playing—which was a more modal style. I haven’t heard this record, but I knew McCoy made an album with guitarists. Which guitarist this is, I’m not sure, but he didn’t sound like he was coming from a jazz background like a Pat Martino or Wes Montgomery. He sounded more like a rock player dealing with the changes in a different way than Joe Henderson. So, I’d have to say Marc Ribot. I just played with him with John Zorn, so he’s in my ears. I like the concept of having a guitar in the mix here. It puts McCoy into a different context, which makes “Passion Dance” sound so different. By changing the context, you alter the condition upon which you improvise.

Fats Waller

“Viper’s Drag” (from *If You Got To Ask, You Ain’t Got It!*, Bluebird/Legacy, 2006, rec’d 1937) Waller, piano.

I loved it. It’s hard to play solo that way, especially with the left hand keeping the music swinging. It’s hard for me to guess who this is. My impression in the first part of this tune with the vamp feel is early Duke Ellington. But the middle section is stride. The touch didn’t feel as light as Fats Waller, James P. Johnson or Earl Fatha Hines. Then I heard a figuration that reminded me of Count Basie. What’s so impressive about this performance is the filigree with the right hand while the left hand was swinging. It’s a lost art. A lot of bebop players let their left hand drop out because the bass and drums would take those parts. But a lot of the older players had to play with both hands because oftentimes they’d have to do solo gigs, at parties or small clubs.

To guess, I’d say Fatha Hines. No? Fats? What I learned about Fats Waller was that his time was ridiculous. Unfortunately a lot of people just know the joking side of his library.

Glenn Gould

“Goldberg Variations 1–3” (from *A State Of Wonder: The Complete Goldberg Variations 1955 & 1981*, Bluebird/Legacy, 2002, rec’d 1981) Gould, piano.

That was the “Goldberg Variations,” parts one through three. Like “Passion Dance,” I listened to Glenn Gould’s 1955 version of this music a lot. This is either Gould’s last version or someone very much influenced by him. But I think this is Gould. A lot of people play Bach in a very traditional way. But Glenn Gould played this with such detached left-hand notes. They sound like walking bass lines in the way he inflects the rhythm. He’s controlling the touch because each of these variations has a different touch. The first variation has a detached, harder tone; the second, the tone is more covered; and the third, which is a canon, has one voice imitating another voice, which is hard to control as a pianist. You have the bass line and two voices moving about in parallel motion.

Andrew Hill

“Spectrum” (from *Point Of Departure*, Blue Note, 1999, rec’d 1964) Hill, piano; Joe Henderson, tenor saxophone; Eric Dolphy, alto saxophone; Kenny Dorham, trumpet; Richard Davis, bass; Tony Williams, drums.

I loved that. It sounded like Andrew Hill, and I’m thinking that could have



JACK VARTOGIAN/FREEMANPHOTOS

been Joe Henderson. First off, Andrew Hill wrote distinctive compositions. Here, you hear the head that’s angular and jagged, which leads into this stretch of free improvisation. Eric Dolphy here is great, combining the totally out with the blues sound. Joe does that too. Even though you can hear echoes of [Thelonious] Monk in the angularity of his phrases, Andrew’s style is unique. You can hear how he sets something up in the shape of his solos, then stops and moves into a different direction, in a different time signature. He doesn’t stay in 4/4 time and just swing. The improvisation sounds like it could be related to what came before or it could be an entirely other part of the whole structure—like when Eric Dolphy plays the blues in his own way.

Marty Ehrlich and Myra Melford

“Hymn” (from *Spark*, Palmetto, 2008) Ehrlich, alto saxophone; Melford, piano.

It’s hard to play duo. These two were doing a very good job of staying together. I like the way this piece began: Each player was punching out different notes and then between them creating a melody that expanded especially when the pianist began to play, starting by adding harmonies and having the left hand do more recognizable progressions. It’s hard for me to guess who these players are, but I’m wondering if the saxophonist might be Marty Ehrlich. It is? I used to play with him and I even made a record with him years ago. I’m not sure who the pianist is.

Last night I played with Paolo Fresu as a duo. In that context, you have to make a decision, do I play time by simulating what a bassist or drummer might add or do I play time without thinking of bass and drums. I liked what this piano player did by outlining the harmony. If you play too much, you can get in the way of the soloist. When you comp, you have to know how much comping is too much. But this piece sounded integrated. This is Myra? I’ve known her for a long time. She’s great. She has her own distinctive way of playing. **DB**

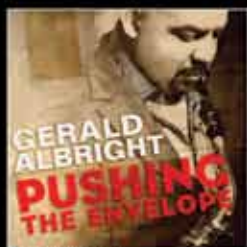
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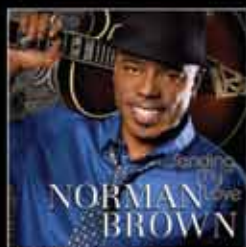
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PKR-31327-02



Stanley Clarke
The Stanley Clarke Band
HUCD3161



Will Downing
Lust, Love & Lies (An Audio Novel)
PKR-32463-02



George Duke
Déjà Vu
HUI-32031-02



Taylor Eigsti
Daylight At Midnight
CJA-32100-02



Fourplay
Let's Touch The Sky
HUI-32030-02



Nnenna Freelon
Hometree
CJA-31316-02



Kenny G
Heart And Soul
CRE-32048-02



Hiromi
Place To Be
83695



Dave Koz
Hello Tomorrow
CRE-31753-02



Jeff Lorber
Now Is The Time
HUI-32029-02



Monica Mancini
I've Loved These Days
CCD-30745



Stanton Moore
Groove Alchemy
TEL-31890-02



John Pizzarelli
Rockin' In Rhythm
TEL-31921-02



Lee Ritenour
6 String Theory
CRE-31911-02



Arturo Sandoval
A Time For Love
CJA-31792-02



Christian Scott
Yesterday You Said Tomorrow
CJA-31412-02



Esperanza Spalding
Chamber Music Society
HUI-31810-02



Spanish Harlem Orchestra
Viva La Tradicion
CPI-32263-02



Take 6
The Most Wonderful Time of the Year
HUCD3158



Jacky Terrasson
Push
CJA-31640-02

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